

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
October 22, 2018 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Monday, October 22, 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 30 people in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

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

PUBLIC HEARING

SECTION 5311 ADMINISTRATIVE, CAPITAL PROGRAM AND SECTION 5310 OPERATING PROGRAM FOR FY 2020

The Manager presented the information required for the public hearing prior to submittal of the annual applications for the FY 2020 Section 5311 Administrative and Capital Program and Section 5310 Operating Program for Transylvania County Transportation.

FY2020 5311 Administrative

The Section 5311 grant program is apportioned to counties based on a formula that considers factors such as land area, population, population growth rates, vehicle miles and the number of low-income individuals. The program subsidizes the administrative costs of running a transportation system, including salaries, wages and fringe benefits for one full-time and three part-time employees. For FY 2020, Transylvania County will be requesting \$155,712 in funds from this program, which requires a County match of 15%, or \$23,358.

FY2020 Capital Program

The Capital Program provides funding to maintain the fleet of publicly supported transit vehicles and other capital needs. For FY 2020, Transylvania County will be requesting \$120,640 from this program for the replacement of two vehicles in its fleet. It requires a County match of 10%, or \$12,064.

FY2020 5310 Operating Program

The Section 5310 Operating Program is a separate funding stream to assist nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when transportation services are unavailable, insufficient or inappropriate. Transylvania County currently budgets \$52,000 for the purpose

of ride purchases through local private operators. The County's goal is to use this funding stream to restore out-of-county transportation to the elderly and disabled. Furthermore, it should allow for the expansion of County services with the larger pool of funding to those seeking in-county transportation by being able to purchase more service from private operators. For FY 2020, Transylvania County will be requesting the same amount as the previous year at \$104,000, which requires a 50% match of \$52,000.

A public hearing is required prior to making application. A public hearing notice was properly advertised in *The Transylvania Times* and posted to the County's website.

Chairman Chapman declared the public hearing open at 7:04 p.m. There were no comments from the public. **Chairman Chapman declared the public hearing closed at 7:05 p.m.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joan Van Orman: Ms. Van Orman shared with Commissioners copies of *A Photographer's Guide to Transylvania County*. It was paid for via a grant from the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority. The guide is basically a photographic tour that begins on the Blue Ridge Parkway, through the Cradle of Forestry, to downtown Brevard, then onto Scenic 276, Cedar Mountain and Dupont State Recreational Forest. It includes a map in the back section of the guide detailing the locations of each photo taken and ends with a night sky image of the star trails at PARI. The guide consists of 33 images provided by 15 photographers, many of whom are local. Ms. Van Orman thanked Transylvania County, the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority, and the many great photographers who contributed so generously to the guide's publication.

David Morrow: Board of Elections Director David Morrow provided an update of the upcoming election. He reported that early voting opened on Wednesday at 7:00 a.m. Early voting polls have been open for 12 hours each day. As of 6:30 p.m. this evening, 3,270 people have voted. Operations appear to be going smoothly and there have been no problems with parking. The last Saturday before Election Day is the final day to vote early. Polls will be open until 1:00 p.m. that day.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The following items were approved:

MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on August 31, 2018 to consider the appropriation of matching funds for two grant applications made available through the Needs Based Public School Capital Fund for Tier 2 counties as prepared by Transylvania County Schools and to authorize the Chairman to sign the applications. Commissioners approved the minutes as submitted.

DISCOVERY, RELEASE AND MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT

Per NC General Statute §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 NC General Statute §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 September 2018, total tax dollars released was \$2,252.86 and refunds totaled \$803.59. Commissioners approved the Discovery, Release and Monthly Settlement Report for September 2018.

RESOLUTION ALLOWING RETIRING OFFICER TO PURCHASE SERVICE HANDGUN-JEFFREY SMITH

Jeffrey Smith will retire from the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office on November 1, 2018 with 30 years of service. NC General Statute §20-187.2 allows the governing board to award to a retiring member the service gun of the retiring member. Sheriff Mahoney requested Commissioners approve a resolution allowing for Officer Jeffrey Smith to purchase his service handgun for the price of \$1.00. Commissioners approved Resolution #35-2018 Allowing Retiring Office to Purchase His Service Handgun which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

RESCHEDULE 2ND BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING IN NOVEMBER

The Board of Commissioners' 2nd meeting in November falls on Monday, November 26. This will be the last meeting for both Chairman Chapman and Commissioner Phillips as they end their service as elected officials. Due to scheduling conflicts, there will not be a full Board in attendance on Monday, November 26 and therefore it has been requested that the meeting be rescheduled to Thursday, November 29 to ensure full Board attendance. In addition, the previous week is an agenda preparation week, but because the Thanksgiving holiday falls on Thursday and Friday, staff has a shorter timeframe for agenda and meeting preparation. Rescheduling the meeting to Thursday, November 29 benefits staff as well by allowing additional time for agenda and meeting preparation. Also, although full Board attendance is expected for Thursday, November 29, Commissioner Lemel will be traveling back from Chapel Hill from attending a Social Services Working Group meeting and requested the meeting time be extended to 7:30 p.m. to ensure she arrives on time. Commissioners rescheduled the 2nd regular meeting in November from Monday, November 26 at 7:00 p.m. to Thursday, November 29 at 7:30 p.m. and instructed the Clerk to the Board to publish and post appropriate notice to the public.

PROCLAMATION-VETERANS DAY 2018

In 2009, the Board of Commissioners established a Veterans Day Committee that is responsible for developing a program to honor the veterans of our community on Veterans Day. Chairman Chapman serves as chair of that committee. For several years, Commissioners have approved a proclamation honoring Veterans Day.

The proclamation will be presented and read at the Veterans Day Ceremony on Saturday, November 10, 2018 at the Courthouse Gazebo. This year's program will be conducted in conjunction with the City of Brevard's 150th Anniversary. The City of Brevard has taken the lead on planning the event entitled *Brevard/Transylvania History & Hero's Veterans Day*, with the assistance of the County and WNC Military History Museum. Commissioner Hawkins read aloud the proclamation for the benefit of the public. Commissioners approved Proclamation #36-2018 Veterans Day 2018 which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

NCACC YOUTH DELEGATE-HANNAH LENZE

Several years ago the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners partnered with 4-H Youth Development, a service of NC Cooperative Extension, to coordinate and bring youth delegates to YouthVoice. The Association strives to bring a diverse mix of youth representatives from each of North Carolina's 100 counties to YouthVoice. During the NCACC Annual Conference, which took place in Catawba County this year, YouthVoice offered sessions to help youth gain a better understanding of what county governments do and the role of commissioners as the governing body for counties, and provided multiple opportunities for youth and county officials to connect. Youth delegates were requested to speak at a county commission meeting prior to YouthVoice and submit a photo of themselves with their local board members. Hannah Lenze represented Transylvania County at YouthVoice in Catawba County this year. She reported on her experience at the NCACC YouthVoice summit.

Ms. Lenze thanked Commissioners for their support. She especially thanked Chairman Chapman and Commissioner Lemel for sharing her experience at the NCACC Annual Conference. She reported that on the first day of the YouthVoice summit students and their advisors participated in team building activities which challenged their communication and cooperation skills. They realized they had to work together to successfully complete each activity. They also took part in a personality test called Real Colors. Ms. Lenze reported she tested as "green", which means that she is creative and likes to have all the facts before making decisions. On Saturday, students had breakfast with commissioners from other counties while listening to a speaker about opioid addiction and how it has become a statewide problem. Later, they divided into various workshops. The workshop she attended allowed her to participate in a mock county commission meeting in which participants had to choose five of their core values and decide whether to make cuts to other programs, use funds from reserve, or raise taxes in order to balance the budget. In addition, they had to answer to a mock media about the decisions they made. Ms. Lenze reported this exercise was difficult while staying strong to her true core values. She expressed that she truly enjoyed her experience and said she would recommend it to other students. Lastly, she presented a certificate of appreciation to Chairman Chapman for his support of 4-H and the youth delegation to the NCACC over the past several years.

4-H Youth Development/Extension Agent Mary Arnaudin reported she is serving in her second year as district chaperon for the YouthVoice summit at the NCACC Annual Conference. She said it was a great experience for all the students and she was very appreciative of the Commissioners' involvement in preparing them for the experience and helping them understand how local government works.

Commissioners thanked Ms. Lenze for her participation. They agreed it was an excellent experience for the youth, especially the opportunity to learn about the budgeting process. They also expressed appreciation to Ms. Arnaudin for her work with youth in our community.

OLD BUSINESS

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITY USE AND FEE WAIVER POLICY

Parks and Recreation Director Jared Mull presented this item. He reminded Commissioners that the Parks and Recreation Department has not had a facility reservation policy in place for any of the parks and recreation facilities, athletic fields, etc., nor did they have a written policy to address the waiver of fees should a user request such. A draft policy was introduced at the last meeting. Commissioners provided comments on the draft policy and staff integrated their feedback, as well as guidance from the County Attorney.

Mr. Mull reviewed the changes made to the draft policy since the first introduction, to include:

- Guidelines – added that fees would be refunded if the facility needed to be closed
- Prioritization of reservation requests – rare occurrence, but policy defines how requests would be prioritized if facilities requested for use on same date and time by more than one user
 - Priority given to program serving higher percentage of Transylvania County residents
 - Priority given to youth programs over adult programs
- Cancellation of Scheduled Events – added that fees would be refunded
- Tennis Court Reservations – no changes; will allow courts 1 and 2 to be reserved; court 3 open to the public on a first-come first-serve basis; exception would be during USTA tournaments
- Partner Organizations – defined as directly contributing to Parks and Recreation Department or providing recreational opportunities not necessarily provided by the department; clarified that 30 hours of usage per calendar year by partner organizations reset each year and are not carried over; new partner organizations should be vetted through the Parks and Recreation Commission
- Fee Waiver – added eligibility factor of County being a sponsor or co-sponsor of event; approval to come from Parks and Recreation Director or County Manager
- Minor changes suggested from County Attorney include correcting a misspelling and adding a clause regarding injury or damage to persons or property

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the new Parks and Recreation Facility Use and Fee Waiver Policy with the corrections suggested by the County Attorney, seconded by Commissioner Chappell. Commissioner Phillips asked if out-of-county residents are allowed to rent facilities. Mr. Mull responded that out-of-county reservations have occurred. He recalled those events as being family-type events at Silvermont and a volleyball clinic. The policy states that anyone serving a higher percentage of Transylvania County residents shall receive priority should a conflict occur. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

NEW BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF SECTION 5311 ADMINISTRATIVE, CAPITAL PROGRAM AND SECTION 5310 OPERATING PROGRAM APPLICATION FOR FY 2020

Transportation Coordinator April Alm presented further detail about the programs in which the County will be applying for funding. She reported that the Section 5311 Administration program subsidizes the administrative costs of running a transportation system, thus allowing communities to focus their resources predominantly on operations. For Transylvania County, the program funding pays for one full-time and three part-time employees. The Combined Capital program allows the department to maintain its fleet of publicly supported vehicles and other capital needs. This year the department intends to replace two vehicles, one of which is a 2001 van. Lastly, the Section 5310 grant, which was first applied for last year, will help to restore out-of-county transportation to the elderly and disabled and allow these individuals to travel from unincorporated areas of Transylvania County to incorporated areas of Transylvania County. Ms. Alm was very excited the County was awarded these funds last year and she looked forward to continued utilization of this program to expand services to citizens.

Ms. Alm announced there were two voluntary public surveys available for members of the public to complete: 1) Title VI Public Involvement survey and 2) survey following review of actual program applications.

There being no further information to report, Ms. Alm requested the Board of Commissioners grant permission for the Transylvania County Transportation Department to apply for the FY 2020 Public Transportation Program funding, to enter into an agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and to provide the necessary assurances and required local match.

Commissioner Lemel moved to grant permission for the Transylvania County Transportation Department to apply for the FY 2020 Public Transportation Program funding, to enter into an agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and to provide the necessary assurances and required local match of \$87,422, seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Commissioner Chappell stated that this program provides a tremendous benefit to Transylvania County and without it the County could not offer these services. He felt that this is an area that should be highlighted in the public because it has a direct impact on our citizens. He thanked Ms. Alm and her staff for their work and the department's continued diligence in seeking these funds year after year. Commissioner Lemel said she spoke with Ms. Alm prior to the start of the meeting and it was obvious Ms. Alm was proud of the department's accomplishments and the positive impact on our citizens. At the request of Commissioner Lemel, Ms. Alm shared a couple of meaningful stories. One story involved a gentleman that had been using transportation services for his shopping needs and realized he could use the same service for employment. He is now gainfully employed and using County transportation services to travel to and from work and is able to support himself with an income. Another story involved a woman who previously used transportation services as a dialysis patient. Following a successful transplant, she has rejoined the workforce and now uses County transportation to travel to and from work. Commissioner Lemel thanked her for sharing these stories because they highlight the role transportation plays in lifting up our citizens, allowing them independence, the ability to earn a wage, develop the opportunity to contribute back to the community, and build self-esteem and pride. She was grateful for the services the department provides. Chairman Chapman was appreciative that the department offered transportation to veterans to the VA Hospital in Asheville. Commissioner Hawkins pointed out that the Administrative Program is described as support for salaries for one full-time and three part-time employees, but noted there is a large percentage allocated toward indirect costs. Ms. Alm confirmed that 21% of the Administrative Program funding pays for supplies, uniforms and benefits. There were no further comments, and **the motion was unanimously approved.**

REQUEST FOR POSITION UPGRADE IN DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Services Director Darrell Renfroe presented this item. He reported there are 14 positions providing Medicaid services and seven positions providing Food and Nutrition Services/Emergency Assistance and Crisis Intervention Services in the Social Services Department Income Maintenance Unit. Of these employees, two are classified as IMC Lead Workers, one is classified as an IMC I, and all others are classified as IMC II's. Until recently the IMC I was responsible for one program-Medicaid Transportation. Due to policy changes in Adult Medicaid, there is an increase in the number of applications that must be assessed and keyed for each applicant. The increased volume cannot be absorbed by the existing workers. At the same time, the department has experienced a decrease in the amount of time necessary in the performance of Medicaid Transportation responsibilities. The decrease is the result of changes in the billing process in NC TRACKS in which providers enter information directly into the software. The combination of these two changes led staff to seek solutions on how to best meet the needs of the department with existing resources. Mr. Renfroe felt the best solution would be to upgrade the existing IMC I to an IMC II position. The upgrade would allow for continuity of services and be the most cost effective option. Because of the decrease in the Medicaid Transportation workload, the upgraded position could take on more Adult Medicaid work. This model would also provide backup support to the existing sole Medicaid Transportation worker. Additionally, the NC Office of Human Resources requires that employees performing in more than one program in the Income Maintenance Unit to be classified as an IMC II.

The total gross cost of upgrading this position for the remaining nine months of this fiscal year would be \$1,478.50 for salary, \$113.11 in FICA, \$115.69 for retirement benefits, and \$0 for insurance for a total cost of \$1,707.30. However, due to the 75% reimbursement rate for Medicaid work, the actual impact to the County for the remainder of the fiscal year is \$426.82.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the upgrade from IMC I position to an IMC II position, seconded by Commissioner Chappell. Commissioner Lemel supported the upgrade of this position both from the standpoint of a County Commissioner and a member of the Social Services Board. She stated that it is very difficult to maintain employees in Social Services departments. She believes this is a good opportunity to reward a quality employee who knows the County and the system. The impact to the County is low, and the overall investment is well worth it. Commissioner Hawkins said it appears that other counties might be experiencing the same issues. He asked if other counties are also moving toward upgrading IMC I positions to IMC II positions. Mr. Renfro responded that very few counties have IMC I positions remaining in their departments. He was confident that counties of like size are experiencing the same issues. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

FAIR MARKET RENT SURVEY

Finance Director Jonathan Griffin presented this item. At the September 24, 2018 meeting of the Board of Commissioners, the Manager reported that County staff had been notified by Western Carolina Community Action (WCCA) that on August 31, 2018, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published its 2019 Fair Market Rent allocations for Transylvania County, as well as the rest of the nation. Transylvania County's Fair Market Rent rate had decreased on average by 3% under the new proposal, while Henderson County's had increased by 20%. At that meeting, Commissioners instructed staff to continue evaluating how best to challenge the determination in Fair Market Rents determined by HUD's analysis. Following the meeting, staff continued discussions with representatives from Congressman Meadows' office, staff in the Economic Analysis Division at HUD, and counterpart staff at WCCA, a public housing agency for our area. Staff determined that other jurisdictions had undertaken similar surveys and sought to challenge the HUD analysis.

Staff developed a request for proposals based on prior surveys and issued it on October 1, 2018 with a deadline of 5:00 p.m. today. The request for proposals and documents describing the methodology previously used by HUD to conduct these types of surveys of market rents were included in the Board's agenda packet. Staff had several communications with interested proposers prior to the deadline, but did not receive any proposals to perform a survey by today's deadline. Therefore, staff had no proposals to bring before the Board for their consideration.

The Manager added that discussions with HUD and Congressman Meadows' office centered on this very scenario – that the County would be unable to secure a contractor to complete the survey or that a contractor would be unable to perform the survey to HUD's standards. Federal staff did not think the County would be successful and explained why based on their methodology. Essentially, Transylvania County's renting population is small. Furthermore, the renting population is not concentrated in large scale apartment complexes. Another factor that makes the survey more challenging is that most people no longer have land line phones. These factors combined make it difficult to achieve an appropriate response rate. In their conversations with federal staffs, County staff inquired about the possibility of an online survey. Based on our last census figures, they were concerned about whether or not our community had enough connectivity to be successful in this effort. With that said, they were open to the County submitting a methodology to them for consideration and then working to implement it with or without a contractor. At this stage, Transylvania County has until January 11 to develop a methodology that could be successful in Transylvania County, submit it to HUD for approval, and attempt to implement it locally. The challenge is that staffing resources are extremely limited. The Manager reported that staff was able to extract addresses for multi-family units using tax data, so there is the ability to send them a postcard survey or notice to take a survey and hope for an acceptable response rate. The Manager believes the only way to be successful is by using a combination method of an online and mail survey, but it will require buy-in from HUD. She asked for direction from the Board of Commissioners. The Manager again reiterated that this will be challenging, but that staffs are willing to do what is necessary to make it successful.

Commissioner Hawkins was concerned if the County does not attempt to develop a methodology that there is a strong possibility 200 family units would no longer have the ability to pay for their current housing and that this particular housing could be removed from the market for this type of use. The Manager said her understanding is that active leases would be locked in. However, if the renter moves, the type of housing is open to change. The long term danger is that those who own units would not feel the rate they receive by participating in Section 8 Housing is satisfactory. The next opportunity to see a different rate would be post-2020 Census canvass in 2021. There are direct impacts to those living in the renter-occupied units, but they are not immediate. The other concern is that there are formulas tied to some of these numbers. Therefore, it could impact some of those areas the County would not otherwise expect in terms of other federal funds that flow into the County. While it is difficult to gain a clear understanding of what that means, what is known for sure is that the County's market rent did not decrease by 3%. HUD utilizes the American Survey in metro areas and then averages the non-metro responses, thus causing Transylvania County to be impacted by other rural communities with lower rent rates. Unfortunately, it is difficult to classify a definitive answer on the ultimate impact to the County.

Commissioner Phillips inquired how this might affect a renter who renegotiates a rent contract or whose rental contract is renewed annually. The Manager stated that during the call with HUD, staff was informed that if the renter has a valid agreement with a set rate, it would not change until there was a reason for it to change, such as the renter moving out. They also shared that WCCA could try to argue for community specific rent modifications, but those would only target pockets of the community. They would still have to provide data from specific neighborhoods proving the rents were higher. It did not sound like a fix to the situation.

Commissioner Hawkins asked for clarification that if a renter has a valid lease in place, their subsidy will not change. The Manager confirmed that if a person is receiving Section 8 assistance and the landlord accepts those vouchers the subsidy will not change as long as there is an agreement in place; however, she was unsure if the rate would be subject to change upon lease renewal. Commissioner Phillips commented that if most rates were likely to remain the same over the period of a year it could give the County more time to perform a more comprehensive survey or study. Commissioner Hawkins emphasized it would give Congressman Meadows time to work on changing this process. The Manager agreed the current methodology is not positive for rural communities.

Commissioner Hawkins said his understanding of why Transylvania County's rate decreased by 3% was because there was no local survey performed and it was based on an average of all the statewide responses they received. Presumably that means every county's rate decreased by 3% and he wondered why more counties were not speaking up about it.

Commissioner Hawkins inquired if there are ways to reach out to our local partners, such as WCCA, to help develop a solution. The Manager said the WCCA was interested in the County's ideas about establishing a different methodology. The issue is complex, in that those surveyed must be private market renters, not Section 8 renters. This factor adds to the already present challenges. Staff contacted several real estate offices and they indicated they would be willing to share the survey, but they were not willing to turn over lists of addresses of renters or rental units. Privacy and protection issues compound the situation further.

Mr. Griffin added that the type of information needed is the amount a renter has agreed to pay and if they have moved within the last 24 months. There are several exceptions. If a renter receives a subsidy, their rent amount does not figure into the calculation. If their housing unit is owned by a relative, the rent is not counted. Seasonal or part-time housing does not count either. Special conditions, such as acting as handyman for the property, disqualify it from being considered.

Commissioner Lemel wondered, with these types of parameters, if Transylvania County even has statistically valid renters. Mr. Griffin reported that the American Survey indicates the County has approximately 3,300 renter-occupied units, requiring a couple hundred responses that do not fall under any of the exceptions in order to provide the necessary information. They must also have geographic diversity.

Commissioner Phillips asked, for clarification purposes, if HUD performed a blanket survey across rural North Carolina and assumed Transylvania County's rate decreased by 3%. Mr. Griffin responded that the methodology used by HUD was to take an average of the areas not considered metropolitan. Cheaper housing in another part of the State impacted Transylvania County's rate.

Commissioner Chappell was appreciative of the work staff did in such a short timeframe in an attempt to address. Based on immediate need, it appears there has been some clarification that as long as there are agreements in place, Section 8 renters will not be impacted right away. He heard concerns from Commissioners that renters might go outside marketplace, and he pointed out that is a concern no matter the Fair Market Rent proposal. Instead of using additional resources to develop a methodology that HUD is unlikely to accept, he preferred Commissioners consider advocacy efforts at the congressional level. Commissioner Hawkins agreed, especially being HUD is already skeptical of our efforts.

Commissioner Chappell pointed out there was quite a bit of misinformation stated at the previous meeting that the solution was as easy as picking up the phone and make a few phone calls. He stressed the issue is much more complex. If the solution were that easy, he assured everyone the County would have taken care of it already.

Chairman Chapman concurred that the County needs to continue advocating at the congressional level and remaining in contact with Congressman Meadows' office. He met with Congressman Meadows' Chief of Staff during a recent visit to Washington, DC and he expressed the desire for a formal response from his office. The Manager noted Congressman Meadows' staff facilitated the conference call with HUD and offered to make connections with universities if the County did not find a contractor to perform the survey. Staff will follow up with his office.

Commissioner Lemel pointed out there is an assumption that other counties may have been negatively impacted by the new rates. She suggested asking Congressman Meadows to help us determine who those other counties are and for those counties to band together for a stronger voice at the federal level.

Commissioner Hawkins thanked the Manager and Mr. Griffin for their work on this issue. He also thanked Chairman Chapman for going out of his way to chase down Congressman Meadows and his Chief of Staff in Washington, DC to ensure they were aware of the severity of this issue.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- Rural Infrastructure Authority approved Transylvania County's \$880,750 Industrial Development Fund grant request to support an extension of the Town of Rosman's sewer infrastructure to serve Gaia Herbs, one of the County's largest private sector employers. The project will allow the company to expand its operations, adding 33 jobs and investing \$55,487,457.
- Staff will schedule a public hearing for the Board of Commissioners to consider a variance for a cell tower
 - The application requires a variance because the request is to build a new cell tower less than ½ mile from an existing tower, and less than 100 feet below the elevation of a protected mountain ridge.

- The Planning Board recommended that the Board of Commissioners approve the variance request to replace an existing tower with a cell tower, subject to receiving a completed application, and only if an agreement and workable lease cannot be obtained to allow colocation on the neighboring Fox News Tower.
- This recommendation was made to address the need for cell coverage to increase safety in Cedar Mountain and DuPont State Recreational Forest.
- Each biennium the NCACC solicits input and proposals from counties concerning federal issues that impact NC counties. Counties can submit federal goals proposals until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 16. If Commissioners are interested in submitting federal goals, this item needs to be placed on the November 13 agenda for final approval. The Manager recommended adding the Fair Market Rent methodology as a goal proposal.
- Early voting continues in the Election Center. The turnout has been steady. The General Election is Tuesday, November 6.
- Transylvania County was not awarded school construction grant funds. Other counties in WNC were awarded funds: Cherokee, McDowell, Mitchell and Swain. Funds were also redirected to Eastern NC following the aftermath of Hurricane Florence.
- Veterans Day Ceremony will be held at Courthouse Gazebo on Saturday, November 10 at 11:00 a.m. It will be held in conjunction with the City of Brevard's 150th Anniversary celebration.
- Dedication of the Sylvan Valley Industrial Center will be held on Wednesday, November 28 at 10:00 a.m. This project represents a unique community collaborative between the City of Brevard, Golden LEAF Foundation, North Carolina Department of Commerce and Transylvania County.
- Planning Board had a presentation from Cedar Mountain Community Center requesting a small area plan to address issue such as setbacks, development type, signs and protection of community character. Planning Department will be working on a process for small area plans to put before the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners before establishing a small area plan committee to guide the process.
- Sesame Street in Communities is coming to HalloweenFest on Saturday, October 27.
 - Special ceremony at 12 noon to launch partnership and new logo.
 - Sesame Street characters to be present.
 - Hosting representatives as early as Wednesday.
 - Several activities and events scheduled beginning on Thursday.
- Kudos to EMS Director Bobby Cooper. He has been named the City of Brevard's first full time fire chief. Bobby will be leaving Transylvania County on November 2 after serving 20 years as a paramedic and in his current role as EMS Director. He will be missed, but we wish him all the best. The community will be in good hands.
- Kudos to Parks and Recreation Jared Mull for initiating a partnership with the Fitness Factory and the Special Olympics that will support our special needs athletes. The idea came from Commissioner Lemel after reading a NACo article.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Lemel encouraged everyone to attend HalloweenFest to learn more about Sesame Street in Communities partnership. Their website contains 870 items of content to support early educators and parents. They have incredible resources to provide positive early childhood experiences. She felt this

partnership is going to be an impactful opportunity for our community. Transylvania County should be very proud.

Chairman Chapman offered kudos to the Transylvania County Abandoned Cemeteries Board. He joined them on an excursion last weekend across Lake Jocassee to visit the Patterson-Chappell Cemetery. The members cleaned it up nicely and completed a survey of the cemetery. The Abandoned Cemeteries Board does a good job taking care of abandoned cemeteries in the County.

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 8:50 p.m. Present were Chairman Chapman, Commissioners Chappell, Hawkins, Lemel and Phillips, County Manager Jaime Laughter, Building Permitting and Inspections Director Mike Owen, Parks and Recreation Director Jared Mull, Transylvania Economic Alliance Executive Director Josh Hallingse, Transylvania Economic Alliance Board of Directors Chairman Jeremy Owen, Hydro-Engineer Andrew Bick with Headwaters Engineering, County Attorney Misti Bass (via conference call), 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.

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

OPEN SESSION

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Chairman Chapman moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously carried.**

ATTEST:

Mike Hawkins, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board