

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
July 27, 2020 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Monday, July 27, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in Commissioners Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Jason Chappell, Jake Dalton, David Guice, Chairman Mike Hawkins, and Vice-Chairwoman Page Lemel. Also present was County Manager Jaime Laughter. Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan and the County Attorney participated remotely.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Derek McKissock participated remotely.

There were 6 people in the audience, including staff.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mike Hawkins presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

WELCOME

Chairman Hawkins welcomed everyone to the meeting participating both in person and remotely. He introduced Commissioners and staff in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christy Blakely: Ms. Blakely thanked the Board for recently hosting Terry Foxx, NFIP Planner for the Western Branch who provided an update on model flood ordinances and for considering updating the flood ordinance to mirror the 2019 model. She asked the Board to consider adopting a more restrictive flood control ordinance to provide the County with more tools. She stated that less restrictive versions of the model ordinance do not ensure surrounding properties will be protected, nor manage floodplain capacity or minimize road flooding. Ms. Blakely was worried that legitimate community concern and property rights are not be considered during this ongoing conversation about floodplain management. She was especially concerned about the increased flooding in the areas around Becky Mountain Road, Mill Cove Road and Reeves Road. Due to the County's role in the technical review process, she proposed a text amendment to the current ordinance that read, "Fill is prohibited in the SFHA, including construction of buildings on fill." She noted this language comes from the 2019 model ordinance and can be applied to the updated ordinance. She encouraged the Board of Commissioners to adopt a more restrictive ordinance and to rely on the variance process for assessing the applicant's hardship because she felt strongly that flood alterations should require heightened land development review scrutiny.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The following items were approved:

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 the period June 23-30, 2020, tax dollars released totaled \$204.32 and refunds issued amounted to \$222.46. Commissioners approved the Discovery, Release and Monthly Settlement Report for the period June 23-30, 2020 as submitted.

AUTHORIZATION TO EXECUTE CAPITAL LEASE

The Board of Commissioners approved funds in the FY 2021 Budget for the Emergency Medical Services department to lease equipment. The equipment to be leased are the Power PRO XT cots and related operating systems for use in each ambulance. The benefit of these cot systems is they are powered via a hydraulic system, thus reducing physical strain on EMS staff. The use of the cots increases operator and patient safety by using lifting equipment to support the weight throughout the loading and unloading process rather than relying on the paramedic's physical strength.

The last time the County executed this type of agreement was in 2014-2015. Paying for these types of equipment systems is typically done through long-term leases with optional purchases at the end of the agreement. Paying the full cost up front would be approximately \$455,000, whereas a long-term lease keeps the payment flat over the course of several budgets. For this reason, nearly all these types of purchases are conducted via capital lease. The nature of the agreement, in that it exceeds one year, obligates future Boards. It is functionally no different than a loan. The nature of this debt excludes it from the types of debt that would require approval from the Local Government Commission and a public hearing. Board action is required separate from the annual budget process due to the nature of the agreement being long-term. Funds are already included in the budget to pay the first year of this agreement, totaling approximately \$92,000.

Commissioners approved proceeding with the installment agreement and authorized the County Manager and County Attorney to execute agreement on behalf of the County.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPENDITURES IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

Veterans Service Officer Frank Pearsall gives an annual report to the Board of Commissioners regarding the distribution of Veterans Affairs (VA) expenditures in Transylvania County and other various veteran demographics.

Since 2005, the veteran population in Transylvania County has been on a slow decline. The amount of expenditures has steadily increased, with exception of 2018. In 2019, total expenditures in Transylvania County were \$21,370,000, an increase of \$828,000 from the previous year. Most of the expenditures are for compensation and pension (\$11,068,000) and medical (\$9,410,000). For 2019, the veteran population was 3,073. Of those, 891 veterans used the VA hospital in Asheville for services.

On the legislation side, Mr. Pearsall reported that the federal government is deliberating about whether to add three diseases to the list of ailments for which Vietnam Veterans may receive medical coverage benefits. Those are hypertension, hyperthyroidism, and Parkinson's-like diseases.

Mr. Pearsall said he continues to file claims at a frequent pace, particularly for Vietnam Veterans. Most of his work is related to filing claims for service-connected disabilities or illness. He also responds to requests for copies of discharge documents and headstones. Mr. Pearsall accepts walk-ins on Tuesdays and Thursdays and sees people by appointment on the other days of the week.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Pearsall for his service to the veterans of Transylvania County.

APPOINTMENTS

DESIGNATION OF VOTING DELEGATE TO THE NCACC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The NC Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) will hold its 113th Annual Conference via virtual platform. The Business Session will occur on Thursday, August 6 at 11:00 a.m. The NCACC requires counties to elect a voting delegate to the Annual Conference. The voting delegate is authorized by the counties to vote on business items. The voting delegate form is due to the NCACC by August 3.

Commissioner Chappell moved to appoint Commissioner Lemel to serve as Transylvania County's Voting Delegate to the NCACC Annual Conference and for Chairman Hawkins to serve as the alternate, seconded by Commissioner Guice and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF CARES ACT FUNDS

The State Legislature previously allocated CARES Act funds to counties for COVID-19 related expenditures and required a spending plan to be submitted by June 15 for use of the Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF). Statewide, \$150 million was allocated in the spring with another \$150 million held in the hopes that the CARES Act would be modified to allow the funds to be used for revenue replacement. Transylvania County initially earmarked \$100,000 in its plan to help the City of Brevard and Town of Rosman with their supply needs by direct order and delivery. The initial allocation was \$809,455.24 to the County for COVID-19 response.

The Legislature has now allocated the remaining funds to counties with the requirement that 25% of all funds be spent on municipal CARES Act eligible expenses. The estimate for Transylvania County totals \$1,476,797.48 resulting in a corresponding increase to municipalities of approximately \$369,199. All funds must be spent by December 20 or they will revert to the State. These funds cannot be used for revenue losses. The funds must be used for direct expenses related to COVID-19.

Transylvania County will have to modify its spending plan and submit it for review to account for the new funds and to reflect the 25% allocation to municipalities. Municipalities will have to submit plans to the County for review for their allocation so that the County can submit them to the State by September 1. The State Local Government Commission is recommending that counties enter interlocal agreements with municipalities to spell out the restrictions and process for leveraging these funds. At their July 13, 2020 regular meeting, Commissioners allocated half of the municipal funds to each municipal entity in Transylvania County and authorized staff to prepare the interlocal agreement.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the interlocal agreement as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chappell. Commissioner Chappell asked if the agreement had been reviewed and okayed by the County Attorney to ensure there are no liability issues for the County. The Manager

reported the State advised that counties are no longer considered liable for the funds going to municipalities, but the Local Government Commission recommended counties enter interlocal agreements with the municipalities so that those parameters are clear and stated explicitly on how the funds are to be used. Commissioner Guice asked the Manager to explain how the municipalities intend to use the funds. The Manager responded that the original plan included providing supplies (masks, hand sanitizer, hand sanitizing stations) to the municipalities using CARES Act funding. The City of Brevard and Town of Rosman can use the funds to continue purchasing those items. The use of the funds must fall into certain categories as outlined in the Act, such as economic support associated with COVID-19 expenses, public safety measures, etc. She said counties overall have borne most of the expenditures in relation to response due to public safety, emergency management and public health falling under its jurisdiction. Funds not used by the municipalities will revert to the County for the uses outlined in the Act. The Manager noted that the City of Brevard and Town of Rosman must have a plan in place by September 1 explaining how they intend to use the funds. The County will be working with them to assure the plans cover what is needed. The interlocal agreement has safeguards in place related to accountability, reporting, etc. The County will be using a reimbursement model as opposed to an upfront allocation to ensure the County has received the proper documentation proving the expenditures fall within the parameters of the spending categories. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

RENEWAL OF FUNDING AGREEMENT WITH THE TOWN OF ROSMAN FOR CHAMPION PARK AND POOL

In 2016, Transylvania County deeded Champion Park and Pool to the Town of Rosman for operations. The agreement included an annual County supplement over a three-year period in the amount of \$50,000 to cover the cost of operations. The funds were to be used for the operations of those amenities only, with any unspent funds to be used for improvements to park and pool. The agreement stipulated that the Town would assume maintenance and upkeep of the property, as well as maintain liability insurance. If for any reason the pool were to shut down, the County would cease the supplement and the property would revert to the County.

In FY 20, Commissioners extended the agreement for one year. The FY 21 Budget includes \$50,000 for this purpose to allow another one-year extension of the agreement. Commissioners may want to pursue setting up a longer-term agreement before the FY 22 budget deliberations begin to guide future budget preparation. The recommendation at this time is for the Board to approve a one-year extension of the agreement and discuss how to approach future year agreements.

Commissioner Lemel moved to allocate \$50,000 from the FY 21 Budget as planned and to approve an extension of the funding agreement for one year with the Town of Rosman for Champion Park Pool, seconded by Commissioner Guice. Commissioner Chappell commented on the great job the Town has done with improving and maintaining the pool. He felt it had been a good partnership and that it should continue. He suggested staff meet with the Town of Rosman officials to discuss a long-term arrangement. Commissioner Lemel agreed that the property is an important asset to the Town and community and is a solid investment, particularly for those children impacted by the program. Commissioner Guice felt it was appropriate to address a long-term solution as well. He wanted to understand the history of how the transaction came to be and learn about the outcomes to help him on deciding on a long-term solution. He agreed that the property is an asset and thus extremely important to the community. Commissioner Chappell explained that a few years ago the previous Parks and Recreation Director made several recommendations to the Board based on the sustainability of the pool and the extensive costs needed to make long-lasting improvements. At that time, the Town of Rosman approached the County with an alternative solution. As a municipality, the Town was eligible for certain grant funds, and the Town has experience with utilities. For them to receive the grant funds, the County had to deed the property to the Town. The Town has been able to extend the life of the facility with the use of those funds. Otherwise, the venture would have been very costly to the County. Chairman

Hawkins asked the Manager to work with the Town over the next six months to understand the existing recreation program, determine how the Town uses the annual allocation of \$50,000, and develop a long-term agreement with specific recreation programs tied to the supplemental funding. The Manager should bring back the information to the Board as a report and subsequent action by the Board. Commissioner Guice said he wanted to understand how the amenities and program fit within the County's recreation master plan. The Manager advised incorporating input from the Parks and Recreation Commission into this process and discussion. Commissioner Lemel wanted to ensure the County is positioning itself to support the ongoing operations of the pool and whatever else is needed to support the Town in making sure the facility continues to be asset for the community. She felt it would be appropriate to review their operational budget, members served, and fees charged, and develop a capital plan that is necessary for improvements. She stressed that the County is not in a position to be blindsided with a \$100,000+ repair. Chairman Hawkins directed the Manager per the conversation. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

NEW BUSINESS

2019 TAX SETTLEMENT REPORT

The Tax Administrator shall make a sworn report to the governing body of the taxing unit on annual basis per NC General Statute § 105-373. Tax Administrator Jessica McCall presented the report that covers the 2019 tax year.

- Total levy
 - County - \$35,700,866.23
 - All districts - \$38,342,408.88
- Total collected
 - County - \$35,617,980.11
 - All districts - \$38,251,271.67
- Uncollected 2019 taxes as of June 30, 2020
 - County - \$82,886.12
 - All districts - \$91,137.21
 - Since June 30, collected another \$12,570.28 for all districts
- 2019 overall County collection rate - 99.77%
 - Each district percentage rate - higher than 99.00%
 - County collection rate as of January 6 (the last day to pay without interest) - 87.95%
 - Leaves \$4.3 million to be collected
- Delinquent taxes collected for 2018 and prior since June 30
 - County - \$36,604
 - Since June 30 collected \$409.11
 - All districts - \$43,065.28
 - Since June 30 collected \$668.02
- Bank attachments - \$65,835.18
- Wage garnishments - \$6,262.12
- Payment plans – 212
 - Decrease from the previous year, likely due to payment coupons included in the tax bills
 - 1,290 accounts used the payment coupons, accounting for \$1.3 million in collections
- Staff made more than 10,000 phone calls

Ms. McCall reported the 2020 tax bills will be mailed tomorrow.

Commissioner Lemel commented that tax bills can be large and hard to manage for some of our citizens. She wondered how the County can better get the word out about options for prepayment, using the coupons, etc. because there are so many ways in which the Tax Office is willing to work with taxpayers. She thanked Ms. McCall and her staff for the great job they do.

Commissioner Chappell echoed Commissioner Lemel's comments. He said he uses the payment plan option, and he was appreciative of how willing staff are to work with citizens which is a testament to their character. He publicly thanked staff, but also the citizens for being responsible. Their actions have resulted in the County having a tremendously high tax rate for many years.

Chairman Hawkins pointed out the City of Brevard now collects its own taxes. He asked Ms. McCall about the interaction her office has with the City. Ms. McCall said the County retains the responsibility for appraising all property within the City's jurisdiction and that information is forwarded to the City of Brevard so they can prepare their tax bills. The County notifies the City regularly of discoveries and releases.

Chairman Hawkins noted the City provides a percentage discount if citizens pay early. He asked about the logic behind that action and if the County should consider the same. Ms. McCall reported that statutes allow for a discount and the City chose to enact it. The Board of Commissioners would need to do so by resolution. The City's discount is 2% if paid before August 31. In terms of dealing with mortgage companies and escrow accounts, many will wait before the end of the year to pay their County portion but will pay early to the municipality that prepayment to receive a discount. The mortgage company requires early payment of the taxes if offered by a municipality.

Chairman Hawkins asked if the discount is offered because of a cashflow issue. The Manager responded the discount is typically related to a cashflow issue. She pointed out if the County were to provide a discount, the Board would have to approach it anticipating there would be a discount to all property owners of 2% and must adjust the budget accordingly. Chairman Hawkins pointed out he was not advocating for the discount, but he wanted to understand why some local governments implemented it.

Commissioner Guice commended the Tax Office for their exceptional job of collections and for historically having one of the best collection rates in the State.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the 2019 Tax Settlement Report, seconded by Commissioner Guice and unanimously approved.

2020 ORDER TO COLLECT ALL REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES

The Tax Collector must be charged with the 2020 tax bills which gives full and sufficient authority to collect taxes with forced collection remedies if necessary, per NC General Statute § 105-321. The order of collection shall have the force and effect of a judgment and execution against the taxpayers' real and personal property.

To the Tax Administrator of the County of Transylvania:

You are hereby authorized, empowered and commanded to collect the taxes set forth in the tax records filed in the office of the Tax Administrator and in the tax receipts herewith delivered to you, in the amounts and from the taxpayers likewise therein set forth. Such taxes are hereby declared to be first lien upon all real property of the respective taxpayers in the County of Transylvania, and this order shall be full and sufficient authority to direct, require and enable you to levy on and sell any real or personal property of such taxpayers, for and on account thereof, in accordance with law.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the 2020 Order to Collect Property Taxes, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

REQUEST FOR USE OF COMMISSIONERS CHAMBERS BY SCORE

Tom Sweeny, on behalf of SCORE, requested the use of Commissioner's Chambers to livestream an event on September 8 that would recognize all those who have gone above and beyond to serve the public during this pandemic and to highlight them as resources for others. Currently, the room is being used to livestream County advisory board meetings, in addition to the County Commission and City Council meetings. This event will include the need for Information Technology staff to operate the livestream equipment and other support required for meeting room use. The County Manager typically approves requests for County business activities and meetings, but anything beyond that is brought before the Commissioners for approval. The Manager asked the Board to consider the request by SCORE and determine whether to sponsor the staff time involved or assess a fee for this purpose.

Commissioner Lemel moved to allow the use of the room by SCORE and to donate the staff time, seconded by Commissioner Guice and unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION GOVERNING INTERFUND FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

Finance Director Jonathan Griffin presented this item for the Board's consideration. The requirements of GASB (Governmental Accounting Standards Board) and the North Carolina Local Government Fiscal Control Act impose restrictions on funds established by governing units, specifically that funds must have requisite cash to operate. This is established by a variety of rules. The two primary requirements in North Carolina statutes are:

- NC General Statute § 159-30 creates a requirement that all funds have a cash balance (by stipulating what activities can be undertaken with a cash balance)
- NC General Statute § 159-13 stipulates that appropriations in a fund cannot exceed the sum of cash and investments minus the sum of liabilities (therefore, if a fund does not have a cash balance, then it is not permitted to make any expenditure appropriations)

However, the nature of some activities of government, particularly county government, are that some activities are expenditures offset by revenue in the form of reimbursements, earned only after some expenditures have been undertaken. Expenditures reduce cash and, therefore, depending on the accounting requirements imposed on an activity, it is possible that at year's end the County could be noncompliant with statutes.

In North Carolina, only governing boards are authorized to transfer monies between funds, which requires a separate budget amendment and approval. Similarly, to transfer funds back would require the same process run in reverse. In practice, the County has relied on transfers authorizing specific amounts which are permanent and incorporated into the budget ordinance. This is an alternative that allows for temporary solutions to temporary problems.

The permanent nature of a transfer is particularly important because there are other rules governing some funds that would prevent the governing board from withdrawing a transfer after it is made (an example being an enterprise fund like the Solid Waste fund).

It is standard and routine practice in local governments across North Carolina to establish these types of policies and delegate the finance officer the authority to create these types of transactions on a temporary basis. For example, the City of Brevard uses this authority regularly to smooth cash inflows and outflows between some of its dedicated funds for sidewalk and greenway construction.

The following is an excerpt from the audit report of a different government unit, illustrating how these types of loans are disclosed in the annual comprehensive annual financial report.

E. Interfund Receivables, Payables and Transfers

1. Interfund Receivables and Payables

The composition of interfund balances at June 30, 2016, is as follows:

Due to Other Funds

Receivable Fund	Payable Fund	Amount
Non-Major Governmental Fund	Non-Major Governmental Funds	\$ 452,316
Water and Sewer Utility	Transit	3,746,817
		<u>\$ 4,199,133</u>

Advance to Other Funds

Receivable Fund	Payable Fund	Amount
Water and Sewer Utility	Ballpark	\$ 267,188
		<u>\$ 267,188</u>

Due to Other Fund balances are overnight loans at fiscal year end from the receivable fund to the payable fund to cover cash deficits in the payable fund. The amounts are reversed on the first day of the next fiscal year. The fund with the cash deficit then has a liability to the pooled cash and investments.

Advance to Other Fund balances are for loans that were made by the receivable to the payable fund for capital improvements in the payable fund.

Based on review of the historical record, the governing board of Transylvania County has never explicitly authorized this activity to occur. However, as the nature of the County's financial activities become more complex, this is likely an appropriate time for the Board to consider authorizing staff to undertake this activity or keep practices the same. Since these types of transactions can only be temporary under GASB, a governing board can delegate it to the staff level, whereas a permanent transfer of assets cannot be delegated and must reside with the Board.

The County now has in its chart of accounts 31 distinct funds, of which about half have cash balances below \$30,000 (most of these are the individual special revenue funds established for fire service districts), so revenue risks could be quite severe.

Mr. Griffin reported the draft resolution before the Board for consideration establishes a written policy for this kind of activity. Specifically, it names which funds can make loans to other funds, authorizes the Finance Director to make the transactions, and requires the Finance Director to report annually on these transactions. Should the Board prefer the resolution to be changed from its current form, Mr. Griffin recommended rejecting it as presented and for the Board to give staff direction on preferred changes. Given the technical nature of the language, Mr. Griffin advised against approving an amended resolution during this meeting. This concluded the formal presentation of the agenda item. Chairman Hawkins opened the floor for comments, questions, and possible action.

Commissioner Lemel noted the resolution only references the Solid Waste Fund and the General Fund. Mr. Griffin stated the Board must specify which funds can make loans to other funds. Any fund can receive a loan, but the Board must specify which ones can make a loan. He said the Solid Waste Fund

and General Fund are the only ones that have significant cash in which to make a loan. He reminded Commissioners that any loan made from one fund to another would be done on a temporary basis and is typically done as an overnight transaction. Otherwise, the transaction is classified as a transfer and would require Board approval.

Commissioner Lemel asked if there needed to be a cash limit assigned to these temporary transactions. Mr. Griffin said the Board could impose a limit if they preferred. His research into other counties' policies found they did not have limits, but it is within the Board's legal authority to do so.

Commissioner Guice was concerned about using funds from the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund to bridge gaps in funding since the fund itself is currently unsustainable in that the expenses outweigh revenues received. Mr. Griffin responded that there is a deficit between the revenues and expenses for the Solid Waste operations in that the fees do not pay for the expenses. He reiterated that a loan from this fund would be only a temporary transaction. It is normally done for the purposes of an audit, for example, when auditors check for compliance with certain statutes.

Chairman Hawkins pointed out this transaction is comparable to in the business world to a line of credit. Mr. Griffin agreed.

To clarify, Commissioner Lemel asked if this request is specific to the end of the fiscal year so that the County's books do not show any negative balances in funds. Mr. Griffin stated that is the primary purpose for these types of policies. It is useful to bridge temporary cash flow issues that can occur within different activities. Every fund must have a cash balance which is a requirement under NC General Statutes and the NC Budget and Fiscal Control Act.

Commissioner Chappell asked for an explanation of Mr. Griffin's use of the word temporary. Mr. Griffin stated that temporary would be considered one day. He pointed out that throughout the year, cash balances and various funds fluctuate, but the only time it ever matters is on June 30.

As a comfort measure to him, Commissioner Chappell preferred that the word temporary be defined in the resolution. He also preferred quarterly reporting as opposed to annually. Mr. Griffin said the only reason he chose annually as the reporting requirement was because he was working off model ordinances and resolutions from other local governments and the fact that these types of transactions happen only once a year. However, he said this report could easily be wrapped into the quarterly report on budget amendments.

Commissioner Guice was uncertain about the need for this policy because he felt current practices were working well. He requested more time to understand the issue before taking any action.

Mr. Griffin pointed out this is a minor bookkeeping element that only the Board can authorize. He was confident there would be no short- or long-term impact from this type of policy. With that said, the Board may continue current practices if they prefer although it is standard and routine practice in local governments across North Carolina.

Chairman Hawkins suggested, despite the technical nature of the request, but because some Commissioners have expressed concerns, tabling this item to give Board members ample time to understand it. Staff can bring it back for consideration at a future meeting. Commissioners were agreeable to tabling the item at this time.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- Adult Fitness Course is moving forward with installation and is scheduled to be completed toward the end of August; Phase 3 of the Governor’s Executive Order reopened playgrounds for use. Stormwater improvements were made to the site prior to installation of the equipment. Staff is also working with the City of Brevard to address the drainage from the ditch that is next to their dog park.
- Staff has submitted for COVID-19 FEMA reimbursement totaling approximately \$177,000. We hope to see that reimbursement process through soon. Staff is being coached by the NC Pandemic Recovery Office on using the FEMA reimbursement to help leverage more funding into North Carolina.
- Congratulations to Solid Waste for being selected to receive the Local Government Federal Credit Union 2020 Excellence in Innovation Award for the Fungi Demonstration Project. This project has led to enhancements at the Solid Waste facility to prevent erosion and is an excellent example of how innovation can happen in local government. An online awards ceremony will be part of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Virtual Conference in August and includes a cash award to the department of \$1,000. A recent site inspection report showed no issues. The County is very proud with how this department is operating.
- NCACC is calling for submissions for legislative goals. Commissioners should be thinking about goals for a September agenda discussion.
- French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) has been working with local governments and community stakeholders to develop a plan for a regional trail network – the Hellbender Regional Trail
 - Draft plan available on MPO website at <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/multimodal/>
 - Comment period open through August 21
 - Details shared with Commissioners in their agenda packets
 - FBRMPO has indicated that they are interested in possible partnerships for fundraising and advocacy for this multi-county plan
 - Transylvania County is not part of the MPO. The County is a member of the Rural Planning Organization. The MPO’s work is separate, but Transylvania County is included in the bike plan discussions and input

Commissioner Guice reminded Commissioners that one of last year’s legislative goals centered on broadband. He inquired about the status of this statewide goal and expressed concern that the State appears to lag in this regard. He felt the County should engage its leaders at the State level especially if virtual learning in the public-school system is going to be part of the future of education. He inquired about the availability of CARES Act funds to help families and communities in need of broadband service. Without true reliable broadband service, counties will be left behind and the work the Transylvania Get Set collaborative has done to improve the lives of young children will be for naught.

The Manager stated there has been some movement at the State level through a grant program that started last year. The first round of grants was targeted toward Tier 1 counties. The Legislature allocated \$30,000 million this year for Tier 2 counties. The CARES Act included additional funding and there is an expectation that Tier 2 counties could see some of those funds. She pointed out that State law prohibits local governments from being providers and building infrastructure. Counties would have to partner with local providers to leverage those funds to help expand access. The Manager pointed out there is a current project in partnership with local providers to improve wi-fi access at the Balsam Grove Community Center. Today she learned there is discussion at the State Legislature about allowing local governments to build infrastructure and lease back to providers. It is a complicated issue and the balance between this being a private business venture versus infrastructure for public purpose is part of the tension in that discussions at the State level.

Commissioner Lemel pointed out this is complex issue, particularly in the mountains due to the terrain. She supported the diligence in ensuring our community centers serve as active nodes. She agreed that if remote and virtual learning are going to be part of our future, the County needs to be more aggressive in resolving this issue.

Commissioner Guice shared that his role on the Board of Health has revealed to the various challenges people face throughout our community.

Commissioner Lemel stated the importance of serving people and meeting them where they are so they can receive the services they need to elevate themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chappell shared that he has been asked by some citizens if it was possible for the public to receive current data related to active COVID-19 cases. While the State database provides a wealth of demographic information, the data is related to the entire pandemic period. Citizens want to know how many current active cases there are to give them some perspective on the present situation.

Commissioner Lemel added she has pointed in her questions when asking for certain data and she was also interested in knowing the number of current active cases and hospitalizations. This data would be helpful in determining the severity of the pandemic in a community.

Commissioner Guice agreed, stating that current information would assist the public in being more prepared. He reported that the Board of Education has voted to open schools under Plan B which will lead to many questions from families with children in the school system. So, additional data would be helpful to leaders in community to be able to communicate intelligently about the issues to the public.

Commissioner Lemel was concerned about reaching those who are underserved.

Commissioner Guice added there is also the added challenge of dealing with miscommunication in the public, especially as it related to the upcoming election. He felt it was critical that all barriers to voting are eliminated.

The Manager reported that the County's COVID-19 team had a conversation about including active case data in their reporting. She noted that one of the key challenges is being part of a statewide system where all the data is collected at the State level and then disbursed locally. Some counties have begun to define the data for themselves which makes it difficult when trying to make county-to-county comparisons. The Manager pointed out it is sometimes difficult to obtain some data by the Health Department when a positive case is either uncooperative or the contact information is incorrect.

Commissioner Chappell suggested a method of reporting the case numbers week-to-week because citizens are concerned, and they want to know what is going on currently. The Manager agreed to share his suggestions with the Public Health Director and determine a way to move forward.

Commissioner Lemel urged and encouraged citizens to complete the census. She reported that Transylvania County was undercounted by 25% during the last census which cost Transylvania County

\$14 million in tax dollars that were not returned to our community. Transylvania County currently ranks 75th in the State in response.

Chairman Hawkins congratulated Sheriff David Mahoney on his upcoming appointment as President of the NC Sheriff's Association. It is a great honor, and he will be a great President for that association.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Guice moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.**

Mike Hawkins, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board