

**MINUTES**  
**TRANSYLVANIA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**FEBRUARY 26, 2024 – REGULAR MEETING**

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in a regular meeting on Monday, February 26, 2024, 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, and Teresa McCall. Vice-Chairman Jake Dalton was out of town and unable to attend in person. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. County Attorney Julie Hooten participated remotely via Zoom meeting software.

Media: Jon Rich – *The Transylvania Times*

There were 35 people in the audience, including staff presenters.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**WELCOME**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

*The comments represent the speakers' opinions or points of view. The Clerk to the Board did not attempt to correct any of their statements based on facts.*

Sam Stites: Mr. Stites is the Living Wage Program Coordinator for Just Economics of Western North Carolina. He addressed the Board on behalf of the Living Wage Coalition of Transylvania County and Just Economics. The organization oversees the largest living wage certification program in the nation and convened the national living wage network to better support workers and communities across the region, state, and country. Mr. Stites advocated for two enhancements to employment with Transylvania County government. He asked the Board to consider raising the wages of the lowest paid County employees to the rural living wage rate of \$16.40 and to adopt a comprehensive paid family leave policy for all County staff covering the birth or adoption of a child or to provide necessary care for a relative. Mr. Stites reported that the City of Brevard adopted these recommendations in 2023. He applauded the Board for implementing the 3.4% cost of living adjustment recommended by the County Manager. Mr. Stites asked the Board to consider working with the organization to explore one or both enhancements to guarantee a more secure future for the County and its dedicated staff.

Jeff Brewer: Mr. Brewer is the Chairman of the Transylvania County Republican Party. He reported that he has been attending the Board of Elections meetings for two years and he recently published an op-ed in the local newspaper based on his observations from those meetings. He spoke in defense of equal access to in-person voting for Transylvania County voters. He felt that he had to give a voice to these voters because the Board of Elections is not. Mr. Brewer stated that the Board of Elections represents a Brevard-centric view when considering what is in the best interest of rural voters. He felt that the Board of Elections' unwillingness

to ask the Board of Commissioners for funding for a third early voting location is unacceptable since there are more registered voters living in North Transylvania and upper Transylvania than in the Brevard precincts. He expected the 2024 General Election to attract a record turnout which is another reason to consider a third site. Mr. Brewer was also concerned about how the construction of a new traffic circle at the entrance of the Pisgah National Forest would make it difficult for voters to access downtown Brevard.

### AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

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

### CONSENT AGENDA

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

The Board approved the following items:

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in a regular meeting on Monday, February 12, 2024, and following met in a closed session in which the minutes were sealed. The Board approved the minutes as submitted.

#### JANUARY 2024 DISCOVERY, RELEASE, AND MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT

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 January, tax dollars released totaled \$15,934.13 and refunds issued amounted to \$3,204.35. The Board approved the January 2024 Discovery, Release, and Monthly Settlement Report as presented.

#### PROCLAMATION DECLARING MARCH AS SOCIAL WORK MONTH IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

Each year, March is celebrated as the National Social Work Month. At the Transylvania County Department of Social Services, numerous social workers provide a variety of duties to serve our most vulnerable population. Often, social work is a thankless job, but it could not be more important. Our social workers keep children and adults safe and provide support for all ages. The Board approved a proclamation declaring March as Social Work in Transylvania County.

Proclamation # 01 -2024  
Social Work Month 2024: Empowering Social Workers

WHEREAS, Social Work is a profession truly dedicated to helping people; and

WHEREAS, the primary mission of Social Work is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic and complex needs of all people; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers put a particular focus on helping people who are vulnerable, oppressed or living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers meet people where they are and help people and communities reach their full potential; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers work in all facets of our society, including schools, hospitals, community organizations, the military, mental health centers, social service agencies, corporations, and local, state and federal government; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers are in high demand, with some states reporting shortages in Social Work staffing and the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicting Social Work will be one of the fastest growing professions in our nation during this decade; and

WHEREAS, the 2024 Social Work Month theme, “Empowering Social Workers” embodies the need for society to support Social Workers so they can continue to do the life-affirming work they do and help address societal needs; and

WHEREAS, Social Workers in turn empower people, communities and our nation, helping everyone achieve their full potential;

NOW THEREFORE, in recognition of the numerous contributions made by Transylvania County’s Social Workers, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners proclaims the month of March 2024 as National Social Work Month in celebration and support of the Social Work Profession.

This the 26th day of February 2024.

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

#### OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUEST BY THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Transylvania County Sheriff’s Office requested approval for one Detention Center staff member to travel out of state to attend Kimble’s Commissary User Conference held in Savannah, Georgia on March 11-14, 2024. This training is critical in understanding and implementing the commissary system and inmate communication system currently in use by the Transylvania County Detention Center. The training is free of cost to the agency, except for associated travel, meals, and lodging. The Sheriff budgeted the funds for this training in his FY 2024 Budget. The Board approved out-of-state travel for one staff member of the Sheriff’s Office Detention Center to attend the Kimble’s User Conference held at the Hotel Bardo in Savannah, Georgia with funds provided in the Detention Center’s training budget.

#### TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION TITLE VI PLAN UPDATE

The Title VI Plan details the nondiscrimination program, policies, and practices administered by Transylvania County Transportation, and is updated every three years to incorporate changes and additional responsibilities as they are made. The plan was updated last year to incorporate new language on para-transit language and after the County’s recent compliance review, under the guidance of the NC Department of Transportation-Integrated Mobility Division, the latest revisions include fixed-route service standards, including vehicle load, on-time performance, headways and service availability and service policies, including vehicle assignment and distribution of transit amenities. The NC Department of Transportation’s Office of Civil Rights has reviewed the update for compliance and recommends approval by the Board of Commissioners. The Board approved the Title VI Plan update as submitted.

#### REFUND OF DUPLICATE PAYMENT OF OCCUPANCY TAXES

A taxpayer reported to the Tax Office that they mistakenly paid occupancy taxes for several years (FY 2019 to FY 2023). The taxpayer filed with the Finance and Tax offices the occupancy tax return form that they had

made sales of accommodations during each period required. However, they have since discovered that the online booking site they used was also paying occupancy taxes. Tax Administration staff requested documents from the taxpayer to verify their claims and to determine whether a refund is justified or allowable under the statute. The County does not have a policy on period limitations for such refunds.

A summary of payments received that were paid to the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority was made available to the Board of Commissioners upon request. As this information covers the income and receipts of a taxpayer, NC General Statute § 153A-148.1 restricts the release of this information to any individuals except those engaged in the course of county business, so it is permissible for staff to discuss it with the governing board, but not for it to be discussed in a public meeting. To discuss the nature of this request not covered by the documents provided at the meeting, the Board must enter a closed session. The applicable statutory citation for a closed session to protect confidential or privileged information is NC General Statute § 143-318.11(a)(1).

Staff recommended the Commissioners authorize the refund of occupancy taxes paid by the taxpayer in error from FY 2019 to FY 2023 while the online rental company was also paying the occupancy taxes. The Board required no further discussion and approved the \$6,752.78 refund.

#### SINGLE SOURCE VENDOR FOR THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING ROOF REPLACEMENT

The current roof of the Administration building is in rough shape and needs replacement. There are leaks in various areas. Piper Roofing has a yearly roofing contract with the County and is familiar with the issues. The new roof will replace both the TPO membranes, add standing seam metal to the rest of the building, and include the parapet walls and gutters. The roof is currently scheduled for replacement in the spring and funds were budgeted in FY 2024 for this purpose. Staff recommended that Commissioners approve using Piper Roofing as a single source vendor to replace the roof on the Administration Building. The Board approved the request to approve Piper Roofing as a single source vendor to replace the roof on the Administration Building.

### **PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS**

#### CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the Transylvania County Finance Department for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. Over 180 local governments across North Carolina applied for and received this award. To receive the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence a government must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized annual comprehensive financial report. The report must satisfy both accepted accounting principles, and applicable legal requirements, and comply with all statements of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. The Board recognized and congratulated the staff of the Finance Department for being awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

#### COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

Department of Social Services Director Amanda Vanderoef presented the Community Child Protection Team's (CCPT) Annual Report. This is a summary of her presentation:

The purpose of the Community Child Protection Team is to assess selected cases in which children are being served by Child Protective Services (CPS), to develop a community-wide approach to child abuse and neglect, understand causes of childhood deaths, identify gaps or deficiencies in service delivery in public agency systems designed to prevent abuse, neglect, and death, and make and implement recommendations for laws, rules, and policies that will support the safe and healthy development of children and prevent future child abuse, neglect, and death.

CCPT membership is designated by statute, consisting of representatives of public and private community agencies that provide services to children and their families, including the local DSS, Health Department, law enforcement, guardian ad litem, and school system. All mandated membership positions were filled during 2023; however, committee member attendance was poor during 2023 with several individuals attending less than two of the four meetings without satisfactory reasons. Staff plans to reach out to the appointing authorities and request replacements for the upcoming year.

The purpose of this report is to give a summary of the activities and accomplishments of the Transylvania County CCPT during the calendar year 2023, including the number of fatality reviews conducted, the number of DSS reviews conducted, and the recommendations for system improvements and needed resources to prevent child abuse, neglect, and death.

Transylvania County CCPT activities and accomplishments:

- The team met four times utilizing a virtual meeting format.
- The team completed the annual CCPT survey by the date requested.
- The team advocated for gaps in services and secured providers for services.
- The team continued to utilize a strengths-based review process using the Protective Factors framework to identify strengths as well as challenges of families.

In 2023, the CCPT reviewed 0 cases in which a child died as a result of suspected or confirmed abuse or neglect and a report of abuse or neglect had been made about the child or their family to DSS within the prior 12 months, and the child or their family was a recipient of CPS within the prior 12 months.

In 2023, the Transylvania County CCPT reviewed seven cases of maltreatment using the Protective Factors framework. Protective factors are characteristics or strengths of individuals, families, communities, or societies that act to mitigate risks and promote positive well-being and healthy development. Based on the case review process, a commonly identified need among cases was the availability of mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and peer support services in the community. In addition, the reviews noted families encounter barriers such as a lack of childcare providers in the community which impacts their ability to engage and follow through with available services.

The Transylvania County CCPT identified the following systemic problems and recommendations for future prevention efforts:

Identified needs/service gap	Recommendation
Lack of service providers to reduce trauma and build resiliency among the diverse caretaking population.	Transylvania County service providers promote inclusive service delivery to improve behavioral health outcomes by eliminating disparities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of providers for mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence services.</li> <li>• Advocate for home health agencies to provide essential services for the special needs pediatric population in Transylvania County.</li> <li>• Offer infant and special needs childcare options.</li> <li>• Promote the need for peer support services aimed at increasing family engagement in service recommendations.</li> </ul>

This concluded the formal presentation. Chairman Chappell called for questions and comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the number of children in foster care and the percentage housed in the County. Ms. Vanderoef responded that there are 43 children in foster care, 60% of whom are housed in Transylvania County. She stated there is a definite need for more foster care parents.

Commissioner Casciato inquired about staff morale within the department. Ms. Vanderoef said that the staff in DSS are amazing, and that morale is currently good, but it ebbs and flows depending on what is going on in the department or community.

Commissioner McCall asked if the providers were receptive to increasing services, especially since so many providers have left Transylvania County. Ms. Vanderoef said the providers are receptive, but they are struggling with recruiting and retaining employees for the positions they already have.

Chairman Chappell thanked Ms. Vanderoef and her staff for the challenging work they do. He also thanked her for contacting the various agencies to ensure there was appropriate representation on the CCPT.

Commissioner McCall asked if the CCPT had an attendance requirement. Ms. Vanderoef stated that attendance is a recommendation, but different perspectives need to be represented therefore better participation is needed.

**Commissioner Chapman moved to accept the Community Child Protection Team Annual Report, seconded by Commissioner Casciato, and unanimously approved.**

#### SEMI-ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS - FY 2025 BUDGET KICKOFF

Department Heads reported on their departmental accomplishments over the first six months of the year. They reported on trends that may be reflected in the upcoming budget years. The departmental presentations, along with any supplemental information they shared, were provided to the Board in a separate notebook.

The Manager was excited to kick off the FY 25 budget season by allowing departments to showcase the work the County does to serve its citizens. She shared a tentative budget calendar that staff hopes to finalize soon. Over the next couple of months, staff will be reviewing several areas in which the County provides funding – departments, nonprofits, education, etc. – and that impact the budget.

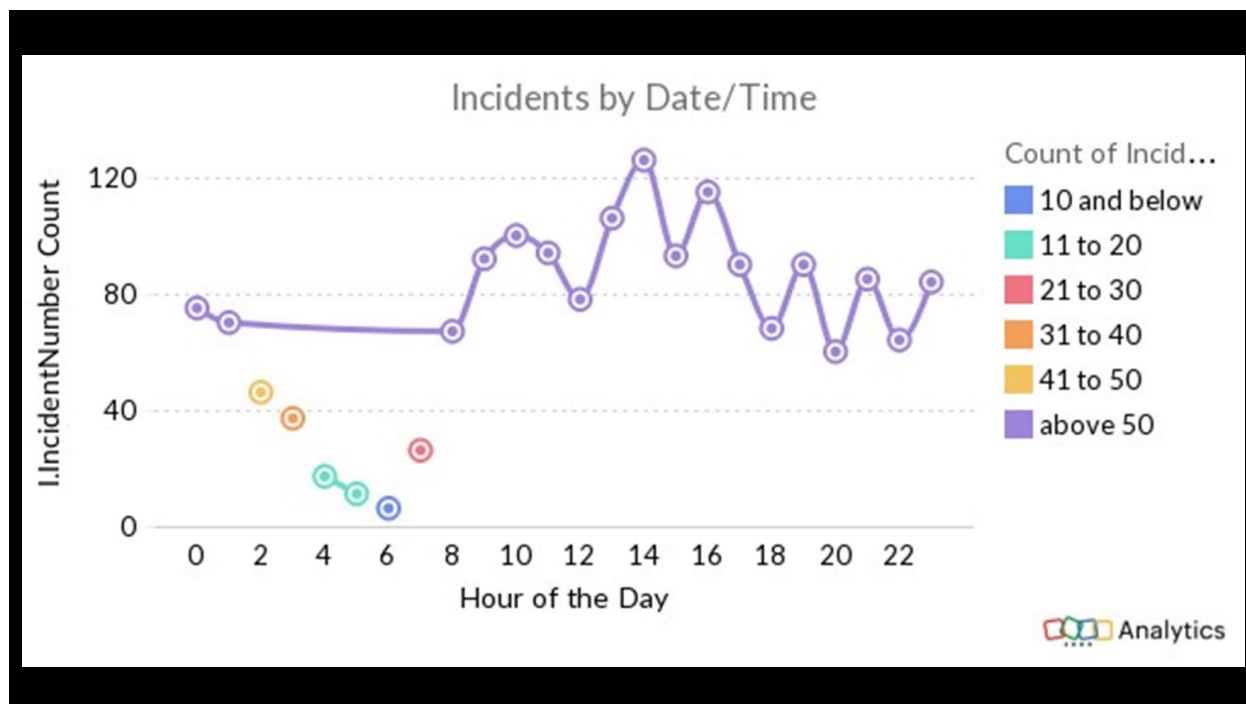
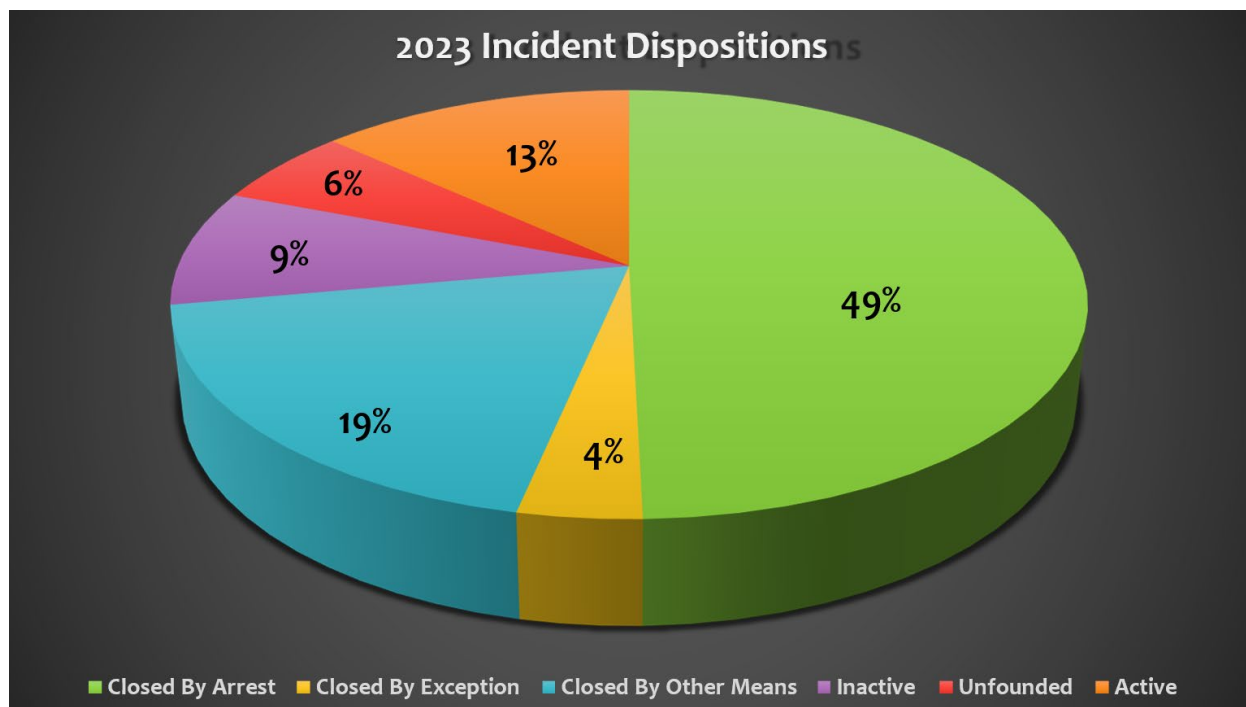
Each department was instructed to provide a five-minute presentation, with a few exceptions. The reports are intended to serve as a snapshot as the Board prepares soon to discuss the budget requests.

The Manager cut off the presentations when the speakers reached their time limit, but for informational purposes, the Clerk to the Board included each department's entire presentation. The Manager asked the Commissioners to submit any questions they had after the meeting to keep the presentations moving forward.

#### **Sheriff's Office – by Sheriff Chuck Owenby**

##### Crime Statistics

- Incidents declined 2.6%
- Arrests declined 5%
- Citations increased by 39%



#### Recruitment

- The pay increase has helped with recruitment
- Agencies across WNC are competing for a limited number of new hires
- Competing agencies are now paying recruits while they attend BLET
- Our biggest staffing issues continue to be in the jail and court security
- Counties are starting to pay detention officers more than deputies and/or offering them Special Separation Allowance upon retirement

### Training

- Specialized training is vital in law enforcement
- Courses such as the National Forensics Academy, National School Safety Conference, Jail Management, Advanced Tactical Operations, Officer Safety and Survival require out-of-state travel while providing the most advanced training for our staff
- To stay abreast of the ever-evolving criminal element, we must provide quality training to retain the best officers

### Equipment

- Equipment ranges from the everyday essentials to specialized tools, each improving law enforcement outcomes in its concrete way
- Deputies must be outfitted to provide first aid, collect evidence, interview persons of interest, secure an area, subdue an assailant, and more
- Law enforcement equipment forms the foundation of the deputy's tool kit and helps us carry out justice from patrol to prosecution
- Some examples of the necessary equipment are:
  - Body-worn cameras
  - Bulletproof vests
  - Conducted energy weapons
  - Integrated evidence management systems
  - Automated license plate recognition cameras
- Staff is developing a replacement plan for all equipment

### Narcotics Investigations

- Fentanyl and other dangerous drugs in our communities continue to present a problem
- The Sheriff's Narcotics Task Force is proactive in its enforcement efforts, resulting in:
  - The seizure of one-third of a pound of methamphetamine and one-eighth of a pound of cocaine
  - Arrest of a person responsible for nine overdoses in Transylvania County
  - 18 individuals arrested and facing prosecution on 53 felony charges in 2023
  - 38 felony drug charges in 2023
  - 47 misdemeanor charges in 2023
  - 203.7 pounds of drugs taken in take-back program
  - 255.7 grams of meth seized
  - 1.2 grams of psilocybin mushrooms seized
  - 33,515 grams of marijuana seized
  - 67.2 grams of cocaine seized
  - 2.5 grams of heroin seized
  - 13.3 grams of fentanyl seized
- Three officers are responsible for all the drug investigations
- We are in dire need to add a fourth narcotics investigator to address the scourge of drugs in our County

### **Department of Social Services – by Director Amanda Vanderoef**

#### Accomplishments

- Transylvania County DSS is meeting the requirement of the Memorandum of Understanding with NCDHHS in Child Welfare and Adult Services.
- As of January 2024, permanency has been achieved for 13 children in DSS custody since July
- Medicaid continues to pass their monthly report card



- Our contract agency providing Child Support Services in Transylvania County, Veritas HHS, has consistently been ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> in the state
- Currently have 16 licensed foster homes and two families in training to become licensed; an increase from nine licensed foster homes this time last year
- Four front-line staff and four supervisors completed the Rise Up mentorship program in 2023 and seven staff members are enrolled in the 2024 session
- Held an onsite job fair to recruit for Economic Services; staff created a real-life job preview video that was shown to candidates resulting in three people accepting job offers
- North Carolina met The Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) required benchmarks for visits during permanency planning cases that 95% of children have a monthly visit with their social worker; and that in 75% of those cases, the visit takes place in the home where the child is staying. The State of North Carolina's data for FFY 2023 (October 2022- September 2023), shows that a monthly visit was completed with each child 96% of the time, and that visit took place in the home where the child resided 93% of the time. Transylvania County DSS foster care unit received recognition from the Regional Child Welfare Consultant for exceeding expectations and continuing to score 100% on their monthly face care visits with 97% in placements.
- Facilitated community sponsorships for 67 children and disabled adults during Christmas

### Goals

- Enhance recruitment, with timelines and goals, of foster care providers and respite foster care providers for both foster homes and kinship providers
- Administer ongoing climate and culture survey to staff to gauge employee morale
- Continue to invest in the professional growth of the leadership team and staff, guided by the agency's mission, values, and public stewardship
- Improve communication through engagement of stakeholders, the workforce, and feedback loops related to achieving outcomes
- Recruit and retain qualified workforce

### Trends

- Increase in Adult Protective Services reports which request DSS to intervene and address mental health issues with the elderly population by filing for guardianship to have these individuals placed in facilities for care and treatment
- Adult Services continues to see a lack of affordable or appropriate housing for disabled adults and unsanitary and hoarding issues remain an ongoing concern
- Due to Epass changes, such as being able to apply online and using text messaging for communication, Food and Nutrition applications increased in 2023 averaging 150 new applications per month since July
- 11 children have been ordered into the department's custody since July 2023 with primary concerns of parental substance use and untreated mental illness
- An average of 40% of children in kinship placements and our kinship culture will be highlighted in an upcoming statewide training being developed by the UNC School of Social Work
- From January 2023 to December 2023, the Medicaid units received 1,218 applications
  - 42% or 510 of these applications were received in November and December, during Federally Facilitated Marketplace (FFM) open enrollment
  - December saw the highest number of applications at 367 likely due to Medicaid Expansion
- The Work First Unit saw a sharp increase in spending in the EA/200% programs. The money became available on July 1, 2023, and was exhausted by December 6, 2023. The primary need in the county was assistance with rent to prevent homelessness.
- Work First continues to provide bags to clients with necessities that cannot be purchased with EBT funds

## **DSS – New Adventure Learning Center – by Director Amanda Vanderoef**

### Accomplishments

- Hired a teacher to replace a newly retired teacher
- Staff continue to advance their education levels by obtaining AA degrees in ECE
- Assessment data helped students reach developmental benchmarks
- External cameras were installed around the building
- Substitute pool increased by three
- A new payment system installed and successfully being utilized

### Goals

- Continue to improve security by adding keyless entry
- Increase substitute and volunteer pool
- Enhance and increase parent/family and community involvement
- Prepare for New Environmental Rating Assessment System

### Trends

- Difficulty recruiting qualified staff; very limited applicant pools
- Strong relationships with community partners, parents, and caregivers
- The Center is open more often than other daycare centers
- Partnership with Transylvania County Schools to allow high school students taking EDU 119 through Blue Ridge Community College to acquire ECE classroom hours for the spring semester
- Still maintaining a waitlist of over 150 children

## **Emergency Management – by Director Kevin Shook**

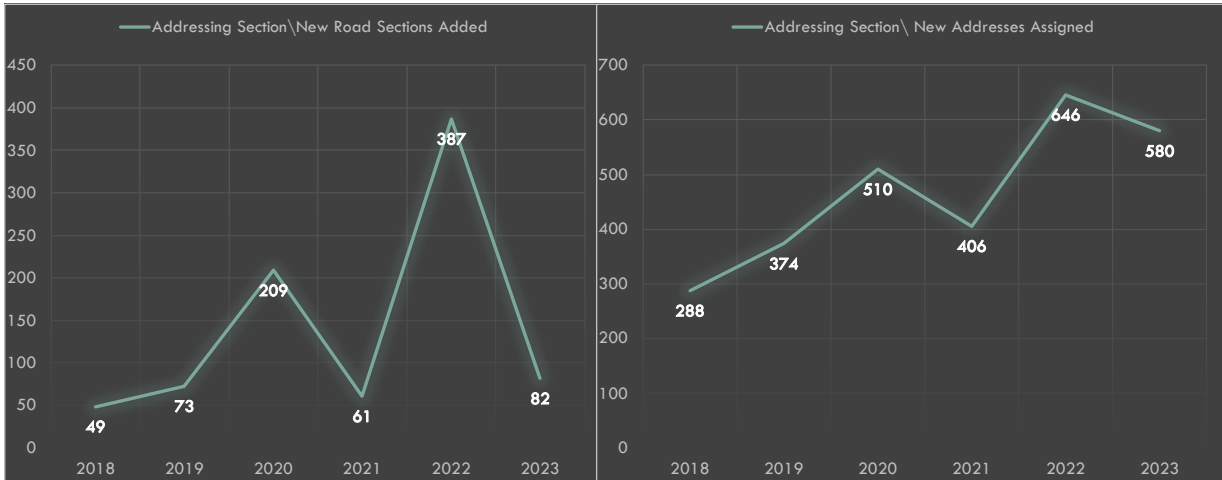
### Accomplishments

- Staff participated in numerous training both virtually and in person to meet the EMPG requirements
- Continued coordination with Emergency Services Stakeholders (i.e., Red Cross, volunteer departments, Public Health, and Social Services)
- Continue working with all Emergency Service agencies to assist during incidents
- Completed the EMPG-S grant requirements and awaiting award
- Assisted a citizen with the application process for the elevation of their home after Tropical Storm Fred

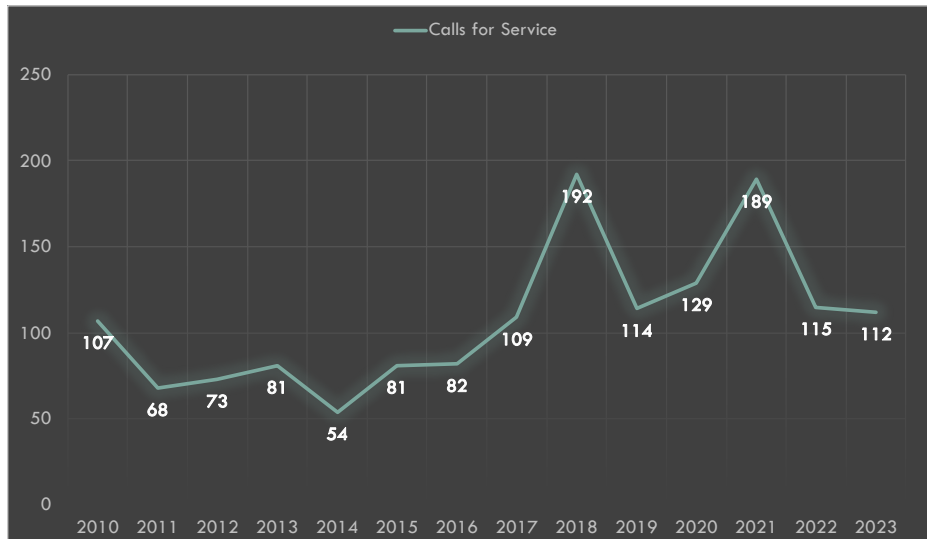
### Trends

- Continued coordination of response disciplines
- Continued integration of nontraditional agencies into emergency services response
- Continued need for technical response needs (high angle rescue, water rescue, wilderness rescue, hazmat)
- Continue requests from local and regional agencies for support from staff for specialized services
- GIS capabilities and specialty software such as SarTopo integration into responses are increasing
- Continue receiving requests for the updating of commercial GPS data for private citizen use through commercially available sources

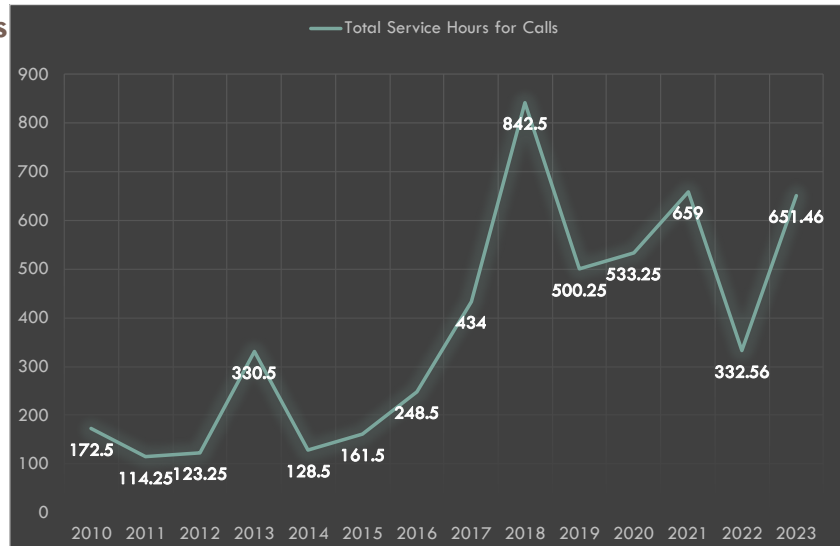
Trends

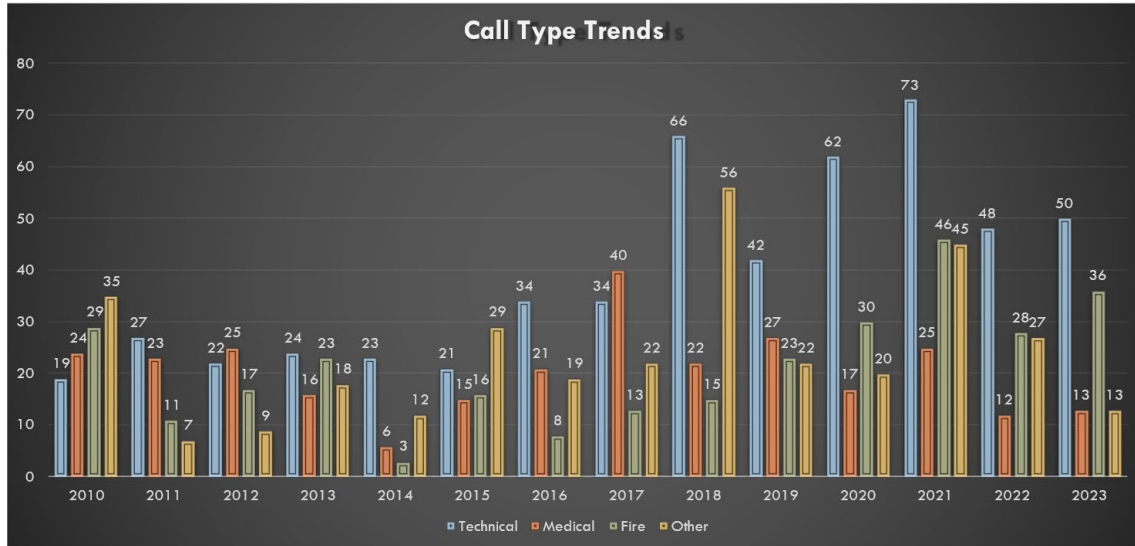


Trends



Trends





### Goals

- Continued coordination with local agencies (i.e., volunteer fire/rescue, Red Cross, nontraditional emergency services agencies)
- Continue strategic operational planning of emergency services
- Update of current Emergency Operations Plan to meet current requirements
- Update County ordinances to reflect State and federal updates
- Continue with the implementation of the Emergency Response Teams to assist with technical calls
- Continue coordination of a centralized GIS program for County government to improve efficiencies of operations both internally and externally thus benefiting the public and staff
- Continue the process of updating commercial GPS data for private citizen use through commercially available sources
- Make an application for the CBCG 2024 grant to start the enhancement of disaster sheltering equipment

### **Communications – by Emergency Services Director Kevin Shook**

#### Accomplishments

- Continued training, certification, and recertification for all telecommunicators
- Represented NC at the Cyber Resilient 911 Symposium for FEMA Regions 4 and 6
- Implemented a new policy and personnel training tracker system
- Attended multiple state board meetings and forums, both virtually and in person
- Multiple staff attended additional training events and received advanced certifications (Incident Tactical Dispatch, Information Technology Services Unit Leader, Homeland Security Cyber Security, Communications Unit Leader)
- Implemented a new county GIS website and continued to add additional features
- Worked with NC 911 Board to secure additional funding for radio dispatch console replacements
- Provided tactical telecommunicators on the scene for major events (SAR, LEO Operations)



### Trends

- Call processing time continues to hold under our goal of 60 seconds, 90% of the time
- Calls for service continue to increase. Decrease in logged phone calls due to a new State system mid-year
- Average time from CFS creation to close 58:52

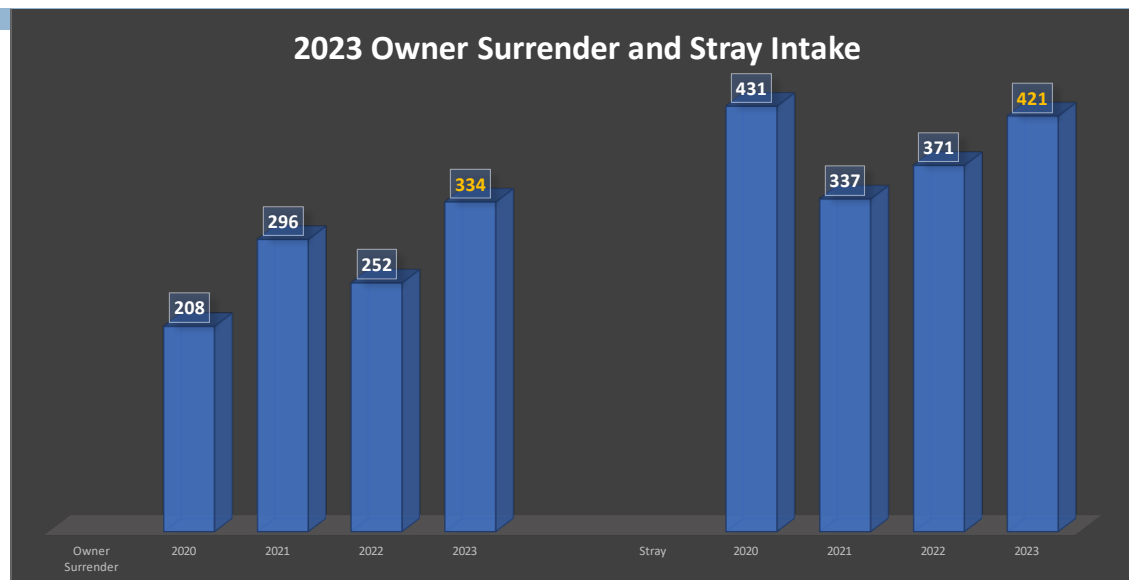
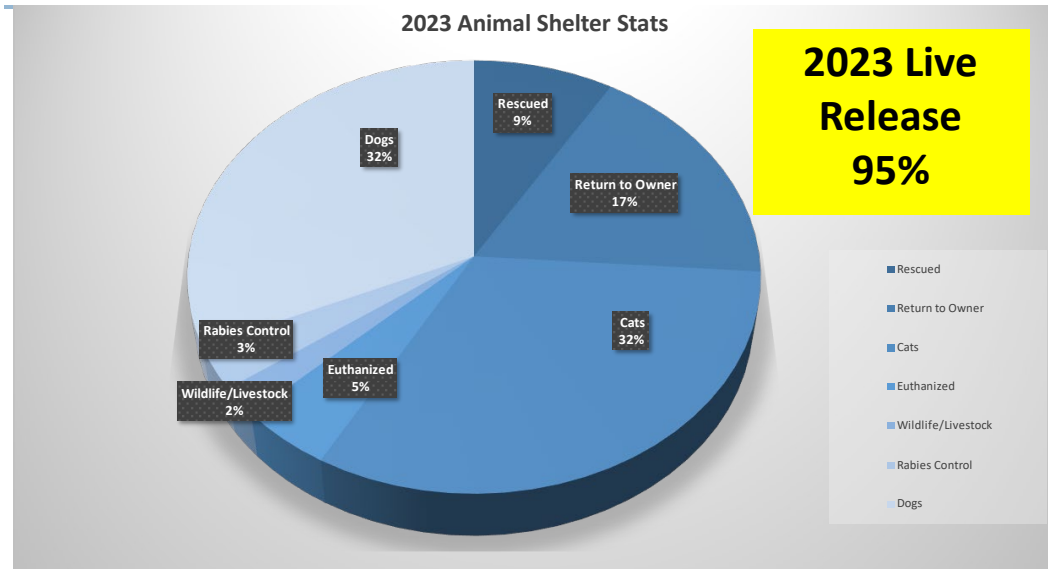
### Goals

- Continue training, certification, and re-certification for all telecommunicators
- Continue to expand and improve the VHF simulcast radio system
- Attend required training, board meetings, and forums
- Upgrade tower and building sites to meet current and future demands of communications
- Continue the enhancements of the new county-wide GIS platform to increase public transparency, staff efficiency, and responder capability
- Continue working with the state 911 Board and NC DIT to implement cybersecurity initiatives
- Continue partnerships with state and local agencies to support their field operations

### **Animal Services – by Director Kevin Shook**

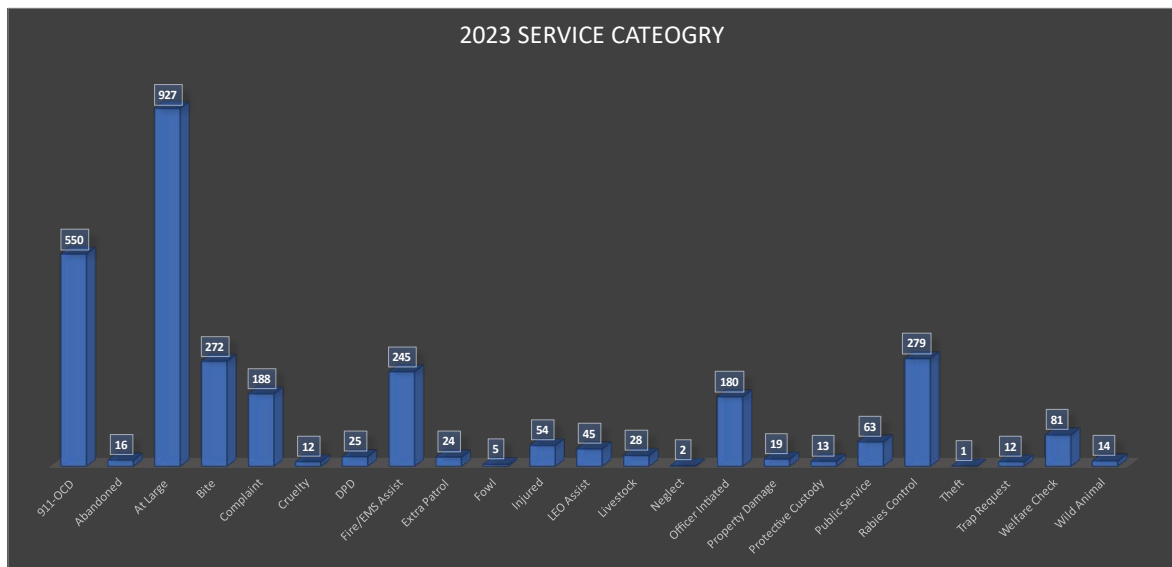
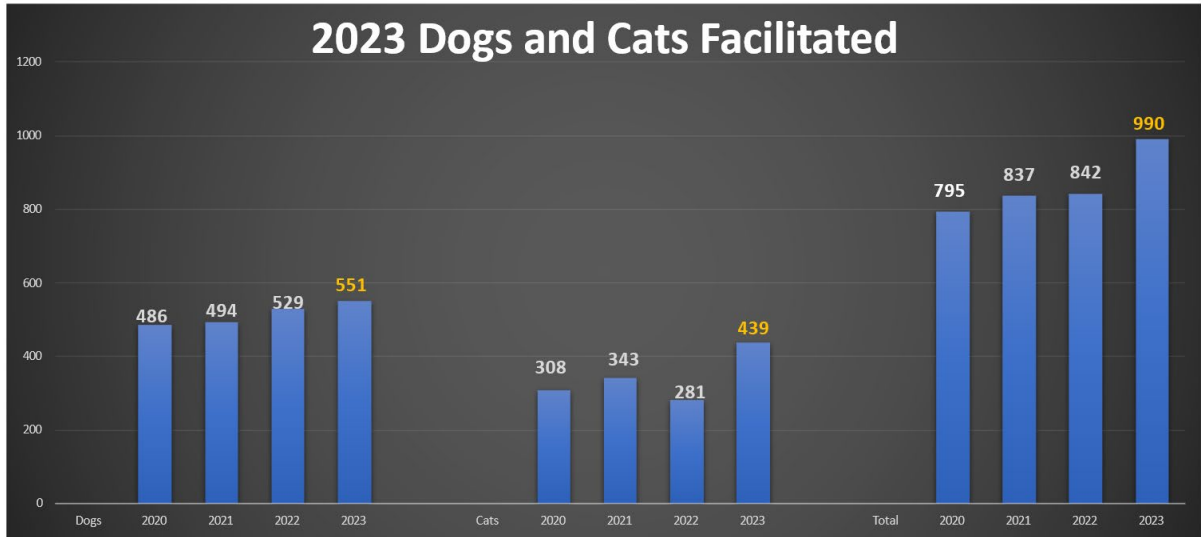
#### Accomplishments

- Increased Animal Control Officer training due to the lifting of COVID restrictions
- Maintained shelter Live Release Rate of over 90% (achieved 95% for 2023)
- Continued working with civic groups to facilitate the delivery of food and supplies for animals to citizens in need
- Closed the Animal Shelter for two weeks to perform maintenance issues at the facility; improved the ability to sanitize housing and work areas thus lowering the possibility spreading of germs between animals

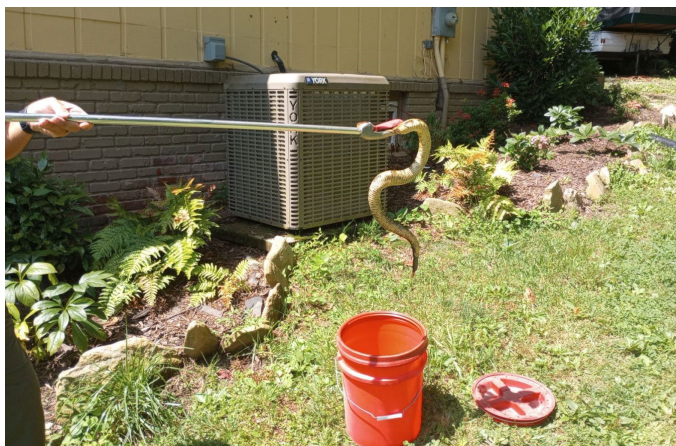


Trends

Key Operational Metrics	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Previous year +/-
Service Requests	1594	1414	1527	1110	1022	1041	1180	13.4
Total Animals facilitated (Dogs and Cats only)	1360	1320	1274	795	837	842	990	17.6
Live Release Rate	85%	93%	91	92%	92%	95%	95%	0.0
Animal Bites and exposures	61	89	118	84	59	102	272	166.7







Other potential critters that Animal Services gets to deal with!

### Goals

- Continue high live animal release rate (90% +)
- Provide quarterly reports for the public on operations
- Continue Animal Control Officer training to national standards and include Animal Cruelty Investigation training in the program
- Provide training to national standards for Shelter staff
- Continue to increase public awareness, focus on spay/neuter education and leash/containment laws
- Maintain a high level of effective, efficient service and response
- Replace high mileage Animal Control response vehicle and make spare unit/retire current spare unit which has limited transport capability
- Upgrade the mass animal transport vehicle for efficiency and reliability
- Work to build the strengths of the various rescue groups
- Continue work on the companion animal shelter options for emergency activations through application to the 2024 CBCG grant

### **NC Cooperative Extension – by Director Addison Bradley**

#### Accomplishments

- Contacts
  - Over 215,000 contacts
  - Total volunteer hours: 4,084
- Grants, community events, and collaborations:
  - Family and Consumer Science: Parents of Independent Eaters with The Family Place
  - Riverfest: approximately 850 attendees.
  - Conserving Carolina, Americorps Volunteer: natural resource education
  - Transylvania County Farmers Market: educational events and assistance to producers
  - Ag Options Grants: \$16,000 in grants to directly benefit producers
  - Farm Service Agency Livestock Forage Program: \$42,000 in drought relief payments
  - SHIIP: 392 individuals served at \$137,000 in cost savings to Medicare beneficiaries
  - 4-H: 127 children enrolled, 15 volunteers
  - Transylvania Natural Resources Council: natural resources education
  - Ag. Advisory Council: farmland preservation
  - Value-added marketing for cattle farmers: increased revenue by \$200/head, for a total of \$40,000 profit for producers



- Certification courses held: Y.Q.C.A. and B.Q.A, pesticide licensing
- 1st Annual Transylvania County Agriculture Week

### Trends

- Diversity of questions
- Youth development and encouragement
- New and beginning farmers
- Local food and community gardens
- Farmland preservation
- Generations away from agriculture
- Health and nutrition

### Goals

- Continue to provide a high level of service to all clients.
- Assist our farmers with:
  - Compliance to regulations
  - Retaining, locating farmland
  - Adapting to change
  - Increasing profits
- Provide support to county advisory boards
- Support SHIP program
- Encourage 4-H youth development
- Support healthy lifestyles through Family and Consumer Sciences
- Encourage and continue various collaborations to benefit the residents of the County

### Library – by Director Rishara Finsel

FY22/23	Population	Library Visits Per Capita	Program Attendance Per 1000 Capita	Checkouts Per Capita	Children's Checkouts Per Capita	E-Checkouts Per Capita
<b>Transylvania</b>	<b>32,917</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>2.25</b>
<b>Appalachian Regional</b> <i>Ashe, Watauga &amp; Wilkes</i>	147,241	1.9	282	3.5	1.7	0.4
<b>Bladen</b>	29,008	0.5	391	1.3	0.8	0.2
<b>Buncombe</b>	273,403	2.6	110	6.5	2.4	2.17
<b>East Albemarle</b> <i>Camden, Currituck, Dare &amp; Pasquotank</i>	120,430	1.7	237	3.0	1.3	0.3
<b>Haywood</b>	63,297	2.6	294	5.2	1.3	1.6
<b>Henderson</b>	118,835	3.0	221	8.3	3.3	2.0
<b>Scotland</b>	33,603	1.0	64	1.0	0.8	0.2
<b>Fontana Regional</b> <i>Jackson, Macon &amp; Swain</i>	94,716	3.2	408	4.1	1.6	1.1
<b>Sandhill Regional</b> <i>Anson, Hoke, Montgomery, Moore &amp; Richmond</i>	215,456	0.8	176	1.8	0.8	0.3
<b>Statewide Average</b>		<b>1.8</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Transylvania Rank</b> (of the 71 County and Regional library systems in NC)		<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

*Based on preliminary data reporting from the State Library of NC*

### Accomplishments

- Per capita, the Library is #1 of county and regional libraries in North Carolina for checkouts of physical materials: books, video, and audio
  - 79% physical checkouts
  - 21% digital checkouts
  - 345,622 total patron checkouts

## Q1 & 2: July - December

	2022	2023	% change
<b>Library Visits</b>	73,577	78,667	<b>7%</b>
<b>New Patrons</b>	1,228	923	-25%
<b>Program Attendance</b>	8,305	10,639	<b>28%</b>
<b>Public Computer Use</b>	5,340	5,292	-1%
<b>Wireless Internet Sessions</b>	9,794	9,376	-4%
<b>Total Checkouts</b>	172,885	186,942	<b>8%</b>



- Notable programs and services
  - Children's area transformation
  - ZOOM passes to regional attractions
  - Three Story Walks installed
  - Seed library launch
  - Tiny Art Show
  - Hosted McDowell Speakers Kelly Corrigan and Annette Gordon-Reed
  - Popular monthly craft programs
  - Launched monthly chess meet-up
  - Chautauqua performance series
  - US Foreign Policy discussion group
  - Record-breaking amphitheater concert attendance
  - Expanded outdoor movement classes
  - Staff completion of Mental Health First Aid training
  - Library Strategic Plan updated

### Goals

- Enhance hands-on and interactive services for all ages to support a wide variety of learning styles
- Ensure that the library's physical spaces meet the changing needs of the public
- Collaborate with County and community partners to develop and enrich educational, social, and recreational services for all ages
- Continue to explore and pursue policies and practices that eliminate barriers to library services
- Evaluate and update existing services to ensure that resources are focused on accomplishing the library's mission of learning, gathering, and growing together

### **Transylvania Public Health – by Director Elaine Russell**

#### Accomplishments

- Completed NC Public Health Accreditation process and site visit on February 1, 2024
- CARE Coalition assisting with the allocation process for national Opioid Settlement funds
  - Coordinated strategic planning process and development of recommendations including local needs, best practices, impacts, and cost-benefit analysis

- Hosted “Community Information Session” in November 2023 to share recommendations with public and local decision-makers; presented recommendations to Board of Commissioners in December 2023
- Revived and regenerated clinical services sidelined by COVID duties
- WIC met the qualifications to apply for the annual USDA Gold Excellence in Breastfeeding Award based on breastfeeding rates supported by our Peer Counselor Program
- Lori Clark was selected as one of five Outstanding Dental Hygienist winners by America’s Tooth Fairy for her work with the Healthy Smiles Dental Project, providing education and screening to children
- Continued work with the Sheriff’s Office to provide counseling and re-entry support at the Detention Center through a \$600,000 Department of Justice COSSAP grant: served 181 detainees in the first year of operations
  - Presented collaborative work and model at the national COSSUP Conference
  - Provided technical assistance to other NC counties around starting similar programs
  - Highlighted in the 2023 Re-Entry Convening report by Appalachia Funders Network
- Continued serving as lead organization for TC STRONG youth mental health collaborative with Transylvania County Schools and The Family Place (fiduciary)
  - Fully onboarded and trained two full-time staff
  - Awarded a three-year \$300,000 grant from Dogwood Health Trust to support mental health and wellness for staff and students attending out-of-school programs
  - Selected as one of 15 teams statewide to participate in a project to improve mental health and reduce suicide from UNC Chapel Hill’s “Carolina Across 100” initiative and the UNC Suicide Prevention Institute; asked to present our strategic planning process at the February convening
- Supporting Trend 2.0 collaboration to identify and address the mental health needs of adults
- Led Region 1 Workforce Development \$1 million Agreement Addendum
  - 13 staff received public health legal training from Teague-Campbell
  - Public health communications campaign developed and disseminated through WNC Health Network
  - Public Health Workforce Strategic Plan developed
  - Hosted two Environmental Health Interns from WCU
- CARE Coalition staff providing vaping prevention education to county middle schools

### Trends

- Navigating Medicaid Managed Care claims process including paid, denied, and “clawbacks” on paid claims
- Environmental Health seeing increased numbers of repair requests due to the overall number of systems, changes in use, and failures of older systems
- WIC caseload percentage has dropped to pre-COVID levels with the return to in-person services
- Food/Lodging/Institutions inspection compliance rate remained above 90% for all of 2023 with full staffing; statewide inspection scores remain lower than expected due in large part to staff shortages, turnover, and retention issues
- Onsite wastewater (septic) and well permits issued by the department remain busy and consistent
  - The average wait time is eight weeks
  - The remaining sites becoming harder to evaluate and permit
  - Sites not prepared/marked with staff arrival, repeat visits needed
- With in-person visits resuming, the WIC caseload percent has returned to pre-COVID levels
  - All participants continue to receive additional funding to spend on fruits and vegetables through May

- WIC's Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program is supporting rates of breastfeeding that are much higher than State rates

### Goals

- Continue to focus on efficiencies and improvements for current programs and projects
- Effectively coordinate the 2024 Community Health Assessment process in collaboration with community members, including data collection, analysis, and identification of top health priorities
- Plan and invest in a leadership succession plan
- Continue support for the Opioid Settlement funding process, including managing compliance with state reporting requirements

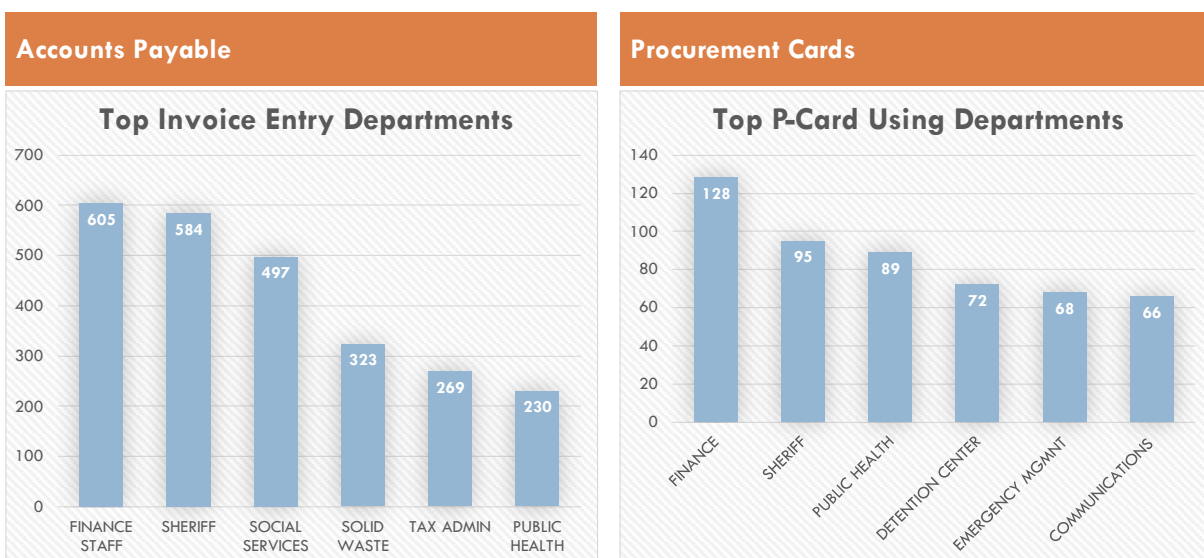
### **Finance – by Director Meagan O'Neill**

#### Accomplishments

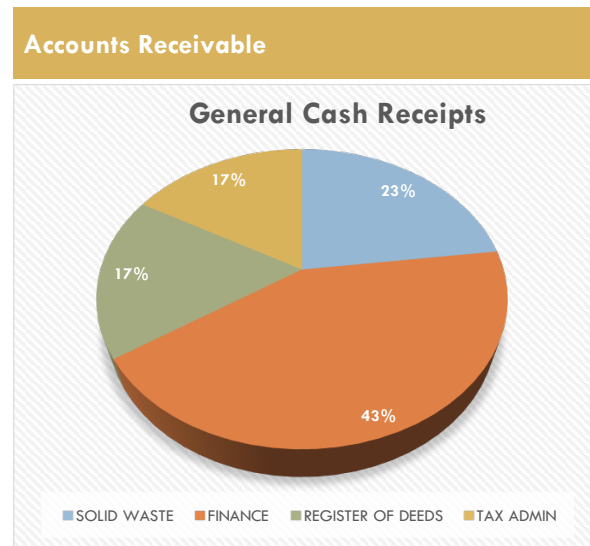
- Currently reviewing all finance processes, Munis workflow, and governing policies to ensure efficiency, quality customer service, and compliance with State and federal rules
- Received GFOA Award for FY 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report
- The Interim Director and staff continued to keep processes running during time of transition

#### Trends

- Difficulty delivering accurate information to the auditors for review
  - Discovery of many items that need to be reclassified or adjusted
  - Making sense of previous accounting entries has proven difficult at times
  - Munis Capital Asset program does not have accurate information and is causing a manual calculation of depreciation for all County assets
- Finance operations and available time
  - Role adjustments, completing the FY 2023 audit, putting procedures in place to help the FY 2024 audit be more efficient, daily tasks



Purchase Orders			
	# of Pos	\$ Encumbered	Average \$ per PO
SOLID WASTE	46	1,420,797	30,887
COMMUNICATIONS	17	1,281,887	75,405
EMS	27	777,009	28,778
MAINTENANCE	55	378,212	6,877
SHERIFF	20	332,857	16,643
LIBRARY	31	157,709	5,087
FINANCE	7	141,105	20,158
IT	10	121,337	12,134
PUBLIC HEALTH	67	58,060	867
HOUSEKEEPING	8	53,225	6,653
PARKS & GROUNDS MAINT	13	48,757	3,751
ANIMAL SERVICES	10	37,670	3,767
REGISTER OF DEEDS	1	31,164	31,164
PARKS & REC	1	4,900	4,900
SOCIAL SERVICES	4	4,268	1,067



EMS Revenue			
	2022	2023	Change
Net Charges	\$1,603,090	\$1,664,154	\$61,064
Write Offs	\$150,266	\$134,756	(\$15,510)
Payments	\$966,526	\$1,108,732	\$142,206
Net % Collected	60.0%	66.5%	6.5%

Primary Payor Mix		
Payor	2022 % of Trips	2023 % of Trips
Medicare/Medicare Advantage	65%	67%
Medicaid/Medicaid MCO	13%	12%
Insurance	10%	11%
Patient	10%	8%
Other Govt. Payers	2%	2%

- Committee support
  - Juvenile Crime Prevention Council
    - Finance staff currently completes minutes of meetings
    - The Finance Director reviews quarterly financials
  - Tourism Development Authority
    - Administration staff has been completing minutes of meetings; will transition back to TDA staff in February
    - Finance Director completes and reports on monthly financial statements at regular board meeting
  - Council on Aging
    - Administration staff has handled the minutes and meeting details; this is transitioning to DSS staff and the Finance Director
    - DSS and Finance are setting up a plan to work together on this committee and manage the HCCBG funds

Goals

- Construction projects at all stages
- New GASB standards
- Cost Allocation Plan; current work on FY 2022
- Completing the FY 2023 audit while planning for the FY 2024 audit

## Information Technology – by Director Nathanael Carver

### Trends

- Support tickets remained even with last year
- Handled 1,145 support tickets with a three-hour average response time and only a 4% re-open rate
- Currently processing 105,000 inbound emails per month, with 8,500 of these incoming messages being either spam or phishing attempts
- Connected 5,766 unique devices to the County’s public Wi-Fi networks
  - An increase of 2.5% over the same period last year
  - An average of 208 users daily with each using about 4.35GB of bandwidth
  - A bandwidth usage increase of 275% over last year
- 65% of the County’s bandwidth is being used by our community.
- Decrease in email account password brute force attacks since implementing Darktrace
- Virus detection remains low, which is a testament to County users being aware and diligent in their computer usage
- Experiencing fewer hardware failures due to the replacement of older computers

### Accomplishments

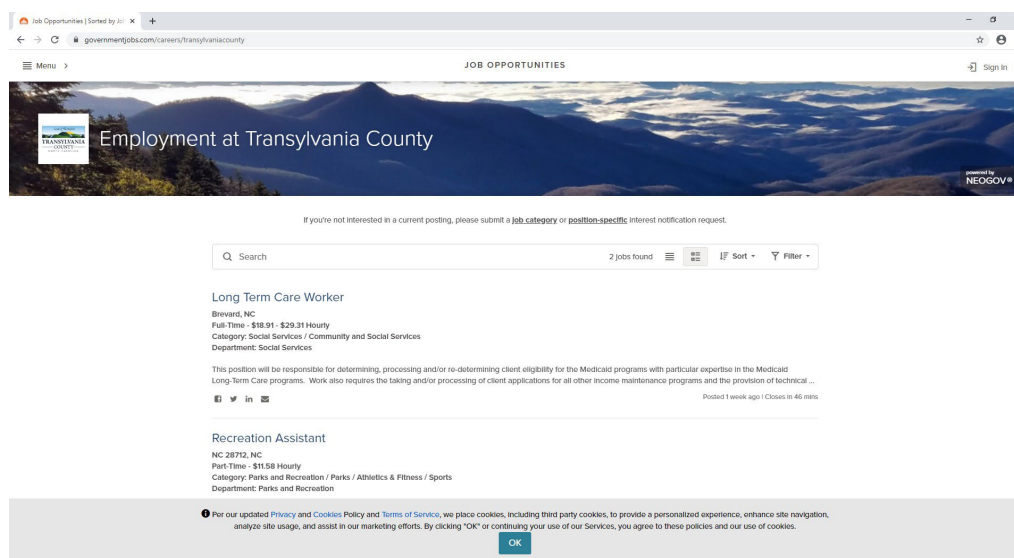
- Saved the County \$50,000 in software licensing by IT staff achieving and maintaining certain certifications
- Dark Trace Cyber-Security Monitoring at the downtown campus, Public Safety Facility, and the Library has captured 100% of the email password brute force attacks and identified 100% of the network access attempts
- Anti-virus has detected and blocked 100% of the viruses that have made it through to our user's workstations
- Continuing to work with other County departments to utilize federal funds to help start a much-needed network upgrade
- NC National Guard Cyber-Security team performed a cyber-security survey on the County’s IT infrastructure and staff are working to resolve vulnerabilities that were discovered
- Received full grant funding for hardware to provide free outdoor public Wi-Fi around public buildings and parks
- Received full grant funding to create a video conferencing room at the Library which will be available for the public to reserve
- Received full grant funding to create ADA-friendly workstations for the public at the Library
- CRAVE Video system implemented in the courthouse with full grant funding

### Goals

- Continuing to upgrade and improve on wired and wireless network infrastructure
- Increase public Wi-Fi coverage by adding new outdoor access points across the County campuses
- Create a solid continuity of function of the County’s IT infrastructure
- Work with NCDIT and broadband providers to seek additional federal funding for broadband infrastructure
- Continue with Windows 11 upgrade to beat Windows 10 end of life in 2025
- Work toward implementing Multi-Factor Authentication on County user accounts
- Implement action plan from NC National Guard Cyber-Security Survey

## Human Resources – by Director Sheila Cozart

### Accomplishments

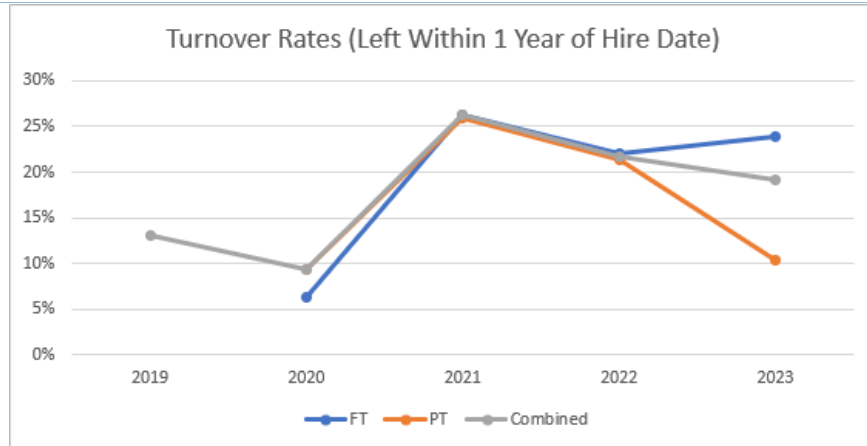


- Compensation Study update
  - The July 2023 update aided in the successful recruitment of fully qualified, experienced applicants in difficult-to-fill positions in EMS, Solid Waste, and Law Enforcement; still difficult for some entry-level, full-time positions such as Education Development Aide (Teacher’s Assistant), Day Care Teacher, and Housekeeper; difficult to recruit part-time for EMS, Law Enforcement, Detention Center, Substitute Teachers
- The study put Transylvania County in a more competitive position among our competitors
- Thanks to the Board of Commissioners for their support in moving us forward with competitive salaries and keeping employees consistent by providing COLA effective February 12, 2024
- Coordination and promotion of employee activities
  - Employee Appreciation Day
  - Employee discount program
  - 401K, 457, benefit open enrollment –virtual and face-to-face opportunities
  - Mammo-on-the-Go mobile mammography onsite
  - Healthy eating – What’s Cooking Transylvania; Choose your Foods; County Your Carbs
  - Employee holiday activities
    - Christmas market with food trucks, craft vendors, door prizes
    - Holiday bingo and trivia both virtual and in-person
    - Holiday luncheon at Brevard College; great participation and much fun
- Recruitment and Onboarding
  - Posted 54 requisitions for 60 positions in 2023 (down from 64 in 2022)
  - Onboarded 71 full-time and 36 part-time employees including paperwork, orientation, and benefits enrollment
  - Processed 432 1095’s and 571 W-2’s
- Service award recognition
  - 25 years – one employee
  - 20 years – four employees
  - 15 years – six employees

- 10 years – 10 employees
- 5 years – 33 employees

Trends

- The number of applicants has rebounded from 2021 after seeing a large decrease locally and nationwide
- Applications for employment
  - 2021: 820
  - 2022: 614
  - 2023: 699 (14% increase over the prior year)



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
FT		6.25%	26.23%	22%	23.94%
PT		9.40%	26%	21.28%	10.26%
Combined	13%	9.40%	26.19%	21.65%	19.09%



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Retirements	18	10	10	14	6	10	5



## Trends

### Retirement Eligibility Trends

	Eligible Today	% of Current	Eligible in 5 years	% of Current
LEO	8	10%	15	19%
Non-LEO	55	20%	52	19%

### Goals

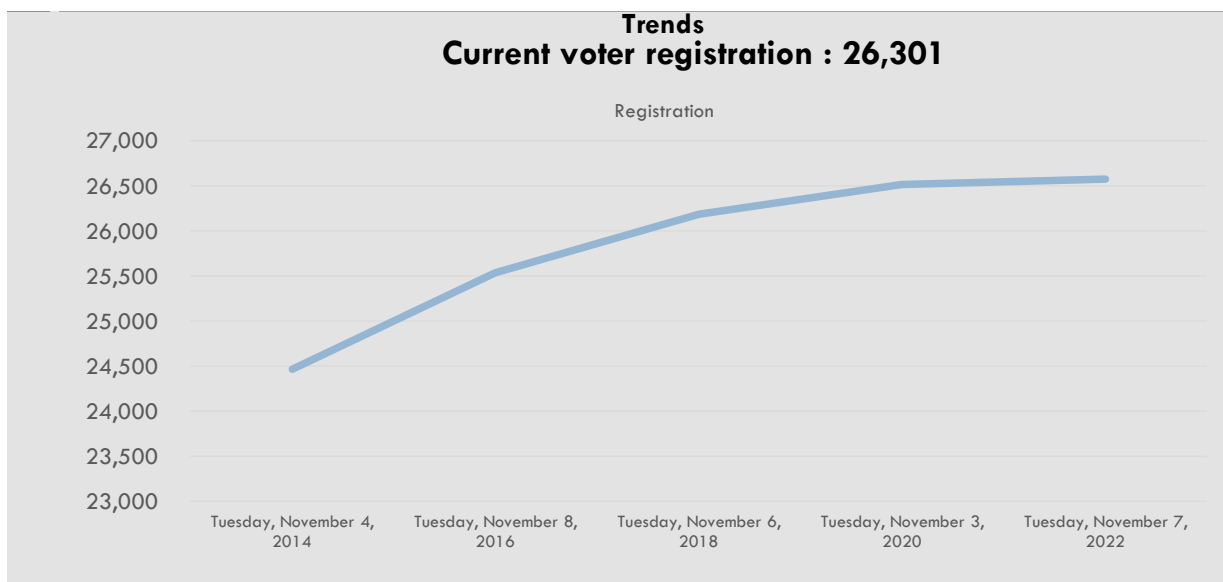
- Continue with employee activities, educational opportunities, and programs
- Work with the Personnel Board to review and recommend needed changes to the County's personnel policies
- Work to integrate Learn and OnBoard within NeoGov
- Work with partners – BCBSNC, Employee Wellness Center, Public Health, Mark III, and Cooperative Extension to provide health education, wellness and wellbeing programs and opportunities for employees
- Celebrate individual and group successes within departments
- Implement online employee benefit enrollment for open enrollment and new employee enrollments to decrease the amount of processing time via paper and duplication of processes and diminish the chance of entry errors
- Work creatively to identify areas of recruitment that could be successful
  - Advertising mediums or QR codes for easy access

### **Elections – by Director Jeff Storey**

#### Accomplishments

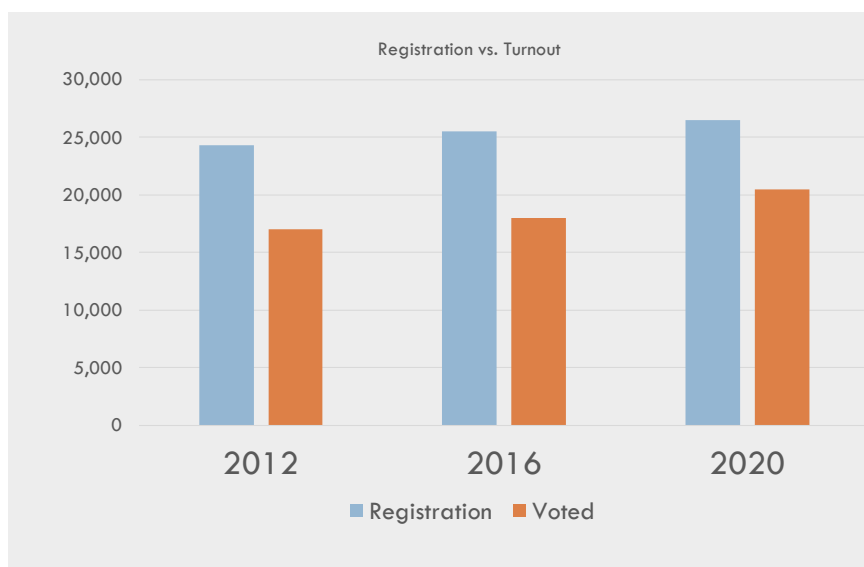
- 2023 Municipal
  - 33.6% of eligible voters turned out
  - 2,043 out of 6,080 voted
- Voter ID implementation
  - Issued 108 photo IDs to date
- ExpressLink implementation
  - Live for March 2024 Primary
- Polling location changes for Brevard 2 at the Mary C. Jenkins Community and Cultural Center

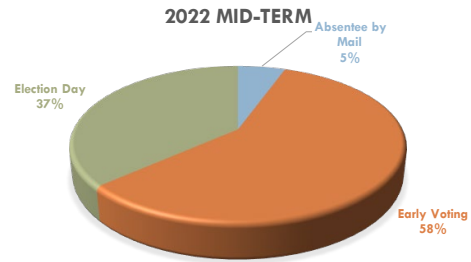
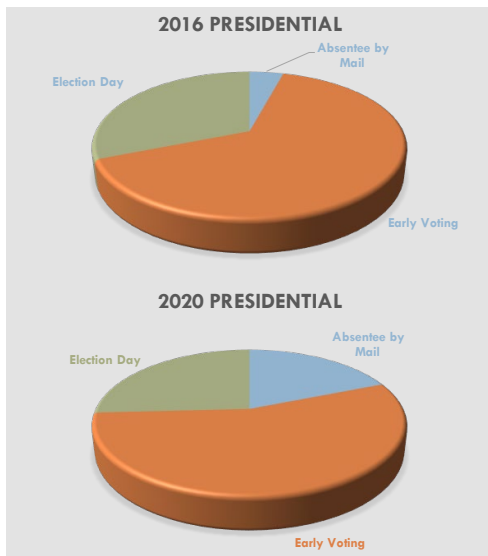
Trends



Year	Registration	Voted	Turnout %
2012	24,302	16,994	70.00%
2016	25,540	17,988	70.43%
2020	26,513	20,498	77.31%
<b>2024</b>	<b>26,301</b>		

Projection is over 20,000 voters





## TURNOUT BY VOTING METHOD

2016 : Early Voting 65%	11,590
2020 : Early Voting 55%	13,017
2022 : Early Voting 58%	9,432 (mid-term election)

- 2024 Elections updates
  - Turnout for early voting is slightly ahead of the 2020 Primary
  - Possible runoff scheduled for May 14, 2024, at an estimated cost of \$25,160
  - Small early voting results delay due to changes in the law
  - SB749 partial injunction; litigation ongoing

### Goals

- Combatting election misinformation through continued transparency and education
  - Absentee ballots process
  - Ballot and equipment security
  - Canvass – ballot reconciliation
- Certifications
  - One staff member recertification as Certified Election Registration Administrator (CERA)
  - Two staff members' certification as Certified North Carolina Election Administrator (CNCEA)
- GIS audits countywide

### **Administration – by County Manager Jaime Laughter**

#### Accomplishments

- Capital planning continuing
  - BRCC Capital Planning Advisory Committee Study and Report to Commissioners
  - Education Capital Work Group- Maintenance Reserve Study (existing building assessment) for school buildings
    - Safety assessment, mold testing, structural assessment complete
  - US 64 water and sewer extension complete
  - EMS Base and Rosman-Brevard water interconnect projects underway
  - Landfill new cell design- construction upcoming
  - Submitted capital needs to Legislature for the County, City of Brevard, and Town of Rosman (\$40 million in revenue allocated to the three entities announced in the fall of 2023)
- Professional development

- Manager on Board of Directors for NCCCMA and NCACC Risk Pool Trustees, Clerk on rolled off NC County Clerks Association Executive Committee but continues to serve on the Association's committees
- Administering over \$30 million in grant funding to support community projects secured over the last three years
  - Additional \$8 million in GREAT grant Infrastructure funds leveraged
- Countywide housing plan

### Trends

- Collaboration
  - MyFutureNC, Land of Sky P-20 Council member
  - CARES and Opioid Settlement Fund planning
  - WestNGN Broadband with Land of Sky
  - Workforce/Affordable Housing
    - Nonprofits, businesses, municipal partners
  - Water and sewer infrastructure
    - Water interconnect between the City of Brevard and the Town of Rosman
  - Economic development
    - Sylvan Valley Industrial Building Phase 2 with a GoldenLeaf CBGI ask of \$1.5 million
  - Workforce development
    - Working with BRCC and Transylvania Economic Alliance on opportunities to meet local industry skills training needs and provide some trades training through an EDA Grant
- Innovation
  - Cyber security to protect citizen data and the ability to operate services
  - Recruitment and retention of people for County services
  - Capital needs
  - Evaluating how to reach citizens
  - Using data to better inform decisions for the Board of Commissioners
  - Statewide leadership, presence, and advocacy
    - Commissioners' service on boards and committees at local/regional/state levels
    - Engagement with NCACC
    - Proven success that advocacy can result in funding
- Adaption
  - Benchmarking (NCACC Map Book, State resources, census)
    - Keeping up to speed on best practices and understanding the impacts of State policy changes (i.e., Tier System)
  - Transitioning leadership
    - Succession planning and recruitment/retention
  - Increased requests for public records with expansive dates
  - Increased complexity of the legal landscape
  - Increase in volume and complexity of recordkeeping

### Goals (2024 Themes: Projects, Grants and Processes)

- Capital planning and construction
  - Courthouse, school capital, landfill new cell, Sylvan Valley Industrial Phase 2, BRCC plans, water and sewer infrastructure
- Improve internal services workflow
  - Financial and human resource process mapping and standard operating procedures

- Software implementation
- Grants management; more grants than ever and requires management
- Technology
  - Use internally and promote broadband access
- Multi-year financial planning
  - Bond issuance for school construction
  - Capital planning for the next 10-20 years
- Housing study and Comprehensive Plan update
- Implementation of a strategic plan for opioid response with Opioid Settlement dollars to make the greatest impact in the County

This concluded the formal presentations.

Chairman Chappell thanked all the departments for their presentations, noting for the public's information that the information is just a snapshot of the services provided by these departments.

**Chairman Chappell called for a brief recess at 7:33 p.m. The Board reconvened at 7:41 p.m.**

## APPOINTMENTS

### PERSONNEL BOARD

The terms of Jo McCall (member-at-large) and Christy Hendrix (county employee) expire at the end of February. Both are eligible and willing to serve another term. There are no other applications on file. Human Resources Director Sheila Cozart recommends their reappointment. There remains one vacancy to represent the private sector business community. Staff will continue to recruit to fill the vacancy.

**Commissioner Chapman moved to reappoint Jo McCall and Christy Hendrix to the Personnel Board and instructed staff to continue recruiting for the vacant position, seconded by Commissioner Casciato, and unanimously approved.**

### BOARD OF HEALTH

The optometrist position on the Board of Health has been vacant for some time. State statutes govern the appointment requirements for local boards of health. Advertisements and recruitment efforts led to the receipt of an application from Dr. Thomas Fuller. Dr. Fuller is a retired optometrist but has retained his license to practice. Public Health Director Elaine Russell has reviewed Dr. Fuller's application and supports his appointment to the Board of Health.

**Commissioner McCall moved to appoint Dr. Thomas Fuller to fill the vacant optometrist position on the Board of Health, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.**

## OLD BUSINESS

### FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENTS AUDIT PROPOSAL

Assistant County Manager David McNeill presented this item to the Board. He reported that Transylvania County issued a request for qualifications for the completion of the fire and rescue department audits for FY 2024, FY 2025, and FY 2026. Staff received one proposal from Goldsmith, Molis, and Gray PLLC and two notices of intent to bid that were not submitted. Staff continue to work with Gould Killian CPA Group, P.A. (formerly Carland and Andersen) to get the FY 2021, FY2022, and FY 2023 audits completed per the

proposal provided by Carland and Andersen. There have been issues and significant delays with Carland and Andersen and the firm continues to fail to meet the time scheduled provided for completion.

Mr. McNeill requested the Board of Commissioners take the following actions:

- Authorize staff to negotiate and sign a contract with Goldsmith, Molis, and Gray PLLC for the FY 2024, FY 2025, and FY 2026 audits.
- Authorize staff to negotiate and sign a contract with Goldsmith, Molis, and Gray PLLC for the completion of the FY 2023 audits for Transylvania County Rescue Squad, North Transylvania Fire Rescue, Little River Fire Rescue, Connestee Fire Rescue, Rosman Fire Rescue, and Balsam Grove Fire Department.
- Authorize staff to instruct Carland and Andersen (Gould Killian CPA Group, P.A.) to complete the FY 2021 and FY 2022 Audits for Transylvania County Rescue Squad, North Transylvania Fire Rescue, Little River Fire Rescue, Connestee Fire Rescue, Rosman Fire Rescue, and Balsam Grove Fire Department and work with the fire and rescue departments to get all FY 2023 audit documents from Carland and Andersen to Goldsmith, Molis, and Gray PLLC.
- Accept the FY 2023 audits for Lake Toxaway Fire Department and Cedar Mountain Fire Department that have already been completed by Goldsmith, Molis, and Gray PLLC and authorize staff to reimburse Cedar Mountain and Lake Toxaway Fire Department for the cost of the audits.

If approved, the Board's actions would have the following financial impact:

- FY 2024: \$78,750 with an option for additional services, 990 forms - \$1,250-\$1,750 per agency
- FY 2025: \$81,250 with an option for additional services, 990 forms - \$1,250-\$1,750 per agency
- FY 2026: \$83,750 with an option for additional services, 990 forms - \$1,250-\$1,750 per agency
- FY 2023: \$59,062

Chairman Chappell asked if there were any repercussions or penalties that could be assessed due to the delay the County has experienced in getting the fire and rescue agencies audits. Mr. McNeill stated the County does not have a contract with Carland and Anderson which makes that difficult; however, staff could report them to the licensing board. Chairman Chappell asked staff to explore possibilities.

The Manager stressed that the new contracts would address the failure to perform components. She noted the County has not paid Carland and Anderson for any audit not yet completed.

Commissioner McCall asked if the fire departments understood that they fall under the County's audit process. She stressed the importance of having consistent audits that are performed using the same criteria. Mr. McNeill confirmed that they understood the process, noting that the departments may use an outside auditing firm to conduct another audit, but the department would have to pay for it.

**Commissioner McCall moved to approve the staff's recommendation, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.**

## NEW BUSINESS

### DUKE ENERGY EASEMENT ANIMAL SHELTER PROPERTY

Assistant County Manager David McNeill presented this item to the Board. Duke Energy currently has an existing transmission line easement across the County's Animal Shelter property. Duke is requesting to keep the existing transmission line active during the construction of the new transmission line. They requested the

Board of Commissioners approve the acquisition of an additional 1.524 acres on the west side of the existing easement (toward the back of the property) during the construction phase and they will release 1.318 acres of the existing easement on the east side of the property (between Animal Shelter and current easement) after construction. If approved, the easement will shift 34 feet west toward the back of the property and 15 feet of the existing easement to the east (toward the shelter) will be released. It would also change the right-of-way from 68 feet to 84 feet, pushing it back away from the Animal Shelter. The County must relocate a metal shed used to store farm equipment outside of the proposed easement and staff anticipates doing so by June 1. Otherwise, there should be no impact on the current operations at the Animal Shelter. Duke Energy has agreed to pay the County \$56,032. They are ready to move forward with the project.

**Commissioner Chapman moved to approve the proposed easement for the Duke Energy transmission lines, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.**

#### HOUSING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

The Manager reported that at a previous meeting, the Commissioners authorized staff to contract with TPMA for a countywide housing study. The Board of Commissioners will need to establish a steering committee to guide the planning process along with County staff. Instead of chartering a new committee, the Planning Board can function as the steering committee to include an ex officio appointment from the Town of Rosman and the City of Brevard. The ex officio appointments would not need to count towards a quorum. The Planning Board will be working with County staff in 2024 on the County Comprehensive Plan, which will overlap with the housing plan activities. This will streamline the advertising of meetings and additional administrative tasks associated with a separate steering committee. The process as outlined by TPMA will include engagement meetings with stakeholders that will bring together nonprofits, government agencies, faith entities, and businesses interested in the plan. The timeline for completion is nine months.

The scope of work will include an inventory of the infrastructure and available land and making recommendations on the types of policies or techniques the Board of Commissioners could explore to facilitate meeting the housing needs.

**Commissioner McCall moved to approve the Planning Board to be the Steering Committee for the Housing Plan and to request an ex officio appointment for the steering committee from the City of Brevard and Town of Rosman, seconded by Commissioner Chapman and unanimously approved.**

#### UPDATE ON EDUCATION CAPITAL FUNDING AND OVERVIEW OF FUNDING PROCESS

The Commissioners shared with the Manager that have received questions from citizens on how school capital is handled following their discussion at the previous meeting on the Rosman High School football field. In response and to help educate the public, the Manager provided an overview of the school capital funding process for which she requested the Commissioners' feedback and a typical project process from concept to construction completion that is utilized by the County's project team, and updated the Commissioners on information received to date on the Rosman High School football field and what staff considers to be best practice on the next steps.

The Manager stated there are three different ways in which the County receives capital funding requests from the Board of Education. The most common is their annual submittal as part of the budget process. The Superintendent prepares and presents a budget to the Board of Education who subsequently approves it and forwards it to the County for consideration. May 15 is the statutory deadline for submission of their budget, but the County normally requests an earlier submittal if possible. As noted on the County's budget calendar during the departmental presentations, the Manager intends to present the County's recommended budget to the Board of Commissioners before May 15.

The Board of Education prioritizes its list of capital items and, generally, the Commissioners have funded the capital according to that prioritized list. The list includes furniture, fixtures and equipment, vehicles, and projects under \$50,000 which are dispersed in monthly payments with operational funding. The Board of Commissioners approves projects over \$50,000 by project as allowed by statute and they are tracked in the Education Capital Fund with reimbursement to the School System when documentation is provided. The Board of Education may request that the Board of Commissioners reallocate funds in the Education Capital Fund if their priorities change mid-year.

Another possibility is that the Board of Education makes funding requests mid-year which are unusual and typically involve an emergency due to the need for financial planning. The reason the County prefers that requests occur during the budget is that local government tax rates in North Carolina are set once per year limiting the local government's ability to find revenue for a mid-year request. The only sources of available funding for mid-year requests may be in the form of grants, financing, or fund balances.

Per statute, the Board of Commissioners must approve all contracts that are longer than a year in length. These types of contracts are typically for engineering or architectural services or construction. The Board of Commissioners must approve applications to draw down lottery funds from the State and those requests sometimes occur mid-year. In both of these cases, the Board of Education would vote on the request and then forward it to County staff who would place the request on an agenda for the Commissioners to consider. Staff normally request supporting documentation on each request, such as timelines, cost, scope of work, etc., so the Commissioners can decide whether the request should be considered mid-year and also identify the funding sources.

The last category is for major capital projects. Major capital projects require substantial planning, especially around determining methods for financing. The process for financing in North Carolina is lengthy. The Commissioners must also determine how they will make the debt service payments. The Manager is working with the Education Capital Work Group to establish a method for determining major capital projects. The report will be presented to both Boards during a special meeting on March 4.

Next, the Manager reviewed general public project processes. The first step involves preliminary scoping and includes a professional estimate of cost, a preliminary project budget, soil testing, a survey, and a timeline. This information helps staff determine a project timeline, the financial components, and overall management of the project. The next step involves an RFQ (request for qualifications) process, which is required by state law, and the development of a contract with professionals. This step takes a minimum of six weeks. Staff must give proper notice of the RFQ and give time for the professionals to prepare a response. Following the award of the RFQ contract, the design phase would begin. The timeline for design will vary depending on the size and scope of the project. Permitting erosion control, floodplain and other types of permits usually occur concurrently with the design phase. The formal bidding process also takes at least six weeks. If the bidding process results in less than three bids, the project must be rebid. Following a one-to-two-week review timeline of the contract by the County Attorney, the winning bid then goes before the Board of Commissioners for award and approval. The contractor then mobilizes within two weeks of the notice of award. The construction timeline varies based on the project. Once the project is completed, staff would begin to close out the contractual and financial obligations.

The Manager showed an example of a preliminary cost estimate for a past County project. It indicated roughly what the County should expect in cost to build the project. It included an estimate on a percentage basis for contingency, cost escalation, permitting fees, surveys, design costs, etc. to develop a project budget to present to the Commissioners. This is an important step in the early stages of the project because if the cost is too high or the funding is not available, there is no need to progress to the next phase. The Manager also showed examples of projected timelines for two projects. This occurs early on with the contractors and design professionals to ensure everyone understands how long the project is going to take.



This can impact financing, timing on issuing debt, and staffing components. Sometimes unforeseen issues occur that impact the timeline. These methods are necessary early on in a project to help drive further decisions.

Next, the Manager updated the Board on the Rosman High School football field. She stated that neither the Board of Education nor school staff have presented the County with a funding request or provided any necessary backup documents. In its FY 2024 annual budget request, the Board of Education submitted an unprioritized capital list. In August 2023, the Board of Education submitted a prioritized list that included the football field for \$325,000 which was approved by the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Education received a task order on the project from McGill Associates, but it did not include a cost projection or timeline. County staff received the task order on February 1, 2024. On January 22, 2024, the Board of Commissioners received a presentation from the County Manager and the Superintendent where they suggested forwarding the Rosman Elementary School projects presented at the time, as well as the football field project, to the Education Capital Work Group. Staff shared with the Work Group the options and budget for the Rosman Elementary School projects, but there was nothing on the field options to be shared with them other than the task order from the engineer.

As recommended during the January presentation, the first joint staff meeting among County staff and school staff occurred in February. During the meeting, school staff shared that they expected the cost for a new turf field to be in the \$800,000 to \$1.2 million range. However, they have not provided an opinion of probable cost to confirm the cost range. Also, during the staff meeting, school staff expressed concern about the timing and funding availability. The group discussed options and decided that instead of having the Work Group fold the project into its study, the Board of Education would request a reallocation of funds from projects already approved, but not started, or prioritize the project with their FY 2025 capital request which would make the funding available on July 1. At its last meeting, the Board of Education approved \$140,000 related to this project, but it is unclear whether it is to fund the task order from McGill or other components of the project.

Last week, the Manager recommended to the Superintendent that the School System should plan to play on the current field another year and not begin site work at this stage due to the timeline required for the project. The task list provided by McGill included only one timeframe reference of 12 weeks for construction. The task list did not factor in the timeframe needed to complete all the other components of the project, including the formal bidding period, design process, permitting for erosion control and floodplain which require the services of an engineer, and the development and award of a contract.

The Manager recommended County staff continue working with the School System on the project, regardless of their decision to improve the drainage or add turf and explore utilizing the \$325,000 already approved for the project for preliminary scoping and getting an opinion of probable cost and timeline from the engineer. In the meantime, the School System should plan to play on the current field this fall with only minimal improvements, if needed.

The Board of Education will need to decide on the option to improve the drainage or add turf which will drive the funding options and processes. They could request at any time to reallocate funding for projects that have already been approved. The County approved projects and allocated funds for projects in FY 2021, FY 2022, FY 2023, and FY 2024 that have yet to be started. The Manager stated that the quickest and easiest method for the Board of Education to receive funding is to prioritize the project in their FY 2025 capital funding request. The funding would then be available on July 1 with the approval of the County's budget. A third option would be for them to request funding as part of a larger project looking beyond the Education Capital Workgroup results, but this option would delay the project further.

The Manager also recommended the continuation of the monthly meetings between the Superintendent, the School System's Project Manager, the Assistant County Manager, and herself to keep the lines of communication open and ensure the success of these capital projects. These meetings also allow them to troubleshoot, provide historical guidance on experience from past projects, and talk about funding constraints. The Manager stressed the importance of ensuring this project does not interrupt play for the football team and other youth leagues and organizations that use the field and that staff continue to develop the project so that it will be successful in a future year.

This concluded the Manager's presentation. She called for questions or comments from the Commissioners about the process we have in place, the current status of this project, or the project process in general.

Commissioner Chapman pointed out that Brevard High School intends to replace the turf on its field for \$400,000 to \$500,000. He asked if the two field projects could be funded with bond monies. The Manager shared that the turf replacement project for Brevard High School was completed recently. Bond monies could be used for the Rosman field project, but the issue will be the timing component. The Board of Education has indicated a sense of urgency regarding fixing the field, but the bond process is lengthy. There is already \$325,000 allocated for this project on the County's books, so the Board of Education has the option of requesting additional funding with its FY 2025 capital budget.

Commissioner McCall asked for clarification that there was not enough time to complete the project even if all the other components from the engineer were in place. The Manager confirmed. She stated there was not enough time to progress through the various processes, particularly with obtaining the floodplain permit which many times requires a no-rise certificate and hydrology.

Commissioner McCall asked if the Board of Education was aware of all the steps they must take to get to the point of going out to bid on the project. The Manager pointed out that the bid process is dictated by State statutes, so she could only assume that they were aware of the timelines.

Commissioner Casciato asked if there was a contingency plan in place in case the Board of Education started the project and could not finish it before the football season started. The Manager stressed this is the reason for requesting a professional opinion of cost because it will factor in contingency for cost overruns and timelines. She stressed the current timeline for design, the bid process, and construction are not feasible for completion before the field would be needed for play.

Chairman Chappell pointed out there has been a lot of miscommunication about this issue. He asked the Manager to present this information as a reference tool for anyone who has questions or concerns about the process for requesting funding and information on projects from concept to completion. The general bidding procedures are dictated by statutes. He pointed out that no timeline was assigned for these procedures or for obtaining the erosion control or potential no-rise certificate. These permits require the services of an engineer and take time to complete. The bidding period and potential rebidding period must meet local newspaper advertising deadlines as well. All these components contribute to a lengthier timeline than just the 12 weeks of construction time noted on the task order. Chairman Chappell stressed the Board of Commissioners nor County staff have received an estimate of probable cost from a qualified professional.

Chairman Chappell also pointed out that the Board of Education has mentioned during its meetings that the Board of Commissioners has received their request, but the County has received no documentation. In the fall, the Board of Education expressed a need for \$300,000+ to deal with the drainage issues which the Commissioners agreed to fund. In December/January, the Commissioners learned the estimates were wrong and were informed that the costs were double the original estimate. However, the County did not receive any documentation to confirm the costs. The current estimates are \$800,000 to \$1 million but

again, the Commissioners have no documentation to confirm. Chairman Chappell reiterated that the County has approved funding on its books from FY 2021 to the current year that the School System has yet to begin. The Board of Education could request to reallocate these funds at any time. Regardless of the Board of Education's decision, the Board of Commissioners must have the request in hand along with documentation of the costs otherwise they are doing a disservice to the taxpayers.

Commissioner McCall stated she had an issue with the School System rejecting the assistance offered by County staff in navigating through the statutory processes for bidding and permitting. She felt their actions were hurting the kids because they were not getting what they needed. She also pointed out that the School System has grossly underestimated the cost of many projects brought forth for approval over the past few years. She implored them to accept the help, otherwise they would be wasting taxpayer dollars. Commissioner McCall felt that the situation was unfortunate because the School System overpromised on delivering a turf field in time for the football season although the timeline was not feasible.

At the request of the Commissioners, the Manager will provide them with a copy of the slide presentation and make them available with previous presentations on education capital. She felt it was helpful for the public to understand what it takes for a project to be funded in the public sector. She pointed out the process is intended to be slower in the public sector to ensure a fair and well thought out process.

#### MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- Special Joint Meeting of the Board of Commissioners and Board of Education on Monday, March 4 at 4:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Chambers to receive report from the Education Capital Workgroup and Axias. The meeting is open to the public. It will be livestreamed and archived on the County's website. The only business will be the presentation of the report along with recommendations.
- Kudos to Finance Director Meagan O'Neal from Health Director Elaine Russell for going above and beyond to support them in getting a grant application submitted on time. It was a significant grant application.
- Remember to send the Manager follow-up questions from the mid-year reports so that she can respond timely.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no comments from the public.

#### **COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Chapman requested the Board consider a presentation at the next meeting from the Board of Education on their decision not to recommend a third early voting location. He said this issue has gained some visibility based on the public comments at the beginning of this meeting and an article in the newspaper.

Chairman Chappell thanked all those who attended the meeting. He asked citizens to take the time to thank department heads for the excellent job they are doing for the County.

**Chairman Chappell moved to enter into a closed session per N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (3) To consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged, and (a) (4) To discuss matters related to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, following a 10-minute recess, seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously carried.**

### CLOSED SESSION

Per N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (3) To consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged, and (a) (4) To discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, the closed session was entered into at 8:49 p.m. Present were Chairman Chappell, Commissioners Casciato, Chapman and McCall, County Manager Jaime Laughter, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan. Commissioner Dalton and County Attorneys Julie Hooten and Peter Dworjanyyn participated remotely via Zoom meeting software.

The Board of Commissioners consulted with an attorney on a privileged matter and directed staff on how to proceed.

**Chairman Chappell moved to leave the closed session, seconded by Commissioner McCall and unanimously carried.**

### OPEN SESSION

**Chairman Chappell moved to seal the minutes of the closed session until such time that opening the minutes does frustrate the purpose of the closed session, seconded by Commissioner Casciato and unanimously approved.**

### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Chairman Chappell moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Casciato 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