

**MINUTES  
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OCTOBER 23, 2023 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, October 23, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Emmett Casciato, Larry Chapman, Chairman Jason Chappell, Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton, and Teresa McCall. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Natalia Isenberg (participating via Zoom meeting software), and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Jon Rich

There were approximately 75 people in the audience.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**WELCOME**

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

**PUBLIC HEARING**

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE-BASED INCENTIVE GRANT FOR PISGAH HOSPITALITY, LLC  
Transylvania Economic Alliance Executive Director Burton Hodges presented information for the public hearing.

Pisgah Hospitality LLC is a South Carolina-based hospitality development group proposing a boutique hotel on 15 acres along Asheville Highway and Lamb's Creek Road. The proposed development would consist of a 36-room lodge and rental cabins for a total of 54 keys, an event and entertainment venue, and other amenities, including food and beverage, an adventure recreation concierge, and guiding services. The development will be called Brevard Staytion and will feature eco-friendly construction materials, and energy-efficient design, and will involve conservation activity along Lamb's Creek to enhance the habitat and natural environment surrounding the development. Pisgah Hospitality LLC will manage the hotel and will directly employ five full-time employees with an average annual salary of \$80,000 with each new job exceeding Transylvania County's current hourly private sector average wage of \$42,179.

The Transylvania Economic Alliance is excited to support this project which aligns with its target industry sectors identified in its original 2014 strategic plan and in its current strategic plan that was updated in 2022, which includes the following diverse target industry sectors: niche and advanced manufacturing, biotechnology/life sciences, outdoor equipment, professional and creative services, and hospitality and tourism.

The project will invest \$28.5 million in real property improvements and an estimated \$1.6 million in tangible personal property for a total of \$30,148,500. The project plans to break ground in early 2024. Based on the following events, the hotel's construction, plus the annual impact of operation and sales,

once fully operational, will generate the following estimated economic impacts on Transylvania County's economy: 456 direct, indirect, and induced jobs with nearly \$20 million in new payroll activity, \$25.5 million contribution to Transylvania County's gross domestic product, over \$7 million of which will come from other businesses and employers in Transylvania County, for a total of \$53 million in total economic output, including taxes, sales, labor costs, payroll, and other property income, nearly \$15 million of which will come from other employers and businesses elsewhere in the County, and over \$605,000 in total of County taxes based on the full construction and factoring in just one year of operations and sales.

Based on a scorecard score of 75, the project qualifies to receive 85% of its ad valorem taxes collected from the new investment granted back to the company over five years per each year of investment upon meeting each year's specific investment and job creation requirements, for a total maximum award of \$763,996.

Mr. Hodges thanked the Board of Commissioners for their continued leadership and commitment to economic growth and tax base diversification. He introduced Brice Bay who represented Pisgah Hospitality.

Mr. Bay spoke about the vision for the project. He acknowledged that it is a challenging time in the capital markets to get projects like this one financed, but he was confident the project would be fully financed. The company intends to hire locally and utilize local service providers and guides. The project will include a world-class event venue using local flare and flavor. The company is already working with local providers of civil engineering and environmental planning, and the general contractor is based here as well.

Mr. Bay also shared the company's vision for a sustainable campus. The buildings will be sustainably constructed and managed, and the inside environment will be sustainable in terms of the air that people breathe, the products that they use, etc. and the exterior and the natural environment around the building will function as a green campus. They intend to highlight what is best and most beautiful here and be a place that inspires people to come back again and again.

Before opening the public hearing for public input, Chairman Chappell called for comments and questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Chapman shared that he received phone calls from citizens concerning the employment of only five people for a project of this size. He assumed the company would contract locally for housekeeping services, etc. but they might not be direct paid staff.

Mr. Bay explained they will be using independent contractors and local vendors for other services. The five directly employed positions will be the top-tier positions.

Commissioner Chapman asked Mr. Hodges to explain to the public how the incentives are paid out. Mr. Hodges explained that based on the scorecard the company qualifies for 85% of the new tax revenue that is collected from the project returned to them in the form of a performance-based cash grant. The company will pay its taxes, and then upon demonstrating that they have met specific performance requirements that they have agreed to with the County, they will be eligible to receive 85% of those new taxes back. None of the funds are given to the company upfront. The performance period is not to exceed five years per each year of investment.

**Chairman Chappell opened the public hearing at 6:14 p.m.**

There were no public comments.

**Chairman Chappell closed the public hearing at 6:15 p.m.**

The Board will consider this item under New Business.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

*The public's comments represent each speaker's point of view or opinion.*

Keirra Hurst, Adonai Jacques, and Mariah Worley: These ladies attended the NC Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference in Wake County in August as Youth Voice Delegates. The event spanned two days with representatives from 4-H and Boys and Girls Clubs in counties across the State. They each shared a brief statement about their experience. They participated in the budget simulation game to learn about how counties set their funding priorities. They also participated in the True Colors personality assessment to help them learn about their and others' core values. They thanked the Board of Commissioners for the opportunity to attend.

Ryan Merrill: Ms. Merrill is a student at Brevard High School, and she expressed her concerns about black mold being present in the school. She shared a handout with pictures showing some of the issues which she said are potentially harmful to the health of students, teachers, and staff. She did not feel the County had done enough to put students first based on the building's conditions. Nor has the Board moved forward on the bond that most citizens voted for. Ms. Merrill stated that the lack of care has affected student morale. She requested the Board discuss the concerns she raised during one of their meetings in January.

Nick Spanenberg: Mr. Spanenberg is a resident of Lake Toxaway. He did not feel there was enough fire coverage, and he was concerned there was only one firefighter on staff at any given time in an area as large as Lake Toxaway. He asked the Board to seriously consider this issue especially as the area continues to grow. He hoped the Board would consider additional staff in the future.

Alan Mercaldo: Mr. Mercaldo shared his concerns about the City's desire to extend utilities outside their corporate limits without annexation. He felt that it opened the potential to change the landscape of the County. He was concerned about developers buying up farmland and converting it into high-density housing areas or other developments like strip malls that are generally not wanted by the public. Mr. Mercaldo asked whether the County has appropriate guardrails to control these requests for expansion and whether County residents had a say in the decision. He stated he was not against growth and development, but he did not think it should be so broad and ambiguous and done so freely.

James Carli: Mr. Carli shared that he travels frequently for work and therefore he supported the Board's agenda item for a resolution seeking to expand Amtrak into Asheville. He said it will bring many benefits to the region and he was excited about the possibility of having alternate means of transportation to get to other parts of the country without having to fly or drive long distances. He invited the Board to explore opportunities for expanding interregional transit services at a future meeting.

### **AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

There were no agenda modifications.

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

## CONSENT AGENDA

**Commissioner Casciato moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously approved.**

The Board approved the following items:

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in a regular meeting on Monday, October 9, 2023, and following met in a closed session (4) in which the minutes were sealed. The Board of Commissioners approved the minutes as submitted.

### DISCOVERY, RELEASE & MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2023

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 September 2023, tax dollars released totaled \$1,456.74 and refunds amounted to \$1,081.23. The Board of Commissioners approved the September 2023 Discovery, Release, and Monthly Settlement Report as submitted.

### CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION TEAM REPORT

N.C.G.S. § 7B-1406 through 7b-1413 define the work of a local Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT). A local CFPT case review intends to identify opportunities for policy and systems improvements that can prevent future child fatalities. It is never the intent of a CFPT to assign blame but to identify improvements that may save the lives of other children. Per statutes, the following entities serve on the review team for Transylvania County: Health Department, Department of Social Services, SAFE, EMS, Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, Hendersonville Pediatrics, Medical Examiner's Office, Transylvania County School System, and the Family Place.

All CFPT meetings are restricted to the agencies and professionals identified in the statutes. All meeting material and communication is conducted in a secure and HIPPA-compliant manner. Meetings are held in person to ensure this security. Per statute, all cases are held for one year prior to review. This ensures all records from the NC Medical Examiner's Office and other potentially associated organizations have been completed and are available for review. Due to the disruptions of COVID, the reviews for calendar years 2021 and 2022 were held in an in-person meeting on August 18, 2023. The recommendations of the CFPT Review are presented in a manner to protect confidentiality.

The team reviewed a total of seven cases during the period and recommended the following:

1. Invest in youth mental health supports to include awareness and education campaigns related to youth mental health needs/response/supports; additional screening opportunities; legislative investments in youth mental health clinical resources; legislative investments in preventive youth mental health systems and resources; continue the local work of TCSTRONG.
2. Support access and engagement with routine prenatal and postnatal care.

The team presented the report to the Board of Health on October 10, 2023, as required by statute.

The Board of Commissioners approved the report as submitted.

CANCELLATION OF NOVEMBER 27, 2023, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in November falls on the Monday immediately after Thanksgiving. Staff would be compressed to get out an agenda packet before the Thanksgiving holiday and there is no pressing business for the Board to take up. The Commissioners and staff wished to cancel the November 27, 2023, meeting. The Board of Commissioners approved the cancellation of the November 27, 2023, meeting and instructed the Clerk to the Board to publish and post appropriate notice to the public.

REQUEST TO CLOSE COUNTY OFFICES FOR ANNUAL EMPLOYEE LUNCH

The Annual Employee Luncheon is scheduled for December 19 at Brevard College. County offices have historically been closed after this event allowing employees to have an afternoon off. Staff are requesting to close County offices for half of the day on this date. The Board of Commissioners approved the request to close the Solid Waste landfill and convenience sites beginning at 11:30 a.m. and the remaining County offices from noon to closing on December 19 so that County employees may attend the Annual Employee Luncheon. The Board of Commissioners instructed staff to post notices at their facilities.

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION #35 - 2021 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TCTDA)

The TCTDA recommended the following changes to Resolution #35-2021 that established the TCTDA:

1. The current resolution identifies the submittal by the TCTDA Board of a nomination for board chair in December of each year. This is then considered by the Board of Commissioners at an upcoming meeting. The TCTDA's first meeting of the year is the first Thursday of January. This is an extremely tight turnaround that does not allow for ample onboarding and preparations for the new chair. The recommended language simply references the nomination needing to occur without a date indicated.
2. The current resolution states that the TCTDA Board shall, by resolution, adopt a schedule of regular meetings at their December meeting. This makes it occur before the new board and new chair are in place. The TCTDA focuses on organizational items like meeting schedules and committee appointments at their January meeting with the new board in place. The recommended language indicates "December or January".
3. The recommended language now indicates that voting may proceed so long as a quorum exists prior to the recusal of any member, even if the recusal puts the number of voting members below a quorum if desired by the chair.

The Board of Commissioners adopted the changes to Resolution #35 - 2021 as recommended by the TCTDA Board.

PROCLAMATION - VETERANS DAY 2023

The Board of Commissioners has traditionally approved a proclamation honoring Veterans Day. The proclamation will be presented and read at the Veterans Day Ceremony on Saturday, November 11 at the Courthouse Gazebo. Commissioner Dalton read aloud the proclamation. The Board of Commissioners approved Proclamation #39-2023 Veterans Day 2023.

**PROCLAMATION # 39-2023  
VETERANS DAY 2023**

**WHEREAS**, the freedoms we enjoy as Americans have been purchased and maintained at a high price throughout our history; and

**WHEREAS**, since the establishment of the original 13 States, Americans have been willing to fight and die to preserve their individual rights as guaranteed in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights; and

**WHEREAS**, we owe a great debt to those who have served in defense of this nation; and

**WHEREAS**, throughout the generations, their sacrifices have preserved our unique form of government dedicated to human rights and respect for the individual; and

**WHEREAS**, for many, that sacrifice had ended in permanent injury or death, yet their spirit remains in continued preservation of our freedoms and the promise of liberty established as an example for all the oppressed persons of the world; and

**WHEREAS**, in honor of these dedicated men and women, we pledge our continued defense of our nation so that their sacrifice will stand before the entire world as a tribute to the spirit and determination of people dedicated to the principles of freedom and democracy;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED** that the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County does hereby call upon the citizenry of Transylvania County to participate in services and to observe the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month with expressions of gratitude to all veterans and to further extend this gratitude to the families of the deceased veterans and to solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us re-consecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.

This the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of October 2023.

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

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION GREEN LIGHT FOR VETERANS**

In support of military veterans statewide and across the country, this Veterans Day, the NC Association of County Commissioners joins the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers in inviting North Carolina counties to participate in Operation Green Light. This initiative shows support for veterans by lighting County buildings and infrastructure green from November 6 to November 12 as a marker to show that veterans are seen, appreciated, and supported.

Operations and Maintenance staff will provide green lighting on the Broad Street side of the Courthouse by the Christmas Tree, in front of the Courthouse on Main Street, as well as at the gazebo and the Veterans History Museum. Staff will also stake green floodlights in the ground and do everything possible to ensure the site is under a flood of green lights for the week. Commissioner Chapman read aloud the proclamation.

The Board of Commissioners approved Resolution #40-2023 Supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans.

**Resolution #40-2023  
Supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans**

**WHEREAS**, the residents of Transylvania County have great respect, admiration, and the utmost gratitude for all the men and women who have selflessly served our country and this community in the Armed Forces; and

**WHEREAS**, the contributions and sacrifices of those who served in the Armed Forces have been vital in maintaining the freedoms and way of life enjoyed by our citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, Transylvania County seeks to honor individuals who have made countless sacrifices for freedom by placing themselves in harm's way for the good of all; and

WHEREAS, veterans continue to serve our community in the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, religious groups, civil service, and by functioning as County Veterans Service Officers in 29 states to help fellow former service members access more than \$52 billion in federal health, disability and compensation benefits each year; and

WHEREAS, approximately 200,000 service members transition to civilian communities annually; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 20% increase of service members will transition to civilian life in the near future; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that 44-72% of service members experience high levels of stress during transition from military to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, active military service members transitioning from military service are at a high risk for suicide during their first year after military service; and

WHEREAS, the National Association of Counties encourages all counties, parishes, and boroughs to recognize Operation Green Light for Veterans; and

WHEREAS, Transylvania County appreciates the sacrifices of our United States military personnel and believes specific recognition should be granted;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with designation as a Green Light for Veterans County, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners hereby declares from November 6 through November 12, 2023, a time to salute and honor the service and sacrifices of our men and women in uniform transitioning from active service;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in observance of Operation Green Light, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners encourages its citizens in patriotic tradition to recognize the importance of honoring all those who made immeasurable sacrifices to preserve freedom by displaying green lights in a window of their place of business or residence.

This the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of October 2023.

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

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING TO REESTABLISH PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE FOR WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

The Western North Carolina Rail Committee, Inc. has worked persistently in support of improved rail service and connectivity since 1989. The communities of Asheville, Old Fort, Marion, Morganton, Valdese, Hickory, Conover, Statesville, and Salisbury would benefit from AMTRAK-operated and NC DOT Rail Division-administered passenger rail service with round trips daily between Salisbury and Asheville. Asheville and WNC have been without a passenger rail connection since 1975.

US Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that will allocate 80% of the funding with a state/local match of 20% with an estimated construction cost of \$665 million and an annual operating cost of \$7.3 million to \$10 million.

Economic development, tourism, and job creation will benefit through the enhancement of a passenger rail system that serves the citizens of North Carolina and visitors to our State. There is a vital need to provide a

strong and balanced transportation system that promotes freight and passenger service. Thus, an increase in State funding for passenger rail service in North Carolina is necessary to connect our small urban and rural areas of the state with the urbanized centers of our state.

Support by local and state officials is essential to the future of alternative transportation in WNC, as identified as one of the 13 rail corridors by NCDOT for inclusion in the Federal Railroad Administration Identification Program. NCDOT's Rail Division has agreed to manage, subject to NC Legislative appropriation, contract development and implementation of AMTRAK service between Salisbury and Asheville.

The WNC Rail Committee, Inc. asked local boards of commissions to adopt a resolution that supports the creation of a rail connection service for WNC. While it may not have a direct impact on Brevard or Transylvania County, it will bring rail service closer to our community.

The Board of Commissioners approved Resolution #41-2023 In Support of Funding to Reestablish Passenger Rail Service for Western North Carolina.

**RESOLUTION #41-2023  
IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING TO RE-ESTABLISH PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE FOR  
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA**

WHEREAS, rail service is an integral part of a comprehensive transportation system for the State of North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Western North Carolina Rail Committee, Inc. has worked persistently in support of improved rail service and connectivity since 1989. These local communities, Asheville, Old Fort, Marion, Morganton, Valdese, Hickory, Conover, Statesville, and Salisbury would thus benefit from AMTRAK operated and NC DOT Rail Division administered passenger rail service with three round trips daily between Salisbury and Asheville; and

WHEREAS, economic development, tourism and job creation will benefit through the enhancement of a passenger rail system that serves the citizens of North Carolina and visitors to our state with 100,000 local trips that could be generated, with additional 150,000 to 290,000 passengers (connections) by 2045 per the Western North Carolina Passenger Rail Feasibility Study, June 2023, prepared by NC DOT Rail Division; and

WHEREAS, Congress has passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) which allocated 80% of the funding with a state/local match of 20% with an estimated construction cost of \$665 million and annual operating cost of \$7.3 to \$10 million; and

WHEREAS, we applaud the State of North Carolina for development of comprehensive intercity rail and transportation services in urban jurisdictions through the state, and recognize that Asheville and Western North Carolina have been without a passenger rail connection since 1975; and

WHEREAS, there is a vital need to provide a strong and balanced transportation system that promotes freight and passenger service; and

WHEREAS, an increase in state funding for passenger rail service in North Carolina is necessary to connect our small urban and rural areas of the state with the urbanized centers of our state; and



WHEREAS, support by local and state elected officials is essential for the future of alternative transportation in Western North Carolina, as identified as one of the thirteen rail corridors by NC DOT for inclusion in the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Railroad Identification Program; and

WHEREAS, support and utilization of transportation improvements which is funded by FRA to speed creation of additional rail passenger routes across the country and is supported by business and commercial interests as essential for the successful deployment of alternative transportation modes in North Carolina, especially in Western North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, this resolution expresses the thirty plus years of unified support of communities and chambers of commerce throughout Western North Carolina for increased statewide funding for bus- rail service; and

WHEREAS, rail linkages between communities and regions within North Carolina establish and strengthen social, historical, commercial, and cultural bonds; and

WHEREAS, the average return on investment for the surrounding community for station revitalizations throughout North Carolina is more than one dollar for every dollar invested, as demonstrated in Salisbury, Morganton, Marion, Old Fort, and Asheville (with purchase of land); and

WHEREAS, the associated improvements to rail facilities have increased the efficiency and safety of rail service, helped attract new freight traffic and provided environmental benefits by reducing the impact of traffic congestion on North Carolina's highways, particularly Interstate 40; and

WHEREAS, a rail system will enhance accessibility and reliability for citizens, tourists, and businesses in Western North Carolina, and by extension to the entire State of North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina Department of Transportation's Rail Division has agreed to manage, subject to NC Legislative appropriation, contract development and implementation of Amtrak service between Salisbury and Asheville; and

WHEREAS, the WNC Rail Committee is committed to working with the local communities to effectively market passenger rail service in WNC and provide other local assistance/services as appropriate to help insure the connection service's long-term success; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County, through the adoption of this resolution, fully supports the creation of an attractive, marketable, and cost-effective rail connection service for Western North Carolina, that includes funding by the FRA and the North Carolina General Assembly with financial participation from local governments and economic entities for the proposed Amtrak rail service between Asheville and Salisbury.

Adopted this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of October 2023.

S://Jason R. Chappell

Chairman, Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

## **PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS**

### RECOGNITION OF TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY VETERAN EMPLOYEES

Saturday, November 11 is Veterans Day. Staff felt it was fitting and appropriate to recognize County employees who served in the US Military. Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart presented the list of names.

Department	Employee	Branch	Rank
Board of Elections	Michael "Jeff" Storey	US Air Force	Staff Sergeant
Commissioner	Larry Chapman	US Marine Corps	Colonel
EMS	Wesley "Dean" Galloway	US Marine Corps	Sergeant
EMS	Shannon Ropp	US Air Force	Airman 1st Class
EMS	Clark Anderson	US Army	
EMS	Stephanie Gibbs	US Navy	AG2/PO2
Facilities Engineering	Larry Reece	US Army	E-4
Information Technology	Jason Cox	US Army	Specialist - MP
NCACC - Consultant	Rod Gilliam	US Army	Major - Retired
Sheriff	Christopher Clark	US Marine Corps	Corporal
Sheriff	Ralph Davenport	US Air Force	Sgt 1st Class
Sheriff	Hampton "Rick" Lasater	US Army	Captain
Sheriff	Jonathan "Kris" McCall	US Army	Corporal
Sheriff	Henry "Hank" Moffitt	US Army	Spec 4
Sheriff	William "Anthony" Worley	US Marine Corps	Corporal
Social Services	Tracy Justice	US Army	
Social Services	Sherri Stearns	US Navy	E-5
Solid Waste	John Waller	US Navy	Chief Warrant Officer III
Solid Waste	Jim Cox	US Navy	E6 Missile Technician
Tax Administration	James "Aaron" Siniard	US Navy	E-5
Transportation	Marion "Jack" Duncan	US Air Force	
Transportation	Robert A Poe		
Transportation	Marty Pressley	US Army	
Veterans Services	Frank Pearsall	US Marine Corps	Master Sergeant

## NEW BUSINESS

### ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE-BASED INCENTIVE GRANT FOR PISGAH HOSPITALITY, LLC

Commissioner McCall requested permission from the Board to recuse herself from this discussion and vote. Her spouse is in real estate and had direct involvement with the sale of the property.

### **Chairman Chappell moved to grant the recusal as requested, seconded by Commissioner Chapman, and unanimously approved.**

The Manager recapped the information presented during the public hearing. Pisgah Hospitality LLC is a company that is contemplating investments in the County in real estate and equipment. Under the project as proposed, the public benefits to be derived from the capital project include a total taxable investment by Pisgah Hospitality LLC in increments through 2026 of at least \$30,148,500 in real and business property. The project as proposed would result in the creation of five new full-time jobs, at an average wage of \$80,000 which exceeds the Transylvania County average wage of \$42,179 for full-time employment, plus other benefits. The contemplated incentives would last for a period not to exceed eight years. Based on the new investment, the number of new employees, and the Board's incentive guidelines the maximum amount of incentives to be considered in this grant over the total period is expected to be valued at \$763,996.12. If approved, the grants would be funded through the County's general funds.

The Manager asked the Board to consider approving the grant and authorizing staff to move forward with a performance agreement.

Commissioner Chapman asked staff to restate where this project will be located for the benefit of the public.

Transylvania Economic Alliance Executive Director Burton Hodges stated that the property the developers are targeting for Brevard Staytion is at the intersection of Lamb's Creek Road and Asheville Highway. The property contains 16 acres.

Chairman Chappell stated it is important to emphasize that this is a \$30 million investment to Transylvania County's tax base. The five new full-time jobs will have an average wage of over \$80,000. The project will also create subsidiary and ancillary jobs. He said this project is a perfect example of how the Board of Commissioners has supported a diverse economic base and why the Board has an incentive policy. Chairman Chappell also stressed that the grant is performance-based whereby the company will receive a grant back of taxes paid once certain performance measures are met. At the same time, sales taxes are being generated, jobs are being created, and capital investment is being made in the community. He stated that every local government entity uses economic incentives. If they did not, companies would seek location elsewhere and that is not a reasonable economic strategy.

Every single local government entity uses economic incentives. If not, the business will go elsewhere. It is where we are today.

**Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the making of the grants as described above and to enter into one or more economic development agreements with Pisgah Hospitality, LLC, seconded by Commissioner Casciato. The motion was approved unanimously (4-0 with Commissioner McCall recusing herself).**

#### REQUEST TO PURSUE CARE COALITION FEDERAL GRANT

Public Health Director Elaine Russell presented this request to the Board. The CARE Coalition requested approval to apply for the Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) grant, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The purpose of this grant is to continue to build substance misuse prevention capacity within Transylvania County. It will help reduce the onset and progress of substance misuse and its related problems through the development and delivery of community-based prevention and mental health promotion services.

This grant program funds up to \$375,000 per year for up to five years. If awarded, the program would start on September 30, 2024, when CARE's current prevention funding ends.

This is a continuation of work the CARE Coalition has been providing in the County since the initial federal grant award in 2014. No local match is required. If a new position is identified for the grant, the position will be hired through the NC Alliance of Public Health Staffing. Ms. Russell recommended the Board approve the request to apply for SAMHSA's SPF-PFS grant to leverage outside federal grant monies to fulfill community needs and to support a robust response to substance misuse crisis by providing evidence-based prevention services.

Commissioner Chapman said he recently attended an NCACC Board of Directors meeting and one of the major topics they discussed was the opioid settlement. North Carolina is slated to receive \$1.5 billion from the settlement. He requested an update on the County's plan at a future meeting. Commissioner Chapman encouraged the public to visit the NCACC website to learn more. He also noted that the NCACC Presidential Initiative is focused on the opioid epidemic. It is personal to NCACC President Johnnie Carswell as he lost a son to opioids.

Commissioner McCall shared that at the last Board of Health meeting, the members received a presentation from the CARE Coalition on the work that they have done to develop recommendations for the use of the opioid settlement money. The CARE Coalition is hosting a community input session on November 16. She was amazed at the work they had done and the thought they put into the recommendations. Commissioner

McCall stated there is a need to provide education and support for those who are struggling with addiction. She stressed that the crisis is real and is being compounded by the illegal drugs that are crossing our borders every day.

Chairman Chappell stated how fortunate Transylvania County is to have the CARE Coalition. Transylvania County is ahead of other communities in terms of planning. He felt it was important to ensure the funding directly impacts Transylvania County.

Chairman Chappell stated that, as with all grants, there is no guarantee of County funding should the grant funding go away.

**Commissioner McCall moved to approve the request to apply for SAMHSA’s “SPF-PFS Grant” to leverage outside federal grant money to fulfill community needs and to support a robust response to substance misuse crisis by providing evidence-based prevention services, seconded by Commissioner Chapman, and unanimously approved.**

CITY OF BREVARD PATHWAYS TO REMOVING OBSTACLES TO HOUSING FEDERAL GRANT APPLICATION LETTER OF SUPPORT

The Manager reported that the City of Brevard is seeking a highly competitive federal grant to extend sewer services to the Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood located in the ETJ. The grant would provide \$6 million to address the extension of sewer services to this neighborhood due to failing septic systems. It would also endow the Brevard Housing Trust Fund Affordable Housing Preservation Project to invest in preservation, home repairs, and tap fee reimbursement to secure affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families in Transylvania County.

The City of Brevard requested a letter of support to submit with the grant application. Because the County and City partner on housing issues, the County would also offer the support of the Planning and Community Development department with in-kind work as they look at the policies around these types of extensions. The Manager recommended the Board approve the letter of support for the City of Brevard’s housing grant application for \$6 million in federal funds.

Commissioner McCall asked for clarification that the County’s contribution would be staff time to help support the effort in an in-kind manner and no matching funds. The Manager confirmed.

Commissioner Chapman stated this is a crisis in our community. He commented that affordable housing is a challenge for the City and the County. Another issue is the City’s sewer capacity because it will cost tens of millions of dollars to address.

Commissioner Casciato commented there is nothing affordable in Transylvania County. The cost of materials remains high. Housing costs are running \$300/foot which he did not consider affordable. Sometimes he thinks affordable housing in Transylvania County is unrealistic. Another issue is that long-term rentals are being converted to short-term rentals to accommodate the tourism industry.

Chairman Chappell stated that the letter of support is important. There are citizens in this community with failing septic systems that cannot be replaced. If they are unable to tap into the City’s system, they will lose their homes. The grant would also provide funding for home repairs and help break down the barriers for developers interested in building here. For these reasons, he supported the letter.

Commissioner McCall stated she supported the letter as well because the area that has been identified needs to be targeted for repairs and sewer connection. She felt it was important to point out that this housing grant seeks to remove barriers, such as restrictive regulatory zoning or land use policies or outdated procedures and

permitting processes. She said we can all agree that we are overregulated everywhere. Commissioner McCall stated that affordable housing is open to interpretation. Economic development helps to solve the problem of affordability. There is also a difference between affordable housing and workforce housing. Commissioner McCall stressed that tourism drives this County because when the manufacturing plants went out of business, the push was to ensure Transylvania County became tourism and recreation focused. She said we cannot complain about what we strived to become. Tourism and recreation continue to be the focus, but some want to use them as reasons for other problems.

In response to Commissioner Dalton, Planning and Community Development Director Jeff Adams reported that the application deadline is October 31, with the award coming in a month or two afterward.

Chairman Chappell stated this is another example of how the City and County can partner with each other when opportunities arise.

**Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the Letter of Support for the City of Brevard's PRO Housing grant application for \$6 million in federal funds to extend sewer to the Azalea/Rhododendron Neighborhood and further affordable housing through the Brevard Housing Trust Fund Affordable Housing Preservation Program, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.**

MODIFICATION OF 2023 PAY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES RELATED TO EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION UPDATES FOR EDUCATION

The Manager reported that the most recent compensation update was implemented in July of 2023. The Board of Commissioners funded the full implementation of the study as recommended. The compensation plan calculates salaries based on applicable advanced education degrees on a year-for-year basis and experience above the job description minimum for existing employees for implementation. Existing non-probationary employees are then eligible annually for COLA increases that move their salary along in the position pay range. New hire's salaries are calculated for existing advanced degrees and experience as of their hire. This is consistent with the 2019 compensation plan implementation.

The Personnel Board recommended modifying the 2023 implementation to recalculate salaries annually to include any applicable newly obtained advanced degrees for implementation in the budget and it was included in the recommendations ratified by the Commissioners.

Since the update, staff have raised concerns about the equity of awarding compensation for advanced degrees received every year, while not awarding employees additional experience gained yearly. In 2019, there was a discussion about implementing a step program which is how some entities reward employees on an annual basis for gained experience, but it was not implemented.

After consultation with the County Attorney, staff recommended removing this provision for the annual review of education, which has not yet been implemented since the pay plan is in its first year of implementation. Educational increases based on advanced degrees earned after implementation or new hires after that date would be considered during subsequent salary updates along with gained experience.

The Manager recommended the Board repeal the award of additional compensation for relevant advanced degrees received after hire on an annual basis as part of the budget process from the 2023 Pay Plan implementation. She added that the Board has the option of looking at ways to move employees through the ranges for both education and experience, but the challenge is that the County has already struggled to keep up with the COLAs, so trying to build additional compensation into the pay plan has been accomplished.

**Commissioner Dalton moved to repeal the awarding of additional compensation for relevant advanced degrees received after hire on an annual basis as part of the budget process from the 2023 Pay Plan implementation, seconded by Commissioner Chapman.** Commissioner McCall stated it is important to note the recommendation comes after consultation with the County Attorney. She struggled with the recommendation, and she hopes the Board will continue to explore ways to reward employees based on their experience and education. Commissioner Dalton asked if staff have explored bonuses. The Manager stated that staff have brought forth recommendations for performance pay. There was a performance pay plan in place more than 15 years ago. It challenging to manage in a large organization and create equity when looking a performance. The County has wide-ranging job classifications over 25+ departments. Employee success looks different in all departments and contributes to challenges with creating a program with over 500 employees. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- After hearing the public comments from the student, the Manager requested the Commissioners agree to allow her to work with the Superintendent to hire an industrial hygienist to test the areas the student shared in the handout. The Educational Capital Study workgroup met recently and agreed that more information was needed on the capital needs around safety and security. Safe Havens will be a contract amendment to the Axias contract to help the workgroup incorporate this information. The County provides Public Health, and so the health and safety of everyone in our public buildings is critical. The County has hired an industrial hygienist to review issues in the Courthouse. She is confident there is enough money in the budget to incorporate the additional work. This issue is important to respond to quickly. The Commissioners were in consensus.
- The Clerk to the Board hosted the NC Association of County Clerks Western Regional Conference in Commissioners Chambers on Friday, October 13. It was a great event with 23 clerks from across the State in attendance. The Clerk to the Board thanks the Commissioners and the Manager who offered welcoming remarks, and to staff and others who had a hand in planning the event. The County Clerks participated in a service project to donate books to the Magic Book Bus which gives age-appropriate books to the youth in our community.
- The architect has begun the design work for phase II of the Sylvan Valley Industrial Building. Staff will provide regular updates to the Board.
- Construction on the new EMS Base continues and is now in the dry. We are expecting a February completion date.
- Rosman Water and Sewer Line extension is nearing completion. The sewer line became active in early October. This project was successful due to the great efforts of the County Team. Staff are working on the close-out documents for the project which are time-consuming and complicated.
- Kudos to the Animal Shelter staff and maintenance for their work in redoing the floors, conducting some maintenance and refreshing the shelter during closure.
- Cooperative Extension Service is hosting Ag Week and will be planning several fun and educational activities for students in Transylvania County
- WNC Career Expo at WNC Ag Center on Wednesday, October 23 from 11:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. presented by the Mountain Are Workforce Board and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce. All job seekers are encouraged to attend this one-stop opportunity to meet directly with representatives from companies hiring now.
- The next Board of Commissioners' meeting will be held on Monday, November 13 at 4:00 p.m. The Board will not meet on November 27. The December 11 regular meeting will also be the Board's organizational meeting. The Board normally cancels the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in December.
- US Congressman Chuck Edwards' mobile office "Carolina Cruiser" will be in front of the Transylvania County Courthouse on Tuesday, October 24 from 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. His staff will be

ready to meet with constituents and assist with casework. Citizens are invited to stop by and share their thoughts on issues that matter to them or ask for assistance from federal agencies.

- Kudos to the Transylvania County License Plate Agency for receiving a 100 on the August monthly audit. The LPA had a significant increase in walk-in traffic during August paired with changes in staffing. A big thanks to the LPA staff for their hard work, dedication, and attention to detail to make this successful.
- The audit is underway and will likely require an amendment given the finance department transition over the summer. The Manager was heavily involved with the audit. She was very impressed with our new Finance Director Meagan O’Neal.
- Happy Birthday to Commissioner Emmett Casciato and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan who both have birthdays this week!

Commissioner McCall asked when the Manager anticipated the full report of the maintenance reserve to be available to both Boards. The Manager stated there was a recent amendment to the contract with Safe Haven to study the safety and security issues. If they remain on schedule, the report should be available to both Boards by the end of January.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Steve Keate: Mr. Keate commented on the presentation by the student during the first public comment period regarding the school facility. He said that the presentation should have been made to the Board of Education. All the issues the students shared in the handouts are maintenance issues. He was appreciative of how the Board of Commissioners is handling the long-term capital needs through the maintenance reserve study.

Alan Mercaldo: Mr. Mercaldo responded to previous public comments about the fire departments. He said he has lived in urban areas where fire departments are fully staffed and in rural areas where departments are mostly staffed with volunteers, and he has experienced no difference in the level of service. He said the volunteers are educated, knowledgeable, and dedicated individuals who focus on safety over property first. He gave kudos to those who serve.

### **COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Casciato invited the public to the Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11 at 11:00 a.m. Courthouse Lawn and Gazebo. There will be free food for everyone following the ceremony. He also announced several other events: Veterans Breakfast at the Little River Community Center on November 11 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.; and Dance and Ceremony at the American Legion on the evening of November 11; Marine Corps Birthday Party at Ecusta Brewery on November 10 beginning at 5:00 p.m. He shared that the Honor Guard will have someone at the monolith every half hour. Commissioner Casciato encouraged everyone to attend events supporting our veterans.

Commissioner Chapman reminded the public that early voting has started for municipal elections. He encouraged citizens to vote and to be educated on who they vote for. Commissioner Chapman thanked the County for the support it provides to veterans in this community.

Commissioner McCall explained that she recused herself from the vote on the incentive grant because it is important for elected officials to not have any appearance of a conflict of interest. While there was no conflict of interest in this case, she wanted to ensure that any perceived conflict of interest did not hurt the entire Board. Commissioner McCall shared that there is a section on the County’s website with information on special projects. Under that tab is information about fire departments, the courthouse timeline, and the bond referendum. She thanked Mr. Keate for pointing out the obvious during his public comments. She also thanked Superintendent Dr. Fletcher for her work because it allows both Boards to be on the same page in

addressing the needs of the schools. She requested further discussion on the future use of the courthouse building and the maintenance reserve study after the holidays. She agreed with the Manager's recommendation to work with the Superintendent to hire an industrial hygienist to remediate any mold issues if there is, in fact, mold in the school facility. Commissioner McCall asked everyone to remember and pray for our troops overseas because they are in harm's way.

Commissioner Dalton commented on the incentive grant awarded by the Board. He acknowledged that the project does not create a lot of jobs, but the company is planning to invest over \$30 million. That is almost a full penny of property tax. He felt it was important that we continue to diversify the base so that property owners do not have to shoulder the burden. Our industrial tax base is much lower here than in neighboring counties. Transylvania County already struggles with over half the County being comprised of State and federal forestland. It is an obstacle that is difficult to overcome and adds pressure to housing and the cost of housing. Commissioner Dalton said other counties are experiencing much of the same issues we are.

Chairman Chappell thanked the public for allowing the Commissioners to serve and work on their behalf.

### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Chapman moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Dalton and unanimously carried.**

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Jason R. Chappell, Chairman  
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board