

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JANUARY 05, 2021**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on January 05, 2021, 6:00 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) **AGENDA**: Commissioner Woody moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Woody moved to approve the minutes of a Work Session of December 10, 2020 and a Regular Meeting of December 15, 2020, as presented. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman McMahan stated that he had a significant amount of feedback from county staff and school system staff concerning the Covid bonuses that they were able to present in December. He had a conversation with Ali Laird-Large, Chair of the Board of Education. She stated that the school system was so appreciative and she wanted to convey that to all of the Commissioners. He knew many of the Commissioners had a lot of phone calls and conversations as well from various employees and administrators. He was glad they were able to do that.

He reported that he and Commissioner Stribling were in attendance for the swearing-in of Representative Mike Clampitt. Many times they were sworn-in at Raleigh, but Representative Clampitt took the oath of office in Sylva at the Old Courthouse Complex. Representative Clampitt had started his term in the General Assembly and he wished him well. He looked forward to working with him.

Also present that day was Senator Kevin Corbin, who had taken the oath earlier that day. He had the opportunity to tell Senator Corbin that he looked forward to working with him as well to benefit all of the citizens of Jackson County and the entire district.

Finally, he wanted to publicly, as an elected official, offer his condolences to both the Woodard family and to the Savannah Fire Department with the passing of Fire Chief Darrell Woodard. He contracted Covid and subsequently passed away at the end of December. His funeral services were held that past Sunday and there was a great outpouring of appreciation and support for him and his family as they mourned the loss. He had been fire chief since 1984, the longest serving fire chief in the county. It was a tremendous loss to that department and community. He was a great leader and county employee serving as the Fire District Coordinator for that district.

(4) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**: Commissioner Jones requested for the Board to receive an update on TWSA at an upcoming meeting. Also, he requested for the Health Department to come back and talk with them about Covid after the holidays.

(5) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: Mr. Adams reported:

(a) Health Department: The Health Department began moving and would be transitioning that week. There were some disruptions with the phones, which was to be expected. The idea would be to have all of the phones operational by January 6th. Citizens could communicate with the Health Department via the website where a popup would appear with multiple phone numbers.

Vaccinations were continuing at the old Health Department facility. A press release was sent out with a priority list of who would get the vaccinations first. Vaccinations would be transferred over to the new facility the next week. They were currently working on plans for mass vaccinations to include first responders, teachers, etc., which would happen in the next couple of weeks.

(b) County Operations: He shared this information to the Board on December 17th. In anticipation of Covid cases increasing, he made the decision to offer more tools for the departments to utilize to protect employees and citizens during the next month.

In March, the county went into telework mode through May. For the most part, county operations came back full by the beginning of June. At that time, the Board empowered the County Manager to make decisions, which were based on advice from the Health Department and Department Heads.

In December, he started getting phone calls from Department Heads concerned that after the holidays there would be many people coming back into the same facility, especially with larger departments. This information along with discussions with the Health Department, he decided to open up telework options to the departments.

They also added to allow for departments with a lot of foot traffic to switch to “by appointment only”. A third option was for modified work hours to make sure employees could separate and protect themselves. These items were effective through January 31st. He left it up to the departments to make decisions of what was best for them. He would reevaluate this the last week of January and there was a potential this could be driven into February, depending on the Covid numbers.

(c) Blue Ridge Water and Wastewater CDBG Project: He wanted to give thanks to the Planning Department, Victor Lofquist, Engineer and the Contractor Stillwell Enterprises. They needed to move forward with this project in order to meet the timelines. There was a lot of work put in from the engineer and contractor in order for them to start the project. Also, Planning staff had to put in a lot of time and effort to get this ready for the Board. He appreciated all of the work.

Chairman McMahan stated that he had several people reach out to him asking about mask mandates. He knew the Governor had certain executive orders in place. Were masks mandated under the Governor’s Orders? Was there a need for county mask mandates?

Ms. Baker stated that the most recent Governor’s Order required masks everywhere except in the home. If someone was outside their home or indoors with people not of their home, they were required to have a mask. They were required outside as well if someone could not be well spaced apart. Originally, there was just enforcement for businesses, but now there was enforcement for individuals as well, which strengthened the mask requirements.

There were some of the same exemptions that were in the original earlier orders that did not include government operations to an extent, although it was recommended that everyone follow the Governor’s Orders. The Order became stricter as well with wearing a mask while in a restaurant while not in the act of eating.

Chairman McMahan stated that he explained to people that reached out to him that they did have a mask order in place from the Governor that was statewide and that really there was not a need to issue a local directive because the Governor’s Order covered it.

Ms. Baker stated that it did and in addition to that, under the local Declaration of Emergency, they covered that in county buildings as well.

Chairman McMahan stated that regarding the Health Department relocating that week. What about Code Enforcement and Planning, were they also relocating that week?

Mr. Adams stated that Code Enforcement and Planning were both planning to move the next week. They had been moving some things over a little at a time. At that time, they were concentrating everything on Health Department operations.

Commissioner Stribling asked what they would do with the old Health Department location?

Mr. Adams stated that the county did not own that building. They were on a month to month lease with them and would eventually evolve out of that lease.

(6) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC: Lianna Costantino stated that she was a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. She had lived there for 20 years and her ancestors had lived and been buried there for thousands of years, so she did feel she had a stake there. She supported the EBCI Resolution to rededicate the namesake for Jackson County in the name of former Cherokee Principal Chief Walter Bull Jackson. People like the county's current namesake were well enough documented in history and were unworthy, in her opinion, of continuing to be honored in this way, in the homeland of the people he betrayed grievously and never lived. In her opinion, this was not anything to do with rewriting history, it was correcting an insult to the Cherokee people. This was a day late and a dollar short, but she thought it was a lovely, brilliant idea. As they continue to do the hard work of decolonization and dismantling the racism, which obviously still existed and building a more equitable society together, she thought this was really an easy thing to do and it hurt no one. It would be a very thoughtful gesture and a step in the right direction. She hoped it would be followed with action and continued positive change that reflected their ability to evolve in a good way as human beings.

(7) BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT: Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented one Budget Ordinance Amendment for fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, for approval.

Motion: *Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the Budget Ordinance Amendment, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion.*

Discussion:

Commissioner Stribling asked where the funds came from in the amendment?

Ms. Fox stated they were from the state.

Commissioner Woody asked if it was money they got from the federal government?

Ms. Fox stated it was part of the Covid money. These funds were mainly used for fuel oil and heating assistance.

Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(8) CDBG FY2011 FUNDING CYCLE APPLICATION: Michael Poston, Planning Director, requested that the Board give staff the ability to submit the two additional applications for FY2011, FY2013 and the modified scope of the existing Grant 09D-2945.

Commissioner Deitz asked if those funds supplemented what they already received?

Mr. Poston stated that they had already been tasked with the water system and the additional funding would allow them to also replace the wastewater system. They would be able to expand the project significantly.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to approve the CDBG FY2011 Funding Cycle Application, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) CDBG FY2013 FUNDING CYCLE APPLICATION:

Motion: Commissioner Woody moved to approve CDBG FY2013 Funding Cycle Application, as presented. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(10) CDBG GRANT 09D-2945:

Motion: Commissioner Woody moved to modify the original \$1,000,000 Grant 09D-2945 in accordance to what was presented at the public hearing prior to this regular meeting. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(11) NCACC LEGISLATIVE GOALS CONFERENCE VOTING DELEGATE: Mr.

Adams stated that the NCACC would hold their Legislative Goals Conference virtually on January 14th – 15th. Each year, prior the conference, counties would designate a voting delegate to the conference.

The goal submitted for consideration referred back to the Millennial Campus erosion issues that were occurring. The goal supported legislation that would allow the state to appoint counties to provide oversight on certain construction projects.

Currently, Jackson County was a designated entity to provide erosion control oversight on all projects except state projects or the county's own projects. At that time, state law did not allow DENR to designate the county to provide oversight on state projects. The goal was to add that so that if DENR needed help with state projects or were willing to designate the county to provide that oversight, then the county could provide direct oversight for those projects.

Commissioner Woody stated that she was serving on the Environmental Committee for the Legislative Goals and the county's submission was very well received. It basically boiled down to local control, which was one of the hallmarks of the NCACC for local governments to deal with local issues. The county supported the Broadband Goal as well.

Chairman McMahan stated that Commissioner Woody was very involved with the Association and was a District Representative.

Motion: Chairman McMahan moved to appoint Commissioner Woody as the Voting Delegate to the NCACC Legislative Goals Conference, January 14th-15th, to be held virtually. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Woody stated that she had thoroughly enjoyed it and had met some wonderful people. As the Chairman stated, she had been very involved and she appreciated the opportunity.

Chairman McMahan stated that any of the Commissioners that wanted to join in and participate in the conference could do so by virtually.

(12) AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD: Carry over.

(13) BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Carry over.

(14) CULLOWHEE PLANNING COUNCIL: Carry over.

(15) HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION: Carry over.

(16) PLANNING BOARD: Carry over.

General discussions were held.

(17) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

Chairman McMahan encouraged everyone to continue to be vigilant wearing a mask and social distancing. They would see spikes with the recent holiday gatherings and he encouraged everyone to use their hand washing procedures and do all they could to encourage vaccinations when they were available.

Commissioner Deitz stated that anything they could do as a county to help the Health Department about the vaccinations, he hoped they continued to look into that. As a country, they were behind on the vaccines compared to where they thought they would be. He hoped they used every means they had to assist the Health Department.

Chairman McMahan stated that he knew the County Manager had been working with the Health Department and Emergency Management was also working with them. There was a plan in place.

Mr. Adams stated that the entities in the county were coming together to help each other. Paramedics were being authorized to assist in the vaccination process. Both Harris and Glenville-Cashiers EMS personnel had offered their assistance to the Health Department and the planning process to start developing plans for the mass vaccinations. This was an ongoing process with the plan being developed as they spoke.

Chairman McMahan stated that on December 31st, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services issued a timeline for when people would be eligible for the vaccination. The first wave was currently underway with hospital employees and nursing home staff. The next group would be firefighters, law enforcement, teachers, etc. They were in the planning phase for that second group.

Mr. Adams stated that he spoke with the Health Director before the meeting. The next priority past health workers would be people 75 years and older, which they would concentrate on at the end of next week.

Sheriff Hall stated that he spoke with the County Manager and Emergency Management and he offered some of his staff to temporarily relocate to assist the Health Department. Also, their contract medical service provider agreed to administer the vaccine for all law enforcement officers. There was a good plan in place and it was moving forward.

General discussions were held.

There being no further business, Commissioner Deitz moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman