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Time Posted: _____
Posted By: Evelyn Baker
Witnessed By: _____

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
OCTOBER 3, 2011**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on October 3, 2011, 2:00 pm, Justice & Administration Bldg., Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Rd., Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Jack Debnam, Chairman	Chuck Wooten, County Manager
Doug Cody, Vice Chair	J. K. Coward, County Attorney
Charles Elders, Commissioner	Evelyn Baker, Clerk to Board
Mark Jones, Commissioner	
Joe Cowan, Commissioner	

Chairman Debnam called the meeting to order.

AGENDA: Commissioner Elders moved to approve the Agenda. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

MINUTES: Commissioner Cowan moved to approve the Minutes of the Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of September 16, 2011. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(1) PROCLAMATION:

Motion: *Commissioner Cody moved to proclaim October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Jackson County. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman Debnam read and presented the Proclamation to Mike Poore, CEO, MedWest and Steve Brown, Executive Director of Harris–Swain Foundation proclaiming October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Mr. Brown stated MedWest will provide a free mammogram to women residing in any county where services are provided by the MedWest Health System who are between the ages of 35-40, under the care of a family physician, and have never had a mammogram.

(2) CHAIRMAN’S REPORT: Chairman Debnam announced that the October 17th meeting will be held at the Albert-Carlton Library in Cashiers.

(3) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: Mr. Wooten reported:

(a) **Unemployment:** The August unemployment rate is 8.4%, down from the July rate of 8.8%. Jackson County continues to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in western North Carolina.

(b) **Mark Watson Park Project**: The project is approximately 36% complete. He recommended a change order for the installation of a drainage pipe from the new library down the embankment and under Savannah Dr. and tie into the existing storm drainage system at the park. The cost is \$25,228.50 which the engineer stated was reasonable. The funds would come from the savings realized because the bid was lower than the project budget.

(c) **Advantage West Economic Summit**: A 2011 Economic Summit is scheduled on November 14 at the Diana Wortham Theatre in Asheville beginning at 5:30 p.m.

(d) **Cashiers Rec Site Project**: The general contractor is completing the installation of the fire pump station. None of the outstanding site items will prevent starting construction of the new recreation facility.

(e) **Public Works Director**: He has met with Chad Parker and the maintenance, housekeeping, grounds, garage and Green Energy Park managers to make sure everyone understands the reasoning for consolidation of these areas into a single division.

(f) **WCU-SCC Strategic Planning**: Both institutions are currently involved in strategic planning efforts and are conducting a series of public meetings to gather input from the public. He and Commissioner Cody attended a joint meeting on September 26th and both made comments about the need for strengthening relationships in support of economic development for Jackson County and the region as well as developing a stronger relationship between the community and the institutions.

(g) **Small Town Forum**: Governor Perdue will host a small town forum on October 6th at Haywood Community College. The forum is an opportunity for anyone to meet with her or her representatives concerning local projects.

(h) **Cullowhee Fire Dept**: Baxter Nicholson, a Cullowhee firefighter, was killed in an automobile accident on October 2.

(i) **Revaluation**: The NC Assoc. of Realtors reports that the existing home sales volume through July was down 7% from last year and down 22% from mid-2008. The average sale price of an existing home is \$198,635, roughly where it was in mid-2005 and below the peak prices in 2007 which means houses are selling at less than the tax value. Vacation homes are losing value faster than the more modest homes of permanent residents, thus tax burdens will shift from the more wealthy non-resident property owners to residents of less modest means. A drop in the tax base means expenditures must be reduced or raise taxes. In Jackson County, 63% of the general fund is funded through property taxes.

(4) CASHIERS REC CENTER BIDS: Mr. Wooten reported that seven bids were received. He recommended that the construction contract be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder, D. Michael Ward, Inc. in the base bid amount of \$3,249,000 as well as three alternates (maintenance bldg., gym equip, sport flooring) be accepted in the amount of \$291,000 for a total bid of \$3,540,100. The company estimated it would take 365 days to complete the project.

Motion: *Commissioner Elders moved to award the bid to D. Michael Ward, Inc. in the total amount of \$3,540,100. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(5) GREEN ENERGY PARK: Timm Muth gave an overview of park activities. Three wells were not producing gas and a new blower was installed which has improved pressure stability. The control system changes have reduced gas wasted to flare and future changes may eliminate flare completely during site operations. Bids are currently being reviewed for installation of four new extraction wells which will allow access to most/all gas resources.

“Friends of Green Energy Park” volunteers have formed teams for landscaping, fund raising, special events, etc. Volunteers have installed over \$2,000 worth of plants and donated over \$2,000 worth of manpower. The majority of the plants were propagated in the greenhouses. Use of the greenhouses has enabled the county grounds department to reduce its costs. SCC has also requested greenhouse space. UNC-CH Law School is assisting with the formation of a non-profit entity.

Two improved working furnaces and a glass garage, worth about \$8,000, were donated and fabricated by park artists. An internationally recognized glass artist, Tadashi Torii, will become a fulltime glass artist in residence beginning in October. This year, more than 15 school groups have toured the park and approximately 1,000 people, plus 30 artisans, participated in the Youth Arts Festival. Resourceful Communities awarded a \$10,000 grant for the construction of a wood/oil fire kiln plus a \$10,000 grant for marketing efforts.

(6) GREEN ENERGY PARK-GLASSBLOWING STUDIO LEASE: Mr. Muth presented a Lease for Tadashi Torii to rent a glassblowing studio at the Green Energy Park. The Lease is for a term of one year at a monthly rental of \$600.00.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Lease. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(7) HOOPER HOUSE HISTORIC DESIGNATION: Gerald Green, Planning Director, stated that the Historic Preservation Commission recommends that the “Hooper House” located at 733 W. Main St., Sylva, be designated as a historic landmark. If designated, the owners may apply for a 50% reduction in local property taxes. He presented a draft Ordinance. A public hearing was scheduled for November 7 at 1:30 p.m.

(8) MOUNTAIN PROJECTS, INC.-CDBG GRANT: Gerald Green, Planning Director, presented a contract for Mountain Projects, Inc. to be designated as the program administrator of the \$500,000 CDBG grant at a cost not to exceed 8% of the project/construction cost. The grant is to assist low-income families in the reconstruction or replacement of existing homes.

Motion: *Commissioner Elders moved that Mountain Projects, Inc. be designated the program administrator for an administrative fee not to exceed 8% of the project/construction cost. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) FIREWORKS DISPLAY: Alan Farmer, Fire Marshal, submitted a Permit Application from Pyrotecnico to display fireworks at a wedding at Castle Ladyhawke in Tuckasee on October 30, 2011. The applicant has submitted the required documentation; however, his office cannot issue a permit until a site inspection has been performed on the day of the event. Authorization, pursuant to G. S. 14-413, must be given to Mr. Farmer to continue the application process and issue a permit at his discretion.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to authorize the Fire Marshal to proceed with the application of Pyrotecnico to display fireworks at Castle Ladyhawke on October 30, 2011 contingent upon the Fire Marshal issuing a permit. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(10) NCDOT AGREEMENT - RE: SR1182 (Plastic Plant Rd. in Cashiers): On October 11, 2010, the county and NCDOT entered into an agreement using grant funds to extend SR1182 (Plastic Plant Road) in Cashiers from US 64 to the Cashiers Recreation Center parking lot. NCDOT has requested completion date of the project be extended to October 10, 2012 in order for NCDOT and county officials to develop plans for use of the balance of the grant funds, such as, sidewalks, curbing, or other enhancements. Commissioner Jones stated a potential use could be repairs to Frank Allen Road.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to extend the agreement to October 10, 2012. Commissioner Cowan seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(11) EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY – DENTAL SCHOOL: Mr. Wooten presented a request for the transfer of 1.25 acres in the Webster Complex to the State of North Carolina for the sum of \$1.00. ECU plans to construct a 7,700 sf School of Dental Medicine on the site. When the facility is opened, five new jobs will be created which could eventually increase to ten. ECU requested a Memorandum of Understanding that the county will continue to maintain the slopes at the site. Construction must start within five years from the date of transfer or the property reverts to the county. Mr. Coward stated that a small portion of the property must be released from the Lease between the county and Jackson County Rescue Squad.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the property transfer. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(12) SHERIFF'S OFFICE SIDEARMS: The Sheriff's Dept. requested authorization, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 20-187.2., to award to Deputy Sheriff Alvin Kinkaid, Jr., who is retiring on October 1, 2011, his service sidearm. The Sheriff recommended that the price for the sidearm be set at \$1.00 which he would pay. Mr. Wooten recommended that the firearm be declared surplus and the Sheriff be authorized to present the sidearm to Mr. Kinkaid. In addition, the Sheriff should be directed to provide the serial number and description of the weapon to the County Finance Director so it can be removed from the fixed asset inventory and to replace it with a new sidearm at no cost to the county.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to declare Alvin Kinkaid, Jr. sidearm surplus and authorize the Sheriff to present it to Mr. Kinkaid. The Sheriff is directed to pay a \$1.00 fee, provide the serial number and description of the sidearm to the Finance Director and replace the sidearm at no cost to the county. Commissioner Elders seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(13) ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX: Mr. Wooten presented a report from the Governor's Office which states that in 2010, Jackson County's tourism expenditures increased only 2.8% while Macon, Haywood and Swain counties had increased 6.6% – 8%. In 2010 tourism expenditures were: Jackson - \$62.5 million; Haywood - \$116.31 million; Macon - \$122.08 million; and Swain - \$256.35 million. Jackson is 48th in the state in expenditures and has 560 tourism related jobs. The surrounding counties have in excess of 1,000 tourism related jobs with Swain having 3,210. Jackson County's lodging revenues have decreased from \$16.2 million in FY2006-07 to \$14.8 million in FY2010-11. Jackson County needs to recapture some of the loss revenue.

The Legislature has authorized the county that it could levy up to a 6% room occupancy tax rate. The room occupancy tax has not increased since 1987. County residents will not be burdened by a room occupancy tax increase.

Motion: Commissioner Elders moved to levy an additional 3% room occupancy tax, for a total of 6%, effective January 1, 2012. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by a vote of 4 - 1 with Commissioner Jones voting "no".

(14) COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR LONG TERM CARE:

Motion: Chairman Debnam moved to reappoint Gail Revis to a 3-year term on the Community Advisory Committee for Long Term Care. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(15) HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE: Carry over.

(16) SOLID WASTE BOARD: Carry over.

INFORMAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC:

(a) Avram Friedman of Sylva urged the Board to adopt a resolution in opposition to Duke Energy's application for a 17.4% increase in residential utility rates which is in addition to the 5% Duke received two months ago. A rate increase would cause a substantial hardship for many citizens in addition to businesses and industries. He stated the purpose for the rate increase is mostly for financing a new coal burning power plant. A public hearing concerning the rate increase is scheduled on October 26 in Macon County.

(b) Marie Leatherwood of Sylva stated revaluation should be delayed until 2016 so the tax burden will not shift from the northern to the southern end of the county and the majority of citizens do not own multi-million dollar houses.

PRESS CONFERENCE

CLOSED SESSION:

***Motion:** Chairman Debnam moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G. S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property and G. S. 143-318.11(a)(3) Legal. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman Debnam called the regular meeting back to order and stated no action was taken in closed session other than approval of closed session minutes.

There being no further business, Commissioner Elders moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Evelyn Baker, Clerk to Board

W. J. Debnam, Chairman