

**MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DECEMBER 11, 2023 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, December 11, 2023, 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 Emmett Casciato, Larry Chapman, Chairman Jason Chappell, Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton, and Teresa McCall. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney John Kubis, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Media: *Brevard Newsbeat*: Dan DeWitt
The Transylvania Times: Jon Rich

There were approximately 70 people in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Chappell presiding declared a quorum was presented and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

WELCOME

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

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

At the first regular meeting in December of each odd-numbered year, the first order of business shall be the approval of the minutes from the previous meeting. The Board of Commissioners met in a regular meeting on Monday, November 13, 2023, and following met in a closed session in which the minutes were sealed.

Commissioner Dalton moved to approve the November 13, 2023, minutes of the regular meeting and sealed closed session, seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously approved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

At the first regular meeting in December of each odd-numbered year, the second order of business shall be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the ensuing year, per N.C.G.S. § 153A-39.

Chair

The Clerk to the Board called for nominations for Chair.

Commissioner McCall nominated and moved to elect Commissioner Jason Chappell as Chair, seconded by Commissioner Dalton. There were no other nominations. **Chairman Chappell was elected by a vote of 4 to 1, with Commissioner Chapman voting against.**

Commissioner Chapman expressed his appreciation for the job Chairman Chappell has done serving as Chair. He stated that he is a firm believer in term limits for both political positions and leadership roles. For this reason, he felt it was important for all the Commissioners to have an opportunity to lead this Board, hence his

vote against the motion. Commissioner Chapman also asked the Board to focus on communicating better among the members.

Chairman Chappell thanked the Board members for another opportunity to serve as Chair and he stated he will continue to keep the Commissioners well-informed.

The Clerk to the Board turned the meeting over to Chairman Chappell.

Vice-Chair

Chairman Chappell called for nominations for Vice-Chair.

Chairman Chappell nominated and moved to elect Commissioner Jake Dalton as Vice-Chair, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and approved by a vote of 4 to 1, with Commissioner Chapman voting against.

Commissioner Chapman explained that he voted against the motion for Vice-Chair for the same reasons.

INSPECTION AND APPROVAL OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL SURETY BONDS

N.C.G.S. § 58-72 requires certain elected and appointed officials to provide a surety bond to the County. A public official surety bond is an agreement between three parties (public officials, the Board of Commissioners, and an insurance company) to guarantee the conduct of public officials for their term. In the event of wrongdoing or malfeasance, the Board of Commissioners may call a bond on a public official to compensate the County. Staff requested acceptance of the bonds for the County Manager, Finance Director, Register of Deeds, Sheriff, and Tax Administrator.

Commissioner McCall moved to approve the public official surety bonds as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Dalton, and unanimously approved.

CODE OF ETHICS

N.C.G.S. § 160A-86 requires the local governing board of a county to adopt a resolution or policy containing a code of ethics to guide actions by the governing board members in the performance of the member's official duties as a member of that governing board. The resolution or policy shall address at least the following:

- The need to obey all applicable laws regarding official actions taken as a board member.
- The need to uphold the integrity and independence of the board member's office.
- The need to avoid impropriety in the exercise of the board member's official duties.
- The need to faithfully perform the duties of the office.
- The need to conduct the affairs of the governing board in an open and public manner, including complying with all applicable laws governing open meetings and public records.

The Board of Commissioners last approved a Code of Ethics in November 2010. Staff recommend the Board adopt the Code of Ethics.

Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the Code of Ethics as presented, seconded by Commissioner Casciato, and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeff Brewer: Mr. Brewer stated that Transylvania County has over 26,000 registered voters and he expected that number to grow over the next year as the General Election approaches. With the anticipation

of 21,000 voting in the 2024 election, he was concerned about the stress it would place on the County voting apparatus. Mr. Brewer stated the current voting apparatus is Brevard-centric, but the data shows that the North Transylvania voting district has more registered voters than the four Brevard precincts combined, and upper Transylvania County has almost as many voters as Brevard. In addition, the early voting location in Rosman is not open consistently from year to year. He felt that the rural voters were being underserved. If the Board of Elections requests an increase in their budget to accommodate additional voting opportunities, especially for rural voters, Mr. Brewer asked the Board of Commissioners to give the request serious consideration because he believes it is necessary.

Joseph Hasler: Mr. Hasler spoke on behalf of Met by Love Ministries which provides outreach services to those battling opioid addiction. He shared that he is nearly seven years clean as a former opioid user. Mr. Hasler was deeply concerned about opioid addiction. He recently learned about the opioid lawsuit and settlement and that North Carolina had set aside billions of dollars to fight this epidemic. He hopes that Met by Love Ministries may access those funds to provide resources, such as transitional housing. Met by Love Ministries owns land on Selica Road and is planning to construct housing for those battling opioid addiction. He asked for the Board's consideration.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

The following items were approved:

NOVEMBER 2023 DISCOVERY, RELEASE & MONTHLY SETTLEMENT

Per N.C.G.S. § 105-312 (b), the Tax Administrator must 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 N.C.G.S. § 105-381 (b), the Tax Administrator must 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 November 2023, tax dollars released totaled \$1,597.33 and refunds issued amounted to \$965.73. The Board approved the November 2023 Discovery, Release, and Monthly Settlement as presented.

CANCELLATION OF THE 2ND BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING IN DECEMBER

Transylvania County offices are closed for the Christmas holiday on Monday, December 25, Tuesday, December 26, and Wednesday, December 27. There is no pressing business and staff would like to utilize vacation time during the holiday season before the next meeting which is scheduled for January 8 at 4:00 p.m. The Board canceled the December 28 Board of Commissioners meeting and instructed the Clerk to the Board to post and publish proper notice to the public.

REQUEST TO USE COMMISSIONERS' CHAMBERS FOR COURT

The Board of Commissioners received a request from Clerk of Superior Court Kristi Brown indicating that the court system is unable to use the Elections Center as a second courtroom from January-March 15 as the Elections department is preparing for the 2024 primary and therefore requested use of the County

Commissioners/Multipurpose Chambers on the following dates for court purposes: February 13-25, 20-22 and 26 (February 26 is a County Commissioners' meeting at 6:00 p.m.; court will need to vacate the facility by 5:00 p.m.), and March 7. Judge Kimberly Justice intends to keep the dockets to 25 defendants/respondents to alleviate parking issues and overcrowding. The Board approved allowing the court system to use Commissioners/Multipurpose Chambers on eight dates in February and March.

REQUEST FOR OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

The Region III International Institute of Municipal Clerks Annual Conference will be held in Columbus, GA February 27- March 1, 2024. Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan is a member of the IIMC and has been designated a Certified Municipal Clerk through its accreditation program. She is also designated as a North Carolina Certified County Clerk through the State's accreditation program. The IIMC is a professional, nonprofit association that promotes continuing education and certification through university and college-based institutes and provides networking solutions, services, and benefits to its members worldwide. IIMC's primary goal is to actively promote the continuing education and professional development of county and municipal clerks through extensive education programs, certifications, publications, networking, annual conferences, and research.

The Board approved the request by the Clerk to the Board and Tax Administration to travel out of state for conference/training purposes

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY CONTRACTS WITH BP SOLUTIONS FOR ADVENTURE GUIDE BROCHURE AND POINTS OF INTEREST MAP PRINTING

The Adventure Guide is the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority's primary brochure. We have produced 90,000 in recent years and plan on the same this year. It informs the visitor of key elements of our destination and is the best collateral piece for an individual who is considering a visit and wants to learn about Transylvania County. It also includes a waterfall map that is accompanied by photos, descriptions, and directions to many of our notable waterfalls. The Points of Interest Map is designed to show visitors who are already in our destination many of their options during their visit and to help them navigate. It includes a large Transylvania County map with points of interest on one side and smaller City of Brevard and WNC maps on the other side. Through their marketing partner agency, TCTDA has explored numerous vendors over the last few years, with BP Solutions rising to the top as the best and most affordable option.

The Board of Commissioners must review TCTDA contracts over \$50,000 per County Resolution #35-2021. The Board met the review requirement.

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT BUDGET REVISION REQUEST

The Board of Commissioners previously approved a total budget amount of \$125,389 of Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) funds for WNC Source. When the Commissioners approved the FY 2024 budget for HCCBG funds among all providers, grant requests from providers did not total the whole amount of allocated funds awarded to Transylvania County by the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services. Transylvania County was allocated \$334,789; however, provider grant requests only totaled \$274,375. WNC Source requested an increase in its allocation of HCCBG monies to fund the salary and fringe benefits for a part-time food delivery driver to deliver meals to the Quebec Community Center, Silvermont, and Cedar Mountain. The requested increase is \$19,211 bringing the total budget for WNC Source to \$144,600. If this revision is approved, the grant requests from providers will total \$293,586 leaving a remainder of \$41,203 in unallocated funds for the fiscal year that could be subject to future revisions from providers.

The Board approved the recommendation from the Council on Aging to approve the additional request for \$19,211 for WNC Source and to revise the budget summary of the HCCBG to reflect that change.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

RECOGNITION OF CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

In July 2015, the Board of Commissioners implemented a recognition program to express their appreciation to citizens who volunteer their time and expertise on the County's citizen advisory councils. The Board recognizes citizens on a semi-annual basis. This period covered July 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023. Each person in attendance was presented with a certificate of appreciation and an insulated mug with the County logo. The Clerk extended the invitation to either the December 11, January 8, or January 22 meetings. The Clerk will mail certificates to those citizen volunteers who are unable to attend.

- Kate Hayes – Transylvania Natural Resources Council
- Joel Malefyt – Transylvania Natural Resources Council
- Fred Morse – Transylvania County Planning Board
- Ali Holroyd Lien – Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority
- Layton Parker – Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority

2023 COUNTY EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

In anticipation of the end-of-year celebrations, Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart shared the 2023 Service Award recipients with the Board of Commissioners to recognize employees who have been with the County for over five years. The Board of Commissioners and County Management are grateful for all employees who have continued to deliver services to the residents and visitors of Transylvania County and are especially grateful to employees who have chosen to make a career out of their employment with Transylvania County during a time when it has been increasingly difficult to retain qualified employees. Transylvania County would not be able to provide a high level of customer service without these valued employees. The Board of Commissioners recognized the following employees:

| Service Awards 2023 | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 25 | Pamela Newman | DSS |
| 20 | Kristin Blair | Library |
| | Christopher "Chuck" Owenby | Sheriff |
| | Shelley Stroup | Sheriff |
| | Pamela Harbin | Sheriff |
| 15 | Tracy Justice | DSS |
| | Laura Petit | Health |
| | James Dodson | Sheriff |
| | Michael Hall | Sheriff |
| | Jerry Mann | Sheriff |
| | Shasta Moretz | Tax Admn |
| 10 | Cameron Sexton | Communication |
| | Margaret Cable | DSS |
| | Heather Bradley | Health |
| | Lori Clark | Health |
| | Derek Nelson | Library |
| | Erika Brock | Library |
| | Laura Sperry | Library |
| | Susan Chambers | Library |
| | Andrew Patterson | Sheriff |
| | William Worley | Sheriff |

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5 | Steven "Eric" Searcy | Animal Services |
| | Richard Mickewicz | Bldg & Permitting |
| | Sheila Mason | Child Development |
| | Andrew Johnson | Commuications |
| | Elijah Tankersley | Commuications |
| | Dennis "Hunter" Hall | Commuications |
| | Anne "Monette" Hopton | DSS |
| | Sara Bibler | DSS |
| | Casey Barnwell | DSS |
| | Rhonda Baker | DSS |
| | Cheryl Mouton | DSS |
| | Sherri Stearns | DSS |
| | Channing Niver | DSS |
| | Abby Johnson | EMS |
| | Bradley Henderson | EMS |
| | Margaret "Alisa" Corn | Health |
| | Traci Forshee | Houskeeping/Maintenance |
| | William Christy | Houskeeping/Maintenance |
| | Paulette LaBerge-Sexton | HR |
| | Katherine "Kate" Hayes | HR |
| | Aaron "Chase" Lance | Parks & Recreation |
| | Brenda Skeffington | Parks & Recreation |
| | Matthew Bush | Sheriff |
| | Janice Morgan | Sheriff |
| | Callum McEwen | Sheriff |
| | Wanda Hawkins | Sheriff |
| | Brent Owen | Sheriff |
| | Kenneth Webb | Solid Waste |
| | Aaron Cash | Solid Waste |
| | Anthony Green | Solid Waste |
| Amanda Newman | Solid Waste | |
| Eric Newman | Solid Waste | |
| Greta Gosnell | Transportation | |

RECOGNITION OF LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Manager was honored to share the announcement of two Land of Sky Regional Council award winners.

The Robert G. Parrish Intergovernmental Relations Award is presented at the discretion of the Council's Executive Committee to an elected or appointed official who has made significant contributions to improve intergovernmental cooperation within the region. This award honors the memory of the late Council Chairman and long-time Fletcher Mayor Robert Parrish, who received the 2000 NC Intergovernmental Relations Award. The Land of Sky Regional Council has bestowed the 2023 to Chairman Jason Chappell. Chairman Chappell has served as the Chair of the Board of Commissioners since December 2020 and previously served as Chair of the Commission from December 2006 through the end of 2010. He is the first Commissioner to have been elected to five consecutive terms and served on the Board of Education before that where he also served as Vice-Chair. Chairman Chappell has been a champion for workforce development, public schools, and the protection of property rights. He has professionally served at Blue Ridge Community College since 2003 and is currently the Director of Henderson and Transylvania County NC Works Career Centers and HRD programs. In 2006, he was recognized as a Certified Workforce Development Professional by the National Association of Workforce Development Officials and since 2018, has been recognized as a global career development facility. In 2010, he was recognized by the Governor and the North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development as the recipient of the Waynes Daves Award for Outstanding Achievement Workforce Development. Chairman Chappell served many years on the Land of Sky Executive Board including serving a term as Chair. He has been appointed by Transylvania Commissioners to serve on both the MPO and RPO at the Land of Sky Regional Council. He has also been recognized in Transylvania County by being inducted into the Rosman High School Alumni Hall of Fame in 2016 for public service. He is also an alumnus of Appalachian State University. Chairman Chappell's service exemplifies a consistent desire to serve Transylvania County residents, but also to invest in regional capacity,

especially the workforce which does not honor county boundaries. His dedication to public service and the region has earned him the 2023 Robert G. Parrish Intergovernmental Relations Award from the Land of Sky Executive Committee.

The Land of Sky Executive Committee annually awards special recognition for highly exemplary service of regional leadership. Commissioner Larry Chapman has made a lifetime commitment to our County, State, and country. After graduating from Brevard High School, Commissioner Chapman earned his bachelor's degree from Western Carolina University. He then entered the United States Marine Corps after completing officer candidate school where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant Infantry Officer. After active duty, he continued to serve in the Marine Corps Reserves before retiring as a Colonel having served 30 years to protect our country. In the County, Commissioner Chapman worked at the Ecusta Paper Mill for 27 years in manufacturing, supervision, and marketing management. He traveled extensively for his work at Ecusta investing his career into a mainstay of our local economy. After Ecusta closed its doors, he continued to work in the paper industry for Delfortgroup before retiring in 2017 as Vice President of Sales. By the time he retired from his career, he was already serving in local government leadership. He was elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2010 where he served two full terms serving as Chair from 2016 to the end of the second term in 2018. He then decided to term limit himself and not run a third time but after two years he decided to reenter service to Transylvania County and won a third term in 2020. Commissioner Chapman has served on many boards in Transylvania County, as well as outside of the County. He has served as the County's Land of Sky RPO and MPO, the regional delegate for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, and many others. His "what can I do to help?" spirit has driven him to a lifetime of service, both in our military and government. It is that commitment that has earned special recognition from the Land of Sky Regional Council Executive Committee as a regional leader for 2023 with the Extraordinary Public Service Award.

The Manager congratulated both Commissioners and thanked them personally for serving on the Board that hired her as the County Manager. She also thanked the Board on behalf of the staff for being very supportive of County services and, specifically, the workers that are out there providing them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUND ALLOCATION

Before the presentation, Chairman Chappell announced that the Board does not intend to take action on this item at this meeting. The presentation is for informational purposes only. They intend to make a decision in early 2024.

The Manager introduced Public Health Director Elaine Russell. Ms. Russell thanked the Board for their time and collaboration on this important work. Next, the Manager introduced Kristin Gentry with the CARE Coalition to present the opioid settlement fund recommendations.

Ms. Gentry stated that the CARE Coalition and staff have been at work over the last several years to find consensus on how to address the substance use crisis that is facing our nation and communities. She thanked the Board for choosing to participate in the opioid settlement and signing the memorandum of agreement (MOA) and for placing their trust in the CARE Coalition. The CARE Coalition has done the work necessary to present the Board with options for an impactful way forward. In this presentation, Ms. Gentry summarized seven recommended interventions which will then be distilled into four specific funding options for the Board's consideration.

Transylvania County will receive \$5.8 million through 2039. The County will receive more funds this year than in any other year. For the next decade, the County's allocation will be over \$300,000 per year. However, by the end of 2039, Transylvania County will only receive \$141,000. The money can roll over from year to year. For example, the County will receive over \$800,000 this year but that money does not have to be spent this year. These funds could be spent the following year or roll over until 2039.

Ms. Gentry pointed out that the MOA is very specific about what is and is not fundable. Counties are permitted to fund the interventions from two lists. Option A is a list of 12 strategies which are evidence-based programs that are needed in every community to address this crisis. Option B is a much broader list of 130 interventions that are meant to address the specific needs of communities. Selecting an intervention from Option B also requires a county to repeat the needs assessment and planning process every four years. Because of the scale and complexity of the substance use crisis and the limited amount of funding, the CARE Coalition wants to ensure these interventions have the greatest impact and fit the unique needs of the County.

The CARE Coalition developed the following criteria to determine their recommended interventions:

- Does it address an identified need?
- Is it an evidence-based or promising practice?
- Is it present in similar communities?
- Can it be fully funded by the allocation amount?
- Does it create a new program or build upon an existing service?
- Which population does it serve?
- How many people could it impact?
- How long may it take to implement?

Recommended Interventions

Ms. Gentry stated that the Board does not have to select just one recommendation. Each recommendation includes detailed information on the research behind it, the estimated local impacts, and the estimated budget. After reviewing the recommendations, Ms. Gentry provided some package options that sit into the settlement budget. She noted that the local details of these recommendations could be very complex. They offer opportunities for public-private partnerships, contract work, community cost sharing, and asset donation, but the budget provided is calculated as if the County's settlement dollars were covering the entire cost of the intervention.

Substance Use Response Coordinator

With programs of this scale, there must be an individual with subject matter expertise making sure the work gets done, that it is within budget, and is on time. A Substance Use Response Coordinator would provide daily oversight of the funded projects. Depending on which intervention is selected, the responsibility of this position could include communicating with partner agencies, facilitating Coalition work, leveraging additional funding opportunities, managing contracts, supervising staff, managing project budgets, and submitting required reports. If an intervention from Option B is selected, this position would also lead the gap and needs assessment and the strategic planning process. The goals are to increase the number of evidence-based programs that are working in Transylvania County and the amount of external funding for substance use disorder (SUD) related efforts and to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives. The cost would depend upon the amount of time this person would work, which largely depends on which interventions are selected. The cost would include the salary and benefits ranging from \$30,000 to \$85,000 per year.

Jail-Based Reentry and Treatment Program

The justice-involved population emerged as a major gap and a top priority in the needs assessment. This intervention is currently operating under a federal grant as a partnership among the CARE Coalition, Transylvania Public Health, and the Sheriff's Office. The full-time therapist and a full-time reentry specialist provide treatment and reentry preparation for detainees. This grant expires in 2024. In the implementation of this project, the CARE Coalition also identified a need for a peer support specialist to provide services and support once the detainee is released. Peer support specialists are trained certified professionals in long-term recovery. The integration of peer support and the behavioral health workforce is

rapidly becoming considered a best practice because it extends the reach of treatment beyond the clinical setting. Peer support specialists can provide advocacy, mentorship, social-emotional, and practical support to those who are experiencing addiction and overcoming barriers to care. They are uniquely positioned for this work because they share similar experiences but were successful at overcoming them. The goals of the program are to increase access to treatment and reentry support, reduce recidivism, reduce violent incidences within the jail, and reduce overdose post-release which is one of the highest-risk times for these individuals. The cost of the current program is \$170,000 per year. It would increase to \$250,000 per year with the added peer support specialist. This includes continuing education, operating supplies, and three full-time salaries.

School-Based Prevention Specialist

The CARE Coalition recommended, in partnership with the Transylvania County Schools Administration, hiring a school-based prevention specialist to deliver approved evidence-based programs to elementary and middle school students. This position would coordinate and support youth empowerment programs to enhance protective factors, such as leadership development and mentorship. The goals are to support schools in universal prevention education, improve coping communication and drug resistance skills, and increase the perception of harm around drugs. The cost is approximately \$85,000 per year and includes materials, training, and a full-time salary.

Peer Support Specialist for Perinatal Women and Families

Addressing neonatal substance exposure was also identified as a priority strategy, as well as improving the behavioral health workforce. Pregnancy and early parenthood are high-risk times for substance use disorder and relapse, but also a window of opportunity because parents want to do better for their children. This position would collaborate with healthcare providers, SUD treatment providers, and agencies that support young families to provide wrap-around services for parents during a very critical time. The goals are to decrease foster care placement and adverse childhood experiences, increase engagement and prenatal care and evidence-based SUD treatment, and decrease neonatal substance exposure. The cost includes full-time salary, benefits, and clinical supervision.

Mobile Health Unit

A mobile health unit would help people access treatment by actively developing care relationships with underserved communities and remote neighborhoods. This is essentially a high-tech van that provides SUD services, primary care, and referrals. Different programs that the CARE Coalition researched provided different offerings of services and levels of care. Some of them were simply office space, while others had the capabilities to run typical tests one might see in a doctor's office. The cost would be approximately \$215,000 per year and would include a medical provider, a peer support specialist, equipment, and maintenance. Startup costs would be higher depending on the specific outfit of the unit.

Recovery Court

A recovery court is a specialty court that serves nonviolent offenders with drug-related charge charges. It is a supervised long-term treatment program whereby participants meet twice a month with a judge. Through their case management, regular court appearances, and routine drug screens, the offenders have a lot of accountability in this process, but a high degree of support. The program usually lasts about 18-24 months and upon graduation, the charges can be reduced or dismissed. The goals are to reduce drug-related incarcerations, reduce the number of repeat offenses, and improve treatment outcomes. The cost is approximately \$340,000 per year which includes salary and benefits for a project coordinator and case manager, training, contract with treatment providers, and insurance.

Transitional Housing

Transylvania County currently has no transitional housing or sober living available for people in early recovery or who are recently released from incarceration. Stable housing is foundational to successful

recovery. This intervention would involve a housing arrangement that provides shelter, a sense of community, and services to people in early recovery. The property could be bought or leased. It could be built from the ground up or renovated to fit the needs of the program. In best practice, transitional housing offers wrap-around services and case management which helps keep people accountable and making strides forward. Startup would be between \$400,000 and \$1.2 million initially and then \$130,000 to \$160,000 per year after that in case management and property management costs.

Funding Options

The CARE Coalition compiled funding options for the Board to consider and are covered by the annual settlement budget. Due to the changing landscape of substance use disorder and the length of time necessary to fully implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a project, the CARE Coalition recommended funding through FY 2028-2029. The CARE Coalition will also pursue grants to enhance the selected interventions and fund the interventions that were not selected for allocation. These funding options assume full out-of-pocket costs and do not account for any possible partnerships or cost-sharing. Additionally, when developing these, the CARE Coalition had to account for what the funds could afford annually. For example, the seven recommendations could be paid for based on this year's and last year's allocation but there would be no funds remaining to sustain them. The CARE Coalition did not include transitional housing in the package options because the budget for transitional housing has too much uncertainty. However, the CARE Coalition emphasized that it remains an option for consideration. All the options would leave a small balance that could be rolled over from year to year and then distributed after 2034 when the amount the County gets per year drops off significantly. This would keep the last decade of funding at a consistent level.

Option 1: \$2,096,625 Total Through FY 2028-2029

- Substance Use Systems Coordinator
 - Responsible for seeking grant funding for the remaining recommendations
- Jail-based Treatment and Reentry Program
- School-based Prevention Specialist

This option focuses on prevention and intensive intervention for individuals incarcerated for substance abuse. It builds upon the successes of programs and personnel already in place. The Substance Use Systems Coordinator would be responsible for seeking grant funding for the remaining recommendations. External funding would be utilized to get other programs up and running with the understanding that if they are successful and can be sustained after the grant period. At the end of FY 2028-2029, there would be an additional \$1.1 million to roll over into other programs which provide a much larger balance and keep funding at a higher consistent level.

Option 2: \$2,474,287 Total Through FY 2028-2029

- Substance Use Systems Coordinator
- Perinatal Peer Support Specialist
- Jail-based Treatment and Reentry Program
- School-based Prevention Specialist

The coordinator would be responsible for supervising, evaluating, and implementing these programs. Several of these already have staff in place but some programmatic elements for the perinatal partnerships would need to be developed and two peer support specialists would need to be hired or contracted. At the end of FY 2028-2029, there would be approximately \$470,000 leftover. If these funds were redistributed into the last decade, the annual budget would be \$305,000 per year.

Option 3: \$2,774,792 Total Through FY 2028-2029

Option 3 is the same as Option 2, except that it replaces the Jail-based Program with the Mobile Health Unit. At the end of FY 2028-2029, there be approximately \$420,000 remaining which could be rolled over into the last 10 years, bringing the budget to about \$300,000 per year for the last decade.

Option 4: \$2,330,310 Total Through FY 2028-2029

This option provides money for a recovery court and includes its necessary interdisciplinary team, training, and supplies. It includes a Substance Use Systems Coordinator, but also a separate coordinator to continue pursuing external funding for the other interventions that were not allocated. Due to the higher cost of the recovery court, the CARE Coalition was unable to pair it with other recommendations and be sustained long-term. After FY 2028-2029, rollover would sustain the budget at \$345,000 per year for the last ten years of the settlement.

The main foreseeable challenge with the recommendations is the difficulty in finding qualified staff to fill these roles. However, one of the strengths of our community is the partnerships that have been created in the substance use and behavioral health workforce. These recommendations offer opportunities to build on those partnerships and for community stakeholders to get more involved in caring for the people who are at risk of and who are suffering from substance use disorder.

This ended the formal presentation.

Chairman Chappell thanked Ms. Gentry for the CARE Coalition's recent community presentation. The presentation gave an in-depth review of the options and was well attended by the public. He noted that Transylvania County is ahead of other counties because of the work of the CARE Coalition.

Commissioner Chapman shared that he met with Mr. Hasler of Met by Love Ministries who spoke during public comment. He felt it was important for the CARE Coalition to reach out to these types of organizations because they understand addiction. Commissioner Chapman felt that having transitional housing is essential to one's recovery and therefore should be a priority. He also expressed concerns about the ongoing cost of personnel. He asked whether the programs would be evaluated periodically to ensure their effectiveness. Ms. Gentry said the Commissioners may allocate monies with a term limit. She said the evaluation is built into the NCACC's process. The CARE Coalition is recommending a four-to-five-year term limit, but the Board could opt to choose shorter term limits. Additionally, many of the grants have evaluations built into them.

The Manager pointed out that the CARE Coalition engaged in a public input process years before the opioid settlement funds were awarded. A grant provided the funds to create the Opioid Response Team whose work centered around determining options for spending these funds strategically. She stressed that the settlement requires counties to spend the funds within the research-based practices and the boundaries of the planning work that the CARE Coalition has done. The County must act carefully to ensure compliance with the settlement and MOA.

Commissioner Casciato said he wanted to ensure that the dollars being invested would result in positive outcomes and help people get out of their addiction. He also felt that transitional housing should be a priority. Ms. Gentry pointed out that the monies are specifically to address the opioid crisis, but it is not uncommon for people to have a co-occurring disorder.

Commissioner McCall asked whether the CARE Coalition had engaged other groups to build on what they have learned and their successes. She also felt that someone who has overcome addiction could be an asset to their work. Commissioner McCall asked what happens when all the money has been spent and whether the programs would continue. While she was concerned about being able to attract and hire the right people for these positions, she wanted to ensure the monies were being used to benefit those who needed

them and not just to pay for salaries. Lastly, Commissioner McCall asked how the CARE Coalition intends to measure the success of these programs.

Ms. Gentry agreed with Commissioner McCall that having those with direct lived experience has a voice and should be front and center in the voice of this work. The CARE Coalition engaged and involved those with lived experience in both the needs assessment and planning process. She shared that the CARE Coalition has about 40 to 50 community partners that are mostly nonprofits in the area. Approximately 30 of them were involved in this planning process. They tried to have broad representation and perspectives as they determined the needs, gaps in services, and priorities. In terms of measuring the impact, the opioid settlement is set up so that the report measures impacts and results based on accountability. Each of the interventions has an evaluation plan in which the CARE Coalition can utilize County-specific data to determine the impacts of each intervention strategy.

Commissioner McCall commented that the CARE Coalition has made good sound recommendations, but it is still difficult to determine which strategy will be the most impactful because the opioid crisis continues to grow across the nation.

Commissioner Chapman stated that he and Chairman Chapman attended several months ago with Senator Corbin before the settlement was reached. One of the key discussions was on the lack of treatment facilities in Western North Carolina. He asked whether counties could or would be willing to consolidate any of these resources to fund a treatment center. He asked if the CARE Coalition had addressed this topic in their work or whether they had discussed it with legislators. The Manager shared that there have been conversations among health directors and managers, and they agreed that treatment centers are necessary and there are not enough beds across the State. However, the challenge with accepting federal dollars is that the County would have no control over who has access to the treatment. The same issue occurred during the COVID-19 vaccination process. The County could not limit the vaccines to Transylvania County residents only because it was a federal program. The Manager pointed out that the State has set aside 15% of the settlement funds for grant programs. So, there could be an opportunity for counties to pursue grant funds to improve infrastructure for such a facility. Commissioner Chapman suggested a discussion with our legislators about making the availability of treatment centers a priority.

Commissioner Dalton pointed out that Henderson County is starting a drug court soon. He asked if there had been discussions about partnering with Henderson County in terms of the service and the costs. Ms. Gentry stated they met with those setting up the drug court. They intend to hold their first drug court date in mid-February. She also spoke with Clerk of Court Kristi Brown and Judge Kimberly Justice about whether Transylvania County would be able to support a drug court based on current staffing levels and space. They believe it is doable. Ms. Gentry said it merits further discussions about how Transylvania County might be able to cost share with Henderson County especially since both counties lie in the same judicial district. It would be a good opportunity to bring the County's out-of-pocket costs down while still being able to provide a service.

At the request of Chairman Chappell, Clerk of Superior Court Kristi Brown added that the first drug court in Henderson County will occur on February 14, 2024. She stated that District Attorney Andrew Murray and Chief District Court Judge Kimberly Justice support having a drug court in all three counties in the judicial district and are ready to move forward. Ms. Brown's office will do what is necessary to support their efforts.

Chairman Chappell asked Ms. Gentry to elaborate on what is involved with the community assessment. Ms. Gentry said it requires a needs assessment process that involves nonprofit agencies, law enforcement, people who directly intersect with drug users, as well as those with lived experience and map out what is missing in the community or inaccessible by the public. From that, a consortium of professionals reviews

the results and prioritizes what can feasibly be done both short term and long term. Next, they will develop priorities and a specific action plan. The initial process took approximately nine months. Option B requires counties to undergo this process every four years, which Ms. Gentry felt was a wise exercise because there is an ever-changing landscape of drug use and available resources. Additionally, if a strategy is chosen from Option B that was not recommended as a priority, a gap and needs assessment is required to show it is a need.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the timeline the Board of Commissioners has for making a decision. Ms. Gentry stated that the timeline for a decision is at the Board's discretion. The CARE Coalition intends to seek grant/external funding to fill in the gaps. The grant cycle begins in the next few months with application due dates in the spring or early summer. Grants are normally awarded on or around September 30.

Commissioner McCall asked if the chances are greater for being awarded grants if we can show success with the interventions. The Manager confirmed and noted that the CARE Coalition started as a grant program. Their success leverages additional grant opportunities. A Dogwood Health Trust grant made the assessment possible because they saw our community was ready. This is a testament to the CARE Coalition, as well as the Board of Commissioners, for supporting this effort within the Health Department.

Commissioner Casciato was concerned about how to measure the success of these programs, noting there is no guarantee someone will be able to stay clean from drug use. Ms. Gentry stated it is very common and almost normal for people to have several attempts at recovery before being successful. The CARE Coalition uses quantitative and qualitative data to measure success. From the quantitative side, they track emergency department visits, EMS calls, and jail admissions and assessments, review the community health assessment, and draw on a variety of data metrics that are empirical.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the number of transitional beds available in Transylvania County for people leaving incarceration or treatment. Ms. Russell said she was unaware of any official transitional housing, but faith organizations are working in some capacity in this regard. She pointed out that transitional housing is a void across all of Western North Carolina. This void provides the greatest potential for collaboration with different resources and existing endeavors. The Manager noted there are cost estimates for transitional housing in the detailed report from the CARE Coalition. She agreed that collaboration is key to leveraging grants for community partners already working on this effort.

Chairman Chappell thanked the staff for the presentation and stated the Board will make a decision in early 2024.

Chairman Chappell called for a brief recess at 5:30 p.m. The Board reconvened at 5:43 p.m.

APPOINTMENTS

BOARD OF HEALTH

The terms of Sandra McNeill (General Public), Teesie Stanton (General Public), and Beth Privette (General Public for Professional Engineer) expire at the end of December. All are eligible and willing to serve another term. Public Health Director Elaine Russell recommends their reappointment. The physician and optometrist positions remain vacant. Mr. Russell has asked the Clerk to the Board to continue advertising for these vacancies to secure these credentialed positions on the Board of Health since there are already so many outside of designated credentialed positions on the Board of Health currently.

Commissioner McCall moved to reappoint Sandra McNeill, Teesie Stanton, and Beth Privette to the Board of Health, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.

BREVARD PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD

The Board of Commissioners appoints three members to the City of Brevard's Planning and Zoning Board. Members must reside in the extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Peter Chaveas' term expires on December 31. He is eligible and willing to serve another term. It is the recommendation of the City's Planning Department to reappoint him. There are no other applications on file.

Commissioner Chapman moved to reappoint Peter Chaveas to the Brevard Planning and Zoning Board, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.

BREVARD BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT AND APPEAL

The Board of Commissioners appoints two members and one alternate to the City of Brevard's Board of Adjustment and Appeal. The members must reside in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The County's appointments have been vacant for some time. The Clerk to the Board has advertised many times. The most recent advertisement had an application submission deadline of December 1. The Clerk received an application from Alan Mercaldo. He is a resident of the ETJ and also serves on the City's Planning and Zoning Board.

Commissioner Chapman moved to appoint Alan Mercaldo to fill a vacancy on the Brevard Board of Adjustment and Appeal, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.

Commissioner McCall said there continues to be confusion in the public about the ETJ and who can and cannot serve on the City boards. Chairman Chappell suggested staff post a map of the jurisdiction on the website.

REVIEW OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENTS

Commissioners serve in a variety of capacities on many different boards and committees, locally, regionally, and statewide. The Board reviews their appointments on an annual basis to determine if they want to continue in their current capacities. The Board conducted a brief review but made no changes at this time. Commissioner Casciato requested a list of the boards and committees that the Commissioners serve on. Chairman Chappell asked the Commissioners to inform the Clerk or Manager if they have a desire to serve on a particular board, and if so, it will be placed on an upcoming agenda for approval.

OLD BUSINESS

COURTHOUSE PROJECT UPDATE

The Board of Commissioners authorized staff to seek requests for qualifications (RFQ) to hire an architect to design a new courthouse at the Public Safety Facility site on Morris Road. The RFQ resulted in three responses. Staff have reviewed the responses and scheduled in-person interviews with all three respondents, which will occur over the next few days.

Staff will collect information during the internal review and interviews to guide the Board's decision on awarding the architecture contract in the first quarter of 2024. Staff will also bring forward some recommendations on how to approach the project.

Commissioner Casciato asked, once the Board selects the architect, whether the process could be expedited, and if the project could commence in October 2024. The Manager stated that the challenge with this project is that it involves many stakeholders. If the Board was willing to make decisions without engaging those stakeholders, an October groundbreaking may be possible. The Board would have to bid the project before July and the timeframe is not realistic. She stressed that this is a major project. She pointed out that the new EMS Base was in the design phase for a year before breaking

ground. For a project of this size, it will take three or more years from design to move-in date. The Manager noted that in one of the interviews today, the architect referenced a similar project taking five years.

Commissioner McCall agreed with the Manager that the stakeholders who work in the courthouse need to provide input. She asked about what other groups want to have input and whether the Board has the latitude to limit the level of engagement by others. The Manager said the Board has the latitude to dictate the engagement. During past programming work, an internal project team has been heavily involved, as well as a stakeholder group. Courts in North Carolina have a mixture of both local staff (Sheriff's Office, Operations, Information Technology, Housekeeping, Maintenance) and State employees, many of whom are independent of each other (Clerk of Superior Court, judicial division, District Attorney, Probation/Parole, Guardian Ad Litem, Public Defender, Juvenile Justice, etc.). These factors make a project of this nature so complicated.

Commissioner Casciato stressed that he wants to move this project forward and that he does not want the Board to still be talking about a new courthouse several years from now.

Commissioner Chapman stated an important component is deciding on the funding.

The Manager stated there are funds available to pay for the architect, but the Board will need to be unified in its willingness to fund the project. She did not recommend the Board spend the money on the design unless they were prepared to construct the building.

Chairman Chappell stated the Board will move as quickly as possible while taking the necessary steps to make the right decisions.

NEW BUSINESS

PURCHASE OF EXPRESSVOTE PRINTERS & SOFTWARE

Elections Director Jeff Storey presented this item. He stated that during voter check-in, the ExpressVote printers would apply a header to a blank ballot card that would contain the voter's party and precinct. This would eliminate the need for a ballot station that is currently used to issue the voter a ballot after workers verify the application and write the voter's party and precinct on the ballot. It would also eliminate the machine attendant from having to load the correct ballot for each voter on the ExpressVote. The voting equipment would read the voter's ballot card and automatically select the correct precinct and party ballot.

The Board approved the funding in the prior fiscal year, but the department was unable to purchase the equipment due to testing delays. The purchase of the equipment would result in increased efficiency and accuracy with ballot distribution and ballot reconciliation.

The printers cost \$800 each. Mr. Storey recommended purchasing five of them. The software costs \$3,500. The savings are achieved by eliminating the ballot station. In a four-year cycle, the department would save approximately \$2,800. Mr. Storey shared that Buncombe County successfully used these printers during the last election.

Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the purchase of the five ExpressVote printers and software for \$7,500 for the Elections department to have the equipment in place for the upcoming 2024 primaries, with funds to come from the County's fund balance, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.

911 CENTER CONSOLE FURNITURE AND RADIO CONSOLE UPGRADES

Communications Director Cameron Sexton presented this item. The main purpose of this request is for the Board to review and approve the contracts and budget amendments necessary for the replacement of the console furniture and radio consoles in the 911 Center.

History

The Transylvania County 911 Center is an approved Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the State of North Carolina. As such, it receives funding for specific expenses that the Legislature has approved. This includes certain allowances for electronics, hardware, and software to ensure the efficient receipt and processing of 911 calls in the County. Traditionally, funding was allowed for any equipment contained within the four walls of the 911 Center. In recent years, the changes in rules and legislation have reduced items that are eligible to be purchased with this funding. The 911 Board approves a certain number of call-taker positions for each center in the state. The annual funding amount received by Transylvania County to support these seats is based on a rolling five-year average of approved expenses applicable to the seat count. Transylvania County has historically been approved for five seats in the primary center, and four seats in the backup center.

Console Furniture

The five consoles in the primary center have been in use 24/7 since 2009 when the Public Safety Facility opened. Four of these consoles are full motion consoles that raise or lower down, allowing the telecommunicator to work seated or standing, while also meeting all ADA requirements. Unfortunately, these consoles have had multiple parts failures due to the extensive use they have received over the past 14 years. The parts are no longer made for repairs. The 911 Board's allowable replacement schedule for console furniture is 10 years.

As staff began planning to replace the console furniture, staff discovered that the 911 Board had never granted the County's overflow position. The overflow position is an extra approved seat in the primary 911 Center that is available when a disaster, storm, or other incident requires extra assistance. Since learning this, Mr. Sexton petitioned the North Carolina 911 Board for this additional approved seat in the 911 Center, and it was granted. This allowed Transylvania County to be approved for six positions in the primary center and four in the backup center.

Staff worked with Watson Consoles to design a new layout for the 911 Center that will accommodate all six positions and submitted the project to the 911 Board's Financial Review Specialist for pre-approval of eligibility.

Radio Consoles

The second project for the 911 Center is the replacement of the radio consoles used by the telecommunicators. The current system is a Telex C-Soft radio console. The Telex system uses hardware in the 911 Center to convert the audio from the telecommunicator into a digital packet. That packet is then sent over a private network to the radio sites, where another piece of hardware converts the digital packet back into audio and injects it into a radio for the field responders to hear. This has historically worked fine in older equipment.

As a part of the radio infrastructure upgrade over the last several years, staff determined that a much better way to transmit the audio was to utilize Digital Fixed Station Interface or DFSI. DFSI allows the radio console inside the 911 Center to transmit the digital audio packets directly to the radio system without having to convert them back and forth. In addition to standard audio, DFSI allows for the transmission of data across the radio network. This enables things like GPS tracking on radios, special alerting functions, private calling, and others. Telex said that they could handle DFSI, so that was the route that the staff took.

Since going live with the new radio system, staff discovered that while Telex could do DFSI sometimes, it was not stable enough to fully function. Additionally, Telex did not have the ability for multiple telecommunicators to access the radio system at the same time. This essentially made it so that only one dispatch console in the 911 Center could function at a time.

To overcome the issue in the short term, staff continued to utilize the dual hardware option where the audio stream is converted on both ends. However, there are some significant issues with this method. The most critical is that the audio stream is still analog and utilizes floating audio to transmit and receive. This causes significant audio loss intermittently. Most notable is during a longer transmission. The system will see the floating audio and sometimes shut it off until the user retransmits. An example of this happening is during our weekly tone testing. The first 15-20 seconds of audio is clear, then it disappears, and nothing is heard by the responders until dispatch concludes the testing. The result is approximately 40 seconds of silence on the system. This same issue has been seen with law enforcement transmitting for a longer period, such as when reading out a VIN or giving a suspect description. The audio just disappears.

Staff worked with Telex and radio system engineers for months trying to come up with a solution but were eventually told that it would be necessary to wait for a new version of Telex to get this to function properly. Telex has not been able to provide a clear timeline for a solution, and it became apparent that staff must do something else for responder safety.

Staff began exploring other options and decided that the Zetron ACOM dispatch console was the best fit for Transylvania County. While talking with other counties and 911 Board Staff, staff discovered that the NC 911 Board has covered the entire purchase of some Zetron console systems recently. Staff's initial estimations were that there would be sufficient funding in the County's 911 fund balance to cover both the Watson furniture consoles and the Zetron radio consoles, which, coupled with the anticipated solution by Telex, is why it was not discussed in detail during the FY 2024 budget process. Due to the significant delay and ultimate failure of Telex to produce a successful resolution of the issue, the replacement radio console project was submitted to the 911 Board's Financial Review Specialist for pre-approval of eligibility. Unfortunately, they determined that only 65% of the project is eligible for 911 funds.

Radio Site Monitoring

In the current budget, the Board of Commissioners approved for the Communications department a radio site monitoring project that provides real-time status changes of remote equipment at the tower sites. This provides an early alert to Communications staff of real or potential issues that cause degraded public safety radio coverage across the County. The site monitoring equipment is provided by Zetron. The approved budgeted amount was \$130,000. Zetron quoted a contract price of \$120,315.50, with an annual maintenance plan of \$9,209.06. Additionally, Zetron has offered a discount of \$35,000 if the County can include site monitoring with the radio console project. This brings the total initial cost for the site monitoring down to \$85,315.50.

Rocky Tower Building

The current Communications budget is \$250,000 for the replacement of the Rocky Tower Building. Mr. Sexton was able to locate a used tower shelter building that is being reconditioned, resulting in significant savings. Initial estimations were that a new building would cost around \$200,000, with site work and miscellaneous charges being around \$50,000. Staff purchased the reconditioned building for less than \$95,000, with site work and miscellaneous charges bringing the overall project down to \$150,000. This project is ongoing, with anticipated completion in late winter or early spring depending on the weather.

Staff Request

Staff requested that Commissioners approve the use of the excess radio site monitoring funds and Rocky Tower Building funds already budgeted to cover ineligible 911 expenses for the referenced projects. Staff also

requested that the Commissioners approve transferring \$100,000 currently budgeted in the Maintenance budget for the second phase of the lighting and electrical upgrades to the Communications budget to cover the remaining ineligible 911 expenses for the referenced projects. Additionally, staff requested approval of the appropriate budget amendments be approved to modify the emergency services telephone fund budget, to reflect the appropriate expenditures, utilizing the increased funding allocation from the NC 911 Board and fund balance. Finally, staff requested that the Commissioners approve the Chairman or the County Manager to sign the scope of work and proposal attached with Zetron by December 20, 2023, to take advantage of the \$85,000 discounts being offered. Mr. Sexton noted that the County Attorney's office has reviewed, revised, and approved the vendor contracts.

The Manager clarified that the funding for these projects involves moving funds within the general fund and utilizing 911 reserve funds. The 911 funds must be spent within certain parameters. She noted that the staff had ceased utilizing the 911 funds during the budget cycle but in future years, they will be included in the budget to avoid these types of requests.

Chairman Chappell thanked Mr. Sexton for his awareness and for petitioning the 911 Board for funds, otherwise, the cost to the County would have been more significant.

Commissioner Casciato inquired about the timeframe for completing these projects. Mr. Sexton stated the radio equipment should be shipped by the end of the year. Much of the installation work will be done in-house. He is expecting a May completion date.

Commissioner McCall moved the following:

- **Approve the use of the excess Radio Site Monitoring funds and Rocky Tower Building funds already budgeted to cover ineligible 911 expenses for the referenced projects.**
- **Approve transferring \$100,000 currently budgeted in Maintenance for the second phase of the lighting and electrical upgrades to Communications to cover the remaining ineligible 911 expenses for the referenced projects.**
- **Approve the appropriate budget amendments be approved to modify the emergency services telephone fund budget, to reflect the appropriate expenditures, utilizing the increased funding allocation from the NC 911 Board and fund balance.**
- **Approve the County Manager to sign the scope of work and proposal attached with Zetron by December 20, 2023, to take advantage of the \$85,000 discounts being offered.**

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously approved.

Commissioner Dalton asked Mr. Sexton how the department fares with its staffing levels. Mr. Sexton shared that the department is nearly fully staffed. There are several currently in training. He thanked the Commissioners for their support of the last pay study because it was instrumental in the department's ability to hire. The department has a few impending retirements as well.

Commissioner Chapman asked if there continued to be "dead spots" across the County for radio coverage. Mr. Sexton shared there remain some "dead spots". Communications is in the process of erecting a new tower at the Public Safety Facility which will improve some, but there are other needs. The towers are extremely expensive.

ACCEPT GRANT FUNDS FROM THE NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY FOR IMPACTS DUE TO TROPICAL STORM FRED

The Board of Commissioners accepted State StRAP funds and Emergency Watershed Protection funds in August 2022 for mitigation repairs due to Tropical Storm Fred's damage. This included streambank

restoration for identified qualifying and priority projects as well as removing blockages in the French Broad River. As the streambank restoration repairs have begun, it was apparent that the existing limits on design costs would not be sufficient to cover the necessary work. The NC Department of Public Safety awarded a \$75,000 grant to assist in making up the difference. County staff initially thought that the grant funds were an amendment to the original project but have learned since that they must be tracked as a separate grant even though they can be used for the same scope of work. Upon approval, staff will amend the project fund with the new grant and set up tracking for reporting on these funds as a separate grant.

Commissioner McCall moved to accept the grant funds as presented and amend the existing project fund for StRAP/EWP, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION TURNING OVER US 64 WATER AND WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TOWN OF ROSMAN

The purpose of this item is to officiate the turnover of the asset the County built for the US 64 water and wastewater improvements using grant funds and that are currently permitted under the Town of Rosman. The Town of Rosman and Transylvania County entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in the spring of 2022. The agreement entailed that Transylvania County would secure funding, construct, handle project administration, and grant reporting for building the US 64 water and wastewater project. Furthermore, the Town of Rosman would work cooperatively in the design and construction phases and then accept the asset after construction to operate within their existing water and sewer system.

The \$5 million project serves the needs for expansion onsite for local manufacturer Gaia Herbs while also extending water and sewer service to unserved areas in Transylvania County and Rosman. The project has been managed by a Transylvania County project team with notable participation on the project from the County Manager, Assistant County Manager David McNeill, County Engineer/Project Manager Larry Reece, Finance Directors Jonathan Griffin and Meagan O'Neal, Purchasing and Finance Specialist Jennifer Galloway, Operations Director Chad Owenby and Town of Rosman Mayor Brian Shelton along with contract support from High Country Engineering and Hyatt Construction.

Michael Goforth with High Country Engineering was in attendance and asked to comment on the project. Ms. Goforth informed the Board that the project is complete other than a final punch list of items. In terms of the timeline, he shared that the first preliminary engineering report was conducted in November 2017. An updated report was provided in August 2020. Engineering began in earnest in October 2020. The design phase took approximately 18 months. The bid process occurred, and the project was awarded to Hyatt Pipeline in July 2022. The original contract with Hyatt was \$4.7 million. There was \$81,000 in change orders representing 3% of the overall project. The project is expected to close under budget by nearly \$650,000. Mr. Goforth heralded the project as a tremendous success. He was thankful to work with the team on this project.

The Manager shared that the funding for this project included grant funds from the NC Department of Commerce and Appalachian Regional Commission and the remainder from NCDEQ ARPA funds for infrastructure that were allocated to Transylvania County. The savings will be eligible to be allocated toward other projects as long as they are spent within the ARPA-required window. Staff will bring recommendations to the Board on how to reallocate those funds. She also announced that the interconnect project has begun and will utilize ARPA funds earmarked for Transylvania County infrastructure. She noted that initially, the County intended to build a water treatment plant with the ARPA funds, but the cost estimates to do so were double the available funds and could not have been constructed within the required timeframe.

Commissioner Chapman moved to approve Resolution #42-2023 Turning Over the US 64 Water and Wastewater Improvements to the Town of Rosman as agreed upon by the Town and the County, seconded by Commissioner Casciato. Chairman Chappell thanked all those who were involved with this project. It is a significant infrastructure investment and a major accomplishment for Transylvania County. Commissioner McCall agreed that the completion of this project is a major accomplishment, and she was appreciative of the partnership between the Town and the County. She supported the resolution with reservation because she felt the better move for the County would have been a continued partnership. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

**RESOLUTION #42-2023
TURNING OVER US 64 WATER AND WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS
TO THE TOWN OF ROSMAN**

Whereas, the ability to grow and develop the Town is of importance to Town leaders and the future of the Town of Rosman; and

Whereas, success of the Town to grow and develop benefits the County as well; and

Whereas, the County provided funding to support expansion and improvement of infrastructure along US 64; and

Whereas, such project and collaborative arrangement is now complete and parties desire to memorialize that completion; and

Whereas, it is in the best interest of the parties to close any prior Agreement, and allow the Town to take over ownership/responsibility for the below noted facilities moving forward; and

Whereas, the Town Board of Alderman and County Board of Commissioners agreed by Memorandum of Understanding for Transylvania County to secure funding for the US 64 water and sewer expansion, construct the lines and to handle the administration and grant reporting for the project; and

Whereas, the Town Board of Alderman and County Board of Commissioners agreed by Memorandum of Understanding for the Town of Rosman to accept the facilities in full at the conclusion of the project to be operated within their existing water and wastewater system; and

Whereas, the project as defined in the Agreement is closing out after satisfactory completion for both parties; and

Whereas, the Town Board of Alderman and County Board of Commissioners agreed by Memorandum of Understanding for the Town of Rosman to accept the facilities in full at the conclusion of the project to be operated within their existing water and wastewater system;

Therefore, the Transylvania County Commissioners hereby confirm that the asset is transferred to the Town of Rosman under the full and complete terms of the governing Memorandum of Understanding.

This the 11th day of December 2023.

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

MANAGER'S REPORT

- Congratulations to the Transylvania Economic Alliance as the recipient of the Workplace of the Year Award from the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board.
- Transylvania County offices and public buildings will close early on Tuesday, December 19 to allow employees to attend the County's Annual Luncheon and Awards Ceremony. The Woodruff Landfill, located on Howell Road, will close at 11:30 a.m. All other offices will close at noon.
- Transylvania County offices will be closed Monday, December 25, Tuesday, December 26, and Wednesday, December 27 for the Christmas holiday break. The County follows the State's holiday closure schedule.
- The Board of Commissioners cancelled its second meeting in December. The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 8, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.
- Kudos to Operations and Parks and Recreation staff and community partners coordinated by Heart of Brevard for all that they did to make Light up the Night special this year.
- Year-end review highlights:
 - US 64 water and sewer line collaboration project complete.
 - Interconnect project was brokered between the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman so they can share water as needed.
 - Commissioners decided on a new courthouse location. The project will move forward in 2024 and several years beyond.
 - Fixed transit route in place and growing and therefore serving needs of the community.
 - Jail-based treatment and intervention program with federal grant funds are having a great impact on the community.
 - The EMS Base project has begun and will be completed in early 2024.
 - Landfill expansion is moving forward with permitting.
 - A salary study was implemented and has helped to address hiring needs.
 - Communications is nearly fully staffed.
 - EMS is fully staffed, which was a struggle before the salary study.
 - Medicaid expansion in the DSS began on December 1. DSS was fully staffed to begin receiving applications on day one.
 - First full budget year of the License Plate Agency and Passport Office.
 - Several economic development expansions contributed to the increase in the tax base.
 - Collaboration with the Board of Education to address capital needs.
 - Brought advocacy to the table. State funding of \$40 million for capital between the County and municipalities is unprecedented, but a direct result of the Board's advocacy.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kristi Brown: Clerk of Superior Court Kristi Brown thanked the Board for moving forward on the courthouse. She made the Board aware that last Thursday ceiling plaster fell from a section of the courthouse. She remains concerned about the safety of courthouse staff and the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chapman announced there will be a showing of *The Veterans Battlefield* on February 3, a documentary film produced by the NC Association of County Commissioners, a good portion of which was filmed in Transylvania County. Commissioner Chapman shared that he and his wife recently adopted a dog from the animal shelter. He thanked the staff for the easy adoption process. He encouraged the public to visit the shelter if they were looking to adopt a pet.

Commissioner McCall wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. She thanked all those who attend the Board meetings regularly. She also expressed appreciation to the County Manager, County Attorneys, Clerk to the Board, County staff, and her fellow Commissioners for all they do for Transylvania County.

Commissioner Casciato wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He hopes 2024 will be another successful year in Transylvania County.

Commissioner Dalton charged Commissioners with thinking about the short legislative session in April and coming up with a list of needs to advocate for on behalf of the County. He shared that he had the opportunity to view *The Veterans Battlefield* during the NCACC Conference in Raleigh and that the film was very emotional and intense. He encouraged everyone to view it. He also wished the Commissioners and staff Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He thanked the public for the opportunity to serve.

Chairman Chappell thanked citizens for the opportunity to serve because it is an honor and a privilege. He thanked the Commissioners for sacrificing their time to serve. He thanked all those who attend the Board meetings regularly and those watching at home. Lastly, he expressed appreciation to the County Manager, the Clerk to the Board, and the staff for the amazing work they do.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner McCall moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously carried.**

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board