

**MINUTES
JOINT MEETING OF THE
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
&
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 25, 2014**

The Transylvania County Board of Commissioners met jointly with the Transylvania County Board of Education on Tuesday, February 25, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Rogow Room at the Transylvania Library. The purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss the needs of the Transylvania County School System.

Commissioners present were Vice-Chairman Larry Chapman, Jason Chappell, Chairman Mike Hawkins, Daryle Hogsed and Page Lemel. Also present were County Manager Artie Wilson, Finance Director Gay Poor, County Attorney Tony Dalton, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Board of Education members present were Sue Fox, Ron Kiviniemi, Chair Tawny McCoy, Vice-Chair Cindy Petit, and Mike Rogers. Also present were Superintendent Jeff McDaris, Finance Director Norris Barger and Executive Assistant Jenny Hunter.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Park Baker and Jeremiah Reed

There were approximately 50 people in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

Chairman Mike Hawkins, presiding over the Board of Commissioners, and Chairwoman Tawny McCoy, presiding over the Board of Education, called their respective Boards to order at 7:05 p.m. and welcomed all those in attendance.

INTRODUCTIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

Board members and staff from the County and School System were introduced.

UPDATE ON FINAL FY 2013 CURRENT EXPENSE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

Finance Director Norris Barger provided an FY 2013 Capital Projects status report. The projects are listed by line item. For the FY 2013 expense, there were some projects that crossed over fiscal years which are reflected in the report provided to Commissioners. The report also indicates if a project has been completed. Mr. Barger reported that all projects except the sidewalk from the parking lot at Rosman High School had been completed. The School System is working with the Town of Rosman on this project which is expected to be complete over spring break.

Commissioner Lemel said that the audit report for the School System states that equipment should be classified as capital items only when it is worth more than \$5,000 and has a use of more than two years; however, the capital items listed by the School System appear to contradict what the audit report states. She feels like some of the items are actually expenses, not capital. Mr. Barger explained that the definition in the audit report is more of a rule of thumb about whether or not to treat the item as a fixed asset, not whether or not it comes from capital outlay. Capital outlay therefore can include buildings and repairs, as well as equipment and furniture less than \$5,000. Repairs may not be indicated as capital or fixed assets because they do not increase the value of the building. Mr. Barger agreed to provide a report that is clearer and color coded per school.

Commissioner Lemel recently went on a school facility tour with members of the Board of Education. Based on

that tour she does not feel the furniture allotment is adequate. She wondered if allotting furniture based on ADM was the most effective way to budget furniture. Mr. Barger said he hopes there will be additional funding sources in the future to take care of some of the major needs in this area.

Commissioner Lemel asked how the Board of Education handles projects when they come in over budget and how decisions are made to shift appropriations. The County allots a fixed amount per project and if that changes the County Manager comes back to the Board of Commissioners to allocate additional monies. Mr. Barger stated that if bids come in over budget for larger projects, he goes back to the Board of Education for approval. If approved, the Board of Education has to indentify funds to cover the costs. If a project goes over budget during the project, the Superintendent has the authority up to a certain limit to approve change orders as long as there are funds available.

Mr. Barger commented that quite a bit of money is spent on athletic equipment and supplies but it costs more to run the athletic programs than the amount of money allotted. At the same time, this is where a lot of individual school revenues are generated.

Commissioner Chapman commented about some concerns that were raised recently about the funding for the project to redo the bus turn-around at Brevard Middle School and how that project became a priority. Mr. Barger responded that the project was taken on because there was equipment already onsite. The project was paid for with individual school funds that had accumulated over a number of years. Commissioner Chapman feels like the County should be made aware of these projects so Commissioners can understand how they are funded. Superintendent Jeff McDaris added that the schools use individual school funds on projects they feel are important. Based on concerns raised by him and others, the Board of Education adopted a new policy that schools must seek approval from the Board of Education if a project totals a certain amount. Commissioner Chapman said he wants to ensure that the real needs are being identified so the County can justify any increases in funding requested by the School System. He said the County and citizens should understand the real costs of running the schools. Chairwoman McCoy clarified that in no way was the Board of Education not being forthcoming to the County Commissioners. She said this project was a school decision and the Board of Education feels like any concerns that were raised have been addressed.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about who makes the decision to spend individual school funds on school projects. Mr. Barger said that decisions to spend money raised by PTO boards are made by the PTO boards. Those funds are not reported on the School System's budget. Individual school funds from yearbook sales, picture sales, clubs and organizations, etc. are spent after consultation at the principal level in consultation with club sponsors, faculty and staff.

UPDATE ON FY 2014 EXPENDITURES & CAPITAL PROJECTS

Mr. Barger indicated many projects have already been completed. His report listed projects in color code according to when they are expected to be completed. Time frames are of course subject to change.

Commissioner Lemel asked why Commissioners cannot receive information on the final costs of a project once completed. Mr. Barger said usually these figures are provided when the audit is complete to ensure that he has not coded an item incorrectly and that the costs are correct before sharing the information. Commissioner Lemel respectfully requested that school officials provide Commissioners with an update on completed projects, including the estimated final costs, so that Commissioners can see what progress has occurred and also what projects are actually costing versus the amount budgeted. Mr. Barger agreed to add an expense column to his capital projects spreadsheet.

Commissioner Lemel inquired further about the anticipated capital requests. To her it appeared that there is \$538,000 in capital requests that the Board of Education needs to find from other sources of revenue. Mr. Barger confirmed that the additional monies will come from lottery proceeds and other sources. He is confident the

projects will be completed.

Commissioner Chapman wondered if the Board of Education expects any significant changes to the budget. Mr. Barger is unaware of any unexpected issues. The School System has a capital repairs line item included in the budget which is used to help cover unexpected situations. This is one of the reasons the Board of Education advocates for a healthy fund balance.

Chairman Hawkins asked if the concession stand at Brevard High School was an addition to the budget. Mr. Barger reported this was part of the original budget. Half of the monies are included in the current year's budget and the other half will come from FY 2015. He expects the project to come in at budget.

Chairman Hawkins also asked if there were any other projects added to the capital projects list because of efficiencies or timing issues. Mr. Barger said no projects have been added to the list; however, he has added to the scope of work for some projects, such as additional doors, cameras, etc. These were added as a result of cost savings elsewhere.

Commissioner Chappell noted that one of the major concerns last year was security. He asked if the Board of Education was comfortable with the security measures they put in place. Dr. McDaris said they feel much more comfortable with a few of their schools and they are working to address other issues.

Commissioner Hogsed commented about the Board of Education's recent decision to join a lawsuit regarding school vouchers and he inquired about the costs involved. Mr. Barger responded that the Board of Education approved a resolution in support of the action but the Board of Education has not joined the lawsuit; therefore there are no costs involved. (*Addendum to minutes.* Commissioner Hogsed reported during a regular meeting on April 28, 2014 that immediately after the joint meeting, he was informed that the Board of Education did in fact join the lawsuit; however, there are still no costs involved. He therefore requested this addendum to the record.)

Mr. Barger noted that he has included an FY 2014 and year-to-date expense budget and actual expenditures in the Board packets. The purpose was to give Commissioners an understanding of their budget through January.

Commissioner Chapman said he is concerned that costs for supplies and equipment are being passed along to kids and their parents, which is a big expense. He asked where in the budget are there funds available to alleviate the burden on families. He is concerned about the millions of dollars spent in the school system each year, yet there is no money available for school supplies. He does not believe there is enough being spent in the classroom and that too much is supporting the bureaucracy called the Department of Public Instruction. Mr. Barger replied that monies for school supplies come from all levels of government, but unfortunately these budgets are continually cut and they have to be made up by using local funds. As the State continues making spending cuts, the School System has to continue to make up the shortfall with local dollars and each cut has a trickledown effect and subsequent impact on the classroom. Chairman Hawkins added that if these cuts are threatening the quality of education, then this needs to be communicated with State representation. Dr. McDaris agreed. He reported that he and other superintendents in the district recently met with State representatives to talk about some of these issues, one being text book allocation, in which the State continues to make reductions. He noted that most of the local monies received are for instructional purposes and most of the remaining is for operational support. Dr. McDaris believes locally the School System does a good job surviving the challenges resulting from the State reductions. As a result, the School System has been able to retain teacher assistants.

Commissioner Chappell asked if there has been any movement on being able to qualify for funding from additional sources. Dr. McDaris said the funding formulas make it impossible for this County to qualify for several sources of funds. This is unfortunate because there are hundreds of thousands of dollars of which the County is unable to benefit.

Chairman Hawkins commented again about school supplies and asked if teachers are purchasing supplies with

their own money as well. Dr. McDaris reported yes, that is the case, but the retired teachers' association does a good job of stocking supplies to help with this effort.

FIRST LOOK AT POTENTIAL ITEMS FOR FY 2015 BUDGET

Mr. Barger reported that the lottery fund balance through the end of FY 2015 is estimated to be approximately \$63,000. The estimated fund balance at the end of FY 2015 is estimated to be approximately \$462,000 for current expense and \$193,000 for capital outlay.

Commissioner Chapman asked how much the average fund balance the Board of Education has had historically and how much it has been reduced over the last few years. Mr. Barger said the balance as of June 30, 2013 was a good indicator of their average fund balance, which ranges from \$1.8 million to \$2.3 million. The Board of Education does not currently have a policy indicating a minimum fund balance; however, they have been discussing the issue. They generally try to keep a level of 8%, which is the level counties are required to have. Chairwoman McCoy said the Board of Education is worried about getting to a point of not having enough money to cover expenses. A continued drawdown of the current expense fund balance is of most concern because these funds cover operations and classroom expenses. Commissioner Chapman believes it is important for County Commissioners to understand the real cost of education so that citizens know how and why their tax dollars are being spent.

Mr. Barger next discussed the anticipated budget changes for FY 2015. He emphasized that the budget numbers are preliminary. The State recommended including a 3% cost of living increase for all employees. There is also a State mandated scheduled increase for health insurance per covered employee from \$5,332 to \$5,378 annually. Mr. Barger noted they are still working through the ramifications from the Affordable Care Act and he is unsure how the State legislature will react, so there may be some changes there. Mr. Barger reported that the Board of Education has had a goal over the last several years of raising the teacher supplement level to 10%. That process has been delayed over the last few years due to budget restraints; however, in the current year budget the Board of Education was able to locate funds to increase the level to 8%. They are requesting to increase it to 8.5% for FY 2015. The retirement rate increase is unknown at this time. He expects a small retirement rate increase this year and noted that it is almost fully funded. Mr. Barger noted there are cuts built into the biannual budget but that may change based on legislation passed in the upcoming session. The Board of Education would therefore like to reduce the amount of fund balance appropriation. The figures provided by Mr. Barger represent a 2.1% increase at this point. Again, Mr. Barger emphasized that the figures are preliminary and this does not represent an official request from the Board of Education.

Commissioner Chappell inquired about potential changes to the Child Nutrition program. Dr. McDaris reported that this is a troublesome program. Currently the federal government does not reimburse the full cost of a plate and regulations make the system hard to operate. This is not unique to Transylvania County as the majority of school systems in the State lose money in this program. Dr. McDaris has heard that in the near future there may be no State or federal funding and local systems would have to operate on their own. He said this would be impossible for Transylvania County, especially if school systems are still held to current nutritional standards. Privatization has not worked well in other areas because the variety of food is limited. Frankly, the system is losing money and the situation continues to worsen.

Commissioner Lemel asked if the Child Nutrition program operates within its own cost center so that the costs are captured within that particular operating budget. Dr. McDaris reported there is a position in the School System that administers the program. The other positions are covered through the program. He said school systems are encouraged to charge a certain percentage of indirect cost so that a portion of what is made comes back to the school system. However, Transylvania County ceased doing that some time ago because it was not sustainable. He noted that Commissioners have provided additional funding for this program.

Commissioner Lemel inquired about the long term implications being that the audit indicates the School System

is not compliant with State statute because of the overages in Child Nutrition. She wondered how to ensure the School System becomes compliant and how to develop a plan to address the challenges facing the Child Nutrition program and caring for the nutritional needs of the children. Dr. McDaris said that when there is a higher free and reduced lunch rate it means that the number of students not on free and reduced lunch, who the School System normally relies upon to make up the difference, decreases. To encourage those students to purchase lunch means there must be a variety of choices for them. The School System has made cuts and also tries to purchase local foods. Sometimes products are cheaper to purchase from other groups. Staff continues to explore options. Dr. McDaris asked Commissioners to lobby legislators at the federal level because the federal government is not appropriately funding the program and the regulations are too onerous.

The Manager reminded Commissioners of what is expected to occur in FY 2015 with the fund balance. For FY 2014, the Board of Education intends to draw down \$1.1 million in fund balance and only \$800,000 for FY 2015. That is a difference of \$300,000 between the two years which means the County will more than likely have to make up the difference. The Manager stressed the importance of planning for the next two years because in FY 2016 the fund balance will be too low for the Board of Education to draw down. Councilwoman McCoy agreed and noted that the Board of Education is not comfortable drawing down the fund balance to the levels indicated. It was discussed but not necessarily agreed upon.

Commissioner Chapman asked if there was any potential legislation at the State level that may impact the budget. Dr. McDaris said the additional cuts to teacher assistants is concerning and he is unsure of the full impact. Salary increases are not known and could affect locally paid positions. There are many other issues that will affect teachers in a variety of ways.

Chairman Hawkins inquired about teacher supplements. Being that it appears the Board of Education increased teacher supplements from 7.44% to 8% in the current year, he asked if the preliminary funding request in the amount of \$71,591 is to increase supplements from 7.44% to 8.5% or from 8% to 8.5%. Dr. McDaris said the request is to increase the supplement from 8% to 8.5%. The Board of Commissioners allocates monies each year for teacher supplements and in the current year the Board of Education was able to find additional monies through attrition, retirements, etc. to increase the supplement from 7.44% to 8%.

Commissioner Chapman asked what the student population is projected to be in the next year or two. Dr. McDaris stated the population decreased quite a bit a few years ago and since then has fluctuated. He reported that kindergarten registration is coming soon; however, some students still show up to school on the first day without having registered. The economy of the County certainly impacts the student population. The School System has been working on reducing the dropout rate and sometimes students will attend school here from another district. There are also students who are dual enrolled in home school and the public school system. Basically there are several trends that affect the population and the figures are not known at this time.

Commissioner Lemel wondered how the dual enrollment works. She noted that her daughter's class enrollment decreased by nearly 30 children by the end of the school year and she wondered why that happened. Dr. McDaris said the reason could be many. The students could have been transferred to the alternative school, be dual enrolled or home-schooled, etc. Losses occur for a variety of reasons, but he cannot account at this time for the decrease Commissioner Lemel is referring to.

Commissioner Lemel commended the program at Davidson River School, the alternative school. She said a tremendous service is being provided to this student population and the success rate is outstanding.

DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE BOND ISSUE

Chairwoman McCoy informed the Board of Commissioners that there are capital items that will be needed on an annual basis. The Board of Education provided a capital needs list for each individual school. These items were large ticket items that could be included in a bond issue. The items were included in the overall capital plan

completed a few years ago. She pointed out that a bond issue provides a large influx of dollars into the schools for capital needs, improvements, and repairs. Councilwoman McCoy pointed out that the preliminary figures are fluid and that the capital items could be reprioritized depending on whether or not a bond issue comes to fruition. The Board of Education feels there is a need for a bond issue to make much needed improvements to the schools.

Mr. Barger reported that a bond issue has normally occurred every 10 years. The last bond issue happened in 1998, 16 years ago. The Manager reminded both Boards that the current debt service for the School System is approximately \$2.2 million a year. The debt service will be paid off in FY 2017 which positions both the County and School System to begin discussions for another bond issue. The bond referendum in 1998 was for \$24.3 million. Preliminary costs for a new bond referendum are currently \$18.5 million. The minimum amount for a bond referendum is \$10 million, because there is lots of cost associated with it.

Commissioner Lemel requested another format for listing the schools' capital needs that included only the dollar figure for each school and then the total at the bottom. Mr. Barger agreed.

Commissioner Chapman noted that many of the school facilities are old. He wondered at what point does the cost of maintaining the schools warrants consideration for building new schools.

Chairman Hawkins said he did not understand how the Board of Education arrived at a figure of \$18.5 million. He expected to see a larger number and wondered if it was designed to meet the capital needs for the next 10 years. Mr. Barger said the figures are based on relatively flat enrollment, gutting of infrastructure like heating and air, water pipes, electrical, etc. He said the physical structure of the buildings is overall sound. Most of the problems are occurring in aging water and sewer lines, mechanical systems, heating and air condition units, electrical supply, etc. There are also some upgrades needed to roofs, windows, etc. Mr. Barger believes this is what it will take to keep the school facilities at a quality standard for the next 10 years.

Chairman Hawkins commented that 10 years is not a long time and he wondered how economic and technological changes over the next 10 years could impact facility needs. Mr. Barger agreed with his comments and offered some examples of how these areas have progressed over the previous 10 years.

Thinking in broad terms, Chairman Hawkins questioned the amount of space that will be needed for the future. Dr. McDaris added that technology changes rapidly but with that comes with responsibility. Interaction between an instructor and student is of key importance. There are other issues that could have ramifications but he believes there will still be a need for classrooms and face-to-face time.

Chairman Hawkins inquired about what the next steps should be. Dr. McDaris believes part of the next steps is for the Board of Education to be comfortable with what a bond will cover and whether or not it will meet the needs of a defined period. The Manager pointed out that a bond can be issued for capital only, including furniture and equipment, not operating expenses.

Chairwoman McCoy believes that both Boards need to determine if everyone is in agreement that a bond is necessary. She believes the Board of Education is ready to move forward. She hopes that the Board of Commissioners is supportive so that they can move forward with the next steps. This has to be a joint effort; however the Board of Education will take the lead in determining the needs of the School System.

Commissioner Lemel said she first wants to know that there is an overall plan and that there is an understanding of the trends in education, staffing, space needs, etc. She noted that other school systems have had comprehensive studies of their school operations completed which might be helpful for both Boards to fully understand the needs in order to feel comfortable committing such a large sum of money. Commissioner Lemel believes this should be accomplished with the help of expertise in this area and that having a plan in place helps citizens understand how and why their tax dollars are being spent.

Chairman Hawkins agreed with Commissioner Lemel. He said Commissioners understand that needs exist. He suggested staff meet and work together to better refine the numbers and be able to provide the rationale for those figures. He believes having a professional analysis of the School System's operations will help make the case for a bond referendum. Chairman Hawkins agreed that a bond referendum is the appropriate route to take.

Mr. Kiviniemi commented that the Board of Education has been having some of the same discussions. He believes this is something they need to move forward with; however predicting the future depends so much on economic development. The progress and development of the County impacts the progress and development of the School System. The School System's contribution to economic development is maintaining excellent schools.

At this point, the next steps happen at the staff level. The Manager noted there is a timing issue. It takes time to organize a bond issue. The Manager hopes that a bond referendum could occur in November 2015, which must be noticed in March 2015. In early 2016, the selling of the bonds would occur, and use of those funds could then begin in May-June 2016.

Mr. Rogers asked if the Board of Commissioners would be supportive in terms of funding of the Board of Education's efforts of having a professional study completed. Chairman Hawkins reported that the County Manager obtained a copy of a study completed for Davie County by a firm for both county and school operations, but at that time Commissioners were not prepared to pursue a study for Transylvania County. Davie County was impressed with the results they have gotten over the last couple of years. Chairman Hawkins stated that the Board of Commissioners has not formally discussed having a study of this nature done and it would make sense to him to include the School System should the County do so. He emphasized that there has been no formal discussion by the Board of Commissioners, so there is no commitment at this point.

As stated, Chairman Hawkins said there is a time frame in order to have a bond referendum on the ballot in 2015, so the work needs to begin now. Chairwoman McCoy said the Board of Education will need to discuss this further. She believes the County will want to hear from the communities about what they want as well.

IMPROVEMENTS TO BREVARD HIGH SCHOOL STADIUM

Dr. McDaris reported that Transylvania County Schools has received a very generous gift of stock from a family with a history of strong support and love for this community and the schools. The benefactor has designated that the gift be used for the improvement of the Brevard High School Stadium. In acknowledging the research that has gone into how best to improve the stadium, the Board of Education believes that the installation of artificial turf represents the strongest manner in which those improvements can be made.

Over the last month, the Superintendent and County Manager have been meeting to discuss alternative ways to fully fund the artificial turf project. Given the significant donation to the Board of Education, the Superintendent and County Manager recommend that the Board of Education and Board of Commissioners evenly split the remaining cost of the artificial turf project, not to exceed \$510,000 in total cost, and not including the college hash marks and goal posts. The funds from each entity would come from their respective fund balances.

It is the understanding of both the Superintendent and County Manager that after the proceeds from the donation, the remaining amount of funds required from the Board of Education and Board of Commissioners would be approximately \$130,000 each. Therefore, both Dr. McDaris and the Manager made the following recommendation to their respective Boards:

1. The monies from the sale of the stock are to be used for the installation of an artificial turf field at Brevard High School Memorial Stadium.

2. The Board of Education pays 50% of the remaining balance for the completion of the project and the Board of Commissioners pays 50% of the remaining balance for the completion of the project. Funds are to come from their respective fund balances.
3. The total cost for the completed installation of the turf field, not including college hash marks and goal posts, is not to exceed \$510,000.

Dr. McDaris noted that current bids are approximately \$499,500. The Manager noted that this project has been brought up over a number of years and the generous donation allows this project to come to fruition.

For the benefit of the public, it was reported that the Brevard High School football field is used 70+ times per year, highly exceeding the average that a field is used during the school year and during the summer months. By adding turf, it helps to maintain the current level of use of the field and also to expand uses to other groups.

Chairwoman McCoy made a motion to use the gift money donated to them to install artificial turf at Brevard High School Memorial Stadium and that the Board of Education fund one half of the remaining funds needed above the gift amount from fund balance, set amount not to exceed \$130,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kiviniemi. The Board of Education thanked the Board of Commissioners for partnering with them to complete this project. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Commissioner Lemel moved that Commissioners allocate up to \$130,000 from unassigned fund balance for the purposes of partnering with the Board of Education to install artificial turf at Brevard High School Memorial Stadium. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hogsed. Commissioner Chapman asked if Brevard College intends to contribute funds towards this project. Dr. McDaris stated that discussions have taken place with Brevard College and they are an eager partner in this project. Dr. David Joyce, President of Brevard College, was in attendance and he confirmed Dr. McDaris' comments and stated that Brevard College intends to pay its fair share for the use of the field. There will be future discussions about a long term lease for their use of the field. He expressed appreciation for the partnership that Brevard College has with the School System and Transylvania County. Commissioner Chapman noted for the benefit of the public that the Board of Education has researched the installation of a new track and it is not feasible. For justification purposes, Commissioner Chappell inquired about the amount of funds spent on the field each year to maintain it. Dr. McDaris said the field has never fully recovered from the severe rains from a few years back. He estimated that approximately \$20,000 is spent annually just to keep it playable. Mr. Barger noted that one firm bid has been received in the amount of \$499,500. He is expecting another bid. Dr. McDaris noted that the timeline for this project would begin in April and will be ready for use in the fall. Chairman Hawkins requested that the discussion with Brevard College on a partnership agreement include the County Manager. Dr. McDaris agreed. Lastly, Chairman Hawkins commented that he supports this project with the understanding that much discussion has occurred this evening about more money for the classroom which is the priority. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

Chairwoman McCoy informed the Board of Commissioners that approval of the turf field project does not mean that their priorities have changed, but the opportunity was presented to the Board of Education and it was a positive move forward.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Commissioner Lemel said she tends to ask a lot of questions so she can understand things and that sometimes her questions come off harsh or challenging. She said she committed to the citizens when she ran for office that she would be open, transparent and accountable. It is important that citizens understand where their tax dollars are being spent. She encouraged citizen participation because it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that children are receiving quality education. Commissioner Lemel said one of her priorities is seeing that teachers are receiving the best possible compensation and the best resources and materials in the classroom.

Commissioner Chapman concurred with Commissioner Lemel's comments. He thanked everyone for coming tonight and also thanked the Board of Education for their hard work. He encouraged citizens to attend meetings of the Board of Education and get involved with the schools because almost half of County tax dollars goes towards funding the School System. Commissioner Chapman commented that he would have preferred the money approved tonight go into the classroom, but neither Board could pass up the generous gift donated by a citizen for the purposes of installing turf. He noted that both Boards will be entering budget deliberations soon and he encouraged more citizen participation. Lastly, he thanked the Board of Education for this meeting so that the County can help address their needs.

Chairman Hawkins thanked the members of the Board of Education, teachers and staff for the work they do. He also thanked all those in the audience for attending the meeting tonight.

Chairwoman McCoy thanked Commissioners for the open discussion. She stated that the Board of Education is passionate about education and they will continue to do the best they can to ensure quality education for the children.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jackie Hovey: Ms. Hovey reported that she has been an educator for almost 40 years and she thanked the County for its support of the School System. She said teachers are becoming more and more discouraged and they are not being fairly compensated. She understands that organizing a bond issue is going to be a lot of work on the part of both Boards but she believes it is worth it to provide much needed funding for the schools.

Don Surette: Mr. Surette encouraged the Board of Education to move forward with having a professional study before moving forward with a bond issue because it may open other avenues and also direct their attention to issues they did not notice. He also said he noticed in the preliminary budget request a 3% COLA increase, yet he has not had a raise in 14 years.

Meredith Licht: Ms. Licht thanked both Boards, especially the County Commissioners, for voting to help fund the turf. She then addressed the public and informed them that as a teacher at Brevard High School she was not supportive of the turf field, at first. However, it will save a tremendous amount of money on maintenance costs and it will mean a lot to the community. Ms. Licht said the field is a classroom is well, where students participate in various activities and learn leadership and many other qualities.

Unidentified Female: She is a resident of the County. Her children have attended Transylvania County Schools and she is a former teacher at Brevard Middle School. She talked about concerns raised by some parents about school money being spent without approval and questioned why nothing had been done about it. She also expressed concerned about the lack of funding for books, furniture and equipment, and for workshops and much needed projects.

Frank Patton: Mr. Patton identified himself as the donor of the stock to the School System to install turf on the field at Brevard High School. He hopes this will benefit all children and others in the community. Mr. Patton said he and his wife were happy to make this donation. His comments were met with much applause from the audience.

Claire Marie Hannon: Ms. Hannon said she has serious concerns about curriculum and over testing of third graders. She is also bothered that the Board of Education does not seem concerned. Ms. Hannon said parents will not stand for this, even if it takes a lawsuit. She urged the Board of Education to be more concerned about the education of children rather than buildings.

Barbie Harper: Ms. Harper expressed concern about the Common Core curriculum and end of grade testing and the fact that students are not receiving the high quality education they deserve. She feels that the needs of gifted

and talented students are not being met and that more monies should be going directly to these programs.

Marty Griffin: Mr. Griffin commented that both Boards continue to do a good job. He shared a story about a student who almost drowned during a football game because of the field conditions and he is thankful that has not happened here. He thanked both Boards for moving forward with the turf field.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board of Commissioners, **Commissioner Chapman moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously carried.**

There being no further business to come before the Board of Education, **Ms. Petit moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Fox and unanimously carried.**

Mike Hawkins, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board