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Time Posted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Posted By: Evelyn Baker  
Witnessed By: \_\_\_\_\_

**MINUTES OF A  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
APRIL 4, 2011**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on April 4, 2011, 2:00 pm, Justice & Administration Bldg., Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Rd., Sylva, North Carolina.

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

Chuck Wooten, Interim County Manager  
Evelyn Baker, Clerk to Board

Absent: J. K. Coward, County Attorney

Chairman Debnam called the meeting to order.

**AGENDA:** Commissioner Elders moved to approve the Agenda. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

**MINUTES:** Commissioner Cody moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 21, 2011. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

**(1) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Chairman Debnam reminded the Board of the April 18 Work Session commencing at 3:30 p.m.

**(2) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:** Mr. Wooten reported:

(a) **General Assembly - Budget:** The Governor has submitted information to the Legislature, in defense of her proposed budget cuts, which indicates counties have sufficient fund balances which could be used to offset a decrease in funding. Counties are encouraged to inform elected officials that fund balances were accumulated over long periods of time, not totally uncommitted, and once spent are gone forever. This action was taken in an attempt to substantiate the Governor's budget that transferred a number of state funded activities to county government. The state Treasurer's Office recommends that counties maintain at least 8% of their total annual expenditures as a fund balance.

(b) **Economic Snapshot Information:** The NC Justice Center recently published a snapshot of various economic indicators for Jackson County for the past two years. The county's unemployment rate continues to be below the state average. 24.3% of county residents were classified as low income families; there were 353 foreclosure filings in 2010. Since the third quarter of 2007, the county has lost 2,356 jobs or a 16% decline. 24% of residents were classified as low income (which means a family of four had income below \$44,100 which is twice the federal poverty level). Weekly wages were \$616 compared to the statewide average of \$768. 20.5% of residents did not have health insurance in 2008-09 as compared to the state average of 15.9%. In December 2009, 4,166 residents received assistance from the food stamp program and increased to 5,338 in December 2010 (13.9% of all residents). These facts and figures demonstrate the impact of the recession to the county and its citizens.

(c) **FY11-12 Budget:** He met with department heads over the past couple of weeks and plans on having a balanced budget available at the first meeting in May. He recommended a Work Session be scheduled shortly thereafter.

(d) **Library:** The project is on target for completion during the first week of May. Shelving is in place and the majority of furniture is on site.

(e) **Judaculla Rock:** The project is completed with just a few minor details outstanding.

(f) **Mark Watson Park:** The engineer is working on construction drawings and anticipates having the project out for bid within the next 30 days.

(g) **Electronic Notification Bills:** Under a bill recently introduced in the General Assembly, counties would be allowed to publish public meeting and public hearing notices on their websites instead of being forced to purchase ads in newspapers.

(h) **NCACC District Meeting:** Four Commissioners have registered to attend the meeting scheduled on April 6<sup>th</sup> at the Doubletree Hotel in Asheville.

(i) **NC DOT Public Hearing – Bridge Replacements:** DOT will hold a citizen informational workshop on the proposed replacement of two bridges over the Tuckasegee River in the Cullowhee area (Wayehutta Road and the Old Cullowhee Road).

(j) **ECU Dental Clinic:** Things are moving along in ECU's preparations to build a dental clinic in Jackson County. ECU hopes to have a final proposal available next month.

### **(3) SCATTERED SITE HOUSING PROGRAM GRANT NO. 02-D-2096:**

Joan Stillwell, Community Development Director, presented a Grant Agreement, Funding Approval and Performance Based Contract for Grant No. 02-D-2096 in the amount of \$216,088.93. A public hearing was held on April 4, 2011 at 1:45 p.m. The two low-income selected sites for rehabilitation/reconstruction and clearance are: 54 Whisper Wind Rd., Cashiers and 227 Mimosa Lane, Sylva.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Grant Agreement, Funding Approval and Performance Based Contract. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**(4) NC ECONOMIC RECOVERY GRANT NO. 10-C-2144:** Joan Stillwell, Community Development Director, presented a Grant Agreement, Funding Approval and Performance Based Contract for Grant No. 10-C-2144 in the amount of \$500,000.00. The funds will be used for rehabilitation/reconstruction and clearance for four low-income families. It will be necessary to schedule a public hearing to amend the original application because USDA supplemental funds are unavailable thus making it necessary to reduce the number of projects from five to four. The Selection Committee will select the four recipients.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Elders moved to approve the Grant Agreement Funding, Approval and Performance Based Contract. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**(5) PLANNING DEPT.:** Gerald Green, Planning Director, reported the Planning Board is currently reviewing the Erosion & Sediment Control, Subdivision and Mountainside Development Ordinances. In addition, planning staff is reviewing junkyards and junk vehicle provisions in the Industrial Development Ordinance. Goals have been identified by the Planning Board to guide the review of ordinances with the goals differing for various ordinances.

**(6) DOT TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS:** Ryan Sherby, Southwestern Commission Regional Planner, presented a list of 13 projects currently funded by DOT for the period of April 2011 - March 2015 and included in the 5-year work program. Eight of those projects are bridge replacements. He stated that DOT typically operates on a 7-year construction schedule. The Hwy. 107 connector is scheduled for right-of-way during the 7-year plan, but not for construction. That project needs to be re-prioritized because construction is not funded in the current 7-year plan; however, right-of-way is scheduled for funding. The county was requested to submit a list of priorities to Division 14. The list will then be forwarded to the State for evaluation and ranking.

**(7) VEHICLE POLICY (R11-09):** Mr. Wooten presented a new Vehicle Policy which prohibits employees from taking county vehicles to and from their homes. He stated the departments have already implemented the policy and all county vehicles have been parked with the exception of Emergency Mgmt., Fire Marshal and Sheriff's Office.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Cody moved to adopt the new Vehicle Policy.

*Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(8) ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER POSITION:** Mr. Wooten stated the Health Dept. Director has informed him there are only three employees assigned to the Animal Shelter which must be staffed seven days per week for feeding and cleaning in addition to responding to complaints and bite investigations. One of the officers resigned on March 18 and it is imperative that the position be filled immediately. Mr. Wooten recommended that the position be advertised and filled according to the current salary grade policy.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Jones moved to approve advertising and filling the vacant Animal Control Officer position. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion.

*Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(9) ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX RESOLUTION (R11-10):** The Resolution requests the General Assembly to amend Chapter 969 of Senate Bill 948 authorizing the Jackson County Board of Commissioners to levy a room occupancy tax of up to 6%.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Cody moved to adopt the Resolution. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion.

Commissioner Jones stated he serves on the Cashiers Travel & Tourism Authority Board which does not support the Resolution and requested that the issue be carried over. Mr. Wooten stated the Resolution does not mean the tax will automatically be increased, but is a request to the General Assembly to give authority to the Board of Commissioners to levy a room occupancy tax of up to 6%. This request may not be considered by the General Assembly during this session because it was not timely filed and would need to be resubmitted in 2012. The current rate of 3% has been in effect since 1987. He was informed that the Jackson Travel & Tourism Authority voted to request the Commissioners to increase the tax by 1%.

*Motion carried by a vote of 4-1 with Commissioner Jones voting "no".*

**(10) BOARD OF EQUALIZATION & REVIEW:** Bobby McMahan, Tax Assessor, stated that Gail Cooper and Richard Robson have agreed to continue to serve if reappointed. He recommended that Robert Edwards, David Nolan and Hart Goodson, who have agreed to serve, be appointed to fill the remaining three vacancies.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Cowan moved to reappoint Gail Cooper and Richard Robson and appoint Robert Edwards, David Nolan and Hart Goodson, all for one year terms, to the Board of Equalization & Review. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. McMahan recommended that Gail Cooper be appointed as Chair.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Elders moved to appoint Gail Cooper as Chair of the Board of Equalization & Review. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**INFORMAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC:**

- (a) Bob Stafford, Glenville Community Dev. Club, commended the Board for scheduling an afternoon Meeting and delaying revaluation. He requested county funding for improvements to the Glenville Community Dev. building.
- (b) Marie Leatherwood of Sylva stated her continued concerns about the JDC properties.
- (c) Jennifer Dirkes, on behalf of REACH, requested the Commissioners to participate in the “100 Man March”, a public gathering of men to stop violence against women, scheduled on April 16 at 9:00 a.m. The march will be from Bridge Park to the Historic Courthouse steps.

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

There being no further business, Commissioner Jones moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Cowan seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Attested By:

Approved:

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Evelyn B. Baker, Clerk to Board

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W. J. Debnam, Chairman