

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 13-14, 2013 – BOARD RETREAT

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in special session on Friday, September 13, 2013 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Saturday, September 14, 2013 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon in the downstairs conference room of the Community Services Building. The purpose of the meeting was to work on developing a vision and strategic plan for the County. Commissioners gathered in a retreat-like setting.

Commissioners present were Vice-Chairman Larry Chapman, Jason Chappell, Chairman Mike Hawkins, and Page Lemel. Also present were County Manager Artie Wilson and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. Lydian Altman with the UNC School of Government facilitated the meeting.

Media: *The Transylvania Times*: Eric Crews

The number of members in the audience fluctuated between 2-6 people over both days.

Ms. Altman presented a flexible agenda for the meeting. She intended for Commissioners to set the context. She will be asking them to think about what is happening in the community now and how that will influence the future. She will also ask them to think about what they value in the community, their vision for the future, and the actions they can take toward a better future. Commissioners will then prioritize those actions and set specific goals with some time frames associated with them.

Retreat Objectives

1. Consider how we might benefit from strategic thinking
2. Recognize our successes and identify local assets that contribute to successes
3. Assess implications of upcoming changes
4. Explore vision (ideal state) and mission (the Board's role in getting there); set goals for next 18 months to 3 years
5. Develop internal operating principles that will move the Board towards optimal performance

Ms. Altman asked Commissioners and staff to share their proudest community moment from the last year. The responses included:

- Opening of the new animal shelter - symbolized people seeing a need and overcoming obstacles to make the new shelter a reality; community effort to raise over \$350,000 to construct the best animal shelter
- Continue to expand exposure and participation in the Memorial Day celebration - brought community together and refocused celebration from a street festival to what's really important
- Economic development efforts to plan for the future of the community - lots of community involvement, broad representation
- Positive State, national and international publicity of what the County has to offer
- Personal support of community during difficult times - very caring community
- The ability to see government actually work for the people - citizens engaged in their community and their voices are being heard; new level of citizen participation
- Community park in Rosman - investment by Commissioners to complete next phase
- Connestee Falls Park - preserving it for the public

While there are certainly more items that could be added to this list, this exercise was to help Commissioners realize that quite a few things have been accomplished over the last year or so. In terms of

moving forward, it is important that the County build upon these successes. It is also important for Commissioners to understand there is a community spirit here which adds another voice to their efforts.

Ms. Altman asked Commissioners to say aloud why they think they should have a strategic plan.

Why make a strategic plan?

- Budget process frustrating; budget decisions should be based on values identified; there is no plan to guide Commissioners on their decision-making; budget is driving the decision-making instead of a future plan driving the budget
- Being clear about priorities and allocating resources towards those priorities
- Government is driven by the dollars available; must be realistic with resources
- Makes budget process easier when staff understands Commissioners' goals (for example-funding for education, capital, etc.)
- Evaluate performance in terms of objectives
- Let others know our vision for the future
- Provide overall guidance for the Manager
- Better understanding of what infrastructure investments we should be making
- To share with the community the County's plan and inform them of what is going on in their County government
- Gives identifiable structure of the leadership that the County Commission should be providing
- What's the purpose of the Board of Commissioners and what are we going to do to help the people of our community?

How can a strategic plan be helpful to the organization?

- Realize benefits of thoughtful guidance
- Turn dreams into actions
- Invest public resources in ways that are consistent with community values and desired future
- Create congruency between core government activities, functions, and strategies

How do organizations use their strategic plans? The plan should be meaningful and actionable.

- To envision future must understand where you are and where you want to be
- What are the conditions we want to create in order to realize that future?
- How do we want to enact that? Develop action plans, timelines, etc.; determine how to allocate resources in terms of dollars and people
- Use plan to help manage progress towards the plan and determine if we're getting the results that we want
- Benchmarking – how well we are doing compared to like organizations
- Performance in particular areas
- Resource allocation – how does it tie in with the budget?
- Internal and external communication tool
- Citizen engagement and education
- Employee orientation

What can Commissioners do to make the strategic planning effort successful?

- Use discretion – don't make the process over structured
- Incorporate flexibility – to be able to eliminate or add useful performance measures
- Directly link strategic planning to other organizational efforts – priority based budgeting; team building; employee performance evaluation process (these are just a few examples)
- Keep it simple – should be understandable, accessible, and relevant to everyone in the organization

- Think “outside the box” and don’t “get back in the box”
- Change mindset; think in larger and broader terms

What changes do we expect to be facing in the next 5-10 years both internal and external to the organization? (Such as, demographic changes; local, State and federal policy changes; growth pressures; infrastructure needs; key partnerships; organizational implications; resource allocations; environmental implications)

Internal

- Expecting large number of retiring department heads and employees (long time Parks and Recreation Director retiring at the end of the month)
- Limited ability to generate revenue resources
- Unfunded mandates
- Impact on services related to tourism – EMS; recreation programs; greater dependency on Health Department and Social Services
- Keeping up with ever-changing technology

External

- More retirees moving here
- Younger generation leaving for employment outside the County
- Aging infrastructure (schools and County)
- Range of housing options to support the workforce
- More developable land is being set aside in conservation
- Increased regulations: Medicaid, environmental, education
- Water – how to protect it and keep it here; do we become a partner with local government entities in the water business?
- Culture of community values is changing – newcomers have different attitudes about the role of government and the level of services that should be provided; more government
- Great interdependency of government with others to provide services both locally and regionally – mental health, economic development, corrections, health, transportation, private sector, community college
- Keeping up with ever-changing technology
- Davidson River Village – hope it will be fully developed in 10 years; build out anticipated to increase population by 33%

What are the unique values we want to preserve for our future generations? (People, places, services, quality of life, etc.)

Small Town Feel

- Community pride
- Loving, caring community
- High quality, small town lifestyle
- Knowing all the community business
- Close knit community
- Opportunities for children to stay if they want
- Safe

Pristine public lands and waters

- Protection of environment

Unique Mix of Cultural Assets

- Brevard College (top adventure college)
- Brevard Music Center (world renowned)
- Blue Ridge Community College (regional; responsive to needs of community)
- Arts Community (amazing collection of creativity and talent that resides here and attracts others; organized arts community and strongly supported by entire community)
- Diverse community on thoughts and issues

Quality of Life

- Safe community
- Clean environment
- Good values
- Trusting community

Balanced Economy

- Diversified sectors (being dependent on one sector, manufacturing for instance, is dangerous)

Landmarks

- County is small enough where there are institutional kinds of businesses
- Iconic landmarks help define our community

Limited Scope/Cost of Government

- Keep government and cost of government under control and not be the main reason for economic growth
- Maintain reasonable amount of government involvement

Excellent Connectivity with the World

- Be engaged with the world
- Embrace things going on in the world because they affect us
- Many people from all over the world come here; community has huge international draw

Citizen Involvement

- We have a culture in this community that promotes, values, and encourages citizen involvement in local government, civic organizations, churches, volunteer fire departments, etc.
- Maintaining what citizens value; taking pride in the fact that we are a self-governing society

Personal Property

- Value personal property rights and keep in forefront of our minds as we move forward with potential land use planning

Top School System (K-12 and higher education)

- Maintain excellence in education and continue improving (K-12 consistently ranked in top 5 best school systems in the State-work to keep that ranking)

Top Healthcare

- Ensure we still have a Transylvania Regional Hospital
- In this small community, we have a remarkable hospital system, with an emergency room and specialists who maintain offices here
- This has occurred because of the foresight of our citizens

- We take care of ourselves; that’s our “mountain values”

What is our vision for the future?

- 45,000 people in the County
- Brevard is active, economic center
- Recreation destination
- Cultural arts destination
- Good mix of small and mid-sized manufacturers
- New, well-maintained public facilities
- Well-developed amenity (recreation, cultural) infrastructure
- Excellent healthcare system
- People are talking about what a wonderful place this is
- Numerous small manufacturers, consistent with community values (not a lot of big smokestacks pumping out pollution; instead there are manufacturers of kayaks, mountain bikes, firearms, backpacking equipment, etc.)
- Revitalized and utilized Silvermont Mansion (showcase)
- More families; a living community
- Businesses are hiring and expanding
- Vibrant downtown in both Brevard and Rosman – no empty storefronts, café tables on the sidewalks
- French Broad River open to community throughout the County – public access, paddle trails, showcasing (nationally recognized attraction; major recreational attraction; central to our County and shapes us and dictates how we live our lives; asset; recognize how central it is to us; unifying theme throughout the County because it flows throughout the County; it is “our” river)
- State and national forests – embrace; multiple access points; connection to City and Town; as the birthplace of conservation and valuing the environment, how can we turn that into opportunities and serve as a model community for good stewardship?; provide lifelong learning opportunities; astounding possession of resources on multiple levels within this County
- Showcase PARI as an educational tool

What are the potential decisions and action steps that we need to make now to move us towards our vision?

<i>AREA</i>	<i>WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?</i>	<i>POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTIONS</i>
Education	Support education through investment and collaboration	<p>Work with Board of Education on a plan to meet their operational needs and facility needs (operational needs include teacher supplements, teacher assistants, security issues, attracting teachers, etc.)</p> <p>Develop plan with Brevard College and Board of Education on upgrading facilities for sporting needs</p> <p>Joint Board meetings and one-on-one individual meetings in order to have open and honest conversations and cultivate personal relationships</p>

<p>Vibrant Downtowns in Brevard and Rosman</p>	<p>County and Town of Rosman participating with city of Brevard on water conversations</p> <p>City of Brevard surveying state of retail; outcome will be to make suggestions on particular types of retail businesses that might be recruited to Brevard</p>	<p>Support existing businesses by collaborating with Chamber of Commerce and Heart of Brevard</p> <p>Provide funding for Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Participate in joint studies</p> <p>Make community attractive and customer-friendly</p>
<p>Work collaboratively with other governments, key community partners, and volunteer organizations</p>	<p>Working with COG to write grants</p> <p>Building relationships locally, regionally and statewide</p>	<p>Actively explore ways to leverage County funds with grant funds</p> <p>Commit to providing money for matching grants when they are available to support items in County's strategic plan</p> <p>Expand presence at the table and be seen as a team player</p> <p>Explore synergies between County, City and Town and various government agencies and explore consolidation or contracting services</p>
<p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Task Force working to identify potential inventory</p> <p>Task Force working on a new economic development organizational structure</p> <p>Task Force working on determining a County brand</p> <p>TDA already aggressively promotes the County in ways it deems appropriate (promotes bike image, outdoor adventure image, etc.)</p>	<p>Help facilitate the development of product inventory (up to and including purchasing land and expanding utilities)</p> <p>Identify desired industries and court them</p> <p>Implement Task Force's recommendations</p> <p>Develop marketing and branding to identify the County's assets and capitalize on them; be consistent with message; include TDA in on these discussions</p> <p>Maximize our resources by exploring grant opportunities and commit to matching funds when grants are available that support our plan or vision</p>
<p>Water</p>	<p>Hired engineering firm to assist the County with understanding more about water issues and the opportunities that may be available</p>	<p>Engage in discussions with other entities about what has and has not worked for them</p> <p>Determine what the questions are and</p>

		<p>what is involved in getting into the water business</p> <p>Determine if we want to be in the water business</p>
Thriving, healthy families and citizens	<p>Strong school system</p> <p>Recreational opportunities</p> <p>Quality of life</p>	<p>Promote healthy living choices (nutrition, exercise)</p> <p>Expand recreational amenities</p> <p>Improve economic/employment opportunities</p> <p>Attract mix of stores/retail to ensure citizens shop locally</p>
Physical Resources and Infrastructure	<p>High water quality</p> <p>Volunteer groups and organizations do river cleanups and remove trash and blockages</p>	<p>Develop a plan to manage resources (lakes, streams, rivers, etc.)</p> <p>Develop master plan for the river; keep passable, accessible, clean</p> <p>Support and partner with volunteer organizations and build regional connections</p>
Cutting-edge Technology	<p>Internally, barely keeping up; delayed computer replacements due to funding</p> <p>85% of County has internet connections</p> <p>School system doing well</p>	<p>Increase wi-fi connections</p> <p>Explore charging station for electronic vehicles</p> <p>Develop strategy with private sector to identify needs and provide/expand services across County at affordable rates; provide funding opportunities (matching grants, etc.)</p> <p>Move forward with paperless agenda system for Board of Commissioners</p>
Recreation	<p>Parks and Recreation Master Plan, but not formally adopted; some items already completed</p>	<p>Reexamine Parks and Recreation Master Plan, recreation programs, etc. and determine how to move forward with these or any new programs</p>
Cultural Resources	<p>Some financial support to Arts Council</p> <p>Display art and sculptures in and on County facilities and grounds</p>	<p>Provide funding and support in consistent manner</p>

The discussion about these items was lengthy. The overriding concept was that Commissioners should have the courage to try new things and not be afraid to fail.

After a self critique, Commissioners discussed tomorrow's agenda and recessed for the day.

Saturday, September 14, 2013, 8:30 a.m., Downstairs Conference Room, Community Services Building

The retreat was reconvened on Saturday, September 14, 2013 at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners present were Vice-Chairman Larry Chapman, Jason Chappell, Chairman Mike Hawkins, and Page Lemel. Also present were County Manager Artie Wilson and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. Lydian Altman with the UNC School of Government facilitated the meeting.

Media: *The Transylvania Times*: Eric Crews

The number of members in the audience fluctuated between 2-6 people over both days.

Commissioners started the morning with a quick overview of yesterday's workshop. They reviewed the principles that they felt would move them towards their vision and began to prioritize those action steps into a work plan for 2013-2014 and beyond.

Priorities

The top priorities identified by Commissioners were:

1. Develop a policy on water
2. Determine operational needs of school system by working with Board of Education and discuss funding
3. Build more collaborative efforts with other local governments/key partners
4. Reexamine Parks and Recreation Master Plan
5. Examine County operational and capital needs and determine long-term investments

Commissioners reviewed their values and visions (from yesterday's work) to determine if they were consistent with the priorities they established for the coming year and beyond, as listed above. Up to this point, Ms. Altman had them follow a specific process: listed values; talked about their vision for the County; discussed at length the actions and decisions that would get them to their vision using the values they identified; consolidated their thoughts and ideas into a potential action plan.

Their vision included the following:

- Focus on culture and history and the mix of assets that we have in this regard
- Focus on natural resources assets, particularly the river and forests
- Vibrant downtowns
- Quality education
- Family friendly environment
- Economic Development

Their vision came out of what Commissioners said they valued and wanted to hold onto. They valued the fact that we live in a loving, caring community, with a sense of pride and small town feel. Our community has unique cultural assets and landmarks that help define who we are. Transylvania County is also blessed with schools, both K-12 and higher learning, that provide quality education. We are also fortunate to have quality healthcare through our local hospital. It is the Commissioners' desire to have a more balanced economy and they recognize that vibrant growth should come from the private sector, not the public sector. Furthermore, Commissioners value the fact that we have a renowned and international presence and that people come here from all over the world. They also hold dear our pristine lands and water and the continued protection of those assets. Commissioners set their priorities based upon their values and their vision for the County.

As a small reminder of where we have come from and who we are, the Clerk showed the video that was created for the County's 150th Anniversary.

Commissioners discussed at length their next steps in terms of a follow up to this meeting. For the short term, they believed they had a good working plan, but felt they would need to meet again to follow up on their progress and discuss more long term goals. They also discussed the possibility of moving to a new meeting model where there is one business meeting each month and one work session each month. They would discuss a variety of topics during these work sessions, with the hope that eventually there would be some action taken on these topics at a business meeting. The City of Brevard has adopted this meeting model and it is working well for them.

Commissioners instructed the Manager to schedule some additional workshops for the remainder of the year where they would discuss topics such as water, space needs, or education needs. The Manager informed Commissioners that the engineer should complete the water study soon and he suggested water be the topic of the first meeting. The meeting would be purely informational and educational. Afterwards, the Manager should begin developing a new meeting model for 2014.

The facilitator asked Commissioners to think about and share how they would like citizens to view them as County Commissioners and the way they are actually conducting business. They shared:

- Commissioners are transparent and that issues are discussed openly in public meetings
- Readily willing to provide information or answers to citizens in a reasonable time frame
- Engaged with our citizens, we understand issues facing the community
- Thoughtful and being willing to adjust opinions based on new information; being fair and flexible
- Prepared and educated about issues; give all issues consideration despite personal opinions
- Trustworthy
- Confidence in the leadership of the Board and proud of the direction in which they are moving the County
- Committed to being a good County Commissioner

Retreat Evaluation

What worked well?

- Refreshments were nice
- Pacing of the meeting; focused and productive
- Openness and participation by Commissioners and staff
- Independent facilitator; unbiased; allowed everyone to freely participate
- Participation by Manager and Clerk was beneficial
- Issues are now on the table and we can now define a path to move forward and give direction to staff

What would we do differently?

- Prefer better consolidation of items into a final list before voting on priorities
- Preferred meeting to be held on weekday rather than Saturday
- More citizen participation so they can see their Board is working hard for them
- Have 100% participation by the Board

Next Steps

1. The facilitator intends to prepare notes from this meeting and send them to the Board in 2-3 weeks
2. Board to consider and adopt notes
3. Add October or November work sessions to discuss 1 of 3 possible topics: water, space needs, or school needs

4. Develop a 2014 meeting schedule of business sessions and work sessions on various topics

Commissioners adjourned the retreat at approximately 12 noon.

Mike Hawkins, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board