

**MINUTES OF A  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
MARCH 17, 2016**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on March 17, 2016, 6:00 p.m., Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman	Chuck Wooten, County Manager
Mark Jones, Vice Chair (via speaker phone)	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board
Charles Elders, Commissioner	Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Vicki Greene, Commissioner	
Boyce Deitz, Commissioner	

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) **AGENDA**: Chairman McMahan amended the agenda by adding an item for the Smoky Mountain High School Turf and an item for a Reimbursement Resolution. Commissioner Elders moved to approve the amended Agenda. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of March 3, 2016. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: He had the opportunity to attend Sheriff Hall's graduation from the Sheriffs Leadership Institute at UNC Chapel Hill, which was a rigorous training program and he congratulated the Sheriff on obtaining the certification.

(4) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: Mr. Wooten reported:

(a) **Connect NC Bonds**: Voters in the county overwhelmingly approved of the bonds with 73.49% voting in support. The NC General Assembly will need to officially authorize the issuance of the bonds and the funds should be available this summer. The WCU project is a complicated project and the programming/design will probably take at least 12 months and the construction 18 to 24 months. The SCC Board will now need to reconfirm their prioritization of projects from their master plan in preparation for requesting local match consideration. This same action must take place in Macon and Swain County.

(b) **Whittier Sanitary District**: TWSA will be hosting a meeting Tuesday night with all the entities that were involved in the creation of the Whittier sewer project. The current owner, Whittier Sanitary District, is interested in starting a discussion about long term ownership options for that system. As Commissioners were aware, the system had struggled since constructed because of low customer counts and to that point had been subsidized to make the system break even.

(c) **Revaluation Update**: According to Bobby McMahan, Tax Assessor, 2,651 (7%) appeals were received in a timely manner. As expected, some folks did a really good job of explaining their reason for an appeal while others just signed the forms and returned it. The personnel in the Tax Assessors Office have completed their review of three townships. As things now stand, taxpayers should expect the change/no change notices during the week of April 25-29<sup>th</sup>. The Board of E&R will meet on April 7<sup>th</sup> and begin reviewing appeals later in the month or during the first part of May.

**(d) Future Meetings:**

Tuesday, March 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 5:30 pm, TWSA Office	Meeting to Discuss Long Term Ownership of Whittier Sewer System
Friday, March 25 <sup>th</sup> , Good Friday Holiday	Offices Closed
Monday, March 28 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 pm	Region A Meeting
Thursday, April 7 <sup>th</sup> , 6:00 pm	Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, April 13 <sup>th</sup> , 5:30 pm	NCACC District Meeting, Waynesville CC
Tuesday, April 19 <sup>th</sup> , 9:00 am	Commissioners Work Session

**(5) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:**

(a) Robert Medlin of Tuckasegee stated his opposition to spending more money on the football field and that Dr. Murray stated he would not move forward if the bid was over budget, but he was now asking for more money.

(b) Denny Wood of Sylva stated he had talked to people who are opposed to the football field. They had a football field, but they do not have a track, soccer field or softball field. He appealed to Commissioner to build these fields and re-sod the football field. The head of the PTA is trying to raise funds to buy books and they are going to spend \$1 mil on artificial turf.

(c) Brian Bartel of Sylva expressed his support for the proposed commercial kitchen for small businesses to use, in the new Cooperative Extension building.

**(6) CONSENT AGENDA:**

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for February, 2016 for fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, for approval.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented Tax Collector and Refund Reports for February, 2016, for approval.

**Motion:** *Commissioner Greene moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(7) THE COMMUNITY TABLE UPDATE:** Amy Sims, Executive Director, stated for fiscal year 2015-16, the county granted The Community Table a total of \$15,000, of which \$8,061.45 was given to MANNA Food Bank as a credit on their behalf. The balance of \$6,938.55, which was redistributed to them by the county after their request for unrestricted funding, was used to purchase \$2,013.83 in food from Reinhart Foodservice and local grocery stores, \$3,566 in utilities and \$1,358.72 in food service supplies. This year they are requesting \$20,000 for the FY 16-17 year and asking that the county not restrict their funding.

*Informational item only.*

**(8) SMOKY MOUNTAIN TURF:** Dr. Murray stated that the school board is humbled by the unprecedented show of support the Commissioners made with the Tuesday morning decision to let \$9 mil dollars from county funds be released to immediately address the critical capital needs with the school system roofing, HVAC and water supply needs we are facing. After leaving the Commissioners work session, the school board was hit with another funding hurdle when the bids for the artificial field grant at SMHS were revealed.

As Commissioners are aware, the artificial turf field project has been endorsed by both boards. The Commissioners provided a letter of support for the grant application and the school board endorsed the project with its five year capital needs plan in the spring of 2014. The \$200,000 grant was awarded to Jackson County Schools, but it came with a timeline, which had to be met and the project has to be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Upon the awarding of the grant, the school board approved the project and authorized the engineering and planning with an anticipated project cost not to exceed \$715,000. As the planning phase progressed, they learned more about artificial turf fields and researched the best options for the community. With all the research and site visits, the board agreed they should avoid a field with utilized crumb rubber infill. In the best interest of the community the only infill option, it should approve would be a field which was constructed with an organic infill which posed no potential health risks to field users. The drawback became the organic infill which drove the originally anticipated costs well above budget.

He attended the meeting for the sole purpose of reassuring the Commissioners that the investment made on Tuesday morning, would go only towards the projects for which they designated the funds. He was certainly not there to ask for additional money, but to give them an updated status report on the artificial field. They did have enough money in hand to complete the base bid. With the stated health concerns, the school board would not be accepting the base bid. The Alternate 3 bid (Organic substitute) would come in at \$200,000 additional cost above budget. He had spent the last three days researching where he could re-prioritize their multiple budgets and could not find a way to cover the difference. Therefore, as a last resort, he asked for community supporter donations, if they would like to save the project. When talking with the superintendent of Transylvania County about their recent addition of an artificial turf field, he shared that they asked the community and private donors stepped up and paid for half of the entire project. He had the same kind of faith in their community. They were on a limited time frame with the grant, so would need the donations prior to April 15<sup>th</sup> in order to move forward. They have all been passionate with their efforts to have the artificial field completed. They know it would serve many students on a year round basis. They had an opportunity with the project to capitalize on a grant, which would have allowed the community to have a state of the art playing surface, which would be a showcase piece and the only organic field of its kind in the region.

Commissioner Deitz stated that that too many times, athletics and academics were in conflict with each other in peoples' minds, but there was a place for both. When they started athletics at Sylva Webster they only had football and basketball. When they started out the paper mill, Apac and some other companies did most of the work at the field. The school system in the county had spent very little on athletics over the years. Others have spent lots of money on their programs because it is important and it is important to kids. This was not about any adult going out and playing on the field, this was about kids from about 7-18 years old playing on the field.

He had been conservative on the board, but he was in favor of athletics. The only thing some kids get out of school is athletics and the best drop-out prevention program in North Carolina schools is athletics. He had one kid in 30 years to quit school. If they play athletics they have to be at school and pass their courses. He did agree that there were other athletic facilities that they needed also, but if the school board felt this was needed and if the Commissioners had to put more money in it, he didn't mind that. The biggest problem they will have if they put the field in is they will have to get a good organizer because there will be so many people that will want to use it. He was not playing politics, if this would help kids, he was for it. He wanted to have a first class facility and thought they should add restrooms on the visitor's side. This is not about football, this is about every kid that can play and use the field.

**(9) REIMBURSEMENT RESOLUTION R16-03:** Darlene Fox, Finance Director, stated the Declaration Reimbursement Resolution is an official intent to reimburse and would authorize the school board to proceed with their school system capital plan, the county would fund that capital plan from its fund balance, until such time that they could issue the debt (\$9-10 mil) and reimburse themselves for any monies they had advanced the school board. This would allow the school board to engage an engineer/architect to move forward to execute their capital plan so that possibly the roofs could be done over the summer. This would be a first step to start the projects, the next step would be a Resolution of Intent to file the application, which would be done in April.

Mr. Wooten stated they would be allowing the school board to move forward with their planning and address the list of critical needs, which is roofing, HVAC and water related projects. The county would use its funds for the costs associated with these projects until such time that they issue debt when they would reimburse the county for any expenses incurred as they relate to the list of critical needs. This would not, in any way, negatively impact the financial situation of the county.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Greene moved to adopt the Declaration of Reimbursement Resolution R16-03. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) **FOREST HILLS PLANNING BOARD:** *Carry over.*

(11) **CULLOWHEE PLANNING COUNCIL:** Commissioner Greene recommended Rick Bennett; Commissioner Jones recommended Scott Baker; Chairman McMahan recommended Myrtle Schrader; and Commissioner Elders recommended Jack Debnam.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Greene moved to appoint Rick Bennett, Scott Baker, Myrtle Schrader and Jack Debnam to serve on the Cullowhee Planning Council. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) **SEDIMENT CONTROL APPEALS BOARD:** *Carry over.*

(13) **WATERSHED REVIEW BOARD:** *Carry over.*

(14) **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION:** *Carry over.*

(15) **PRESS CONFERENCE:** None

(16) **CLOSED SESSION:**

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

Chairman McMahan called the regular meeting back to order and stated no action was taken in closed session except the approval of the Closed Session Minutes of March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

(17) **AGENDA:** Chairman McMahan amended the agenda by adding an item for the Drexel Lease. Commissioner Elders moved to approve the amended Agenda. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(18) **DREXEL LEASE:** Chairman McMahan stated that Thomas Valley Growers, LLC wanted to enter into a lease for the property commonly referred to as the Drexel Property.

Commissioner Greene stated that these were all gentlemen of the community, who had long-term ties here and they want to see them contribute to the agricultural sector of the economy and wanted them to succeed.

Commissioner Elders stated they were his neighbors and he fully supported what they were doing.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Deitz moved to advertise for 30 days the county's intent to enter into a five year lease with a five year renewal, beginning May 6, 2016, for the amount of \$75,000 (\$15,000 per annum) with Thomas Valley Growers, LLC, for the property located at 271 Clearwood Drive, Whittier, NC, containing 31.98 acres and vacant building and to include a 10 day upset bid period under the normal terms to be included as part of the notice. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

There being no further business, Commissioner Greene moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

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Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman