

Land of Sky Regional Council  
March 24, 2021  
Regular Meeting



**Under S.L. 2020-3, SB 704, Delegates are required to state their names when moving on orders of business. Thank you!**

**AGENDA**

- I. **Call to Order** (12:30pm)
- II. **Invocation**
- III. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- IV. **Roll Call**
- V. **Consent Agenda**
  - A. Modification/Approval of Agenda
  - B. Minutes from the February 24, 2021 Regular Meeting, held Virtually via Zoom
- VI. **Public Comment**
- VII. **Recognition of Special Guests**
- VIII. **Chairperson's Comments and Delegates Roundtable**
- IX. **Presentations**
  - A. Police Chiefs presentation on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice
  - B. Resolution in support of The Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative and myFutureNC postsecondary credential attainment goal
  - C. Money Follows the Person (MFP) Medicaid Program, Ginger Hill, MFP Coordinator
- X. **Old Business**
- XI. **Annual Meeting**
  - A. Election of Officers and Executive Committee
- XII. **Executive Director's Report**
- XIII. **Important Dates**
  - A. Next Virtual Regional Board Meeting via Zoom is scheduled for Wednesday, April 28, 2021
- XIV. **Adjournment**



## **BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM**

- Subject:** Consent Agenda
- Item Number:** V. Consent Agenda: Item A. Modification/Approval of Agenda and Item B. Approval of Minutes from the February 24, 2021 Regular Meeting via the Zoom Platform
- Responsible Party:** Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services
- Attachment(s):** Minutes from the February 2021 Virtual Regular Meeting
- Background:** A. Modification/Approval of February 24, 2021 Agenda  
B. February 24, 2021 Virtual Meeting Minutes  
Quorum was present to conduct business at the February 2021 virtual meeting via the Zoom platform and the minutes provide a recap of the of the Delegates' updates from around the region. Presentations were provided by Dr. Susan Mims with the Dogwood Health Trust (DHT), who updated the Board on current initiatives. In addition, Dr. May Roderick, LOSRC Planner, provided a presentation on Racial Disparities in the LOS Region.
- Staff Recommendation:** Approval of the Consent Agenda
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented.

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom of the  
Land of Sky Regional Council Board of Delegates**

**February 24, 2021**

**Minutes**

- I. Call to Order – Chair Volk called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30pm.
- II. Invocation –Chair Volk gave the invocation.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance – Chair Volk led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- IV. Roll Call – Nathan Ramsey called the roll. The following members were present: Lyndsey Simpson, William Lapsley, John Mitchell, Albert Gooch, Terri Wells, Preston Blakely, Bob Tomasulo, Brian Caskey, Sandra Kilgore, Jane Alexander, Patrick Fitzsimmons, Ryan Stone, Barbara Volk, Forrest Gilliam, Daniel Cobb, Jason Chappell, Maureen Copelof, Jonathan Kanipe, George Morosani, Rebecca McCall, Parker Sloan, Larry Harris, and Nathan Bennett

Guests Present – Danny Hein, Andrew McKinney, Fairley Patton, Lisa Adkins, Robin Ramsey, Sherri Holbert, Stephanie Lee, Dr. Susan Mims, Drew Christy, Scottie Parks, Maurice Jones, and Dr. Gene Loflin

A quorum was present to conduct business.

Chair Volk announced a modification to the agenda to allow a recognition by Forrest Gilliam for the passing of Mayor Jack Wallin with the Town of Marshall. Additionally, the Town of Weaverville Council Member Patrick Fitzsimmons recognized their former Mayor, Beth Stroud.

The agenda was also modified to move the Recognition for LOSRC Staff Years' of Service Awards to before item V. Consent Agenda.

Recognition –

A. LOSRC Staff Years of Service Recognition

Nathan Ramsey shared that each year, Council recognizes employees' years of service milestones. This year, the following LOSRC staff are being recognized:

Zack Schmitt	5 Years
Erica Anderson	10 Years
Sherry Christenson	15 Years
Christina Giles	15 Years
LeeAnne Tucker	20 Years

LeeAnne Tucker was presented with a resolution to honor her 20 years of service to LOSRC. LeeAnne shared thanks and that it has been an honor and pleasure to work at LOSRC to serve the residents of the region for the past 20 years.

Chair Volk noted her appreciation for LeeAnne Tucker's service to older members of the community, too.

B. Special Presentation by Governor Roy Cooper – Drew Christy, Director, Western Regional Office

Drew Christy shared that Governor Cooper would like to recognize Bill Eaker with the distinguished Order of the Longleaf Pine, the highest civilian recognition the Governor can provide. Bill's service, integrity, honor and zeal were noted as part of the conferment.

Bill Eaker shared that he was honored to receive this recognition from the Governor and that he appreciates the Governor's strong commitment to clean energy and air quality. He noted the strong collaboration in the region and the State to improve the air, the environment, and the quality of life for everyone.

- V. Consent Agenda – The consent agenda, consisting of the modified agenda and the minutes of January 27, 2021 minutes was presented for approval as noted above.

***George Morosani moved to approve the consent agenda, with the modifications noted by Chair Volk. Bob Tomasulo seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote and without further discussion.***

- VI. Public Comment – No public comments were received.

- VII. Recognition of Special Guests –

- VIII. Chair's Comments and Delegates Roundtable

Chair Volk requested that Delegates share updates and news of interest in their jurisdictions.

Delegates Roundtable

Commissioner Terri Wells – Shared that Buncombe County has received 80 applications from businesses for the One Buncombe Fund. The County is still raising money for that fund, too. In addition, the County received \$7.8 million from the US Department of Treasury for rental assistance, utilities, etc. The Southern Conference is coming back to the area from March 4-8 at the Harrah's Cherokee Center. The Commissioner shared that the Maui Conference was a success and the County looks forward to hosting it again.

Commissioner William Lapsley – Shared that Henderson County held a groundbreaking ceremony at BRCC for a \$26 million expansion at the college. Work continues on the \$60 million rebuild of Henderson High School, which is going extremely well and will conclude by summer of 2022. The County continues to have some industrial prospects looking at the area and positive results are possible from those recruiting efforts. The Commissioner also shared about HB-119, which pertains to COVID Relief to property tax payers, by allowing for forgiveness of property taxes, etc., if it's associated with COVID. The Commissioner encouraged his colleagues in the region to stay on top of developments around this bill.

Commission Chair Jason Chappell – Shared that Transylvania County continues to work on the School Bond Projects; groundbreaking is planned for June, and it's the largest capital project in the history of the County, coming in at \$68 million. The Chairman shared that the County is continuing to advocate for more vaccines for residents and it is a property revaluation year, too.

Council Member Sandra Kilgore – Shared that the City of Asheville voted in the new Hotel Overlay District Amendment and also approved the changes to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which basically reflects and aligns with the Hotel Overlay District. The City also voted in the confirmation of the seven participants who will be moving forward in the process. Debra Campbell, the City's Manager, reviewed the process for setting up the Reparations Committee, which will lead to a three-phase program in order to move forward. Council Member Kilgore noted that this is a very difficult task and the goal is to have the Commission up and operational by 2023. The City adopted its legislative agenda, hoping to bring about some changes by sharing the legislative priorities with the delegation representing the City. Priorities include Expansion and support for the Transit System (Asheville Redefines Transit-ART), authority to conduct a referendum on a quarter-cent sales tax for transit, implementation of an authority for oversight and reform of the local occupancy tax and how that is divided and also authority for electronic meetings and clarification for public hearings held by the City Council.

Town Manager Jonathan Kanipe – Shared that the Town has been working on getting the property revaluation numbers in and working on the budget. Additionally, the Town is planning capital improvements for parks and stormwater.

Vice Mayor Ryan Stone – Shared that the Town of Black Mountain is getting the property revaluation numbers in and the first budget workshop is coming up on the March 10. The Vice Mayor ended his update by shared that the Town is working to modernize/specify appointment process if a vacancy occurs on the Town Board.

Council Member Maureen Copelof – Shared that the City of Brevard is starting to work on revisions to the Downtown Streetscape Plan. This is planned to be done incrementally year by year. The City is also looking for stakeholder input. Additionally, the City is working with the Blue Zone Project partner and doing a walkability assessment of the downtown area, which will feed into the Streetscape Plan, when that gets going. Other news in the City includes that a new boutique hotel will be going in over the next couple of years neighborhood meeting are beginning and work with stakeholders is underway on this big boost to the downtown area. Council Member Copelof concluded her update for the City by sharing that the Heart of Brevard is back! It is a self-guided art walk and is coming up soon!

Council Member Albert Gooch – Shared that the Village of Flat Rock is looking at improvements to the park and looking at reorganization of the Flat Rock Park Foundation.

Council Member Preston Blakely – Shared that everything is going well in the Town of Fletcher. The Town's park project is moving forward and the Town should have a new police chief within the next month.

Mayor Barbara Volk – Shared that the new Police Chief for the City of Hendersonville has been sworn in and the Council's Planning Retreat begins tomorrow and goes through Friday. The bears have arrived and are being decorated and will be back on the street in May.

Town Manager Forrest Gilliam – Shared that the Town of Marshall is completing its Water Use Study, which will be utilized to secure additional water resources. He shared that the Town Board has been quite selective in what projects can be taken on. Manager Gilliam shared that he is very pleased to live in a county with the kinds of services that people are getting.

Council Member Brian Caskey – Shared that the Town of Mills River received news today regarding its approval to receive two electric vehicle charging stations at the park. Also, at the park, the finishing touches are being put on the ball field.

Town Manager Daniel Cobb – Shared that the Town of Mills River has a number of plans under development and the hope is to have those to Council later in the spring. The Town is looking at properties it owns for potential development. Manager Cobb shared that the Town has been awarded a Bike/Ped Planning Grant from NCDOT. Council is working on an ordinance update regarding noise and food trucks. He shared that sales tax revenue is exceeding projections. The Town is working on the budget and looking to hire another administrator soon.

Commissioner Jane alexander – Shared that the Town of Montreat is getting ready for its retreat, planned as two half day meetings and is working on the budget.

Council Member Patrick Fitzsimmons – Shared that the Town of Weaverville has had a marked decrease in criminal activity in the past few months calls to the Police Department are down 30%.

Planning Director John Mitchell – Shared that the County of Henderson Commission selected a firm for the work on the Comprehensive 2045 Plan. The Commission also selected a new vendor for software. Planning Director Mitchell requested that Executive Director Ramsey share HB 119 with the Council.

Economic Development Representative George Morosani – Shared that the commercial real estate activity is quite strong in both Buncombe and Henderson Counties. He remarked that a group meets every month to reviews the activity and there is a shortage of warehouse space.

Aging Services Representative Bob Tomasulo – Shared that the next Regional Aging Advisory Council (RAAC) meeting is coming up on March 11 at 10am, virtually and folks may reach out to LeeAnne Tucker or him for the meeting link.

## IX. Presentations –

### A. Dogwood Health Trust – Dr. Susan Mims, Interim CEO

Dr. Susan Mims, Interim CEO for Dogwood Health Trust (DHT) shared that the organization is doing a lot of work around the pandemic and taking time this month to regroup and think about the work to be done in the strategic area, including thinking about how to address factors that influence health like having a place to sleep every night, adequate food, water and the other things that make life livable. Everything is being looked at through equity lenses. Other areas of interest in health and wellness is substance abuse disorder and the other area, that's really been highlighted during the pandemic is Broadband, which has been a focus of virtual education and health care. Dr. Mims shared that DHT is working through the community



based organizations and partners and the local jurisdictions to be successful and make a difference in these areas. The DHT is looking forward to getting to know the Council and how everyone can work together to improve lives in the region. Also mentioned that coming very soon, there will be an online process to apply for and access DHT funding. The Trust is open to conversations about what is being done around the region to improve communities, etc.

B. Racial Disparity in the Land of Sky Region – Dr. Mary Roderick, Planner LOSRC

Land of Sky Regional Council's Economic and Community Development staff developed a report on racial disparities in the LOSRC region based on eight key metrics, including population, income, poverty, homeownership, educational attainment, health and technology. The purpose of the report is to highlight racial disparities in order to foster a regional conversation based on the most accurate data available.

Dr. Roderick noted that the report is looking at racial disparities across the LOSRC region. She noted that DHT could provide a lot of information on equity along with other organizations and community partners. Most of the data was drawn from the ACS. When the census data becomes available the maps will be updated. She noted that there is a margin of error in the maps due to the ACS data used. Dr. Roderick provided population data by county that includes the percentage of racial and ethnic composition. The purpose of the report is to put forth the data, not necessarily the reasons why the data looks the way it does.

Dr. Roderick reviewed educational attainment, broken out by race, for the LOSRC region and the State. The State of Black Asheville also has educational attainment rates and some other nuance, that is not broken out in the report. The report is linked on the LOSRC website/homepage.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4378eb31075b4732ab90c28d0cf538cb>

X. Old Business

XI. New Business –

A. LOSRC Legislative Agenda –

The LOSRC Strategic Plan recommends Council take a more active role in relationship building and advocacy efforts at the state and federal levels (Goal 2.3). The strategic plan recommends the creation of a Legislative Relations Committee (Goal 2.13) and the development of a Regional Legislative Priority List (Goal 2.15).

Nathan Ramsey reviewed the draft LOSRC Legislative Priorities with the Board. He expressed thanks to the Legislative Priorities Committee members for their work to review and develop the priorities. These priorities align with the COG's and municipalities' priorities in the region.

**Broadband Expansion:** Broadband expansion is the top priority of the Council. The Council supports legislation that will expand broadband in our region, that allows local governments to enter into partnerships with private providers and that commits additional funding to increase access to broadband.

**Local Government Sales Tax Flexibility:** Local Governments currently have sales tax options that are contingent on voter approval. The Council requests that the existing sales tax authority be more flexible to meet the needs of local government but that the additional sales tax flexibility be subject to voter approval from voters within the respective local government jurisdiction.

**Sustainable Transportation Funding for NC and our region:** Additional funding is required to address the immediate and long-term transportation funding model. The Council does not take a position on how to generate additional transportation revenues. The Council endorses the NC Chamber of Commerce Destination 2030 plan and will join as a coalition member. The NC First Commission has recently released their report and the Council requests that the NC General Assembly to seriously consider the options proposed in the report. The Council does not take an official position on how to raise the additional revenue needed.

Commissioner Lapsley shared that he had the privilege of serving on the NC First Commission, whose mission was to find ways to raise additional revenues for transportation. Transportation funding is a major problem for North Carolina and for many states in the nation.

Forrest Gilliam shared that it's a hard problem to deal with transportation funding and he noted that the issues that arise dealing with the snow, is a major issue for the residents of Madison County. Currently, due to its cash flow issues, NCDOT has left every vacant position open and maintenance, including snow removal has really suffered, causing a burden on residents who need to travel for work and other reasons.

***Bill Lapsley moved to approve the draft Land of Sky Regional Council Legislative Priorities. George Morosani seconded the motion, which carried upon a roll call vote and without further discussion.***

XII. Executive Director's Report

Available in the agenda packet. Delegates and guests are encouraged to reach out to Nathan Ramsey with any questions or comments regarding the report.

XIII. Important Dates

A. Wednesday, March 24, 2021 is the next regularly scheduled Board of Delegates meeting via the Zoom Platform.

XIV. Old Business

XV. Adjournment – Chair Volk adjourned the meeting, as there was no further business.

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin



## **BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM**

- Subject:** Resolution Supporting The Land of Sky Educational Attainment and Workforce Collaborative and myFutureNC Post-Secondary Educational Attainment Goal
- Item Number:** XIII. Presentations; Item B.
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** Resolution in Support of The Land of Sky Educational Attainment and Workforce Collaborative and for the Post-Secondary Educational Attainment Goal through myFutureNC
- Background:** The Land of Sky Educational Attainment and Workforce Collaborative, "The Collaborative," is a pilot program related to the statewide myFutureNC Commission Educational Attainment Initiative. The focus is to align educational achievements with the employable skill needs of local employers. The overall myFutureNC state goal is to increase the total number of North Carolinians with a post-secondary credential or degree by 2 million by the year 2030. The Collaborative's four-county goal is to increase the number of North Carolinians in WNC with post-secondary credentials or degrees by 10,070, by the year 2030.
- Staff Recommendation:** Consider and Discuss the myFutureNC Presentation and Adopt the Resolution
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to approve the Resolution in support of The Land of Sky Educational Attainment and Workforce Collaborative and the Post-Secondary Educational Attainment Goal of myFutureNC.



## **Resolution to Support the myFutureNC Attainment Goal**

WHEREAS, the myFutureNC Commission (the Commission) was chartered to involve the leaders of the education business, philanthropy, faith-based and non-profit communities from across North Carolina in developing an educational goal for our state; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has concluded that North Carolina should have as a goal that 2 million North Carolinians will have a high-quality post-secondary degree or credential by 2030 (up from 1.3 million today); and

WHEREAS, Land of Sky Regional Council is committed to helping employers in our region of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties meet their workforce needs while helping job seekers and youth find a rewarding career pathway; and

WHEREAS, the Land of Sky region is home to North Carolina's first regional postsecondary credential attainment effort with The Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative;

WHEREAS, The Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative has received funding from the John M Belk Endowment for our region's local postsecondary credential effort;

WHEREAS, The Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative has released the report "Connecting the Dots That Lead to Educational Attainment and Gainful Employment Model" to build the foundation to increase postsecondary credential attainment in our region;

WHEREAS, employers in the Local Area served by the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board have over 10,000 job openings currently and many of these jobs require some type of education and training beyond a high school diploma; and

WHEREAS, most jobs in the Land of Sky region that pay a family sustaining wage require some type of education and training beyond a high school diploma; and

WHEREAS, employers in advanced manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality, technology, skilled trades, and other sectors in the Land of Sky region depend on a highly skilled workforce; and increasing post-secondary credential attainment will help employers meet their talent needs..

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** BY THE Land of Sky Regional Council Board of Delegates as follows:

1. That the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board strongly supports the myFutureNC Commission post-secondary credential attainment goal that 2 million North Carolinians will have a high quality degree or postsecondary credential by 2030.
2. That this Board will continue to support The Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative to foster partnerships across the region's education continuum and with leaders in business, philanthropy and government to achieve the goal.
3. That this Board will work with employers, educators, government, non-profits and workforce partners to increase the number of high-quality post-secondary credentials awarded in the region to help meet the statewide myFutureNC attainment goal.
4. That this resolution shall be effective upon its adoption.

Adopted this the 24th day of March, 2021.

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The Honorable Barbara Volk, Chair  
Land of Sky Regional Council Board of Delegates

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Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director  
Land of Sky Regional Council



## **BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM**

- Subject:** Election of Officers and Executive Committee
- Item Number:** XI. Annual Meeting
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** LOSRC Nominating Committee Report
- Background:** Per Council Bylaws, the Annual Meeting/Elections are to be held during the March meeting of each year. The attached slate is recommended by the Nominating Committee. Nominations from the floor are also permitted.
- LOSRC Nominating Committee was appointed pursuant to the Bylaws & Charter at the February meeting. Nominating Committee members are Bill Lapsley, Commission Chairman, Henderson County, Terri Wells, Commissioner, Buncombe County and George Morosani, Economic Development Representative- Buncombe County.
- Staff Recommendation:** N/A
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to appoint Land of Sky Regional Council Executive Committee members and Officers.



**2021-22 Officers/Executive Committee  
(Terms Ending March 23, 2022)  
Nominating Committee Recommendation**

**Chair:** Barbara Volk, Hendersonville (Henderson)  
**Vice-Chair:** Patrick Fitzsimmons, Weaverville (Buncombe)  
**Secretary:** Maureen Copelof, Brevard (Transylvania)  
**Treasurer:** Norris Gentry, Madison County  
**County Delegate:** Matthew Wechtel, Madison County  
**Municipal Delegate:** Albert Gooch, Flat Rock (Henderson)  
**Past Chair Delegate:** Larry B. Harris, Black Mountain (Buncombe)  
**Minority Representative Delegate:** Preston Blakely, Fletcher (Henderson)  
**Aging/Volunteer Services Representative:** Bob Tomasulo, Regional Aging Advisory Committee

Respectfully submitted by the Nominating Committee:  
Bill Lapsley, Chairman, Board of Commissioners, Henderson County  
George Morosani, Council Member – Economic Development, Buncombe County  
Terri Wells, Commissioner, Buncombe County



## **BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM**

- Subject:** Executive Director's Report
- Item Number:** XII. Executive Director's Report
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** Executive Director's Report for March 24, 2021
- Background:** The Executive Director's Report provides updates and relevant information regarding projects and initiatives for LOSRC Departments/Agencies.
- Staff Recommendation:** N/A.
- Suggested Motion(s):** N/A

Land of Sky Regional Council  
Executive Director's Report  
Respectfully submitted by Nathan Ramsey  
March 24, 2021

1. Economic Community Development & Transportation

a. Planning Services

- The Grey Mill Apartments in Hendersonville has been awarded an IEDC Excellence in Economic Development Award and NC Main Street award for best Adaptive Reuse project. LOSRC applied for and administered NC Commerce Neighborhood Revitalization Program funding (\$500,000) for the project.
- Land of Sky, Region A, High Country Council, and Asheville-Buncombe Chamber's Riverbird Research have been awarded the EDA Reshoring PPE and Outdoor Manufacturing Gap Analysis project. The total project award is \$116,078.
- Black Mountain's water/sewer extensions for the future Avadim expansion site have been closed out by Golden LEAF. We are in the final stage of close-out by EDA as well.
- Work has been completed in Mars Hill for sewer extension to the future Industrial Site and is in the project close-out stage.
- Staff are preparing a Planning Menu of Services.
- LOSRC launched the Regional Stormwater Services Program to support small MS4s and interested communities with stormwater management and MS4 stormwater compliance.
- Staff are preparing to review draft Census data in anticipation of Apportionment Data and the Redistricting data later this summer. Please connect with us if you would like to discuss the 2020 Census data timeline.
- Contracting with several towns for zoning and mapping assistance
- LOSRC held the first Regional Resilience Advisory Board in February to guide the continued development of the regional resilience assessment and action planning.
- LOSRC and its Waste Reduction Partners program are hosting an 11-week training course for municipal wastewater treatment operators presented by USEPA. The course covers optimization of nutrient removal and energy savings.
- LOSRC has been selected to participate in USEPA's Greening America's Communities program, which will provide a conceptual level design for a hazard mitigation project.
- Submitted multiple competitive grants to EDA, ARC, FEMA, and DEQ, including reshoring manufacturing focused on the outdoor gear sector in collaboration with Southwestern Commission and High Country Council of Governments.
- Submitted a \$160,000 grant application to the FEMA BRIC program through NCDPS in partnership with several entities.

- Partnering with the Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Support Agencies, nonprofits, and economic developers to assist small businesses through COVID-19 impacts.
  - **Broadband**
    - The annual Broadband Leadership Forum was held on March 2nd. This successful event brought local, state, and national level leaders to discuss changes in policy, funding, and technology that may occur in 2021.
    - Town of Mars Hill awarded Downtown WIFI project from ARC. This project also partners with Madison County and Hometown Strong to start creating more public places to connect.
    - WestNGN is working on getting better broadband data to help leverage more broadband investment to the region. We have been working with Dogwood Health Trust and Southwestern Commission on putting outreach materials and marketing for the NC Broadband Survey. Please share videos with your network so we're ready for the next rounds of funding. Contact Sara Nichols at Sara@landofsky.org for more information about where the missing data for your community may be.
    - Assisted in the submission of several GREAT broadband applications on behalf of our region and providers. Two projects in the region were selected for funding – Transylvania County and Buncombe County!
    - ARC Community Center WIFI is making progress! We have public wifi access set up in the Leicester, Balsam Grove, and Broad River Community Centers! These sites have been identified as areas with gaps in widespread broadband coverage and are addressing needs for business, education, telehealth, and more.
  - **Housing**
    - The 5-Year Strategic Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan has been completed and submitted to HUD for the Asheville Regional Housing Consortium to guide the use of HOME funds for the region and CDBG funds for the City of Asheville.
    - LOSRC is leveraging this experience to support the newly formed HOME Consortium in Region A, and launching their consolidated planning process in January.
- b. **Transportation Services**
- RPO and LOSRC staff have supported Transylvania County Public Transit now know as Transylvania in Motion, (TIM's) with the development and mapping of their new fixed route.
  - RPO staff continues to work with local partners and NCDOT on project design and development
  - RPO staff serving as NCARPO Association President, the NCARPO is the statewide organization representing Rural Transportation Planning Organizations in NC



- RPO staff working with SWRPO, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Staff and LOSRC staff on the development of CMAQ, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, funding applications. These funds support ongoing air quality education and outreach programs in the Smoky Mountain Region
- RPO staff served on the FTA 5307 Urban Transit Funding selection committee for Haywood County
- RPO staff is surviving on the steering committee for the FBRMPO Regional Transit Study
- MPO staff is participating on NCDOT's Statewide Resiliency Planning Workgroup to help identify how resiliency challenges to transportation infrastructure (rockslides, floods, wildfires) can be incorporated into the planning process to evaluate transportation needs and planned improvements
- MPO staff is participating on a VMT reduction work group with NCDOT. The work group is looking at the potential efficacy in a number of efforts to reduce the amount that people drive in metropolitan areas in North Carolina.
- The MPO is in the process of approving more than \$300,000 in FTA Job Access Reverse Commute Funding (JARC) to transit providers in the region
- The MPO held a training session for Locally Administered Projects management for jurisdictions that have been awarded federal transportation funds through the MPO on February 18, 2021.
- The MPO is continuing to work through a Regional Transit Feasibility Study. <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/regional-transit-feasibility-study/>
- The MPO held its final design workshop on the Hendersonville Corridor Study on February 10, 2021. <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/regional-transit-feasibility-study/>
- MPO staff is continuing to work through its Tunnel Road Corridor Study with an initial public meeting planned for April
- MPO staff assisted with the procurement of transit services for Haywood County as it transitions to an "urban" transit provider under FTA rules and regulations.
- The MPO recently programmed a number of projects into the Transportation Improvement Program, utilizing its direct allotment of federal transportation funds. These projects include:
  - Engineering and Construction for three phases of the Ecusta Trail
  - Construction funding for improvements on Coxe Avenue
  - Additional funding for construction of the North RAD Greenway
  - Engineering and Construction for the Clear Creek Greenway
  - Construction funds for bike/ped upgrades on Haywood Road in West Asheville
  - Construction funds for an extension of sidewalk on Broadway Avenue
  - Construction funds for pedestrian improvements at the I-240/Charlotte Street Interchange
  - Construction funds for pedestrian safety improvements at various sites around the City of Asheville
  - Construction funds to add a signal at Biltmore Avenue and White Fawn Drive

- Additional construction funds for the Riverwalk Greenway in Black Mountain
- Continuing to work with the City of Asheville on the Close the GAP Plan (Greenways, ADA, and Pedestrian)
- MPO staff is working with the Town of Waynesville on its Richland Creek Greenway Feasibility Study
- MPO staff worked with Henderson County staff on its Mud Creek Greenway Study, which is in the process of closing-out
- MPO staff is working with City of Asheville staff on its Biltmore/McDowell corridor study
- The MPO recently approved its Draft FY 22 budget (Unified Planning Work Program) that includes funding for several local projects: Hellbender Feasibility Study (Haywood County), Pedestrian Plan (Buncombe County), Reed Creek Greenway Extension Study (City of Asheville), etc.

## 2. Finance

- a. Finance welcomes a new Administrative and Finance Clerk on April 12. Melissa Lindsey has accepted the position. Melissa has many years of experience working for two local CPA firms.
- b. Sherry Christenson and Charlotte will attend the School of Government class, *Governmental and Financial Reporting* starting Wednesday, March 24. All classes are online and are held every Wednesday through April 14. Sherry and Charlotte both received a scholarship of \$400 each from the Local Government Training Program at Western Carolina. Both of us are excited to attend!
- c. Charlotte also attended the MIP (Financial Software) class – Advanced Reporting on March 11.
- d. The audit team performed compliance work the week of March 8. We are happy to report that there are “No concerns” at this time.
- e. Charlotte continues to meet with Leadership Team members on current year budgets and fiscal year 2022 budgets.
- f. Our finance intern, Senuri is working on a budget handbook. The budget handbook includes worksheets that will help departments budget and monitor spending.

## 3. Aging

Updated Demographic Data Available on Older Adults: The [North Carolina State Aging Profile](#) and [County Profiles](#), and [State Demographic Slide Show](#) are now available from NC DHHS Division of Aging and Adult Services. The reports were released in February 2021 and can be viewed online or downloaded [here](#).

### Staff presentations

- Staff presented to MAHEC’s UNC School of Pharmacy students on how to access older adult resources in our region and state.
- Staff presented on Older Americans Month to aging providers at the monthly Buncombe County Aging Services Alliance meeting.

**Home and Community Care Block Grant Services: February 2021**

Adult Day Care/Health Hours	Meals Served	In-Home Aide Hours	Legal Hours	Transportation Trips	Home Improvement Projects
3,587	87,759	14,698	534	19,389	10

**Health Promotion/Disease Prevention:**

Community Health workers at Asheville Terrace Apartment successfully implemented support efforts with MAHEC to help facilitate distribution of the J&J shot to qualified residents on March 9. Staff begins the process of increasing the number of community health workers and onboarding new volunteers at Asheville Terrace. Licensing complete to continue offering the Living Healthy programs which resume virtually in late April.

**Family Caregiver Program:**

Launched a second *Harnessing Tech to Connect for Caregivers* on Facebook and YouTube, taking place on March 11, 18, and 25. All sessions will be recorded and available afterwards. Collaborating with Jewish Family Services and AARP for virtual segments on May 5, 12, and 19 for Older Americans Month to “Spark Joy” and encourage brain health.

**Ombudsman Program:**

The Ombudsmen Program has received new regulations which now allows for facility visitation. The Ombudsmen will wear PPEs as requested and will adhere to facility visitation guidelines. Facility visits may not be completed due to a high County Positivity Rates and COVID-19 Outbreaks. Even with facility visits being completed, the Ombudsmen will continue to advocate for residents through phone calls, email, and video calls.

**Other updates:**

- Regulations continue to state that the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is unable to visit facilities however committee meetings are being held virtually and continuing education opportunities are being provided.
- CARES Act Funding will be utilized to provide personal amplifiers to facilities. The funds have also been used to create postcards about stimulus checks. These postcards have been mailed to all facilities in Region B and will be provided to residents.
- Two presentations titled “What is an Ombudsman?” have been scheduled in April 2021.
- Zakit Levine, a student from Mars Hill University, is a new intern who is working with the Ombudsman Program until May 2021. Zakit is assisting the program in updating the Long Term Care and Senior Housing Directory and creating new presentations that will be provided to facility staff (i.e. resident rights, managing difficult behaviors, etc.). She is also attending meetings which allows her to learn not only about our program but about other issues within the aging community.

#### Money Follows The Person:

March is the third month Land of Sky has been implementing the program. Current caseload is 14 participants ranging from the ages of 34 to 75 years old. Our youngest participant is 34 years old and legally blind due to a brain tumor. She has been in the nursing facility for three years and is ready to have her own apartment. She is currently at the top of the waiting list for housing in Hendersonville. This is a new adventure for her and Money Follows the Person is proud to be able to take the journey with her. Once she is in her own apartment, she will have community services to help her get acclimated to the community and her own apartment. Her transitioning has started while in the facility. We have connected her with Services for the Blind and also a mentor that is blind himself.

#### Foster Grandparent Program:

Volunteers of the Foster Grandparent Program remain on “pause” during the COVID-19 pandemic until it is safe for them to return to service. Our federal funder, AmeriCorps, has been responsive to the impact of COVID-19 on our program. AmeriCorps has authorized a temporary stipend payment to volunteers while our programs are on hold, through March 31.

#### Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty):

The Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant has distributed \$53,720 in federal, state, and private grant respite funds to caregivers across her 15-county region and of this amount \$33,500 has thus far been spent on respite services. Caregivers have reported feeling great relief from the time off from caregiving that these funds have provided them. Care consultation services are also being provided to all enrolled caregivers and to a handful of other caregivers who do not need or want the funding. The Western Project C.A.R.E. office has three sources of respite funding for caregivers this fiscal year. They are 1) the State Project C.A.R.E. funds, 2) North Carolina Lifespan Respite Program (federal), and 3) a grant from the Dogwood Health Trust (for Region B only). Including all three funding sources, \$32,409 is currently available for caregiver respite services and there are 39 caregivers in line to receive funds. Also, the Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant is getting acquainted with an online educational platform developed for caregivers, TRUALTA <trualta.com>, recently made available to Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultants and Family Caregiver Support Specialists by the State, and will soon be inviting caregivers to become registered users. The hope is that caregivers making use of this online learning opportunity will grow in both confidence and competence.

#### 4. Administration

- a. We will be hosting a NC State University student as an intern through the university's Rural Works internship program. We have selected the intern and the intern will work under the supervision of the Deputy Director. The internship will be paid for by a grant from the State Employees Credit Union (SECU).
- b. Continuing to host weekly COVID19 calls on Thursday at 1:00 pm, the most recent call featured representatives of the NC League of Municipalities (NCLM) and NC Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) discussing the details of the \$130 million local governments in our region will receive from the American Recovery Act. This call featured over 80 participants. Upcoming calls will feature the region's public health directors and NC Department of Commerce, Assistant Secretary for Rural Development

- c. Christina Giles is representing the Council on a statewide team to create a NCARCOG Impact Report. We will create a regional impact report based on this template.
- d. In the early stages of planning a regional summit in the fall of 2021 with Southwestern Commission. We are discussing with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond the possibility of a partnership in hosting the summit. .
- e. We are working with Epsilon on their transition as the Council's IT Managed Services provider.
- f. Hosted a second mandatory staff training for our Council's "The Manual"/Handbook held in partnership with Craft HR Solutions and the Council's Legal Counsel.
- g. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion committee is continuing to meet biweekly with support from Craft HR Solutions. The committee is focused on staff training, external outreach, review of our personnel policy and employee handbook, hiring practices among other efforts. One goal of this effort is by 2022 our staff will reflect the diversity of our region.
- h. We have contracted with Deborah Miles to provide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training to staff. Deborah was selected based on evaluation from the Council's EDI committee. This training will be offered in April.
- i. Submitted a request to the John M Belk Endowment (JMBE) to support the Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative. JMBE has already provided \$200,000 and they have been very pleased with the work of our region.
- j. Monthly staff evaluations are in process following the tool developed with the assistance of Craft HR Solutions.
- k. Danna held new employee orientation meetings for new staff members
- l. Supporting staff telework needs and many virtual meetings.
- m. Working with Susan Russo Klein on moving forward with the LOSRC nonprofit "Friends of LOSRC", we are waiting on approval from the Internal Revenue Service.
- n. Working with the five Chambers of Commerce in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. The chambers would like to retain an outside firm to review the strategic plans of the chambers and local governments to determine areas of agreement for potential focus. LOSRC will assist in securing funding to support this effort and is incorporating this work into the CEDS.
- o. Hosted quarterly managers meeting.

## 5. Workforce

- a. Despite an unemployment rate around twice what it was one year ago, many employers in the region are struggling to meet their workforce needs. Even hospitality and tourism employers are starting to hire and host job fairs, while this sector's job openings are not as great as pre-pandemic there are still large number of job openings in that sector.
- b. We are working with Southwestern Commission and Dogwood Health Trust to apply for ARC POWER grant to increase the number of early childhood educators in our eleven county region.
- c. We are working with our financial monitor to secure approval for our partnership with the Asheville Chamber of Commerce to host the WNC Career Expo on April 14 – 16. The event will be virtual April 14 – 16 with an in-person event on April 15. We provide \$7,500 for sponsorship and \$15,000 for outreach.



- d. Region's Experienced Worker Initiative (EWI) was highlighted by the NC Department of Commerce as an innovative workforce development program. This effort is a partnership between AARP NC, Land of Sky Regional Council AAA, Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, NCWorks Career Center Asheville, AB Tech, Buncombe County Government and many others. The EWI is focused on supporting older workers with their career transitions.
- e. Christy Cheek, Education and Work-Based Learning Coordinator with MAWDB is working with Buncombe County on possible registered apprenticeship partnerships.
- f. We are working to increase the number of employers who have endorsed the Career Readiness Certification and make Buncombe, Henderson and Madison work-ready certified communities. Transylvania County is already certified as a Work-Ready Community.
- g. We have selected JB Media to be the firm which leads our NCWorks Dislocated Worker Outreach to connect more dislocated workers with our region's NCWorks Career Centers and community colleges to support them with education, training and employment. We received four proposals from this RFP.
- h. We have selected Integritive to be the firm which leads the Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative website outreach. The Collaborative oversees our region's postsecondary credential attainment effort aligned with My Future NC. This effort is funded by the John M Belk Endowment. Our region is the pilot in NC for a regional postsecondary credential attainment effort.
- i. We have received positive news from the ARC for a grant application in partnership with Southwestern Workforce Development Board for \$500,000. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Inspire (Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems) grant will support recovery to work. Dogwood Health Trust provided a professional grant writer for this project and they have agreed to match the grant award (1:1) from ARC if we are successful.
- j. Our Board staff are working closely with multiple partners, including but not limited to the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, NC Community College System and AB Tech, to support the Pratt & Whitney project. We have submitted multiple requests to our financial monitor for approval of expenditures that will support pre-employment training and outreach for Pratt & Whitney jobs.
- k. Despite the tens of thousands of layoffs impacting our region, we still have many employers hiring. Our career center managers are indicating demand for talent by employers is now as great or greater as it was prior to the pandemic. Our board is maintaining a list of current job openings to highlight that there are still jobs available. This list is in addition to the thousands of job opportunities in our region available through NCWorks.gov. We are trying to share the news that despite a historically elevated unemployment rate, many employers in our region are hiring.
- l. We have developed a professional NCWorks newsletter that is being sent to over 18,000 individuals in our Local Area registered on NCWorks.gov. This is one of our most effective and least costly ways to reach job seekers.



## 6. Mountain Mobility

- a. Mountain Mobility has provided more than 170 trips to vaccine appointments for those needing transportation in Buncombe County. In addition to transportation to the Buncombe County DHHS vaccine clinics, we are also working with other providers such as MAHEC and local pharmacy locations. These trips are provided at no cost to the passenger.
- b. Mountain Mobility has distributed 1200 packets to homebound seniors who are feeling the effects of isolation during the pandemic. These packets are filled with items ranging from toys and games, craft projects, snacks and information on services in the community. The project, funded by the CARES Act, is scheduled to continue through calendar year 2021.

## 7. NEMT

- a. Monitoring Medicaid Transformation to determine the impact on the Council's NEMT contract with Buncombe County. Latest projection from NCDOT is about 85% of clients will not transition to Managed Care.
- b. Buncombe County has budgeted funds to support full NEMT program for FY21-22.