

**PLANNING AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Jason Stewart, Director
Kate Hayes, Interim Planner
Beth Webb, Program Assistant



106 East Morgan Street, Suite 207
Brevard, NC 28712
828.884.3205
planning.transylvaniacounty.org

**TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
Regular Meeting, November 21, 2019**

Call to Order: Chair, Sandy Watson - The Transylvania County Planning Board met in regular session on Thursday, November 21, 2019, in the Community Services Building conference room. Members present were Chair, Sandy Watson, Vice Chair, Kimsey Jackson, Bob Twomey, Rick Lasater, Beecher Allison, and Lauren Wise. John Wayne Hardison was absent. Staff members present were Transylvania County Planning and Community Development Director, Jason Stewart and Interim Planner, Kate Hayes. Nine members of the public were present. No media attended.

- I. **Welcome:** Sandy Watson welcomed everyone. The meeting began @ 7:00 p.m. Bob Twomey said the invocation and Lauren Wise led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- II. **Public Comment:** There were no members of the public who wished to speak.
- III. **Approval of Agenda:** Kimsey Jackson made the motion to approve the agenda as presented, the motion was seconded by Bob Twomey and carried unanimously.
- IV. **Approval of Minutes:** Lauren Wise moved to approve the Regular Meeting minutes for October 17, 2019 as amended after Rick Lasater requested changing College Park to College Walk at the bottom of page 2. The motion was seconded by Kimsey Jackson and carried unanimously.
- V. **CLG Presentation to the Planning Board:** Dr. Michael Ann Williams and Sydney Varajon presented, "Walking Around the World: African American Landscapes & Experience in Transylvania County. Rebecca Suddeth, Chair of JHPC, introduced Michael Ann and Sydney who introduced that the grant is an architectural survey and what buildings are important. The big part was oral history and they found the experts.
 - o **Michael Ann Williams**, folklorist and historic preservationist started with Henderson County survey, has done work for Swain, Cherokee and Graham counties. She worked at Western Carolina University and the Heritage Center and met her husband. She taught folklore and historic preservation at Western Kentucky University and retired two years ago. She has since moved back to Franklin, NC. She wrote her dissertation using oral history to study buildings.
 - o **Sydney Varajon** is from eastern Tennessee. She is a preservation and folk lore student at Western Kentucky and is currently working on her doctorate at Ohio State and her dissertation in Gatlinburg.Dr. Williams advised that she and Sydney gave the community presentation two months ago to the Rosenwald community. The report is entitled, "Walking Around the World" which was taken from their first interview with Elsie Betsill, who attended the first Rosenwald School. As a kid he had walked through all the neighborhoods and called it walking around the world and caught a sense of freedom in the phrase. Dr. Williams appreciated the time of the CLG subcommittee and couldn't have done the project without them. Special thanks to our "teachers" with whom they interviewed and to the people who served as guides to various parts of the county and communities.

Although African Americans are underrepresented in surveys, there are existing resources such as Nathaniel Hall's book which goes back to the 19th century. The Transylvania County Improvement Organization and the comprehensive survey in the 90's captured significant properties built before 1930, and there is an eight-page bibliography that the library came up with.

Resources for African American history before the Civil War are very scarce. Michael Ann believes people who came in the 18th century were escaped slaves, but they were first documented in the 19th century (Transylvania did not become a county until the eve of the Civil War). From the first census in 1862, there were 447 slaves and three free people of color; this is significant because it shows there was not the ability to set up separate African American institutions before emancipation. Archaeology resources exist as well and many unmarked slave burials exist throughout the county.

One possible free-standing slave quarters that still survives in Dunn's Rock is the Johnstone-Hume slave quarters. It is now the Raxter house and a white family bought it; oral tradition says it was a slave house and this story is only separated by one generation. There is no further documentation. It looks like a 19th century house from the outside, but on the inside it appears older though Michael Ann couldn't definitively date it. There are things that could possibly date it to being slave quarters, it has a brick central chimney, rather than stone and hearths on the second floor and a divided staircase leading to separate rooms. You can see by the way it was built that it could accommodate four families instead of a single family.

Some of the African American slaves left townships and moved to French Broad, Glade Creek and Shady Grove. There are four Baptist churches which are all over one-hundred years old. Two of the churches date close to emancipation (one is French Broad and it dates to more than 150 years old). Bethel dates to a period after emancipation and has moved to several different locations. Glade Creek split from French Broad and has been rebuilt several times. Bethel A which split from Bethel in 1919, recently celebrated their 100th anniversary.

The French Broad cemetery includes the grave of Jim Aiken, who was one of the most prominent African American citizens. Many prominent people are buried at Cooper's cemetery, which was created in the early 20th Century. Shady Grove and Bailey cemeteries are across private land and are not accessible to the public. Davidson is segregated. Davidson River cemetery is working with Western Carolina University on ground penetrating radar to locate unmarked graves.

Industrialization and the growth of African American communities in Brevard between the years of 1910-1963 included the building of two schools; the Industrial School and the Rosenwald School, as well as the construction of the Tannery in Brevard. This helped consolidate and make the African American community grow.

The Industrial school continues to be a mystery. The school was largely unknown and probably not as large as planned. The school was three stories tall and contemplating a second building for boys. An insurance map from 1911 shows the school and two buildings, unfortunately they do not know the exact location. From Nathaniel Hall's history, it says that a woman named Pruden was involved with this somehow. They are pretty certain that it was Emily Pruden, who created a lot of African American schools, including Lincoln Academy in Kings Mountain. They

Transylvania County Planning Board Minutes
Regular Meeting, November 21, 2019

found a deed where Mrs. Pruden had bought land and for one dollar, deeded it to the Johnstone's. Dr. Johnstone's wife, Wilkie, is probably the connecting person between this and the Rosenwald School. There is a reference to Jim Aiken as the person who would have had the means and the influence to make sure the school was built.

Julius Rosenwald, son of German and Jewish immigrants, became President of Sears and Roebuck, and who was inspired by the writings of Booker T. Washington. Rosenwald met Washington who advised him that the real needs were to build African American elementary schools in the South. Thousands of schools were built. The Brevard School is listed as being built in 1920-21 under Tuskegee. In 1921, they moved the offices of the Rosenwald fund from Tuskegee to Nashville. Since the school was built before that date, and it is one of the older Rosenwald schools. North Carolina has more Rosenwald schools than any other state. Brevard had a three room school. They are not sure what happened to the first school, but the second school burned to the ground in the early 1940s. For seven years, there was no African American school, probably due to the War.

The growth of the Rosenwald community, including the area immediately around where the school was known as Pickelseimer, which is now known as Mills Avenue. These were all marked dwellings on insurance maps between 1924 -1931. There was not a lot of business in the area except for a one story store, which later became two stories and was the Jip Mills Store. The store is still standing and is the oldest African American business in Brevard. Jip Mills was a community leader and the community, which was residential, became the heart and soul of the area. Many of the homes were a typical one-story house with side gables and the Jip Mills house was more of a bungalow.

The Transylvania Tannery opened around 1917 and had a great influence in developing that part of town as well as at least six store buildings. By the 1930's, this became the commercial hub for African Americans and was known as Greasy Corner (some took that as a slur, but others said it referenced the Tannery). The Tannery actively recruited African Americans out of South Carolina and Georgia. Two prominent families, the Betsill's and the Kilgores', built in the Greasy Corner area. Greasy Corner was once a great place for nightlife. Mama Rose, whose name came up in a lot of the stories, lived in this area and she was a relative of Mom's Mabley.

The architecture of domestic services in Cedar Mountain turned out to be a small collection of freestanding servant's houses. The oldest is the Beckwith-Hanahan house and quarters. One of the best preserved one's is at While-a-Way servant's quarters and was the home of Lee Freeman who was a chauffeur and a cook.

Gathering Rock, which is not the official name; must have been isolated, but it was a natural outcropping of rock and became the place where people gathered. There are historical pictures of African Americans on Sunday afternoons and they would gather for picnics at this rock.

The Fred and Ethel Mills house is stone masonry and an African American building art. Ethel Mills started teaching at Rosenwald in the 1920s and was acting principal until de-segregation. Ethel Mills was born in Franklin. Her father was a preacher in Franklin. They want to recognize Ethel Mills on their women's history trail. Fred Mills was a stone mason who only had one arm and was involved in a lot of the stone projects in the community. Fred Mills trained Avery Benjamin who built a frame house down the street. They used their personal residence to display their skills with different types of stone work. There is a lot of stone work still in

Transylvania County Planning Board Minutes
Regular Meeting, November 21, 2019

existence when you walk around the Rosenwald community. Fred built the arch at Silverstein Park and worked on Brevard Gates along with the Wright brothers from Hendersonville.

There were two boarding houses that served the African American community that have both been torn down, but you can still see the foundation of the Mabel and Condrey Sharp boarding house and the double staircase still survives.

Morris Young's father taught at Ninth Avenue in Hendersonville. Morris described his father's esthetics in laying bricks. His father told him, *"when you lay a brick, just don't lay it to just be laying it, lay it with neatness. The reason being you have less to clean up afterwards. Lay it like it should be laid, when you look down a wall, you don't want to see a snake. That will speak for you, people will call you back."*

In 1941, the Rosenwald School was consumed by fire and for about seven years they met at churches. The new stone school opened in 1948, when it was the actual Rosenwald School. It was referred to as Brevard's Rosenwald School or new school, but it was named Rosenwald so it carried on the history. It is technically not a Rosenwald School because it was a public school, but the community saw it as their school and it was in direct line with the Rosenwald vision. Rosenwald only provided seed money to the communities.

In Brevard, there was no secondary education for African Americans after they finished at Rosenwald, which was 1st through 8th grade. Suddenly, you had a big decision to make in the 8th grade. You could be bussed 42 miles to Ninth Avenue in Hendersonville or attend a private school and leave your family (ex. Allen Home School in Asheville).

The community felt a loss for what they had. People were very nostalgic about the communities that they lost and the school that they lost. Not meaning that segregation was better, they did feel a loss for the sense of community.

People felt safe because it showed how much African American parents tried to protect their kids, they weren't allowed to go downtown and see the segregation when they were young and they knew people were looking out for them. People talked about their community in terms of safety.

There were 86 new properties documented and 15 previously documented properties were updated. The report is 98 pages and there are copies at the library.

What do you want people to know about your community? Sheila Mooney said, *"Yes life was safe, they protected us from all the misery that was actually going on. Like, we weren't allowed to go to town without an adult to see colored only or whites only and certain places we couldn't go. So, growing up poor, safe and protected that's it."* Mary Alice Mooney said, *"That we never give up, you may knock us down, but still we rise, we fight and we always have setbacks, but we are always moving forward."*

Maureen Copelof, Brevard City Council, thanked Dr. Michael Ann Williams and Sydney Varajon. Ms. Copelof talked about her appreciation of the many things in that area and you see the remains of things that you don't quite know what they are. Preservation is so important to our community and there is such pride that is taken by the Rosenwald community. Nichola Karesh is working on a project and will be documenting places with markers for a walking trail even if

the house isn't there, you can see what used to be there. This ties together nicely with this documentation.

An attendee who grew up in Chapel Hill, but has been in Transylvania County since the 70's, commented that Transylvania County was the first county in the State of North Carolina to integrate. Part of it was that kids were having to be bussed to Hendersonville. So, some of the folks that you talked with were some of the first to integrate.

Bob Twomey questioned who maintains cemeteries on private land? Rebecca Suddeth is on that board and they don't maintain the cemeteries, they make sure they are marked and protected. They have cemetery cleaning days and get permission from the property owners and the community goes and cleans the cemeteries. There are some groups that do cleaning days. Bob Twomey thinks that some of those groups cleaned the Moore and Thomas cemeteries in DuPont.

VI. Subdivision Approvals and Updates: Kate Hayes notified the Planning Board that since October 15, 2019, there have been seventeen (17) subdivision and exemption plats reviewed: Eight (8) recombination of previously approved lots, three (3) family subdivisions, two (2) changing of boundary lines between adjoining property owners, three (3) 2 lot subdivisions and one (1) review only. Bob Twomey asked Kate Hayes what an example of a changing of boundary lines would be. Kate brought up the Mountain Falls Motorcoach Resort as an example or a recent plat where a portion of the property was on the other side of a road. Sandy Watson asked what would be considered review only and Jason Stewart answered that this would be when no division of land took place, but a party needed a review officer to sign off on a plat before it can be recorded.

VII. Old Business:

- A. Noise Ordinance – Update – Jason Stewart advised that the Noise Ordinance isn't going to the Board of Commissioner's this month, their agenda is full with the timing of the holidays. Holding off until January, the Board of Commissioners have seen it, but it won't be on the agenda for discussion until January.
- B. Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan – Update – Jason Stewart advised that the meeting was held last night, the committee is working towards a preliminary boundary. Jason gave them some ordinance design guidelines of different localities who have done small area plans, decide on framework moving forward from those examples and will continue in January. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 28th, at the Cedar Mountain Community Center at 6:00 p.m.

VII. New Business

- A. Planning and Community Development Department - Update – Jason Stewart advised that interviews have been completed for the planner and are moving forward with a candidate. Currently in the process of filling that position and checking references, should have everything firm by next month.
- B. Planning Board Members – Interest in serving another term on the Planning Board – Beecher Allison, Lauren Wise and Sandy Watson's terms expire in January. Lauren Wise did resubmit, Sandy Watson is still thinking and Beecher Allison will give it a go.
- C. Planning Board – Transylvania County Email/Training Opportunities/Mission Statement

Transylvania County Planning Board Minutes
Regular Meeting, November 21, 2019

- Transylvania County Email - Jason Stewart advised that from an official standpoint, you want things to flow through an official source for the records, rules and regulations. Bob Twomey questioned if this would also be for members of the public to email Planning Board members? Rick Lasater stated that if you use your personal account, the whole account can be subpoenaed.
- Training Opportunities – Jason Stewart is looking at training opportunities from UNC SOG related to planning boards. Planning Board may meet at the Commissioners Chambers to use the technology in that conference room. Sandy Watson and Kimsey Jackson attended a training at UNC - Asheville. Jason Stewart advised that there is a class on updated State Planning Regulations at Western Carolina on January 21, 2020, in Biltmore Park from 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm. Sandy Watson, Lauren Wise and Kimsey Jackson have attended the Quasi-judicial training. Jason Stewart will be looking for opportunities in the spring.
- Mission Statement – Jason Stewart discussed a Mission Statement with John Wayne Hardison. Jason advised that he has not been able to find anything where the Planning Board ever adopted a Mission Statement. John Wayne Hardison mentioned the possibility of the Planning Board adopting a Mission Statement for the Planning Board to have a focus. Jason is hesitant to speak about it without John Wayne Hardison being at the meeting. Jason Stewart asked the group to think about what that statement might be to discuss as a group.

VIII. **Public and Board Member Comments**

Sandy Watson commented that she really enjoyed the presentation. Bob Twomey questioned if there would be a Planning Board meeting in December? Jason Stewart answered that he doesn't have any major items, but doesn't know what the Planning Board has done in the past, so far as cancelling. Sandy Watson, Kimsey Jackson and Lauren Wise advised that as long as they have been on the Planning Board, they haven't cancelled. Jason Stewart advised that he may present trainings at the December Planning Board meeting.

Sandy Watson advised that the Chamber of Commerce has a \$6 map that covers the whole county. Rick Lasater advised that the DOT shed in Rosman will give you a free county road map. Bob Twomey recommended that if we ever get a request in the future for road names like the ones in Connestee, could the road names be denied? The names are difficult to pronounce from OCD and difficult for EMS to find.

- IX. **Adjourn:** The next meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2019, at 7:00 pm and there being no further discussion, Lauren Wise moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Sandy Watson and carried unanimously. The meeting ended at 8:25 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED


Sandy Watson, Chair


Kate Hayes, Recording Secretary