

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
AUGUST 13, 2019**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on August 13, 2019, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A227, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair
Mickey Luker, Commissioner
Ron Mau, Commissioner
Gayle Woody, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) TRANSPORTATION AGREEMENT – SENATE BILL 630: Mr. Adams stated that this was a continuation of a conversation of an item that had been brought to the Board through mental health reform and Senate Bill 630. This was regarding the Involuntary Commitment Transit Agreement that was necessary for that law.

Major Shannon Queen stated that this had been long-standing since the statutes had been in place. Law enforcement agencies were bound by the statutes on how to transport involuntary commitments. A new law was enacted that stated there had to be a transportation plan in place for mental health providers and cities and counties as well.

They had a plan already, but it was not written in a format for the county or town to be aware of. This agreement would be placing in writing what they already knew and it was similar to what other agencies across the state had in place. He and Ms. Baker had worked with the Town of Sylva and they presented it to their Board earlier in the month where they adopted the agreement. There could be one possible modification to the agreement to change “municipalities” to the “Town of Sylva”, since all of the other municipalities in the county were covered by the Sheriff’s Office.

Mr. Adams stated that it was important that they continue their arrangement with Harris Hospital as they did not have to leave law enforcement officers there for more than a short period of time.

Major Queen stated that they did a quick assessment and if they did not feel that their on-site security could handle what was going on, they did not release the officer. If they had it handled, they would let the officer go. Previously, they would sit for days waiting for bed space across the state. The agreement they had with Harris was tremendous.

Commissioner Woody stated that she had a question about a different subject. She had two different situations that she knew he was very familiar with about Highway 107, River Road and the speed limits. A couple of people mentioned to her that if there was a reputation of ticketing people that speed, word would get around and then it would become a deterrent for speeding. She knew it was probably a personnel issue, but she heard from people asking if they could request there be an effort with legitimate speeders. The speed limits were already in place, could those speed limits, for a period of time, be enforced at a greater level.

Major Queen stated that with speeding and traffic, personnel levels were usually the push for that. The Sheriff’s Office had to cover from the front of the Justice Center to the courts, jails, schools, 911 calls, property crimes and mental commitments. Traffic usually ended up being one of the things they had the opportunity to work to solve other crimes, not necessarily to address speeding concerns, even though it could happen if an officer observed it.

Usually, they did not have the staffing to commit to an area just for speeding because of all of the other things they had to do. That was where the Highway Patrol came in. Their responsibility and governance as an agency was to enforce Chapter 20, Motor Vehicle Laws. For them as well, they had their own set of issues with staffing and personnel.

Commissioner Deitz stated that if it became known that a person would get a ticket if they speed on some of the roads where they were really having trouble, it would be a deterrent.

Major Queen stated that he recently had a meeting in Cashiers regarding speeding. The eventual idea with speeding was that they really wanted voluntary compliance. They wanted everyone to not speed by whatever means they could do, but they tried to avoid a ticket.

He talked with DOT as well and they had a Decorative Crosswalk Policy. Part of that policy was that they would have to maintain it. Since Cashiers was not a town or city, they did not have the ability to enter into an agreement with DOT. Other municipalities had the same issue over the years as it was a common problem. He suggested that the Cashiers group contact DOT and request a speed study. He also gave them information about pole mounted radar signs to let people know they were speeding.

Commissioner Woody requested that he share this issue with Sheriff Hall and any others as there was a huge concern in the community about people speeding in areas. They did not want there to be a serious accident that then caused them to act, they wanted to be proactive.

Consensus: *Add the Transportation Agreement to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(2) HOUSING COMMITTEE: Michael Poston, Planning Director; Rich Price Economic Development Director; and Caroline LaFrienier, Planner I, were present for this item.

Mr. Poston stated that about a year ago, he requested to establish a Housing Committee, which was born out of the 2040 Land Use Plan Initiative. They envisioned that over time, the committee could increase in representation, but in the initial setup they requested five members: Rich Price, Economic Development Director; Heather Baker, County Attorney; Michael Poston, Planning Director; Patsy Davis, Executive Director, Mountain Projects; Dan Harbaugh, Executive Director, TWSA; and Caroline LaFrienier, Planning Staff.

Their charge was to look at the following four items:

- Land Reservation Programs
- Housing Trust Fund Programs
- Complete Housing Survey
- Develop and Administer an Access to Fair Housing Plan

They completed the Fair Housing Plan, which the Commissioners approved and they were working to implement that plan. They would continue to work with Mountain Projects and others to create information sessions/programs that addressed Fair Housing to landlords, which would be retooled in the future for renters. They wanted to address the issues with the landlords to make sure that they were furthering the understanding of what Fair Housing Laws required in the community. That was one of the obstacles and impediments of Fair Housing they had identified in the planning process, so that was one of the first things they wanted to create a program to help to begin to educate and address that issue.

Mr. Price stated that while they had been focused on trying to understand the housing situation in the county, his counterparts across the region had also been looking at that. About four months ago, the Mountain West Partnership, in collaboration with Southwestern Commission, partnered with a research consultant out of Asheville that would be performing a housing study with each county starting with Haywood and west.

Jackson County was taking longer because the analyst was looking at all of the student housing in the county, which could skew the results dramatically and make it appear that there was not a need for a particular type of housing in the county. So far, the conditions in the county looked very favorable for the need of senior and family housing, both rental and for sale. He was hopeful to have the full report in the next ten days.

Chairman McMahan inquired about housing data from the census.

Mr. Poston stated they would get the vacancy rates and where the second home market was to some extent.

Mr. Price stated that from the study, they were hopeful to be able to see the information from the county in its entirety and then specifically by location.

Mr. Poston distributed the most recent draft of the Housing Trust Fund.

Ms. LaFrienier presented the information in the draft Housing Trust Fund:

(a) Introduction: Mixed Income Housing had been recognized as a substantial need for the residents of the county. In an effort to promote development and retention of housing for individuals who earn up to 120% of the median household income, the county established the Housing Trust Fund.

Mixed Income Housing was defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a development that was comprised of housing units with differing levels of affordability, typically with some market-rate housing and some housing that was available to low-income occupants below market-rate. Mixed Income Housing for the purposes of this Trust Fund, would be defined as housing that costs no more than 30% of the total income for residents making less than or equal to 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI) as defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

(b) Funding Sources:

- County Funds
- Community Development Block Grant Funds
- USDA
- North Carolina Housing Finance Agency
- Private Foundation Funds

(c) Housing Trust Fund Priorities:

- Development of one, two and three-bedroom affordable rental housing based on market deficit.
- Transportation oriented development.
- Removal of health and safety risks in existing housing stock.
- Projects that could satisfy more than one need and/or involve several partner entities.
- Priority would be given to projects where Housing Trust Fund money could serve as gap financing that would enable a project to move forward.
- Acquire land that could be developed for mixed income housing.
- Development of housing units for individuals with disabilities.
- Development of housing units with tenant selection plans that comply with the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

(d) Eligible Activities: The following activities would be eligible for assistance through the Housing Trust Fund:

- Loans to developers:
 - For the installation of public infrastructure to facilitate the development of affordable/workforce housing.
 - To purchase land to facilitate the development of affordable/workforce housing.
 - To assist in the conversion of existing non-residential buildings into affordable/workforce housing.
 - To assist with the rehabilitation of existing substandard multi-family housing units and their conversion to affordable/workforce housing.
- Loans to income eligible homeowners for housing repairs.
- Grants:
 - To low-income homeowners for emergency (health and safety related) housing repairs.

- For the acquisition of land to be used for the creation of affordable/workforce housing.
- For construction of affordable housing units (maximum \$_____ per unit).
- For the acquisition of vacant housing for rehabilitation and resale as affordable/workforce housing.
- For public water system improvements with emphasis given to predominately low/moderate income (LMI) areas.
- For public sewer system improvements with emphasis given to predominately LMI areas.
- For public street improvements with emphasis given to predominately LMI areas.
- For public pedestrian improvement with emphasis given to predominately LMI areas.

(e) Eligible Applicants:

- For profit developers of affordable/workforce housing.
- Non-profit developers of affordable/workforce housing.
- Public housing agencies.
- Income eligible homeowners.
- Local governments.

(f) Grant Terms:

- Funding up to \$_____ per dwelling unit would be considered for projects that meet the Housing Trust Fund Priorities in Section III of this document.
- For infrastructure would be made on a case-by-case basis based on the proposed project scope and availability of funds.
- With the exception of income eligible homeowner emergency housing repairs, all grant projects must comply with Section VIII of this document.
- The distribution of CDBG funds would be determined according to their standards and priorities, not the priorities in this Housing Trust Fund document.

(g) Loan Terms:

- Loan Amount
 - Developers: Loan amounts would be at the rate of \$__ per unit of affordable/workforce housing developed. If the developer incorporates one or more of the Housing Trust Fund priorities, an additional \$__ per unit may be requested. The maximum loan amount \$__.
 - Homeowners with an income of 80% or less of the AMI may qualify for a maximum of \$__ loan for housing rehabilitation activities. Loans would be secured with a Promissory Note and Deed of Trust. Any costs incurred in preparing the Promissory Note and Deed of Trust, verifying satisfactory credit or any other associated fees would be incorporated into the loan amount.
 - Homeowners whose income was 50% or less of the AMI may qualify for \$__ grant for emergency repairs to their dwelling. Emergency repair grants would only be approved in instances where the health and safety of the residents or the general public or the structural integrity of the dwelling unit, were at risk.
- Interest Rate and Loan Repayment:
 - Developers would be at the current IRS Applicable Federal Rates (AFRs) and the loan may be amortized over the loan period.
 - Homeowners would be at the current IRS AFRs, and the loan may be amortized over the loan period.

(h) Affordability:

- Housing was considered affordable if total costs do not exceed 30% of household income.
- Homeowners: Total housing costs include principal, interest, taxes and insurances.
- Renters: Total housing costs include rent and utilities.

- Developments that receive Housing Trust Fund assistance would be kept affordable, as defined above, for a minimum of 20 years.
- (i) Application Process:
- Developers
 - Pre-Application meeting with Planning Department staff to determine eligibility.
 - Before application submittal, applicant may require market analysis to determine housing deficit.
 - Application submittal
 - Homeowners
 - Pre-Application meeting with staff to determine eligibility
 - Application submittal
 - Selection Committee review
 - Approval or denial issued via email or first class mail.
- (j) Approval Process and Procedure:
- After initial Planning Department staff review, the Selection Committee would review applications based on Housing Trust Fund Priorities, efficiency of design, energy efficiency of the dwellings and cost and availability of funds. The selection committee would compare the unit cost or rents with the prices that eligible clients could afford to determine the “gap” that needs to be funded.
 - Selection Committee would recommend a course of action to the Board of Commissioners.
 - The Board of Commissioners would have final determination of applications.
- (k) Selection Committee: The Housing Committee would serve as the Selection Committee.
- (l) Effective Dates: TBD
- (m) Amendments and Administrative Procedures.
- (n) Equal Employment Opportunity, Minority and Women Owned Businesses, Davis-Bacon, and Fair Housing Requirements.
 General discussions were held.
Informational item.

(3) GENERAL UTILITY WORKER III – MAINTENANCE MECHANIC I:

Kathleen Breedlove, Human Resources Director, stated that in the 2019-2020 Budget, there were three new positions for the Public Works Department

- 2 – General Utility Worker III – Grounds, Grade 17
- 1 – General Utility Worker III – Maintenance, Grade 17

She requested the following revision:

- 2 – General Utility Worker III – Grounds, Grade 17
- 1 – General Utility Worker III – Maintenance Mechanic I, Grade 18

The purpose would be to create a hybrid position to provide maintenance and grounds support for county owned properties and facilities.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(4) EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PLAN: Ms. Breedlove presented an updated Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan for consideration and adoption. The plan would put in place a systematic and consistent recruitment to identify and attract the most qualified applicants for employment with the county. The plan analyzes relevant labor market data, as well as employment practices and identify possible barriers to the participation of women and minorities in all levels of the county’s workforce. Its purpose was to ensure the opportunity for full and equal participation of men and women in the workplace, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, disability, age or sexual orientation.

As a periodic recipient of the Department of Justice funding, the county may be required to submit an EEO certification form or an EEO utilization report to the Office of Civil Rights. To ensure the accuracy of submitted data, it was recommended that the county Board of Commissioners adopt the updated EEO Plan and permit the County Manager and Human Resources Director the authority to review, evaluate and update the EEO Plan annually and as needed.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(5) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY DESTINATION RESEARCH:

Nick Breedlove, Executive Director TDA and Berkley Young, President Young Strategies, Inc., were present for this item.

Mr. Breedlove stated that about a year ago, they started visitor profile research to better understand the visitors to the county. They had gotten approximately 4,000 responses, which was well above what they needed. They conducted a resident and part-time resident survey and also an image awareness survey regarding the brand and images they used to advertise the county. They then surveyed 150 local elected officials, key stakeholders and long-time business owners about their opinions about tourism, infrastructure and mobility, which was called Destination Next. They took all of the visitor data, Destination Next and created their first Strategic Plan.

Mr. Young presented: Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Destination Research:

(a) Client Destinations: The Young Strategies project team, both individually and collectively, conducted destination research and planning in thirty-three states.

(b) Travel Market Research:

- Research Objective: Young Strategies would provide a visitor profile study for TDA that:
 - Identified the current visitor segmented markets, visitor geo/sociodemographic profile and spending level; seasonal visitation patterns; the attractors/motivators that drive visitation to the county and cities within the county; target/growth markets, visitor segments and strategies with the optimal ROI.
 - Developed a model to calculate annual visitor volume; a solid, reliable annual economic impact model.
 - Engagement of staff, Board, community and travel industry leaders
 - Identified gaps and opportunities for growth and development
 - A shared vision and plan for growth, clearly defined goals and objectives
- Survey Responses:
 - 2,358 were visitors in the last 3 years
 - 505 were residents
 - 483 had not visited the county in the last 3 years
 - 267 were part-time residents
 - 161 were visitors from a neighboring county
 - 9 were residents of Cherokee

(c) 2012 vs. 2017 Travel related tax relieve for the county:

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2017</u>
Total Visitor Spending Ranking in state visitor spending (100 counties)	\$156,050,000 26th	\$195,440,000 26th
State and Local Taxes attributed to Tourism	\$15,660,000	\$19,940,000
Direct Travel and Tourism Employment (jobs)	1,570	1,850
Number of Households in County	N/A	16,218
Tax Relief per Household	\$383.94	\$462.46

(d) Summary and Observations:

- The county currently had 17 hotel/motel lodging properties with approximately 769 rooms. A total of ten properties participated in the YSI survey, which provided an overall response rate of 83.0%.

- Recent hotel development in 2014 saw the opening of two new chain-affiliated properties in the county. A total of 133 hotel rooms were added resulting in a 17% increase in total room inventory.
- (e) Monthly Occupancy Trend:
- Hotel annual occupancy = 55.5%
 - Total number of days 60% or higher occupancy
 - 150 nights = 41.1% of the year
 - Observations:
 - Data shows weekends ran highest occupancy.
 - This data was very reflective of the market segmentation data collected in the YSI survey.
 - Increasing supply in the market was absorbed in peak demand periods while occupancy drops primarily in the harder to sell nights, Sunday, Monday and Wednesday.
 - More rooms must be sold for a healthy lodging industry to thrive and a long-term marketing strategy must be developed to sell more rooms in both the weekdays and off-peak months of travel.
- (f) Market Segmentation:
- The YSI survey of hoteliers revealed the market segments that were driving overnight visitation within the destination. This data confirms that the county was heavily reliant on the leisure related group segments.
 - Business transient was second highest transient segment driving 22% of room nights.
 - STR data supported these findings with Friday and Saturday nights running highest occupancy in lodging over the previous 12 months.
- (g) Methodology:
- An online survey instrument was prepared by the Young Strategies research team and approved by JCTDA staff. Recipients were invited to take a visitor survey and be entered into a chance to win one of two \$250 VISA gift cards. The survey was deployed through web-links, email invitations and Facebook invitations provided to 24 JCTDA industry partners. The following partners deployed a unique link to the survey and generated the number of survey responses.
- (h) Observations:
- Both daytrip and overnight visitors report natural/beautiful scenery followed by outdoor recreation/parks as the most important attributes when selecting a getaway/vacation destination.
 - Nearly half of overnight respondents (48%) indicate they were booking their accommodations within a month of travel, which was a typical trend in many markets across the country. This data indicated that JCTDA needed to respond swiftly to visitor information inquiries since potential visitors were highly likely to book quickly.
 - The highest response by a single category was 2-3 months before travel at 29%.
 - Travelers to the county were typically staying 1-3 nights which was positive data as too many one night stays indicates the need for more activities.
 - The number of two (25%) and three (24%) night stays for overnight visitors suggests enough activities to keep travelers occupied and interested in the destination.
 - Overnight visitors came to immerse themselves in the local experience by partaking in local, unique dining, driving/sightseeing, shopping, waterfalls and hiking.
 - Like overnight visitors, day trippers came to immerse themselves in the local experience by enjoying local, unique dining, driving/sightseeing, shopping, waterfalls and hiking which should be at the core of future marketing messages.

- It was important to mention that while shopping was the second most popular activity reported by visitors, it does not necessarily translate to high spending on shopping. Many people shop for something to do, without making a purchase.
 - Overall trip satisfaction for visitors was high; Overnight (4.74) and Daytrip (4.62) on a 5.0 scale.
 - Overall spending per travel party: overnight = \$1,082.27; daytrip = \$201.60
 - The county makes more than 5 times as much money per party on overnight visitors compared to daytrip visitors. Therefore, the prime focus of marketing efforts should be their overnight segment.
 - Promotion of the destination to overnight visitors would result in a healthy number of day trippers as a natural by-product.
- (i) Part-time Resident Survey Respondents:
- 267 respondents identified as part-time residents.
 - Top 5 Activities: Unique local dining, waterfalls, driving/site-seeing, hiking and shopping.
 - Top 5 Attractions: Blue Ridge Parkway, Biltmore, Great Smoky Mountain National Park, State Parks, USFS Land.
 - Overall trip satisfaction rated highly at 4.76 on a 5.0 scale. 99% said they would recommend the county to others as well as consider a future visit.
 - Highest rated amenities were variety of outdoor experiences, lodging value and unique, local dining.
 - Cultural events, themed experience and outdoor ice skating in winter months rated as the most appealing activities/experiences to be offered in the county.
- (j) Resident Survey Respondents:
- 505 respondents identified as residents in the survey.
 - Resident survey respondents have lived in the county for a wide range of years; the highest responses being 1-5 years (24%) and 11-20 years (22%) followed by 31+ years (19%).
 - Resident respondents reported the county as an active outdoors destination, a great place for families, and a weekend getaway destination. Residents rated their satisfaction with outdoor recreational activities, unique local dining and local events / festivals as the highest rated experiences. Evening entertainment and unique shopping were recognized as having the lowest appeal among residents.
 - Beautiful, friendly, mountains, peaceful and quaint were the words used most often by resident respondents to describe the county.
 - Cultural events, themed experiences and a waterpark along the Tuckasegee River rated as the most appealing activities/experiences to be offered in the county.
- (k) Destination Next: Multi-user online diagnostic tool results:
- 46% Local Stakeholders
 - 27% Tourism Partners
 - 21% Local Government
 - 6% DMO Board of Directors and Staff
 - Overall assessment: average
 - Voyagers: These DMO's and destinations had a tourism vision and community mandate to get it done.
 - Key strategic challenges:
 - Maintaining momentum over time required to implement strategy
 - Making prioritized choices for focused action; avoiding the temptation to be all things to all people
 - Establishing destination marketplace credibility; delivering on brand promises for target market segments

- What could the county do to become a better destination:
 - 25% Mobility and Accessibility
 - 15% Dining/Restaurant options
 - 15% Internet and Communication

(l) Organization and Board Structure: Strategic Vision and Direction: The JCTDA promoted the county as the premier mountain destination in the North Carolina Mountains. The JCTDA operated as a department of the county government with oversight provided by the JCTDA. The JCTDA Board was appointed by and had representation from the County Commissioners. The Executive Director managed the work of the organization and reported to the Board Chair and the Board of Directors.

Travel promotion was a unique approach to economic development because it had a dedicated funding source from traveler-paid lodging taxes and a measurable return on investment. JCTDA was committed to a program of work guided by smart, research-based strategy.

- Vision: To be the premier mountain destination providing an active lifestyle, spectacular natural assets and a friendly community for citizens and visitors alike.
- Mission: To promote the growth of year-round tourism opportunities that benefit the county economy. Their efforts put people to work, grow jobs, build community, and make the towns a vibrant place to live, play and work.
- The TDA Board would be engaged in two primary functions:
 - Providing proper oversight
 - Provide leadership

(m) Strategic Direction: Travel to the county was currently driven by leisure demand for scenic mountain beauty, Cherokee and major WNC regional attractions. Western Carolina University and group travel were also drivers of visitation. The JCTDA would drive growth in visitation and visitor spending by promoting an active-lifestyle destination and focusing on longer weekend stays, weekdays, shoulder and off-seasons. A combination of leisure and group promotion would drive maximum ROI.

Mr. Breedlove stated that in early September, they would have community sessions to go through the information in depth in Cashiers and Sylva.

Informational item.

(6) HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM: Mr. Adams stated that HERE received their 5013c designation. The grants that the Board approved for the county to apply for, HERE would now assume. He would meet with the group on Monday and within the next month they should finalize a lot of details regarding contracts with the company that would run payroll and checking. They hoped to have part-time help coming on in September. Mid-September to no later than mid-October, they would come back to the Board with more of a finalized overall budget and the formal designation of being the county's homeless services provider.

Commissioner Woody stated that she was speaking with Bob Cochran and he stated that Mr. Adams had gone above and beyond. They appreciated his expertise in facilitating the 5013c and all the steps that were necessary. Mr. Cochran stated that they could not have done it without Mr. Adams.

Informational item.

(7) OTHER BUSINESS:

(a) Commissioner Mau inquired about the Conservation Land Trust Policy. They had an outstanding question and Mr. Adams had answered that and indicated that would put them in a position to go ahead and start finalizing that. Did they need to put that on the next work session agenda?

Mr. Adams stated that yes, it just needed to be placed on the next work session agenda.

Informational item.

(b) Commissioner Woody presented a flyer to request businesses and individuals in the county to contribute to the Litter Campaign. The money would go into the account under the Public Works Department. So far, they had \$200 of contributions with \$100 more promised, without passing the flyers out. There would be billboards going up soon and in September there was a statewide effort. Also, the Sylva Herald would be doing a feature on the effort and the cooperation with the state effort. She requested approval for the flyer from the Board.

There were no objections to the flyer.

Informational item.

(c) Chairman McMahan requested that the American Legion be placed on the agenda for August 20th for an update. They had requested to make a presentation to the Board

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Mau moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Luker seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman