

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JUNE 03, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on June 03, 2025, 6:07 p.m., Southwestern Community College, Balsam Center, Myers Auditorium, 447 College Drive, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Kevin King, County Manager
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	John Kubis, County Attorney
Jenny Lynn Hooper, Commissioner	Darlene Fox, Finance Director
Michael Jennings, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
John W. Smith, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **AGENDA**: Chairman Letson requested to amend the agenda by moving New Business before Informal Comments by Public. Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of May 20, 2025, as presented. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson stated he joined Mayor Phillips at Mark Watson Park for a Memorial Day Ceremony. It was a wonderful service and he encouraged everyone to attend in the future.

(4) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**:

(a) Commissioner Jennings stated there were a lot of rumors floating around that were not true. Before public comment, he wanted everyone to know that no one on the Board was for closing libraries or banning any books. They were simply trying to get certain books moved to a different section.

Freedom of speech was very important and he believed in it for adults, not so much for kids because people could write books about anything. He did not believe kids should be reading anything and everything. Someone could write a book entitled how to shoot up a school or the benefits of illegal drugs. Kids should not read those books or some of the books at the library now that gave step by step instructions how to solicit sex from adults. It was not just immoral, it was illegal.

Movies were even rated PG13 or R. If a child could not see certain movies, why was it right for them to read about something more graphic than what they would see in a movie. The Board had asked FRL to make these changes in these areas and so far, they had not seen any. If they would come their way on the books he was referring to, they may get to a compromise quicker. Unless something changed, he supported leaving FRL.

(b) Commissioner Bryson stated he was not for closing a library. He never received one phone call from the Sylva Herald about how he stood on the issue. To set the record straight, he was not for closing the library. It was never an issue. It got blown out of proportion by the media.

(5) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: None.

(6) FIREWORKS DISPLAY REQUESTS: Tony Elders, Permitting and Code Enforcement Director, requested approval for applications he received for fireworks displays:

- (a)** Thursday, July 3rd:
 - High Hampton
 - Chattooga Club
 - The Village Green Cashiers
 - Cedar Creek Racquet Club
- (b)** Friday, July 4th:
 - Lonesome Valley
 - Downtown Sylva
 - Bear Lake Reserve
 - Mountaintop Club
 - Wade Hampton
- (c)** Saturday, July 5th:
 - Friends of Lake Glenville
 - Country Club of Sapphire Valley

Motion: Commissioner Hooper moved to approve the requests for fireworks displays, as presented. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(7) BOARD OF ELECTIONS REPORT: Amanda Allen, Board of Elections Director, presented:

(a) Mission: Conducting safe, secure, fair and impartial elections for the people of Jackson County. Effective processes//proactive planning//multi-partisan, community-led efforts.

- (b)** Who we are and what we do:
 - The Board of Elections (BOE) was a state mandated county department.
 - Governed by five appointed, multi-partisan board members.
 - Board appointed Director oversees day-to-day operations and election administration.
 - Bound by local, state and federal election laws and rules from the State Board of Elections (SBE).
 - County government's role was largely budgetary.
 - One to three elections held every year, but election functions occurred daily.

- (c)** Key Election Tasks:
 - Candidacy: All candidate filing was done at the BOE, including petitions.
 - Campaign Finance: All campaigns must follow campaign finance law, often locally administered.
 - Program and Test: Voting equipment was tested and uniquely programmed prior to each election.
 - Poll Workers: Recruit, train and deploy 150+ precinct workers; 50+ new workers in 2024.
 - Ballot Processing: In-person (Early and Election Day), Absentee-By-Mail and Provisional.
 - Administer Election: Included 1-5 Early Voting sites and 13 Election Day precincts. Plus, processing any challenges or protests.

- (d)** Year-Round Tasks:
 - Voter Registration
 - List Maintenance: Daily, weekly, monthly, annual, biannual functions
 - Mapping: Collaboration with local, tribal and state GIS.
 - Media and Public Engagement

- Public Records Requests
- Campaign Finance: Reports throughout the year, plus audits.
- Petition Processing: Local and state level.
- Training/Conferences: Mandated for Board and Director, at a minimum.
- (e) Always Preparing for the Next Election:**
 - After Action Analysis: With precinct workers, staff, board, stakeholders
 - Scheduling and checklists
 - Jurisdictional Audits
 - Emergency and Security Planning: 2024 advances included cameras and access controls.
 - Voting Equipment Maintenance: Performed annually by PrintElect.
 - Coordinating Voting Sites
 - Supply inventory/ordering
 - Forecasting staffing: Recruitment and retention
 - Preparing for changes
- (f) 2024 Stat Snapshot:**
 - 3 successful Countywide Elections
 - 30,403 Ballots Cast
 - 44 days of In-Person Voting
 - 35 Poll Worker Training Sessions
 - 5,321 new registrations processed
 - 125 Voter Photo IDs
- (g) Presidential Election comparison:**
 - 2020:
 - Turnout 72.67% 21,504 votes out of 29,593
 - Absentee by mail and early voting 2,800 + absentee accepted; 14,700 + EV
 - 2024
 - Turnout 72.32% 22,091 votes out of 30,547
 - Absentee by mail and early voting 886 + absentee accepted; 16,746 + EV
- (h) Challenges:**
 - Survived in 2024:
 - Voter Photo ID implementation and vast changes to election law (SB747)
 - Employee and board turnover
 - SBE Wellness Check
 - Ballot reconfiguration and absentee release delay
 - Hurricane Helene
 - New Model of election preference
 - Six month long statewide election protest
 - Anticipated in 2025:
 - SBE and BOE turnover
 - New administrative burdens and compressed deadlines (SB382)
 - Increase in election administration legislation and litigation
 - Limited time between election cycles
- (i) 2025-2026 FY Goals:**
 - Safe and secure voting
 - Maintain election standards
 - Community partnerships
 - Invest in poll workers
 - Support office staff

Informational item.

(8) PUBLIC COMMENT:

- (a) Sarah Ward stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (b) Kim Mitchell stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (c) Garret Craig stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (d) Evelyn Craig stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (e) Madeleine Craig stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (f) Pastor Rosie Peek stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (g) Steve Steinbrueck stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (h) Antoinette MacWatt stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (i) Deborah Stanley stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (j) Frederick Buskey stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (k) Steve Kuehl stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (l) Keith Blaine stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (m) Charlene Homolka stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (n) Cheryl Crowe stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (o) Beth Baxley stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (p) Casey Walawender stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (q) Austin Frady stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (r) Walter Cook stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (s) Sarah Pedonti stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (t) Cornelia Waldrom stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (u) Jason Kimenker stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (v) Anne Link stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (w) Julie Fox Jones stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (x) Betty Dishman stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (y) Reverend Sara Lee Hinnant stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (z) Lew Teter stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (aa) Brittney Lofthouse stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (bb) Kara McMullen stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (cc) Sarah Hirsch stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (dd) Jim Gaston stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (ee) Emmy Schneider stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (ff) Matthew Nations stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (gg) Sophia Karner stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (hh) McKenzie Twine stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (ii) Kristin Kane stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (jj) Travis Russell stated support for the county to exit the FRL.
- (kk) Jeananne Nichols stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (ll) Savvy DeHart stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (mm) Destri Leger stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (nn) Cynthia Faircloth-Smith stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (oo) Ron Robinson stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (pp) Tom Downing stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (qq) Adam Bigelow stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (rr) Teri Cole-Smith stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (ss) Allen Lomax stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.
- (tt) Stephen Anfinson stated support for the Library and remaining in the FRL.

The Board took a ten-minute recess.

Chairman Letson called the meeting back to order.

(9) ABC BOARD:

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to appoint Donald Ferguson to serve an additional three-year term on the ABC Board. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) 250 COMMITTEE: Chairman Letson stated in 2026 the United States would be commemorating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. America 250 NC, a program of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NDNCR) was partnering with local governments and nonprofits to mark this anniversary. He urged anyone interested in volunteering to be on the 250 Committee to complete a volunteer application.

Informational item.

(11) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

(12) 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 Bryson 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 Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman