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Posted By: Evelyn Baker
Witness: _____

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, VILLAGE OF FOREST HILLS,
TOWN OF SYLVA, TOWN OF WEBSTER, TOWN OF DILLSBORO
ON
FEBRUARY 13, 2006**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Joint Meeting on February 13, 2006, at 6:00 p.m., 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Room A201, Sylva, North Carolina.

County Board of Commissioners:

Brian T. McMahan, Chairman
Roberta Crawford, Vice Chair
Joe Cowan, Commissioner
Eddie Madden, Commissioner
Conrad Burrell, Commissioner
Kenneth L. Westmoreland, County Mgr
Evelyn B. Baker, Clerk to the Board

Town of Sylva

Brenda Oliver, Mayor
Maurice Moody
Stacy Knotts
Jay Denton, Town Mgr
Jim Aust, Town Planner

Town of Dillsboro

Jean Hartbarger, Mayor
John Faulk
Jimmy Cabe
Michael Fitzgerald

Town of Webster:

Steve Gray, Mayor
Louise Bedford
Laura Spaulding
Susan Leveille, Planning Board

Village of Forest Hills:

James Davis, Mayor
James Wallace
Sue Burton

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

TIMELINE: Chairman McMahan gave an overview of the timeline and purpose for a Land Development Plan. In 1995 the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution requesting the Dept. of Transportation to amend its 1994 Thoroughfare Plan by showing what a crisis Hwy. 107 would become. On May 19, 2003, a feasibility study was presented by DOT for a "Southern Bypass" around Sylva. In November 2003, the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution requesting a comprehensive traffic study and plan for Hwy. 107. The resolution urged the community to come together and work positively toward improvement and a solution to present and future NC 107 Corridor traffic issues and requested that the Statewide Planning Unit work cooperatively through a community based task force. A task force was appointed in 2004. In March 2005 the DOT sent a letter which indicated that a comprehensive transportation planning process could not go forward in Jackson County until a Land Development Plan was adopted. In June 2005 the official process to create a plan commenced.

(1) JACKSON COUNTY: Linda Cable, Planning Coordinator, stated that preparation of the Jackson County Development Plan was a cooperative effort among Jackson County, the incorporated and unincorporated communities in the county, Western Carolina University, Southwestern Community College, NC Dept. of Transportation, Tuckaseige Water & Sewer Authority, and local and regional planning agencies. The purpose of the committee was to provide background information on growth and development, assess the county's current condition, promote cooperative

efforts among governments, institutions, and citizens, identify and address transportation concerns and provide a guide for DOT studies, and identify a vision for the future.

The plan does not identify or endorse new regulations on land use, impose new ordinances or regulations affecting land use, or identify or impose land development regulations. The plan does assess where Jackson County is now based on population, development patterns and economy; assess where Jackson County will be tomorrow based on current trends.

(2) DEVELOPMENT MAPS: Kevin Jamison, GIS Application Specialist, stated that he was requested to compile data from internal tax resources and external information and create maps. He presented seven different maps depicting slopes, protected areas, population density, primary vs. secondary homes, potential commercial and growth areas.

(3) DEVELOPMENT TRENDS: Ms. Cable stated that research and census data revealed the following:

(a) Ridge Top Development & Subdivision Trends: Increased ridge top development and increased pressure on sensitive land and resources. Within the past five years at least 5,500 lots were subdivided (excluding lots in municipalities and smaller subdivisions consisting of 15-20 lots). Further, there are plans to add 2,000-3,000 additional lots within the next couple of years. Development is also limiting access to lands available for public use and increased pressure on sensitive land and resources.

(b) Education & Health Care Trends: WCU expanding its campus, SCC expanding its programs, and WestCare Health Systems is expanding community services.

(c) Infrastructure Expansions:

Introduction of broadband capabilities;
Availability of natural gas lines to the community;
Expansion of TWSA water and wastewater treatment capacity.

(d) Demographic Trends:

Population increased by 24% between 1990 and 2000;
Estimated population expected to increase 10% between 2000 and 2005;
Population growing older;
In-migration is the leading component of population growth.

(e) Economic Trends:

Educated labor force;
Manufacturing employment decreasing;
Education and health care sectors increasing in importance;
Increase in service sector employment;
Tourism revenues flat.

(f) Growth & Development Issues:

Housing costs are increasing faster than incomes;
Large portion of housing stock is occupied seasonally;
Development pressure on sensitive land increasing;
Development patterns affecting county roads;
Potential impact on quality of life.

(4) CASHIERS COMMUNITY: Ed Henson, Chairman of the Cashiers Community Land Development Committee, stated the year-round population averages 1,700 with the summer population averaging 10,000. The challenges are growth in commercial area, limited available space for development, sewer expansion, subdivisions within five miles of commercial district and second homes. Goals are to promote the

health, safety and general welfare of the community, provide for sound and orderly development, facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, and parks, promote the economic prosperity of the community, preserve the community's unique scenic quality, conserve the natural resources and environmental quality of the community, and protect and conserve the heritage of the community. Expansion of the library is underway, SCC has moved into its new location, and the county has plans to build a new recreation center in the near future. Highways 64 and 107 are in need of improvement.

(5) **TOWN OF DILLSBORO:** Mayor Hartbarger stated that Dillsboro is a tourist community with small shops and restaurants. Challenges are traffic congestion and speed, improve signage, limited land for development, preserve historic structures, and maintain community's ambiance. Goals are to preserve historic treasures, improve community's appearance, increase community involvement, develop Monteith Park & Theater, and designate a historic district.

(6) **VILLAGE OF FOREST HILLS:** Mayor Davis stated that the Forest Hills is a residential community and home to many WCU faculty, staff and retirees. Challenges include road improvement and maintenance, creating a municipal presence in the county, and preservation of community's residential character.

(7) **TOWN OF SYLVA:** Jim Aust, Town Planner, stated that Sylva's mission is to serve the citizens by providing quality services through visionary leadership for a safe, clean community. Its vision is to develop long range plans that expand opportunities for viable commercial and residential growth, while keeping environmental and aesthetics issues in mind, develop long range plans that address job creation to fit its small-town profile, encourage affordable housing and pedestrian-friendly urban villages. Some of the smart growth strategies are: encouraging mixed use development and buildings, encouraging compatible, higher density commercial and residential development, incorporating mass transit features, and carefully monitoring traffic-carrying capacity of existing highways. The master plan focus includes analysis of growth trends and patterns, potential expansion of jurisdiction, infrastructure capability, development tools and techniques, protect the environment, aesthetics, culture, and maintain a viable sustainable community.

(8) **TOWN OF WEBSTER:** Susan Levielle, Planning Board Chair, stated that Webster is a quaint, quiet residential community, has many historic properties, home to SCC, close to WCU and Smoky Mountain High School. Highway 116 is a heavily traveled road that runs through the middle of town. Its challenges include new growth and development, traffic congestion, facilitating community participation, maintaining a strong sense of place, retaining small-town atmosphere and maintain present quality of life. The guiding principles are: an attractive community with a strong sense of place, broad-based community participation, enhanced public places, integrated transportation choices, and maximize use of existing infrastructure and ensure property maintenance.

(9) WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY: Chuck Wooten, Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance, stated that enrollment at WCU has increased 54% at all sites during the past 33 years and projects a 45.8% increase by 2015 at the Cullowhee campus. WCU's regional economic impact includes a seven-county region with primary and secondary impacts of operational, capital and employee payroll expenditures. WCU expends \$321 million annually in the seven-county region, the impact to Jackson County is \$213 million, producing 2,094 jobs. WCU has purchased 344 acres for development (millennial initiative) as a mixed land use, public-private partnership campus. WCU campus now consists of 680 acres. It is a nationally recognized university in development and planning efforts. New construction priorities include a Health & Gerontological Studies Building, College of Education Building, Hospitality & Tourism Building, and new Science Building.

(10) SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Dr. Cecil Groves, President, stated that SCC is continuing to expand programs. SCC serves three counties (Jackson, Macon, Swain) and the Qualla Boundary. The acquisition of the N.C. Forest Service and school bus properties will allow the campus to grow for the next 40 years. At present there is only one entrance and that is from Hwy. 116. SCC future plans include construction of a second road onto Hwy. 107. Approximately 75% of SCC graduates stay in the area. The joint programs with public schools improve graduation rates and reduce the cost of higher education. Some students can earn an associate degree from SCC while still in high school. SCC, in partnership with Drake Enterprises and Eastern Band of Cherokee created BalsamWest FiberNET, LLC to facilitate the deployment of a 250-mile advanced underground telecommunications infrastructure throughout western North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee and Northern Georgia. This technological advantage will have a huge economic development impact on the region.

(11) WESTCARE HEALTH SYSTEM: Mark Leonard, CEO, stated that WestCare is a local healthcare system that provides and improves access to a full range of health care services for its communities through collaboration with its medical staff, employees and other providers while seeking to optimize the health status of the people who entrust it with their care. Its mission and vision stresses improving health care access through collaboration with the physicians, agencies and partners. WestCare serves Jackson, Macon, Swain, Graham, Haywood, Cherokee, and Clay counties (52% of patients come from outside of Jackson County). WestCare EMS is now one of the very few accredited ambulance services in the country. The medical staff includes 84 physicians in 22 specialties. The Medical Staff Development Committee, which oversees physician recruitment search process, has sanctioned 17 additional searches for additional physicians. At present, there is insufficient office space for 17 new physicians; however, WestCare will commence a master facilities planning process in the spring to review the campuses. WestCare employs more than 1,000 with an annual payroll of \$33 million.

(12) TUCKASEIGEE WATER & SEWER AUTHORITY: Joe Cline, Executive Director, stated that TWSA's infrastructure includes water treatment and storage, wastewater treatment and collection system. Current improvements and upgrades are: NC107 waterline & storage tank, water plant improvements, Harold St. waterline, I/I rehabilitation work, and Rhodes Cove sewer replacement. TWSA has approximately 2,400 customers and 2 million gallons per day storage capacity. TWSA's future includes a continuation of an aggressive capital improvement plan, keep WASP Committee active, improve customer relations, and continue to build a closer working relationship with local governments.

(13) VISION STATEMENT: The Land Development Plan Committee's vision statement: Assure that the county preserves and strengthens its position as a balanced community with a broad mix of housing and economic opportunities to meet the needs of its citizens. In ten years Jackson County will have provided for growth management through proactive long-range planning enacted by the Board of Commissioners that has effectively addressed commercial and residential development, community aesthetics, infrastructure development, and community services.

(14) CONCLUSION: The Land Development Plan Committee should continue to meet quarterly to assess and make recommendations regarding development issues, present action plan to local governments for consideration and promote quality of life.

(15) RESOLUTION: The county, municipalities, and other entities were urged to adopt a Resolution approving the plan.

There being no further business, Commissioner Burrell moved that the meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Crawford seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Attested By:

Approved:

Evelyn B. Baker
Clerk to the Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman

