

**MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
November 23, 2020 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Monday, November 23, 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 were County Manager Jaime Laughter and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. County Attorney John Kubis participated remotely via Zoom meeting software.

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

There were approximately 20 people in the audience, including staff. To maintain social distancing and mass gathering requirements, the conference rooms in the Administration Building were used as overflow space.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mike Hawkins presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

WELCOME

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

PUBLIC HEARING

SECTION 5311 ADMINISTRATIVE, COMBINED CAPITAL PROGRAM AND SECTION 5310 OPERATING PROGRAM

Transportation Planner April Alm presented this item for the purpose of the public hearing. The application for the Section 5311 Administrative, Combined Capital Program and the Section 5310 Operating Program should be submitted to the North Carolina Department of Transportation no later than December 1, 2020.

FY 2022 5311 Administrative

The Section 5311 grant program is apportioned to individual 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. In North Carolina, the Section 5311 grant subsidizes the administrative costs of running a transportation system, allowing communities to focus their resources predominantly on operations. In this application, Transylvania County Transportation is requesting a total of \$162,232 which requires a 20% local match of \$32,447. These funds will cover salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for nonoperational employees, as well as administrative expenses.

FY 2022 Combined Capital Program

The Section 5311 grant program also provides funding to maintain the fleet of publicly supported transit vehicles and other capital needs. Transylvania County Transportation is requesting a total of \$37,355 in capital funding for two bike racks, a replacement camera system for all seven vans and propane conversion kits for two vans. This requires a 20% local match of \$7,471.

Ms. Alm provided additional details on the request for propane conversion kits. County Transportation has been reviewing alternative fuel solutions for efficiency and potential cost-savings. Propane reduces emissions without increasing costs. Other counties have converted to this fueling method, including Macon, Jackson, Haywood, and Buncombe in our region. Propane, on average, costs about 30% less than gasoline. For comparison purposes, Ms. Alm reported that over the last two weeks, gasoline prices in Brevard ranged from \$1.99 to \$2.09 per gallon while propane was priced at \$1.52 per gallon. Converting to propane also makes the County eligible for the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit up to \$0.37 per gallon. The propane conversion kits will not replace the gasoline system in the vans; they will be an addition. Ms. Alm reported that the department's gasoline usage over the last two years was just over 11,000 gallons per year. Alliance (formerly Blossman) will be fitting a filling station in Brevard at no cost to the County and it will be available to others for usage as well. This year's request is the start of the plan to install conversion kits on all seven vans.

FY 2022 5310 Operating Program

County Transportation was successful in being approved for 5310 grant funds in FY 2021. For FY 2022, the department intends to apply for the same amount of \$104,000 which requires a 50% local match of \$52,000. The department currently budgets \$52,000 for the purchase of rides through a local private operator. The 5310 grant helped restore out-of-county transportation to the elderly and disabled and enabled these individuals to travel from unincorporated areas within Transylvania County to incorporated areas of the County. A voucher costs \$5 to travel from an unincorporated area of the County to up to three destinations in incorporated areas. A \$20 voucher allows for single destination trips to Buncombe or Henderson Counties. For FY 2022, the County will also make the service available to program participants with van transportation.

Ms. Alm encouraged public comments on all transportation needs, as well as the pending grant applications. She reported there were two voluntary surveys available for the public to complete: Title VI Public Involvement and proposed FY 2022 program applications. She also provided program summaries for the public's purpose.

Prior to opening the public hearing, Chairman Hawkins called for comments and questions from Commissioners.

Commissioner Chappell commented that these funds provide some of the biggest returns on investment for Transylvania County. For a small local share, the program has a tremendous impact on our citizens.

Commissioner Lemel stated that the restoration of out-of-county services for the elderly and disabled is hugely critical and she commended Ms. Alm for all the work she has done. She concurred with Commissioner Chappell's comments and noted that with transportation being one of the County's highest needs, the ability to expand and do so more efficiently benefits our citizens greatly.

Chairman Hawkins declared the public hearing open at 6:15 p.m.

There were no comments from the public.

Chairman Hawkins declared the public hearing closed at 6:16 p.m.

The Board intends to act on this item under the New Business portion of the agenda.

SERVICE CHANGES IN TRANSPORTATION

This item was presented by both Interim Planning and Community Development Director Allen McNeill and County Transportation Planner April Alm for the purpose of the public hearing. Ms. Alm shared

information on service changes in the Transportation department. She first provided some background on how these changes came about.

Transylvania County Transportation currently provides demand response, i.e., door-to-door transportation services for residents of Transylvania County. The department also contracts with a local service provider to supplement County services by offering a discounted rate. Requests for transportation must be made prior to 10:00 a.m. at least one workday in advance. The service is in operation Monday through Friday. County Transportation has a fleet of seven vehicles, three of which are lift-equipped paratransit vans.

The French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan adopted in February 2018 includes a compilation of comments from stakeholder and public input sessions that were held in each of the five counties in the Land of Sky region.

For Transylvania County those recommendations were:

1. Expand and/or maintain services across multiple jurisdictions (Asheville to Black Mountain, Hendersonville to Fletcher, etc.)
2. Target transportation to and from jobs, interviews, applications for jobs and job skill training
3. Extend hours of service to cover nights, weekends, and holidays
4. Improve coordination and collaboration between transit agencies for greater efficiencies with cross-county trips
5. Develop new fixed route and deviated fixed route service

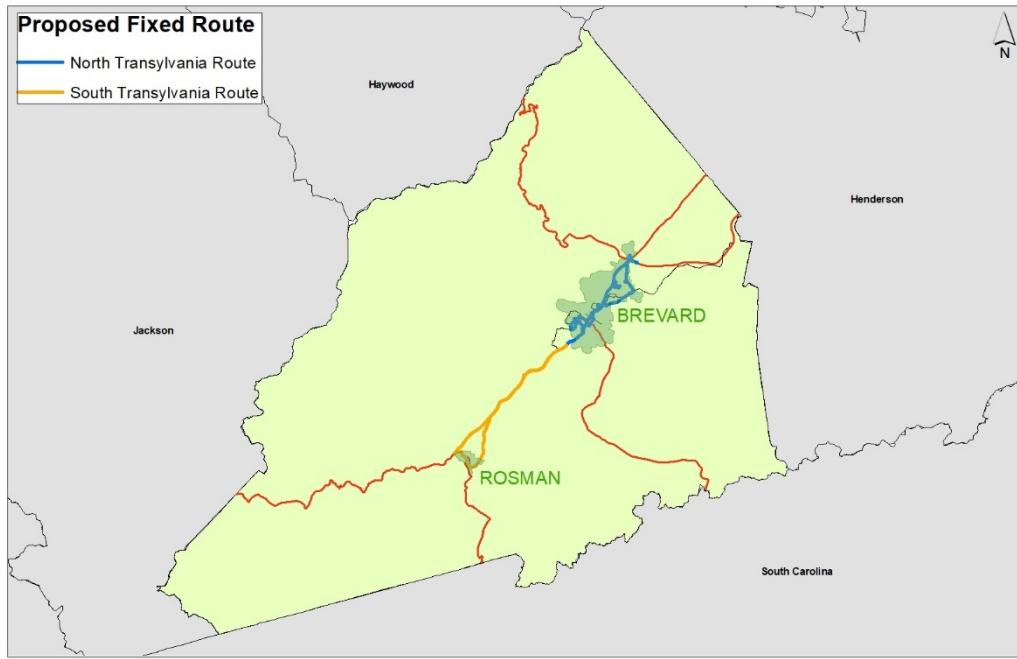
The need for fixed and deviated fixed routes were also identified in the Transylvania County Community Transportation Service Plan of 2011 and in the previous Transylvania County Comprehensive Transportation Plan of 2011.

The Planning and Community Development Department, along with County Transportation, has been working with the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the Land of Sky RPO to address service expansion by creating a fixed route service between Rosman and Pisgah Forest. Funding for implementation has been approved in the County budget for FY 2021.

A fixed route system is where vehicles run on regular, scheduled routes with fixed stops and no deviation. Typically, fixed route service is characterized by printed schedules or timetables and designated bus stops where passengers board and descend.

The new fixed route, with an expected implementation date of no later than January 4, 2021, will run beginning at 6:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. A Saturday service will be introduced later operating from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The South Transylvania Route through Rosman will begin at 6:30 a.m. and then the North Transylvania Route, going from Brevard to Pisgah Forest, will run on the hour except for going to Rosman at 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The cost to use the fixed route service will be \$1.00 per stop with the ability to purchase a book of 20 tickets for \$15 or an unlimited monthly pass for \$30. Riders will have purchase options through their driver or department staff.

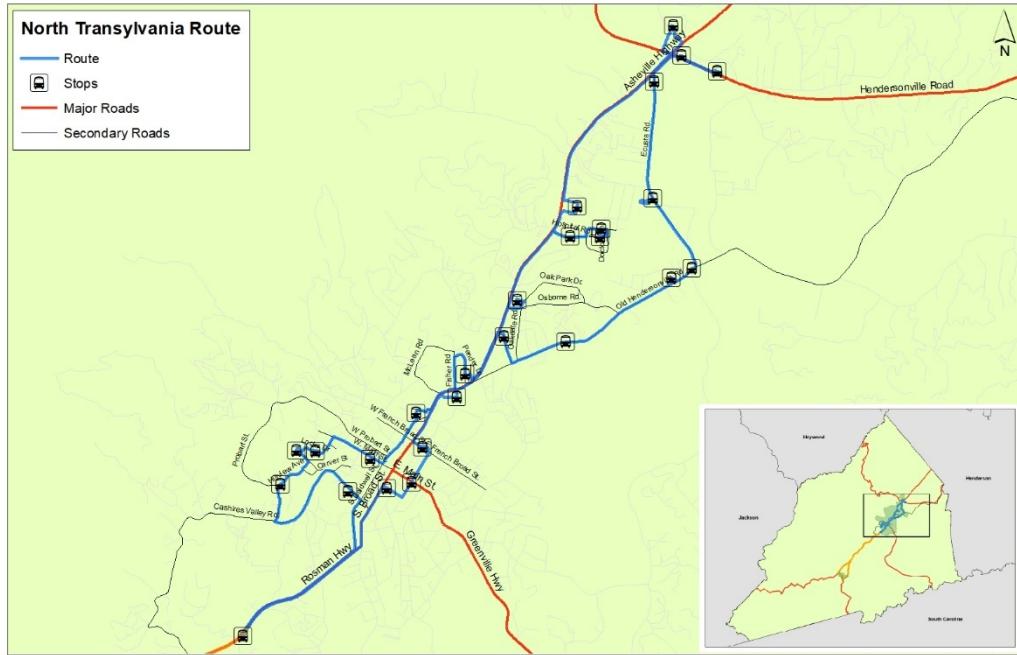
Mr. McNeill highlighted the mapping element of this project. He explained that the route will be broken into two sections: North Transylvania Route and South Transylvania Route. The South Transylvania Route will include the southern part of Brevard to Rosman and back, connecting to the North Transylvania Route which starts in Brevard to Pisgah Forest and back, routinely. Round trip is approximately 32 miles.



The North Transylvania Route, as shown below with the proposed locations, will run every hour on the hour except for 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to make a southern route to Rosman. Staff is working with NCDOT to solidify some of the bus stops. Some could change based on feedback from NCDOT concerning safety issues and efficiency. The North Transylvania Route will provide transportation from Sav-Mor Foods on Rosman Highway to the Bi-Lo Shopping Center on Asheville Highway. The loop is roughly 16 miles.



The South Transylvania Route, as shown below, will run three times per day. Round trip is approximately 16 miles. The route is subject to change based on feedback from NCDOT.



To give County Transportation a new look and feel and to help promote services with a marketing campaign, the Board of Commissioners provided some funding for rebranding services. County Transportation thus began working with a marketing company for assistance with a new name and logo. “*Transylvania in Motion (TIM)*” has been selected as the new name. Marketing materials will include a map of the new route with timetables on the County’s website, as well as other media resources for public outreach.

New Logo

Transylvania In Motion



TIM *Transylvania in Motion*



TIM
Transylvania in Motion

Prior to opening the public hearing, Chairman Hawkins called for comments and questions from Commissioners.

Commissioner Lemel was appreciative of NCDOT’s engagement. She asked if there had been input from employers regarding their employees who struggle with transportation issues and how that could affect

the route. She hopes the department will be flexible and adjust the hours and routes as needed to meet the needs of citizens. Mr. McNeill credited Ms. Alm for developing the stops. She collected data based on current ridership, as well as noted popular points and locations throughout the County to establish where the stops should be. He stated that fixed routes are often a very fluid service and are modified based on need. The route map could look different a year from now following implementation. He also reported that employment was a factor Ms. Alm considered when she worked to identify stop locations.

Commissioner Lemel asked if the department would be able to consider the purchase of larger vehicles for better capacity should the program grow. Mr. McNeill responded yes, and that Ms. Alm can discuss with the Board in the future the various funding alternatives.

Commissioner Lemel personally found this to be one of the most exciting things to happen during her eight years of service as a County Commissioner. She was excited to see Transylvania County grow as a community and for County government to provide this service for our citizens. She thanked staff for their work.

Chairman Hawkins asked about the department's COVID protocols. Ms. Alm stated currently the department is limiting the number of people on vans at one time, practicing social distancing as much as possible, and providing drivers with personal protective equipment. The seat directly behind the drivers has been blocked off to eliminate exposure. The vans are being sanitized twice daily.

Chairman Hawkins declared the public hearing open at 6:28 p.m.

There were no comments from the public.

Chairman Hawkins declared the public hearing closed at 6:29 p.m.

The Board intends to act on this item under the New Business portion of the agenda.

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 current chair of the Social Services Board. She thanked the Board for their continued support of the Department of Social Services (DSS), including appointing Commissioner Lemel as the County Commissioner designee to the Social Services Board, implementing the pay compensation study to help recruit and retain quality and competent employees, having the courage to consider a consolidated health and human services agency, and hiring an attorney to specifically represent DSS in court which has helped clear up the dockets, improve relationships with local attorneys and save money. Ms. West encouraged the Board to support the appointment of the recommended candidate to fill the DSS Attorney position. She also thanked the Board for utilizing an interim director model which has been a useful process. Ms. West thanked the Board for their support and especially Commissioners Hawkins and Lemel for their service and for being progressive, thoughtful, and forward-thinking in their support of social services in Transylvania County.

Clark Lovelace: Mr. Lovelace is Executive Director of the Brevard Transylvania Chamber of Commerce and Transylvania County Tourism. He informed that the Chamber Board endorsed the idea of the Ecusta Trail more than five years ago, citing the economic benefit it would bring to the business community as a primary factor. He stated that hike and bike paths, the Ecusta Trail specifically, has been named as one of the most important issues and initiatives in Transylvania County. Transylvania County Tourism also

endorsed the trail many years ago, recognizing its potential impact on tourism and the community. Earlier this year, Transylvania County Tourism provided \$100,000 to cover due diligence and other related costs to support the Ecusta Trail corridor property because they felt the trail would be a substantial economic driver for tourism representing an effort to grow our destination in the right way. The Transylvania County Tourism Board is excited that a deal has been reached and they look forward to the acquisition occurring soon. Mr. Lovelace shared that Transylvania County Tourism intends to dedicate additional dollars to the effort in the future to help build the trail. He thanked the Friends of the Ecusta Trail, Conserving Carolina, Senator Edwards and Representative McGrady for attending this meeting. Mr. Lovelace also thanked County Commissioners for taking the time to listen to issues like this and for allowing the presentation at tonight's meeting. Mr. Lovelace congratulated and welcomed the newly elected Commissioners who will continue to serve or begin serving in the very near future. He thanked Commissioner Lemel for all she has given to this Board and this community and Commissioner Hawkins for all that he has done for the community and including his time on the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority. He expressed that he looks forward to working with the new Board of Commissioners as we move forward in these exciting times.

Larry Chapman: Mr. Chapman stated he was speaking on behalf of several citizens who have contacted him since the announcement about the Ecusta Trail. He drafted a list of questions from those citizens and asked for them to be on record and potentially answered during the Ecusta Trail presentation this evening. He emphasized that adjacent property owners and others share many concerns and they do not feel their questions have been answered at this time.

1. Based on the pending purchase of the Watco Rail Line, what will be the relationship between the adjacent property owners and the new owners of the line? Will all the property be owned and maintained by the new owners?
2. Currently the line is being purchased with donations and grants and supplemented with matching funds from Henderson County taxpayers. Does this cover the cost of the entire line or just the Henderson County part? If not fully covered, what will be the projected, if any, cost to Transylvania County taxpayers for our County's part of the purchase?
3. What are the projected costs and timeline to complete the Ecusta Trail?
4. Are there any projected ongoing costs to taxpayers to maintain the trail other than providing normal services like EMS and law enforcement as needed?
5. What provisions will be made to ensure the security of the adjacent property owners along the trail?
6. Who is legally responsible for any situation that could result in an incident or accident that might occur on the trail that could result in a lawsuit?

Lucia Gerdes: Ms. Gerdes is the vice-chair of the Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan Committee. She wanted to dispel some of the false information in the community that this plan is about placing zoning restrictions on private property. She stated the small area plan will outline how the residents of Cedar Mountain would like to see local resources applied and allocated. The committee has been discussing the need for parks and recreation, economic development, bike lanes, countywide transportation services, and historical preservation opportunities. The small area plan would also memorialize the history of Cedar Mountain and the uniqueness of its natural resources. Ms. Gerdes stated that engaging communities directly and getting input on the need for local resources can help County officials be more fiscally responsible and create a better place to live and invest. She emphasized the Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan is not an effort to institute zoning, but to address lighting, signage, setbacks, and aesthetics of future commercial buildings. Ms. Gerdes argued that restrictions do not prohibit economic growth; they lay out aesthetic expectations that citizens desire for their community. She hopes the Board of Commissioners will continue the planning process throughout the County, act on recommendations from the Planning

board and value the work citizens have done to provide their time and input into planning the future of their communities.

Richard Mayberry: Mr. Mayberry spoke in support of the Ecusta Trail. He is member of Pisgah Hikers and the Blue Ridge Bicycle Club. He felt the construction of the trail would be a great economic boost for the community and enrich the quality of life for citizens and users of the trail. He noted that people were skeptical about the Swamp Rabbit Trail until it was built and people starting using it. They now see the benefits of the trail. Mr. Mayberry encouraged the Board to find a way to support it.

Chairman Hawkins acknowledged receipt of several comments about the Ecusta Trail that were emailed to the Board and Clerk prior to this meeting. Because the 15-minute time limit has been reached on the Public Comment period, he offered to share the comments during the second Public Comment portion of the meeting.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications from staff.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Guice, 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:

MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners held a Solid Waste Workshop on Wednesday, September 2, 2020. The Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, September 14, 2020 and following met in closed session in which the minutes were sealed. The minutes were approved 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 October 2020, tax dollars released totaled \$3,453.36 and refunds amounted to \$46,346.98. The Board approved the Discovery, Release and Monthly Settlement Report for October 2020 as submitted.

REQUEST TO CLOSE TAX ADMINISTRATION OFFICE ON DECEMBER 2ND FOR EMPLOYEE TRAINING

The Tax Administration office requested to close for a full day on December 2, 2020 for reappraisal and customer service training. Several new staff have been hired since the 2016 reappraisal. This time would be used to train all staff in assisting taxpayers with basic reappraisal value questions, understanding expectations in the coming months, and customer service training. The Board of Commissioners approved request and instructed staff to provide public notice.

TRANSYLVANIA RESIDENTIAL ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAMS

Transylvania County has prepared an application for the CDBG-CV funding through the NC Department of Commerce. While new applications are not being accepted at this time, there is potential for further funding through the CARES Act that will allow additional projects to move forward. This is the last component needed for adoption. The Board approved the Transylvania Residential Antidisplacement and Relocation Assistance Plan for CDBG Programs as submitted.

GASB 84 – FIDUCIARY ACTIVITIES

The NC Local Government Commission (LGC) issued memorandum 2020-4 and instructed local governments to implement Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) by the end of FY 2021. The purpose of the LGC's requirements is to standardize the presentation of certain financial activities to the same across all types of local governments in North Carolina consistent with the new rules. These financial activities are already a part of the County's day-to-day fiscal operations, but how they are reported and presented have changed.

Staff recommended the following:

- Amend the General Fund budget to account for certain financial activity in the Building Inspections and Enforcement Department
- Establish three special revenue funds per the LGC memorandum 2020-4
- Authorize staff to release certain funds to the Sheriff of Transylvania County

The Board approved the requests as recommended by staff.

REQUEST TO CLOSE COUNTY OFFICES FOR ANNUAL EMPLOYEE LUNCHEON

The Annual Employee Luncheon will be on Friday, December 18. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on group gathering limits, staff will facilitate a virtual event. Staff requested that Solid Waste convenience center sites be closed from 11:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m. and remaining County offices be closed from 12:00 noon-5:00 p.m. so that employees may attend the virtual event after closing to the public. Commissioners approved the request and instructed staff to provide public notice.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

ECUSTA TRAIL

The Manager introduced the following people who were in attendance to provide an update on the Ecusta Trail:

- Senator Chuck Edwards
- Former Representative and NCDOT Board Member Chuck McGrady
- Chris Burns, Friends of the Ecusta Trail

Chuck McGrady announced that Watco and Conserving Carolina have reached an agreement for the sale of railroad line between Hendersonville and Brevard pursuant to federal railbanking laws. Conserving Carolina is completing the title work and Watco will soon begin the process to have the rail corridor railbanked. The NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) granted federal funding for the acquisition of the line by Conserving Carolina. Funding will be available in the last quarter of federal FY 2021 (September). The Henderson County Board of Commissioners approved a bridge loan for the acquisition. Henderson County committed dollars for the purpose of drawing down State monies, and then the State will seek reimbursement from the federal government. In terms of timing, Conserving Carolina should have the title work complete later this year or early next year. The railbanking must then be approved by

the Transportation Board. Upon approval, Conserving Carolina will use the bridge loan and other monies to purchase the line in May or June 2021. When the transition is complete, the line will be owned by Conserving Carolina. Then the local governments will negotiate an interlocal agreement to build out and maintain the trail. Mr. McGrady was a strong supporter of the trail. He was confident the trail will provide an economic benefit to both counties. He encouraged the Board to visit the Virginia Creeper Trail and the Swamp Rabbit Trail to understand the economic boost those trails have provided to the communities in which they are located.

Chris Burns is a founding member of the Friends of the Ecusta Trail which was created 12 years ago. The Friends of the Ecusta Trail Board is ecstatic about the recent news regarding the purchase of the line and that Henderson County has applied for grant funding to help with constructing the trail. He hopes that Transylvania County will agree that finishing the entire 19-mile trail that connects both counties is a tremendous asset for the entire region and one that will attract businesses and visitors. Mr. Burns acknowledged there are local nuances that will need to be worked through and the fact that Henderson County has access to both financial and human resources that Transylvania County does not have. He assured Commissioners that both Conserving Carolina and Friends of the Ecusta Trail want to partner with Transylvania County to address the nuances and lack of resources to lessen the burden on taxpayers through grant funds and fundraising. The organizations have promised the same to Henderson County. Mr. Burns shared they also want to be an information resource for property owners because there remains a lot of questions and anxiety about the anticipated changes to this property. The Friends of the Ecusta Trail has been compiling a list of questions and answers based on facts, along with the sources to the answers provided. They sent a letter last week to every property owner along the trail to inform them of the impending purchase and the resources available to them to seek answers to their questions and concerns. Mr. Burns stated the Friends will continue to be in communication with the County and property owners as the project progresses.

Senator Chuck Edwards spoke to the Board playing multiple roles. He currently owns both commercial and residential property in Transylvania County and he is a business owner. As State Senator, he sits on the NC Travel and Tourism Board. His interest in this project started many years ago when he chaired the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce which supported the project as a railbanking venture. Following his term on the Board of Directors, he became involved with the Friends of the Ecusta Trail. He retired from that position when he was elected to the NC Senate. His current interest is purely economic in nature. He stated the businesses looking to relocate to an area consider quality of life very highly. Not only would the trail provide a healthy living choice, but it would also create synergy in the region. He shared that he had seen firsthand how these types of projects are an attraction and create a point of destination. As Senator, he felt it was his duty to represent those organizations and local governments that are in favor of this project. He reminded the Board there are options available to the County for funding the project, so he did not want Transylvania County to miss out on the potential synergy due to such obstacles. Senator Edwards appealed to the Board to make the necessary investments in this project for the overall economic impact to the County, as well as for the physical and mental health of our citizens and visitors. He encouraged the Board not to form an opinion until they visit at least two other trails and talk to the local leaders about the impact the trails have had on their communities. The Friends of the Ecusta Trail would be happy to facilitate a visit to other trails. Lastly, Senator Edwards pledged a grant donation of \$5,000 to the Friends of the Ecusta Trail to be used in Transylvania County for unmatched funds. He hopes the Board will feel as strongly about the project as he does.

Chairman Hawkins thanked the presenters for their information and called upon questions and comments from Commissioners. This is a summary in Q&A format:

- Q. Who will be on the deed once the transaction takes place? Is it the goal for Conserving Carolina to be the long-term property owner? Or will it be a combination?

- A. Conserving Carolina will be the railbanking entity and thus will own the entire corridor in both counties. It is anticipated that Henderson County, Hendersonville, and Laurel Park will have an agreement in place to lease the trail from Conserving Carolina. Under the rules of railbanking, Conserving Carolina is nothing more than a caretaker of this corridor. They cannot break it up, sell parts of it, or build permanent structures on it because the corridor must remain intact in case a rail provider wants to come through in the future. That is the primary purpose of railbanking.
- Q. Will property owners whose property crosses both sides of the rail line have access to their property?
- A. Conserving Carolina, as the railbanking entity, will enter into agreements with every single property owner, including NCDOT, Duke Energy, etc., and anyone else who has an access point or crossing. Conserving Carolina has no intention of cutting off those types of accesses. Conserving Carolina may have to have additional agreements ready because while laying the trail it might be a good opportunity to lay fiber or other infrastructure for economic development or citizen growth.
- Q. There is a certain industry along the line that is regulated by the Department of Homeland Security. Have there been discussions with that industry in Transylvania County about making provisions? The current route of the trail would be within 5 feet of their front door.
- A. Senator Edwards has personally met with this company. They assured him they would work with Conserving Carolina to provide an easement around their property to avoid the proximity to their business.
- Q. Is it fair to say there remains a significant amount of due diligence work that needs to be done around the structure for operating the trail, but there is the commitment among the municipalities and the two counties to begin this work, with the goal being to have one trail with common characteristics to the extent possible?
- A. Yes. There remains a lot to be done. The local governments from both counties need to come together and begin to figure out the logistics. Other than mile markers, there would be no difference between the two sides of the counties.
- Q. Does the build-out cost per mile vary per county?
- A. The cost will be different. The preliminary numbers range between \$1 million and \$1.25 million per mile based on the Alta planning study the Board commissioned in 2012. The study brings in a lot of amenities that may not be necessary from the start, so there are options for potential cost reduction.
- Q. The Friends of the Ecusta Trail has suggested that a large percentage of the cost could be handled through potential grant opportunities. Does the Friends intend to assist Transylvania County with a match for those grants with the goal of no taxpayer dollars going toward the construction of the trail?
- A. Correct, that remains the goal of the Friends of the Ecusta Trail.
- Q. Should the new Transylvania County Board of Commissioners want to explore this further, would the next step be for them to direct staff to engage the Friends of the Ecusta Trail and the staff in

Henderson County and municipalities within to explore financial possibilities and discuss the various components, such as engineering, operations, and supervision?

- A. Correct.
- Q. During public comment, there was a series of questions asked about the trail. Are any of those questions unanswerable?
- A. None are unanswerable, but the Friends does not have complete answers to all of them yet. However, they continue to work on getting the answers to each question that arises.
- Q. The Transylvania County Board of Commissioners often hears that our parks are overused. How does one regulate the use of the trail with different types of users (cyclists, families, walkers, etc.) competing for use of the trail at the same time?
- A. The Friends of the Ecusta Trail will use other trails as examples. For example, the Swamp Trail had to impose speed limits for bicycles. They have also started to widen the trail because 10 feet was not wide enough to accommodate the users. The Friends will work through these issues as the project progresses.

Chairman Hawkins also offered a contribution of \$5,000 from his restaurant, same as Senator Edwards and under the same conditions.

Mr. Burns shared the Friends of the Ecusta Trail has not yet started its capital campaign and he has already received commitments for well over \$100,000.

Commissioner Chappell asked for Larry Chapman's comments made during the Public Comment be shared with Mr. Burns.

Mr. Burns encouraged Commissioners and the public to reach out to the Friends of the Ecusta Trail with any questions. Those questions, along with the answers, will be posted to the website.

APPOINTMENTS

APPOINTMENT OF DSS SPECIAL COUNSEL

Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart presented this item. In September 2020, the Board of Commissioners approved a structural model for DSS Special Counsel and instructed staff to proceed with interviewing applicants. The Board appointed a selection committee comprised of County Commissioner Page Lemel, DSS Board chair Judith West, DSS Board member Jessica Shanor, County Manager Jaime Laughter, the DSS Interim Director Team of Kevin Marino and Angela Pittman, and Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart.

The selection committee held a series of electronic meetings where they were provided information about each applicant. Part of the interview process included the applicants' submitting written briefs on a scenario which were blindly reviewed by two regional DSS attorneys. Candidates then participated in an in-person interview with the selection committee, which included a series of questions and participation in a role-play exercise.

The selection committee recommended the appointment of Megan Silver Washel as DSS Special Counsel. She has a juris doctorate from Elon University School of Law and a bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University in communications. She worked in McDowell County as the DSS Agency

Attorney and has worked in private law firms where she represented clients involving cases of child custody, child support, and abuse, neglect, and dependency actions. If appointed, she can begin December 28.

Commissioner Lemel moved to appoint Megan Silver Washel as the new DSS Special Counsel, seconded by Commissioner Guice. Commissioner Chappell said all the comments about Ms. Washel have been glowing remarks and he believed the citizens of this County will be well served. Commissioner Lemel stated this is a tremendous opportunity and an incredible hire for DSS Counsel. Commissioner Guice was impressed with her resumé and her educational background. He believes she is an excellent fit for this position and will serve the County well. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING

Linda Fluck retired from her position at CarePartners and thus will come off the Transylvania County Council on Aging. Heather Quinn is a registered nurse at CarePartners, and she is willing to replace Ms. Fluck on this council. It is recommended that Ms. Quinn fill the position vacated by Ms. Fluck on the Transylvania County Council on Aging.

Commissioner Guice moved to appoint Heather Quinn to replace Linda Fluck on the Transylvania County Council on Aging, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

SECTION 5311 ADMINISTRATIVE, COMBINED CAPITAL PROGRAM AND SECTION 5310 OPERATING PROGRAM FOR FY 2022

Transportation Coordinator April Alm presented this item. She repeated the information provided during the public hearing that was held at the start of the meeting.

FY2022 5311 Administrative

The Section 5311 grant program is apportioned to individual 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. In North Carolina, the Section 5311 grant subsidizes the administrative costs of running a transportation system, allowing communities to focus their resources predominantly on operations.

For FY 2022, the five-year funding allocation formula that was created in FY 2018 will be used. In this application, Transylvania County Transportation is requesting a total of \$162,232 to support the administrative expenditures of its transit program. The application requires a local match of 20%, or \$32,447.

FY2022 Combined Capital Program

NCDOT also applies for funding to maintain the fleet of publicly supported transit vehicles and other capital needs. Transylvania County Transportation is requesting a total of \$37,355 in capital funding for two bike racks, a replacement camera system for all seven vans and propane conversion costs for two vans. The application requires a local match of 20%, or \$7,471.

FY2022 5310 Operating Program

Transylvania County was successful in the approval of 5310 funds for FY 2021. For FY 2022, Transylvania County Transportation intends to apply for the same amount of \$104,000 which requires 50% local match of \$52,000. The County currently budgets \$52,000 for the purchase of rides through a local private operator. The 5310 grant has helped to restore out-of-county transportation to the elderly

and disabled, as well as enabling these individuals to travel from unincorporated areas within Transylvania County to incorporated areas of the county.

The total funding request is \$303,587, with the local share being \$91,918.

Ms. Alm requested permission for Transylvania County Transportation to apply for the FY 2022 Public Transportation Program funding, enter into agreement with the NC Department of Transportation, and provide the necessary assurances and required local match.

Commissioner Chappell moved to grant permission for Transylvania County Transportation to apply for FY 2022 Public Transportation Program funding, enter into agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and provide the necessary assurances and the required local match, seconded by Commissioner Lemel. Commissioner Dalton shared he had a meeting with Blue Ridge Community College representatives recently and one of the issues discussed was how to provide transportation to students to receive educational opportunities, so he was appreciative of the effort to address this need. He also asked about the propane conversion kits and whether it would be beneficial to convert to natural gas. Ms. Alm reported that she conducted a cost analysis of a propane conversion versus a natural gas conversion. Converting one van to natural gas costs the same as converting two to propane. She also pointed the fueling station will be providing access to propane. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

SERVICE CHANGES TO TRANSPORTATION

The Manager thanked Ms. Alm for her leadership over the past two years to bring about service changes to County Transportation. The task was monumental and required lining up the funding and putting attention to detail. She shared that this is one of the biggest projects to come out of Planning and Community Development. She commended all the work that has gone into designing a fixed route transportation system for Transylvania County with little investment from this year's budget.

A public hearing is required prior to implementation. It was held at the start of the meeting and there was no input from the public. There were no further questions or comments on the fixed route transportation plan that was presented during the public hearing.

Commissioner Lemel moved to grant permission to staff to proceed with the implementation of proposed fixed route, seconded by Commissioner Chappell. Chairman Hawkins echoed the Manager's comments and shared that Commissioners are very appreciative of Ms. Alm's work. Commissioner Chappell emphasized how important this is to the community and believes that it will have a trickle-down effect in other areas in a positive way. He asked staff to be flexible and consider adjusting the route times and schedules based on the needs of the community. Commissioner Guice stated this is a great opportunity and creates a pathway for citizens to achieve success. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

PERSONNEL TO MEET INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR CITY OF BREVARD E-911 COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart presented this information. She reported that in October, the Board of Commissioners approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Brevard to assume responsibility for all 911 dispatch functions of the City and other related technology responsibilities. The approval involved adding telecommunication staff and a radio systems technician.

As a follow up, Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart requested the Board allocate the position of Emergency Services Systems Engineer into the County's Classification/Pay Plan as an exempt position at

salary grade 117 and to reallocate the Communications Manager to Communications Director at a salary grade 120. There are no additional costs required as they have already been allocated within budget.

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

QUARTERLY FINANCIAL UPDATE – FY 2021

Finance Director Jonathan Griffin presented a quarterly financial update for FY 2021.

Revenue

He reported that, generally, all revenue indicators are positive through the end of the fiscal year and have improved on their equivalent performance in 2020. There were some declines or low growth in some of the departments that primarily serve the public. Given the circumstances of the current pandemic, it makes sense that those departmental revenues are lower – Library, Transportation, and Parks and Recreation.

Some warning signs the Board should be aware of are a lower daily population at the Detention Center and limited court activity that has resulted in reduced revenues in the Sheriff's Office; however, the increase over last year is primarily attributable to School Resource Officer revenues from billings to educational institutions. Miscellaneous revenues are very low due to two main factors: investment returns are the lowest they have been in 10 years and there have been significantly fewer insurance settlements.

The primary revenue for county governments is property tax. A smaller share of revenue comes from the taxes levied on motor vehicles. Property tax on real and personal property provides the County with funds to operate.

The County records sales tax revenues based on the month of the underlying transaction, which means that the monies received from the Department of Revenue in July, August and September 2020 (the first three months of FY 2021) are recorded for the months of April, May and June 2020 (the last three months of FY 2020). In recording financial transactions related to tax levies, the fundamental rule is that the tax should be recorded as soon as the underlying transaction occurs or when it is collected, so it is normal and expected that from a strict accounting perspective the County has no revenue from sales taxes in the first quarter. Generally, the anticipated shortfalls in sales tax have not materialized. The broad concern, shared by many local government professionals and the State of North Carolina at the same time, was that there would be a decline across all types of taxable transactions but so far that does not appear to have happened.

The U.S. Census Bureau gathers some data on e-commerce sales, and reported that third quarter 2020 seasonally adjusted online retail transactions were up 37% over the same period in 2019. This is evidence of the theory that Transylvania County was shielded from a more serious revenue shortfall by its citizens significantly switching to online shopping which means those sales tax dollars come back to Transylvania County.

Expenditures by Function

Most functions are below their equivalent period or within trend. The biggest exceptions are remittances to those agencies the County shares revenue with – occupancy tax to the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority and excise tax on real estate transactions to the State. Expenditures by function highlight the County's two main spending outlays: education and public safety.

Expenditures by Type

The County's biggest investment is its employees. Personnel costs comprise the largest share of the County's expense on a day-to-day basis, followed by education. Prior to the Board's implementing the compensation study to bring employee salaries to market levels, education was the County's largest expense by type. The Board of Commissioners has demonstrated its investment in the County's employees.

Conclusion

The County had \$14.75 million in revenues in the General Fund and spent only \$14 million in the first quarter which is under budget.

Other Key Financial Indicators

- Solid Waste Fund revenues trending over expenses
- Fire District Special Revenue up over prior year due to tax increase; payments to volunteer fire departments up due to timing
- Self Insurance Fund paid health claims running 12% below quarter one of 2020

This concluded Mr. Griffin's formal presentation. Commissioners thanked Mr. Griffin for his presentation.

Chairman Hawkins recapped Mr. Griffin's presentation that revenues are above budget and expenditures are below budget.

Commissioner Chappell asked if the decrease in the paid health claims was due to many procedures being cancelled because of COVID-19 and therefore the County should expect a major increase in the coming months. The Manager shared that discussions with our healthcare administrator revealed the impact was felt during the early months of the pandemic. At this point, the decrease is not attributed to any procedure cancellations. She pointed out there were some cancer-associated cases that impacted the fund last year but those should not impact the fund this year now that those employees have undergone treatment.

Commissioner Guice emphasized how important it is to purchase items online so the County can capture the sales tax. He wondered if the County was capturing all the sales tax it should be. Mr. Griffin responded that the US Supreme Court ruled that states have the right to enforce their sales tax rules across state lines, so there are significant increases in revenue due to enforcement by the State government from these transactions. In addition, in terms of optimizing sales tax, the State of North Carolina collects the tax first and then makes the final call on how those funds are distributed back to counties, so advocacy with our State representatives is crucial.

Commissioner Lemel inquired about how the positive budget indicators might impact those items that were frozen, such as capital projects and the cost of living adjustment for employees. Mr. Griffin stated the frozen items would be possible to fund with the current available revenues. Consumer Price Index (CPI) is trending low as one might expect in a distressed economic situation.

Commissioner Lemel felt it would be reasonable for the Board to consider a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for employees considering they have been essential throughout this pandemic.

Commissioner Guice reminded Commissioners that they implemented the pay classification and compensation very recently and that they all felt strongly about continuing COLA; however, the Board was hesitant with including it in the FY 21 budget because they did know how the pandemic would impact revenues. He agreed that a majority of employees were designated as essential and critical during the pandemic and they have been working diligently. He also felt COLA should be addressed.

Commissioner Chappell agreed, but he felt it would be prudent to wait on giving a COLA because this is the Board's first major review of the budget. He felt it was necessary to wait until January to determine if there might be other impacts that could negatively impact revenues.

Chairman Hawkins also felt a COLA was important and it was clear that the circumstances that caused the Board to pause on the COLA have not materialized. He emphasized that employees are the County's biggest asset and it makes no sense to implement a pay study then immediately cease COLAs.

Commissioners were in consensus to address the COLA at a future meeting due to not having the financial data readily available and to allow the new Board to make the decision.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE GOALS

Every biennium the NCACC solicits input and proposals from counties concerning federal issues that impact NC counties. Counties have been asked to submit federal goals proposals by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 30. The NCACC Board of Directors will meet in December to review and approve a package of federal goals. The package of federal goals approved by the Board of Directors will go before the voting body at the Legislative Goals Conference in January for approval.

Below is the list of federal goals submitted for the previous biennium:

- Fair Market Rent Methodology
- Fully funding or increasing PILT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) funds
- Fully funding School Resource Officers in all schools and allowing flexibility for those counties that already fund these positions *or provide reimbursement to those counties that already fund these positions*
- General opposition to government shutdown legislation because it costs local governments
- Increase to funding for prevention programs through federal spending programs – *opioids and other drug* addiction, mental health, and through Medicaid - allowing communities to spend dollars on prevention programs rather than reactionary programs
- Support Stepping Up Initiative for Jail Diversion because it is a substantial savings for counties

Commissioners discussed and added the following list of goals in addition to the modified (*italicized*) list above:

- Prioritize broadband with funding and buildout levels commensurate with a public utility and recognize its importance to rural North Carolina and nationwide
- Fully fund any required mandates and stop passing costs down to local governments

Submit existing goals and two additional goals identified here tonight

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the bullet points with modifications and the two new goals added tonight, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Mike Hawkins and Vice-Chairwoman Page Lemel will end their service as County Commissioners following tonight's meeting and as two new Commissioners are sworn in on December 7. The Board of Commissioners wishes to recognize them for their service to the citizens of Transylvania County.

Commissioner Chappell read aloud a resolution honoring Chairman Hawkins for his service to the citizens to Transylvania County.

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve Resolution #36-2020 Honoring County Commissioner Mike Hawkins for Service to the Citizens of Transylvania County, seconded by Commissioner Guice. Commissioner Chappell felt it is very important to recognize elected officials because serving in elected office is a sacrifice of their own time away from their family and work life, and thus he was appreciative of his service. Commissioner Guice said it has been a privilege to serve alongside Chairman Hawkins over the past two years. He was appreciative of his friendship and his service. As a fairly new County Commissioner, Commissioner Dalton was appreciative of his patience and helping to educate him on the issues. Commissioner Lemel saw Chairman Hawkins as being patient and a deep thinker and she said she did not want to serve without him, so felt it very fitting they would be leaving this Board together. On behalf of the organization and all employees, the Manager thanked Chairman Hawkins for being one of our leaders. It takes a lot of gumption to file for public office and certainly to lead in public office. Commissioners make a lot of sacrifices on behalf of the people of Transylvania County. The Manager presented Chairman Hawkins with a plaque that read:

*Presented to Mike Hawkins
In dedication of his leadership and dedicated public service to the citizens of Transylvania County as a
Transylvania County Commissioner
2008-2020
Chair 2010-2015 & 2018-2020
Presented by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners
This the 23rd day of November, 2020*

On a personal note, the Manager stated that Chairman Hawkins served on the Board that hired her as County Manager and for that she was very thankful because it was the right decision for her and her family. She was thankful to have served with him. She felt he made a mark on this community and for that she was very appreciative. **The motion to approve the resolution was unanimous.**

**Resolution # 36-2020
Honoring County Commissioner Mike Hawkins for His Service to the Citizens of Transylvania
County**

WHEREAS, Mike Hawkins has served Transylvania County and its citizens for 12 years as a County Commissioner, including eight years as chair; and

WHEREAS, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners wishes to recognize Mike's service as a public official during his term as a County Commissioner; and

WHEREAS, Mike has served with distinction and his numerous accomplishments reflect his varied interests; and

WHEREAS, Mike supported protecting the rich history of this County by supporting the preservation of the County's historic structures, most notably through repairs to the Courthouse and restoration of the Silvermont Mansion, including signing onto the Silvermont Preservation Plan and Master Plan to extend its longevity and preserve the mansion for many generations; and facilitated an architectural and cultural survey of the African American communities in Transylvania County; and

WHEREAS, he supported an open and transparent government that led to the design of a new County website and livestreaming County Commission meetings online and through social media, and embraced his own social media platform to inform the public; and

WHEREAS, Mike promoted economic development efforts in the community by seeking designation as a Certified Entrepreneurial Community to make it possible for new and existing businesses to grow and survive; supported an economic development visioning process that led to the creation of the Transylvania Economic Alliance; signed onto the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative that connects employers and job seekers, and that markets Transylvania County as a good fit for potential employers; made investments to improve infrastructure, business incentives for job growth and capital investment, as well as embarked upon a significant partnership with various agencies to construct the Sylvan Valley Industrial Center to attract future employers and to retain an existing manufacturer, thereby allowing the County to reinvest in itself and future projects; and

WHEREAS, Mike has been an ardent supporter of youth and children in our community evidenced by the approved expenditures for the local school system that are better relative to our economic peers, our school system peers, and neighbors, in both capital and annual expenditures and appropriating operating expenses at the fourth highest rate per student in the State, as well as supporting the long-term capital improvements in the public school system through the issuance of a bond referendum; and

WHEREAS, he supported early childhood initiatives and the collaboration of agencies and nonprofits that serve children 0-5 and their families; and

WHEREAS, Mike embraced considerable investments in parks and recreation amenities - Connestee Falls Park, Rosman Community Park, Champion Park and Pool, Silvermont Mansion and Park, the Transylvania County Activity Center, the purchase of property on Gallimore Road formerly owned by Brevard College for a potential community park, accessible playground at Silvermont, Rosman youth summer camps, Jameson's Joy fitness park and pickleball courts; and adopted the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide future plans; and

WHEREAS, Mike oversaw a capital program that led to new space for the Clerk of Court, District Attorney, Public Defender, and other court operations; Register of Deeds, Tax Administration, Administration, and Elections, thereby prolonging the life of the Transylvania County Courthouse and renewing life in vacant County-owned buildings; made major improvements in County-owned buildings and properties; and funded and constructed a state-of-the-art animal shelter while lessening the impact on the public through the use of donated funds; and

WHEREAS, Mike exhibited fiscal leadership as a County Commissioner through the development of a strategic plan as a tool for guiding the organization to achieve comprehensive priorities and objectives and performance-based budgeting with outcome measures; and made purposeful investments in long-term planning for economic development, capital improvements, and parks and recreation; and

WHEREAS, Mike showed unwavering support for County employees through the implementation of a compensation plan that is fair to the market, attracts and retains qualified employees, and supports professional growth and development; invested in an Employee Wellness Clinic to reduce overall healthcare costs to the County and to improve the health and wellness of employees; and improved efficiencies in departments through new software implementation and upgrades in technology; and

WHEREAS, Mike endorsed efforts to protect our natural resources by approving annual allocations to remove log jams in the French Broad River to prevent streambank erosion and protect the public recreating and traveling on our waterways; strengthening the Farmland Protection Ordinance; and creation of the Hemlock Restoration Program; and

WHEREAS, Mike spearheaded Transylvania County's 150th Anniversary Steering Committee that planned a successful year-long celebration that will be remembered for years to come and whose logo,

“Weaving a Tapestry of Community” highlighted elements that will help our community continue to be great; and

WHEREAS, Mike has been a strong advocate for Transylvania County at the State and federal level to support counties and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, as a Commissioner, Mike represented the Board of Commissioners by serving on various boards and committees, including the Brevard/Transylvania Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Land-of-Sky Regional Council Board member and chair, Land-of-Sky Rural Planning Organization, French Broad Water Resources Study Committee, Gorges State Park Advisory Committee, and Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority; and at the State level he served on the Executive Boards of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina and the North Carolina Travel and Tourism Board, co-chaired the North Carolina Small Business Task Force, and served on the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, Mike was recognized for achieving Practitioner level in education as an elected official through the Local Elected Leaders Academy, a partnership of advanced learning for county and municipal elected officials housed at the UNC-School of Government in response to the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners’ strategic goal to strengthen county leadership and board development; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, Mike was honored as the recipient of the Duke Energy Citizenship Award which recognizes the efforts of a person who demonstrates outstanding volunteerism and community service; in 2018 he received the Robert G. Parrish Award from the Land of Sky Regional Council for making significant contributions as an elected official to improve intergovernmental cooperation within the region; and in 2019, he was honored with the NC Rural Advocate of the Year Award; and

WHEREAS, Mike’s kindness, thoughtfulness, and genuine concern for others make him a friend to everyone and he will be remembered for his desire to promote equality and diversity;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners to commend Mike Hawkins for his years of service to Transylvania County and to recognize his loyalty and excellence of performance; and to extend to him best wishes for many years of good health and happiness in his future endeavors.

This the 23rd day of November, 2020.

S://Page Ives Lemel, Vice-Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

Chairman Hawkins read aloud a resolution honoring Commissioner Lemel for her service to the citizens to Transylvania County.

Chairman Hawkins moved to approve Resolution #37-2020 Honoring County Commissioner Page Lemel for Her Service to the Citizens of Transylvania County, seconded by Commissioner Guice. Commissioner Guice stated that Commissioner Lemel, besides being a dear friend, is a true leader. She inspires people to become more engaged and involved and to learn about the issues. She challenges others to be prepared and she is passionate about her work and finding solutions to problems. He knows she cares a lot about Transylvania County, a quality she likely inherited from her father. Commissioner Guice was confident there would be opportunities for her to advocate and continue to work on issues in Transylvania County and across the State. He felt the same was true for Chairman Hawkins.

Commissioner Dalton was appreciative of her generosity and for her efforts to educate him on the issues. Commissioner Chappell echoed the previous comments, and he respected her for her dedication to being educated on the issues. He described her as being a fierce leader and he was appreciative of the sacrifices she made to serve. Chairman Hawkins said there are many people who see things and wish they could do something about them but do not for many reasons, but that is not Commissioner Lemel. The Manager presented Commissioner Lemel with a plaque that read:

*Presented to Page Lemel
In dedication of her leadership and dedicated public service to the citizens of Transylvania County as a
Transylvania County Commissioner
2012-2020
Vice-Chair 2016-2017 & 2019-2020
Presented by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners
This the 23rd day of November, 2020*

The Manager thanked Commissioner Lemel for her leadership. She said the County would not nearly have the depth in the organization without quality leadership and that takes investment and sacrifice from our elected officials. On a personal note, she thanked Commissioner Lemel for pushing her individually and for making it very apparent that she cares about every child in the community and that it is possible to do something about it. She felt that Commissioner Lemel made a difference in the community and she was appreciative of her service. **The motion to approve the resolution was unanimous.**

**Resolution #37-2020
Honoring County Commissioner Page Ives Lemel for Her Service to the Citizens of Transylvania
County**

WHEREAS, Page Ives Lemel has served Transylvania County and its citizens for eight years as a County Commissioner, including three years as vice-chair; and

WHEREAS, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners wishes to recognize Page's service as a public official during her term as a County Commissioner; and

WHEREAS, Page has served with distinction and her numerous accomplishments reflect her varied interests; and

WHEREAS, Page supported protecting the rich history of this County by supporting the preservation of the County's historic structures, most notably through repairs to the Courthouse and restoration of the Silvermont Mansion, including signing onto the Silvermont Preservation Plan and Master Plan to extend its longevity and preserve the mansion for many generations; and facilitated an architectural and cultural survey of the African American communities in Transylvania County; and

WHEREAS, she supported an open and transparent government that led to the design of a new County website and livestreaming County Commission meetings online and through social media; and

WHEREAS, Page promoted economic development efforts through a visioning process that led to the creation of the Transylvania Economic Alliance; signed onto the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative that connects employers and job seekers, and that markets Transylvania County as a good fit for potential employers; made investments to improve infrastructure, business incentives for job growth and capital investment, as well as embarked upon a significant partnership with various agencies to construct the Sylvan Valley Industrial Center to attract future employers and to retain an existing manufacturer, thereby allowing the County to reinvest in itself and future projects; and

WHEREAS, Page has been an ardent supporter of youth and children in our community evidenced by the approved expenditures for the local school system that are better relative to our economic peers, our school system peers, and neighbors, in both capital and annual expenditures and appropriating operating expenses at the fourth highest rate per student in the State, as well supporting the long-term capital improvements in the public school system through the issuance of a bond referendum; and

WHEREAS, Page embraced considerable investments in parks and recreation amenities - Champion Park and Pool, Silvermont Mansion and Park, the Transylvania County Activity Center, the purchase of property on Gallimore Road formerly owned by Brevard College for a potential community park, accessible playground at Silvermont, Rosman youth summer camps, Jameson's Joy fitness park and pickleball courts; and adopted the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide future plans; and

WHEREAS, Page oversaw a capital program that led to new space for the Clerk of Court, District Attorney, Public Defender, and other court operations; Register of Deeds, Tax Administration, Administration, and Elections, thereby prolonging the life of the Transylvania County Courthouse and renewing life in vacant County-owned buildings; made major improvements in buildings and properties; and funded and constructed a state-of-the-art animal shelter while lessening the impact on the public through the use of donated funds; and

WHEREAS, Page exhibited fiscal leadership as a County Commissioner through the development of a strategic plan as a tool for guiding the organization to achieve comprehensive priorities and objectives and performance-based budgeting with outcome measures; and she made purposeful investments in long-term planning for economic development, capital improvements, and parks and recreation; and

WHEREAS, Page showed unwavering support for County employees through the implementation of a compensation plan that is fair to the market, attracts and retains qualified employees, and supports professional growth and development; invested in an Employee Wellness Clinic to reduce overall healthcare costs to the County and to improve the health and wellness of employees; and improved efficiencies in departments through new software implementation and upgrades in technology; and

WHEREAS, Page encouraged citizen participation in all facets of government, and she improved the process to recruit and attract citizens to serve on the County's many citizen advisory councils; and

WHEREAS, Page endorsed efforts to protect our natural resources by approving annual allocations to remove log jams in the French Broad River to prevent streambank erosion and protect the public recreating and traveling on our waterways; by strengthening the Farmland Protection Ordinance; and through the creation of the Hemlock Restoration Program; and

WHEREAS, as Commissioner, Page represented the Board of Commissioners by serving citizens on various boards and committees, including the Dupont State Recreational Forest Advisory Committee, Smart Start Board of Directors, Joint Parks and Recreation Strategic Planning Task Force, Extension Advisory Board, Social Services Board, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Health and Human Services Steering Committee Chair and Board of Directors, Legislative Voting Delegate to the Legislative Goals Conference, Social Services Working Group, Vaya Health LME/MCO County Commissioner Advisory Council, Early Childhood Initiative/GetSet Transylvania, Blue Ribbon Commission on Local Financing Options for Early Childhood Development, Senior Services Task Force, REACH Task Force, and Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Task Force, and several other local, State and national boards and groups; and

WHEREAS, Page was especially passionate about serving and lifting up those most vulnerable in our community; she spearheaded the Early Childhood Initiative/GetSet Transylvania utilizing the collective

impact model process that pulled together more than 22 entities including government agencies, nonprofits and local businesses to focus on improving early childhood; she was inspired to address the community concerns around a high rate of children not testing for kindergarten readiness and concerns for families about affordable, quality child care; her advocacy through the Institute of Emerging Issues led to GetSet being selected as a partner community for Sesame Street in Communities, the fourth in the nation, which was launched at HalloweenFest in 2018; and

WHEREAS, Page was very active in government at all levels; she has a passion for learning and for trying to solve community issues in a collaborative way to improve the quality of life for all our citizens; and

WHEREAS, Page has received several awards for her work, including the National Association of Counties Achievement Award for Best Childhood Program in the nation for the GetSet Transylvania Early Childhood Collective model, the Duke Energy Citizen and Service Award which recognizes the efforts of a person who demonstrates outstanding volunteerism and community service, and the Charles Duke Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service to Duke University; and

WHEREAS, Page has been a strong advocate for Transylvania County at the State and federal level to support counties and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, Page's kindness, thoughtfulness, genuine concern for others makes her a friend to everyone and she will be remembered for her determination and courage;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners to commend Page Ives Lemel for her years of service to Transylvania County and to recognize her loyalty and excellence of performance; and to extend to her best wishes for many years of good health and happiness in her future endeavors.

This the 23rd day of November, 2020.

Mike Hawkins, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- County Commissioners, Register of Deeds and Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors will be sworn in on Monday, December 7; the new Board of Commissioners will then convene and elect their officers for the ensuing year; the first regular meeting of the new Board will be on Monday, December 14
- Naming of Connector Road at old Ecusta property will need to be considered at a future meeting and submitted to NCDOT; options include:
 - Public survey?
 - Defer to advisory committee?
 - Board of Commissioners decision?
- Health Director Elaine Russell has been asked to be on the planning committee for the National Association of County and City Health Professionals National Conference – kudos!!
 - Transylvania County has continued to see infection rates in the bottom 10 percent due to the exemplary work in the Health Department
- Kudos to Comporium for applying to the GREAT grant call for projects even though the State has noticed no applications will be funded due to error by State and the fact that the County's

economic tier level could be changing; the factors that go into the deciding on the tier level do not favor our community

- Tier status could be changing – more on impacts to our County to come
- CDBG-CV grant update
 - Received notification that applications are no longer being accepted; however, with the GREAT grant call for projects, the County may see another open call for grant applications; the County is ready to submit an application
- Happy Thanksgiving! We are blessed as a community!

Commissioner Lemel pointed out that not only is the County's infection rate low per capita, there have only been nine deaths, the last of which occurred this last summer. She felt that was profound and speaks again to how the County has been able to mitigate this virus under Public Health Director Elaine Russell's leadership.

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.

Larry Chapman: Mr. Chapman thanked Commissioners Hawkins and Lemel for their service and for the friendship they forged while working together on the Board. He wished them the best and said he hopes they would keep the option open to running for public office again in the future. He said he will continue to seek their advice and leadership. He also congratulated Chairman Hawkins on becoming a new grandpa in the very near future.

Chairman Hawkins read some of the written comments that were submitted prior to this meeting and they are summarized below: (not all comments were read due to the length of the meeting and because they were similar to other comments)

Elaine Long: Ms. Long stated that the members of the Living Wage Coalition are thrilled to learn that the Board of Commissioners is supporting the introduction and development of fixed-route transportation in the County to provide reliable transportation for our residents. Lack of access to reliable transportation has been consistently reported to be the biggest need among low wage workers. Many low wage workers find it extremely difficult to provide their own reliable personal transportation due to the cost of vehicle ownership. Providing reliable public transportation that will enable people to commute to jobs will go a long way to improving the economic health of our county. She commended Commissioners for their foresight and leadership in providing this extremely important service.

Jim Fatland: Brevard City Manager Jim Fatland sent a letter of support for the Ecusta Trail. The City of Brevard was excited to learn that Conserving Carolina had acquired the right of way for the Ecusta Trail that will connect Henderson and Transylvania Counties and provide an amenity for all to enjoy. Mr. Fatland stated the City of Brevard looks forward to working with the County.

Staff will provide Commissioners with copies of the other emails that were sent via email.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Lemel shared that what she was most proud of during her tenure was hiring Jaime Laughter as the County Manager. She was very appreciative for the opportunity to work with her over the past six years. Commissioner Lemel stated that there is very little one must do to fulfill the requirements of being a County Commissioner, but the lessons she learned throughout her time have been

the opportunity the office provides. She logged almost 300 hours with the NC Association of County Commissioners and the UNC School of Government. There are no limits to what a County Commissioner can do when the position is used as a platform to impact the quality of life for citizens. She stated her goal when she first ran for office was to elevate the reputation of Transylvania County in the State and she felt that she and Chairman Hawkins have accomplished that. She very much appreciated the relationship she and Chairman Hawkins have forged over the years and how they balanced each other out. Commissioner Lemel shared that Transylvania County does not have to solve problems on its own. Other counties have faced similar challenges, so it is important to learn from others and seize upon opportunities to bring ideas back to Transylvania County. Commissioner Lemel stated she was proud of her tenacity because it drove her to pursue Jeanette Betancourt with Sesame Street because she knew Transylvania County would benefit from having their program here. She saw her time as a County Commissioner as a great experience, not as a sacrifice. It was a wonderful opportunity for her and her family. She said she looks forward to working with Chairman Hawkins to tackle future issues. She was confident that they had done an admirable job of elevating the State's perspective of Transylvania County.

Chairman Hawkins stated that the opportunity to serve as a County Commissioners has been the greatest personal and professional experience of his life. He was grateful to those who allowed him to serve. Part of what made the experience great was getting the opportunity to meet great people in both Commissioners and staff. He considered Commissioners to be his friends and he felt blessed to have worked with this Board and past Commissioners. He strongly believes that Transylvania County has the best staff in North Carolina, and he wished that citizens could know them and understand the work they do the way Commissioners see them. He worked with two County Managers during his tenure and he was appreciative of everything he learned from them. He was proud to be on the Board that hired Jaime Laughter as County Manager. She was given an incredibly difficult job to fill and she did it with grace, intelligence, savvy, accomplishment, and toughness. Chairman Hawkins felt she is the best Manager in the State. He shared a story to that he spoke with the Vision class recently in his role as Chair of the Board of Commissioners. The participants asked him to talk about his highest and lowest point as a County Commissioner. He stated his lowest point as a County Commissioner was early on in his tenure. Many years ago, the State Legislature seemed to focus on culture and social issues and in response many local governments expressed support through resolutions. At this meeting, there was a resolution on the agenda to support something the Legislature was doing, and several citizens showed up to speak in opposition to the resolution. He learned at the meeting that the resolution had already been sent to the Legislature in Raleigh without having been approved by the Board or before the public. He recalled that as a low moment for him as a County Commissioner. Soon after Commissioner Lemel was elected, they met with a gentleman with local government knowledge to seek his guidance on what they should be doing for Transylvania County. What the gentleman thought about Transylvania County was that we are not doing a good job and he was specific in his assessment, saying that Transylvania County is 20 years behind the rest of North Carolina in terms of doing the things that need to be done to give our citizens a chance to thrive in the 21st century – infrastructure, education, economic development, etc. The conversation was motivating but it was understood the decisions before the Board would become harder. So far, the past few years, he has been committed to making hard decisions in the best interest of the citizens and to help build a foundation to start catching up. Chairman Hawkins stated he looked forward to 2021 from the perspective of the Board of Commissioners because he felt 2021 has the chance to be a monumental year of achievement – Courthouse, Ecusta Trail, Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan – just to name a few. Lastly, he wanted to be remembered as someone who was not afraid to make hard decisions regardless of the consequences and that he and Commissioner Lemel worked hard to lay the foundation to start closing the 20-year gap with the rest of WNC. He closed by saying how much he loves the Board and staff and that he will miss his service on the Board.

Chairman Hawkins moved to enter in 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 terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange or lease, following a 5-minute recess, seconded by Commissioner Chappell 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 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 9:40 p.m. Present were Chairman Hawkins, Commissioners Chappell, Dalton, Guice and Lemel, County Manager Jaime Laughter, Assistant County Manager David McNeill, County Attorney John Kubis (participating via Zoom meeting software), and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

The Board received an update on the negotiation efforts for the potential purchase of property.

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

OPEN SESSION

Chairman Hawkins 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 Lemel and unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board