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

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
APRIL 18, 2005**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing on April 18, 2005, at 6:10 p.m., Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian T. McMahan, Chairman
Roberta Crawford, Vice Chairman
Joe Cowan, Commissioner
Eddie Madden, Commissioner
Conrad Burrell, Commissioner
Kenneth L. Westmoreland, County Manager
W. Paul Holt, Jr., County Attorney
Evelyn B. Baker, Clerk to the Board

Chairman McMahan called the hearing to order and stated the purpose is to receive public input on the Proposed Budget for FY2005-2006. Chairman McMahan then opened the floor for public comment.

(1) SHERIFF'S OFFICE: Sheriff Ashe requested the Board to review the proposal be submitted at the last meeting. He stated that safety and security are priorities and plans must be made for the future. He stated his budget requests were carefully evaluated and substantiated.

(2) COMMUNITY HEALTH LINK: Lorna Barnett requested that funding be increased to from \$10,000 to \$20,000. She stated that the organization has grown very fast and with that growth comes increased expectations. Community Health Link must exist in order for Community Health Access Network (CHAN) to exist; however, CHAN does not fund all their needs. She stated that WestCare Hospital has donated over \$200,000 in services and the doctors and pharmacies also cooperate with Community Health Link clients. Community Health Link is working on a child obesity program and has completed Phase I of that program. This program included gathering body-mass statistics from every single child in the Jackson County elementary school system. This information is being sent to the parents. Community Health Link is also working with the Sheriff's Office on methamphetamine problems and several other programs. Ms. Barnett urged the Board to increase funding to Community Health Link.

Lora Mulck stated that without financial assistance from the CHAN program she would have been unable to receive critical medical care since she did not have health insurance or qualify for Medicaid. She urged the Board to keep the program available for needy citizens.

George Stanley stated that the request is for Community Health Link which exists to administer the CHAN Program. The budget for next year includes \$265,373 to pay for prescriptions for non-insured county residents.

Dr. Lisa Lefler of Cherokee Choices reported that diabetes is a growing problem with adults and children. Cherokee Choices is a prevention program that also targets youth. They are interested in getting the baseline information needed to ascertain how to categorize children (in terms of the national population with childhood obesity, eating patterns, etc.), in order to garner more money for prevention education programs. She encouraged the Board to consider increasing the funding for Community Health Link and its programs.

(3) **R.E.A.C.H.**: Sandy Frazier, Director of Development, requested the Board to increase funding from \$15,000 to \$50,000. He stated that for 27 years REACH has been serving the community with services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. REACH has established a regional children’s counseling center to area children and families that are affected by abuse. Last year REACH provided services to over 1,000 men, women and children. The New Choices Program provides support services to women leaving violent relationships and to others in the community who are on welfare or in low paying jobs that are seeking to become self-sufficient. REACH continues to experience a significant cutback in federal and state funding for established programs. County funds will be used for continued operation of the emergency shelter, the legal advocacy program, sexual assault crisis center, and provision for crisis, ongoing and substance abuse counseling. The \$50,000 request represents 5.8% of REACH’s total budget.

Russ Seagle stated that REACH is expanding its services to include counseling for children and elderly abuse. REACH advocates and supports abused victims. He urged the Board to increase funding to REACH.

Bob Cochran, Director of Social Services, stated that REACH is one of the most developed and well managed domestic violence service that he has experienced in his 25 years of social services work. He stated they have done a very good job of developing an array of services and obtaining funding. If REACH is unable to provide emergency services, it is possible that the responsibility reverts to the county. CHAN is a phenomenal program that addresses one of the most basis needs – health care for people who cannot afford health insurance and do not qualify for Medicaid. He requested the Board to honor REACH’s budget request.

There being no further comments, Commissioner Burrell moved that the public hearing be adjourned. Commissioner Madden seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote and the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Attested By:

Approved:

Evelyn B. Baker, Clerk

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman