

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
APRIL 01, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on April 01, 2025, 6:00 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	Megan N. Silver, County Attorney Rep. (Via Zoom)
Jenny Lynn Hooper, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Michael Jennings, Commissioner	
John W. Smith, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **PROCLAMATION FOR CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION**: Chairman Letson read a Proclamation to proclaim April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Crystal Jones, AWAKE Executive Director and AWAKE Staff were present to accept the proclamation.

(2) **PROCLAMATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK**: Chairman Letson read a Proclamation to proclaim April 7-13 as Public Health Week. Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Anna Lippard, Health Director and Health Department Staff were present to accept the proclamation.

(3) **AGENDA**: Chairman Letson requested to add one item: Offer to Purchase and Contract - T&S Hardwood Property. Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Jennings moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of March 18, 2025, as presented. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(5) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson commended Barney Cagle, Cullowhee Rec Site Manager and Christi Young, Cullowhee Rec Administrative Assistant, for provided life-saving CPR at the rec center for a person who had a heart attack. He thanked them both, along with EMS and the 911 Call Center for their quick responses.

(6) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**: Commissioner Smith thanked all Emergency Management Personnel and Firefighters, who battled the Kitchens Branch/Fisher Creek Fire. Also, Balsam Fire Department was called out to a fire started at Waterrock Knob, but they were able to contain it quickly.

(7) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: Mr. King reported:

(a) Library Security: A stakeholder group was going through a process to look at security at the Library.

(b) Appointment Policy and Procedures: Staff was working on this item and they would have a draft for the Board at the next work session.

(c) Cashiers Water and Sewer: Working with Civil Design Concepts to study water and sewer in the Cashiers area. He would bring a proposal to the Board in May for next steps and best practices.

(d) Department on Aging: There were no potential bidders at the pre-bid meeting. The new bid date was set for April 24th.

(e) Canada Fire Department: It was previously discussed to utilize a design-build concept, but they were so far along, they were going to go with a traditional bid, which would be done at the end of May.

(f) Fair Grounds: The footer would be started in April. The building was on site, ready to be installed. They were working with Cherokee Water for the sprinkler water system.

(8) PUBLIC COMMENT:

(a) Casey Walawender requested more transparency about the gas station approved to be built off of Highway 107. She knew how much the waterways meant to the communities and tourism. The riparian areas were natural filtration systems for the waterways. The Tuckasegee River was one of the greatest assets in the county. The site was dangerous in terms of traffic with limited visibility. Impacts could be felt for years to come.

(b) Dale Collins stated he was a resident of Webster. The development of gas stations along the banks of the Tuckasegee River was a threat to the economy for restaurants, lodging and most of all, the anglers. Lackadaisical and apathetic planning and zoning were also a threat to the county. The trout fishing economic impact was tremendous in Western North Carolina. He challenged the Board to step up and address the process of how permits were approved on the banks and waterways in the county.

(c) Julie Van Leuven stated she was from Webster. The controversy over the gas station being built pointed to the need for stricter ordinances to protect green space and waterways. She requested the Board to prioritize developing a path forward to adequately modernize the county's planning and permitting processes. They needed to keep the county as pristine and charming as it was into the future.

(d) Miller Watson stated he was the owner of a fly shop and lived there for 18 years. He was taking a stand for transparency moving forward on developments like the Lewis gas station approved along the Tuckasegee River. Many businesses were hurting after Hurricane Helene and relied on rivers and watersheds that had been heavily affected. The riparian zones on the streams had become fragile and were forever changed. The placement of the large underground gas tank and construction of a convenience store adjacent to the Tuckasegee River could not come at a more inappropriate time or be placed in a more inappropriate location. He asked the Board to consider this moving forward and understand the detrimental aspects within the scope of builds like the Lewis gas station.

(e) Wes Buchanan stated he was in the fishing industry and helped clean up with the EPA and the county was lucky to be missed by the storm. They had pulled gas tanks out half a mile from gas stations. There was a lot of focus on the economic value of the river. This was an ill-advised decision for people like him in the industry. He did not think storms would be less-frequent and he thought it was irresponsible to not let the public chime in on projects like these.

(f) Kate McKittrick stated she lived in the Webster ETJ. The Tuckasegee River was not far from her home. She was astonished to recently learn about the gas station project. She believed the project should never have been undertaken at this site. Considering past storms in Western North Carolina, imagine the impact of a direct hit on the business under construction. There would be more storms and they needed to plan for that. She stated her opposition to the granting of the permit for the project and asked the Board to take responsibility to make sure this did not happen again.

(g) Brett Riggs stated his opposition to the new Lewis gas station, due to potential future storms. He encouraged the Board to reconsider permitting the gas station and called for a more stringent planning and public hearing process. He encouraged them to strengthen the process of oversight and planning.

(h) Jim Whitaker stated he lived off South River Road. He voiced his concern with placing a gas tank 50 feet from the river and problems that would cause. Also, that intersection was already very dangerous. He expressed his opposition.

(i) Georgia Ennis stated she was an Environmental Anthropologist. She stated her opposition of the gas station. She saw many well-planned projects in other places that led to contamination in rivers. She was very concerned about the decision to place oil infrastructure on the Tuckasegee River. There were potential environmental dangers that could occur from the project. She expressed her opposition on environmental grounds, safety and green space issues. She requested the Board reconsider of approval and to be more transparent in the future.

(j) Bobby Bennett stated his opposition to the gas station being built and he requested to change the way things were done in the public process from the county's standpoint in the future. A devastating storm could happen anywhere. Also, everything they cut down, removed the shade, which warmed the water and the whole ecology of the system. Every time they built a parking lot, the warm water would come off the pavement and would elevate the temperature of the water. He requested to look at permeable pavers as an option to cool the water before it was released.

(9) ANNUAL CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION TEAM REPORT: Ms. Lippard stated, North Carolina Statute Article 14, 7B-1406 and the CFPT Agreement Addenda with local health departments required Local Child Fatality Prevention Teams to advocate for system improvements and needed resources where gaps and deficiencies may exist. Also, to submit a report annually to their local county commissioners and boards of health.

The purpose of the local CFPTs:

- Identify deficiencies in the delivery of services to children and families by public agencies
- Make and carry out recommendations for changes that would prevent future child deaths
- Promote understanding of the causes of child deaths

She presented the CFPT Annual Report for review for calendar year 2024.

Informational item.

(10) SHERIFF'S OFFICE DETENTION CENTER MEDICAL PLAN FOR INMATES: Tiffany Paul, Detention Captain, presented the revised Sheriff's Office Detention Center Medical Plan for Inmates, for review and approval. Upon a determination the plan was adequate to protect the health and welfare of the prisoners, the plan must be adopted by the governing body.

General discussions were held.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to adopt the Sheriff's Office Detention Center Medical Plan for Inmates, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(11) OFFER TO PURCHASE AND CONTRACT – T&S HARDWOOD PROPERTY: Mr. King stated in November, the Board voted to make an offer for the T&S Hardwood property during a closed session. They were ready to close on the property and would need to have a formal vote. The offer was for \$3,750,000 for 42.04 acres. There were no findings in the Phase One Environmental that would prohibit the potential of industrial development.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Offer to Purchase and Contract for the T&S Hardwood Property in the amount of \$3,750,000, as requested. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) WEBSTER VILLAGE BOND INDUCEMENT RESOLUTION R25-09: Andrew Crosson, Givens Project Development Coordinator; Teresa Stephens, Givens Affordable Communities Vice President; and Kristen Kirby, Bond Attorney (via Zoom), were present for this item.

Mr. Crosson stated HUD awarded a Section 202 Capital Advance to Givens Webster Village, a 120-apartment building that would serve low-income seniors. The HUD Capita Advance would be paired with 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs). The Givens Estates, Inc. was in the process of submitting a final application to the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency for the 4% LIHTCs, which were required to be paired with tax exempt bonds.

The tax-exempt bonds would be used in construction financing. The county was able to serve as the tax-exempt bond issuer for the project. The final application was due May 9, 2025 and required the inclusion of an inducement resolution from the municipal issuer. He requested Jackson County to assume the role of bond issuer and adopt an inducement resolution for the bonds.

General discussions were held.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to approve Resolution R25-09 Webster Village Bond Inducement, as presented. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(13) ABC BOARD:

Motion: *Commissioner Jennings moved to table this item. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(14) PLANNING BOARD:

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to table this item. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(15) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Bryson moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman