

**MINUTES**  
**TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**September 24, 2018 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Monday, September 24, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in Commissioners Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Chairman Larry Chapman, Jason Chappell, Mike Hawkins, Vice-Chairwoman Page Lemel and Kelvin Phillips. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. County Attorney Misti Bass participated remotely.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Derek McKissock

There were approximately 20 people in the audience.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Larry Chapman presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**WELCOME**

Chairman Chapman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members of the public for participating in their local government. He introduced Commissioners and staff in attendance. He also thanked Vice-Chairwoman Lemel for chairing the previous meeting in his absence.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

*The comments made by the public represent the individual speaker's opinion or point of view. No attempt was made to vet their statements for accuracy or modify them based on facts.*

Erica Erickson: Ms. Erickson is a local attorney and president of two active animal advocacy groups in Transylvania County: Friends of Transylvania Animals, (formerly Friends of the Animal Shelter which raised funds to assist with building the animal shelter in 2013) which helps to provide free spay and neuter vouchers to pet owners, and the Pisgah Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), a nonprofit whose goal is to reduce the euthanasia rate of healthy animals at the shelter. Ms. Erickson reported that prior to PAWS' work, the shelter was euthanizing over 500 healthy cats per year. PAWS now rescues cats and kittens at risk each week and uses social media to promote adoption of these animals throughout the County and region. Through this work, the shelter has achieved one of the lowest euthanasia rates in the State of North Carolina. Ms. Erickson expressed that she does not feel the shelter staff values PAWS and other rescue groups. Additionally, she reported they have continually limited groups' access to records, and she had decided to make known on her social media accounts her concerns with the animal shelter's lack of transparency. Ms. Erickson pointed out she has been able to save the lives of many dogs by posting pictures on social media and noting the animal should be adopted by a certain date before being at risk of euthanasia. As a result, the public response has been wonderful and these animals are being adopted. Ms. Erickson said her social media post caused current Animal Services Director Kevin Shook to further restrict her access to information at the shelter. She said she finds this hindrance of her rescue efforts unacceptable and as an attorney she claimed the acts by staff to be illegal, stating the records are public. She did not understand what purpose it served to lock up and hide records from the public and rescue groups who devote countless hours and their own money to care for these animals. Ms. Erickson

wanted Commissioners to know the lack of transparency is unacceptable and illegal and she felt the actions by staff were vengeful. She stressed that she wanted the shelter to be the best in the State.

### **AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

The Manager reported on the agenda modifications. She requested to add Item VIII-B Letter Challenging Fair Market Rent for 2019 under New Business, moving the Manager's Report to Item VIII-C. There were no additional agenda modifications from Commissioners.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to accept the agenda as modified, seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously approved.**

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and Hawkins simultaneously and unanimously approved.**

The following items were approved:

#### MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, July 23, 2018. The minutes were approved as submitted.

#### DISCOVERY, RELEASE AND MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT

Per NCGS 105-312 (b), it is the duty of the Tax Administrator to see that all property not properly listed during the regular listing period be listed, assessed and taxed. The Tax Administrator shall file such reports of discoveries with the Board of Commissioners. Per NCGS 105-381 (b), it is the duty of the Tax Administrator to provide a monthly report to the Board of Commissioners of the actions taken by the Tax Administrator on requests for release or refund, which shall be recorded in the minutes. For August 2018, total tax dollars released was \$29,682.98 and refunds totaled \$454.33. Commissioners approved the Discovery, Release and Monthly Settlement Report for August 2018.

#### BAD DEBT WRITE-OFF FOR THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1/1/2018-6/30/2018

The Department of Public Health Bad Debt policy identifies the process for handling aging accounts with no payment activity greater than 180 days. Pursuant to this policy, Health Director Elaine Russell recommended to the Board of Health the write-off of bad debts totaling \$815.30 for the time period 01/01/2018 to 06/30/2018. The Board of Health approved the recommendation during a regular meeting on 8/14/2018. Of the \$815.30 in bad debt, balances greater than \$50 (\$717.90) will be sent to the NC Debt Setoff Program for collection. Commissioners approved the recommendation as submitted.

#### REAUTHORIZE THE COUNTY MANAGER TO NEGOTIATE REAL PROPERTY PURCHASE CONTRACTS

On September 25, 2017, Commissioners gave authority to the County Manager to enter into real property purchase contracts, if necessary, with the authority expiring March 31, 2018. If the Manager were to enter into any such contract, the terms were that the contract shall provide sufficient time during due diligence to allow Commissioners to consider property and terms in an open session in compliance with all applicable laws and with the opportunity to withdraw from the contract without penalty during that time. In April 2018, Commissioners extended the Manager's authority for an additional six months, which is due to expire September 30, 2018. Due to ongoing work, Commissioners wish to extend the authority through December 31, 2018, with the same terms applying. Commissioners, therefore,

reauthorized the County Manager to negotiate real property purchase contracts with authority to expire December 31, 2018.

### **PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS**

#### RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

The NC Legislature recently authorized funding totaling approximately \$3.4 million to assist rural counties, such as Transylvania County, in creating landslide maps. Senator Edwards and Representative Henson both supported this funding and interceded with the Department of Environmental Quality to ensure that Transylvania County is an early recipient of those funds. Senator Edwards also supported a bill authorizing the expenditure of \$20,000 to assist in river clean-up and deadfall removal after the latest episodes of drenching rains, which was supported by Representative Henson leading to its inclusion in the current budget. This funding will be extremely important and helpful to Transylvania County in the creation of a complete map of landslide prone areas and in river clean-up. For this reason, the Board of Commissioners, Transylvania Natural Resources Council, and Transylvania County Agricultural Advisory Board wish to publicly thank Senator Edwards and Representative Henson for their support. Chairman Chapman read aloud Resolution #32-2018 Expressing Appreciation for Legislative Support to be included as part of the minutes and for the benefit of the public.

#### **RESOLUTION #32-2018 EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT**

**Whereas**, Transylvania County is nestled in the Southern Appalachians; and

**Whereas**, much of the surrounding mountains contain steep slopes; and

**Whereas**, Transylvania County lies in a temperate rainforest experiencing an average of 71 inches of rain per year; and

**Whereas**, Transylvania County has a fulltime population of over 33,000 that continues to grow at an annual rate of approximately 1.5% and a summertime population of nearly 41,000 increasing demand for roads and housing; and

**Whereas**, nearly 60% of growth occurs in rural areas where steep slopes may dominate; and

**Whereas**, disturbed earth from development, excessive rainfall, and steep slopes are the formula for destructive and dangerous landslides; and

**Whereas**, Transylvania County does not have a complete map of landslide prone areas; and

**Whereas**, the headwaters of the French Broad River lie within the County boundaries; and

**Whereas**, excessive rainfall, development that increases the area of impervious surfaces and disturbed earth, and steep slopes contribute to landslides, flooding, and deadfall debris causing log jams and creating dangerous conditions for people enjoying river sports; and

**Whereas**, the State Legislature recently authorized the expenditure of approximately \$3.4 million to assist rural counties such as Transylvania in creating landslide maps; and

**Whereas**, Senator Chuck Edwards and Representative Cody Henson both supported this funding and have interceded with the Department of Environmental Quality to ensure that Transylvania County is an early recipient of those funds; and

**Whereas**, Senator Chuck Edwards sponsored a local bill authorizing the expenditure of \$20,000 to assist in river clean-up and deadfall removal after the latest episodes of drenching rains; and

**Whereas**, Representative Cody Henson supported Senator Edwards' bill in the House, leading to its inclusion in the current budget;

**Be it therefore resolved** that the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County, the Transylvania Natural Resources Council, and the Transylvania County Agricultural Advisory Board hereby express their sincere gratitude for the support provided by Senator Edwards and Representative Henson.

This the 24th day of September, 2018.

s:/Larry L. Chapman, Chairman, Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

s:/Lee McMinn, Chairman, Transylvania Natural Resources Council

s:/John Witherspoon, Chair, Transylvania County Agricultural Advisory Board

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve Resolution #32-2018 Expressing Appreciation for Legislative Support and to instruct the Clerk to the Board to send copies to both Senator Edwards and Representative Henson, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.**

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESENTATION

Commissioner Hawkins is a member of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina and serves on the Executive Board. At a previous Board of Commissioners' meeting, Chairman Chapman asked him to make a presentation to the Board on his work at the State level to promote economic development.

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) is the lead economic development agency in North Carolina. The EDPNC works with the NC Department of Commerce to grow the State's economy. The EDPNC, however, is the lead organization and their focus is on five major areas. The concept by EDPNC, which was borne by former Governor Pat McCrory, is that there would be certain advantages to a private entity focusing on economic development for North Carolina, in terms of flexibility, speed, nimbleness and leadership. The Board of Director leads the partnership and is made up of some of the best business people in the State.

The five areas the EDPNC concentrates on are business recruitment, existing business development, export assistance, international markets, and travel and tourism. Commissioner Hawkins is the EDPNC representative on the NC Travel and Tourism Board.

New business recruitment tends to focus more on urban areas, so the EDPNC began thinking about what it could do to promote growth in rural North Carolina. The new EDPNC chair made rural economic development his area of focus and he asked Commissioner Hawkins to serve as chairman of a subcommittee within EDPNC's board to further study rural issues. The subcommittee began its work and quickly realized that communities are comprised of basic building blocks and the difference between urban and rural communities is how far along they might be in accomplishing those building blocks. The EDPNC asked itself how it could help promote this concept. They referred to a survey conducted by *Site*

*Development* magazine that polls CEOs and site consultants about those items they feel are important to attracting business to a location. The number one answer for the last five years has been highway accessibility. Last year's survey showed number two is labor costs, followed by availability of skilled labor, quality of life, tax exemptions (incentives), construction costs, corporate tax rate, available land, etc. Using this list, the subcommittee concluded that if rural North Carolina is going to be competitive, they will need the following building blocks: education, health, infrastructure, leadership, and workforce support. They further concluded that counties must be good, not great, in all five of these areas in order to be successful.

The next idea involved hosting all economic development directors from across the State in one location for a couple of days, asking to them think about these building blocks in the context of economic development, and then challenging them to apply the concept to their respective counties. This idea culminated into an invitation-only conference of economic development professionals, along with individuals they identified from their respective communities who would have the energy and wherewithal to work on these building blocks. The conference was entitled *Energizing Rural North Carolina* and was held in Pinehurst in July. It was attended by five representatives from Transylvania County: Transylvania Economic Development Executive Director Josh Hallingse, three members of the Transylvania Economic Alliance Board of Directors-Jeremy Owen, Mark Tooley, and Amber Webb, and President of Blue Ridge Community College Laura Leatherwood (representing both Henderson and Transylvania Counties).

The EDPNC targeted speakers who focused on the five building blocks. They were:

**Nathan Ramsey, Director of the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, Asheville**

Mr. Ramsey spoke on workforce development, rural growth as a challenge, an interest (or skills) gap, and the need for collaboration and cooperation. He pointed out that urban and rural areas face similar issues; however, rural areas do not have the same resources to combat those issues. He stressed if a rural community adjoins an urban economy, it would be important for that community to integrate itself into that particular urban economy.

**Catherine Truitt, Chancellor, Western Governor's University**

The Western Governor's University is a nontraditional university available online and created by a consortium of governors in western states. It is now expanding nationwide and has recently made its way into North Carolina. Ms. Truitt is Chancellor of the North Carolina branch of the Western Governor's University. She did not talk about higher education and instead focused on pre-K, kindergarten and K-12. She specifically focused on the component of early success, which ties precisely into the work of the Early Childhood Initiative. Ms. Truitt provided some statistics that were pretty startling, such as 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency being the greatest indicator of future success. In 2017, only 24% of North Carolina students who attended economically disadvantaged schools were proficient in this area. This tied to another area Ms. Truitt placed emphasis on - that poverty is a key factor. Students in economically disadvantaged schools perform poorer in every measurable category. It is proven that every dollar spent on programs for economically disadvantaged children in the age group 0-5 gives a 13% return on investment.

**Dan Gerlach, Executive Director, Golden Leaf Foundation**

Mr. Gerlach spoke about infrastructure and challenged attendees to think about infrastructure in different ways, both in the physical and human form. He also emphasized that infrastructure is constantly changing. He placed strong emphasis on those areas that Transylvania County continues to talk about and work on – water, sewer and broadband. Three quarters of the grants Golden Leaf makes available to communities are water, sewer or broadband related. Another point Mr. Gerlach made is many communities have the “if we build it, they will come” attitude which is rarely successful. He taught that

building new infrastructure must be part of a well thought out economic plan which includes numerous components; otherwise, communities will not be successful.

**Maggie Sauer, Director, Rural Health Office, NC Department of Health and Human Services**

Ms. Sauer spoke on the topic of public health. To Commissioner Hawkins, this was the most important topic or the topic that had the greatest potential for growth because most people do not think of public health as an economic development issue, but it is. Not just the direct economic benefits of the health related industry, for example, but also a county's overall score in public health indicators. If a county has an unhealthy population, it impacts areas such as productivity, new job growth, existing business, business recruitment, etc. Commissioner Hawkins pointed out that for each category was a speaker and also a success story. The success story for the health category was a really interesting one from the McDowell County Health Coalition. It is a consortium of local nonprofits, along with McDowell County and its municipalities, with a staff of two people who visit small businesses and perform wellness programs to help screen for health issues, both physical and mental. Beyond that, they help these employees with life issues, like elder care, pre-K, or transportation, etc., and connect them with the agencies they need to deal with those issues. It is extraordinarily important and innovative and they are trying to expand it out into WNC. Commissioner Hawkins has already talked with the Manager about the potential for Transylvania County to be in the next wave of expansion of this program.

**Patrick Woodie, Director, NC Rural Center**

Mr. Woodie spoke on leadership. What Commissioner Hawkins said he took away from this speaker was that leadership is both the most essential, and at the same, time least examined component of rural economic development. Plans cannot be formulated, much less implemented, without a strong cadre of local leaders, not just in government, but in business, in the faith community, in nonprofits, and across the board.

**What were the outcomes?**

- 219 participants from 70 counties; by invitation only
- High satisfaction levels – after event survey, participants graded 4.7 out of 5.0
- Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of participants graded the event as of 5.0 out of 5.0
- If held again, what would participants like to see?
  - Responses ranged from housing to health to workforce development to education
- Participants reported that statistics on K-12 education were startling
- EDPNC already thinking about hosting another conference next year

Commissioner Hawkins again pointed out that the EDPNC challenged participants to go back to their home communities and incorporate what they learned. Since the conference, the Transylvania County group has continued to meet. They are exploring ways in which Transylvania County can expand its capacity in particular building block areas. They are initially focusing on two areas: leadership and infrastructure, specifically broadband infrastructure. Their goal is to develop a proposal for the Board of Commissioners to consider. At a future date, the group may present some ideas to the Board of Commissioners either in the context of a regular meeting or individually. Commissioner Hawkins recently learned of three different regional initiatives across the State where counties are organizing regional conferences exactly like this one using these building blocks to study their specific region and their situations. He has asked Dr. Leatherwood and Land of Sky Executive Director Justin Hembree if they would be interested in conducting a four-five county regional initiative.

Commissioner Hawkins was very excited because he believes in the message from the conference and that it makes sense. He closed by saying that the conference and networking with others from across the State showed him that Transylvania County is already innovative in a number of ways. Most rural

counties are not like Transylvania County and they were actually envious of the fact that we are three or four steps ahead of them, even though we are not where we want to be. This concluded his presentation.

Chairman Chapman thanked Commissioner Hawkins for his excellent presentation. He called for comments and questions from Commissioners.

Commissioner Lemel supported Commissioner Hawkins' comments about Transylvania County being more innovative. She credited the County Manager with providing the Board of Commissioners with professional leadership and experience in guiding them to realize the great resources we have here in Transylvania County. This has generated more collaboration, better community conversations, the advent of the economic alliance, and other wonderful opportunities. It is for these reasons that Commissioner Lemel believes Transylvania County is ahead of many of the other rural counties.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD ACTIVITY UPDATE

The Manager stated it is very timely to make this presentation after hearing Commissioner Hawkins' presentation on economic development. She pointed out that ranking 4<sup>th</sup> on the list of what attracts businesses to a location is quality of life. Two elements of quality of life are childcare for workers and early education opportunities for children (future workers). The Manager was pleased to present information about the County's Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) and she wanted to share how the initiative fits in with the directive of the County Commissioners and also how it has developed into a community collaboration that exemplifies what can happen when we work together using local resources with matters that are within our control.

This is a summary of her presentation:

#### **Setting the Stage**

- Adopted Strategic Plan
- Moved toward organizational change
- Sought process improvement
- Desired efficiency
- Desired collaboration

The elements above can be seen across the board in County government over the last several years, but the ECI shows a very organic representation of how all the elements work together. The Manager pointed out that essentially the strategic plan works in tandem with the annual budget and annual work plan to move us forward as a community, both now and with investments in the future. The organization has also become more data-driven, which enables us to increase accountability and transparency, develop consistency in our work plans, and drive for priorities and decision-making. This is key to changing the mentality of simply developing a plan that "sits on a shelf" to moving forward and creating positive change in a community.

In keeping with this theme/idea, the Early Childhood Initiative began three years ago. Included in the State of the Young Child Report were two quotes, which the Manager shared:

*"A population that does not take care of the elderly and of children and the young has no future, because it abuses both its memory and its promise." - Pope Francis*

*"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."*  
– Nelson Mandela

The Manager reported there is 16% return on investment with 80% going to benefit the public when making investment in early childhood education. It is a true economic return on an investment. In other words, it equates to an \$8 return for every \$1 invested, with \$6.5 benefitting the public, according to the Federal Reserve of Minneapolis. Other studies have produced very similar figures. Another factor that makes investment in early childhood education important is that our aging population indicates a shortage of future workers. Additionally many economists are worried that the declining nationwide birthrate is creating an imbalance in our economy. These factors make it more important that our future workers be prepared to be highly functional in order for our economy to be sustainable. Therefore, both short-term and long-term economic impacts exist that make early childhood education necessary for our community to focus on. This is also a segment of the population that does not yet have a voice, so we have to act for them.

The Manager reported that the group approached the early childhood investment with an engagement structure that she thinks they are learning can be deployed in other areas as well. They are actively working to model after the success of the early childhood initiative.

- May 2015: Kick-off meeting
  - Open invitation to stakeholders from Commissioner Lemel (lunch paid personally by her)
  - Facilitated discussion on issues facing children 0-5 in Transylvania County; developed discussion topics
- Summer/Fall 2015: Monthly focus meetings
  - Encouraged bringing data around topics to show issues
  - Vetted data in the meeting
  - Live screen documentation of key points, data sources
  - Topics: Health/Mental Health, Education and Child Care, Family Life and Poverty, Recreation
  - Utilized in-house resources to sort through data and create State of the Young Child Report
- Winter 2015: Report issued
  - County Commission meeting
  - Press release/social media release
  - Community presentations began
  - Importance of a quick read and a detailed report
  - Report gave snapshot of what children and families were facing in Transylvania County
  - Report helped educate public and create topic of conversation and allowed ECI members to have document in-hand to pursue grants and initiatives because it had already been vetted
- Highlights from the 2015 State of the Young Child Report
  - It costs almost double to send an infant for child care in Transylvania County than to send a child to a public college in North Carolina
  - 78% of kindergarteners tested below or far below proficiency at the beginning of the 2015 school year
  - The average two income working household in Transylvania County can expect to spend 27.8% of their income on one child in care and over half for two children
  - Transylvania County child care rates are the 6<sup>th</sup> highest in the State
  - The average weekly wage for workers is \$637, well below the State average weekly wage of \$932 in 2016
  - The rate of babies being born addicted to substances was 7-times the State average for births per 100,000 in 2015



The Manager pointed out the importance of all of these statistics to help direct the ECI group on what areas they should be focusing on. The ECI meets monthly for the purposes of providing updates and motivating one another to continue their work. The ECI developed subcommittees to focus on specific topics with an appointed leader. The initial focus was to utilize existing resources and align those purposes through collaboration with partners. This was to ensure no duplication of services among the agencies and nonprofits. No single agency or nonprofit is the owner of the ECI and it is not a separate/registered nonprofit. It is simply a collaborative group of people that represent different agencies and nonprofits in the community. Transylvania County acts as the coordination structure and what the Manager calls the “glue”. The County provides the space, creates the agenda, and provides administrative support and motivation. The County has also moved into more advocacy efforts at both the County Commissioner and staff level. Transylvania County also provides the engagement framework for the Sesame Street in Communities Initiative.

The subgroupings from the initial meetings have included: Preschool Education, Health/Mental Health, Recreation, Family Support, and Advocacy.

The Manager reported on some of the activities that have occurred since the State of the Young Child Report was issued. She noted that the ECI is three years into its work, so the outcomes have yet to be assessed; however, the ECI has seen early indicators of positive outcomes. The activities help showcase the different approaches to fix the issues that were identified in the data.

- Workshop for preschool and kindergarten teachers
  - Intended to increase communication
- Kindergarten Readiness Rally coordinated by WCCA
  - Multi-agency representation
- Town Hall on Childcare
  - Citizens and employers-119 people in attendance
  - Identified that more resources and referrals were needed
  - Affordability and availability
- Summer family happenings published
- Partnerships between Family Place and Library on programming
- Birth forward in summer reading program
- Expansion of Head Start slots through partnership between WCCA and TC Schools
- NC Pre-K slots up 4-times pre-ECI levels
- Family Place started play and learn kits and Circle of Parents groups
- Transylvania Public Health has engaged with Dr. Hartye, the chair of the monthly Substance Abuse in Pregnancy Workshop through the Behavioral Health division of Mission Health, to address drug addiction during pregnancy and in newborns and has identified in-county treatment options
- Mental Health Forum held; kiosk at Health Department installed by Vaya Health
- Hendersonville Pediatrics has added a behavioral consultant and has a partnership with Smart Start for Reach Out and Read
- Parks and Recreation added indoor preschool play time and summer camp for preschoolers as well as Start Smart Basketball for 4-5 year olds
- Institute of Emerging Issues at NCSU Forum on Early Childhood hosted Commissioner Page Lemel and used Transylvania County as the only rural model in their toolkit resources
- Family dinner series from healthy cooking to parenting classes coordinated through Family Place; expanding to Rosman this year
- Community Resilience Training in March
- Week and Month of the Young Child

- Library preschool kits and new programming for 0-5 children
- New preschool programs in Parks and Recreation, including camps, basketball, indoor plan and expanding breakfast with Santa to include over 200 participants in the first year to around 600 in 2017
- Brevard College starting new early education program with outdoor focus
- Community Playgroups starting as partnership between Family Place and El Centro with United Way grant
- Institute for Emerging Issues involvement and meeting Sesame Street in Communities
  - Site visit in May
  - Funds from State Legislature to prepare ECI for partnership
  - Developed action plan over summer and preparing for launch at HalloweenFest

The Manager pointed out a lot has happened locally over the past three years. She said she cannot explain how magical it is to be part of the ECI – the “magic” is because no one is in charge and no one is telling the group what they have to do or what vision they have to realize. The group comes together because they understand that early childhood is our future, as well as our present. They understand that by addressing the issues of our children, we are making a community that is a great place for anyone to live. The group is impacting current economic development conditions because they are working on elements that will allow parents to be their best in the workforce. They are also impacting the long range view of economic development in that the children who are 0-5 now will be our workforce in 20 to 30 years.

Lastly, the Manager announced activities the ECI has upcoming:

- State Legislature has developed study committee and making investment in early childhood
- Sesame Street in Communities partnership launch
  - Transylvania County known across the State as a model for early childhood discussion and improvement
  - SSIC will allow us to become a model nationally
- Update on State of the Young Child Report to evaluate outcomes at the three-year mark
- Continue work on the economic development component
  - Child care is infrastructure for economy
    - Availability and affordability
- Research on early learning
  - Baby 0-3 produces 700 new neural connections per second
  - Wages less than \$11 per hour, even for teachers with degrees
  - 22% decline in community college enrollment since 2008 for early educators

This completed the Manager’s presentation. While it is a lot of information, there has been a lot of work accomplished by the ECI over the last three years. The future direction will be incredible for the community. The Manager called for questions and comments from Commissioners on how the County has been involved along the way.

Commissioner Hawkins referred to the Manager’s announcement of increased funding at the State level for early childhood initiatives. He confirmed that our representatives advocated for this funding. The Manager confirmed and stated that early childhood is unique in that it appeals to both sides of the spectrum. She thinks that it is because we are learning more about the science of early childhood and how quickly one’s brain develops and sets one up for future success.

Commissioners commended the Manager for her report.

## APPOINTMENTS

### BREVARD BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT AND APPEAL

Judy Mathew's term on the Brevard Board of Adjustment and Appeal expires at the end of September. She is eligible and willing to serve another term. It is the recommendation of the City Planning Department to appoint her to another term. The alternate position remains vacant. The Clerk to the Board continues to advertise for the position.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to reappoint Judy Mathews to the Brevard Board of Adjustment and Appeal, seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously approved.**

### BREVARD PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD

Through a recent advertisement, the Clerk received an application from Stephanie Smith to fill a vacancy on the Brevard Planning and Zoning Board. The County's representative to this board must reside in the ETJ. Both the City Planning Department and County Tax Administration office have confirmed that Ms. Smith resides in the ETJ. City Planning staff interviewed Ms. Smith and she remains very much interested in serving; therefore, the City Planning Department recommends appointing Ms. Smith to fill the vacancy.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to appoint Stephanie Smith to fill the vacancy on the Brevard Planning and Zoning Board, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.**

## NEW BUSINESS

### BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Interim Finance Director Jonathan Griffin presented the following budget amendments for approval:

#30: A \$10,000 grant from the partnership between the UNC School of Government and Blue Cross Blue Shield to implement a collective action approach to opioid addiction prevention. This \$10,000 will defray some personnel expenses for an employee of the Health Department who is federally funded.

#31: A \$49,094 federal Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act grant recently received by the Health Department. Expenditures of this grant will support a partial share of the salary, fringe benefits and other office expenditures for current Health Department full-time and part time employees.

#32: A carryforward of \$15,241 from a NC Department of Public Safety grant awarded to the Children's Center of Transylvania County. This is related to a timing issue of when the grant payment was received by the County (received the payment during the time period where it was reasonable to backdate the payment into FY 2018's revenues, but not reasonable to cut a check as an FY2018 expenditure). This will carry forward these funds so that the pass-through funding can be paid out in FY 2019.

#33: At the May 21, 2018 regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners, the Board authorized the Building and Permitting Department to proceed with hiring a Code Enforcement Officer through reserve funding for FY 2018 in anticipation of the position continuing in the FY 2019 budget. At that time the Board also authorized the purchase of a vehicle for that new employee's use. Due to various hurdles in recruiting for the position, staff did not fill the position permanently until after June 30, 2018. This amendment lines up the intent of the Board at that meeting with the current status of the Building and Permitting Department.

#35: In July 2018, a lightning strike damaged the power generator at the Lake Toxaway Communications Radio Tower. The County received partial reimbursement of the repair costs through its insurance policy.

This budget amendment both acknowledges those revenues and appropriates them to the line item that was previously used to record the repairs on that generator.

If approved, these amendments will increase the General Fund budget to \$53,878,684.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the requested budget amendments as presented, seconded by Commissioner Hawkins and unanimously approved.**

LETTER CHALLENGING FAIR MARKET RENT FOR 2019

The Manager informed Commissioners that last Friday the Western Carolina Community Action (WCCA) informed County staff that on August 31 the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the Fair Market Rent for our community which showed a decrease in the rate. Comments from the public and County officials are due by October 1. The Manager recommended Commissioners authorize staff to send a letter from the Chairman challenging the FMR value that is set to decrease by roughly 3% across the board, and, in some cases, 5% for a one bedroom home.

The rates appear to be based on information obtained from the American Community Survey. However, in reading through the materials, the Manager stated it was difficult to ascertain what caused the reduction in the rate. She indicated Transylvania County could provide sufficient data to show their calculations are incorrect. She pointed out that local surveys have been conducted in the past, but they are expensive to develop and take time to navigate, hence why WCCA mentioned in their correspondence that they did not conduct a survey through their agency.

Chairman Chapman thanked Commissioner Hawkins for bringing this issue forward, along with input from his wife Claudia who is heavily involved with affordable/workforce housing initiatives, as well as Sheryl Fortune with WCCA. He read aloud the letter that, if approved, will be submitted to HUD on behalf of Transylvania County that expressed disagreement with the proposed 2019 Fair Market Rent rates.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to submit the letter to HUD requesting a change in the Fair Market Rent values for 2019, seconded by Commissioner Chappell.** Commissioner Hawkins questioned why HUD would indicate a decrease for Transylvania County by 3%, yet Henderson and Haywood Counties are expected to see a 20% increase and Buncombe County a 28% increase. In reading through the materials provided by HUD, he learned there are different surveys conducted depending on whether a community is metro or non-metro. The surveys in metro areas, because of density, tend to be more accurate and reflect the market rate. For non-metro areas, they call residences to obtain rates, but many people do not have land lines anymore. Their call success rate dropped from 90% to 40%. HUD indicated they could not afford to call more people, citing the cost of conducting additional surveys would have increased from \$25,000 to \$75,000. With that said, HUD's information reported they commissioned a study to examine alternative surveys and to determine if a less costly methodology could be employed. Following this review, HUD intended to have money available to survey small areas, but the sequestration forced the department to "make hard choices in the use of its diminished funding". Commissioner Hawkins summed up that HUD is blaming sequestration on the lack of funding to complete the local surveys. What this means for Transylvania County is that 200 families will see their voucher supplements decrease by \$250-\$300, causing them to potentially not be able to afford to live where they are currently living. If this is in the case, Commissioner Hawkins said it important that the County fight on their behalf. Commissioner Hawkins noted the letter will be submitted electronically via a website and public comment portal and he feared the letter would go into a "black hole". He was especially worried that the rates were set to change in a few days, effective October 1, so there would be no time for the County or another agency to conduct its own survey. With that said, he was still supportive of sending the letter, but he also requested to amend the motion. **Commissioner Hawkins**

**moved to amend the motion to direct staff to try to examine what alternatives might be available in addition to submitting the statement, seconded by Commissioner Lemel.** Chairman Chapman noted he will be seeing Congressman Meadows and his staff on Wednesday and will take him copies of the letter and any other information necessary. Commissioner Lemel asked for confirmation that this relates specifically Section 8 vouchers. The Manager confirmed that the FMR reduction will impact Section 8 vouchers and any federally funded housing program. Commissioner Lemel questioned why WCCA could not determine the figures for Transylvania County, i.e. conduct their own survey. Commissioner Hawkins responded that the WCCA's funding was reduced by the State by 25% this year so they do not have the funding to do so. Commissioner Lemel pointed out NACo is taking on the housing crisis as one of their issues this year. She wondered if this issue could be pushed through the national organization if counties could get the legislative backing they needed at the federal level. **The amendment was approved unanimously. The main motion was approved unanimously.**

### MANAGER'S REPORT


The Manager reported the following:

- Silvermont Master Plan, public input session, September 25, 6-7 pm, Recreation Center
- Library's first Bag Lunch To Go program, September 25, 12 noon, Cedar Mountain Community Center, program Brevard by the Decades; tea and sweets provided
- Land and Water Quality State reviews at the Landfill last month; commented that the Landfill "has never looked so good"
- The County and Sheriff's Office has deployed personnel, with additional being deployed soon, to assist with Hurricane Florence efforts
- Family Dinner Series calendar released-partnership of the Library and Parks and Recreation


## The Family Dinner Series

### 2018-2019 Calendar

*A Free Monthly Dinner and Program for Our Community*

<b>Sept 24</b> <b>Resiliency</b> Raising Resilient Children	<b>Oct 9</b> <b>Community Crock</b> Taste & Learn New Recipes	<b>Oct 22</b> <b>Juggling Act</b> Balancing Work, Family, & Self-Care	<b>Nov 26</b> <b>Get Set Transylvania</b> What's New with the Early Childhood Initiative	<b>Jan 8</b> <b>Bullying/ Cyber Abuse</b> Learn the Warning Signs & Intervention Skills
<b>Jan 28</b> <b>Family Fitness</b> Workouts To Do with the Whole Family	<b>Feb 25</b> <b>Love &amp; Intimacy</b> Dating, Marriage, & Communication	<b>Mar 25</b> <b>Summer Happenings</b> Explore Camps & Activities Available to Your Family <i>*Pizza Dinner*</i>	<b>April 9</b> <b>Family Fitness</b> Workouts To Do with the Whole Family	<b>April 22</b> <b>Bullying/ Cyber Abuse</b> Learn the Warning Signs & Intervention Skills
<b>May 20</b> <b>Healthy Eating &amp; Snacks on the Go</b> Ideas for Busy Families	@ Rosman Elementary School @ Transylvania County Library		<b>5:30pm-7pm</b> <b>Childcare provided</b>	 Like us on Facebook

**Community Partners:**



## PUBLIC COMMENT

*The comments made by the public represent the individual speaker's opinion or point of view. No attempt was made to vet their statements for accuracy or modify them based on facts.*

Judith West: Ms. West is the Chair of Brevard Housing Authority. She reported the Fair Market Rent decrease will impact them as some of their very complicated rent is tagged to the fair market. She said her understanding of the issue is that if the Fair Market Rent rate goes down, the landlords may choose not to participate in Section 8 Housing anymore. She applauded the Board of Commissioners' advocacy for citizens who cannot speak for themselves and she hopes they will invite Congressman Meadows to help us find solutions. She cited this as another example of rural counties not being treated fairly.

Peter Mockridge: Mr. Mockridge stated that funding the unstable or landslide prone areas is very important, but if it's only funded for the purpose of getting a report and do nothing about it, it will have been done for nothing. He wondered how rural communities can convince adjacent urban communities that partnership is important. Mr. Mockridge asked if staff had been keeping records of public participation since the County Commissioners added a daytime meeting. If the records show the participation during the daytime is no better, then he suggested the Board reconsider the schedule and go back to holding two evening meetings.

Kevin Jones: Mr. Jones expressed to the Board that the reasons HUD cites for the Fair Market Rent decreasing are ridiculous and the negative impact to many of citizens is happening too fast. Unfortunately, the only tools at the County's disposal at this time were to contact Congressman Meadows and to send a letter in protest. Another unfortunate matter is the County does not have any better data than what HUD has collected. Mr. Jones agreed with Commissioners that the County should fight for those citizens being affected. To get some sort of data, he suggested a data sample of 15%. He volunteered his time to gather this information and hoped the County would put forth the resources as well to conduct a proper survey.

Edwin Jones: Mr. Jones said he recently accompanied a Boy Scout Troop on a canoe trip from Hap Simpson Park to Penrose and that the French Broad River was the cleanest he had ever seen it. Referring to the Early Childhood Initiative, he suggested surveying teachers to determine programming and report on if there is an area that is not good about the program as an early warning signal. Also, in reference to the Fair Market Rent rate, he wondered if the County would be willing to supplement the loss in rent by \$40,000/month from the County's General Fund while staffs contact Congressman Meadows and work on generating better and more accurate figures.

Lee McMinn: Mr. McMinn suggested sequestration is a term federal departments use when they do not want to pay for something or too lazy to do the work. Additionally, if WCCA administers the program of rent support, then he felt they should have case files detailing the rent each landlord charges. He volunteered his time to review the files and collect the data. He understood the privacy issues, but said he would be discreet. He thanked the Board of Commissioners for wanting to tackle this problem quickly.

The Manager responded to Mr. McMinn's offer to volunteer to review records. According to the County Attorney, the records for those being served by Section 8 are confidential and cannot be released to the public. Those records would not be accessible for us to conduct our survey. Additionally, the survey is not just for those receiving benefits; it is the rents in general and the market.

## COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Continuing the Manager's response to Mr. McMinn, Commissioner Hawkins added that the survey has to be conducted with the methodology that is prescribed by HUD and the federal government. He stated the first step in resolving this issue is to understand the problem. He said he could be overstating the problem, but it is based on what he has read thus far. Additionally, it needs to be determined whether or not October 1 is a hard deadline, and if so, if there would be an allowance for hardship exemptions. If it is determined this a truly a problem, the County can take a number of avenues to deal with the problem, depending on conversations with Congressman Meadows' office as well.

Commissioner Hawkins asked the Manager to explore and address the comments made during the first public comment period with regards to the animal shelter. The Manager reported that Director Kevin Shook is already working on a response to describe to the Board all of the events that led to Ms. Erickson's comments.

Commissioner Chappell thanked the Manager for reporting on our staff and officers working on the coast helping with Hurricane Florence efforts. This was a very quick turnaround for some of these individuals as they have volunteered to help in other areas as well. They are making extreme sacrifices for their own families and for others and they should be commended. The County is fortunate for their service. Commissioner Chappell encouraged everyone to do what they can to help those affected by the storm.

Commissioner Phillips reported that retired Parks and Recreation Director Rick Pangle lost both of his parent over the last week. He asked everyone to keep his family in their thoughts and prayers.

Chairman Chapman reminded everyone that a major issue facing citizens is the upcoming school bond referendum. He noted that the Board of Education held a special meeting this evening and has scheduled another for October 1 at Rosman High School at which they intend to provide more details on the bond projects. He encouraged all citizens to become educated on the issues so they can make an informed decision.

**Chairman Chapman moved to enter into closed session per NC General Statute § 143-318.11 (a) (5) To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease, after a 5 minute recess, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously carried.**

## CLOSED SESSION

Per NC General Statute § 143-318.11 (a) (5) To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease, closed session was entered into at 8:52 p.m.

Present were Chairman Chapman, Commissioners Chappell, Hawkins, Lemel and Phillips, County Manager Jaime Laughter, Transylvania Economic Alliance Executive Director Josh Hallingse, Transylvania Economic Alliance Board of Directors Chairman Jeremy Owen, Parks and Recreation Director Jared Mull, participating via conference call County Attorney Misti Bass, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Commissioners received an update on the negotiation efforts of the potential purchase of property and staff was instructed on how to proceed.

During a second closed session, under the same statute, present were Chairman Chapman, Commissioners Chappell, Hawkins, Lemel and Phillips, County Manager Jaime Laughter, Parks and Recreation Director Jared Mull, participating via conference call County Attorney Misti Bass, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Commissioners received an update on the potential purchase of property and staff was instructed on how to proceed.

**Chairman Chapman moved to leave closed session, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously carried.**

#### OPEN SESSION

**Chairman Chapman moved to seal the minutes of the closed sessions until such time that opening the minutes does not frustrate the purpose of the closed session, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously approved.**

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Chairman Chapman moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:02 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously carried.**

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Mike Hawkins, Chair  
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board