

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
NOVEMBER 16, 2021**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on November 16, 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 Board

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION: Mr. Adams recognized the following employees for their years of service and/or retirement:

Name	Department	Years of Service	Retirement Date
Linda Queen	Tax Collector	9	12/1/2020
Chet Stephens	Emergency Management	27	9/1/2020
Suzanne Allison	Tax Administration	29.5	9/1/2020
Diane Ammons	Housekeeping	14.25	8/1/2020
Dallas Stephens	Maintenance	21.25	8/1/2020
Billy Lambert	Parks and Recreation	9.25	8/1/2020
Glenda Laminack	Social Services	20.75	8/1/2020
Brian Henry	Health - Animal Shelter	7.75	7/1/2020
Shelia Stirling	Social Services	6.5	6/1/2020
Joanna Nicholson	Emergency Telephone	26.5	4/1/2020
Charles Stallings	Sheriff's Office	9	4/1/2020
Roy Ellis Young	Transit	17	3/1/2020

20 Years of Service:

Stacy Howell, Social Services
Brenda Lillard, Health
David Lovedahl, Sheriff's Office

25 Years of Service:

Kevin Morgan, Maintenance
Sheryl Williamson, Social Services

30 Years of Service:

Pam Hooper, Social Services
Ira Jones, Grounds

(2) **AGENDA**: Commissioner Woody moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the minutes of a Public Hearing (UDO Amendments) of November 02, 2021 and a Regular Meeting of November 02, 2021, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: None.

(5) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**: Commissioner Woody reported that she and Commissioner Deitz attended the Veterans Dinner and it was a wonderful celebration of the veterans in the county that served the country so well. Also, the Veterans Parade was on Thursday and it was a very nice event. The county grounds crew did a wonderful job putting the flags out and she thanked them.

(6) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: Mr. Adams reported:

(a) **October Zoning and Building Permits**: He provided a report that listed the zoning district (if applicable), the owner/business name, the work permitted and the location of the project. The Planning Department issued four commercial zoning permits and two renovation/addition zoning permits. Code Enforcement issued three commercial permits and four renovation/addition permits.

(b) **Salary Survey**: The county completed the Job Assessment Tools (JAT) portion of the contract with Evergreen Solutions. Evergreen would provide a draft projected classification plan by the end of November and they would have preliminary market study data by the first of December. A rough draft of the proposed new pay plan would start to be developed in December. The goal would be to have information and recommendations ready to be presented to the Board in January.

(c) **Construction Projects**:

- **Animal Rescue Center/Green Energy Park**: The project was 38% complete through October. Rain caused significant delays in completing items, such as retaining walls, storm sewer and walking paths. Recent weather improvements allowed for H&M to continue working on the main retaining wall and they started to construct the metal building.
- **Fairview Press Box, Concession and Restrooms**: All contracts had been signed and executed. Demolition would be completed that week. Owle construction would start pouring foundations on November 22nd and they would be working on the block walls in the next 30 days.
- **Indoor Pool**: Clarknexsen would continue to develop the construction document. It was anticipated to take the project out to bid in spring of 2022. Clarknexsen would be appearing before the Board at the December or January work session to discuss updated cost estimates.
- **Justice Center Administration Building**: The Request for Qualifications for Architectural Services had been issued and received. The county received six responses. An interview team was established consisting of representatives from the courts, law enforcement and administration. Four out of the six firms were selected to be interviewed. Representatives from the courts favored HEERY Design/The Tamara Peacock Company with Moseley and Clarknexsen/HOK being second and third. Administration and law enforcement favored Clarknexsen/HOK and Moseley being first and second with MPS being third. Combining all input from the interview team placed Clarknexsen/HOK and Moseley in a virtual tie. His final score between these two firms would break the virtual tie. He planned on conducting additional research to finalize his recommendation. He would present the selected firm to the Board in January. Once the firm was selected, then contract negotiations could commence.

Chairman McMahan requested that the County Manager provide information regarding the request for planning and the funds they would use for the planning of the domestic violence shelter and the homeless shelter. Also, he requested that he discuss how the process would unfold and the scope of work.

(d) Domestic Violence Shelter and Homeless Shelter: Mr. Adams stated that the grant request that was submitted and approved by Dogwood was for \$2,174,497.50, which the county would match. Of those funds, a total of \$125,000 was set aside for the planning of the homeless shelter. There were no construction dollars set aside for the homeless shelter at that point. The planning would consist of acquiring the services of an architect. Also, there would be a second part that he was in conversations with Robert Cochran, Director of HERE about hiring a consultant to come in and talk about how they were going to operate.

Some questions raised by the Board, when the grant was being presented, included what a homeless shelter operation would look like. Those types of things would be discussed over the next several months, along with the physical space aspect. The \$125,000 would be used to look at physical space and talk about a true estimated cost, specifically for the space they were looking at, which was the Evergreen Foundations building (former temporary health department location). Also, they would discuss what a full-time homeless shelter structure and operation would look like.

Another \$125,000 was set aside for a domestic violence shelter, but not so much for operational planning. They had been working for multi-years to transfer domestic violence services back to Jackson County. They already had full-time staff associated and a long-term plan to acquire state funds to help with their annual operations. This would be about investigating the building site and design.

Chairman McMahan stated that a question raised was how much input would Commissioners have as a part of this process as they investigated a homeless shelter. Would the Commissioners be engaged in that process? It was a concept they had to work out with HERE to come to some understanding of what a model may look like going forward.

Mr. Adams stated that Mr. Cochran would need to pull information together and eventually there would have to be a conversation with the Board and the community. That would be an additional process they would not have with the domestic violence shelter.

Chairman McMahan stated that this money was set aside to hire a firm to help them walk through the process. This would not only look at the specific location to see if it was feasible to locate the shelter, but also to evaluate operational concepts that would help provide the tools and information to the Board to help with that decision, if they wanted to move forward in years to come.

Mr. Adams stated that he would provide a copy of the Request for Qualifications to the Board.

Commissioner Woody stated that her concern moving forward was that she did not understand how a firm could be paid to do space analysis for the homeless shelter when they had not decided what the programming would look like and had no direction to give them. She thought they needed to step back and get with Mr. Cochran so they could provide a starting place.

Mr. Adams stated that these would not be the same contract. They may select an architect firm to work with, but it did not mean they would contract with them to provide the service. The domestic violence shelter architect contract would be separate from the homeless architect contract. Once a firm was selected, they could move forward with the domestic violence shelter, but delay the contract with that firm for the homeless shelter until they were in a position to identify what spaces were needed, etc. He never considered the contracts to be operating on the same timeline.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he agreed they did not need to spend \$125,000 on something where the five of them did not know what they thought about this. He thought they had people in the community that could enlighten them on different options and they needed to take advantage of that and come to some peace themselves about this before they started spending a lot of money.

Mr. Adams stated that he would request Mr. Cochran talk with the Board about what he needed as far as resources to help bring this information to the Board.

Chairman McMahan requested to invite Mr. Cochran to a future work session to have a dialogue about how they would determine what would be best for the community as they started working through the process.

(7) **INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:** None.

(8) **CONSENT AGENDA:**

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for October, 2021 and one Budget Ordinance Amendment for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, for approval.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for October, 2021, for approval.

Motion: Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(9) **ALL IN JACKSON FUND AGREEMENT:** Tiffany Henry, Economic Development Director, stated this item was discussed with the Board at the last work session. She requested consideration of approval of the agreement.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the All In Jackson Fund Agreement, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(10) **HARRIS EMS RATE INCREASES AND CLINICAL LADDER/STEP UP PROGRAM:** Mr. Adams stated this was a follow up item from the work session. Currently, the county contracted with Harris Regional Hospital to provide EMS service. The provisions of the contract stated that when the hospital wanted to make personnel changes that would impact costs, they had to come before the Board for approval. The request to the Board would be to make pay adjustments as presented at the work session. A contract amendment would be presented for consideration at a later date.

Motion: Commissioner Woody moved to approve the Harris EMS Personnel Adjustments Request, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Jones stated that the Clinical Ladder Step Up Program intrigued him. Did the county utilize that type system with the county employees and/or as they looked down the road at the Evergreen Study, could similar language be implemented for the benefit of receiving extra education?

Mr. Adams stated that the county had various forms of ways to improve pay based on experience and education in different departments, such as Code Enforcement, Environmental Health or Social Services.

(11) **REGISTER OF DEEDS INTERIM APPOINTMENT:** Chairman McMahan reported that the Jackson County Democratic Party Executive Committee was scheduled to meet on November 16th at 6:30 p.m. At that time, they would go through the process of officially making a recommendation to the county for the interim appointment for the Register of Deeds vacancy. He requested that the Board recess the meeting and reconvene at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 18th.

The Board took at ten-minute recess.

Chairman McMahan called the meeting back to order. The Board would possibly take action on this item at the reconvened meeting on Thursday, November 18th at 12:00 p.m.

Carry over.

(12) CASHIERS PLANNING COUNCIL: Commissioner Jones stated that Sonia Morales had owned a business in Cashiers for a number of years and was very involved in the community with her children attending Blue Ridge School.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to appoint Sonia Morales to a three-year term on the Cashiers Planning Council. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(13) VAYA HEALTH BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Chairman McMahan stated that this item was a follow up from the work session. The county had two appointments to make on this board. The recommendation was to have at least one County Commissioner. The second appointment could be another County Commissioner, the County Manager, Department of Social Services Director, Health Director, the Sheriff or a designee from his office.

He had served as the County Commissioner Appointee for several years on the Vaya County Commissioner Advisory Board. He was willing to continue to serve. If no Commissioner wished to serve in the second appointment, he would request to consider the County Manager to serve or to consider his recommendation.

Mr. Adams stated that he would request that he be appointed to the board. He wanted to focus on the Opioid Settlement and funding coming up in the next year. He also wanted to start getting involved regionally because he did believe that within the next year there would be items and processes brought before the Board on how to proceed forward with the best ways to expend those funds.

He thought it would help him to be more involved with the regional board initially. Then, in the long-term, if there were other strategies that brought in the DSS Director or the Health Director, maybe it would then become more appropriate for one of them to be in that position.

Chairman McMahan stated that if they did have meetings in which there were topics that would be of interest to the Health Department, the Department of Social Services or the Sheriff's Office, they had the ability to attend, they just would not be a voting delegate.

Motion: Commissioner Deitz moved to appoint Chairman Brian McMahan and County Manager Don Adams to serve on the Vaya Health Board of Directors. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(14) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: (continuation)

(d) Domestic Violence Shelter and Homeless Shelter: Mr. Adams stated that he wanted to provide additional information for the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the planning funds. He noted the following in the RFQ advertisement:

“Project Description: Jackson County has received funds from the Federal Government through the American Rescue Plan and from Dogwood Health Trust to assist with two shelter projects. These two projects will be contracted separately. The shelter projects are as follows:

1. Domestic Violence Shelter. Jackson County has secured funding for both the design and construction of a new domestic violence shelter...

2. Homeless Shelter. Jackson County has secured funding for the programming and schematic design of a homeless shelter...As additional funding is secured, the contract would eventually expand to construction design and administration.”

Mr. Adams stated that as a firm was selected, he would let them know that they would be prepared to move forward with the domestic violence side, but there would be questions and discussions had before they county would be able to contract with them for the physical design of a homeless shelter.

Chairman McMahan stated that this would be very similar to what they did with the Animal Rescue Center where they did work to identify programming, what kind of space was needed and the level of services they wanted to offer. After the programming work was performed, they would know what to design. They would go through a process in the coming months that would put them in a position to better know what they may potentially build.

Mr. Adams stated that this firm would mainly be for the physical space. He would request Mr. Cochran talk to the Board about agencies that could help them decide what the homeless shelter would look like and how it would operate.

Commissioner Jones requested that Mr. Cochran provide a list of resources that he utilized to operate the homeless component, as well as what the county spent each year. This would give the Board guidance of what the community provided as well as what the county provided.

Mr. Adams stated that the first meeting could be an educational conversation with HERE about all of their partnerships.

Informational item.

(15) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

(16) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Woody moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman McMahan called the regular meeting back to order and stated that no action was taken in closed session. He stated that meeting would be in recess until Thursday, November 18th at 12:00 p.m. The meeting recessed at 2:24 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman