

RESOLUTION NO. 13-02-008

Sponsored by Commissioners Tab Burkhalter and Tonya Burchfield,

A RESOLUTION TO OPPOSE THE BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING FEE FOR THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK, TO OPPOSE THE IMPOSITION OF ANY FEE FOR THE USE OF THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK THAT IS NOT DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF AMENITIES OR A COMMERCIAL PURPOSE AND TO DEMAND IMMEDIATE REPEAL OF THE BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING FEE AND ASKING ALL COUNTIES TO JOIN IN PASSING THIS RESOLUTION AND FORWARDING IT TO THEIR STATE DELEGATES

WHEREAS, a significant portion of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is situated in Blount County;

WHEREAS, the history and culture of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is an integral part of the history and culture of Blount County;

WHEREAS, the people of Blount County have a deep connection with the history and culture of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in that many Blount County residents descend from the original inhabitants of the land that is now known as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park;

WHEREAS, many Blount County residents use the backcountry campsites to visit the cemeteries wherein their ancestors are buried and to explore the home places that their ancestors occupied;

WHEREAS, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has 8 to 10 million visitors per year, making it the most visited national park in the United States of America;

WHEREAS, the small businesses in Blount County enjoy the revenue that is realized through visitation to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Blount County government derives direct benefit from the sales tax revenue that is collected from the purchases made by those visitors;

WHEREAS, the current administration of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has arbitrarily decided to impose a fee in the amount of \$4.00 per person, per night, for the activity of backcountry camping for all of the backcountry campsites and shelters in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park;

WHEREAS, backcountry camping is differentiated from front country camping in that no amenities are provided to campers other than the metal cables that are constructed to raise campers' gear and food above the level at which bears can access said gear and food;

WHEREAS, the imposition of the backcountry camping fee marks the first time in the history of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park that a fee has been imposed upon a select group of individuals who are not provided any amenities and who are not using the park grounds for a commercial purpose;

WHEREAS, significant questions have arisen with regard to the necessity of the backcountry camping fee, the allocation of the fees collected and the lawful implementation of the backcountry camping fee;

WHEREAS, the administration of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park initially stated that the primary purpose of the imposition of the backcountry camping fee was to cover the administrative costs of placing the backcountry campsites and shelters on the National Recreation Reservation System, but has since stated that the National Recreation Reservation System may not be used at all and that a stand-alone software program tailored specifically to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park may be implemented instead;

WHEREAS, the administration of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has failed to provide adequate proof for its justification of the necessity of the backcountry camping fee or the allocation of the

backcountry camping fee and has otherwise refused to directly address the concerns of those individuals who have presented valid arguments as to the necessity and allocation of such fees;

WHEREAS, the Blount County Commission has a genuine concern that the imposition of the backcountry camping fee and backcountry reservation system may hinder the use of the backcountry campsites by Blount County families who engage in backcountry camping to strengthen familial bonds and reflect on the history and culture of their ancestors;

WHEREAS, the Blount County Commission has a genuine concern that the imposition of this unique fee may lay the groundwork for the imposition of other fees for the use of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which may reduce park visitation to the detriment of Blount County's small businesses and government.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Commissioners of Blount County, Tennessee, meeting in regular session on this, the 21st day of February, 2013, that this body formally opposes the imposition of the backcountry camping fee for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park set to take effect on February 13, 2013; that this body further opposes the imposition of any fee for the use of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park that is not directly associated with the use of amenities or a commercial purpose; and that this body demands an immediate repeal of the backcountry camping fee imposed upon the use of backcountry campsites and shelters in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Blount County, Tennessee does hereby ask our delegates to the Tennessee General Assembly to carefully investigate this matter and to join in formally opposing the imposition of the backcountry camping fee for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park set to take effect on February 13, 2013; that our delegates further formally oppose the imposition of any fee for the use of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park that is not directly associated with the use of amenities or a commercial purpose; and that our delegates demand an immediate repeal of the backcountry camping fee imposed upon the use of backcountry campsites and shelters in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park;


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Blount County, Tennessee hereby directs the office of the County Mayor to provide a copy of this resolution to all Tennessee counties and to encourage their legislative bodies to join in passing this resolution and forwarding it to their state delegations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect from and after its passage the public welfare requiring it.

Duly authorized and approved on this 21st day of February, 2013.

CERTIFICATION OF ACTION:

ATTEST:


Commission Chairman


County Clerk

Approved:

Vetoed:


County Mayor

2-27-13
Date

IN RE: RESOLUTION TO AMEND GENERAL COUNTY FUND BUDGET - \$2,461.00.

Commissioner Burkhalter made a motion to approve the transfer. Commissioner Burchfield seconded the motion.

A vote was taken on the motion:

- | | | | |
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| Burchfield - yes | French - yes | Kirby - yes | Murrell - yes |
| Burkhalter - yes | Gamble - yes | Lail - yes | Samples - yes |
| Carver - yes | Greene - yes | Lambert - yes | Wright - yes |
| Caylor - yes | Harrison - yes | Lewis - yes | |
| Farmer - yes | Hasty - yes | Melton - yes | |
| Folts - yes | Helton - yes | Moon - yes | |

There were 21 voting yes, 0 voting no, 0 abstaining, and 0 absent. Chairman Moon declared the transfer to be approved.