

**MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
July 13, 2015 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Monday, July 13, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in Commissioners Chambers at the County Administration Building.

Commissioners present were Jason Chappell, Vice-Chairman Larry Chapman, Chairman Mike Hawkins, Page Lemel and Kelvin Phillips. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Tony Dalton and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Jeremiah Reed

There were approximately 30 people in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mike Hawkins presiding called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

WELCOME

Chairman Hawkins welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members of the audience for participating in their County government. He introduced Commissioners and staff in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jan Plemmons: Ms. Plemmons complained to Commissioners about the lack of transportation for handicapped individuals in the Lake Toxaway area and requested Commissioners provide transportation services equally across the County.

Chairman Hawkins introduced two special guests in attendance. The first was Zeb Landreth. He will serve as the Youth Summit Delegate to the NC Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Annual Conference being held in Pitt County in late August. Commissioners thanked Zeb for his willingness to attend. Commissioner Chapman serves on the Board of Directors for the NCACC. He stated that the event is a good learning experience for the youth delegates as they will participate in a number of activities, including how to balance a county budget. The second was Kristen Reece. She began a two week internship with County Administration today with the goal of learning more about County government. She is Project Manager Larry Reece's granddaughter.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The following items were approved:

MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in regular session on June 22, 2015 and following held a closed session in which the minutes were sealed. Commissioners approved the minutes as submitted.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION BYLAWS ADDENDUM

The Parks and Recreation Commission was created in June of 2014. At that time it was standard practice for the Board of Commissioners to appoint the chair for each committee and this was included in the bylaws of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Earlier this year, the Board of Commissioners approved new procedures for making appointments to citizen advisory councils and one of the changes made was to allow each citizen advisory council to appoint their own chair unless statutes required otherwise. The bylaws of the Parks and Recreation Commission need to be amended to reflect the new procedure. Commissioners granted approval of the Addendum to the Parks and Recreation Bylaws allowing the committee to assign the chair position each year.

PROCLAMATION-AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE

Transylvania County has participated in and spearheaded the Relay for Life event for many years. Social Services Department employee Paula Piercy is heading the event this year and she requested the Board of Commissioners approve a proclamation declaring the week of July 27-August 1 as Relay for Life Week in Transylvania County. She invited Commissioners and the public to attend this year's event at Brevard High School. It is an overnight event and begins on July 31 at 6 p.m. and ends on August 1 at 6 a.m. Chairman Hawkins read aloud the proclamation for the benefit of the public and presented it to Ms. Piercy. Commissioners approved Proclamation 24-2015 American Cancer Society Relay for Life.

(Proclamation 24-2015 American Cancer Society Relay for Life is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.)

APPOINTMENTSVOTING DELEGATE TO THE NCACC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The NC Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) will hold its Annual Conference in Pitt County August 20-23, 2015. The NCACC requires counties to elect a voting delegate to the Annual Conference. The voting delegates are authorized by the counties to vote on business items during the conference. As of this date, Commissioners Chapman and Lemel plan to attend.

Commissioner Lemel moved to appoint Commissioner Chapman to serve as Transylvania County's Voting Delegate to the NCACC Annual Conference, seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously approved.

REPORT ON 4TH QUARTER CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Policy and Procedures for Appointments to Citizen Advisory Councils indicates that at the beginning of each calendar quarter the Clerk to the Board will send the Board of Commissioners the following:

1. List of all Citizen Advisory Council vacancies for the next quarter with the name of the individual currently filling the position and whether or not they are eligible for reappointment
2. Application deadline for each position

The purpose of the report is to make Commissioners aware of vacancies and upcoming appointments and help to identify potential candidates. The Clerk to the Board provided a report of the vacancies and upcoming appointments for the 4th Quarter as well as a list of all vacancies on citizen advisory councils. Per policy, she published notice of these vacancies in the local newspaper and County website.

The Manager asked the Board to assist with providing the public an opportunity for volunteer service in Transylvania County and in addition, to provide the Clerk to the Board feedback on the report format and guide

or instruct as necessary. Hopefully, getting information to Commissioners one quarter in advance will allow time for generating more interest in serving on citizen advisory councils and recruitment. The Clerk to the Board will set an application deadline with each advertisement so there can be a vetting process and to ensure every application is viewed fairly. *The Transylvania Times* intends to publish an article this week about serving on citizen advisory councils which will hopefully generate citizen interest.

OLD BUSINESS

NC 280 PROPOSED SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

A 10-year crash history recorded by the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) indicates there have been a total of 68 crashes on a roughly one-mile stretch of NC 280 in Pisgah Forest. Of those, two were fatal, four resulted in severe injury, 25 were minor crashes, and 37 were property damage only crashes. Officials from the NCDOT presented a proposal to Commissioners on June 22, 2015 and participated in a discussion to address questions and concerns.

The proposal is to re-mark NC 280 to a 4-lane unbalanced couplet system, thereby creating a buffer between opposing thru traffic and creating a continuous turn lane for left turning vehicles on NC 280 that will lead to anticipated reduction of severe injury and fatal crashes, as well as reduce the potential for head-on, rear-end and left-turn crashes. In addition, the proposed unbalanced couplet traffic pattern will help reduce speeding in the southbound direction while slightly improving the level of service for northbound traffic. NCDOT officials are requesting the Board of Commissioners consider supporting the new configuration. It was noted that Transylvania County School Superintendent Jeff McDaris recently contacted Commissioners via email expressing his opposition to the proposal because of its potential negative impact on bus traffic.

Chairman Hawkins reported that these recommendations came about as a result of Commissioners asking the NCDOT to explore ways to make that stretch of road safer after a fatality occurred. This is their recommendation for making the road safer. The NCDOT does not intend to force this upon the County and they want the Board's input.

Commissioner Phillips said he reached out to citizens in the area and they are opposed to the new configuration. Instead they preferred the NCDOT lower the speed limit and install flashing lights at the base of Little Mountain alerting drivers that lower speed limits are ahead. Commissioner Phillips agreed with them and added that he believes there should also be signage designating this area as residential.

Commissioner Chapman also did not support the proposal. He reported he recently drove this stretch of road and counted at least 36 mailboxes on one side of the highway. He believes the new configuration will cause traffic congestion, as evidenced by other roads in town that have been reduced to one lane, and will be further impacted by postal stops at mailboxes and school bus pickups.

Commissioner Chappell was disappointed that the School System was not made aware of the proposal and this may be an indication that due diligence has not fully occurred. He would like for the NCDOT to offer other alternatives. He is also concerned about the proposal from an economic development perspective.

Commissioner Lemel is concerned about "retraining" drivers who have driven this road for so many years to learn a new configuration. She said she understands the challenges with finding a viable alternative, but she would prefer that the speed limit is lowered. She is afraid the proposed configuration would cause more problems than solve.

Chairman Hawkins stated there are real concerns about accidents on NC 280. He said it should be noted that the solution was developed by traffic engineers and was approved by the County's Transportation Advisory Committee. Personally he makes a point to drive slower on this road. He stated that the road was engineered for speeds higher than 35 mph and motorists are more than likely going to drive at speeds in which they feel comfortable and at which they feel the road is designed. He predicted that lowering the speed limit is only

going to result in more traffic tickets. Chairman Hawkins stated that one of the advantages of the proposal is that it basically involves restriping the road, so it could be returned to its original configuration if it does not accomplish the goal. Lastly, he noted that the NCDOT had data that indicated traffic congestion would not be an issue and he suspected they probably took school bus traffic into consideration.

Commissioners discussed next steps and came to a consensus about what should be included in a letter to the NCDOT which was included in the following motion:

Commissioner Lemel moved to direct staff to contact NCDOT regarding Commissioners' desire to reduce the speed limit and for the NCDOT to continue studying options over the next 6-12 months, with a presentation to the Board of Commissioners at the end of the study for the Board's consideration. At the request of Commissioner Phillips, she added **"to install a flashing light to alert drivers to reduce speed"**. **The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.**

Chairman Hawkins said the letter would be circulated to Commissioners for review and comment before sending to the NCDOT.

OLD DETENTION CENTER RENOVATION

The Board of Commissioners has pursued design and specifications for the renovation of the old detention center for use by the Board of Elections and County Wellness Clinic. Bids were due on May 21. The lowest responsible bid on the project came from Goforth Builders in the amount of \$1,229,400. Funds needed for security, technology, furniture, computers, a generator and professional services total \$372,510. The Manager included a 10% contingency in the project budget to account for renovation related unknowns. The City of Brevard Planning Department has approved the plans with the commitment that the parking area will be addressed by removing an entrance/exit point and reconfiguring the space to meet code. This may be done as a separate alternate provided the project is complete within the next five years. This alternate to achieve compliance and repave the area at the same time will cost \$106,052 bringing the total project budget to \$1,883,807.

The Manager reported on several factors for the Board to consider related to this project:

1. The Wellness Clinic will be temporarily relocated to the old administration building during construction. It will take \$3,000 to upfit the building for the Wellness Clinic.
2. The house being used by the Board of Elections will be vacant at the completion of this project. While there is no clear direction on the future of that space, the Soil and Water Conservation District has requested to locate there in order to use the storage space on site in addition to the office space. Another alternative could be to pursue selling the property to offset the expense of the project.
3. There are several capital projects to be considered in the coming years. One to be discussed soon includes the courthouse relocation or renovation. Either option is expected to cost between \$15-\$20 million. Other capital projects may include infrastructure development, economic development related expenditures, projects as a result of the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan and school capital needs. While there is room in fund balance to allocate for the project, it may make sense to finance while interest rates are low and allocate fund balance for payment as staff and Commissioners develop a comprehensive capital project strategy and to allow revenue to grow to cover those annual payments.

The Finance Director Gay Poor estimated several different financing methods looking at traditional installment financing. She included in the Board's agenda packet the debt service amounts for 10- and 15-year terms, interest rates, and varying borrowing levels beginning at the \$1.9 million and up to \$20 million. She has also been in contact with the USDA about a long term low interest loan. The USDA borrowing rate for a 40-year loan in the amount of \$20 million is 3.625%. Fortunately, the USDA has been allocated monies, but has no projects assigned. They encouraged the County to take advantage of the monies available and to do so within the next six months.

For financing the old detention center project, along with the other capital projects potentially on the horizon, the Manager focused on the longest term loan scenario with the full amount of these projects being financed. The annual payment would look like the following:

<i>Capital Project</i>	<i>Financing Scenario</i>	<i>FY16</i>	<i>FY 17</i>	<i>FY 18</i>	<i>FY 19</i>	<i>FY 20</i>
Old Detention Center	Private loan, full cost, 15 years	\$154,587	\$154,587	\$154,587	\$154,587	\$154,587
Courthouse	USDA loan, full cost, 40 years		\$954,787	\$954,787	\$954,787	\$954,787
Subtotal		\$154,587	\$1,109,374	\$1,109,374	\$1,109,374	\$1,109,374
Champion Pool	Private loan, full cost, 15 years		\$81,382	\$81,382	\$81,382	\$81,382
EMS Main Station	Private loan, full cost, 15 years			\$130,179	\$130,179	\$130,179
Annual Total Payments		\$154,587	\$1,190,756	\$1,320,935	\$1,320,935	\$1,320,935

The Manager also calculated the figure for the private installment purchase for a 10-year term and the difference is minimal. The Local Government Commission (LGC) recommended the County's annual debt service not to exceed \$7.5 million. Taking this scenario and including an annual school bond debt payment of \$2.5 million, the County's debt annual debt service would be roughly half of the maximum amount allowed/recommended by the LGC.

The Manager recommended Commissioners approve installment financing to fund the renovation project in order to take advantage of the low interest rates and protect fund balance for emergencies and to soften tax increase that would be needed for capital needs as revenues grow. The Manager noted the Board can spend up to \$5 million from fund balance and still remain within the level they set for themselves. However, the County's revenues are not growing at an aggressive rate. As the County begins to address its capital needs, some fund balance appropriation may be needed to offset costs in the future. The longer term financing also puts the tax burden on those actually benefiting from the use of the facility.

The Manager asked Commissioners to approve the installment financing option, award the bid and set the project budget, and appropriate funds for temporarily relocating the Wellness Clinic. Should Commissioners approve the installment financing option, it would be prudent to extend the contract with the builder by three months to allow time for approval of the installment financing by the LGC. In addition, the Manager would like for Commissioners to develop a long term capital improvement plan.

Commissioner Chappell inquired about what changes would need to be made to the old administration building for the Wellness Clinic. The Manager said the changes would be mostly cosmetic. The changes made would allow for bathroom accessibility and privacy for patient visits. There would be no construction or other modifications made that would alter the building.

Commissioner Chapman was supportive of moving forward with the renovation project to provide space for the Board of Elections and complete the County campus. It also frees up the Rogow Room at the Library which is in high demand and provides additional public meeting space in the new facility. By doing nothing, the County is wasting money maintaining a facility that is not being used. He was also supportive of financing the project

and not drawing down fund balance. He expressed the desire to sell the house in which the Board of Elections is now located.

Commissioner Phillips asked that consideration be given to paying for a portion of the project from fund balance and financing the remaining. This option still leaves a healthy fund balance.

Commissioner Lemel said it is very cheap to borrow money right now and it would be prudent to fund the project through installment financing given the other projects in the foreseen future. Commissioner Chappell concurred with her comments. He said fund balance should be used to pay for smaller projects and for projects that may be under time constraints.

Commissioner Lemel moved to set the project budget ordinance at 1,883,807, which includes a 10% contingency. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chapman and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Lemel moved to appropriate \$3,000 for relocating the Wellness Clinic with funds to come from fund balance. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Commissioner Chapman requested that any modifications made to the old administration building be held to a minimum. At this point, he would be in favor of tearing it down. The Manager noted that the construction period is expected to last 9-12 months. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

Commissioner Lemel moved to utilize installment financing for the full cost of \$1,883,807 for a period of 10 years. The motion was seconded by Chairman Hawkins. Commissioner Lemel preferred 10 years over 15 years in order to save on interest paid. Commissioner Phillips again asked the Board to consider funding the project from both fund balance and installment financing for a five-year period. It was noted there was no penalty for paying off the loan early. Chairman Hawkins agreed that the County should fully finance the project because interest rates are so low. He also advised against prepaying and preferred to spread the cost out because he believes it makes smart financial sense. Chairman Hawkins asked Commissioners to think about setting a policy on financing future projects. Commissioner Chappell supported the motion, but recommended 15 years instead of 10. **Commissioner Phillips moved to amend the motion and change the financing period from 10 years to 15 years. The amendment was seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved. The main motion was unanimously approved.**

Commissioner Lemel moved to award the bid to Goforth Builders and to extend the contract by the length of time required to get the debt financing in place. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously approved.

UPDATE ON CHAMPION POOL

Parks and Recreation Director Carleen Dixon provided an update on the condition of Champion Pool. It was built in 1979 and the age of the pool is making it difficult to maintain in a safe operational condition. Ms. Dixon reported her department continues to expend funds to patch problems, particularly deteriorating decking and chemical issues. There is approximately \$700 remaining out of the \$15,000 the Board of Commissioners allocated earlier this year to get the pool ready and open for the summer. At this point, there is no recommendation, but Ms. Dixon wanted Commissioners to understand the conditions and begin thinking about aquatics needs for the future.

Commissioners understood the need to act in a timely manner because it is important to the community. Commissioners thanked Ms. Dixon and her staff for all they are doing to maintain the pool for use by the public.

NEW BUSINESS

PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN

The County and City of Brevard allocated funds totaling \$45,000 in the FY 2015 budget to complete a Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. In August 2014 the Board of Commissioners and Brevard City Council voted to

adopt a resolution establishing a joint task force to develop a parks and recreation strategic plan for Transylvania County and the City of Brevard. This task force first met on September 30, 2014 and since this time the following steps have been taken:

- Developed a Request for Proposals
- Request for Proposals was published on November 19, 2014 with a deadline of January 5, 2015
- The Task Force evaluated the proposals and selected the top two firms
- In person interviews were held in late February with the top two firms
- A top firm was selected at the end of March
- Meetings were held with top firm to work on details of the strategic plan
- A updated plan proposal with pricing was submitted on April 20, 2015

Since the end of April there have been multiple meetings with the firm to work on the scale of the plan and cost. The committee felt strongly about the need for a quality master plan as well as a full operations review. By having both of these completed the final plan will include a recommendation on how the City and County could work together to better serve the community in terms of costs and customer service. Based on this scope of work it has been difficult to remove sections of the proposal that the firm submitted. Any section the committee considers removing leads to incomplete data for the final plan. After thoughtful discussion the committee recommended that the Board of Commissioners and the Brevard City Council allocate additional funds to complete the entire plan for a total cost of \$103,000. The County's additional portion would be \$31,500. To date, the County has allocated \$20,000 and the City of Brevard has allocated \$25,000. City Planner Josh Freeman will be taking the proposal to Brevard City Council in August.

Commissioner Chapman asked if the attorney had reviewed the agreement. He had not. He also asked for clarification that the County's decision on this item is contingent upon what Brevard City Council decides. Ms. Dixon confirmed.

Commissioner Chappell moved to table this item to the next meeting while the attorney reviews the agreement. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Commissioner Chappell asked staff to ensure the attorney has reviewed any and all agreements prior to approval by the Board. Commissioner Lemel commented that this is a tremendous opportunity knowing what the County and City could be doing with a comprehensive plan in place. It is important that both entities are providing quality service. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

On another note, Ms. Dixon reported that she learned today that one of the County's Senior Games basketball teams won gold medal at the national competition in Massachusetts. This is a first for Transylvania County.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCY EVALUATION AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MASTER STUDY PLAN

Operations Manager David McNeill requested Board approval to publish a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an Emergency Services Agency Evaluation and Emergency Services Master Plan, as well as the appointment of an RFP review committee, to include the County Manager, Finance Director, Fire Marshal, EMS Director, Communications Director, and three representatives from the Transylvania County Chief's Association (two from fire and one from rescue departments). Staff also asked that Mr. McNeill chair the review committee process as a non-voting member. The committee will review the RFP's and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.

Emergency Services includes fire, rescue, EMS, 911 Communications, and emergency management. Staff has been working with volunteer fire and rescue providers to examine the current status and identify current and future needs to ensure operational viability. The process has identified a need for a more in-depth study of the emergency services system encompassing each discipline including paid and volunteer. Mr. McNeill recommended Commissioners contract with a qualified firm to review the current baseline status of the

County's emergency services, fire protection, medical first response, EMS operations, rescue and 911 Communications as they compare to industry standards and best practices in order to identify opportunities for future measurable improvements that will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of overall service delivery.

In addition, the selected firm will develop a progressive, phased approach to strategies and recommendations that will guide countywide emergency services planning to ensure future community risk and service demands can be met. The RFP should provide an emphasis on operational models that can deliver the desired level of services while maintaining affordability and effectiveness. Opportunities for cooperative efforts among the various emergency departments, along with short, mid- and long-term strategies shall also be provided that address service delivery improvements or increased efficiencies. Mr. McNeill has set an aggressive schedule for completion of the study by the selected firm for potential inclusion of recommendations in next year's and future budgets. The study is also going to require cooperation and interaction with County departments, volunteer departments, Commissioners, County staff, citizens, etc.

There is no cost associated with obtaining the RFP's for review and consideration by the Board of Commissioners. The RFP from the lowest responsible/responsive bidder will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for consideration and approval.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the RFP process and RFP review committee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Mr. McNeill will serve as a staff liaison on the RFP review committee and will not vote on matters. Commissioner Chappell hopes the end result will provide more than one option for the County to consider as well as a plan to achieve the end result. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCIL CONSIDERATIONS

A committee has continued to meet over the past few months to study the processes for managing citizen advisory councils and has generated the following recommendations for consideration by the Board of Commissioners:

1. Recognition and appreciation of retiring or resigning CAC members

Currently, Transylvania County provides a letter of appreciation mailed to the retiring/resigning council member. Recognition programs in other counties and cities are as elaborate as dinners, but many communities commented on the expense. This committee feels that publicly providing a certificate of appreciation at a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners would be an appropriate recognition for the public service and recommend that the certificates be presented as an agenda item on a quarterly or semi-annual basis. Those retiring/resigning citizens would also receive a gift of a County coffee mug if they are present at the recognition ceremony.

2. Marketing vacancies to community

In an effort to increase the number of citizens applying to serve as members of citizen advisory councils, the committee recommended expanding the advertising of potential openings. These additions would include civic organizations, community centers and property owner associations within the County. Any interested party may contact the Clerk to be added to the distribution list for CAC vacancies. Just as the Board of Commissioners will receive a list of potential appointments on a quarterly basis, so too would these various organizations.

3. Training

Recognizing a need to provide education to the County's various citizen advisory councils on procedures, open meeting laws, and record keeping, the committee recommended a required training session for all appointees. The County Manager, County Attorney and Clerk to the Board would conduct these training sessions at a mutually agreed upon time for citizen advisory council appointees. It is expected that a minimum of two sessions per year would be offered.

Staff asked Commissioners to provide feedback and approve the three recommendations from the committee.

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the recommendations as submitted. Commissioner Chappell said it is very appropriate that Commissioners recognize citizens who give so much of their time to serving Transylvania County. He commented that he wished the County could do more, but understands there is an expense. He also understood the important of providing training to these citizens so they can be effective citizen advisory council members. **The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chapman.** Commissioner Chappell asked that staff record the training or produce a webinar to be able to provide for citizens that may be unable to attend a training session. Chairman Hawkins commended Commissioner Lemel for her work on this and for making suggestions to the Board that will improve the process and show citizens the Board's appreciation for their time and service to the County.

2014 TAX SETTLEMENT REPORT

Each year the Tax Collector shall make a sworn report to the governing body of the taxing unit, per NCGS 105-373. The report will cover the period January 1, 2015 through June 30, 2015 since the previous Tax Administrator was required to give a final report upon his retirement.

Tax Administrator Annette Raines presented the report. First she thanked the majority of the citizens who pay their taxes on time and therefore makes her and her staffs' jobs so much easier. She also thanked Commissioners and County Administration for their support. Ms. Raines expressed gratitude toward her coworkers who do an outstanding job.

This is a summary of her report:

- Total levy for all Jurisdictions was \$33,283,439.02
 - The County portion was \$26,220,281.36
- 2014 overall County collection rate is 99.87% which equates to \$26,187,201.93
- Also collected \$71,475.62 in interest, costs and fees associated with delinquent collections for all years. (These monies are not part of the Settlement Collection Percentage Rate.)
- Uncollected 2014 County Taxes as of June 30, 2015:
 - County - \$33,079.43
 - Bankrupt - \$8,596.84 (protected and not collectible)
- Bank Attachments – 420
- Wage Garnishments – 146
- Rent attachments – 2
- Payment Plans – 388
- Staff made over 13,000 phone calls; talking with citizens and working out payments plans has been the most effective delinquent tax collection tool
- Continue to work on collecting delinquent taxes from prior years; since July 1 staff has collected an additional \$3,495.91, in 2014 taxes bringing the tax collection rate to 99.89%

Commissioner Lemel commented Ms. Raines and her staff for their kindness and willingness to work with citizens, especially helping to set up payment plans. She feels if more citizens were aware of this payment method sooner, it would help them be more successful in paying taxes.

In response to a question from Commissioner Chapman, Ms. Raines reported that the 2014 tax collection rate is a record for Transylvania County and is on track to be the highest in the State once again.

Commissioner Chapman commended Ms. Raines for the work she and her staff do to collect taxes. Many communities are struggling although staff is working just as hard to collect taxes as well. He thanked the citizens for recognizing their obligation to pay their taxes.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the 2014 Tax Settlement Report, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

2015 ORDER TO COLLECT TAXES

The Tax Collector must be charged with the 2015 Tax Bills which gives full and sufficient authority to collect taxes with forced collection remedies if necessary, per NCGS 105-321. Tax Administrator Annette Raines announced tax bills will be mailed this week.

Commissioner Phillips moved to approve the 2015 Order to Collect Taxes, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously approved.

Commissioner Chapman noted that the tax bills will include a note asking citizens to complete the survey for the Comprehensive Plan.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- The County is eligible for grant funds in the coming year's Golden Leaf Community Initiative Funds Grant Cycle. There is potentially \$1.5 million available in grant funding for Transylvania County. Staff will be meeting with different facets of the community to determine where grant funds can be most effective.
- Met with Congressman Meadows to talk about grants that failed to materialize over the years. It was a great visit and he was very receptive to the comments made during the meeting. Town of Rosman officials joined the meeting as well. Congressman Meadows is looking for grant opportunities and intends to follow up on several other issues brought to light during the meeting.
- At the State level there are Medicaid reform discussions occurring as part of the budget process. Staff is trying to stay informed on this issue in order to understand how these reforms impact local providers and County departments.
- Work on the strategic plan will be resuming. Work was delayed during the budget process. The Manager intends to provide an update at the next meeting.
- Courthouse repairs should be complete within the next few days. The Manager thanked Operations Manager David McNeill and Maintenance staff for their hard work to complete the repairs. She also thanked those working in the Courthouse and those impacted by repair work for their patience.

Commissioner Chapman commented that Transylvania County was severely impacted by the loss of the tobacco industry. The Golden Leaf Fund was started with funds from the tobacco industry and he feels Transylvania County deserves these grant funds. He encouraged staff to work to identify projects to ensure Transylvania County gets its fair share.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Morrow: Mr. Morrow thanked the Board for their decision to move forward with the renovation of the old detention center for use by the Board of Elections and Elections Department. He said they will strive to make the most efficient use of the facility.

Edwin Morrow: Mr. Morrow reported that he passes through Oconee County on his frequent trips to Georgia and that business development is growing in the area. He stated that Oconee County has prepared raw land for an industry/technology park to locate there which is an asset to offer businesses. He suggested a representative from Transylvania County travel there to learn more from their economic development professionals.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chappell, on behalf of Don Surrette, reminded everyone of the 200th birthday celebration event at the Allison-Deaver House on July 25.

Commissioner Chapman reported that he recently attended lunch with a group of senior citizens at Silvermont. It reminded him that this is an aging community and the County needs to be able to provide services and meet the needs of this population. Commissioner Chapman also met with a gentleman who is heavily involved in writing grants for local fire departments and other counties. He asked the Manager to meet with him to see if there are any grants available for which the County might apply. Commissioner Chapman said he remains concerned about the security at the Courthouse when loading and offloading inmates. He asked staff to explore options for possibly erecting a fence at the entrance so that citizens and inmates are unable to coningle.

Commissioner Phillips is concerned that citizens are not able to serve on citizen advisory councils because the meeting schedules are set at a time which is inconvenient for them. He would like to see what can be done to ensure those citizens working day shift hours have an opportunity to serve on a citizen advisory council. Commissioner Phillips mentioned that the Board of Education employed a company to upfit their buildings for energy efficiency. There was no outlay of funds and they realized savings on their energy costs. He suggested staff contact the School System Finance Director to find out more information and explore ways to improve energy efficiency in County buildings.

Commissioner Lemel reported on her County Commissioner duties since the last meeting. She met with WCCA Executive Director David White to understand opportunities for assistance in the community in reference to early childhood education. She attended the anniversary celebration of Bethel Baptist Church. Commissioner Lemel attended the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for the Silvermont playground and walking path. She participated in the reading of the Declaration of Independence at the July 4 Festival. Commissioner Lemel was present at a breakfast meeting with State Economic Development Director Chris Chung. She said Mr. Chung was so impressed with Transylvania County he intends to make a personal trip here with his fiancé. This is exciting for the County because it means we are noticed at the State level. On a personal level, summer camp is in full swing.

Chairman Hawkins thanked everyone for attending the Board of Commissioners' meetings because it is important to Commissioners that citizens understand what they are doing for them.

Chairman Hawkins moved to enter into closed session per NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (5) to establish or instruct staff or agent concerning the negotiation of the price and/or terms of a contract concerning the acquisition of real property, after a 5 minute recess. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously carried.

CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (5) to establish or instruct staff or agent concerning the negotiation of the price and/or terms of a contract concerning the acquisition of real property, closed session was entered into at 9:10 p.m. Present were Chairman Hawkins, Commissioners Chapman, Chappell, Lemel and Phillips, County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Operations Manager David McNeill, County Attorney Tony Dalton and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. Commissioners held the closed session meeting in the Arthur C. Wilson, Jr. Conference Room.

Staff updated Commissioners on the status of the negotiation process. Commissioners directed staff on how to proceed.

Chairman Hawkins moved to leave closed session, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously carried.

OPEN SESSION

Chairman Hawkins moved to seal the minutes of the closed session until such time that opening the minutes does not frustrate the purpose of the closed session, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hawkins moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously carried.

Mike Hawkins, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board