MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 8, 2026 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, June 8, 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, Jake Dalton, Chair Teresa McCall, and Chase McKelvey. Commissioner Jason Chappell was out of town and unable to attend. County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Bill Bulfer, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan were also present.

Media: Jon Rich - *Brevard Beagle*

Approximately 15 people were in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

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

WELCOME

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Owen Carson spoke about the Opportunity Zone nominations recently approved by the Board. He understood that Opportunity Zones are intended to attract private investment and do not approve development, change zoning, or commit local tax dollars. He encouraged the Board to continue engaging the public and clearly communicate its goals for the designated areas. Mr. Carson also discussed farmland preservation efforts, including the need for continued support and potential updates to the County's Farmland Protection Plan. He thanked the Board for its support of agriculture and for the recent appointment to the Agricultural Advisory Board. Lastly, he encouraged the Board to inform the public of its position on potential data center development and related economic development initiatives.

Doug Powell spoke about the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He reflected on the sacrifices made by the nation's founders and encouraged citizens to remember their contributions and the importance of preserving freedom for future generations.

Daniel Carey, representing Pisgah Legal Services, invited Commissioners and the public to attend an upcoming open house at the organization's Brevard office. He thanked the County for its continued support, highlighted the services Pisgah Legal Services provides to residents, and shared information about the organization's impact in Transylvania County.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and the motion was unanimously approved.

The Board approved the following:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The Board approved the minutes of the May 26, 2026, regular meeting.

PROCLAMATION - HONORING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
The Board approved a proclamation commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States of America and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The proclamation recognized the nation's founding principles and encouraged residents to reflect on the country's history, honor those who have served, and participate in activities celebrating liberty, democracy, and civic responsibility. Chairwoman McCall read the proclamation aloud and noted the significance of the upcoming anniversary.

PROCLAMATION #26-2026
HONORING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, the year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, and the birth of a nation dedicated to the principles of liberty, equality, self-government, and the pursuit of opportunity; and

WHEREAS, for two and a half centuries, the United States has endured and prospered through the courage, sacrifice, innovation, and civic engagement of generations of Americans who have worked to preserve and strengthen our democratic institutions; and

WHEREAS, the Semiquincentennial provides an opportunity for Americans to reflect upon our nation's history, honor the contributions of those who came before us, recognize the progress that has been achieved, and renew our commitment to the ideals upon which our country was founded; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Transylvania County have long contributed to the strength and vitality of our nation through military service, public service, volunteerism, entrepreneurship, education, stewardship of our natural resources, and active participation in civic life; and

WHEREAS, this historic milestone invites all residents to learn more about our nation's history, celebrate our shared heritage, and inspire future generations to embrace the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship; and

WHEREAS, throughout 2026, communities across the nation will participate in commemorative events, educational programs, service projects, and celebrations recognizing America's 250-year journey;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby recognizes and commemorates the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America and encourages all residents to observe this historic occasion by reflecting on our nation's history, honoring those who have

served and sacrificed for our freedoms, and participating in activities that celebrate the enduring ideals of liberty, democracy, and civic responsibility.

This the 8th day of June 2026.

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

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUEST - COMMUNICATIONS
The Board approved an out-of-state travel request for Communications staff to attend training and professional development opportunities, as required by Board policy.

CANCELLATION OF JULY 27 AND AUGUST 10 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS
The Board approved the cancellation of its July 27 and August 10 regular meetings. The Board customarily cancels a summer meeting following adoption of the annual budget to allow staff time for vacations and to address ongoing workloads. The Clerk to the Board was directed to publish the required public notice. If necessary, a special meeting may be scheduled.

NCDOT INTEGRATED MOBILITY DIVISION PROCUREMENT POLICY UPDATE
The Board approved updates to the County's procurement policy for transit services to comply with revised requirements issued by the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Integrated Mobility Division. The updates reflect recent changes to federal regulations and are required to maintain compliance with state transit program requirements.

TCTDA CONTRACT WITH MARKET CONNECTIONS FOR FY 2026-2027
The Board acknowledged that the County Commissioner review requirement established by Resolution No. 35-2021 had been satisfied for the Tourism Development Authority's contract with Market Connections for marketing services during FY 2026-2027.

TCTDA CONTRACT WITH MEDIA ONE FOR FY 2026-2027
The Board acknowledged that the County Commissioner review requirement established by Resolution No. 35-2021 had been satisfied for the Tourism Development Authority's contract with Media One for digital marketing services during FY 2026-2027.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

UPDATE ON EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO HURRICANE/TROPICAL STORM HELENE
The County Manager provided an update on recovery efforts related to Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene.

Agriculture Support Programs

- A new USDA Disaster Block Grant Program is available to assist farmers and producers impacted by Hurricane Helene, including support for infrastructure damage, market and economic losses, and timber losses.
- Cooperative Extension staff are assisting local producers with applications and program information.

Commercial and Housing Recovery

- Renew NC's Commercial District Revitalization Program is offering federal funding to assist with the restoration of damaged commercial districts in Western North Carolina.
- The Renew NC Small Rental Rehabilitation Program is accepting applications to repair, reconstruct, or replace storm-damaged rental properties and help restore affordable housing.

Hazard Mitigation Grants

- The first group of hazard mitigation property acquisition projects has been released for bid, with contractor selection anticipated by July 1. Several participating property owners are expected to receive purchase offers this fall.

Private Property Debris Removal

- FEMA has agreed to review previously denied applications for private property debris removal.
- Progress continues on debris removal activities and ongoing coordination with the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management.
    - 428 Rights of Entry processed
    - 29 Rights of Entry pending eligibility review
    - 103 Rights of Entry have received ineligible FEMA determinations
    - 44 work authorizations issued to haulers
    - 224 properties have been closed out

Infrastructure Assessments

- Assessments of waterways and debris-related impacts continue, with evaluations underway at multiple identified locations throughout the county.

APPOINTMENTS

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

A vacancy existed on the Agricultural Advisory Board following the expiration of a member's term. Cooperative Extension staff assisted with recruitment efforts, resulting in three applications for consideration. The Agricultural Advisory Board expressed a preference for Farm Bureau representation and recommended Tracie Gant based on her experience and alignment with the Board's current goals.

Commissioner Chapman moved to appoint Tracie Gant to the Agricultural Advisory Board, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and the motion was unanimously approved.

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The term of Sarah Justice was set to expire at the end of June. Ms. Justice was eligible and willing to serve another term. The term of Karen Cole also expired; however, she was not eligible for reappointment due to term limits. One application was received to fill the resulting vacancy, but the applicant did not yet meet the Board's eligibility requirements.

Commissioner Dalton moved to reappoint Sarah Justice to the Library Board of Trustees and to table consideration of the vacancy until the applicant meets the Board's requirements or another application is received, seconded by Commissioners Chapman and McKelvey, and the motion was unanimously approved.

REGIONAL COUNCIL ON AGING

The term of Kathe Harris was set to expire on June 30. The Area Agency on Aging Director recommended her reappointment and also recommended the appointment of Woodie Dyches to fill an existing community member vacancy.

Commissioner Chapman moved to reappoint Kathe Harris and to appoint Woodie Dyches to the Regional Council on Aging, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and the motion was unanimously approved.

SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD
Jessica Shanor's term on the Social Services Board was set to expire on June 30, and she was not eligible for reappointment due to term limits. Recruitment efforts resulted in one application. The Social Services Board recommended the appointment of Kathy Klepfer to fill the upcoming vacancy.

Commissioner McKelvey moved to appoint Kathy Klepfer to the Social Services Board effective July 1, 2026, seconded by Commissioner Chapman, and the motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

NCACC LEGISLATIVE GOALS
Chairwoman McCall reviewed the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners' (NCACC) legislative goals process, which occurs every two years before the General Assembly's long session. Counties are invited to submit legislative priorities for consideration by NCACC. Following review by steering committees, the Legislative Goals Committee, and the NCACC Board of Directors, the proposed goals are presented to all 100 counties for consideration and prioritization at the Legislative Goals Conference. Staff requested direction on legislative priorities in advance of the August 14 submission deadline.

The Board reviewed legislative goals submitted during the previous cycle and discussed potential priorities for the upcoming session. Discussion included concerns regarding unfunded state mandates, restrictions on local revenue sources, local control of school calendars, the use of occupancy tax revenues, and proposals affecting property tax authority. Commissioners emphasized the importance of advocating for greater state funding support for mandated services and preserving local government flexibility in addressing community needs.

Staff requested approval of the County's final legislative goals package by July 13 to ensure timely submission to NCACC. No formal action was taken. The Board will continue to discuss and refine its goal submissions during the next two meetings.

MANAGER'S REPORT
The County Manager shared several updates with the Board:

- The Manager reminded the public that, in addition to required public hearings on the budget, there are multiple ways to provide comments, including two public comment periods at each regular meeting. (State law only requires one per month.)
- After the public hearing on the proposed FY 2027 budget on June 22, staff will recommend that the Board adopt the final budget, effective on July 1, 2026, to meet statutory requirements.
- Congratulations were shared for Ashley Minery, Planning and Community Development Director, who recently earned certification from the North Carolina Zoning Officials Association for her professional training and experience.
- The County is recognizing the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026, with local events planned throughout the year. Upcoming events include:
  - June 20: *Okra Awakening – Washington's Primary Pursuit Revolutionary Era Garden*, 12:00–1:00 p.m.
  - June 27: *Appalachian Folk Festival* at the Allison-Deaver House, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Owen Carson raised several questions and concerns. He asked how the Board developed its list of 21 legislative priorities, and whether the public had opportunities to provide input before those priorities were set. He specifically questioned a proposal related to placing a cap on land held in conservation easements, stating he felt it could conflict with local property rights and the County's values. He also noted concern about limiting land conservation incentives and expressed disagreement with that concept. He emphasized the importance of Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC), sharing examples of how programs there help students earn certifications and enter the workforce more quickly. He encouraged continued or increased support for BRCC, noting its role in workforce development and education in both Transylvania and neighboring counties.

Clark Lovelace, Executive Director of the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority, provided an update on a state-level issue affecting tourism funding rules. He explained that North Carolina's rules on occupancy tax use have evolved, with major changes in 1997 that standardized how local tourism dollars must be used. He noted that a current issue involving the interpretation of "tourism-related expenditures" is being reviewed at the state level and may be clarified in the coming months. He also shared historical context about how different counties apply these rules, including special exceptions for some counties like Currituck. Mr. Lovelace also offered condolences on the recent and sudden passing of community member Tim Gafnea, recognizing his contributions and expressing sympathy to his family. His wife, Corey Gafnea, worked for the TCTDA for a period of time.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman raised concerns about trash on the roads, describing a recent incident on Rosman Highway where an elderly resident stopped to remove a large trash bag from the roadway and was nearly struck by traffic, resulting in a broken wrist. He urged residents to report road debris immediately to the Sheriff's Office or Highway Patrol. He noted that a County ordinance requires trash on vehicles to be properly tarped. He encouraged the public to help report violations to reduce ongoing issues.

Commissioner Chapman also shared concerns about regional competition for public safety staffing, referencing Henderson County's proposed budget, which includes significant tax increases and an 18% pay raise for law enforcement due to staffing needs for the new jail. He noted this could increase pressure on Transylvania County to retain deputies and warned of future budget challenges.

Commissioner Dalton responded to questions raised during public comment and provided clarification on several topics. He explained that Opportunity Zones are state-designated areas, and counties have limited control over their placement. He noted that past efforts to relocate a designated zone that was placed in an undevelopable national forest area were unsuccessful. He also said two current zones were assigned by the state and are under review, and the county can only recommend, not choose, the final designation. While the Pisgah Forest option is more viable for an Opportunity Zone designation, he emphasized prior county investment of tens of millions of dollars in water and sewer infrastructure along the U.S. 64 corridor, and ongoing work on water supply and watershed protection for future needs. He referenced the County's targeted industries list located on the Transylvania Economic Alliance's website, noting that while the county identifies preferred business types, it does not guarantee those businesses will locate here.

Commissioner Dalton also noted that the county previously shared a state grant of just over $2 million with Henderson County to support farmland preservation efforts. Lastly, he stated that claims about large AI data center projects in the County are unfounded. While he acknowledged that the former Ecusta property was once considered, he said utility capacity limitations and terrain make such projects impractical. He also distinguished between large AI data centers and existing smaller data facilities used by the county government and other institutions, such as the Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute.

Chairwoman McCall announced that she, Commissioner Chapman, and Commissioner Dalton will travel to Raleigh tomorrow to meet with state legislators. She also thanked the County Manager and staff for their work on the budget process and long-term planning. She noted that multiple Western North Carolina counties and municipalities are considering or implementing significant tax increases alongside fee hikes, amid delayed revaluation impacts. She highlighted that Transylvania County's budget approach is intended to remain fiscally responsible. Lastly, Chairwoman McCall noted that the Board will hold its budget public hearing and vote at the next meeting and indicated continued financial challenges ahead.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Dalton moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 p.m., seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and the motion was unanimously approved.**

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Teresa K. McCall, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board