

**Cherokee County Board of Commissioners**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 6, 2024**

**Board members present:** Randy Phillips, Chairman; Dr. Dan Eichenbaum, Vice-Chairman; Cal Stiles, member; Jan Griggs, member; Ben Adams, member.

**Others present:** Randy Wiggins, County Manager; Candy Anderson, Chief Financial Officer; and, Darryl Brown, County Attorney.

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** Cherokee County Courthouse, Room 342.

**Call to order by Chairman Phillips**

**Invocation**

**Pledge**

**Ethics Statement** “Members of the County Board of Commissioners are advised, hereby, of their duty under the Local Government Ethics Act and should avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of such conflict; and, further, are instructed to refrain from participating in any matter coming before this Board of County Commissioners with respect to which there is a conflict of interest or appearance of such conflict as may be allowed by law”.

**Modification of Agenda**

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Griggs to remove Peachtree VFD request from the agenda until May 20th, per request of Chief Jordan Messer. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Adams to remove designated funds discussion from the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Griggs to approve the agenda, as modified. Motion passed unanimously.

**Minutes**

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Eichenbaum to approve the following meeting minutes: 9/5/2023; 9/18/2023; 11/6/2023; 3/18/2024 and 4/15/2024. Motion passed unanimously.

**Annual Opioid Settlement Funds Planning Discussion and Updates**

Russ Harris of Southwestern Commission updated the Board on the regional planning meetings that have been taking place over the last year and shared counties local priorities. The Town of

Murphy and the Town of Andrews was invited to attend and discuss opioid settlement funding strategies with the Board of Commissioners.

### **Public Comment Period**

Captain David Williams advocated for higher pay for sheriff's office personnel.

Oscar Valdez asked permission to place an archway at the entrance of Konehete Veterans Park. Mr. Valdez said that he would be paying for the archway. Mr. Valdez said the archway would be 20' wide and about 13' high. Before considering the request, the Board asked Mr. Valdez to come back with schematics/drawings of the project.

### **Budget and Finance**

- Motion made by Commissioner Adams to table until the Board has had its budget hearings. The county manager explained that the reason they are being requested now is to get them ordered, so they will be here by the new budget year. After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Phillips and seconded by Commissioner Eichenbaum to approve a budget revision for use of fund balance in the amount of \$71,800.00 to order two vehicles on state contract form Capital Ford, Inc. of Raleigh to replace a 911 Addressing Office vehicle and a Tax Assessor Office vehicle. Voting in favor of the Motion was Commissioner Phillips, Eichenbaum, Griggs and Stiles. Voting against the Motion was Commissioner Adams. Motion passed 4-1. *Note: Purchasing through the State contract saves the county \$8,200.00. The 911 Addressing office vehicle being replaced is a 2008 Chevrolet Colorado with 99,247 miles, and the Tax office vehicle being replaced is a 2008 Chevrolet Colorado with 151,538 miles.*

- Motion made by Commissioner Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Adams to approve a budget revision for Cherokee County Schools request for use of Article 40/42 sales tax funds in the amount of \$36,057 for Murphy Elementary School gym floor offices and Murphy High School commercial athletic washer. Motion passed unanimously.

- Sheriff Smith requested funding in the amount of \$75,361.00 to purchase for his use, a 2024 Expedition and for upfitting the vehicle. After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Phillips to approve the purchase of a 2024 Ford Explorer for Sheriff Smith's use in the amount of \$42,350.00. *Note: The county can purchase the Explorer through state contract. Total savings by purchasing an Explorer, instead of Expedition is \$30,000.*

- The County Manager presented the fiscal year 2025 recommended budget with the following highlights:

- **No increase to the property tax millage rate of 61 cents**
- **No increase in fees except the requested changes to GIS Mapping service fees**
- \$2,928,572 addition to designated General Fund Balance for payment #3 due on July 15, 2025 of the DSS suit settlement
- A use of designated fund balance and the corresponding expense budget for payment #2 of the DSS suit settlement payment due on July 15, 2024 in the amount of \$2,928,572

- A use of Article 46 Designated Fund Balance for Cherokee County Board of Education operations in the amount of \$730,573 and for Tri-County Community College capital request items in the amount of \$244,745
- 2% Cost of Living Adjustment
- \$400,912 appropriated as Contingency to address unexpected needs or opportunities
- An increase in the Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System (LGERS) contribution rate of 12.93% to 13.67% for general employees and \$14.04% to 15.04% for law enforcement officers. This resulted in an increase in retirement expense of approximately \$105,000.
- \$104,000 increase in insurance & bonding
- \$943,832 use of General Fund Balance for major capital needs:
  - o Annex Building elevator replacement - \$125,000
  - o Articulating Dump Truck for solid waste - \$254,000
  - o Frazier ambulance remounts (2 units) - \$523,540
  - o North Tac Repeater site backup - \$15,000
  - o 911 Emergency Communications Critical Spare Equipment - \$26,292
- 68.1% (over two-thirds) of the general fund expenditures are allocated to the following functions:
  - o Public Safety – 26.9%
  - o Human Services – 26.3%
  - o Education – 14.9%

### **New Business**

Michael Starks, member of Hiwassee Dam VFD, came before the Board to request approval of a tax-exempt loan certification and written agreement resolution. Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Griggs to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

*Note: Cherokee County is not a party to the loan, but because the County contracts with the Department and provides a fire tax, the Board of Commissioners must approve the bank's resolution.*

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Griggs to approve a 12-month lease between Titan Fuel and Cherokee County/Western Carolina Regional Airport for the lease of a jet fuel truck. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Local Emergency Shelter Grant Program Application**

After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Griggs and seconded by Commissioner Eichenbaum to approve the application of a Local Emergency Shelter Grant. Motion passed unanimously. The grant, if awarded, is 100% reimbursable, and would be used to purchase and install a generator and/or a transfer switch for a generator at Unaka Community Center, purchase and install a generator at a location TBD in the Hiwassee Dam Community, and to purchase and install a generator at the Andrews Community Center.

After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Stiles to approve an amendment to the Board of Equalization and Review resolution to allow for unpaid volunteer members. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Griggs to approve the tax releases, tax refunds, and NCVTS report, as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Phillips and seconded by Commissioner Stiles to approve a proclamation recognizing May 5-11, 2024 as Clerk's to the Board of County Commissioners Week and recognizing the Board's Clerk, Maria Hass. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Commissioner Comment Period**

- Commissioner Griggs announced the MANNA Food distribution at Hiwassee Dam Community Center on May 15<sup>th</sup> and praise the Hiwassee Dam 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders for participating in last month's food distribution. Commissioner Griggs also shared a letter from CCS parent Amber Dean, re: exceptional children's funding.
- Commissioner Eichenbaum said that he and Commissioner Griggs recently met on-site at the Mountain Folk Center. He said that he and Commissioner Griggs are both interested in making sure the Saddle Club has a place to hold its events, and decided that they needed to look around for funding opportunities. Commissioner Eichenbaum said he reached out to Cherokee County Cooperative Extension Director Doug Clement for assistance. Commissioner Eichenbaum read Mr. Clements comments and suggestions, which included, determining what the county's long-term goal is for the facility and potential grant funding sources. Board members agreed that funding cannot be pursued without a facility use plan.

### **County Manager Items - None**

### **Closed Session**

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Eichenbaum to go into closed session, pursuant to §143-318.11 (1) To prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to the law of this State or of the United States, or not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes.

### **Open Session**

No further action.

### **Adjournment**

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

**THESE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ON JUNE 24, 2024.**