

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

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on December 13, 2022, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present:	Mark A. Letson, Chairman Todd Bryson, Vice Chair Mark Jones, Commissioner (Via Zoom) John W. Smith, Commissioner Tom Stribling, Commissioner	Don Adams, County Manager Heather C. Baker, County Attorney Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board Darlene Fox, Finance Director
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Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

**(1) COMBINED CAPITAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM GRANT:** April Alm, Transit Director stated the North Carolina Department of Transportation Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) handled grant applications with the Federal Transit Administration for mass and community transportation programs.

On behalf of rural communities, the NCDOT IMD completed applications for formula grants for rural areas (Section 5311 Admin) and formula grants for the enhanced mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310 Operating), as well as capital improvements for transit systems. This allowed rural communities to work directly with their state rather than needing to apply directly for funding through the Federal Transit Administration.

Jackson County Transit applied for both 5311 and 5310 funding with the approval from the Board of Commissioners in October 2022. However, due to the recent delay in the State’s vehicle contract, the FY24 Combined Capital grant application was postponed to open November 1, 2022.

The Combined Capital program allowed Community Transportation (CT) systems the opportunity to apply for funding for capital projects and provided the NCDOT IMD the flexibility to fund the approved projects with the type of funds which best suited the projects and managed the funds in the most efficient and effective manner. The Combined Capital application utilized funds from the 5311, 5307, 5339 federal programs.

The FY24 Combined Capital Community Transportation Program Grant Application Public Hearing was scheduled for December 20, 2022 at 12:55 p.m. As the applicant, Jackson County Transit would seek permission to apply for the Public Transportation Program funding with the required local match. The total estimated amount requested for the period of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024:

<u>Project</u>	<u>Total Amount</u>	<u>Local Share 10%</u>
Capital	\$148,384	\$14,839
<b>Total Project</b>	<b>\$148,384</b>	<b>\$14,839</b>

She noted that the local share amount was subject to state funding availability. The funds would be used to replace transit vehicles, cameras and computers.

General discussions were held.

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

**(2) COUNTY RECREATION PROJECTS:** Michael Hopkins, Assistant Director Parks and Recreation, presented a brief history of the following recreation projects:

**(a) Indoor Aquatics Center:** The planning process had been ongoing since 2017. Information had been presented to the Board detailing the need for a centrally located pool in the county. He presented renderings from the architect. The project was currently underway with Phase One.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(b) Whittier-Qualla Park:** The county was awarded a \$500,000 PARTF Grant toward the project. The park would be located on an 18-acre tract located next to Smokey Mountain Elementary School. The main purpose of the park was to provide outdoor, multi-use recreation opportunities to the residents of Whittier/Qualla. The design of the park looked to the results of the survey and focused on providing a variety of opportunities for play, a variety of trails and a picnic shelter, among other opportunities for respite and recreational.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(c) Cashiers Splash Pad:** The county started working on this plan in October, 2019. Due to Covid, they resumed work in 2021. The main purpose of the masterplan was to provide a plan for the Cashiers-Glenville Recreation Center to become a central hub for recreational activities in the Cashiers-Glenville area. They acquired architectural services for the Splash Pad Area, Pickle Ball-Tennis Courts and the removal of the existing pool.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(d) Webster Park Picnic Shelter and Playground:** This project included a covered picnic shelter, walkways that were ADA accessible and potentially an accessible playground.

General discussions were held.

**Consensus:** *This item to be placed on an upcoming agenda for further discussions.*

**(3) COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:** Tiffany Henry, Economic Development Director, presented:

**(a) Broadband Funding:**

- Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF): A Federal Communications Commission program with the purpose of closing the digital divide. RDOF was a FCC reverse auction bid program. Jackson County RDOF Award:
  - 11,128 locations
  - Fiber to the home installation
  - \$16,978,566.40 award amount
  - Largest award in North Carolina
  - 7-year timeline (started early 2022)
  - Required speeds 100 Mbps symmetrical
- Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Grant: Charter (Spectrum) was the ISP awarded a GREAT grant for the county.
  - 1,156 locations
  - \$4,497,486 award amount
  - 2-year timeline
  - \$300,000 matching funds from the county
  - Partnership agreement forthcoming from NCDIT

- Jackson County had the largest number of applications submitted by ISP's in the region:
  - Total of 8 applications submitted
  - Total of \$32,673,402.89
  - Approximately \$35 million remaining and another round of awards was expected
  - The county offered to provide match funding of up to an additional \$300,000 a total of \$600,000 matching funds
- 2022-2023 Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) Grant Program: This program gave counties opportunity to target specific eligible areas in partnership with NCDIT BIO Office. CAB Program compliments the GREAT Grant program ensuring no overlap of grant funding support. Funding for the project must come from:
  - CAB Fund (NC portion) up to 35%
  - ISP up to 30%
  - County up to 35%

(b) **Outdoor Economy: Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE):** A technical assistance program provided by NC Department of Commerce's Main Street and Rural Planning Center that was aimed at the Outdoor Recreation Economy. This program would provide strategic planning and asset development to resources in the county.

(c) **NC Commerce Building Reuse Grant: American Sewing Expansion:**

- First ever building reuse grant in the county
- Grant Award for building expansion: \$60,000
- Permanent full-time jobs created: 12
- Permanent full-time jobs retained: 36
- Investment: Capital investment and real property: over \$2 million

(d) **Tuckasee Mills – Sold:**

- Innovation Brewing expansion of production facility: purchased for \$743,970
- Estimated jobs created: 22
- Investment: Capital investment and real property: over \$3 million

(e) **Other Updates**

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(4) UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE:** Michael Poston, Planning Director stated the Planning Department was working with the Cashiers Community Planning Council and the Jackson County Planning Board on updates to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The UDO was a compilation of development regulations that guided development throughout the county. Prior to 2019, the county had 21 separate ordinances and the UDO process combined those into one unified code for ease of administration and enforcement.

The largest UDO project was a recodification or complete rewrite of the Cashiers Commercial District regulations based on the recommendations of the adopted 2019 Cashiers Small Area Plan and the 2021 Urban Land Institute Cashiers Panel Report. Both documents included considerable public input that resulted in several recommendations related to updating the current Cashiers Commercial District regulations. The county engaged a consultant, CodeWright Planners, to assist with the recodification efforts, pending final contract negotiations.

The consultant was identified and unanimously recommended through a selection process by a committee comprised of the County Planning Staff, County Attorney and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cashiers Planning Council. This process was scheduled to kick off in January of 2023 and take approximately one year to complete. The project included five phases and included public engagement opportunities throughout the process. Planning Staff would continue to update the Commissioners on the project throughout the process.

Planning Staff also worked with the County's Planning Board on two proposed amendments to Article 6 of the UDO. The first proposed amendment was a rewrite of the Wireless Communications Facilities regulations. All new towers or modification to existing towers required a Special Use Permit issued by the Board of Commissioners through the quasi-judicial hearing process. The proposed amendments included moving tower approvals from a special use permit requirement to administrative approval and increasing maximum tower height to 199 feet. The Planning Board was required to hold a public hearing then make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners regarding the amendment. Upon receiving the recommendation of the Planning Board, the Board of Commissioners may call for a public hearing and consider approval of the proposed amendments.

The second proposed amendment addressed development standards for campgrounds. The county realized a significant increase in the development of campgrounds. Currently, the county did not have any development standards of how a developer or property owner constructed a campground. This issue was initially raised at the county's monthly Plan Review Team meeting (Plan Review team was comprised of staff members from Planning, Code Enforcement, Environmental Health, Fire Marshall, 911 Addressing, Economic Development, County Attorney and partnering agencies), where concerns were raised about the impacts of campgrounds and the need to address those impacts. The proposed amendments would create development standards for campgrounds in a tiered system. Level 1 would be campgrounds between two and 14 campsites. Level 2 campgrounds would be 15 or more campsites. Those standards included road design and access, minimum lot size of two acres, identification signs and site addresses, parking, bathhouse/laundry facilities required for Level 2 campgrounds. The Planning Board was required to hold a public hearing then make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners regarding the amendment. Upon receiving the recommendation of the Planning Board, the Board of Commissioners may call for a public hearing and consider approval of the proposed amendments.

The timeline for the proposed amendments for campgrounds and wireless communication facilities included the Planning Board to call for a public hearing in early 2023 and make a recommendation to Board of Commissioners for consideration. The Cashiers recodification project was expected to be a yearlong process with updates throughout the process. It was anticipated the Cashiers Planning Council and Planning Board could offer recommendations regarding a final draft of proposed changes in the mid-to-late fall of 2023.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

#### **(5) NCDOT PAVED TRAILS AND SIDEWALK FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT:**

Mr. Poston stated the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) had been allocated funds to establish a feasibility study program for paved trails, sidewalks and shared use paths. Through these funds, NCDOT created a grant program to allow jurisdictions to apply on a project by project basis. The call for applications would close January 9, 2023.

In 2021, the county completed the Jackson County Walks Plan through a NCDOT Pedestrian Planning Grant (one of a handful of counties in NC to have a pedestrian plan). This plan was guided by a Steering Committee made up of partners from the school system, WCU, SCC, law enforcement, Chambers of Commerce, Planning Councils, Planning Board, municipal representatives, Parks and Recreation, Vision Cashiers, Vencinos, Safe Routes to School and several others. The plan was designed to create a vision of a multimodal transportation network in the county. This planning document identified several potential projects across the county, including within municipalities that were key to multimodal transportation.

The next step in project development would be to move a project from the plan to a feasibility study. Feasibility studies better defined the project scope, location of the trail or sidewalk, property impacts, opportunities and constraints, design alternatives and cost estimates. This process also included public engagement with landowners and stakeholders regarding the proposed project. Once these studies were completed, they would provide enough information to identify funding sources, including grant sources for construction (shovel ready).

Planning Staff had identified two projects that they believed meet the criteria of the grant and would benefit the county to have completed studies to compete for future funding opportunities. The first was a sidewalk project in the Cashiers Community on Highway 64 East from the intersection of NC Highway 107 to Ingles. The second project was the Fairview Road from NC 107 to Fairview School. Both projects were identified in the Jackson County Walks plan.

In order to apply, the Board of Commissioners would need to adopt a Resolution of Support at their January meeting. They would also need a Resolution of Support from the Rural Planning Organization (RPO), which was a regional transportation planning group for rural areas of North Carolina. They could submit all required resolutions as an addendum to the application after the January 9<sup>th</sup> deadline.

He requested feedback from the Board of Commissioners in proceeding with the application process for these two projects and preparation of Resolutions of Support for consideration at the January meeting.

General discussions were held.

**Consensus:** *Proceed to forward with the grant.*

**(6) BOARD APPOINTMENTS:** Ms. Winchester presented:

(a) 2022 Remaining Appointments and Vacancies

(b) 2023 Expiring Appointments

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

The Board took a ten-minute break.

Chairman Letson called the meeting back to order.

**(7) ARPA AND LOCAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING:** Mr. Adams stated that the information he would present related to discussions they had or items he was aware of that the Board would discuss in the future.

He presented: American Rescue Plan Summary \$8,534,441:

<b>Revenues</b>	
First Payment 6/8/2021	\$4,267,220.50
Second Payment 6/10/2022	\$4,267,220.50
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$8,534,441.00</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
<b>Public Safety and Health Wages</b>	
Public Safety-Sheriff, Emergency Mgt.	\$4,840,009.00
Health	\$3,094,432.00
	<b>\$7,934,441.00</b>
Broadband Match	<b>\$600,000.00</b>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$8,534,441.00</b>
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<b>General fund 12</b>	
<b>Revenue Replacement Funds</b>	<b>\$7,934,441.00</b>

Commitments to date:	
<b>Capital Projects Fund 44</b>	
Planning Homeless Shelter	\$62,500.00
Planning Center for Domestic Peace	\$62,500.00
Construction CDP Facility	\$2,049,497.50
	\$2,174,497.50
Public Safety Equipment	
Axon Equipment	\$1,210,450.90
Nonprofits	
AWAKE	\$64,711.57
<b>Total Commitments to date:</b>	<b>\$3,449,659.97</b>
<b>Balance of Revenue Replacement Funds:</b>	<b><u>\$4,484,781.03</u></b>
Remaining Revenue Replacement Funds:	\$4,484,781.03
Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund	\$493,794.80
Jackson County was awarded \$493,794.80	
FY22 payment of \$246,897.40 had been received	
Funding could be used for General Government Services	
No deadline until expended	
March 31st reporting was required until expended	
<b>Total uncommitted funds:</b>	<b><u>\$4,978,575.83</u></b>

General discussions were held.  
*Informational item.*

**(8) OPIOID SETTLEMENT:** Mr. Adams stated that in the future, the Board would need to start having conversations about next steps regarding how to proceed forward with the funds available. In order to do so, he requested that the Board review the documentation available on the county website “Opioid Resources and Discussions” at [www.jacksonnc.org](http://www.jacksonnc.org).

The links on the website provided all of the information regarding the opioid settlement dollars. He shared a link to information that was presented to the Board on August 9, 2022. This link contained all of the information the Board would need initially to understand what the settlement dollars were, the amount of funds and what they could be expended for. This was a national settlement through lawsuits administered through the state, in which Jackson County received \$3.2 million over a 17-year timeframe.

**(a)** He shared the MOA Guiding Principles from previous discussions:

- Spend the money to save lives.
- Use evidence and data to guide spending.
- Invest in prevention of root causes.
- Focus on equity and populations disproportionately impacted. Include people with lived experience.

- Transparency and accountability. Fair and transparent process for deciding where and how to spend the funding.
- (b) How should counties and cities spend their settlement funds: The MOA offered local governments two options:
- Under Option A, a local government may fund one or more strategies from a shorter list of evidence-based, high-impact strategies to address the epidemic.
  - Under Option B, a local government engages in a collaborative strategic planning process involving a diverse array of stakeholders and may then fund a strategy from the list or a longer list of strategies included in the national settlements.
- (c) The previous Board decided to focus on Option A, which included: High Impact Abatement Strategies:
- Collaborative strategic planning
  - Evidence-based addiction treatment
  - Recovery support
  - Housing
  - Employment
  - Early intervention
  - Naloxone
  - Post-overdose response
  - Syringe service programs (SSPs)
  - Legal system diversion
  - Addiction treatment for incarcerated persons
  - Reentry programs: Opioid overdose death rates 40 times higher than general population during the first two weeks after release. 11 times more likely to die one year after release.
- (d) On October 11, 2022, the Board heard from Dr. Richard Zenn and Dr. Albert Kopak, who focused on four of the 12 High Impact Abatement Strategies:
- Evidence based addiction treatment
  - Legal system diversion
  - Addiction treatment for incarcerated persons
  - Reentry programs

*Informational item.*

**(9) REQUESTED SALARY GRADE ADJUSTMENTS:** Sheriff Doug Farmer was present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated that the Sheriff had been working internally to make changes within his organization. He had conversations with the County Manager's Office, along with the Finance Office. He presented the Sheriff's request for reorganization of his departmental structure.

He presented a document with the current organizational structure and a document dated December 20, 2022, with the requested changes. The county had a grade plan that ranked positions according to function and responsibility. The document showed the number of employees and the Sheriff's grade plan adjustments.

Sheriff Farmer stated this was his request. They worked through the numbers and he thought it was pretty much a wash as far as increases and decreases.

Mr. Adams stated that this was about positions in the organization and not about individuals in particular positions. This was the Sheriff's sole authority in those conversations. This was about working with the Sheriff's Office to put his organization in a manner that he deemed appropriate. There would be transitions occurring that would require payouts. This would require a budget amendment that would be on a January agenda for consideration.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(10) MUNICIPAL GRANT PROGRAM:** Mr. Adams stated the county had a Municipal Grant Program where municipalities could apply for up to \$5,000 from the county for projects that would help the town and the community as a whole. Applications would be accepted through January 5, 2023. The applicants would appear before the Board at the January work session.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(11) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER:** Mr. Adams presented the property location of where the Domestic Violence Shelter was proposed to be built. The property was owned by Mountain Projects. In order to apply to Dogwood for the grant, he had to obtain rough estimates from an architect and have the land in place.

The county received a grant from Dogwood in the amount of \$2,049,497.50 toward the project. They would work with Mountain Projects to transfer a portion of the property to the county for the anticipated a two-story 7,000 SF facility. The total project cost was \$4,098,994.21. They were hopeful to have schematics and updated project costs in approximately six months.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(12) FY22-23 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS AND SUMMARY:** Mr. Adams stated he would propose the budget calendar at the January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. He shared the link to the budget online and provided a quick tutorial and overview of the budget.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

**(13) MEETING SCHEDULE:** Chairman Letson stated that since they last discussed this item, it was noted there was a conflict with the third meeting at 6:00 p.m. He proposed to set the time for the third meeting to 6:30 p.m.

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

There being no further business, Chairman Letson moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

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Mark A. Letson, Chairman