

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

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

No media representation was present.

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

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.

Angela Emerson expressed concerns about alleged violations of the Open Meetings Act during prior Board of Equalization and Review proceedings. She urged the County to ensure proper training for staff and appointees, promote compliance, and encourage accountability, including addressing past concerns.

Kristen Bulpitt & Jenna Shimek, residents of the Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood, spoke in support of sewer infrastructure improvements, citing failing septic systems, limited repair options due to lot size and soil conditions, and the resulting public health and housing concerns. They encouraged the County to support funding and partnerships to advance the project and protect existing homes and neighborhoods.

Meg LeBeck (Housing Assistance Corporation) expressed appreciation for the County's collaboration on housing initiatives, including disaster recovery efforts and new housing development, and acknowledged ongoing efforts to address workforce housing needs.

Doug Powell highlighted the historical significance of the upcoming 250th anniversary events related to North Carolina's role in the American Revolution and encouraged recognition of these milestones.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The Board approved the following:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board approved the minutes of the February 9, 2026, regular meeting.

PROCLAMATION - NATIONAL TRANSIT EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY

The Board recognized March 18 as National Transit Employee Appreciation Day, honoring the employees of Transylvania in Motion for their dedication to providing safe, reliable, and efficient public transportation services. The Board approved Proclamation #07-2026.

PROCLAMATION #07-2026 NATIONAL TRANSIT DRIVER APPRECIATION DAY MARCH 18, 2026

WHEREAS, public transportation is a vital part of our community, providing essential services to our county citizens; and

WHEREAS, dependable local transportation strengthens the overall health, safety, and economic well-being of Transylvania County by reducing isolation and increasing access to essential services; and

WHEREAS, transit drivers in Transylvania County serve some of the County's most vulnerable residents, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those without access to personal vehicles, helping them maintain independence, dignity, and connection to the community; and

WHEREAS, the dedicated employees of Transylvania in Motion, the local transit system, work tirelessly to ensure safe, reliable, and efficient transportation for all; and

WHEREAS, these employees include our County van drivers, dispatchers, transit operation managers, and many others who contribute to the smooth operation of our transit system; and

WHEREAS, their commitment to excellence and their unwavering dedication to serving the public deserve recognition and appreciation; and

WHEREAS, National Transit Employee Appreciation Day is an opportunity to honor and celebrate the hard work and dedication of these invaluable employees;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby proclaims March 18, 2026, as National Transit Employee Appreciation Day in Transylvania County, and encourages all residents to join in expressing their gratitude and appreciation for the outstanding service provided by our transit employees.

Adopted this 9th day of March 2026.

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

REQUEST TO CLOSE HEALTH DEPARTMENT FOR ANNUAL TRAINING DAY

The Board approved the closure of the Health Department on April 9, 2026, to allow staff to participate in required annual training in compliance with NC Public Health Accreditation Standards.

REQUEST TO USE MULTIPURPOSE/COMMISSIONERS CHAMBERS FOR HEALTH DEPARTMENT TRAINING

The Board also approved the use of the Commissioners' Chambers for the training. The space is well-suited to accommodate the presentations and materials for the full-day session.

REQUEST TO WRITE OFF HEALTH DEPARTMENT BAD DEBT

The Board approved the write-off of \$134 in uncollected Health Department accounts for the period of January 1 through June 30, 2025, in accordance with the Department's bad debt policy. Eligible accounts will be submitted to the State's Debt Setoff Program for potential recovery.

VAYA HEALTH FISCAL MONITORING REPORT – FY 2026 Q2

The Board received the second quarter Fiscal Monitoring Report for Vaya Health, as required by state statute. The report reflected revenues and expenditures exceeding annualized budget projections, with a net operating gain of approximately \$4.65 million. Fund balances and cash position were reported, including both restricted and unrestricted funds, as well as estimated incurred but unpaid service costs. The Board directed the Clerk to enter the report into the official minutes.

LETTER OF SUPPORT - BALSAM GROVE FIRE DEPARTMENT GRANT FUNDING REQUEST

The Board approved letters of support for the Balsam Grove Fire Department's application for federal funding through Congressionally Directed Spending. The funding would support the construction of a new fire station to replace an aging facility serving a rural and geographically isolated area of the County.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

SEMI-ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS - FY 2027 BUDGET KICKOFF

The Board received the next round of semi-annual departmental presentations as part of the FY 2027 budget development process. Department heads highlighted key accomplishments, emerging trends, and future goals. Due to time constraints, Commissioners were asked to submit follow-up questions to the County Manager for a consolidated response. Supporting materials were provided in notebooks for review.

Elections – by Director Jeff Storey

Accomplishments

- Successfully upgraded voting equipment, improving security and reporting functionality.
- Conducted and certified the 2025 municipal election, with increased voter turnout compared to prior cycles

Trends

- Minimal voter registration growth over the past decade
- Continued increase in unaffiliated voters, creating challenges in staffing bipartisan precinct officials
- Early voting remains the most utilized voting method, with increasing participation.
- Limitations on early voting site flexibility create challenges in staffing and cost.

Upcoming/Goals

- Certification of primary election results with no anticipated runoff
- Continued voter registration maintenance and list accuracy efforts
- Planning for the replacement of the statewide election management system before 2028
- Evaluate the need for additional early voting equipment to support operations.

Public Health Department – by Director Elaine Russell

Accomplishments

- Implemented new policy and learning management systems
- CARE Coalition secured federal grant funding and supported opioid settlement processes.
- Established new environmental health quality assurance processes
- Expanded partnerships, including work with detention center re-entry support and community mental health initiatives
- Achieved over 100% of assigned WIC caseload

Collaborations

- Partnered with multiple agencies to support mental health, substance use prevention, and workforce development initiatives
- Led regional workforce development efforts and supported public health communications campaigns

Trends

- Ongoing challenges with Medicaid managed care billing and reimbursement processes
- Increased demand for environmental health services on complex properties
- Rising need for communicable disease services, including STD treatment and vaccinations

Goals

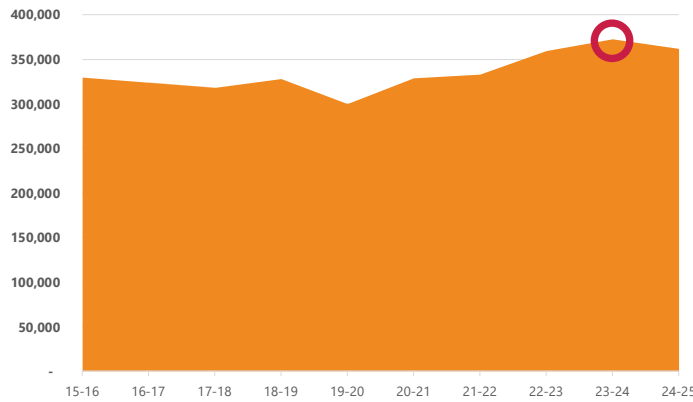
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programs and services.
- Monitor and respond to changes in funding and regulatory requirements.
- Support leadership development across the department
- Continue to oversee and implement opioid settlement initiatives.

Library – by Director Rishara Finsel

| FY24/25 | Population | Library Visits Per Capita | Program Attendance Per 1000 Capita | Checkouts Per Capita | Children's Checkouts Per Capita | Digital Checkouts Per Capita |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Transylvania | 33,765 | 4.9 | 697 | 10.4 | 3.7 | 2.5 |
| Appalachian Regional (incl. Ashe) | 147,935 | 2.0 | 283 | 2.4 | 1.6 | 0.4 |
| Bladen | 29,393 | 1.1 | 372 | 1.3 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| Buncombe | 279,533 | 2.3 | 155 | 6.3 | 1.9 | 2.6 |
| East Albemarle (incl. Dare) | 123,567 | 2.0 | 341 | 3.7 | 2.3 | 0.5 |
| Fontana Region (incl. Jackson & Macon) | 96,485 | 3.2 | 368 | 4.5 | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Haywood | 63,924 | 1.3 | 285 | 5.7 | 1.6 | 2.3 |
| Henderson | 122,513 | 3.0 | 219 | 8.0 | 2.6 | 2.0 |
| Scotland | 32,860 | 1.0 | 25 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Sandhill Regional (incl. Montgomery) | 219,463 | 0.9 | 251 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.3 |
| Statewide Average | | 2.2 | 306 | 4.0 | 1.6 | 1.1 |
| Transylvania Rank (of the 71 County and Regional library systems in NC) | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |

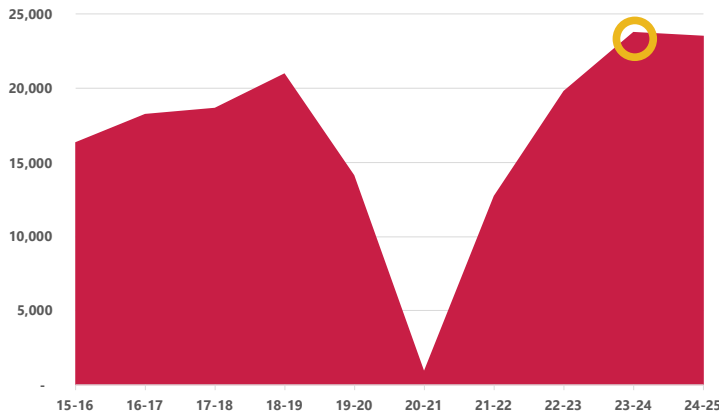
Based on preliminary data
from the State Library of NC

Circulation of Materials



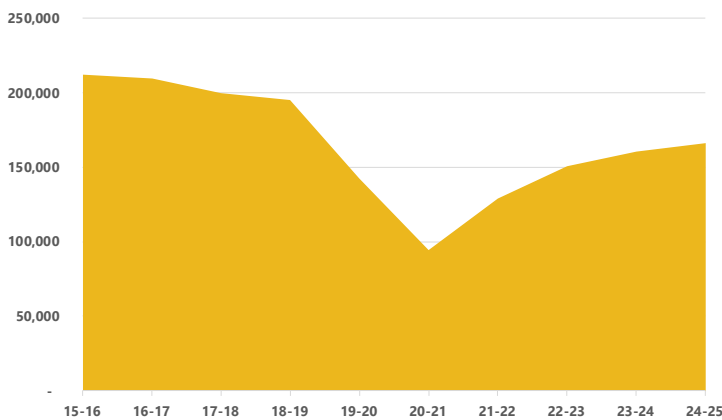
- Minor dip during early pandemic
- Minor dip following Hurricane Helene
- FY23-24: Highest year on TCL record - 372,507 checkouts

Program Attendees



- Major dip during pandemic
- Minor dip following Hurricane Helene
- FY23-24: Highest year on TCL record - 23,800 attendees

Patron Visits



- Major dip during pandemic; consistent regrowth since

Evolution of Patron Needs:

- Patrons stay longer, seek more complex assistance, and families use the library as a destination for extended learning and exploration – not just a quick spot to pick up books.

Q1 & 2: July – December 2025

| | 2024 | 2025 | % change |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|------------|
| Library Visits | 80,267 | 89,125 | 10% |
| New Patrons | 995 | 770 | -23% |
| Program Attendance | 11,140 | 11,120 | 0% |
| Public Computer Use | 4,888 | 5,369 | 10% |
| Wireless Internet Sessions | 15,323 | 16,425 | 7% |
| Total Checkouts | 176,572 | 179,677 | 2% |

Accomplishments

- Expanded role as a hub for learning, culture, and community connection through increased partnerships with organizations such as Cooperative Extension, local festivals, and civic groups
- High-demand programs and cultural events continued to grow, including historical performances, concerts, and monthly programs.
- Hosted nationally recognized speakers and authors, including Joy Harjo
- Increased access to services through expanded Spanish language materials, health resources, and library tours
- Local history and genealogy programming highlighted Appalachian and regional culture.
- Youth and family programming reached record participation levels, including strong attendance at summer reading events and community collaborations.
- Demand for programs exceeded available space in several areas, including early literacy programs for young children.
- Continued facility improvements, including the ongoing amphitheater project, and transitions in key staff leadership positions

Goals

- Advance a sustainable vision for bookmobile and outreach services, focusing on equitable access for underserved areas.
- Strengthen organizational resilience through cross-training to improve flexibility, staff development, and continuity of services.

Planning, Community Development, and Transportation – by Director Ashley Minery

Overview

- The department includes Planning, Community Development, and Transportation Services.
- Vacant Transportation Planning position to be evaluated through upcoming Transit Operations Study; recruitment planned for Land Use Planner position

Accomplishments

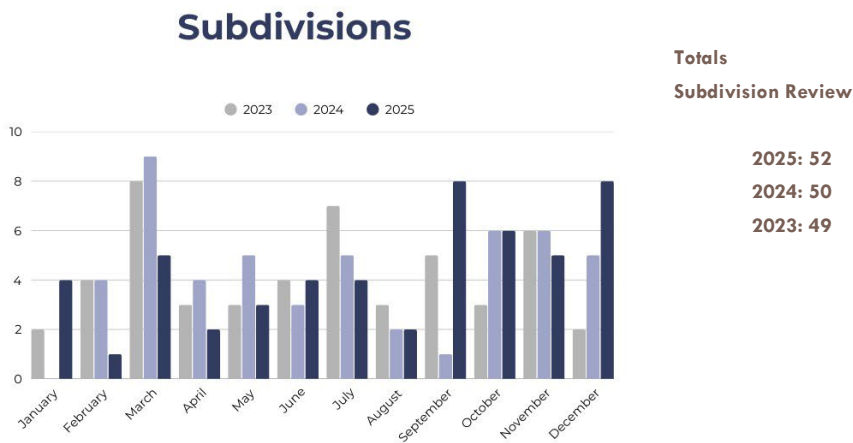
- Provided ongoing support to advisory boards and committees, including the Planning Board, Historic Preservation Commission, and transportation-related boards
- Administered and ensured compliance with multiple land use and development ordinances
- Successfully managed and closed out multiple grants supporting community initiatives and programs.

- Administered funding for community centers and transportation services, including senior transportation programs
- Continued senior programming through the Silver Squirrels initiative
- Advanced transportation planning efforts, including the development of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- Provided significant regional housing support:
 - Completed the County’s first Comprehensive Housing Report
 - Participated in regional housing partnerships and administered funding for affordable housing initiatives
 - Supported long-term recovery and housing efforts following recent disasters
- Continued progress on the Transylvania 2050 Comprehensive Plan update, including community engagement and survey efforts

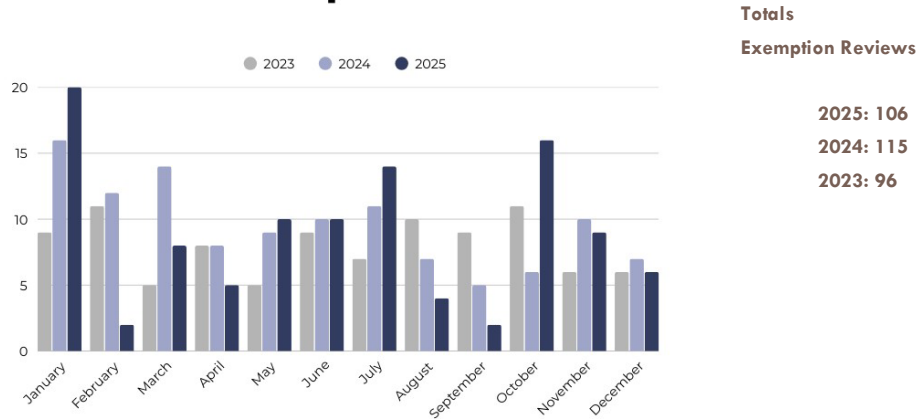
Goals

- Support completion of the Transylvania 2050 Comprehensive Plan update
- Provide planning support for utility expansion and housing initiatives.
- Collaborate with regional partners to advance affordable and workforce housing.
- Administer community appearance and community center grant programs.
- Support county departments with planning, GIS, and transportation needs
- Continue providing safe and efficient transportation services.
- Complete the Transportation Operations Study in partnership with regional organizations.

Trends

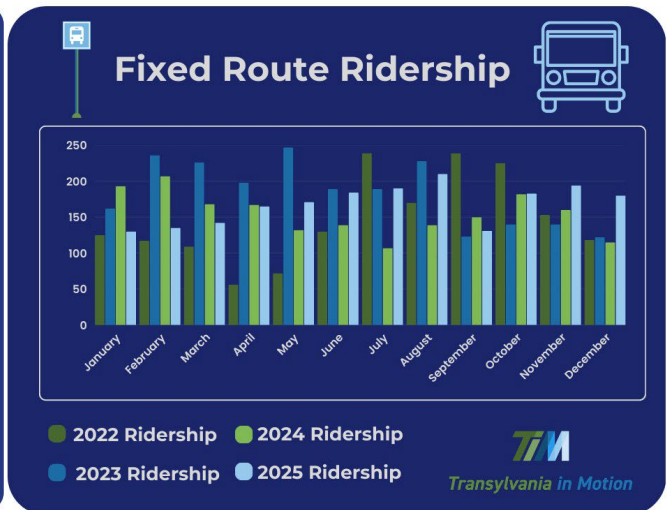
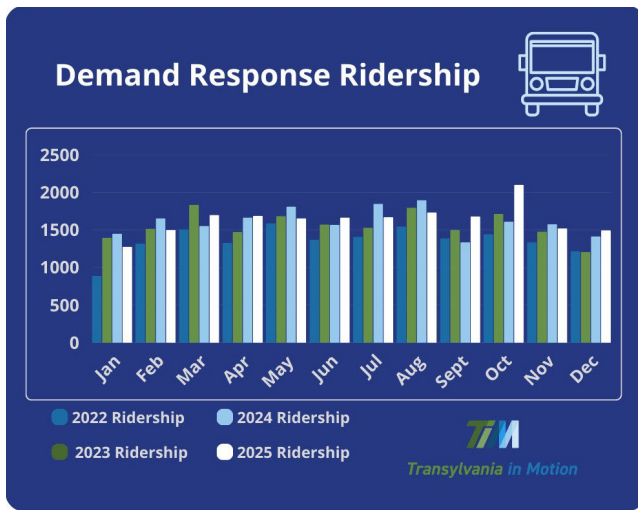


Exemptions



DR: Total Rides= 19,688 (Year), Avg per Month: 1,641

FR: Total Rides= 2,015 (Year), Avg per Month: 168



FY2026

| Project | Total Amount | Local Share |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 5311 Administrative | \$181,328 | \$27,200 |
| Combined Capital | \$435,000 | \$43,500 |
| 5310 Operating | \$104,000 | \$52,000 |
| Total Project | \$720,328 | \$122,700 |

FY2027

| Project | Total Amount | Local Share |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 5311 Administrative | \$164,470 | \$24,671 |
| Combined Capital | \$270,000 | \$27,000 |
| 5310 Operating | \$100,000 | \$50,000 |
| Total Project | \$538,470 | \$103,671 |

- Affordable housing remains a regional challenge.
- Limited affordable housing contributes to increased pressure on substandard housing and development in environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., floodplains and steep slopes)
- Subdivision activity and exemption requests remain steady in Transylvania County.
- Demand-response transportation requests remain strong; the transit study will identify opportunities to maximize use of available funding.

Information Technology – by Director Nathanael Carver

Trends

- Support ticket volume increased slightly from July through January compared to the same period last year.
- Over the past three years, support tickets have increased by approximately 24%
- IT handled 1,209 support tickets with an average response time of 6 hours and a 9.5% re-open rate.
- The current staffing ratio is approximately 200:1 computers to desktop support technicians.
- IT processes approximately 120,000 inbound emails per month, including about 12,000 spam or phishing attempts.
- Public Wi-Fi usage continues to grow:
 - 13,469 unique devices connected over the past six months, a 65% increase year-over-year
 - Average of 453 daily users consuming approximately 108 GB of bandwidth per day
 - Public Wi-Fi bandwidth usage increased by approximately 2,500% year-over-year
 - Over three years, public Wi-Fi users have increased by 240% and bandwidth usage by approximately 7,000%
 - Approximately 75% of the County’s bandwidth is utilized by community users.

Accomplishments

- Completed approximately \$30,000 in public Wi-Fi equipment upgrades through grants from Land of Sky and IT DRC at participating community centers
- Received 11 Starlink devices from Land of Sky to establish redundant internet connections at community centers
- Joined the SecureNC cybersecurity program through NC DIT to enhance security posture
- Secured a \$3.5 million CAB grant to expand fiber internet to an additional 473 homes and businesses
- Received approval of NC DIT’s BEAD funding proposal, providing:
 - \$8.7 million in funding for an additional 1,009 homes
 - \$10.5 million, total including provider match
 - Potential cumulative broadband investment of \$22.8 million since 2021, supporting 3,926 homes and businesses
 - If fully implemented, the County could achieve near 100% broadband coverage of FCC-eligible addresses.

Goals

- Expand public Wi-Fi coverage through additional outdoor access points across county campuses.
- Strengthen continuity of operations for the County’s IT infrastructure.
- Continue participation in NC DIT’s SecureNC cybersecurity program.
- Implement multi-factor authentication for county user accounts.

Finance – by Director Meagan O’Neal

Accomplishments

- Continued long-term financial planning for major capital projects, including:
 - Sylvan Valley II expansion
 - Library amphitheater canopy project
 - Landfill expansion and cell construction
 - Multiple school capital projects funded through cash and bonds
- Strengthened coordination and communication between the County and School finance and administration teams
 - Improved transparency regarding project tracking, funding, and budget priorities

- Enhanced collaboration to support current and future capital needs
- Improved reporting methods to present financial data in clearer and more accessible formats
- Continued ongoing planning to balance current capital commitments with future school capital funding needs

Challenges

- Ongoing updates to financial policies and procedures to remain aligned with statutory requirements and evolving interpretations of general statutes
- Continued staff training to stay current with best practices and guidance from local government peers

Overview of Education Capital Fund

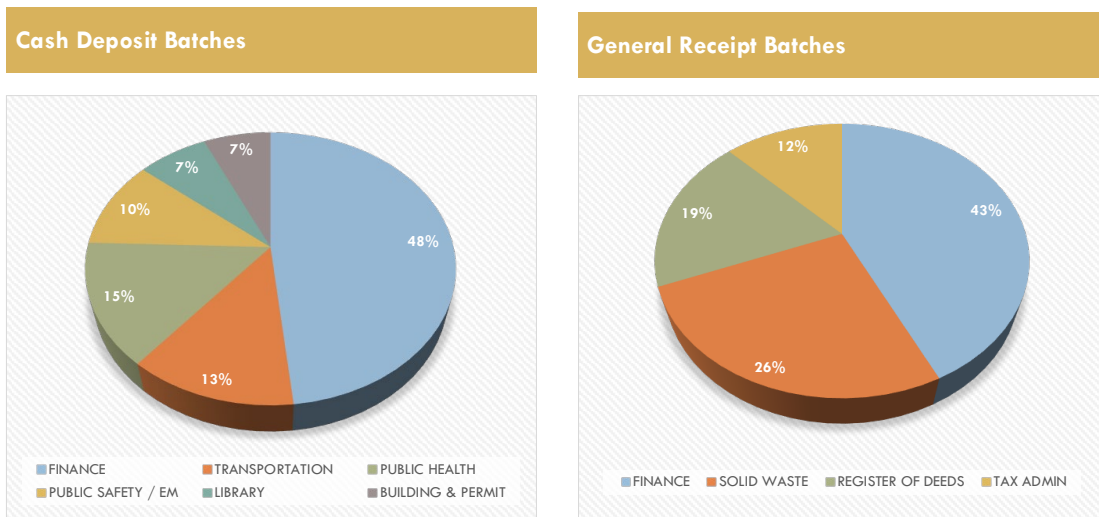
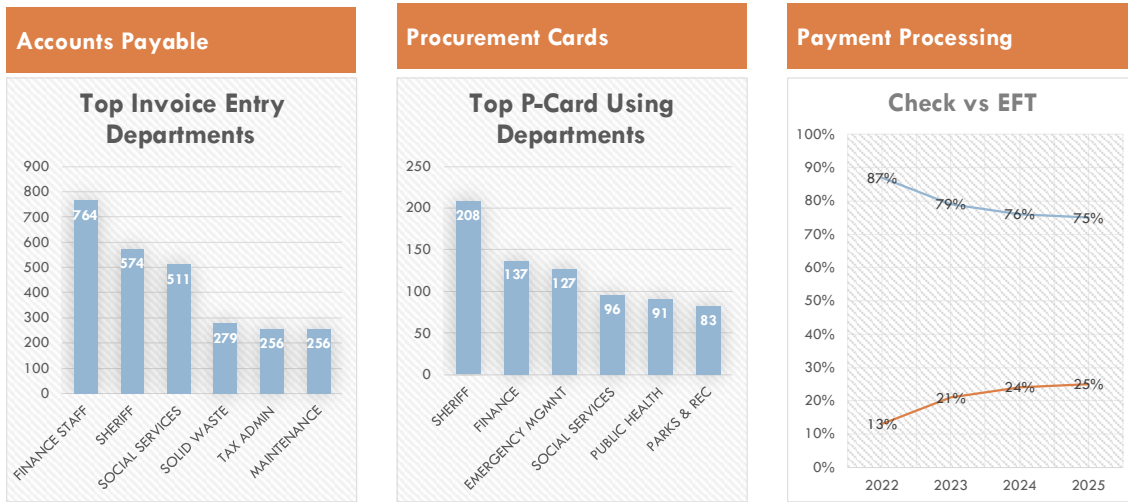
| Funding Source | Current Budget | Current Available |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| “Cash” from BOC | \$17.3M | \$11.1M |
| School GO Bonds | \$50.6M | \$44.7M |
| Lottery Funds | \$62.4M | \$62.0M |
| Totals | \$130.3M | \$117.8M |

Goals

- Establish a designated debt service fund to better track and communicate long-term debt obligations.
- Plan for significant upcoming debt service requirements, including:
 - 2024 school general obligation bonds, totaling approximately \$38 million in repayment over the next 10 years
 - Anticipated courthouse financing of approximately \$29 million
 - An additional school bond tranche is estimated at \$15 million over the next 10 years.
- Continue managing existing debt obligations, including:
 - Elections Center project (\$1.8 million; annual payments through FY 2031)
 - EMS Base project (\$5.5 million; annual payments through FY 2038)
- Maintain strategic fund balance planning to support future debt service needs without compromising financial stability.
- Improve financial transparency by clearly demonstrating how fund balance levels are allocated for future obligations.
- Continue long-term financial planning practices that support strong credit ratings and responsible debt management.

| Current Debt | Annual Payments | The Next 10 Years of Obligation |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Elections Center Loan | \$134,505 | \$480,000 |
| EMS Base Loan | \$536,705 | \$4,700,000 |
| 2024 School GO Bonds | \$4,403,212 | \$38,000,000 |
| | | |
| Upcoming Debt | Expected Payments | |
| Courthouse Bonds | ~\$3,200,000 | ~\$29,500,000 |
| 2028 School GO Bonds | ~1,800,000 | ~\$15,000,000 |
| Total Obligation Over 10 Years | \$10,074,422 | \$87,680,000 |

Trends



| EMS Billing Revenue | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| | 2024 | 2025 | Change |
| Trip Count | 3,100 | 2,345 | (755) |
| Net Charges | \$1,743,772 | \$1,948,200 | \$204,428 |
| Write Offs | \$34,169 | \$34,372 | \$203 |
| Payments | \$1,201,245 | \$1,246,609 | \$45,364 |
| Net % Collected | 68.7% | 63.5% | (5.2%) |

| Primary Payor Mix | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Payor | 2024 Trips | 2025 Trips |
| Medicare/Medicare Advantage | 65% | 66% |
| Medicaid/Medicaid MCO | 16% | 16% |
| Insurance | 10% | 11% |
| Patient | 6% | 6% |
| Other Govt. Payers | 3% | 1% |

Human Resources – by Director Sheila Cozart

Accomplishments

- Workforce optimization through NEOGOV:
 - 72 job postings in 2025, with 41 filled internally

- Departments utilized part-time, temporary, and contract staff to address vacancies.
- Training and development initiatives:
 - HR Manager attended the Tyler Tech Conference to improve personnel and payroll processes.
 - Continued emphasis on internal promotion and “grow your own” workforce strategies
- Employee engagement efforts:
 - Increased participation in the annual County 5K by 5%
 - Continued planning for Employee Appreciation Week (May 3–9)
- Compliance and risk reduction:
 - Reduction in workers’ compensation claims and incident reports
 - Timely implementation of new statutory requirements
- Implementation of new background check requirements under G.S. 153A-94.2(b):
 - Requires fingerprinting and SBI background checks for positions involving children
 - Resulted in increased costs, onboarding delays, and administrative strain
 - Duplication of efforts in departments with existing background check processes

Trends

- Continued recruitment challenges for specialized positions (e.g., social workers, nurses, childcare staff)
- EMS hiring has improved; law enforcement staffing remains impacted by retirements
- DSS vacancies improved from 44% (2023) to 25% (2025), but remain among the highest
- Average job posting duration is 30 days, with an average of 7.5 applicants per position.
- The countywide vacancy rate is currently at approximately 9%

Administration – by County Manager Jaime Laughter

Overview

- Includes Clerk to the Board, County Manager, Assistant County Manager, Budget and Management Analyst, Project Managers, and Legal Counsel

Records and Business Meetings

- Manages recruitment and logistics for 25 boards/committees and additional outside appointments
- Coordinated Board of Commissioners meetings, including agenda development, minutes, and follow-up actions
 - Approximately 50 hours of meetings across 20 meetings in 2025
 - Significant administrative output, including minutes, resolutions, ordinances, and contracts
- Added Joint Subcommittee for Education Capital in coordination with the School administration
- Public records requests continue to increase in volume and complexity.
- Contract management has grown more complex, particularly with capital projects.

External Communication

- Central coordination of media requests, press releases, and public information efforts
- Expanded online access to public records for improved self-service
- Significant growth in social media engagement:
 - Facebook views increased by 200%
 - Content reached a substantial portion of the county population.
 - Emergency Management posts generated the highest engagement.

Capital Projects and Grants

- Managing over \$220 million in capital projects, supported by approximately \$120 million in grant funding secured since 2022
- Closed out over \$10 million in capital projects and \$5 million in grants in 2025
- Continued long-term capital planning to balance project delivery with financial stability
- Completed facility assessments, identifying long-term maintenance needs with minimal critical deficiencies.

Strategic Planning

- Continued advancement of multi-year capital and financial planning
- Ongoing landfill study to evaluate long-term solid waste options and funding
- Implemented a project team approach integrating finance, project management, and operations
- Maintained compliance with increasingly complex legal and regulatory requirements

Goals

- Improve efficiency and accessibility of public records, including agendas and minutes.
- Implement website updates to enhance public access to information.
- Strengthen grant reporting and capital project management processes.
- Continue timely budget development and provide education on legal requirements and fiscal constraints.

This concluded the second round of departmental presentations, with the exception of the Sheriff's Office, which will be presented at a future meeting. Chairwoman McCall reminded Commissioners to submit any questions regarding the presentations or supporting materials to the County Manager for a consolidated response at a later meeting.

UPDATE ON EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO HURRICANE/TROPICAL STORM HELENE

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

Private Roads and Bridges

- Reported no change in procedures
- 83 requests for assistance, of which 31 are duplicates
- Completions to date:
 - 52 estimates
 - 1 design
 - 2 projects

Renew NC

Renew NC is offering a prescreening opportunity to help potential applicants, such as local governments or nonprofits in western North Carolina, prepare for the upcoming launch of its Commercial District Revitalization (CDR) Program. The prescreening tool is not an application for the program. While prescreening is not required to submit a program application, it is strongly encouraged. Prescreening provides an initial review to help determine whether proposed Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery projects align with federal requirements, meet a national objective, and demonstrate financial feasibility.

SMART program update

| <i>Locations submitted for debris removal</i> | | <i>Debris Load statistics</i> | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-------|
| Pending eligibility review | 29 | Total loads | 136 |
| Work Authorization Pending | 36 | Average CuYds per load | 20 |
| Work Authorization in Process | 1 | Max CuYds per load | 74 |
| Work Authorization Canceled | 2 | Min CuYds per load | 1.3 |
| Debris Operations in Progress | 3 | Total Trucks operating | 17 |
| Debris Operations Completed | 3 | Monitors writing tickets | 24 |
| Closed | 192 | Total Tickets by CY to date | 2,749 |
| FEMA ineligible | 162 | Total Tickets by Ton | 736 |

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

- FEMA has given approval for 7 properties to proceed; 2 of the 7 properties have changed ownership since the application submission
 - 2 of the 7 transitioned to elevation projects at the owners' request after the initial submission
 - Of the 5 remaining, local Emergency Management staff have determined that 3 of the property owners wish to remain in the program; 1 requested removal from the program, and attempts to contact 1 out-of-state owner have been unsuccessful
- NC Emergency Management will begin the process for seeking bids to procure a contractor to complete the projects. Property owners may still withdraw from the program prior to signing a written offer.
- Applicants should expect a timeframe of 3-5 years before any completion of work.
 - County Emergency Management will help property owners in the program determine the status of their application. NCEM has not provided updates to local EM, however.

OLD BUSINESS**CONSIDERATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT FUND ALLOCATION**

The Board discussed allocation of remaining state infrastructure grant funds, with consideration given to ongoing water and sewer needs across the county and the significant investment already made in these systems.

The Manager reported that since 2022, approximately \$55 million in grant funding has been secured to support water and sewer infrastructure for the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman. Of that total, Transylvania County directly allocated or gifted \$4.6 million to the City of Brevard and \$6.7 million to the Town of Rosman, with additional funding secured through state advocacy efforts. Many of these projects are expected to generate new customers and future system revenue for both jurisdictions.

The Board first considered the Brevard High School (BHS) sewer infrastructure project. Staff explained that the existing pump station and force main pose a potential risk to school facilities, with the possibility of system failure impacting multiple buildings. The estimated project cost of \$1.6 million includes a 20% contingency. Commissioners agreed this project was a priority due to public health and safety concerns, as well as the Board's commitment to preventative maintenance.

Upon motion by Commissioner Chapman and second by Commissioner Dalton, the Board unanimously approved \$1.6 million for the BHS sewer project.

The Board then discussed allocation of the remaining \$7.1 million. The Manager recommended splitting the funds evenly between the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman to support their respective priority projects - Brevard's Azalea/Rhododendron sewer extension and Rosman's Calvert Road water and sewer extension. Both projects are intended to expand service areas and support future growth, though each would require additional funding to be fully completed.

Commissioners expressed support for this approach, noting it provides equitable investment across the County while continuing to leverage grant funding to minimize the burden on local taxpayers. It was acknowledged that both the City and Town may need to contribute additional funds or pursue other grant opportunities to address remaining project costs. The County also committed to assisting with identifying and pursuing additional funding sources.

NEW BUSINESS

AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN REINVESTMENT OF FUNDS

Finance Director Meagan O'Neal presented a request regarding reinvestment of funds designated for landfill closure and post-closure costs. She explained that the County is required by the State to set aside funds annually for these future obligations, which are recorded as a liability within the Solid Waste enterprise fund. The required amount is based on available landfill airspace and projected costs for closure and long-term maintenance.

To prepare for these expenses, the County maintains an investment portfolio with FCB Wealth Management. The current balance of the portfolio is approximately \$7.8 million, compared to a total post-closure liability of \$8.6 million. While the balance does not yet fully meet the liability, staff noted that additional funds will continue to be invested over time.

Ms. O'Neal emphasized that reinvestment is important to ensure the reserve grows in pace with increasing closure costs. In 2024, maturing funds were temporarily placed in a money market account due to uncertainty surrounding potential expenses related to Hurricane Helene debris removal. With those costs avoided, staff now recommend reinvesting funds to take advantage of current interest rates.

Two investment strategies were presented, both utilizing U.S. Treasury-backed securities and structured with quarterly maturities:

- A three-year term, consistent with prior Board direction, allowing the full portfolio to mature within three years.
- A four-year term, which slightly increases yield (approximately 3.51% compared to 3.50%) but spreads maturities over a longer period, reducing the amount available each quarter.

The portfolio generates approximately \$270,000 annually in investment income, with quarterly maturities of approximately \$650,000 to \$675,000 under the three-year model. Ms. O'Neal noted that the investments remain highly liquid, allowing funds to be accessed or reinvested at each maturity interval. Locking in rates now is advantageous given anticipated federal rate cuts over the next year.

Ms. O'Neal recommended approval of the four-year investment strategy to maximize returns, along with authorization for the Finance Director to continue reinvesting funds at each maturity at the most beneficial rates.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve reinvestment of the current portfolio into a four-year investment strategy with FCB Wealth Management and authorized the Finance Director to reinvest funds quarterly, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported on recent events, recognitions, and community updates.

- The Manager served as the featured speaker at the Chamber's Coffee Connections event, where she provided an overview of how County tax dollars are collected, allocated, and invested. The session included an interactive exercise allowing participants to make decisions about allocating property taxes across competing service needs.
- Representatives from Transylvania County attended the NC Association of County Commissioners Districts 16 and 17 meeting in Jackson County. Discussions included statewide initiatives to improve access to healthcare, policy and advocacy updates, and regional issues impacting counties.
- Transylvania Public Health received a \$2,500 grant from the Women of St. Philip's to support emergency preparedness in schools. The funding will be used to supply first aid backpacks for each school, led by Public Health staff.
- The Manager expressed condolences on the passing of Dr. Morris Jenkins, a longtime community member and former Chair of the Library Foundation Board. She recognized his contributions to the community, including his support of the library and involvement in the amphitheater project, noting that his impact and service will be greatly missed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Brian Crosier, a resident of the Azalea Avenue neighborhood, expressed appreciation for the Board's approval of infrastructure funding. He emphasized the importance of clean water and the need to support long-standing residents, particularly those with low or fixed incomes, so they can remain in their homes and community.

Lisa Rodke requested that the Board consider concerns outlined in a recent letter regarding alleged irregularities in the property tax appeal process. She encouraged fair and consistent scheduling practices, support for residents navigating the appeals process, and additional training to ensure compliance with open meetings laws.

Aaron Baker, a member of the Brevard City Council, thanked the Board for its partnership in advancing the Azalea Avenue infrastructure project. He highlighted the long-standing need for sewer improvements in the area and noted the project as an example of successful collaboration between the County and City to benefit the broader community.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman announced an upcoming community event featuring a documentary on Hurricane Helene recovery efforts, produced by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. He encouraged public attendance and noted the film highlights both the impacts of the storm and the progress made across western North Carolina. He also emphasized that water and sewer infrastructure remains an ongoing countywide challenge. He encouraged continued discussion about long-term solutions, including the potential development of a countywide water and sewer authority to better address future infrastructure needs beyond individual projects.

Commissioner Chappell reflected on the significance of the Board's actions taken during the meeting, noting that the approved infrastructure investments represent years of planning, advocacy, and collaboration. He highlighted the substantial funding directed toward water and sewer improvements, as well as continued

investments in school facilities and broadband, emphasizing the collective effort of staff, local governments, and state partners.

Chairwoman McCall echoed those sentiments, noting that recent accomplishments are the result of sustained efforts over several years. She highlighted the importance of partnerships with the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman and acknowledged that while not all needs were fully funded, shared investment by all parties strengthens the overall impact of these projects.

Chairwoman McCall moved to enter into a closed session per N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(4) To discuss matters 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 McKelvey and unanimously approved.

CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(4) To discuss matters 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 5:45 p.m. Present were Chairwoman McCall, Commissioners Chapman, Chappell, Dalton, and McKelvey, County Manager Jaime Laughrer, County Attorney Megan Silver, Transylvania Economic Alliance Executive Director Burton Hodges and Alliance Board Chair Sheila Carland, 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 Dalton moved to leave the closed session, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously carried.

OPEN SESSION

Commissioner Dalton 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 Chapman, and unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner McKelvey moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:41 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.**

Teresa K. McCall, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board