

**MINUTES**  
**TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**April 11, 2017 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Tuesday, April 11, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. in Commissioners Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Chairman Larry Chapman, Jason Chappell, Mike Hawkins, Vice-Chairwoman 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* – Derrick McKissock

There were approximately 20 people in the audience.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Larry Chapman presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

**WELCOME**

Chairman Chapman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members of the public for participating in their local government. He introduced Commissioners and staff in attendance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Don Surette: On behalf of the French Broad River Stewards, Mr. Surette announced that the second annual Upper French Broad Riverfest will be held at Champion Park in Rosman on June 24 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The day's event includes several family-friendly activities, a canoe relay, and a gear swap/sale. The event is made possible by the generosity of several sponsors. More information is to come. Mr. Surette invited everyone to attend and informed that there are opportunities for the public to become a sponsor and/or volunteer to help.

**AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

The Manager requested to remove Item IV-A Minutes under Consent Agenda. She also requested to add Item VIII-C Budget Amendments under New Business and move the Manager's Report to Item VIII-D. There were no agenda modification requests from Commissioners.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the modified agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.**

The following items were approved:

#### PROCLAMATION-NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER 2017

Commissioners wish to proclaim May 4, 2017 as “A Day of Prayer in Transylvania County”. This year’s National Day of Prayer theme is “For Your Great Name’s Sake, Hear Us, Forgive Us, Heal Us”. A local event will be held at 12:30 p.m. on May 4 at Temple Baptist Church located on Morris Road.

Commissioner Chappell read aloud the proclamation for the benefit of the public. Commissioners approved Proclamation 10-2017 National Day of Prayer 2017 which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

#### PROCLAMATION-SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH

SAFE, Inc. of Transylvania County is dedicated to the prevention of rape and sexual violence in our community. Their programs are evidence-based and have been extremely successful in the County. Associate Director of SAFE, Inc., Clare-Marie Hannon requested Commissioners support their efforts by proclaiming April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Commissioner Phillips read aloud the proclamation for the benefit of the public. Commissioners approved Proclamation 11-2017 Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

#### MODIFICATION TO APRIL 24, 2017 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS’ MEETING

The Board of Education has requested a joint meeting with the Board of Commissioners. In the interest of time and accommodating schedules, staff requested the joint meeting occur during the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners on April 24 with the meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m. instead of 7:00 p.m. Commissioners approved changing the start time of the April 24 Commissioners’ meeting to 6:00 p.m. and instructed the Clerk to advertise and post notice.

### **PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS**

#### MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Mr. Nathan Ramsey, Director of the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, requested to present to the Boards of Commissioners in the four-county Land of Sky region. He intends to update the Board on Workforce Development Board initiatives and regional economy and provide demographic figures specific to Transylvania County about unemployment rates, wages, job sectors, etc. This is a summary of his presentation that was made via Power Point:

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board is part of Land of Sky Regional Council serving Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. The Board is made up of 29 members, the majority of which represent private sector employers.

Overall, Transylvania County is still recovering from the Great Recession. The County’s unemployment rate is close to the average of the last 20 year span. As of January 2017, the unemployment rate was 5.7%, but it dropped to 5% in February. The region as a whole is below the State and national averages.

As of November 2015, 13,343 people were in the labor force, compared to 13,335 in 2007. Transylvania County wages are below State and national averages and this is true for all counties in our region. However, personal income on a per capita basis has steadily increased over time.

Transylvania County is a very well educated community. The number of people with a high school diploma is higher than the State and national averages. The number of people with a bachelor’s degree is above the State average and slightly below the national average. This is true for most counties in our region.

Median household income for Transylvania County is lower than State and national averages at \$41,952. There are only two sectors in our region that pay higher wages above the State average: Healthcare and Hospitality & Tourism. 16 of 20 industries in our region are at least 10% lower than the NC average wage for that industry. This tends to be in the sectors that pay higher wages. About 40% of Transylvania County residents actually live and work here; the others work in another county.

As of January 2017, there were slightly more than 12,000 job openings in our region and less than 10,000 people classified as unemployed. The number of individuals employed is greater than the number of individuals drawing unemployment benefits. In March, according to NCWorks, there were 318 job openings in Transylvania County and a little over 6,000 in the Mountain Area Works region.

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board focuses on five target sectors:

1. Advanced Manufacturing
  - a. Around 20,000 jobs in the region
  - b. Average wage over \$50,000
  - c. Over 2,500 new jobs have been announced in the past two years
  - d. Around 1,000 job openings today
  - e. Career Pathways program certified by NCWorks Commission
2. Healthcare
  - a. Around 36,000 jobs in the region
  - b. Average wage over \$50,000 per year
  - c. Our region is 20 years ahead of nation in aging
  - d. Mission Health System alone has about 1,000 job openings today
  - e. Overall, our region will never fully meet the demand for healthcare jobs in our region
  - f. Starting a Career Pathways effort for the healthcare sector
3. Hospitality & Tourism
  - a. Around 25,000 jobs in the region
  - b. Average wage data is misleading due to high number of part time jobs
  - c. NC Commerce projects 6,000 new jobs between now and 2022; employer surveys project 5,000 new jobs between now and 2018
  - d. Career Pathways program certified in February; includes summer camps and outdoor recreation
4. Skilled Trades
  - a. Construction, maintenance, repair occupations in many different sectors
  - b. Over 8,000 jobs in the region
  - c. For example, HVAC Technician, upon completion of a two-year degree which includes work experience and licensing will earn around \$40,000, within a few years can earn \$70,000 or more
5. Tech/IT
  - a. Almost every employer needs tech talent
  - b. Largest tech employer in our region is Mission Health; they have over 300 employees in their tech/IT department
  - c. Jobs pay very well, even though around 20% below the State average
  - d. Growing entrepreneurial tech community in our region

Mr. Ramsey pointed out that people tend to have perceptions about job sectors that are not necessarily true. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board has engaged a local company to develop an outreach strategy to help change perceptions about the manufacturing (perception is there are no manufacturing jobs) and hospitality & tourism (perception is these are low wage jobs) sectors.

The NCWorks program is a comprehensive career development service with career counselors who can assist citizens with meeting their career goals. Based on eligibility criteria, there is funding available to support job seekers with both short-term and long-term training up to a two-year degree. Most good paying jobs require a postsecondary credential. North Carolina's goal is that by 2025 67% of all workers will have a postsecondary credential. Field of study is critical. Many of the best paying jobs and jobs with the most growth potential are in STEM. The job opportunities for those with only a high school diploma or less are declining.

This concluded the presentation. Chairman Chapman called for questions and comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Lemel asked why there is a disparity between the number of jobs available and the unemployed. There appears to be more jobs available than there are unemployed citizens and she wondered why they cannot be connected to one of these jobs. Mr. Ramsey stated that most people that want to work are working. The people that are not working generally have barriers to employment, such as transportation or childcare issues, and because we are not an urban region we lack many of the resources needed.

Commissioner Lemel inquired about what constitutes effective full employment for a county. Mr. Ramsey stated that economists put that figure as anything less than 5%. Transylvania County's unemployment rate is currently 5%. All counties in the four county region are considered at full employment. The Career Pathways program is an effort to guide talented people into these jobs. It is also critical to engage students at the high school level.

Commissioner Hawkins pointed out there is a ripple effect with other employers when skilled technician jobs remain unfilled. Secondly, he stated, when referring to the unemployment rate, it is useful for Transylvania County to compare itself to other rural counties in North Carolina, not just those counties in the region. Out of the 85 counties that the Rural Center considers rural, Transylvania County has the seventh lowest unemployment rate. Lastly, Commissioner Hawkins pointed out we live in a regional economy so it is important to promote collaboration on economic development initiatives.

Commissioner Phillips asked if the Mountain Area Workforce Development includes data on agriculture jobs. He said agriculture is changing and there appears to be a lot of interest in this area. He inquired about efforts to guide students and others into this field. Mr. Ramsey said currently the Board focuses on the five target sectors highlighted earlier, but pointed out that statewide agriculture is North Carolina's largest industry. He pointed out that many employers desire students with this experience because they tend to see the value of hard work.

Chairman Chapman thanked Mr. Ramsey for his presentation. He also thanked Commissioner Chappell for the work he does in this community connecting people to work.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

### **APPOINTMENT OF COUNTY ATTORNEY**

Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart presented that the FY 17 Budget included a new position for an in-house County Attorney as approved by the Board of Commissioners. The recruitment process began in August 2016. An interview team comprised of two Commissioners and staffs from the Department of Social Services selected Misti Bass as the most qualified candidate to serve as County Attorney. Ms. Bass has accepted the position and intends to begin her employment with the County on April 17, pending official appointment by the Board.

Ms. Bass thanked the Board of Commissioners for the opportunity to serve. She gave a brief background on her legal experience and public service. She stated she looks forward to working for Transylvania County and that she was impressed with our work and our goals for the future.

Chairman Chapman thanked current County Attorney Tony Dalton for his service, noting that he is willing to serve as a backup DSS Attorney as needed.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the appointment of Misti Bass as the County Attorney. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chappell.** Commissioners welcomed Ms. Bass onboard. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

#### PERSONNEL BOARD

There is one member-at-large vacancy on the Personnel Board. The Clerk advertised the vacancy and received three applications. The Personnel Board reviewed the applications and appointed a subcommittee to interview the applicants. The Personnel Board recommends the appointment of James “Jim” Bailey to fill the vacancy due to his experience and background in the human resources field.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to appoint James “Jim” Bailey to fill the vacancy on the Personnel Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chappell.** Commissioner Chappell serves as the Commissioner Representative to the Personnel Board and he agreed that Mr. Bailey will be an asset to this board. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

#### LAKE TOXAWAY FIRE RESCUE, INC. FIREFIGHTER’S RELIEF FUND BOARD

NCGS 58-84-30 states that for each county complying with and deriving benefits from the Firefighter’s Relief Fund, there shall be appointed a local board of trustees to be composed of five members, two of whom shall be elected by the local fire department, two of whom shall be elected by the local governing body, and one of whom shall be named by the Commissioner of Insurance.

David Cash and Richard Hall were appointed by the Board of Commissioners in 2016. Lake Toxaway Fire Rescue Chief Carmon West is requesting that two new members be appointed to replace them on the Firefighter’s Relief Fund Board and to comply with reporting requirements spelled out in NCGS 58-84-46.

**Commissioner Phillips moved to Appoint Clayton Thomas Avirett and Rex Alvin Dillard as new members on the Lake Toxaway Fire Rescue, Inc. Firefighter’s Relief Fund Board, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously approved.**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD REQUEST TO CHARGE STANDBY FEES

EMS Director Bobby Cooper presented this item. Per the Transylvania County Ambulance Ordinance Section 2.1-11. Rates and Charges (a) “*Rate Schedule* states that each franchisee shall submit a schedule of rates to the county for approval and shall not charge more nor less than the approved rates without specific approval by the county.”

The Transylvania County Rescue Squad would like to start charging standby fees for ambulances (BLS and ALS), ATVs, and First Responders. This would include football games (Youth League, middle school, high school, and Brevard College), downtown events, race events, recreational events in Pisgah Forest, etc. The sponsoring organization would be responsible for the fees. Technically, per the Ambulance Ordinance, the County only has control over ambulance standby fees, not First Responder

standby fees, and there is nothing in the current Rescue Squad contract to prevent them from charging fees.

It is a very common practice for rescue squads to charge fees for standbys and ambulance response. At this time, the Rescue Squad does not plan to charge patients for ambulance transport, but may do so in the future. Emergency Services has actually encouraged them in recent years to look at options for charging fees in order to produce some internal revenue for their operations.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the proposed Transylvania County Rescue Squad Standby Fee Schedule. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chappell.** Commissioner Chappell inquired about the effect on standby coverage should an emergency occur offsite. He also wanted to know if a standby service is ceased if the Rescue Squad would refund any associated fees. Mr. Cooper stated that during standby service that unit is typically dedicated to the event. If there is an extreme situation requiring the response of multiple units, the unit may have to cancel the standby service. He noted this is a rare occurrence. Nonetheless, the fee would more than likely be refunded. Commissioner Lemel inquired about how the new fees may impact the School System's budget to pay for these services. Chief Dale Whitlock reported that the Rescue Squad intends to work out a separate deal for school standby service. He stated that the deal will be made with the athletic clubs, not the School System. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

#### POSITION RECLASSIFICATION

Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart presented this item. She requested the Board of Commissioners reclassify the Administrative Assistant in County Administration to a Program Support Assistant. A sample job description was included in the Board's packet for their consideration.

A Program Support Assistant for County Administration would be in line with the same position found in the Planning, Library and Building departments and the Sheriff's Office. Ms. Cozart stressed it is imperative that we are able to recruit for a position that requires a higher skill set and can assist with the ever-increasing responsibilities of Human Resources and County Management in general. Ms. Cozart felt that a reclassification of the position is essential to the success of the Human Resources Department and will allow us to be more attentive to the needs of employees.

In slightly more than 25 years, the County has grown from 220 FT and almost 50 PT employees, to 331 FT and 120 PT employees. Last year alone, we hired 92 new employees and assisted 552 separate individuals. In the early 1990's, there was a dedicated human resources assistant for Human Resources in addition to the Director, but that position was consolidated into one Administrative Assistant to support the County Manager, Human Resources, Finance, and Clerk to the Board. The Administrative Assistant has taken on HR responsibilities of processing employee paperwork and assisting employees with benefits questions along with other finance and administrative duties. Because of the increased responsibilities in HR, the Administrative Assistant is unable to assist the County Manager, Commissioners, and Clerk to the Board and because of their workload too, many projects do not get attention to make way for more urgent demands.

After considering different scenarios, Ms. Cozart felt strongly that the organization will benefit by reclassifying the Administrative Assistant position to a Program Support Assistant and that she begin recruiting for that position now. She had originally intended to make this request in the upcoming FY 18 Budget. She intends to amend her FY 18 request to upgrade the part-time Administrative Assistant to full time. The Program Support Assistant will be dedicated to assisting departments within County Administration and temporarily fill the front desk role. In FY 18 she would like to move forward with filling the Administrative Assistant as a full time position who would then serve as a front desk position and provide much needed administrative support to County Management.

The financial impact is \$0 to the FY 17 Budget due to lapsed salaries. The impact to FY 18 will be approximately \$4,500. This amount does not include the FY 18 request to upgrade the PT position to FT.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the reclassification of the Administrative Assistant to a Program Support Assistant. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hawkins.** Ms. Cozart clarified the FY 18 request to increase a second position that is currently part-time to a full-time position. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

#### BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Finance Director Gay Poor submitted the following budget amendments for approval:

- #58: \$23,275 from General Fund fund balance restricted by NCGS 153A-354 for Building Permitting and Inspection to purchase a vehicle to be used by inspectors
- #59: \$46,441 from General Fund fund balance assigned for Economic Development to support the expansion of New Excelsior, per Incentive Agreement dated October 2014

If approved, these amendments will increase the final FY 17 General Fund budget by \$69,716, bringing it to a total of \$50,577,851.

Commissioner Chappell asked if the vehicle for Building Permitting was intended to be requested in the FY 18 Budget. The Manager stated that these funds must be used in the Building Permitting department. Staff is able to shift around some other vehicles by replacing one there.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the budget amendments as presented, seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously approved.**

#### MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- NC Department of Transportation will be inviting Commissioners and members of the Transportation Advisory Committee on a tour of the US 64 road construction work in late April or early May
- Joint meeting with Board of Education on April 24 starting at 6:00 p.m., followed by the regular business meeting of the Board of Commissioners
- Fire Departments to present budget requests on April 24
- Met with staff from Mission about STEMI (heart) transports; Pardee Hospital is working to become certified in accepting STEMI patients; the reimbursement rates for ambulance services for out-of-county transports is effected by the distance of the closest certified facility
- County offices closed on Friday, April 14 for Good Friday holiday
- Connect Bond grant application denied for upgrade of park next to Library, but staff will be looking for other funding opportunities
- Official notification that Transylvania County is now a NC Works Certified Work Ready Community; thanks to Commissioner Chappell and other community partners for their work on that effort
- Kudos
  - Jim Boyer – letter from citizen for work on testing and customer service
  - Trisha Hogan – received credentials as a NC Certified County Clerk at annual conference last week; she was presented with a framed certificate and name plate for her desk
  - Larry Chapman – received DAR Distinguished Citizen recognition

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Edwin Jones: Mr. Jones asked if there had been any analysis on the skill level of the unemployed folks and how they matched up to the skills required for the available jobs. Secondly, he asked who intends to oversee the implementation of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

## COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Lemel reported on the Kindergarten Readiness Rally that occurred last Thursday. This is the second year of the event. It was held in the gym at Parks and Recreation. Last year 135 people attended and that number increased to over 200 this year. There were 120 children that participated. Twenty six agencies that provide services to children and young families were represented, along with all of the school kindergartens. Also participating were both local law enforcement agencies and the Brevard Fire Department. Each agency offered an interactive activity for the children. After parents and children visited each of the agency tables, they wrapped up at the Library Foundation table where each child was given a book. The feedback has been tremendous and children are excited to be attending kindergarten soon. This is part of the ongoing effort to improve kindergarten readiness and offer support to children and young families in Transylvania County.

Commissioner Hawkins thanked Tony Dalton for his work as County Attorney over the last few years. He reported that the TDA voted yesterday to provide grant support for the Upper French Broad Riverfest. To Mr. Jones, Commissioner Hawkins responded that the Board of Commissioners will be responsible for implementing the Comprehensive Plan through the Manager, staff and various departments.

Chairman Chapman reported that one of our prominent citizens passed away. Coach Cliff Brookshire, the father of Solid Waste Director Jeff Brookshire, was an icon in high school coaching. He asked everyone to keep the Brookshire family in their thoughts and prayers. Chairman Chapman thanked the Transylvania County Rescue Squad for the hat they provided him and others. He announced that the planning for the Memorial Day parade and ceremony is underway. The event will occur on Saturday, March 27 at 9:00 a.m. with the ceremony following the parade. Chairman Chapman informed that Transylvania County hosted a district meeting of the NC Association of County Commissioners. He and Commissioners Hawkins and Lemel attended, along with county commissioners from five other counties in the region. A press release will be out soon with further information. Lastly, Chairman Chapman congratulated the Clerk to the Board on receiving her certification credentials.

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Lemel moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m., seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously carried.**

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Larry L. Chapman, Chairman  
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board