

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JULY 09, 2024**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on July 09, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Kevin King, County Manager
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	John Kubis, County Attorney (Via Zoom)
Mark Jones, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
John W. Smith, Commissioner	Darlene Fox, Finance Director
Tom Stribling, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAPITAL PLANNING: Dr. Dana Ayers, Public School Superintendent and Jake Buchanan, Public School Deputy Assistant Superintendent, were present for this item.

Dr. Ayers shared information about JCPS' most pressing construction project, the Fairview cafeteria with additional classroom space. In January, 2023, there was a joint meeting between the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education to discuss the priority list at that time:

1. Cafeteria and classrooms at Fairview
2. Traditional middle school
3. ADA upgrades/concession stand at SMHS stadium
4. Track on Jones Street property
5. New bus garage on current site
6. Erosion control at Scotts Creek
7. Blue Ridge gym with performance space

After the January meeting, JCPS was directed to conduct a facilities study by the Board of Commissioners. The county funded the study done by Clark Nexsen. In November, 2023, the Fairview PTA invited all Commissioners to attend the Thanksgiving lunch meal. They believed it was imperative to see the inaccessibility of the kitchen area, cafeteria and the overcrowding.

Another joint meeting was held in February, 2024 at Fairview to discuss the same priority list. At that time, Clark Nexsen provided the results of the facilities study. The results did not change JCPS's priority list, it remained in the same order. They had not seen any movement in the last 18 months, so they wanted to focus on the Fairview cafeteria and additional classroom space project.

Mr. Buchanan presented: New cafeteria with classrooms and renovations for Fairview:

(a) Long-term planning history review:

- New locker rooms at Blue Ridge Early College completed 2013
- SMHS new gym and auditorium completed 2014
- HVAC and roof upgrades/replacements
- New water and sewer system for Blue Ridge completed 2021
- OCR mandated accessibility project at SM baseball completed 2020
- Egress courtyard project completed 2024

- (b) Fairview did not have enough space:
 - Accessibility. Stairs to lunch room, outside non-ADA ramp for those with mobility challenges.
 - Safety. Kitchen was not a sufficient size to be safe for staff.
 - Comfortable environment. Lunch started early and goes late and was still uncomfortable.
 - Classroom space needs
 - This had been their priority through several school board election cycles and three superintendents.
- (c) Needs based capital grants:
 - State funds through NCDPI
 - Over the past three years, the two boards voted to support a new cafeteria with six classrooms at Fairview as the top priority.
 - Clark Nexsen completed a facility study at the request of the Commissioners in 2023.
- (d) Total cost \$20,000,000 for:
 - 7,500-8,000 sf cafeteria and kitchen
 - Renovation to existing space 4,000 sf
 - Six new classrooms at 1,000 sf each

Chairman Letson stated at the Board of Commissioners' Budget Retreat, the Board moved forward with approving Fairview, Blue Ridge and the Garage.

Ms. Fox stated there was a consensus among the Board, it was not actually approved.

Chairman Letson inquired if they were going to do a \$20 million project, would they seek a bond or pull from Article 42?

Ms. Fox stated they could do a combination with sales tax. If they did the \$20 million over a two-year cycle, they could get LGC approval on a \$10 million loan one year and a \$10 million loan the next year or they could go for a bond.

Chairman Letson asked when JCPS would need the funding?

Mr. Buchanan stated it would be in line with what Ms. Fox stated. They would need upfront costs for design with Clark Nexsen, but the first starting draw would be after they went out to bid and they started doing payouts. They could work out the timing so it would span over two fiscal years. The preference of JCPS would be to use Article 41 and 42 funds and pay the debt on two \$10 million loans using Smoky Mountain High School as the equity.

Commissioner Bryson stated this project was long overdue.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Move forward and add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(2) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director presented: Tourism Development Authority update:

(a) Mission: To promote the growth of year-round tourism opportunities that benefit the county economy. Their efforts put people to work, grow jobs, build community and make the towns a vibrant place to live, play and work.

(b) Vision: To be the premier mountain destination providing an active lifestyle, spectacular natural assets and a friendly community for citizens and visitors.

(c) Tourism builds community:

- Jackson County #2 in visitor spending in WNC \$452 million
- Buncombe County #1 in visitor spending in WNC \$2.8 billion
- \$452 million spent at local businesses by visitors
- Visitors deposit \$1,239,917 per day into local cash registers

- People visiting the county puts 2,400 people to work
 - \$119.2 million in county paychecks generated
 - \$15.2 million in local county tax revenues generated by visitors
 - 1,093,283 visitors per year
- (d) Partners:
- buffalo groupe Ad Agency
 - LHG PR Firm
 - Love Communications SEM Agency
- (e) 2024 Ad Campaign: Capture the Moment
- (f) 120,000 active email subscribers
- (g) Public Relations: National Clips, Regional Clips
- (h) Social Media for 2023:
- 102,551,759 Impressions
 - 3,507,935 Engagements
- (i) Website visits 714,835
- (j) TDA dedicated itself to keeping the county a clean, sustainable and vibrant destination and community for visitors and residents.
- (k) Total grants issued since TDA inception: \$686,573
- (l) Occupancy Tax FY23-24 \$2,495,40.96
- Informational item.*

(3) HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Anna Lippard, Health Director presented: Department of Public Health:

(a) Mission: Ensure, enhance, promote and protect the health of residents through prevention and education.

(b) Board of Health shall be the policy making, rule making and adjudicatory body for a county health department. The members were appointed by the Board of Commissioners and shall be composed of the following 11 members: licensed physician, licensed dentist, licensed optometrist, licensed veterinarian, registered nurse, licensed pharmacist, county commissioner, professional engineer and three at-large representatives from the public. All board members must be residents of the county, except as otherwise provided in the statute.

(c) Staff:

- 63 full-time employees
- 3 part-time employees
- Medical Director
- Temporary part-time employees

(d) Public health, also called population health, was the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities.

(e) Financial:

- 28 different program budgets
- Audited by the state annually by program
- Total annual budget \$6,545,712
- Funding sources:
 - Fees \$936,499.00
 - Local appropriations \$4,431,384.85
 - Grants \$30,500.00
 - State allocations \$1,147,329.00

(f) Services offered:

- Clinical Services
- School Health

- Laboratory Services
- WIC and Nutrition Services
- Environmental Health
- Animal Control and Shelter
- Emergency Preparedness
- Community Outreach and Health Education

Informational item.

(4) SOCIAL SERVICES: Cris Weatherford, DSS Director presented: Social Services 101:

(a) Mission: Provide essential human services that protect, strengthen and improve lives in the county. Their commitment was to provide the highest quality service through teamwork, professionalism and respect for their clients and the community that supported their work.

(b) NC Law in General Statutes for Social Services.

(c) Local history. The County Department of Social Services began in July 1937 when the first Welfare Board met and began fulfilling its duties.

(d) The Board of Social Services was the governing body of this agency, comprised of five board members:

- Two appointed by the county commissioners
- Two appointed by the NC Social Services Commission
- These four select the fifth member

(e) Funding: Some DSS programs were funded up to 75% by the state and federal governments. The county made the initial investment and was reimbursed by the state each month.

(f) Social work programs for children and adults:

- Child Welfare
- Adult Services Programs

(g) Medicaid: the county had over 11,000 Medicaid cases. Medicaid was used to cover over \$80 million in medical payments that year.

(h) Food and Nutrition Services: The county had an average of 4,700 cases that provided over \$14 million in assistance.

(i) Child Support Services: Assures children received parental support. Child Support collected FY22-23 \$1,793,815.01 from 833 cases.

(j) Emergency Assistance Programs:

- Low Income Energy Assistance
- Crisis Intervention
- Emergency Food and Shelter
- Share the Warmth

(k) Service delivery had a bilateral focus:

- Provide the highest level of services to their clients to protect, strengthen and improve lives in the county.
- Maintain their fiduciary duty to taxpayers by providing these services in a fiscally responsible manner.

(l) Fiscal Responsibility: All services provided by the agency underwent multiple intensive audits at various levels to ensure effective service delivery and fiscal responsibility. Audits occurred at the federal, state, county levels and in-house at supervisory level.

(m) Volunteer:

- Become a Guardian Ad Litem
- Become a Foster Parent
- Sit with a Foster Child
- Tell others about the need for volunteers in the community

Informational item.

(5) GREENS CREEK ROAD INTERSECTION SAFETY PROJECT: Mr. King stated NCDOT requested a Resolution of Support from the Board to construct a reduced conflict intersection at US 23-441 and Greens Creek Road, as a safety project to mitigate a pattern of crash history in the county to the south of Dillsboro.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Gather additional information from NCDOT and obtain citizen input. Add the item to the August 6th agenda for additional discussions.*

(6) KROGER OPIOID SETTLEMENT: Mr. King presented a resolution authorizing the execution of the Kroger Opioid Settlement and approving the second supplemental agreement for additional funds.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(7) NCACC ANNUAL CONFERENCE VOTING DELEGATE: Mr. King stated the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference would be held in Forsyth County on Saturday, August 10th. Each county was entitled to one vote on items that came before the membership.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(8) OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. King stated the Board had mentioned previously having further discussions on increasing the Occupancy Tax. Did the Board want to continue those discussions?

Commissioner Jones stated he was a TDA Board Member. TDA Executive Board would meet to discuss making a recommendation to the TDA Board, which would then vote to move the item to the Board of Commissioners. At the last TDA meeting in June, it was perceived very positively to move forward by those in attendance. He anticipated Mr. Breedlove would make a presentation and request of the Board of Commissioners to revisit the Occupancy Tax in the future.

Informational item.

(9) 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)(5) Real Property. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

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

There being no further business, Commissioner Bryson moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman