

Posted: May 23, 2003
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Posted By: Evelyn Baker
Witnessed By: _____

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
May 22, 2003**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing on May 22, 2003, at 6:00 p.m. at Southwestern Community College, Myers Auditorium, 447 College Drive, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Stacy Buchanan, Chairman
 Roberta Crawford, Vice Chairman
 Joe Cowan, Commissioner
 Brian McMahan, Commissioner
 Eddie Madden, Commissioner
 Kenneth L. Westmoreland, County Manager
 Evelyn B. Baker, Clerk to the Board

Chairman Buchanan called the hearing to order and stated the purpose is to receive public input on consideration of building a public library as a joint venture with Southwestern Community College.

(1) FONTANA REGIONAL LIBRARY: Gail Findley, Director, presented a historical overview of the library. She reported that it had been her board's dream to improve the services at the library. When presented with the idea in 1999 of a joint venture with Southwestern Community College, it appeared that this concept would bring the dream closer to fruition. In 1999 the Board of Commissioners appointed a task force to do a space needs study. When the "Hooper House" was conveyed to the Chamber of Commerce, the plan for expansion into that building was negated. In 2000 architect Rick Lee chose six potential sites. However, none were feasible. She concluded that a shared facility is the best proposal.

(2) BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: Chairman Buchanan gave a power point presentation. He stated that it is the responsibility of the Board of Commissioners to make Jackson County a better place to live, work, learn and play; however, it must make tough decisions concerning sound fiscal policy. It must provide various services and facilities accessible to all citizens, provide quality programs, and provide for future growth. The General Statutes identifies mandatory services while others are optional. Counties and cities have the authority to support libraries from any available source of funds. The public library is an educational institution whose purpose is to help people of all ages and interests to continue to learn. He addressed some the following:

Concerns: (a) the Public Library Association recommends that national standards for library performance be abandoned in favor formulating local goals and objectives based on the needs of particular communities;

(b) Commissioners must set up mission and goals of the proposed new joint use facility;

(c) citizens are the owners;

(d) the county and SCC will ensure that all citizens are made to feel invited and welcome at a new facility, and

(e) the public will be asked for input during the planning and design phase to ensure that they will be proud of a new library.

Population Access: SCC is located in the geographical center of the county. A new Social Services building will be constructed across the road. It is contemplated that a new Department on Aging will also be located adjacent to DSS.

Meetings: The Commissioners have always discussed the library expansion issue in open meetings. SCC was contacted in November 1998 concerning the feasibility of a joint venture. This issue was also discussed in open meetings in November and December 1998, December 1999, January 2000, and March 13 and 20, 2003, April 10, 2003, May 2, 2003, and at various other meetings.

Cost: A new facility in Sylva would cost approximately \$5,000,000. The county already has an obligation of \$4,000,000 to SCC. Because SCC already owns the property, a joint venture for the same size facility would cost \$4,000,000.

Funding: \$280,000 per year is allocated from the county. A new facility in Sylva would require \$1,460,000 per annum compared to \$680,000 for a joint facility. The county will match the Town of Sylva dollar for dollar. Sylva appropriates \$5,000 to the library.

Timeline: On June 3, 2003, the Board of Commissioners will vote on the issue of dismissing the joint venture concept or appropriating \$50,000 for a consultant to do a feasibility study concerning a joint venture. The Commissioners may choose to dismiss the idea of the joint venture at any time during the consultant's study. Should the joint venture issue be approved, construction could begin in FY2003-04 and the new facility could open as early as FY2005-06.

(3) SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Dr. Cecil Groves, President, gave a power point presentation. The Board of Trustees has studied the joint venture idea in depth. SCC is committed to service and has a good relationship with all the libraries. SCC's 1998 Master Plan included construction of a new library. It has purchased the U.S.F.S. site, which will be the location of a new library and would include 300 new parking spaces. SCC received \$9,821,079.13 in grants in the last four years. Over 60% of grant funds supported partner organizations like public schools, public libraries and county governments. Some key comparisons were:

Library Books Access:

SCC	29,583/CCLINC	1,800,000
Public Library	39,243/FRL	184,727
Proposed: I-BISTRO System		40,000,000

Public Use Computers:

SCC	26
Public Library	13
Proposed	100+

No. of Periodicals:

SCC	250
Public Library	71
Proposed	400+

Library Size/Sq.Ft:

SCC	8,000
Public Library	6,000
Proposed	30,000

Hours of Operation per Week:

SCC	66
Public Library	45
Proposed	70

Present Parking at Existing Sites:

SCC	60+
Public Library	14+
Proposed	200+w/in 150'
	400+w/in 400'
	Space for school buses

Bond Funds for Jackson Campus:

<u>New Construction:</u>	<u>State Bonds</u>	<u>Local Match</u>	<u>Total</u>
	\$6,232,770	\$4,271,584	\$10,504,354
Renovation & Repair:	798,982	none required	798,982

Some Special Features:

Youth Services Complex	Special Collection Spaces	Individual & Group Spaces
General Reading Spaces	Disabled/handicapped accessible	Single floor/ground access
Meeting/conference rooms (technology enhanced & enabled)		Gallery space:Arts/Crafts/Collections
College food service	College bookstore	Tutorial Spaces

Dr. Groves stated that SCC does not need the joint venture, but is of the opinion that it would be in the best interests of the county.

(4) PUBLIC LIBRARY: Michael Cartwright, Librarian, identified the Joint Use Library Committee: Deb Lawley, John Tyndall, Karen Wallace, Nelda Reid, Dianne Lindgren, and Gene Couch. He shared the committee’s background, education and expertise. The committee found that its mission and philosophy are compatible in a joint venture. Services would be complimentary to each other. Additional resources would be needed for additional staffing since there would be an increase in services. The committee reviewed, by written surveys, other existing joint libraries throughout the country. The surveys resulted in the compelling need to improve present public library services and all described their joint ventures as a positive experience. He recommended that the joint library venture would improve the lives of citizens.

(5) PUBLIC COMMENT: Some of the comments in opposition to the joint venture were:

- In small towns, libraries should always remain in the county seat
- Traffic on Highways 107 and 116 is too heavy
- Sylva is making strides to revive the downtown area and the library is a hub
- A public library offers more to citizens
- Moving the library would radically alter the lifestyle
- SCC has campuses in 3 counties
- There is no agreement on policies and expenses
- There is nothing in writing of guarantees to the general public
- Other properties are available in Sylva
- Public libraries are not just about books, magazines and computers – but people
- Public will feel unwelcome in academic setting
- SCC students need a quiet library
- Children using library are not always quiet
- Sylva pays its per capita share for the support of the library
- Sylva Commissioners should be included in all aspects of plans
- A college campus intimidates many citizens
- Build a new library in Sylva
- Expand present library
- Moving library would decentralize the community
- Study how to improve parking at library

Who will benefit from move?
A library compliments downtown businesses
Small town atmosphere
Seniors will not come to new site
Programs for young children will probably be diminished
There is already a massive library at WCU
No lay people were included in the committees doing the studies
Grants are available for libraries
College needs are different from public needs
Sylva Partners in Renewal presented a Resolution in opposition
Have community involvement before a final decision is made
The Jackson County Chamber of Commerce presented a Resolution in opposition
A Petition signed by 2,700 citizens in opposition was presented

Some citizens spoke in favor of the joint venture and recommended:

A new facility is needed
Sylva should have a library, but not necessarily the main library
Sylva should allocate more funding to the library
SCC is more convenient

Chairman Buchanan expressed appreciation for the public comments and stated that on June 3, 2003, 6:00 p.m., the Board of Commissioners will decide whether to make an appropriation in the FY2003-04 budget for funding a further study on this issue. There are many possibilities that still need to be pursued before a final decision is made.

There being no further public comments, Commissioner McMahan moved that the hearing be adjourned. Commissioner Crawford seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote and public hearing adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Attested By:

Approved:

Evelyn B. Baker, Clerk

Stacy Buchanan, Chairman