

**MINUTES OF A  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
MARCH 07, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on March 07, 2023, 6:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present:	Mark Letson, Chairman	Don Adams, County Manager
	Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
	Mark Jones, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
	John Smith, Commissioner	
	Tom Stribling, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **PLAQUE PRESENTATIONS**: Chairman Letson stated that at that time, the Board would give special recognition to former members of the Board and valued members of the community. He recognized Mr. Boyce Deitz, who served as Jackson County Commissioner from 2014 to 2022 and served as Vice Chairman of the Board from 2018 to 2022; Ms. Gayle Woody, who served as Commissioner from 2018 to 2022; and Mr. Brian McMahan, who served as Commissioner from 2014 to 2022 and served as Chairman of the Board from 2005 to 2010 and 2014 to 2022.

Appreciation plaques were presented to each of the former Commissioners and wall plaques were unveiled for each. He thanked each of them and stated the county was blessed for the times they had all served.

Commissioner Stribling thanked each of them for their service.

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

(3) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Smith moved to approve the minutes of a Work Session of February 14, 2023; a Budget Retreat of February 21, 2023; and a Regular Meeting of February 21, 2023, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Commissioner Jones noted that the Budget Retreat was very informative and well done. He thanked Mr. Adams for putting it together.

(4) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson stated that he was sad to announce that the Board received a letter of resignation from the County Attorney, Heather Baker. Ms. Baker served the county for seven and a half years and had been a constant for the Board of Commissioners and other planning boards. She would be missed.

(5) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**:

(a) Commissioner Bryson thanked Ms. Baker for being so professional during the transition. He wished her the best of luck.

(b) Commissioner Stribling wished Ms. Baker good luck.

**(6) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:** Mr. Adams expressed his appreciation to the former Commissioners in attendance. He appreciated their service to the community. Also, he greatly appreciated Ms. Baker's work for the county. She had new opportunities and he was happy for her. He appreciated her professionalism and service to the county. She had been a great assistance to him and all county departments and operations.

He reported:

**(a) February Zoning and Building Permits:** He provided a report that listed the zoning district (if applicable), the owner/business name, the work permitted and the location of the project where the permit was issued. The Planning Department issued one commercial zoning permits. Code enforcement issued two commercial permits and two renovation/addition permits.

**(b) Construction Projects:**

- **Animal Rescue Center:** He provided updated pictures of the project. A Transition Team would meet every two weeks prior to the transition. The contractor was going through the punch-out list. He felt comfortable they would be transitioning into the facility over the next couple of months. The state had inspected the project and provided a list of items to be completed. Although they may transition operations into the facility in April, they still had to get stabilization of the dog park and upper walking trail. It could be late spring to early summer before those facilities were open.
- **Aquatics Center:** He provided updated pictures of the project. In the last couple of weeks, they had 90% of the footers complete in Area A. In the next couple of weeks, they would complete the anchors, the footers and start a retaining wall.
- **Domestic Violence Shelter:** At the budget retreat, they had discussions regarding two designs for this facility. One was less than 7,000 sf with eight rooms and a staff room. The other was approximately 8,200 sf with ten, much larger rooms with a staff room. They were finding that the 8,200 sf building would meet the needs significantly more than the 7,000 sf facility. They were approximately \$400,000 over budget. He reached out to Dogwood and provided the information. They were discussing and would provide feedback. He would bring this item back to the work session.

**(c) MAT Program for the jail:** The Sheriff's Office and Administration submitted the \$1,481,000 application for the MAT Program Grant. They should hear back by the end of March. He was thankful to everyone involved with the submission of the application. They were hopeful to have a positive outcome with the grant to start developing a limited MAT Program in the jail setting, which would include providing transition services to incarcerated people when they would leave the jail setting. The build out of the transition services would be the base for building out services for all programming, which would go beyond treating incarcerated people. It would eventually allow them to start discussions about diversion programs, along with other programming, to allow people access to services.

**(d) Register of Deeds:** He received notification from the North Carolina Association of Register of Deeds that Shandra Sims had completed all coursework and was officially a Certified Register of Deeds. Also, Stephanie Grissom was a Certified Deputy Register of Deeds. He congratulated them both.

**(7) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:** None.

**(8) NCDOT CARBON REDUCTION GRANT-NC HIGHWAY 107 CULLOWHEE:** Michael Poston, Planning Director, stated this was a follow up from the work session. NCDOT opened a grant (submitted through the Southwestern RPO) for projects that reduce carbon in transportation systems. One of the eligible types of projects would be the construction of shared paths/greenways.

Throughout the planning processes (Cullowhee Small Area Plan, Jackson County Walks) they had identified a shared use path/greenway segment along NC Hwy 107 connecting the Cullowhee Recreation Center, Cullowhee Valley School, the Village of Forest Hills and Western Carolina University. The project was rated as one of the top ten projects in the Jackson County Walks Plan. They were currently working with Transportation Planning Design, transportation-engineering firm out of Asheville on a feasibility study for this project.

The grant would require a local match of 20%. The total cost of the project must include a 10% administration fee for NCDOT to manage all aspects of the project. He provided a proposed construction budget based on the draft feasibility study. The figures included construction costs, as well as a 25% contingency. In addition to the costs shown on the attachment, there was an estimated \$400,000 for engineering, surveying and permitting. Also, there was \$105,000 in project costs to move utility poles within the project boundary.

He also included a 10% escalation cost over a two-year period. The total construction cost (\$1,132,566 + \$105,000 + 10% escalation over two-year period) was \$1,497,455. The total cost for the project (\$1,497,455 + \$400,000 + \$189,745) was proposed to be \$2,087,200. The county's 20% would be \$417,440.

The grant provided a three-year period to construct the project. Grant applications were due from the Southwestern RPO by March 17, 2023. In general, there would be a few months to sign the contract with NCDOT and then another 9-12 months to develop construction documents and prepare for bid. After awarding the contract, it could take an additional 9-12 months for construction. In total, time from award to final construction could be 24-36 months in duration.

General discussions were held.

***Motion:** Commissioner Smith moved to authorize county staff to work with the Southwestern RPO and move forward to submit the grant, as presented, with the understanding the county was committed to a 20% match. Commissioner Stribling seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(9) OPIOID SETTLEMENT SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH RESOLUTION R23-04:**

Ms. Baker stated that a couple of years ago, there was a national \$26 billion opioid settlement. North Carolina participated in the settlement with all 100 counties signing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), along with some larger municipalities, to distribute those opioid funds. The agreement stated 15% would go to the state and the remaining 85% would be divided, proportionately to all the counties.

There was another large national settlement of \$21 billion. The original MOA did not cover this second wave settlement. The state requested a new MOA so that counties would receive the majority share of this settlement. North Carolina was set to receive an estimated \$600 million with 84.62% going to counties and a few municipalities. Jackson County's percentage was just over a half percent.

She presented Resolution R23-04 for consideration, stating the county agreed to abide by the MOA for the second wave settlement and authorized the County Manager or County Attorney to execute all documents necessary to enter into opioid settlement agreements.

General discussions were held.

***Motion:** Commissioner Jones moved to approve Resolution R23-04 and the Opioid Settlement Supplemental Agreement, as presented. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(10) DOGWOOD HEALTH TRUST GRANT:** Mr. Adams stated he was requesting permission to submit an application for a Dogwood grant for opioid planning. He had previously provided information for this grant at the work session.

The opioid planning grant would provide up to \$300,000 per year for up to two years. The funds would be to support collaborative planning projects between counties, municipalities or tribal nations and 501(c)(3) organizations and other community partners. The projects would align with the strategies listed in the North Carolina Memorandum Agreement executed by the NC Department of Justice and the NC Association of County Commissioners.

(a) The purpose was to plan and prepare for use of funding to be distributed to counties and municipalities in Western North Carolina as a result of the national opioid settlement.

(b) Funding available: They would consider grants of up to \$300,000 per year for up to two years. Opioid planning proposals may include requests to support:

- Facilitation and/or coordination of collaborative planning
- Needs assessment, data collection and/or analysis
- Partnership building
- Development of workforce, implementation and/or sustainability plans
- Capacity building
- Technical assistance
- Administration/reporting

(c) The county would request \$368,429 from Dogwood Health Trust to create a substance abuse recovery planning program for a two-year period. The initial primary focus of the program would be to create a long-term plan for the opioid settlement funding. Planning activities would align with the Memorandum of Agreement between the state and the county on proceeds related to the settlement of opioid litigation.

The requested allocation would be used to support over a two-year period the following items:

- One full-time substance abuse recovery coordinator position along with all associated fringe benefits.
- All costs associated with office space allocation, supplies, operational costs, travel, training, mileage reimbursement and equipment costs.
- Costs such as venue rental and meals associated with holding larger planning meetings with community stakeholders.
- Contracted consulting services, temporary services and part-time assistance as needed.

The planning process would include creating/enhancing community partnerships, developing a comprehensive needs assessment and collecting/maintaining data on existing and new programs. All of the stakeholders identified in Exhibit C to the NC MOA would be engaged in some form in the planning process.

It was anticipated that the planning process would enhance partnerships by identifying new opportunities between stakeholder groups. The program could build additional capacity by connecting programs with each other and with unmet needs. For example, the Board of Commissioners identified several areas of interest from the NC MOA: Option A – High Impact Abatement Strategies: The interest included addiction treatment and reentry programs for incarcerated persons.

The Sheriff's office applied for a grant being offered through the NC Department of Public Safety. If awarded, the grant would fund a limited MAT Program for incarcerated persons and would provide for some support once the person leaves the jail setting. It was anticipated that the substance abuse coordinator position requested in the Dogwood Grant, would assist in coordinating and connecting the client to services. This coordinator would also be involved in data collection and monitoring.

If the Sheriff was not successful with the grant, the requested program through Dogwood could still assist in connecting clients to services once released from jail. It was believed that there were other capacity building opportunities. The program would work with the county departments, nonprofits and other stakeholder groups to improve an integrated approach to address substance abuse disorders. Action plans would be facilitated and created. All new programs/approaches to addressing substance abuse disorders would be monitored to track community impacts of the coordinated efforts.

(d) Substance Abuse Recovery Planning Program Budget:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Budget Year FY23-24</u>	<u>Budget Year FY24-25 3.5% increase on position costs</u>	<u>Grand Total 2 Years</u>	
Full-time Substance Abuse Recovery Coordinator	\$64,066.00	\$66,308.31	\$130,374.31	Grade 25 - Step 12 Starting salary to be determined in accordance with county's career path hiring policy
Social Security Contribution	\$3,972.09	\$4,111.12	\$8,083.21	
Retirement Expense	\$7,694.33	\$7,963.63	\$15,657.95	
Hospitalization Insurance	\$14,460.00	\$14,966.10	\$29,426.10	
Unemployment Insurance	\$296.00	\$306.36	\$602.36	
Workman's Compensation	\$180.92	\$187.25	\$368.18	
Medicare Tax	\$928.96	\$961.47	\$1,890.43	
Sub-Total: Full-time position w/ benefits	<b>\$91,598.30</b>	<b>\$94,804.24</b>	<b>\$186,402.54</b>	
Office supplies and material	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	
Meeting supplies	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00	meeting supplies, meals and rented venue space
Travel and training	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$6,000.00	hotel, meal and registration costs associated w/ out of town training
Telephone	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00	\$3,200.00	
Postage	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	
Advertising	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$4,000.00	
Vehicle mileage reimbursement	\$6,250.00	\$6,250.00	\$12,500.00	
Insurance-professional liability	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$400.00	
Office space - allocated costs	\$19,963.00	\$19,963.00	\$39,926.00	*see note below
Capital outlay - equipment	\$4,000.00		\$4,000.00	laptop, tablet and printer
Contracted consulting services/temp services/part-time assist	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$100,000.00	**see note below
<b>Sub-Total: Other Expenses</b>	<b>\$93,013.00</b>	<b>\$89,013.00</b>	<b>\$182,026.00</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$184,611.30</b>	<b>\$183,817.24</b>	<b>\$368,428.54</b>	

\*County office to be reimbursed based upon professional allocated cost plan. This included all overhead costs to operate program and space. This would include items such as payroll/financial costs, facility insurance costs, power, water, sewer, maintenance and housekeeping.

\*\*Hire professional consulting services to facilitate and memorialize planning efforts. Hire temporary part-time assistance as needed. Provide stipends to those with lived experience to participate in planning process.

The grant was due mid-March. He requested permission to apply for the grant. If awarded, the grant would be available for next fiscal year.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Bryson moved to authorize the County Manager to apply for the Dogwood Health Grant for opioid planning, as requested. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(11) **COUNCIL ON AGING**: Recommendations for appointments were submitted by Eddie Wells, Aging Director.

**Motion**: *Commissioner Stribling moved to reappoint Debbie Coffey, Peggy Wike and Jim Montsinger to additional three-year terms on the Council on Aging. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) **PLANNING BOARD**: Chairman Letson stated the Board received a letter of resignation from Brad Waldrop from the Planning Board, as he was appointed to serve on the Sylva Town Board. This was the Chairman's appointment and he would be in the process of finding a replacement.

*Carry over.*

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

(14) **CLOSED SESSION**:

**Motion**: *Commissioner Smith moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(3) Legal and G.S.143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman Letson called the regular meeting back to order and stated that no action was taken in closed session.

(15) **AGENDA**: Chairman Letson requested to add one item: County Attorney Position. Commissioner Jones moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(16) **COUNTY ATTORNEY POSITION**: Chairman Letson requested a motion to direct county staff to advertise for a new job position for County Attorney.

**Motion**: *Commissioner Bryson moved to direct county staff to advertise for a new job position for County Attorney. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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

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