

**MINUTES OF A  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
SEPTEMBER 05, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on September 05, 2023, 6:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman  
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair  
John W. Smith, Commissioner  
Tom Stribling, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager  
Debra Bechtel, Interim County Attorney (Via Zoom)  
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board

Absent: Mark Jones, Commissioner

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **PROCLAMATION: FIREFIGHTER, RESCUE SQUAD AND FIRST RESPONDER WEEK**: Chairman Letson read a Proclamation declaring September 10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> as Firefighter, Rescue Squad and First Responder Week. Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Randy Dillard, Chief of the Cashiers-Glenville Fire Department; Cale Wilson, Assistant Chief of the Savannah Fire Department; and Chris Cabe, Lieutenant of the Savannah Fire Department, were present to accept the proclamation.

(2) **AGENDA**: Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of August 15, 2023, as presented. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson reported he attended the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference in Raleigh two weeks ago. He met a lot of new people and it was a good conference.

(5) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**: Commissioner Bryson stated he had a meeting at the Savannah Community Building with a citizen regarding repairs and needed upgrades to the building and parking area. He requested the Board look at assisting with these needs.

(6) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: Mr. Adams stated he had no formal report. He noted they would not be able to conduct the Citizens Academy that year due to the lack of applicants.

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

(a) Tracy Powell requested to withdraw her application from consideration for appointment to the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees.

(b) Burgin Mackey voiced disapproval of Commissioner Smith's comments regarding a recent Sylva Pride event held at the Library. Both the Executive Boards of Sylva Pride and Sylva Belles Drag called on Commissioner Smith to issue a formal apology.

(c) Nathan Mann referenced a recent article in the Smoky Mountain News that included comments by Commissioner Smith. He called on Commissioner Smith to answer for his comments about the LGBTQ community and called on him to apologize.

(d) Tracy Mann expressed support and love to the community that suffered from comments made by Commissioner Smith. She voiced disapproval of the Sheriff's Office during an incident at an event hosted by Sylva pride held at the Library in Sylva. She called on Commissioner Smith and Sheriff Farmer to apologize.

(e) Sarah DeArmon voiced her support of the LGBTQ community and requested accountability and support from the elected officials. The event at the Library was a private event for adults paid for and put on outside of regular Library hours. She voiced disapproval of Commissioner Smith's comments and demanded an apology.

(f) Preston Willis stated restricting any content at the public library violated anyone's ability to access materials. Commissioner Smith violated what it meant to be a public servant as he publicly inflamed the situation negatively. He hoped going forward the Commissioners would strive to care for the community as a whole.

(g) Sara Rivera stated she, along with other attendees felt unsafe at an event hosted by Sylva pride held at the Library in Sylva. Everyone deserved love, acceptance and safety for who they were. They had an opportunity to build a better future. She asked for acceptance and support.

(h) C.Y. Wang shared his qualifications and credentials to volunteer for the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees. He requested to be appointed to this board and he would be willing to serve.

(i) Bill Ogletree stated he was a colleague of Dr. Wang. He spoke in support of Dr. Wang being appointed to the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees.

(j) Lori Anderson stated she was a colleague of Dr. Wang. She spoke in support of Dr. Wang being appointed to the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees.

(k) Terri Durbin stated she was a colleague of Dr. Wang. She spoke in support of Dr. Wang being appointed to the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees.

(l) Joe Tomaino stated he was a neighbor of Dr. Wang. He spoke in support of Dr. Wang being appointed to the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees.

(m) Jack Debnam requested consideration of his application for an appointment on the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees. He shared his qualifications for this position. He looked forward to getting back into community service.

(n) Michael Hall stated Sylva Pride had happened two years in a row. The event was a celebration in the community, including businesses and local governments. The county did not have to be the latest battleground in the culture war. He requested an apology for statements made and reiterated the Commission's dedication to serve all of the county residents.

(o) Jim Gaston stated he supported Commissioner Smith's First Amendment right. He expressed disapproval of the Fontana Regional Library (FRL) promoting sexual themes and gender confusion to children and minors. He requested the Commissioners look at the 10-year agreement with FRL to make needed changes.

(p) Keith Blaine expressed disapproval of FRL and discussed options to make changes. The FRL Board had not held FRL Directors accountable for spending money or for agendas. There were only six meetings per year and public comment had been banned. He requested the Commissioners hold meetings with Macon and Swain Commissioners to discuss changes to the contract.

**(8) SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT:** Russ Harris, Executive Director Southwestern Commission, stated each year he visited the County Commissions in the region to provide an update and distribute the most recent annual report.

The Southwestern Commission was the Council of Government (COGS) for Region A, which was the southwestern counties west of Haywood County and the 17 municipalities within. They had been around since 1965, providing service in the region when federal programs provided aid to local communities.

They raised local funds through per capita dues, which was approximately \$153,000 from the counties that year. Then, they received matching federal funds that brought in about \$20 million. Regional organizations were determined to be the most efficient way to get those federal funds to the local level.

Southwestern Commission's mission was to improve the quality of life in the region through the work of four primary departments:

- Area Agency on Aging: The Area Agency on Aging provided many services. There were over 150,000 meals served last year with 46,000 in Jackson County. Those folks received a nutritious meal and a personal contact.
- Community Economic Development Department
- Workforce Development Department: In March, when they learned about 1,000 people would lose their jobs with the closing of Pactiv Evergreen. Within 24-hours, the Workforce Development Department formed a rapid response team to present career opportunities, provide help for mortgage support and navigating health care.
- Mountain West Partnership

He invited all of the Commissioners to the next Southwestern Commission meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup> at Southwestern Community College.

*Informational item.*

**(9) SENIOR CENTER OF EXCELLENCE:** Eddie Wells, Department on Aging Director, provided a Certificate of Excellence from the North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services presented to the Jackson County Senior Center. The certificated stated the Jackson County Senior Center met all criteria and achieved recognition and was hereby declared a Senior Center of Excellence for a five-year term.

He thanked the Board of Commissioners, Administration, Public Works and Southwestern Commission. Also, he thanked the Senior Center staff, which was a dedicated staff that truly cared about helping people in the community. Senior Center Staff in attendance were Laura Rodi, Kristi Perino and Amanda Brooks.

*Informational item.*

**(10) PERMITTING SOFTWARE CONTRACT:** Mr. Adams stated this document had been discussed by the Board multiple times. He presented the final legal version of the contract with Tyler Technologies, Inc., with all of the attachments.

**(a)** Changes made to the contract were as follows:

- Page 5, Section 9. Data Breach and Cyber Attacks.
- Page 11, Section G-6 Insurance and Indemnification.

**(b)** Summary of Costs located in Exhibit B:

- Three annual maintenance payments: \$119,714
- Software payment: \$365,505
- Total Contract: \$724,647
- Estimated Travel Expenses: \$20,000

**(c)** He referenced Exhibit E Statement of Work, for details of the work that would be provided.

This was an important piece of software for the county to provide safety inspections through many departments. The funds had been budgeted to proceed forward with the three-year contract. He requested consideration for approval of the contract.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the Permitting Software Contract with Tyler Technologies, Inc., as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(11) COUNCIL ON AGING:** A recommendation for the appointment was submitted by Mr. Wells on behalf of the Council on Aging.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Smith moved to appoint Monica Wildcatt to serve a three-year term on the Council on Aging. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(12) PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD:**

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Stribling moved to appoint Geraldine Martinez to serve a three-year term on the Public Library Board. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(13) SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:**

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Smith moved to ratify Macon County's reappointment of Brett Rogers to the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees, as requested. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(14) PRESS CONFERENCE:** None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark A. Letson, Chairman