

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
APRIL 01, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on April 01, 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
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	Megan N. Silver, County Attorney Representative (Via Zoom)
Jenny Lynn Hooper, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Michael Jennings, Commissioner	Darlene Fox, Finance Director
John W. Smith, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) MOUNTAIN PROJECTS: Patsy Davis, Executive Director and Si Simmons, Deputy Director, were present for this item.

Ms. Davis presented: Housing Choice Voucher Program:

(a) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program:

- Help for low-income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities afford safe, private market housing.
- Administered by Public Housing Agencies, it provided rental assistance by covering a portion of the rent, with families paying the rest.
- Promote housing stability and choice for participants

(b) HCV Rental payments January 2022-March 2025

(c) Vouchers in use per unit

- January 2022 Voucher in use 842: \$466.60 per unit cost
- March 2025 Voucher in use 889: \$746.06 per unit cost

(d) Shortfall:

- In August, 2024, Mountain Projects, Inc. was notified by HUD that it was entering shortfall status, halting new voucher issuance due to projected overspending.
- HUD and HCV consultants indicated entering shortfall was necessary to secure additional funding and expand the program long term.
- Maximizing voucher use had been a challenge due to landlords leaving the program for the more lucrative private and vacation rental markets.
- Fair Market Rents set by HUD often fall below actual market rates, but in 2023 and 2024, Mountain Projects received approval from HUD to raise rent standards to 120%, making vouchers more competitive.
- HUD based funding on prior year spending, leaving Mountain Projects underfunded in 2024 despite increased voucher usage.
- A nationwide shortfall in HUD's set aside funds delayed additional funding and with congressional stop gap funding stuck at 2024 levels, Mountain Projects would likely remain in shortfall through 2025, unable to issue new vouchers to assist the 500+ families on the waiting list.

(e) HCV Waitlist:

- 552 total applicants
- 415 Haywood County applicants
- 137 Jackson County applicants
- 247 days average wait time

(f) Volume of continued need:

- Jackson County office received approximately 10-15 phone calls each week from families in need of rental assistance
- Haywood County office received approximately 25-30 phone calls each week from families in need of rental assistance

(g) Conclusion and next steps:

- Demand for vouchers remain high, especially in the wake of Tropical Storm Fred, Hurricane Helene and the closure of the Canton paper mill
- Mountain Projects remained in shortfall despite contacting representatives and appealing to HUD directly
- Without sufficient funding, Mountain Projects could not provide critical support leaving the most vulnerable at risk

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(2) **LIBRARY REPORT**: Tracy Fitzmaurice, Librarian, presented: Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library and Jackson County Public Library:

(a) Fontana Regional Library's Mission: To provide the public of Jackson, Macon and Swain County with excellent service and convenient access to resources for their educational, informational and recreational needs.

(b) Fontana Regional Library's Vision: The heart of the community, enriching lives and inspiring the future.

(c) Jackson County statistics in the current fiscal year:

- 35,013 people with a library card
- 92,994 patrons visited the library
- 122,039 items checked out

(d) NC Cardinal:

- 8.1 million items in the catalog
- 234 physical branches throughout NC
- 66 counties throughout NC
- 54 library systems, 8 regional, 36 county, 6 municipal, 1 special

(e) E-Resources – Overdrive / Libby:

- NC Kids Digital Library: eBooks for grades K-3
- NC Kids Level Up: eBooks for grades 4-8
- Libby: eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines

(f) Continue education with UniversalClass:

- 442 lessons viewed; 302 videos watched; 595 student submissions
- Hundreds of courses to choose from
- Receive actual grades and feedback
- CEUs and Certificates
- Self-paced

(g) Tech help resources:

- iOS user groups

- Android user groups
- Tech time with Digital Navigators
- (h) Reference Services:**
 - Reference transactions: 14,421
 - Technology assistance (not including tech time): 3,351
- (i) Computer and WIFI usage:**
 - Library computers used: 3,055
 - Individual WIFI uses: 112,504
- (j) Library Programs:**
 - Library Programs: 549
 - Attendees: 8,798
 - Non-Library Programs: 1,569
 - Attendees: 10,143
- (k) Youth Library Programs:**
 - Rock and Read
 - Baby Storytime
 - Toddler Storytime
 - ARTrageous
 - Lego Club
 - Family Nights
 - Music
 - Bilingual Storytime
- (l) Teen Library Programs:**
 - Teen Time
 - Resume Help
 - Graphic Novel Club
 - Coffee Chat
 - Game Club
 - Volunteer Opportunities
 - Dungeons and Dragons
 - Art time
- (m) Adult Library Programs**
 - Book Groups
 - Author Events
 - Guest Speakers
 - Spice Club
 - Dementia Support Group
 - Creating Community Crafts
 - Mah Jongg
 - Live Music
- (n) Library Outreach**
 - Greening Up the Mountains
 - Dia del Nino
 - Storywalks
 - Festival of Trees
 - Back to School Bash
 - Community Halloween
 - Childcare Storytimes
 - Farmer's Market Booth

- Off-site Book Group
- School Visits
- Off-Site Computer Classes
- (o) Other Services:
 - Assistance for information
 - Wireless printing
 - Notary
 - Exam proctoring
 - Free summer lunches
- (p) Grants:
 - Wade Hampton \$15,000: e-resources
 - Cedar Creek Club \$8,000: Junior Library Guild
 - Cullasaja Women's Outreach \$10,500: STEAM
 - Church of the Good Shepherd \$6,400: Large Print
 - Foundation \$10,000: Programming and literacy
 - FoL Neely Fund \$3,500: Periodicals
 - Digital Champions (FRL) \$300,000 over two years

General discussions were held.
Informational item.

(3) AMERICA 250 COMMITTEE: Mr. King stated the Board previously passed a resolution to establish the 250 Committee, which was created to plan, encourage, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States. Staff would look to publicize an ad seeking volunteers for membership. He would recommend appointing seven to nine individuals to the committee.

He recommended the volunteers selected for the America 250 Committee also serve on the Jackson 175 Committee for the county anniversary coming up in 2026. The county received a grant of \$10,000 to be used for marketing and events for the America 250 Committee.

Consensus: *Staff to move forward with publicizing for membership on the America 250 Committee / Jackson 175 Committee for seven individuals.*

(4) OTHER BUSINESS: None.

(5) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Hooper 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 Smith 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 Hooper moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman