The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on August 28, 2017, 6:00 p.m., Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Charles Elders, Vice Chair
Boyce Deitz, Commissioner
Mickey Luker, Commissioner
Ron Mau, Commissioner

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

Chairman McMahan stated that as a nation, they had seen a lot transpire over the course of the last several weeks from the Charlottesville incident. He wanted to clarify where they were at as a county and what the options were concerning the Confederate statue in the county. The School of Government had sent out information to help clarify for local governments what the 2015 Federal Legislature did concerning protection of monuments and what that meant for county and municipal governments. Ms. Baker had reviewed the briefing from the School of Government as well as researched the legislation enacted. He requested that she provide a summary of options for the county.

Ms. Baker stated the following regarding protection or removal of monuments:

Question: What was the NC State law with regard to protection or removal of monuments and how does it relate to Jackson County monuments?
Answer: Pursuant to current NC State Law, NCGS 100-2.1, an Object of Remembrance located on public property may only be removed or relocated if appropriate measures are required by the county to preserve the object, when necessary for construction, renovation or reconfiguration of buildings, or if a building inspector or similar official has determined the monument poses a threat to public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition.

An “object of remembrance” means a monument, memorial, plaque, statue, marker, or display of a permanent character that commemorates an event, a person, or military service that is part of North Carolina history. If it is determined that an object of remembrance needs to be removed or relocated due to one of the reasons listed above, it must be relocated to a site of similar prominence, honor, visibility, availability and access within its current jurisdiction. If an object of remembrance is temporarily removed or relocated, it shall be returned within 90 days of completion of the project that required its removal.

Chairman McMahan stated that in light of what had taken place in the nation over the course of the last month, he wanted to first take the opportunity to condemn, in the strongest and harshest of ways, any act of racism, bigotry, violence and hatred. What took place in Charlottesville, Virginia was hateful, immoral, egregious and just plain wrong. Any action by these white supremacist groups was a total embarrassment to the nation and they in no way represent his values or the values of most Americans.
His grandfather stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, was captured in Germany and taken to a Nazi prisoner of war camp, where he endured a living hell. He and his comrades fought to defeat the Nazis. If he were alive today, he would likewise say that there was no reason why anyone should waive a Nazi flag, which represented an evil regime that killed millions of innocent people.

The civil war was over, the Confederacy had been dissolved and the flags that represented it should not be flown today from any governmental property. To the many in the county that displayed the Confederate flag as a historic flag of a movement and of an era of long ago, often siting heritage not hate, he cautioned them to be mindful that many in today’s world, many white supremacist and hate groups had made the Confederate flag their modern battle flag. That was truly unfortunate and he believed from what he knew about history, Robert E. Lee himself would also disapprove of what had happened.

The county’s Confederate statue, like many others, had become the center of a discussion about whether or not Confederate monuments should be allowed to stand today and for what they represent. He had been asked how he felt about the issue in general, but he was commenting specifically about the statue in Jackson County, because he found it unique and much different than others he had seen. First, he was not in favor of its removal and he was firm in his position. Second, the NC General Assembly enacted a law in 2015 that did not allow the county the ability to take down the statue except for three exceptions.

The statue represents the common soldiers who left the mountains of Jackson County to go and fight in a war that they may not have even supported. The statue was a visual reminder of a period in history, as unpleasant as it may have been. For all the talk about when the statue was erected during the Jim Crow Period, that too stood as a reminder of who they were, but not necessarily who they were today. He was very disappointed with the event that took place in Durham, NC, where a mob group tore down a Confederate statue. He was very disappointed that Jackson Paper’s sign was vandalized recently. They were a nation of laws and that type of behavior was not acceptable. When he looked back in history at some of the most powerful leaders of change, like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Susan B. Anthony and Gandhi, they promoted nonviolence and with the power of peace, helped to change a world.

The statue was not the problem. The statue was a dead, inanimate object. Taking the statue down did not remove the hate that was in people’s hearts, that was their jobs. He appreciated the work of the local branch of the NAACP. They worked to promote peaceful dialogue in the community to improve relationships among neighbors, because they were all neighbors in a small rural county.

He pledged his full support of any effort to promote peace and harmony within the community to ensure that the correct history was taught to young generations, to visibly demonstrate what it means to love your neighbor and to honor and respect others around them and set an example for the world around them and showcase what was right about America and strive to finally see the words of Jefferson become a reality.

Commissioner Luker stated that he appreciated Chairman McMahan’s comments and was in support of the statue as well. History was history and they could not change it, but they could make a difference moving forward every day. He was not willing to compromise on the removal of the statue. He was willing to stand and support law enforcement to protect public property.

Commissioner Mau stated he would change one word in Chairman McMahan’s statement from “his values” to “their values”, he agreed with what the Chairman said. He quoted Peggy Noonan, who had an article in the Wall Street Journal, “When a nation tears down its statues, it’s toppling more than brass and marble. It is in a way, toppling itself - tearing down all the things, good, bad and inadequate, that made it. Or, rather, everyone. Not all of what made America is good - does anyone even think this? - but why try to hide from that?”. 
Commissioner Elders stated he wanted to join Chairman McMahan’s pledge. He agreed with his statement. He also thought of his father, who was in the Battle of the Bulge in WWII. He also had an uncle and cousin lost during that time and family that served in Korea and Vietnam as well. The statue was in memory the men and women that fought during that time. Things had changed since that time, but he always liked to refer back to the 4-H Club motto “I pledge to make the best better”. He did not want to see the monument taken down.

Commissioner Deitz stated he had mixed feelings. His great-grandfather fought in the Civil War and drove a team of horses for a supply wagon. He may not have even known what he was fighting about. He felt a debate needed to take place on the issue. There were many great black families in the community. He would hate to know they were passing by a statue every day that made them feel like they were less. There was a lot of racism now and it was terrible. This would be a tough decision to make. There were bad things happening, but there were also good people doing good things all the time.

(1) AGENDA: Commissioner Elders moved to approve the Agenda. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) MINUTES: Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of August 07, 2017; a Special Meeting – Health Department of August 08, 2017; and a Work Session of August 15, 2017. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) CHAIRMAN’S REPORT: Chairman McMahan stated he attended the NC Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference, which was great. On Friday, they had the District 17 Conference, with Jackson, Haywood, Graham, Cherokee and Clay in attendance. They elected CB McKinnon of Cherokee as District 17 Director. On Saturday morning, there was a breakfast with the Youth Delegates, including Holly Miller of Jackson County, who spoke at the Commissioners’ Meeting on August 7th. Also, Ronnie Smith was elected as the new VP of NCACC and he would do a great job.

He also attended the Vaya Health County Commissioner meeting and the highlight was discussing budget cuts from the general assembly. There was a mathematical error in the formula that determined Vaya’s appropriation in the new budget. They would now have additional monies cut from their budget, which they were trying to figure out how to meet those additional cuts. They already trimmed staff and lost 47 positions. This was the beginning of the transition process.

Also, he was sad to read that week that the two year record in the county of not having to euthanize an animal due to space needs, had ended because they had more dogs than they had space for. He was getting a lot of feedback and wanted everyone to know they were working on it. They were working behind the scenes and would hopefully be put in a position to do something to provide a permanent solution in the near future. They were also working on temporary, short-term solutions as well. It was a good time to foster or adopt an animal.

(4) COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

(a) Commissioner Deitz stated that before the eclipse, he read an article in the Asheville Citizen Times about how the eclipse would be a waste of time. He read her article yesterday where she stated she was all wrong and it was awesome. To him personally, the eclipse was spiritual. He was very proud of what happened in the county. There was a large crowd in the town and in the county. It had to be good for the county and for Sylva. He personally thanked the Sheriff’s Department, NC Highway Patrol, the Recreation Department, the Town of Sylva, the Chamber of Commerce, the TDA, etc. He thought they put their best foot forward in the county and he thought it was the biggest thing to ever happen in the county.

(b) Commissioner Elders stated the eclipse was great and the next one would be on his birthday. He requested that everyone remember the folks in Texas and he encouraged everyone to be patient that there may be a temporary gas shortage.
(c) Commissioner Luker stated as far as a business owner, he was thankful for what the TDA and Chamber of Commerce had done and everyone that had a part with the eclipse, it was a great 4-5 days of business. He commended county staff and county partners during the eclipse.

Also, in the last few days, Birchfield Contracting had been picking up trash along the roadsides. Over the past weekend there was a group of WCU students on Highway 107 picking up trash. Everyone should appreciate the roadsides and the beauty of the county. He asked the public to join the Commissioners to come up with ideas for solutions to the trash problem.

(d) Commissioner Mau stated that the last TDA meeting was before the eclipse where they received information from the state on the tourism results for the past year. Jackson County had the third highest growth rate in tourism dollars in the state with a 7% increase. He also thanked the TDA and Sheriff’s Department and all that worked on the advanced planning for the eclipse, it was a wonderful event.

Regarding TWSA, he reported previously that they were looking at impact fees and that process, but now that House Bill 436 passed and was signed at the end of the session, they would be looking at that and working on a timeline to get that done, which went into effect the first of October.

Also, the Southwestern Commission had their Southwestern North Carolina Economic Development District Plan out and they were looking for public comments until September 25th. The plan was on their website and they wanted like to have public input.

(5) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:

(a) Skyland Service Center Remodel: Work commenced on July 19, 2017. In accordance with the contract documents, the project must be substantially complete by January 15, 2018. Western Builders were currently ahead of schedule.

(b) Citizens Academy: The county received 24 applications and would still accept applications to fill the final slot. Applications could be found at www.jacksonnc.org. The first class would be held on Thursday, September 14th at 6:00 pm at the Justice Center Commissioner Board Room.

(c) NCDOT Updates: Due to feedback from the public hearing held on June 15th, NCDOT chose not to pursue the proposed connector from Ledbetter Road to Monteith Gap Road. Instead, they would concentrate on improvements to the intersections of Monteith Gap Road, Ledbetter Road and South Painter Road. NCDOT recommended to reduce the current speed zone on Ledbetter Road down from 35 mph to 25 mph.

(d) Office of the State Fire Marshall Fire Department Inspections: The county received official notification from OSFM that the Canada Volunteer Fire Department passed inspections on July 31, 2017.

(e) Skyland Drive Property 7642-52-3270: The property had been purchased and the deed was recorded on Wednesday, August 23, 2017.

(f) Department on Aging Volunteer Statistics: He provided the 2016-2017 DOA Volunteer Statistics on a handout.

(g) Upcoming Meetings:
   - Tuesday, September 12, 2017 – Commissioner Work Session at 1:00 pm
   - Monday, September 18, 2017 – Regular Commissioner Meeting at 6:00 pm
   - Monday, October 2, 2017 – Cancelled
   - Monday, October 9, 2017 – Regular Commissioner Meeting at 3:00 pm
   - Tuesday, October 10, 2017 – Commissioner Work Session at 1:00 pm
   - Monday, October 16, 2017 – Regular Commissioner Meeting at 6:00 pm

(6) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:

(a) Valerie Harrison of Sylva, praised all of the Commissioners for their comments earlier. History should not be torn apart. History was history and people who fought, regardless of what side they were on, should not lose their part of history.
(b) Jane Koenig of Tuckasegee, stated she thought what all of the Commissioners said was marvelous. Maybe one of the problems that they suffered in the south was that there was a preponderance of monuments and remembrances to the Civil War and the Confederacy. Maybe they needed balance because a lot of other people fought and died for their country, for a cause and there was not much, especially in a small town, to commemorate that.

(c) Dan Perlmutter of Cullowhee, stated he was not even sure what the dedication was on the monument. With his brief understanding of the history of the area, there was a mosaic of sympathies. There were those who were Union supporters and Confederate supporters. Possibly, as Ms. Koenig had said, some recognition to all of the people who were swept up in the Civil War.

(d) Mary Cosair of Sylva, stated she appreciated the need to remember history. The issue she had and the solution she was thinking about was that the Confederacy was one side of a terrible battle that was fought, fortunately, she thought the right side prevailed. People from both sides fought for a cause, so perhaps they needed not just a Confederate soldier, but also a Union soldier to remind them of the battle that was fought between two different points of view. She thought balance was a good idea.

7) CONSENT AGENDA:
(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for July, 2017, two Budget Ordinance Amendments for fiscal year ending June 30, 2018 and one Project Ordinance Amendments for fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, for approval.
(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector presented, Tax Collector and Refund Reports for July, 2017, for approval.
(c) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector presented, Tax Settlement Report for February 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017 for approval.
Motion: Commissioner Elders moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

8) PUBLIC SCHOOLS – BLUE RIDGE SCHOOL WATER REPORT: Dr. Kim Elliott, Interim Superintendent, stated that at the Commissioners’ previous work session, they discussed both water towers at Blue Ridge School and Smokey Mountain Elementary School. During that meeting, she gave personal assurances that she would only open school with zero hint of imperfect water quality. She was pleased to report that both schools’ water quality was excellent. She wanted to assure all of them that they contracted the water quality testing to an outside entity, Environmental, Inc., and they performed the water test, which the Board had received the results.

She shared the summary detailing the reports for both campuses. Water sample collection dates were August 18th with the final report back to them on the 23rd. Three test sites in each of the two schools were collected. There was no level of concern in relation to lead or copper in either schools’ water and therefore there was no action required at that time with regard to water quality.

The Blue Ridge report detailed “not detected” for both lead and copper at all three sites. The Smokey Mountain Elementary report did state “not detected” for any lead at all three test sites and “hardly detectable amounts of copper”. Any copper level detected was substantially lower than the causation of any trigger that would require action of any kind, according to the EPA, so that did give them some assurance about water quality in and of itself.

The second request was to obtain her recommendation on how to proceed after water quality test were received by the school system. At that point, she reiterated that they had excellent water quality in all of the county public schools. What they did have was a tower structure issue due to two outdated tower systems that needed to be retired and replaced with another water service system. Her formal recommendation was to proceed with the Community Development Block Grant, which was due in November, for the Blue Ridge water tower, with their agreement being, that should any negative water quality test results occur in the future, they would immediately rectify the situation by moving that tower up on the list of priorities and in the timeline.
She and the JCPS team would be attending a staff meeting on September 6th at Blue Ridge School to garner support in assisting them in gathering the parent survey results needed for the grant. The school responsibilities for the CDBG would be to provide a listing of all addresses for Blue Ridge students and staff and obtain a 75% response rate to the grant survey and enter the data into the grant spreadsheet. They were fully capable, able and willing to meet those requirements. An additional recommendation she had was to pursue a timely tap with the Tribal Water Authority for Smokey Mountain Elementary. Darin Allison, Director of Capital Projects and Facilities, reached out to the partners to assist them with the water tower.

With regards to the two standing towers, again they had a tower issue, they did not have a water issue. The most recent Blue Ridge tank inspections report recommended repairs and rehabilitation that exceeded $158,000, which was just for repair. The Smokey Mountain Elementary recommended tank work was estimated to be $188,000, which was a minor short term fix. The projections were for repairs and current maintenance, they did not factor in future preventative maintenance cost that would be necessary for either of the tanks. That was the reasoning behind their seeking to connect Smokey Mountain Elementary to the Tribal utilities and redesign the water storage facility at Blue Ridge School.

*Informational item.*

**9) Glenville Lake – No Wake Zone Request:** Mr. Adams stated that at the last work session, the Board was petitioned by two residents and homeowners in the county to begin the process to request that the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) investigate the establishment of a No Wake Zone (NWZ) on Glenville Lake for an area that consisted of a narrow passage between the mainland and two islands at the north end of the lake.

The first step would be for the Board to contact the NWZ Coordinator to request an investigation of the area to determine whether statutory authority may exist for the establishment of a NWZ. The Coordinator would request that Enforcement provide a recommendation to the NWZ Coordinator about whether sufficient safety hazards existed to meet the statutory authority of the WRC to enact a no wake zone in public trust waters.

**Motion:** Commissioner Luker moved to make a request for a No Wake Zone investigation to North Carolina Wildlife Commission for the described area on Glenville Lake. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**10) September 11th Meeting:** Mr. Adams requested that the Board set a Work Session and a Special Meeting on September 11th. The Special Meeting would be to recognize Firefighters Week in the county.

Chairman McMahan suggested the Special Meeting begin at 2:30 pm and the Work Session begin at 3:00 pm.

*Informational item.*

**11) Greenway Easement Riverwalk Acceptance:** Michael Poston, Planning Director, presented a Greenway Easement, which was off Ledbetter Road. Part of that process with the Riverwalk Development was to allow a Greenway Easement across that piece of property. He and Ms. Baker had been working with the property owner and their legal representation to accomplish this. He presented the agreement to the Board for consideration.

Ms. Baker stated that typically, the Grantor would sign the easement, but since the county would be agreeing to maintain the easement for a Greenway, it required the Grantee’s signature also.

**Motion:** Commissioner Deitz moved to accept the gift of the easement from the Grantor and authorized the Chairman to sign on behalf of the Commissioners. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.
(12) **CDBG POLICIES:** Mr. Poston stated they were working with the state to officially close out one of the last housing CDBG grants. The county had various policies adopted over the past last ten years required by the state and federal government. During the final monitoring visit, they found that some of the policies were outdated. He requested that the Board consider readopting the policies that had been in place prior to the closeout process so that they could closeout with the state. Also, they were waiting on two numbers from Mountain projects to complete the documents.

*Motion: Commissioner Elders moved to readopt the Policies as requested. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(13) **COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (CTP):** Chairman McMahan stated this had been a long process with many meetings and he appreciated all of the hard work by the committee.

Mr. Poston stated that currently, they were at a place for the Commissioners to consider adopting a resolution for the CTP and move to the next step, which would be at the regional level where the RPO would consider adopting and then on to the Board of Transportation, where consideration for final adoption would take place.

Rose Bauguess, Senior Planner, Southwestern Commission, gave a brief background on the CTP. The NC DOT did a CTP for every county in the state. They first need each county to develop a vision for how and where they wanted to grow. The DOT could then help to develop the transportation system to meet the county’s needs. In this case, both the county’s plan and the DOT’s plan needed to be updated at the same time. So, they embarked on a joint planning process with one steering committee with 20 members, including Chairman McMahan and Commissioner Mau. Other major institutions and groups represented on the committee were:

- Public School System
- WCU
- Harris Regional Hospital
- Cashiers Community
- Whittier Community
- Bicycle Advocates
- Environmental Advocates

They had over 20 meetings with the steering committee members and also did an online public survey outreach to the general public and received over 2,000 responses. After they had a draft plan developed, they had five public meetings across the county and incorporated public comments into the final plan. The committee looked at many different aspects including population and employment projections to the year 2040 to figure out what the transportation system would need by that year. The CTP was a long list of identified needs for potential improvements, which was more than the funds that were available.

One of the main focuses of the committee was on upgrading existing roads for minor widening improvements to make them safer and up to basic standard design. There were a few other more major widening projects that were recommended as well. Those projects included: Asheville Highway from Skyland Drive to the exit, to widen and continue the boulevard design; a similar plan for 441 into Cherokee from the exit, to get ahead of the development; and the intersection of 107 and 64 in Cashiers was another project recommendation, to look at improving that intersection.

The committee also looked at not just moving in vehicles, but also people moving on foot and bicycles and they focused on schools to begin a connection with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Also, there were some recommendations for the public transit system to expand.
The plans were not set in stone and would be continually evaluated and would be updated every 5-10 years depending on changes in the county. There were not any new location projects recommended in the plan, which was a change from the previous plan they were updating. There was a lot of discussion about what was called the NC 107 Connector, which had been a part of the previously adopted plan. Initially, it was thought it would save more time than it actually would and it would not remove as much traffic from 107 as was thought. At the time, they felt the benefits of the project were not worth the cost in both money and property impacts.

Mr. Poston stated that all four planning councils had input in the process and recommended approval.

Chairman McMahan stated he appreciated the leadership and guidance through the process. The outcome was reflective of the community’s opinion and approval.

Informational item.

(14) COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN RESOLUTION (R17-13): Mr. Poston presented a Comprehensive Transportation Plan Resolution R17-13 for consideration.

Motion: Commissioner Mau moved to adopt the Comprehensive Transportation Plan Resolution (R17-13), as presented. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(15) CULLOWHEE COMMUNITY PLANNING AREA DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENTS AND CONSISTENCY STATEMENT: Caroline Edmonds, Planner I, stated that the Cullowhee Planning Council and the Planning Staff worked on amendments to Article IV, Section 4-1 and 4-4 (General and Special Use Districts) of the ordinance. A public hearing was held prior to this meeting with no public comment.

Motion: Commissioner Mau moved to approve the amendments to the Cullowhee Community Planning Area Development Standards and Consistency Statement. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(16) CASHIERS COMMERCIAL AREA LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS AND CONSISTENCY STATEMENT: Caroline Edmonds, Planner I, stated that the Cashiers Planning Council and the Planning Staff have worked on amendments to Article VII (General Use Districts) of the ordinance. A public hearing was held prior to this meeting with no public comment.

Motion: Commissioner Luker moved to approve the amendments to the Cashiers Commercial Area Land Development Ordinance and Consistency Statement. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(17) CASHIERS PLANNING COUNCIL:

Motion: Commissioner Luker moved to appoint Bob Dews to serve the unexpired term of Ann McKee Austin on the Cashiers Planning Council, term to expire December 31, 2018. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(18) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

(19) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: Commissioner Deitz moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(3) Legal for one item and G.S.143-318.11(a)(4) Business Expansion for one item. 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.

(20) **AGENDA:** Commissioner Deitz moved to amend the agenda to add one item: Engage Attorney to represent Jackson County and the Cullowhee Planning Council. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(21) **ENGAGE ATTORNEY TO REPRESENT JACKSON COUNTY AND CULLOWHEE PLANNING COUNCIL:** Ms. Baker stated she had an engagement letter with Parker Poe with the standard terms at $380 per hour.

*Motion:* Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the Engagement Letter with Parker Poe, as presented. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

There being no further business, Commissioner Mau moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Luker seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Attest:                                Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board   Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman