

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 02, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on September 02, 2025, 7:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present:	Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Kevin King, County Manager
	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) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY REPORT: Nick Breedlove, JCTDA Executive Director presented: Commissioners update:

(a) What's New:

- Summer travel was booming and they hoped for a good fall leaf season. In June and July, they saw great visitation.
- New data provider, Tourism Economics Symphony Platform, provided detailed information they shared with the Economic Development Department.
- Hosted the CycleNC bike ride in Sylva in August with almost 300 in attendance.
- Sponsor of the Outdoor Economy Conference for the third year in September in Cherokee.
- New Chamber Leadership in Sylva.
- Mountain Heritage Days shift from one to five days September 22-25 where they were also a sponsor.
- New streamlined board application to assist with recruitment.

(b) Rebranding: Move from "Play On" to "More Peak Moments".

(c) New Website: Relaunching an 8-year old website:

- A visitor or resident's one stop website for everything to do.
- Started work on the website August 2024, completed June 2025.
- In 2015, there were around 3,000 monthly visitors, in 2025 it was an average of 65,000 per month.

(d) Marketing and Communications:

- Key Business Objectives:
 - Drive overnight visitation
 - Enhance brand awareness
 - Increase off peak visitation
 - Support community and economic development

(e) Programs:

- Social media
- Search engine marketing
- Display and print ads
- Email newsletter
- Public relations
- Video production

(f) Trends

- 2024 visitor spending statistics
 - \$463.4M in annual spending
 - \$30.47M in combined state and local tax revenues generated
 - 682 per year in local tax savings per resident
 - 2,464 jobs supported with \$118.43M in paychecks. Tourism was the number one employer by jobs in the county.

(g) Projects:

- Birding Guide
- Peak Fall Foliage

(h) Capital Projects:

- Bridge Park \$376,767
- Tuck River Greenway \$750,000
- Fairgrounds Whittier \$500,000
- Dillsboro Link \$250,000

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(2) SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT: Cris Weatherford, DSS Director presented: Social Services Update:

(a) Medicaid:

- Around 12,000 county citizens received Medicaid Benefits.
- The county added 2,983 new beneficiaries with Medicaid expansion.
- Federal Reconciliation HB1 could end coverage for the new enrollees.
- New work requirements made it difficult for citizens to enroll.
- The Federal government would no longer reimburse counties for 75% of the administrative cost of operating Medicaid. The cost would pass down to counties.

(b) Energy Assistance Programs offered:

- Crisis Intervention Program
- Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, not funded in the Federal Reconciliation HB1

(c) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS):

- Around 4,200 county citizens received FNS benefits.
- FNS Benefits contributed roughly \$8,000,000 to the local economy.
- Federal Reconciliation HB1 would no longer allow for 100% federal funding for the program. Counties would pay 75% of the administrative costs instead of 25%.
- HB1 would require counties to pay up to 15% of the total cost of the program, an annual \$2,000,000 expense for the county.

(d) Child Support Services:

- Child Support was 50 years old.
- Started by congress in 1975, the program ensured both parents shared financial responsibility for raising children.
- The program was seen as a means to lessen the burden on Social Welfare Systems.
- The county had one of the best units in the state and annually collected nearly \$2,000,000 for children.

(e) Adult Protective Services (APS): Adults who were at risk of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation.

- Guardianship
- Representative Payee

(f) Child Protective Services: 24/7/365 response to reports of abuse, neglect and dependency. FY 24, they received 698 reports and responded to 395 reports. They had 78 children in foster care.

- In-Home Services
- Foster Care

(g) Clerical and Administration:

- Team of Processing Assistants
- Fiscal Officer
- Administrative Assistant

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(3) **OTHER BUSINESS:** None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman