

Cherokee County Board of Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2025

Board members present: Dr. Dan Eichenbaum, Chairman; Cal Stiles, Vice-Chairman; Ben Adams, member; Alan Bryant, member; and Mark Stiles, member.

Others present: Randy Wiggins, County Manager; Candy Anderson, Chief Financial Officer; Maria Hass, Assistant County Manager/Clerk to Board; and, Darryl Brown, County Attorney.

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Cherokee County Courthouse, Room 342.

Call to Order by Chairman Eichenbaum

Invocation

Pledge

Ethics Statement

The Clerk to the Board read the Ethics statement.

Modification of Agenda

Motion made by Commissioner Mark Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to table item “c - Dr. Jillian Irwin and David Badger, Health Director – Presentation of Program to Address Opioid Pandemic in Cherokee County” under New Business. Motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to adopt the agenda, as modified. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing on Road Names

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Chairman Eichenbaum to open the public hearing. Motion passed unanimously.

During the public hearing, there was a family dispute over the proposed road name, Elaine’s Spring House Drive. There was also a comment opposing Maple Ridge Lane.

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to close the public hearing. Motion passed unanimously.

Adopt Road Name

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Cal Stiles to adopt the following road names: Accineves Mountain; Belair Drive; Blue Sky Way; Cole Creek Court; Cook Holler Drive; End of the Line Trail; Garnie Lane; Helton Farm Road; Landon Farm Road; Lucy Lane; Maple Ridge Lane; Mountain Memories Lane; Noelles Pass; Providence Woods

Trail; Quinn Branch Drive; Randy Dockery Drive; Summer Ridge; and Studebaker Drive. Motion passed unanimously. The Board did not include Elaine's Spring House Drive in the adoption of road names, and instead, asked family members to try and work out a compromise.

Public Comment Period

During public forum, Phil Pressley and Greg Huskins spoke in support of repairing the Mountain Folk Center property for agricultural purposes.

Budget and Finance

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve a budget revision for 2021 NPE grant funds in the amount of \$29,785 for project development and archaeological testing for the airport AWOS Project. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Mark Stiles to approve a budget revision for Cherokee County Board of Education's request for use of Article 40/42 sales tax in the amount of \$32,380 for the Hiwassee Dam chiller service agreement (\$26,080) and a metal building (\$6300). Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Mark Stiles to approve a budget revision in the amount of \$75,000 for a grant from NC Community Foundation for disaster preparedness. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Mark Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve a budget revision for use of insurance proceeds in the amount of \$30,006 to replace a truck lost in the recent landfill fire. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Chairman Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Mark Stiles to approve a budget revision for use of contingency in the amount of \$230,000 to cover an unexpected increase in involuntary commitment transports. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Chairman Eichenbaum to approve a budget revision for use of contingency in the amount of \$28,797, and use of fund balance in the amount of \$7,166, to replace the courthouse alarm panel. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Bryant and seconded by Commissioner Adams to approve the Health Department fee schedules, as submitted. These schedules were approved by the Board of Health on March 10, 2025.

New Business

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Chairman Eichenbaum to accept a late tax exemption (PUV) application from Mr. Isaac Raper. Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Raper explained that he had been out of town due to a family members health issues and had failed to meet the application deadline.

Following Marble Springs Lodge #439 providing proof of valid insurance, holding Cherokee County harmless, a Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner

Bryant to allow the organization to use the county's property in Marble for its annual Easter Egg Hunt. Motion passed unanimously.

After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Chairman Eichenbaum to accept an offer from Tri-County Community College to purchase the county's armory facility for \$200,000. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve a request by Cherokee County Soil & Water to store equipment at the county's Mark's Drive property. Motion passed unanimously.

After discussion, and recommendation by the county manager, a Motion was made by Commissioner Bryant and seconded by Commissioner Adams to purchase the Drexel Pointe Playground system in the amount of \$58,167 to replace the current playground equipment at Konehete Park, and for the county manager to then reach out to the Town of Murphy to see if they would be willing to reimburse the county 25% of the total cost. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve the Tax Releases, Tax Refund Report and the NCVTS Refund Report, as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 105-369, a Motion was made by Commissioner Bryant and seconded by Chairman Eichenbaum to order the Cherokee County Tax Collector to advertise delinquent tax liens. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Chairman Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Stiles to declare the following real properties as surplus property, and to list all properties for online auction at the minimum bids shown below:

- Parcel ID 458004733154000 – Morris Ridge Rd - .84 acres – Minimum starting bid \$3,675.99
- Parcel ID 557600828644000 – Granny Squirrel Dr - .78 acres – Minimum starting bid \$5,684.49
- Parcel ID 454200880093000 – Choctaw Ridge Tr - .74 acres – Minimum starting bid \$5,379.59

Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to reject an unsolicited offer in the amount of \$1,000 from Ms. Shawna Plat for Parcel # 458004733154000 shown above. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve sending letters to Senator Thom Tillis, Senator Ted Budd, and Congressman Chuck Edwards in support of recently introduced legislation making certain federal broadband grants exempt from taxation. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Mark Stiles to adopt the 2025 National Day of Prayer Proclamation. Motion passed unanimously.

Mountain Folk Center Discussion

Chairman Eichenbaum shared his ideas for repair of the horse arena at the Mountain Folk Center. He said while there is a need for an overall plan for the property, he feels the immediate need is for repairs to the horse area. He proposed seeking help from local volunteers from the community with track hoes and bulldozers, and suggested the county could pay for the diesel fuel and cover them under the county's insurance while volunteering on the project.

Commissioner Bryant agreed, saying utilizing local volunteers would save the county money. He also said the Saddle Club has Nora Starks Foundation funds that could be used toward the repairs. He said he has met with some local contractors who have given him some estimates.

Chairman Eichenbaum said asking for volunteers is the quickest way to get the arena fixed.

Commissioner Stiles said there needs to be a plan as to how it can be fixed.

The county manager said the Board could solicit Request for Proposals and then bid out once specs for repairs are determined.

Commissioner Bryant said he has met with excavators and knows what needs to be done.

Commissioner Adams said he would like permission to assess the auction house at the top of the property and get code enforcement involved and see what is needed to get it ready for use.

Chairman Eichenbaum and Commissioner Bryant will seek volunteers to work on the horse arena.

Paul Worley, of Tri-County Community College, was in attendance and said the college has a Heavy Equipment Operator program, and there may be an opportunity for the college to use the students and equipment to dig up the arena, so it can then be determined what is needed to fix it. Commissioner Cal Stiles asked Mr. Worley what the timeframe would be to utilize the program for the project. Mr. Worley said they could possibly come out and look at it the next day. Chairman Eichenbaum said he would like to have it fixed as quickly as possible and available for use this summer.

Commissioner Adams – Rescue Funds Discussion

Commissioner Adams said he had heard from some fire chiefs about the board's previous decision on February 17th to purchase turn-out gear and an air pak for the fire marshal from rescue funds. Due to the complaints, he wants to reimburse the rescue funds from the general fund to cover the purchase cost. After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Mark Stiles to move \$7,082 from the general fund to reimburse the rescue funds. Voting in favor of the Motion was Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Mark Stiles, Commissioner Bryant, and Chairman Eichenbaum. Voting against the Motion was Commissioner Cal Stiles. Motion passed 4-1.

Motion made by Commissioner Bryant and seconded by Commissioner Mark Stiles to approve the following budget meeting schedule: May 6 (Special meeting for county manager recommended budget presentation); May 12 (Budget hearings); May 13 (Budget hearings); May 14 (Budget hearings); May 19 (Public Hearing during regular meeting); May 20 (Budget hearings); May 27 (budget worksession); and June 30 (budget adoption). Motion passed unanimously.

County Manager Items

The county manager announced that CND Acquisitions/The Cable Company was awarded a Completing Access to Broadband Grant, which will allow them to serve 749 unserved or underserved locations within Cherokee County.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Mark Stiles thanked Tri-County Community College for offering to help at the Mountain Folk Center.

Commissioner Bryant said he thought the meeting went well. He expressed his appreciation of teachers and acknowledged that athletics are important.

Chairman Eichenbaum said he would be holding a Chairman's forum on April 7th at the Center for Applied Technology in Marble, Commissioner Mark Stiles District.

Closed Session

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to go into closed session, pursuant to §143-318.11 (a) (4), to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body. Motion passed unanimously. While in closed session, the Board met with Economic Development Director Paul Worley, Aaron Patton and Corey Eller, to discuss potential expansion of a local industry.

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Adams to return to open session. Motion passed unanimously.

Open Session

After returning to open session, no action was taken on matters discussed in closed session.

Adjourn

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Cal Stiles to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.

THESE MINUTES WERE APPROVED BY THE CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ON APRIL 21, 2025.