MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 9, 2026 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, February 9, 2026, 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 Jason Chappell, Jake Dalton, Vice-Chair Larry Chapman, Chair Teresa McCall, and Chase McKelvey. County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Megan Silver, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan were also present.

There was no media representation.

There were approximately 30 people in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Teresa McCall presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

WELCOME

Chairwoman McCall welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Commissioners and staff in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public comments reflect the opinions and viewpoints of the speakers.

Owen Carson: Mr. Carson asked about the status of the County Planner position and whether the Board intends to fill it. He stated that he had been told the position was being advertised but had not been able to locate the posting or find related discussion in meeting minutes. He expressed concern about the implementation of the Housing Plan commissioned by the County in November 2025, noting that the consultant identified numerous near-term, high-priority action items. He asked whether the Board had acted on those items and stated that overseeing implementation would typically fall under the responsibilities of a County Planner rather than a volunteer planning board. Mr. Carson encouraged the Board to hire a County Planner to help advance the Housing Plan and ensure progress for the community. He also requested that advisory board meeting minutes be posted online to improve transparency. He concluded by announcing that he is running for a seat on the County Commission.

Doug Powell: Mr. Powell wished everyone a happy Black History Month and shared historical information about African Americans who played significant roles during the American Revolutionary era. He referenced individuals such as Crispus Attucks, Peter Salem, Salem Poor, Prince Whipple, Oliver Cromwell, Wentworth Cheswell, and James Armistead Lafayette, highlighting their contributions and service. He encouraged the public to learn more about these and other African American figures who contributed to the nation's founding.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

The Manager requested the Board consider the following agenda modifications:

1. Add Board Presentation under Presentations/Recognitions as Item A and move all other items down in succession.
2. Add Consideration of a Letter of Support for a Waiver on the Number of Virtual Days for WNC Schools under New Business as Item A and move all the other items down in succession.
3. Add a closed session per N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (4) relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Chapman 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 January 12, 2026, regular meeting. (The Board cancelled the January 26, 2026, regular meeting due to inclement weather.)

DISCOVERY, RELEASE & MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT - DECEMBER 2025
Per N.C.G.S. § 105-312 (b), the Tax Administrator must list, assess, and tax all property not properly listed during the regular listing period and file discovery reports with the Board. Per N.C.G.S. § 105-381 (b), the Tax Administrator must provide a monthly release/refund report, which shall be recorded in these minutes. For December 2025, releases totaled $5,548.85, and refunds were $3,076.17. The Board approved the report as presented.

2025 DELINQUENT TAXPAYER LIST
N.C.G.S. § 105-369(a) requires the tax collector to report the current fiscal year's total unpaid property tax liens each February. The Board must then order the tax collector to advertise these liens. Payments made before the advertisement will not be included. The Board ordered Tax Administrator Jessica McCall to advertise the 2025 list per statute.

OUT OF STATE TRAINING REQUEST
County policy requires Board approval for employee travel outside the state. The FY 2026 budget included funding for two employees, one from Finance and one from Administration, to attend TylerConnect 2026 in Las Vegas, Nevada. TylerConnect is the national conference hosted by Tyler Technologies, the County's Enterprise ERP software provider. The conference offers hands-on training, opportunities to collaborate with peers and software developers, and information about upcoming system features. Attendance is intended to help staff improve efficiency and enhance County services. The Board approved the out-of-state travel request using funds already budgeted for this purpose.

REVISED PURCHASING RESOLUTION
The Board annually adopts a purchasing resolution. During renewal of the FY 2026 resolution, language defining the capitalization threshold for assets was inadvertently omitted. The Finance Director requested that this language be reinstated. Additionally, the Finance Director recommended removing the expiration date from the resolution so that it will remain in effect until superseded by a future resolution. The Board approved the requested revisions to the purchasing resolution.

RESOLUTION # 01 - 2026
ANNUAL PURCHASING RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, from time to time, the County of Transylvania purchases goods and services using federal funding subject to the procurement standards in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart D; and

WHEREAS, the County of Transylvania's procurement of such goods and services is subject to Transylvania Purchasing and Contracting Procedures, as most recently amended on 25th of June, 2018; and

WHEREAS, the County of Transylvania is a non-Federal entity under the definition set forth in 2 C.F.R. § 200.1; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.320(a)(1)(ii), a non-Federal entity may award micro-purchases without soliciting competitive price or rate quotations if the non-Federal entity considers the price to be reasonable based on research, experience, purchase history or other information and documents that the non-Federal entity files; accordingly, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.320(a)(1)(iii), a non-Federal entity is responsible for determining and documenting an appropriate micro-purchase threshold based on internal controls, an evaluation of risk, and its documented procurement procedures; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.320(a)(1)(iv), a non-Federal entity may self-certify on an annual basis a micro-purchase threshold not to exceed $50,000 and maintain documentation to be made available to a Federal awarding agency and auditors in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.334; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.320(a)(1)(iv), such self-certification must include (1) a justification for the threshold, (2) a clear identification of the threshold, and (3) supporting documentation, which, for public institutions, may be a "higher threshold consistent with State law"; and

WHEREAS, G.S. 143-129(a) and G.S. 143-131(a) require the County of Transylvania to conduct a competitive bidding process for the purchase of (1) "apparatus, supplies, materials, or equipment" where the cost of such purchase is equal to or greater than $30,000, and (2) "construction or repair work" where the cost of such purchase is greater than or equal to $30,000; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina law does not require a unit of local government to competitively bid for purchase of services other than services subject to the qualifications-based selection process set forth in Article 3D of Chapter 143 of the North Carolina General Statutes (the "Mini-Brooks Act"); and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the County of Transylvania to achieve the following principles as a matter of public policy:

A. To comply with the legal requirements of public purchasing and procurement.
B. To assure vendors and contractors that impartial and equal treatment to all those who wish to do business with the County.
C. To receive maximum value for each public dollar spent.
D. To ensure that County departments and offices have the required goods, equipment and services necessary to carry out their duties.
E. To promote good and effective vendor relations, cultivated by fair practices and strict ethical standards.

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

1. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.320(a)(1)(iv) and the applicable provisions of North Carolina law, the County of Transylvania hereby self-certifies the following micro-purchase thresholds, each of which is a "higher threshold consistent with State law" under 2 C.F.R. § 200.320(a)(1)(iv)(C).

    a. $15,000 for purchase of "construction or repair work" to County facilities
    b. $10,000 for the purchase of "apparatus, supplies, materials or equipment"
    c. $50,000 for the acquisition of services not subject to the qualifications-based selection process.
    d. $50,000 for the acquisition of services subject to the qualifications-based selection process in the Mini-Brooks Act; provided that such threshold shall apply to a contract only if the County has exercised an exemption to the Mini-Brooks Act, in writing, for a particular project pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-64.32. If an exemption pursuant to Mini-Brooks Act has not been issued, then the threshold shall be $0.

2. In the event that the value of goods and services exceed these values outlined in section 1, then following thresholds shall apply, and be subject to the "informal" competitive process, as defined by the County of Transylvania's policies and procedures:
    a. $15,001 to $99,999 for purchase of "construction or repair work"
    b. $10,001 to $49,999 for the purchase of "apparatus, supplies, materials or equipment"
    c. $50,001 to $89,999 for the acquisition of services not subject to the qualifications-based selection process

3. In the event that the value of goods and services exceed these values outlined in section 2, then following thresholds shall apply, and be subject to the "formal" competitive process, as defined by the County of Transylvania's procurement policies and procedures:
    a. $100,000 for the purchase of "construction or repair work"
    b. $50,000 for the purchase of "apparatus, supplies, materials or equipment"
    c. $90,000 for the acquisition of services not subject to the qualifications-based selection process

4. The procurement of goods, materials, services and construction or repair work shall be exempted from these requirements if the procurement has a qualified exception as defined by N.C. General Statutes 143-129(e) **and** that exception has been documented in the Transylvania County Finance Office.

5. In the event a federal or state agency requires, as a condition of funding receipt, a threshold for a competitive process more restrictive than those adopted above, then those more restrictive thresholds shall prevail and govern the procurement of goods and services.

6. The Count's policy for capitalization of capital assets shall be that all assets with a value of $10,000 shall be capitalized as an investment in the fixed assets of the County.

7. Modifications to existing purchase agreements and contracts ("change orders") shall be subject to the review and approval of the County Manager if they fall within the approved budget for the purchase or acquisition of the agreement or contract, if they exceed the approved budget then they shall only be valid if submitted to and approved by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners.

8. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This Resolution became effective beginning July 1, 2024, and shall remain effective until superseded by a new resolution.

Adopted this the 9th day of February 2026.

S://Teresa K. McCall, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

RESOLUTION ALLOWING RETIRING OFFICER TO PURCHASE SERVICE SIDEARM
Brian Barton will retire from the Sheriff's Office effective February 1, 2026, with 17 years of service. N.C.G.S. §17F-20 allows the governing board to award to a retiring member the service sidearm of the retiring member. Sheriff Owenby requested approval from the Board of Commissioners to allow Officer Barton to purchase his service sidearm upon retirement. The Board approved the request to allow Officer Brian Barton to purchase his service sidearm upon retirement, effective February 1, 2026, for $1.00.

RESOLUTION # 03-2026
ALLOWING RETIRING OFFICER TO PURCHASE SERVICE SIDEARM

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 17F-20 authorizes the governing body of a local law enforcement agency, in its discretion, to award a retiring member, upon request, the service sidearm of the retiring member, at a price determined by the governing body; and

WHEREAS, Brian Barton began his career with the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office on May 4, 2009, serving initially as a detention officer and, after being promoted to various positions, he earned a promotion to Detective with the Investigations Unit; and

WHEREAS, Brian Barton will retire from the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office effective February 1, 2026, after 17 years of dedicated service;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes Brian Barton to purchase his service sidearm, in accordance with North Carolina General Statute § 17F-20, for the purchase price of $1.00.

Adopted this the 9th day of February 2026.

S://Teresa K. McCall, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

APPROVAL OF NOTICE TO DONATE SURPLUS FIREARMS SIMULATOR TO BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
The Sheriff's Office requested permission to donate a Meggitt FATS 100 LE Firearms Simulator to Blue Ridge Community College. The simulator is obsolete because the manufacturer is no longer in business, and the equipment can no longer be supported or updated. As a result, the Sheriff's Office no longer has use for it. Under N.C.G.S. § 160A-280, the County may donate surplus or obsolete personal property to another governmental unit or nonprofit entity after providing public notice and adopting a resolution at a subsequent meeting. The Board approved the required notice of intent to donate the surplus simulator. A resolution to finalize the donation will be considered at a future meeting.

TDA OFFICE SPACE AND VISITOR CENTER AGREEMENTS
The Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA) and the Brevard/Transylvania Chamber of Commerce have worked together for 30 years. Since the restructuring of TCTDA operations in 2022, the County, TCTDA, and the Chamber have operated under three short-term agreements covering office space, visitor center space, and visitor center operations.

All County expenditures related to TCTDA activities are fully reimbursed by the TCTDA.

After review and strategic discussions, the recommended plan is to:

- Continue leasing TCTDA office space on the second floor of the Chamber building for a four-year term, with no increase in lease cost. The agreement includes an option for the TCTDA to convert storage space into additional office space at its expense.
- Continue operating the Visitor Center on the first floor of the Chamber building under a four-year agreement. Lease costs would remain unchanged, while the operational agreement would increase by 7% initially and then adjust annually based on the Consumer Price Index.
- Allow either party to terminate the agreements with one year's notice after the first year.

The County Manager and legal counsel reviewed the contracts and recommended approval. The TCTDA Board endorsed the plan. The Board of Commissioners approved all three agreements for execution.

APPROVAL OF PROCESS TO DISPOSE OF UNSOLD FORECLOSED REAL PROPERTY

Several properties foreclosed due to unpaid taxes did not sell at prior courthouse auctions and are now owned by the County. In 2023, the County contracted with GovDeals to successfully auction similar properties. The County currently owns three vacant lots in Connestee Falls that remain unsold. Staff requested permission to renew the contract with GovDeals to market and auction these properties electronically, in compliance with state statutes governing the sale of public property. If the required resolution and advertisement are approved, the electronic auction is anticipated to open on March 23, 2026, and close on April 22, 2026. Final bids will be presented to the Board for approval before any sale becomes effective. The Board approved the resolution authorizing the sale of real property by electronic public auction and the notice of advertisement and granted staff permission to proceed with renewing the contract with GovDeals to market and auction the unsold properties.

Resolution #02-2026
Authorizing Sale of Real Property by Electronic Public Auction
Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 160A-270

Whereas, N.C.G.S. § 160A-270 authorizes the Board of Commissioners to sell real property at public auction, including electronic public auction, upon adoption of a resolution authorizing the appropriate official to dispose of the property at public auction subject to the Board's acceptance of the highest bid; and

Whereas, the County Manager has recommended that the property listed on the attached exhibits should be sold at public auction as surplus property; and

Whereas, Transylvania County acquired the property listed on the attached exhibits when the properties did not sell at a tax foreclosure auction;

Now therefore, be it resolved, by the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners that:

1. The County Manager or her designee is authorized to sell by electronic auction at *www.govdeals.com* under Transylvania County – Real Estate, beginning on March 23, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. and ending on April 22, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., the surplus property described in the attached exhibits.
2. Any offer or bid must be accepted or confirmed by the Board of Commissioners before the sale will be effective. Transylvania County reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to withdraw from sale any assets listed at any time until the County has received payment in full for the assets.
3. All assets are offered for sale "As Is, Where Is." Transylvania County makes no warranty, guarantee or representation of any kind, expressed or implied, as to the merchantability or fitness for any purpose of the property offered for sale.
4. The terms of the sale shall be net cash. The buyer is responsible for the closing costs. The County shall require the sale to be finalized and the titles to be transferred via warranty deed within 90 days of the auction date closing.

5. The lots are located within a development that has restrictions and covenants set forth in the Declaration of Restrictive Covenants by Connestee Falls Development Corporation.
6. The County Manager or her designee is directed to have published a notice of the sale at least once and not less than 30 days before the date on which bidding opens. The notice shall contain a general description of the land sufficient to identify it, the terms of the sale, and a reference to this authorizing resolution as required by N.C.G.S. § 160A-270(a).

Adopted on this 9th day of February 2026.

S://Teresa K. McCall, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

Exhibit A
A 0.425-acre lot located in the Connestee Falls Development (Lot 74 of Unit 5 on Tsisqua Circle) in Brevard, North Carolina. PIN # 8582-29-4267-000

Exhibit B
A 0.383-acre lot located in the Connestee Falls subdivision (Lot 23 of Unit 19 on Usdasdi Drive) in Brevard, North Carolina. PIN # 8592-09-4977-000

Exhibit C
A 0.449-acre lot located in the Connestee Falls subdivision (Lot 109 of Unit 29 on Ugugu Drive) in Brevard, North Carolina. PIN # 8573-32-1729-000

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

BOARD PRESENTATION
Chairwoman McCall shared an email announcing that Trisha Hogan, Clerk to the Board for Transylvania County, earned the Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC). The MMC is awarded to clerks who complete extensive educational requirements and demonstrate significant contributions to local government, their community, and their state. The IIMC, founded in 1947, represents more than 14,000 members across the United States, Canada, and 15 other countries and promotes professional development and lifelong learning in local government. Chairwoman McCall presented Ms. Hogan with her MMC certificate, a card, and flowers.

Board members offered remarks recognizing her achievement and service:

- Chairwoman McCall praised Ms. Hogan's leadership, organization, and dedication to the Board and County.
- Commissioner Chapman congratulated her on the well-deserved recognition and reflected on 14 years of working together.
- Commissioner McKelvey commended her professionalism and commitment to excellence.
- Commissioner Dalton acknowledged the extensive behind-the-scenes work she performs to support the Board.
- Chairman Chappell reflected on serving on her original interview committee and described her as one of the most dedicated individuals in County government, noting the significant impact of her service over the years.

The County Manager echoed the Board's appreciation, highlighting the vital role the Clerk plays in policymaking, record keeping, and the overall function of local government.

Ms. Hogan thanked the Board for the unexpected recognition and expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to serve.

RECOGNITION OF CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS
In July 2015, the Board implemented a semi-annual recognition program to thank citizens who volunteer their time and expertise on County advisory councils. This recognition period covered July 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. The remaining members scheduled for recognition were unable to attend and will be invited to a future meeting.

MONTHLY CAPITAL UPDATE
Pursuant to the interlocal agreement between the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education, the Project Manager provides monthly updates on school capital projects. In addition to the project update, the Board received a report from the County Manager and School Superintendent regarding the February 5, 2026, Joint School Bond Project Committee meeting. The Manager also provided an update on countywide capital projects outside of school facilities.

Fixing Transylvania Schools
The County Manager invited Superintendent Dr. Lisa Fletcher to assist with the school capital update.

The Manager reported that the County currently has more than $200 million in capital projects in development, underway, or upcoming. Approximately $100 million of that total comes from grant funding (excluding broadband), including a $62 million state grant awarded to the School System.

Since February 2025, significant progress has been made. The Joint School Bond Project Committee met on February 5, 2026, and approved the first phase of bond-funded work scheduled for summer 2026. Project Manager Beecher Allison will provide additional details in his report.

Rosman Middle/High School and Old Gym
The Manager updated the Board on structural concerns at Rosman Middle/High School and the old gym. The structural engineer revised a prior recommendation and advised that shoring work should occur before additional work proceeds under Guaranteed Maximum Price 2 (GMP 2), scheduled for this fall. In response to the updated recommendation and prioritizing public safety, the Superintendent immediately ordered the closure of the building. Staff began developing a revised life-safety plan due to changes in entry and exit points associated with the old gym. Staffs hope to reopen the building under limited occupancy once the updated safety plan receives approval. Dr. Fletcher reported that the middle school basketball season has concluded, reducing scheduling impacts. The middle and high schools continue to share space effectively during the closure. Commissioners had no questions regarding this portion of the update.

Education Capital Fund and Financial Review
The Manager reported that she, Dr. Fletcher, and the County and School finance directors meet regularly to review the Education Capital Fund, project status, financial conditions, and upcoming needs. Monthly reports are provided to the Board in hard copy. These meetings also allow staff to evaluate project closeouts and potential reallocation of funds.
In August 2024, the Board adopted a five-year education capital plan and project budgets. While the original plan focused on projects identified after the Axias assessments, the Education Capital Fund includes all school capital projects exceeding $50,000. The Board retains authority to amend project budgets, and several amendments have been approved to date.

The updated five-year report that was presented to the Board:
- Identifies which projects are managed by the School System, the County, or remain to be determined.
- Lists total approved budgets.

- Provides anticipated timelines and estimated completion dates.
- Notes budget amendments and approval dates.

The Manager stated that the enhanced detail should provide greater transparency regarding project budgets and expenditures. Staff will post the updated report on the County website. S

The Manager invited questions from the Board regarding the capital update.

Commissioner Chappell did not have questions but thanked the Manager and staff for revising the capital report. He noted that expanding the spreadsheet to show items such as the percentage of completion within current budgets, an idea raised at the recent Committee meeting, adds clarity and improves oversight. Commissioner McKelvey agreed and expressed appreciation for the added detail.

The Manager acknowledged the volume of projects underway, noting that both the County and School System have significant responsibilities. She highlighted the addition of the grant-funded Career and Technical Education (CTE) building at Brevard High School and stated that approximately $164 million in capital investment is now dedicated to school facilities. She emphasized the importance of this investment and thanked Dr. Fletcher for her leadership in advancing these projects.

The Manager then invited Project Manager Beecher Allison to provide status updates on the projects under his management. She noted that Finance Director Meagan O'Neal would present updated financial data later in the meeting. While the project status report reflects information current as of today, the financial report will show a 60–90-day lag due to invoice processing and change order reconciliation.

<u>Project Manager Update – Beecher Allison</u>

- Rosman Underground Storage Tank Replacement: The underground storage tank replacement at Rosman will begin next summer as part of the larger Rosman Area Scope under Guaranteed Maximum Price 1 (GMP 1), approved by the Joint School Bond Project Committee on February 5, 2026. The project will bring all required storage tanks in the Rosman school district into compliance with current environmental standards.
- Softball Lighting Project: The County is managing the Softball Lighting Project. The contract has been awarded, and the contractor began underground work in early February. Staff are coordinating closely with the softball coach to avoid disrupting practices. Lighting fixtures have been procured, and metal poles are on order with delivery expected in late February or early March. The project remains within the approved budget.
- Retaining Wall Project (RMS/RHS): The retaining wall is being incorporated into Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) pricing and design development for inclusion in GMP 2. The project team will review updated pricing at the next phase.
- Brevard High School – Scope #1 (Old Gym Emergency Roof Replacement): Punch list items are nearing completion. Once final inspections and payments are complete, County staff will finalize project closeout documentation, including warranties, for School Maintenance and Finance. Carlisle completed the final roof warranty inspection on January 19. The project will finish slightly under budget; however, remaining funds cannot be reallocated until formal closeout is complete.
- Major Bond-Funded Scopes (Brevard and Rosman Areas): Projects include Brevard High School and Plant Operations (Scope #2), Rosman Area (T.C. Henderson, Rosman Elementary, Rosman Middle, Rosman High), and Brevard Area (Davidson River, Pisgah Forest, Brevard Elementary, Brevard Middle). Schematic design drawings have been submitted to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) for review. The first round of schematic-level pricing was completed on January 8, with revisions reviewed prior to the February 5 Joint School Bond Project Committee meeting. The Committee approved GMP 1 work to begin in the summer of 2026 in order to meet bidding timelines

and maintain project momentum. Approved scope adjustments remain within existing budgets under the interlocal agreement. Any future budget amendments, such as incorporating the RMS/RHS retaining wall, will require approval from both Boards during GMP 2 consideration. Current projections anticipate GMP 2 construction beginning in fall 2026, with completion of these scopes by summer 2028. Timelines will be refined once GMP 2 is finalized this summer.

- Brevard High School – Scope #2 (EC Wing Roof Replacement): Using emergency procurement statutes, the County advanced the EC Wing roof replacement. The EC Wing reopened for occupancy on January 20. Carlisle completed the final roof warranty inspection on January 19. The project is now in closeout, and remaining funds will continue to apply to the broader Scope #2 budget. Mr. Allison shared photos of the completed work.
- Rosman Old Gym – Temporary Shoring: Temporary shoring, included in the original Rosman Area Scope budget, will proceed once shoring and interim life-safety drawings receive approval from Building Inspections and the Fire Marshal. The design team submitted drawings for review. Upon approval of the life-safety plan, the old gym may reopen under limited occupancy. Once shoring is complete, the gym may return to full capacity until larger construction begins.
- Financial Reporting: Finance Director Meagan O'Neal will present the second quarter FY 2026 financial report later in the meeting and it will reflect invoices paid through December 31, 2025. Mr. Allison reminded the Board that financial reports typically lag behind real-time project status due to invoice processing and change orders. He and the Finance Director will also present updates to the Board of Education on February 16.
- Brevard High School CTE Wing Grant Project: County and School leadership are negotiating amended contracts for architectural and CMAR services related to the grant-funded CTE Wing project. Once contract amendments are finalized, programming and design refinement will proceed. The grant requires construction to begin no later than the end of 2028, and current timelines remain on track to meet that deadline.
- Summary: Brevard High School Scope #1 and the EC Wing roof replacement (Scope #2) are complete. Additional bond-funded work will begin in summer 2026 under GMP 1, as approved by the Joint School Bond Project Committee on February 5. NCDPI is reviewing schematic drawings, and the design team continues refining documents to establish GMP 2 pricing.

Chairwoman McCall invited questions or comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Chapman asked whether staff were receiving timely responses from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) or whether the review process was causing delays. Mr. Allison stated he would confirm with the architect, but noted that the design firm, LS3P, has experience working with DPI. He explained that LS3P conducts internal design reviews before submitting documents to DPI to identify and correct issues in advance, which helps minimize comments or resubmissions.

Commissioner Dalton asked whether the cause of the structural issues at the Rosman old gym had been determined and whether drainage concerns previously discussed were a factor. Mr. Allison explained that drainage contributed to the problem but was not the sole cause. Water infiltration through the top of the foundation wall deteriorated the bar joists supporting the slab over the former coal room beneath the main entrance, leading to corrosion of structural steel. He emphasized that the damage resulted from multiple compounding issues. Historic construction documents assisted the design team and structural engineer in identifying causes and developing repair plans.

The Manager added that the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) delivery method allows phased submission of schematic, design development, and construction drawings to DPI, which can improve review timelines because DPI evaluates documents incrementally. She contrasted this with the Brevard High School old gym emergency project, where drawings had to be completed and submitted at once due to time

constraints. Staff do not anticipate DPI review delays on the current projects, given the phased approach and the architect's experience.

Chairwoman McCall asked whether the Rosman old gym issue would affect the retaining wall project. Mr. Allison stated that the two projects are currently separate; however, staff plan to incorporate the retaining wall into the broader GMP 2 scope. He noted that refining drawings and fully understanding site conditions before construction often results in better outcomes.

Chairwoman McCall also asked about the timeline for installing temporary shoring at the Rosman old gym. Staff indicated that the shoring work itself can be completed quickly. However, final scheduling depends on CMAR mobilization, which is still being coordinated. The structural engineer has completed the drawings, and the CMAR used them to inform the GMP 1 budget presented to the Committee. Once mobilized, limited occupancy could resume before full construction begins, though the main entrance would remain closed. The proposed life-safety plan significantly reduces occupancy but would allow classes and limited activities to occur in the space if needed.

Creating Jobs and a Safe Community

- New Courthouse: The Courthouse project has reached the 50% design phase, and staff are reviewing the drawings. The County is working with its financial advisor to pursue limited obligation bond financing in fall 2026. To meet bond requirements, bid timing must align with the bond sale, which will require issuing bids in the summer. Staff expect bid documents to be ready in advance but will coordinate timing accordingly. The County remains on track to break ground by the end of 2026.
- Library Amphitheater Cover: Site work has begun on the amphitheater cover. The contractor is completing wiring and the required pre-installation work. The structure is being fabricated off-site and will be erected on-site once ready.

Protecting Transylvania Natural Resources

- Landfill Cell Expansion: Sediment ponds are nearing completion, and crews are placing the clay liner, which forms the base layer for leachate collection. Due to its thickness, installation requires additional time. Completion remains on schedule for May 2026, meeting the grant expenditure deadline of June 30.
- Watershed Study: The project engineer is preparing the required submission to the State.
- Boys & Girls Club / Gallimore Road Sewer Project: Staff expect to issue the notice to proceed to the contractor this week.
- Landfill Leachate Pretreatment System: The pretreatment system is in the design phase and is expected to bid and award this summer. This project has the tightest grant timeline, with completion anticipated in late November. Staff remain confident that all grant funds will be fully invoiced within the required deadlines.
- Pisgah Labs Water and Sewer Extension: The Economic Development Administration (EDA) is reviewing the draft Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for engineering services. Staff will release the RFQ upon receiving EDA comments.
- Brevard System Housing Projects: Projects include Housing Assistance Corporation construction approval, Habitat design and construction, and Azalea Avenue design. Engineers are updating preliminary engineering reports to confirm project budgets and allow work to proceed.

The Manager invited questions from the Board.

Commissioner Dalton asked about the timeline for completing the Solid Waste Study. The Manager reported that staff are reviewing draft materials from the consultant, including options analysis, while the contractor

continues work on the rate study. She anticipates providing a brief update during the Administration's semi-annual report and noted that additional details will be incorporated into upcoming budget discussions.

FY 2027 BUDGET PROCESS: EARLY REVENUE PROJECTION AND MANAGING EXPECTATIONS
The County Manager outlined the FY 2027 budget process, which begins in January and concludes by June 30 to ensure adoption before the July 1 fiscal year start. Staff plan to provide monthly updates to increase transparency and public understanding of how county budgets are developed and funded. The Manager also asked Commissioners to share any travel dates through June to assist with scheduling budget work sessions.

The presentation focused on County funding responsibilities, including outside agencies, and preliminary revenue projections and strategies for managing expectations with funding partners.

North Carolina counties operate under a unique structure. While Boards of Commissioners control revenue decisions, particularly property taxes, they do not have full control over many expenditures, including education and fire services, which are heavily influenced by state mandates.

Four Primary Revenue Categories

1. Property Tax
    - The only revenue source fully controlled by the Board.
    - Represents the majority of County operating revenue.
2. Sales Tax
    - Levied and restricted by the State.
    - Certain sales tax articles must be dedicated to specific purposes, such as education capital; the same is not true for municipalities.
3. State and Federal Funds
    - Typically tied to mandated programs.
    - Often do not fully fund the required services.
4. Fees for Service
    - Includes permits, landfill fees, and similar charges.
    - Fees must offset the cost of providing the service and cannot generate profit.
    - Only two departments offset operations through fees:
        - Building Inspections
        - Register of Deeds (fees set by the State; most collections are remitted to the State)

State and federal funds and service fees combined represent the second-largest revenue source, followed by sales tax.

Non–Property Tax Revenue Options

- Sales Tax (¼-cent option not currently levied)
    - Requires voter approval through referendum.
    - Previously failed when placed on the ballot.
    - Equivalent to approximately one cent of property tax on the current levy.
- Fees for Service
    - Solid Waste: In 2019, the Board adjusted landfill fees but began supplementing operations with property tax. The Board may consider transitioning Solid Waste to a true enterprise fund model so that fees fully offset operational and capital costs. A rate study will inform future discussion. Without the recent state grant for landfill cell expansion, the project would have equaled approximately six cents of property taxes.
    - Parks and Recreation: Program fees offset direct program costs. The County does not currently charge field use fees, though this has been discussed in prior years.

Revenue Challenges for FY 2027

- Federal HR 1 Impacts: Changes to SNAP and Medicaid may require additional state matching funds. If the State does not fully fund these requirements, up to $1.2 million ($1 million of which is direct benefit to citizens) could shift to the County (approximately one cent on the property tax rate).
- Grant Uncertainty: Reductions in state or federal grants could eliminate certain programs and impact the County's ability to respond to emergencies or public health needs.

Funding for Outside Agencies

Approximately 35% of property tax expenditures support entities outside direct County operational control, including:

- K–12 Schools and the Community College
- Fire and Rescue agencies
- NC Forestry Service
- Vaya Health
- Nonprofit partners providing complementary human services

While these agencies submit budget requests and justification, the County does not manage their daily expenditures. Internally, County departments control costs by:

- Reviewing vacancies before refilling positions
- Bidding services competitively
- Conducting utility and expense audits
- Implementing cost-control policies

Such oversight tools are not available for external agencies, which complicates budget management.

Preliminary Revenue Outlook and Budget Guidance

Preliminary projections show property tax base growth of approximately 2%, subject to refinement by April. The Manager informed internal departments that:

- She does not intend to recommend a tax increase in FY 2027.
- Requests exceeding 2% growth must include a strong justification to be considered in her recommended budget.

The Manager also plans to issue a formal budget guidance letter to outside agencies stating:

- Revenue growth is expected to remain at or below 2%.
- No tax increase is intended in the Manager's recommended budget.
- Funding requests exceeding 2% will not be recommended unless the requesting agency's governing board formally votes to request funding at a level that would require a property tax increase.

The intent is to set clear expectations early, encourage thoughtful budget requests, and align funding discussions with the reality that only the Board of Commissioners has the authority to raise property taxes.

Future Budget Discussions

Upcoming presentations will include:

- Analysis of mandated services (previously estimated at more than 86% of the FY 2025 budget).
- Debt and capital planning.
- Additional education on County budget mechanics.

The Manager plans to present her recommended budget in May, with statutory adoption required by June 1.

The Manager invited questions or comments regarding the proposed budget guidance approach.

Commissioner Dalton noted that the County received a $7 million state grant for the landfill expansion. However, regulatory and permitting costs pushed the total project cost higher, requiring the Board to add $2.5 million. Without the grant, the property tax impact could have been eight or nine cents instead of six. He credited the County's advocacy in Raleigh, which benefited both Transylvania County and the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman. He thanked Commissioner Chapman for joining him on multiple trips and meetings with state representatives.

Commissioner Chapman observed that property tax reform is a growing topic nationwide. At a recent NCACC district directors' meeting, representatives from Florida shared similar discussions. He questioned how counties would replace property tax revenue if the state limited local authority. Alternatives like sales or income taxes present challenges, especially in states without income taxes.

Commissioner Dalton added that he and Chairwoman McCall serve on the NCACC Tax and Finance Subcommittee, where property tax reform was heavily discussed. He advocated for a differentiated tax rate on vacation and second homes, similar to Virginia, Tennessee, and South Carolina. He expressed concern that legislative influence tends to favor more populous regions of the state and affirmed his intention to continue advocating for mountain communities.

Commissioner McKelvey asked whether the previously defeated ¼-cent sales tax could return to the ballot in 2026. The Manager confirmed that it could, if approved by the Board. He requested further discussion, noting that the estimated revenue, equivalent to approximately one cent on the property tax rate, could relieve pressure in future budget cycles. The Manager clarified that this particular sales tax option is not restricted in how proceeds are spent, unlike many other sales tax revenues counties receive. She also highlighted structural differences between counties and municipalities, noting that cities have greater flexibility and access to additional revenue streams, such as franchise fees, and are not mandated to provide certain services.

Discussion returned to solid waste funding. Commissioner McKelvey asked if the upcoming rate study would allow the Board to consider fully covering operational costs through fees. The Manager confirmed that the study will include both operational and long-term capital needs. Currently, the County supplements solid waste operations by $600,000 to $1 million annually. She emphasized the need for sustainable funding, citing 2016 when the State threatened to shut down the landfill over compliance concerns stemming from prior cost-cutting measures.

Commissioner McKelvey noted that in 2019, the Board increased property taxes by 1.9 cents to support solid waste. If landfill operations were fully offset through fees and a ¼-cent sales tax were approved, he suggested property taxes could theoretically decrease by nearly three cents. The Manager clarified that any reduction would depend on whether new fee structures fully covered operational and capital costs, as current budgeting does not fully account for long-term landfill improvements.

Commissioner Dalton raised the possibility of a parcel fee model similar to South Carolina, where residents pay a solid waste fee on their tax bill rather than at the landfill. The Manager confirmed that a parcel fee option would be included in the study. She added that comparative data from the NCACC's budget survey would provide context, as some counties appear to charge lower tipping fees but supplement those rates with parcel fees or other funding mechanisms. She also noted that Transylvania County's convenience site model is popular with residents but more costly than models relying primarily on private-sector collection.

Commissioner Dalton advocated for increased federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding, pointing out that more than two-thirds of the County's land base does not generate property taxes yet still requires services.

Chairwoman McCall emphasized the need to discuss the timing of a potential sales tax referendum. She praised staff for securing the landfill expansion grant, which effectively saved six cents on the property tax rate. She supported issuing clear budget guidance and thanked staff and Commissioners for their work.

Commissioner Chappell also thanked staff and recognized the County's General Assembly delegation, noting that long-term relationships and consistent advocacy have resulted in unprecedented funding for the County.

UPDATE ON EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO HURRICANE/TROPICAL STORM HELENE

The Manager provided an update on recovery efforts related to Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene. She noted that while updates have been given at every meeting, future updates will move to a monthly schedule.

Resources

- Renew NC is accepting applications for a disaster recovery program to repair or rebuild small rental properties damaged by the storm. Property owners can visit www.renewnc.org or call 1-888-791-0207 for more information.
- Property owners have until February 28 to apply for reimbursement through the North Carolina Private Road and Bridge Program. Although the interest form for state-managed repairs has closed, owners may still apply for partial reimbursement for eligible repairs to private roads, bridges, culverts, or pipes.
- FEMA information remains available at 4827 | FEMA.gov.

FEMA Assistance Data Points (as of February 5, 2026)

- FEMA has awarded more than $10.4 million in Individual Assistance to Transylvania County residents.
- Of 4,837 valid registrations, 4,194 were referred for Individual Assistance.
- To date, 3,064 applicants have been found eligible for Housing Assistance and/or Other Needs Assistance.

Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR)

- 429 Right-of-Entry (ROE) forms have been processed.
- 30 remain pending eligibility review.
- 24 properties received full eligibility, and debris removal began on September 15.
- 203 properties were determined ineligible.
- 168 properties were deemed eligible with conditions; 163 of those have been closed, and 5 remain assigned to a hauler.
- In total, 187 properties have been closed, and 6 are currently assigned to a hauler.

The primary delay continues to be FEMA's review of applications that were resubmitted after conditional determinations. Staff continue to receive calls from residents asking about the status of their applications.

Waterway Debris

- 72 debris sites have been identified.
- To qualify, debris must pose a threat to infrastructure.
- The County is waiting on FEMA to determine eligibility.
- Staff are identifying access points and submitting that information to FEMA as part of the review process.

General Updates

- Remaining private property debris removal and waterway cleanup are delayed due to FEMA review timelines.

- Some progress has been made at the federal level on hazard mitigation efforts.
- The County continues working with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners to advocate for funding.
- The Manager noted that although the County experienced challenges working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on debris removal, it avoided entering into direct debris removal contracts, which has spared the County from issues now facing other counties that signed large contracts.

Hazard Mitigation

- Seven of eleven Group 1 (acquisition) properties have been approved to move forward and receive federal funding.
- Two of those seven properties switched to elevation requests after the initial submission but remained in the acquisition group to secure funding. Those two will require a Benefit-Cost Analysis for elevation.
- One property owner may withdraw; confirmation is pending.
- The State has notified the approved property owners and assigned a project manager. The County Emergency Management Director is working with the State to obtain responses.

The Manager explained that property owners are often directed by the State to contact the County for updates. While the County collects and submits applications, it does not make eligibility decisions or manage contractors. As a result, the County is also waiting for updates. The Manager has expressed concerns to the State that this process creates confusion about the County's role, but she does not expect changes in the near future.

APPOINTMENTS

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW

The terms of James Cruickshank and Jackson Tate expire at the end of January. Both are eligible and willing to serve another term. There is also one additional application on file. Applicants must own property in Transylvania County. This board has no term limits. Tax Administrator Jessica McCall recommended the reappointment of Mr. Cruickshank and Mr. Tate.

Commissioner Chappell moved to reappoint James Cruickshank and Jackson Tate to the Board of Equalization and Review, seconded by Commissioner Chapman, and unanimously approved.

PLANNING BOARD

The terms of Herschel Johnson, Mike Privette, and Wendy Warwick expire at the end of January. They are eligible and willing to serve another term. There are also several applications on file for the Board to review and consider.

Commissioner Chappell moved to reappoint Herschel Johnson, Mike Privette, and Wendy Warwick to a second term on the Planning Board, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously approved.

JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

N.C.G.S. § 143B-846 requires the Board of County Commissioners to appoint members to a Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) as a prerequisite for receiving funding for juvenile court services and delinquency prevention programs. The JCPC's membership is governed by statute and shall not exceed 26 members. The Clerk to the Board manages the application process for the Board of Commissioners. She received an application for a Commissioner Appointee (member-at-large) position following a recent advertisement. The JCPC consultant recommended the appointment of Leah Bush to fill the vacant position.

Commissioner Dalton moved to appoint Leah Bush to fill a Commissioner Appointee vacancy on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously approved.

Chairwoman McCall called for a 10-minute recess. The meeting resumed at 5:45 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDERATION OF A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR A WAIVER ON THE NUMBER OF VIRTUAL DAYS FOR WNC SCHOOLS

Commissioner Chappell requested that this item be added to the agenda after speaking with Transylvania County Schools Superintendent Dr. Lisa Fletcher about challenges related to recent winter weather. He explained that the North Carolina General Assembly limits the number of virtual instructional days public schools may use, and several school systems in Western North Carolina have already exhausted their allotted days due to recent weather events. He suggested that the Board send a letter to the County's General Assembly delegation advocating for a waiver or an extension of the allowable number of virtual days for affected school systems.

Chairwoman McCall agreed that sending a letter was an appropriate step and expressed support for greater local control over school calendars to better address situations like extended weather disruptions.

Commissioner Chappell moved that the Board send a letter to Transylvania County's delegation in the NC General Assembly advocating for additional virtual instructional days for public school systems impacted by adverse weather. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McKelvey and unanimously approved.

FY 2026 2ND QUARTER FINANCIAL SUMMARY 1:47:35

Finance Director Meagan O'Neal presented the FY 2026 Second Quarter Financial Summary covering financial activity through December 31, 2025. She explained that fiscal control requirements mandate quarterly reporting of unaudited financial statements to the Board.

General Fund Revenue totaled approximately $41.6 million. Property tax revenue accounted for just over $30 million, including $29.9 million from current year ad valorem taxes and approximately $750,000 from prior year taxes, interest, penalties, and motor vehicle tax collections. Other revenue sources included sales tax, investment earnings, permits, fines, and service revenues. Sales tax revenues, which are received from the state on a two-month delay, totaled $3.79 million for July through October sales, placing collections at approximately 33.3% of the annual budget and on schedule.

General Fund Expenditures totaled $33.9 million. Personnel expenses accounted for $16 million, or 44.3% of the budgeted amount. Education funding to Transylvania County Schools and Blue Ridge Community College totaled $9.3 million. Ms. O'Neal reported that expenditures remain within budget at the halfway point of the fiscal year.

Enterprise Fund – Solid Waste reported $1.59 million in revenues, including just over $1 million from scale sales and $306,000 from sticker sales, both slightly under 50% of the budgeted totals. Miscellaneous fees, including recycling, bulk item, and television disposal fees, totaled $43,000. The Solid Waste investment account earned approximately $157,000 through the second quarter. Expenditures totaled $1.3 million, primarily for personnel, operating costs, and contract services, resulting in a net gain of approximately $243,570.

Ms. O'Neal also provided an overview of the **Education Capital Fund**, which includes projects funded through cash allocations, state lottery funds, and voter-approved general obligation bonds. She reviewed the

status of several ongoing school capital projects, including Brevard High School roof and EC wing repairs, underground storage tank removal and replacement, softball field lighting, the Rosman and Brevard area project scopes, and a retaining wall investigation and potential repairs. She noted that since the adoption of the five-year capital plan in August 2024, the County has paid more than $10.9 million to vendors for school capital projects, including cash-funded projects, lottery-funded projects, and projects funded through bonds issued in November 2024.

Project	Funding	Budgeted	Encumbered	Actual
Bond Step 1- BHS Scope 1	Bond Funds	$2,052,156	$73,366	$1,978,790
Bond Step 1- BHS Scope 2	Bond Funds	$9,078,798	$846,350	$632,941
Underground Storage Tank Removal/Replace				
Design	Cash	$165,000	$4,411	$34,589
Construction & Contingency	Bond Funds	$2,249,390	$2,372	$259,423
Softball Lighting	Cash	$150,000	$73,544	$73,544
Rosman Area Scope	Bond Funds	$16,707,282	$670,720	$267,668
Brevard Area Scope	Bond Funds	$14,673,792	$670,720	$267,668
Retaining Wall				
Investigation	Cash	$702,780	$8,260	$36,740
Repairs	Bond Funds (Considering combining with Rosman Area Scope)			

Ms. O'Neal explained that financial reporting often lags behind construction progress due to the time required to process contractor pay applications. This process includes review of sales tax documentation, architect certification, required approvals, and internal accounts payable controls. She noted that projects may appear complete operationally while financial closeout continues due to inspections, regulatory approvals, or final documentation. The graphic below is an example of the financial steps necessary to process one project.

Ms. O'Neal also reviewed **statutory requirements governing local government financial management**, including the pre-audit process required under North Carolina law. She emphasized that no contracts or obligations may be executed without sufficient budget appropriations in place and verified by the Finance Officer. If additional funding were ever required beyond the approved project budget and contingency, it would require a public budget amendment approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioners thanked the Manager, Finance Director, and Project Manager for providing clear and transparent information to help the public understand the status of the school capital projects and County finances.

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

PROPOSED CHANGES TO NONPROFIT GRANT FUNDING FOR FY 2027

Budget and Management Analyst Jennifer Wright presented proposed updates to the County's nonprofit grant funding process. Each year, Transylvania County allocates approximately $100,000 to support local nonprofit organizations that provide services that support, enhance, or complement existing County programs.

Ms. Wright explained that state statute requires funded activities to meet a public purpose test, meaning the County may only fund projects that represent services the County could otherwise provide. Eligible partnership services are outlined in detail within the grant application materials.

Applications are reviewed during the budget process by an internal committee composed of representatives from the Departments of Social Services, Public Health, and Planning, along with two Commissioners. Nonprofits with a historical preservation focus are also reviewed by the Joint Historic Preservation Commission, which provides funding recommendations for those organizations.

After reviewing the current process, the staff recommended several improvements:

- Online application form – The existing paper application would be replaced with a simplified online application using the County's existing software.
- Designated housing grant – Staff recommended designating $20,000 of the total funding specifically for housing-related nonprofit programs based on findings from the recent County housing study.
- Direct services to citizens – Additional revisions would emphasize that eligible projects should provide direct services to residents.
- Encouraging partnerships – The application would also encourage collaborative applications from organizations providing similar services, with priority given to partnerships rather than separate individual requests.
- SMART goals – applicants would be encouraged to include SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound) to help both the County and grant recipients better track outcomes and success.

Chairwoman McCall noted that she has served on the grant review committee and described the process as very detailed and time-consuming. She supported efforts to streamline the process while maintaining the importance of carefully reviewing the funding the County distributes.

Commissioner Chapman asked whether the proposed changes would apply to the Community Center grant program. Ms. Wright clarified that those funds are part of a separate program and would not be affected by these changes.

Commissioner Chappell expressed support for the proposed revisions, particularly the inclusion of SMART goals to help measure program outcomes.

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the changes as presented, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and the motion was unanimously approved.

FUNDING TO REPLACE BOOKMOBILE GENERATOR

Library Director Rishara Finsel requested $10,000 to help replace the generator on the Transylvania County Library's bookmobile so the vehicle can return to service.

Ms. Finsel explained that the bookmobile extends library services beyond the Library's single location in Brevard and primarily serves two groups: youth through early literacy outreach at schools and preschools, seniors, homebound patrons, and residents in remote areas with limited transportation. While these groups have different needs, both rely on the bookmobile for access to library materials, programs, and staff assistance.

The current bookmobile, a 2007 model that began service in 2008, remains mechanically sound, but the generator powers all essential onboard systems. Without it, the vehicle cannot operate because it lacks heat, lighting, electricity, and other necessary equipment. The generator has required multiple repairs in recent years that caused temporary service disruptions. The current failure is the most significant to date, and mechanics have been unable to locate the parts needed to repair it. Because of these recurring issues and the lack of replacement parts, staff recommend replacing the generator as the only viable way to restore service.

Under normal operations, the bookmobile serves 50–60 regular stops across the county, including schools, preschools, daycare centers, assisted living facilities, apartment complexes, community centers, parks, and neighborhoods. Most locations are visited twice a month. During the previous fiscal year, the bookmobile served 3,618 patrons, operated 155 days, provided 515 hours of direct public service, and averaged 58 stops

per month. Ms. Finsel noted that service was reduced during that time due to approximately two weeks of repair downtime and an additional four weeks following Hurricane Helene.

Without replacing the generator, bookmobile services will remain suspended. Delaying the repair could lead to canceled school and early literacy visits, loss of service to seniors and homebound residents, reduced access for rural residents with limited transportation, and greater inequity in access to library services.

The total cost of a new generator is slightly more than $16,000 before tax. The Library can redirect approximately $6,000 by postponing non-urgent bookmobile improvements but cannot cover the full cost within its current budget. The requested funding would allow the Library to complete the replacement and resume service.

Ms. Finsel acknowledged that the repair is costly for an older vehicle but noted that replacing the entire bookmobile would require a much larger investment. New mobile library vehicles typically cost $200,000 or more, with models similar in size to the County's exceeding $600,000. Extending the life of the current vehicle will allow the Library time to evaluate future mobile service options, align services with community needs, and pursue potential grants or fundraising for a replacement. She plans to provide additional information about bookmobile services, trends, and future options in her upcoming semiannual report.

Commissioner Chappell expressed support for the request and asked whether the Library had considered adding a Starlink system to the bookmobile to improve connectivity, particularly during emergencies such as Hurricane Helene. Ms. Finsel said the vehicle currently uses a hotspot but acknowledged that service gaps exist in parts of the county. She supported exploring options that would improve connectivity, safety, and service for staff and patrons. The Manager noted that the County already has access to deployable systems that could be used initially and that staff could also explore equipment that might be permanently assigned to the vehicle. Ms. Finsel added that as the Library evaluates future mobile service options, staff want to consider technologies and service models that best meet community needs rather than assuming the next vehicle will look like the current one.

Chairwoman McCall asked about the expected lifespan of the bookmobile. Ms. Finsel said the vehicle is approaching 20 years of service, which makes long-term planning important. However, the vehicle itself has remained reliable, with most issues related to the generator.

Chairwoman McCall also asked how the current bookmobile was originally funded. Ms. Finsel said she believes it was partially supported by grants and would confirm those details for the Board. Chairwoman McCall encouraged staff to begin exploring potential grant opportunities as part of planning for a future replacement.

Commissioner Chappell moved to appropriate $10,000 from the General Fund contingency to replace the generator on the Transylvania County Library bookmobile and restore countywide mobile library services. Commissioner Chapman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

2026 CAPITAL PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY AND GRANT GUIDANCE

The County Manager led a discussion on capital priorities to guide the County's annual advocacy letter to state and federal legislators.

The County typically submits a list of capital needs during this time of year as the State prepares for the short legislative session, which is expected to be convened in April. Subcommittees are currently meeting and developing budget recommendations that will be considered when the General Assembly returns to session. Submitting priority projects in advance allows the County to position itself for potential funding opportunities.

Over the past five years, Transylvania County has secured approximately $100 million in capital funding from private, state, and federal sources. These funds have supported water and sewer infrastructure projects in Rosman and Brevard, housing and economic development initiatives, school renovations and construction, expansion of the Sylvan Valley Industrial Park, and environmental protection projects. The Manager noted that this success has resulted from coordinated capital planning and strong advocacy by the Board with state and federal partners.

The Manager recommended that the Board consider focusing primarily on funding a new courthouse in this year's request. The project is currently estimated to cost $36 million and is expected to require full financing if outside funding is not secured. Even partial state or federal assistance would reduce the County's debt obligation.

She also reviewed projects included in the County's 2025 advocacy list. Those requests included funding for a new courthouse, potential development of a Blue Ridge Community College campus, land acquisition and facility relocation associated with a future industrial park, communications tower infrastructure, and renovations to the historic courthouse once a new courthouse is constructed. The communications tower project has since been funded, and the Brevard High School CTE renovation previously included on the list was recently funded through a grant.

The Manager suggested asking the Transylvania County School System again this year to provide its top capital priorities for potential inclusion. Last year, their requests included activity buses and food and nutrition equipment. She also asked whether the Board wanted to continue including infrastructure requests related to water and sewer projects in Brevard and Rosman, noting that these services are provided by municipal systems rather than the County.

She shared additional capital needs identified by departments, including a crime scene and mobile command vehicle for the Sheriff's Office estimated at $400,000; a satellite Fire and EMS facility estimated at $2.7 million; Emergency Management and Communications vehicle replacements estimated at $122,000; public safety IT equipment estimated at $600,000; countywide IT network equipment estimated at $541,000; and a future expansion to the Quebec EMS Base estimated at $180,000. She noted that maintaining a broader list can be helpful when legislators identify smaller funding opportunities for equipment or specific projects. The Board could also consider including a future bookmobile replacement in the advocacy request.

Commissioner Chapman expressed concern about relying too heavily on the current $36 million estimate for the courthouse before final design and bidding are complete. Based on experiences in other counties, he cautioned against committing to a figure too early and stressed the importance of ensuring the facility will meet long-term needs.

The Manager explained that the County previously requested $50 million for a courthouse project when the Board considered a much larger facility. The current design is approximately 45,000 square feet, and the architect's estimate based on the 50 percent design drawings is $36 million. Those drawings are currently being reviewed for updated pricing. She said the estimate appears solid but suggested increasing the request to $40 million for advocacy purposes to allow flexibility.

Chairwoman McCall asked whether the Board preferred to limit the request to the courthouse or include multiple projects. Commissioner Dalton supported including as many projects as possible to take advantage of potential funding opportunities. Commissioner Chappell recommended prioritizing the list to distinguish critical needs from lower priorities and supported listing the courthouse as the top priority, followed by potential funding for a Blue Ridge Community College campus.

Chairwoman McCall agreed with prioritizing the projects and suggested organizing the requests by category, such as equipment and construction needs, to provide clarity while preserving funding opportunities.

Commissioner Dalton also supported including the satellite Fire and EMS facility and improvements to the Quebec EMS station because they align with the County's long-term public safety planning. He asked about the status of a federal grant for ambulances. The Manager reported that the County has been informed it will receive the funding but is still waiting for the official award documentation. She also noted that the County has secured two grants totaling approximately $2.3 million for communications tower projects, and staff are working through the preliminary implementation steps.

Commissioner Dalton supported requesting $36 million for the courthouse but noted that if the final cost is higher, any state funding would still significantly reduce the County's share. Chairwoman McCall suggested using a round number, such as $40 million, in the advocacy request. The Manager noted that the earlier $50 million estimate reflected a larger 90,000-square-foot concept that the Board later scaled back.

Chairwoman McCall asked whether the legislature has recently shown interest in funding courthouse construction. The Manager said there has not been a consistent statewide program, but some individual courthouse projects have received targeted allocations, and there have been occasional discussions about a broader courthouse funding package.

The Manager will compile a draft list of capital requests, update cost estimates, and reach out to municipal partners and the school system to determine whether they wish to submit prioritized projects. Commissioners supported inviting those partners to participate again this year. Staff will return with a finalized list for the Board to approve before submitting an advocacy letter to legislators prior to the April session.

Chairwoman McCall also noted that another member of the North Carolina legislature is a part-time resident of Transylvania County and has previously expressed interest in local priorities. She suggested providing him with the County's request list as well. The Manager agreed that sharing the information with state and federal leaders helps ensure the County's needs are well understood.

Staff will bring the finalized list back to the Board for approval so the advocacy letter can be distributed before the legislature reconvenes in April.

ENCORE CONTRACT FOR UPGRADING AV SYSTEM IN COMMISSIONERS' CHAMBERS

Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver presented a contract to upgrade the audiovisual system in the Commissioners' Chambers. The current system is 10 years old and has experienced multiple issues in recent years. The proposed project would replace the existing system and modernize the Chambers' technology to improve both in-person and online viewing experiences. The contract with Encore totals $183,377.33, and funds have been budgeted for this purpose.

Commissioner Dalton asked whether the upgraded system would meet ADA requirements. Mr. Carver confirmed that it would. He explained that IT staff conducted studies related to the existing hearing loop but determined that interference from a nearby radio tower limits its effectiveness. The new system will include a Bluetooth hearing assistance system to provide a more reliable and modern accessibility solution.

Chairwoman McCall noted that staff have worked on this project for some time and asked whether the contract amount represented the final cost. Mr. Carver confirmed that it did.

Commissioner Chappell asked about the expected timeline for completion. Mr. Carver explained that once approved and equipment is ordered, the vendor plans to complete the installation between Board meetings to

avoid disruptions. The vendor also intends to attend the first meeting using the new system to ensure everything operates properly.

Commissioner Chapman asked whether the system could be relocated if the Board chose to move meetings to the historic courthouse in the future. Mr. Carver stated that some components could be reused. He added that IT plans to centralize certain AV controls in the County's data center so that additional facilities can be integrated more efficiently as upgrades occur.

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the contract with Encore totaling $183,377.33 for hardware and installation services, seconded by Commissioner Dalton. The motion passed unanimously.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE NC DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SECURENC PILOT PROGRAM

Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver presented a Memorandum of Understanding with the North Carolina Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) to participate in the SecureNC Pilot Program. The program involves the use of Tanium software to enhance cybersecurity monitoring and vulnerability detection.

Mr. Carver explained that IT staff have been working with the Deputy Chief Security Officer from the Enterprise Security and Risk Management Office at NCDIT as part of a statewide cybersecurity framework. NCDIT has used the Tanium platform for several years and is offering participation in the SecureNC Pilot Program to Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties at no cost. Staff welcomed the opportunity to participate and support the state's cybersecurity initiative.

Commissioner Chapman asked whether the IT Department has sufficient staffing to support the program. Mr. Carver confirmed that it does. He explained that the system scans County networks for vulnerabilities and will enhance the County's existing cybersecurity tools by providing greater visibility into potential threats.

The County Manager noted that cybersecurity has become an increasing liability concern for local governments. She explained that the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Risk Management Group has faced challenges obtaining insurance coverage for cybersecurity incidents because many government systems have evolved over time, while policies have struggled to keep pace. She added that organizations such as the North Carolina Department of Information Technology, the UNC School of Government, and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners continue encouraging counties to strengthen cybersecurity systems to protect sensitive public data. Participation in the pilot program will help the County better secure residents' information.

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the North Carolina Department of Information Technology, seconded by Commissioner Dalton. The motion passed unanimously.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The County Manager reported the following:

- Upgrades to the County's 9-1-1 Center have been completed. Telecommunications staff moved back into the renovated space in early January, just before the recent winter ice and snowstorm. The project was funded in part through the County's 9-1-1 fund, meaning most of the funding did not come from local property tax revenue.
- Property tax relief remains available to qualifying residents. Homeowners who turn 65 or become totally and permanently disabled in 2025 and whose income does not exceed $38,800 may qualify for property tax relief under state law. Eligible homeowners must apply by June 1, 2026. The program excludes $25,000 of a home's value or 50 percent of the appraised value, whichever is greater.

Residents who already receive the exclusion do not need to reapply unless their income exceeds the limit, their marital status changes, or the use of the property changes. First-time applicants claiming disability must provide a physician's statement confirming total and permanent disability. Additional information and application forms are available on the County website or through the Tax Administration office.

- The Manager recognized several longtime employees who recently retired from Transylvania County: Jeff Parker, Soil and Water District Director; Sylvia Petit, DSS Adult Services Supervisor; Jim Boyer, Environmental Health Supervisor; and Sheriff's Office employees Trevor Queen and Brian Barton.
- The Manager also announced that the International Institute of Municipal Clerks awarded Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan the designation of Master Municipal Clerk. The designation recognizes clerks who complete rigorous educational requirements and demonstrate significant contributions to their local government, community, and profession.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman reported that the President of the Veterans History Museum of the Carolinas provided Commissioners with information about the organization's history and accomplishments. He also announced that a screening of the documentary *Rising Above Helene*, produced by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, will take place on March 17 at 6:00 p.m. at the Transylvania County Library. The documentary features interviews with county officials and others involved in recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene. He encouraged the public to attend.

Commissioner Dalton congratulated the Clerk to the Board on her recent professional achievement. He also recognized the 9-1-1 Center staff, noting that when he first joined the Board, the center struggled with staffing shortages. After a compensation study made the positions more competitive, the County was able to fully staff the center and now complete a major technology upgrade.

Commissioner Chappell cautioned citizens to carefully evaluate the sources of information they encounter, particularly on social media, regarding County matters. He noted that individuals sometimes present themselves as experts while sharing inaccurate or misleading information. As an example, he addressed recent claims suggesting that the County should scrape snow from roads. He explained that road maintenance falls under the authority of the North Carolina Department of Transportation and that County employees cannot perform work on state roads without violating state law and exposing the County to liability. He encouraged residents to verify information and contact County officials directly with questions.

Chairwoman McCall agreed and emphasized that County staff are responsible for maintaining accurate and current information. She also addressed a question raised earlier regarding a County position vacancy. While the Board does not engage in back-and-forth discussions during public comment, she noted that residents may contact the County Manager or the Clerk's office directly for information. She confirmed that the position referenced earlier will be filled.

Chairwoman McCall also shared condolences following the recent passing of Kathy Haehnel, a longtime educator who served as principal of Pisgah Forest Elementary School and dedicated many years to public education. She expressed sympathy to Dr. Haehnel's family and friends and recognized her contributions to the community.

Commissioner Chappell moved to enter into a closed session per N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (4) relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, following a 10-minute recess, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (4) relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, a closed session was entered into at 7:00 p.m. Present were Chairwoman McCall, Commissioners Chapman, Chappell, Dalton and McKelvey, County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Megan Silver, Transylvania Economic Alliance Executive Director Burton Hodges and Board of Directors Chair Sheila Carland, Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver (for technical support), and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

The Board received an update on a potential economic development project and then directed staff on how to proceed.

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

OPEN SESSION

Commissioner 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, **Commissioner Dalton moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m., seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously approved.**

_____
Teresa K. McCall, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

_____
Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board