

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 24, 2025 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, February 24, 2025, at 6:00 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, Teresa McCall, and Chase McKelvey. County Manager Jaime Laughter and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan were also present. Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton was out of town but participated via Zoom meeting software. County Attorney Bill Bulfer also participated via Zoom meeting software.

There were approximately 50 people in the audience, including staff presenters.

Media: Laura Denon – *The Transylvania Times*

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

WELCOME

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following remarks reflect the opinions and viewpoints of the speakers.

Hannah Bowers: Ms. Bowers requested the Board consider extending the property tax reassessment appeal deadline by 30 days to allow residents more time to review records and gather comparable sales data. She provided a handout with guidance on the appeal process.

Elizabeth Riggs and Kathy Balistreri expressed concerns about the timing of the tax reassessment, citing the impact of artificially inflated property values due to the post-COVID housing market. Ms. Riggs, a recent resident, noted that many Lake Toxaway homeowners are worried about rising taxes. Ms. Balistreri, a local realtor, emphasized that the market peaked with competitive bidding in 2021, drawing comparisons to the 2007 housing bubble and subsequent crash.

Charles Merrill: Mr. Merrill, a property owner, voiced frustration over significant increases in property valuations, noting discrepancies between his two adjoining properties. He rents his homes at affordable rates but fears he may have to raise rents or displace tenants due to higher tax burdens. He sought clarification on how the reassessment impacts rental properties.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

The Manager requested the removal of Item A – New Courthouse Programming under New Business. She explained that she would be meeting with the architect later this week or early next week to discuss the current and future status of the project.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey, and unanimously approved.

The Board approved the following:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, February 10, 2025, and following met in a closed session in which the minutes were sealed. The Board approved the minutes as submitted.

JANUARY 2025 DISCOVERY, RELEASE, & MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT

Per N.C.G.S. § 105-312 (b), the Tax Administrator is responsible for ensuring that all property not properly listed during the regular listing period is assessed and taxed. Additionally, per N.C.G.S. § 105-381 (b), the Tax Administrator must provide a monthly report to the Board of Commissioners detailing actions taken on requests for release or refund, which must be recorded in the minutes. For January 2025, the report included: Tax dollars released - \$2,197.56; Refunds issued - \$2,022.24. The Board approved the January 2025 Discovery, Release, and Monthly Settlement Report as submitted.

2024 DELINQUENT TAX LIST

Per N.C.G.S. § 105-369 (a), the advertisement of delinquent taxes is required. Before publication, the Board of Commissioners must approve the list. Any delinquent taxes paid prior to the advertisement date will not be published. The Board approved the 2024 Delinquent Tax List and ordered Tax Administrator Jessica McCall to advertise the list per statute.

VAYA HEALTH FISCAL MONITORING REPORT – FY 2025 Q2

Per N.C.G.S. § 122C-117 (c), local management entities (LMEs) and managed care organizations (MCOs) must present quarterly Fiscal Monitoring Reports (FMRs) to the Board of Commissioners. The report must be read into the minutes. Vaya Health's FY 2025 second quarter FMR covers its financial statistics through December 31, 2024.

- Current actual revenues \$796,176,890 (107.06% of annualized budget)
- Current actual expenditures were \$190,947,002 (106.36% of annualized budget)
- Current net gain from operations of \$5,229,888
- Fund balances:
 - \$0 restricted for risk reserve
 - \$91,862,070 restricted for statute, prepaids, and investments in fixed assets
 - \$88,667,775 unrestricted
- Total operating cash of \$289,932,789 net of risk reserves
- The total spendable cash estimate is \$200,472,688

The Board received the Vaya Health Fiscal Monitoring Report for FY 2025 Q2. The Clerk to the Board entered the report into the minutes as required per N.C.G.S. § 122C-117 (c).

PROCLAMATION DECLARING MARCH AS SOCIAL WORK MONTH IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

The Board approved a Proclamation Declaring March as Social Work Month in Transylvania County. Social workers at Transylvania County DSS play a vital role in protecting and supporting the community's most vulnerable populations. This proclamation recognizes their dedication and the essential services they provide.

**Proclamation # 04-2025
Social Work Month 2025
Social Work: Compassion + Action**

WHEREAS, people have entered the social work profession for generations because they genuinely care about helping improve the welfare of people, families, communities and our nation; and

WHEREAS, this year's Social Work Month theme, "Social Work: Compassion + Action," embodies the fact that social workers go through years of education and training, so they have the skills and expertise to transform their care for others into action that brings positive results; and

WHEREAS, the primary mission of the Social Work profession is the enhancement of human well-being and meeting the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of those who are vulnerable and living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, the Social Work profession is one of the fastest growing professions in the United States, with more than 800,000 people expected to be employed as Social Workers by 2033; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers work in all parts of our society helping people, families and communities secure services they need to thrive; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers are at the forefront of pressing issues our nation is addressing, including increased needs for mental health care, especially for children and adolescents; and substance use disorder treatment; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers help protect millions of children from abuse and neglect, provide services and support, which helps strengthen families that are under stress, and help create new families through adoption; and

WHEREAS, research proves the presence of Social Workers in schools, hospitals, and assisted living facilities improve education and health outcomes and quality of life for students, patients and residents;

NOW THEREFORE, in recognition of the numerous contributions made by Transylvania County's Social Workers, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners proclaims the month of March 2025 as National Social Work Month in celebration and support of the Social Work profession.

This the 24th day of February 2025.

S://Jason R. Chappell
Chairman, Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

PROCLAMATION PROCLAIMING MARCH AS NATIONAL ATHLETIC TRAINER MONTH IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

The Board approved a Proclamation Proclaiming March as National Athletic Trainer Month in Transylvania County. This recognition highlights the invaluable contributions of athletic trainers, particularly those

provided by Pardee, who support athletic programs at Rosman and Brevard. An event celebrating their dedication will be held on March 7 at the VFW in Hendersonville, honoring trainers serving schools across four counties.

**PROCLAMATION #05-2025
PROCLAIMING MARCH AS NATIONAL ATHLETIC TRAINING MONTH**

WHEREAS, athletic trainers have a long history of providing quality health care for athletes and those engaged in regular physical activity based on specific tasks, knowledge and skills required through their nationally regulated educational processes; and

WHEREAS, athletic trainers are highly skilled health care professionals who specialize in immediate, acute and emergency care; examination, assessment and diagnosis; injury prevention; risk management; therapeutic intervention; and rehabilitation of injury and illness; and

WHEREAS, the National Athletic Trainers' Association represents and supports more than 45,000 members of the athletic training profession employed in the following settings: professional sports, colleges and universities, high schools, clinics and hospitals, corporate and industrial settings, and military branches; and

WHEREAS, leading organizations concerned with athletic training and healthcare have united in a common commitment to raise public awareness of the importance of the profession of athletic training and the role of athletic trainers in the provision of quality health care services; and

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners to promote improved healthcare for athletes and all of those who engage in physical activity;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim the month of March as National Athletic Training Month and calls upon residents to recognize athletic trainers for their honorable work in keeping the community healthy.

This the 24th day of February 2025.

S://Jason R. Chappell
Chairman, Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

DONATION OF SURPLUS SPEED TRAILER

The Board granted staff permission to give notice of the donation of a surplus speed trailer to the Haywood County Sheriff's Office. The Transylvania County Sheriff's Office has deemed the trailer non-functional and without value. Per N.C.G.S. § 160A-280, the County must post a notice at least five days before adopting a resolution approving the donation. Staff will present the resolution for approval at the next meeting.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

SEMI-ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS - FY 2026 BUDGET KICKOFF

During the FY 2026 budget kickoff, department heads presented semi-annual departmental reports summarizing their accomplishments for the first half of the fiscal year. They also highlighted trends and challenges that may influence future budget planning. These reports, along with supplemental materials, were provided in a separate notebook for the Board's reference.

The County Manager officially began the FY 2026 budget season with this second round of departmental presentations, emphasizing the importance of showcasing the County's work in serving citizens. Each

department was allocated five minutes for presentations, with exceptions for those overseeing multiple functions or elected offices. These reports serve as a snapshot to help the Board prepare for the upcoming budget discussions.

Due to the recent property revaluation, there were many citizen inquiries regarding the County's budget and revenue sources. The Manager reminded the Board that property tax is a key local revenue source for funding County services.

To maintain efficiency, the Manager enforced time limits on presentations; however, the Clerk to the Board included the full reports for reference. The Board was encouraged to submit questions after the meeting to keep the presentations on schedule.

Register of Deeds – by Register Beth Landreth

Accomplishments

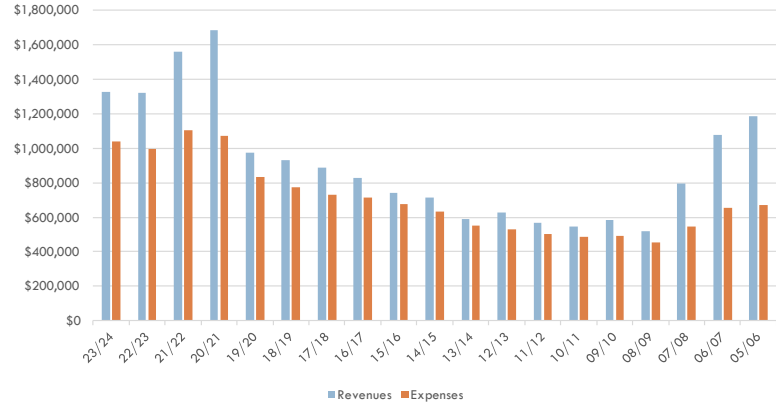
- Increased registered accounts for property fraud alerts by 38.5%, reaching 671 total.
- "Thank A Vet" Program: Issued 350 discount ID cards to veterans; 25 businesses participating.
- Continually updating online birth, death, and marriage indexes for research.
- Fully transitioned to NCDAVE, the new birth/death registration system in January 2024; completed the required training.
- Health Department and other registration partners now processing all new birth and death records using NCDAVE.
- Online marriage license applications and document submission are available for faster service.
- Back-indexed Corporate Books 1-5 for improved online access to historical real estate records.
- Increased to over 1,200 registered electronic document submitters.
- Collected 149.54% more revenue for passport services than budgeted due to high demand.

Trends

- Steady demand for electronic filing across real estate and vital records.
- Revenue exceeded expenses by \$300,000 in FY 2023-24 and is on track to do the same in FY 2024-25.
- The Passport Office expanded to four days per week in September 2023; increasing demand requires both primary and backup passport agents.

	Revenues	Expenses
23/24	\$1,328,798	\$1,037,897
22/23	\$1,318,722	\$998,375
21/22	\$1,559,915	\$1,103,649
20/21	\$1,684,048	\$1,073,892
19/20	\$972,155	\$832,537
18/19	\$932,115	\$773,410
17/18	\$888,316	\$731,103
16/17	\$828,667	\$715,745
15/16	\$742,300	\$673,690
14/15	\$712,395	\$630,274
13/14	\$587,837	\$550,637
12/13	\$627,526	\$528,717
11/12	\$566,379	\$505,013
10/11	\$546,435	\$484,451
09/10	\$583,735	\$489,674
08/09	\$520,773	\$453,591
07/08	\$794,111	\$544,651
06/07	\$1,078,630	\$654,080
05/06	\$1,188,040	\$668,984
04/05	\$843,057	\$496,965

Register of Deeds Comparison:
Revenues VS Expenses FY 04/05--FY 23/24

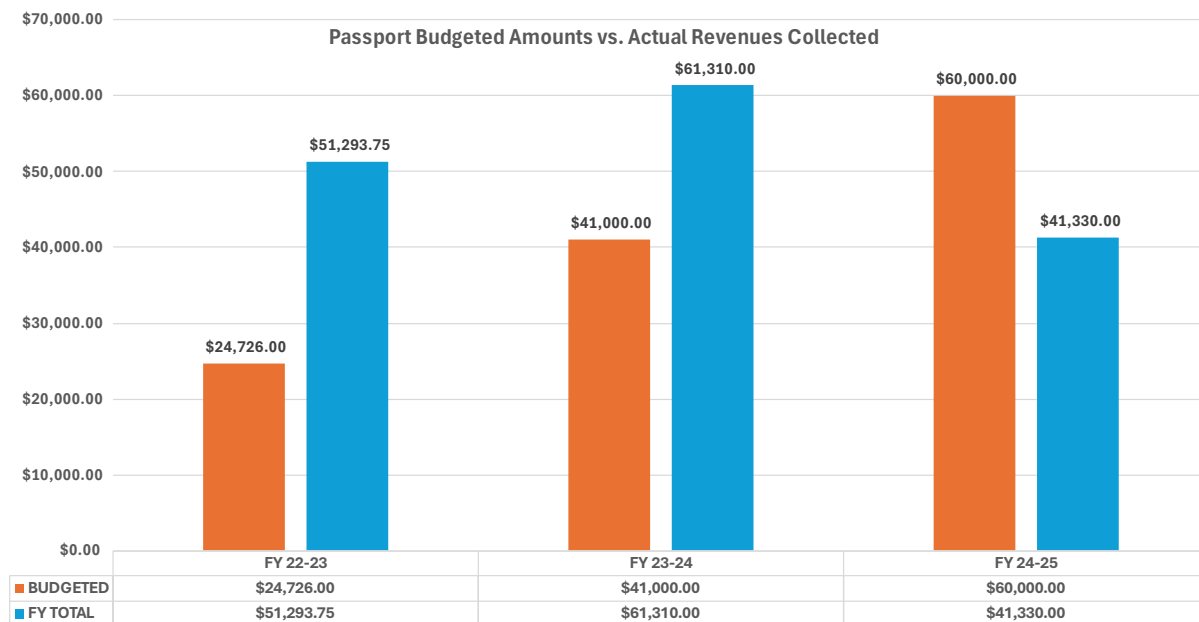


Passport Revenues Per Calendar Year

	2022	2023	2024	2025
January	\$3,035.00	\$5,505.00	\$6,925.00	\$12,190.00
February	\$3,610.00	\$5,450.00	\$6,200.00	
March	\$5,425.00	\$6,750.00	\$5,780.00	
April	\$3,430.00	\$6,193.75	\$5,400.00	
May	\$2,930.00	\$4,215.00	\$5,770.00	
June	\$2,260.00	\$5,250.00	\$4,860.00	
TOTAL	\$20,690.00	\$33,363.75	\$34,935.00	\$12,190.00
July	\$2,455.00	\$5,985.00	\$5,355.00	
August	\$4,055.00	\$6,225.00	\$5,160.00	
Sept.	\$2,480.00	\$3,720.00	\$3,680.00	
Oct	\$2,740.00	\$3,840.00	\$4,260.00	
Nov	\$2,905.00	\$3,945.00	\$5,050.00	
Dec.	\$3,295.00	\$2,660.00	\$5,635.00	
TOTAL	\$17,930.00	\$26,375.00	\$29,140.00	\$12,190.00
YEAR TOTAL	\$38,620.00	\$59,738.75	\$64,075.00	\$24,380.00

Passport Revenue Totals FY

	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	FY 24-25
July	\$2,455.00	\$5,985.00	\$5,355.00
August	\$4,055.00	\$6,225.00	\$5,160.00
Sept.	\$2,480.00	\$3,720.00	\$3,680.00
Oct	\$2,740.00	\$3,840.00	\$4,260.00
Nov	\$2,905.00	\$3,945.00	\$5,050.00
Dec.	\$3,295.00	\$2,660.00	\$5,635.00
TOTAL	\$17,930.00	\$26,375.00	\$29,140.00
January	\$5,505.00	\$6,925.00	\$12,190.00
February	\$5,450.00	\$6,200.00	
March	\$6,750.00	\$5,780.00	
April	\$6,193.75	\$5,400.00	
May	\$4,215.00	\$5,770.00	
June	\$5,250.00	\$4,860.00	
TOTAL	\$33,363.75	\$34,935.00	\$12,190.00
FY TOTAL	\$51,293.75	\$61,310.00	\$41,330.00
BUDGETED	\$24,726.00	\$41,000.00	\$60,000.00
		*this amount was amended from original budget of \$36,000.	



Goals

- Add hyperlinks in GIS deed references to connect directly to the deed website.
- Back-index and back-scan pre-1980 Condominium Plans.
- Increase the number of electronic submitters.
- Encourage more businesses to participate in the “Thank A Vet” program and register more veterans.
- Advertise to inform the public about fraud protection services.
- Maintain passport services compliance with State Department requirements and expand hours based on demand.
- Enhance online options for real estate and vital records access.
- Continue efforts to revamp and update the website.
- Ensure staff proficiency in the new electronic birth/death registration system.
- Promote the availability of out-of-county birth and death records through NCDAVE.
- Enhance training and service efforts to assist citizens better.

Fire Marshal – by Fire Marshal Scott Justus

Accomplishments

- Meeting state-mandated fire and life safety inspections for all businesses and commercial buildings, excluding private homes and agricultural farms.
- Completed 310 periodic inspections in six months, overseeing 1,825 total occupancies with varying inspection cycles.
- Moved from Emergency Reporting to ESO software for fire and rescue reporting, still refining system use.
- Reviewed 81 commercial plans requiring Fire Marshal approval.
- Investigated 44 fires, a 95% increase, collaborating with multiple agencies on arson cases.
- Completed 210 hours of training in fire investigations, code updates, and emergency management.
- Engaged in safety committees, emergency planning, school safety surveys, and other county initiatives.

- Provided fire safety education/training to daycare centers, county departments, and community groups.

Trends

- The number of commercial properties requiring inspection increased from 1,510 to 1,825 due to ongoing development.
- Persistent noncompliance by businesses not maintaining fire and life safety requirements and citizen complaints about unsafe businesses, especially in between scheduled inspections.
- Fire safety service companies are requesting the County join Brycer Compliance Engine, a no-cost service for tracking fire safety reports, already used by nearby jurisdictions.
- Effective July 1, the updated fire code will require inspections for food trucks, trailers, and commercial lodging properties, adding an estimated 150+ inspections.
- Fire investigations rose by 95% in 2024.
- Continued demand for commercial plan reviews, site visits, and early-stage consultations for new developments, including glamping sites, retreats, and subdivisions.

Goals

- Continue thorough inspections, emergency responses, and strong collaboration with law enforcement and investigative agencies.
- Submit a request to join Brycer, The Compliance Engine, to streamline fire safety report tracking and discuss updates to the Fire Prevention Ordinance.
- Work with the Administration to request funding for an additional full-time Assistant Fire Marshal/Inspector in the FY26 budget to meet increased inspection demands.

Information Technology – by Director Nathanael Carver

Trends

- A 5% rise in support tickets compared to last year, totaling 1,202 requests with an average 5-hour response time and a low 7% re-open rate.
- Processing 110,000 inbound emails per month, with 9,000 identified as spam or phishing attempts.
- 41% increase in unique device connections to public wi-fi (8,130 total) over the past six months, with 366 daily users consuming an average of 4.43GB of bandwidth.
- 67% of county bandwidth is utilized by the public.
- Decrease in email brute-force attacks due to Darktrace implementation and consistently low virus detection rates, reflecting strong user awareness.
- Fewer computer failures due to ongoing replacement of older devices.

Accomplishments

- IT staff certifications saved the county \$75,000 on software licensing fees.
- 100% of detected viruses were blocked before impacting users.
- Near completion of free outdoor Wi-Fi around public buildings and parks.
- Installed a Zoom Room for public use and halfway through implementing ADA-friendly workstations at the Library
- Assisting with a new Environmental Health Permitting App in the Health Department to streamline well and septic processes.
- Nearly completed transitions from Windows 10 to Windows 11.
- Upgraded downtown core infrastructure to a 10G backbone, with plans to extend it further.
- Secured a \$4 million Great Grant for Comporium to provide broadband expansion/fiber internet to 698 additional homes.

Goals

- Collaborate with NCDIT to ensure effective use of the additional \$5 million for broadband expansion.
- Continue upgrading wired and wireless network infrastructure.
- Add more outdoor public wi-fi access points across county campuses.
- Strengthen systems to ensure reliable county IT operations.
- Complete Windows 11 upgrades before Windows 10 reaches the end of life in 2025.
- Implement Multi-Factor Authentication for county user accounts to enhance security.

Library – by Director Rishard Finsel

Accomplishments

FY23/24	Population	Library Visits Per Capita	Program Attendance Per 1000 Capita	Checkouts Per Capita	Children's Checkouts Per Capita	E-Checkouts Per Capita
Transylvania	33,193	4.8	717	11.2	4.0	2.50
Appalachian Regional <i>Ashe, Watauga & Wilkes</i>	147,653	2.0	257	3.6	1.6	0.6
Bladen	29,153	1.0	333	1.2	0.8	0.2
Buncombe	277,047	2.7	140	7.1	2.4	2.70
East Albemarle <i>Camden, Currituck, Dare & Pasquotank</i>	121,569	1.8	277	3.5	1.1	0.4
Haywood	63,949	2.0	279	8.4	2.5	2.1
Henderson	120,597	3.0	234	8.3	2.9	2.1
Scotland	33,567	0.8	3	0.9	0.3	0.2
Fontana Regional <i>Jackson, Macon & Swain</i>	96,253	3.3	382	4.7	1.7	1.3
Sandhill Regional <i>Anson, Hoke, Montgomery, Moore & Richmond</i>	216,654	0.9	153	1.9	1.1	0.3
Statewide Average		2.2	316	4.2	1.7	1.1
Transylvania Rank (of the 71 County and Regional library systems in NC)		1	2	1	3	5

FY23/24

**The highest year EVER
for checkouts and
program attendance!**

372,507 checkouts
23,800 program attendees

Q1 & 2: July – December 2024

	2023	2024	% change
Library Visits	78,667	80,267	2%
New Patrons	923	995	8%
Program Attendance	10,639	11,140	5%
Public Computer Use	5,292	4,888	-8%
Wireless Internet Sessions	9,376	15,323	63%
Total Checkouts	186,942	176,572	-6%

- Notable Programs & Services
 - Transylvania Times digitization: 1976-1996
 - Field Trips for Grownups
 - Collaborations with public land organizations
 - Smokey Bear fire prevention, with FIND Outdoors and Pisgah Ranger District
 - Topography course, with Dupont
 - Noontime Notions Science Spotlight: AI, physics, nuclear energy, etc.
 - Author visits: Ron Rash, Jason Mott, Pam Houston & more
 - Disaster relief support
 - Zoom pass expansion, including the Brevard Music Center
 - Tech updates: better mobile printing, teleconferencing options, public computers, network infrastructure
 - Chautauqua historical interpreters
 - Super Soaked Saturday – 1,237 attendees
 - New furniture
 - Launched a cookbook club and a mending circle
 - NC Reads and World Affairs book discussion groups
 - Yoga year-round
 - Amphitheater concerts drew big crowds
 - McDowell Speaker Series: Rick Steves and Drew Lanham

Goals

- Plan for the future of Bookmobile and outreach efforts to serve remote and underserved areas better.
- Advocate for including part-time Library Pages in the County's pay system.

- Assess staff responsibilities for efficiency and redistribute duties as needed.
- Work with County and community organizations to enhance educational, social, and recreational programs.
- Expand hands-on services to support diverse learning styles for all ages.
- Explore and implement policies that make Library services more accessible.
- Continuously assess programs to align with the Library's mission of learning, gathering, and growing together.

Public Health – by Director Elaine Russell

Accomplishments

- Initiated legal review and updates of all agency policies using one-time public health funding.
- Secured credentialing with Aetna Insurance, which holds the state employee contract.
- CARE Coalition managed the allocation of opioid settlement funds, secured a second federal grant for jail-based substance abuse services, and formalized the role of Opioid Settlement Coordinator.
- Enhanced quality assurance processes across all clinical programs.
- Reestablished bacterial water testing capacity in Environmental Health.
- Completion of new Community Health Assessment priority-setting process (Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Maternal Health).
- Awarded USDA Gold Excellence in WIC Breastfeeding programs for four years due to high breastfeeding rates.
- Assisted in Hurricane Helene recovery efforts through shelter management, septic/well assessments, WIC emergency allowances, and communications.

Collaborations

- Partnered with the Sheriff's Office to provide counseling and re-entry support services for detainees in the Detention Center
- Completed a \$600,000 Department of Justice grant, serving 343 detainees in year two, reducing 12-month recidivism by 50%, and securing an additional \$1 million grant.
- Led a \$1 million regional agreement for workforce development, provided public health legal training, implemented a communications campaign through the WNC Health Network, secured a \$100,000 HRSA regional planning grant, and submitted a \$1 million HRSA implementation grant.

Trends

- Navigating Medicaid Managed Care claims including paid, denied, and clawback claims.
- Environmental Health seeing an increase in requests for repairs due to the overall number of systems, changes in use, and failures of older systems.
- Rising requests for STD treatment and partner notification services.

Goals

- Improve operations and service delivery for current programs and projects.
- Stay responsive to federal and state funding and policy changes.
- Develop a plan for future leadership transitions.
- Continue support for ongoing Helene recovery efforts.
- Ensure effective management of opioid settlement funds.

Emergency Management – by County Manager Jaime Laughter (on behalf of Director Kevin Shook)

Accomplishments

- Staff completed the required EMPG training courses, both virtually and in person.
- Maintained collaboration with emergency service partners, including Red Cross, volunteer departments, Public Health, and Social Services.
- Assisted to all Emergency Service agencies during incidents.
- Managed logistics requests before, during, and after Hurricane Helene. Coordinated NC State Emergency Management Team's onsite support for Hazard Mitigation Applications.
- Finalized the application process and project closeout for home elevation in Rosman after Tropical Storm Fred.

Trends

- Increasing integration of non-traditional agencies into emergency response.
- Growing demand for technical response capabilities, including high-angle, water, wilderness, and hazmat rescues.
- Continued requests from local and regional agencies for specialized services.
- Increasing use of GIS capabilities and specialty software like SarTopo in response efforts.
- Ongoing requests for commercial GPS data updates for private citizen use.
- Continued support for long-term recovery from Hurricane Helene.

Goals

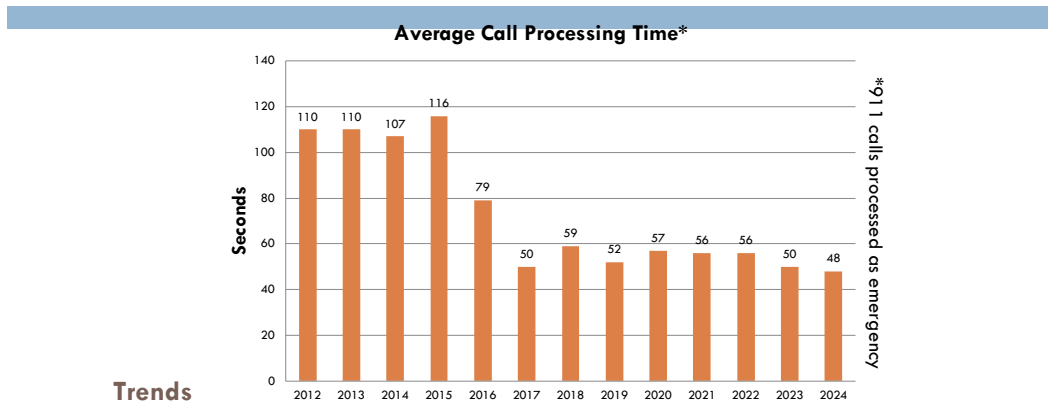
- Continue collaboration with local agencies, including volunteer fire/rescue, Red Cross, and non-traditional emergency service organizations.
- Advance operational planning for emergency services to improve response efficiency.
- Ensure the Emergency Operations Plan meets current state and federal requirements.
- Revise county ordinances to align with updated state and federal regulations.
- Implement Emergency Response Teams specialized in handling technical emergency calls.
- Develop a centralized GIS system to improve county operations and benefit staff and the public.
- Continue updating commercial GPS data for private citizen use through available sources.
- Complete the CBCG 2024 grant to upgrade disaster sheltering equipment.

Communications – by County Manager Jaime Laughter (on behalf of Director Kevin Shook)

Accomplishments

- Continued education, certification, and re-certification for all telecommunicators.
- Participated in multiple state board meetings and forums, both virtually and in person.
- Staff obtained specialized training, including Incident Tactical Dispatch, IT Services Unit Leader, Homeland Security Cybersecurity, and Communications Unit Leader.
- Improved and added features to the county's GIS system.
- Provided tactical telecommunicators for major events such as search and rescue and law enforcement operations.
- Managed thousands of calls and service requests during Hurricane Helene.
- Supported 52.7 million individual data requests through the GIS website, reflecting high usage and demand.

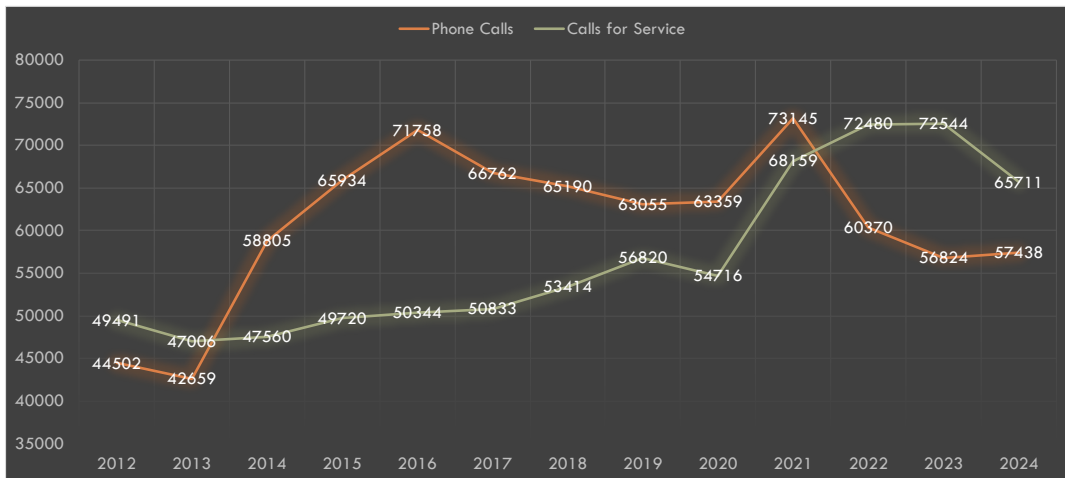
Trends



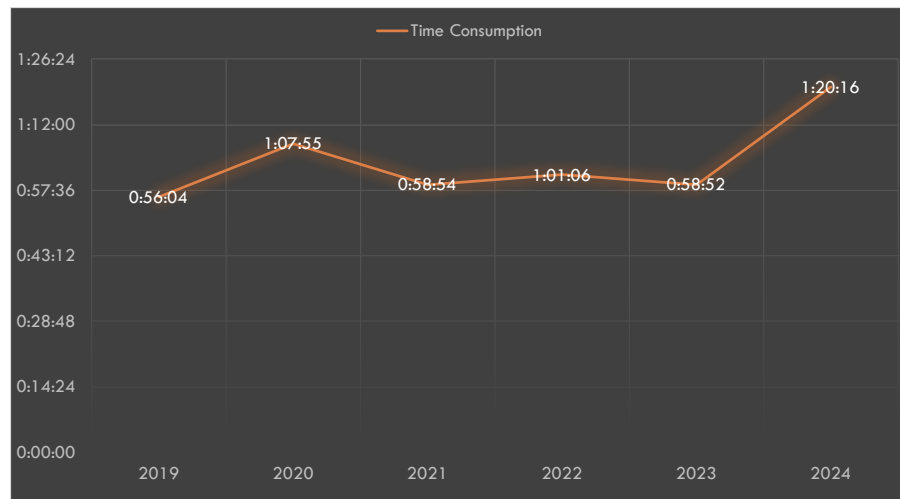
Trends

Call processing time continues to hold true under our goal of 60 seconds, 90% of the time.

Trends



Average time from CFS creation to close



*calls processed as emergency

Goals

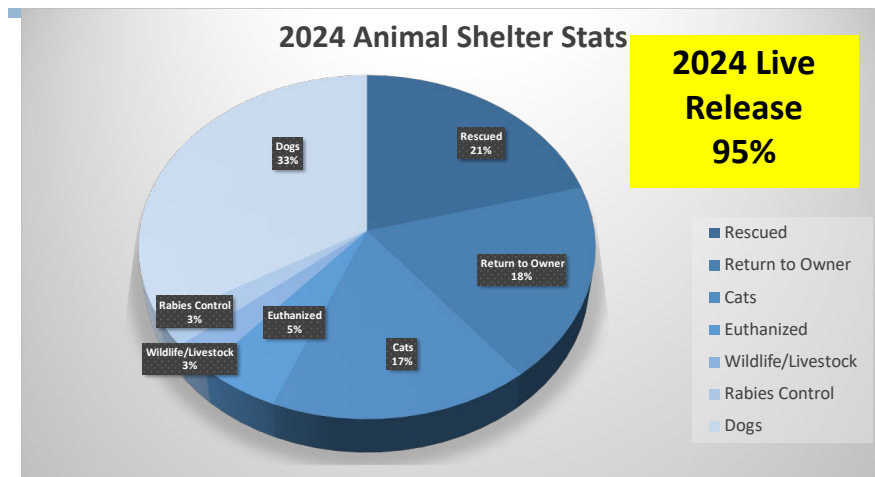
- Maintain ongoing education, certification, and re-certification for all telecommunicators.
- Continue improving the VHF simulcast radio system.
- Attend required training sessions, board meetings, and forums.
- Enhance tower and building sites to support current and future communication demands.
- Advance the countywide GIS platform to improve public transparency, staff efficiency, and emergency responder capabilities.
- Collaborate with the state 911 Board and NC DIT to implement cybersecurity improvements.
- Strengthen relationships with state and local agencies to support field operations.

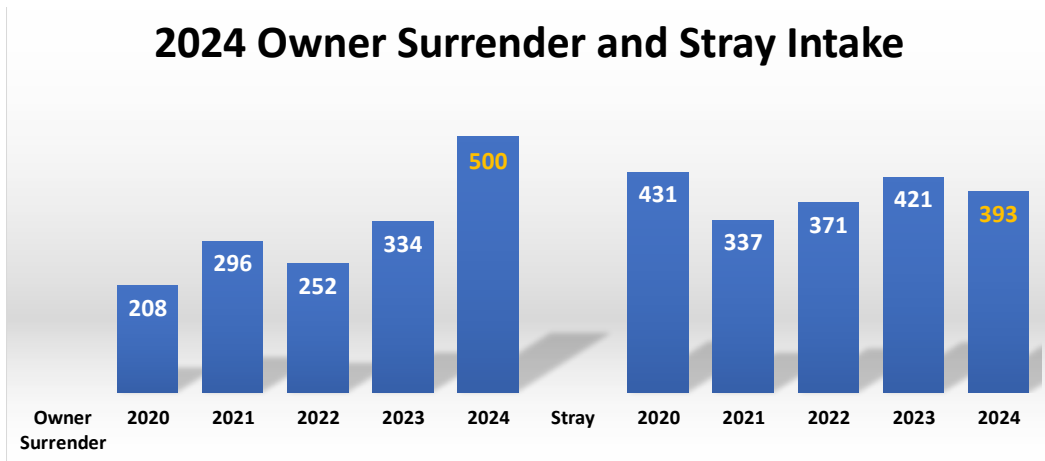
Animal Services – by County Manager Jaime Laughter (on behalf of Director Kevin Shook)

Accomplishments

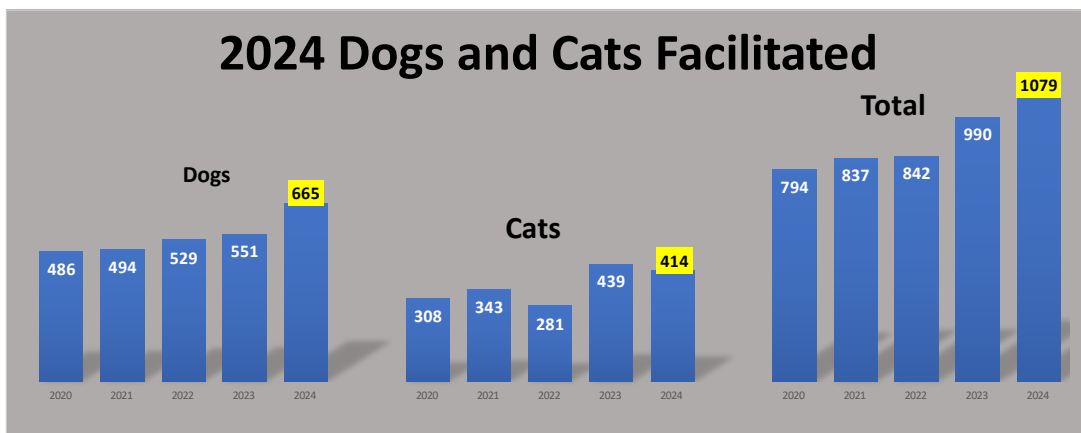
- Provided shelter for animals displaced by Hurricane Helene, with three still in care as owners secure permanent housing.
- Maintained a 95% Live Release Rate for 2024.
- Partnered with civic groups to distribute food and supplies to pet owners in need.
- Distributed nearly 80,000 pounds of pet food to the community.
- Secured weekly food and supply deliveries from the National ASPCA Foundation through April 2025 for continued community support.

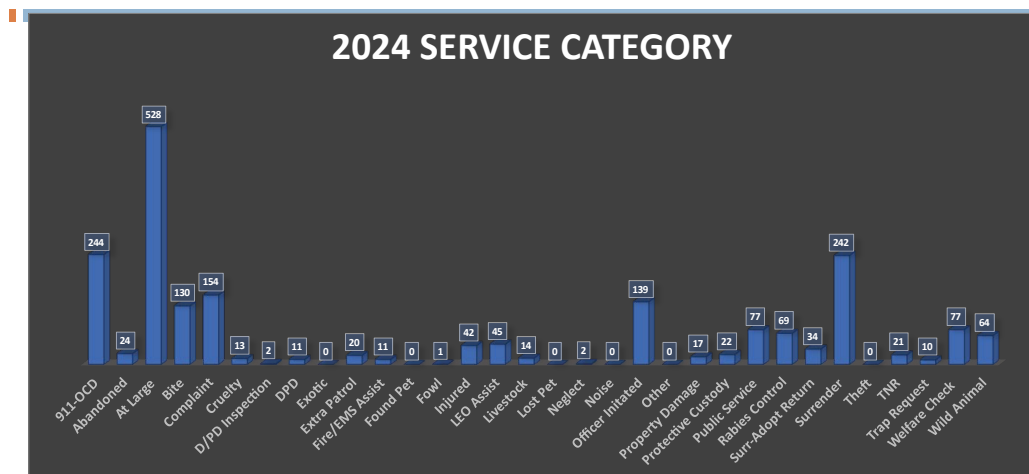
Trends





Key Operational Metrics	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Previous Year +/-
Service Request	1527	1110	1022	1041	1180	1185	0.4% increase
Total Animal Facilitated (dogs and cats ONLY)	1274	795	837	842	990	1079	9% increase
Live Release Rate	91%	92%	95%	95%	95%	95%	Stayed the Same
Animal Bites and Exposures	118	84	59	102	272	130	52% decrease





Goals

- Continue achieving a 90%+ live release rate.
- Provide training that aligns with national standards for all shelter personnel.
- Increase public awareness, with a focus on spay/neuter education and leash/containment laws
- Ensure efficient response times and effective community service.
- Upgrade vehicles:
 - Replace high-mileage Animal Control Vehicle (move current to spare and retire old spare).
 - Replace Mass Animal Transport Vehicle for better efficiency and reliability.
- Strengthening partnerships with rescue organizations for improved collaboration.

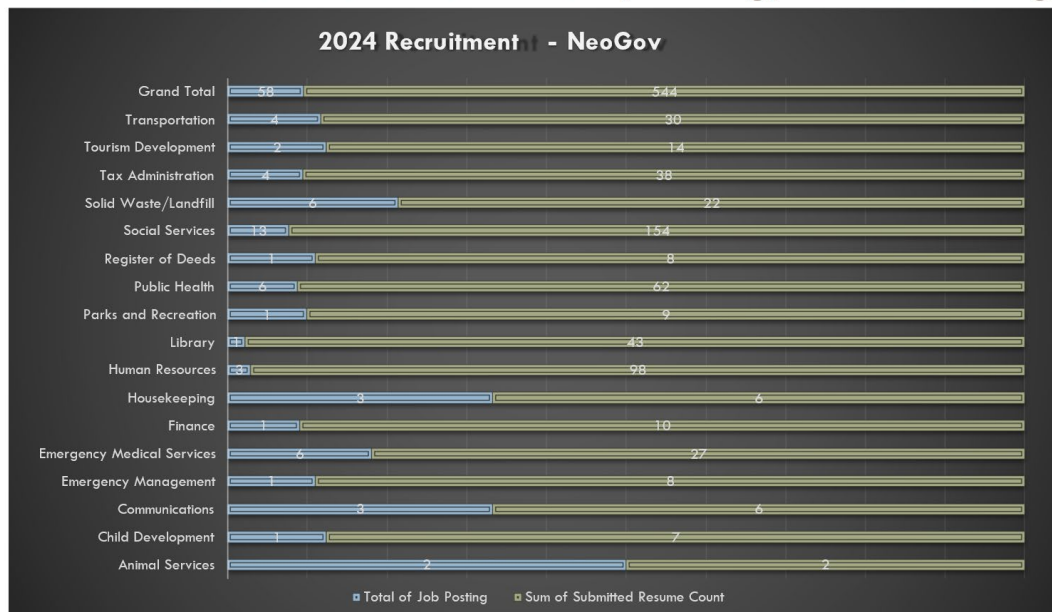
Human Resources – by Director Sheila Cozart

Accomplishments

- Implemented employee benefits portal; streamlined onboarding, reducing paperwork, redundancy, and errors.
- Staffing updates:
 - Administrative Assistant Retirement (January 2024):
 - NCACC Fellow temporarily filled the role for six months.
 - The position was reclassified to Benefits & Administrative Specialist.
 - Kendall Brackin was hired for the role in June 2024.
 - HR Program Manager Vacancy (September 2024):
 - Kendall Brackin was promoted after a competitive process in October 2024.
 - Temporarily filled both roles before recruitment.
 - Maggie Dodson was hired as Benefits & Administrative Specialist (December 9, 2024).

Trends

Human Resources- Recruitment, Hiring, Onboarding



- Employee Movement & Support:
 - New Hires:
 - Full-time-40
 - Part-time: 68
 - Resignations: 52 (30 Full-time, 22 Part-time)
 - Retirements: 12
 - Terminations: 16 (15 Part-time, 1 Full-time)
 - Job Status Changes:
 - Full-time to Part-time: 16
 - Part-time to Full-time: 22
 - Total County Employees Supported: 620
- Events and Employee Engagement:
 - Wellness Programs:
 - 4th Annual 5K (50 participants)
 - Mammo on the Go
 - What's Cooking Transylvania
 - Learning and Development:
 - 401k Webinars
 - Vision Day
 - Employee Recognition and Appreciation:
 - Employee Appreciation Day
 - Christmas Luncheon
 - Employee & Family Holiday Craft Market
 - 50/50 Raffle (to support DSS)
 - Service Awards:
 - 25 Years: 5 employees
 - 20 Years: 7 employees
 - 15 Years: 2 employees

- 10 Years: 13 employees
- 5 Years: 12 employees

Goals

- Enhance employee activities, training, and wellness programs.
- Improve NeoGov Utilization (Insight for recruiting, Onboard, and Learn via NCACC)
- Expand education and wellbeing initiatives with BCBSNC, Employee Wellness Center, Public Health, Cooperative Extension, Empower 401K, and Nationwide 457b
- Personnel Policy review and updates with the Administration and Personnel Board
- Celebrate employee and department successes.
- Strengthen recruitment strategies:
 - Host position/department-specific job fairs
 - Implement QR codes for quick access to job openings.

Finance – by Director Meagan O’Neal

Accomplishments

- FY 2023 Audit completion and transition to FY 2024 Audit
- Bond sale process initiation
 - Prepared for credit ratings
 - Created continuing disclosure policies
 - Prepared required financial documents
- Credit rating agency presentations
 - S&P rating: AA (3rd highest possible)
 - Moody’s rating: Aa1 (2nd highest possible)
- Financial recovery efforts for Hurricane Helene
- Closed on School GO bonds sale
 - Logged 50+ hours in FEMA Public Assistance training
- Completed FEMA Recovery Scoping kick-off
- Hired a new accountant following the retirement of a long-time employee
- Year-end payroll and accounts payable finalization

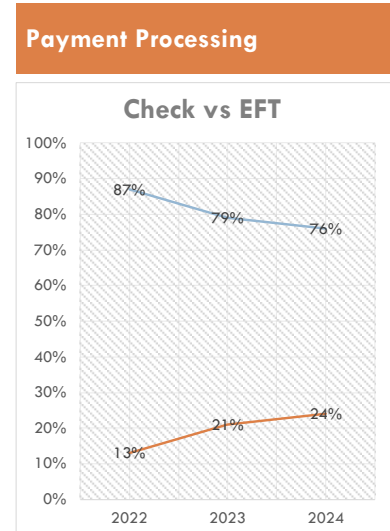
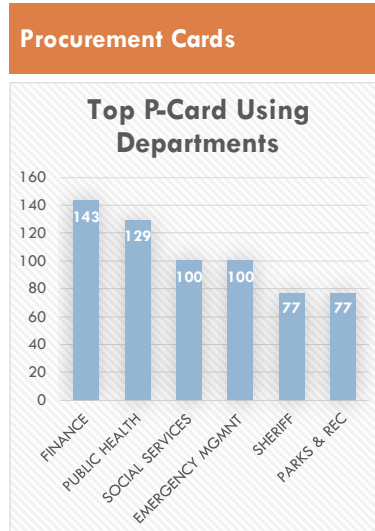
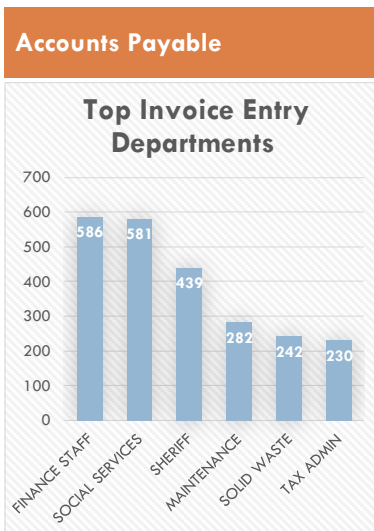
Challenges

- Optimizing financial software setup to improve efficiency
- Streamlining internal finance processes to eliminate redundant work

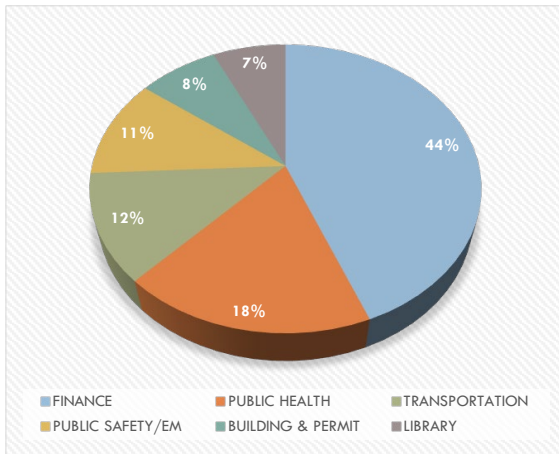
Trends

- Decentralized Financial Functions rely on Business Managers across departments for invoice and revenue entry.
- A high volume of transactions
 - 3,700+ invoices entered in the first six months of the year
 - 1,200+ procurement card transactions reconciled
- Increased use of procurement cards (P-Cards)
 - Departments trained in P-card reconciliation saw improved budget oversight.
- Vendor data cleanup and transition to electronic payments (EFTs)
 - A steady increase in EFTs reduces check stock, envelopes, MICR ink, and postage costs.
 - The three-year trend shows continued progress toward paperless payments.
- Revenue is recorded through receipts and decentralized deposits where departments process payments in Munis via Cash Deposit batches. Major contributors include Solid Waste, the Register of Deeds, Tax, and Public Health.

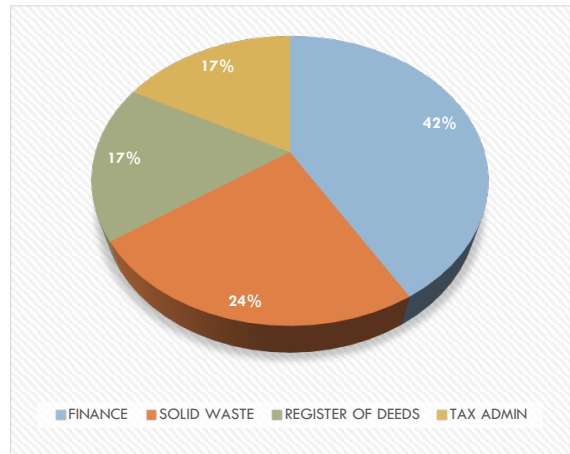
- Finance continuously monitors and reconciles 6 major bank accounts and 5 major investment accounts to ensure financial stability.
- EMS billing and collections:
 - A third-party vendor handles EMS billing, but Finance remains involved in collections.
 - In-house processing of insurance and individual payments received by mail.
 - 2023 vs. 2024 data shows decreased write-offs due to improved fee collection.
 - The payor mix remains stable, with Medicare payments comprising over half of revenue.
 - Human Resources and Finance collaborate annually on the Medicare Cost Plan to maximize reimbursements.
- Finance plays a key role in several committees and advisory groups, providing financial oversight and administrative support:
 - Juvenile Crime Prevention Council: Meeting minutes and quarterly financial review.
 - Tourism Development Authority (TDA): Monthly financial reports and quarterly financial presentations to the Board.
 - Council on Aging: Supports the Home and Community Care Block Grant application process and review of care provider applications.
 - Community Center Grant Review: Participates in the review of grant applications for Wi-Fi and capital projects.
- Ongoing projects
 - Major construction projects:
 - Sylvan Valley Industrial Center
 - School improvement projects
 - Landfill expansion
 - Courthouse project
 - Compliance with new GASB Standards: Adapting to new GASB accounting standards for FY 2024, with additional updates for FY 2026 already in progress.
 - FY 2024 Audit preparation



Cash Deposit Batches



General Receipt Batches



EMS Revenue

	2023	2024	Change
Net Charges	\$1,664,154	\$1,743,772	\$79,618
Write Offs	\$134,756	\$34,169	(\$100,587)
Payments	\$1,108,732	\$1,201,245	\$92,513
Net % Collected	66.5%	68.7%	2.2%

Primary Payor Mix

Payor	2023 % of Trips	2024 % of Trips
Medicare/Medicare Advantage	67%	65%
Medicaid/Medicaid MCO	12%	16%
Insurance	11%	10%
Patient	8%	6%
Other Govt. Payers	2%	3%

Administration – by County Manager Jaime Laughter

Accomplishments

- Core functions (4-person team: Manager, Clerk, Assistant County Manager, Budget & Management Analyst)
 - Managed volunteer recruitment, advertising, minutes, and logistics for 25 committees.
 - Coordinated Board of Commissioners meeting cycle, including agendas, minutes, and advertising (60 hours of meeting run time annually).
 - Oversaw budget preparation and monitoring for 11 outside agencies, 21 departments, and 20 different funds.
 - Supervised operations across 20 departments, 10 main operational sites, and over 500 employees
 - Provided administrative support to 2 elected offices and 11 outside agencies
 - Led capital planning, coordination, and grants management
 - Managed records (digital: 57.22 TB, plus paper records)
 - Conducted internal audits and policy development
 - Handled communications (website, social media, press releases, media requests)
 - Facilitated legal services, contracts, and legal processes
- Additional functions impacting capacity
 - Disaster management (2019-Present)
 - COVID-19 Response

- Tropical Storm Fred
 - Hurricane Helene
- Largest capital projects to date (scope and financial impact)
 - School projects
 - Courthouse
 - Infrastructure
 - Other government buildings/sites
- Secured over \$30 million in capital grants (unprecedented level)
- Temporary committee and advisory board participation
 - Blue Ridge Community College Strategic Planning Committee
 - Education Capital Committee
 - Housing Committee

Trends

- Public records requests (increase in volume and complexity – 30+ in the past year)
 - Vendor-driven requests (invoices/contracts)
 - Broad requests (multi-year emails, ex. 6-year school site visit emails = 715 records)
 - Grant document inquiries
- Policy and program development challenges
 - A wide range of services complicates policy standardization
 - Evolving legal and liability landscape
 - Employee engagement initiatives
 - Mental Health and Diabetes Program Survey
 - Computer Policy updates
 - Records Policy enhancements
- Increased communications needs and challenges
 - Changing information consumption habits (short attention spans for complex issues)
 - Storm-related communication challenges (digital infrastructure failures required alternative methods)
 - Public engagement trends
 - Historically low survey responses and attendance until an issue becomes urgent
 - Shift from traditional media to social media reliance
- No dedicated Public Information Officer or Communications staff
- Primary social media platform: Facebook (8 County pages, no plans to expand further)
- 2024 stats for the main County government page (including Storm impact):
 - 927,314 total views (116% increase in reach)
 - Photos outperformed videos and reels
 - 72% of audience = women, 40% located in Transylvania County
 - Top video: Storm press conference (15,400 people reached, 12,500 minutes watched)
 - Top 9 posts (storm-related): Most popular reached 103,000 users, 1,800 interactions
 - 10th most popular post: Calvert Convenience Center closure due to mama bear and cubs (11,000 reached)
 - Retained new followed post-storm (net increase of 1,868)
 - 1.4% increase in return viewers
- Meta Post Metrics (comparison to other local governments and community pages)
 - Above-average posting frequency
 - Higher follower count, follows, and interactions than similar pages

Goals

- Advance capital projects

- Enhance financing and grants management to maximize funding opportunities
- Increase communication and public engagement
- Implement technology and equipment replacement schedules

The Manager concluded the presentations, acknowledging the overwhelming amount of information but emphasizing its value in demonstrating the scope of work within county government. She highlighted the dedication of employees who provide essential services and prepare budgets to sustain those efforts.

Chairman Chappell expressed gratitude to all departments for their presentations, underscoring the importance of showcasing the contributions of county employees. He noted that these insights will help the Board make well-informed decisions during the budget process.

MONTHLY CAPITAL UPDATE

The Board of Commissioners has requested a monthly update from the County Manager on the status of capital projects. These updates will be provided during a regular meeting once a month.

Key Highlights

- Over \$150 million in capital projects are currently in development, underway, or planned.
- Approximately \$30 million in grant funding has been secured, excluding broadband funding allocated directly to local providers.
- Updates will be provided at the Board's second monthly meeting and posted on the County's website to keep the public informed.

Fixing Transylvania County Schools – Step One: Investment in Capital Projects at All Nine Schools

- A subcommittee has been established, consisting of:
 - Two Board of Education members
 - Two County Commissioners
 - County Manager
 - Superintendent
- Recent actions:
 - The subcommittee held its first meeting and approved the Brevard High School Scope #1 architect contract.
 - In March, the subcommittee will select architects and interview project manager candidates.
- A Five-Year Educational Capital Funding Plan is available on the County website.

The Manager emphasized that these projects (highlighted in blue in the graphic below) have been negotiated to be managed by the County in a supportive role, specifically for defined project scopes. She compared the process to a baker handing over a recipe—the County is managing the defined projects for the School System while ensuring that the agreed-upon scopes are followed.

Major Education Projects Approved and Funded from 5 Year Plan					
Project		Time Frame	Current Budget	Funding Method	
	RHS, RMS, RES, TCHES SOI Rosman Area Renovation Scope	Roofs, HVAC, Boilers, Electrical Upgrades, Exterior repairs, construct security vestibules where needed. <i>Note- some work will have to be completed in summer</i>	FY 25-28	\$ 16,707,282.00	FY 24 Bond Sale
	BMS, BES, PFE, DRS SOI Brevard Area Renovation	Roofs, HVAC, Boilers, plumbing, electrical, window replacements, security vestibules where needed, exterior repairs <i>Note- some work will have to be completed in summer</i>	FY 25-28	\$ 14,673,792.00	FY 24 Bond Sale
	BHS SOI Scope #2	Roofs, HVAC, Boilers, plumbing, electrical, window replacements, security vestibule <i>Note- some work will have to be completed in summer</i>	FY 25-28	\$ 10,477,407	FY 24 Bond Sale
	SYS SOI Security System Upgrades	Security System Upgrades at all 9 schools	FY 25-28	\$ 2,954,495.00	FY 24 Bond Sale
	BHS SOI Scope #1 Revised	Old Gym roof, masonry repair, window replacement <i>Can move forward while school in session. Design factored back in scope from 5 Year Capital Plan</i>	FY 25-28	\$ 2,052,156	FY 24 Bond Sale
Project Pair	SYS Underground Storage Tank Professional Services	Prepare plan for removal of 8 aging oil storage tanks	FY 25	\$ 165,000.00	Cash
	SYS Underground Storage Tank Construction	Removal and replacement as needed	FY 25-28	\$ 2,249,940.00	FY 24 Bond Sale
	RHS Turf Field	Convert Football field to Turf Facility	FY 25-26	\$ 2,425,000	Cash
	BHS SOI Pre-engineered Wrestling Facility	Wrestling facility to accommodate men and women long term	FY 25-30	\$ 1,200,000.00	Cash
	RES SOI Playground	Playground Replacement	FY 25-30	\$ 500,000.00	Cash
	SYS SOI Fencing	Fencing repair and/or placement at 8 school sites per safety plan	FY 25-28	\$ 364,678.00	FY 24 Bond Sale
	BES SOI Playground	Replace Playground	FY 25-30	\$ 300,000.00	Cash
	BHS SOI Softball Lighting	Replace and repair softball lighting	FY 25-30	\$ 150,000.00	Cash
	RHS Retaining Wall Investigation	Structural Engineer Analysis to investigate stability and design and scope repairs if recommended. Construction project candidate for annual funding when results are known.	FY 25-30	\$ 50,000.00	Cash
	SYS SOI Asphalt Improvements 1 Scope	Asphalt projects at all sites following completion of major construction FY 25-28	FY 28	\$ 1,255,784.00	FY 24 Bond Sale
			Total : \$55,525,534		

Protecting Transylvania Natural Resources: Clean Water, Sanitary Sewer, Solid Waste Disposal, and Streambank Restoration

- The Emergency Water Protection (EWP) streambank restoration was near completion when Hurricane Helene caused damage. Since existing funds cannot be used for additional repairs, the County may seek another round of EWP funding.
- A project to connect the Town of Rosman and the City of Brevard's water systems for emergency use is progressing. The contract is in effect, and boring under the road is scheduled to begin this week.
- Plans for a new landfill cell, which will extend the life of the County landfill, are being revised after the initial bid process did not secure enough bidders. The County expects to rebid the project in March or April.
- The County has requested updated infrastructure planning documents from Brevard and Rosman. Both received ARPA grants to update asset inventories and capital improvement plans. The County has received Brevard's asset inventory and is awaiting Rosman's. Additionally, staff are gathering information on infrastructure that would support housing, following the Board's direction from the last housing-related agenda item.

Creating Jobs and Safe Community: New Space for Growing Businesses and Upgrading Public Safety

- Sylvan Valley Industrial Building – Phase 2: Construction is underway, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony expected in May.
- Hart Road Emergency Access & Flood Mitigation: In the permitting stage; the project is expected to move forward in the spring.
- Courthouse at Public Safety Complex: Programming will be presented to the Board at a meeting in March.

- Library Amphitheater Cover: Staff are finalizing the preferred design in coordination with the Library Foundation and will present a project budget to the Board for approval before proceeding with the project.

Spring Capital Planning Workshop

- Updated budget figures will be available for Courthouse and Schools.
- Brevard and Rosman received ARPA grants for asset inventory assessments of their water/sewer systems. The County is requesting copies of these along with their capital improvement plans to guide future investments. Brevard submitted its draft, and Rosman's is pending.
- The County has identified infrastructure resilience as a major issue in storm recovery and has a \$10 million state allocation to invest in countywide infrastructure improvements.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO HURRICANE/TROPICAL STORM HELENE

The Manager provided an update on Transylvania County's ongoing response to Hurricane Helene. She noted that updates will continue in future meetings as needed. The summary of her report is as follows:

- 4,753 Transylvania County households have registered for FEMA assistance.
- NC Emergency Management received a 24-month FEMA grant to provide case management services, helping survivors develop recovery plans and connect with resources, such as temporary housing (RVs) and repair assistance. Contact Disaster Case Management 1-844-746-2326 for assistance.
- 64 households have received or are in the process of receiving rental assistance.
- 57 households were approved, but only 5 have elected to use direct housing, with units in various stages of placement.
 - 17 chose to stay in their damaged dwellings
 - 25 found alternative housing
 - 5 plan to secure resources
 - 5 have not responded to outreach efforts
- On February 2nd, Governor Stein joined Dogwood Health Trust to announce a \$30 million small business grant program to support businesses impacted by Hurricane Helene and bolster economic recovery. Small businesses with an annual revenue of up to \$2.5 million are eligible to apply for grants of up to \$50,000 from the WNC Small Business Initiative grant program. Funds will be managed by the Appalachian Community Capital, with the partnership of the Community Reinvestment Fund on the application process.
- Governor Stein also announced that the State is awarding \$3 million to Baptists on Mission and \$3 million to Habitat for Humanity NC to support their housing repair initiatives.
- NC League of Municipalities, NC Association of County Commissioners, and WNC Regional Councils of Government hosted a Hurricane Helene disaster recovery meeting on Tuesday, February 11 in Asheville for elected officials, local government managers and staff, and Governor Stein's Rebuilding WNC Advisory Committee and partners. Similar to the special convening held in November in Burke County, the second joint meeting focused on ongoing community needs, funding updates, and legislative actions to support recovery.
- The County is coordinating debris removal with the US Army Corps of Engineers. The County does not directly manage the debris removal contractors but actively communicates needs to them. Residents can submit their addresses for debris pickup at for debris at <https://www.transylvaniacounty.org/disaster-resources>. Contractors use this system to identify debris locations.
- The County is supporting applications for state-driven mitigation grants that help homeowners reduce flood risks, such as elevating flood-prone homes that do not meet flood ordinance compliance, or buyouts. County staff facilitate applications, but final approval is determined by state and federal agencies.

The Manager concluded the presentation and invited questions from the Board.

Commissioner McCall inquired about the support available to families considering a property buyout. She asked whether FEMA or North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) is responsible for explaining the implications of buyouts. The Manager Jaime clarified that it is a combination of FEMA, NCEM, and County staff. County staff are involved because they receive and process applications, but the overall decision-making is at the federal and state levels. She acknowledged that the process is slow and frustrating, particularly for families deciding whether to repair and elevate their homes or sell through the buyout program. She explained that under the buyout program:

- The property and home are purchased, and FEMA returns the land to its natural state.
- The deed is transferred to the County, and the land can no longer be developed.
- Some families have expressed interest, but it is a permanent decision. County staff are ensuring applicants fully understand the long-term implications.

Commissioner McCall asked whether buyout offers reflect the full value of the home and property or a lower amount. The Manager responded that the buyout is intended to reflect the undamaged pre-flood value. Compensation is based on market value as if the owner were selling before the disaster occurred. The County has not yet seen the specific offer amounts, but the recent countywide property revaluation should help provide a more accurate comparison. The Tax Office has also provided data to the Hazard Mitigation Program to ensure valuation adjustments align with current market conditions rather than outdated tax values.

Commissioner McCall expressed concern that property owners have complete information before making a decision—especially those with existing mortgages, as they would still be responsible for satisfying their loan payments. She was reassured that County staff are involved in the process to help explain these considerations. The Manager acknowledged that frustration exists among both citizens and County staff due to the slow-moving process and difficulty in obtaining information. The final decision on a buyout can take 12 to 18 months, which can be extremely challenging for families living in uncertain conditions.

Commissioner McKelvey asked how many property owners had expressed interest in the buyout process and how it would impact County land ownership. The Manager reported that the County has received 50 applications from homeowners interested in the buyout program. Once acquired by the County, these properties will be removed from the tax rolls and designated as conservation land.

Commissioner McKelvey estimated that this would result in a conservative revenue loss of \$50,000 to \$75,000. The Manager agreed, noting that this is a particular challenge for Transylvania County, where more than half of the land area consists of federal and state parks or conservancies, which are not taxable. As a result, the remaining taxable properties must generate the full revenue needed to support county services.

APPOINTMENTS

PERSONNEL BOARD

Kim Bailey has been a valuable member of the Personnel Board, representing EMS in the Department Head category. As she is both eligible and willing to serve another term, Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart strongly recommended her reappointment.

Kim's contributions have been instrumental in ensuring fair and informed personnel decisions, particularly given that EMS is one of the county's larger departments and one that has faced recruitment challenges. Her leadership and firsthand understanding of the unique hardships EMS employees encounter—challenges not often experienced by other local government staff—have provided the Board with an important and necessary perspective. Her continued service would be an asset to the Personnel Board and to the County as a whole.

Staff are aware of the two vacancies on the Personnel Board and will continue actively recruiting applicants who are the right fit.

Commissioner McCall moved to reappoint Kim Bailey to the Department Head category representing EMS, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

MANAGER'S REPORT

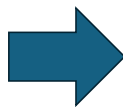
- The NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is inviting public input on the Draft 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Regional drop-in sessions will be held February 17 – March 17 to gather feedback on project selection, geographic diversity, and process improvements. Citizens unable to attend can prioritize projects and submit comments online via PublicInput.com at NCDOT: 2026-2035 STIP Development. The public comment period is open through April 4, 2025. Informational flyers are available in the lobby.
- Congressman Chuck Edwards will hold office hours at the Transylvania County Courthouse on Tuesday, February 25th, from 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. His staff will be available to answer questions about Hurricane Helene recovery and assist with federal agency issues. Citizens who cannot attend or need help with FEMA-related concerns can call 223-FIX-FEMA for assistance.
- Assistant County Manager David McNeill extended kudos to Project Manager Larry Reece for his dedication to the Sylvan Valley Phase 2 project. The project required pouring 320 yards of concrete, and Larry was on-site for three early morning pours, starting at 3:45 a.m., to ensure quality. His commitment to excellence is deeply appreciated, and the County is fortunate to have him.
- Fairhaven Affordable Housing Project Update
 - The City of Brevard has withdrawn its request for the County to contribute funding to cover the gap.
 - The original funding gap included \$524,000 in public infrastructure costs, which has now been reduced.
 - The County has requested Preliminary Engineering Reports and Opinions of Probable Cost for infrastructure on other potential housing projects. These reports will help identify opportunities for grant funding to support affordable housing efforts.
- Revaluation Update
 - Revaluation notices have been sent, with the average countywide increase at 54%.
 - Increases vary by municipality and fire district, ranging from 63% to 153% for improved properties.
 - Several other North Carolina counties have also conducted recent revaluations, with Transylvania County just below the statewide average.
 - Most counties operate on a four-year revaluation cycle, which Transylvania County has followed for the last two cycles.
 - The Manager reviewed the following information, which was displayed on a slide reel for the start of the meeting to educate the public on how to calculate a tax bill, when the tax rate would be set, how property tax impacts the county budget, and the appeal process.

2025 Revaluation Counties		
County	Last Revaluation	% Increase
Surry	2021	25
Orange	2021	49.5
Wayne	2019	50-55
Davie	2021	51.07

Transylvania	2021	54
Person	2021	54
Cleveland	2021	55
Caldwell	2021	56
Union	2021	60.05
New Hanover	2021	67
Johnston	2019	70.6
Dare	2020	73
Lenoir	2017	73
Durham	2019	75.22
Cumberland	2017	88
Stanly	2021	30-40
Chatham	2021	40-50
Cleveland	2021	40-50
Davie	2021	40-50
Forsyth	2021	55-57
Jackson	2021	60-70
	Average All	61

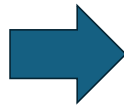


How do you calculate a **tax** bill?



First, you need to take the **tax rate**, which is a fraction of X¢/ \$100 of property valuation.

Example: 10 ¢/\$100= \$.10/\$100=\$.0010



Next, you multiply the tax rate by your **property valuation** to get your tax bill amount. Let's say your property valuation is \$200,000.

Example: \$.0010 X \$200,000= \$ 200 **tax bill amount**

What happens during **Revaluation**? Does my tax bill go up if my revaluation goes up at the same amount?

NO!

→ Sales data in different areas of the county will mean that not all properties will go up by the same amount. **The county, city, town and fire districts will calculate a rate that is revenue neutral.** That means a rate that *results in the same amount of revenue* from tax collection.

→ Because the rate and the property valuation are **aratio**, to get the same amount of revenue, the valuation going up means **the rate to collect the same amount goes down.**

When will we know the **Tax Rate**?

June 2025

→ The Property Tax Rate can only be set **one time a year** by the **City, Town and County Boards**. It must be set by July 1 of each year with the annual budget and after a public hearing. In a revaluation year, the revenue neutral rate must also be presented for all of them. The majority of appeals need to process so that the revenue neutral rate can be calculated.

→ The Budget Process for the County takes 6 months to prepare and includes funding requests and justification from all fire departments, Board of Education, Solid Waste, Sheriff's Office, Register of Deeds, Building & Inspections, Planning and Transit, EMS, Dispatch, Emergency Mgmt, Tax Admin, Social Services, Health Department, Animal Services, Soil and Water Conservation, Cooperative Ag Extension, Library, Elections, Economic Development Alliance and Operations and Support Departments. Around 90% of the county budget is mandated services or requirements to meet mandates.

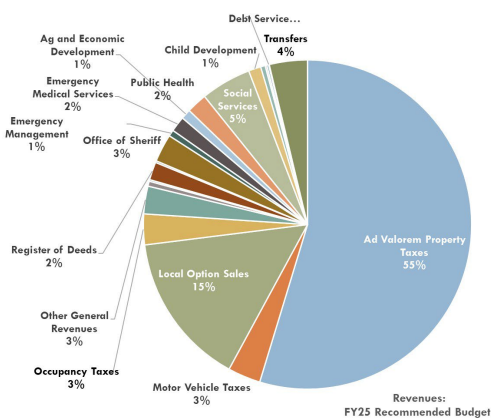
The City of Brevard and Town of Rosman will also be going through their budget processes during that time.

How much of the county budget is **Property Tax**?

The majority of the county budget

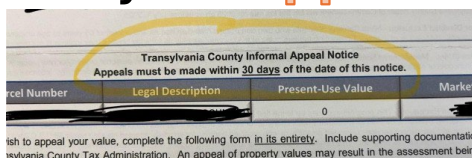
→ The Budget is presented annually including revenues and expenditures. Under state law, property tax is the majority of revenue for local government and the only tax that local boards-county, city and town- have full control over.

→ Counties are required under state law to provide a lot of **mandated services**. Approximately 90% of the Budget is mandated services or services necessary to meet mandates.



Why are there 30 days to **appeal**? Is that it?

NO!



→ The **30 days** is necessary to process the **informal appeals** in time for the Board of Equalization and Review appeal period and to **give property owners time to decide** if they want to appeal to the board. The reappraisal form sent to all property owners with a 30 day submission period is for an **informal appeal**. The informal appeal form and any documentation is **reviewed by assessment staff** and adjusted if it appears justified without having to go to the board. The property owner then receives a letter to let them know the outcome of the informal appeal and how they can appeal further. If the property owner still does not agree with the value from informal appeal, then they **can continue their appeal to the Board of Equalization and Review**. The E&R Board will start meeting approximately the **second week of April** and continue to process all formal appeals received. Appeals are accepted up until the Board adjourns, but **property owners are encouraged to submit as soon as possible**.

→ **Without the 30 days, staff would not be able to review and notify the property owner** so that they have the opportunity to appeal to the Board of Equalization and Review before the statutory deadline. A citizen can continue to gather back up information after submitting the informal review request so that they submit complete information to the Board.

The Manager concluded her report and invited questions from the Board.

Chairman Chappell highlighted the importance of the public understanding the recent actions by the City of Brevard regarding the Fairhaven Affordable Housing project. During the most recent Brevard City Council meeting, the City expressed its desire for the County to not pursue grant funding available for affordable housing. These grant funds were allocated to the County, but the City withdrew their request, citing concerns about potential restrictions and timeframes.

Chairman Chappell also mentioned that the City's \$524,000 request for public infrastructure costs had been significantly reduced in the meeting compared to what was presented to the Board. The Manager confirmed this change and explained that the reduced figure addressed in the meeting was much lower than initially requested.

Chairman Chappell expressed concern that the City had presented a lower number than the County had been asked to help fund in order to make the project feasible. He encouraged the public to watch the City's meeting for further details.

Commissioner McCall shared her concerns, noting that she had requested the item be tabled at the previous Board meeting to gain a better understanding of the infrastructure needs being requested. She explained that she had difficulty approving a blanket request for funds without understanding whether they were for water, sewer, or road infrastructure. With existing utilities in place, the specific infrastructure needs were not clear. She emphasized that the Board of Commissioners needs this information to ensure they know whether the County is legally able to expend funds.

Chairman Chappell referenced the asset inventory mentioned by the Manager, stating that this would help with evaluating such funding requests in the future.

Commissioner Chapman thanked Chairman Chappell for raising the issue, noting the backlash the Board received for tabling the request to obtain more information, followed by the City's decision to withdraw their request. He agreed that the Board needs a better understanding of funding requests going forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman shared his attendance at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new UNC Health Pardee building, noting that it will be a valuable asset to the community and bring significant benefits to the area.

Commissioner Chapman also provided an update on the debris removal efforts. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been working on Williamson Creek for the past two days and is doing an excellent job. While the timeline for completing debris removal across the county remains uncertain, he noted that USACE had a full crew and trailers onsite, which is a positive sign for progress.

Commissioner Chapman mentioned that the Wilson Road project, which was previously expected to move quickly, has been delayed by three to four years. The delay is due to funding being redirected to cover the costs of storm damage recovery.

Commissioner Chapman and Commissioner McKelvey attended a Zoom meeting this week on the Essentials of County Government and Ethics class. The ethics class is a legal requirement for County Commissioners. The session, originally scheduled in-person, was moved to Zoom due to the threat of snow.

Chairman Chappell requested that the Manager contact NCDOT regarding an issue on Old Toxaway Road. He noted that, just before reaching Howell Road, there were significant washouts, with the curbing beside the road washed out and water running underneath. These issues are worsening with each storm, and he wanted to ensure NCDOT is aware of the situation.

Commissioner McCall thanked the public for their comments and concerns regarding the property revaluation. She appreciated the efforts of the Tax Office and the information they provided through videos, calls, and the presentation by the Manager at the meeting. She emphasized that the County Commissioners' properties were also revalued, and it is important for citizens to have accurate information about the process, including how appeals work and how staff can assist them in gathering information. Commissioner McCall assured the public that while the tax rate will not be set until June, it will be lower than it is now, even though some citizens may see increases in their property bills. She clarified that the County conducts revaluations every four years, not every eight years as some may have thought. She also referenced revaluation data from other counties, which showed higher increases in property values (70% and 88%) in counties that revalue less frequently. Commissioner McCall acknowledged that, like many others, she also experienced "sticker shock" upon receiving her revaluation notice. She stressed that the Board is committed to being reasonable and that staff are available to answer any questions.

Chairman Chappell shared an update on the joint school bond project committee that he, Commissioner McKelvey, two members of the Board of Education, the Manager, and the Superintendent are serving on. The committee decided to hold public comment periods at the respective Board of Commissioners and Board of Education meetings to streamline the process. This decision is why there will be no public comment periods on the agenda for future school committee meetings. The public will have many opportunities to provide comments at the two elected boards' meetings.

Chairman Chappell moved to enter into a closed session per N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 § (a) (5) To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease, after a 10-minute recess, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.

CLOSED SESSION

Per N.C.G.S. §143-318.11 (a) (5) To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease, a closed session was entered into at 7:50 p.m. Present were Chairman Chappell, Commissioners Chapman, McCall and McKelvey, County Manager Jaime Laughter, Assistant County Manager David McNeill, Information Technology Director Nathanael Carver for IT support, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton and County Attorney Bill Bulfer participated via Zoom meeting software.

The Board discussed its position on negotiations regarding the potential acquisition of real property and directed staff on how to proceed.

Chairman Chappell moved to leave the closed session, seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously approved.

OPEN SESSION

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Chairman Chappell moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m., seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously carried.**

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board