

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JANUARY 21, 2025**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on January 21, 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**: Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Smith moved to approve the minutes a Regular Meeting of January 07, 2025 and a Work Session of January 07, 2025. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson reported he had met with different entities around the county about upcoming needs. It was nice to get out and see everyone.

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

(5) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: Mr. King reported demolition had started at the Drexel Plant and was going well. Also, Representative Clampitt's office requested a wish list of items for the next budget cycle by February 10th.

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

(a) Ricardo Ball requested support from the Board for Unidxs WNC. They were a local, intercultural, non-political organization committed to serving the community in the seven rural counties of Western North Carolina, especially within the Hispanic Community and during Hurricane Helene.

(b) Sarah Hirsch stated her support for Unidxs WNC. She requested kindness and support in the coming months. Because of the administration change in Washington DC, there was a declared change of mass deportation, including family separations of Latinx folks.

(c) Dee Billia stated the disturbing trend of book banning had been building across the country and was impacting the Cashiers Library. The library was for everyone, not just one group. She requested the Board to condemn book banning at public libraries.

(d) Jon Brown stated he was a Commissioner on the Town of Sylva Board. There was interest in the community for a skate park in the county. He was joined by Town of Sylva Commissioner Mary Gelbaugh and they were interested in creating a task force with the county and stakeholders to explore a possible location and funding for a skate park.

(e) Brooklyn stated she was advocating for the skate park. The Sylva Board was supportive of the skate park. She had communicated with more than 2,000 people on her Facebook without one person saying they were against it. Donors were ready to give and multiple possible locations had been found.

(f) Blaze Shields stated providing a safe place for skaters in Sylva was a much needed service. It would help keep a lot of people out of trouble and give them something constructive to do with their time. They had seen the success in other nearby towns with skate parks. He started a skate club at Smoky Mountain High School and it helped to get more people into the sport and be physically active.

(g) Henry Walker stated he was part of the skate community at the high school. He thought the skate park would help a lot of people who wanted to skateboard in a safe place. Skateboarding helped him be physically active and in the community. A skate park would help them have a safe space.

(h) Isaiah DePasquale stated skating helped him be calm and focused. He thought having a skate park would be beneficial for anyone any age, especially younger kids.

(i) Johnny Smith stated he was a freshman at Smoky Mountain High School. Skating had helped him a lot and he believed having a safer environment led to a lot less injuries.

(j) Ernesto Dominquez stated he was a junior at Smoky Mountain High School. Skateboarding had always been a symbol of personality and freedom. They wanted to have a place to express themselves. It brought health to people mentally and physically, helping them be in a healthier space.

Chairman Letson thanked them for coming to the meeting. It took a lot for five high schoolers to come to a Board of Commissioners meeting and speak. They did a great job and he was very proud of them.

(7) CONSENT AGENDA:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for December, 2024 and one Budget Ordinance Amendment for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for approval.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for December, 2024, for approval.

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

(8) FY2025-2026 BUDGET CALENDAR: Ms. Fox stated the proposed FY2025-2026 Budget Calendar was presented to the Board at the last regular meeting. She requested consideration for approval:

January 7	Regular Commissioner Work Session – Set budget calendar
February 18	Commissioner’s Budget Retreat at the Burrell Building SCC10:00 am
February 27	Manager’s preliminary meeting with Departments and Offices
March 1	Nonprofit Grant Applications Disseminated
March 24	All requests submitted to Finance
March 31	Nonprofit Grant Applications Due
April 1	Regular Commissioner Work Session –summary of all new requests 6:30 pm
April 14-25	Manager / Finance Budget Meeting with Departments and Agencies
April 28-May 2	Finance Officer inputs changes from Manager/Finance Budget Meetings
May 5-9	Manager/Finance finalize budget recommendations presentation
May 6	Regular Commissioner Work Session – Capital Projects, update new requests
May 20	Regular Commissioner Meeting – Manager’s Recommended Budget 6:30 pm
May 22	Special called budget work sessions to hear presentations if needed 9:00 am
June 3	Regular Commissioner Meeting – Budget Public Hearing 5:55 pm
June 5-6	Special called budget meetings as needed to make final adjustments
June 18	Adoption of budget

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve the FY2025-2026 Budget Calendar, as presented. Commissioner Jennings seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) AQUATIC CENTER STAFFING: Mr. King stated at a prior meeting, they discussed the need to move funds from the part-time budget to add five full-time positions at the Aquatic Center. The funds were already in the budget, so there was no need for a budget amendment. Originally, there were 45 part-time positions, which was proposed to be changed to approximately 30 part-time positions and add five full-time positions.

Commissioner Jennings stated he was all for it, but he had been advocating to add full-time staff at the Building Inspections Office in Cashiers. He thought that was more important to keep the county going. He did think the pool was important and he was for it.

Commissioner Smith stated more staffing at the Cashiers Building Inspections Office could be part of the upcoming budget discussions.

Mr. King stated with the Aquatic Center staffing, the funds were already in place.

Chairman Letson stated they could discuss adding full-time staff in February.

Motion: Commissioner Jennings moved to approve the adjustment to the Aquatic Center Staffing, as requested. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(10) PLANNING TOPICS: Mr. King stated Commissioner Smith requested to discuss planning topics and to request the Planning Board bring specific legislation for the Board to consider.

Commissioner Smith stated one item he wanted to discuss was dilapidated equipment and mobile homes pulled and abandoned in areas of the county.

Chairman Letson stated it was something they could address and ask Michael Poston, Planning Director, to come to a work session to discuss what they could or could not do legally.

Commissioner Smith stated the Planning Board requested a letter of direction from the Board on this issue.

Commissioner Hooper stated she was concerned about having too many regulations.

Chairman Letson stated he thought it was more about abandoned structures and items.

Commissioner Bryson stated he did not agree with telling people what they could or could not do on their own property, but he agreed when it became a safety issue.

General discussions were held.

Mr. King stated he would invite Mr. Poston to a future work session for further discussions.

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)(5) Real Property. Commissioner Jennings 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 Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman