

**MINUTES OF A PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
NOVEMBER 5, 2012**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing on November 5, 2012, at 1:30 p.m., Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Jack Debnam, Chairman
Doug Cody, Vice Chair
Charles Elders, Commissioner
Mark Jones, Commissioner
Joe Cowan, Commissioner

Chuck Wooten, County Manager
J. K. Coward, Jr., Co. Attorney
Pat Parris, Clerk to Board

Chairman Debnam called the public hearing to order and stated the purpose of the hearing is to receive public input on a “Resolution Confirming the Levy of an Existing 3% Occupancy Tax, Increasing the Levy of Occupancy Tax by 1%, and Creating the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority”.

Public Comments:

(1) T. J. Walker, Dillsboro Inn, stated he is favor of the one cent occupancy tax increase to support development and regional marketing. One of the county’s biggest industries is tourism and a broader regional approach should be taken. There is the need to establish a regional identity greater as well as partner with different businesses throughout the county. Dillsboro could still be the best partner for the railroad if a turn-about is installed.

(2) Ken Hernandez, President of the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce, stated he is in general support of the Resolution to create a single Jackson County Tourism Development Authority. The Chamber applauds local tourism industry leaders for the significant contributions of businesses not just to the economy but also to the quality of life enjoyed as a result. The Chamber pledges continued support to expanded tourism development in the future through a coordinated, strategic marketing among distinctive destinations across the county and enhanced operations of the south Jackson County Visitors Center.

(3) George Ware, owner of Chalet Inn, urged the Board to reconsider portions of the resolution. His main three concerns are: (a) the TDA Director should be a citizen and taxpayer of Jackson County. Spending a tax increase meant to increase tourism to hire personnel should be the last resort; (b) that members of the authority should be appointed by the commissioners; (c) none of the commissioners ran on a platform where they would raise taxes and use a portion of that revenue to hire an additional county employee and increase the county bureaucracy. The county would be better served by relying on the volunteer efforts of motivated and knowledgeable citizens; however, if that is insufficient, then out-source through competitive bid contractual services.

(4) Julie Spiro, Executive Director, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, stated she is speaking on behalf of the Board of Directors and pledges continued support of the partnership of the new TDA to the Commissioners and the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber stands ready to support the new TDA Board and looks forward to promoting Jackson County. The Chamber feels very good about the work that has been accomplished over the past two decades and looks forward to the new opportunities to grow tourism and positively impact the economy throughout the county through an educational process that will allow the application of fresh knowledge and vision toward a cohesive cooperative and targeted market effort.

(5) Clifford Meads, High Hampton Inn General Manager, stated his appreciation for the opportunity for several citizens to work on the committee to try to shape the TDA package. There is more good in it than not; however, he is uncomfortable having the TDA give the appearance, maybe unintended, of being nothing more than another county department. The director would be a county employee, the chairman and members are either accepted or rejected by the county commission, thus it gives the appearance it is nothing more than county employees. He does not believe nor support a destination marketing organization that has the appearance and the reach with political involvement and is a bad way to start. A TDA is a good method to make a fresh start, but urged the commissioners to reconsider those components that showed up on the last day.

There being no further public comments, Commissioner Elders moved that the public hearing be adjourned. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Attested By:

Approved:

Patsy C. Parris, Clerk

W. J. Debnam, Chairman