

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MAY 16, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on May 16, 2023, 6:30 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Don Adams, County Manager
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	Patrick Scott, Interim County Attorney
Mark Jones, Commissioner (Via Zoom)	Representative (Via Zoom)
John W. Smith, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Tom Stribling, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

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

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Smith moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of May 02, 2023. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: None.

(4) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**: Commissioner Stribling reported that he lived near the Cullowhee Rec Center and it was looking awesome. It was really coming along.

(5) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: None.

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

(7) **CONSENT AGENDA**:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for April, 2023 and six Budget Ordinance Amendments for fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, for approval.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for April, 2023, for approval.

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

(8) **FIREWORKS DISPLAY REQUEST**: Tony Elders, Director of Permitting and Code Enforcement, requested approval for an application he received for a fireworks display at Castle Ladyhawke in Tuckasee on Tuesday, June 6th.

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the request for fireworks display, as presented. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) PINNACLE PARK MASTER PLAN: Mr. Adams stated that this request was presented to the Board at the work session for \$50,000 to go toward a \$150,000 planning project for Pinnacle Park and Black Rock.

Chairman Letson stated that he thought having a Master Plan would help determine what happened at the park and it would be an asset in the community. He thought it was a worthwhile venture for the county and the area.

Commissioner Jones stated that he agreed with Chairman Letson.

Commissioner Smith asked if there would be a traffic impact analysis done?

Mr. Adams stated that he was not aware of a traffic impact study being in the scope of work.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Master Plan funding request for Pinnacle Park, in the amount of \$50,000. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(10) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – HEALTH DEPARTMENT – EBCI: Mr. Adams provided the latest version of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as discussed at the work session. Shelley Carraway, Health Director, presented a redline version at the work session that included the exclusion of the infinity pool language. He had requested that Mr. Scott create a clean version that removed the infinity pool exclusion language.

He had conversations with Swain, Cherokee and Haywood Counties and Ms. Carraway had spoken with the Graham County Health Director. All of the counties agreed that they did not believe that type of exclusion language should be in a regional agreement. He believed that if the Board moved forward with the agreement, that all counties would be in agreement to sign. He noted that the county would be approached by the state and EBCI to discuss the exclusion separate from the regional agreement.

Motion: Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the Health Department and EBIC, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(11) JAIL LIMITED MAT GRANT: Mr. Adams stated this was a follow up from the work session. He provided the proposed Memorandum of Agreement between the State of North Carolina Department of Public Safety Purchasing and Logistic Office and the Jackson County Sheriff's Office. He requested the Board to authorize the Sheriff and/or the County Manager to sign off on documentation to proceed forward with the grant.

(a) He provided the budget for a two-year program:

- \$161,689 Two years of salary
- \$82,699 Available for peer support services
- \$243,000 162 Vivitrol doses
- \$6,400 Grant oversight/reporting
- \$493,788 Grant Award

(b) North Carolina Department of Public Safety stated the following conditions were to be addressed when implementing the Medication-Assisted Treatment Program utilizing the awarded funds:

- Recommend consultation with Alkermes; discuss any savings options
- Develop detailed implementation plan for Vivitrol administration pre and post release for at least a 6 to 9-month timeframe for each participant:
 - Clarify subcontractors, recovery support
 - Clarify administration of Vivitrol administered in the community

- Submit a 12-month budget for the award amount along with the signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to authorize the Sheriff and/or County Manager to sign off on documentation to proceed forward with the grant, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) FY23-24 PROPOSED BUDGET: Mr. Adams presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Annual Budget for the county and stated it was in the amount of \$88,106,428. The proposal constituted an approximate increase of 5.94% (\$4,938,651) over the current FY23 amended budget. The budget was balanced and prepared in accordance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, presenting appropriations by categories of expense and revenues by source. All proposals within the general fund were based upon a budget with a tax rate of \$0.38 per \$100 of value.

(a) Expenditures Highlights: Total Expenditures by Function for the General Fund \$88,106,428:

- 24.06% Education
- 24.53% Public Safety
- 21.54% Human Services
- 16.56% General Government
- 6.29% Cultural/Recreation
- 2.10% Non-Education Debt
- 1.52% Ec and Phy Dev
- 1.35% Transportation
- 0.18% Environmental Protection
- 1.87% Other/Contingency

(b) Personnel/Insurance: The proposed FY23-24 budget contained personnel recommendations. The recommendations included:

- One step (3.15%, 3.00% or 1.5% based on career path) increase for all employees.
- A 3% Cost of Living adjustment for all employees.
- Worker's Compensation and Liability Insurance.

It was recommended that all employees move up one step in the current grade and step plan. This action was necessary to maintain the career path system. Approximately \$1,011,788 was budgeted to implement a one-step increase and a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) included in the proposal.

There were several requests for salary reclassifications and new positions. The classification and compensation study that was approved by the Board on March 15, 2022 and implemented effective January 1, 2022 should allow for the retention of existing personnel. The salary plan would also allow for the recruitment of both inexperienced and experienced personnel. He had not recommended salary reclassifications in this proposal.

The following other personnel recommendations were included in this proposal for a total of 15.5 new positions:

- Housekeeping: 1 Housekeeper to be used for multiple facilities.
- Grounds: 1 General Utility Worker III for new Dillsboro Complex facility.
- Sheriff: 4 Road Patrol Deputies and 1 Detective for drug enforcement.
- Jail: 1 Detention Officer.
- Code Enforcement: 1 50%-time Administrative Assistant II to be used in Cashiers during the new software implementation.
- Green Energy: 1 50%-time Programming Manager.
- Animal Control: 1 Animal Shelter Attendant.
- Social Services: 2 Social Worker IA&T positions to manage caseloads and to implement Safety Organized Practice, a new software system to achieve better outcomes for children and families. These positions were to transition into a new pilot program through the state's Family First Preventative Services Act.

- Social Services: Extend the IMC II-Support Specialist position one additional year. The position was already budgeted and was cost shared with the state.
- Health: Eliminate a Health Educator position that worked solely in Haywood County under a contract with Smart Start.
- Recreation: 3.5 positions were included for the Aquatics Facility. They would be hired on a staggered schedule beginning January 1, 2024. The positions included a Site Manager, Head Lifeguard and 1.5 Administrative Assistant II positions.

Hospitalization/dental insurance premiums would remain at current rates. The employee rates would also remain the same. Worker's Compensation Insurance would increase by 3%. Liability Insurance would increase by 2%.

(c) Capital and Capital Improvements: There were capital and capital improvement needs in the amount of \$2,064,846 that should be addressed in FY23-24. The recommendations were as follows:

- Equipment: \$1,510,822. Highlights under this category include computers, servers, printers, software, garage equipment, cleaning equipment, grounds maintenance equipment, recreation equipment, law enforcement radios, cameras, body scanner and emergency communication equipment. It was recommended that the majority of these expenses be delayed until after the audit was complete.
- Vehicles: \$554,024. Highlights under this category include \$252,000 for five new vehicles at the Sheriff's Office and \$60,000 for painting and decal updates; \$70,000 for two Code Enforcement vehicle replacements; \$104,724 for Ground Maintenance two replacement vehicles; \$37,300 for Cooperative Extension new vehicle; and \$30,000 for one Social Services replacement vehicle.
- Improvements: \$2,494,300. Highlights under this category include Cashiers Code Enforcement painting, replacement of one HVAC unit and painting for the Cashiers Recreation Center. Repairs to the jail areas of booking, cabinets and kitchen shelving. Two HVAC units and a generator were also included for the Jail. Other improvements included Cullowhee Recreation Center building updates, Fairview Concession road paving, repairs to the Sylva Pool, Mark Watson Park paving, Department on Aging roof repairs and road improvements; and office unit at the Green Energy Park. Also included, was a match for Highway 107 sidewalk construction and the Pinnacle Park Master Plan.
- Note: It was proposed that these projects be funded from two different sources: \$2,124,000 from General Fund and \$370,300 from the CPR Fund.

(d) Current FY2018-2022 Facility Capital Improvement Plan and New FY2024-2028 Facility Capital Improvement Plan: The adopted FY2018-2022 Facility Capital Improvement Plan set aside funds for three major facility projects:

- Health Department/One Stop Permitting Center. Project had been completed.
- Animal Rescue Center. The project was scheduled for completion in the summer of 2023.
- Justice Center Renovations. Schematic design work for the Justice Center Renovations would begin during FY23-24 to include the newly elected Sheriff, Clerk of Court and Register of Deeds.
- The FY 2024-2028 Facility Capital Improvement Plan would be completed in early FY24. Four projects were proposed to move forward while working on the new plan. There were as follows:
 - Aquatics Center was under construction and should be completed by the spring of 2024.
 - Domestic Violence Shelter design would be completed in the fall of 2023.
 - Whittier-Qualla Park project site development plans would be completed during the fall of 2023.
 - Glenville-Cashiers Splash Pad project site development plans would be completed during the fall of 2023.

(e) Board of Education:

- Current Expense: It was proposed to allocate \$9,417,613 (a 4% increase of \$362,216) to the public schools for FY23-24. This included \$7,928,547 for current operations, \$147,605 for PILT, \$880,950 in teacher supplements and \$460,511 for counselors.
- Capital: 40% of the Article 40 (½ cent) sales tax and 60% of the Article 42 (½ cent) sales tax go to public schools for capital. In FY23-24 the following items were proposed to be funded:
 - Capital Outlay: \$335,000
 - Capital Outlay Technology: \$400,000
 - Capital Outlay One to One: \$320,700
 - Capital Outlay Maintenance: \$375,000 preventative maintenance
 - Capital Outlay Security: \$25,000
 - Capital Outlay Masterplan \$130,000
 - Total: \$1,585,700

It was recommended to budget an additional \$2,504,682 for public school capital expenditures in FY23-24 out of Articles 40 and 42 sales tax. It was also recommended to budget an additional \$2,671,043 out of the Article 46 sales tax fund in FY23-24 to be used for educational purposes. These sales tax funds, future grants and available lottery proceeds would dictate the outcomes of Public Safety Schools' FY2024-2028 Facility Capital Improvement Plan.

(f) Southwestern Community College (SCC): It was proposed to allocate \$2,635,757 (a 4% increase of \$101,375) to SCC in current operations for FY23-24.

The proposed general maintenance capital outlay appropriation was \$154,850 for Fire Alarm System upgrades and \$50,000 for incidental repairs.

(g) County Libraries: It was proposed to allocate \$1,342,101 (a 4% increase of \$51,619) to the Fontana Regional Library System to operate both the Jackson County Library and the Albert Carlton Library.

(h) Other Appropriations: There were many agencies that requested funds from the county. He divided the discussions into three categories: Safety-Fire, Forestry, Rescue, EMS; Community Development Centers (CDC), non-profits; and Contingencies. Safety – Fire, Forestry, Rescue, EMS:

- It was proposed that Canada, Savannah, Balsam and Qualla Volunteer Fire Departments and the Glenville-Cashiers and Jackson County Rescue Squads receive a 4% increase in allocation. Matching funds would be available for equipment purchased under grant funding.
- Sylva Fire Department was being funded at \$1,070,308. This amount included a debt reduction of \$45,158.17, then a 4% increase. This would enable the department to have paid members on staff 24/7. Mutual aid was provided to other departments within the county. The proposed funding amount provided enough funding for eight full-time fire personnel. Since this was a town department, the Town of Sylva could choose to add additional personnel by adding town funds to the operations.
- Cullowhee Fire Department was being funded at \$1,103,480. This amount included a debt reduction of \$15,750, then a 4% increase. This would enable the department to continue to have paid members on staff 24/7. Mutual aid was provided to other departments within the county.
- It was proposed that the Forestry Service receive funding of \$99,656, as requested. This represented a \$9,459 decrease.
- A debt payment of \$350,00 was being recommended for a new Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad facility at a cost of \$4,500,000.

- CDC and Non-profits: It was proposed that Community Development Center funding to all 14 centers remain at current FY22-23 levels. It was proposed that most nonprofits be funded at the current FY22-23 levels. An increased was proposed for the Community Table and Cullowhee Revitalization to bring them back to the level prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Contingencies: There were multiple contingencies recommended in the proposed budget:
 - \$399,637 in contingency for general purposes.
 - \$1,172,707 for equipment purchases. This was part of the overall equipment budget discussed earlier that could be delayed until the audit was received.
 - \$25,000 for internship/work programs.

(i) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): Remaining and future funds in these programs would be expended for programs to be decided upon on a case by case basis.

(j) Special Fund Highlights: These funds were separate operating entities from the general fund budget. The general fund budget included transfers to some of these other funds in the amount of \$11,651,218 to support capital projects, recreation and conservation, debt service, the green energy park, economic development, revaluation and school capital reserve. There were additional personnel and capital recommendations in the following summaries:

- Solid Waste Enterprise Fund: The Solid Waste FY23-24 proposed operating budget was \$5,212,822. The proposal constituted an approximate increase of 1.69% (\$86,776) over the current FY22-23 amended budget. The enterprise fund was funded completely from fees collected for services. Employees within this Fund would receive a one-step pay increase and 3% cost of living adjustment. There were no other major operational changes proposed for FY23-24.
- He did not propose an increase in availability fees for the operation. Escalating energy costs were dramatically impacting the budget. The current contracts had fuel escalator clauses. All contracts were out for bid. Bid results would dictate future level of service rates.
- Emergency Telephone (E911) Fund: The E911 FY23-24 proposed operating budget was \$314,070. The proposal was the same level as the current FY22-23 amended budget. These operations were funded completely through E911 fees. There were no major operational changes proposed for FY23-24.
- Real Property Revaluation Fund: The proposed FY23-24 revaluation operating budget was \$600,500. The proposal constituted a 20.5% increase over current year operations. Employees within this Fund would receive a one-step pay increase and a 3% cost of living increase. This was the third year of the four-year revaluation cycle that began during FY21-22. Contracted services had increased for oversight in the revaluation process. There were no major operational changes proposed for FY23-24.
- Green Energy Fund: The FY23-24 proposed budget was \$331,516. The proposal constituted a 4.93% (\$15,586) increase in funding over current FY22-23 budget. Employees within this Fund would receive a one-step pay increase and a 3% cost of living adjustment. There were no major operational changes proposed for FY23-24.
- Economic Development fund: The FY23-24 proposed budget was \$195,608. The proposal constituted an approximate increase of 11.16% (\$19,642) over the current FY22-23 amended budget. The employee within this Fund would receive a one-step pay increase and a 3% cost of living adjustment. There were no other major operational changes proposed for FY23-24.

- Fire Tax Fund: This Fund included both the Highlands Fire and Rescue Operations and the Cashiers-Glenville Volunteer Fire Department.
 - The Highlands Fire and Rescue proposed FY23-24 budget was \$84,000. The proposal constituted the same level of funding from current FY22-23. The current fire tax rate of \$0.0272 per \$100 value would provide the revenues necessary to cover expenses.
 - The Cashiers-Glenville Volunteer Fire Department proposed FY23-24 budget was \$1,844,634. This proposal constituted the same level of funding from current FY22-23 amended budget. The current tax rate of \$0.0294 per \$100 value would provide the revenues necessary to cover expenses.
- Other Funds: This category included other funds such as the Capital Reserve Fund, School Capital Reserve Fund (19 and 20), Economic Development Fund (23, 42 and 64), Community Development Fund, Law Enforcement Fund, Conservation Preservation Recreation Fund, Debt Service Fund, Clean Water Revolving Fund, Airport Authority Fund and all active funds.

(k) Fee Schedules: The county operated many services that relied on fees to offset the cost of operations. These fee schedules applied to both the general fund and other fund operations. The fee and rate schedule included the following: Mileage reimbursement rate; Hospital/Dental Insurance Rates; Recreation Center Fees and Charges; Pool Fees and Charges; Senior Center Participants Fee Schedule; Permitting and Code Enforcement Fees; Planning Fees; Health Department Fees; and Solid Waste Fund Fees. It was recommended that adjustments be made to the following fee schedules:

- Mile rate was recommended to increase to the 2023 IRS rate of 65.5 cents per mile.
- Hospital/Dental Rates – The county’s contribution for employees would remain the same.
- Solid Waste Availability Fees may remain the same.
- Other minor changes in departmental fee and rate schedules were included in the proposal.

(l) Closing: The public hearing was scheduled for June 06, 2023 at 5:55 p.m. in regards to the proposed budget. The public would be able to examine the proposed budget on the county’s website and hard copies would be available for inspections at the Administration and Finance Departments. The budget was tentatively scheduled to be approved at a Commissioners’ meeting in June, 2022, after the Board had the opportunity to make any final adjustments.

He extended his appreciation to all county employees who worked extremely hard to provide the necessary services that made Jackson County a great place to live. He also extended his thanks to the department heads, elected officials and other representatives for their cooperation in fashioning their budget requests to the required specifications and timelines. Last, but by no means least, he thanked Finance Director Darlene Fox and her staff for their tireless effort and attention to detail over the budget development process.

Chairman Letson thanked Mr. Adams and Ms. Fox for all their hard work.

Informational item.

(13) **NCDHHS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SPECIALTY PLAN**: Mr. Adams presented a revised letter for review. The letter requested that the focus be on the real issue and urgent crisis occurring. A portion of the letter stated:

“We request that the North Carolina Governor’s Office, the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the NC Legislature focus on the real issue of building provider and institutional capacity. Any additional strategies to build provider and institutional capacity should be funded and implemented without having to wait for a long 18-month request for proposal process. The urgent need is immediate.

Jackson County understands that the foster care system is complex. We look forward to collaborative partnerships when addressing these issues. Any assistance on these urgent issues will be greatly appreciated.”

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve the NCDHHS Children and Families Specialty Plan Letter, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(14) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

The Board took a five-minute break.
Chairman Letson called the meeting back to order.

(15) CLOSED SESSION:

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

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

There being no further business, Commissioner Stribling moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman