

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
March 22, 2021 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Monday, March 22, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Commissioners Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Larry Chapman, Chairman Jason Chappell, Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton, David Guice and Teresa McCall. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. County Attorney Julie Hooten participated remotely via Zoom meeting software.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Derek McKissock participated remotely.
Brevard Newsbeat – Dan DeWitt

There were approximately 15 people in the audience, including staff presenters.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

WELCOME

Chairman Chappell welcomed everyone to the meeting participating both in person and remotely. He introduced Commissioners and staff in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The comments made by the public represent the individual speaker's opinion or point of view. No attempt was made to vet their statements for accuracy or modify them based on facts.

The following comments were submitted in writing prior to the meeting. Chairman Chappell read the comments aloud and they have been summarized here by the Clerk to the Board.

David Smith: Mr. Smith encouraged the Board of Commissioners to fund a 4-H Youth Development Agent for the upcoming budget period because he considered it a valuable community resource for the youth of Transylvania County. He began serving on the 4-H Advisory Council a few years ago and witnessed the outreach efforts of the 4-H organization to provide developmental opportunities to youth in a variety of ways. He recalled one student who took advantage of the program and is now a freshman in college thanks to the skills he learned in the 4-H program. Because of the positive impact the program has had in Transylvania County, he asked the Board to commit to funding the position for the upcoming year.

Benny Frady: Mr. Frady addressed the Board regarding the courthouse. He stated that the need for a new courthouse continues to grow and that nothing is being done to alleviate the issues court officials face daily. He pointed out that since the previous Board ceased further action on a new facility, the day-to-day use of the current courthouse has been restricted for various reasons and that only usage of the large courtroom is being allowed. This has created a backlog in court calendars. While he understood the high price tag of building a new courthouse, he pointed out that costs continue to rise each year the Board

delays a decision. Mr. Frady stated now is the time for the Board to make a necessary decision; otherwise, the safety of all those who work in and visit the courthouse will be at risk.

Lisa Rodke: Ms. Rodke cited several instances over the years contrasting the behavior of Republicans to that of Democrats, mostly at the national level, which segued into a comment referencing former County Commissioner Mike Hawkins' request for this Board to add to its agenda a declaration of unity which acknowledged that Joe Biden won the presidency in a fair election. She called out Commissioner Chapman for comments he made at previous meetings and stated that Commissioners who refuse to add the declaration of unity to the agenda are giving a green light to racist groups to recruit our youth.

The next two speakers addressed the Board in-person.

Kristi Brown: Mrs. Brown is the Clerk of Superior Court. She stated that when Judge Brittain removed the small courtroom from the rotation, it was her understanding that the Board of Commissioners was to find a second courtroom location to hold court cases. She shared that beginning in April, there are four out of five weeks that require a jury and there is nowhere that has been identified to hold court. The pandemic has delayed court cases considerably, and the upcoming Superior Court session will delay district, criminal, civil and domestic courts further due to lack of space. She requested the use of County Commissioners Chambers to hold court because it meets the court's needs. She stressed that court cases cannot continue to be delayed and asked the Board to compromise and allow use of the County's space.

Commissioner Chapman asked Mrs. Brown about the status of the courtroom at the Public Safety Facility. Mrs. Brown stated it is smaller than Commissioners' Chambers. It is currently used for first appearances and magistrate court.

Phil Seymore: Mr. Seymore spoke in support of the Community Appearance Initiative item on the agenda this evening. He stated he moved here from New Bern in Eastern NC where they have similar problems with trash. He encouraged a proactive program that begins with education of our youth about their civic responsibilities, which includes teaching them not to litter and to pick up trash. He also supported a public service announcement campaign that encourages people not to litter and to organize litter pick up campaigns. Mr. Seymore encouraged the Board to ensure enforcement of the tarp rule for trucks and trailers and other vehicles carrying trash. Lastly, Mr. Seymore implored citizens to be more responsible.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

Commissioner Guice moved to approve the agenda as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner McCall moved to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Guice and unanimously approved.

The following items were approved:

MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in regular session on February 8, 2021 and following met in closed session in which the minutes were sealed. The minutes were approved as submitted.

DISCOVERY, RELEASE AND MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT

Per NC General Statute § 105-312 (b), it is the duty of the Tax Administrator to see that all property not properly listed during the regular listing period be listed, assessed, and taxed. The Tax Administrator shall file such reports of discoveries with the Board of Commissioners. Per NC General Statute § 105-381 (b), it is the duty of the Tax Administrator to provide a monthly report to the Board of Commissioners of the actions taken by the Tax Administrator on requests for release or refund, which shall be recorded in the minutes. For February 2021, tax dollars released totaled \$358 and \$1,588.05 in refunds were issued. The Board approved the Discovery, Release and Monthly Settlement Report for February 2021 as submitted.

PROCLAMATION – MONTH OF THE YOUNG CHILD AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Transylvania County Children’s Advocacy Center Director Susan Huter requested the Board of Commissioners proclaim the month of April 2021 as Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month. The purpose of the proclamation is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families, to recognize early childcare programs and services that meet those needs, and to call upon support for early childhood programs and the prevention of child abuse in our community. The Board approved Proclamation #09-2021 Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Proclamation # 09-2021
Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month

Whereas, child abuse and neglect are serious problems affecting every segment of our community, and finding solutions requires input and action from everyone; and

Whereas, in 1971 The Week of the Young Child™ was established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the world’s largest early childhood education association; and

Whereas, the youth-serving agencies of Transylvania County come together to celebrate The Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month during the month of April 2021 to focus public attention on needs of children and their families; and

Whereas, youth-serving agencies of Transylvania County are collaborating to establish a countywide plan to prevent child abuse in our community because all kids matter; and

Whereas, our children are our most valuable resources and we all must work to improve opportunities knowing they are vital to our state’s future success, prosperity and quality of life as well as being our most vulnerable assets; and

Whereas, all children deserve to have the safe, stable, nurturing homes and communities they need to foster their healthy growth and development; and

Whereas, communities that provide parents with the social support, knowledge of parenting and child development and concrete resources they need to cope with stress and nurture their children ensure all children grow to their full potential; and

Whereas, effective child abuse prevention strategies succeed because of partnerships created among citizens, human service agencies, schools, faith communities, health care providers, civic organizations, law enforcement agencies, and the business community;

Therefore, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim April as The Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month and calls upon all citizens, community agencies, faith groups, medical facilities, elected leaders, and businesses to increase their participation in our efforts to support families, thereby supporting early childhood programs and preventing child abuse while strengthening the communities in which we live.

This the 22nd day of March, 2021.

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

PROCLAMATION – NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

April 11-17, 2021 is recognized as National Public Safety Telecommunications Week to honor the thousands of men and women who respond to emergency calls, dispatch professionals and equipment and render life-saving assistance to the citizens of the United States. The Board of Commissioners is very proud of all the Transylvania County 911 Communications Center's Telecommunicators and the vital service they provide to the citizens of Transylvania County and their fellow emergency services comrades. The Board approved Proclamation 10-2021 National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week and presented it to Emergency Management Director Kevin Shook.

**Proclamation #10-2021
National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week
April 11-17, 2021**

Whereas, emergencies can occur at any time that require police, fire, or emergency medical services; and

Whereas, when an emergency occurs the prompt response of police and law enforcement officers, firefighters and paramedics is critical to the protection of life and preservation of property; and

Whereas, the safety of our police and law enforcement officers and firefighters is dependent upon the quality and accuracy of information obtained from citizens who telephone the Transylvania County 911 communications center; and

Whereas, Public Safety Telecommunicators are the first and most critical contact our citizens have with emergency services; and

Whereas, Public Safety Telecommunicators are the single vital link for our police and law enforcement officers and firefighters by monitoring their activities by radio, providing them information, and ensuring their safety; and

Whereas, Public Safety Telecommunicators of the Transylvania County 911 communications center have contributed substantially to the apprehension of criminals, suppression of fires and treatment of patients; and

Whereas, each dispatcher has exhibited compassion, understanding and professionalism during the performance of their job in the past year;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners declares the week of April 11 through 17, 2021, to be National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in Transylvania County, in honor of the men and women whose diligence and professionalism keep our county and citizens safe.

This 22nd day of March, 2021.

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

PROCLAMATION – NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

Making communities safe and healthy is public health’s top priority. COVID-19 has made that even more important. Amid the most challenging public health crisis of our lifetimes, it is more important than ever to celebrate public health. The Board of Commissioners thanked Transylvania County Public Health for the hard work they are doing to keep our community safe. The Board approved Proclamation #11-2021 National Public Health Week and presented it to Public Health Director Elaine Russell.

**Proclamation #11-2021
National Public Health Week**

WHEREAS, the week of April 5-11, 2021 is National Public Health Week, and the theme is “Building Bridges to Better Health”; and

WHEREAS, the Transylvania County Public Health Department has provided immeasurable contributions to enhancing the quality of life for our residents, especially during the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic through testing, tracing, health education and vaccination; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania Public Health programs have evolved over many years from a focus on sanitation and controlling the spread of infectious diseases to now also preventing the onset of chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania Public Health professionals help communities prevent, prepare for, withstand, and recover from the impact of a full range of health threats, including disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, measles, natural disasters, and disasters caused by human activity; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania Public Health promotes improved lifestyles by providing services and supporting policies to help young people stay well and develop into healthy adults; and,

WHEREAS, Transylvania Public Health is a critical collaborative partner in the community to respond to emergencies; and,

WHEREAS, the significant increase in life expectancy is widely credited to improvements in public health programs; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim the week of April 5-11, 2021 as **PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK** in honor of the men and women who work tirelessly to keep our community safe and healthy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners encourages all citizens of Transylvania County to take steps to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of their families by making healthy personal lifestyle choices and seeking regular preventive health care.

This the 22nd day of March, 2021.

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

PROCLAMATION – NC 811 SAFE DIGGING MONTH

Brian Morehouse, NC 811 Liaison, requested the Board of Commissioners consider a proclamation designating the month of April as NC 811 Safe Digging Month. The NC One Call System serves as a resource to help prevent damages and injuries when excavating. North Carolina law requires that anyone engaging in demolition or excavation activities contact NC 811 at least three days prior to beginning work. The Board approved Proclamation #12-2021 Designating the Month of April 2021 as NC 811 Safe Digging Month and instructed the Clerk to forward a copy to the NC 811 office.

**Proclamation #12-2021
Designating the Month of April 2021 as North Carolina 811 Safe Digging Month**

WHEREAS, as utility owners, excavators, designers, and homeowners work to keep pace with North Carolina’s economic development, it is important to minimize damages to underground utility lines, danger to workers and the general public, environmental impact, and loss of utility services to the citizens of North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina 811, a utility service notification center and leader in education celebrates its 43rd year of continuous service to the State, is key to preventing injuries and damages when excavating; and

WHEREAS, this unique service provides easy, one-call notification about construction and excavation projects that may endanger workers and jeopardize utility lines while promoting workplace and public safety, reducing underground utility damage, minimizing utility service interruptions, and protecting the environment; and

WHEREAS, this vital service, which began in 1978 serves the citizens of North Carolina from the mountains to the coast, educates stakeholders about the need for excavation safety whether the project is as small as planting a tree to designing and beginning construction on a new interstate; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, the North Carolina one call system received 2.1 million notification requests and transmitted over 12.2 million requests, providing protection to utility companies’ infrastructure, their employees, excavators, and customers;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners has designated the month of April 2021 as “North Carolina 811 Safe Digging Month” to encourage all excavators and homeowners of Transylvania County to contact 8-1-1 either by dialing 8-1-1 or contacting NC811 via the webpage of NC811.org at least three working days prior to digging in order to “Know What’s Below,” avoid injury, protect the environment, prevent millions of dollars in damages and to remind excavators that three working days’ notice is the law, for safe digging is no accident, and that more information may be obtained by visiting www.nc811.org.

This the 22nd day of March, 2021.

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

COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

The Community Child Protection Team was created by statute to assess selected cases in which children are being served by Child Protective Services. The CCPT serves to develop a community-wide approach to child abuse and neglect, understand the causes of childhood deaths, identify gaps or deficiencies in service delivery in public agency systems designed to prevent abuse, neglect, and death, and make and

implement recommendations for laws, rules, and policies that will support the safe and healthy development of children and prevent future child abuse, neglect, and death. The CCPT's 2020 Annual Report identified needs and gaps in service and made recommendations on how to meet those needs and close gaps in service. The Board accepted the 2020 Community Child Protection Team Annual Report as submitted.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT

Dr. Leatherwood, President of Blue Ridge Community College, presented the College's annual report and FY 2022 budget request. She recognized three of her Board members in attendance: Duke Woodhull, Dr. Brian Weaver, and Chairman Chip Gould. This is a summary of her presentation:

Prior to presenting the Board with the College's FY 22 budget requests, Dr. Leatherwood recapped an historic year for the College. In March 2020 at the onset of the pandemic, the College pivoted into online learning. However, the College never closed because they were vital in training a workforce that was essential during the pandemic (nurses, paramedics, healthcare workers, law enforcement officers). Soon thereafter, the College received its first federal stimulus dollars from the CARES Act totaling \$1.4 million. Of this amount, 50% was used for their students who were struggling financially during the pandemic. The other half was used to enhance and improve the College's technology infrastructure on all their campuses so they could operate and teach in a virtual environment. The Governor released additional dollars for workforce training in the amount of \$214,000. Knowing their students were struggling, the College raised \$50,000 through their foundation for emergency aid for students who needed assistance with transportation and childcare. The Small Business Center developed and designed the R3 program, which stands for "Reboot, Recover, Rebuild" for small businesses in the community which was well received in Transylvania County. Their effort was replicated across the State of North Carolina.

The College also moved forward with conducting its master plan for both campuses. They completed a capital project that added a classroom building on the Transylvania County campus. The \$400,000 in funding for the project came in the form of bond money from the State. The College also received the single largest gift from a private donor totaling \$2 million. The foundation continued to raise money for scholarship students so they could continue to pursue their education. This past summer when the College expected a loss of enrollment, they had the largest enrollment increase during the summer months in the last 10 years.

The College continued to strengthen its partnership with Transylvania County Schools. The College is intentionally growing the Career and College Promise Program because it is a workforce pipeline. The College wants every high school student to graduate with some college credit if possible.

Dr. Leatherwood reported that the corporate and customized training the College conducted with industry in Transylvania County trained 101 students and 12 businesses in the manufacturing sector. She stressed that small businesses are key to economic development in Transylvania County. The College counseled 73 small businesses throughout the pandemic, held 170 business training events with 370 businesses. The College had many more accomplishments as well.

Next, Dr. Leatherwood presented the College's budget request for FY 22. The College's capital and operating budget requests are very similar to the previous year's request:

- Capital: \$196,455
- Operating: \$578,735

As noted, the College conducted a facility master plan for both campuses. Last year, the Board of Commissioners awarded the College \$20,000 to hire an architect to assess their facilities and develop a master plan for the Transylvania County campus. The College hired ClarkNexsen to develop a proposal for their facility. She noted that the Transylvania County campus is referred to as a multi-campus designation which means they must keep their full-time equivalent of students at 300 or above. When they meet the FTE requirement, the College receives an allotment from the State that allows them to fund seven positions to make it a full functioning campus. This also allows the College to offer associate degree programs. This is directly tied to their ability to attract students to their campus. This fact makes the facility plan even more important. Otherwise, the College would not be able to offer degree programs in Transylvania County which would have a devastating impact on all students. Having a state-of-the-art facility would help the College recruit students. Dr. Leatherwood noted that Transylvania County will soon have two newly renovated high schools, yet students would be attending a community college that is housed in a former elementary school. She, therefore, thought it was important to consider the transition of those high school students to the community college setting.

Dr. Leatherwood invited Chad Roberson with ClarkNexsen to present on the results of their master facility planning study. She noted the study includes a proposal for the current site only (Oak Park Drive) because no other site was identified as an option on which they could build.

Mr. Roberson walked the Board through the process his firm went through to develop the master facility study for the Transylvania County campus of Blue Ridge Community College. There are three overarching phases in the design process – research, generate and execute. During the research phase, they conducted fact-finding to understand the campus better. Then they started to generate, which is where they began to process goals, lofty objectives, reflecting and projecting where the campus might go, and presenting those ideas to stakeholders. Lastly, they began to execute and materialize those ideas into a master plan for its current and future state. The backbone for this processing is where options are developed.

The firm went through a couple different exercises over the last few months. They started with a visioning exercise called Keep, Toss and Create – things stakeholders liked about their campus, things they did not like about their campus, and what they wanted to see different on their campus. Part of the process also included a visual exercise called Visual Speak. It involves scattering pictures on a table and participants grabbing a photo and talking about what the photo means to them or what they would like it to mean in terms of the master plan.

Key takeaways from the visioning process were:

- Flexibility and adaptability – ability to teach in different environments during changing times
- Balance of collaborative and focused working environments – trend across community colleges
- Mix of spaces across campuses to allow for flexible work and integrated technology
- Natural lighting inside buildings
- Community engagement
- Green space that capitalizes on natural resources
- Create a space for student commons
- Reflective of Western North Carolina

The firm heard from stakeholders on factors that were important to them. They were:

- For students to have a college experience
- Community and workforce development

- Modern campus that is reflective of WNC and capitalizes on its natural resources
- Transformational

Next, Mr. Roberson walked the Board through the firm's analysis process. The main building, Strauss Building, is approximately 28,000 sq. ft. It originally served as an elementary school and was constructed in 1951. There was an addition in 1966 and another addition recently. While the building has some wonderful components, the architects identified several challenges with the building – outdated mechanical system, leaky and outdated water filtration system, inadequate classroom size, etc. Mr. Roberson noted that a roundabout is intended to be constructed directly adjacent to the building and will take some of the front lawn frontage and require relocation of the campus sign.

The Applied Technology Building, constructed in 2008, is one of the newer buildings on the campus. One of the challenges this building faces is the automotive area is directly underneath the teaching and classroom areas and the smells of gas and oil waft into the upstairs classrooms. Otherwise, the building is in very good shape.

After evaluating the existing buildings, the firm considered different options for the site that represented a complete replacement of the Strauss Building. A new structure could be constructed in the current parking lot to ensure operations are maintained in the existing facility. Once the new building is constructed, the old building would be demolished and replaced with green space and/or parking. A second option is to locate a new structure next to the Allied Technology Building and take advantage of the slope on the site which allows for the construction of a two-story building with a smaller footprint. Once the new structure is completed, the old building would be demolished and replaced with parking or green space. A third option is to construct a new facility on the same footprint; this option would present challenges in that current operations could not be maintained during its implementation.

This concluded Mr. Roberson's presentation.

Dr. Leatherwood added that the College's facilities are more important than ever in retraining and recruiting business and industry. They are unable to offer many new programs with the current facility. She felt that a revamped campus is imperative for the economic viability of the community in Transylvania County.

Commissioner Chapman understood that the College's programs are closely related to programs at the high schools. He asked if there had been any discussion about relocating the College to another site or whether the facilities study assumed they would remain at the same campus. Dr. Leatherwood stated there was never another site established for the College to assess. She said the College would take their direction from the Board in terms of whether to assess another site.

Commissioner Chapman asked if the College had been invited by Transylvania County Schools to give input on the bond projects. He felt it would have been a great opportunity given the nature of their relationship. Dr. Leatherwood stated she was not at the College when the bond projects were being planned. The Manager shared that after the bond referendum was passed, she met with Blue Ridge Community College Board of Trustees Chairman Gould, Dr. Leatherwood, Superintendent Dr. Jeff McDaris, and former County Commission Chair Mike Hawkins about the feasibility of collocation for some or all the projects to gain efficiency both in terms of the projects and cost, but there was objection from Dr. McDaris with regards to security on that site. He was concerned about the commingling of adults and children. This discussion also took place prior to the College pursuing their facilities master plan.

Commissioner Guice commented that the needs in Transylvania County are great, and the focus should be on what is best for the community and our future. The relationship between high school students and Community College is significantly important to the community. Thus, he felt the Board should be bold enough to pause and have these discussions further because they have everlasting impacts.

Commissioner Chapman asked about a timeline for construction if approved. Mr. Roberson said the project would take about a year to design and 18 months for construction. Depending upon the option chosen, the College may have to find another location for current programs which would take additional time. Mr. Roberson noted that the proposed design adds 10,000 sq. ft. to what is currently a 38,000 sq. ft. building, but the site itself does not provide much more space for expansion. The new space would be designed to be flexible, which is an important component to meet economic development demands.

Commissioner Guice felt it was important to recognize the number of high school students participating in programs at the College and therefore wondered why the College could not be located nearer to the high schools. He stated that students more than ever are attending community college which provides them with wonderful opportunities to either transfer to a four-year institution or enter the workforce.

Dr. Leatherwood concluded the presentation by stating that the College works well with Transylvania County Schools, and they are very appreciative of that relationship.

APPOINTMENTS

BREVARD PLANNING AND ZONING

There is a vacancy on the Brevard Planning and Zoning Board. The Clerk advertised and received one application. Applicants must reside in the ETJ. One of the other applicants will be resigning soon because they will be moving out of the ETJ, so the appointments will be coming back before the Board soon once other applications are received.

Chairman Chappell moved to appoint Peter Chaveas to fill the vacancy on the Brevard Planning and Zoning Board. The motion died for lack of a second.

Following discussion, Chairman Chappell directed the Clerk to the Board to advertise for additional applications to include explanation of the residency requirements and to bring back to the Board for consideration at the second meeting in April.

OLD BUSINESS

NAMING OF ECUSTA ROAD CONNECTOR PROJECT

The Board of Commissioners has the option of naming the Ecusta Road Connector project before it is open to the public. At the February 8, 2021 Board of Commissioners' meeting, the Manager invited the public to submit name suggestions. The Board received the list of suggestions at their February 22, 2021 meeting. Commissioners agreed at that time to narrow down their list of favorites to undergo a nominating process at the March 22, 2021 meeting for subsequent approval of a name to forward to the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The chart below consists of the names submitted by the public.

Baldwin Parkway	Em-Dash	Olin Road
Ben's Bypass	Fay Walker Way	Paper Path
Black Bear Road	Flax Road	Papermaker Drive
Brevard Boulevard	Glatfelter Road	Pisgah Pass
Brevard Byway	Harry Straus Blvd	Pisgah Path
Brook Trout Byway	Harry Straus Road	Rhododendron Row
Constitution Way	Harstrauss Road	River Cut
Davidson Bridge Road	Industry Trail	River Rotary
Davidson Direct	Looking Glass Lane	Roundabout Way
Davidson Drive	Memorial Boulevard	Straus Parkway
Davidson River Village Road	Mill Bypass	Straus Way
Dogwood Lane	Mill Circle	Transylvania Turnpike
Echo Road	Mill Pass	Uncle Harry's Loop
Ecusta Connector	Mill Path	Veteran's Link
Ecusta Corner Road	Old Ecusta Mill Road	Waterfall Way
Ecusta Pike	Olin Bypass	
Ecusta Road Connector	Olin Parkway	

Commissioner Chapman moved to adopt the name Veterans Way, seconded by Commissioner Dalton. Chairman Chappell pointed out there may be NCDOT requirements as to whether it is classified as way, road, etc. that will be at their discretion. There were no other nominations. **The motion was approved unanimously.** The Manager will forward to NCDOT representatives.

COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR FY 2019-2020

Finance Director Jonathan Griffin introduced Kelly Gooderham. She presented the audit via electronic means at the Board's last meeting and was in person to present the information once again at the Board's request. Mr. Griffin noted he had prepared a slide that addressed the questions received from the Board since the last meeting which he intended to review following Ms. Gooderham's presentation.

(Ms. Gooderham presented the same information as she had at the previous Board meeting on March 8, 2021.) Ms. Gooderham reported that the Local Government Commission has received and accepted the County's audit.

Mr. Griffin shared his responses to Commissioners' questions since the last meeting.

Transylvania County's general fund balance is comparable to general fund balances from like counties. Transylvania County is the only one with a major portion of its General Fund balance as a non-spendable long-term loan to another entity (non-spendable fund balance is non-spendable because it is not cash). Comparison counties are using a mix of pay-as-you-go, debt financing and formal capital improvement plans, so their fund balances differ significantly by classification. Transylvania County currently uses only pay-as-you-go on a project-by-project basis. There is no formal capital improvement plan resolution.

The County dedicates some property tax revenues for future capital projects. Assigned fund balances, mostly for capital projects are listed below:

Assigned fund balance at June 30, 2020 is as follows:

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>General Fund</u>
Assigned:	
Subsequent year's expenditures	\$ 1,456,900
Employee health insurance	2,274,103
Accrued vacation	2,203,719
General government projects	1,200,000
Special projects	446,614
Education projects	288,000
Public safety projects	2,152,788
Economic and physical development	2,652,236
Environmental protection	38,121
Recreation programs and facilities	<u>1,054,933</u>
Total	<u>\$ 13,767,414</u>

One question was related to the large increase in General Government expenditures. This was due to a significant increase in FY 2020's claims on health insurance. The two previous years were comparatively much better years. Thus, the County was in a strong position to weather the increase in medical costs in FY 2020. The current trend for 2021 is 4% below the same time last year.

Mr. Griffin also received a question about the increase in Public Safety expenditures. In FY 2020, the Board of Commissioners adjusted the recommended budget to cover some expenditures on fire and volunteer rescue services from the General Fund which is why there was a comparatively lower number of expenditures within the fire districts and higher expenses in the General Fund. It was not new spending, rather it was spending located from elsewhere.

These were all the questions he received in advance of the meeting. He asked Commissioners for any other questions he may be able to address.

Commissioner Guice pointed out the wellness programming has saved the County money over time and that staff has been well-served because of it. He was appreciative of the work being done by Human Resources to focus on employee health. Chairman Chappell concurred and was pleased with the program, not only financially, but in caring for employees.

Commissioner Chapman requested either a formal update or a report on the services being provided to employees through the Wellness Clinic sometime soon.

NEW BUSINESS

COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

Public Health Director Elaine Russell updated the Board on the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine program. This is a summary of her presentation:

- Percentage fully vaccinated 15.8% (5,431)
- Percentage partially vaccinated 23% (7,919)
- Agency baseline weekly allocation of 400 (Moderna) for current 3-week cycle
- Agency has received and administered Moderna, Pfizer, and Janssen
- As of this week, Transylvania Public Health has received 5,090 first doses; 3,200 second doses; and 2,400 single doses (inclusive of transfers)
- Federal vaccination contracts for long-term care facilities have been completed and the agency will assume any emergent vaccination requests for new staff or residents
- This week is a week of targeted 1st dose outreach and 2nd dose work
- North Carolina moved into Group 4 due to slowing inquiry
- Local vaccine inquiry is slowing, but work remains on a smaller scale for targeted outreach
- Growing emphasis on special project outreach allocations, especially for Janssen (Johnson & Johnson), for clinics at Brevard College and Blue Ridge Community College – Brevard Campus

Commissioners thanked Ms. Russell for all the work the Health Department is doing to care for our citizens.

CONTRACT TO AUDIT ACCOUNTS

Finance Director Jonathan Griffin presented this item. In North Carolina, all local governments are required each year to undergo a single audit, in accordance with procedures and documents set forward by generally accepted auditing procedures and the procedures established by the Secretary of the Local Government Commission, a branch of the Department of State Treasurer.

The purpose of this audit requirement is not to uncover waste, fraud, or abuse, but rather to examine whether the local government has complied in material respects with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the requirements of state or federal restricted programs and generally accepted accounting principles. Additionally, audit firms assess the skills, knowledge and experience and reports made by key management positions, i.e., County Manager, and Finance Director primarily, but also staff in the Department of Social Services.

Since FY 2011, the firm of Martin Starnes and Associates, CPAs has served as the audit firm for Transylvania County government. It is important to note that during this time the County has been served by four different individuals as the primary audit manager. Each manager has had a team of four to six dedicated staff to conduct the operations of the audit. This is all to elucidate that the use of Martin Starnes for 10 years has not meant that it has been the same individuals reviewing the County's financial records for that period.

At the conclusion of the FY 2018 audit report and transition in Finance Director positions, Martin Starnes offered a three-year proposal. FY 2022 would be the final year of this proposal and that audit would be conducted at the same price as FY 2021's. This proposal was nonbinding – statute creates a single audit requirement every year and extends the governing board the right to choose annually.

Generally, staff have made the following observations:

1. The number of firms that service counties has fallen significantly in North Carolina, likely due to the additional specialized training required by individuals who must examine social services records.
2. The fees the County has paid are roughly comparable to other counties.
3. Martin Starnes is the largest county-level auditor in North Carolina, with 22 clients in 2019-2020.

From this, staff concluded it is likely to get another set of eyes on the County's financial system, but not at a reduced price. Additionally, it would not be unreasonable for Martin Starnes to raise its fee in response to the County soliciting proposals from elsewhere since it has previously guaranteed no cost increases in this three-year proposal.

At this time, the only known risk to soliciting more proposals would be if there were delays in the high school construction projects. After June 30, 2021, the County will need to have its audit in progress with the Local Government Commission (the LGC approves all billings to governments individually to ensure that all invoices are within a scope of work and within a previously agreed upon contract) and by September 30, 2021, the County would need to have a fresher audit to issue debt. If bidding out and onboarding a new auditor took longer than anticipated, it might generate some short-term cash flow issues. Bringing a new auditor on board would be a significant project for multiple County departments, not just the Finance Office, because not all departments were analyzed in the audit report to the Finance Director, so it would not be unreasonable to assume onboarding a new audit firm could be time consuming.

Only the governing board can make this decision, so staff asked for instruction on how to proceed with the following:

1. Instruct staff to proceed with awarding a one-year audit contract to Martin Starnes and Associates for FY 2022, or
2. Instruct staff to solicit a new round of proposals for a new multi-year commitment.

Chairman Chappell agreed with the recommendation to award a one-year contract to the current auditor. With that said, he emphasized that he supports changing auditors periodically to receive a fresh set of eyes on the County's finances. Commissioner Chapman agreed, but he felt more comfortable remaining with the current auditor knowing that they change their audit review team from year-to-year. He also felt the fee was reasonable.

Commissioner Guice moved to instruct staff to proceed with awarding a one-year audit contract to Martin Starnes and Associates for FY 2022 and to instruct staff to solicit a new round of proposals for a new multi-year commitment, seconded by Commissioners Dalton and McCall simultaneously and unanimously approved.

COMMUNITY APPEARANCE INITIATIVE

The County previously had a Community Appearance Initiative effort that was operated by the Planning Department with an appointed advisory committee that engaged property owners on designated scenic byways to clean up junk. The program required that the property owner sign an agreement not to allow the accumulation of junk to repeat at the property. County funds were used to pay for tipping fees and other costs associated with clean up.

With an increase in complaints about junk accumulated on property, there has been discussion about reactivating the program as an incentive-based program to address concerns. The Manager has had preliminary discussions with the TCTDA Director about potential grants to help fund the program. The Manager sought feedback from Commissioners on whether they would want to pursue the program as it was prior and to request using TCTDA funds to reactivate the program.

Commissioner Chapman reported that Commissioners have been receiving complaints about various issues around the County. He felt it was worth reviewing the former Community Appearance Initiative and making any necessary changes to deal with recent complaints. He noted the former program only

addressed the major highways and that the program could be tweaked to add secondary roads. He preferred staff evaluate the former program, consult with its former members, and bring back a proposal for the Board to consider. Commissioner Chapman was open to working with the TCTDA either on the initiative itself or from a funding standpoint because the issue of trash around the County impacts tourism. He pointed out there are agencies and businesses that are responsible for certain aspects of trash removal, like NCDOT, that can assist with these issues as well.

Chairman Chappell shared that based on discussions with individual Commissioners, the Board is supportive of addressing the problem, but the issue is putting in place the appropriate program to do so. He asked staff to gather information and bring back options for the Board to consider.

Commissioner Guice supported broadening the program to include more than the scenic byways. He supported private property rights but also understood how people who travel our roadways react to seeing junk piles and trash. He noted that Commissioners continue to receive several complaints. He supported the recommendation to review the program. Commissioner Guice noted that the trash issue related to the highways is a different issue. It takes enforcement of the tarp laws and littering to address this problem.

Commissioner Dalton reminded Commissioners there is a program in place with the Sheriff's Office using inmate labor taxpayer free, but the program was stalled due to COVID. He felt that it should be reimplemented. He commended volunteer groups like Headwaters Outfitters for picking up trash along our highways. NCDOT has vowed to increase their litter clean up days and they seek volunteer groups to assist between cleanups.

Chairman Chappell thanked Commissioner Dalton for acknowledging the volunteer groups. His daughter's Honor Society did the same and he was grateful. Initially, he was proud that the initiative was a voluntary effort when enacted which contributed to its success.

Commissioner McCall added that she felt in some cases for some of those people who need assistance, the problem has become overwhelming for them. Thus, a program such as this to offer a helping hand would be great for the community.

Commissioner Guice pointed out that inmates have worked side by side with NCDOT for many years on a regular basis and he asked the Manager to inquire about the status of the program. He understood the program may be halted due to COVID. He shared that the State at one time contracted with agencies to pick up trash along roadways and he inquired about the status of that as well. He stressed that our legislators need to be aware of the issues counties are dealing with as it relates to trash along our roadways.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- March 14 incident update
 - Thanks to all the agencies that collaborated, communicated, and followed up as County officials worked to determine operational plans
 - Security investments the County has made since the 2016 Safety Survey were critical
 - Cameras
 - Access controls
 - Training such as the Active Shooter Training Scenario
 - Reviewing the incident and identifying additional measures that would benefit safety of employees and the public
- Thanks to NC Commerce, Senator Edwards, Representative Johnson, and the Transylvania Economic Alliance for the collaboration on the Raybow expansion- a big win for our community!

- This will put the highest concentration of scientists outside a university setting in all WNC
- Kudos to Laura Gardner from the Library. She has written her first book and it has been published by Page Street Kids. It is called “Blue Ridge Babies 1, 2, 3”
- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Blue pin wheels will be placed around the County campus. Notice people wearing blue ribbons to remind us not only to look out for issues around child abuse but also that we are intentional in our investments to prevent child abuse.

Chairman Chappell declared a 10-minute break prior to beginning the capital workshop. Chairman Chappell also dismissed the County Attorney as legal services would not be needed during the workshop portion of the agenda.

The meeting reconvened at 8:07 p.m.

WORKSHOP

REVIEW OF CAPITAL PROJECTS

Commissioners will hold capital workshops over the next two meetings. Tonight’s workshop is part one where staff will provide an overview of the capital projects that are under consideration. Additionally, staff will review the capital funding strategy that has been employed to assign funds annually for capital expenditures in public safety, parks and recreation and economic development.

At the next meeting, Commissioners will conduct part two of the workshop. They will hear from Tryon Advisors and view their financial modeling program that shows how scheduling capital expenditures with the existing debt service obligations will impact future budgets.

The Manager reported that staff provided the Board with supplemental documents to indicate where expenditures come from for various capital projects. She noted that the list of projects is not exhaustive, and she was aware of several projects that may be proposed in the future. Staff took information they had on hand regarding the capital needs for Transylvania County and compiled them into one list for the purpose of reviewing during this meeting.

Some of the projects have large price tags. Not all the projects are expected to be completed in the near term. Nonetheless, the list is meant to give Commissioners a snapshot of the projects on the horizon long-term. The purpose of holding a capital workshop not only helps inform the Board’s annual budget decisions; it also informs how the Board thinks long-term and how they might employ strategies to fund all the different items.

Next the Manager gave an overview of the capital projects on the list. The Board was given a document that covered the five-year capital list that is required of every department during the budget preparation process and a list of projects beyond five years that are to be determined.

The Manager touched on financing somewhat because she wanted the public to understand the limitations placed on counties for financing projects. This is a summary:

- Financing
 - Small to medium projects may be able to get commercial bank loans up to 20 years but it ultimately depends on the market at the time
 - Major projects financed through General Obligation Bonds, Limited Obligation Bonds, USDA Loan (if applicable to purpose) and Revenue Bonds (Infrastructure or Solid Waste)

- Pay-as-you-go (cash)
 - Strategy employed for some projects since FY 16
 - Board intentionally set tax rate to have surplus funds being earmarked in assigned fund balance
 - Projects that have been funded with this method since then have been:
 - Parks and Recreation: Gallimore Rd Purchase, Ninja Fitness Course, Pickleball Courts, Recreation Center air conditioning and improvements
 - Economic Development: Sylvan Valley Industrial Building (lease payments), Gaia Herbs Sewer Line
 - Public Safety: Communications upgrade, EMS property purchase
- Grants and other funds
 - Golden Leaf, PARTF, ARC, NC Commerce have all been used in recent years
 - Grant funds are not the primary source of funding for capital
 - \$6.6 million stimulus funding available (restrictions still being determined; future guidance expected on from Treasury)
 - COVID-related, infrastructure, broadband
 - Careful about generating future expense to maintain/replace
 - Use the opportunity to make investments that will pay community dividends

Next, the Manager reviewed the capital projects.

Major Projects

- Courthouse (current facility constructed 1861)
 - Cost estimates updated in 2020, options range from \$38-\$42 million
 - 2019 second Courtroom Evaluation (old Administration Building upfit \$1.1-\$1.3 million)
- EMS 2008 Placement Study
 - Construction of Morris Road Building \$1.9 million
 - EMS/Sylvan Valley Substation \$2.4 million (some expense from Sylvan Valley)
- Infrastructure (water, sewer)
 - 2014 Potable Water Supply Study identified three alternates for water expansion
 - \$40-\$50 million for future combined water needs
 - \$1.3 million to add water to the Gaia/Rosman sewer line project along US 64 and would qualify for funding from federal stimulus
 - Sewer treatment needs have not been modeled so there is no estimate of cost available
 - Engagement with Lake Toxaway Historic Foundation about their identified needs in their planning efforts for infrastructure
 - Engagement with Town of Rosman about long term expansion needs
- Economic Development
 - Sylvan Valley Industrial Building planned expansion \$5 million
 - Current building is currently leased and there is minimal product available to grow existing business
- Education
 - Assuming \$68 million bond proceeds as expected with Transylvania County Schools
 - \$8 million in needs at 7 campuses over the next 5 years Transylvania Schools
 - Blue Ridge Community College Campus replacement proposal \$28 million
- Solid Waste
 - Cell closures \$6 million (note: current revenue falls short of annual expenses)
 - Construction for expansion \$5.3 million

- Technology-driven projects (tower replacements, etc.); broadband-related could make these projects eligible to use federal stimulus monies

General Projects

- Public Safety technological systems for security purposes that require regular upgrades
 - Includes a lot of technological systems that are becoming outdated or obsolete but are required to be operational and will require regular upgrades to maintain security
- HVAC replacements, fire alarm systems, maintenance schedule (roofs, etc.)
- Parking lot repaving
- Solid Waste heavy equipment and Collection Center improvements
- Parks and Recreation
 - Master Plan list of improvements from 2016
 - Silvermont Master Plan improvements from 2018
 - Master plans could identify more (Gallimore Road Park, Recreation Center, Rosman Community Park, South Broad Park)
 - Transylvania County Bike Plan from 2019
 - Ecusta Trail \$12-\$13 million (no County funds committed, Friends of Ecusta Trail to seek grants and plan to fundraise to match grants)
 - Some other improvements estimated
- Library
 - Branch library
 - Bookmobile replacement
 - Cantilever shade for amphitheater stage

The Manager noted there are some capital items that the Board of Commissioners is legally required to own and maintain and provide facilities for. Those include a courthouse, Solid Waste (although not mandated, is a necessary function), and school capital. There are some services that are necessary to our community but that are not mandated. Those include economic development investments, community college, infrastructure, parks and recreation and library. She pointed out this information specifically because the capital projects are enormous in cost. So, as the Board moves into the modeling phase of the workshop at their next meeting, they may want to consider prioritizing these projects. Some priorities will be motivated by necessity, such as maintenance, paving, etc. to protect the investments they have already made. At the same time, the Board may decide that some of the projects that are mandated should be top priority while those that are not mandated may become lesser priority.

The Manager stated as part of the budget decision, the Board will need to decide if and how they want to continue to employ the strategy of setting aside part of the tax rate from 2016 implementation for certain capital projects. As the Board heard from the auditor and Finance Director, the County reflects favorably among peer counties for fund balance, but part of the strategy is that the Board has been assigning funds into different categories. It is an intentional savings strategy that gives the County the ability to pay cash for certain improvements.

This summed up all the capital projects before the Board. The Manager opened the floor for discussion or questions they may have about specific projects.

Commissioner McCall expressed concerns about the project estimates due to the cost of construction skyrocketing in the current market. Thus, she expected the cost of these projects to rise which should be taken into consideration as Commissioners make decisions on future projects.

Chairman Chappell requested staff provide revised estimates on the waterline project proposal. He also noted the original proposal called for an 8" waterline, but he requested estimates for a 10" waterline as well. This appears to be standard with other water systems.

Commissioner Chapman reminded the Board of the comments made earlier by Clerk to Superior Court Kristi Brown. He felt the courtroom space and new Courthouse should be a top priority because the need is not going to go away.

Commissioner Guice pointed out the Board has been discussing the Courthouse for many years. Previous Boards made efforts to address issues in the Courthouse. He recalled hearing from various court officials over the years that the County has always been responsive to the needs of the courts. Commissioner Guice felt that much of the backlog in cases the courts are dealing with is due to the pandemic. Many of the jury trials were delayed and now they have a need for space to conduct other courts while the large courtroom is being used for the backlog of jury trials. Judge Brittain has ordered that the small courtroom is not acceptable for the other courts because it only has space for small groups. Commissioner Guice felt it was important to focus on the long-term but understood that continued delays drive the cost up. He said the Board must remember that there is no other viable option to relocate court functions in the short- to mid-term. He recalled that when the Public Safety Facility was constructed, the thought was that the small courtroom in that facility would be better and more frequently utilized. Nonetheless, Ms. Brown has expressed an immediate need that needs to be addressed now, regardless of the long-term decision over a new courthouse.

Commissioner Guice stated he did not feel that Commissioners Chambers was an ideal space for court functions because it cannot accommodate the large numbers of people on the docket for district courts. He felt that the courts need to consider scheduling options to help alleviate the space need.

The Manager noted in the Board's agenda packet is information from 2019 when staff explored leasing space for court. At that time, there were two locations that met the 5,000 sq. ft. minimum. One cost \$900,000-\$1 million for upfit and did not include acquisition or lease. The other was \$1.4 million to \$1.7 million to upfit, not including acquisition or lease. The upfit of the old Administration for court functions was at a cost of \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million. She was unaware of any new space available. She wanted the public to understand that staff spoke with the owners of the former Kmart space, and they were not interested in leasing space or selling space to the County for court purposes. Recently, a citizen asked the Board to consider eminent domain with regards to that building, but the Manager noted that laws around eminent domain are restrictive and local governments cannot acquire space simply because they want it. The County must be able to show there is no reasonable alternative. The County's studies, in fact, show there are reasonable alternatives to the former Kmart site. Thus, she did not see a need for condemnation of this or any other property for court functions.

Commissioner Guice was unaware of any new space that had become available. The Manager shared that staff explored other spaces, like churches. She pointed out that court personnel indicated that any space they use must be secured space, thus it could not be intermittently used for another function, and that it must be in downtown so they could bring files and equipment from the Courthouse with ease. She made the Board aware of the option of using the Elections Center conference room or the Rogow Room temporarily. One of the complications of using Commissioners Chambers is that it is the only facility with livestreaming capabilities. Currently, the County is livestreaming County Commission meetings, as well as committee meetings that use this room. Thus, it would present a challenge to use this room specifically for court space and be able to find space for other County functions, especially during the pandemic when meetings are being broadcast due to gathering limits. She called upon the Board and public to notify her of any other possible space that is available for staff to explore further.

Commissioner McCall asked if the space at Board of Elections is used frequently. The Manager said it is used by community groups and other County functions, so it would require rearranging schedules. The biggest challenge would be during the 2021 and 2022 elections which would have to be relocated to meet the need for exclusive use by the courts. The Rogow Room is widely used as well.

Commissioner McCall felt it would be most practical to use the Elections conference room and that court needs would take precedence over other community groups. It could be set up for use only by the courts on a semi-permanent basis.

Commissioner Guice agreed with Commissioner McCall's suggestion. He noted that one of the negative aspects of using the Rogow Room is that it is connected to the Library, which is heavily used by the public, including children. In addition, the New Adventure Learning Center is in proximity. With the types of cases that are heard in court on a regular basis, it would not make sense to hold court in these facilities. Commissioner Guice pointed out regardless of where courts are relocated temporarily, parking will be an issue. He again suggested the courts consider calendaring courts in a way to alleviate congestion.

Chairman Chappell asked if staff had received the latest guidelines from the Treasury on the most recent round of stimulus payments. The Manager stated that the County should expect to receive some funds within 30-60 days which should be half of the allotment. In terms of guidance on spending, staff expects to receive further communication in about a month or so which she expects to continue to be refined. She is in frequent contact with NACo and the NCACC to help the County guide its decision-making. Consistent throughout the guidance has been that funds may be used for COVID response and infrastructure (water, sewer, broadband). The broadband issue is more complicated in North Carolina because local governments are not allowed to be providers of broadband service. The County would only be allowed to make investments that were either support structure (tower) or possible grants.

Commissioner Chappell pointed out the proposal to add a waterline along with the Gaia Herbs sewer project. He was concerned about the time-sensitive nature of the project and any further delays. He wanted to confirm that this project falls under projects permissible by the US Treasury with regards to use of the stimulus funds.

Commissioner Guice inquired about whether the stimulus funds would assist the Town of Rosman. The Manager stated that all local governments must abide by the same restrictions outlined by the US Treasury. She has been in discussions with Mayor Brian Shelton and learned the Town is interested in making investments in infrastructure. Their allocation is significantly smaller.

All Commissioners were supportive of adding the waterline to the Gaia Herbs sewer line project and getting further information on the feasibility of adding a 10" line rather than an 8" line.

Chairman Chappell was appreciative of the Manager's guidance on using the stimulus funds in a way that will have a long-lasting impact on the community and that is non-recurring.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the potential for applying for additional Golden Leaf grants to expand the Sylvan Valley Industrial Building. The Manager said Golden Leaf has called for grants with a summer submittal. She had already been in contact with the Transylvania Economic Alliance. The Alliance is working with the architect on the expansion details to prepare the application.

Commissioner McCall returned to the courthouse discussion. Given that the discussion has been occurring for more than 20 years, she assured the public that the Board does, in fact, intend to make a decision. That said, she pointed she has yet to see any cost to upfit the current courthouse when court

functions vacate or potential usage ideas. She was concerned about the building sitting vacant. Chairman Chappell noted that Commissioner Chapman has asked for this discussion to come before the Board for discussion soon. The Manager stated the first step would be getting an idea of how Commissioners want to use the facility. There has been discussion over the last few years about it being the potential home for the Veterans Museum, leasing it for nonprofits, convention/meeting space, etc. The usage will drive the cost estimates. The structure of the building is such that it cannot withstand much change.

Commissioner Dalton asked staff to inquire about whether stimulus funds can be used toward the EMS base expansion or potential expansion in the Sylvan Valley II fire district.

Chairman Chappell asked Commissioners to submit any questions or items they want to see specifically for the financial modeling workshop at the next meeting. Commissioners asked to see the following:

- Estimates/predictions on construction cost escalation
- Options for funding (loans, grants, etc.)

The Manager shared that Tryon Advisors will be able to plug projects into the program and shift/schedule them based on funding, types of funding, debt service, etc. The biggest challenge with being creative in funding options is that new accounting standards require local governments to book leases on their balance sheets. Local governments will be required to record the value of the property being leased, not the value of the lease. For this reason, creative funding solutions have been narrowed because of the significant liability being added to the County's financial books.

Commissioner Chapman noted the County must also address the \$1.8 million (current year) request from Transylvania County Schools and another \$8 million over seven campuses in the next five years.

Commissioner Guice said the Board has been trying to understand education funding for some time. The Board has asked questions to understand, and most times the Board does not get answers to their questions. One question that the Board has yet to receive an answer to is how the pandemic has changed education and what the School System expects in the future. Commissioner Guice was concerned about a \$68 million bond that only adds about 17,000 sq. ft. to the total square footage, plus the loss of student enrollment. In addition, he was disappointed that the School System did not include the community college in their discussion of the bond projects. He was unsure of what could be done, but taxpayers are looking to the Board for those answers. He stressed the importance of Blue Ridge Community College to the community and the need to address their facilities.

Commissioner McCall agreed with Commissioner Guice's comments. She was disappointed in the School System's inability to provide the Board of Commissioners with requested information or answers to their questions. As a steward of taxpayer dollars, she stressed that she does not "write blank checks", so the School System must be able to justify their needs. Otherwise, she was reluctant to agree to additional funding.

Commissioner McCall inquired about the \$6.2 million estimated for FY 22 projects and asked if these were considered the most pressing needs. The Manager stated these items were requested during the budget process, but it does not mean the requests will be included in her recommended budget. The cost for the EMS replacement base station was included because it is a priority due to the poor condition of the current facility. Another \$1.3 million for the water expansion project has been included because it requires moving forward rather quickly. As staff begins engaging the US Treasury on stimulus guidance, they intend to float the EMS base station as a potential project.

Commissioner Guice suggested inquiry about funding the Sylvan Valley II EMS station/fire department. The Manager added it for inquiry, noting it would probably be considered the same type of project as the main EMS base station project from a US Treasury standpoint. Because this project is expected to be a combined station, there are funds being set aside in the Sylvan Valley II fire district toward that project. The project would be a partnership with the City of Brevard with the future split on the cost to construct to be determined. It will require the acquisition of property which will in turn impact overall construction costs.

Commissioner Dalton referred to the courthouse and suggested inquiry into the former First Union Building. The Manager stated that staff has explored it and revealed that the space is not flexible enough for court use nor is the building able to handle additional load because of its structure. It also does not lend itself to meet the requirements for temporary usage as outlined by court officials.

Commissioner Guice asked if there was any space at the hospital that could be used as temporary court space. The Manager stated she would reach out to them to see what is available.

Commissioner Dalton said the stimulus money will provide opportunities for the County that he hopes do not go to waste. He felt the waterline project should be the focus on the use of these funds.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the purchase of the property for the new EMS base station. The Manager reported the closing should occur in April.

Again, Chairman Chappell asked Commissioners to submit any financial modeling questions to the Manager for Tryon Advisors to prepare ahead of the next workshop.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman thanked the Manager for the information and updates for the capital workshop. Staff completed a lot of work in preparation for this workshop.

Chairman Chappell thanked all those who worked to resolve the security issue from last weekend and for doing all they can to keep Transylvania County safe.

Commissioner McCall thanked Commissioners and staff for their graciousness as she missed the last couple of meetings. Their well-wishes and prayers were felt. She reported her family is well on their way to recovery.

Chairman Chappell thanked the Board of Commissioners for supporting economic incentives. This past Friday there was an exciting and major announcement that shows the County's dedication to moving economic development forward. He hopes this is the first of many announcements.

Commissioner Dalton reiterated his comments. He was amazed at how our County and region continues to attract life sciences and bio-tech companies. He too hoped it would bring about additional opportunities. He also thanked law enforcement and first responders to the incident last Sunday. He commended them for their professionalism.

Commissioner Guice was thankful for the work being done by staff and the law enforcement community. He also expressed appreciation to Commissioners and staff for reaching out to him on the recent loss of his mother. He asked for prayers for his soon-to-be 90-year-old father. He was appreciative of the closeness of this Board.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Guice moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 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