

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MARCH 21, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on March 21, 2023, 6:30 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
John W. Smith, Commissioner
Tom Stribling, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) PROCLAMATION FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS: Chairman Letson read a Proclamation to proclaim April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Wesley Myers, Executive Director, Center for Domestic Peace; Ruby Lawrence, Victim Advocate, Center for Domestic Peace; and Beth Hodges, Forensic Nurse Examiner, Women's Services Harris Regional Hospital, were present to accept the proclamation.

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

(3) MINUTES: Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of March 07, 2023. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: None.

(5) COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

(a) Commissioner Jones stated that thanks to Ms. Baker, over the past seven and a half years, an emphasis had been made on the large inventory of properties the county had foreclosed on and taken off the tax rolls. At that time, almost 100 properties, with values of almost \$4 million, had been placed back on the tax rolls. This meant \$14,000 of taxes, per year, coming in as tax revenue. He thanked Ms. Baker for the extra effort and hard work she did on this. It was excellent work.

(b) Commissioner Bryson thanked Ms. Baker for all she had done.

(6) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: None.

(7) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC: None.

(8) CONSENT AGENDA:

Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for February, 2023, for approval.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) SHERIFF'S OFFICE TRANSFER OF SERVICE PISTOL TO RETIREE:

Sheriff Farmer stated Sergeant Kenneth Woodring retired from service with the Sheriff's Office, effective March 1, 2023. He met the eligibility requirements to be transferred ownership of his service pistol at the time of his retirement. Accordingly, he requested approval from the Board of Commissioners to transfer the below listed service pistol as follows: Glock Modell 22 .40 caliber serial #AHEE431.

North Carolina General Statute 20-187.2 authorized the Board to complete this transaction at a cost determined by the Board, which had traditionally been set in the amount of \$1.00, cash paid at the time of approval by the Board.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to declare the service pistol surplus for \$1.00 and authorized presenting it as requested. He directed the Sheriff's Office to provide the serial numbers and descriptions of the service pistol to the Finance Director and replace the service pistol at no cost to the county. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) TOBACCO POLICY REVISION: Kathleen Breedlove, Human Resources Director, stated this item was discussed at the work session. The Board of Commissioners approved a Health Insurance Policy for Users of Tobacco Products on April 16, 2019. This policy required health plan eligible employees of any age and retirees under the age of 65 to certify their status as a user or non-user of tobacco products at the time they began health plan eligible employment, annually during the Open Enrollment period and also submit to mandatory substance testing.

This policy was suspended for the years 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Substance testing resumed in 2022 with the use of a mouth swab cotinine (nicotine) test as had been done in prior years. It became apparent that a number of employees who certified as non-tobacco users were testing positive on the substance test due to the use of e-cigarette products.

The county, as an employer and provider of employee health insurance benefits, discouraged the use of nicotine/tobacco products in any form and was seriously committed to assisting users with cessation support. Therefore, it was recommended that the policy be updated to include nicotine.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the Tobacco Policy Revision, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(11) UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS: Michael Poston, Planning Director, stated this item was discussed at the last work session. Planning Staff had been working with the Planning Board on proposed amendments to Article VI of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Development Standards. The proposed Amendments would amend the current Wireless Communications Development Standards and add development standards for campgrounds.

The Planning Board held a public hearing for the proposed changes and no public comment was made. The Planning Board unanimously recommended that the Board of Commissioners consider adoption of the proposed amendments.

He requested a public hearing be set on April 18th at 6:25 p.m.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to set a public hearing on April 18th at 6:25 p.m. for the Unified Development Ordinance Amendments, as requested. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) MUNICIPAL GRANT APPLICATION: Mr. Adams stated this item was discussed at the work session. It was proposed that the county fund a portion of Sylva's Municipal Grant application in the amount of \$2,431.62 to purchase four kiosks. He shared the original application and noted the portion of the request that discussed the kiosks.

General discussions were held.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to approve a portion of Sylva's Municipal Grant application in the amount of \$2,431.62 for the purchase of four kiosks, as requested. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(13) INTERIM COUNTY ATTORNEY: Mr. Adams introduced the proposed Interim County Attorney, Debra Bechtel. He believed they had found someone highly skilled to provide services to the county on an interim basis. Ms. Bechtel worked for the law firm, Teague Campbell and had local government experience. She served as a prosecutor at the beginning of her career and then served 20 years as the Catawba County Attorney. Ms. Bechtel had experience with all aspects of local government.

Ms. Bechtel was a professor at Wake Forest University and currently developed and presented Critical Training for multiple organizations. He presented to the Board to consider the appointment of Ms. Bechtel as the Interim County Attorney, effective April 1, 2023.

Motion: Commissioner Stribling stated that pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 153A-114, he made a motion to appoint attorney Debra Bechtel, with the Teague Campbell law firm, to be the County Attorney, on an interim basis, effective April 1, 2023. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Chairman Letson stated that the Board had a copy of the Hourly Representation Agreement stating the terms of Ms. Bechtel's rate, along with Associate and Paralegal rates. He requested a motion to approve the hourly agreement.

Motion: Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Teague Campbell Hourly Representation Agreement, as presented. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Ms. Bechtel stated she was pleased to be with the Board in person. She was in the area doing training for regional health departments. After her 25 years with Catawba County, she retired early and her dream was to focus on and support local government. In the last year and a half, it had been a privilege to do that across the state. She had worked with Ms. Baker and Ms. Breedlove in that role. Also, she worked with Ms. Poston for many years in Catawba County. She was happy to be able to help in any way that she could.

Chairman Letson thanked Ms. Bechtel and stated they were grateful for her service. They looked forward to working with her in the future. Since it was Ms. Baker's last official meeting, the Board of Commissioners created a certificate of appreciation to show how much they truly would miss Ms. Baker and all of the services she had provided. He thanked her for all of her years of service.

(14) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman