

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
OCTOBER 17, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on October 17, 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	John Kubis, Interim County Attorney
Mark Jones, Commissioner (Via Zoom)	Representative (Via Zoom)
John W. Smith, Commissioner (Via Zoom)	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Tom Stribling, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

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

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the minutes of a Public Hearing (Consolidated Human Services) of October 03, 2023 and a Regular Meeting of October 03, 2023. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson reported he attended the Western North Carolina Farm to Table Dinner held at Bridge Park. He got to hang out with wonderful people and eat fresh, local foods. It was delicious and a lot of fun.

(4) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**: None.

(5) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: Mr. Adams stated he had no formal report. He noted that last Thursday, the Department on Aging held their annual Hands on Jackson. Over 220 volunteers participated and they raised over \$17,000 for projects. They had over 37 projects, including handicap ramps, decks, stairs, pressure washing, gutter cleaning, yard maintenance, etc.

This was a great annual event that Eddie Wells, Department on Aging Director and his staff, along with volunteers, came together to help the community. He thanked Mr. Wells, his staff and all the volunteers that made it a great day.

(6) **INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC**: Dick Darnall requested the county pave the entrance to Ralph Andrews Park. He also requested the county to look at ways to combat kudzu.

(7) **CONSENT AGENDA**:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for September, 2023 for approval.

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

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

(8) GREAT GRANT AWARD: Mr. Adams stated this item was discussed at the work session. He presented Exhibit J, which had some minimal wording changes requested by NCDIT. Exhibit J approved the \$182,000 match from the county for the \$2,431,130.90 project. The contract would eventually come back before the Board for approval.

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to approve Exhibit J approving the \$182,000 county match for the GREAT Grant, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) STATE EXTENSION RAISES – COUNTY MATCH: Mr. Adams stated this item was discussed at the work session. There was a request for a county match with the state salary increase of NC State Employees of 4%. This would be a 4% match of the county extension salary portion with the state salary portion. The total would be an approximate \$3,386 annual increase to the County Extension budget.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the county match for the County Extension salary increase, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) SUMMIT CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITY LOAN REQUEST: Chairman Letson was recused from this item at the work session on October 10, 2023.

Mr. Adams stated this item was discussed at the work session. Summit Charter School requested a loan in the amount of \$2,500,000 from the county for the construction of a new high school building on the campus of Summit Charter School located at 370 Mitten Lane, Cashiers.

The Foundation raised \$4.8 million toward a \$6.5 million campaign goal. Their goal was to have commitments totaling \$6.5 million by August 2024. The purpose of the Foundation's loan request was to bridge their cash flow needs during construction. If approved, the Foundation expected to repay the full amount of the loan within thirty-six months of the loan origination date. They anticipated paying all necessary closing costs associated with the loan, as well as monthly interest as to be defined and agreed upon in the terms of the loan agreement.

If the Board wished to move forward, he recommended to start with a Letter of Intent. He provided a proposed letter for review. The letter stated the county intended to move forward with the request under the following conditions:

- 1. All actions must be allowable by North Carolina law. Jackson County will require all documentation to be reviewed and approved by County legal representation prior to approval and implementation.
- 2. The loan amount will be up to \$2,500,000.
- 3. The payback timeline will be 36 months.
- 4. The interest rate will be based upon the actual return on investments that Jackson County is receiving for its cash investments. Currently the ROI is 5.5%.
- 5. Summit Charter School will be responsible for all costs associated with this loan. Jackson County requests that Summit Charter School commit to these costs in writing.
- 6. The loan must be secured by a promissory note and deed of trust.
- 7. The goal is to have these funds available to Summit Charter School by January 2024. Actual availability of funds will be dictated by how long it takes to accomplish the above tasks.
- 8. This letter is not a formal commitment. All tasks above, and any other items deemed appropriate, must be completed prior to the Jackson County Board of Commissioners taking any final action. The Board must take final action prior to any funds being made available for this project. Any decisions / actions made by Summit Charter School based upon this proposed loan is being done so at your own risk.

He noted that if the Board wished to move forward, Summit Charter School would share information they provided to the bank that qualified them for a bank loan. He provided a parcel report of Summit Charter School and the property the high school would be built on, which had a current land value was \$345,000.

General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams stated since Chairman Letson was recused from this item and there were two Commissioners participating via Zoom, technically there were two Commissioners present who could vote on this item. Until the majority of the Board was physically present, there could not be a vote.

Carry over.

(11) SAVANNAH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER: Mr. Adams stated this item was discussed at the work session. The Savannah Community Development Center Board of Trustees requested funding to repair the ceiling and gravel for the parking lot.

Quotes received for the repairs:

- Estimate to drywall ceiling: \$4,580
- Parking Lot:
 - #1 ABC stone and 78mm spread on new handicap parking area \$4,536
 - #2 78mm stone and spread on existing driveway and parking areas \$2,800

Chairman Letson stated he believed the Commissioners had agreed to move forward with Option #1 to spend \$4,536 for the parking lot.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to award \$4,580 for ceiling repair and \$4,536 for parking lot repair, as requested. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) ANIMAL SHELTER NAME: Mr. Adams stated this item was discussed at the work session. He requested to change the name of the Animal Rescue Center to the original name of “Animal Shelter”. At that point, there was only one sign that would need to be changed. If the Board moved forward with the name change, they could proceed forward with ordering all of the other signage.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to change the Animal Rescue Center name back to the original name of “Animal Shelter”, as requested. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(13) MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT PLAN: Mark E. Browder, Mark III Brokerage, Inc., was present for this item via Zoom.

Mr. Adams stated this would normally be a work session conversation, but the timing would not allow them to put this on the November work session. Mr. Browder was the county’s insurance Consultant met with staff last week to discuss the Medicare Supplement Plan.

This plan was for all of the county’s retirees 65 and over. Until age 65, all retirees remained on the county’s plan. Once they became Medicare eligible, they switched to Medicare and the county supplemented the plan. Mr. Browder presented the county with an opportunity he believed they should consider. Since it was Medicare, they would have to move forward with training and implementation in November to become effective in January.

Mr. Browder stated the market had changed dramatically with post-65 coverage. Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina had become extremely competitive in this market. Last year, they started implementing plans with Blue Cross based on their competitive position and started receiving proposals. This year, Blue Cross started expressing a strong interest in Jackson County.

He presented: Medical Plan Medicare Advantage:

(a) Suggested Plan Design Post 65 Retiree Coverage

- The Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Plan was a PPO Plan
- Retirees could go in and out of network
- Additional benefits including hearing aid allowance, vision hardware allowance

(b) Suggested Plan Design Retiree Coverage:

Pharmacy	Preferred		
Member Pays	30 Day	60 Day	90 Day
RX Coverage Gap		\$8,000	
Deductible	\$0	\$0	\$0
Generic Tier 1	\$0	\$0	\$0
Generic Tier 2	\$10	\$20	\$30
Preferred Brand Tier 3	\$15	\$30	\$45
Non-Preferred Brand Tier 4	\$30	\$60	\$90
Specialty Tier 5	\$60	Only 30 Day Supply	
	Non-Preferred		
Member Pays	30 Day	60 Day	90 Day
RX Coverage Gap		\$8,000	
Deductible	\$0	\$0	\$0
Generic Tier 1	\$14	\$28	\$42
Generic Tier 2	\$20	\$40	\$60
Preferred Brand Tier 3	\$25	\$50	\$75
Non-Preferred Brand Tier 4	\$40	\$80	\$120
Specialty Tier 5	33%	Only 30 Day Supply	

(c) Prescription Drug Benefits Current Coverage: No yearly deductible

	One Month 30 day	Two Months 60 day	Retail Preferred 90 day	Non-Preferred 90 day	Mail Order 90 day
Generic Tier 1	\$0 Copay	\$0 Copay	\$0 Copay	\$0 Copay	\$0 Copay
Generic Tier 2	\$10 Copay	\$20 Copay	\$20 Copay	\$30 Copay	\$20 Copay
Preferred Brand Tier 3	\$40 Copay	\$80 Copay	\$80 Copay	\$120 Copay	\$80 Copay
Non-Preferred Brand Tier 4	\$70 Copay	\$140 Copay	\$140 Copay	\$210 Copay	\$140 Copay
Specialty Tier 5	\$70 Copay	\$140 Copay	\$140 Copay	\$210 Copay	\$140 Copay

(d) MAPD quote for the county with a two-year rate guarantee:

- There were savings available for the county with additional benefits they currently did not have, including \$0 copays and cost sharing, and a more robust formulary and benefits.
- Additional highlights:
 - Hearing with Hearing aid allowance
 - Vision with Eyeglass allowance
 - PERS Free per member
 - Worldwide Emergency, Urgent care and Transportation \$0, \$100,000 combined allowance for worldwide
 - No Donut Hole on Rx
 - Passive PPO network-in network and out of network was the same

- (e) 2024-2025 MAPD BCBSNC Offer:
 - Coverage Gap: There was no coverage gap. The same copayments and coinsurance apply with no gap in coverage.
 - Catastrophic Coverage: Qualify for the Catastrophic Coverage state when out-of-pocket costs reach \$8,000 limit for the calendar year. Once in the Catastrophic Coverage state, stay in payment stage until the end of the calendar year. During the payment stage, the plan paid the full cost for covered Part D drugs.
- (f) 2024-2025 EGWP MAPD Pricing:
 - Plan: 2024 MAPD PPO00 and PDPP010: \$265.00
 - Plan: 2025 MAPD PPO00 and PDPP010: \$265.00

Mr. Adams noted if the county switched to this plan, the county would save \$252,000 per year and the rate was guaranteed for two years.

Ms. Fox stated with the current plan, they just received a 6.5% projected rate increase. The average rate currently paid without the projected rate increase was \$466 per post-65 per month.

Mr. Adams stated they wanted to keep the benefits the same or better. These benefits for post-65 were better than current employees and pre-65. If the Board moved forward with this plan, they would provide information to all retirees and invite local retirees for onsite training. Human Resources would work with retirees to help guide them.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the new BCBS of NC Retiree Medicare Supplement Plan, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(14) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

The Board took a 10-minute recess.
Chairman Letson called the meeting back to order.

(15) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling 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 Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

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

Commissioner Bryson moved to recess the meeting until Tuesday, October 24th at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting recessed at 7:47 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman