

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
NOVEMBER 09, 2021**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on November 09, 2021, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair
Mark Jones, Commissioner
Tom Stribling, Commissioner
Gayle Woody, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) VAYA HEALTH AREA BOARD STRUCTURE: Shelly Foreman, Vaya Health Community Relations Regional Director, was present via Zoom for this item.

Mr. Adams stated this was a follow up to an issue discussed regarding reorganization.

Ms. Foreman stated Vaya Health was the public agency overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services. Their role was to manage Medicaid and state funds allocated through the General Assembly to people in need of mental health, substance use and developmental disabilities. They did this through contracting with a variety of providers.

Over the summer, Vaya was approached by another local managed care organization, Cardinal Innovations, which was an organization that served areas in the eastern part of the state. Cardinal was facing many challenges as an organization, so they approached Vaya about consolidation.

She presented: County Commissioner Advisory Board:

(a) LME/MCO County Alignments:

- Alliance Behavioral Healthcare
- Eastpointe
- Partners Behavioral Health Management
- Sandhills Center
- Trillium Health Resources
- Vaya Health

(b) Vaya's Regional Assignments:

- Region 1:
 - Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain
 - General Population: 207,833
- Region 2:
 - Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Transylvania, Yancey
 - General Population: 493,367
- Region 3:
 - Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, McDowell, Watauga, Wilkes, Rowan
 - General Population: 494,513

- Region 4:
 - Stokes, Alamance, Caswell, Chatham, Person, Franklin, Granville, Vance
 - General Population: 517,800
- (c) Alternative Board Structure:
 - CFAC appoints 4 Board of Director Members
 - Each Region Board of County Commissioners appoints 2 Regional Board Members
- (d) Proposed Composition for Consolidated Board of Directors:
 - 2 directors appointed by each Regional Board
 - 4 directors appointed by Consumer & Family Advisory Committee
 - 1 director appointed by the DHHS Secretary
 - Up to 8 At-Large directors appointed by current Vaya Board in consultation Cardinal Board, CCABs, counties
 - The Provider Advisory Council President serve as non-voting director
 - Up to 3 non-voting advisory directors
- (e) Timing and Plan:
 - September 2021: Present draft to future Committee and Vaya Board
 - October 2021:
 - Send draft to DHHS for socialization
 - JSC endorsement of proposed alternate board structure
 - October 13-22: County CCAB Resolution passed authorizing Vaya to request alternate board structure
 - October 19: Formal request submitted to DHHS Secretary
 - October 27-31: County CCAB meeting
 - November 2021: BOCC's appoint Regional Board Members
 - December 2021:
 - Regional Boards meet and appoint members to Vaya Board
 - Regional CFACs meet and appoint members to Vaya Board
 - Vaya Board meets and appoints At-Large Members
 - January 2022: Consolidation date 01/01/2022
 - First Consolidated (Vaya 2.0) Board Meeting
 - Cardinal Board meets as needed/continues through wind down
- (f) Resolution of the County Commissioner Advisory Board of Vaya Health to appoint Members of the Area Board in a manner or with a composition other than as required by NCGS 122C-118.1
- (g) Letter of approval of the Alternate Board Structure and Composition – Dave Richard, Deputy Secretary, NC Medicaid, NC DHHS

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought this had been a well thought out process to determine what they could do to enhance the level of service and the engagement between the boards and staff to make sure they understood what the needs were. The goal and concept of the regional boards worked well and it was a natural fit in the west as the seven western counties had always worked well together. It would give them an opportunity to have input on the local services and continue to be engaged at the higher level.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Add the appointments to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(2) **ALL IN JACKSON FUND**: Tiffany Henry, Economic Development Director and Christopher Murrey, Chief Credit Officer, Mountain Bizworks were present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated that within a few months after the pandemic, the Board moved forward and created the All In Jackson Fund. The Fund utilized existing CDBG Revolving Loan Funds that were not being used.

Ms. Henry stated that Mountain Bizworks was the organization that helped to support the All In Jackson Fund. They had been working alongside Ms. Baker, Iris Payne, CDBG Director and Mountain Bizworks to determine the best use of these funds.

The Fund was intended to be a bridge loan for the Payroll Protection Program and the Economic Income Disaster Loan Fund, both SBA Programs. At the time, they were not seeing those funds flow timely to the small businesses, so the All In Jackson Fund was set up to bridge that gap. By the time the Fund was set up and ready to go, SBA opened up, so they really did not use a lot of the funds. They loaned approximately \$50,000 from the All In Jackson Fund.

One of her missions was to look at the Revolving Loan Fund as a whole, as well as the All In Jackson Fund, to determine the best way for them to utilize both funds. A conversation she had with Ms. Payne was that the restrictions they had on the CDBG funds really were not working for the county with the businesses that were in the county. They were designed more for industrial, manufacturers and big business, which they did not have a lot of in the county. This was why the fund had not been utilized to its potential.

The original agreement between the county and Mountain Bizworks had expired. She presented a new agreement for a period of five years. The main change from the first contract was the Scope of Work section. Many times small businesses fail because of lack of collateral or cash flow. This Fund could allow businesses a boost they may not have otherwise. The Fund must, at a minimum, be matched by the borrower's investment (whether collateral pledged or cash invested) on a 1:1 basis.

For example: Small Business Expansion:

- Project Cost: \$100,000
- Mountain Bizworks Loan Amount: \$50,000
- Owner's Minimum Investment: \$25,000
- County Participation: \$25,000

The Revolving Loan Fund balance was approximately \$650,000, which they would also start to look at, but would focus on the All In Jackson Fund first. The remaining balance of in the All In Jackson Fund was approximately \$275,000. When those funds were used, they would potentially look to access the CDBG funds.

Mr. Murrey stated that the standard which they would work with the county was the same standard they would work with in terms of how they would underwrite decisions in order to protect the county's investment. There were several businesses in Sylva they had supported over the years. Mountain Bizworks was a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). They acted as a lender to small businesses that could not access funding through community banks or traditional banks. They were a gap lender or startup lender that provided technical assistance as well with peer coaches providing expertise.

Ms. Henry stated that once the business would get on their feet, they would look to refinance with a bank because their interest rates were lower. The CDFI lender would be the gap lender to get them on their feet.

General discussions were held.

Mr. Murrey stated they hired a Southwestern Regional Manger to focus on business development. They were ready to support small business and be proactive. He thought there was opportunity for them to broaden their footprint in the county. They had the resources and capacity for that aggressively. This structure gave them creativity and capacity to do this in a unique way.

Consensus: *Add the agreement to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(3) JACKSON AND MACON COUNTIES - BOUNDARY LINE: Tabitha Ashe, Tax Administrator, presented

(a) History:

- The Jackson/Macon boundary line was not well defined. The property descriptions run with the top of the ridge.
- Traditionally have used evidence from recorded surveys and United States Forest Service quadrangle (quad) maps to assist in locating the line for taxation purposes.

(b) Timeline of Events:

- July 9, 2013: Macon County Commissioners Meeting: Macon County presented resolution for the North Carolina Geodetic Survey (NCGS) to survey boundary line between Macon and Jackson Counties. Resolution approved unanimously.
- August 5, 2013: Commissioners Meeting: Macon County submitted the approved resolution to Jackson County for similar action.
- August 19, 2013: Commissioners Meeting: The resolution was approved by Jackson County.
- October 20, 2014: Commissioners Meeting: Former Tax Administrator Bobby McMahan stated that staffing turnover at the state and at Macon County had delayed the boundary line project. The state surveyor retired August 14, 2014. A new surveyor was not hired until 2016.
- March 3, 2017: Preliminary information was provided by Ronald Harding, State Surveyor. Fieldwork was to be completed by the NCGS.
- July 21, 2017: North Carolina General Statute 153A-18 was rewritten. The current statute makes the results of the state conclusive. Disagreements require court action.
- October 10, 2017 Commissioners Meeting: Bobby McMahan presented a timeline of events. Discussion based on a newspaper article from September 27, 2017. The article stated Jackson County would lose nearly \$600 million in value, \$1.2 million in tax levy.
- July 2020: Final proposed line information provided.
- August 2020: County expressed concerns over nine areas.
- April 2021 – August 2021: Worked with NCGS to research areas of concern.
- August 18, 2021: NCGS concluded, after a site visit, they did not find any evidence to make any changes to the information previously sent to the counties.

(c) Parcels Affected: The following parcels lie on the county line:

- 219 taxable parcels
- 17 exempt parcels: 1 Western Carolina University tract, 16 US Forest Service tracts
- Acreage affected:
 - 83 parcels lose acreage – 68.80 acres total (21 acres from one parcel)
 - 38 parcels gain acreage – 12.71 acres total, including 18 new parcels, currently only taxed by Macon County.

- Homes affected:
 - 5 homes in Macon County, 2 detached garages
 - 1 home in Jackson County
 - 18 homes split between counties: 1 untaxed by either county, 8 currently taxed in Jackson, 9 currently taxed in Macon.
 - 3 of the affected homes and 1 of the garages were currently not receiving a bill in both counties.
 - 4 of the affected homeowners had a local mailing address.
- (d) Estimated Value Change:
 - Land value:
 - Loss \$4,796,184
 - Gain \$1,089,927
 - Net loss \$3,706,257
 - Building Value:
 - Loss \$8,404,640
 - Gain \$7,669,482
 - Net loss \$735,158
 - Total Value:
 - Loss \$13,200,824
 - Gain \$8,759,409
 - Net loss \$4,441,415
 - County tax loss \$15,990
- (e) Future Actions:
 - Approve resolution on December 7, 2021.
 - Once recorded in the Register of Deeds, the NCGS would notify each affected party in writing.
 - The Land Records Office would begin processing the work.
 - The property values would be determined in a joint effort with the Macon County Tax Administrator and Reappraisal Coordinator.
 - Estimated completion of changes –January 1, 2023.
 - Sample letter.

General discussions were held.

She presented a Joint Resolution adopting and establishing the common boundary line between Jackson County and Macon County for consideration.

Ms. Baker stated she had worked with the Macon County attorney and this was ready to move forward.

Consensus: *Add this item to the December 7th meeting agenda for consideration.*

(4) TAX SOFTWARE: Ms. Ashe stated that the Tax Administration Department solicited a Request for Proposals (RFP), #01-2021, to contract with a single qualified software company to provide the county with an automated Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) solution, including tax assessment, tax collection and land records software. The goal of the RFP was to contract with a software company that could provide a proven solution to streamline operations and system performance in the Tax Administration Department.

The proposals were due on September 30, 2021. Proposals were submitted by BI-Tek and Tyler Technologies. A thorough review of each company was conducted.

BI-Tek was located in Charlotte, North Carolina and supported 31 North Carolina counties. It was the most popular system used throughout the state. BI-Tek customers included all counties west and two to the east of Jackson County (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Macon, Swain and Transylvania).

Additionally, BI-Tek was familiar with their current software and the difficulties that may arise during the data conversion process. They also came in at a lower cost and would cost less in annual support compared to Tyler Technologies.

(a) Bid Tabulation form:

Company Information	NC Counties	Licensure and Data Conversion Cost	Annual Support Cost
BI-Tek - Charlotte, NC	31	\$321,050	\$49,450
Tyler Technologies - Yarmouth, ME	21	\$412,013	\$125,166

(b) Anticipated Payment Schedule: Conversion cost would be extended over two fiscal years. The license cost would be extended over five fiscal years. Annual support cost started after conversion and started in fiscal year 22-23.

Fiscal Year	Data Conversion	License	Annual Support	Total Costs
FY 21-22	\$29,400	\$52,450	\$0	\$81,850
FY 22-23	\$29,400	\$52,450	\$49,450	\$131,850
FY 23-24	\$0	\$52,450	\$49,450	\$101,900
FY 24-25	\$0	\$52,450	\$49,450	\$101,900
FY 25-26	\$0	\$52,450	\$49,450	\$101,900
Total	\$58,800	\$262,250	\$197,800	\$518,850

Ms. Ashe respectfully requested the Board to approve the contract for BI-Tek to convert and implement a new CAMA, billing and collections software.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: Add this item to the December 7th meeting agenda for consideration.

(5) **PAY PLAN STUDY:** Kathleen Breedlove, Human Resources Director and Darlene Fox, Finance Director, were present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated the county proceeded forward with Evergreen Solutions to conduct a salary survey and a pay plan study. The Board put aside funds to move forward with salary adjustments.

Ms. Breedlove presented: Salary Study Milestones completed or in progress:

(a) Internal Outreach: Evergreen completed the internal outreach component of the salary study. This included surveying employees, conducting interviews with department heads. Department heads reviewed the completed employee Job Assessment Tools (JATs) and utilized the optional Management Issues Tool (MIT).

(b) Salary Survey: Market survey targets were identified and the salary survey was recently completed November 3rd with 13 (60%) of the 22 identified targets responding.

(c) Projected Classification Plan: Evergreen would provide the county with JAT scores by classification and a projected classification plan by November 17th for review/approval.

(d) Market Summary: Evergreen would provide preliminary salary survey results in the near future and a Market Summary draft during the first week in December.

Mr. Adams stated that he had wanted to be in a position to come to the Board in December, but unfortunately they would not get the market data until the first week of December. With the holidays, it would be tough to have a full conversation with the Board with recommendations in December. It could lead them into the first two weeks of January to be at a point of making recommendations and the Board making decisions.

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought a key component to the market research was about what was happening in neighboring jurisdictions, as they were their biggest competitors. Some of them had recently gone through similar studies or may be in process as well. He hoped they would have all of that information to take into consideration to make decisions. It may be worth delaying if they had to.

Ms. Fox stated that Evergreen had the information, but it would take them a while to review all of it and get back to them. They would give several different options.

Informational item.

(6) HARRIS EMS CONTRACT: Matthew Burrell, Harris Hospital EMS Manager and Toby Moore, Harris Hospital EMS Supervisor, were present for this item.

Mr. Burrell stated that Harris EMS had provided 911 service for the county since January 1, 1996. In this time, the service had grown from a single 24-hour ambulance and a back-up on-call crew to three 24-hour ambulances a 12-hour ambulance and a 12-hour supervisor that operated a quick response vehicle. The Harris EMS response area covered all areas of the county from the Thorpe Power Plant, north with the exception of the area within the Cherokee Reservation. In addition to providing 911 service, Harris EMS also provided interfacility transports from Harris Regional Hospital to tertiary care facilities.

They operated three bases that were strategically located throughout the service area and were staffed 24-hours per day. Base One was located at Harris Regional Hospital. It housed a 24-hour ambulance, as well as a 12-hour ambulance and the 12-hour supervisor in the quick response vehicle. Base Two was located at the Jackson County Rescue Building off Highway 116 and housed a 24-hour ambulance. Base Three was located on Highway 441 north of the Qualla Fire District and housed a 24-hour ambulance. In 2020, Harris EMS ran 6,708 calls, which was their busiest year ever. They continued to see increasing call volumes year-over-year. August 2021 was their busiest month to date where they ran 697 calls.

Harris EMS worked with many community partners during special events throughout each year to provide emergency stand-by coverage. They provided a crew for all local football games and many other community events. They worked with the Health Department to help vaccinate the community through drive thru clinics and also by delivering home vaccines to those who were unable to leave their home. Each year they taught several CPR courses within the community and were involved with many other community outreach activities. Harris EMS also provided continuing education to the fire departments within the service area. These classes included training for the administration and use of the medication Narcan, which they provided the medication and needed medical supplies for the first responder program.

Harris EMS was continually looking for ways to improve the care they provided to the community. They reviewed and updated their treatment protocols on a yearly basis, looking for opportunities to expand and improve the care they provided. Working with Harris Regional Hospital, they had access to information on evidence-based medicine, which helped them improve the overall quality of care. They were active members of the Patient and Safety Clinical Quality Committee within the hospital where they presented data that they tracked quarterly and garnered feedback from the committee on areas for improvement.

Harris EMS strived to provide the most efficient, highest-quality care possible to the communities that they serve. They achieved this through working with Harris Regional Hospital and community partners. Their operation was centered around their mission of making communities healthier, which was a sentiment that they kept at the forefront of all they did.

General discussions were held
Informational item.

(7) HARRIS EMS PAY SCALE: Mr. Burrell presented: Recruitment and Retention Raise 2021: Harris EMS lost 19 full-time employees in the past year. The total lost years of experience was conservatively over 80 years. Most of these employees were employed with county-based EMS services. The others were with a private service that paid at minimum the insurance for the employee. The reason that most gave when they left the service to go to a county-based service or other private services was benefits and retirement. These included the health insurance that was paid for by the employer, as well as a 30-year pension retirement.

Government benefits were extremely difficult to compete with and because of this, in 2015 Harris EMS raised the starting paramedic pay by 8% to offset the cost of benefits, as well as other paid holidays and retirement that county-based services offered. When this was done in 2015 it seemed to help with recruitment and retention. However, the other services caught up in the pay and were also offering the county government benefits which were better than those offered by their company.

Currently, EMS worked a 24/72 schedule. During a 28-day cycle, an employee worked 144 regular hours and 24 overtime hours. The starting pay per hour was \$17.44 for a Paramedic with a yearly salary of \$40,809.60. They were proposing a \$1.76 increase to the base rate while also bringing current employees' salaries to the correct penetration rate given the new base rate. Under the proposed rates, the starting annual salary would be \$44,928.00.

In addition to the rate increases, Harris EMS proposed to implement a Clinical Ladder/Step Up Program in which team members could earn an hourly differential of \$0.75 per hour dependent upon meeting specified guidelines of the program. The guidelines included obtaining additional Continuing Education Units (CEUs), advanced certifications, etc. The estimated maximum impact of the program would be \$18,515 per year over the next two years.

They believed making the adjustments would have the same effect it did in 2015, which was to decrease turnover and retain experienced staff who had been loyal to their service and to the county.

The following table presents a summary of the aggregate annual cost increase.

Position	#of EE	Avg YOE	Avg Pay Rate	Avg New Pay Rate	Avg of Std Hours	Rate Incr	Avg Annual Impact
Community Paramedic	1	4.3	\$18.82	\$21.88	80	\$3.06	\$6,365
EMS Crew Leader	2	22.2	\$23.79	\$27.04	80	\$3.24	\$13,498
EMS Field Training Officer	4	11.5	\$20.27	\$25.11	80	\$4.84	\$40,247
EMS Operations Coord	1	15	\$28.19	\$32.94	80	\$4.75	\$9,887
EMT	1	0.8	\$11.24	\$14.96	80	\$3.72	\$7,733
Paramedic	<u>20</u>	<u>7.1</u>	<u>\$18.54</u>	<u>\$21.94</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>\$3.40</u>	<u>\$141,446</u>
Grand Total	29	8.7	\$19.23	\$22.86	80	\$3.63	\$219,175

General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams stated that the county was in a private contract with Harris. They currently paid Harris an annual lump sum of \$1,441,703. Within the contract, they had a shore up clause at the end of the year. The hospital billed for their service, so the \$1,441,703 was supposed to cover costs above their revenues. Harris was guaranteed that amount of money. The county could end up owing more money at the end of the year, but it also worked in reverse and Harris would provide the county with funds. The county had been doing better in the last four out of five years.

There was also another clause in the contract that stated that before they made any major financial decisions, specifically personnel decisions that could impact the annual cost to the county, they must come back before the Board. If the Board wished to move forward, they would need to approve the request and he recommended to update the contract to include these additional costs.

Ms. Fox stated that the shore up cost for the last several years for EMS:

2021	\$109,054
2020	\$153,603
2019	\$25,551
2018	\$145,403
2017	\$222,337

Mr. Adams noted that all of those were payments to the county. If the Board chose to move forward, he and Ms. Fox would come back with a revised recommended annual lump sum amount. If the Board was interested in moving forward, the pay scale request could be added to the next regular agenda and the contract revisions could be at a later date.

Consensus: *Add the pay scale request item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(8) OTHER BUSINESS:

(a) Mr. Adams inquired if the Board had any follow up regarding the Cashiers Recreation Master Plan prior to the item being placed on a regular meeting agenda?

Commissioner Woody asked Commissioner Jones if the change of eliminating the pool was okay with him and the constituents in that area?

Commissioner Jones stated that based on the past general attendance, it was hard to justify the pool with it having a water table 8-10 feet below it. The pool could structurally become unsafe and unusable. The other caveat was hearing there was a potential site where a future pool could go, if they chose to do so. He thought the splash pad would get them to the next level. He did like the plan that was presented to the Board.

Mr. Adams stated that he would schedule this item before the end of the year to come back before the Board for final approval.

Informational item.

(b) Commissioner Deitz asked if the Recreation Department or the Board had ever considered a skate park in the county? A lot of kids were into that. If kids did not have a place to skate, they were doing it on the streets in town, going to Waynesville, Cherokee or Hendersonville. Had there ever been any interested about this? He requested the County Manager to talk with the Recreation Director to look into this. He thought it would be a good thing that could include a picnic area also.

Chairman McMahan stated that he had toured a skateboard park several years ago as it was an issue raised at a previous meeting and they did have discussions about it at that time. He would be interested to look back and see how a skate park ranked in the Recreation Master Plan. There had been some discussions in the past.

Commissioner Jones stated that citizens had spoken to the Board in the past regarding the need for a skate park, multiple times over the years.

Commissioner Woody stated that she was in favor of anything that encouraged outdoor recreation and participation. The bike paths on the Greenway were really being used and were great for kids, so this would be another opportunity.

Mr. Adam stated he would request staff to research the history and bring the item back to the Board for further discussions.

Informational item.

(c) Commissioner Woody stated that in honor of Veterans Day, she reminded everyone of the parade on Thursday and there was a Veterans Appreciation Dinner that night. They were so thankful for all of the veterans.

Informational item.

(d) Chairman McMahan inquired about the December meeting schedule. Often times, the Board changed the schedule because of the holiday season.

Mr. Adams stated that if the Board was comfortable with understanding that the salary discussion may be driven into January. That would be the only pressing timing issue. Sometimes the Board did look at the third meeting to cancel.

Chairman McMahan stated they could make that determination as they got closer to December. If they needed to have a business session before the end of the month, they could have it after the work session on December 14th.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Woody moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman