

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MAY 13, 2024 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

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 Megan Silver participated remotely via Zoom meeting software.

Media: Dan DeWitt – *Brevard Newsbeat*
Jon Rich – *The Transylvania Times*

There were approximately 50 in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 4:01 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' points of view or opinions.

Alice Wellborn: Ms. Wellborn expressed deep concern about the strained working relationship between the County and the School System. Despite promises of collaboration, the School Board and staff are consistently met with disrespect from Commissioners and County officials. Recent events, such as the delay in funding for crucial boiler installations, highlight this ongoing issue. Despite being on the approved projects list, the County's reluctance to release funds jeopardizes essential services like heating for schools. The lack of cooperation is evident, compounded by the County's failure to reimburse the schools promptly. This situation undermines trust and goodwill, reflecting a failure to act in good faith and fulfill promises of collaboration.

Jeff Brewer: Mr. Brewer clarified his stance, noting a lesser degree of concern compared to the previous speaker. He emphasized the recent directive from the North Carolina State Board of Elections regarding early voting sites for the 2024 general election, characterizing it as a politically motivated mandate hindering statewide discussion. He highlighted disparities in the number of sites across counties, with larger populations having significantly more sites. Despite Transylvania County's submission of a plan for two sites, Brewer advocated for a third site, particularly in anticipation of high turnout during presidential elections. He underscored logistical challenges at existing sites and suggested proactive measures to address them. Brewer expressed disappointment in the County Board of Elections' lack of action, despite the Republican Party's efforts to secure funding and locate a site. He urged vigilance to prevent a repeat of the 2022 situation where Transylvania County had only one early voting site in the future.

Sam Stites: Mr. Stites, representing the Living Wage Coalition of Transylvania County, advocated for two significant budget changes benefiting County staff. Firstly, he proposed raising the wage floor for County employees to the rural living wage rate of \$16.40, aiming to lift some workers from sub-livable wages. Additionally, he urged the adoption of a comprehensive paid family leave policy covering the birth or adoption of a child or providing necessary care for a relative. The Coalition's efforts involved listening to past and present County workers across various departments to understand their economic realities. Their accounts highlighted struggles with low wages, recruitment and retention challenges, and deficiencies in benefit structures, affecting both workers and their families. Their goal is to voice these concerns, advocate for progress, and collaborate with Commissioners to build a more resilient community through a secure workforce. Referencing the positive impact of wage increases on retention and recruitment at the Sheriff's Office, Mr. Stites emphasized that proper compensation is not only fair but also effective in addressing staffing issues across departments. He stressed that investment in the workforce is often budget-neutral, especially in the case of paid family leave. While refraining from disclosing specific findings, Mr. Stites expressed a desire to share them in good faith with the Board of Commissioners and County leadership to advance the advocated changes. Furthermore, he applied for appointment to the Personnel Board, aiming to contribute to strengthening the County workforce. Mr. Stites urged the Board to view the budget as a reflection of the organization's values and commitments to its dedicated staff, emphasizing the importance of providing wages and benefits that honor their service and well-being.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The Board approved the following items:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners held a special closed session on April 8, 2024, in which the minutes were sealed, and met in a regular meeting on April 22, 2024. The Board approved the minutes as submitted.

PROCLAMATION - EMS WEEK

In 1974 President Gerald Ford signed into law the Emergency Medical Services Systems Act of 1973. The third full week of May has ever since been designated as EMS Week. The purpose of EMS Week is to honor the dedication of the EMS personnel who provide day-to-day lifesaving services of medicine's front line. The Board of Commissioners is proud of the paid and volunteer EMS staff that provide this critical lifesaving service to the citizens and visitors of Transylvania County. This year's theme is *Honoring Our Past. Forging Our Future*. The Board approved Proclamation #15-2024 EMS Week, designating the week of May 19-25, 2024, as Emergency Medical Services Week.

**Proclamation #15-2024 EMS Week
To designate the Week of May 19 - 25, 2024, as Emergency Medical Services Week**

WHEREAS, emergency medical services is a vital public service; and

WHEREAS, the members of emergency medical services teams are ready to provide lifesaving care to those in need 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and

WHEREAS, access to quality emergency care dramatically improves the survival and recovery rate of those who experience sudden illness or injury; and

WHEREAS, emergency medical services has grown to fill a gap by providing important, out-of-hospital care, including preventative medicine, follow-up care, and access to telemedicine; and

WHEREAS, the emergency medical services system consists of first responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, emergency medical dispatchers, firefighters, police officers, educators, administrators, pre-hospital nurses, emergency nurses, emergency physicians, trained members of the public, and other out of hospital medical care providers; and

WHEREAS, the members of emergency medical services teams, whether career or volunteer, engage in thousands of hours of specialized training and continuing education to enhance their lifesaving skills; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to recognize the value and the accomplishments of emergency medical services providers by designating the Emergency Medical Services Week;

Now THEREFORE, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners, in recognition of this event does hereby proclaim the week of May 19 - 25, 2024, as EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES WEEK. The 50th Anniversary of EMS Week theme is *EMS WEEK: Honoring Our Past. Forging Our Future*. We encourage the community to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

This the 13th day of May 2024.

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

PROCLAMATION - NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

The week of May 12-18, 2024, is National Police Week with Peace Officers Memorial Day designated on May 15. The Sheriff's Office has historically requested that the Board of Commissioners publicly recognize and salute the service of law enforcement officers in our community and communities across the nation. The Board approved Proclamation #16-2024 National Police Week May 12-18, 2024.

PROCLAMATION #16-2024 NATIONAL POLICE WEEK May 12 - May 18, 2024

WHEREAS, in 1963, the Congress and President of the United States designated May 15 as Peace Officers' Memorial Day, and the week in which May 15 falls as National Police Week; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 900,000 law enforcement officers serving across the United States, including the dedicated members of the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office and Brevard Police Department; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office and Brevard Police Department play an essential role in safeguarding the rights and freedoms of our community; and

WHEREAS, it is important that all citizens know and understand the duties, responsibilities, and sacrifices of their law enforcement agencies, and that officers of the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office and Brevard Police Department recognize their duty to serve the people by safeguarding life and property, by protecting them against violence and disorder, and by protecting the innocent against deception and the weak against oppression; and

WHEREAS, the men and women of law enforcement unceasingly provide a vital public service who by their faithful and loyal devotion to their responsibilities have rendered a dedicated service to this community and in so doing, have established for themselves an enviable and enduring reputation for preserving the rights and security of all citizens;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners proclaims the week of May 12 – May 18, 2024, as Police Week and calls upon all citizens and all patriotic, civic, and educational organizations to observe May 15, 2024, as Peace Officers' Memorial Day in which people may join in commemorating law enforcement officers, past and present, who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community or have become disabled in the performance of their duty.

ADOPTED this the 13th day of May 2024.

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

RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING MEMORIAL DAY

The Board of Commissioners approved Resolution \$17-2024 Commemorating Memorial Day 2024 in observance of Memorial Day on May 27 to honor the sacrifices of the brave men and women who gave their lives in defense of our great nation. A ceremony will be held at the Courthouse gazebo on Monday, May 27 at 10:00 a.m. and the Commissioners encourage all to attend.

RESOLUTION #17-2024 COMMEMORATING MEMORIAL DAY 2024

WHEREAS, Americans have observed Memorial Day since May 1868 to honor the sacrifices of the brave men and women who gave their lives in defense of our great nation; and

WHEREAS, since that time, brave men and women have answered our nation's call to duty and defended freedom at home and abroad; and

WHEREAS, these men and women have served in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, and Merchant Marines with heroism, determination, and valor; and

WHEREAS, many of those who faced enemy fire on the battlefields the world over were from Transylvania County; and

WHEREAS, Memorial Day is a special day when Americans rededicate themselves to the principles upon which our nation was founded, and men and women in the Armed Forces have died defending; and

WHEREAS, Memorial Day offers each of us the opportunity to honor loved ones and remind ourselves of the ideals that are the foundation of the freedoms we enjoy and endure because of the dedication and sacrifice of those who answered the nation's call;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County does hereby urge all citizens to join us in honoring the men and women who died in service to our nation in war to preserve our freedom and honor those families who endured the sorrow of a loved one making the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the United States of America.

This the 13th day of May 2024.

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

VAYA HEALTH FISCAL MONITORING REPORT – FY 2024 Q3

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 covers all financial statistics as of March 31, 2024.

- Current actual revenues \$691,514,055 (96.07% of annualized budget)
- Current actual expenditures were \$685,088,023 (95.18% of annualized budget)
- Current net gain from operations of \$2,370,176
- Fund balances:
 - \$110,062,925 restricted for risk reserve
 - \$67,828,418 restricted for statute, prepaids, and investments in fixed assets
 - (\$4,982,475) unrestricted
- Operating cash \$134,700,035 net of risk reserves
- Total spendable cash estimate is \$60,697,031

The Board received the report and the Clerk to the Board entered the report into the minutes as required by statute.

CONTRACT REVIEW BETWEEN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (TCTDA) AUTHORITY AND CITY OF BREVARD ON ECUSTA TRAIL FUNDING

On October 11, 2022, the TCTDA Board pledged up to \$1 million in local matching funds to the City of Brevard should the City receive a grant of \$10 million or more for the Ecusta Trail. The City of Brevard secured two large grants. The TCTDA felt that the matching funds would fill a greater need by being directed to expenses not covered by those grants. On February 22, 2024, the TCTDA Board voted to approve the funds being paid out over a multi-year period toward any expenditure related to the development of and access to the Ecusta Trail and related amenities. On March 28, 2024, the City of Brevard presented a request to the TCTDA Board for \$250,000 in engineering costs related to the Ecusta Trail. TCTDA staff worked with legal counsel to develop a contract for grant funding of \$25,000 or more to provide specific protections to the TCTDA and the County, as well as and key assurances regarding the spending of the funds. The TCTDA Board approved the contract on April 25, 2024. State law gives the TDA full discretion on how to spend the tax revenue on tourism-related expenditures. Any review by the Board of Commissioners under the 2021 resolution establishing the TCTDA is to ensure compliance with the fiscal control laws, County policy, and other expenditure limitations imposed on the TDA. The contract complies with these requirements, and as such, the Board indicated that their review of the contract has been satisfied.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

PRESENTATION OF MANAGER'S FY 2025 RECOMMENDED BUDGET

NC General Statutes require that the County Manager present a recommended balanced budget to the Board of Commissioners by June 1 of each year. Before presenting the budget recommendation, the Manager thanked the Board of Commissioners. The public does not always know how much the Commissioners give

to the budget process. The Commissioners meet with the Manager frequently and participate in subcommittees that review various elements of the budget so by the time the Manager is ready to present a recommendation, the Commissioners are quite familiar with the budget. The Manager also thanked the County's funding partners – fire departments, public schools, the community college, various departments within the County, and various State agencies. She expressed appreciation to the budget team: Assistant County Manager David McNeill, IT Director Nathanael Carver, Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart, Finance Director Meagan O'Neal, and Budget and Management Analyst Jennifer Wright.

The Manager presented her FY 2025 Budget recommendation. This is a summary of her presentation, the discussion that followed, and the next steps as directed by the Board.

How Do We Budget?

- Budget team approach, each department meets with the team
- Look at revenue trends and resources that help suggest what to expect with those trends
 - Projecting revenue and economic trends up to 18 months in advance
- Gather information from various sources on price changes and projections including gas, utility rates, goods and services, economic predictions, etc.
- Seek to understand Board of Commissioner's priorities, community needs, and funding partner needs while balancing the mandated services counties are required to provide
- Estimate service demands by examining existing demands
- Understand mandated services and non-mandated services (86% or more)
- Review fees to see where proposed adjustments could be made
- Consider the local economy and economic outlook
- Factor in long-term fiscal health and long-term planning in addition to the annual budgeting process

Budgets are math and statistics problems, but also establish policy and reflect priorities, including those that are required through mandates.

Fiscal Policy Goals

- Implement a long-term capital improvement plan (estimated at over \$300 million)
 - Education Capital Work Group recommendations total \$124 million
 - Courthouse \$45-\$50 million
 - Blue Ridge Community College Campus \$80 million
 - Infrastructure \$52 million
 - Landfill cell expansion in 2025 \$5.8 million for a five-year lifetime, closures expenses, 2030 and beyond plans
 - Communication towers \$3 million
 - Fire and Rescue Department infrastructure
- Identify revenue to fund capital needs
 - Economic development and infrastructure support
 - Lease payments from Sylvan Valley Industrial Building for reinvestment into economic development
 - Education facilities bond moving forward in 2024
 - Possible ¼ cents sales tax referendum
- Factor multi-year budget planning in the General Fund
- Computers, equipment, and vehicles on replacement schedules to level expenses

Management's Policy Goals

- Maintain existing service levels; most are mandated or required to meet mandates
- Retention and recruitment; maintain position in the market with continuing COLA policy

- Compared to the region and similar-sized counties, most benefit policies related to paid leave and health insurance are competitive
- Two areas identified last year likely to be up for consideration next year are 401K match and longevity pay
- Work to minimize capital project costs by focusing on efficiency and utility in design processes; minimize maintenance, evaluate finishes, evaluate construction methods and materials
- Maintain training programs and maintenance schedules to prevent liability and future expenses
- Leverage technology and plan for upgrades and replacements; cybersecurity, changing vendor landscapes, increasing cost of public safety equipment
- Provide suggestions and guidance on ways to minimize pressure on the tax rate to the degree possible
- Leverage the purchasing power of State or Sheriff's Association pricing

Process with Changes Implemented this Year

- Internal departments turned in budget requests with justification in February
- Panel review of all budgets; Commissioners included in review meetings with elected office leaders
- Nonprofit funding: open call for applications in March, review by subcommittee to be scheduled; recommended budget contains a budget to give the committee
- School funding: statutorily required to submit a budget to the County by May 15; school officials turned in a partial budget but do not intend to turn in a budget with all funds as listed in the statute which limits County staffs' ability to analyze their budget and make recommendations accordingly
 - The State has not approved its budget
 - State agencies operating under the County umbrella work from projections until the State budget is passed
- Outside Agencies; Fire Departments, Rescue Squad, etc.
 - Budget requests due in March, subcommittee review includes the Commissioners
- Priorities and preliminary discussion
 - Commissioner meetings in May to clarify priorities, discuss justifications
- Capital planning and discussions from the past year will continue into the fall; schedule a capital workshop to revise the capital plan in the fall of 2024 when there is more information about the school bond timing and the courthouse design work

Transylvania Considerations

- The official population is artificially low due to the seasonal population without residency here
- Property tax is the only way the Commissioners can meaningfully raise funds which makes the tax base very important
 - Our current mix skews heavily toward residential meaning that residential bears the burden of any increase and differentiates Transylvania from other counties in the area (see chart below)
 - Half of Transylvania County is nontaxable (federal and State Parks/Forests) but requires County services
 - Residential costs the most in local government services over other types
 - Some of those residential are second homes, Airbnb, etc.; the State constitution does not allow charging a differential tax rate so legislative action would be required

	Transylvania (33,130)		Henderson County (121,151)		Dare County (38,537)	
Residential Property	\$5,040,167,342	79%	\$10,467,439,798	63%	\$14,154,651,775	85%
Commercial/Industrial Real Property	\$654,111,462	10%	\$3,094,688,800	18%	\$1,552,167,500	9%
Present-use value	\$35,135,730	1%	\$170,197,216.00	1%	\$13,500	0%

Personal Property	\$501,220,379	8%	\$2,671,648,195	16%	\$1,026,345,520	6%
Public Service Companies	\$116,731,987	2%	\$326,671,538.00	2%	\$144,451,838	1%
	\$6,347,366,900		\$16,730,645,547		\$16,877,630,133	
	Macon (38,575)		Rutherford (64,482)			
Residential Property	\$6,448,116,725	78%	\$4,412,408	74%		
Commercial/Industrial	\$1,071,450,830	13%	\$495,788	8%		
Personal Property	\$561,673,699	7%	\$657,378	11%		
Public Service Companies	\$173,065,385	2%	\$417,796	7%		
	\$8,254,306,639		\$5,983,370			

Revenue Highlights for FY 25

- The property tax base increased by 2%
- Sales tax was overstated in the FY 24 budget, with no budgeted increase going into FY 25
- Medicaid Hold Harmless decreased statewide with FY 24 impact of \$500,000 and diminished expectations in FY 25; the decrease resulted from a formula used at the State and federal levels; there could be some relief at the State level, but staff have not received an update
- Investment income is higher for FY 24 and projected into FY 25
- Fee adjustments in Building Inspections and Child Development
- The impact of the ARPA funding cliff across the State is minimized for Transylvania because of careful allocation on nonrecurring/capital expenses while some counties are having budget crises; ARPA funding must be committed by the end of this calendar year and spent by next calendar year
- The total budget of \$76.2 million a net 0.9% decrease from the original FY 24 budget (note: \$2 million accounted for currently in Fund 21 [fund that tracks sales tax specifically for education] so the inclusion of that would be 2% increase in the budget)

Expense Highlights for FY 25

- The budget prioritizes maintaining staff levels/existing benefits and tries to combat economic inflationary impacts, such as fuel
- Baseline annual capital proposed
 - Includes four patrol car equivalents with equipment for the Sheriff's Office
 - Computer replacements on a five-year cycle while evaluating system security
 - Planned IT infrastructure upgrades
 - Communication tower replacement in Lake Toxaway
 - No ambulance replacement; federal grant underway with support from Congressman Edward's Office
 - Five vehicles in Maintenance, Building Inspections, Animal Services, and EMS (2)
 - Transit van replacements (2) not included yet while finalizing grant receipt
- The focus is on existing personnel and trying to maintain existing service levels.
 - No new personnel or reclassifications are recommended for this year
 - Four new positions and five reclassifications were requested but not recommended
 - Maintains benefits at existing levels
- 2% increase for Transylvania County Schools, Blue Ridge Community College, and Transylvania Economic Alliance
- FY 25 will see the transition of some of the planned transfers for capital turn into EMS building payments and school bond payments which will change the funding level for education
- Retired debt service for the Public Safety Facility

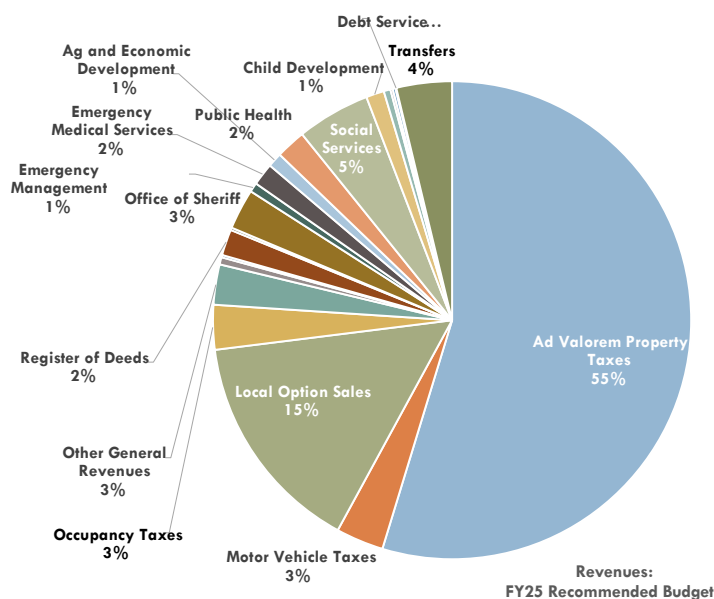
- Courthouse design and Toxaway Tower are funded from the assigned fund balance in the capital fund (not in Fund 10)
- Comprehensive Plan and Housing Plan underway
- Presidential election and property revaluation next year
- Community center Wi-Fi and capital improvement program that serves many in our communities
- Maintains nonprofit funding for supplemental services; funds will be allocated by the committee with the approval of the contracts by the Board of Commissioners
- Grant funding administration for over \$30 million in project grant funds with existing staff
 - TIRF Grant project on Hart Road
 - Emergency Watershed Protection streambank restoration
 - Federal radio grant
 - State grant for Solid Waste expansion
 - State grants for water and sewer infrastructure
 - State grant for Sheriff’s Office to upgrade interview equipment per the District Attorney’s requirements
 - Dogwood Trust housing grant
 - State grant for upgrading library broadband internet (not yet confirmed)

The following projects will have separate capital funds, but will impact workload this fiscal year:

- Completion of the Rosman-Brevard water system interconnect
- Sylvan Valley Industrial Building Phase 2 construction
- Kick off the Courthouse design process

Revenue Projections

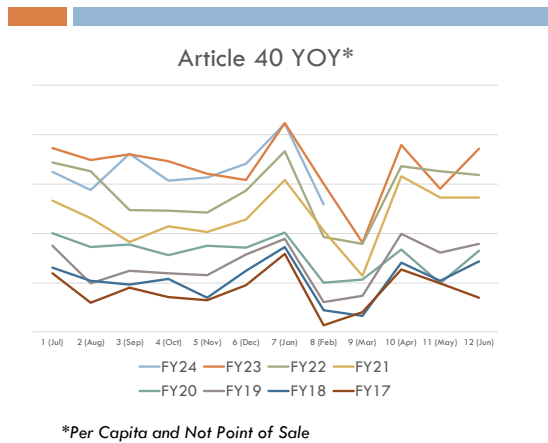
- Property Tax is the primary revenue
- Federal bond rates are boosting investment income
- Sales tax growth is down, especially in Article 40 with the population reset impact from the 2020 Census
- Medicaid Hold Harmless sales tax down
- State redistribution of sales tax from FY 16 reflects the loss of \$150,000 annually for Transylvania County
- Fees increases in Child Development and Inspections



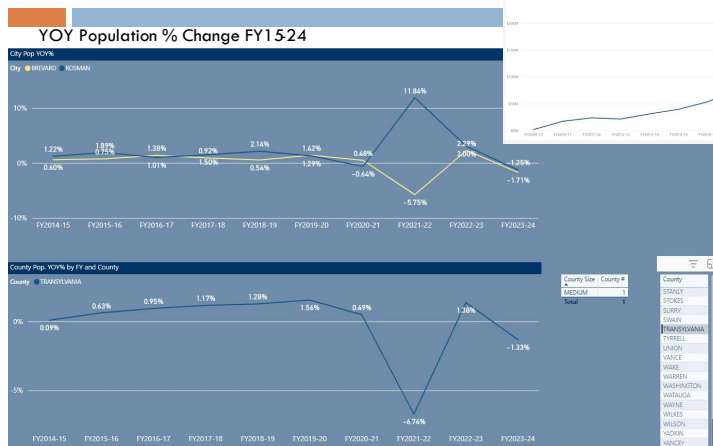
Sales Tax Revenue – County Trends

- Similar trendlines for Articles 39 and 42 sales taxes due to point-of-sale distribution
 - Transylvania County experienced increases consistently for several years due to expansion and economic growth
 - Last year, the County began to see decreases
 - Overall, Transylvania County is seeing a 3% growth for this year, but the average statewide growth is less than 3%
- Trendline much more varied for Article 40 year-over-year than Articles 39 and 42 due to per capita distribution
 - 2020 Census figures have taken effect and impacted the County’s revenue with the decrease in Article 40 distribution
 - Challenging element to consider between the Census data; the State projects the County’s population as growing faster than it is and the Census data shows otherwise
 - Will continue to see the impact on Article 40 until the population projections begin to increase

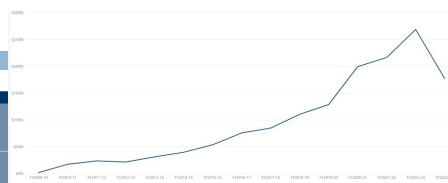
Sales Tax Rev- County Trends



Sales Tax Trend



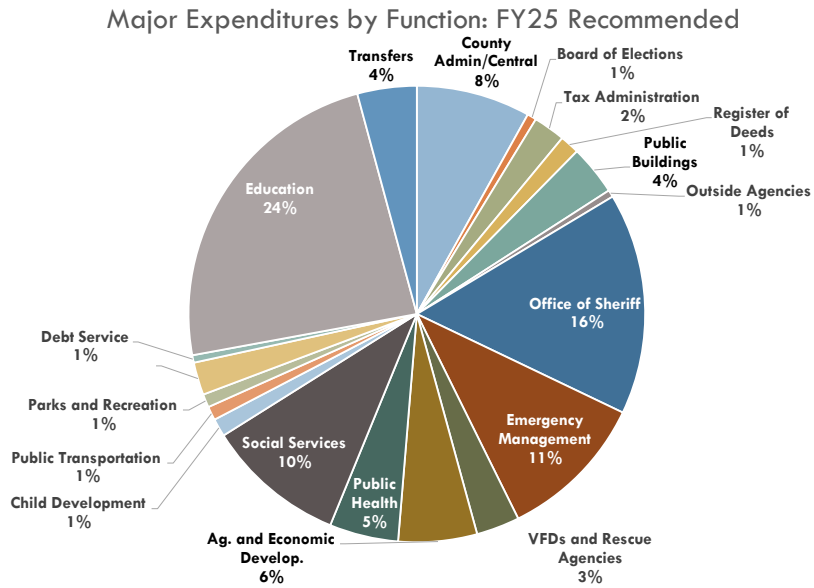
State Trend Medicaid Hold Harmless Sales Tax FY1024



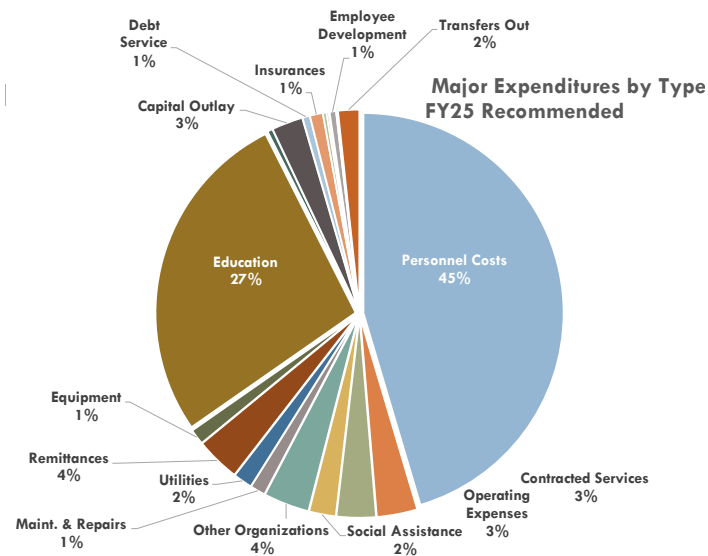
- Secondary homes and tourism lead to population estimates pushing upwards between Census that then gets corrected.
- Benefit to Transylvania is that the correction dropped the county from Economic Tier 3 to 2.
- Negative is it also impacts population-driven revenue like Article 40.

Expenditures

- Overall, the same distribution of expenditures with some changes such as moving groundskeeping from Parks and Recreation to Public Buildings/Operations
- Includes funds going into the Education Capital Fund for annual projects and upcoming bond payments



- Personnel are the highest cost in providing County services and account for higher when factoring that education funding is heavily used for salaries; services are person-to-person
- Education funding is the second-largest expenditure



Education Funding K-Community College

- K-12 Education is recommended for the same increase as the recommended budget at 2% for operations. The evaluation of the budgetary needs was limited due to the decision by Transylvania County Schools not to provide a full budget as indicated in the statute, but the rate of increase recommended is consistent with property tax base growth.
 - *Noted the School Resource Officers are being partially funded with State dollars, so not all increases will be seen in the SRO contracts*
 - The request for FFE, vehicles, and equipment are fully funded as requested
 - Recommend revisiting the DPI recommendations on the ESSER funding cliff around program evaluation to determine the programs to fund when ESSER funding goes away; one recommendation was for the schools to seek local funding which is occurring across the State, but most counties are not in a financial position to make up for funding that previously came from the federal government
 - Local operational funding is recommended at \$13,086,152
 - Capital funding is recommended at \$3 million to be appropriated by project for projects over \$50,000 and those funds will be moved to the Education Capital Fund. County staff has not received the details yet on the specific project appropriations.
 - County staff learned last week that the School System may be requesting emergency funds to purchase boilers requested in the FY 25 budget by June 1 instead of July 1. The outcome of that request and appropriation will impact available funds for remaining capital recommendations. The Board of Education will need to take action before the request can come before the Board of Commissioners for consideration.
 - \$2.19 million will be available in FY 25 for capital projects. The Manager will be in a position to make further recommendations once the boiler issue has been resolved.
- Recommendation for Blue Ridge Community College local operational funding at \$698,404 and capital funding at \$135,490.

Note: Education budgets are submitted with detail; however, once operational funding is approved, those agencies may adjust how they spend funds without County Commissioner approval based on their priorities.

Education Funding for Transylvania County Schools Request for Pre-K

- The increase does not accommodate Transylvania County Schools' request for County funding to supplement preschool programs for 99 children who qualify for State funding under NC Pre-K and 36 children under private pay for approximately \$600,000.
- Early Education is unquestionably important as the County has advocated under the GetSet program that was started by the County, but the proposal does not meet the requirements of the NC State Constitution for public funding. Public funding may be targeted toward low-income individuals, but services that are not must be equitably available. This prevents supplementing a preschool service for some and not all Transylvania preschool children.
- This is why the County Child Development Program must maintain rates that are at or above the private center rates to avoid competition with them and must be operated on fees and not a county supplement. Additionally, serving older children has historically helped balance the rates needed for younger children that require a lower ratio for childcare facilities which is why infant care has almost disappeared in Transylvania County and other areas and the reason the Manager has not recommended the funding in the budget.
- If the issue were approached at the County level, the County must be able to serve more than the 99 children who qualify for NC Pre-K and the 36 children who are on private pay. It would take a more global approach to addressing the need.

- To fund a program that meets the State Constitution requirements, the plan must serve the whole population of preschool children. Below is a rough funding scenario of operational costs and for informational purposes:
 - Operational expenses for ages 0-5 would require \$13.5 million in local funding, equating to a 30% increase in property tax assuming that:
 - 1,250 children ages 0-5 currently reside in the County
 - \$1,100 monthly expense per child=annual cost of \$13,200 per child (market rates do not necessarily reflect this scenario cost due to teacher qualifications required for NC Pre-K)
 - Total annual expense of \$16.5 million
 - Currently Transylvania community is allocated \$1,126,647 in NC Pre-K funding and \$1,848,000 for childcare subsidy
 - Assuming both revenue sources would be available, additional funding would be required at approximately \$13.5 million or 21 cents on the tax rate (30% increase).
 - This does not factor in the cost of capital investment for buildings that are needed to meet the State regulations for this age group
- Recommended advocacy at the State and federal levels for Pre-K availability and affordability to address the collective concerns of the Board of Education and Board of Commissioners
- Attempting to solve the childcare and early education affordability and availability problem at the County level would be very challenging. It would be easy to move from county-to-county or claim residency across a short geography. Shifting the population to take advantage of the benefit would make financial projections more challenging and subject to error. That has happened with K-12 education which is why Henderson County charges tuition for out-of-county students, but it takes enforcement.
- This issue will need to be addressed at the State and/or federal level and one that the Manager recommends the County continue to advocate for consideration at those levels.
- Build Back Better originally included language to fund Pre-K nationwide for ages 3-5. The major question during that time was whether there would be physical spaces to provide the services. The language did not make the final bill, but local officials had discussions about how counties would handle the mandate if it were included. ARPA funding was pushed out to state and local governments quickly without guidance but with a push to spend the funds. If the Pre-K requirement had been included in Build Back Better, counties may not have had the physical spaces available to provide the services.
- Pre-K is a much larger policy issue than Transylvania County can solve.

Education Capital Funding Process Change

- Recommended modifying the education capital by project funding process
 - County staff have been in consultation with the auditor around project documentation to find a solution due to County staff having challenges getting documentation on projects after the fact
 - County has a level of responsibility to ensure that fiscal processes are being followed due to the statutory funding responsibility imposed
 - School staff have had to put in time to gather documentation requested by the County and there is duplication of invoice processing due to School Finance having to process payments and then seek reimbursement from the County
 - Continue to fund by project for projects over \$50,000, but follow the process outlined in the Pisgah Forest Elementary Piping Project agreement for larger projects
 - For projects between \$50,000-\$90,000:

- School staff handle procurement procedures send a copy of the quote when they make the encumbrance and then send the signed invoice to the County for payment to the vendor
- For projects over \$90,000:
 - School staff handle procurement procedures and submit copies of documentation, contracts would include the County as a co-signer with the School Board; as work is completed, School staff would sign off on invoices or payment requests and the County would pay the vendor or contractor directly
- This eliminates duplication in processing, reducing the burden on School staff, reduces potential delays in reimbursement, and makes it easier to track project information. County staff can help spot issues such as when the Commissioners need to approve multi-year contracts, and eliminates the need to request documentation using the new folder system; would complement changes made this year where County and School staff are meeting every monthly to discuss capital

Fire Department Budgets

- The recommendation is to maintain the district rates at 5.5 cents/\$100 valuation and supplement the remainder of the budgets from the General Fund property tax totaling \$1,491,565.
- Themes from subcommittee meetings with fire departments:
 - Challenges maintaining volunteers requiring more paid staffing, especially to fill daytime needs for call responses due to few employers with alternate shifts in the area
 - Equipment costs are rapidly increasing with long lead times on major apparatus orders
- The committee is recommending that increases to all budgets to fund personnel COLA increases at 3.5% and use of the reserve to fund some of the equipment requests in the Sylvan Valley II and Lake Toxaway service districts
- Fire Marshal staff intend to review the recommended budgets with each fire department, but staff communicated with them early in the budget planning process that this budget would be lean
- Future challenges will include long-term capital improvements identified by fire departments
 - Request by Connestee Fire for a new main station
 - Request for a new building by the Transylvania County Rescue Squad
 - Sylvan Valley II is primarily covered by a contract with the City of Brevard Fire Department but as the City's demand for services continues to grow into a more urban expectation of service, it becomes challenging to serve a non-municipal service district under contract

Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Summary

- Balanced budget of \$4,137,310, a 4.7% increase from FY 24 due to equipment purchases, including lifts in the garage. FY 24 was down \$662,000 from the prior year.
 - Fee Revenue: Sticker sales are steady for FY 24 over FY 23 and scale fees are trending slightly down from the prior year which is typical with economic uncertainty or slowdown.
 - Balance is from property tax collections from the general fund which is not a typical county government practice

General Fund Summary

- Balanced budget of \$76.2 million with no tax increase
- 2% increase to Transylvania County Schools, Blue Ridge Community College, and Transylvania Economic Alliance
- No new personnel or reclassifications
- Fire department contract increases to support existing personnel COLA at 3.5%
- Maintaining capital replacements

- Decrease from five to four vehicle replacements in the Sheriff's office due to rapidly increasing costs with a goal to restore the replacement level to five next year
- Ambulance replacements will resume next year pending grants
- Fire district rates are recommended at a \$.055/\$100 valuation
- Any additional funding considerations to fund requests not included in the recommended budget will require a tax increase
- Capital projects include School improvements, the Courthouse, infrastructure projects, the Sylvan Valley Industrial Building, and the Lake Toxaway Tower replacement
- Capital modeling will need to be revisited with updated assumptions on interest rates, project costs, and leveraging cash holdings versus debt service
- EMS Base payments and Education Bond payments will start in 2025
- Additional capital needs discussed in FY 24 include aging infrastructure and service capacity for municipal systems in the County and program space needs at Blue Ridge Community College
- Staff have been highly successful with grants, but these also require careful management to meet requirements in processes and reporting demanding redirecting staffing resources

Forecasted Needs and Emerging Issues

- ARPA funding cliff fallout will continue to be a challenge
- Retention and recruitment of workforce supply; rapidly changing market, but the NCACC survey results indicate the County's projection for COLA in FY 25 is consistent with the average
- Support services staffing should be considered when opening the new Courthouse, including Human Resources, Operations/Maintenance, and IT, as well as additional security staff
- Staffing with community growth and aging population would require investments in Transit, Inspections, Environmental Health, and EMS
- Technology and cyber-security will continue to impact future budgets and important to ensuring the County's data is secure
- Solid Waste future investments beyond the new cell will require a major capital investment. The current operational model does not pay for itself
- Fire departments are struggling to get volunteers which will require more staffing and increase pressure on the property tax rate to supplement with paid staffing
- Education funding challenges and working towards success within the existing structure will be a challenge
 - The Commissioners have heard frustrations from others regarding their relationship with the Board of Education
 - State statutes create that tension
 - County staff have advocated in the past for consideration to allow Boards of Education to have taxation authority, but the State Legislature is not interested in that as a solution
- Major capital implementation
 - \$100 million or more over the next three years based on the current plans will be a significant management feat
- Mental and physical health infrastructure for public employees and the public is a growing concern

The Manager concluded her presentation. She asked the Commissioners to consider whether they needed to hold a budget workshop next week or during the next regular meeting on May 28. The Commissioners will also need to discuss scheduling dates to hold the public hearing with possibilities on May 28, June 10, and June 24, with the goal of adopting a balanced budget by July 1.

Board Discussion and Next Steps

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the Manager's proposal for the education capital funding process, seeking assurance that budgeted projects would be completed. The Manager clarified that while School staff

and the School Board would still oversee projects, the proposal would streamline the payment process by having the County pay vendors directly, eliminating invoice processing delays. This approach would also provide the County with better project status oversight.

Commissioner McCall noted that despite not having the full education budget, the recommendation includes \$3 million for capital expenses. The Manager confirmed, detailing that \$835,000 would be allocated in monthly payments for furniture, fixtures, and equipment, with \$2.19 million designated for the Education Capital Fund to be allocated by project. Once County staff assesses the emergency funding request for boilers from School staff, they will present a recommendation to the Commissioners.

Commissioner McCall sought confirmation that the boilers were intended for Brevard Middle School, Pisgah Forest Elementary School, and Rosman High School (old gym), which the Manager confirmed. Commissioner McCall noted that air handlers and boilers were previously budgeted at \$105,000 per line item for FY 2022 and 2023. She asked whether the boilers would constitute an additional request. The Manager had difficulty responding due to the lack of response from School staff to ongoing documentation requests from the Commissioners over the past two months regarding the budget amendment. Staff observed a significant increase in funding for these projects by reallocating funds from other school projects, totaling approximately \$1 million in the pending amendment request. Additionally, there is an impending request for additional funding impacting the same sites. However, final approval hinges on the Board of Education's action. Typically, significant funding requests are initiated by the elected board rather than staff alone.

Commissioner McCall inquired whether the Board of Education had the option to procure these items using fund balance and then be reimbursed once budgets are finalized. The Manager confirmed that she had recommended considering this approach. Statutes permit an emergency fund balance transfer from the current expense fund balance, which stood at \$2.5 million at the end of FY 2023, along with nearly \$500,000 in capital reserves. The Board of Education can request moving funds from the fund balance for current expense to capital funds, pending approval from both Boards.

Commissioner McCall highlighted the considerable lead time for procuring fire engines. Despite orders being placed today, delivery might not occur for two to three years, complicating budget projections. Grants and other funding sources alleviate some of this burden. She also noted the dwindling pool of volunteers crucial to fire departments and EMS, underscoring their often-underappreciated value until needed. Looking ahead, she agreed with the potential necessity of transitioning to more salaried positions, anticipating this shift to present a challenge that the Commissioners must navigate in the coming years.

Commissioner Dalton emphasized the extensive training required for volunteers, leading to the sharing of resources across district lines. Fire departments must maintain volunteer rosters to secure better insurance rates for citizens, while also striving to maintain or improve fire ratings, directly impacting residents' finances. This looming challenge demands attention and solutions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Chapman condemned the simultaneous crisis-level state of three school boilers, deeming it unacceptable. To improve budgeting and planning, he advocated for a more proactive approach to identifying and addressing such issues, especially considering their significant financial implications. Managing such large expenses in crisis mode regularly is unsustainable for the County.

Commissioner Chapman commended the Manager and staff for their diligent work in improving the budgeting process annually. He supported the recommendation for no tax increase, acknowledging the financial strain on many citizens, particularly with the City of Brevard also considering a tax hike. While the budget may not fulfill every need, he expressed full support for it.

Chairman Chappell emphasized the need for the Commissioners to provide staff with guidance on the next steps, particularly regarding the necessity of a budget workshop and scheduling the public hearing. Commissioner Chapman expressed that a separate workshop was unnecessary, considering the Commissioners' familiarity with the budget and detailed discussions with the Manager. Instead, he suggested that staff promptly schedule the public hearing. If any concerns arise during the hearing, the Board could then schedule a workshop accordingly.

Commissioner McCall agreed that the timing of the budget presentation allowed for further discussion and potential workshops if necessary. She had no major issues with the budget.

Staff confirmed that there was adequate time to advertise the public hearing for the next County Commission meeting on May 28.

Chairman Chappell confirmed the consensus not to schedule a budget workshop at this time and instructed staff to advertise for a public hearing on May 28. If any issues arise during the hearing or if further information is required, the Commissioners may then schedule a workshop accordingly.

Chairman Chappell extended gratitude to the staff, Manager, and Commissioners for prioritizing concerns and objectives, recognizing that budgeting entails ongoing planning from year to year. He appreciated the timely provision of the requested information to enable informed decision-making by the Commissioners. Expressing a wish for the State to adhere to the same stringent guidelines imposed on counties and schools during budgeting, he acknowledged the inevitability of certain factors beyond the County's control, necessitating estimates based on available information.

Chairman Chappell affirmed his agreement with the recommended budget and commended the Manager's proposed changes aimed at addressing specific issues and improving budget request processes while ensuring compliance with statutory requirements. Emphasizing the importance of having comprehensive documentation to inform decisions, he underscored his commitment as Chairman to ensuring that Commissioners receive the necessary information adhering to standard accounting procedures and statutory mandates. He deemed this essential to upholding fiduciary responsibilities as elected officials, irrespective of who occupies the role of Chair. Highlighting the Manager's history of implementing efficiencies across various departments, often at the Commissioners' request, Chairman Chappell expressed gratitude for presenting a recommended budget aligned with the Board's guidance.

Chairman Chappell highlighted the significance of the graph illustrating the County's expenditures by function, encouraging the public to review it for insights into how their tax dollars support various departments. He underscored that the majority of the County's services are mandated, leaving little funding available for additional initiatives.

Expressing ongoing concern regarding the Medicaid Hold Harmless issue, Chairman Chappell noted that these funds were promised to local governments in exchange for forfeiting certain revenues guaranteed by statute. The Manager elaborated, explaining that the Hold Harmless funds were pledged by the State when they repealed an article of the sales tax. However, while counties were required to hold municipalities harmless as well, this requirement remains unchanged. Consequently, the amount deducted from County sales tax to fulfill this obligation remains the same, despite efforts to reduce the Hold Harmless burden between the State and the County.

Commissioner Chapman sought clarification on the process for the Commissioners to consider implementing a quarter-cent sales tax. The Manager advised that the Board must notify the Board of Elections by August, necessitating consideration on an upcoming agenda in June or July to meet the deadline. The proposal would

then be subject to a public vote, although the ballot cannot specify how the County intends to use the funds if approved. Still, the County can express its intent.

Chairman Chappell informed the Commissioners that agenda planning discussions would include this topic in June and July.

Commissioner Casciato inquired about the potential revenue from a quarter-cent sales tax. The Manager estimated it to be between \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million, though certain State-level formulas affecting collections can make projections challenging.

Commissioner Casciato queried whether any counties in the region have a 7% sales tax. The Manager replied that approximately half of the counties in North Carolina do, while others either saw their referendums fail or have not attempted to put the question to a ballot. However, there is a changing trend, with sales tax referendums in Western North Carolina historically experiencing failure but now showing signs of progress.

Commissioner McCall emphasized that the proposed quarter-cent sales tax would not apply to food or gasoline, which is crucial for families and could help mitigate the need for potential future tax increases. She stressed the importance of obtaining accurate estimates for capital projects to effectively utilize available funding options like grants and sales tax, thereby minimizing the impact on citizens.

Commissioner McCall expressed gratitude for the Manager's thorough budget presentation and the discussions she had with her and acknowledged the careful consideration given to every department and request in developing the budget. She affirmed her full support for the budget, highlighting the decision to hold the line for the citizens of the County without harming any department.

Commissioner McCall emphasized the enduring importance of education to everyone, expressing regret over any perception suggesting otherwise. She highlighted a statement in the Manager's budget recommendation, indicating that once education operational funding is approved, the School System can adjust how funds are allocated without County Commissioner approval. This provides flexibility within the local current expense, allowing the School System to adapt its priorities as needed. Commissioner McCall reiterated the commitment of both Boards to collaboration, acknowledging that statutory requirements govern their actions.

Commissioner Dalton echoed Commissioner McCall's sentiments, expressing gratitude for the Manager's proactive approach in meeting individually with Commissioners to ensure an understanding of the budget. He commended the same approach extended to department heads, viewing it as a strategic way of conducting business.

Chairman Chappell urged Commissioners to forward any budget-related questions to the Manager before the next meeting. In the interim, staff will proceed with scheduling the public hearing.

APPOINTMENTS

REGIONAL COUNCIL ON AGING

The recent appointment of Paula Hartman-Stein and Robert Stein as Senior Tar Heel Delegates at the State Legislature necessitates their inclusion in the membership of the Regional Council on Aging, as mandated by the council's structure, which includes the Senior Tar Heel Delegate and Alternate Senior Tar Heel Delegate.

Commissioner Dalton moved to appoint Paula Hartman-Stein (Delegate) and Robert Stein (Alternate Delegate) to the Regional Council on Aging, seconded by Commissioners Casciato and McCall simultaneously and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

EDUCATION CAPITAL WORK GROUP BHS OLD GYM AND CAFETERIA STRUCTURAL ENGINEER'S MAINTENANCE PLAN

In late 2022, the Board of Education and County Commission collaborated to establish a study group tasked with assessing the capital needs of Transylvania County Schools and proposing viable options for joint consideration. The initial budget allocated \$170,000 for this endeavor, covering essential areas such as maintenance reserve study/assessment, retired professional consulting, safety assessment, environmental testing, and structural testing.

Following this phase, the focus shifted to developing project scopes. Staff requested a budget increase to \$220,000 to engage consultants on an as-needed basis during this process, including the preparation of a maintenance plan for structural beams at Brevard High School. The Board approved this budget adjustment in a previous meeting. Subsequently, a licensed structural engineer has completed the maintenance plan.

Results from the structural boring assessment previously shared indicated that, in their current condition, the beams have a life expectancy of five years or more. However, with the implementation of an annual maintenance plan, this lifespan could extend to 15 years or beyond. Importantly, the assessment affirmed that the beams are currently structurally sound for building occupancy.

County staff will now provide the maintenance plan to Transylvania County Schools for implementation, aiming to prolong the life of these facilities.

Commissioner McCall sought confirmation regarding the status of repairs, which the Manager affirmed, noting that while structural plates have been added to alleviate some load on the beams, further repairs are still necessary based on the structural engineer's assessment. Once these repairs are completed and the maintenance plan is implemented, the structural engineer is confident in extending the beams' lifespan by 15 years or more. Emphasizing the importance of annual maintenance, the structural engineer underscored that consistent implementation of the plan is essential for achieving prolonged beam life.

Chairman Chappell reiterated the assessment findings, highlighting that the implementation of an annual maintenance plan could extend the life of the beams to 15 years or longer. He emphasized the importance of qualified professionals assessing the beams and developing a plan to extend their lifespan, particularly in response to previous comments made about their condition.

Commissioner McCall reiterated her longstanding advocacy for preventative maintenance, recalling her past insistence on annual structural engineering reports during her tenure on the Board of Education, dating back to 2005. She stressed the continued importance of such measures as a County Commissioner.

Chairman Chappell reflected on his six-year tenure serving alongside Commissioner McCall on the Board of Education, recalling their consistent discussions and advocacy for preventative maintenance measures. He expressed disappointment at the previous meeting where blame was placed on past Board of Education service for the deterioration of buildings. Chairman Chappell emphasized that it has been 20 years since his time on the Board of Education, during which time the successful implementation of a bond occurred.

NEW BUSINESS

CONTRACT REVIEW BETWEEN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND BREVARD/TRANSYLVANIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR VISITOR CENTER OPERATIONS AND APPROVAL OF OFFICE SPACE AND VISITOR CENTER LEASE

This agreement extends the partnership with the Brevard/Transylvania Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) to operate a visitor center at their location at 175 East Main Street in Brevard. The Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA) Board has determined that maintaining a visitor center at this location for the next two fiscal years is vital for serving visitors and represents a sound use of their funds. The Chamber has expressed its willingness to continue operating the visitor center as a third party, which aligns with the TCTDA Board's objectives.

The contract closely resembles the existing one and has undergone review and approval by legal counsel. It was subsequently approved by the TCTDA Board during their March 28, 2024, meeting. Similar to the current Visitor Center operating contract, there is a corresponding lease agreement between the County and the Chamber for the rental of the Visitor Center space. The TCTDA Board recommends that the Commissioners approve this contract, with the intention of executing both contracts simultaneously.

Additionally, two lease agreements supporting the TDA are due for renewal. The Chamber has proposed renewals for both office and visitor space leases, with a 3% increase in lease rates. The Chamber Director provided real estate comparisons for rental space, which were included in the Board's agenda packet for reference. Legal counsel has reviewed and approved these lease agreements as well.

Commissioner Chapman highlighted for the public's benefit that the funds allocated for these purposes stem from the occupancy tax levied on visitors to Transylvania County who stay at lodging and other accommodations. He emphasized that this tax is not directly imposed on any citizen of the County.

Commissioner Dalton moved that the Commissioner review requirement from Resolution #35-2021 has been satisfied and to approve the lease agreements for the TCTDA Offices and Visitor Center with the Brevard/Transylvania Chamber of Commerce, seconded by Commissioners Casciato and Chapman simultaneously and unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- May 14, 2024, Second Primary for Republican Lt. Governor and Republican State Auditor candidate races
 - Open to all registered Republicans, 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
- The next regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 28 at 6:00 p.m. Monday, May 27 is Memorial Day and County offices are closed.
- Education investment projects are moving along the timeline that was presented by the Education Capital Workgroup. County and School staff met with consultants last week to review the assessment and discuss project scoping. Work remains on track for the July 1 project scopes which is the next timeline milestone to have the bond sale in October.
- There will be a party for all Transylvania County centenarians on May 17 and everyone is invited to celebrate these special community members in recognition of Older Americans Month. The Council on Aging has identified 16 people so far who are 100 years or older and are looking for more to

celebrate. The celebration will be held on Friday, May 17 from 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. at the Silvermont Senior Center.

- Kudos to Operations Director Chad Owenby for being named the Coach of the Year for High School Softball in the Mountain Foothills 7 Conference. Brevard High School also brought home awards for pitcher of the year, player of the year, and three all-conference.



Save the Date & Participate!
**Have a Say in the Future
of your Community!**

Kickoff Events:

June 4th 6PM-8PM: Transylvania County Library, Rogow Room
June 6th 6PM-8PM: Rosman Town Hall

Community Center Events:

June 10th 11AM-1PM: Balsam Grove Community Center
June 11th 11AM-1PM: Cathey's Creek Community Center
June 12th 11AM-1PM: Cedar Mountain Community Center
June 13th 11AM-1PM: Dunn's Rock Community Center
June 17th 11AM-1PM: Little River Community Center
June 18th 1PM-3PM: Quebec Community Center
June 19th 1PM-3PM: See Off Community Center
June 20th 11AM-1PM: Williamson Creek Community Center
June 25th 11AM-1PM: Lake Toxaway Community Center

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman shared his attendance at a Town Hall for Congressman Edwards, who addressed various issues occurring in Washington, DC affecting citizens. He emphasized Congressman Edwards' commitment to being visible in communities within his district to address constituents' needs. Commissioner

Chapman addressed public comments alleging a poor relationship between the Commissioners and the Board of Education. He expressed a desire to hear directly from the Board of Education if such issues exist, as no animosity has been communicated to him. He proposed a meeting between the two Boards to address any major issues and improve collaboration.

Commissioner Casciato invited everyone to honor veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice on Monday, May 27, at 10:00 a.m. at the Courthouse gazebo. US Air Force Colonel Art Cole (retired) will be the guest speaker, and the street in front of the Courthouse will be closed to accommodate attendees.

Commissioner McCall addressed earlier comments, expressing disappointment in unfounded accusations and urging citizens to seek factual information. She acknowledged the frustration felt by both Boards in facing significant challenges, emphasizing the new leadership's limited time in addressing inherited issues. Despite potential differences in approach, both Boards share a commitment to prioritizing students' best interests. Looking ahead, Commissioner McCall emphasized the importance of focusing on the future and collaboratively addressing needs across all nine schools. Bond sales are anticipated in October to kick-start necessary work. She underscored the value of partnership, leveraging expertise from both sides to achieve positive outcomes for students. Commissioner McCall stressed the need to disregard divisive noise and work towards common goals, despite potential disagreements. She reaffirmed her commitment to transparency and accountability, despite facing criticism for asking questions. She expressed confidence in the ability of both Boards to move forward together, provided they remain focused and united in their efforts.

Commissioner McCall addressed a concerning incident from the last meeting, where a conversation was overheard implying that the person hoped the Commissioners would attack the students in attendance. She strongly condemned such behavior, emphasizing that students have every right to ask questions and express frustration, and should never be put in a position where they feel vulnerable or used for political agendas.

Commissioner Dalton shared positive experiences from recent community events. He praised the MCJROTC pancake breakfast for its outstanding turnout and expressed satisfaction that such programs continue in high schools. He also commended the Brevard High School production of "Beauty and the Beast," noting its captivating performance that engaged his grandchildren. Additionally, he attended a Boys and Girls Club fundraiser honoring Dr. Bob Graham, highlighting his significant contributions to mentorship within the community, particularly in high schools.

Chairman Chappell moved to enter into a closed session per N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (3) To consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged, following a 10-minute recess, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

CLOSED SESSION

Per N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (3) To consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged, a closed session was entered into at 6:25 p.m. Present were Chairman Chappell, Commissioners Casciato, Chapman, Dalton and McCall, County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Megan Silver participating remotely via Zoom meeting software, Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan, and IT Director Nathanael Carver for information technology support.

The Board of Commissioners consulted with the County Attorney on a privileged matter and then directed staff on how to proceed.

Chairman Chappell moved to leave the closed session, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously carried.

OPEN SESSION

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Chairman Chappell moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 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