

Unsealed by the Board of Commissioners on 11/13/2023.

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 14, 2020 – CLOSED SESSION

Per NC General Statute 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 terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease, the second closed session was entered into. Present were Chairman Hawkins, Commissioners Chappell, Dalton, Guice and Lemel, County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Bill Bulfer (participating via Zoom meeting software), and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Closed Session #2 – Property Negotiation: Johnson St. (former dentist office)

The Manager updated the Board on property negotiation efforts and the due diligence completed on the Johnson Street property.

The property appraised at \$530,000. The owner settled on a purchase price of \$515,000. The County paid \$10,000 in earnest money. During the due diligence period, staff received a report on the overall condition of the building, to include environmental, soils, asbestos, etc. The soils are not suitable and would need to be remediated if the County ever decided to expand currently owned property onto that site. Asbestos was also detected and would need to be remediated. The Manager reported the building is in reasonable condition, but it needs renovation work to be suitable for office space.

Staff recently toured the building with Probation and Parole staff. The County currently leases space for them as required by law for approximately \$22,000/year. Probation and Parole staff felt the building could work for them if certain modifications were made to meet their needs. For instance, there are no doors on most of the rooms because the building previously served as a dentist office.

The most positive element of this property is its location and proximity to the County's campus. Otherwise, the County would unlikely have an interest in the property. The Manager was unaware of any other competitive purchasers at this time. She sought direction from the Board on how to proceed.

The Board discussed this topic at length. They agreed that if purchased, the preferred purpose would be office space for Probation and Parole until a new courthouse is built. Then it could be used as space for other County functions and upfitted for appropriate use. Housing Probation and Parole there puts them in proximity to the current courthouse in which they do most of their work.

The Manager informed the Board that once a timeframe is set for renovation, Probation and Parole could be ready to move in. Staff intended to conduct a review of the building and determine which renovation work can be done in-house and which should be contracted out.

Overall, Commissioners were supportive of acquiring the property, but they were concerned about timing, particularly with so many unknowns around the County's future financial condition and costs to renovate. The Manager reported that the Department of Public Safety has its own inspectors and they will have to ensure the building is upfitted according to their standards and will meet the operational needs for Probation and Parole, such as secured entrances, separate bathrooms for offenders and staff, area for drug testing, etc.

Following further discussion, the Board directed the Manager to seek a three-month extension on the due diligence so staff can work with the appropriate people and the architect to determine what is needed for renovation and the associated costs. If the property owner does not agree to an extension, the Manager was instructed to terminate the due diligence contract and request a refund of the County's earnest money.

In the meantime, the Board asked the Manager to also put together options they have before them to fund the purchase of the property.

S://Mike Hawkins, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

S://Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board