

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JULY 8, 2024 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, July 8, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Larry Chapman, Chairman Jason Chappell, Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton, and Teresa McCall. Chase McKelvey was seated at the dais following his appointment as County Commissioner and taking his oath of office. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Julie Hooten, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Media: Jon Rich – *The Transylvania Times*

There were approximately 40 people in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

WELCOME

Chairman Chappell welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Commissioners and staff in attendance.

SPECIAL APPOINTMENT OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER

APPOINTMENT OF CHASE ROBERT MCKELVEY AS COUNTY COMMISSIONER

With the recent resignation of Emmett Casciato, a vacancy has occurred on the Board of Commissioners. NC General Statutes govern how the vacancy should be filled. Initially, the seat will be filled in accordance with N.C.G.S. § 153A-27.1. Since Mr. Casciato won the seat as a Republican in 2022, the Board of Commissioners consulted the Transylvania County Republican Executive Committee to appoint a person of their choosing. The Board of Commissioners must appoint the recommendation of the Executive Committee if the recommendation is made within 30 days of the vacancy occurring. The appointed member will fill the seat until the first Monday in December.

Jeff Brewer, Chair of the Transylvania County Republican Party submitted the party's nominee to Chairman Chappell on June 20 which met the statutory timeline for making the recommendation. The Transylvania County Republican Party chose Chase Robert McKelvey as its nominee and requested the Board of Commissioners appoint him to fill the vacancy.

Mr. McKelvey will serve through the first Monday in December. A special election will run concurrently with the general election in November. The winning candidate will serve the remaining two years of the term and the seat will be up for election in 2026 as scheduled.

Commissioner McCall moved to appoint Chase Robert McKelvey to fill the vacancy on the Board of Commissioners, thereby accepting the nomination of the TCGOP, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and Chapman simultaneously, and unanimously approved.

The Clerk to the Board administered the oath of office to Commissioner McKelvey and then he joined the Commissioners at the dais to begin filling his seat.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

The Manager requested that Item VI.B., an Out of State Training Request by the Fire Marshal's Office, be removed from the Consent Agenda. The Fire Marshal was notified that the class was full and had a waiting list.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve the agenda as revised, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner McCall moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.

The Board approved the following:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in a regular meeting on Monday, June 24, 2024. The Board approved the minutes as submitted.

NOTICE TO DONATE SURPLUS AMBULANCE TO BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Manager has designated a 2012 ambulance as surplus. Blue Ridge Community College has expressed interest in using it for training purposes and has requested the County to donate it to them. According to N.C.G.S. § 160A-280, the county is authorized to donate surplus property to a nonprofit organization incorporated in the United States. Before making the donation, the County is required to publicly announce its intent to donate the property and subsequently adopt a resolution approving the donation at a separate meeting. The Board authorized staff to publish a notice of the Board's intention to donate the surplus ambulance to Blue Ridge Community College.

DIRECTED GRANT FROM SENATOR CORBIN – REGION 1 PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Transylvania Public Health leads and acts as the fiduciary agent for the Region 1 Public Health Workforce Development Project, which serves the eight westernmost counties. In light of the anticipated significant State budget surplus, the Region 1 Health Directors crafted a proposal seeking funding to support this initiative. The proposal was submitted via email to Senator Corbin on May 30, 2024. The following day, Senator Corbin personally called to express his strong support for the proposal and the collaborative efforts involved. Senator Corbin subsequently offered a Directed Grant totaling \$150,000, administered through the Southwestern Commission on his behalf. Directed Grants require a matching contribution, which will be met using a recent \$100,000 HRSA grant and a \$107,000 NC Division of Public Health Workforce Development Agreement Addendum for FY 2024-2025. These funds will enhance communication capabilities within Region 1 Health Departments and sustain the Western Carolina University Environmental Health paid internship model. This model aims to bolster the pipeline of future Environmental Health professionals. The Board accepted the \$150,000 Directed Grant from Senator Corbin for the Region 1 Public Health Workforce Development Project.

APPOINTMENTS

VOTING DELEGATE TO THE NCACC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) 117th Annual Conference Business Session will be held in Forsyth County on Saturday, August 10 at 2:00 p.m. Each county is entitled to one vote on items that come before the membership. Commissioners Chapman, Dalton, and McCall are registered to attend the conference. The voting delegate designations are due by August 7. The Commissioners may select a delegate and an alternate if they so choose.

Commissioner McCall moved to appoint Commissioner Chapman to serve as the Voting Delegate representing Transylvania County at the upcoming NCACC Annual Conference in Forsyth County, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

Commissioner Chapman moved to appoint Commissioner McCall to serve as the Alternate Delegate, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

Jennifer Galloway, the County's Purchasing Agent, has been serving as the County Manager's designee on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, facilitating the submission of necessary documents to secure funding for local agencies' services. The County Manager requested the Board reappoint Ms. Galloway to continue in this role.

Commissioner Dalton moved to reappoint Jennifer Galloway as the County Manager's designee on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

CONSIDERATION OF QUARTER-CENT SALES TAX REFERENDUM

The Manager explained that counties can enact a quarter-cent local option sales tax in addition to the existing sales tax in Transylvania County. This requires a referendum solely to determine whether to levy the tax, with the current and future Boards of Commissioners deciding on the allocation of the funds. Many counties have successfully passed such referendums, with about half implementing the tax. Public communication is crucial. One key benefit that should be highlighted is that it spreads the tax burden beyond property owners, ensuring that visitors also contribute to local revenue.

The Board deliberated on this matter on June 10 at their request. This agenda item aims to foster additional discussion and guide staff on whether to propose it for the November ballot. Staff estimated the potential revenue from the quarter-cent sales tax, projected between \$1.2 to \$1.5 million, though exact figures may vary due to some unclear sales tax formulas.

The Manager noted that an advisory referendum can only coincide with a county or statewide general election, meaning the next chance would be in two years if not this November. The Board must notify the Board of Elections by August 1 if they intend to include the referendum on this ballot, underscoring the urgency of the current discussion.

The Manager reported that the quarter-cent sales tax would not apply to food or gas purchases. Revenue generated from this tax could be allocated to any public purpose with the Board of Commissioners' purview. If approved in November, it would take effect 90 days after notifying the NC Department of Revenue at the start of the financial quarter, potentially as early as April 1. The Manager sought guidance from the Commissioners on this matter.

Commissioner McCall inquired whether if the sales tax proposal failed on the ballot, it could be reintroduced in two years or if it was a one-time opportunity. The Manager clarified that it could indeed be placed on future ballots. Additionally, she noted that even if approved by voters, the Board of Commissioners retains the discretion whether or not to implement the tax.

Commissioner McCall inquired whether there is a specific timeframe within which the Board must levy the tax once approved. The Manager responded that there is no statutory time limit specified. It remains within the Board's discretion to determine when to implement the tax. Typically, upon approval, Boards tend to proceed with levying the tax, but there exists the option to delay if a majority of Commissioners are not inclined to do so.

The Manager highlighted that the referendum grants permission to the Board, similar to a bond referendum allowing the Board to pursue bonds without mandating it. Likewise, the sales tax referendum authorizes the Board to implement the tax but does not compel them to do so.

Commissioner Chapman expressed concern about proceeding with the sales tax proposal amidst the ongoing countywide property revaluation. Uncertain about the revaluation's outcome, he anticipated potential tax adjustments. He also noted that the November ballot would include several constitutional amendment propositions, making it lengthy and complex for voters. He preferred scheduling the referendum at a time when voters could fully concentrate on its purpose. Looking ahead two years, he suggested the Board might have a clearer understanding of the tax structure and related factors.

Commissioner McCall acknowledged the validity of Commissioner Chapman's concerns. She inquired about the timeline for finalizing the courthouse design. The Manager indicated that programming for the courthouse is expected to return to the Board this fall. Once approved, the design phase will commence in earnest. Construction is anticipated to start no sooner than a year from now.

Commissioner Chapman clarified that his understanding was that the ballot itself would not specify how the funds would be used, but the Board could communicate their intended use of the revenue. The Manager confirmed, noting that while some communities advertise their intended use, the Board retains flexibility to alter those plans if necessary.

Commissioner McCall recalled the initial discussions regarding the referendum, emphasizing that one potential use of the revenue, if approved, could be to support funding for the courthouse, thereby potentially reducing the need for property tax increases. She acknowledged the current timing might not be ideal but expressed willingness to support either decision. She emphasized the importance of informing the public that the sales tax would not apply to food or gas, items that families often struggle with and that it would share the financial responsibility with tourists who use local goods and services. Commissioner McCall believed that while it is beneficial to eventually place the referendum on the ballot, she advocated for sooner rather than later. She also stressed that the referendum should not be tied to a specific project, though previous discussions had linked it to courthouse funding.

Commissioner McKelvey inquired about the earliest implementation date of April 1 and whether the Board could opt for a later start. The Manager confirmed that the Board has the flexibility to select a later date, as long as they provide the NC Department of Revenue with a minimum of 90 days' notice, aligning with the start of a fiscal quarter.

Commissioner McCall asked how much the projected \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million in sales tax revenue would equate to in terms of the property tax rate. The Manager replied that it equates to 2 cents on the ad valorem tax rate.

Commissioner McCall emphasized that the projected revenue could significantly support a major capital project. She suggested that if the Board decides to proceed with placing the sales tax on the ballot now, there should be a commitment either to delay its implementation or, upon implementation, to allocate the revenue into a dedicated capital fund. This approach would ensure that funds are earmarked for their intended purpose until the Board identifies the best use for them.

Commissioner McCall suggested placing this item on the next agenda to decide whether the Board should proceed.

Chairman Chappell noted that a vote must occur at the upcoming meeting to meet the ballot requirements of the Board of Elections.

Commissioner Dalton said that he was comfortable with either decision.

Chairman Chappell voiced his support for initiatives that distribute responsibility for funding infrastructure and other capital expenses across the board, rather than solely burdening property owners, who contribute the majority of local revenue. He emphasized the importance of allowing sufficient time for the Board to effectively communicate the intended purpose to the public.

Commissioner Chapman expressed concern that waiting until the next meeting might not allow enough time for a thorough discussion on how to utilize the sales tax revenue. He reiterated the importance of ensuring the referendum does not get lost on a lengthy ballot.

Commissioner Chapman moved to delay the consideration of a quarter-cent sales tax referendum until the 2026 General Election, seconded by Commissioner Dalton. Commissioner McCall expressed her indecision, pointing out that waiting until 2026 could delay potential benefits until 2028 if the referendum fails. She emphasized that the sales tax proposal is not a property tax and could potentially alleviate future property tax increases. Chairman Chappell acknowledged the suggestion to continue discussions at the next meeting, respecting the motion on the floor. Commissioner McKelvey supported waiting until the next meeting and asked about the timing of revenue impact if the referendum passed and was implemented. The Manager explained that the County would start receiving monthly distributions two months after implementation, following the State's collection process from vendors. She noted that sales tax revenues can vary monthly, making it challenging to estimate consistently for budgeting. Chairman Chappell highlighted the uncertainty of year-to-year sales tax revenue due to fluctuations, underscoring the difficulties in predicting sales for budgetary purposes, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. **The motion failed 5 to 0.**

Chairman Chappell requested that staff prepare the documentation in case the Board votes to proceed with the referendum at the next meeting, giving the Board of Elections ample time to prepare for the ballot initiative.

Commissioner McCall inquired about recent referendums in counties near Transylvania County and their success rates. The Manager informed Commissioners that Jackson, Haywood, Buncombe, and Rutherford Counties currently apply the quarter-cent sales tax. She highlighted that Transylvania County citizens contribute to these counties' tax revenues when traveling there.

Chairman Chappell urged Commissioners to promptly send any questions to him or the Manager so that staff can be fully prepared to present at the next meeting.

2024-2025 NCACC LEGISLATIVE GOAL PROPOSALS

The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) annually solicits legislative goal proposals from counties, inviting submissions by August 23. Each proposal must include a goal name, details on its positive impact on local government, and supporting documentation. To meet the NCACC deadline, staff require approval of final goal submissions no later than the second meeting in July. The Board typically cancels its first meeting in August, and the second meeting falls after the submission deadline.

Recent discussions by the Board have included reviewing past submissions and considering new goals for this legislative cycle:

1. Differentiated tax rate for nonresident parcels.
2. Medicaid Hold Harmless – Ensure rules align for counties and cities.
3. Increase in lottery funds to schools not tied to economic tier ratings.
4. Increase PILT funds for state and national forest land.
5. Flexibility on spending occupancy tax dollars currently controlled by State legislation.
6. Local flexibility on school calendars to optimize learning.
7. Increase funding for NC Pre-K.
8. Expedite Child Permanency from Foster Care to Adoption.
9. Declare broadband as a utility for local government involvement.
10. Modify county-tier designations based on average wages instead of median income.
11. Mental health funding and services.
12. Funding for School Resource Officers statewide.
13. Flexibility for workforce housing funding based on economic tier adjustments.
14. Revise State metrics for school funding:
 - a. Small school definitions based on a ratio rather than all-or-nothing criteria.
 - b. Low wealth funding based on average wages instead of median income.
 - c. Lottery distribution based on reported capital needs.
15. Seek financial transparency for all public bodies.
16. Funding for State-mandated services to match requirements.
17. Repeal State income tax cap to avoid potential revenue constraints.
18. Flexibility within the Department of Social Services for preventative programs.
19. Expand ethics training for elected officials.
20. Allow counties to cap land conservation percentages

These goals aim to enhance local governance, address funding disparities, and advocate for legislative changes beneficial to Transylvania County and its residents.

Chairman Chappell emphasized that many of the legislative goals directly hinge on Transylvania County's economic tier designation. This designation significantly influences grant and incentive opportunities, impacting the County beyond the listed goals. He highlighted the adverse effects when these designations were altered, stressing the need for them to accurately reflect local economic conditions.

Commissioner Dalton pointed out the challenge posed by State mandates, which account for more than 80% of the County's budget but often lack corresponding State funding. This forces the Board of Commissioners to seek alternative means to finance mandated services, a situation he noted the State is known for.

Commissioner McCall emphasized the goal of allowing counties to cap the percentage of land designated for conservation. She noted that over 50% of Transylvania County's land is already regulated by the State and federal governments, including conservation easements and other restrictions. She expressed concern over the increasing pressure to place more land under conservation, driven by groups advocating for tourism benefits

and environmental preservation, which limits the County's ability to develop land for economic purposes and job creation. Commissioner McCall underscored the need for Transylvania County to protect its interests in balancing conservation efforts with economic development opportunities. She highlighted the ongoing challenge of providing emergency services on State and federally owned lands or land under conservation easements.

Commissioner Dalton inquired about the possibility of petitioning the State for reimbursement of emergency services provided in State forests. The Manager indicated that the County could request authority to seek reimbursement or advocate for increased State contributions toward these services. Commissioner Dalton proposed adding this as goal #21.

Commissioner McCall clarified that the goal would include developing a memorandum of understanding or agreement where the County provides services, and the State reimburses the County accordingly. She agreed with this approach.

Staff will finalize the list of goals for approval via resolution at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

SCOPES OF WORK FOR SCHOOL BOND PROJECTS

The Manager presented to the Board of Commissioners the completed scopes of work as County staff prepares for the upcoming bond sale this fall. The presentation is organized into three key sections:

1. **Context and Clarity:** To address potential confusion, the Manager provided detailed information previously shared with the Commissioners, aimed at educating the public about this uncommon project process.
2. **Timeline Overview:** A comprehensive timeline was presented to highlight the progress made.
3. **Funding Plan:** The Manager discussed the funding strategy for the work study group's recommendations, referred to as the "Step One Investment." This section covered allocated project funding to date, the scope of work for the bond sale, upcoming milestones, and current recommendations.

Context and Clarity

Capital funds, as defined by State education statutes, are distinct from operational funds. Funding for capital needs does not replace other educational expenses. The Manager emphasized that capital and operational funding are separate entities with different funding mechanisms. It is crucial to understand the division of responsibilities between the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners. Annual expenditures are prioritized by the Board of Education, with approved funding levels determined by the Board of Commissioners. This distinction can sometimes be challenging for the public to grasp.

Both the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners have endorsed the Work Study Group's project list, so no further endorsement is needed to proceed with the funding plan. The agreement on these projects is established, and it is now the Commissioners' responsibility to develop a reasonable funding plan, which the County is currently undertaking.

Meetings for both Boards are recorded and available on their respective websites. The Manager encourages the public to watch these meetings to stay informed about discussions and actions taken. This ensures transparency and reduces reliance on memory.

Timeline Overview

From July 2023 to March 2024, the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners tasked the Education Capital Work Group, comprising Superintendent Lisa Fletcher, County Manager Jaime Laughter, a retired superintendent, and a retired county manager, to collaborate with a third-party building assessment consultant. Their goal was to evaluate capital needs across all school sites, focusing on practical issues. The Work Group unanimously recommended moving forward with Step One: Investment, which was presented at a joint meeting of the Boards on March 4, 2024. The assessment identified over \$100 million in needs over a 10-year period, but the group prioritized a manageable project list that could be funded through a combination of bond funds and cash. This prioritized list was then presented to both Boards for approval.

Most projects were identified through building assessment inspections, which included thorough evaluations such as roof inspections. Each facility was visited to assess the condition of equipment, its installation timeline, expected lifespan, and anticipated repairs over the next 10 years. However, some project needs were identified outside these assessments. The Manager highlighted three specific areas that fall into this category:

1. **Oil Storage Tanks:** While not deemed an immediate replacement need in the assessments, discussions with Transylvania County Schools staff during the Rosman Elementary project highlighted concerns about aging, single-wall oil tanks, which are no longer compliant with current regulations. As a result, replacing these tanks was included in the assessment for environmental reasons.
2. **Rosman High School Football Field:** In January and February, the Board of Education discussed the urgent need to address the Rosman High School football field. Initially requested for \$325,000 in the FY 2024 budget, school staff recognized that both repairs and turf installation would require additional funding. The Board of Education indicated they were waiting for a funding decision from the Commissioners, but the County did not receive an official request, leading to confusion about the process. Consequently, the football field was incorporated into the assessment.
3. **Brevard High School Wrestling Facility:** The Work Study Group raised concerns about the wrestling facility in the field house men's locker room due to the recent sanctioning of women's wrestling. Parents and students questioned whether the current facilities adequately supported the new women's team. Superintendent Fletcher was tasked with exploring additional Title IX concerns, which mandates equal support for men's and women's athletics. A temporary solution has been found, and no further Title IX issues were reported. Additionally, the Board of Education intends to apply for a State grant this fall for a new gym and cafeteria at BHS to address long-term needs, although past applications have been denied due to the State's scoring system. Without a backup plan, the group expressed concerns about the lack of a long-term solution if the grant is again denied.

On March 11, 2024, the Commissioners endorsed the Step One: Investment recommendation. The Work Study Group considered the assessment results along with additional factors, including air quality testing, which influenced some assessments, a structural evaluation of the glu-lam beams at Brevard High School, and safety assessments. These components were all incorporated into the final recommendations.

On March 18, 2024, the Board of Education and Board of Commissioners Chairs, Vice Chairs, and staff met at the request of Transylvania County Schools. Superintendent Fletcher and her staff presented a draft revision to the Step One: Investment recommendation initially proposed on March 4 by the Work Study Group. During the meeting, there was discussion about potentially removing certain projects from the list, including the wrestling facility, in light of plans to reapply for State grant funds in the fall of 2024. The group expressed concerns that excluding these projects from bond funding could jeopardize their completion if the grants were not approved. This could impact not only the wrestling facility but also critical needs like roof replacements. If a grant is awarded for replacing the old gym at BHS, for example, attention would shift away from addressing the leaking roof, prioritizing the new project instead.

On March 18, 2024, the Board of Education endorsed the Step One: Investment list in its entirety. Although there was discussion regarding staff changes at Transylvania County Schools, which included the removal of certain items like the wrestling room, the vote supported the full list based on earlier discussions among the Chairs and Vice Chairs. The following day, Superintendent Fletcher's email confirmed this decision, stating that the Boards agreed to retain the line items marked for removal. The Manager emphasized the importance of this endorsement, noting public concerns about the origins of the items approved by the Commissioners. All items on the list are based on a consensus from both Boards.

From April to June, Transylvania County Schools continued to submit project documentation. This was a key topic discussed during the joint meeting with the Chairs, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive information. This documentation is crucial for the building assessment consultant, as it helps inform any necessary revisions and identify issues that have already been addressed. Since the physical assessment conducted in July 2023, various projects, both formal capital projects and internal repairs, have likely occurred within the school system. Sharing this information is essential to ensure that any completed items can be accurately removed from the assessment list.

On May 7, 2024, Transylvania County Schools and County representatives met with Axias, the consultant, to discuss project scoping. The following guidance was reached by consensus:

- For areas with multiple trades and extensive needs, it is preferred to develop scopes of work as General Contractor projects. This ensures effective coordination among various trades on-site. In contrast, single trades, like a roof replacement, may allow for using a single vendor.
- Transylvania County Schools staff highlighted a major leak in the old gym at Brevard High School that had damaged important paperwork and equipment for the JROTC, stressing the need for prompt action.
- Transylvania County Schools staff noted that obtaining bids for work in the upper end of the county can be difficult. Grouping related projects, such as those at TC Henderson and Rosman, could help attract more bidders by presenting a larger project.
- Projects involving roof-mounted HVAC systems must be scheduled for the summer months. While bond funding will be available in November, immediate plans must consider design needs to ensure timely execution.
- The consultant was instructed to remove completed or already funded projects, such as fire alarm panel upgrades, from the scope.

In May 2024, the Fire Marshal and Building Inspections were consulted to help refine the project list. For example, the Fire Marshal confirmed that the sprinklers originally identified as a fire code requirement at Rosman Elementary School could be removed from the list due to the presence of existing firewalls. While ensuring the safety of students is paramount, unnecessary code requirements can complicate projects and increase costs. Thus, eliminating such items helps streamline the process and manage expenses effectively.

On June 26, 2024, Transylvania County Schools staff and County staff reviewed the draft provided by Axias. They collaborated to offer comments and feedback to ensure the project scope and recommendations were comprehensive and aligned with their objectives.

On July 1, 2024, revisions were made based on the feedback received. The Commissioners were provided with a copy of these revisions. However, one ongoing concern remains unaddressed: the potential challenges in managing the projects due to the complexity of needs at some sites. This involves handling more funds and coordinating a greater number of contractors, raising concerns about the existing capacity to effectively manage these projects.

Funding Plan

To facilitate progress before the bond sale, some funding for Step One: Investment is already being allocated. During a spring meeting with the Board Chairs, it was noted that waiting until November for full funding would delay any project work. The Commissioners have approved several projects using FY 25 Annual appropriations and cash reserves from the Education Capital Fund, totaling \$5.5 million. These projects include:

- Air Quality Improvements: \$200,000; Testing initiated by the Commissioners and funded in December 2023/January 2024. Recommended cleaning was completed in May 2024, and funds were allocated in June 2024 for replacing moldy ceiling tiles before students returned to school. Moldy tiles were identified as affecting air quality.
- HVAC Boiler Purchases: \$395,270; Funded for Brevard Middle School, Pisgah Forest Elementary, and Rosman High School, identified as urgent for winter 2024-2025. The lower cost is due to multiple bids.
- Funding Correction: \$420,000; To address contracts signed beyond the approved funding, resolving overcommitted HVAC contracts at Davidson River School, Pisgah Forest Elementary, Brevard Elementary, and Brevard Middle School.
- Brevard High School Glu-Lam Beams: \$106,000; Repair costs based on the structural engineer's plan ordered by the Work Group.
- Athletic Facilities: \$4.3 million; The Commissioners approved several athletic projects that can proceed without being tied to the larger bond projects. The Board of Education will determine alternative implementations within these project budgets, including:
 - Brevard Elementary School Playground: \$300,000
 - Brevard High School Pre-engineered Building for Wrestling: \$1.2 million
 - Rosman Elementary School Playground: \$500,000
 - RMS/RHS Football Field: \$2.1 million
 - TC Henderson Pedestrian Bridge and Playground: \$203,500
 - Softball Lighting: Omitted from the list; will be added to the Board of Commissioners agenda for approval on July 22.

Once the Board of Commissioners allocates funding, they have no control over the pace at which the Board of Education moves or the alternatives they choose within that budget. These decisions rest solely with the Board of Education.

Additionally, the Manager highlighted that athletic facilities have consistently been a priority for the School System. Over the past few years, requests for funding show that athletic facilities rank third in priority, representing 11% of total capital funding.

Scopes of Work

Thirteen project scopes have been identified as remaining in Step One, in addition to those approved for funding since May. These projects have been categorized to separate roof work not involving HVAC from those that do, allowing some repairs to start before the summer of 2025. For instance, at Brevard High School, certain tasks can commence as soon as the bond is available in November, while others that involve both HVAC and roofing must wait until next summer to begin.

The major scopes are budgeted for completion by a General Contractor who will manage various trades and repairs, which adds to the overall costs. This grouping creates a practical plan that supports the Commissioners' funding strategy. A key part of this strategy is to demonstrate to the Local Government Commission staff that the project completion is realistic. This is why these scopes of work are crucial. The Manager emphasized that the projects listed remain the same ones endorsed by both Boards.

Some projects previously deemed less critical have been advanced because they are related to more urgent ones. For example, a roof repair scheduled for three years from now may be completed sooner if it is linked to a critical HVAC upgrade. This adjustment reflects a shift in timeframes based on the updated project scopes.

Fencing and security systems have been consolidated into a single scope of work to allow for contracting with one vendor and scheduling alongside larger projects. Parking lot repairs and repaving are planned to occur after major work at each site, as construction can easily damage parking areas. This approach ensures we avoid re-funding the same project due to damage caused by other activities.

Some projects identified for investigation have been removed from the list, which the Manager will address with her recommendations.

The original next steps indicated that the scopes of work needed to be developed by July 1, and staff have successfully met this timeline. The next focus is advancing the funding plan with the County's financial advisor to prepare for the bond sale in October. The Manager noted that the scopes presented to the Board may need to be adjusted based on feedback from the advisor. The Board might also consider multiple bond sales. Depending on this feedback and input from LGC staff, staff may return to the Board to propose that some scopes be funded in this year's sale while others are delayed by two to three years. The County has an extension for bond sales, providing several years to sell a second tranche; only the bonds need to be sold by the deadline, not the completion of the work.

From July to September, staff will focus on the financial process, finalizing the funding plan, and identifying projects eligible for cash funding from the Education Capital Fund, as well as those specifically designated for bond funding. Staff anticipates a bond sale in October, similar to closing a loan, with funds available by November. This allows the School System to start some improvements immediately with cash funding, while other projects will need to wait for bond availability or practical reasons, such as delaying roof repairs involving HVAC until the summer of 2025.

Recommendations

The Manager recommended that the Board add \$421,038 to the Education Capital Fund for investigation projects. Two items in Step One: Investment lacked sufficient information for a refined budget. The first is a proposal to assess and repair the retaining wall at Rosman High School, for which funds are needed to hire a structural engineer to determine the necessary repairs. The second project involves evaluating and removing underground storage tanks, where professional input will help refine associated costs.

The other request is for funds to secure a design professional for Phase 1 of the Brevard High School renovation project. This phase will address the leaking roofs affecting the JROTC office. This project can proceed as soon as the bonds are sold, as it does not involve HVAC and does not need to wait until summer.

If the Board approves these recommendations, the total projects approved for funding will increase to \$6 million, allowing the School System to move forward as soon as possible. Bond funding will cover the remaining items, while some projects may also be funded with cash.

The Manager emphasized that while the Commissioners can provide funding, they have limited capacity to move projects forward; the School System must manage those projects. Typically, projects for in-house management are scaled at \$2 million or less annually. Currently, there is \$59 million in project scopes, in addition to the recommended \$6 million for cash funding, which is a substantial amount of work to manage within three to four years, far beyond the School System's typical capacity. To ensure effective communication and monitoring of progress as funding is allocated, the Manager does not recommend appropriating the entire project amount upfront. Instead, she advocated for a collaborative approach to the design process. At this meeting, for instance, she is requesting funding from the Education Capital Fund for

Phase 1 design of the Brevard High School renovation, but not for additional phases. Once the design is complete, both Boards can review and confirm the scope and budget.

The Manager reported that she forgot to include the electricity for a softball field project, which she will bring to the Board at its next meeting to ensure it is identified in the Education Capital Fund for cash funding. She hopes this presentation has clarified the timeline and helped the public understand the funding plan supporting the endorsed project list. The Manager then invited questions from the Board.

Board Discussion and Action

Commissioner McCall recalled that the work group had a recommendation for managing projects and asked for details. The Manager explained that the recommendation was to establish a liaison between the County and the School System to ensure successful project management and progress. She noted that Henderson County retained a project manager to oversee school projects to successful completion, similar to the County's approach to its projects.

Commissioner McCall emphasized the importance of determining if the School System would be open to having a project manager facilitate collaboration between the two entities. She expressed concerns about the past lack of project completion on approved projects, suggesting that the workload may be overwhelming, and that assistance is needed to advance projects. A dedicated liaison could help ensure timely progress while adhering to bidding, procurement, and contract awarding laws, which would benefit everyone involved.

Commissioner McCall inquired about the potential benefits of a second tranche bond sale, asking if delaying some sales could lead to better interest rates. She acknowledged the flexibility to sell all bonds at once but questioned if a staggered approach might yield better rates for subsequent sales. The Manager confirmed this possibility and noted that the LGC expects projects to progress within a three-to-four-year timeframe for the first tranche. Additionally, having multiple bond sales offers the County a chance to regroup if unforeseen funding needs arise. The financial advisor may suggest two bond sales, particularly since the initial Step One: Investment does not cover the full \$68 million. This approach also provides a buffer to reassure the LGC regarding project management capacity. The Manager expressed confidence in the County's ability to manage the projects effectively and indicated that the LGC would appreciate the option of a second tranche. Furthermore, waiting could lead to lower interest rates for future sales. While the County must sell any intended bonds by November 2028, proceeding in phases should not negatively impact the County or the School System.

Commissioner Chapman noted that there is a community perception that the Commissioners instructed the Board of Education to prioritize a turf field over funding for counselors and other positions. He clarified that the County can only direct the School System regarding capital funds, not operational ones. He asked the County Manager to explain the situation, emphasizing that the Commissioners did not dictate the decision to install turf at Rosman or direct the Board regarding the wrestling facility. The Manager confirmed this, highlighting that both projects were included in a list endorsed by both Boards. The work study group had previously discussed these projects, and there were public conversations by the Board of Education about the potential for turf at Rosman High School. The group decided to include turf funding in the planning to ensure all options were available. This inclusion was crucial, especially given prior discussions about whether to pursue turf or repairs. The same is true for the wrestling facility. The School System anticipates submitting a Public School Facilities Grant application in August, and the Manager has coordinated with the Superintendent on necessary deadlines for required Board approval. If the grant is funded by the State, it could reduce the need for current Education Capital Fund projects. The work group emphasized the importance of comprehensive planning rather than relying solely on potential grant funding. The Commissioners do not dictate project priorities but recognize the needs identified by both Boards and the professionals involved in the discussions.

Chairman Chappell emphasized that the funding for the Board of Education's alternatives comes from a capital school reserve fund, distinct from operational funds. Statutorily and in practice, these funds serve different purposes. The Education Capital Fund is specifically designated for such projects, ensuring that the money collected for school capital is used as intended. He noted that utilizing one-time funds for ongoing operating expenses is problematic, as it creates short-term impacts without addressing long-term needs. He referred to a slide from the Manager indicating that funding for Step One: Investment is already in progress, allowing Transylvania County Schools to advance before the bond sale in October. This includes \$5.5 million from FY 2025 annual appropriations and cash reserves, with a recommendation for a significant increase in that amount. These funds are allocated for specific needs identified and advocated for by Transylvania County Schools, reinforcing their importance. He thanked the Manager for her detailed presentation, highlighting that Board meetings are archived on the County's website for public access, including PowerPoint slides and detailed information about discussions and actions. He also expressed appreciation for the Manager's commitment to finding solutions to improve schools.

Chairman Chappell noted that the Manager has recommended an additional \$421,038 for the Education Capital Fund, with the County managing the contracts to expand the School System's capacity as needed. He highlighted that the FY 25 budget ordinance includes contract requirements, including direct vendor payments. Chairman Chappell reviewed the projects outlined by the Manager, emphasizing that they involve investigations and design for the BHS renovation project phase 1, none of which impact classroom instruction. He referenced the athletic facilities, noting that the County had not received a specific funding request, and even so, and that Transylvania County Schools would not have been able to meet the necessary timeframe without affecting student use. Proper management is essential to ensure projects can proceed promptly after the season ends. This situation underscores the need for detailed, factual information as the County navigates these decisions. The goal is to make immediate impacts while advancing bond projects and optimizing the use of bond funds. This information is crucial for the Board to make informed, statutory decisions.

Commissioner McCall inquired about the underground storage tank removal, specifically whether the cost estimates included mitigation and monitoring. She asked if these tanks fell under the State of North Carolina's jurisdiction. The Manager confirmed that they are indeed monitored and permitted by the State. This next step will help refine expectations for mitigation costs. The scope of work includes project budgets for each tank, and once the environmental company assesses them, they will provide precise requirements for bidding and completing the work. Commissioner McCall noted that there should be no issue as long as there have been no leaks, to which the Manager agreed.

Commissioner McCall referenced the grant the School System plans to apply for this fall, commending the Superintendent for her persistence in reapplying. However, she noted that Transylvania County does not meet certain criteria for this grant. She asked if matching funds would be required if the application is approved. The Manager confirmed that matching funds are necessary and that there is a cap on funding. Depending on the specifics of the application, there will still be some associated expenses, but these can be incorporated into the funding plan.

Commissioner McCall stated that if the grant is approved and matching funds are secured, the intent is to build a new gym and cafeteria. She noted that the design process for these projects would likely take over a year, given past challenges, and would require additional inspections by a structural engineer. As a result, the projects could be delayed three to five years even if the grant is approved. Meanwhile, the existing buildings need urgent repairs, and it is unreasonable to let them deteriorate further, especially since the Commissioners had previously approved funding for repairs in 2021-2022, which were only partially completed.

Commissioner McCall emphasized that the buildings should not continue to deteriorate, regardless of plans for new construction. Stabilizing the existing structures is crucial. She recalled that the Commissioners had

approved funding for both buildings, which the Manager confirmed, noting that funding for beam repairs was approved at the last meeting. Additional repairs are still needed as part of the Phase One scope of work for BHS, specifically addressing the structural engineer's plan.

Commissioner McCall recalled that she requested an update on the commencement of repairs at the last meeting. The Commissioners have not yet received this update, but she acknowledged that the School System may still be in the process of bidding for the project. She also asked for a cost estimate for addressing the cafeteria ceiling, which has not been tackled by the School System. The Manager responded that Superintendent Fletcher is working on both items, so the update is pending.

Commissioner McCall inquired whether the moldy tiles would be replaced this summer as previously agreed. The Manager confirmed that the Commissioners have provided funding, and the staff is awaiting the contract or purchase order to proceed with the vendor.

Commissioner McCall acknowledged the significant ongoing work while awaiting approval to sell the first tranche of bonds, which would total over \$6 million approved for various projects. She noted the County's willingness to help manage these projects to ensure timely progress, to which the Manager agreed.

Commissioner McKelvey expressed concern about the School System being able to manage projects over \$2 million in-house, especially with the current total approaching \$6 million. He echoed Commissioner McCall's suggestion to consider hiring a project manager to act as a liaison between the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education to ensure the timely completion of these projects. He inquired about the likelihood of the School System agreeing to this approach. The Manager responded that, with the Board's consensus, she would extend an offer to the School System regarding hiring someone to fulfill this liaison role and manage the projects. She noted that this is a best practice highly recommended by the work study group to both Boards.

Commissioner Chapman emphasized the need for a detailed agreement outlining responsibilities and oversight if there is an agreement to move forward. He noted that avoiding conflict and confusion is essential, particularly regarding the functions and responsibilities of the project manager for both Boards.

Chairman Chappell noted that hiring a project manager was a key recommendation from the work study group, and both Boards recognize this as a best practice. The Manager received consensus from the Board to extend an official offer to the School System through the Superintendent.

Commissioner McCall emphasized that a project manager facilitates progress and acts as a liaison between the two Boards. This allows the Board of Education to focus on educating students without getting bogged down by project management, which they may lack the capacity to handle. The County has more experience in managing larger projects, providing a solid knowledge base for seeing projects through to completion. She expressed hope that the School System will be receptive to this offer, as both share the goal of completing projects.

Commissioner Dalton recalled that during the meeting where Axias presented its findings, the School Board attorney was present and urged both Boards to consider hiring a project manager.

Commissioner McCall highlighted an important issue that the Board has not discussed: over \$3 million has been spent on unsuccessful construction and design by the School System. She noted that the Board has yet to address whether this amount will be included in the bond or if it will be funded and forgiven.

The Chairman confirmed the consensus and directed the Manager to present a formal recommendation to the Board once it is ready.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve an additional \$421,038 in the Education Capital Fund (as recommended by the Manager for investigation projects and design for BHS renovation project phase 1), with an offer for county staff to manage contracts to expand TCS capacity as needed. The contract requirements in the FY 2025 budget ordinance including direct vendor pay apply. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McKelvey and unanimously approved.

The Manager will present a funding recommendation for lighting at the softball fields at the next meeting.

FY 2024 4TH QUARTER BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Budget and Management Analyst Jennifer Wright presented the FY 2024 4th Quarter Budget Amendments for the Board's approval. Based on policies approved by the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County through their annual budget ordinance and the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve certain amendments to the budget ordinance. Primarily, these are the types of budget amendments that by their nature require review/approval by a governing board:

1. Recognition of new revenues and appropriations for related expenditures
2. Appropriations of fund balance (whether assigned, committed, or restricted)
3. Transfers from one fund to another fund, if permitted statute by statute
4. Establishment of new special revenue funds, capital project funds, or fiduciary funds

A summary of the amendments for approval is below:

FY 2023 Retroactive Audit-Related Budget Amendments

During a normal audit process, retroactive budget amendments are typically made where needed. The following amendments were made as the FY 2023 audit process wrapped up.

Budget Amendment 71: Reflects the Board-approved \$44,000 draw-down of Little River Fire Department reserve funds to pay off debt so the department could purchase a new engine but keep debt payments the same. Effective 6/30/23.

Budget Amendment 72: Reflects the allocation of \$20,002.72 in matching funds for a grant from the Office of the State Fire Marshal, received by the Cedar Mountain Fire Department to purchase personal protective equipment in FY 2023. The Board of Commissioners approved the grant match on 8/22/22. Effective 6/30/23.

Budget Amendment 73: Recognizes and allocates an additional \$11,644 in Fines & Forfeiture revenue for FY 2023. Effective 6/30/23.

Budget Amendment 74: Allocates \$2.4 million in ARPA distributions to balance ARPA Revenue Loss expenditures at the end of FY 2023.

Budget Amendment 75: Recognizes and allocates an additional \$223,192 in sales tax at the end of FY 2023.

FY 2024 Quarter 4 Budget Amendments

Several budget amendments were approved through Board action during regularly scheduled meetings.

Budget Amendment 32: Reflects reallocations of funds from underbudget or canceled projects, as requested by the School System in December, and updates approved budget amounts, based on Board of Commissioners action, in Fund 41 - Education Capital Projects. Effective 6/11/24.

Budget Amendment 45: Recognizes and allocates \$20,000 received from the Dogwood Health Trust leverage fund for Public Health to pay Innovative Funding Partners for their work on the SAMHSA grant. Effective 4/8/24.

Budget Amendment 46: Appropriates \$7,500 from the fund balance to Elections to complete the purchase of five ExpressVote printers as approved by the Board of Commissioners on 12/11/23. Effective 4/10/24.

Budget Amendment 49: Recognizes and allocates a \$5,000 St. Philip's Episcopal Emergency Grant for the Silver Squirrels senior transportation program, as approved by the Board on 4/8/24. Effective 4/11/24.

Budget Amendment 50: Recognizes and allocates a \$5,000 sponsorship from Pardee for the County's Human Resources Department to conduct employee-focused wellness activities. Effective 4/16/24.

Budget Amendment 53: Establishes the budgets for three new multiyear Agreement Addenda from the State of North Carolina for Public Health program guidance and funding totaling \$317, 894: 117 PH Infrastructure Workforce Development, 118 Regional Foundational Capabilities Development, and 121 ARPA TSF (Temporary Savings Fund) Public Health Services. Effective 4/18/24.

Budget Amendment 54: Allocates \$3,550 in revenue from the US Marshals Service to overtime wages for the Narcotics Task Force. Effective 4/18/24.

Budget Amendment 56: Moves the Community Appearance Initiative grant funds out of the General Fund (10) and sets up the project as a Multi-Year Grant Fund (57). Recognizes and allocates a \$60,000 grant from the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority which will be received over the three-year duration of the grant. The Community Appearance Initiative is led by the Planning and Community Development Department, in collaboration with the Solid Waste and the Environmental Health Departments, as approved by the Board on 10/9/2023. Effective 4/24/24.

Budget Amendment 57: Recognizes and allocates funds from the NC 911 Board for Cybersecurity remediation, as approved by the Board of Commissioners on 2/12/24 and 4/22/24. The remediation funds will reimburse the County for \$39,877.18 spent on Multifactor Authentication and a Security Event Manager. Effective 4/25/24.

Budget Amendment 58: Establishes the following grant funds in a Multi-Year Grant Fund (57) account: As previously approved by the Board, the Transportation Department was awarded \$30,000 in grant funds from the Pisgah Health Foundation to support an expansion of the County's transit system. The funds will be used toward the hiring of a part-time transit driver to make scheduled trips outside the existing service area to meet the increased demand for services. Effective 5/6/24.

Budget Amendment 59: Appropriates \$131,950 from the PSAP Fund Balance to complete the purchase of new 911 console furniture and radio consoles from vendor Zetron, as approved at the 12/11/23 Board meeting. Effective 5/14/24.

Budget Amendment 63: Recognizes and allocates grant funds from the NCOSBM Directed Grant III (previously approved by the Board) to establish a multi-year capital project budget in Fund 40 for the construction of the new Woodruff Landfill Cell and related expenses. Effective 6/18/24.

Budget Amendment 64: Updates the budgets for the Sylvan Valley Project Phase 2, supported by a \$1.5 million Golden LEAF grant for construction, a \$150,000 Transylvania Economic Alliance grant for professional services/architectural design, and a \$3.75 million match from County funds, as approved by the Board in FY 2022. Effective 6/3/24.

Budget Amendment 65: Establishes a new Multi-Year Grant Project Budget (Fund 57) for the infrastructure-related \$2 million Dogwood Health Trust grant (as approved by the Board), which will be used to fund the Comprehensive Housing Study (being conducted by the firm TPMA) and related assessment and implementation. Effective 6/6/24.

Budget Amendment 67: Establishes \$963,500 in project budgets for two NCDEQ grant-funded projects in Fund 37 Water and Sewer Capital Projects. Project 80005 represents the Rosman/Brevard Sewer Interconnection, and Project 80006 represents the Watershed and Stream Reclassification Study, both approved by the Board of Commissioners as part of Request for Funding S.L. 2021-180 Appropriated Projects with the NCDEQ Division of Water Infrastructure. Effective 6/11/24.

Budget Amendment 68: Allocates \$389,786 in designated funds for County employees' longevity and vacation payouts throughout FY 2024.

At a future meeting, Ms. Wright will present additional pending budget amendments to finalize the fiscal year.

Chairman Chappell invited comments and questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Chapman encouraged employees to utilize their vacation time.

Commissioner Dalton inquired about fines and forfeitures, confirming that these funds from the court system are meant for teacher supplies, as long as requests are made. The Manager clarified that these funds are transmitted directly to the School System; the County's Finance Department issues a check directly to them. Commissioner Dalton noted ongoing concerns about teachers not receiving their supplies, despite the availability of funding through fines and forfeitures.

Commissioner McCall moved to receive the budget changes report through June 30, 2024, and to approve the budget amendments as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chapman, and unanimously approved.

FY 2023 AUDIT UPDATE

The Manager reminded the Commissioners that in June 2023, while preparing for the FY 2023 Audit, the County's Finance Director resigned. Recruitment for a replacement began that summer, leading to the hiring of Meagan O'Neal in October 2023. Upon her arrival, she not only managed current fiscal responsibilities but also had to familiarize herself with prior events to complete the audit. As a result of the temporary finance operations in place, there was no significant progress on the audit from June to October 2023.

County audits have become increasingly challenging due to additional testing of various programs, grants, and funding streams. There are growing requirements for tracking financial items, such as leases. In some counties, the cost of software to track leases can exceed the cost of the leases themselves, but this is a requirement that counties in North Carolina must follow.

Due to these factors, many counties in the State are experiencing delays in completing audits. For FY 2021 and 2022, the County finalized its audit in the spring. County staff expect to submit the final audit in early August, the latest completion in at least the last 10 years.

The Manager shared this information with the Board for transparency and informed them that the staff will present a revised audit contract for approval at the next meeting. This contract will reflect the additional support the County received from the auditor. Additionally, the County plans to appeal to the Local Government Commission, which has confirmed that Transylvania County qualifies for an appeal to prevent

sales tax withholding as a penalty effective July 1. The Manager reported that the County is still on track to sell bonds in October, despite the late submission of the FY 2023 Audit.

The Manager thanked the new Finance Director Meagan O’Neal for her dedicated hours in completing the audit. She is addressing current issues to ensure smoother audit processes in the future. The Manager also expressed gratitude to Budget and Management Analyst Jennifer Wright, another recent County hire, for her assistance in researching transactions and supporting the audit's completion.

Chairman Chappell acknowledged that this audit has been particularly challenging for staff due to various factors, noting that counties across the State are facing similar setbacks related to changes in software and accounting procedures. Many firms are choosing not to contract with local governments for audits, presenting a continuing challenge for counties. He considered this a potential legislative goal for submission to the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners but was uncertain how to frame the language, given its widespread impact. The pool of auditors is shrinking and becoming more expensive, with only a few firms willing to conduct local government audits.

Commissioner Chapman noted that the NCACC provides regular updates on this issue. The primary concern is the declining interest among accounting firms in performing audits for local governments, particularly for smaller entities.

LIBRARY BROADBAND E-RATE PROJECT

Nathanael Carver, the Information Technology Director, announced that the IT Department has collaborated with Library staff to develop a strategy for modernizing the library's aging public access infrastructure. With the Library eligible for 85% Category 2 funding through E-rate, staff applied for funding to acquire new hardware, marking the first time the County has secured such funding. This also opens the door for annual Category 2 funding in the future to further enhance the Library's public infrastructure.

The funds will replace outdated network equipment and add seven additional wireless access points, enabling the Library to achieve the 2-gig speeds the County currently pays for through E-rate Category 1. If approved, IT can promptly order the equipment, especially given some existing failures. Mr. Carver expects project completion within a couple of weeks.

Commissioner McCall moved to accept the E-Rate Category 2 funding of \$67,688.89 and allocate the required \$15,092.84 match from the general fund. Commissioner Dalton seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Chairman Chappell thanked the IT staff for their work up until the meeting to address equipment failures in the Chamber.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager shared that she spent the morning with her daughter, who had wisdom teeth surgery, balancing her roles as a mother and manager. While she feels she has already addressed the professional context of the wrestling facility, she emphasized that project advancement requires collective agreement from various stakeholders. She also wanted to clarify concerns regarding her integrity raised publicly last week. She chose a career in public service, while her children were born into it. She strives to keep her personal life separate, shielding them from public scrutiny, which is why her Facebook only identifies her by name and focuses on family. Reflecting on her oldest daughter’s first day of preschool, she felt a deep connection to both her child and the other kids who would shape her daughter’s experiences. Her professional choices impact the community where her children are growing up in Transylvania County, and she wants to ensure it is a nurturing environment for them and future generations. As a dedicated mother, she supports her youngest daughter in wrestling, one of the fastest-growing sports for women, and encourages all young athletes at

Brevard and Rosman High Schools. Proud of the progress made in the County, she emphasizes the importance of these initiatives for the community. Although her youngest daughter is entering her sophomore year and may not witness many of these improvements, she is proud that the wrestling facility will benefit younger girls. She appreciates the ongoing projects that serve the community, reinforcing her commitment to creating a better environment for all children in Transylvania County. She hopes the community recognizes her investment rather than criticizing her for it.

The Manager announced a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new EMS Base on Thursday, July 18, at 2:00 p.m., followed by an open house. Congressman Edwards, Senator Corbin, and Representative Clampitt have been invited, as they played key roles in securing funding for this important community facility.

Commissioner McCall expressed her appreciation for the County Manager's comments, stating she was disturbed by recent insinuations. Drawing from her experience as a former manager with the National Park Service, she always emphasized putting family first. She commended the Manager for prioritizing her family and criticized those who suggest otherwise as small-minded. Commissioner McCall thanked the Manager for her leadership, affirming that the County is fortunate to have her and appreciating her love for her family.

Commissioner Chapman reflected on when the Board hired Ms. Laughter as Manager and recalled meeting her and her two daughters at Pisgah Forest Elementary School. He noted the evident love she had for her children and expressed deep appreciation for all she has done for the County, emphasizing her bright future ahead.

Chairman Chappell asserted that there is no better advocate for Transylvania County than the County Manager. He praised her dedication as a public servant and her deep care for the community. Reflecting on their first interaction during the interview process, he noted he was holding his son, which resonated with Ms. Laughter and demonstrated the Commissioners' commitment to family. Chairman Chappell expressed full trust in her recommendations, knowing she thoroughly vets and researches her decisions. He concluded that every citizen benefits from County Manager Jaime Laughter's service, calling any implication to the contrary ridiculous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman announced that the Commissioners should have received notice regarding the election of a District Director for District 16 of the NCACC on July 22. He plans to submit his candidacy for the position and would appreciate the Commissioners' support. Chapman has served on the NCACC Board of Directors for several years, noting that while it requires significant travel, he enjoys representing District 16.

Commissioner Chapman discussed the turf field at Rosman, noting that Brevard High School already has a turf field, primarily funded by a generous donor, which cost about \$1 million. In contrast, the estimated cost for the turf at Rosman is \$2 million. He highlighted that there has been no financial plan for replacing the turf at Brevard High School, despite it being ten years since installation, and no funds have been set aside for its replacement. Chapman urged the Board of Education to allocate replacement costs in their annual budget to ensure future sustainability.

Commissioner Chapman thanked citizens for attending the meeting, noting that some tend to make negative comments at the beginning and leave before staff present any facts. He encouraged everyone to seek accurate

information about the issues the Board is addressing. He expressed frustration with having to respond to comments that are not grounded in facts.

Commissioner McKelvey expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the Board. He looks forward to collaborating with the County Manager and the Clerk to the Board, as well as working alongside the Board of Education to address the needs of the schools. He appreciates the support he has received from fellow Commissioners and their efforts to welcome and educate him on the relevant issues.

Commissioner McCall highlighted the significant accomplishments of the past three and a half years, emphasizing their transformative impact on Transylvania County. She welcomed Commissioner McKelvey to the Board and looks forward to collaborating on future achievements. McCall offered her support and noted the County Manager and Clerk to the Board as valuable resources for him.

Commissioner Dalton welcomed Commissioner McKelvey and offered his assistance. He addressed public comments from a previous meeting that incorrectly claimed the County has tens of millions in unused economic development funds. He clarified that the County is awaiting \$10 million from the State for water and sewer projects, not economic development, highlighting that these utilities are owned by the local municipalities. Additionally, the County received \$7 million for solid waste and \$2.5 million for agricultural purposes in partnership with Henderson County. Commissioner Dalton also highlighted successful efforts to secure \$13 million in water and sewer funding for the City of Brevard and \$10 million for the Town of Rosman, which were directly allocated to the municipalities. He emphasized the importance of sharing accurate information with the public.

Chairman Chappell congratulated Commissioner McKelvey on his appointment, emphasizing that his vote is just as important as those of more tenured Commissioners. He looks forward to his contributions to the Board, noting his business background, enthusiasm, and strong family ties. He also offered his assistance at any time. Additionally, Chairman Chappell proposed taking a group photo of the Board at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner McCall moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.**

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board