

**MINUTES**  
**TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**MARCH 10, 2025 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, March 10, 2025, 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, Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton, Teresa McCall, and Chase McKelvey. Chairman Jason Chappell was absent due to illness. County Manager Jaime Laughter and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan were also present. County Attorney Julie Hooten participated remotely via Zoom meeting software.

Media: Laura Denon – *The Transylvania Times*

There were approximately 40 people in the audience.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

**WELCOME**

Vice-Chairman Dalton 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.*

David Whitmire: Mr. Whitmire thanked the Board for its support last September regarding an old growth amendment. He also expressed appreciation for the Transylvania Natural Resources Council (TNRC) and their support. He reported that the executive order and amendment were canceled even before the new administration took office. He was pleased that the U.S. Forest Service had the opportunity to hear local support on the matter. Mr. Whitmire also provided the Commissioners with a letter he wrote to the Forest Service concerning layoffs and Hurricane Helene recovery efforts. He noted that his advocacy had an impact, as he was the only representative from a non-governmental organization invited to meet with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture last Thursday. He shared that the administration is committed to addressing local needs and has already rehired several individuals, particularly for Helene recovery efforts and wildfire response. He expressed appreciation for the responsiveness of the Secretary of Agriculture. Lastly, he invited the Commissioners to the first annual North Fork Festival on March 23 at Deerwoode. He discussed the potential Wild and Scenic River designation for the North Fork, stating that while there is no emergency, the festival aims to showcase community support for the designation and address any related questions.

Sam Stites: Mr. Stites, a Cedar Mountain resident, spoke on behalf of the Living Wage Coalition of Transylvania County. He reiterated the coalition's 2023 request for the County to raise its wage floor to the living wage rate of \$16.40 per hour and to adopt a paid family leave policy. In 2025, the coalition is again requesting that the County raise the wage floor to \$17.55 per hour and adopt a paid family leave policy to support family caregiving, birth, or adoption. Mr. Stites highlighted the economic challenges

facing the community, including the ongoing impacts of Hurricane Helene. He asserted that these policy changes would demonstrate the County's commitment to worker well-being and improve employee retention, reduce vacancies, and decrease recruitment/training costs. He also noted that paid family leave can reduce workforce strain by helping employees stay in their jobs rather than exit the workforce due to caregiving needs. The Living Wage Coalition offered to consult with the County on assessing the value of its benefits to workers. Mr. Stites encouraged the County to join the local living wage movement, noting that in 2024, new and renewed employers participating in the certification program increased wages by \$80,000 to meet program criteria. There are now 62 certified employers in Transylvania County, employing 1,105 workers. He also mentioned that in 2023, the City of Brevard adopted a paid parental leave policy for its employees, and he hopes both the City and County will raise wages to \$17.55 per hour in upcoming budget cycles.

Andrew Riddle: Mr. Riddle, a Henderson County resident and developer, shared his background in the building industry and his current role in development. He represents 277 North Broad Street Partners, which is constructing a 39,000-square-foot medical facility in downtown Brevard. The facility will include 45 jobs, a 300-person event space in the lobby, a 50-person meeting room available for public use, and healthcare services as an alternative to HCA. Mr. Riddle explained that shortly before closing on the property—formerly known as College Plaza—his team encountered a significant obstacle. While he could not provide details, he expressed confidence in overcoming the challenge. He noted that despite the roadblock, his team proceeded with the project, culminating in a successful groundbreaking ceremony attended by County officials and other stakeholders. Last Wednesday, he met with the County Manager, who informed him that current County policies do not allow for certain business incentives. Acknowledging that the Manager must follow the policy, he addressed the Board directly, stating that since they created policy, he is seeking ways for the County to be more business-friendly, both for his development and future investments in Transylvania County.

### AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

### CONSENT AGENDA

**Commissioner McCall 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 met in a regular meeting on Monday, February 24, 2025, and following met in a closed session in which the minutes were sealed. The Board approved the minutes as submitted.

#### PROCLAMATION - NATIONAL TRANSIT EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY

March 18 is National Transit Employee Appreciation Day, an occasion where the public transportation industry recognizes and honors its dedicated workforce. Public transportation provides essential services to our citizens. The dedicated employees of Transylvania in Motion, the County's local transit system, work tirelessly to ensure safe, reliable, and efficient transportation for all. The Board approved Proclamation #07-2025 National Transit Employee Appreciation Day.

**Proclamation #07-2025  
National Transit Employee Appreciation Day**

**WHEREAS**, public transportation is a vital part of our community, providing essential services to our county citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, the dedicated employees of Transylvania in Motion, the local transit system, work tirelessly to ensure safe, reliable, and efficient transportation for all; and

**WHEREAS**, these employees include our County van drivers, dispatchers, transit operation managers, and many others who contribute to the smooth operation of our transit system; and

**WHEREAS**, their commitment to excellence and their unwavering dedication to serving the public deserve recognition and appreciation; and

**WHEREAS**, National Transit Employee Appreciation Day is an opportunity to honor and celebrate the hard work and dedication of these invaluable employees;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it resolved that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby proclaims March 18, 2025, as National Transit Employee Appreciation Day in Transylvania County, and encourages all residents to join in expressing their gratitude and appreciation for the outstanding service provided by our transit employees.

This the 10<sup>th</sup> day of March 2025.

S://Jake Dalton, Vice-Chairman  
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

**DONATION OF SURPLUS SPEED TRAILER**

The Transylvania County Sheriff's Office has a used speed trailer that is no longer operable. The department planned to dispose of the item, but the Haywood County Sheriff's Office requested the item for another use. The item has no value. N.C.G.S. § 160A-280 allows the County to donate surplus property to another governmental agency upon posting a notice at least five days before the adoption of a resolution approving the donation. Staff have met the posting requirement and requested approval of a resolution formally approving the donation. The Board approved Resolution #06-2025 Approving Donation of Surplus Speed Trailer to the Haywood County Sheriff's Office.

**RESOLUTION #06-2025  
APPROVING DONATION OF SURPLUS SPEED TRAILER  
TO THE HAYWOOD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**WHEREAS**, The Transylvania County Manager has declared a speed trailer in the Sheriff's Office as surplus and it has been removed from service; and

**WHEREAS**, the speed trailer is inoperable, but the Haywood County Sheriff's Office has expressed interest in using it for another purpose; and

**WHEREAS**, North Carolina General Statute §160A-280 allows a county to donate surplus property to a nonprofit or other governmental unit incorporated in the United States upon posting public notice at least five days prior to the adoption of a resolution approving the donation; and

**WHEREAS**, Transylvania County has met the posting requirements outlined in North Carolina General Statute § 160A-280; and

**WHEREAS**, County staff recommend the conveyance of the speed trailer to the Haywood County Sheriff's Office at no cost;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County does hereby approve the donation of a surplus speed trailer to the Haywood County Sheriff's Office at no cost.

This the 10<sup>th</sup> day of March 2025.

S://Jake Dalton, Vice-Chairman  
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

#### HEALTH DEPARTMENT BAD DEBT WRITE-OFF

The Department of Public Health Bad Debt policy identifies the process for handling aging accounts with no payment activity greater than 180 days. Under this policy, Public Health Director Elaine Russell recommended the write-off of bad debts totaling \$51.60 for the period January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024. If approved, eligible debts greater than \$50 will be forwarded to the North Carolina Tax Debt Setoff program for potential collection. The Board approved the write-off of bad debt totaling \$51.60 for the period January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, as requested.

#### COMPORIUM VOICE AND INTERNET CONTRACT

The County's voice and internet services contract with Comporium is up for renewal. As part of the renewal process, the IT Department evaluated proposals from Comporium, Verizon, and Nextiva for VOIP services. Comporium offered the most competitive pricing.

Key benefits of the renewed contract include:

- \$35,000 in annual savings compared to the current cost.
- 25% discount on internet services at community centers.
- Free upgraded VOIP phones for all users, with phones now provided as part of the contract.
- Additional long-term savings as IT converts old analog lines to digital at a cost reduction of \$24 per line.

The negotiated rates will remain in place for the next five years, ensuring consistent cost savings. The Board of Commissioners approved the contract as presented.

#### PERMISSION TO APPLY FOR CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT FOR ALLISON DEAVER RESTORATION PROJECT

The Transylvania County Historical Society is seeking a Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant to fund a front porch structural repair and restoration project at the Allison-Deaver House. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), part of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, administers these federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grants through the National Park Service. Eligible applicants include Certified Local Governments (CLGs), as well as not-for-profit organizations and educational institutions within a CLG's jurisdiction. Privately owned buildings are not eligible for funding. The Planning Department and the Joint Historic Preservation Committee work together to support the preservation of Transylvania County's historic landmarks and districts. The proposed project will restore the main entryway of the Allison-Deaver House, ensuring its continued public use and accessibility. The Board of Commissioners approved the submission of the grant application as requested.

## **PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS**

### JOINT HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

Each year, the Joint Historic Preservation Commission (JHPC) provides an update to the Board of Commissioners on its activities. JHPC Chair John Koury presented the 2024 annual report, summarized as follows:

The JHPC is a collaborative committee between the City of Brevard and Transylvania County, focusing on initiatives such as inventory designation, partnerships, stewardship, advocacy, and education.

#### **Inventory and Designation:**

The JHPC continues to maintain an inventory of historically significant buildings, ensuring they are considered for designation before they are lost. In 2024, the Commission sent designation letters to both new owners of already designated properties and owners of properties on the potential designation inventory.

#### **Education and Public Engagement:**

The Commission hosted an offsite meeting on May 14, 2024, at the Little River Baptist Church. Presentations included discussions on the history of farming, Cascade Lake Dam, and the experiences of early settlers in the Little River area. Participants also toured the historic Cascade Lake Grocery Building. For 2025, the JHPC plans an offsite meeting at Champion Park in Rosman on May 13, 2025, focusing on the role of the river in early settlements. Additionally, the historic downtown walking tour guide remains a popular resource through the Heart of Brevard and the Transylvania County Library.

#### **Local Designations:**

The Bryant House at 132 King Street was designated as a local historic landmark this year. The JHPC also worked to maintain the historic designation of the Inn at Brevard following storm damage and a potential ownership change. The Commission is committed to ensuring the building retains its landmark status.

#### **America 250 Commemoration:**

The JHPC participated in Transylvania County's 250th Anniversary celebrations, including an event at Silvermont commemorating the first Provincial Congress. Upcoming events include a reenactment of the Edenton Tea Party at Champion Park in Rosman on April 27, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., and a Voices of Freedom poetry contest in April. There will also be a commemoration of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, significant because Ephraim Brevard authored it.

#### **Training and Continuing Education:**

JHPC members participated in historic tax credit training seminars to explore how historic preservation can be made feasible for developers and property owners.

Following the presentation, Commissioner Chapman commended the work of the JHPC. He noted his wife's involvement in leading historic downtown tours and encouraged citizens to participate, stating he had gained valuable knowledge through the tours.

### NEW EXPLORE BREVARD WEBSITE

Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA) Executive Director Clark Lovelace presented the Board and the public with an overview of the newly launched Explore Brevard website.

Mr. Lovelace emphasized the significance of a modern website as a destination marketing tool. Websites serve as a first impression for visitors and function as a centralized hub for information. In contrast to one-time advertisements, websites offer ongoing engagement, support local businesses through directories, and provide space for storytelling that cannot be conveyed through other marketing mediums.

### **Reasons for the New Website**

- **Industry Standard:** Websites should be updated every 5-6 years. By the time of completion, it had been 8 years since the last update.
- **Improved Functionality:** Enhancements in search engine optimization (SEO) and navigation ensure that visitors can find information more easily.
- **Evolving Content:** The County's story has changed, and the website now reflects current priorities, including campaigns like Leave It Better featuring the mascot Trashesquatch.
- **Enhanced Design:** The site was redesigned in collaboration with Madden Strategy Group and overseen by a task force of the TCTDA Marketing Committee.

The development process lasted 12 months, with regular meetings and content updates. After a soft launch in January, followed by a medium launch for partner feedback, the hard launch was recently completed, and the site is now actively promoted. Mr. Lovelace praised the efforts of Mollie from TCTDA and Garnet from Market Connections for their dedication to making the project a success.

### **Website Demonstration**

Mr. Lovelace provided a video demonstration of the site, [explorebrevard.com](http://explorebrevard.com), showcasing its improved look, enhanced functionality, and expanded storytelling features.

### **Financial Update**

For September, October, and November, occupancy tax proceeds were down approximately 40%, equating to a \$220,000 shortfall from the \$2 million budget. While December and January showed more typical results, the TCTDA is projecting a potential 10% loss for the fiscal year. To avoid cutting expenditures, the Board opted to use fund balance for continued marketing efforts and grant programs.

The TCTDA's annual strategic retreat is scheduled in a few weeks, with meetings open to the public.

### **Commissioner Comments and Questions**

Vice-Chairman Dalton inquired about the Transylvania Tomorrow Business Relief Fund. Mr. Lovelace reported that \$300,000 in small grants had been distributed to 100 businesses affected by Hurricane Helene to assist with recovery.

Commissioner McKelvey praised the site's effectiveness for SEO and asked about how the TCTDA selects lodging options. Mr. Lovelace explained that traditional accommodations (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts) are actively listed, while short-term rentals are referenced through platforms like VRBO or Airbnb. Owners may also request direct listing on the site.

Commissioner McCall questioned the event posting process. Mr. Lovelace confirmed that all submitted events undergo a staff-level review before being published, ensuring proper categorization with relevant tags.

Vice-Chairman Dalton praised the Stay Where You Play initiative, noting concerns about neighboring counties using images of Transylvania County to attract visitors. Mr. Lovelace acknowledged that out-of-county day visitors often burden local resources without contributing economically, contrasting with ideal visitors who stay longer and explore the county.

Commissioner Chapman highlighted that the website and marketing efforts are funded through occupancy tax dollars, not property taxes, reinforcing the value of tourism funding. Mr. Lovelace thanked Commissioner Chapman for his service as the County's representative on the TCTDA Board.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO HURRICANE/TROPICAL STORM HELENE

The County Manager provided the Board with an update on the ongoing emergency response efforts related to Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene:

- FEMA Registrations:
  - 4,798 households have registered for FEMA assistance, reflecting an increase of 30 since the last report.
  - The application deadline has been extended to April 7.
- Disaster Case Management:
  - NC Emergency Management secured a 24-month FEMA grant to provide case management services.
  - Case managers are actively assisting survivors with recovery plans and resource connections, including temporary housing solutions such as RVs and repair assistance.
  - Residents needing assistance should call Disaster Case Management at 1-844-746-2326.
  - Some RVs have been placed in the County for temporary housing.
- Rental Assistance:
  - 68 households are receiving or have received rental assistance, an increase from the previous report.
- Direct Housing Support:
  - At least one family remains in need of a long-term housing solution.
  - Families qualifying for long-term housing are permitted to stay in hotels under interim programs until a solution is implemented.
- Private Property Debris Removal:
  - The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has contracted support for private property debris removal.
  - A temporary office operates in the former elections building at 221 S. Gaston Street.
  - Operating Hours:
    - Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
    - Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
  - Citizens can contact the USACE Debris Center at 833-468-6033 for assistance with the Right of Entry forms and other documentation.
  - Mitigation grant applicants are eligible for debris removal assistance.
- River Debris Clean-Up:
  - 42 sites have been identified for river debris clean-up.
  - A separate USACE contractor is developing a removal and disposal plan.
  - The challenge remains to find a debris disposal location as the agreement stipulates that debris must be transported out of the County to avoid additional strain on the landfill.
- Public Right-of-Way Debris Removal:
  - Another USACE contractor is conducting debris removal from the public right-of-way.
  - Residents can submit requests by visiting the County website and entering the pickup location address.
  - Important Note: Debris must be separated according to USACE guidelines. Failure to do so will result in debris not being collected.

The Manager concluded the update and welcomed questions and comments from the Board.

Vice-Chairman Dalton asked about debris removal for his elderly neighbor. The Manager clarified that debris in the public right-of-way could be reported on her behalf, while private property owners needed to complete forms for assistance.

Commissioner McCall inquired about deadlines for debris pickup, and the Manager confirmed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) would continue removal until completed. She also suggested increasing local media outreach to ensure residents, especially those without internet access, are aware of available resources.

Regarding rental assistance, Commissioner McCall questioned timelines and the risk of residents losing temporary housing. The Manager explained that assistance varies case by case, with some handled directly through FEMA. Commissioner McCall expressed frustration over the lengthy process for FEMA trailers, noting that only two units had been placed despite the County's request for more. The Manager attributed delays to federal regulations, particularly prohibiting trailers in floodplains.

Commissioner McKelvey asked about the Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) process, which allows residents to remain in their homes while repairs are completed. The Manager reported that compliance was progressing well, though some homeowners were exploring buyouts or mitigation grants.

Concerns were also raised about the impact of FEMA buyouts on the county's tax base. The Manager indicated that the financial impact was uncertain as property owners were still deciding between buyouts and mitigation grants.

Commissioners commended county staff for their ongoing efforts in recovery coordination.

#### CAPITAL WORKSHOP PREP

The Manager outlined the plan to provide a series of presentations leading up to the spring capital workshop. These sessions will offer Commissioners an overview of the County's capital plan, including previous studies, plans, and financial projections.

The workshop, held as part of the budget process, will review upcoming capital needs and financial strategies for both the annual budget and long-term planning. Capital workshops occur at least every two years to update financial projections. Tryon Advisors has developed a financial model tailored to Transylvania County, using county audits to simulate various financial scenarios. This tool will help the Board assess the impact of proposed capital projects on the tax rate and long-term financial obligations.

During this meeting, the Manager will focus on Parks and Recreation projects.

#### Existing Facilities

- Activity Center Park/Recreation Center: Park and gymnasium on Ecusta Road
- Silvermont Mansion, Senior Center and Park
- Rosman Park Community Park: A portion is leased
- Broad Street Park
- Island Ford River Access: Lease
- Connestee Falls Park
- Walker Park: Located behind the courthouse
- Courthouse Gazebo
- Gallimore Road Property and Former Airfield Hanger: Undeveloped
- Library Amphitheater

Note: Transylvania County transferred Champion Park and Pool to Rosman Town to help the Town access grants for pool improvements. The Town now owns and maintains the park, including recent master planning with Land of Sky.



Joint City-County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2017)

- Completed as a collaboration between the City of Brevard and Transylvania County.
- The implementation section was not adopted, particularly concerning operational changes and the complex idea of creating an independent parks and recreation authority which is not a straightforward method for operating in North Carolina.
- Rosman did not own parks at the time, so they were included under the County’s portion of the plan.
- Key findings and recommendations:
  - Identified capital and program needs.
  - Recommended that all parks have master plans to address operational issues, such as parking.
- Completed Master Plans:
  - Silvermont Park Master Plan (2018)
  - Transylvania County Bicycle Plan (2019)
  - Rosman Community Park Plan (2016): Fully developed to plan.
  - French Broad River Access Study (2019)
  - Activity Center/Recreation Center Park: Facilities fully developed.
  - Gallimore Road Park: Master plan proposed by the Transylvania Economic Alliance (2018) but not adopted.
- The plan recommended \$32 million in capital improvements, excluding land costs and additional improvements that may arise from master planning individual parks, such as maintenance or new features.
- The plan did not include feasibility studies or due diligence for additions like a sports complex or an indoor pool. Finding suitable sites for new facilities is challenging due to terrain issues and access to infrastructure.

County Progress Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The Manager reviewed the capital components of the Master Plan and marked completed projects. Some of these are City parks, and while progress has been made, she did not address them due to incomplete information.

PROJECTS	BUDGET	SUBTOTAL	NOTES	Ta
<b>PARK AND TRAILS PLANNING</b>				<b>Fu</b>
Franklin Park	\$20,000		Note 1	
City Sports Complex/Activity Center Park	\$30,000		Note 1	
Hap Simpson Park	\$10,000		Note 1	Not
South Broad Park	\$10,000		Note 1	
Rosman Community Park ✓	\$20,000		Note 1	1. E
Island Ford River Access	\$7,500		Note 1	Par
Wilson Road River Access	\$7,500		Note 1	mu
Silvermont Park ✓	\$30,000		Note 1	inv
ADA Evaluation of All Parks ✓	\$30,000			incl
County/City Greenway Master Plan ✓	\$75,000			2. E
<b>Planning Total</b>	<b>\$240,000</b>	<b>\$240,000</b>		qua
				3. n

Master planning has been completed for most of the recommended County facilities. While river access points were not individually master-planned, a river access plan was completed by the County. No check marks do not imply a lack of progress.

The County applied for a grant for the South Broad Park Master Plan but did not receive it. However, some improvements to the park were made, including landscaping changes and better visibility for security purposes. The adult fitness component was relocated to Ninja Park at the Activity Center in partnership with Jameson's Joy.

The County conducted ADA assessments across the parks and made various improvements over several budget years to enhance accessibility.

PROJECTS	BUDGET	SUBTOTAL	NOTES
<b>NEW PARKS</b>			
Community Park/Sports Complex	\$8,000,000		Note 2
Clemson Plaza	\$274,469		
Master Plan for Tannery Park	\$25,000		Note 3
<b>New Parks Total</b>	<b>\$8,299,469</b>	<b>\$8,299,469</b>	
<b>EXISTING PARK IMPROVEMENTS</b>			
			Note 4
Champion Park Pool ✓	\$1,100,000		Note 5
County Parks Main Identification Signage (9 parks) ✓	\$90,000		
Activity Center Park Recreation Center Improvements ✓	\$300,000		Note 6
Activity Center Park Fields and Concession Building Renovations	\$600,000		
Connestee Falls Park Parking Area Improvements ✓	\$20,000		
<b>Existing Park Improvements Total</b>	<b>\$2,110,000</b>	<b>\$2,110,000</b>	
<b>FACILITIES</b>			
Maintenance Building ✓	\$300,000		Note 7
Multi-Generational Recreation Center/Neighborhood Park	\$19,000,000		Note 8
<b>New Facilities Total</b>	<b>\$19,300,000</b>	<b>\$19,300,000</b>	
<b>GREENWAY TRAILS</b>			
			Note 9

The County transferred ownership of Champion Park and Pool to the Town of Rosman to enable the Town to leverage grant funding for repairs and improvements. Over the last nine years, the County has provided \$450,000 in annual operational funding. The Board will need to decide whether to continue this funding in the upcoming budget. The Town of Rosman recently completed a master plan for the park in collaboration with the Land of Sky.

Parking improvements and replacement of the viewing deck were completed at Connestee Falls Park.

Upgrades made to the Activity Center include air conditioning installation, new flooring, showers added to restrooms, and new lobby furniture.

The Gallimore Road property was purchased in line with recommendations for additional park properties. Some park maintenance equipment was moved to the old hangar on the property to support maintenance needs. Maintenance and groundskeeping were merged for more shared support.

<b>GREENWAY TRAILS</b>		Note 9
Railroad Avenue - McLean Road to West Main	\$392,504	
West Main Street - South Oaklawn Ave to English Hills	\$370,336	
English Hills to Rosman Highway	\$691,120	
Rosman Highway to Country Club Road/High School	\$721,112	
Music Center Greenway	\$268,000	
<b>Greenway Trails Total</b>	<b>\$2,443,072</b>	<b>\$2,443,072</b>
<b>BLUEWAYS</b>		Note 10
French Broad River Blueway	\$75,000	
<b>Blueways Total</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>

The 2019 Bicycle Plan was completed and filed with NCDOT to facilitate the inclusion of bicycle facilities in future projects. Since counties cannot own or maintain roads, these projects must be in partnership with NCDOT.

County Transit added bike racks to buses to allow bike access to greenways for riders without direct access.

In 2019, the County conducted a River Access Study with NCIMPACT and the UNC School of Government.

Rosman Community Park was also evaluated by NC Fish and Wildlife for potential fishing piers and river launch, but access was determined to be unsuitable.

Hurricane Helene mitigation buyout grants will return some riverway properties to a natural state and be deeded to the County, presenting future opportunities for river access points.

Additional investments not in the Master Plan:

- Jameson's Joy partnership added Ninja Park at the Activity Center.
- Activity Center/Recreation Center Park:
  - Added picnic shelter at Ninja Park and pickleball courts.
  - Completed stormwater improvements.
- Silvermont Master Plan:
  - Phases 1 and 2 were completed, including stormwater improvements, restroom renovation, and walking trail paving.
- Library Story Walk along the Activity Center/Recreation Center Park greenway.
- Senior Center at Silvermont was brought in-house, with increased programming and recreation opportunities.
- Silvermont Mansion improvements as part of the historic preservation plan (future improvements will require significant investment).
- Gallimore Road property has been used passively, with heavy public use despite limited facility capacity.
- Transylvania County Schools partnership expanded summer camp offerings, utilizing school facilities.
- Pre-K Indoor Play and summer camps were added.

- Programming fee restructuring for cost evaluation.
- Library Foundation partnership is working on building a cover for the amphitheater (currently in the project process).
- Community Centers partnered to provide free public Wi-Fi and make facility improvements, including playgrounds and other pocket parks with community center grants.

### County Capital Planning Considerations

The Manager outlined several key considerations for the Board as they think about how Parks and Recreation fits into the broader Capital Plan:

- The City's addition of a dog park and turf soccer field has created parking pressures on the County's neighboring park property.
- The Ecusta Trail is expected to terminate near the County park, potentially increasing visitation and parking demands.
- Relocation of tennis and basketball courts was suggested in the Silvermont Master Plan, but no relocation plan or site has been identified. The courts must either be replaced onsite or relocated soon to maintain the offering.
- Silvermont Mansion will require ongoing investment for maintenance due to its historic nature.
- Some parks are on leases and will either need renewal or will be removed from the inventory.
- New facilities or additional park sites require more operational support. Staffing for groundskeeping, trash collection, maintenance, and replacement costs have not increased, stretching current resources.
- Operational costs must also account for issues like playground replacements, building maintenance, and stormwater management.
- Floodplain impacts are significant, as the County's higher insurance deductible means that damage in floodplains is often not covered.
- Major capital projects previously planned included \$10 million for a park complex and \$20 million for a multigenerational facility, but these figures are outdated and need to be updated for current cost factors.
- The future of Walker Park may change once the new courthouse is complete. If the old administration building is demolished, additional park space may become available, requiring a master plan for the site.
- The County currently has \$1.2 million in capital funds assigned to Parks and Recreation in Fund 10 Fund Balance (FY 23 close), but this is insufficient to cover remaining master planning and maintenance needs. User fees offset program costs, but facility fees are currently limited (fields not charged fees, Rec Center and Silvermont rental fees are charged). A previous proposal to charge field rentals was denied, despite being proposed as a revenue source in the master plan.

The Manager wrapped up the presentation and invited comments and questions from the Board.

Commissioner Chapman asked about the role of the Parks and Recreation Commission in reviewing and advising on the capital plan. The Manager responded that the Parks and Recreation Commission plays an advisory role, offering guidance on the Board's chosen areas of focus. They were most involved in the 2016-2017 master plan process and Silvermont planning. Their function is primarily long-term strategic planning rather than immediate operational decisions. They help lay the groundwork for Board decisions but do not have control over budgets. Public involvement is incorporated into master planning through surveys and community workshops, with the commission aiding in facilitating these.

Commissioner McCall inquired about the leased parks and how many would need to be renewed or removed. The Manager responded that a portion of Rosman Community Park is leased and that the lease is set to expire. The Island Ford River Access is also on a lease, entering the final 5 years of its 25-year term. The County

may also acquire properties through the hazard mitigation buyout program that could provide additional river access, but these will require long-term maintenance.

The Manager also emphasized the importance of considering ongoing operational and maintenance costs when community groups approach the County with proposals for funding or park improvements. Jameson's Joy Partnership was a successful example, but all new facilities require careful consideration of long-term operations, safety, and upkeep.

Vice-Chairman Dalton asked whether properties received through the hazard mitigation buyout program, which must be maintained as green space, could be improved. The Manager stated that the terms of the buyout are unclear, but the language around "no improvements" is being interpreted to prevent future development. Minor improvements, like access to river use, may be allowed, but deed restrictions will play a role in determining what is permissible.

Commissioner McKelvey pointed out that the \$1.2 million in the capital fund is far less than the \$32 million estimated in the 2017 master plan. With inflation and other factors, the costs have risen. He asked whether the Parks and Recreation Commission had prioritized capital needs or if their needs had changed. The Manager suggested it might be time to update the master plan. The last plan was 10 years ago, and an update would not only review progress but also assess if the assumptions still hold. Updating the plan would engage the community and the Parks and Recreation Commission, providing the Board with better direction for budgeting and prioritization.

Vice-Chairman Dalton asked for an update on the Town of Rosman's Land of Sky grants. The Manager had not received an update but mentioned that maintenance would be an important consideration for future projects. The County is working with Axias on a study for the replacement needs of County facilities, including parks. A formalized capital plan will help plan for ongoing needs.

Commissioner McCall raised the point that parks and libraries are not mandated services, but they are extremely popular with the community. She noted that, during budget processes, the Board often faces the difficult choice of cutting costs, and both parks and libraries fall within areas the Board can choose to reduce funding. The Manager confirmed that parks and libraries are not mandated but are vital to the community. She noted that, with the current master plan, the County has the advantage of long-term vision and planning, reducing the likelihood of reactionary decisions. The Manager emphasized the importance of looking at the big picture to ensure better investments and better planning for ongoing maintenance.

Commissioner McCall suggested placing donation boxes at parks to help fund specific amenities or upkeep. The Manager agreed that donations could be a useful tool but stressed that having a master plan allows for better coordination of efforts, whether fundraising or project management. It ensures that decisions are aligned with the bigger vision instead of being driven by immediate demands.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUNDING REQUEST FROM THE CITY OF BREVARD - TABLED FROM FEBRUARY 10TH

The City of Brevard had previously requested funding from Transylvania County to help bridge a funding gap for the Fairhaven LITECH Credit Affordable Housing Project, which will build 42 affordable housing units for households earning 80% or less of the Annual Median Income (AMI). Originally, the gap was estimated at \$1.7 million, but it was later revised to \$1 million, with \$524,000 of that being related to public infrastructure needs.

During the February 10 meeting, the Manager presented the County's legal powers and responsibilities in relation to funding housing projects. Key points included:

- Public funds must serve a public purpose, as per the NC Constitution. Funding private entities directly for public needs is not allowed if it provides a direct benefit to the private entity.
- The County can support affordable housing in various ways:
  - Increased density for residential development in exchange for affordable housing. Transylvania County already allows residential density without restrictions.
  - Assistance to individuals, such as through the Regional Housing Consortium, which now administers HOME funds for home repairs.
  - Infrastructure support, such as investments in water and sewer systems, which help lower the cost per housing unit and facilitate more affordable housing development. The County has already explored using grant funds for infrastructure to support the City's housing project.

After the February 10 meeting, the City Manager informed the County that the City of Brevard would be withdrawing its request for County funding. The withdrawal was due to the time-sensitive nature of the project, as meeting any obligations or conditions tied to grant funding was not feasible. The City intends to close the funding gap through a \$1.169 million loan to the developer, with additional funding sources secured by the City. The Public infrastructure gap initially cited at \$524,536, was revised to \$387,119 by the City after further consultation with its Planning Director.

The Manager has requested Preliminary Engineering Reports and Opinions of Probable Costs for infrastructure related to other housing projects that may be eligible for grant support. These reports will help ensure that future projects meet the requirements for public infrastructure and allow the County to seek grant funding. The Manager mentioned receiving some materials for review on Friday and intends to conduct a more thorough review. She will bring forward any findings related to grant funding opportunities for the Board's consideration.

The Manager invited the Board to ask questions or provide comments.

Commissioner McCall confirmed that this item would be removed from the Board's consideration entirely, as the request for funding has been withdrawn by the City of Brevard. The Manager clarified that the item was placed back on the agenda for resolution in the meeting minutes, as it had previously been tabled. The funding request for the Fairhaven project is no longer under consideration.

Commissioner Chapman expressed frustration with the situation, noting that he and other Commissioners had received negative feedback from the public about the Board's perceived lack of concern for affordable housing. He suggested that if the County were to receive future requests for funding from the City of Brevard or other entities, further details should be provided to ensure transparency. He questioned why the City withdrew its request after presenting it as a critical need. He speculated that either the City no longer needed the funds or something had changed significantly. He pointed out that the Board had received negative hits but had not had enough information to make an informed decision. The Manager shared that the City cited a timeline-sensitive issue, which led to the decision to fully fund the project on its own. She agreed with Commissioner Chapman that early engagement and clear information would be helpful in the future when the County is asked to participate in such projects.

Commissioner McCall emphasized that the infrastructure requests provided by the City were not specific enough for the Board to make a decision. As such, the Board followed the advice of its attorney in tabling the item.

## NEW BUSINESS

### COMMUNITY CENTER GRANT AWARDS

Transylvania County has partnered with community centers to enhance public infrastructure, including providing public Wi-Fi and supporting facilities like meeting spaces and playgrounds. The Community Center Support Grant Policy governs the application process, ensuring that grants are distributed in accordance with state law and serve the public interest.

The County received applications from 11 community centers, requesting a total of \$119,334.99, broken down as follows:

- Non-competitive Connected Public Space Grant (Wi-Fi): \$16,500
- Competitive Public Health/Safety Grants: \$23,263.99
- Competitive Public Project Grants: \$64,415
- Comporium Wi-Fi: \$16,656

The Planning Department made several errors during the review process, oversubscribing grant funding by offering \$84,763.99 over 30 awards, totaling \$101,419.99 awarded—exceeding the budgeted amount of \$85,000. The errors included:

- Failure to factor in \$1,500 for each community center as required by policy.
- Ineligible applications are not being reviewed for compliance before submission.
- Incorrectly awarded amounts for Grant 2 and Grant 3, as non-capital requests do not qualify for funding.

The Manager clarified that her comments regarding the errors in the community center grant process were not intended to disparage the Planning Department. She emphasized the County's commitment to transparency and accountability, stating that when mistakes occur, the County acknowledges them and takes appropriate steps to correct them.

Following these errors, staff rescinded the grant award letters and re-evaluated the applications, reducing the grant amounts across the board to ensure compliance.

The Planning Department recommended the following grant awards:

- Grant 1 (Wi-Fi): Fully fund 10 applications for \$30,500, including Comporium Wi-Fi.
- Grant 2 (Capital Projects): Fully fund 7 applications at \$2,500 each, totaling \$15,594.51.
- Grant 3 (Capital Projects): Fully fund 9 applications at \$4,350 each, totaling \$38,453.

The total recommended award is \$84,547.51, which is within the available budget.

Vice-Chairman Dalton disclosed his voting rights with the Lake Toxaway Community Center and, on the advice of the County Attorney, requested to be recused from voting to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

**Commissioner McCall moved to allow Vice-Chairman Dalton to recuse himself from voting, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and approved unanimously.**

**Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the Community Center Grant awards as presented, seconded by Commissioner McKelvey.** Commissioner Chapman expressed appreciation for the community centers' efforts and partnerships. **The motion was approved unanimously by a 3-0 vote, with Vice-Chairman Dalton recused.**

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY AND LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE DOWNTOWN BREVARD CIRCULATION STUDY

On September 25, 2023, the Board of Commissioners approved \$10,000 in matching funds for a grant that the Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (RPO) planned to apply for to conduct a downtown Brevard circulation study. The study is funded through a combination of State Planning and Research funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), State funds, and local funds. The total project budget is \$200,000, with the County and the City of Brevard each contributing a 10% cost-share for the FHWA funds.

The RPO will administer the project, which is expected to take 18-24 months. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County and the RPO must be established to guide the project. A steering committee will be formed, including representatives from City and County Planning staff, NCDOT Division 14, TPD staff, possibly the TAC Chair, Brevard Police Chief, and the Sheriff. The steering committee's first task will be selecting a consulting firm to conduct the study. The consulting firm will evaluate potential modifications to improve traffic flow and efficiency. The County has a vested interest in the study for economic development purposes.

Once the study is completed, the RPO will present the results to the Board of Commissioners. However, because NCDOT and the City of Brevard are responsible for the road system, any decisions regarding changes will lie with them.

**Commissioner McCall moved to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between Transylvania County and the Land of Sky Regional Council for the downtown Brevard circulation study, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.**

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager provided several updates:

- The NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is inviting the public to provide feedback on the Draft 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). NCDOT will host regional drop-in sessions across the state from February 17 to March 17 to gather public input on the variety and geographic diversity of projects, the process for developing the STIP, and suggestions for improvement.
  - If unable to attend in person, individuals can view and prioritize projects and submit comments online via PublicInput.com at NCDOT: 2026-2035 STIP Development.
  - The public comment period will be open until April 4, 2025.
  - Flyers with additional information were placed in the lobby.
- The Manager congratulated Cooperative Extension Ag Agent Bart Renner for being named Transylvanian of the Week by *The Transylvania Times*.
- There have been several questions regarding the revaluation process, and the Manager encouraged property owners to reach out to the Tax Office for clarification on their notices and to file an appeal if needed. County staff directed a citizen, who had storm damage from Hurricane Helene to the appeal process after it was found that the damage was not recorded in the County's system.
  - Revaluation Notices have been sent out, and the average countywide increase was 54%. However, increases by municipality/fire district ranged from 60% to 153% for improved property.
  - North Carolina's 100 counties are experiencing significant property value increases due to the current real estate market.
  - Reappraisals are essential for ensuring a fair and equitable property tax system. This process is covered in detail in the Machine Act.
  - Transylvania County ranks lower in overall increase percentage compared to other counties that conducted a revaluation this year



<b>2025 Revaluation Counties</b>		
<b>County</b>	<b>Last Revaluation</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
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
	<b>Average All</b>	<b>61</b>

### **What is a county reappraisal?**

A county reappraisal is the process of updating the assessed value of all real property within the county to reflect its fair market value as of January 1 of the reappraisal year. The fair market value is the price at which a property would be sold between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an open market.

### **How often do counties conduct reappraisals?**

North Carolina law (N.C.G.S. § 105-286) mandates counties to conduct reappraisals at least once every eight years. However, many counties, including Transylvania, conduct reappraisals more frequently, particularly if property values change significantly over time. The NC Department of Revenue evaluates counties annually through the sales ratio (the ratio between assessed values and actual sale prices). If the ratio falls below 90%, it indicates an unfair tax burden among property owners. Transylvania's sales ratio was 60.73% as of January 1, 2024, meaning properties were selling for about 60% of their assessed value. Transylvania previously adopted a policy to reappraise every four years. In some cases, the County may decide to delay a revaluation based on the sales ratio or other economic factors.

### **What is the purpose of a reappraisal?**

The primary purpose of a reappraisal is to equalize the tax burden across different property types (e.g., residential, commercial, and agricultural). The goal is to ensure that each property's assessed value aligns with its current market value, so property taxes are distributed fairly across the county.

Without regular revaluations, some property owners may end up paying more than their fair share of taxes, while others pay less. This discrepancy can occur if property values increase at different rates across the county.

### Does reappraisal mean an increase in taxes?

A reappraisal does not automatically mean an increase in property taxes. The final impact on taxes depends on two key factors:

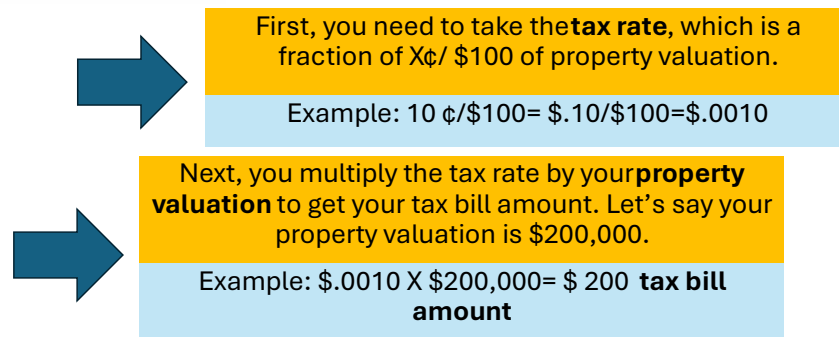
1. The new assessed value of the property.
2. The property tax rate set by the County is influenced by the government's budgetary needs.

When property values increase, the tax rate may be adjusted to maintain revenue neutrality (i.e., the total tax revenue does not increase from the previous year). Therefore, some property owners may see their tax bills increase, while others may see a decrease, but the overall distribution of the tax burden should be more equitable.

The revenue neutral rate will not be known until after the appeals process is completed, which usually happens around April. The goal of the reappraisal is to ensure that everyone is taxed based on the true market value of their property, creating a fair and equitable system for all taxpayers.

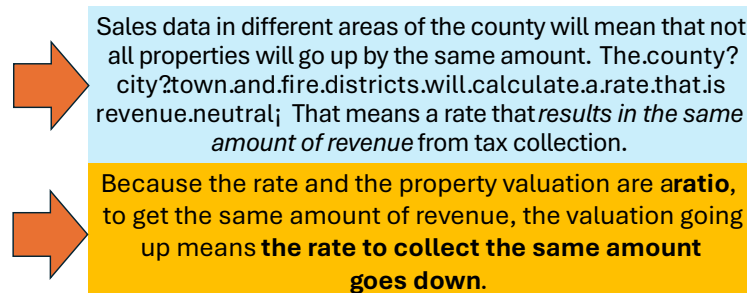


## How do you calculate a tax bill?



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

**NO!**



## 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**

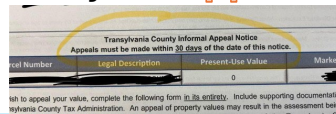
➔ The Budget is presented annually including revenues and expenditures. Under state law, property tax is the majority of revenue for local government and the only tax that local boards-county, city and town- have full control over.

➔ 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.

Category	Percentage
Ad Valorem Property Taxes	55%
Local Option Sales	15%
Social Services	5%
Motor Vehicle Taxes	3%
Other General Revenues	3%
Occupancy Taxes	3%
Office of Sheriff	3%
Public Health	2%
Emergency Medical Services	2%
Register of Deeds	2%
Child Development	1%
Ag and Economic Development	1%
Emergency Management	1%
Debt Service	4%
Transfers	4%

## 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.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

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

David Morrow: Mr. Morrow reported that the Veterans History Museum opened for the new season last week. He mentioned that the new submarine anchor on display in front of the building has been a significant attraction. He said that the Museum would like to be included in discussions regarding the former administration building and the courthouse. Specifically, the Museum hopes to be part of that building under a longer-term lease. He also thanked the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA) for including the Museum on its new website.

## COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman shared that last Friday, he had the honor of presenting a letter from the Board, along with letters from Senator Tillis, Representative Edwards, and local State Senator and Representative, to Elizabeth Rahn in celebration of her 100th birthday. One of Elizabeth's life goals was to reach 100 years old and clog on the courthouse steps. Though she did not manage to do so, she clogged in her living room at 100 years old, and Commissioner Chapman even got a video of her doing so, noting she moved better than he could. He thanked the Board for the letter as it was appreciated. Additionally, Commissioner Chapman mentioned attending a 5-hour session with several school board members and the Superintendent on how to navigate school and county budgets, presented by the UNC School of Government. The session provided valuable information about legal responsibilities and how the Board collaborates with the school board on funding matters.

Vice-Chairman Dalton shared that the field at Rosman High is being converted to turf. He told a story about his father-in-law, who was one of the first football players on that field and used to tell a tale that there were cars buried in the field. Recently, a car was found during the field conversion, and Vice-Chairman Dalton joked that his wife was thrilled that the old wives' tale was true.

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner McKelvey moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m., seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously approved.**

---

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman  
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

---

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board