

**MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OCTOBER 13, 2025 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, October 13, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, North Carolina.

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

There was no media coverage present.

Approximately 20 people were in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

WELCOME

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

Commissioner McKelvey moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The Board approved the following:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board approved the minutes of the August 25, 2025, regular meeting and sealed closed session, and the minutes of the September 8, 2025, regular meeting.

OUT OF STATE TRAINING REQUEST – COMMUNICATIONS

The Board approved a request to allow the Communications Director and four Telecommunicators to attend the Southern Software annual conference in Myrtle Beach, SC, in October, using budgeted funds.

Transylvania County uses Southern Software for its public safety software, including Computer-Aided Dispatch, Mapping Display System, Mobile Data Information System, and others. Staff will attend courses specific to these products that share updates, features, and functionality improvements to the products.

REQUEST TO CLOSE COUNTY OFFICES FOR ANNUAL EMPLOYEE LUNCH

The Board approved a request to close County offices on December 15 for the Annual Employee Lunch. The Solid Waste Department will close the landfill and convenience center sites at 11:30 a.m. All other offices will close at 12:00 p.m. The Clerk to the Board will publish notice in the local newspaper and on the County website. Staff will post a notice at their respective facilities.

CANCELLATION OF OCTOBER 27, 2025, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

The Board cancelled the October 27 regular meeting. The County Manager will be attending the International City and County Management Association's Annual Conference on October 25-29 in Tampa, FL. While the Assistant County Manager is available to fill in, there is no urgent business that must be carried out before the first meeting in November. However, should an issue arise, the Board may call a special meeting upon giving 48 hours' notice. The Clerk to the Board will publish notice in the local newspaper and post notice on the County website and on the door to the meeting facility.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION GREEN LIGHT FOR VETERANS

The Board approved a resolution in support of Operation Green Light for Veterans. The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) partnered with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers again this year to support Operation Green Light for Veterans, taking place November 4-11. This national initiative invites counties to show support for our nation's veterans by lighting county buildings and infrastructure green. Operations and Maintenance staff will install green lights to illuminate the Courthouse, Gazebo, and Veterans History Museum.

RESOLUTION #42-2025 IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION GREEN LIGHT FOR VETERANS

WHEREAS, the residents of Transylvania County have great respect, admiration, and the utmost gratitude for all the men and women who have selflessly served our country and this community in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, the contributions and sacrifices of those who served in the Armed Forces have been vital in maintaining the freedoms and way of life enjoyed by our citizens; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County seeks to honor individuals who have made countless sacrifices for freedom by placing themselves in harm's way for the good of all; and

WHEREAS, veterans continue to serve our community in the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, religious groups, civil service, and by functioning as County Veterans Service Officers in 29 states to help fellow former service members access more than \$52 billion in federal health, disability and compensation benefits each year; and

WHEREAS, approximately 200,000 service members transition to civilian communities annually; and an estimated 20 percent increase of service members will transition to civilian life in the near future; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that 44-72 percent of service members experience high levels of stress during transition from military to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, active military service members transitioning from military service are at a high risk for suicide during their first year after military service; and

WHEREAS, the National Association of Counties and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners encourage all counties to recognize Operation Green Light for Veterans; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County appreciates the sacrifices of our United States military personnel and believes specific recognition should be granted;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with designation as a Green Light for Veterans County, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby declares November 4-11, 2025, as a time to salute and honor the service and sacrifices of those transitioning from active service; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in observance of Operation Green Light, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners is illuminating the Courthouse lawn and gazebo green beginning on November 4, 2025, to let veterans know that they are seen, appreciated and supported; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners encourages its citizens in patriotic tradition to recognize the importance of honoring all those who made immeasurable sacrifices to preserve freedom by displaying green lights in a window of their place of business or residence from November 4-11, 2025.

This the 13th day of October 2025.

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

PROCLAMATION - IN OBSERVANCE OF VETERANS DAY

The Board approved a proclamation in observance of Veterans Day. The proclamation will be presented to the Veterans History Museum and shared during the Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11 at the Courthouse Gazebo.

PROCLAMATION #43-2025 IN OBSERVANCE OF VETERANS DAY

WHEREAS, the freedoms we enjoy as Americans have been purchased and maintained at a high price throughout our history; and

WHEREAS, since the establishment of the original 13 States, Americans have been willing to fight and die to preserve their individual rights as guaranteed in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, we owe a great debt to those who have served in defense of this nation; and

WHEREAS, throughout the generations, their sacrifices have preserved our unique form of government dedicated to human rights and respect for the individual; and

WHEREAS, for many, that sacrifice had ended in permanent injury or death, yet their spirit remains in continued preservation of our freedoms and the promise of liberty established as an example for all the oppressed persons of the world; and

WHEREAS, in honor of these dedicated men and women, we pledge our continued defense of our nation so that their sacrifice will stand before the entire world as a tribute to the spirit and determination of people dedicated to the principles of freedom and democracy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County does hereby call upon the citizenry of Transylvania County to participate in services and to observe the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month with expressions of gratitude to all veterans and to further extend this gratitude to the families of the deceased veterans and to solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us re-consecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.

This the 13th day of October 2025.

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

PROCLAMATION - ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH AND NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

The Board approved a proclamation proclaiming November as Adoption Awareness Month and November 22, 2025, as National Adoption Day. National Adoption Month is a dedicated period to raise awareness about the critical need for adoptive families for children in foster care. It is a nationwide effort to promote and advocate for the well-being of children through adoption. National Adoption Day is a collective effort to raise awareness of the thousands of children waiting to be adopted from foster care in the United States.

**PROCLAMATION #44-2025
ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH AND NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY**

WHEREAS, the youth 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, there are 24 children and youth in Transylvania County's foster care system, with 8 waiting to be adopted; in FY 2024-2025, Transylvania County had 11 children and youth adopted from foster care; and

WHEREAS, for our children who have lost their birth families, adoption can provide the home life, parental love, nurturing and security that they would otherwise be missing; and

WHEREAS, caring adults and committed families can make all the difference in the lives of young people, sibling groups, children with special needs, and teenagers; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County families are encouraged to share their hearts and homes with older youth at risk of aging out of foster care waiting to be adopted; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous individuals, communities, and public and private organizations working to increase public awareness of the unique needs of children and youth in foster care waiting for permanence by participating in efforts to recruit permanent, loving families; and

WHEREAS, Adoption Awareness Month is an opportunity to recognize the families who open their hearts to provide children with a sense of connection, security, and ties to their culture, family, and community, as well as child welfare professionals, and advocates working to ensure children's safety, permanence, and well-being, and to spread awareness on behalf of the children waiting; and

WHEREAS, National Adoption Day, observed on Saturday, November 22, 2025, is dedicated to raising awareness about the thousands of children in foster care waiting for permanent families; and

WHEREAS, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners and the Transylvania County Department of Social Services encourage residents to volunteer their time, energy, and talents on behalf of children in foster care and their biological families, kinship caregivers, and foster parents during this month and throughout the year;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County does hereby proclaim November 2025 as “**ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH**” and November 22, 2025, as “**NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY**” in Transylvania County, and commends its observance to all citizens.

This the 13th day of October 2025.

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

RESOLUTION TRANSFERRING OWNERSHIP OF THE WATER SYSTEM INTERCONNECT TO THE CITY OF BREVARD AND THE TOWN OF ROSMAN

The Board approved a resolution transferring ownership of the water system interconnect to the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman.

The City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman operate two separate water systems with independent water sources. Both municipalities recognize the long-term benefit of establishing an interconnect to improve system resiliency. To that end, they have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining responsibilities for the maintenance and operation of the interconnect.

Transylvania County secured federal DEQ At-Risk (ARPA) funds to invest in infrastructure supporting this project. As the funding recipient, the County was responsible for administering the grant and maintaining accountability for all expenditures. The County managed the design and construction phases with the understanding, consistent with the MOU, that ownership would be transferred to the two municipalities upon project completion. The MOU specifies that each entity will hold ownership of a defined portion of the infrastructure, with the final recorded drawings identifying the precise maintenance boundary for each party.

This project builds upon previous extensions of water and sewer along the US 64 corridor and represents a significant step in strengthening resilience by enabling the two systems to share water resources in emergencies. The importance of this capacity was underscored by the impacts of Hurricane Helene in the fall of 2024, which affected water systems throughout western North Carolina. The collaboration between Brevard and Rosman also advances a key goal of the Board of Commissioners to invest in infrastructure that supports economic development and ensures reliable access to water for residents.

The County is now completing the required documentation to close out the project. The proposed resolution formally transfers ownership of the interconnect to the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman, as originally agreed upon by all parties. Due to the location of the interconnect along a major corridor, a dedication ceremony is not feasible for safety reasons. The Chairman intends to schedule a time to formally present the resolutions to the mayors of both entities.

RESOLUTION #45-2025
**A RESOLUTION TRANSFERRING OWNERSHIP OF THE WATER SYSTEM INTERCONNECT
 TO THE CITY OF BREVARD AND THE TOWN OF ROSMAN**

WHEREAS, the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman each operate independent water treatment and distribution systems serving their respective jurisdictions and surrounding areas; and

WHEREAS, both municipalities recognize the long-term benefit of establishing an interconnect between their two systems to enhance resilience, redundancy, and emergency capacity for their customers; and

WHEREAS, the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman have entered into an *Interlocal Agreement Establishing Procedures for Use of City-Town Water Supply Interconnects*, which defines the operational, maintenance, and cost-sharing responsibilities for the interconnect and provides for mutual aid during emergencies such as line breaks, contamination events, or extreme drought conditions; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County secured federal Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) At-Risk Funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support critical infrastructure improvements, including the design and construction of this interconnect project; and

WHEREAS, as the grant recipient, Transylvania County was responsible for administering the funds and ensuring proper financial and regulatory accountability for the project; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the Interlocal Agreement, the County undertook the design and construction of the interconnect with the understanding that ownership of the completed infrastructure would be transferred to the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman upon project completion, with each entity assuming operation and maintenance responsibilities for their respective portions of the asset; and

WHEREAS, the project also supports the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners' goals of strengthening local partnerships, investing in resilient infrastructure, supporting economic development, and ensuring reliable access to safe drinking water for residents; and

WHEREAS, the County has completed construction and is now in the process of submitting the necessary documentation to close out the project with the funding agency.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners that:

1. Ownership of the water system interconnect constructed with DEQ At-Risk (ARPA) funds is hereby transferred to the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman in accordance with the terms of the *Interlocal Agreement Establishing Procedures for Use of City-Town Water Supply Interconnects*.
2. The City of Brevard shall assume ownership, operation, and maintenance responsibilities for the portion of the infrastructure located within its jurisdiction, including the connecting valve on the City's side, as designated in the final recorded project drawings.
3. The Town of Rosman shall assume ownership, operation, and maintenance responsibilities for the portion of the infrastructure located within its jurisdiction, including the connecting valve box on the Town's side, as designated in the final recorded project drawings.
4. The County Manager is authorized to execute any documents necessary to complete the transfer and to coordinate with both municipalities on final project closeout and documentation required by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

ADOPTED this the 13th day of October 2025.

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

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

UPDATE ON NEW COURTHOUSE DESIGN

The Manager introduced Joel Helms, President of Sizemore Group, to provide an update on the new courthouse project.

Site Plan Adjustments

Mr. Helms reviewed the original plan, which included a 45,000 sq. ft. courthouse with capacity for a future 45,000 sq. ft. addition. In response to the Board's direction to explore cost-saving measures, the design team evaluated alternatives and presented a revised site plan that shifts the building footprint to the west. This change reduces the size of the retaining pond, eliminates the loop road, and decreases the number of retaining walls needed, resulting in an estimated savings of \$825,000.

The design team is also evaluating whether a smaller addition might meet future needs, which could further reduce initial costs. Adjustments to the drainage area or relocation of the sallyport would be addressed when the addition is constructed. Secure parking may also be reduced to essential staff only.

Floor Plan Overview

Updated floor plans reflect a compact and efficient building layout without excess space.

- First Floor: One courtroom; public areas; offices for the Clerk of Court, Adult Corrections, and Juvenile Justice.
- Second Floor: District Attorney; Public Defender; two courtrooms; spaces for judges, staff, and the grand jury.
- Basement: Sheriff's offices; detention areas; sallyport; other back-of-house functions.

The building maintains three separate circulation paths to prevent interactions between judges, detainees, and the public.

Exterior Design

In response to the Board's request for a traditional courthouse appearance, the front façade has been modified to incorporate a classic porch with columns and pediments. Because of the building's shift on the site, the previously proposed tower now conflicts visually with the front porch. The design team is favoring a centered cupola instead. The cost difference between the two is minimal.

City of Brevard UDO Requirements

Mr. Helms noted that the City's civic building requirements add \$765,000 in cost to the project. Features such as the tower or cupola, window accents, and rooftop equipment screening, a mansard roof, and a front porch contribute to the architectural requirements. Some of these elements would have been included regardless, but the UDO increases overall cost.

Cost Estimate

The design team continues to refine cost estimates and identify potential savings, including add-alternates such as acoustical treatments, special finishes, conduit, and flagpoles. The base bid estimate is just over \$28 million. With contingency, fees, and related costs, the total project estimate is \$36.2 million. The architects emphasized that the estimated construction cost remains below state and national averages for courthouses.

Design Schedule

The project is entering the construction document phase, which will continue through April 20, 2026. After County review and revisions, final permit drawings are expected to be submitted to the City by May 18, 2026. Mr. Helms estimated an 18-month construction period.

Board Discussion and Feedback

The Manager requested feedback from the Board on the proposed site adjustment, which shifts the courthouse footprint closer to the Public Safety Facility, and on the updated building elevations (cupola vs. tower). She explained that the architects continue value-engineering efforts to bring the project within the original budget and that staff will soon begin financing discussions with the Local Government Commission while design work continues.

Commissioner Chapman asked whether shifting the building impacted the overall square footage. Mr. Helms clarified that the base building remains the same and only the size of the future addition is being reduced as a potential cost-saving measure. Commissioner Chapman expressed concern that downsizing the addition might result in needing phase two sooner, which could reduce long-term savings. He also asked whether building plans have been thoroughly reviewed with court officials. Mr. Helms confirmed they are meeting biweekly with user groups. Commissioner Chapman asked whether the City is evaluating traffic impacts along Morris Road. The Manager noted the County plans stormwater improvements, and the existing road and stoplight appear to function adequately.

Chairman Chappell raised questions about the exterior design elements, specifically the change from the stair tower to a cupola. He noted that earlier the cost difference between the two elements had been significant, but now the cost appears equivalent. Mr. Helms explained that the tower was scaled down, making the price the same. Chairman Chappell also emphasized that because the County previously paid the City's required payment-in-lieu for sidewalks during construction of the Public Safety Facility, the County should not be required to pay again for this site. Staff confirmed that documentation supports this. Chairman Chappell also asked that the design continue to accommodate placement of the Charters of Freedom monument, which Mr. Helms confirmed remains feasible.

Commissioner McCall sought clarification about centering the cupola once phase two is built. Mr. Helms explained that the shift in the building footprint resolves the earlier concern about alignment. Commissioner McCall confirmed her understanding that the size of the future addition may be reduced to approximately 38,000 sq. ft. She asked about overall usable space in phase one, and both the architect and the Manager confirmed that the new facility will more than double the current courthouse's usable square footage, even when including the County's leased Probation and Parole space, a lease that costs approximately \$36,000 annually. Commissioner McCall also asked about the anticipated groundbreaking schedule, and the Manager responded that, depending on financing, staff expect it to be late summer or early fall of 2026.

Commissioner Dalton emphasized the importance of ensuring the courthouse roof is pitched as much as possible due to the County's heavy rainfall. Mr. Helms stated that although a portion of the roof is flat, it is pitched more than a typical flat roof and could support a metal roof if desired.

Commissioner McKelvey asked about the net savings achieved by shifting the building to the west. Mr. Helms confirmed that the shift yields approximately \$825,000 in savings related to reduced retaining walls, elimination of the loop road, and a smaller stormwater basin.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by thanking the architect for continuing to work toward cost reductions while ensuring the facility meets the County's needs, noting that the final design will return to the Board for review.

PRESENTATION ON HOUSING PLAN AND NCIMPACT INITIATIVE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Manager introduced the presentation by noting that County Planner Ashley Minery, who has led the County's housing initiatives over the past year, is currently on maternity leave and unable to co-present as originally planned. Ms. Minery has represented Transylvania County on the Brevard/Transylvania Housing Coalition, the Land of Sky Regional Housing Coalition, and the NC Impact *Our State, Our Homes* team, and has worked closely with the consultant team on the County's housing plan. The Manager explained that the presentation would include an overview of the County's 10-year Housing Strategy prepared by TPMA using Dogwood Health Trust grant funds, followed by an update on the NC Impact initiative from the Land of Sky Regional Council.

TPMA – 10-Year Housing Strategy

Presentation Overview

Ben Helkowski of TPMA presented the County's 10-Year Housing Strategy. He explained that the presentation would highlight key high-level data points to validate the plan's findings, reminding the Board that these represent only a brief snapshot of the full report. The presentation included an executive summary, five key findings, and corresponding goals and strategies. Mr. Helkowski noted that the goals were designed as the "flip side" of the findings, offering potential approaches to overcome the challenges identified in the housing data. He added that the full document includes best practices and case studies from communities in North Carolina and across the country, illustrating how other jurisdictions have implemented similar strategies.

Executive Summary

Mr. Helkowski presented the Executive Summary of the housing plan, outlining five key findings. First, Transylvania County is experiencing a growing imbalance between housing needs and the available housing supply. Second, the County's housing stock remains heavily concentrated in single-family detached homes, limiting diversity in housing types. Third, tourism, while essential to the local economy, is placing additional strain on the year-round housing supply. Fourth, physical and infrastructural barriers continue to complicate housing development. Finally, he noted a lack of clarity and coordination across federal, state, and local housing-related policies. Mr. Helkowski emphasized that lowering housing costs will require coordinated efforts across all sectors, including government at all levels, for-profit developers, and nonprofit organizations. He reminded the Board that the report is intended not just for County government but for all community partners, encouraging a collaborative approach to addressing housing challenges.

Key Findings

Finding 1: Mr. Helkowski reported that Transylvania County's housing mix remains heavily weighted toward single-family detached homes. He noted that 88% of the County's housing stock consists of either detached single-family homes or mobile homes, leaving only about 12% available in other forms such as attached units or small and large multifamily buildings. This limited variety restricts the overall housing infrastructure. He emphasized the importance of offering a full range of housing options to support the "housing life cycle," including starter units for young adults, homes suitable for growing families, and accessible downsizing options for seniors. When a community relies too heavily on a single housing type, it can hinder natural turnover and limit opportunities for residents at different life stages. Mr. Helkowski also noted that Transylvania County's rental vacancy rate has remained significantly lower than the statewide rate since 2018. This shortage of available rental units, often relied upon by essential workers, contributes to higher rental costs and exacerbates affordability challenges.

Finding 2: Mr. Helkowski reported that housing costs in Transylvania County have increasingly fallen out of line with resident incomes, particularly for lower-wage and essential workers. Median home prices have risen statewide, but Transylvania County has outpaced the State average since 2017, with a sharp acceleration following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. He pointed to data on median annual earnings for essential occupations, such as EMTs, firefighters, first-year teachers, and nursing assistants, paired with HUD's

guideline that households should spend no more than 30% of income on housing. The resulting affordability ceilings fall well below current rental prices in the local market. A review of all available rentals in May 2025 showed only one apartment listed below \$1,000 per month, two units between \$1,000 and \$1,499, 15 between \$1,500 and \$1,999, three between \$2,000 and \$2,500, and nine units priced above \$2,500. He emphasized that, given this supply and pricing structure, it is increasingly difficult for single-income households to find attainable housing within the County.

Finding 3: Transylvania County's popularity as a tourist destination is limiting access to its housing supply. AirDNA data comparing the number of short-term rentals in Transylvania County to several neighboring counties shows that short-term rentals make up a larger share of total housing units in Transylvania County than in surrounding communities. This does not suggest that short-term rentals are inherently negative. They play an important role in supporting the local economy and tourism revenue. The takeaway is that their growing presence should continue to be monitored, within the limits of what local governments are legally able to regulate. Short-term rentals remain a significant and ongoing topic of discussion because of their influence on the availability of long-term housing.

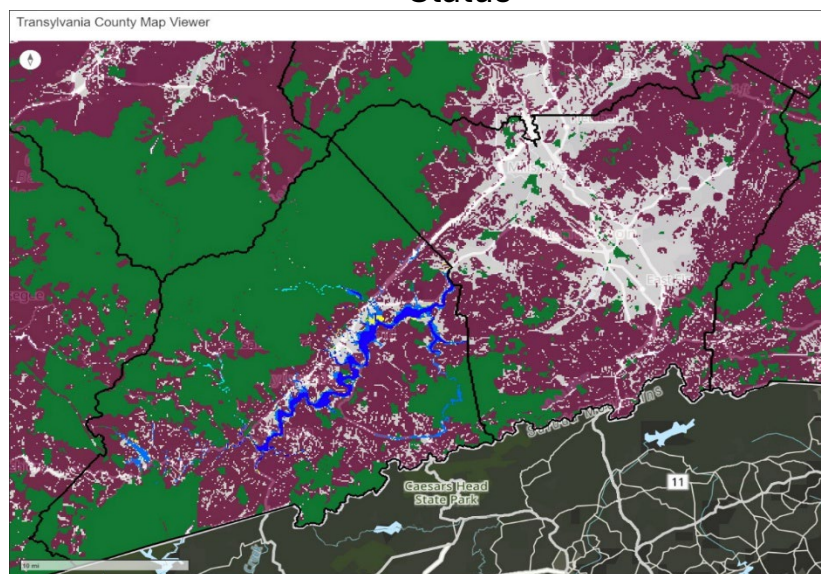
Finding 4: Practical barriers are limiting the County's opportunities to increase, diversify, and improve affordability in the housing supply. The cumulative cost of constructing a new single-family home has increased 45% since 2018, a trend residents are experiencing directly through rising prices.

Figure 23 (below) highlights available developable land in the County:

- Green areas represent managed lands that are not available for development.
- Purple areas identify steep slopes that are technically developable but significantly more challenging to build on.
- Blue areas indicate flood zones, which are typically avoided for new construction.
- Light gray areas represent the remaining land where development is most feasible.

A comparison image of Henderson County is included as a point of reference, highlighting the more limited developable land base in Transylvania County.

Figure 23: Land by Conservation Status



Finding 5: A lack of clarity and coordination at the federal, state, and local levels around housing policies is further creating obstacles to addressing some of the housing needs. North Carolina’s status as a Dillon’s Rule state limits the authority of counties and municipalities, including their ability to adopt certain housing-related regulations. A key example is the County’s difficulty securing LITECH funding, a major federal program for developing affordable housing. The State administers the funds using a scoring system that disadvantages Transylvania County, primarily due to its lack of proximity to certain required amenities under the Qualified Allocation Plan. The County has not been awarded a LITECH project in several years, so strengthening coordination and communication with the State will be an important step in improving future eligibility. The report also acknowledges positive regional efforts underway, including collaboration through NC Impact and other initiatives that have taken shape during the two years TPMA worked on this assessment.

Public engagement results reflected in the report highlight community priorities related to housing policies and development preferences. Survey respondents most strongly supported:

- Redeveloping vacant commercial properties for residential use,
- Incentivizing developers to include affordable units in new projects, and
- Increasing funding for homeowner repair and rehabilitation programs.

Residents expressed the strongest preference for additional rental housing, which aligns with the extremely low rental vacancy rate identified earlier in the report. Single-family detached homes ranked next; however, increasing single-family construction can sometimes compete with opportunities to expand rental options, especially given the limited developable land base.

The Manager noted that some of the policies favored by the public are not permitted tools for local governments in North Carolina under current law. This underscores the need for additional public education about available housing tools. Mr. Helkowski emphasized that any approach to advocacy would be a policy decision for the County moving forward.

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Ensure a diverse and adequate housing supply that meets the needs of the full spectrum of community needs, including varying household sizes, income levels, and stages of life.

This goal reflects the “housing lifecycle” referenced earlier, providing smaller homes for starting households, larger options for growing families, and downsizing opportunities for seniors. One key strategy is supporting the preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing. These units tend to be older, smaller, and affordable without subsidies. Establishing revitalization or repair funds could help maintain this important portion of the housing stock.

Goal 2: Promote the development of affordable housing options specifically tailored to support the county's existing and emerging workforce across industry sectors.

The County’s existing and emerging workforce, including EMS personnel, teachers, service industry employees, and others, faces increasing housing pressure. Mr. Helkowski emphasized that “affordable housing” is not synonymous with “low-income housing.” Rising costs mean that many middle-income workers also struggle to find housing within reach. This goal focuses on creating options that support those workers essential to sustaining the local economy.

Goal 3: Balance the growth of the tourism economy with housing needs in its workforce by addressing seasonal housing shortages and the impacts of short-term rentals.

Recognizing the limits on local authority over short-term rentals and related tools, this goal focuses on longer-term advocacy. Strategies include seeking expanded or more flexible use of occupancy tax revenue and exploring differentiated tax options for certain property types.

Goal 4: Enhance coordinated effort among local and regional governments, nonprofits, and private sector partners to guide the development of effective housing policies and address shared barriers to affordable housing.

This goal emphasizes coordinated efforts among local governments, regional partners, nonprofits, and the private sector. Examples include partnering with churches interested in housing development and continuing work with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

Conclusion

Transylvania County can continue to support housing efforts by remaining active in regional and statewide initiatives. This includes participating in NC Impact, working through the existing housing coalition with nonprofit, for-profit, and government partners, and advocating for state law changes that would allow expanded use of occupancy tax revenue and differentiated tax rates for nonresident property owners to support affordable housing programs.

The plan also identifies areas for future exploration. These include developing approaches to identify and address heirs' property issues, which can complicate a household's ability to transfer or sell property, and considering a roommate registration or matching program to help essential workers access rental housing in a market with very limited vacancy.

The Manager noted that several of the continuing strategies reflect efforts already underway. While the County's median household income has grown faster than the state average, due in part to economic development and job diversification, housing costs have also increased and outpaced statewide growth. Continued investment in infrastructure remains important, as it supports both housing development and broader economic opportunities.

The Planning Board has reviewed the draft housing plan and recommends approval. Staff will ask the Board later in the meeting to approve the plan and share it with community partners, allowing agencies and organizations to begin identifying roles and next steps in addressing the County's housing challenges.

Board Discussion

Commissioner Chapman noted that most of the information in the study is not unique to Transylvania County and has been known for some time. He emphasized the need to focus specifically on what the County can influence, such as infrastructure and the limited available land.

The Manager explained that while some best practices referenced in the study originate in other states, they can still help Transylvania County identify areas where advocacy for state or federal policy changes may be useful.

Commissioner McCall emphasized the importance of continuing efforts to strengthen infrastructure and pursue economic development, noting these are the areas where the government has the most appropriate role. She reaffirmed support for advocating expanded use of the occupancy tax and allowing differentiated tax rates. She expressed mixed feelings about portions of the report related to housing types, but felt the document was still appropriate to accept.

Commissioner Chapman appreciated the section of the report highlighting business incentives and suggested that the Transylvania Economic Alliance explore those further. In his view, the private sector will have to lead solutions to the housing challenge, as the government cannot resolve the issue alone.

Mr. Helkowski shared that local employers appeared open to participating in solutions, which is not always common in other communities.

Commissioner Dalton referenced previous discussions with Pisgah Labs about employer-supported housing initiatives, which were paused after Hurricane Helene.

Commissioner McCall expressed concern about the growing number of abandoned or deteriorating properties and asked how the County might address them. The Manager reported that some are heirs' properties, making repairs or conveyance difficult. There is no simple solution to address this issue currently.

Commissioner McCall also expressed opposition to forcing commercial property owners to alter or redevelop their properties. The Manager stated that the County does not have the authority to require commercial property owners to redevelop vacant properties for residential use.

Chairman Chappell stated he would not support Strategy 3.3, which calls for exploring zoning approaches to govern short-term rentals. He expressed concern about unintended consequences and plans to raise this during adoption. He supported accepting the report overall and acknowledged the Planning Board's recommendation.

Commissioner McCall suggested that implementation should be strategic due to ongoing infrastructure constraints and limited developable land.

The Manager then transitioned to the *Our State, Our Homes* update, noting the close relationship between the two efforts. She introduced Paul Moon from the Land of Sky Regional Council, who leads that project.

Our State, Our Homes

Background

Our State, Our Homes is an 18-month statewide initiative designed to help communities build capacity, analyze housing challenges, and implement strategies to address affordable housing needs. The program is led by the UNC School of Government, NC Impact, and the Development Finance Initiative and includes 14 teams representing 22 counties across North Carolina. Each team brings together business, civic, education, nonprofit, faith-based, and government partners to develop locally tailored housing visions and action plans.

Transylvania County is part of the Land of Sky Impact Alliance, and its participation has been essential to the team's selection for the program. Partners include MountainTrue, the North Carolina Council of Churches, the Community Housing Coalition of Madison County, and the Housing Assistance Corporation serving Henderson, Transylvania, and Polk Counties. County Planner Ashley Minery was recognized for her significant contributions to the team.

Our State, Our Homes Commitments

Program commitments include attending five peer learning forums in Chapel Hill (three completed to date), monthly webinars, training events, technical assistance, and coaching. The program also provides financial support:

- \$5,000 for project manager stipends,
- \$7,000 for partner travel reimbursement, and
- \$5,000 for pilot project implementation.

Lessons Learned

Mr. Moon noted that the housing challenges identified by Mr. Helkowski earlier in the meeting remain central to the work of the *Our State, Our Homes* team.

The team has learned about various tools local governments can use to influence housing outcomes.

- Zoning and land use: More applicable to municipalities such as the City of Brevard than to the County.
- County role: The County's strongest contributions relate to supporting infrastructure and engaging in public-private partnerships. Counties and municipalities operate under different statutory frameworks, and the County cannot pursue all the tools available to cities.

The program has guided the team through defining a clear mission, vision, goals, measurable objectives, and systems for tracking progress.

Land of Sky Impact Alliance: Vision and Goals

The Alliance believes that housing is a human right and aims for a future where all residents have safe, accessible, and affordable housing.

Current goals focus on:

- Incentivizing collaboration among home-repair service providers,
- Increasing available funding for home-repair programs, and
- Supporting home-repair beneficiaries in all social determinants of health.

Given Transylvania County's large older-adult population, home-repair efforts have been particularly relevant locally.

Looking Ahead

The team plans to continue learning from statewide and national best practices and building connections among developers, advocates, and community partners. Future work includes:

- Exploring additional funding and financing options for affordable housing.
- Establishing long-term structures for sustaining the Alliance's work.
- Supporting education and narrative change around the meaning of "affordable housing," emphasizing that it spans all income levels.
- Collecting baseline data and setting benchmarks for the region's home-repair network.
- Strengthening regional coordination so residents are efficiently matched with the appropriate nonprofit home-repair provider.

Mr. Moon closed by inviting Commissioners and attendees to contact him with questions.

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY FY24/25 ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Director Clark Lovelace presented the Tourism Development Authority's annual report, speaking on behalf of the staff, board members, and local tourism-related businesses. He noted that the full report is available on the TCTDA website and encouraged the public to review it.

Board Members and Support Team

The TCTDA Board consists of nine members and is supported by a small team: Mr. Lovelace as Executive Director, Virginia Watkins handling operations and outreach, Molly Gordon leading marketing and communications, and Market Connections serving as the marketing partner agency.

What is a TDA?

The State authorizes local governments to create TDAs and sets the parameters for occupancy tax use (up to 6% may be levied, all revenue must support tourism, and at least two-thirds must be spent on marketing and promotion). Local governments then secure state legislation enabling collection, set tax rates (Transylvania County's is 5%), and establish the structure and composition of the board. Spending decisions, mission

development, oversight of the executive director, and contractual matters fall under the authority of the TDA Board.

What is our TDA all about?

He emphasized that Transylvania County's TDA is committed to fostering a thriving and sustainable tourism industry. Tourism plays a crucial role in the local economy, especially following the loss of major employers. The TDA's work focuses not only on supporting tourism partners and managing the destination but also on protecting natural resources, promoting responsible visitor behavior, honoring the character of the community, and keeping residents in mind in all marketing and management decisions.

Destination Marketing

Mr. Lovelace reported that destination marketing is the core function of the TCTDA, supported heavily by the agency's marketing partner, Market Connections, and led internally by staff member Molly Gordon. The goal is to strengthen Transylvania County's brand, encourage visits, and highlight the area's natural assets.

This year's marketing efforts included a mix of digital, print, and broadcast advertising, as well as newsletters, blogs, and two billboards, one on I-26 and another on Highway 280, to create strong impressions for visitors entering the region. Following Hurricane Helene, the TDA also ran messaging to welcome visitors back and recognize the work done to restore natural resources.

Public relations work increased significantly, particularly to counter widespread misconceptions that all of Western North Carolina remained heavily impacted by the storm. PR efforts included media interviews, coordinating familiarization trips for travel writers, and generating leads for local tourism businesses.

Mr. Lovelace noted the launch of a redesigned website in February. Social media performance highlighted that audiences respond best to authentic, real-life content, such as a popular video shared by Friends of DuPont. He also highlighted key printed materials used to support visitors and promote the area: 90,000 copies of the annual Adventure Guide and 50,000 Points of Interest maps, both distributed widely.

FY 25 Marketing Highlights

Mr. Lovelace reported several key marketing accomplishments for FY 25. TCTDA launched a new website and continued to expand its social media presence and public relations efforts, including significant work related to post-Helene recovery messaging. The organization also introduced a downtown webcam as a new engagement tool.

A major highlight was Transylvania County being featured as the premiere episode of PBS's *North Carolina Weekend*. This episode focused entirely on the County, the only single-destination feature of the season. Mr. Lovelace noted this milestone resulted from more than a decade of persistent relationship-building and advocacy by Market Connections and TCTDA staff.

Destination Management

The TCTDA's destination management work focuses on helping visitors navigate the County, promoting safe and responsible outdoor behavior, and supporting local tourism-related projects. This includes on-site wayfinding tools such as informational kiosks and behavior campaigns like *Leave it Better* and *Be Waterfall Wise*, which provide multilingual safety messaging at high-traffic natural areas. Through the Transylvania Always program, the TCTDA funded seven projects totaling over \$70,000, including several County initiatives.

Destination Infrastructure grants support improvements that benefit both visitors and residents, such as the Community Appearance Initiative, Rosman Riverfront Park, and the Allison Deavor House. The TCTDA also offers tourism marketing grants for smaller initiatives (up to \$5,000), supporting projects like the Aluminum

Tree and Ornament Museum and the Ghost Wrestling Tournament. Partner support remains a major component of destination management, including newsletters, co-op advertising opportunities, and lead generation for local tourism businesses.

FY 25 Management Highlights

FY 25 management highlights included providing over \$200,000 across the three management programs, supporting recovery and visitor messaging after Hurricane Helene, refreshing visitor kiosks (including a new one at Bracken Mountain), and incorporating more local partner stories into TCTDA messaging.

Helene Response

In response to Hurricane Helene, the TCTDA immediately paused advertising, placed an emergency alert on the website, and issued a public message asking visitors not to travel to the area. Frequent online updates were provided during the initial weeks, later shifting to “know before you go” information for those who needed to reach the county, such as families of Brevard College students. As conditions improved, marketing efforts gradually resumed with “We’re Open” messaging, followed by a targeted campaign encouraging visitation to support local businesses.

On the community side, staff engaged regularly with land managers, emergency services, and County partners. Mr. Lovelace expressed appreciation for the County’s consistent public updates. TCTDA staff also assisted with temporary housing coordination by leveraging relationships with local lodging operators and serving as a liaison to Housing Assistance Corporation, FEMA, and others. *Transylvania Tomorrow* was reactivated with partner support, raising and distributing \$300,000 to 78 businesses. The TDA Board prioritized helping local business owners, drawing from fund balance and reallocating resources to provide winter support despite anticipated revenue decreases.

Monthly Occupancy Tax Proceeds vs. Prior Years

Occupancy tax collected by the County from all accommodations, including hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and short-term rentals, declined significantly during September through November 2024, down roughly 42% compared to prior years. When combined with the remaining nine months, which were generally flat with a slight 1% increase, the year ended with an overall 11% decline in occupancy tax revenue. A 10-year review showed steady pre-pandemic growth, a doubling of revenues during the pandemic, and a stabilization period afterward with a roughly 10% decrease compared to pandemic highs.

Short-Term Rental Data

Short-term rental activity remains higher in the mountains than in most regions outside the coast. Transylvania County’s short-term rental presence is particularly strong: comparable in number to Hendersonville’s inventory, despite Hendersonville having a population more than double Transylvania County. Brevard and Western Transylvania (Rosman and Lake Toxaway) each account for approximately 40% of total occupancy tax revenues. Eastern Transylvania (Penrose and Cedar Mountain) contributes the remaining 20%.

Mr. Lovelace reviewed recent analytics from Zartico, noting that approximately 41% of devices detected at key points of interest belonged to residents, one-third were visitors from elsewhere in North Carolina, and about 31% were out-of-state visitors. The data also identified the five counties that generate the highest share of visitors, including one neighboring county. He reiterated an ongoing challenge that many people travel to Transylvania County to enjoy local amenities but choose to stay overnight in surrounding counties, resulting in local impacts without corresponding economic benefits.

He reported that the top states sending visitors are South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama, with Florida visitors generating the highest spending. State tourism impact figures show that visitors produced \$7.41 million in local tax revenue, with approximately \$1.7 million coming from occupancy taxes. The

remaining revenue, over \$5.5 million, directly supports County and City services. Mr. Lovelace noted that, without occupancy tax revenue, residents would pay \$400 more per year for the same level of services.

Financial Overview

Mr. Lovelace reported that TCTDA's goal is to operate on a break-even basis to ensure responsible stewardship of public funds. Due to reduced revenue this year, the TCTDA did not allocate any funding to the Ecusta Trail, which helped offset the deficit.

What is new and exciting?

Mr. Lovelace highlighted recent successes, including the *North Carolina Weekend* feature, fall promotional efforts, and upcoming holiday marketing initiatives. New editions of the Adventure Guide and Waterfall Map are also in development.

Looking ahead, he emphasized TCTDA's continued commitment to protecting natural resources, supporting tourism-related infrastructure, and promoting responsible visitation. Despite a difficult year, he expressed strong long-term optimism for Transylvania County's tourism economy, noting that the County's unique natural assets and authentic character position it well for sustained success.

Mr. Lovelace concluded the presentation with an invitation for comments and questions from the Board.

Board Comments

Commissioner Dalton praised the recent *NC Weekend* feature on Transylvania County, noting it highlighted areas across the County and was well produced. Mr. Lovelace appreciated the feedback and explained that the TCTDA intentionally guided the production team to showcase locations beyond downtown Brevard.

Commissioner Dalton also reiterated to the public that 100% of occupancy tax revenue must support tourism-related activities, with at least two-thirds dedicated to marketing, noting he often receives questions about whether the funds can be used elsewhere. Mr. Lovelace agreed and emphasized that the tax is designed so visitors, not residents, help support tourism infrastructure and promotion.

Commissioner Dalton commended the TCTDA for identifying local projects to fund with the remaining one-third of revenues and acknowledged the challenge of competing with neighboring counties that market Transylvania County's natural assets to attract visitors to stay elsewhere. He expressed appreciation for the TCTDA's efforts to encourage overnight stays within the County.

Commissioner Chapman recognized Mr. Lovelace, staff, and the TCTDA board for their hard work and thoughtful stewardship of tourism resources, noting there may be an opportunity in the future to consider increasing the occupancy tax rate if recommended by the TCTDA board.

Chairman Chappell thanked Mr. Lovelace and highlighted the value of TCTDA grant programs in supporting community initiatives.

PRESENTATION BY VETERAN'S HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE CAROLINAS

The Manager introduced David Morrow, President of the Museum's Board of Directors, and founding member Ken Corn to provide an update on the Museum's activities.

Mr. Morrow thanked the Tourism Development Authority for helping feature the Museum on the recent *NC Weekend* PBS episode. He expressed appreciation for the Commissioners' long-standing support, noting that it has enabled the Museum to expand its mission to honor, educate, and preserve veterans' history. With the new courthouse project underway, he specifically asked the Board to clarify their intentions for the old courthouse and the Museum's current location to allow for responsible planning.

Mr. Corn highlighted continued efforts to increase public visibility, noting that most visitors discover the Museum only when they see a sidewalk sandwich board, despite advertising and a permanent sign. To improve visibility, the Museum proposes installing a piece of retired Navy equipment, currently in its possession and acquired from the USS *Yorktown*, outside the building as an attention-drawing visual cue.

He shared a story illustrating the impact of such displays. A former submariner from Franklin, NC, recently recognized a submarine component displayed at the Museum and traveled to Brevard to see it. A video about the encounter received more than 4,400 views across social media platforms, demonstrating strong public interest.

Mr. Corn also described other media exposure, including the Museum's involvement with the Ingles *Open Road* show and a WLOS feature, which helped expand their reach across multiple states. He noted similar installations in other communities draw substantial public attention and could benefit Brevard as well.

He then reviewed key accomplishments from the past year:

- Approximately 5,000 visitors annually, including 500 in July alone
- Featured on PBS *North Carolina Weekend*
- Awarded a \$20,000 Pratt & Whitney grant
- Hosted 22 group tours, including homeschool and JROTC groups
- 2,400 newsletter subscribers
- Monthly veteran interviews on WSQL Radio

Mr. Corn concluded by seeking permission from the Board to install the retired Navy equipment on the courthouse lawn. He emphasized that the project would come at no cost to the County, and the Museum believes the installation would honor veterans while significantly increasing visibility and visitation.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE TO HURRICANE/TROPICAL STORM HELENE

The Manager presented an update on the emergency response to Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene.

- FEMA Assistance (as of 9/25/2025)
 - Over \$9.4 million awarded to Transylvania County residents.
 - 4,837 valid registrations submitted.
 - 4,191 referred to Individual Assistance: 3,062 found eligible for Housing Assistance and/or Other Needs Assistance.
 - FEMA information available at [4827|FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov).
- Additional Housing Assistance
 - Residents needing assistance with rehabilitation, rebuilding, or replacement of housing may apply through renewnc.org for programs beyond FEMA aid.
- WNC Economic Recovery Resources
 - Information on [wncrecovery@nc.gov/resources](mailto:wncrecovery@nc.gov), including funding opportunities for communities, mental health support, repair assistance, and sector-specific resources.
- Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) - SMART Program
 - 52 projects completed.
 - 1,080 cubic yards/246 tons of eligible debris removed.
 - Many citizen concerns relate to eligibility determinations, which are made by FEMA, not County or State staff.
 - SMART successfully appealed eight applications, resulting in overturned ineligible determinations.

- FEMA will conduct a desk review of the previously ineligible applications; property owners will be contacted if determinations change.
- Eligibility Challenges
 - FEMA reviews only the “improved area” around a home, not the full parcel; this is the primary cause of the dissatisfaction.
 - SMART contractors continue helping property owners gather documentation for appeals.
 - Property owners may submit additional information at NCDebrisCleanUp.com.
- Waterway Debris Removal
 - SMART is obtaining clearance verification on 22 sites reviewed by FEMA/USACE.
 - Waterway debris removal is expected to begin soon.
 - Property owners will be contacted directly if access is needed; updates are not shared through the hotline due to FEMA’s ongoing reviews.
- Landslide and Demolition Programs
 - Applications for nine landslides and six demolition projects remain under State review.

Mitigation Grants and Other Funding Support

- Right of Entry
 - The State has released updated Right of Entry forms; prior applicants are being contacted to update paperwork.
 - A new application is required for all new submissions.
- Current Mitigation Projects (29 total + 1 pending resubmission)
 - 15 Acquisition projects
 - Nine Elevation projects (two ineligible due to being in the floodway; property owners considering next steps)
 - Two Mitigation Reconstruction projects
 - Three Land Stabilization projects.
- Private Roads & Bridges
 - 51 sites serving 329 households have applied.
 - All estimates are complete. The State’s contract firm is designing replacement structures built to support the heaviest emergency service vehicle, based on information provided by County staff.
- FEMA Reimbursements
 - FEMA continues processing reimbursements to the County.
 - Other counties are facing major issues due to direct contracting; Transylvania County avoided this situation but remains aware of challenges statewide.

Board Discussion

Commissioner Chapman expressed frustration with the lack of waterway debris removal, particularly along Williamson Creek, and the changing guidance on eligibility requirements. The Manager acknowledged the ongoing challenges with the changing criteria, even from meeting to meeting with federal officials. She stressed appreciation for NC Emergency Management’s help with appeals, which has improved progress. She also recognized that some residents would remain dissatisfied because results differ from what they expected.

Chairman Chappell expressed appreciation for the County’s conservative approach to FEMA reimbursement and working through USACE. He noted there are new State programs to assist counties denied reimbursement, emphasizing that some counties risked significant portions of their budgets. The Manager clarified that guidance changes impacted counties that contracted work early on. Reimbursement risks for those counties remain unresolved.

NEW BUSINESS

ADOPTION OF HOUSING PLAN

The Manager reviewed the development of the countywide Housing Plan, funded through a 2022 Dogwood Foundation grant that supported both infrastructure initiatives and hiring a consultant (TPMA) in 2024. The Planning Board, serving as the steering committee, completed review of the plan and recommended approval in September. The Manager emphasized that while the plan includes an implementation matrix, it is intended as a communitywide toolbox rather than a list of actions the County alone must carry out. She offered examples illustrating legal limitations on the County's role in housing and asked the Board for direction on desired revisions.

Chairman Chappell reiterated his concern with Strategy 3.3 related to exploring zoning for short-term rentals and recommended striking this item. Commissioner McCall agreed, noting the plan contains valid data but that the government's role is to provide infrastructure, not housing itself. She stressed the importance of recognizing the difference between what municipalities can do and what counties can do. She preferred leaving implementation decisions to staff and the Planning Board, focusing only on what is feasible. The Manager suggested adding language clarifying the implementation matrix as a flexible tool and including presentation slides that distinguish County geography from County government authority. The Board agreed.

Commissioners also discussed infrastructure limitations, LITECH scoring barriers, and the need for continued advocacy at the federal level to adjust requirements that disadvantage rural counties. The Manager noted related ongoing work with NC Impact and Land of Sky to analyze local housing challenges and data accuracy, including Fair Market Rent.

Commissioner Chapman questioned whether the Board should delay approval to allow public input, noting the presentation had just been received. The Manager said this was possible, but it delays the consultant from finalizing the document for publication. Commissioner Chapman suggested the Board receive the plan and place it on the first November agenda for approval after public review. Commissioner McCall cautioned that soliciting public comment may generate numerous requested changes but supported making the draft publicly available for information. Chairman Chappell reiterated that the Planning Board served as the steering committee and recommended Board approval.

Chairman Chappell moved to approve the Housing Plan with Strategy 3.3 removed and with the edits suggested by the Manager. Commissioner McCall seconded. Commissioner McCall commented that the income and rent affordability chart in the plan assumes a single-income household, which can be misleading given that many households have two earners. **The motion passed 4 to 1, with Commissioner Chapman opposed.**

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH CITY OF BREVARD ON GRANT-FUNDED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Transylvania County began seeking grant funding in 2022 to support water and sewer infrastructure improvements, recognizing that expanding these services, managed by the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman, is essential for economic development and housing initiatives. At the September 22 meeting, Commissioners authorized the County Manager to prepare a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Brevard to guide the use of County funds for infrastructure projects that support housing.

Under the proposed agreement, the County would manage the design and construction of the projects once approved by the grantor, while the City would assist in the design phase and take ownership of the completed facilities for ongoing operation and maintenance. Housing Assistance Corporation and Habitat for Humanity have committed to building new housing units once the infrastructure is complete.

If Commissioners approve the terms, the Manager will forward the MOU to the City for review and adoption and submit it to the grantor for approval of an amendment allowing remaining grant funds to be used for these additional projects. Although it is a modification to the original grant, it expands the overall housing outcomes. The Manager noted that similar MOUs have been used successfully on past projects. The Chairman confirmed that both the Manager and the County Attorney are comfortable with the agreement as written.

Commissioner McCall moved to approve the terms of the MOU to offer to the City of Brevard regarding infrastructure funding to support housing, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously approved.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH TOWN OF ROSMAN ON GRANT-FUNDED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Transylvania County began seeking grant funding in 2022 to support water and sewer infrastructure improvements, recognizing that expanding these services, managed by the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman, is essential for economic development and housing initiatives. At the September 22 meeting, Commissioners authorized the County Manager to prepare a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Town of Rosman to guide the use of County funds for improvements to the Town's wastewater system according to the scope as defined in their Preliminary Engineering Report.

Under the proposed agreement, the County will manage the design and construction of the project once approved by the grantor. Rosman will work closely with County staff during the design phase, and upon completion, the Town will take ownership of the upgraded wastewater facilities. They will be responsible for operating and maintaining the system going forward.

A major difference in this MOU, compared to the similar agreement with the City of Brevard, is a provision requested by the Board of Commissioners. That provision states that if Rosman were ever to stop owning or operating its water and sewer system, either by its own choice or because the State alters the Town's authority, the Town would support giving Transylvania County the first opportunity to take over the system. The additional provision was added because the Board previously expressed interest in having some long-term assurance regarding the County's investment in infrastructure. The Manager noted that the intention is not for the County to take over any water or sewer system, but to have a safeguard in place if circumstances ever change.

If Commissioners approve the terms, the Manager will forward the MOU to the Town of Rosman for consideration and adoption and submit it to the grantor for funding approval.

The Manager emphasized that the language is written to keep the County responsible for grant compliance, since the County, not the Town, would be accountable for any financial penalties or "claw backs" if requirements are not met. For that reason, she recommended the MOU remain mostly as drafted. Commissioners agreed that the agreements with both Brevard and Rosman should be presented as non-negotiable due to the County's obligations as the fund administrator.

Chairman Chappell stated publicly that the Board is not attempting to assume control of Rosman's system. Instead, the goal is to protect the County's financial and legal responsibilities while ensuring the long-term success of the projects, which are important for economic development.

Commissioner McCall moved to approve the terms of the MOU to offer to the Town of Rosman regarding infrastructure funding, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF CONSTRUCTION MANAGER AT RISK CONTRACTS FOR SCHOOL BOND PROJECTS

The Board reviewed contracts related to the school bond construction projects that are being managed jointly by the County and Board of Education under an interlocal agreement adopted in February 2025. A subcommittee, appointed through that agreement, carried out the contractor selection process and recommended Blum Construction as the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR). Although the subcommittee oversees the process, the full Board must approve the contract. The County Attorney reviewed the proposed agreement and confirmed that the pricing aligns with the project budgets and current market standards. Some minor wording changes were made last week for clarity, but the substance of the contract remains the same as what was originally presented.

The recommended action was to authorize the County Manager to sign the CMAR contracts, which include \$244,570 in preconstruction fees and a 5% overhead and profit rate as the projects advance.

Commissioner McCall moved to authorize the County Manager to sign the Construction Manager at Risk contracts for the education capital projects totaling \$244,570 in preconstruction fees and a 5% overhead and profit, on behalf of the County, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey. During the discussion, staff explained that a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) will be established after the preconstruction phase and will include contingencies for cost volatility. This phase will allow the project team to refine the scope and budget before construction begins. The subcommittee will meet in December to make additional scope decisions to keep the projects on schedule. The Board unanimously approved the motion to authorize the County Manager to execute the contracts. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

EVIDENCE STORAGE LOT AT PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY

The Manager explained that the Public Safety and Maintenance campus on Morris Road currently has one shared secure outdoor parking area used by both the County and the Sheriff's Office. After reviewing the setup with the County Attorney, staff determined that the Sheriff's Office needs a separate, more secure impound area for storing evidence and impounded vehicles. Regular vehicle storage for both the County and Sheriff's Office can remain in the existing shared lot. The proposed project will build a new paved, fenced, and secured impound lot behind the Public Safety building to ensure proper security for evidence storage. The project cost is \$70,416 for construction, plus a 5% contingency of \$3,521, for a total of \$73,937. Sufficient funding is already available in the FY 26 capital maintenance and improvement budget. The Manager noted that, if approved, the project would move forward quickly so that paving can occur before asphalt plants close for winter. The project will not affect any other activities on the site, and the Sheriff's Office has worked closely with staff to determine appropriate sizing based on comparable agencies.

Chairman Chappell moved to approve the project budget and authorize contract signatures for a secure evidence lot behind public safety, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager shared several updates on County operations and ongoing projects:

- Congressman Chuck Edwards will host a telephone town hall on Tuesday, October 14, at 7 p.m. to discuss the federal government shutdown and answer questions; residents can join by calling 434-ASK-NC11.
- The NC General Assembly is currently out of session but plans to return on October 20 for limited legislative work.
- The Manager congratulated the Health Department's CARE Coalition for receiving a highly competitive federal STOP Grant, one of only 13 awarded nationwide, which will provide \$65,000 per year for four years to support youth alcohol-prevention work. However, the Coalition did not receive

the larger \$1.2 million federal Partnerships for Success grant, and staff are working on long-term funding options since current support from the Public Health Infrastructure Grant ends in May 2026.

- The federal shutdown continues, and its impacts on county services are still unfolding.
 - Health and Human Services programs are most vulnerable, and the County has already absorbed small funding claw backs, such as a \$6,000 reduction in Title X.
 - According to state updates, WIC and SNAP benefits are expected to continue through the end of October.
 - An upcoming shift in Medicaid funding from the federal to state level, unrelated to the shutdown, may affect County budgets in FY 27, especially if additional county funding is required to maintain mandated services or staffing.
- The Manager reported progress on several capital projects.
 - The Hart Road Mitigation project, completed in partnership with NCDOT, is nearing its final stages, and the new road, designed to remain above flood levels, is now open, with hopes to close out the grant by the end of 2025.
 - The Water System Emergency Interconnect project, in partnership with the Town of Rosman and City of Brevard, is now finished and will serve as a critical resiliency component, evidenced by the impact of Helene across WNC.
- 9th Annual Pumpkin Fest at Silvermont runs every weekend in October from 6–9 p.m. and supports Silvermont Mansion and Park.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Morrow: Mr. Morrow thanked the Board for recognizing veterans through the Veterans Day proclamation and Operation Green Light. Reflecting on the Tourism Development Authority presentation earlier in the meeting, he said he felt a mix of emotions but emphasized how grateful he is to have grown up in Transylvania County. He noted that he “won the lottery” by being able to live here and thanked the Board for the work they do. He said he looks forward to the Board’s continued good service in the coming years.

Kristi Brown: Ms. Brown, Clerk of Superior Court, thanked the Board for the update on the courthouse project and shared an example of how her office has been working to reduce costs. She noted that choosing to remove certain interior elements from the design saved more than \$100,000. She wanted the Board and the public to know that her office is committed to finding cost-saving measures while still ensuring the courthouse can function efficiently.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman reported that he attended the NC Association of County Commissioners Board meeting in Beaufort over the weekend. He said much of the discussion focused on upcoming financial challenges related to Medicaid and new federal rules, which could significantly increase costs for counties. He thanked the County Manager for closely tracking this issue and stressed the need to stay in communication with state and federal legislators. He also encouraged everyone to join Congressman Edwards’ upcoming telephone town hall, where this topic will be discussed.

Commissioner McCall reflected on recent international news, noting both the hopeful progress toward a peace agreement in the Middle East and the release of 20 hostages, while also acknowledging the sadness surrounding those who have not yet been recovered.

Chairman Chappell shared that he contacted the Chairman of the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners to express Transylvania County’s condolences. Three EE Smith High School students and football players in Cumberland County were tragically killed in a car accident last week. He emphasized the deep impact such a loss has on a community, recalling the similarity to a local tragedy last year. He asked the

public to keep the families and that community in their thoughts and prayers and offered support from Transylvania County if needed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Dalton moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 p.m., seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously approved.**

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board