

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
APRIL 22, 2024 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, April 22, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, North Carolina.

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

Media: Jon Rich – *The Transylvania Times*

There were approximately 100 in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

WELCOME

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public comments represent the speakers' opinions or points of view. Note: The Board designates 15 minutes at the beginning of each meeting for the public comment period. Due to the high number of speakers signed up, Chairman Chappell assured those who were unable to address the Board during this time that they would each be granted three minutes at the conclusion of the meeting.

David Trowbridge: Mr. Trowbridge gave the Board an update on the recent Ghost Wrestling Tournament held at Brevard High School. The tournament featured 405 wrestlers from 81 clubs across the southeastern region, who competed in a total of 1,812 matches. The event drew in 1,225 spectators. Wrestlers from Transylvania County did exceptionally well, earning five first-place, six second place, and six third-place finishes, totaling 17 trophies and medals. Notably, seven state champions from North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and South Carolina were among the participants. In total, 288 medals and trophies were awarded across 96 weight classes in eight divisions, with wrestlers coming from nine states. The tournament also had a positive impact on the local economy, benefiting businesses in downtown Brevard and throughout the county. Mr. Trowbridge thanked the Board of Education, Board candidates, the Mayor of Brevard, and attending Commissioners for their support. This tournament was the largest school-age sporting event ever held in Transylvania County, and he expressed special appreciation to public officials and event organizers for their assistance and contributions.

Jeff Brewer: Mr. Brewer, who has attended many Board of Commissioners meetings and carefully looked into the details and timeline of the school bond, praised the County Commissioners for how they have handled the situation. He commended their careful management and financial oversight, stressing how they have avoided making decisions based on politics or negative feelings. Using his experience teaching finance, he encouraged people who want to understand the truth about the bond process to do thorough research before

criticizing the Board publicly. Mr. Brewer highlighted the importance of presenting a complete plan to the Local Government Commission for bond approval, especially considering the economic challenges caused by COVID-19. Despite these difficulties, he mentioned that the Commissioners have already allocated \$17 million for school improvements since 2020 to tackle urgent needs. He also talked about the Education Capital Work Group's detailed 10-year, \$94 million plan and the seven-year timeframe for the bond sale to account for uncertain economic conditions. Mr. Brewer expressed confidence in the County's ability to submit its application to the LGC in October and start the work in November if it is approved. He urged the community to move beyond political differences and focus on fixing the schools. Lastly, he thanked the Commissioners for their service.

Steve Keate:

Mr. Keate spoke out against what he saw as a misguided move by the Democratic Party in Transylvania County to undermine the Commissioners' support for public schools. He criticized their efforts to gather people for this meeting, calling it an unjustified attack. Mr. Keate questioned the reasoning behind suggesting that the Commissioners do not back public education, pointing out that many members have strong ties to the community, including their own education and that of their children and grandchildren in local schools. He highlighted the Commissioners' actions, mentioning that they have allocated funds that rank fifth highest among all North Carolina counties on a per-pupil basis. He also noted the additional \$17 million given for school improvements since 2020. As for the 2018 bond referendum, Mr. Keate blamed external factors like COVID lockdowns and the previous School Board's lack of a clear recovery plan for its failure to be implemented. Mr. Keate praised the teamwork between the Commissioners and the current School Board, which led to the formation of the Education Capital Work Group and unanimous approval of its suggestions. He believed that the people of Transylvania County would see through what he considered politically motivated attacks by the Democrats.

Lisa Presnell:

Ms. Presnell thanked Commissioners Chappell, Chapman, and McCall for talking with her recently. As a parent of two kids, she is worried about their health, safety, and overall happiness. Ms. Presnell pointed out that everyone shares the blame for the bad condition of the schools, but the County is mainly responsible for fixing the buildings. Even though she believed the Board of Education has not been given enough money, she said it is important to stop arguing about politics and focus on what is best for kids. She thinks the community must come together, regardless of political differences. She did not agree with Commissioner Casciato's recent criticism of teachers and principals and said it is more important to find answers and be honest with taxpayers. Ms. Presnell asked the Board to make kids and the community their top priority and stressed the urgent need for clean, safe schools.

Steve Christopher:

Mr. Christopher, a seasoned general contractor with 43 years of experience, specializing in various projects like hospitals, libraries, jails, and schools, shared his insights gained from navigating through three recessions. He has overseen over 250 projects, including serving as a construction manager for universities in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. During the recession from 2007 to 2012, he saw material costs soar to market prices, affecting project budgets. Now, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions in the supply chain and factory closures have made things even more challenging, leading to significant delays in project timelines. He recognized the Board of Commissioners' difficult task of managing fluctuating market prices while ensuring both cost and timeline predictability for school construction projects. Mr. Christopher praised the Board's adoption of construction management techniques, stressing the importance of collaboration and prioritizing quality and cost to achieve the best results for everyone involved.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the agenda as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously approved.

The Board of Commissioners approved the following items:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in a regular meeting on April 8, 2024. The Board approved the minutes as submitted. (Prior to the regular meeting on April 8, the Board of Commissioners held a special closed session meeting in which the minutes were sealed. The Clerk to the Board will submit those minutes for approval at a future meeting.)

DISCOVERY, RELEASE, AND MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT

Per N.C.G.S. § 105-312 (b), the Tax Administrator must 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 N.C.G.S. § 105-381 (b), the Tax Administrator must 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 March 2024, tax dollars released totaled \$1,258.91 and refunds issued amounted to \$1,069.40. The Board approved the March 2024 Discovery, Release, and Monthly Settlement Report as submitted.

OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL REQUEST - PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

The ARPA Regional Workforce Development Director requested approval to attend the National Association of County and City Health Officials 2024 convening to present the abstract titled "*View from Here WNC: Building the Capacity of Local Communicators through a Regional Communications Approach*" as a poster presentation. The poster will show the results of the regional public health communication campaign that connects residents to the top three shared regional health priority topics: Substance Use, Mental Health, and Healthy Eating/Active Living. The conference will be held July 23-26, 2024, at the Huntington Place Convention Center in Detroit, Michigan. The ARPA grant outcome requirements necessitate the need for national level public health legal training. All travel and training have been approved in the grant program's action plan and budget. The Board approved the out-of-state travel request as submitted.

REQUEST PERMISSION TO CLOSE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR STAFF RETREAT

Amanda Vanderoef, the Director of the Department of Social Services requested permission to close DSS offices on June 6 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. for a staff retreat. Staff will post and publish public notices. The Board approved the request as submitted.

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE REQUEST TO APPLY FOR COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO NC SHERIFF'S OFFICES FOR MEDICATION-ASSISTED TREATMENT IN JAILS

The Transylvania County Sheriff's Office requested approval to apply for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety's "Competitive Grants to NC Sheriffs' Offices for Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) in Jails." This is a collaborative grant effort between the Sheriff's Office and the Health Department/CARE Coalition. The work builds on the existing COSSUP grant work occurring at the Detention Center. Eligible applicants may apply for a maximum of \$1.5 million over three years to establish or expand MAT programs in local jails. MAT is the use of medications, in combination with counseling and other behavioral therapies, to provide a whole-patient approach to the treatment of substance use disorders (SUD). The expansion of the jail-based treatment and reentry program to include MAT is consistent with the CARE Coalition's strategic

plan and recommendations for improving support and services for the justice-involved population. No new full-time equivalents are associated with the grant. However, several contract opportunities for ensuring a continuum of care may be included. The grant will have a start date of July 1, 2024. The Sheriff's Office will partner with CARE Coalition and Transylvania Public Health for grant writing and program coordination. The Board approved the request to apply for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety grant to leverage outside federal grant money to fulfill community needs and support a robust response to the substance misuse crisis by providing additional treatment options to justice-involved individuals.

PUBLIC HEALTH REQUEST TO APPLY FOR DOGWOOD HEALTH TRUST POLICY AND ADVOCACY GRANT

In 2021, Transylvania County Public Health became the fiscal agent for the \$1 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) COVID-19 Public Health Regional Workforce Agreement Addendum from the NC Department of Public Health. The award provides funding to the NC Region 1 Health Departments to establish, expand, train, and sustain the public health workforce while also filling critical gaps in the Public Health Infrastructure Foundational Capability structure. To sustain and expand this critical work, the Region 1 Health Directors have undergone a strategic planning process to identify opportunities to build upon the regional public health workforce development infrastructure that is currently in place.

Through the strategic planning process, the Region 1 Health Directors have identified an advocacy strategy related to better understanding the use of state and federal indexes (Social Vulnerability Index, NC Resiliency Index, etc.) related to funding allocations that have resulted in less funding for Region 1 Health Departments. North Carolina Health Departments in Region 1 (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Swain, Jackson, Haywood, Macon, and Transylvania Counties) face economic and social challenges unique to rural Southern Appalachia. The majority of the counties in Region 1 rely on state and federal funding to provide core public health functions and the local governments do not have the tax base to offset costs. Providing the community with core public health functions requires that local public health departments have the capacity, infrastructure, and readiness to do so.

For the health departments in Region 1 to provide these functions, adequate funding is required to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable communities in North Carolina. North Carolina Department of Public Health (NCDPH) has begun using the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to allocate funding based on the SVI score in each county. When the SVI ranking is used, most of the counties in Region 1 experience a significant reduction in funding. Reducing the region's funding undermines the region's ability to provide critical access to services in agencies that already lack the infrastructure to succeed.

On behalf of the NC Region 1 Health Departments, Transylvania County Public Health would like to apply to the Dogwood Health Trust's upcoming Policy and Advocacy Grant opportunity to support a research project that will help Region 1 to truly understand the metrics being used in the indexes and how those metrics result in less state and federal funding in Region 1. As a result of the research, recommendations will be made on which metrics and other supplemental information may create a more accurate representation to reflect the region's unique needs and challenges. The agency has identified East Tennessee State University's Center for Rural Health Research as the desired partner for the research work. The team at ETSU has expressed a strong interest in partnering on this potential project. The Policy and Advocacy Grant awards up to \$250,000 for two years with a due date of April 26th, 2024. The Board approved the Public Health Department's application to the Dogwood Health Trust's Health Sector Workforce grant.

ACCEPTANCE OF PSAP CYBERSECURITY REMEDIATION INITIATIVE FUNDS

On February 12, 2024, the Board of Commissioners approved the Communications Directors' application to the NC 911 Board for cybersecurity remediation funds. On March 22, 2024, the NC 911 Board approved the application for the following: \$2,880 for Multifactor Authentication and \$36,997.18 for Security Event Manager in the current fiscal year, and \$74,432.47 for Disaster Recovery Hardware in FY 2025, for a total

award of \$114,309.65. Transylvania County will pay the amount upfront and seek reimbursement from the NC 911 Board. The Board approved the acceptance of the PSAP Cybersecurity Remediation Initiative Funds.

PREQUALIFICATION POLICY AND RESOLUTION

A prequalification process aims to impartially assess contractors, ensuring they possess responsible business practices, relevant work experience, adequate manpower, and equipment necessary for bidding on construction projects. Contracts should be awarded based on open competition, impartial contractor selection, integrity in business dealings, and proficient, safe project execution. To prevent underqualified bidders from competing for jobs, the County's Project Team deemed it essential to establish a qualification process for construction project bidders and recommended the adoption of a policy through a resolution to formalize this approach. The Board approved the recommendation through the adoption of Resolution #14-2024.

RESOLUTION # 14-2024 RESOLUTION ADOPTING A POLICY FOR PREQUALIFICATION OF BIDDERS FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

WHEREAS, Session Law 2014-42, amended N.C.G.S. §143-135.8 and N.C.G.S. §143-128.1 to provide general authorization to local governments to prequalify contractors for construction and repair contracts that are bid under the single-prime, separate-prime (multi-prime), or dual bidding methods as well as the first-tier subcontractors on Construction Manager at Risk projects; and

WHEREAS, Session Law 2014-42, requires that prior to advertisement of the contract for which the governmental entity intends to prequalify bidders, that Transylvania County adopt an objective prequalification policy to ensure uniformity, consistency, and transparency in its application to all bidders; and

WHEREAS, a policy for prequalification of bidders for construction projects as authorized by Session Law 2014-42, was prepared by Transylvania County's Finance Department and distributed to the affected departments with favorable responses; and

WHEREAS, staff recommend that Transylvania County adopt the Transylvania County Policy for Prequalification of Bidders for Construction Projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the Transylvania County Policy for Prequalification of Bidders for Construction Projects.

This the 22nd day of April 2024.

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

PROCLAMATION - NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION

Celebrated the first full week in May, Public Service Recognition Week is a time set aside to honor the men and women who serve our nation as federal, state, county, and local government employees. Commissioners will recognize and honor county employees by hosting an Employee Appreciation Event on Friday, May 10 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Library's Rogow Room and outdoor patio area. Human Resources and Administration Staff are planning the details of the event, which will include food and entertainment. The Board approved Proclamation #08-2024 Public Service Recognition Week.

**PROCLAMATION #08-2024
NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK**

WHEREAS, Public servants at the local, state and federal levels work selflessly to provide for the needs of citizens on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS, Government employees are committed to carrying out their duties, responsibilities and oaths not only in times of prosperity and calm but also in times of duress and uncertainty; and

WHEREAS, The global pandemic has revealed the critical nature of work performed by our *local* public servants who have ensured continuity of services by transforming operations that were once routine and predictable through agility, adaptation, creativity, and innovation; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County's employees have collaborated across departmental lines to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our citizens by providing essential services such as emergency response, public health, social services, solid waste services, sanitation of facilities, childcare, and transportation services; and

WHEREAS, We have witnessed our public servants display their courage and humanity in these unprecedented times, placing service before self in their dedication to our community and in their support of each other; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County's employees are doing important work that positively affects all of us every day, and they work to address the incredible challenges our citizens are facing; and

WHEREAS, Public servants deserve thanks for working diligently on our behalf. Government service is public service.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners to recognize the week of May 5-11, 2024, as National Public Service Recognition Week and to encourage citizens to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of government employees at all levels.

This the 22nd day of April 2024.

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

JOINT PROCLAMATION - MENTAL HEALTH MONTH IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

Brevard Mayor Maureen Copelof contacted the County about doing a joint proclamation of the three local governments in Transylvania County to proclaim May as Mental Health Month to raise awareness and highlight the importance of mental health. With the recent suicides in our community, it is important for the three boards – Board of County Commissioners, Brevard City Council, and Rosman Board of Aldermen - to send a unified message to the public. The Board approved a joint proclamation proclaiming May as Mental Health Month. The Clerk to the Board will forward the proclamation to City and Town officials for approval and signatures.

**A Proclamation
Mental Health Month in Transylvania County, the City of Brevard, and the Town of Rosman**

WHEREAS, the mental health and well-being of our community members, especially our youth, are paramount to the vitality and resilience of Transylvania County, the City of Brevard, and the Town of Rosman; and

WHEREAS, recent tragic events, including student suicides, have underscored the urgent need for increased awareness, support, and action to address mental health challenges in our community; and

WHEREAS, mental health is an integral component of overall health and wellness, and access to comprehensive mental health resources and support services is essential for all individuals to thrive; and

WHEREAS, stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health concerns often prevent individuals from seeking the help and support they need, perpetuating cycles of suffering and isolation; and

WHEREAS, by coming together as a community, we can break down barriers, foster empathy, and create a culture of understanding, compassion, and acceptance for those experiencing mental health challenges; and

WHEREAS, May is recognized nationally as Mental Health Awareness Month, providing an opportunity to raise awareness, combat stigma, and promote mental health resources;

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the undersigned leaders of Transylvania County, the City of Brevard, and the Town of Rosman, do hereby proclaim May as Mental Health Month and call upon all residents to join us in our commitment to prioritize mental health and well-being for ourselves, our families, and our community.

We urge individuals to:

- Educate themselves and others about mental health and the importance of seeking help when needed.
- Foster supportive and inclusive environments where individuals feel safe to share their experiences and seek support without fear of judgment or stigma.
- Advocate for policies and initiatives that promote mental health awareness, access to care, and suicide prevention efforts.
- Encourage open and honest conversations about mental health, reducing the silence and shame that often surrounds these issues.
- Access available mental health resources and support services and encourage others to do the same.

Together, let us work tirelessly to create a community where mental health is valued, prioritized, and supported, and where every individual feels empowered to live their lives to the fullest.

This the 22nd day of April 2024.

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

S://Maureen Copelof, Mayor
City of Brevard

S://Brian Shelton, Mayor
Town of Rosman

PROCLAMATION - NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

In 1988, both Houses of Congress adopted legislation declaring the first Thursday in May of each year as National Day of Prayer. The Commissioners proclaimed May 2, 2024, as “A Day of Prayer in Transylvania County.” This year’s theme, “Lift Up the Word. Light Up the World.” is based on the verse of 2 Samuel 22:29-31. First Baptist Church has organized an event at noon on May 2 to commemorate the National Day of

Prayer. The Board approved Proclamation #10-2024 Proclaiming May 2 as a Day of Prayer in Transylvania County.

**PROCLAMATION #10-2024
NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER**

WHEREAS, Throughout history, America has faced trials and triumphs, and Americans have responded in prayer seeking courage and comfort, inspiration, and joy-filled celebration. Faith compels us to seek and cling to the Light in times of darkness and spread light to those in need; and

WHEREAS, From the first gatherings of our Founding Fathers, elected officials have prayed and entreated those they serve and represent to join them in prayer, including the authors of our Declaration of Independence, wrote that they, “the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world...” and carried on to present day in Presidential Proclamations such as last year’s invitation to “join him in asking for God’s continued guidance, mercy, and protection.,” and

WHEREAS, A National Day of Prayer has not only been a part of our heritage since it was declared by the First Continental Congress in 1775, but it is a Public Law established in the United States Congress in 1952 approved by a Joint Resolution and amended by Congress and President Reagan with Public Law 100-307 in 1988, affirming that it is essential for us as a nation to pray and directs the President of the United States to set aside and proclaim the first Thursday of May annually as The National Day of Prayer; and

WHEREAS, In every state across America, the observance of the National Day of Prayer will be held on Thursday, May 2, 2024, with the theme, “Lift Up the Word, Light Up the World,” based on the verses found in 2 Samuel 22:29-31, “For you are my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness ... This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.,” and

WHEREAS, Unified prayer is mobilized across America every first Thursday of May on the National Day of Prayer as neighbors come together to join their hearts and voices in reading sacred Scriptures and attending services to seek God for the city and country where we live, learn, work, worship, serve, and desire all to thrive; and

WHEREAS, We express our faith and exercise our freedom in prayer, then unite our hearts and voices in personal prayer and public gatherings across America with fervent praise, repentance, love, and humble intercession for our neighbor and nation, holding fast to the promises throughout the Holy Scriptures that the Lord hears and avails much as He answers the faith-filled prayers of His people.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County does hereby proclaim May 2, 2024, as a National Day of Prayer.

This the 22nd day of April 2024.

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

PROCLAMATION - HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

May has been deemed National Preservation Month or Historic Preservation Month since the 1970’s. The historical nonprofit organizations in Transylvania County plan to celebrate Transylvania County’s history in May with different events planned throughout the month. The Joint Historic Preservation Commission would like to help celebrate and promote May as Historic Preservation Month in Transylvania County with a

proclamation by the Board of Commissioners. The Board approved Proclamation #11-2024 Proclaiming May as Historic Preservation Month in Transylvania County.

**PROCLAMATION #11-2024
PROCLAIMING MAY AS HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH**

WHEREAS, Historic preservation is an effective tool for managing growth, revitalizing neighborhoods, fostering local pride, and maintaining community character while enhancing the livability of a community; and

WHEREAS, Historic preservation is relevant for communities across the nation, both urban and rural, and for Americans of all ages, all walks of life, and all ethnic backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, It is important to celebrate the role of history in our lives and the contributions made by dedicated individuals in helping to preserve the tangible aspects of the heritage that has shaped us as a people; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County and the City of Brevard have two National Register Districts and 21 individual local landmarks; and

WHEREAS, In May there will be a host of events that have been prepared by local historical organizations and co-sponsored by the Transylvania County Joint Historic Preservation Commission, who are appointed by the County Commissioners, to help preserve the historical identity of all Transylvania County;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County does hereby proclaim and recognizes the month of May 2024 as **HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH**.

This the 22nd day of April 2024.

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

PROCLAMATION - FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH

May is National Foster Care Month, a month set aside to acknowledge foster care parents, family members, volunteers, mentors, community members, child welfare professionals, and policymakers who help children and youth in foster care find permanent homes and connections. Department of Social Services Director Amanda Vanderoef requested the Board approve a proclamation raising awareness about the importance of foster care in our community. The Board approved Proclamation #12-2024 Proclaiming May as Foster Care Awareness Month.

**PROCLAMATION #12-2024
FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH**

WHEREAS, the youth of North Carolina are our most precious resource and hope for the future, and all children deserve a safe, loving, and nurturing place to call home; and

WHEREAS, in Transylvania County, there are approximately 45 children of all ages in the custody of the Department of Social Services, and most of these children reside in foster care homes or with relatives; and

WHEREAS, the primary goal of foster care is to provide safe, secure, and stable homes through the compassion and nurturing of a foster family or a kinship family; and

WHEREAS, foster families and kinship families open their homes and hearts to children whose families are in crisis, and play a vital role in helping children and families heal and reunify, while helping children launch into successful adulthood; and

WHEREAS, dedicated foster families and kinship families sometimes adopt foster children, resulting in a greater need for more foster families; and

WHEREAS, through the partnerships of numerous individuals, communities, and public and private organizations, there is a collaborative effort to raise public awareness of the needs of children both in foster care and exiting foster care, and of the enduring and valuable contributions made by foster and kinship families; and

WHEREAS, “Foster Care Awareness Month” is an opportunity to recognize foster families, child welfare professionals, and advocates working to ensure children’s safety, well-being, and permanence, and to spread awareness on behalf of the children in foster care;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED by the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County that May 2024 will be recognized as “**Foster Care Awareness Month**” in Transylvania County, and encourages individuals and families to volunteer their time, energy, and talents on behalf of children in foster care and their biological families, kinship caregivers, and foster families during the month and throughout the year.

Adopted this the 22nd day of April 2024.

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

PROCLAMATION - CLERKS TO THE BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS’ WEEK

The proclamation extends appreciation to all county clerks for the services with which they provide their communities. The clerk serves as the professional link between the citizens, the local governing bodies, and agencies of government at other levels. The functions of the Clerk necessitate a thorough knowledge of law procedure, administration, and interpersonal relationships. The Board approved Proclamation #13-2024 Proclaiming May 5-11, 2024, as Clerks to the Boards of County Commissioners Week.

P R O C L A M A T I O N #13-2024
CLERKS TO THE BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' WEEK
May 5 through May 11, 2024

WHEREAS, It is imperative to the democratic process that a well-informed citizenry participates in the operation of their local government; and

WHEREAS, The office of the Clerk to the Board provides the communication link between the citizens, the local governing body and administrative departments, and local government partners; and

WHEREAS, The position of clerk is one of the oldest in local government, dating at least to biblical times, and whose term has long been associated with the written word; so, it is that modern-day clerks are official recordkeepers for their counties; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina law requires every board of county commissioners to appoint a clerk and the clerk continues in that position “at the pleasure of the board;” and

WHEREAS, The clerk's most significant statutory duties concern the preparation, filing and safeguarding of local government records, but the statutory duties constitute only a portion of what the clerk actually does; and

WHEREAS, The clerk plays a vital role in county government and provides the written record needed to ensure that the board is accountable to the county's citizens and to other public and private officials; and

WHEREAS, The clerk is sometimes described as "the hub of the wheel" in local government because of the central work that the clerk plays in the government's communication network; and

WHEREAS, As local government becomes larger and more complicated, the clerk's role as a professional, dispassionate provider of information to citizens, government officials, and the media becomes more and more important; and

WHEREAS, Clerks have the opportunity to participate in the North Carolina Association of County Clerks, a very active professional association of public officials dedicated to improving the professional competency of clerks through regular regional and statewide educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, In cooperation with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Government and International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), the North Carolina Association of County Clerks helps to sponsor a nationally recognized, examination-based certification program that culminates in receipt of the designation of Certified Municipal Clerk; and

WHEREAS, In addition, the North Carolina Association of County Clerks and the School of Government sponsor state certification programs leading to the designation of North Carolina Certified County Clerk, as well as opportunities for experienced clerks to obtain the continuing professional education needed to remain state-certified or to earn an advanced Master Clerk designation; and

WHEREAS, In addition to conducting education programs, the North Carolina Association of County Clerks also directly assists clerks on the job with mentoring programs to provide guidance to assist clerks in their day-to-day work; and

WHEREAS, Clerks, upon their own initiative, participate in these certification and education programs, including annual meetings of the North Carolina Association of County Clerks and the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, which not only improve the operation of their office, but through their achievements and awards bring favorable publicity to the counties in which they serve; and

WHEREAS, Clerks are involved at the state level, as well as in potential legislative and other matters of interest; and

WHEREAS, Although clerks work for the boards of county commissioners, they truly provide public service;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners does hereby recognize the week of May 5 through May 11, 2024, as Clerks to the Boards of County Commissioners' Week, and extends our appreciation to our Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan and to all County Clerks for the vital services they perform and their exemplary dedication to the county they represent.

Adopted this 22nd day of April 2024.

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

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

MONTHLY CAPITAL UPDATE

Chairman Chappell requested the Manager begin providing monthly updates on the County's capital projects. The Manager reported that the County has several projects that are either underway, in development, or upcoming, totaling \$150 million. Of that, \$30 million is through grant funding, not including broadband on which the County has been working with the local internet service providers. She divided her report on capital projects into the categories of Fix, Create, and Protect.

Fix Transylvania County Schools

The Board of Commissioners and Board of Education have already endorsed a project to fix Transylvania County Schools. Step 1, as recommended by the Education Capital Work Group, has commenced and involves investment in capital projects at all nine schools. The next step is for the Board of Education to provide current project documentation by the target date of May 1. The Manager reported that the School System provided some documentation to the County last week and additional information today, so this step is running slightly ahead of schedule. From May to June, School and County staff will begin meeting to develop scopes of work. This is important because the scope of work must be ready to submit to the Local Government Commission which must feel confident that Transylvania County can accomplish the projects over three years and that the County is requesting sufficient funds to complete the projects.

The financial process for selling the bonds will occur from July through September. The financial process under state statutes is robust and anything but simple. Some of the process also involves having bond rating calls with national firms, such as Moody's or Standard and Poor's. These are some of the critical steps the County must undertake to get to the point of the bond sale. October is the target date for the bond sale with the Local Government Commission. Bonds funds would then be available to invest as soon as November. The Manager reported that this timeline has remained consistent.

The Manager noted there have been a lot of questions surrounding HVAC and roofs which, if not maintained properly, can cause mold issues. The replacements of HVAC and roofs are large expenditures. The Manager detailed these expenses further in a handout to the public.

Create Jobs and a Safe Community

The Manager updated the Board on several projects that are designed to create jobs and keep the community safe. She reported that the new EMS Base Station will be opening soon. Phase 2 of the Sylvan Valley Industrial Building, a 40,000 sq. ft. addition to the current building. Once completed, the addition is expected to create at least 20 jobs. The emergency access flood mitigation project for Hart Road is in the design phase. This is a partnership project with the NC Department of Transportation using grant funds. The contract to design a new courthouse adjacent to the Public Safety Facility is on the Board's agenda for approval later on in the agenda. The approval of the contract will set in motion the next step to review the programming. Lastly, a request for qualifications is underway for the Library Amphitheater project. This project will provide a cover for the amphitheater and will allow more opportunities for the facility's usage, especially during poor weather conditions.

Protect Transylvania Natural Resources

These are projects that involve clean water, sanitary sewer, solid waste disposal, and the restoration of streambanks. The County recently completed the water and sewer access project on the US 64 to Rosman which came in under budget. The County has also completed the engineering study for Rosman on the Burlingame system which is important to understand the types of investment needed to serve that area of the community. The County is currently working on the design of the water system interconnection for the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman that will ensure no interruption of service during an emergency. The erosion control permit on the project has been issued, so the County hopes to move forward with construction

soon. The County is also constructing a new landfill cell that will extend the life of the County's landfill to at least 2030. The project is currently in the design phase. Staff will be applying for the erosion control permit soon with construction to begin by the end of the calendar year. Finally, an emergency water protection streambank restoration project is under construction that involves \$1 million in emergency streambank restorations resulting from the damage from Tropical Storm Fred.

The Manager reiterated that the projects she highlighted are either fully or partially funded by grants and the remaining projects are supported with taxpayer dollars.

This concluded the Manager's update. Chairman Chappell called for questions and comments from the Board.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the timeline for the new courthouse. The Manager reported that three years is a reasonable timeline to complete the design and construction. The design work will commence once the architect completes the program verification.

Commissioner Dalton asked if the State would be open to reclassifying the County's allocation of grant funds. The Manager reported there is potential for the State to allow the County to use its allocation of \$10 million for other purposes, but at this point, the County can only spend the money on water and infrastructure.

Chairman Chappell thanked the Manager for the presentation and reminded everyone that the Manager will provide an update monthly.

APPOINTMENTS

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

Devin Gentry rolled off the Agricultural Advisory Board at the end of April 2023 after having served two full terms. The Clerk to the Board advertised on several occasions to recruit applicants, but none of the applicants met the requirement to be part of the farming community until now. The County's Ag Agent, Bart Renner, reviewed the application to determine Dwight Parker's eligibility and recommended his appointment. In addition, the terms of Jeffrey Bradley and Cynthiana Cain expire at the end of April. Both are eligible and willing to serve another term.

Commissioner McCall moved to appoint Dwight Parker to fill a vacancy on the Ag Advisory Board and reappoint Jeffrey Bradley and Cynthiana Cain to a second term, seconded by Commissioner Dalton.

Commissioner Chapman was encouraged to hear about the positive interaction between the Agricultural Advisory Board and Transylvania Natural Resources Council during the TNRC meeting last week.

Commissioner Dalton stated that the significant economic contribution of agriculture to the local economy often goes unnoticed. He was thankful that most local farmers were continuing their agricultural activities as opposed to selling to developers. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

OLD BUSINESS

EDUCATION CAPITAL WORK GROUP PROJECT BUDGET

In late 2022, the Board of Education and County Commission agreed to develop a work group to evaluate the capital needs of Transylvania County Schools. The work group presented the options to both Boards in March 2023. The Commissioners approved up to \$170,000 to support the work of this group. These funds covered the cost of a maintenance reserve study/assessment, consulting services by retired professionals, safety assessments, environmental testing, and structural testing at almost all school sites.

As the work group moves to the next phase, the Manager requested an additional \$50,00 to engage with the consultants to develop the scope of work for the recommended projects and to implement a maintenance plan

to extend the life of the beams in Brevard High School. Staff will engage a structural engineer to prepare the maintenance plan.

Commissioner McCall wanted reassurance that the School System would conduct the recommended work. She recalled that some of the work had previously been recommended but was only partially completed. The Manager confirmed that the work was only partially completed but said there may have been some miscommunication about the plans. Staff have a plan to repair the existing beams while implementing a maintenance plan to extend the life of those beams according to the structural engineer's assessment. The Manager emphasized that the Board of Commissioners does not have the authority to ensure the work gets done; however, County staff intend to encourage the School System to complete the recommended work as soon as possible.

Commissioner McCall felt it would be appropriate to step in and complete the work if the School System fails to do so, adding that the Board of Commissioners can have this discussion if it gets to this point.

Commissioner Chapman reiterated the Manager's point that the Board of Commissioners cannot dictate to the School System to complete certain projects or work. With the County as the funding source, he felt that frank discussions were needed between the two Boards to determine who should be responsible for ensuring the work is completed. He cited incomplete projects despite County funds being allocated for the reason the schools are in their current condition.

Chairman Chappell inquired about the timeframe for the Commissioners to receive the engineering report on the suggested regular maintenance plan. The Manager stated that staff should receive information from the structural engineer as early as two weeks. In response, Chairman Chappell requested an update on the Board's next agenda scheduled for May 13.

Commissioner McCall moved to approve an increase in the Education Capital Work Group Project Budget of \$50,000 in the Education Capital Fund to fund consultant usage during the project scoping phase, including a maintenance plan to prolong the life of the Brevard High structural beams prepared by a licensed structural engineer, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

FY 2024 3RD QUARTER BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Budget and Management Analyst Jennifer Wright submitted the FY 2024 3rd Quarter Budget Amendments for the Board's approval.

Based on policies approved by the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County through the annual budget ordinance and the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve certain amendments to the budget ordinance. Primarily, these are the types of budget amendments that by their nature require review/approval by a governing board:

1. Recognition of new revenues and appropriations for related expenditures
2. Appropriations of fund balance (whether assigned, committed, or restricted)
3. Transfers from one fund to another fund, if permitted statute by statute
4. Establishment of new special revenue funds, capital project funds, or fiduciary funds

A summary of the amendments for approval is below:

Budget Amendment 23: Allocate \$3,947 to the Register of Deeds supplemental Pension budget, as requested by the Register. Effective 1/3/24.

Budget Amendment 24: Recognize and allocate \$20,000 in revenue from Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority grant funds for the Community Appearance Initiative led by the Transportation, Planning and Community Development Department, in collaboration with Solid Waste and the Environmental Health departments. Effective 1/17/24.

Budget Amendment 25: Update budget lines to correctly reflect the budget for the Sylvan Valley Project Phase 2, supported by a \$1.5 million Golden LEAF grant for construction, a \$150,000 Transylvania Economic Alliance grant for professional services/architectural design, and a \$3.75 million match from County funds as approved by the Board of Commissioners on 5/9/22. Effective 2/5/2024.

Budget Amendment 26: Recognize and allocate a \$25,174 increase in revenue from State Aid funding to the Transylvania County Public Library. Effective 1/30/24.

Budget Amendment 27: Recognize and allocate \$40,000 in grant funds from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center Partnership Development Grant. Per a Board-approved agreement signed on 6/2/23, these grant funds were received by the County and disbursed as a lump sum incentive payment to Raybow Pharmaceuticals, as part of Project Whooping Crane. Effective 2/16/24.

Budget Amendment 28: Recognize and allocate \$30,000 in grant funds from the Pisgah Health Foundation to support an expansion of the County's transit system. The funds will be used toward the hiring of a part-time transit driver to make scheduled trips outside the existing service area to meet increased demand for services. Effective 2/19/24.

Budget Amendment 29: Recognize and allocate the PSAP Portable Radio Grant from the NC 9-1-1 Board. The reimbursement grant of \$49,985 covers six portable radios, batteries and chargers, and associated programming and maintenance costs for each of the primary dispatch positions. Effective 2/19/24.

Budget Amendment 30: Reallocate \$4,000 within the Library budget for travel and training expenses. Effective 2/22/24.

Budget Amendment 31: Reallocate \$42,670 within the Solid Waste budget for repairs to the D6 dozer. Effective 2/22/24.

Budget Amendment 33: Reallocate \$1,400 within the Fire Marshal's Office budget to cover the cost of an unexpected radio equipment failure. Effective 2/29/24.

Budget Amendment 34: Update budget lines to correctly reflect the budgets for the grant-funded StRAP and EWP projects to repair damages caused by Tropical Storm Fred, previously approved by the Board of Trustees. The \$90,000 StRAP grant project is complete, and the \$700,000 EWP project is now in progress. Effective 3/12/24.

Budget Amendment 35: Reallocate \$46,259 within the Information Technology budget to replace essential network equipment becoming obsolete in 2024. Effective 3/11/24.

Budget Amendment 36: Reallocate \$2,152 within the Library budget to finalize the purchase and shipping of furniture. Effective 3/11/24.

Budget Amendment 38: Recognize and allocate a \$75,000 Dogwood Trust Fund grant from the Land of Sky Regional Council to the County's Information Technology Department to complete projects to improve Public internet access, as approved by the Board of Commissioners on 9/11/23. Effective 3/19/24.

Budget Amendment 39: Reallocate \$3,900 within the Public Health budget to supply COVID vaccines per State requirement. Effective 3/22/24.

Budget Amendment 40: Reallocate \$83,500 in excess funds from the Sheriff's tuition assistance reserve to purchase a new van for transporting inmates, as requested by the Sheriff's Office and approved by the Board of Commissioners on 3/25/2024. Effective 3/26/24.

Ms. Wright highlighted that the budget amendment numbers serve as part of the Finance Department's internal tracking system. She informed the Board that amendments numbered 32 and 37 are currently pending and awaiting processing. These will be addressed in the upcoming 4th quarter report.

In response, the Board and Manager expressed their appreciation to Ms. Wright for her diligent management of the budget amendments. Chairman Chappell also acknowledged the County's auditor's recommendation for a quarterly report on budget amendments, noting that Ms. Wright's report and request for approval align perfectly with this directive.

Commissioner McCall moved to receive the budget changes report through March 31, 2024, and to approve the budget amendments as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

FY 2024 3RD QUARTER FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Finance Director Meagan O'Neal presented the FY 2024 3rd Financial Summary. The County's auditor requires quarterly updates so that the Board remains informed of the County's financial condition.

Key Revenue Points

Property tax revenue stands at \$42,179,279, representing 99.6% of the total levy. This includes approximately \$40 million from current year taxes and \$2 million came from prior year collections, encompassing interest, late fees, and motor vehicle taxes. Staff formulates the budget based on a 99.5% collection rate. As of the third quarter of the fiscal year, the County has met its target.

Sales tax revenues amount to \$7,051,588, with a 57% collection rate in line with expectations for this period. Notably, this incorporates \$913,170 in Medicaid Hold Harmless funds, significantly lower than the budgeted \$1.4 million. Ms. O'Neal highlighted a statewide trend of such shortfalls. The NC Association of County Commissioners is advocating on behalf of counties to the State to address the deficit. Staff will continue to provide updates to the Board as developments unfold.

The County's investment earnings reached \$2,280,975, surpassing the budgeted amount by 323%.

General Fund Expenditures

Personnel expenses across all departments have reached 70.5% of the allocated budget, totaling \$23,273,956. A few departments have exceeded 75% and they have been directed to manage their overtime and other personnel expenses prudently. Conversely, some departments remain below expectations due to factors such as lapsed salaries and vacancies. Staff are closely monitoring all the expenses as the fiscal year draws to a close and are ready to address any departmental issues, as necessary.

Operating expenses stand at 65.5% across all departments. Staff has yet to determine whether there are any substantial expenses yet to be recorded or if the current average reflects underspending within certain budgets. Staff will be monitoring expenses closely to ascertain the situation.

Contracted services across all departments are at 69.8%. While some departments have utilized 100% of their contracted services budget, others have not expended any funds in this category. As part of the year-end processes, staff will evaluate the necessity of these contracted services for the upcoming fiscal year.

Enterprise Fund (Solid Waste)

The Solid Waste department has generated \$2,321,089 in revenues, with \$1.5 million stemming from the Woodruff Landfill, representing 84% of the budget. Additionally, revenues include \$477,718 from sticker sales, slightly below 75% of the budget. Other sources of revenue comprise various fees and interest. Notably, recycling fees and bulk item fees are only at 50% of the budget, falling below expectations for this point in the year.

Expenses currently stand at 58.6% of the budget. As a result, the entire fund has a current net income of \$7,296. However, forecasting year-end totals proves challenging for this department due to potential equipment failures, which could lead to increased expenses, and the seasonal factor of citizens engaging in spring cleaning and waste disposal, which could drive revenues up.

Finance Department Progress

The Finance Department is currently engaged in several capital projects, as detailed in the Manager's capital update.

Ms. O'Neal provided an update on the FY 2023 audit, noting that the majority of the initial data requested by auditors has been supplied by staff. Currently, staff are actively researching and addressing inquiries from the auditors. She highlighted that in prior years, many financial tasks were finalized at year-end, contributing to delays in completing the audit. To streamline the process, she is spearheading the implementation of new procedures involving regular monthly reconciliations, aiming to facilitate timely audit completion.

The FY 2025 budget process is in progress. Ms. O'Neal participated in the departmental budget meetings. With this year being her first budget cycle year, she found the budget team and process to be productive and informative.

With the FY 2024 year-end quickly approaching, Finance staff are diligently working through the necessary procedures for closing out the year effectively.

Ms. O'Neal concluded her presentation and invited the Commissioners to pose any questions they might have.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the progress of the audit completion for next year. He noted the challenges faced by counties in finding auditors, given the limited number of firms willing to undertake this responsibility for local government. The Manager assured the Commissioners that the County is on schedule to finalize the audit for the upcoming year. Additionally, she reminded them of the County's contract with an auditor to conduct audits for the fire departments. Efforts are underway to obtain audits for the fire departments from the previous years, particularly with the former firm that defaulted.

Chairman Chappell thanked Ms. O'Neal for streamlining the report, acknowledging the extensive nature of the detailed information provided in the Board's agenda packet.

Commissioner Casciato inquired about the resolution of issues concerning counterfeit solid waste disposal stickers. The Manager informed the Commissioners that the County has pursued legal action regarding counterfeit stickers and noted a lack of recent incidents. Emphasizing the significance of the matter, she reiterated the County's commitment to maintaining strict controls over the solid waste disposal sticker process, given its impact on the Solid Waste department's revenues.

Chairman Chappell underscored a key section of the report concerning the Medicaid Hold Harmless funds, highlighting the significant reliance of counties on external funds. He noted that when the General Assembly introduced the Hold Harmless Funds, it did so in exchange for a portion of sales tax revenue, with assurances that it would consistently benefit counties. However, Transylvania County has been left with a shortfall of \$500,000. This underscores the critical importance of ongoing advocacy efforts, as a single change in funding can profoundly impact local governments. Chairman Chappell emphasized that while promises may be made, alterations to state regulations can directly affect local communities, often resulting in the need to either raise property taxes or reduce services. This situation exemplifies the considerable dependence of local governments on both the General Assembly and federal funds.

Commissioner Chapman thanked the citizens for being diligent about paying their taxes. Acknowledging Transylvania County's historically high tax collection rate, which is attributable to the citizens' cooperation and the diligent efforts of the Tax Office. Commissioner Chapman emphasized citizens' understanding of their responsibility in contributing to the County's financial stability, which in turn facilitates more straightforward budgeting processes.

Chairman Chappell shared insights from two articles he read during the week, one highlighting a \$1.5 billion revenue surplus in the General Assembly and another warning of a looming multi-billion-dollar fiscal cliff in the coming year. This underscores the necessity for continued vigilance and awareness of fiscal challenges.

Commissioner McCall expressed appreciation for Ms. O'Neal's efforts.

The Manager commended Ms. O'Neal for her dedication in not only addressing last year's audit but also implementing processes for FY 2024 to ensure smoother operations. She expressed confidence in Ms. O'Neal's contributions since joining in October and looked forward to her continued work.

Commissioner Dalton moved to receive the report as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chapman, and unanimously approved.

APPROVE COURTHOUSE ARCHITECT CONTRACT AND FEE SCHEDULE

The Manager announced that the Board of Commissioners had authorized staff to engage in negotiations for a contract with Sizemore Architects, and an agreement has been reached with the firm. The County Attorney has reviewed both the contract language and its appendices. Additionally, staff have successfully negotiated a fee schedule, which is designed to adjust based on the project's cost but will not exceed 6.25% for design fees, with 0.75% allocated for pre-design work. The FF&E (Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment) design is estimated to comprise 10% of the final FF&E package. The Manager expressed confidence in the robustness of the architectural contract and fee schedule, especially considering the scope of the courthouse project. To finalize the process, the Manager requested approval from the Commissioners to proceed with the contract and fee schedule, utilizing funds from the reserved fund balance for this purpose. Furthermore, authorization was sought for either the Chairman or Manager to sign the contract, and for staff to commence the verification phase.

Commissioner Dalton sought confirmation regarding the timeframe for the design phase, which the Manager confirmed to be 18 months.

Commissioner McCall clarified that the County has allocated funds specifically designated to cover the costs of both the pre-design and design work, which the Manager affirmed.

Commissioner Casciato sought clarification regarding the committee's role in reviewing the designs. In response, the Manager explained that various groups would be involved in different aspects of the project. Stakeholders from the courthouse would assist with program design to ensure their needs are met, while the

County's project team would collaborate throughout the project alongside the contractors, including the architect.

Commissioner Chapman urged the Board not to overlook the importance of repurposing the old courthouse, suggesting that it might necessitate the formation of a committee comprised of citizens invested in the issue. Chairman Chappell emphasized that the Board's current priority is the FY 2025 Budget. He suggested that once the budget is approved, the Board can then address other matters, including the repurposing of the old courthouse.

Commissioner Casciato moved to approve the architect's contract and fee from the fund balance, to authorize the Chairman or Manager to sign the contract, and for staff to proceed with the program verification phase, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

Commissioner McCall sought clarification regarding the formation of the committee that the Manager would be collaborating with. In response, the Manager explained that previously, there was a stakeholder group involved in the prior program verification process. This group consisted of representatives from the various functions housed within the courthouse, such as the Clerk of Court, Judges, and others. Moving forward, the Manager indicated that they would convene this stakeholder group specifically for the program verification phase. Additionally, the project team would play a significant role throughout the entire project.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The County Manager provides an update to the Board and public on various items of interest. She reported the following:

- May 14, 2024, Second Primary for Republican Lt. Governor and Republican State Auditor candidate races
 - Open to all registered Republicans and unaffiliated voters who chose a Republican ballot in the March primary, and unaffiliated voters who did not vote in the March primary
 - Early voting begins on Thursday, April 25, and runs through Saturday, May 11
 - Voters will be asked to present an acceptable photo ID for voting
 - For more information, contact the Transylvania County Board of Elections at 884-3114
- There is an extra week between this meeting and the first meeting in May. The next Board of Commissioners meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 13 at 4:00 p.m.
- The County Manager will present her recommended budget for FY 2025 at the May 14 meeting.

Commissioner Chapman noted that the second meeting in May coincides with Memorial Day and requested confirmation that the meeting would be rescheduled to Tuesday. The Manager confirmed this adjustment to the Board's meeting schedule.

Commissioner McCall raised a concern regarding a potential conflict with the June 10 meeting. She explained that three Commissioners would need to be in Raleigh the following day to participate in NCACC Steering Committees. Due to the considerable travel distance involved, she suggested a review of the meeting schedule to accommodate this conflict. The Manager agreed to collaborate with the Chairman and Clerk to the Board on adjusting the schedule, including finding suitable dates for the budget workshop.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public comments represent the speakers' opinions or points of view. The Chairman first called upon those signed up and did not get an opportunity to address the Board during the first public comment period.

Then he opened the floor for additional public comments. The same rules applied in that each speaker received three minutes to speak, but there was no time limit on the public comment period.

Kim Christopher:

Ms. Christopher stressed that the community widely acknowledges the urgent need for repairs and updates to the school facilities. She emphasized that everyone understands how important this issue is. She pointed out the significant amount of time and effort spent on figuring out what needs to be done, producing solutions, estimating costs, and making sure construction is done safely. Ms. Christopher also talked about how complicated this process is and why it is important to focus on safety and fiscal responsibility. Despite challenges like delays, supply chain issues, and rising costs, progress is happening. She encouraged people to actively help find solutions instead of just complaining. She reminded everyone that the Board is committed to using funds effectively. Ms. Christopher asked the community to get involved and support the School Board and Commissioners in their work.

Harvest Leasure:

Mr. Leasure, a concerned parent, contractor, and citizen, has been closely observing the condition of Rosman Middle and High Schools, as well as Brevard High School. He was alarmed by numerous safety and health issues, including roof leaks, mold, structural failures, and deteriorating infrastructure. These problems are not only affecting the physical environment but also posing risks to students and staff. Mr. Leasure was troubled by the lack of action taken to address these issues, despite repeated frustrations expressed by teachers and students. He emphasized the urgent need for concrete solutions and actions from the Commissioners, not just promises. While he appreciated the steps being taken, he urged for tangible results to restore trust within the community and ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in the schools.

Damian Vicary:

Mr. Vicary, a professional engineer, acknowledged the challenges faced by the Commission in waiting for a comprehensive plan required for submission to the Local Government Commission. He noted the positive changes within the School Board, particularly under the new Superintendent, and praised the progress made and the competent individuals put in place. However, he stressed the need for a dedicated project management team to oversee the execution of the project, given its scale and complexity. Mr. Vicary expressed gratitude to the Board for their patience and adherence to a solid plan, avoiding premature action that could have led to wasted resources. He commended both the Commissioners and the School Board for their dedication and progress within the constraints of bureaucracy.

Ashley Hart: Ms. Hart expressed gratitude to the commissioners for their contributions to the community.

Lisa Rodke: Ms. Rodke highlighted the historical context of the deteriorating conditions in school buildings, noting that some Commissioners were previously on the School Board. She emphasized that the need for repairs did not develop overnight. Ms. Rodke criticized the deferred maintenance which has now resulted in significant issues such as mold. She questioned whether the County Commission had adequately addressed repair proposals or simply dismissed them. She said the community is weary of the ongoing bickering between the School Board and Commissioners since the passage of the bond. Ms. Rodke stressed the missed opportunities to address the issues before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could have allowed for repairs while students were not in school. She urged the Commissioners to collaborate with the School Board and prioritize timely action to avoid further delays.

Claudia Hawkins:

Ms. Hawkins expressed her exhaustion with the ongoing dispute between the County Commission and the Board of Education regarding school funding. She urged both parties to cease the finger-pointing. While acknowledging the Commission's greater responsibility due to their control over funding and statutory obligations, she stressed the need for accountability on both sides. Ms. Hawkins criticized the childish

behavior exhibited by both Boards, citing the need to move past mistakes and focus on constructive action. Despite setbacks, such as the failure to execute extensive renovations funded by the voter-approved bond, she emphasized the urgent need to make schools operational. Ms. Hawkins called for a reset and expressed hope that new staff members could facilitate a fresh start if elected officials prioritize cooperation and collaboration.

Peter Offen: Mr. Offen emphasized the principle that leaders bear responsibility for the outcomes, or lack thereof, under their leadership. He lamented the failure of leadership within the County Commission, noting their responsibility to ensure safe learning environments for students. He criticized the Commissioners for attempting to deflect blame elsewhere instead of taking ownership of the failures within the School System. Mr. Offen urged the Commissioners to reflect on their responsibilities and called for action to address the deficiencies in the School System. He highlighted the personal impact of these failures on parents, students, and administrators, emphasizing that it transcends politics and requires immediate attention. As a gesture of commitment to fixing the schools, he proposed that each Commissioner donate their salary to the School System until the issues are resolved, viewing it as a symbolic act of good faith. He implored the Commissioners to prioritize their duties and cease shifting blame, urging them to fulfill their responsibilities and rectify the shortcomings in the School System.

Mary Freudenberg: Ms. Freudenberg, a volunteer with the Living Wage Coalition of Transylvania County, highlighted the importance of paying a living wage to promote a just and sustainable local economy. She noted that over 75 businesses and nonprofits in the County have already committed to paying a living wage, resulting in better staff retention and competitiveness in recruitment. However, she emphasized that a significant portion of Transylvania County's workforce, including many County employees, still do not earn a living wage. She defined a living wage as the minimum income necessary to cover basic needs without outside assistance, such as food, clothing, transportation, and housing. In Western North Carolina, this wage is calculated at \$16.40 per hour. Ms. Freudenberg expressed gratitude to the Board for approving a 3.4% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase for County employees earlier in the year. However, she urged the Board to consider two additional measures: raising the wages of the lowest-paid county employees to \$16.40 per hour and adopting a paid family medical leave policy for all County staff. She argued that providing paid time off for family health crises improves morale, loyalty, and efficiency, while also helping to attract and retain skilled workers. Ms. Freudenberg underscored the importance of ensuring that County workers, who are vital to the community's functioning, can afford their basic needs and support their families. She expressed hope for the Board's support in implementing these initiatives.

Cassie Broshears:

Ms. Broshears, a parent with both a recent graduate and a future graduate in the School System, acknowledged the importance of fiscal responsibility and strategic planning in executing the capital plan. However, she argued that the current learning and teaching environment demands more immediate action from all stakeholders, including parents, the Board of Education, and the Board of Commissioners. Ms. Broshears pointed out that if the conditions in some schools were found in homes or private businesses, regulatory agencies would take swift action. She called for accountability and urged the Commissioners to stop hiding behind fiscal responsibility excuses and to acknowledge the deteriorating conditions in schools. Ms. Broshears criticized a recent newspaper article in which a Commissioner blamed principals for not reporting school conditions, arguing that Commissioners who live in the community bear responsibility. She questioned how often Commissioners had visited schools in the past five years, emphasizing that students and parents are well aware of the conditions. She lamented the time and energy wasted on excuses instead of addressing the needs of the School System, noting the negative impact on students who witness such behavior from community leaders. Ms. Broshears stressed that when it comes to human safety, actions speak louder than words.

Theresa Weber: Ms. Weber, representing the School Improvement Coalition in Transylvania County, emphasized the nonpartisan group's efforts to raise awareness about the condition of schools in the community. She highlighted the students' involvement in the coalition and their concerns about school conditions, as evidenced by their presence and signs at the meeting. Ms. Weber underscored the urgency of utilizing the funds from the school bond passed six years ago, which will expire in November 2025 if not acted upon. Expressing hope that the Commissioners would promptly issue the bonds and initiate the necessary projects, Ms. Weber also voiced skepticism due to the delay in selling the bonds over the past six years. She urged the Commissioners to be proactive in applying for an extension if needed, stressing that it is not a simple process and requires careful planning and adherence to deadlines. She urged the Commissioners to familiarize themselves with the process and take responsibility for ensuring that the County receives the funds allocated for school improvements.

Kristi Brown:

Ms. Brown, the Clerk of Superior Court for Transylvania County, thanked the Board of Commissioners for moving forward with the courthouse project. She wanted to know more about the qualifications of the selected architect for designing courthouses architects and when they planned to include stakeholders in the process. As a key stakeholder herself, she mentioned that she had not been contacted yet and wanted to know when she could expect to be involved.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Chairman Chappell highlighted two upcoming fundraising events: a talent show on April 27th at Rosman High School Auditorium, benefiting the theater department, and a BBQ plate sale and community yard sale fundraiser for Rosman Youth Football and Cheerleading at Rosman Town Hall this Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. He encouraged community members to attend and show their support.

Commissioner Chapman reminded everyone about the District 16 North Carolina Association of County Commissioners meeting happening on Wednesday night. This meeting will bring together Commissioners and staff from Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania Counties, along with the NCACC Director and President.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Dalton moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously carried.**

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board