

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 16, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on September 16, 2025, 6:34 p.m., Albert Carlton Library, 249 Frank Allen Road, Cashiers, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Kevin King, County Manager
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	John Kubis, County Attorney (Via Zoom)
Jenny Hooper, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Michael Jennings, Commissioner (Via Zoom)	
John W. Smith, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **AGENDA**: Chairman Letson requested to remove one item: America 250 Committee. Commissioner Smith moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of September 02, 2025 and a Work Session of September 02, 2025. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson stated he and his wife attended the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad "Wet Your Whistle" event and train ride. It was great event and he encouraged everyone to support GSMR as they had done a lot of good things.

(4) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**: Commissioner Smith stated he stopped by the Charles R. Elders Event Center and it was looking good. He also stopped by the Whittier-Qualla Park and it was coming along too.

(5) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: Mr. King reported:

(a) **Fair Grounds**: The Charles R. Elders Event Center was coming along and the process had been started for the bid tabulations to go out.

(b) **Childcare Property**: The closing of the childcare center purchased by the county was on September 9th. They were in the programming stage of the project.

(c) **School Projects**: The property closing for the middle school occurred on September 9th. They were in the programming stage of the project.

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

(a) Maryellen Ramstack stated concerns for the Board's decision to exit the FRL.

(b) Gene Hall stated concerns for the Board's decision to exit the FRL.

(c) Chris Jefferson stated concerns for the Board's decision to exit the FRL.

(d) Bob Cox stated science identified over 1,500 species that some individuals had exhibited sex on sex behavior.

(e) Mary Cox stated concerns for the Board's decision to exit the FRL and she commended the Librarian at the Albert Carlton Library.

(f) Teri Cole-Smith stated concerns over House Bill 1 and the impact it would have on the citizens and finances of the county.

(g) Ann McKee Austin stated concerns for the Board's decision to exit the FRL and noted the successes of the Albert Carlton Library.

(h) Kay Callaghan asked where the money was coming from for the library consultant and what was the timeframe for implementation.

(i) Allen Lomax stated the Board was misled about withdrawal from the FRL.

(j) Lucy Christopher stated concerns for the Board's decision to exit the FRL and asked the Board to reverse the decision.

(k) Heidi Hiack shared her positive experiences with the Albert Carlton Library and stated the library should be open to all children and adults.

(7) CONSENT AGENDA:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, (Via Zoom) presented the Finance Report for August, 2025 for approval.

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

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

(8) THE VILLAGE GREEN: Ashlie Mitchell, Executive Director, The Village Green, presented: Year-round restrooms at The Village Green serving families, residents and visitors 365 days a year:

(a) The Village Green was the only community green space and affordable event campus in the area, making it a vital hub for recreation, culture and connection.

- A nonprofit community park system at the heart of Cashiers
- Serving the community for 30+ years as a gathering place for residents and visitors
- Maintain 13+ acres of green space, gardens, trails and event spaces
- Venue for over 275 days of community events annually
- Provide free, public park access year-round for all ages

(b) Why year-round restrooms matter:

- TVG had the only public restrooms available in the community
- Hundreds of families, residents and visitors utilize the restrooms monthly
- TVG had over 35,000 visitors in the park annually
- Restrooms were used 275+ days a year for community events
- Restrooms for everyone to enjoy the park longer
- Year-round public facilities encouraged late fall/winter events and tourism
- Safety, comfort and hospitality for families and visitors

(c) Current Restrooms and Challenges:

- Not insulated – not open November-May
- 20+ years old
- Deteriorating and damaged interiors
- Hard to clean – wood interior paneling
- Only two toilets and two sinks

(d) The Solution: new year-round restrooms:

- Fully insulated men's and women's restroom with two private stalls each
- Private family restroom
- Water fountain/drinking station

- (e) The benefits:
- Reliable facilities for parents with small children
 - Mobility Accessible
 - Safer and cleaner
 - Supports local businesses by encouraging visitors to stay longer
 - Expands opportunities for tourism and events in fall and winter
 - Aligns with community values of hospitality, health and quality of life
- (f) Support:
- Funding request of \$425,000 from the county
 - Funding partners: Jackson County and Tourism Development Authority
 - Timeline:
 - Currently meeting with architects for engineered drawings
 - RFP process late October 2025
 - Contract completion November 2025
 - Project completion May 2026

Chairman Letson noted \$425,000 had been included in the FY25-26 budget for the project.
Informational item.

(9) 5311, 5310, OPERATING AND COMBINED CAPITAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION GRANTS – RESOLUTION R25-21: Zackary Beck, Assistant Transit Director, stated one public hearing was acceptable for all four Community Transportation Program Grant Applications. As the applicant, Transit would seek permission to apply for the Public Transportation Program funding, enter into an agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, provide the necessary assurances and the required local match.

The 5311 Administrative Grant Program helped to subsidize the administrative costs of running a transportation system, which included administrative salaries and benefits, as well as office supplies, uniforms, training and marketing. The 5310 Operating Grant Program supported transportation operating costs for the elderly and individuals with disabilities.

The Combined Capital Grant Program allowed Community Transportation systems the opportunity to apply for funding to maintain a public transportation system fleet and other capital needs. This capital project consisted of two replacement vehicles (two Raised Roof vans with lifts), lettering and logos for each vehicle and two propane conversions. Also, included was a replacement repeater for radio communication. All vehicles and equipment were being requested due to having met the end of their useful life and meet the minimum requirements for replacement with NCDOT IMD.

The Non-STI Rural Expansion Vehicle Program supported rural systems interested in applying for expansion vehicles. The opportunity for funding requests made through the program would only be considered after all Combined Capital funding requests. Transit would request to apply for one expansion Raised Roof van with lift, lettering and logos and one propane conversion.

Total estimated amount requested for the period July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027:

<u>Project</u>	<u>Total Amount</u>	<u>Local Share</u>
Administrative	\$221,867	\$33,279 (15%)
Capital (Vehicles and other)	\$133,605	\$13,361 (10%)
5310 Operating	\$165,000	\$82,500 (50%)
TOTAL PROJECT	\$520,462	\$129,140

A public hearing was held prior to this meeting with no public comment. He presented the Transit Grant Program Resolution R25-21 for consideration.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve Resolution R25-21, as presented. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) **SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:**
Carry over.

(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)(6) Personnel. Commissioner Hooper 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 Hooper moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman