

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
March 14, 2022 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular session on Monday, March 14, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. in Commissioners' Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Larry Chapman, Chairman Jason Chappell, Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton, David Guice, and Teresa McCall. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. County Attorney Patrick Scott participated remotely via Zoom meeting software.

Media: Dan Dewitt – *Brevard Newsbeat*
Jonathan Rich – *The Transylvania Times*

There were approximately 30 people in the audience, including department heads and staff presenters.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

WELCOME

Chairman Chappell welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced the Commissioners and staff in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The comments made by the public represent the individual speaker's opinion or point of view. The Clerk to the Board did not attempt to vet their statements for accuracy or modify them based on facts.

Janet O'Brien: Ms. O'Brien shared with the Commissioners her concerns about a dog that is continuously going back and forth between the animal shelter and its owner. Her encounters with the dog have revealed lacerations and other injuries. She stated that animal services informed her there was no limit on the number of times an animal can be returned to its owner and that the law allows a person to neglect or abuse an animal because it is their property until a felony occurs. Ms. O'Brien was concerned about the lack of accountability on the part of the animal owner and that the shelter staff has no right to intervene. She was also concerned about the animal shelter staff's risk of fatigue and burnout from having to deal with these issues. She pleaded with the Board of Commissioners to reexamine and improve the County's animal control ordinances to allow officers to hold animal owners more accountable.

Jamie Reese: Ms. Reese stated there seems to be a culture in Transylvania County Schools of mismanaging students with disabilities and poor communication with and bullying parents. She stated that the School System refuses to allow a student with certain diagnoses and behavioral challenges the right to a free and public education in the least restrictive setting by transferring those students to the alternative school. Ms. Reese referred to a recent article in the local newspaper that cited the School System's graduation rate as 94%, however, the NC Department of Public Instruction in 2021 disagreed and rated the graduation rate at Brevard and Rosman High Schools at 84%, while the State average is 87%, and Davidson River School at 44%. Ms. Reese also noted that the Board of Education voted to use extra funds to make repairs at Pisgah Forest Elementary which could have been prevented with proper

maintenance. She questioned the need to demolish Rosman Middle School and asked if the County Commissioners had seen the School System's facilities maintenance plan. She informed the Board that the number of families homeschooling their children is on the rise, as is the number of student suicides. She was equally concerned with the increase in school personnel resignations. Ms. Reese asked the Board of Commissioners to consider the needs of the community before moving forward with the bond projects or agreeing to provide matching funds for grants because she did not have faith that the Board of Education could act independently of the superintendent or in the best interest of their constituents.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

The Manager requested to remove the closed session item from the agenda.

Commissioner McCall moved to approve the revised agenda, seconded by Commissioners Dalton and Guice simultaneously and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Guice moved to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously approved.

The following items were approved:

CONVEYANCE OF PROPERTY TO TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

In 2010, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners and Transylvania County Board of Education entered into an interlocal agreement to govern the construction of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) wing of the Rosman High campus. This project was financed by a qualified school construction bond which is a type of debt instrument created by federal law where the lender receives an additional tax credit to make the borrower's interest rate nominally zero.

As a limited obligation bond, the terms of the agreement required the County to pledge the building as security/collateral to the agreement. This required Transylvania County Schools to deed 0.387 acres of that lot to the County government, and the County government in turn leased the land and building back to the Board of Education.

In February, the County received confirmation that the loan was paid off and all liens against the property had been removed. The County must now return the property to the Board of Education. NC General Statute § 160A-274 allows the County, by resolution, to convey real property to other units of government. The Board adopted the resolution conveying real property to Transylvania County Schools as described below.

RESOLUTION # 07 - 2022 CONVEYANCE OF REAL PROPERTY

WHEREAS, the County of Transylvania owns 0.378 acres of real property in the Town of Rosman, and

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 160A-274 authorizes a governmental unit in this state to exchange with, lease to, lease from, sell to, or purchase from any other governmental unit any interest in real or personal property upon such terms and conditions as the governmental unit deems wise, with or without consideration; and

WHEREAS, the County of Transylvania has determined that it is in the best interest of the county to

convey the .378 acres (parcel identification number 8552-89-0466) to the Transylvania County Board of Education and deems it wise to do so for no consideration.

THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF TRANSYLVANIA RESOLVES THAT:

1. The County of Transylvania hereby conveys to Transylvania County Board of Education, a body politic, the following property: all of that parcel, containing 0.378 acres, more or less, as shown on a plat recorded in Plat File 14, at Slide 44, Transylvania County Register of Deeds, reference to which plat is hereby made for a more particular description of said property.

2. The property herein described shall be conveyed for no consideration.

3. The Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners is authorized to execute all documents necessary to convey the property in the manner authorized by this Resolution.

Adopted this the 13th day of March 2022.

S://Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

VAYA HEALTH FISCAL MONITORING REPORT

Per N.C.G.S. § 122C-117 (c), the quarterly fiscal monitoring reports for the Local management entities must be presented to the Board of Commissioners. This report covered the second quarter through December 31, 2021.

Vaya Health reported their current actual revenues as \$256,542,838 (106.65% of annualized budget) and their current actual expenditures as \$251,289,717 (104.46% of annualized budget) equating to a current net income from operations of \$2,572,783.

Vaya Health reported the following fund balances:

- \$58,232,008 restricted for risk reserve
- \$15,421,452 restricted for statute, prepaids and investments in fixed assets
- \$29,533,867 unrestricted

They also reported total operating cash of \$113,831,462 net of risk reserves. The total spendable cash estimate is \$13,312,935.

The Board received the report. No other action was necessary.

Commissioner Chapman asked staff to request a formal presentation at a future meeting by Vaya Health to report on actual expenditures in Transylvania County.

PROCLAMATION DECLARING MARCH AS SOCIAL WORK MONTH IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

Each year, March is celebrated as National Social Work Month. The Transylvania County Department of Social Services employs numerous social workers who provide a variety of duties to serve our most vulnerable population. Often, social work is a thankless job, but it could not be more important. Social workers keep children and adults safe and provide support for all ages. The Board approved Proclamation

#06-2022 Declaring March as Social Work Month in Transylvania County. Commissioner Dalton read aloud the proclamation for the benefit of the public.

**PROCLAMATION #06-2022
DECLARING SOCIAL WORK MONTH IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY**

Whereas, the dedicated social workers of the Transylvania County Department of Social Services work to address and care for the emotional, psychological, economic, and physical needs of the County’s residents, especially its most vulnerable; and

Whereas, social workers employ their skillsets and caring attributes to assist clients in navigating life’s challenges to become stronger and more resilient through assessments, counseling, encouragement, and by working to refer clients to available community resources; and

Whereas, all children have the right to safe environments and a quality education, and senior citizens deserve dignity and to be free from abuse and neglect; and

Whereas, social workers in the County work to support and protect all citizens, without regard to their circumstance, social status, or background; and

Whereas, social workers are employed in many different organizations within the County, and the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners is proud to recognize the vital contributions of social workers as they meet the needs of residents; and

Whereas, this year’s Social Work Month theme, “**The Time is Right for Social Work**” embodies how social workers rose to meet the pressing challenges of all of our lifetimes;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that Transylvania County Board of County Commissioners does hereby proclaim the month of March 2022 as:

SOCIAL WORK MONTH IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

The Board encourages citizens to reflect on the work and service of local social workers and to recognize these professionals for their efforts to help meet the needs of our community’s most vulnerable citizens.

This the 14th day of March 2022.

S://Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

REQUEST TO CLOSE OFFICES FOR REGISTER OF DEEDS RETIREMENT RECEPTION

Register of Deeds Cindy Ownbey has announced her retirement from Transylvania County. Her staff is planning a retirement reception for her on April 18 in the Board of Elections conference room. Assistant Register of Deeds Beth Landreth requested Commissioners allow staff to close the Register of Deeds office from 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. to allow those staff to attend the reception. Approval at this meeting will give the department ample time to inform the public. The Board permitted the closure of the Register of Deeds Office on Monday, April 18 from 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

CANCELLATION OF THE 1ST BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING IN APRIL

The 1st Board of Commissioners’ meeting in April falls during spring break. Commissioners have expressed an interest in taking time off to travel and spend time with family. Should something arise that

requires the Board's action, the Board may schedule a special meeting to address those issues. This will be a welcome break before the Manager presents the FY 23 Budget recommendation and begins budget workshop sessions. The Board approved the cancellation of the 1st Board of Commissioners in April and instructed the Clerk to the Board to post and publish appropriate notice to the public.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

NANTAHALA AND PISGAH FOREST PLAN REVISION – FINAL PLAN UPDATE

Forest Ranger David Casey presented an update on the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan. A forest plan provides an overall general direction on how to manage the national forest.

Just before the start of the pandemic, the Forest Service rolled out the draft Environmental Impact Statement and sought public input. They received approximately 10,000 comments. The series of in-person meetings they had scheduled quickly transitioned to virtual engagement due to the pandemic. A team in Asheville then set out to work on reviewing the comments and modifying the plan. The Forest Service released the final plan in January of this year. The Forest Service is no longer seeking public input; they are asking for objections at this point. The public has until March 22 to object to the plan.

Mr. Casey encouraged the Board of Commissioners and the public to visit the website to review the reader's guide. The guide is broken out into several topics under four unifying themes – connecting people to the land, sustaining healthy ecosystems, providing clean and abundant water, and partnering with others.

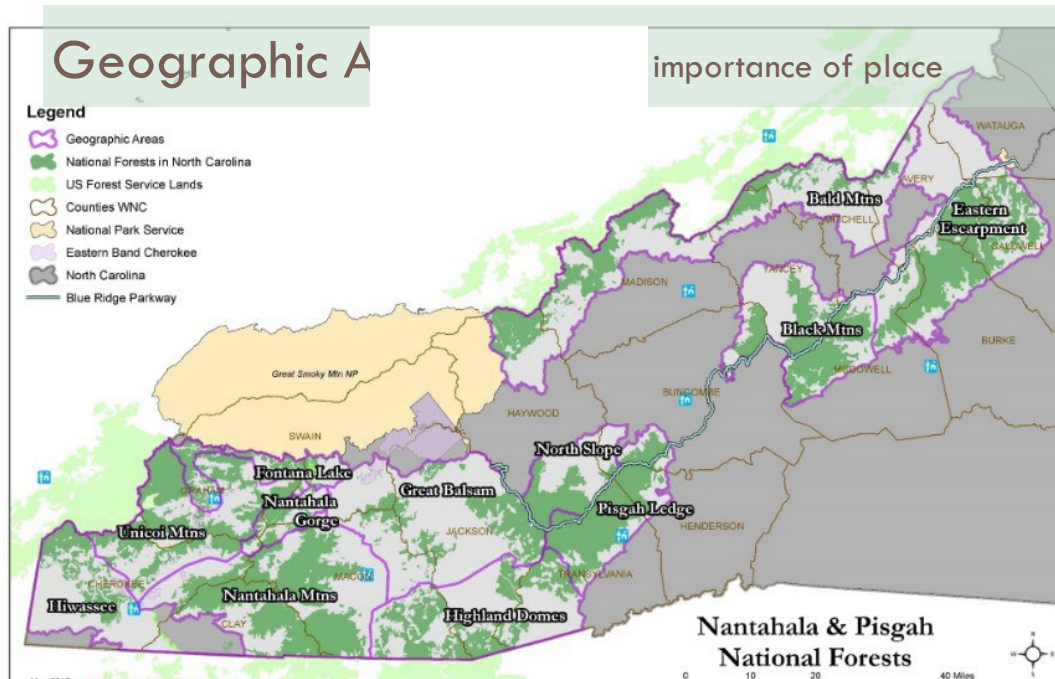
The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests are the most visited national forests in the east. The plan recognizes that people do not interact with the national forest the same everywhere and that areas within the national forests are different. The plan seeks to connect people to the land by emphasizing forest places and uses by identifying 12 geographic areas and a new management area that recognizes access and concentrated recreation use, as well as establishes a framework for sustainable recreation.

A lot of analysis went into the theme of sustaining healthy ecosystems. Experts weighed in and provided the rationale for how the national forests should look over the next 20 years. The plan seeks to accelerate the development of currently underrepresented habitats, increase prescribed burning, restore rare habitats and increase overall wildlife habitats.

National forests were originally established in the east to protect the headwaters, which continues to be an emphasis. The plan identifies priority watersheds for restoration activities, emphasizes aquatic organism passage across the forest, protects streamside zones, and includes an objective to develop a forest-wide road maintenance plan to promote public safety, prevent erosion, and protect water quality.

Mr. Casey stated that Transylvania County is one of the best examples across Western North Carolina for partnering with others. Many people are very interested in their national forest and the Forest Service could not operate effectively and efficiently without the support of volunteers and partners. The plan identifies stretch goals for all objectives if additional capacity in the form of resources or help from others is available during plan implementation and identifies ways to work with others to accomplish shared goals.

Below is a map of the geographical area. Transylvania County sits in the Pisgah Ledge and the Highland Domes sections of the national forest.



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Mr. Casey highlighted the concept of having a tiered objective. The public was asked to analyze what the Forest Service could accomplish with collective actions. Tier 1 would comprise what the Forest Service can accomplish with existing budgets and capacity. Tier 2 responds to public input of accomplishing more with the help of partners and additional capacity. For example, the plan doubles the annual young forest creation practices from 650 to 1,200 acres under Tier 1, and accomplishes even more with the help of partners, up to 3,200 acres annually under Tier 2. The concept is similar to increasing thinning, creating an open forest, and increasing prescribed burning.

There are no recommended wilderness areas for Transylvania County. The Forest Service does not designate those; Congress designates them. However, the plan identifies new eligible wild and scenic rivers, as well as other special interest areas.

Also, this plan recognizes the role that the national forest plays in local communities. It emphasizes local government coordination, collaborative recreation planning, and not decreasing the miles of open roads.

Mr. Casey reminded the Board of the impact of Tropical Storm Fred on Transylvania County and Western North Carolina last fall and showed a picture of Sliding Rock before the river crested. This plan seeks to create more resilient infrastructure and more resiliency in the forest in general.

The next steps to a final signed plan include the objection period which expires on March 22. Following that date, the Forest Service will publish all the objections, then go through a resolution process on those objections. If the process continues as planned, the new forest plan will be in place by the summer.

Lastly, Mr. Casey referred to a map that was included in the Board's agenda packet but did not make the formal presentation that denotes Highway 276 as a designated scenic area. Looking Glass Rock, Cedar Rock, and John Rock are designated as special areas. A majority of Transylvania County in the national forest is designated as a matrix. Different management directions go along with each of those areas.

Mr. Casey briefly updated the Board on Tropical Storm Fred's recovery. He informed the Board that their funding process is different than that of the State and County. The Forest Service is just now getting requests coming into the regional office in Atlanta and a team is preparing to begin recovery and repair efforts in the district.

He also shared that the Christmas tree for the US Capitol this year will be chosen from either the Nantahala or Pisgah National Forests. There are already some potential candidates, and it is possible the tree could be chosen from the Pisgah Ranger District. Ranger Lorie Stroup is heading up that project. There will be a tour across the State before the tree is brought to the US Capitol in November.

Mr. Casey reported the Forest Service has completed 1,000 acres of prescribed burning and planted another 2,500 acres in Transylvania County alone. Sliding Rock will open this year with no lower deck. It will be rebuilt at some point in the future. The Cradle of Forestry will open on April 15. The Forest Service is in the design phase for new bathhouses at Davidson River Campground. Davidson River Road will remain closed between Daniel Ridge and Gloucester Gap for at least a year to make repairs from Tropical Storm Fred. Mr. Casey was appreciative of the partnership with the County, Headwaters Outfitters, and others on the cleanup of Tucker Creek back in January. The Forest Service is also increasing its collaboration with Schenck Job Corps, especially as the organization is bringing on new students.

This concluded Mr. Casey's update. He thanked the County and countywide departments and agencies for their efforts, without which the Forest Service could not function.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Casey for this presentation. Chairman Chappell expressed his appreciation to the Forest Service for allowing a lengthy plan review process to allow thorough review and input from the public.

SEMI-ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS – SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff David Mahoney reported on his Office's accomplishments over the first six months of the fiscal year, as well as on trends that may be reflected in upcoming budget years. This is a summary of his report.

Crime/Incidents are Down

Transylvania County is fortunate to be a safe place and has one of the lowest crime rates in Western North Carolina. The Sheriff's Office works hard every day collaborating with the community to solve and reduce crime.

- Total incidents in 2020 – 1,059
- Total incidents in 2021 – 1,014
- 4.2% reduction in the crime rate

Federal Inmate Housing/Revenue

The Sheriff's Office entered into a contract with the US Marshal's Service to house and transport federal inmates which brings in on average \$19,531 per month in revenue. The contract pays for two positions to run this program.

Solving Crime/Fingerprint Computer

The Sheriff was successful in his request to purchase a fingerprint identification system for his office which was implemented in September 2021. The system allows the input of fingerprints to compare to those on file for a potential match. Since implementation, staff has compared 95 latent prints resulting in

12 positive matches for cases in Transylvania County and adjoining counties. This represents 12 cases that otherwise would not be solved. Staff identified another 35 prints with no match in the system. This is a wonderful tool for the Sheriff's Office.

National Forensics Academy/Training

On Friday, a detective in the Sheriff's Office will be graduating from the National Forensic Academy. This is the first time the Sheriff recalled one of his detectives attaining this level of training. It will bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Criminal Investigations Division. For many years, the Sheriff's Office has sent officers through the Law Enforcement Leadership Academy and this year is no different. An officer will be graduating from the academy soon.

The operation of a detention facility is one of the largest liability areas for counties. This year, Officer Jeremy Queen graduated from the Jail Administrator's Leadership Institute, a program offered by the North Carolina Sheriff's Association.

Honored to Have Served

This is Sheriff Mahoney's last annual presentation as Sheriff of Transylvania County. He said he looks forward to working with the Board on the upcoming budget. He thanked this and previous Boards of Commissioners that he has had the opportunity to work with for the last 15 years. Sheriff Mahoney stated it was an honor to serve and he was appreciative of the Board's support of the men and women working hard every day to support and defend the community.

Commissioner Chapman shared that he traveled with Sheriff Mahoney recently to visit Camp Matthews where the DARE and SHIELD camps are held. He commended the Sheriff for the phenomenal work he and his staff do to provide services to the youth in the community. He encouraged Commissioners to visit Camp Matthews.

Commissioner Guice thanked Sheriff Mahoney for all he has done for Transylvania County over the years and for what he means to this community. He asked a question related to the contract with the US Marshal's Service. He inquired about who pays for the medical costs of the federal inmates housed in our facility. Sheriff Mahoney informed the Board that the medical costs for the federal inmates are paid for by the US Marshal's Service.

Commissioner McCall thanked Sheriff Mahoney for all he has done for Transylvania County. She said over the years that many fine men have occupied the Office of the Sheriff, but she could think of anyone who had the widespread support and respect that he has, not only in Transylvania County but across the State of North Carolina.

Chairman Chappell stated that he appreciated Sheriff Mahoney for what he does and how he does it and that he had the utmost respect for him.

SEMI-ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS – REGISTER OF DEEDS

Register of Deeds Cindy Ownbey reported on her department's accomplishments over the first six months of the fiscal year, as well as on trends that may be reflected in upcoming budget years. This is a summary of her report:

Accomplishments

- On March 31, 2021, began Property Fraud Alert for citizens; utilized by many citizens
- Began Passport Acceptance Facility on October 5, 2021 which has been very successful
- Continued the "Thank A Vet" program which began in 2018

- Since implementation, issued 312 photo ID discount cards and signed up 25 participating businesses
- On December 7, 2021, began offering vital records (index information only) online to assist constituents in research for real estate, genealogy, etc.
- Began training and readiness for the NCDave system through NC Vital Records (electronic death registrations)
 - Partnering with Health Department and other registration partners, like doctors and funeral homes
- Continued with the next phase of the GT/GT project which encompasses documents for real estate dating back to the County's beginning
 - Completed several group projects for converting older records into searchable data; through GT/GT, back-indexing; back-scanning. Ex: pre-1988 maps; older vital records, and pre-1960 real estate
 - Projects took years to complete
 - A huge accomplishment for this department
- Completed year one of the next phase of the preservation projects (two-year contract)
- Began the process of adding a function to our online services for a "certified copy button" for the real estate records
 - Currently on hold by the vendor

Below is data about the Passport Acceptance Facility since it began operation on October 5, 2021.

Passport Acceptance Facility Information

Began: 10-05-21 operating hours: Tue. Wed. Thurs. 9am -4pm

	Oct	Nov	Dec.
# of Customers	44	45	51
\$ mailed to State	\$3,576.35	\$4,665.00	\$4,515.32
\$ to ROD	\$1,615.00	\$1,815.00	\$1,975.00
Less Postage:	\$130.50	\$140.40	\$130.50
Net Income:	\$1,484.50	\$1,674.60	\$1,844.50
 Total Net Income: Oct - Dec. 2021	 \$5,003.60		

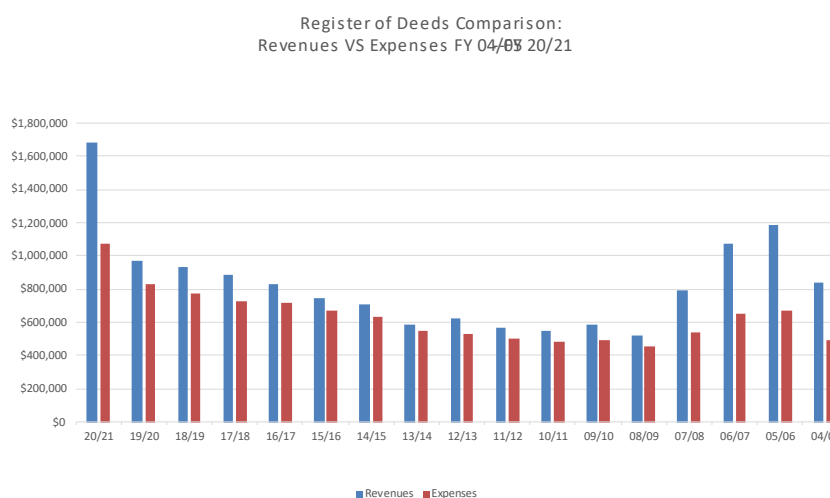
Note: Total # of customers are those that made appointments. Does not include walk ins; phone calls; or those that filled out applications for renewing a passport and came in for review only as no money is collected on renewals. Customer count would be much higher if these things were included, however we only included the ones that we collected money from for a service that was provided. Passport staff will add those statistics going forward.

Trends

- Continue to see an increased demand for electronic resources and the demand was profound during the pandemic
- Continue to see improvement in revenues
 - Collected \$610,156 more in revenues over expenses at the end of FY 2021
 - On target for same at mid-year of FY 2022

The graph below compares revenues and expenses from FY 2004-05 through FY 2020-2021. The current figures are an economic indicator of the number of real estate transactions taking place in the community.

	Revenues	Expenses
20/21	\$1,684,048	\$1,073,892
19/20	\$972,155	\$832,537
18/19	\$932,115	\$773,410
17/18	\$888,316	\$731,103
16/17	\$828,667	\$715,745
15/16	\$742,300	\$673,690
14/15	\$712,395	\$630,274
13/14	\$587,837	\$550,637
12/13	\$627,526	\$528,717
11/12	\$566,379	\$505,013
10/11	\$546,435	\$484,451
09/10	\$583,735	\$489,674
08/09	\$520,773	\$453,591
07/08	\$794,111	\$544,651
06/07	\$1,078,630	\$654,080
05/06	\$1,188,040	\$668,984
04/05	\$843,057	\$496,965



- The number of document books filled (now virtually) from January 1, 2000 through January 1, 2020 was 905 books at approximately 850 pages per book (real estate only)
 - Average of 45 books per year
 - During FY 20-21, filled 62 books which means a book is filled in four days which is another indicator of the increase in real estate transactions for Transylvania County

Goals

- Continue phases of GT/GT scanning projects
 - Back-index and back-scan condominium plans, pre-1980
 - Back-index corporate documents, pre-1980
- Continue Preservation Project with new budget
- Continue adding submitters for e-recording, ongoing
- Continue efforts to grow the “Thank-A-Vet” program by encouraging more businesses to participate in giving a veteran’s discount when shown an ID card, Ongoing
- Continue efforts to grow fraud alert services by advertising periodically to keep the public informed of the service
- Continue passport services, training, and all requirements set by the Department of State
- Continue to increase online options for various services the department provides
- Continue efforts to revamp the website for needed updates

- Continue efforts to train and utilize Statewide Electronic Death Registration System through NC Vital Records
- Continue all customer service and training efforts to better serve our citizens
- Begin a new contract with a vendor for “Record Time Machine” (more information forthcoming)

This is Ms. Ownbey’s last annual presentation to the Board of Commissioners as Register of Deeds as she is set to retire soon. She was very appreciative of the Board’s support over the years, including previous Boards.

Commissioner Chapman thanked Ms. Ownbey for her service to the County. He said he has enjoyed working with her over the last several years. He asked if the Register of Deeds office has enough space for storing records. Ms. Ownbey shared that the space is somewhat tight, but she has implemented space-saving measures, like roller shelving, so they are utilizing the space as best they can. She mentioned that the next phase of the preservation project could result in 20 books becoming 40 books, so the office can quickly run out of space.

Commissioner Guice stated that he has had the privilege of knowing and working with Ms. Ownbey for 30 years. He said she is an exceptionally talented administrator who cares a great deal about the community. Commissioner Guice stated that Transylvania County is fortunate to have people serving in elected positions who care so much about the community they serve. He wished her the best in her retirement.

Commissioner Dalton expressed appreciation to Ms. Ownbey for her years of service to Transylvania County and wished her well in her retirement.

Commissioner McCall shared how responsive the Register of Deeds office is to the public and was impressed by their customer service. She thanked Ms. Ownbey for raising the bar and serving the citizens well.

Chairman Chappell commented that he and Ms. Ownbey have worked together for a long time, and he was amazed at how much the Register of Deeds office has changed over the years. He thanked Ms. Ownbey for continuously seeking initiatives and programs to better serve the citizens of Transylvania County.

ECUSTA TRAIL UPDATE

It has been approximately six months since the Board of Commissioners received an update on the Ecusta Trail project. A lot has occurred since that time, so Commissioners invited representatives from Conserving Carolina and Friends of the Ecusta Trail to provide an update. Brevard Mayor Maureen Copelof opened the presentation with brief comments on the work the City of Brevard is doing, then she turned the presentation over to Conserving Carolina and the Friends of the Ecusta Trail.

Mayor Copelof reported that last year the City of Brevard agreed to become the governmental lead to facilitate the development of the Ecusta Trail in Transylvania County. Since that time, the City has been working closely with its partner Conserving Carolina and created an Ecusta Trail Advisory Board which is a collaboration of six different entities to see the project to fruition. Mayor Copelof stated that the City took the lead on this project because they saw the potential that the trail has for Brevard and Transylvania County, and they saw that there were significant challenges that called for solutions to make the project happen. One of those challenges is funding. She acknowledged the City does not have the funding to pay for the project, so the goal is to seek outside funding sources. The City was unsuccessful in its application for the RAISE grant two years ago, but they intend to reapply this year and sought the County’s support of the application via a letter or resolution which is due April 15. The City did not ask for a commitment

of funds from the County. Mayor Copelof shared that the City sought the support of Dogwood Health for writing the grant and she was confident their grant application would be competitive.

Executive Director of Conserving Carolina Kieran Roe gave a detailed report of their accomplishments over the last six months. He thanked the City of Brevard for being a strong partner, as well as Mayor Copelof for building support in the City and County. He recalled that the last time the Board received an update on this project was around August last year from Chris Burns with the Friends of the Ecusta Trail. It was around the same time that Conserving Carolina closed on the purchase of the rail corridor from Watco and created a subsidiary of Conserving Carolina named Ecusta Rails2Trails, LLC which now owns the corridor.

Mr. Roe also noted that around the same time as the purchase, a law firm filed a claim on behalf of the local landowners who felt that if their land was crossed by the rail corridor and there had been an easement in place by the railroad, that they had a claim under the federal railbanking statute. He pointed out the closing was under the terms of the federal legislation whereby the conversion from a rail to other types of transportation, such as a bike or pedestrian trail, is allowed. However, the legislation also allows anyone with a valid claim to make that claim against the federal government. Thus, the lawsuit is continuing.

Mr. Roe stated there is overwhelming community support and excitement for this project. Conserving Carolina held a ribbon cutting in Brevard in September. They held a similar celebration in Hendersonville a few prior.

With the acquisition of the corridor last summer, they are now set on the task of raising money for the design and construction of the trail. The budget for the 19-mile corridor is estimated at \$31 million. Henderson County was able to acquire some funding from the French Broad River MPO. Conserving Carolinas and the Friends of the Ecusta Trail have begun a joint fundraising campaign. In a relatively short time, they have raised \$4.4 million in gifts and pledges toward their \$6.5 million goal. The goal represents 20% of the total cost of \$31 million. Many of the public grant sources require a local match and they are trying to accomplish raising the matching funds in ways that do not incur costs to the local governments. The \$4.4 million includes a \$2.5 million pledge from the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority and \$600,000 allocated by the State of North Carolina in budget appropriations.

Mr. Roe shared breaking news as of today that Senators Chuck Edwards and Tim Moffitt have secured an additional \$7.5 million in State appropriations which is a major boost and additional source of support toward the total project cost and one they hope will enhance fundraising efforts.

Mr. Roe reiterated Mayor Copelof's report about the creation of the advisory committee, and he thanked Commissioner Chapman for serving on behalf of the Board of Commissioners. Also as mentioned earlier, he stressed that the RAISE grant is currently their target for bringing in a significant amount of dollars to help fund the construction of the trail on the Transylvania County side.

Dogwood Health Trust hired very successful grant writers with a strong record of raising similar grants elsewhere in the Carolinas, so they are optimistic about their chances of being awarded funding. One of the reasons for being aggressive with seeking federal funds is that Transylvania County, unlike Buncombe and Henderson Counties, is not part of the French Broad River MPO, so Transylvania County is not eligible for monies that flow through the MPO. Henderson County has received \$5 million through the MPO which will cover the first five miles of the design and construction in Henderson County.

Mr. Roe reported the project construction will start in Hendersonville and then head west to the Horse Shoe area. They have already begun the design of this section and it is slated to be complete at the end of this calendar year or early 2023.

They are eager to begin momentum on the project in Transylvania County. A 2012 economic impact study indicated several economic benefits to communities along the rail corridor. The economic benefits expected to be derived are many jobs during the construction phase, a rise in property values along the corridor, and an increase in tax revenues to local governments. Once fully constructed, the trail is expected to attract 20,000 additional visitors to communities along the corridor who will spend \$1.2 million in tourism-related activities and create 27 new jobs. There is also a projection that it will save healthcare costs by getting people outside for exercise and improve their overall health.

Mr. Roe stated there are other benefits of having greenways in communities. Greenways make communities safer, healthier, greener, better economically, and more connected. He pointed out that the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville, South Carolina has helped revive some of the smaller towns like Travelers Rest. He was excited about the progress so far. He asked the Board to support the City's RAISE grant application. With his request, he concluded the formal presentation.

Chairman Chappell asked if the City had completed the RAISE grant application. Mayor Copelof stated the timeframe between the application announcement and the submission date was reduced from previous years. They are working on the application now and she is confident they will have a quality application packet ready before the due date.

Commissioner Chapman appreciated serving on the advisory board. He stated he was not opposed to approving a letter of support for the City's RAISE grant application, but he stressed that the Board of Commissioners and others still have many questions about the project that remain unanswered. He asked that the City provide a copy of the grant application to the Board prior to them approving a letter of support and he went on record saying he would not support a letter if it meant a funding commitment from the County. He asked if the RAISE grant required matching funds. Mr. Roe responded that the grant program does not require matching funds, but he felt that securing additional funds from elsewhere would make the City's application more competitive.

Commissioner McCall stated that her concerns have not changed since the last presentation and her questions have not been answered to her satisfaction. She did not feel that a letter of support would influence the approval of the grant application, especially if the application is a strong one. Commissioner McCall was committed to the property owners along the corridor and protecting their property rights and thus she felt that giving support for a grant application to push the trail forward equates to supporting the construction of the trail. She agreed with Commissioner Chapman that there remain many unanswered questions, like who would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep and the cost of doing so, how security would be provided, the agricultural and personal property impacts, etc. Therefore, she will continue to stand with the property owners.

Chairman Chappell asked that prior to the Board considering a letter of support that the City forwards a copy of the completed application to Commissioners. In addition, he asked for further detail about the State appropriation that was announced today.

Commissioner Guice expressed support for a letter for the City's RAISE grant application and the Ecusta Trail. He noted that his family owns property in the area, and he has seen a groundswell of support for the trail. He emphasized that the project is moving forward under the new ownership, and he was excited about the funding that has been secured at this point and for what is to come.

APPOINTMENTS

PERSONNEL BOARD

Elaine Russell's term on the Personnel Board expired on February 28, 2022. She has served two full terms and is not eligible for reappointment. Ms. Russell filled the position of Department Head on the Personnel Board. Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart recommended the appointment of EMS Director Kim Bailey to replace Ms. Russell on the Personnel Board.

Commissioner Guice moved to appoint Kim Bailey to fill the Department Head position on the Personnel Board, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.

BOARD OF HEALTH

The nurse position on the Board of Health became vacant at the end of December. The Clerk to the Board advertised and received one application. Public Health Director Elaine Russell recommended the appointment of Heather Kauffman to fill the vacant nurse position on the Board of Health. The professional engineer position remains vacant. Staff will continue to recruit.

Commissioner Chapman moved to appoint Heather Kauffman to fill the vacant nurse position on the Board of Health, seconded by Commissioner Guice and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS REQUEST TO APPLY FOR A NEEDS-BASED PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND GRANT

On March 7, 2022, the Transylvania County Board of Education approved a proposal to apply for \$50 million in resources from the State-controlled Needs-Based Public School Building Capital Fund. As the financial planning for school building facilities falls under the purview of County Commissioners, the application requires the Commissioners' approval and co-signature. Their request is split over two applications and if approved, would require a local match from the County's resources (including bond funds) as broken down in the chart below:

	Total Grant Request	Local Funds Listed as Spent	Additional Local Match	Total Local Match
Brevard	\$25,000,000	\$2,129,588	\$2,975,512	\$5,105,100
Rosman	\$25,000,000	\$1,146,701	\$5,511,999	\$6,658,700
Totals	\$50,000,000	\$3,276,289	\$8,487,511	\$11,763,800

The Board of Education listed the cost of the proposed scope of work between the two projects as \$61.8 million. If awarded, they intend to use the funds at Brevard High School to update the CTE building, classrooms, auxiliary gym, and cafeteria citing structural problems. At Rosman, they intend to make additions and upgrades to the electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems and address flooding the band support space.

The evaluation for this program includes the following criteria:

- Prior recipient of funds is expanding their project
- Tier 1 counties
- The ability of a county to generate one cent of tax

- Debt ratio to tax revenue
- Projects that are addressing critical deficiencies
- New construction or a complete renovation
- Projects that are consolidating facilities into a new facility
- Whether the applicant has received any funds in the previous three years

Representatives from the Transylvania County Board of Education and School system were present to provide further detail and answer questions. The Manager asked the Board of Commissioners to consider their grant application which is due March 15.

Commissioner McCall stated that in her review of the grant proposal a fair amount of work has been identified for grant funding that also falls under the option the Board of Commissioners is considering for the bond project. If that is correct, she asked how a grant award would impact the bond projects. Superintendent Dr. Jeff McDaris stated that the cost of the bond projects continues to rise, and the Board of Commissioners has not yet set a date for the issuance of the bonds, so this grant proposal is an opportunity to seek funds for much-needed capital projects. He commented that this grant is competitive, and Transylvania County has not had success with past applications.

Commissioner Chapman asked when the State is expected to announce the grant awards. Dr. McDaris stated they anticipate a quick turnaround time and could receive word as early as April.

Commissioner Guice noted there is a shortfall of funds for the bond projects and additional needs not being met so it makes sense for the School System and County to apply for any available funding. He was supportive of the grant application.

Commissioner Dalton asked how being a Tier 3 county might impact the grant award. Dr. McDaris said being a Tier 3 puts the County at a disadvantage in receiving some grant funds; however, with the additional tranche of monies, he was hopeful about their application. Both agreed that the Tier 3 designation does not paint an accurate depiction of the County's economic situation.

Commissioner McCall asked where the matching funds would come from if the grant is awarded. The Manager responded that tax collections for the bond could be appropriated

Commissioner McCall asked where the money would come from if the Board does not go through with the bond sale. The Manager explained that within a year there would be \$8.4 million in the education capital ordinance from tax collections.

Chairman Chappell stated he was 100% supportive of the grant application. He was appreciative of the Board of Education's efforts to seek outside funding sources to help meet their capital needs.

Commissioner Guice moved to approve Transylvania County Schools' request to make an application for grant funding, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS REQUEST TO MODIFY THE CAPITAL PROJECTS LIST

The Transylvania County Schools Finance Officer Gabrielle Frost reached out to the County Manager to request an adjustment in the appropriations by project imposed on the Transylvania County Schools Capital Outlay Fund. Staff included a reconciliation of current projects and appropriations funded by local County revenue sources in the Board's agenda packet.

The Commissioners appropriate capital funding by project which allows them to see progress toward accomplishing those capital projects. This request is to take savings from one project and apply it to the Rosman High School press box canopy and roof repair.

Commissioner McCall moved to approve changes to the N.C.G.S. § 115C-426(f) appropriations made by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners to the Transylvania County Board of Education, seconded by Commissioner Guice and approved unanimously.

REQUEST BY C.A.R.E. COALITION TO TRANSFER POSITION TO STAFFING AGENCY

Public Health Director Elaine Russell presented this item. The CARE Coalition requested approval to transfer an existing 1.0 FTE staff position to the North Carolina Public Health Association Staffing Agency. The position requested for transfer is for the Coalition Coordinator. The position has remained vacant since July 2021 despite extensive advertising and a round of interviews.

The position is classified as a Health Educator I which has made it difficult to find candidates with both the experience required for the Health Educator I classification and the experience relevant to the qualifications and skills needed to be an effective Coalition Coordinator. Filling the position through the staffing agency will allow more flexibility to hire a candidate whose background is more closely aligned with the skills and qualifications needed to coordinate a coalition, work with youth, and engage the community in prevention efforts. There is no financial impact with this request as the position is budgeted within the Drug-Free Communities Grant.

Ms. Russell shared that the Health Department and CARE Coalition will be fully involved in the interview process. The staffing agency employee would not fall under the State personnel procedures.

Commissioner Guice moved to approve to transfer of the 1.0 FTE Coalition Coordinator position to the NC Public Health Alliance Staffing Agency, seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously approved.

REQUEST TO RECLASSIFY POSITION IN HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health Director Elaine Russell presented this item. The Health Department's immunization nurse has long been classified as an LPN. Upon the retirement of the long-standing immunization nurse in December, the LPN position was posted through the usual/standard posting options. The Health Department has received no applications to date.

The academic pursuit of the LPN credential has fallen significantly in past years in favor of pursuing the Associate Degree or Bachelor's Degree credentials in nursing.

The immunization nurse position is vital to the workflow of the Health Department in service to the community. The position carries the daily workload of the routine pediatric and adult immunizations provided by the agency. When the position is vacant, other nursing staff are tasked with covering the work, which in turn impacts other agency services. All public health nurses are expected to know the immunization schedule and be capable of supporting the program. However, the program works best with a full-time assigned nurse.

The FTE has a higher salary allocation due to the years of service of the retired employee. Reclassification from an LPN to a starting Public Health Nurse I would be possible without an additional allocation of funds. Ms. Russell felt the reclassification would be a more attractive job offer. The position is a long-established FTE with full benefits and a retirement package.

Commissioner Guice moved to reclass the LPN position to a Public Health Nurse I position to facilitate an applicant pool for essential public health immunization work, seconded by Commissioner Dalton. The motion was approved unanimously.

In response to a question from Commissioner McCall about current staffing levels and vacancies, Ms. Russell shared that she is working with the Human Resources Director and the State Personnel Office on possibly adding positions, reclassifying positions, and seeking to meet the needs of managed care and Medicaid.

REQUEST TO RESTRUCTURE POSITIONS IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT (DSS)
Social Services Director Amanda Vanderoef presented this item.

Redirect Vacant Position

DSS currently has four social work supervisors working under the social work program manager. Each social work supervisor has specific program areas that include adult services and child welfare. Quality assurance is a part of creating and sustaining an agency culture of continuous quality improvement of services being provided to adults, children, and families. A continuous quality support position would offer training to new staff, across all program areas as well as provide an evaluation of programs, including analyzing data. This position will ensure staff is managing and documenting cases correctly and maximizing revenue from the State.

DSS is required to meet performance measures that are set forth in federal or State law, rule, or policy that governs that particular program. Failure to meet these measurements can result in corrective action plans. A continuous quality improvement (CQI) position will help to ensure social work programs are tracking to meet performance measures and identify trends, strengths, and areas for growth to improve and/or change service delivery to achieve higher rates of safety outcomes for the population served. A CQI position will collect and track data and make recommendations based on analysis. A CQI position will generate focused areas of needed training for staff, supervisors, and agency leaders which improves job satisfaction and retention. This position will be conducting thorough case reviews and identifying areas that could potentially be subject to paybacks if they are not caught before an audit and this could be cost savings for the county.

Reclassify Finance Position in DSS

DSS currently has an accounting technician IV that works directly under the supervision of the business officer position. The position has the responsibility of reporting all the agency's revenues and expenditures. This position requires accounting skills and attention to detail for the County to maximize revenue and is heavily involved in budget and fiscal management. Due to the level of accuracy and accountability, staff conducted an analysis and determined that this position functions in a higher class than its current specification under the State's defined job descriptions. The duties of this position meet the definition of an accounting specialist II. The position is currently vacant and to recruit, it would be beneficial at this time to reclassify to align with the State's job classification.

Last year, as child support staff resigned, staff evaluated the caseloads per employee and cost-effectiveness of the program and determined one position, a child support agent I, could be eliminated. A few months later after another resignation, staff determined it was more cost-effective to contract child support services to Veritas, HHS. The elimination of a position and the savings from the contract created an opportunity for requesting a new position without having to request any additional funding, as well as a reclassification.

Commissioner Guice moved to approve the reclassification of an accounting technician IV to an accounting specialist II and retitle the existing position request for a CQI, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

REQUEST TO PURCHASE TEMPORARY HOUSING FOR EMS

Assistance County Manager David McNeill presented this item. The Board of Commissioners approved the sale of the current EMS base. County staff is currently working with an architect to design a new EMS base on Morris Road. The staff has also been working with the Transylvania County Rescue Squad to temporarily house EMS units in bay space at their building. County maintenance staff will make minor improvements to existing restrooms located in the bay space as well as data and electrical improvements to accommodate the use of a camper trailer located under a covered area adjacent to the bay space that will house the EMS units. Staff is confident this will provide adequate housing for EMS crews during the interim period.

Once EMS is relocated to the new EMS station on Morris Road, the camper unit will be converted in-house to a mobile command unit to enhance emergency management capabilities at large-scale events or rescues requiring longer scene times, such as searches and rescues. A mobile command center also allows staff to mobilize communications capabilities in remote areas. This will be a major improvement and resource for cooperation with the local fire, rescue, and law enforcement agencies.

Staff received a quote of \$54,000 to purchase the trailer. Along with the minor improvements needed at the Rescue Squad, Mr. McNeill recommended a budget of \$60,000. He recommended covering the from two sources: \$30,000 from leftover funds from the Community Services Building HVAC project and \$30,000 from the Emergency Management Program Supplement grant. The EMPG Supplement grant provides funds from the State to be used for projects/equipment to enhance the emergency management program.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve the use of funds for the acquisition of a trailer and minor improvements to the Transylvania County Rescue Squad building for housing EMS crews and for the trailer to be converted to mobile command unit once EMS is relocated to the new EMS base, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- Manager attended NCACC Risk Management Board of Trustees meeting in Raleigh on March 4. Liability trends for county services continue to increase.
- Clerk to the Board to attend NC Association of County Clerks Annual Conference in Cabarrus County beginning March 16-18 where she will hand over the reins as President to Davidson County Clerk to the Board Debbie Harris. Trisha will continue to serve on the Association's Executive Committee for one additional year as its Immediate Past President.
- Transylvania Animal Services has announced new Shelter Manager Megan Searcy who will be implementing system improvements to the policy and procedures working with the State Veterinarian. TAS also announced an MOU with Animals R Us and Dr. Beverly Hargus for Veterinarian of Record. Dr. Hargus serves both small and large animals with experience working with Henderson County's shelter.
- County Manager has been invited to be a panelist for the Investing in Rural America Conference by the Federal Reserve of Richmond to discuss investments in early childhood
- GetSet Transylvania early childhood activities coming up around the Week of the Young Child in April

- Rootle event with PBS at the Library on March 26
- Family Fun Day at the Recreation Center on April 2
- Kindergarten Readiness Rally at Recreation Center on April 7

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mickey Robinson: Mr. Robinson is the founder and director of Isaac Homes Youth Center. He announced the opening of a new youth support center in Rosman effective tomorrow to serve middle school students. The center will offer a safe cozy place for them to be, as well as space to do homework and play games. Mr. Robinson also announced how people could donate to support the center's efforts to serve the youth in this community, especially those who are homeless or at risk.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman thanked Mr. Robinson for the work he is doing in the community to serve the youth. He visited their center and was impressed. He noted the center received a significant donation from the Land of Sky Regional Council for computers and printers.

Chairman Chappell announced a governmental job fair at the Western North Carolina Ag Center next Thursday. It will focus on positions in the State and federal government. He encouraged anyone looking for work to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Guice moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously carried.

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board