

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MAY 10, 2022**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on May 10, 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) **AGENDA**: Chairman McMahan requested to remove one item: Municipal Grant Application Update. Commissioner Woody moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **SAFETY DISCUSSIONS**: Paige Dowling, Town of Sylva Manager and Mike Beck, Sylva Fire Chief, were present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated that this item was a follow up to discussions and requests from the Board for additional information. The Town of Sylva hired a professional firm to make recommendations.

He presented:

(a) Proposed Sylva Fire Department personnel budget:

	<u>Wages and Salary</u>	<u>OT and Standby</u>	<u>Subtotal Payroll Including OT</u>	<u>Group Insurance</u>	<u>Employer Match</u>	<u>Sub-Total Benefits</u>	<u>Grand Total Personnel Cost</u>
8 Employees	\$407,836.88	\$90,921.72	\$498,758.60	\$110,387.37	\$123,692.13	\$234,079.47	\$732,838.08
10 Employees	\$488,521.81	\$75,917.78	\$564,439.59	\$137,922.07	\$139,981.02	\$277,903.08	\$842,342.68
11 Employees	\$539,844.37	\$19,800.00	\$559,644.37	\$151,724.69	\$138,791.80	\$290,516.50	\$850,160.87
12 Employees	\$570,994.45	\$21,600.00	\$592,594.45	\$165,462.53	\$146,963.42	\$312,425.95	\$905,020.40

(b) Summary of Sylva FD total proposed budget and total county request:

	<u>Total Budget</u>	<u>County Total Request</u>
FD 8 Employees	\$1,321,515	\$1,074,290
FD 10 Employees	\$1,431,021	\$1,183,796
FD 11 Employees	\$1,438,839	\$1,191,613
FD 12 Employees	\$1,493,698	\$1,246,473

(c) Summary of new county funds / taxes needed for request

	<u>Additional Personnel Costs</u>	<u>Budget Shortfall</u>	<u>Less Current Personnel Costs</u>	<u>Additional Funds Needed</u>	<u>Additional Tax Needed</u>
8 Employees	\$732,838.08	\$45,386.00	(\$135,012.00)	\$643,212.08	0.0055
10 Employees	\$842,342.68	\$45,387.00	(\$135,012.00)	\$752,717.68	0.0065
11 Employees	\$850,160.87	\$45,387.00	(\$135,012.00)	\$760,535.87	0.0065
12 Employees	\$905,020.40	\$45,387.00	(\$135,012.00)	\$815,395.40	0.0070

(d) Budget and Tax Rate to provide additional EMS/Rescue Services:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Tax Rate</u>
Harris Contract Wage Increase	\$237,690.00	
Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Wage Increase	\$289,676.00	
Loan - GCRS Building Project		
\$4,500,000 @ 4.5% 20 years	\$343,596.40	
Previous allocation for Building Project	(\$147,687.00)	
Total Expenditures for new Ambulance and Rescue Expense	\$723,275.40	0.0062

(e) Projected Aquatics Center costs:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Tax Rate</u>
20 million over 15 years @ 3.228% - Debt Payment	\$1,952,701.00	0.0168
Original Projected Operational Costs	\$380,324.00	0.0033
Loan - GCRS Building Project		
Total Projected Annual Costs	2,333,025.00	0.0201

Only the debt payment cost of \$1,952,701 needed to be budgeted for FY22-23

(f) Budget and Tax Rate to provide additional Fire Services, Rescue Services, EMS Pay and Aquatics Center:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Tax Rate</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Tax Rate</u>
Total Expenditures for New EMS and Rescue Expense	\$723,275.40	0.0062	\$723,275.40	0.0062
Total Sylva Request for Fire Services	<i>8 Employees</i> \$643,212.08	0.0055	<i>11 Employees</i> \$760,535.87	0.0065
Total Funds/Taxes needed for EMS/Rescue and Fire Requests	\$1,366,487.48	0.0118	\$1,483,811.27	0.0128
Projected Aquatic Center Debt Service Cost	\$1,952,701.00	0.0168	\$1,952,701.00	0.0168
TOTAL - all costs with associated Tax Increase	\$3,319,188.48	0.0285	\$3,436,512.27	0.0296

(g) Ms. Dowling stated that she realized the need for a study since the Town had never operated a 24-hour department and because of the Federal Labor Standards. They hired Bucket Brigade Consulting, LLC to provide a professional recommendation. They requested recommendations on making the transition from a volunteer department to a split/paid department. They also requested that Bucket Brigade review their budget to make sure they included the ancillary costs associated with a full 24-hour operation.

She reached out to two firms, but selected Bucket Brigade Consulting, LLC, who came highly recommended. They had worked with small towns and departments similar in size. The staffing study was aimed to have an outside consultant's view of the staffing options of the fire department. The study revealed several options for career staffing and how it affected FLSA rules.

Bucket Brigade interviewed the Town Manager, Town Staff and Fire Department personnel. They looked at similar departments, studied the station and apparatus of the Fire Department, as well as the call statistics. The option Bucket Brigade recommended was Option #2: Staff the Fire Department with eight career personnel on shift, one career day-time floater/administrative firefighter and two Chief Officers operating on a 24 on shift/72 off shift schedule.

Mr. Adams stated that Option #1 was a 24/48 shift for eight employees. Option #2 was a 24/72 shift for 11 employees. There were other options as well, but the recommendation from Bucket Brigade Consulting, LLC was for Option #2.

General discussions were held.

Chairman McMahan stated that Jeff Cash, President of Bucket Brigade Consulting, LLC and Quentin Cash, Vice President of Bucket Brigade Consulting, LLC, had both been heavily involved in the State Firemen's Association and nationally accredited organizations. They did a lot of good work.

Commissioner Jones asked if this would be a tax increase for citizens in the city limits?

Ms. Dowling stated they had not gone down that road yet. The value of their penny was \$49,000. They were currently putting approximately \$200,000 into the fire department.

Commissioner Deitz asked how much Sylva taxes would increase?

Ms. Dowling stated that there would be no increase.

Commissioner Deitz stated that this would not cause Sylva taxes to increase nor the Sylva budget to increase.

Ms. Dowling stated that was correct as far as an increase in costs.

Chairman McMahan noted that going forward in the future, these would be Town of Sylva employees and would be included in their benefits package. They did not know what those future implications would be for the town. That fiscal year would seem like a zero sum, but in future budget years, there would be an increase.

Commissioner Woody stated that she lived in Dillsboro, but was in the Sylva Fire District. It did serve a larger area in the county as well.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Woody asked for more explanation and clarification on overtime.

Mr. Adams stated that he believed the decision between eight and eleven employees was really going to impact how they would shift from then on. Overtime would change based on the number of employees and based on the type of shift they went with. If the Board went with eight employees, it would put them in a permanent 24/48 shift. They could try to change it later, but it would be difficult.

Regarding overtime, there were different rules for firefighters and safety personnel. When talking about built-in overtime, with a 24/48 shift, the person would work 48 hours total in the week. The scheduling would create the built-in overtime. This was why the 24/72 shift would reduce the built-in overtime. There would be overtime for other situations such as people using sick or vacation time and others would cover the shift. Eventually, they would talk about part-time that would help with covering shifts.

Commissioner Deitz requested additional information about what the hourly rate would be.

Mr. Adams stated they would bring that information back to the Board.

Ms. Fox noted that it would be a 28 workday period with any time over 212 hours being overtime.

General discussions were held.

(h) Chief Beck stated that if they went with 11 people, it would give them 24 hours per month to call them back in for training, fires, etc., which would not be overtime and was in the recommendation. The first recommendation from Bucket Brigade was for Option #2 with 11 people and a 24/72-hour shift.

Having 11 people would also be more helpful during a structure fire. This would allow for “two in, two out” that was recommended and would have enough people to run the trucks, which was a safety issue. This would help the entire county, not just Sylva. Also, call volume had increased 8.99% over the last several years. Bucket Brigade projected call volume to go to 1,208 in 2025. This was one reason they felt they needed 11 people.

Commissioner Jones stated with the three cents per 100, how would that affect someone inside the city limits? He had a conversation with an insurance agent who indicated within the city limits, the average homeowner would be saving approximately \$50 per year with the better insurance rating with the additional personnel at the fire department. A business could be close to \$250 in savings.

Chairman McMahan stated that it would not be limited to the city limits, it would include anywhere within their response district. This could prompt a new inspection.

Commissioner Woody asked Ms. Dowling if certain standards would be used to hire these positions?

Ms. Dowling stated that yes, they would have standards for firefighters like police.

Commissioner Jones asked if the standards were different than with the police?

Ms. Dowling stated yes, there were certifications for firefighters. They had gotten recommendations for job descriptions and advertisements from their Salary Study and from Bucket Brigade.

Commissioner Jones requested to see that information in the future.

Commissioner Stribling asked if they were going to try and hire local folks first?

Ms. Dowling stated yes, they would love to hire local.

Chairman McMahan stated they were not going to make a decision that day. They were still learning, trying to understand and gather information.

Mr. Adams stated he wanted to clarify that the rules for firemen was 212 hours per month in a 28-day period. There was potential to have built-in overtime, but it would not always be that way.

The deadline for a decision would be June 14th or 15th in order for the Board to adopt a budget on June 21st. He would include this item on the budget and then the Board would make the final decision to proceed forward.

Informational item.

(3) **MEETING CALENDAR:** Mr. Adams stated that on May 17th he would present his recommended budget to the Board. He presented the tentative upcoming meeting calendar:

05-17-2022	Tuesday	1:00 pm	Regular Meeting
05-23-2022	Monday	8:30 am	Special Budget Meeting
05-24-2022	Tuesday	8:30 am	Special Budget Meeting
06-07-2022	Tuesday	5:55 pm	Public Hearing - Budget
06-07-2022	Tuesday	6:00 pm	Regular Meeting
06-09-2022	Thursday	1:00 pm	Special Budget Meeting
06-10-2022	Friday	1:00 pm	Special Budget Meeting
06-14-2022	Tuesday	1:00 pm	Work Session
06-21-2022	Tuesday	1:00 pm	Regular Meeting

Chairman McMahan stated that on May 17th, Mr. Adams would present the Manager’s Budget, which would include funding the Sylva Fire Department, the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad Building, the EMS Salary Increases and the Cullowhee Recreation Center expansion. All of those tax increases would be included in the recommended budget. It would be up to the Board to make the decision to leave them or pull some of those out.

General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams stated that since several Commissioners had conflicts with multiple dates, he requested that the Board look at June 6th, 7th and 8th for potential alternative days to meet.

Chairman McMahan requested that the Board make a commitment to resolve all of these issues and come to a final conclusion the first full week of June. This would give staff time to incorporate all so that they could have a special called meeting before June 21st to vote on the budget.

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

(4) FY22-23 BUDGET UPDATE: Darlene Fox, Finance Director, provided the Board with an updated version of Personnel, Capital and Capital Improvement requests. There were minor changes on the Capital Outlay Detail. There were no changes on Capital Improvements. There were additional positions added in the Sheriff's Office and a name change for the Green Energy position for personnel. They did receive additional nonprofit grant applications from Rolling Start and Center for Domestic Peace.

Mr. Adams noted that there were several nonprofits that had not turned an application in. All information was sent out to the nonprofits.

Informational item.

(5) OTHER BUSINESS:

(a) Commissioner Woody stated that she appreciated the Board's willingness to have the monument go up to honor the Old County Home. It had been installed with Bill Crawford's suggestion. County Staff did a great job placing the monument.

Informational item.

(b) Commissioner Deitz stated that he was contacted about the monument in honor of Paul Buchanan at the old Webster School and it was in need of repair. He spoke with Sheila Hoyle at Southwestern Child Development and offered assistance from the county.

Also, he saw where County Staff was working around the flagpoles at the Health Department. It was going to look really good.

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 2:21 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman