

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
FEBRUARY 03, 2026**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on February 03, 2026, 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
	Jenny Lynn Hooper, Commissioner	John Kubis, County Attorney (Via Zoom)
	Michael Jennings, Commissioner (Via Zoom)	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
	John W. Smith, Commissioner	
Absent:	Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **AGENDA**: Commissioner Smith moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Hooper moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of January 20, 2026 and a Joint Meeting with the Board of Education of January 22, 2026, as presented. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman Letson thanked the NCDOT, the Sheriff's Office and both the County and Town Public Works Departments for keeping the roads and streets cleared during the winter storm. He appreciated all their hard work and time spent.

(4) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**:

(a) Commissioner Hooper stated she agreed with Chairman Letson. She appreciated everything the emergency crews and road crews did to keep the roads safe. She also wanted to send out prayers for the canine Chief Hatton lost. The canine found one lost child during his time of service. She expressed her condolences.

(b) Commissioner Smith stated he also appreciated the County Grounds Crew who kept all the sidewalks and parking lots cleared for the county.

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

(a) **Fairview Project**: Bids were opened that day. He would have an exact number for the Board at the February 17th meeting for consideration.

(b) **Library**: They were currently working out the details for the E-Rate System. The equipment had been categorized and they were working with FRL staff to ensure continuity on the conversion date. They were also sending out conditional employment letters to staff at both libraries.

In the next few months, the Commissioners would need to identify board members to work through a five-year strategic plan. The members could be appointed by the Commissioners or the Commissioners could choose to serve. The strategic plan would have to be sent to the State Library System by July 1st.

(6) PUBLIC COMMENT:

(a) Michelle Arellanes stated she was pleased that planning was going forward for the library, but still had concerns. She asked for regular progress reports to the community on the transition and for transparency.

(b) Bobbi Hopp stated the Board was taking actions without getting a full understanding of the costs. The people of the county were owed a good reason for why money was being sent. The Board should be better stewards of the people's money.

(7) SHERIFF'S OFFICE: Sheriff Doug Farmer presented: Stats and Information 2025:

(a) School Resource Officers:

- A School Resource Officer was more than just a badge in the hallway. They were a trusted presence, a guiding voice and a safety net for students, always ready to listen and support.
- 280 events in addition to regular operations, which equaled 480 extra hours or two additional events per school day

(b) Patrol:

- Calls:
 - 2023: 17,424 calls
 - 2024: 18,653 calls
 - 2025: 18,537 calls
- 2025:
 - Misdemeanor Arrests: 53
 - Misdemeanor Charges: 1,381
 - Felony Arrests: 553
 - Felony Charges: 982

(c) Fraud and Scam Reports:

- 2023: 99
- 2024: 101
- 2025: 122

(d) Assault Investigations:

- 2023: 349
- 2024: 425
- 2025: 421

(e) Criminal Investigations:

- 262 Search Warrants for houses/records/devices
- 113 Felony Arrests
- 371 Felony Charges
- 96 Misdemeanor Charges
- 371 Interviews
- 55 Forensic Interviews
- 15 ICAC Reports
- Operation Up the Creek
 - Targeted child predators
 - First operation of its kind at the JCISO

- (f) Criminal Suppression Unit:
 - A narcotics investigator was assigned to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) as a Task Force Officer (TFO)
 - A narcotics investigator was assigned to HITDA as a Task Force Officer (TFO)
 - Crack Cocaine/Cocaine: 166.610 grams
 - Fentanyl & Heroin: 500.353 grams
 - Methamphetamine: 2,121,264 grams
 - 2025: 229 Felony Charges
 - Drug Arrests: 101
 - Large Scale Operations Targeting Drug Trafficking: 3
- (g) Overdose Calls: Even one was too many. They must have help from the court system. i.e. stiffer consequences, longer mandatory sentences and drug court.
 - 2023: 158 with 38 deaths
 - 2024: 99 with 5 deaths
 - 2025: 94 with 1 death
- (h) Canine Program: Added 3 new canines to the program through grants, donations and federal asset forfeiture funds.
 - Canine deployments:
 - 2023: 24
 - 2024: 130
 - 2025: 131
 - Canine Arrests:
 - 2023: 13
 - 2024: 65
 - 2025: 36
- (i) SRT:
 - In 2025 the Sheriff's Office SRT Team was rebranded.
 - Trained to handle high risk situations that exceeded the capabilities of standard law enforcement such as hostage situations, armed standoffs, high risk warrant service and search warrants. Members underwent rigorous training in tactics, negotiations and crisis management.
 - They were held to physical standards set forth by state and national standards.
 - SRT Callouts: 14
 - They trained for a combined 866.5 hours.
- (j) Drone Operations:
 - Deployments:
 - FY24: 5
 - FY25: 43
 - Surveillance, SRT Call-Out, Scene Documentation, Search and Rescue, Special Events, Assist Emergency Management, Training
- (k) Boat Operations:
 - Boat Deployments: 8
 - The boat was used around the holidays ensuring water safety for citizens and tourists. They worked closely with NC Wildlife during these times. They also assisted with boater safety training.
- (l) Civil Process and Courts:
 - Civil Process Services:
 - 2023: 1,707
 - 2024: 1,627
 - 2025: 2,398

- Courthouse Visitors:
 - 2023: 35,556
 - 2024: 19,806
 - 2025: 75,262
 - Total open courts: 312
- (m) Detention Center:
 - Total beds: 72
 - Male beds: 59
 - Female beds: 8
 - Holding beds: 5
 - The upcoming jail expansion of 40 additional beds should alleviate some jail overcrowding and reduce costs of housing inmates with other facilities.
 - 2025 Admissions: 2,217
 - Recidivism Rate: 34.26%
- (n) 2025 Involuntary Commitment and Inmate Transports:
 - Total transports: 811
 - IVC transports: 241
 - Inmate transports: 570
 - Total time spent in transports: 3,244
- (o) Community Outreach:
 - Safe Schools Task Force
 - D.A.R.E. Program
 - Senior Center Christmas Box Deliver
 - Special Olympics
 - Back to School Bash
 - Emergency Services Committee
 - DWI Task Force
 - Shop with a Cop
 - Sylva Christmas Parade
 - Host for the NC Sheriff's Association Fall Conference

(p) Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program: The detention center was no longer just a place of custody. It was an accountability opportunity for real second chances. The MAT program addressed Substance Use Disorder directed by providing a prescription medication with reentry support. Participants began the Program during incarceration and continued to receive services in the community upon release. 64 inmates expressed interest in participating with more than half had been admitted into the Detention Center multiple times within the past 12 months. He wanted to see all in jail stay outside and become productive citizens of the county.

General discussions were held.
Informational item.

(8) BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT: Darlene Fox, Finance Officer, presented one Budget Ordinance Amendment for fiscal year ending June 30, 2026. The Amendment was for land acquisition for Southwestern Community College in the amount of \$475,000.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Budget Ordinance Amendment, as presented. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) RESOLUTION R26-01 APPROVING INSTALLMENT FINANCING

CONTRACT: Ms. Fox presented Resolution R26-01 approving an Installment Financing Contract and Delivery thereof and providing for certain other related matters regarding the approved projects totaling \$27M. The document had been reviewed by the County Attorney. She requested approval of the Resolution and to authorize staff to execute the documents.

Motion: Commissioner Smith moved to approve Resolution R26-01 Approving the Installment Financing Contract and authorize staff to execute the documents, as presented. Commissioner Hooper seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(10) RESOLUTION R26-02 DEFINING AND ESTABLISHING THE COUNTYWIDE SERVICE DISTRICT TO PROVIDE FIRE PROTECTION, AMBULANCE AND RESCUE SERVICES:

Mr. King presented Resolution R26-02 defining and establishing the Countywide Service District to provide Fire Protection, Ambulance and Rescue Services. There would be a base amount for each fire district. Additional funding for any agencies with multiple funding sources would be enhanced funding. Also, they contracted with two EMS Services and Rescue Squads, which would also be a funding piece for the District.

Commissioner Hooper requested to table the item until all five Commissioners were present.

Chairman Letson asked how many county firemen would they be hiring?

Mr. King stated they would not hire any county firemen.

Chairman Letson stated everyone within each fire department would remain.

Mr. King stated this would be for the same exact services they currently had and would be operated the exact same way. They would still maintain two employees per department for the rural fire departments, which reported to the Fire Marshal. The other departments would have appropriations from this tax for the base amount, plus whatever enhanced funds they got from other sources.

Commissioner Smith stated this was not an additional tax for fire. They were better separating where it was coming from.

General discussions were held.

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

(11) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Hooper moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman