

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JUNE 17, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on June 17, 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 | John Kubis, County Attorney (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) **AGENDA**: Chairman Letson requested to amend the agenda by removing one item: Rules of Procedure; and adding one item: Resolution to display the flag half-staff by order of the Chairman. Commissioner Smith moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the minutes a Public Hearing (FY2025-26 Budget) of June 03, 2025; a Regular Meeting of June 03, 2025; and a Work Session of June 03, 2025. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson stated he attended the Boys and Girls Club Acorn Ceremony to open the Teen Center in Cashiers. It was a wonderful event that was well attended. The Boys and Girls Club of Cashiers had a full summer program planned with over 300 children attending.

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

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

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

- (a) Ethan Fortner stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (b) Justin Castle stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (c) Keith Blaine stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (d) Becky Abel stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (e) Tom Downing stated concerns in county leadership.
- (f) Daniel Shields stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (g) Kim Mitchell stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (h) Loran Berg stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (i) Chris Hamlet stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (j) Lew Teter stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (k) John Ritchie stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (l) Teri Cole-Smith stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (m) Jason Kimenker stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (n) Kate McKittrick stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.

- (o) Mike Jones stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (p) Brad Reisinger stated concern about Commissioner representation in District Three.
- (q) Sarah Ward stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (r) John Steinbreck stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.

(7) CONSENT AGENDA:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for May, 2025; 13 Budget Ordinance Amendments; and three Project Ordinance Amendments for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for approval.

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

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

(8) TAX ASSESSOR APPOINTMENT: Mr. King stated pursuant to G.S. 105-294(a), the appointment of the County Tax Assessor was to occur before the first Commissioners' Board meeting in July. Tabitha Ashe, the current Tax Assessor, was a Certified Assessor and had completed all courses necessary. He recommended the Board reappoint Ms. Ashe to an additional four-year appointment.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to reappoint Tabitha Ashe as Tax Assessor for an additional four-year term. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) FY2025-26 BUDGET ORDINANCE: Mr. King presented the proposed budget for 2025-2026 fiscal year for review and consideration. The budget set forth a plan of operation for all county departments, programs and projects for the fiscal year 2025-26. The proposed General Fund Budget was balanced in accordance with the state law with revenues and expenditures totaling \$106,540,858. The total including Interfund Transfers was \$120,471,401. All proposals within the general fund were based upon a budget with a tax rate of \$0.32 per \$100 of value. A public hearing was held on June 3rd with public comment.

Commissioner Bryson stated he hoped the public would read through the budget to see what the Board provided for teacher supplements. He requested Mr. King to provide the specifics.

Mr. King stated the Board provided an additional \$200 for both certified and noncertified school personnel. Certified received \$2,000 currently and would receive \$2,200 in the upcoming year. Noncertified received \$600 currently and would receive \$800 in the upcoming year.

Commissioner Bryson asked Ms. Fox when the county started paying for school lunches.

Ms. Fox stated last year was the first year the county paid for school lunches.

Commissioner Bryson stated no other Board before had done this. Also, did any other counties pay for breakfast and lunch for all students?

Ms. Fox stated there were not a lot.

Chairman Letson stated during Covid, a supplement was provided for school lunch. Last year, the Board extended this to continue the program to include all students for breakfast and lunch.

Commissioner Bryson stated last year, the Board set aside \$500,000 for the program. This year, they put \$530,000 in the budget. He wanted to address those items and get the facts straight. There were no complaints from the Board funding these items.

Commissioner Jennings stated there was so much to review and understand with the budget. He knew they had to do something for the average taxpayer. The rate was going down, but the total amount was going up. No one wanted to cut services, but they had to do something if the rate was going to stay at 0.32 cents. He did not know if they needed more time or an interim budget.

Chairman Letson stated the budget had to be adopted by the Board by June 30, so they did have additional time. He noted there was \$150,000,000 in new projects upcoming.

Commissioner Hooper stated she still wanted to see if they could get the rate down to 0.30 to help protect the taxpayers.

Commissioner Smith asked if they had confirmation on the tax neutral rate.

Mr. King stated it was 26.89 cents.

General discussions were held.

Motion: Commissioner Bryson moved to adopt the FY2025-26 Budget Ordinance, along with all fee schedules, as presented. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion.

Commissioner Jennings stated he wanted to have one more budget meeting.

Commissioner Hooper stated she agreed.

Motion: Commissioner Hooper moved to table the item. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Chairman Letson suggested June 24th at 6:00 p.m. for a special called budget meeting.

(10) RESOLUTIONS TO CLOSE-OUT CAPITAL PROJECTS: Ms. Fox presented Resolution R25-14 Close-out of Capital Project for the Dillsboro Complex; Resolution R25-15 Close-out of Capital Project for the Skyland Service Center; and Resolution R25-16 Close-out of Capital Project for the Southwestern Community College Health Sciences Building, for consideration.

Motion: Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the Resolutions to close out Capital Projects, as presented. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(11) RESOLUTION R25-17 TO DISPLAY THE FLAG HALF-STAFF BY ORDER OF THE CHAIRMAN: Chairman Letson presented Resolution R25-17 to display the flag at half-staff by order of the Chairman in the event of the death of a principal figure of the Jackson County Government as a mark of respect to their memory.

Motion: Commissioner Smith moved to approve Resolution R25-17 to display the flag half-staff by order of the Chairman, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(12) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

(13) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: Commissioner Hooper 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 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 Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman