

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 13, 2022**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on September 13, 2022, 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) **SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT**: Russ Harris, Executive Director Southwestern Commission, stated that each year he would visit the County Commissions in the region to provide an update and distribute the most recent annual report.

The Southwestern Commission was the Council of Government (COGS) for Region A, which was the southwestern counties west of Haywood County and the 17 municipalities within. They had been around since 1965, providing service in the region when federal programs that brought aid to the local communities.

They raised their local funds through per capita dues, which the county paid each year, which was approximately \$155,000 from the counties that year. They then received matching federal funds that brought in about \$15 million. Regional organizations were determined to be the most efficient way to get those federal funds to the local level.

Three primary departments:

- Area Agency on Aging:
 - Meals and in-home care for older adults
 - Host events
 - Transit Rides
- Community Economic Development Department
 - Housing: WNC Housing Consortium
 - Broadband: \$10 million to the area
- Workforce Development Department:
 - Training for employees available to businesses
 - NC Works Center
 - Peer Support Specialist

The next meeting would be September 26th at Harrah's Convention Center.

Commissioner Deitz stated they were very fortunate to have Southwestern Commission in the county and he was proud of Mr. Harris and the work he was doing and how he represented the Commission so professionally.

Chairman McMahan stated that Southwestern Commission was a very vital organization in the region. Given how isolated they were in the west, because of their topography, it was vitally important to partner with their neighbors. There was no better way to partner than through Region A. He could not say enough good about all they were doing.

Informational item.

(2) BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH PROCLAMATION: Anna Lippard Deputy Health Director, stated they had Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings at the Health Department. They felt this was important to the community and they worked every day to help get women to the screenings and treatments they needed.

Mr. Adams stated that the Town of Sylva would also take up this proclamation. The Town of Sylva took a leadership role with events on Breast Cancer Awareness Day.

Commissioner Woody stated that she was in support of this initiative. Early detection was so imperative. She was a breast cancer survivor after having a mastectomy in 1990. She was thankful for the early diagnosis and care that she received in Jackson County.

Commissioner Deitz stated that Ms. Lippard was another great employee in the county.

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

(3) SPLASH PAD/PARK ARCHITECT CONTRACT: Rusty Ellis, Parks and Recreation Director, presented a contract from Equinox for the Splash Pad/Park in Cashiers. The contract included surveying the entire parcel, site analysis, site plan, construction drawings, specifications, permitting and construction observation. Phase 1 would include the construction of the Splash Pad, partial walking trail, demo of the pool, excavation and storm water.

Mr. Adams stated that he requested a price to spec out a tennis/pickleball court to be bid as an alternate. They had previously discussed the removal of the pool and bringing back a splash pad. As they were grading, they could look to see if they had the ability to replace one of the courts since they were removing an element the community was using.

The contract total was \$119,263.63 for the original items they discussed. He recommended to spend the \$13,200 to design the additional tennis/pickleball court as an alternate so they would have that choice for discussion.

Mr. Ellis stated that they did have a lot more use of the indoor pickleball courts at the rec center. At one time, they had a lot of people playing tennis on the outdoor courts until the drainage and erosion issues occurred.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he wanted them to use any info they could to look at a splash pad in or near Sylva in the future.

General discussions were held.

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

(4) TRANSIT DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY UPDATED: April Alm, Transit Director, stated the NC Department of Transportation, Integrated Mobility Division provided the latest Drug and Alcohol Policy template that had been recommended by both the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division.

The purpose of the policy was to establish guidelines to maintain a drug and alcohol-free workplace in compliance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 and the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991. The policy was intended to comply with all applicable Federal regulations governing workplace anti-drug and alcohol programs in the transit industry.

Specifically, the FTA of the U.S. Department of Transportation published 49 CFR Part 655, as amended, that mandated urine drug testing and breath alcohol testing for safety sensitive positions and prohibited performance of safety sensitive functions when there was a positive test result or a refusal to test. The U.S. Department of Transportation also published 49 CFR Part 40, as amended, that set standards for the collection and testing of urine and breath specimens.

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

(5) TRANSIT POLICIES UPDATED: Ms. Alm stated that as mandated by the NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division, a Proficiency Review would be conducted for Jackson County Transit on October 19, 2022. This review typically occurred every three years for each NC transit agency. Upon review of the Jackson County Transit’s policies and procedures, minor policy revisions were made and were subject to the Board’s approval.

She requested the Board of Commissioners consider adoption of the following Transit Policies:

- Cash Management
- Charter
- Conflict of Interest
- Fare and Service Changes
- Refusal of Service
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

General discussions were held.

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

(6) REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN: Todd Dillard, Emergency Management Director, presented the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was located on the county website. This plan was in conjunction with the EBCI, Haywood, Swain, Graham and Cherokee Counties. The plan addressed hazards that each county faced, including winter storms, tornados, hurricanes, etc. It was mandated by FEMA to have these plans in order to receive grant funding and recovery funding.

Every five years, they were mandated to have a renewal of the plan. 2022 was the year for renewal, which required Commissioner approval for renewal. Ms. Baker was working with the municipalities to approve as well. He presented a draft resolution for consideration by the Board at a future meeting.

General discussions were held.

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

(7) EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN: Mr. Dillard presented the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP):

(a) What is an EOP:

- Assigned responsibility to organizations and individuals for carrying out specific actions at projected times and places in an emergency.
- Sets forth lines of authority and organizational relationships and showed how all actions would be coordinated.
- Described how people and places would be protected in emergencies and disasters.
- Identified personnel, equipment, facilities, supplies and other resources available within the jurisdiction or by agreement with other jurisdictions.
- Identified steps to address mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities.

- (b) EOP Last update:**
 - Jackson County EOP was last updated in 2022.
 - Developed in 2021 and would be approved in 2022.
 - The entire plan was updated in 2021.
 - Last presented to the Board in 2018.
- (c) Roles of the Board of Commissioners:**
 - The roles of the County Commissioners and the Chairman were clearly defined throughout the EOP.
 - The Board of Commissioners was responsible for the direction and control of disaster situations.
 - The Board would work in conjunction with the Chairman to finalize decisions.
 - Exercises emergency responsibilities during emergencies and disasters to provide for the health and safety of the public.
- (d) Chairman of the Board of Commissioners responsibilities:**
 - Establish policy and incident guidance procedures in coordination with other officials.
 - Carry out appropriate provisions of state general statutes, in addition to local ordinances relating to emergencies.
 - Issue and distribute, as appropriate, a local proclamation declaring a State of Emergency or terminating the State of Emergency. NCGS 166A-19.15 NCEM Act.
 - Assume or delegate direction and control of emergency operations after declaring an emergency at the county level.
 - Receive confidential and public information from the EOC and be available to distribute accurate and public information across channels.
 - Support county functions as requested by the Emergency Management Director, Board Chair or other points of contact.
- (e) Roles and Responsibilities:**
 - County Emergency Management Director:
 - Direct responsibility or organization, administration and operation of the emergency response.
 - Direct command and control during an emergency event.
 - Authority over EOC throughout the emergency.
 - Ability to send request through Web EOC.
 - County Clerk:
 - Statutorily required to maintain county records.
 - Last signature on contracts, resolutions and declarations.
 - A State of Emergency would be signed by the County Clerk, which made it legally binding.
 - Clerks post notices of States of Emergency, notify the sunshine list, work with other departments for other notifications.
 - County Manager:
 - Overall administrative management of departments and personnel.
 - Ability to enter mutual aid agreements.
- (f) Annual Training:**
 - County Commissioners had not had annual training in the past, but key county staff did regularly review the plan.
 - During Covid, the EOC was open four months utilizing all county departments. This was the last time the EOP was used for training and practice.

- (g) Municipalities Roles within the EOP:**
 - The county had four municipalities.
 - Municipalities fell under the county EOP.
 - They could be included under the county's State of Emergency activation or could declare an emergency independently.
- (h) How could the Board of Commissioners support the EOP and partnerships?**
 - Understanding the role of Emergency Management in the county and providing support.
 - Help provide funding to obtain crucial resources needed for preparedness of Emergency Management.
 - Emergency Management's main priority was the health and safety of the citizens in the county.
- (i) EOP Partnerships:**
 - Mutual Aid Agreements – county and state.
 - Voluntary Organizations Assisting in Disasters (VOADS)
- (j) Local Partners: The county's front line responders during an emergency:**
 - Seven fire departments
 - Two Rescue Squads
 - Two EMS Bases
 - Sheriff's Office and Sylva Police Department
 - North Carolina Forest Service
- (k) Pre-event Contracts:**
 - Food contract when opening shelters
 - Statewide Regional Prepositioned Debris Removal Contract (Region 13)
- (l) Communication during an emergency:**
 - Code Red / Reverse 911
 - National Weather Service
 - Social Media
- (m) Rescue and Recovery:**
 - There were multiple annexes within the EOP dedicated to rescue and recovery.
 - The annexes contain information regarding EOC, Emergency Services, Public Health, Sheltering and Evacuation, Debris Management and donations.
 - Shelters:
 - They were in the process of updating shelter surveys for all seven locations. These locations included county facilities, public schools and churches.
 - Two annexes that discussed this: Sheltering and Mass Care; Evacuation and Shelter.
- (n) Community Coordination: VOAD was coordinated in the EOC:**
 - American Red Cross, NC Baptist Men and the Salvation Army were a few examples in the county.
 - American Red Cross representatives were assigned to the Human Services Branch in the EOC where they would coordinate VOAD response.
- (o) Mitigation Grant Funding:**
 - In the process of updating the Smoky Mountain Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.
 - Any county with property belonging to the EBCI was part of the plan.
 - The plan was updated every five years and funded through mitigation grants.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Woody stated that one area that struck her during the class she took, was communication with the media. It was very important that the Chair of the Board communicate with the media. Referring media people to the Chair during a crisis would present a united voice.

Mr. Dillard stated that they had public information officers that worked with the Chair to get the information out so that they were speaking with one voice.

Mr. Adams stated that during a state of emergency, they generally appointed a public information officer. When information was disseminated, they did attempt to send it out to each Board Member so that they all had the official information.

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

Mr. Dillard noted that there was a new program that came out nationwide called, Preferred Live. The new program would allow them to receive a 911 call from a cellphone and ask this person to receive a link from Emergency Management. With good cell service, they could take over the camera on the cellphone. This would allow them to watch the situation live and send the information to the Sheriff's Office, EMS or Fire Department.

The program was free to every 911 center. They would be one of the first centers in Western North Carolina to use the program. They were working on the contract and the program should be working in the next couple of weeks.

(8) OTHER BUSINESS:

(a) Commissioner Woody reminded everyone that September 10th – 24th was the “Keep Jackson County Clean and Green” litter campaign. They appreciated everyone that would be participating. They had great support from organizations and departments within the county.

Informational item.

(b) Commissioner Woody stated that there were previous discussions about thoughts of whom they ask to come to the Board to share issues of opioid concerns. She provided a list to each Commissioner of her thoughts.

Informational item.

(c) Commissioner Stribling stated that he went to the Cullowhee Valley School's new Inclusive Playground ribbon cutting. He applauded Dr. Ayers' efforts.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Deitz moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman