

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
FEBRUARY 18, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on February 18, 2025, 6:30 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present:	Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Kevin King, County Manager
	Jenny Lynn Hooper, Commissioner	John Kubis, County Attorney (Via Zoom)
	Michael Jennings, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
	John W. Smith, Commissioner	
Absent:	Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **PROCLAMATION FOR CHARLES R. ELDERS EVENT CENTER**: Chairman Letson read a Proclamation naming the future Event Center in Whittier, the “Charles R. Elders Event Center”. Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Ray Stephens accepted the proclamation on behalf of Mr. Elders and expressed appreciation to the Board.

(2) **AGENDA**: Chairman Letson requested to remove one item: Resolution R25-02 Municipal Election Schedule. Commissioner Smith moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Hooper moved to approve the minutes a Regular Meeting of February 04, 2025 and a Work Session of February 04, 2025. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**: None.

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

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

(7) **INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC**:

(a) Brooklyn stated she was given the news the skate park would be approved in the upcoming budget. She thanked the Board.

(b) Michael Redman stated his concern and disagreement with regional County Boards of Commissioners secretly working to break up the Fontana Regional Library System.

(c) Antoinette MacWatt stated her concern and disagreement with regional County Boards of Commissioners secretly working to break up the Fontana Regional Library System.

(8) CONSENT AGENDA:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for January, 2025 for approval.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for January, 2025, for approval.

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

(9) AUDIT CONTRACT: Ms. Fox presented the audit contract and stated she recommended awarding the contract to Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A., to audit the county records for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, in the amount of \$128,600.

Motion: *Commissioner Jennings moved to approve the audit contract with Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A., as requested. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) RESOLUTION R25-05 – REQUESTING HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION: Mr. King presented Resolution R25-05 requesting the North Carolina General Assembly to create a Homestead Exemption for citizens who have declared Jackson County their permanent, year-round residence. The request stated the exemption should include a mechanism to reduce the valuation of full-time permanent taxpayer's property by the amount of \$50,000 or 50%, whichever was greater, of the value of the property for tax purposes only. This amount could be deducted only on one qualifying parcel each tax year.

He presented Resolution R25-05 for consideration.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve Resolution R25-05 Requesting Homestead Exemption, as presented. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(11) CONSTRUCTION MANAGER AT-RISK CONTRACTS: Mr. King stated during the budget retreat, they discussed all the projects slated for the year, including Fairview Elementary, Blue Ridge School, the Athletic Fields at Smoky Mountain High School, the new Middle School, County Administration Building and Justice Center Renovations. With these projects, he wanted the Board to consider a Construction Manager At-Risk.

Two bidders were received from the RFQ, with only one bidder being qualified, Vannoy Construction. He requested the Board approve staff going through the process of contracting with Vannoy Construction as the primary Construction Manager At-Risk for the projects.

Motion: *Commissioner Hooper moved to approve staff contracting with Vannoy Construction to be the Construction Manager At-Risk, as requested. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) RESOLUTION R25-03 – BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION SCHEDULE: Chairman Letson presented Resolution R25-03 requesting the North Carolina General Assembly to change the election schedule for the Jackson County Board of Education to be at the General Election in November, starting in the 2026 election cycle.

Commissioner Smith requested to amend the resolution to include making the Board of Education elections partisan.

Motion: *Commissioner Jennings moved to approve Resolution R25-03, to include the added language to make the Board of Education elections partisan. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(13) RESOLUTION R25-04 – ARTHUR WADE BRIDGE: Mr. King stated the Board discussed this item at the work session. Swain County requested consideration of a Resolution to name a bridge in Whittier the “Arthur Wade Bridge”. Mr. Wade was a citizen who passed away a few years ago and was employed by both Jackson County and Swain County Soil and Water Conservation District for 32 years. Mr. Wade was a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), he was a Missionary and a Veteran awarded three Purple Hearts.

He presented Resolution R25-04 for consideration.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Resolution R25-04, as requested. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(14) EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW BOARD: Recommendations were submitted by Tabitha Ashe, Tax Administrator.

Motion: *Commissioner Jennings moved to reappoint Richard Robson, Chairman; Robert T. Edwards, Vice Chair; Roger M. Bartlett; David A. Noland; and Norman West to serve additional one-year terms on the Equalization and Review Board. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(15) REGION A AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL: A recommendation was submitted by Sarajane Melton, Region A AAA Director.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to reappoint Sara Evans to serve an additional three-year term on the Region A Aging Advisory Council. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(16) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

Motion: *Chairman Letson moved to appoint Dale Collins to serve an unexpired vacant term on the Tourism Development Authority. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion.*

Commissioner Hooper moved to appoint John Faulk to serve an unexpired vacant term on the Tourism Development Authority.

Motion died for lack of second.

The Motion to appoint Dale Collins passed by a vote of 3-1 with Commissioner Hooper voting “nay”.

(17) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

Chairman Letson stated there had been a lot of miscommunication about the FRL. At that time, Jackson County was not engaged in trying to get out of the FRL Agreement. They spent thousands of dollars working towards a resolution and they were not meeting in secret. Jackson County was within the FRL Agreement and was not leaving.

(18) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(3) Legal, G.S.143-318.11(a)(4) Business Expansion and G.S.143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

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

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman