

**MINUTES**  
**TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**August 8, 2017 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Tuesday, August 8, 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 Misti Bass, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Derek McKissock

There were approximately 25 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**

There were no comments from the public.

**AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

The Manager requested to add Request for Professional Services of Developmental Associates for Professional Search for Social Services Director as Item E under New Business and to move the Manager's Report to item F. There were no agenda modifications from Commissioners.

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

**CONSENT AGENDA**

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

The following items were approved:

MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, July 11, 2017 and Monday, July 24, 2017. The minutes from both meetings were approved as submitted.

### BUDGET AMENDMENT

The following budget amendment was submitted for approval:

#9: \$20,682 from assigned Fund Balance for a project initiated in FY 17, but not completed until FY 18 to switch Animal Services from the existing UHF radio system to the countywide VHF system

This amendment increases the General Fund budget by \$20,682, bringing it to a total of \$51,466,179. Commissioners approved the requested budget amendment.

### **PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS**

#### SUPPORT FOR THE STEPPING UP INITIATIVE

Carolina Carter with Meridian Behavioral Health Services requested the support of the Board of Commissioners for the Stepping Up Initiative for Jail Diversion in Transylvania County. The next several paragraphs provide background information about this topic.

Over the past several years, institutions and residential treatment centers previously serving people with mental illnesses have closed causing local jails and prisons to become de facto treatment centers. This contributes to the stress on local resources and law enforcement officers as counties are forced to try and figure out how best to serve these individuals.

Individuals who suffer from mental illness are disproportionately overrepresented in detention facilities, have longer stays while incarcerated, have a higher re-incarceration rate than individuals without mental illness, and cost detention centers more, both in money and resources. Jail diversion programs are created to provide alternative options to incarceration for individuals who have been arrested and jailed due to behaviors that are caused by mental health struggles, as well as reduce the recidivism rates for these individuals. Jail diversion programs target helping those who have serious mental illness, whose diversion from jail to treatment services would not be a public safety risk. The national 'Sequential Intercept Model' of jail diversion identifies five key points where diversion can take place:

1. At the community level, when law enforcement is first involved before arrest
2. During the initial detention and first appearance court hearings
3. Specialty treatment courts and jail-based mental health programming
4. Transitioning and re-entry
5. Specialized community corrections programs

A diverse group of individuals in Transylvania County has expressed great interest in assisting individuals with mental illness who find themselves involved in the correctional system, including hospital staff, community mental health agencies, members of both the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office and the Brevard Police Department, neighborhood churches, County officials, and community advocates. Currently, Meridian Behavioral Health Services is working side by side with community members to develop a jail diversion program that fits the needs of Transylvania County, with the following goals:

- Reduce number of individuals booked
- Reduce length of stay
- Increase connection to treatment and other services
- Reduce recidivism

Several counties across the nation, including North Carolina, have committed to developing diversion programs to assist individuals with mental illness, and have also received the added benefit of reduced expenditures within the correctional system and increased public safety as individuals become engaged in recovery.

A joint resolution is a call to action for local leaders and agencies to utilize comprehensive resources available through Stepping Up to continue to:

- Convene or draw on a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies committed to safely reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails
- Collect and review prevalence numbers and assess individuals' needs to better identify adults entering jails with mental illnesses and their recidivism risk, and use that baseline information to guide decision making at the system, program, and case levels
- Examine treatment and service capacity to determine which programs and services are available in the County for people with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance abuse disorders, and identify State and local policy and funding barriers to minimizing contact with the justice system and providing treatment and support in the community
- Develop a plan with measurable outcomes that draws on the jail assessment and prevalence data and the examination of available treatment and service capacity, while considering identified barriers
- Implement research-based approaches that advance the plan
- Create a process to track progress using data and information systems, and to report on successes

The Stepping Up Initiative, which started in 2015, is a national initiative that is building momentum and support. It includes a collaboration of various national organizations (Bureau of Justice, National Psychiatric Association, National Association of Counties, just to name a few) with the goal of supporting treatment alternatives rather than individuals continually being in the jail/prison system. To date, 381 counties across the country, including 43 counties in North Carolina, have signed up.

Ms. Carter requested the Board of Commissioners' support of the Stepping Up Initiative which will grant them access to resources and help them to determine how best to support individuals and divert them from the jail/prison system. She assured Commissioners this program does come with a great amount of accountability and what that looks like will be determined by this diverse group of individuals working toward this initiative. Ms. Carter reemphasized that the goals of a jail diversion program such as this are to reduce costs to counties, increase public safety, and improve the quality of life for individuals with mental illness and those that try to care for them.

This concluded the presentation. Chairman Chapman called for questions and comments from Commissioners. This is a summary of the discussion:

Q. What additional costs are incurred by the County for inmates with mental illness?

A. Medicaid recipients lose their benefits once they enter the jail system. Because inmates with mental illness tend to serve longer sentences, the cost to house them is greater. In addition, sometimes their behavior in jail leads to additional charges and, as a result, lengthier stays or hospitalizations that costs counties more. These inmates require extra resources to meet their needs and officers are faced with significant behavior management of them as well. Data shows these individuals are high recidivists so the cost to counties is recurrent.

Q. Once incarcerated, inmates receive meals, medications, regular interaction with others, etc. that they may not have gotten outside of jail, although the cost to taxpayers is expensive. Will this initiative ensure these individuals' needs are met outside of incarceration as well?

A. The program is intended to look at diversion across the continuum. Some individuals may not be diverted to treatment depending on their charges and their risk to public safety. To prevent reentry into the system by those that are diverted will depend much on case management: ensure engagement with treatment providers, help with employment and housing issues, etc. This may also include partnering with Probation to assign a specialized officer to cases involving individuals with mental illness.

Q. Who determines if the inmate in fact has a mental illness issue?

A. Meridian Behavioral Health Services has been providing services in the Transylvania County Detention Center since early 2017 with financial support from VAYA Health. Once a person enters the jail facility, officers conduct an initial assessment that includes specific questions related to mental health, substance abuse, physical health, etc. If the officer determines the individual may be a candidate for jail diversion, the Meridian clinician and nurse will work together to determine appropriate action. This is a coordinated effort on behalf of the detention officers, clinicians and nurse. Part of the planning phase of the initiative will be to work with the local judges to determine what charges would be eligible for diversion.

Q. How will the success of this program be determined?

A. This will also be part of the planning process. The Stepping Up Initiative has already done a lot of work in determining how to implement a successful program. For Transylvania County, it will include using current data and measuring certain outcomes. By the Board's approval of the joint resolution today, the group will be able to move forward in the process and build collaboration with appropriate partners.

**Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the resolution as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips.** Commissioner Lemel stated this initiative is a great opportunity and she is proud to be associated with this group. Commissioner Chappell requested periodic updates on the number of individuals being served. He stated it is important to know that the program is being successful and what might need to be changed if it is not. Chairman Chapman read aloud a portion of the joint resolution which explained what the supporters resolve to do. The resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

## NEW BUSINESS

### BIDS FOR HVAC UPFIT FOR THE TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY ACTIVITY CENTER

The Manager presented this item, noting it is consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan that was adopted by the Board of Commissioners earlier this year.

On June 29, 2017, the County released an Invitation For Bids (IFB) for the HVAC Upfit of the Transylvania County Activity Center with a mandatory Pre-Bid meeting on July 7, 2017 with a submission deadline of July 25, 2017. The project includes installation of two 20 ton HVAC units for the gymnasium portion of the facility. In addition, the work will include a new exterior concrete slab, chain link fencing, repair work of metal building siding/liner panel/roof system, gas piping, electrical work, acoustical layin ceiling as well as associated demolition work.

It has been determined that Appalachian Construction of Pisgah Forest, Inc. is the lowest responsible, responsive bidder, having a base bid of \$152,500.

Due to the need to relocate water lines to accommodate the new HVAC units, the City of Brevard has agreed to install a 120' water line, new meter, meter setter and meter box, relocate the existing fire hydrant and repair the asphalt if Transylvania County will purchase the materials in the amount of \$9,520.

### **Proposed Project Budget**

#### **HVAC Upfit for the Transylvania County Activity Center**

##### **City of Brevard Utility Work**

Material Cost (Installation of 120' of 6" water line, new meter, relocate existing fire hydrant and asphalt repair)	<b>\$ 9,520.00</b>
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<b>Bid Documents - Project Manuals / Drawings</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>
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<b>Rich Worley - Proposal for Partial Construction Phase Services</b> (Not to exceed \$4,000)	<b>\$ 4,000.00</b>
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<b>IFB - Lowest Responsible, Responsive Bidder</b>	<b>\$ 152,500.00</b>
	<b>\$ 166,520.00</b>

<b>Contingency - 10%</b>	<b>\$ 16,652.00</b>
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<b>Total Proposed Project Budget</b>	<b><u>\$ 183,172.00</u></b>
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Funds will be drawn from the \$250,000 assigned in FY16 for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendation.

Staff recommended Commissioners take the following action:

1. Award the construction contract to Appalachian Construction of Pisgah Forest, Inc. in the amount of \$152,500,
2. Approve the project budget for the HVAC Upfit for the Transylvania County Activity Center totaling \$183,172 with funds to come from Parks and Recreation Reserve Funds (includes 10% contingency) and
3. Give the County Manager the authority to approve change orders as long as the project stays within the approved budget.

**Commissioner Lemel moved for approval of the contract with Appalachian Construction of Pisgah Forest for the upfit of HVAC at the Parks and Recreation Center, for a full proposed project budget of \$183,172 with funds to come from the Parks and Recreation Reserve Fund, and for giving the County Manager authority to approve changes in the contract as long as they do not exceed total budget. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hawkins.** Commissioner Lemel expressed she was excited to see this project move forward. Commissioner Hawkins noted there was quite a spread between the different bids. He asked if the Manager has any concerns about this. The Manager stated that anytime there is a large spread between bids, there is a level of concern for staff, but that gives staff an opportunity to review the bids thoroughly to make sure there was a clear understanding of the project,

particularly from the bidder that is being recommended. She said she has been assured by her staff that that is the case here. Commissioner Chappell requested confirmation that there were no issues with the contracts and bids. The Manager replied yes and noted the project team is in attendance today should Commissioners have specific questions. Chairman Chapman inquired about the timeline from installation to being ready to use. Project Manager Larry Reece pointed out there is an issue with the waterlines. They must be relocated. The units are very large and therefore must be placed outside, but the water lines and power are located where the units need to be placed. He expects a January completion date. The project is expected to take approximately six months. He noted that the units will be protected with fencing. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

#### TRANSYLVANIA ECONOMIC ALLIANCE CONTRACT EXTENSION

The contract between Transylvania County and the Transylvania Economic Alliance expired June 30, 2017. Both parties have expressed clear intent to renew the contract. County Commissioner representatives, staff and members of the Alliance met in July to work through improvements to the existing contract so that it can be renewed. In order to provide adequate time for that negotiation, the group recommended an extension for one quarter. The extension would expire on September 30, 2017 and result in a quarterly payment due at the end of the quarter to the Alliance of \$125,000.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the extension of the Transylvania Economic Alliance contract for one fiscal quarter to expire September 30, 2017 with funds coming from existing budget. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hawkins.** Commissioner Chappell thanked the group that met to discuss negotiations. He felt they made good progress. Staff is working to corral all the ideas presented into appropriate language for the contract. The group will reconvene to finalize the agreement. This extension assures that there is no impact to any projects that TEA is working on. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

#### TRANSPORTATION FARE POLICY REVISIONS

Management Analyst and Interim County Transportation Director Jonathan Griffin presented this item. He reported that as part of a broader effort to improve the Transportation Department's operations, staff thoroughly reviewed the County's fare policies and procedures to determine if any improvements were necessary. As a part of this effort, staff had discussions with partner organizations served by Transylvania County Transportation routes.

During the discussion with Transylvania Vocational Services (TVS), staff learned of an interesting historical holdover. When the Rural Operation Assistance Program (ROAP) began requiring that local Transportation systems collect fares to support transportation services, Transylvania County staff came to an agreement on partial collections with TVS. TVS would pay fares for some of its riders, but would only do so on the Friday of a given week. While this arrangement may have been a reasonable accommodation at the time, the amount of time that has passed indicates it needs to be revisited.

TVS agreed to pay for individuals receiving some form of vocational rehabilitation, adult developmental programs or participating in another similar program. They would not pay for workers on the production side of their operations. Each week they ask that Transylvania County Transportation employees complete forms indicating which TVS service recipients rode on that day. They reconcile that information with their grants they have on their individual clients to determine who can use their grant funding to receive transportation services and then send the County a check for what they owe the Transportation Department.

This policy has created two classes of individuals traveling to TVS – there are riders who pay every day, and riders for whom that TVS uses their funding streams to pay for them only on Friday. In the time

since the County implemented this agreement, the number of individuals traveling to and from TVS on a daily basis has significantly increased.

Additionally, some riders traveling to TVS who are being covered by TVS are those who should be traveling fare free. The EDTAP program, which Transylvania County applies for annually, covers 100% of the costs of transporting individuals who have a disability, which is a large number of TVS' clients. Because of the agreement with TVS, these individuals are categorized as traveling through TVS, which artificially keeps low the number of people with disabilities being served by the County. This results in the County not being able to show NCDOT the number of people it is actually serving and therefore knocks the department out of the running for many grant opportunities.

On a related note, the individuals who are traveling to TVS to be production workers are those who would benefit the most from having their costs of transportation subsidized. TVS does not cover their expenses, but they would benefit the most from having the nominal fare related to transportation services waived. This would be affirming their dignity on their way to work, and at the same time eliminate any concerns that they are treated differently from the individuals that are a part of TVS's other programs.

This would also achieve additional efficiency by keeping van drivers on the road rather than needing to leave their vehicles on a weekly basis to fill out paperwork at the TVS offices so that TVS can complete their calculations.

Historically, this procedure generates between \$45 and \$75 in monthly fare revenue for the County's transit system paid directly from TVS. The County receives around \$30 per month from individual riders traveling to and from TVS. Mr. Griffin anticipated that the total loss in fares would fall between \$810 and \$1,260 annually. In the FY 2018 budget, it is estimated that the County would collect \$3,800 in fares for the period and should reach that target even with this policy change.

Ultimately, revising the policy that covers individuals traveling to and from TVS would improve the efficiency of transportation operations through eliminating processes that require coordination with TVS staff. It will create a blank slate for further collaboration on transportation issues and grant applications. Mr. Griffin recommended the Board consider revising the existing Transportation Fare Policy to make trips to and from TVS fare free on the County's existing routes. Changing this policy would not impact operations in their other grants except to increase the opportunity to qualify for other grants in the future.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to revise the existing Transportation Fare Policy to make trips to and from Transylvania Vocational Services fare free on our existing routes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips.** Commissioner Hawkins commented that this action causes there to be an open-ended policy change with no deadline for a new agreement to be in place. Mr. Griffin confirmed, but noted that future service expansion would be through contractual arrangement. Commissioner Hawkins also commented that this constitutes a level of County support for TVS and should therefore fall under the nonprofit funding request structure. The Manager interjected that it would depend on who is being served. If the County is transporting people with disabilities to work or services, this service may be part of the County's program in which grant funds are utilized to provide the service and also requires a local match. Commissioner Hawkins stressed that the County cannot keep making exceptions to the structure. This was noted and agreed by the Manager. Commissioner Chappell asked how many people Transportation is providing services to that are not documented as being served by grant funds. This figure would not only impact the County's ability to access specific grants, but because the data is skewed, it impacts grant opportunities countywide. Mr. Griffin reported that approximately 6,000 riders/trips a year fall into this category.

Chairman Chapman requested to review this issue in six months because transportation is a major issue and need for the community. He thanked Mr. Griffin for the work he has done analyzing the needs of the department, determining efficiencies, and helping to put in place operations that help Commissioners determine what additional resources are needed in the future. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

#### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TEMPORARY OVERTIME

Historically, Environmental Health has averaged 2-3 weeks from permit application to being onsite for services. Recently, the wait time has increased to 4-6 weeks, partially due to some staff turnover and personnel out of the office due to injury. The warmer months are peak time for construction and contractors are concerned the longer wait time will result in lost business opportunities. The wait time as of today is approximately 4 weeks and 2 days. Transylvania County's Environmental Health wait times in comparison to other counties in the region score us in the middle. In order to make immediate headway on reducing the wait time back to a 2-3 week period, it will take approximately a month of overtime with estimates of 10 hours per employee per pay period, or 5 hours additional weekly. The cost to the County per pay period would be \$1,945.81; two pay periods to cover a month would be \$3,891.62.

Health Director Elaine Russell has also agreed that late fall or early winter the Environmental Health section will work with Ruth Harris on a LEAN process improvement project to help make operations more efficient while evaluating if utilizing technology could also aid in the future to keep wait times lower.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve up to \$3,891.62 in overtime for the Health Department to utilize overtime for one month to improve wait times for Environmental Health. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips.** Chairman Chapman noted that construction appears to be booming around the County so he thanked staff for addressing this issue. He stressed that the services the County provides are vital, particularly those that aid in economic development. He also thanked Environmental Health staff for their hard work and assured them that Commissioners wants to provide them with the help they need. Commissioner Phillips noted it will be especially important to keep tabs on their progress during dryer months when construction activity increases. Commissioner Hawkins noted this department operates with a lean staff with turnaround times comparable to other counties with much more staff which is a credit to the quality of staff employed by this department. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

#### REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES OF DEVELOPMENTAL ASSOCIATES FOR PROFESSIONAL SEARCH FOR SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR

On Friday, July 28, Social Services Director Tracy Jones tendered her resignation effective August 11. In response, the Social Services Board met on July 31 in special session to develop a transition plan and requested that the Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart obtain a quote from Developmental Associates for professional search services. Developmental Associates was instrumental in the recruiting of Ms. Jones in 2015.

The Social Services Board met again on Friday, August 4 to follow up on the transition plan. The Manager presented the proposal from Developmental Associates to them on behalf of Ms. Cozart. The Social Services Board voted to request the amount of \$19,225 for the maximum cost of professional services. Based on the proposal, the process could take 70 to 90 days.

**Commissioner Lemel moved to approve \$19,225 from Fund Balance for a contract with Developmental Associates in the hiring of a new Social Services Director. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chappell.** Commissioner Chappell stated that the requirements for this position are so specific and the liability is so great that this is a prudent decision to allow Developmental Associates to assist with hiring a qualified individual. Chairman Chapman noted that the applicant pool for Social

Services Directors is small, so the help of professional services is needed. Commissioner Hawkins inquired about the plan for the interim. The Manager reported that in the interim the Social Services Board has appointed Darrell Renfroe. He is retired from the State and has about 30 years of experience in social services work at local and State government. Mr. Renfroe will come onboard Monday. The Manager intends to offer support from the management perspective as the department transitions to an interim and eventual new director. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

### MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- Federal Flood Insurance Reauthorization
  - Sept 30 deadline
  - Reforms proposed to decrease the subsidy given to those with federal policies
  - \$25 billion owed to the US Treasury which is part of what is driving the reforms
  - Local impact could include an increase in rates for those in flood zones
    - County-148 homes
    - Rosman-15 homes
    - Brevard-100 homes
- Davidson River Connector intersection with US 64
  - Current plans call for a traffic light
  - No right of way to allow roundabout alternative
  - Could restrict to a right in/right out movement to maintain traffic flow onto US 64
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC and Mission Health have not come to terms on a contract
  - Set to expire in October
  - County is self-insured
    - Increased rates as out of network or increases on negotiated renewal rates directly impacts county health plan costs as well as employee costs (based on %)
    - BCBS furnished Human Resources Director with providers in the area outside of the Mission network for in-network options should the contract not be renewed
- NC Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference in Durham County
  - Manager to give Early Childhood Initiative presentation on Saturday showcasing the local work of the ECI and best practices for facilitating the discussion
  - Durham County also presenting; praised work of Commissioner Lemel and Transylvania County ECI as inspiration to them tackling early childhood issues in their community
- Kudos to Scott Justus from visitor Bill Rauch for assistance during the fugitive man hunt; visitor from out of town who needed help getting to his campsite to retrieve his belongings
- Fire Department ratings improved or stayed steady for:
  - Cedar Mountain
  - Conestee
  - Lake Toxaway
  - Little River
  - Sylvan Valley II
  - Waiting for results for N Transylvania, Rosman (Fall) and Balsam Grove (concluded end of July)

Chairman Chapman pointed out that Transylvania County is recognized as a leader across this State in many areas, and the early childhood efforts of Commissioner Lemel, the Manager and others is one of them. They are doing great work. He will be attending the conference and plans to hear the Manager's presentation. He is also meeting with the County's 4-H representative while there. He stressed to the public that the Board of Commissioners and staff are very much involved at the State level in their service to the citizens.

Commissioner Hawkins echoed Chairman Chapman's comments. He emphasized how significant it is for the Manager to be making this presentation at the NCACC conference. He plans to attend as well.

Commissioner Lemel regretted not being able to attend, but camp does not close until Friday. She stated it has been a pleasure getting to know and working with longtime Durham County Commissioner Ellen Reckow. For Commissioner Reckow to acknowledge Transylvania County's work in early childhood efforts is a tremendous compliment. Commissioner Lemel said the ECI is a phenomenal group and great commitment to this subject. The ECI's work is bleeding over into other areas too. Two work groups have been established at the State level. One is the NC Pathways to grade level reading. Commissioner Lemel was the only County Commissioner invited to participate, along with 50+ others from across the State, to examine grade level reading success and to engage in an affordability and access to childcare group. Additionally, the NCACC and UNC School of Government have also approached her about participating in a group that intends to evaluate child welfare reform at the State level. This highlights Transylvania County as being a leader in terms of caring for its children which should be a source of community pride.

Commissioner Phillips referred to the Mission and Blue Cross Blue Shield contract dispute, and informed that if someone is participating in a specific program or treatment when the contract ends in October, BCBS has continuity of services plan that is supposed to continue covering the individual at the in-network rate until the program or treatment ends. It is important that individuals insured by BCBS are aware of this.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kevin Smith: Ms. Smith is a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission. He thanked the Board for investing in parks and recreation services, a lot of which has required outside support and cooperation. He particularly thanked the Board for moving forward with the installation of the HVAC in the gymnasium. It has been a long time wish list and it will open up a lot of possibilities for other events for all age groups.

William "LeRoy" Newell: Mr. Newell is the President of Transylvania County Farm Bureau. He addressed the Board to introduce himself and offered to be a resource to the County on any farm related issues.

#### **COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Chappell publicly responded to a recent letter to the editor in *The Transylvania Times* in which a citizen accused him of not being available to the public because he listed only his PO Box as his address. He stated the reason as being that he does not get mail at his physical address and he did not want to take the chance of someone sending him a letter to the physical address and it not being received. He stressed that during his time in public office, he has strived to make a vested effort to be available to the public, noting that his cell phone number is public and he takes the time to talk with citizens no matter where he is. For the record, he announced his physical address as 1245 Panther Gap Road, Brevard, NC.

Commissioner Hawkins stated that Commissioner Chappell has always been conscientious about what he does and he thanked him for his service. Commissioner Hawkins reported that he met with the new Chair of the State's Economic Development Board last week while in Charlotte. This individual serving in this role is good for Transylvania County because he has a vested interest in rural economic development. They spent time discussing strategies for counties like ours. Commissioner Hawkins pointed out this meeting was another example of the positive image Transylvania County has across this State. Commissioner Hawkins reported that the State unemployment rates for June were just released.

Transylvania County's rate was recorded at 4%. He said the percentage is great, but it should be put into better context. The best context is there are 45 counties in North Carolina with a population of less than 50,000 people, which is nearly half the State. Of those 45 counties, there are only four counties that have an unemployment rate lower than Transylvania County during June 2017. Commissioner Hawkins said this rate is attributed to the hard work and innovation of people in this community who want to create jobs and provide businesses and this is important to mention. Commissioner Hawkins reminded everyone of the upcoming total solar eclipse. He pointed out that the Manager and staff have been involved in a tremendous amount of work across all departments to ensure public safety during the event. Lastly, Commissioner Lemel wished Commissioner Lemel a happy birthday coming up on Thursday.

Chairman Chapman reminded the public that the August 28 Board of Commissioners' meeting has been cancelled. He also announced the official opening of the WNC Military History Museum on Friday, August 25. He encouraged citizens to attend. He said visitors will be impressed with the work that went into preparing the museum and it is expected to draw visitors from all over. Chairman Chapman also announced that on August 26 the VFW will host an appreciation event for all Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans. The public is encouraged to attend and show their appreciation. Chairman Chapman thanked Commissioners and County staff for their hard work and dedication and expressed gratitude to citizens for their support of local government. Lastly, he reported that he attended a town hall event for Congressman Meadows at Blue Ridge Community College. He assured the public that Congressman Meadows wants to hear from all his constituents.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Lemel moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 a.m., seconded by Commissioner Hawkins 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