

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 23, 2026 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, March 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, North Carolina.

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

No media representation was present.

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 6:00 p.m.

WELCOME

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Doug Powell: Mr. Powell reflected on the approaching 250th anniversary of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence. He described the solemn atmosphere surrounding its signing, emphasized the risks and sacrifices made by the signers, and encouraged the community to remember the occasion's historical significance as Independence Day 2026 approaches.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The Board approved the following:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board approved the minutes of the February 23, 2026, regular meeting.

DISCOVERY, RELEASE & MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

The Board accepted the Tax Administrator's monthly report in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes, including \$4,528.88 in tax releases and \$1,208.70 in refunds.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO DONATE SURPLUS INFLATABLE SLIDE TO YOUNG LIFE
TRANSYLVANIA

The Board authorized staff to post notice of intent to donate a surplus inflatable slide to Young Life Transylvania County, in accordance with state statute requirements for nonprofit donations.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE USE OF THE TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY DETENTION
CENTER FOR DETENTION OFFICER CERTIFICATION COURSE TRAINING

The Board approved a resolution and Memorandum of Understanding between Transylvania County, the Sheriff's Office, and Blue Ridge Community College to allow use of the County Detention Center for Detention Officer Certification Course training, under defined safety, operational, and liability conditions.

RESOLUTION #08-2026
Resolution in Support of the Use of
Transylvania County Detention Center for DOCC Training

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 153A-169 allows a county to oversee, maintain, and use its property; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County, Transylvania County Sheriff, and Blue Ridge Community College wish to enter into an agreement, which proposes to permit BRCC students enter and use Transylvania County Detention Center for Detention Officer Certification Course (DOCC) training; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County Sheriff and Blue Ridge Community College do not intend to exchange a fee for such training opportunities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County, North Carolina, approves and supports the agreement between the Transylvania County Sheriff and Blue Ridge Community College.

This the 23rd day of March 2026.

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

PROCLAMATION - MONTH OF THE YOUNG CHILD & CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

The Board recognized April 2026 as the Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month, emphasizing the importance of early childhood development, family support, and the community's role in ensuring children grow up in safe and nurturing environments. The proclamation also acknowledged the work of the Transylvania County Department of Social Services, the Transylvania County Smart Start Partnership, and community partners. The Board approved the proclamation.

PROCLAMATION #09-2026
MONTH OF THE YOUNG CHILD AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH
APRIL 2026

WHEREAS, children are our community's most valuable resource and represent the future of Transylvania County; and

WHEREAS, every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment that allows them to reach their full potential; and

WHEREAS, strong families, supportive communities, and access to high-quality early childhood programs are essential to the healthy development and well-being of young children; and

WHEREAS, April is recognized nationally as the Month of the Young Child, a time to celebrate early learning and recognize the educators, caregivers, and organizations who support the growth and development of our youngest residents; and

WHEREAS, April is also recognized as Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness and promote the responsibility shared by all members of the community to protect children and strengthen families; and

WHEREAS, the Transylvania County Department of Social Services works year-round to protect children, support families in crisis, and connect residents with resources that promote the safety and well-being of children; and

WHEREAS, the Transylvania County Smart Start Partnership works collaboratively with families, educators, and community partners to ensure that young children enter school healthy and ready to learn; and

WHEREAS, preventing child abuse and neglect requires the collective commitment of families, educators, service providers, civic leaders, and community members working together to create a safe and supportive environment for all children.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby recognizes **April 2026 as the Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month** in Transylvania County and encourages all citizens to support families, promote early childhood development, and work together to ensure that every child grows up in a safe, nurturing, and supportive community.

ADOPTED this the 23rd day of March 2026.

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

PROCLAMATION - NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

The Board recognized April 6–12, 2026, as National Public Health Week, highlighting the essential role of public health professionals in protecting and improving community health. The proclamation acknowledged the work of the Department of Public Health and its partners in providing services such as disease prevention, health education, environmental health, and programs that support healthy communities. The Board approved the proclamation.

**PROCLAMATION #10-2026
NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK
APRIL 6–12, 2026**

WHEREAS, the health and well-being of residents are essential to the strength and vitality of Transylvania County; and

WHEREAS, public health plays a vital role in protecting and improving the quality of life for individuals and families by promoting healthy lifestyles, preventing disease, and responding to community health needs; and

WHEREAS, rural communities like Transylvania County rely on strong local public health services to provide immunizations, maternal and child health services, health education, environmental health protections, and programs that support healthy living across all stages of life; and

WHEREAS, the Transylvania County Department of Public Health works collaboratively with healthcare providers, schools, community organizations, and local governments to address health challenges and improve access to services for residents; and

WHEREAS, the dedicated professionals in public health work every day to monitor community health, prevent the spread of disease, ensure safe food and water, and support families in building healthier futures; and

WHEREAS, National Public Health Week provides an opportunity to recognize the contributions of public health professionals and encourages residents to take steps that support healthier communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby recognizes **April 6–12, 2026, as National Public Health Week** in Transylvania County and expresses appreciation for the many public health professionals, partners, and community members who work to protect and promote the health of our residents.

ADOPTED this the 23rd day of March 2026.

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

PROCLAMATION - NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

The Board recognized April 12–18, 2026, as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, honoring telecommunicators as the first point of contact during emergencies. The proclamation noted their crucial role in dispatching emergency services and providing critical support to callers, contributing to effective public safety operations. The Board approved the proclamation.

**PROCLAMATION #11-2026
NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK
APRIL 12–18, 2026**

WHEREAS, public safety telecommunicators serve as the first point of contact for citizens requesting emergency assistance and play a critical role in the protection of life and property; and

WHEREAS, these dedicated professionals are responsible for receiving emergency and non-emergency calls, dispatching law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services, and providing lifesaving instructions to callers during times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, public safety telecommunicators must remain calm, professional, and focused while responding to stressful and often life-threatening situations, providing reassurance and guidance to those in need; and

WHEREAS, the telecommunicators serving Transylvania County demonstrate exceptional commitment and professionalism while supporting first responders and ensuring timely coordination of emergency services throughout the community; and

WHEREAS, National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week provides an opportunity to recognize the invaluable service and dedication of these individuals who work around the clock to keep our community safe.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby recognizes **April 12–18, 2026, as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week** in Transylvania County and expresses its sincere appreciation to the public safety telecommunicators who serve our community with professionalism, dedication, and compassion.

ADOPTED this the 23rd day of March 2026.

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

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

SEMI-ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORT - FY 2027 BUDGET KICKOFF: SHERIFF'S OFFICE

As part of the Board's ongoing budget preparation process, Sheriff Chuck Owenby presented a semi-annual report highlighting departmental accomplishments, operational impacts, performance data, and future needs.

Accomplishments & Operational Improvements

The Sheriff outlined several organizational and operational enhancements made over the past year. Court Services were restructured to improve command-level oversight, coordination, and supervision, particularly with multiple court sessions occurring simultaneously. A Tek84 body scanner was implemented at the detention center, allowing for non-invasive screening, improved contraband detection, and increased safety for both staff and inmates.

A new narcotics investigator position significantly expanded the agency's ability to conduct proactive, long-term investigations, reducing reliance on patrol-initiated cases and improving coordination with regional and state partners. This effort contributed to major seizures of drugs, firearms, and illicit funds through participation in a multi-agency operation recognized at the federal level.

The reclassification of the evidence technician role strengthened chain-of-custody compliance and reduced risk in one of the department's highest liability areas. Additional tasers and body cameras were deployed to enhance officer safety, accountability, and evidentiary quality.

The department also introduced a speed trailer equipped with Flock technology, which supports traffic calming while serving as an investigative tool for identifying stolen vehicles and potential criminal activity. The Sheriff noted this technology is not used for issuing citations but for public safety purposes, such as locating stolen vehicles and combating crimes like trafficking.

Impacts of the 2026 Budget

Investments made through the current budget cycle have resulted in improved public and officer safety, enhanced service delivery, upgraded evidence handling processes, and modernization of equipment, all contributing to strengthening the department's overall mission.

2025 Performance Highlights

The Sheriff reported a 5.2% decrease in reportable crime alongside a 1.7% increase in arrests and a 24% increase in traffic citations. The office logged over 13,000 activities and provided six months of patrol coverage for the City of Brevard.

Operational data included 2,345 civil papers served and detention center metrics reflecting an average daily population of 59 inmates, with over 1,100 bookings and releases. Jail operations required extensive transport activity, including over 58,000 miles driven in a single year. The Sheriff's Office generated approximately \$784,000 in revenue.

Court security operations handled 235 court days and 307 sessions, screening more than 29,000 individuals and managing over 11,000 cases, with significant facility traffic and security demands.

Future Outlook

Looking ahead, the Sheriff identified several challenges, including the need for additional court security personnel, particularly with the planned new courthouse. A recent FCC ruling is expected to reduce jail phone revenue by approximately \$30,000 annually.

Recruitment and retention of both detention officers and sworn deputies remain ongoing concerns, with competition from neighboring jurisdictions offering higher starting pay. The Sheriff expressed a goal of funding recruits through Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) to improve hiring success. Increasing mileage and wear on departmental vehicles were also noted as operational concerns.

Conclusion

Sheriff Owenby concluded by emphasizing his commitment to public service, noting that the Sheriff's Office remains focused on protecting the community through integrity, accountability, and strong partnerships while continuing to adapt to growing service demands and operational challenges.

FY 2027 BUDGET PROCESS UPDATE

Chairwoman McCall opened the discussion by noting that the FY 2027 budget process will take place over the next several months. She encouraged Commissioners to communicate any questions or requests for additional information to the County Manager so those discussions can occur in a public and transparent manner.

The Manager explained that budgeting for North Carolina counties is uniquely complex. Counties are responsible for delivering a wide range of services, many of which are mandated by the State to ensure a consistent level of service for all residents. While Boards of Commissioners have full authority over setting revenues, primarily through property taxes, they do not have full control over how all funds are spent, particularly in areas such as education and fire services. This differs from municipalities and can make the county budget process more difficult for the public to understand and engage with. To improve transparency, staff will provide monthly updates throughout the budget cycle.

The presentation focused on three areas: structural challenges that impact county budgeting, an analysis of FY 2025 property tax spending, and the timeline for completing the FY 2027 budget.

Structural Challenges in County Budgeting

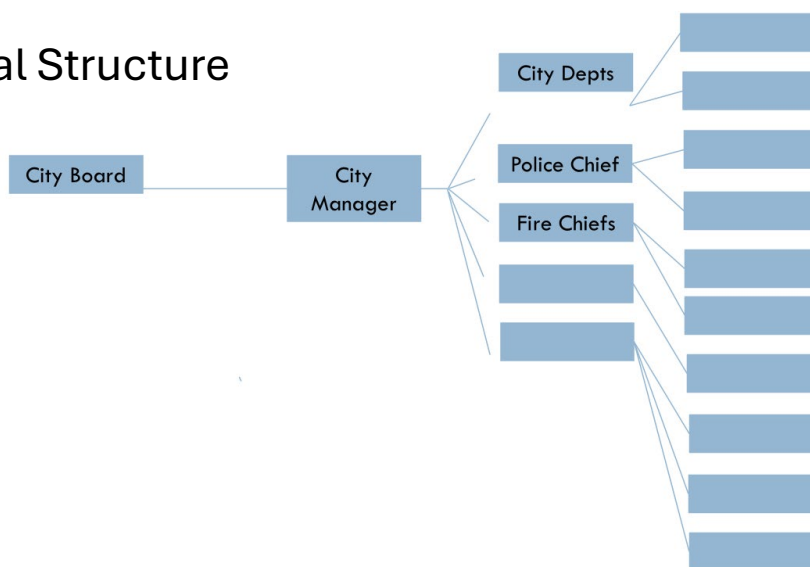
The Manager addressed common comparisons between local government and private business models, noting that while some principles apply, key differences exist. Unlike businesses, counties must provide a broad range of services rather than specialize, and they do not operate to generate profit. Any surplus revenue is typically reserved for future capital needs or long-term obligations.

North Carolina operates under Dillon’s Rule, meaning counties can only exercise powers expressly granted by the State. This limits both the services counties can provide and how they can generate revenue. Property tax remains the only revenue source fully controlled at the local level. Other sources, such as fees and sales taxes, are restricted. Fees must reflect the cost of service, and a significant portion of sales tax revenues must be used for specific purposes defined by state law.

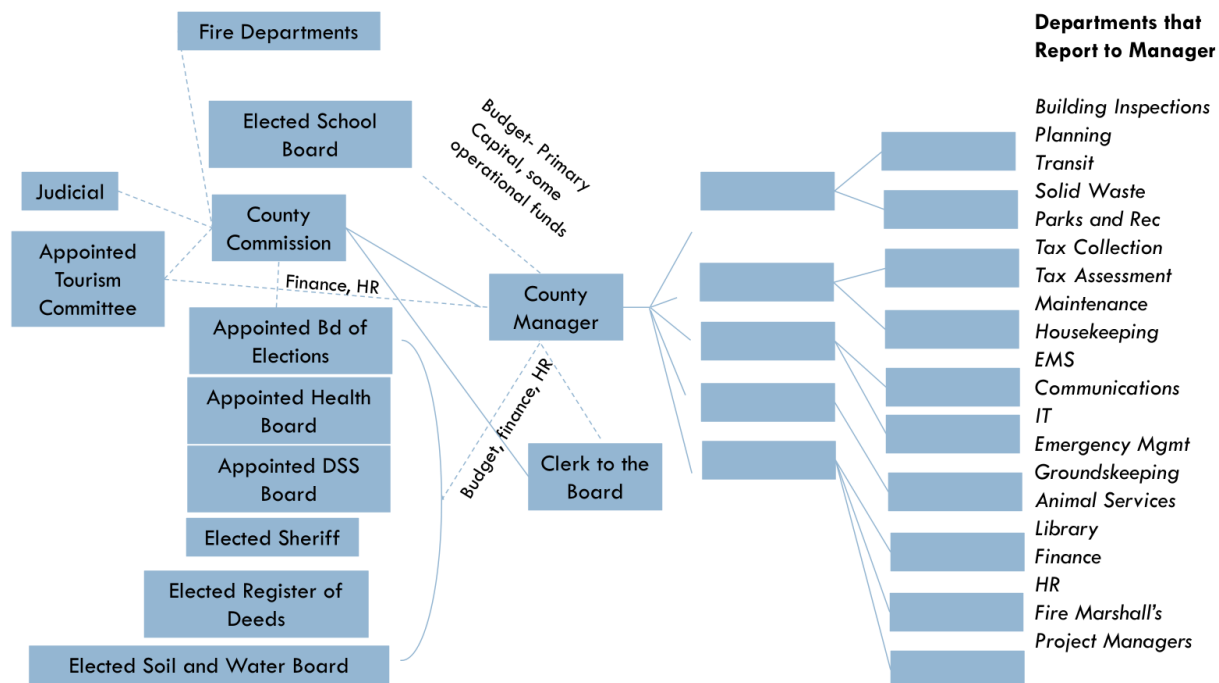
Counties also differ significantly from municipalities in both responsibilities and organizational structure. Municipal governments operate more like a traditional organizational model, with a city manager overseeing departments under the direction of an elected council. In contrast, county government includes multiple independent and semi-independent entities. In addition to departments managed by the County Manager, counties are required to fund external agencies such as public schools, fire departments, and the judicial system. Certain functions, such as Social Services, Public Health, and the Board of Elections, are governed by independent boards, while the Sheriff and Register of Deeds are elected officials who operate independently of the County Manager.

This structure creates additional complexity, as some county employees report through different governance structures while still relying on centralized services like Human Resources and Finance. Overall, approximately 20 departments report directly to the County Manager, but the broader county system includes many more entities with varying levels of autonomy.

Municipal Structure



County Structure



Another key challenge is that while the Board allocates funding to certain entities, such as schools, it does not have authority over how those funds are spent on a day-to-day basis. As a result, tools typically used to manage budgets, such as controlling hiring or adjusting operational spending, can only be applied to internal county departments and not across all funded areas.

Finally, the presence of restricted revenues adds further complexity. Some funds must be spent for specific purposes, while others are collected by the County and passed through to the State. Although these pass-through funds appear in the County's budget, they are offset by corresponding revenues and do not represent discretionary spending.

How the County Operates Like a Business

The County operates under a manager-board model that is similar in structure to a private-sector CEO and board of directors. In this model, the County Manager is responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations and managing core business functions often considered "overhead" in the private sector. These functions include administration, finance, human resources, information technology, legal services, facility operations, and the management and depreciation of buildings and equipment.

Each year, the County conducts a cost allocation study to better understand how these internal service costs support the delivery of core services. This study is normally completed after the annual audit and is based on actual expenditures. It reallocates overhead costs across departments, providing a more accurate picture of the full cost of delivering services. While budget presentations typically show planned expenditures, the cost allocation model reflects actual spending and distributes indirect costs accordingly.

Using the most recent analysis (applying the FY 2024 cost allocation study to FY 2025 actual expenditures), the County operates with an approximate 15% overhead rate. For comparison, professional

service industries in the private sector often average between 25% and 35% overhead, with broader industry ranges between 10% and 35%. Based on this model, the County's overhead is low.

Where permitted by state law, the County charges fees for services. However, those fees must be directly tied to the cost of providing the service. The cost allocation model allows the County to incorporate not only direct costs, but also a portion of indirect or overhead costs when establishing fees, for example, in programs like Parks and Recreation. Even so, statutory limitations restrict how much of these indirect costs can be recovered through fees.

Unlike private businesses, the County cannot eliminate services that are unprofitable or inefficient if they are mandated or considered essential. In the private sector, organizations may discontinue services to remain financially viable. In contrast, counties are required to continue providing many services regardless of cost.

Additionally, many mandated services come with state-imposed performance requirements and funding expectations. For example, in departments such as Social Services, the State requires specific staffing ratios, such as the number of social workers per caseload in Child Protective Services. This means the County must not only provide the service, but also meet defined service levels, further limiting flexibility in managing costs.

County Mandates

The Manager noted that county governments are responsible for a wide range of mandated services established by state law. A study completed in 2011 by a previous County Manager identified these requirements, and that work has since been expanded to reflect current obligations.

Administrative functions themselves are mandated, as counties are required to maintain a balanced budget, manage public funds, and ensure compliance with state financial and operational laws. In addition to more visible services, counties are responsible for functions that may not be widely recognized by the public. For example, counties fund medical examiner services, including the cost of autopsies.

Further mandates exist under North Carolina General Statutes, including those outlined in Chapter 160D, which governs planning, zoning, and building inspections. These statutes also establish requirements related to permitting processes and limit how fees for those services may be structured.

North Carolina Association of County Commissioners
Current Federal and State Mandates to Counties

Service Area	Requirement and Legal Citation
Administration	State requires county to have a budget and appoint a budget officer (G.S. 159-8, 9).
Attorney	State requires funding of workman's' compensation program (G.S. 97-3, 7).
Building Inspections	State requires county to have an attorney (G.S. 153A-114).
Community Colleges	State requires provision of inspection services (G.S. 153A-351, 352, 364).
	State requires funding of plant expenses such as land acquisition, building construction, and purchases of autos, buses, other motor vehicles, and maintenance related equipment; funding of plant operations costs such as utilities, janitorial supplies, operation of motor vehicles, and maintenance of buildings and grounds and all equipment and motor vehicles purchased with local funds; and funding of support services such as property and liability insurance, workers' compensation, and legal fees (G.S. 115D-32).
County Commissioners	State requires Board of Commissioners (G.S. 153A-34).
Courts	State requires provision of adequate facilities and furniture for District Court and Superior Court Divisions and the cleaning and maintenance of court facilities and related office space (G.S. 7A-302, 7A-304(a)(2)).
Elections	State requires Board of Elections although funding level discretionary (G.S. 163-30, 284, 284.1).
Emergency Management	State requires county to be responsible for emergency management (G.S. 166A-4, 7).
Emergency Medical Services	State requires county to ensure emergency medical services are provided to its citizens (though may be provided by private entity) (G.S. 143-517).
Environmental Affairs	State requires new landfills to be lined and all landfills to be equipped with scales (Subtitle D regulations).
	State requires solid waste management programs to remove 25% of waste stream from landfill (Subtitle D regulations).
Facility Maintenance	State requires county to supervise maintenance, repair, and use of all county property (G.S. 153A-169).
Finance	State requires county to appoint a finance officer (G.S. 159-24).
	State requires county to adhere to bid procedures (G.S. 143-129, 131).
	State requires county to have official bonds (G.S. 159-29).
	State requires county to maintain an accounting system based on modified accrual (G.S. 159-26).
	State requires county to have an annual balanced budget ordinance (G.S. 159-8, 10-13).
	State requires county to ensure sufficient internal controls and budgetary compliance (G.S. 159-28).
	State requires annual audit and submission of semiannual financial information (G.S. 159-33, 34)
Health	State requires provision of health services (G.S. 130A-34).
Medical Examiner	State requires provision of Medical Examiner (G.S. 130A-382, 383, 387).
Mental Health	State requires provision of mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse services through an area authority (G.S. 122C-2, 115).
Public Schools	State requires funding of sites, buildings, furniture, and apparatus (G.S. 115C-426(f), 429(b), 521(b)).
	State requires funding for repair and maintenance of school property (G.S. 115C-524)).
	State requires funding of garage and maintenance equipment for school buses (G.S. 115C-249e).
	State requires funding for instructional supplies, window shades, reference books, blackboards, library equipment, maps, science equipment, proper water supplies and sewage facilities (G.S. 115C-426(e), 429(b), 522(c)).
Register of Deeds	State requires county to have an elected register of deeds with a minimum of 2 deputies (G.S. 161-1, 2, 153A-103).
Sheriff	State requires county to have an elected sheriff with a minimum of 2 deputies (G.S. 162-1, 153A-103).
	State requires provision of bailiff services to courts
	State requires funding of criminal and civil processing and prisoner transportation (G.S. 162-16, 39).
Social Services	State requires provision of mandated services (G.S. 153A-225): Secretary of Human Resources can require adequate funding levels to support mandated programs and state can withhold tax revenues owed to county to support funding levels (G.S. 108A-88, 93).
	State requires board of commissioners to levy and collect taxes sufficient to meet county's share of social services expenditures (G.S. 108A-90).
	State requires formation of Board of Social Services (G.S. 108A, Article 1, Part 1).
Social Services Mandates	Adoptions (G.S. 108A-14, 25, 50, 71; Title XX and Title IV-B, E Social Security Act)
	Adult Placement (G.S. 108A-14)
	AFDC (G.S. 108A-27, 25, 39.1; Title IV-A SSA)
	Aid to Blind (G.S. 111-14)
	Child Custody (G.S. 108A-14)
	Child Daycare (10NCAC 431.0203; Title IVB and Title XX SSA)
	Child Support Enforcement (G.S. 110-130, 130.1; Title IV-D SSA)
	Chore Services to Blind (10NCAC 43L.0203)
	Adjustment Services to Blind (10NCAC 43L.0203)
	Crisis Intervention Program (G.S. 108A-25)
	Crisis Intervention- Federal (G.S. 143B-153 (Social Services Comm.))
	Employment Training: mandatory October 1990
	Family Planning Services (10NCAC 43L.0203)
	Food Stamps (G.S. 108A-51, 25; 7C.F.R. Parts 272, 273, 274)
	Foster Care/Foster Homes (G.S. 108A-48, 14(8), 25, 71; Title IVE and Title XX SSA)
	Fraud Investigation (Federal regulations)
	Health Support Services (10NCAC 43L.0203)
	Home Health (G.S. 108A-71, G.S. 143B-153 (SS Comm.), Title XX of SSA)

	In-Home Services for Elderly (10NCAS 43L.0203)
	Individual & Family Adjustment Services (10NCAC 43L.0203)
	Low Income Energy Assistance (G.S. 108A-25)
	Medicaid (G.S. 108A-54, 25; Title XIX SSA)
	Protective Services, Adult (G.S. 108A-103 through 107, 14; Title XX SSA)
	Protective Services, Children (G.S. 7A-544, 542, 108A-14, 71; Title XX)
	Special Assistance (Rest Home Care) (G.S. 108A-40, 25)
	Support Services, Family (G.S. 143B-153 (Social Services Commission) Federal)
	Support Services, Adult (G.S. 143B-153 (Social Services Commission))
	Title XX: Block Grant for Social Services (Federal regulation, Social Security Act)
Tax Assessing	State requires county appointment of Tax Supervisor (G.S. 105-294).
	State requires assessor to appraise, list, and classify all property (G.S. 105-274, 282.1, 285, 296).
Tax Collection	State requires assessor to discover, appraise, and list unlisted property (G.S. 105-312).
	State requires county appointment of Tax Collector (G.S. 105-349).
	State requires collector to collect taxes for current year and delinquent taxes (G.S. 105-350, 364, 366 through 369, 374 and 375).
	State requires uniform assessments and, at minimum, octennial reappraisals (G.S. 105-286, 287).
	State requires collector to certify taxes from other jurisdictions (G.S. 105-364).
	State requires county to have a Board of Equalization and Review (G.S. 105-322).

What Is Not Mandated or Essential for County Government

The Manager explained that counties also provide certain “optional” or non-mandated services. These services are not required by state law but are supported by the Board of Commissioners and funded in part through property taxes. In many cases, these services are intended to operate on a cost-recovery basis; however, they do not always fully cover their expenses. The difference is supplemented through property tax funding.

The following services operate at a net cost to the County (after accounting for fees and revenues collected):

- **Solid Waste: \$611,653**
This amount does not include funding set aside for future capital needs, which is typically expected in an enterprise fund. Ideally, fees would fully support operations, maintenance, and long-term capital replacement.
- **DMV Tag Office: \$50,572**
This is a service the County added several years ago to improve local access. While the County collects certain fees, the fee structure is set by the State. As a result, this operation frequently runs a deficit, which is supported by local property taxes. The benefit is improved convenience for residents, and the service is also used by individuals from surrounding counties.
- **Child Development: \$325,572**
This program has historically required supplementation from property taxes to support ongoing operations.

Collectively, these services represent approximately one cent on the County’s property tax rate. The Manager emphasized that this was not presented as a recommendation to reduce or eliminate these services, but rather to provide context for how they are funded and the types of policy decisions the Board must consider each year. These services are widely valued by the public, but they require local funding to remain in place.

Additional Non-Mandated Services Provided by the County

The County also provides several services that are not mandated by state law but are supported as community priorities:

- **Blue Ridge Community College: \$813,814**
- **Library: \$2,228,470**
- **Parks and Recreation: \$845,809 (net of revenues)**
- **Economic Development: \$362,100 (excluding incentives)**

- Cooperative Extension: \$225,097 (base funding required to provide the service)
- External Agency Funding: \$227,243

The Manager noted that many of these services are among those most frequently used and valued by residents. However, because they are not mandated, they represent areas where service levels and funding could be adjusted if the Board were to focus strictly on required services.

Mandated vs. Non-Mandated Spending

In FY 2025, approximately 92% of County expenditures were associated with mandated or essential services, while 8% supported non-mandated services. This 8% represents the portion of the budget where the Board has the most flexibility to adjust funding levels or evaluate cost recovery options.

The Manager also noted a potential future budget impact related to federal changes affecting SNAP benefits. If implemented in FY 2027, the County could incur approximately \$1 million in direct benefit costs and an additional \$200,000 in administrative costs, depending on whether the State assumes responsibility. This potential mandate could equate to approximately one cent on the property tax rate.

Where Property Tax Dollars Are Spent

The Manager also provided an overview of how property tax revenues were distributed in FY 2025 after accounting for other revenue sources such as fees, state funds, federal funds, and grants. This breakdown reflects the net reliance on property tax to support County services.

- Education (including Blue Ridge Community College and debt service): 34.17%
- Public Safety (Sheriff's Office, EMS, Emergency Management, Detention Center): 31%
- Health and Human Services: 15%
- Other Services (including general government, infrastructure, and remaining functions): Remaining balance
- Fire and Rescue: 3% (County contribution only; does not include separate fire district taxes collected by the County)

The Manager noted that the education category is expected to increase in future years due to the commencement of debt service payments associated with the school bond. While fire districts are funded through separate tax levies, County resources also support related administrative functions such as tax collection and emergency dispatch services.

Areas for Potential Discussion to Reduce Property Tax Impact

The Board may consider the following general categories when evaluating opportunities to reduce property tax impact:

- Review of Fees and Cost-Recovery Services
Evaluate fees for services that are intended to operate on a cost-recovery basis but currently do not fully cover expenses. If fully aligned with cost recovery, this category could represent an estimated impact of approximately one cent on the property tax rate.
- Evaluation of Non-Mandated Services
Consider the level of service or funding for non-mandated programs that are not required to be fee-supported. Adjustments in this category could represent up to approximately five cents on the property tax rate, depending on the extent of reductions. This would include services such as the Library and Parks and Recreation.

Methods Not Recommended for Budget Balancing

The Manager also outlined approaches that are generally not recommended for use in balancing the budget, based on long-term operational impacts and service sustainability considerations:

- **Deferring or Reducing Capital Maintenance**
While deferring maintenance may provide short-term savings, it typically results in higher long-term costs due to accelerated deterioration and increased repair needs. Deferred maintenance can also negatively impact the condition and lifespan of public assets.
- **Reducing Personnel Costs Below Competitive Levels**
Sustained reductions in staffing levels or compensation can lead to recruitment and retention challenges, reduced efficiency, and loss of institutional knowledge. In critical areas such as emergency communications, staffing shortages can create serious service risks, including delayed response times.
- **Reducing Investment in Equipment and Technology**
Reducing investment in equipment or infrastructure can lead to higher long-term costs, including increased vulnerability to cybersecurity threats, reduced operational efficiency, and equipment failures. For example, inadequate landfill equipment can impact compaction efficiency and create future maintenance challenges.

Budget Timeline Update

The Manager concluded by providing an overview of the current FY 2027 budget timeline and upcoming milestones in the budget development process.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Milestone Title</i>	<i>Description or Activity</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> February	Early Budget Expectations	Communicate to internal and external budget partners about revenue expectations, internal department requests are prepared for submittal to administration
<input type="checkbox"/> 2/9/2026	<u>Commissioner Discussion</u>	Early Revenue Indicators and Managing Expectations
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2/23/2026	<u>Commissioner Meeting- Department Head Presentations</u>	Night One Department Head Presentations on Performance Measures and Trends
<input type="checkbox"/> 3/9/2026	<u>Commissioner Meeting- Department Head Presentations</u>	Night Two Department Head Presentations on Performance Measures and Trends
<input type="checkbox"/> 3/23/2026	<u>Commissioner Meeting- Sheriff Trends, Budget Timeline Check in and Expenditure Analysis</u>	Sheriff Presentation, Budget Check in and Expenditure Analysis from the Budget Officer
April	External Funding Requests Due	Nonprofits, Transylvania Schools, Community College and Fire Departments submit/present requests
March/April	Budget Team Reviews	Review budget requests with administration, finance, IT, HR and Operations with each department head
April	<u>Capital Discussion</u>	Capital Workshop with Commissioners
April	Budget Team Reviews and Revenue Finalization	Fire Department Subcommittee, Nonprofit funding Subcommittee, Elected Official Subcommittee, HR has third party evaluate position requests in pay/class system. Tax Administrator provides Tax Base estimate to Administration, Budget Officer projects all revenue
April/May	<u>Balancing Budget and Guidance- Possible Fee Discussion at Commissioner Meeting</u>	Manager works to match revenues to expenditures to get to a recommendation, engages commissioners for guidance and to share additional information
5/15/2026	Statute*	Deadline for Transylvania Schools Budget (Expected in April instead)
5/26/2026	<u>Recommended Budget</u>	Target presentation of recommended budget includes requests with the recommended and detail on personnel changes, equipment and capital
6/1/2026	Statute*	Deadline for Manager's Recommended Budget as Budget Officer (Expect to Deliver in May instead)
6/2 and 6/4	<u>Workshop Tentative Dates</u>	Discuss remaining unresolved budget items to get to consensus and direct manager so public hearing can be advertised
6/22/2026	Public Hearing and Budget Adoption*	Adoption same night
7/1/2026	Statute*	Deadline for a balanced budget to be implemented

Board Discussion

Commissioner Dalton noted that at a recent NCACC Tax and Finance Committee meeting in Catawba County, he learned that several counties are beginning to publish lists of unfunded mandates required by the State. He asked whether it would be accurate to characterize a majority of the services previously outlined by the Manager as state-required but not state-funded. The Manager confirmed that this is largely accurate, noting that State funding is primarily directed toward Health and Human Services. She clarified that the budget breakdown presented to the Board reflects property tax-supported spending after accounting for all other revenue sources, including fees, state and federal funds, and grants.

Commissioner Dalton also noted that Medicaid “hold harmless” provisions were not included in the earlier discussion. The Manager responded that Medicaid-related changes are being closely monitored, as potential shifts in responsibility and funding could significantly impact EMS, Public Health, and Social Services operations, depending on how changes are implemented at the State and Federal levels.

Commissioner Dalton added that, based on his understanding, the Board has direct discretion over \$4 to \$4.5 million of the County’s total budget, which equates to five cents on the property tax rate. This portion includes discretionary services such as the Library, Parks and Recreation, and Economic Development. The Manager confirmed this and reiterated that staff work to maintain a fiscally responsible budget. She noted that Transylvania County currently has one of the lower property tax rates in the State and emphasized the importance of helping the public understand the extent of mandated obligations.

Commissioner Chapman stated that statewide discussions regarding property tax reform, including potential limitations or elimination of property taxes, are increasing. He noted that while such proposals may sound appealing, there is currently no clearly defined replacement revenue source. He added that if property taxes were reduced or eliminated, the State would need to assume greater responsibility for mandated services, which would represent a significant policy shift.

Commissioner Dalton stated that while some proposals involve capping annual property tax increases, such measures could limit counties’ ability to respond to unforeseen events such as natural disasters. He noted concerns expressed by other officials that such caps could reduce local flexibility and shift greater financial uncertainty to counties. He also referenced discussion of a potential constitutional amendment, noting that legislative authority already exists to implement many of these changes without constitutional revision.

Chairwoman McCall noted that some state-level discussions include pursuing a constitutional amendment to limit future legislative changes. She reiterated that while multiple proposals are being considered, none have identified a sustainable replacement for property tax revenue. She emphasized that counties are required to provide a wide range of mandated services, and property taxes remain the primary source of revenue for funding those obligations. She also noted that if the State were to assume those responsibilities, it is unclear how service delivery would be maintained at the local level.

Chairwoman McCall further clarified that once funding is allocated to external entities such as public education, the County does not retain authority over how those funds are spent. While the Board approves funding levels, operational decisions within those organizations are made independently once funds are appropriated.

She added that Solid Waste, while often discussed in the context of discretionary services, is not optional in practice due to ongoing environmental and regulatory obligations. Even if landfill operations were to cease, long-term monitoring and maintenance responsibilities would continue for many years.

The Manager reiterated that the intent of the presentation was not to suggest reducing services, but to clearly communicate that there is no external funding source that offsets local service delivery. Rather, services are funded by the residents who receive them. She emphasized the importance of transparency in understanding how local government is financed.

Chairwoman McCall concluded that the budget discussion highlights the balance between mandated obligations and community-supported services. While Commissioners may approach priorities differently, the Board's responsibility is to develop a balanced budget that reflects both legal requirements and community expectations.

Commissioner Chapman noted that the New Adventure Learning Center is currently subsidized by the County at approximately \$325,000 annually. He stated that while the facility provides valuable childcare services, it operates at a significant deficit and is in direct competition with private childcare providers. He suggested that the Board should continue evaluating long-term sustainability and consider ways to reduce reliance on County subsidy.

Chairwoman McCall asked about current enrollment and waitlist status. The Manager reported that approximately 55 enrolled children and confirmed that the center maintains a waitlist. She also noted that staffing shortages have impacted operations, including temporary classroom closures, though efforts are underway to restore full capacity.

Commissioner Dalton added that childcare shortages are also affecting the private sector, citing recent closures of childcare facilities in the region. The Manager confirmed that several childcare providers have closed or reduced services in recent years, though some limited part-time options remain available. She noted that there is still strong community demand for full-time childcare services.

Chairwoman McCall stated that, given regional childcare shortages, the center serves an important community need despite its subsidy level. She noted that while cost considerations remain important, access to childcare is essential for working families and local workforce participation. The Manager added that childcare availability has a direct economic impact on employers and employee retention.

Commissioner Dalton also noted that staffing challenges have impacted pre-K programming within the school system, with one requested class unable to be staffed last year due to workforce shortages.

Commissioner Chappell concluded by stating that the discussion illustrates the complexity of the County budget and the significant portion of spending that is mandated or structurally required. He emphasized that while there are differing views on specific services, reductions are not always straightforward due to legal requirements, service obligations, and community needs. He encouraged the public to consider the full scope of County responsibilities when evaluating budget decisions.

MONTHLY CAPITAL UPDATE

Per the interlocal agreement between the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education, the Project Manager provides a monthly update to both Boards on school capital projects. The County Manager also reports on countywide capital projects outside of school facilities.

The Manager noted that Project Manager Beecher Allison was attending the Board of Education meeting, and she would provide the school portion of the update on his behalf.

Overview

The County is currently involved in:

- Over \$200 million in capital projects are in development, underway, or planned

- Over \$100 million in grant funding supporting capital initiatives across multiple sectors

Transylvania County Schools Capital Projects

Completed School Projects

Significant completed projects include:

- Brevard High School (BHS) Old Gym roof replacement and renovation
- BHS Exceptional Children (EC) Wing roof replacement
- Removal or closure of Brevard area storage tanks
- Structural shoring improvements at Rosman High School (RHS) old gym

Current and Upcoming School Projects

Projects currently underway or scheduled include:

- BHS softball field lighting replacement
- Rosman area storage tank replacements to meet current environmental standards
- RMS/RHS old gym structural shoring and stabilization work
- RES (Rosman Elementary School) foundation injection to address stair-step cracking
- BMS (Brevard Middle School) roof replacement
- Additional roof replacements at Brevard High Schools

The Manager encouraged the public to review the Updated Five-Year Education Capital Funding Plan, available on the County website under Special Projects, for a comprehensive overview of current and planned school capital work.

Education Capital Project Updates (Detailed Status):

- Storage Tank Project
 - Work is underway to remove an underground storage tank at RHS that was damaged during testing.
 - Engineering firm S&ME is evaluating proposals for remaining tank replacements in the Rosman area.
 - These are not currently in danger; the work is intended to bring systems into compliance with modern environmental standards.
- BHS Scope #1
 - Old gym renovation is nearing final closeout.
 - Warranty and project closeout documentation will be delivered to the school system.
- BHS Scope #2
 - Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) 1 package for 2026 work has been approved by the subcommittee.
 - Construction is scheduled to move forward this summer.
 - GMP 2 package confirmation is expected in July
- Rosman Area Scope
 - Temporary structural shoring at Rosman facilities has been completed, and buildings have been returned to full operational use.
 - The remaining summer work will begin once school is out of session.
 - GMP 2 construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2026, following package finalization this summer.
- Brevard Area Scope
 - Similar phased work is planned for the Brevard area facilities.
- RHS Retaining Wall
 - Retaining wall work remains included in GMP 2 planning.

- Budget adjustments will not be finalized until the complete GMP 2 figures are completed, allowing for consolidated updates.
- BHS Softball Lighting
 - Lighting installation is nearing completion.
 - Target completion is in time for the scheduled game on the 27th

New State-Funded Project: BHS CTE Wing

A newly awarded state grant will fund a Career and Technical (CTE) wing expansion at Brevard High School.

- This is new construction, adding a wing to the existing school (not a new school facility)
- The project is currently in the programming phase.
- School staff are working directly with the architect to develop schematic design.
- The Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) will join later in the process.
- The County will have increased involvement as the project moves into the construction management phases.

Creating Jobs and a Safe Community

- New Courthouse
 - Currently at approximately 50% design completion
 - Budget refinement underway prior to returning to the Board
 - Final construction documents expected late summer/early fall
 - Project financing discussions are scheduled with the County's financial advisor.
- Library Amphitheater Cover
 - Structural installation is complete.
 - Contractor is completing site grading, concrete, and rock work.
 - Estimated completion is late April.
 - Additional drainage issues were identified and are being addressed during construction.

Protecting Transylvania Natural Resources

- Landfill Cell Expansion
 - Construction continues and remains on schedule.
 - Substantial completion is expected around July 29
 - A change order was recently approved due to unexpected rock conditions encountered during excavation.
- Watershed Study
 - The engineering team is preparing submission materials for state review.
- Boys and Girls Club/Gallimore Road Sewer Project
 - Moving forward in coordination with the City of Brevard
- Landfill Leachate Pretreatment System
 - Design phase underway
 - Bid and award expected in the summer.
 - Completion anticipation in late November
- Pisgah Labs Water/Sewer Extension
 - RFQ issued for engineering services
 - The project is a partnership with the City of Brevard.
- Brevard System Housing Projects
 - HAC, Habitat, and Azalea projects are in preliminary stages
- BHS Sewer Line and Pump Station
 - State funding approval is being pursued.

- Once approved, the project will move into the engineering phase.
- Azalea/Rhododendron Infrastructure Expansion
 - Design funded through one source, construction largely County-funded with City participation.
 - The City has indicated its intent to fund the remaining gap.
 - The County is working with regional and state partners (including Land of Sky, Renew NC, NCACC, NCLM, and UNC-School of Government) to identify additional funding solutions for remaining connection gaps.
- Calvert Road Water and Sewer
 - The Town has been notified of funding availability.
 - The County is awaiting confirmation of the remaining funding before executing the MOU.

Board Discussion

Commissioner Chappell asked for clarification on the total value of capital projects currently underway. The Manager reported approximately \$220 million in active capital projects, with over \$10 million in grant-funded projects closed out in the prior year.

Commissioner Chappell asked how this compares to five years ago. The Manager noted that previous annual capital activity typically peaked at approximately \$5 million for individual projects, such as the Sylvan Valley Industrial Building or EMS facility.

Commissioner Chappell further asked whether staffing had increased proportionally. The Manager confirmed that staffing levels have remained the same, with the same project team now managing over \$200 million in capital work.

Commissioner Chappell thanked staff for their work and emphasized the long-term benefit of the County's capital investments.

The Manager concluded by noting that this level of project management has been made possible through the Board's investment in a cross-departmental project team, including staff from finance, IT, operations, and administration working collaboratively to manage large-scale capital delivery effectively.

APPOINTMENTS

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

The Board considered an appointment to fill a vacancy on the Agricultural Advisory Board that occurred in October 2025 due to a resignation. The Clerk to the Board advertised the vacancy and received one application. Agricultural Agent Bart Renner recommended the appointment of Jeffrey Haywood to fill the unexpired term.

Commissioner Chapman moved to appoint Jeffrey Haywood to fill a vacant position on the Agricultural Advisory Board, seconded by Commissioners Chappell and Dalton simultaneously, and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF 2026 CAPITAL PRIORITIES FOR STATE ADVOCACY AND GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The County Manager presented a proposed list of capital priorities to guide the County's annual advocacy efforts with state and federal legislators. This follows a discussion held during the Board's February 9, 2026, meeting.

Each year, the County submits a list of priority projects ahead of the North Carolina General Assembly's short session, expected to convene in April. Providing these priorities in advance positions the County to compete for available funding as legislative budget discussions take shape.

The Manager reported that over the past five years, Transylvania County has successfully secured approximately \$100 million in capital funding from private, state, and federal sources. These funds have supported a wide range of projects, including water and sewer infrastructure in Rosman and Brevard, housing and economic development initiatives, school construction and renovations, expansion of the Sylvan Valley Industrial Park, and environmental protection efforts. This success has been attributed to coordinated capital planning and consistent advocacy by the Board and its partners.

For the current year, the Manager recommended prioritizing funding for a new county courthouse, currently estimated at \$36 million. Without outside assistance, the project would require full local financing. Any state or federal contribution would help reduce the County's long-term debt burden. At the Board's direction, additional projects were included to reflect broader community needs. The proposed capital priorities include:

County Capital Needs

- County Courthouse – \$36 million
- Blue Ridge Community College New Campus – \$68 million
- Public School System Identified Needs (Phase 2) – \$30 million
- Land Acquisition for Industrial Park – \$4 million
- Relocated Facilities for Industrial Park – \$8 million
- Historic Courthouse Renovations – \$3.7 million
- Satellite Fire and EMS Facility – \$2.7 million

Municipal Partner Infrastructure Needs

- City of Brevard Wastewater Improvements – \$90 million
- Rosman Water Treatment Plant – \$10 million
- Rosman Water and Sewer Extension (Woodruff Area) – \$4.5 million

Additional Departmental Capital Needs

To maintain flexibility for smaller funding opportunities, staff also included equipment and operational capital requests:

- Sheriff's Office crime scene and mobile command vehicle – \$400,000
- School system generator (Child Nutrition, Transportation, Plant Operations) – \$126,000
- Emergency Management and Communications vehicle replacements – \$122,000
- Public Safety IT equipment – \$600,000
- Countywide IT network equipment – \$541,000
- Quebec EMS Base expansion (future) – \$180,000
- Library bookmobile replacement – \$500,000

The Board discussed the importance of clearly prioritizing projects and distinguishing between critical needs and lower-priority items. Commissioners supported identifying the courthouse as the top priority, followed by the Blue Ridge Community College campus, and organizing the list by project type (e.g., construction vs. equipment) to improve clarity for funding partners.

The Board also supported continuing collaboration with municipal partners and the public school system, both of which were included in the proposed advocacy request.

Additionally, the Manager highlighted a potential \$1.2 million impact on the FY 2027 budget resulting from federal changes to the SNAP program, which could require the County to fund approximately \$1 million in direct benefits and \$200,000 in administrative costs. These costs have historically been covered by federal and state funding. The Manager recommended including a request for the State to fund these additional mandated expenses, noting that the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners is actively advocating on behalf of counties on this issue.

Based on Board input, coordination with municipal partners and the school system, and inclusion of the SNAP funding concern, the Manager finalized an advocacy letter outlining the County's capital priorities and funding requests.

The Manager recommended approval of the advocacy letter for submission to state and federal legislators in advance of the upcoming legislative session.

Board Discussion

Chairwoman McCall referenced the municipal partner infrastructure section of the proposed priorities, emphasizing that the County has consistently included the needs of its municipal partners and the school system in its annual advocacy efforts. She addressed recent public comments suggesting the County has not supported municipal funding, stating that the Board has actively advocated for both County and municipal projects through letters, calls, in-person meetings in Raleigh, and local meetings with legislators. Although the County does not own or operate wastewater systems, she noted these projects are critical to the health and safety of residents across the entire county, and the Board will continue advocating for them regardless of ownership.

Commissioner Dalton expressed support for the proposed list and suggested that future advocacy efforts include Solid Waste needs, particularly as the results of the ongoing study become available. He noted that Solid Waste operations run at a deficit annually and highlighted the importance of prior advocacy that secured approximately \$7 million toward the landfill cell expansion. With the total project cost near \$9.5 million, those funds significantly reduced what would have otherwise resulted in an estimated ten-cent increase on the property tax rate. He added that prior state funding received by the County, exceeding \$40 million, has benefited the County, the City of Brevard, and the Town of Rosman, with all parties working to maximize those resources.

Commissioner Chapman noted that the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners hosts annual Advocacy Days in Raleigh, providing opportunities for local officials to meet directly with legislators. He encouraged Commissioners to participate when possible.

Commissioner Chappell echoed Chairwoman McCall's remarks, emphasizing the County's long-standing advocacy on behalf of the entire community, including municipal partners. He noted that the County's experience managing grants and its established relationships with members of the General Assembly have contributed to securing significant funding for local projects. In many cases, funds are directed to the County specifically because of confidence in its administration and oversight. He explained that requirements such as County management of projects and financial oversight are necessary to ensure

compliance with funding conditions and to maintain eligibility for future funding opportunities. He reiterated that the County's advocacy efforts have consistently benefited Transylvania County residents.

The County Manager reviewed several projects that have been removed from the priority list due to successful funding efforts. These include:

- Approximately \$62 million for the Brevard High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) wing
- \$7 million for landfill cell expansion
- Approximately \$40 million in previously identified needs, including:
 - \$7 million for water and sewer infrastructure in Brevard and Rosman
 - An additional \$13 million in infrastructure funding through grants and state appropriations
- \$1.2 million in federal funding for radio replacements
- \$2 million for the construction of two new cell towers
- Funding for two new ambulances

The Manager noted that many of these funded projects were included in prior advocacy lists, demonstrating how continued engagement with state and federal partners translates into tangible results for the community.

Commissioner McKelvey moved to approve the advocacy letter containing the list of capital priorities for seeking funding support from the state and federal government, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

REALLOCATION OF DSS LAPSED SALARY FUNDS FOR CONTRACT WITH ALLIES 4 OUTCOMES

Social Services Director Amanda Vanderoef presented a request to reallocate lapsed salary funds to support a temporary contract for Child Welfare services.

She explained that over the past year, the Department of Social Services has experienced significant staffing shortages within its Child Welfare division, with half of the positions vacant and a limited applicant pool. While the department has attempted interim solutions, such as hiring part-time staff, these efforts have not been sufficient to meet service demands.

To address this gap, DSS requested authorization to enter into a three-month contract with Allies 4 Outcomes to provide temporary Child Welfare staffing support. The maximum contract amount is \$135,921, with billing based only on actual hours worked. The cost would be fully covered by lapsed salaries from vacant positions, and the state reimbursement rate would remain consistent with that of full-time employees.

Ms. Vanderoef expressed confidence that the three-month timeframe would allow the department to stabilize staffing levels. She noted that one new full-time employee had recently started, with additional candidates expected to apply in the coming months, including a graduating student and an intern completing her placement. She also emphasized that contracted staff are already fully trained, allowing them to begin work immediately, whereas newly hired employees require approximately three months of state-mandated training before becoming fully operational.

She further noted that the use of lapsed salaries is typically limited to expenses directly tied to staffing needs, such as temporary contract support. She emphasized the risk associated with operating understaffed in Child Welfare, including potential state intervention in the event of serious incidents. She added that many counties in Western North Carolina are currently utilizing similar contracts to address workforce shortages.

Commissioner Chappell asked whether the contract would allow for flexibility in the event that positions are filled sooner than expected. Ms. Vanderoef confirmed that services would be scaled based on need, as the County would only be billed for actual services provided. This would allow the County to discontinue contract services if permanent staff are hired more quickly than anticipated. Commissioner Chappell emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility to ensure funds remain available for hiring permanent staff and noted the significant liability risks associated with understaffing in Child Welfare.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve a reallocation of \$135,921 from DSS lapsed salaries to fund a three-month contract with Allies 4 Outcomes until three vacant Child Welfare positions can be filled, and the contract to be signed only after the attorney comments are incorporated from review, seconded by Commissioner Chappell. The motion was approved unanimously.

BALSAM GROVE FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING REQUEST FOR LAND ACQUISITION

Fire Marshal Scott Justus presented a request on behalf of the Balsam Grove Fire Department regarding options to address space limitations at the current station and support future 24-hour staffing.

Following prior Board direction, the department engaged Architect Richard Worley to evaluate the expansion of the existing facility. While expansion was determined to be feasible, it was not recommended due to significant constraints, including limited space requiring a two-story design with no room for future growth, the need to remove and replace two septic systems, and operational challenges associated with construction that would leave equipment exposed and unsecured.

As an alternative, the department identified a 2.90-acre property on Highway 215, located approximately one-half mile from the current station. The site offers flat topography, road frontage, and is outside of the floodplain. Preliminary evaluation by the architect confirmed the site is suitable for a new fire station. Required septic and geotechnical testing has been completed with favorable results.

The department requested approval to purchase the property for \$300,000, with an additional \$20,000 for due diligence and associated costs, for a total of \$320,000. Funding would be provided through \$240,000 from the department's personnel line, due to the current inability to add staff without expanded space, and \$80,000 from the countywide fire service district tax reserve.

Staff also reported that the department has applied for \$3.8 million in Congressionally Directed Spending, which would require a 25% local match, and is pursuing additional funding opportunities, including state grants and CDBG-DR funds. If awarded, the match may be financed through debt service.

Board discussion included questions regarding property valuation, potential use of the existing station, and funding strategies. The property is currently assessed at \$68,000, and staff noted that relocating too far from the existing station could negatively impact fire protection ratings for the service area. Commissioners acknowledged the importance of addressing facility limitations to support staffing and service delivery.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve the funding request as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chapman, and unanimously approved.

REQUEST FOR DISBURSEMENT OF FIRE DISTRICT RESERVE FUNDS - CEDAR MOUNTAIN FIRE RESCUE & ROSMAN FIRE RESCUE

Fire Marshal Scott Justus presented requests from Cedar Mountain Fire Rescue and Rosman Fire Rescue to access remaining fire district reserve funds following the implementation of a countywide fire tax on July 1, 2025. Under the new structure, individual districts no longer retain separate reserve accounts, though previously collected funds remain available for district use.

Departments have requested to use these funds to address operational needs, including increased costs for firefighter physicals, equipment purchases, wildfire response improvements, and upgrades to sleeping quarters to support 24-hour staffing.

Cedar Mountain Fire Rescue has an available balance of \$4,894.30, and Rosman Fire Rescue has \$41,876.44, as of June 30, 2025. Staff recommended approval of both requests.

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the disbursement of fire district reserve funds to Cedar Mountain Fire Rescue and Rosman Fire Rescue, seconded by Commissioners Dalton and McKelvey simultaneously, and unanimously approved.

NEW COUNTY WEBSITE SUBSCRIPTION WITH PROVIDER APPTEGY

Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver presented a proposal for a new County website and mobile application. A staff committee evaluated multiple vendors and selected Apptegy as the most comprehensive and cost-effective solution.

The new platform will provide an ADA-compliant website, mobile app, notification features, and social media integration. Staff confirmed compatibility with existing County software systems to ensure seamless access to services.

Initial setup costs of \$10,700 in FY 2026 will be funded from contingency, with an annual subscription cost of \$10,900 beginning in FY 2027. The County has the option to add additional features, such as AI search and chatbot tools, in the future. A three-year contract was negotiated to secure pricing.

Commissioners expressed support for the initiative as a way to enhance transparency and accessibility.

Commissioner McKelvey moved to approve initial setup costs and the upcoming multi-year contract for Apptegy, which will provide the County with a new website and app, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

MULTI-YEAR CONTRACT FOR EMS MEDICAL MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver presented a proposed multi-year contract for Handtevy, a medical management platform used by EMS. Staff negotiated a three-year agreement with the vendor that will result in approximately 30% cost savings over the life of the contract while maintaining and enhancing system functionality.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the staff's efforts to improve services while reducing costs.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve the multi-year contract with Handtevy, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously approved.

CONTRACT WITH COMPORIUM FOR RECIPROCAL USE OF SERVICE AND FACILITIES

Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver presented a proposed agreement with Comporium to enhance the County's network infrastructure. Currently, the County relies on a single dark fiber

connection between its downtown and Public Safety data centers. Through this agreement, Comporium would receive rack space in the County's downtown data center in exchange for providing an additional dark fiber connection between the two sites.

This arrangement would create a secondary fiber route, significantly improving network redundancy and disaster recovery capabilities. Staff noted that "dark fiber" allows the County full control over bandwidth and data transmission without leasing capacity.

Approval was recommended pending final legal review by the County Attorney, with any substantive changes to be brought back to the Board. Commissioners highlighted the importance of improved system resiliency, particularly in light of the failures that occurred during Hurricane Helene.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve the contract with Comporium for reciprocal use of services and facilities, pending legal review by the County Attorney, seconded by Commissioner Chappell, and unanimously approved.

COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE POLICY UPDATE

Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver presented an updated Computer and Internet Use Policy, replacing the County's existing policy from 2001. The revised policy reflects modern technology practices, cybersecurity risks, and current North Carolina law, and aligns with state IT guidance.

The policy establishes clear expectations for the use of County technology by employees, officials, contractors, and volunteers, with key objectives including protecting County systems and data, defining acceptable use, ensuring legal compliance, addressing evolving cybersecurity threats, and maintaining public trust and transparency.

The policy has been reviewed by the County Attorney and department heads. It will be incorporated into employee onboarding and supported by departmental training.

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the changes and updates to the Computer and Internet Use Policy, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The County Manager provided updates on several items of interest. She shared condolences on the passing of Mike Clampitt, recognizing his service, leadership, and dedication to the community, and asked that his family be kept in the community's thoughts.

She noted that there will be an additional week between meetings, with the Board reconvening in three weeks. The Manager also highlighted ongoing efforts to improve public access to information through the County's website, including the addition of a dedicated FY 2027 Budget information page and continued updates on capital projects.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman reported on a recent NCACC Justice and Public Safety Committee, where discussion focused on the limited regulation of vape shops. He noted concerns about product origins, lack of clarity regarding contents, and the challenges associated with enforcement due to the cost of testing. He

encouraged public awareness and communication with legislators regarding the issue. He also expressed appreciation for the Manager's work on the budget.

Chairwoman McCall thanked the Manager for her continued work and dedication, particularly during the budget process. She reminded the public that the County Manager carries out the direction of the Board of Commissioners, and that concerns regarding decisions should be directed to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner McKelvey moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 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