

**MINUTES OF A
BUDGET WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MAY 25, 2021**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Work Session on May 25, 2021, 8:30 a.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman	Don Adams, County Manager
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair	Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Mark Jones, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board
Tom Stribling, Commissioner (via Zoom video conferencing)	
Gayle Woody, Commissioner	

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

Mr. Adams stated they had two nonprofits scheduled to present. In the budget message, he stated that new requests needed to come before the Board. These two were not in the proposed budget at that point, but it would be for the Board to make that decision in the final budget process.

(1) TEEN CHALLENGE OF THE SMOKIES: Mike Barres, Executive Director stated that Teen Challenge of the Smokies Men's Center provided a faith based solution for addiction epidemic located in Franklin. Teen Challenge began in 1958 as a way to help older teens dealing with addiction, but quickly grew to help adults who were struggling with addiction as well. There were over 200 Teen Challenge Programs throughout the US with more than 70% success rate for those who finish the program. Teen Challenge was a long-term, Christ centered, Bible based discipleship ministry. They taught those wrestling with addiction a whole new set of life skills and coping skills.

They were a nonprofit ministry and did not receive any state or federal funding, insurance money or financial support from the National Teen Challenge office. Teen Challenge of the Smokies Men's Center was a 12 month, five phase residential program, which was located at the former Camp Cullasaja off Highlands Road in Franklin. It was a program for men 18 to 50+ years old and served the entire Western North Carolina region and beyond.

Commissioner Deitz asked if they had men from Jackson County in the program?

Mr. Barres stated that they did and also received a lot of calls from the Jackson County Detention Center.

Mr. Adams stated that counties in North Carolina were going to receive funding from opioid settlement agreements, which the Board would be dealing with in the future. A portion of the money would be distributed for treatment services. He saw some opportunities coming to county governments in the region with a large part going toward human services and treatment for opioid use.

General discussions were held.
Informational item.

(2) FARMER'S MARKET: Mr. Adams stated that John Bubacz, Chairman had not yet joined them via Zoom for this item.

General discussions were held.

This item would continue later in the meeting.

(3) GENERAL BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:

(a) Commissioner Woody stated that there were a couple of nonprofit applications that did not have information. One was the Arts Council. She was a former board member of that council and she did reach out to the president of the board. The president let her know that the council granted over \$74,000 during Covid to different arts organizations. She would reach out to them to request they provide the Board with a summary. She felt they were a worthy group that met needs in the community that no one else did. Also, there was no information for the State of Franklin.

Ms. Fox stated that she believed the State of Franklin was probably not functioning because of Covid. It was the Senior Citizen Service based in Swain County, but they served Jackson County also. They placed a lot of senior citizens in the workforce.

Informational item.

(b) Commissioner Jones stated that he met with Highlands Child Development Center and spoke to the director. She had been in contact with Ms. Fox with moving forward. Years ago, when Southwestern Child Development Center left Cashiers, it impacted a lot of single moms. The county stepped in and provided a \$52,000 to start up the Hampton School, which changed to the Highlands Child Development. He was very supportive of that.

Informational item.

(c) Chairman McMahan stated that as far as the two they had on the list for that day, he would not be in favor of funding either of the new requests. He thought they needed to clarify a few questions on the Farmer's Market request. It seemed they may have some organizational issues they may need to work through. He was fully supportive of the Farmer's Market and what they did, but he did want to evaluate it further. Regarding the Teen Challenge of the Smokies, he thought they should wait on that one.

Mr. Adams stated that he thought there would be more opportunities available for the Teen Challenge of the Smokies organization that went well beyond the \$8,000 that had been requested.

Commissioner Woody stated that she mentioned to Mr. Barres that there was no one from Jackson County on their board of directors. She thought it would be helpful ongoing if they did choose to support that, if there was representation from the community.

Informational item.

(d) Commissioner Woody stated that she also had a question about REACH. She knew that Ms. Baker was on the REACH Board. Did Center for Domestic Peace (CDP) have its own board of directors or was it still functioning under the REACH Board?

Ms. Baker stated that the CDP had its own board for about five years. They just transitioned services in July of 2020 for domestic violence. REACH still handled sexual assault for Jackson County. By July 1, 2022, CDP should be handling all of it. Everyone on the CDP Board of Directors was from Jackson County.

Mr. Adams stated they had been putting in a lot of work over the years to transition those services back to Jackson County. Going back to the American Recovery Funds and when the Board would decide how to proceed forward with that, he went back to the human services component of those dollars. He and Ms. Fox had sat through more meetings regarding the rules associated with those funds. They confirmed that they were making an automatic association with human services programs and they could be a target for those funds. He believed these funds would be integral to develop a long-term partnership with CDP.

Informational item.

(e) Commissioner Jones asked with Teen Challenge and the opioid settlement money, what was the timeline for the settlement?

Ms. Baker stated there was no timeline on the settlement. She did hear in an update that things were moving towards a settlement, but with a national settlement, moving could mean months. The state could receive up to \$850 million with Jackson County's portion to be approximately \$4 million over 18 years, with the majority being in the first three years.

Informational item.

(f) Commissioner Deitz stated that he went to the Farmer's Market almost every Saturday. They needed to realize that was a big tourist attraction on Saturdays. Once people came down, they probably ate breakfast or this or that, so there was more to it than just the Farmer's Market. He had seen people there from many different states. It was a draw for downtown, especially in the fall. The Farmer's Market was in disarray because their manager took another job. He thought the Farmer's Market was a really good thing.

Informational item.

(4) **FARMER'S MARKET**: Mr. Adams stated that John Bubacz, Chairman had now joined them via Zoom for this item.

Mr. Bubacz stated he assumed everyone was familiar with the Farmer's Market. The year 2020 was their 20th anniversary, which they did not get to celebrate. They also did not get to do any fundraising or get any donations. They only survived on vendor fees, which was not enough to fund everything.

They did not make payroll, so they lost their manager. Their board stepped up to run the market all winter, but now they were in the spring season and they needed to take funding from other places to fund a manager position for nine hours per week. He did not know if they needed to take the funds from the county to directly fund the position. They could take those funds for marketing and signage.

Chairman McMahan asked if the funds would most likely be dedicated to non-payroll needs?

Mr. Bubacz stated they would prefer to not use public funds for payroll. They had CARES Act money and vendor fees they had already collected that year. They could take those from the other items to contribute, but they would have to use some county money to add to it to fund the manager position.

Chairman McMahan asked if they had someone identified for the position?

Mr. Bubacz stated they did have three interested people in the position. It was not sustainable for the board to keep doing all of the volunteer work. All board members also had a booth, so the market suffered because they were doing the work of the manager. They would plan to fund the manager position from somewhere else in 2022.

Commissioner Jones stated that Mr. Bubacz mentioned marketing, but he did not see marketing monies on projected expenses except \$1,000 for advertising/printing.

Mr. Bubacz stated that it was something new. Their board discussed in their last two meetings how much they needed to advertise because the market had suffered so badly and attendance was so down. They had already started some of that with donation money on Facebook and WRGC.

Commissioner Jones asked what a vendor took in on average on a Saturday?

Mr. Bubacz stated that he did not have that information with him, but could get the numbers to them for 2019.

Mr. Adams asked what the Payroll Reserve Fund item in the budget was for?

Mr. Bubacz stated that was money set aside in payroll so that they never lost a manager again because they could not make payroll. It was an emergency payroll fund.

Commissioner Deitz stated he related to the Commission about a lot of people that came to visit the Farmer's Market from out of town and college kids. It was a draw in town and he thought very much they needed more signage to direct people. There were people from Haywood, Swain, Macon and Graham that sold at the Market.

Mr. Bubacz also noted that the Farmer's Market accepted SNAP Benefits. In addition, they had a grant to double their first \$20 of SNAP Benefits, so their cost was cut in half for their fresh produce.

Mr. Adams asked if he felt comfortable with his budget as presented?

Mr. Bubacz stated yes, they had already discussed strategy for fundraising.

General discussions were held.

Chairman McMahan stated that after hearing Mr. Bubacz speak and clarify, he was in favor of recommending the grant for \$15,000 and add that into the budget.

Commissioner Woody stated that she agreed.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he agreed.

Commissioner Jones stated that he still wanted to get the information he requested.

Commissioner Stribling stated that he was good.

Informational item.

(5) ADDITIONAL GENERAL BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:

(a) Commissioner Woody stated that she did have one more question regarding Habitat for Humanity, which was Macon and Jackson. Looking at the board of directors, she believed almost all of them were from Macon County. Was the money the county was investing, helping the Jackson County citizens? Did they know if there were plans to build or renovate in Jackson County?

Ms. Baker stated that there was a particular situation in Jackson County a few years ago with a septic situation. Habitat for Humanity came in and paid for that issue to be resolved. She did not know if they did building as much as help with emergency housing situations.

Chairman McMahan stated the problem with building a new home was finding property.

Mr. Adams stated that under Section 1 of their application, it stated: "This program covers repairs to floors, structural repairs, bathrooms, kitchen, handicap accessible areas, ramps, roof repairs, as well as any repair that makes a home safe and secure".

Under Section 6, it discussed how many individuals were served by their agency:

- 2018-19: 3 families served
- 2019-20: 12 families served
- 2020-21: 14 families served
- 2021-22: 15-20 families served

He would follow up and ask them how many were in Jackson County.

Commissioner Woody stated that she totally supported their efforts. They knew housing was a huge issue and anyone contributing to help solve that issue was worth their support.

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(b) Chairman McMahan asked Mr. Adams where they were in the budget process at that point?

Mr. Adams stated the only item left, from staff's standpoint would be to have a final conversation regarding the fee schedule. There was a proposal with Solid Waste and he wanted to point out a request with the Health Department fee schedule also. They were requesting a fee change.

He would look to the Board for guidance on what issues they wanted to discuss. Also, they had set aside May 26th and June 1st for special budget work sessions. June 1st at 5:55 p.m. would be the budget public hearing. June 2nd was also set aside for a special budget work session. The last day for changes for staff would be June 8th. That would allow staff to put the budget together for adoption on June 15th.

Chairman McMahan stated he did not believe there was a need to meet on May 26th. He did have one item he wanted to research more and bring up on June 1st.

Informational item.

(c) Commissioner Woody gave an update from the Southwest Commission Meeting. They talked a lot about the CARES Act money and Southwest Commission was working very hard. They would make a specific webinar to address how the money could be spent to maximize their funds.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Deitz moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman