

Land of Sky Regional Council
December 2, 2020
Virtual Regular Meeting
via the Zoom Platform



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 the Agenda
 - B. Minutes from the October Virtual Regular Meeting via the Zoom Platform
- VI. Public Comment**
- VII. Recognition of Special Guests**
- VIII. Delegates Roundtable and Updates from Around the Region**
- IX. 2020 Awards Presentation**
 - A. Robert E. Shepherd Excellence in Local Government Award
 - B. Charles H. Campbell Regional Leadership Award
 - C. Robert G. Parrish, Sr. Intergovernmental Relations Award
 - D. Special Recognition
- X. Old Business**
- XI. New Business**
 - A. Land of Sky Regional Council Annual Report FY 19-20
- XII. Executive Director's Report**
- XIII. Important Dates**
 - A. Next Virtual Regional Board Meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2021 via the Zoom Platform.
- XIV. Adjournment**



BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** October 2020 Board of Delegates Virtual Meeting Minutes
- Item Number:** X. Approval of Minutes from the October 2020 Virtual Regular Meeting
- Responsible Party:** Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services
- Attachment(s):** Minutes from the October 2020 Virtual Regular Meeting
- Background:** A quorum was present to conduct business at the October 2020 virtual meeting and the minutes provide a recap of the of the Delegates' updates from around the region. Presentations were provided by Dr. Anita Brown-Graham, UNC School of Government and nclIMPACT, Buncombe County Government, Duke Energy and Dominion Energy featuring a WNC Energy Update and information from Waste Reduction Partners (WRP) and the LOSRC Clean Vehicles Coalition about their programs.
- Staff Recommendation:** Recommend acceptance of the October 2020 virtual meeting minutes
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to approve the October 2020 virtual meeting minutes as submitted

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

October 28, 2020

Minutes

- I. Call to Order – Chair Volk called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30pm.
- II. Invocation – Mayor Larry Harris 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: Maureen Copelof, Eric Hardy, John Mitchell, Pat Christie, John Connet, Barbara Volk, Bob Tomasulo, Mike Hawkins, Preston Blakely, Nathan Bennett, Forrest Gilliam, Albert Gooch, Jonathan Kanipe, Joshua Hallingse, Tim Love, Daniel Cobb, and Norris Gentry, Mark Biberdorf, and George Morosani.
Guests Present – Jason Walls, Andrew McKinney, Dr. Gene Loflin, Jeremiah LeRoy, Ann Bass, Dr. John Gossett, Dr. Anita Brown-Graham, Dr. Arthur Salido, Tim Ware, Jamie Justus, Sybil Tate, and Julie Roper.
A quorum was present to conduct business.

- V. Modification and Approval of Agenda – The agenda was presented for approval with no modification requested.

Approval of the agenda as presented, by consensus of the Chair and Delegates.

- VI. Public Comment – No public comments were received.
- VII. Recognition of Special Guests –
Nathan Ramsey shared that guests would be introduced during the presentation portion of the meeting.
- VIII. Chair's Comments and Delegates Roundtable
Chair Volk requested that Delegates share updates and news of interest in their jurisdictions.

Delegates Roundtable

Tim Love – Shared that Buncombe County can now announce that Pratt & Whitney is moving to the County, bringing 800 high wage jobs! The facility is planned to open by 2022. These jobs could draw people from around the region. He thanked Biltmore Farms/Jack Cecil, AB Tech, EDC, etc.

John Mitchell – Shared that Henderson County has the high school project moving along and there is a new building underway at BRCC. With Halloween coming up, the Recreation Department is doing a special COVID Halloween, which is planned as a drive-through event. More information should be announced through the media. The big news is that the Zoning Department is developing a Comprehensive Plan, active through 2025.

Norris Gentry – Shared that Madison County has employed its new Director for Planning and Zoning, who is very qualified with regional experience. He also thanked LOS for providing support to the County while that position was vacant.

Mike Hawkins – Shared that Transylvania County had a Commission meeting Monday night, which included dealing with landfill issues (to expand or engage a contractor to have materials hauled off). The Commissioners made the decision to expand the current landfill. The second thing that happened at the meeting is that the City of Brevard and the County are combining their emergency response services. He communicated that the County is grateful that the City developed that initiative.

Jonathan Kanipe – Shared that the Town of Biltmore Forest is moving forward, realizing sales tax revenue, and looking forward to a better budget environment. The Town is discouraging in-person trick or treating. The Police Department is planning an event so kids can come by and get candy.

Larry Harris – Shared that the Town of Black Mountain is discouraging trick or treating and arranging activities downtown instead. The Town is also trying to navigate these unusual times, just like everyone else. The Christmas Parade and other in-person events have been called-off. Bracing for another five inches of rain tomorrow from the tropical storm.

Maureen Copelof – Shared that the City of Brevard has opened its new Skate Park- this makes two in City. It was immediately a popular site. At the Council meeting last week, approval was gained to move forward with a new community center for Rosenwald, the historic Black community. The City's finances are better than expected and the decision was made to move forward with building the community center (estimated cost- \$2 million). Last night, there was a virtual kick-off for updates to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. As a Blue Zone Site, the City was able to bring in Dan Burden. The City is planning to seek community input on that plan. Not closing any streets for Halloween and discouraging in-person trick or treating- a number of virtual Halloween events are planned instead. Councilwoman Copelof mentioned the combining of dispatch services with the County.

Albert Gooch – Shared that the Village of Flat Rock has seen heavy voter turnout at the Town Hall during early voting.

Preston Blakely – Shared that the Town of Fletcher also has early voting at its Town Hall. The Town Centre project is moving forward. This Veterans Day, there is a virtual salute planned. A virtual Halloween event was held at Biltmore Park recently.

Barbara Volk – Shared that the City of Hendersonville also canceled its big Treat Street downtown. To make up for that, the Farmer's Market is having the last of the seasonal markets this Saturday and kids are welcome to come down and get their pictures taken. The City has posted on its website and Facebook page recommendations for alternate Halloween events and is asking the community to follow CDC guidelines. The Turkey Trot is planned in-person on Thanksgiving morning. People can sign up for a time to stagger attendance.

Nathan Bennett – Shared that the Town of Mars Hill has canceled in-person Halloween and Christmas events. Otherwise, things are going well.

Forrest Gilliam – Shared that the Town of Marshall has canceled its in-person Halloween events but there are some alternative events going on. From a real estate standpoint, people are buying homes and renovating downtown projects.

Daniel Cobb – Shared that the Town of Mills River has a lot going on. The baseball field is nearly complete and ready for play. Solar panels have been installed on the Town Hall and the Town is realizing savings on power. The Town is also working on the comprehensive plan and virtual public involvement is part of the process. In addition, there has been very active permit activity, the majority of which is for single-family homes. Things are going well in Mills River.

Eric Hardy – Shared that the Town of Woodfin has hired a planning director (Adrienne Eisenhower). The Town was awarded a grant through the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and is planning to sell bonds to assist in developing the park system.

George Morosani – Shared that the Pratt & Whitney announcement is overwhelming! He also shared that the City of Hendersonville received a national award for the Grey's Hosiery Mill development.

Joshua Hallingse – Shared that the Transylvania Alliance is working with its county partners on a substantial sewer expansion. He also shared that the last industrial property in the City of Brevard has been sold to an enterprise from Mississippi.

Bob Tomasulo – Shared that the RAAC meeting is November 12 at 10am and the focus will be on Transylvania County, including a review of the Early Survey from April and May, when unemployment had peaked. The County is looking at the Blue Zone project going on. He communicated that LeeAnne Tucker can always share the meeting link for the RAAC meetings and for folks to reach out to her, if interested.

- IX. Approval of Minutes from the September Regular Meeting –
The minutes were approved as submitted by consensus of the Chair and Delegates.

Presentations/Recognition –

A. Dr. Anita Brown-Graham, UNC School of Government and nclIMPACT

Dr. Anita Brown-Graham shared that nclIMPACT is an initiative that could assist local governments to help their communities respond to the challenges of COVID19. She provided a presentation that included information about the Early Survey from April and May, when unemployment had peaked. Respondents to the survey came from counties throughout the state as the survey was sent to all city and county managers. The survey results indicate that local impacts across the state have included that COVID has had a negative impact for the majority of respondents. A very few responses said that there had been no impact or it was too soon to tell. Impacts were greater in the western part of the state. The most negative impacts for communities included risk of business closures, employment instability, educational disruptions, food insecurity, travel restrictions, childcare availability, loss of capacity for nonprofit partners, less access to healthcare, housing instability, etc. The responses also showed different impacts from region to region. It was also shared through the survey that most negative impacts were expected to last from 91 days to a year. The Piedmont region in particular shared responses that around 31-60 days would be the length of negative impacts. The impact on the economy and the local workforce were highly felt in the western Prosperity Zones. The northwestern and northeastern regions thought there would be more negative impacts to their local workforce. There were also regional differences on impacts to the economy and the workforce. Some positive impacts were noted, including the chance to build a strong collaboration with community faith leaders, which was initially used to promote health and safety during the pandemic, but is now being used to promote the Census and other community priorities. Another respondent noted appreciation for the role of healthcare providers, first responders and essential personnel. In addition, yet another shared that during these distressing times, to see our community looking out for each other – neighbors, businesses, organizations, has been heartening. People have become more selfless. Looking ahead, the perceived impact on local government revenues has been worse in the western region of the state. Other positive impacts include people coming together.

Dr. Brown-Graham shared about the webinar series- '*Keys to Economic Recovery*' that began October 8 with a webinar on innovation, continues on November 18 with an entry on collaboration and concludes with a data-driven decision making webinar on January 27, 2021. These are available through the NC School of Government. Dr. Anita Brown-Graham shared case studies including one from the City of Belmont, which paired a loan program for small businesses with an effective "Keep the light on Belmont" program to drive residents to support local enterprises. There have also been positive public health messages, leading to community confidence. The City of Fayetteville provided another case study, about an innovative approach to capitalizing on deep relationships and strong networks, the City expended its existing loan program to target support to businesses that need it most. The next program highlighted was the Carolina Textile District Program that had an innovative approach to let local governments use procurement as a way to sustain and support local businesses.

Dr. Anita Brown-Graham shared data on consumer consternation, which showed that some consumers were under too much pressure to engage fully with the economy during the height of the stay-at-home order. As the phases have progressed, a high level of consumer consternation has persisted, which could lead to a challenge for the economy going forward. In part, this is due to the level of daily reported COVID cases. The differences between rural and urban areas was noted, including that the infection rates are much higher in the rural areas. Finally, the virus is hitting racial and ethnic communities differently. Dr. Brown-Graham shared the link to the compendium of case studies. (<https://ncimpact.sog.unc.edu/our-work/economy/keys-to-economic-recovery-from-covid-19/>)

B. WNC Energy Update, featuring Buncombe County Government, Duke Energy and Dominion Energy
Jeremiah LeRoy shared an update on Buncombe County's Sustainability Plan. One of the community focus areas is environmental and energy stewardship. Aggressive goals include 100% renewable energy for County operations by 2030 and 100% renewable energy for all of Buncombe County by 2032. He shared a '*Pathway to 100*' graphic showing how this goal might be accomplished. He noted that the County is working

on an alternative-fueled fleet. He shared that teleworking is probably going to continue. Big solar farms and more solar projects are on the horizon. Jeremiah LeRoy shared about the big solar project. Partners include AB Tech, Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, the County and the City of Asheville. The process included an initial site review, utility consumption review, initial system design, structural certification, budget estimates, and financial analysis for savings, cash flow, payback, and bid readiness and solicitation. He shared that partners pay for their solar updates. The results of a Request for Quotes (RFQ) included 47 total projects and construction/installation costs of \$10M, excluding the City of Asheville. Estimated savings are projected to be \$27M over the life of the project. Next steps include a Phase 2, which includes other local governments and stakeholders (Town of Weaverville, Town of Black Mountain UNC-A, the Airport Authority, and additional County facilities). Another aggregated bidding process is underway with an estimate to put projects out for bid by July 2021.

Jason Walls, District Manager with Duke Energy- Asheville Area, shared about the pathways to a cleaner energy future. He shared about the work underway at Duke Energy to build a smarter energy grid for the consumer. Targets include improved reliability, strengthening the grid, providing more options and controls and expanding solar and renewables. Customers want more convenience and control over electricity usage. Jason Walls noted that this is especially important now, as people are spending more time at home. He also noted that it is important to have a grid that is capable of massive expansion. Jason Walls shared about the 2020 IRP, which is a national leader in reducing carbon emissions. This has provided upfront, robust stakeholder engagement, and the ability to realize aggressive targets achievable with investments in solar, wind and other forms of renewable energy. Late last year, Duke Energy announced the goal to reduce carbon emissions by up to 70% by 2035. Duke Energy is also looking at impacts to costs to customers. Investments in the Asheville area's energy future include the natural gas powered plant, which is 75% more efficient than the now-retired coal plant it replaced, because natural gas burns cleaner than coal, anticipates a 60% reduction in carbon emissions per megawatt-hours, a 99% reduction in sulfur dioxide, a 40% reduction in nitrogen oxides, and Mercury has been eliminated. Other innovations include \$600M in battery projects across the six states serviced by Duke Energy. Batteries can provide backup energy storage, control energy flow inside power lines, and allow multiple applications. Other local projects include Hot Springs Micro-Grid, the Riverside Storage Facility and the Asheville Plant Solar/Storage Facility. Jason Walls shared that Duke Energy is an active participant in the stakeholder process, is seeking common ground with environmental groups, public advocates, electric co-ops, municipalities and other companies.

Julie Roper with Dominion Energy shared that natural gas delivers for North Carolina. Dominion Energy's national footprint includes over 20 states with over 600,000 gas customers in the State. Dominion Energy supports communities by providing operations that provide millions of dollars in tax revenue to help local governments pay for schools, roads, and emergency response services. Employees are personally involved in Dominion Energy programs that assist communities. The company has also committed \$5M to social justice and community rebuilding efforts and \$35M to HBCUs, among other things. Dominion Energy is committed to being net zero by 2040 for both power generation and natural gas operations. Plans are in the works to reduce emissions from natural gas operations by decreasing gas venting, expanding leak detection and repair programs, and offsetting emissions through renewable natural gas. Dominion Energy supports the expansion of renewables through significant investments in solar energy. As of June 2020, Dominion Energy owns or purchases output from nearly 1100 megawatts of solar energy in North Carolina. That is enough power to serve 275,000 homes at peak solar output. The public utility has also reduced carbon emissions by 60% since 2005. Dominion Energy plans to build a low-carbon future through its natural gas operations and by supporting the expansion of renewables and producing electricity from natural gas, etc. Dominion Energy captures methane from hog farms and converts that to renewable natural gas to serve homes and businesses; there is a \$300M initiative, with partner Smithfield Foods, to make the State the largest agricultural producer of renewable natural gas (RNG) in the nation. This project plans to utilize 19 farms in Duplin and Sampson Counties and could be operational by the end of 2020.

Julie Roper shared about new technology that captures purged natural gas, rather than expelling it into the atmosphere. Dominion Energy is looking to incorporate other new technologies including a national initiative to explore and accelerate low-carbon energy technologies, including hydrogen, which has the potential to decarbonize many sectors. She noted that while not everything is happening in North Carolina, there are plenty of opportunities in the State to incorporate new technology. Natural gas plays an important role in growing the economy. Dominion Energy works with many local governments on projects to help those communities compete locally.

C. Waste Reduction Partners (WRP) – Terry Albrecht, Director

Terry Albrecht shared that WRP has a team of volunteer engineers that are available to conduct energy assessments for local governments, businesses, educational institutions, etc. He encouraged the Board and others to reach out through the WRP webpage on the LOSRC website (<http://www.landofsky.org/wrp.html>) or to the WRP Program Manager, Russ Jordan (russ@landofsky.org) for more information.

D. Clean Vehicles Coalition Update – Sara Nichols, Regional Planner

Sara Nichols shared an update regarding the Clean Vehicles Coalition. She noted that Jason Walls is scheduled to speak at the Air Quality press conference this Friday (10/30/20), along with others, including Bill Eaker. The focus of the Clean Vehicles Coalition is on the provision of renewable fuels and alternatively fueled fleet development. She noted that the VW Settlement funds could provide funding for EV charging stations. Interested parties can reach out to Sara Nichols (sara@landofsky.org) or Bill Eaker (bill@landofsky.org) for more information.

X. Consideration and Approval of Consent Agenda Items

XI. New Business

XII. Executive Director's Report

Nathan Ramsey shared that his report was in the agenda packet. He encouraged Delegates and guests to reach out with any questions or comments regarding the report.

XIII. Important Dates

A. Wednesday, December 2, 2020 is the next regularly scheduled Board of Delegates meeting, which includes the annual awards presentation for the Charles H. Campbell, Robert G. Parrish and Robert E. Shepherd awards.

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:** Executive Director's Report
- Item Number:** XIV. Executive Director's Report
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Interim Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** Executive Director's Report for December 2, 2020
- Background:** The Executive Director's Report provides updates and relevant information on funding opportunities and current initiatives from LOSRC Departments/Agencies.
- Staff Recommendation:** N/A.
- Suggested Motion(s):** N/A

Land of Sky Regional Council
Executive Director Report
Respectfully submitted by Nathan Ramsey
December 2, 2020

1. Economic & Community Development/Transportation
 - a. ECD
 - Welcomed Scott Adams – Regional Planner, to the Team as the Zoning Administrator for Montreat and planner for Land of Sky.
 - Regional Air Quality Press Conference was held Oct. 30 via Webex.
 - Received \$22,250 grant from DHT for broadband survey marketing support for Land of Sky and Southwestern Commission.
 - Submitted technical assistance applications for EDA and ARC totaling \$316,538 in requests.
 - Submitted CDBG-Infrastructure grant application for the City of Brevard.
 - Completed and submitted the regional Housing Analysis and Plan to HUD for the City of Asheville.
 - Assisted in the submission of several GREAT broadband applications on behalf of our region and providers.
 - Working with local governments, Dogwood Health Trust to apply for CDBG-CV grants for each of our counties and for municipalities that are willing and eligible to participate.
 - Providing support for the regional (five counties) Chambers of Commerce leadership group effort to assist small businesses.
 - 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.
 - Waste Reduction Partners has been hosting webinars on COVID-19 reaching over 500 participants.
 - Partnering with the AAA team to assist in the administration of the CARES Act funds.
 - Submitted a \$160,000 grant application to the FEMA BRIC program through NCDPS in partnership with several entities.
 - Initiating the WNC Stormwater Partnership for training, education, and stormwater inventories for member governments.
 - Partnering with the Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Support Agencies, nonprofits, and economic developers to assist small businesses through COVID-19 impacts.
 - Partnering with EDA, NCORR, Rural Center, COGS, and others to build a framework for Resilience and Recovery.
 - Facilitating the Regional Solid Waste Managers Forum and Recycling Program.
 - Contracting with several towns for zoning and mapping assistance including Flat Rock and Montreat.
 - Working with regional partners to identify Affordable/Workforce Housing opportunities for short- and mid term solutions.

- Developing a regional Housing Analysis and Plan in partnership with the Asheville Housing Consortium.
- Developing a CDBG-I application for sewer extension in Brevard.

b. Transportation

- The 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), was approved by the MPO Board in September, 2020
- The Hellbender Regional Trail Plan, was approved by the MPO Board in September, 2020
- Assisted Haywood County with the development of an RFQ for urban transit services
- Held several design-based virtual public workshops for the Hendersonville Road Corridor Study
- Working on the Tunnel Road Corridor Study
- Contracted with the Town of Waynesville and Henderson County to conduct Greenway Feasibility Studies
- Continuing to work with the City of Asheville on the Close the GAP Plan (Greenways, ADA, and Pedestrian)
- In progress to program \$27,400,000 in Surface Transportation Block Grant funds to member governments from FY 22 - FY 26
- Kicked-off the Regional Transit Feasibility Study
- Submitted highway, transit, and bike/ped projects from around the region for the Statewide Prioritization Process

2. Workforce Development

- Annual recognition event will be Tuesday, December 1 at 11:00 am. This year's event will be virtual. The event recognizes outstanding employers, job seekers, youth and workforce partners in our region.
- Land of Sky Education and Workforce Collaborative work groups have started with target areas of Enhance Pre-K and Early Childhood Education, Improve Student Success Rates in K12 Education, Create a Seamless Transition to Postsecondary Education, Align Educational Objectives and Outcomes to Desired Employee Competencies and Policy and Funding Needs to Achieve Goal. This project is funded by the John M Belk Endowment and is the first regional effort to meet the my Future NC postsecondary credential attainment effort.
- Applied for \$100,000 in funding from the NC Department of Commerce to provide training/education for dislocated workers to support Pratt & Whitney and other advanced manufacturing firms in the region.
- Applied for \$75,000 in funding from the NC Department of Commerce to support business services to employers in the region.
- Working to finalize contracts with Transylvania County for the \$75,000 grant from the NC Department of Commerce for temporary employment of dislocated workers to support COVID-19 contact tracing in Madison and Transylvania Counties. Madison County's contract is finalized and the program is active.

- Received \$55,000 to provide student support for the Finish Line Grant program at AB Tech and Blue Ridge Community College. Also received \$40,000 to assist the community colleges with outreach and administration of this program.
- Submitted an application for \$500,000 ARC INspire grant, Dogwood Health Trust will match this grant 1:1 if successful so the potential project could be \$1,000,000. The grant will support recovery to work in the eleven counties served by MAWDB and Southwestern WDB. Dogwood Health Trust is providing a professional grant writer to support this project.
- Partnership with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce for a virtual job fair platform that can be utilized on an unlimited basis by our region's NCWorks Career Centers and the Board.
- Providing ongoing support for many employers who are downsizing or furloughing workers as well as many dislocated workers.
- Supporting incumbent worker training with Business Accelerator Grants at Atlas Precision Plastics, Astral Buoyancy Company, Advanced Superabrasives Inc., Metropolitan Medical and Daniels Graphics.
- Working on a partnership with MANNA Food Bank to distribute NCWorks packets to reach individuals who may be dislocated workers or those searching for employment and training opportunities.
- Held forum with local school systems and employers on disconnected youth and homeless students.

3. Administration

- Continuing to host weekly COVID19 calls on Thursday at 1:00 pm, next call on Thursday, December 3 will feature NC Treasurer Dale Folwell.
- We have extended VC3 contract by six months and we anticipate announcing the decision soon to select a vendor in response to our Managed IT Services RFP.
- Exploring the possibility of hosting a "Foreign Trade Zone" (FTZ) for our region.
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion committee is meeting biweekly with support from Craft HR Solutions. Two executive committee members (Bob Tomasulo and Mike Hawkins) are part of this committee. 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.
- We have contracted with Leslie Anderson to offer collective impact training to staff and we have invited the staff at Southwestern Commission to join us as space allows. The training will be on January 14 and January 15.
- We contracted with Erica Allison at Formation PR to assist LOSRC in preparing a video annual report that will be released at the December 2 meeting.
- Monthly staff evaluations are in process following the tool developed with the assistance of Craft HR Solutions.
- Danna held new employee orientation meetings for new staff members
- Danna and Charlotte are working on our FEMA reimbursement request to recover expenses incurred due to COVID19

- Weekly COVID-19 response calls have been averaging between 35 – 130 participants.
- Supporting staff telework needs and many virtual meetings.
- Hosted multiple meetings on behalf of the NC Association of Regional Council of Governments (NC ARCOG).
- Working with Susan Russo Klein on moving forward with the LOSRC nonprofit “Friends of LOSRC” .
- 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.

4. Area Agency on Aging

Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty): Project C.A.R.E. services are being provided as usual with the exception that no in-person visits with caregivers are taking place. Respite funds are being distributed to previously enrolled clients and to new clients. Enrolled clients are receiving care consultation services. Callers are receiving information, assistance and referral services and in some cases being added to the waiting list for respite funds/care consultation.

\$30,000 (64% of the total amount allocated by the state for regions A, B, and C) has been distributed to 47 caregivers needing respite in Regions A, B, and C, and approximately half (\$14,976) has been utilized. Of the 47 caregivers receiving respite funds, 25 are in the Land of Sky region; 11 are in each of the adjoining regions.

- Half of the currently enrolled caregivers are new to the program as of this fiscal year.
- 35 caregivers are on the above-mentioned waiting list.
- In addition to the 47 caregivers receiving respite funds, several more have enrolled for consultation services only.
- The North Carolina Respite Care Coalition is providing additional funds for caregiver respite to Project C.A.R.E. statewide; approximately \$18,000 will be distributed in the Western P.C. region by the Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program: Ombudsmen were recently provided regulations regarding re-entering long term care facilities. Both indoor and outdoor visits are allowed within certain written guidelines. Even with the visits that are allowed, the Ombudsman are continuing to advocate for residents through phone calls, email and video calls. Ombudsmen are also in contact with facility staff to provide information, support and review of new regulations.

Ombudsmen are staying up-to-date on facility regulations around COVID-19 by attending numerous meetings. The State Ombudsman Office holds biweekly meetings for all NC Ombudsmen, and on alternate weeks, the North Carolina Ombudsman Members meet to

discuss pertinent issues. The Ombudsman program is also holding virtual meetings to discuss issues around COVID-19 and how various states are handling the pandemic.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is now able to hold virtual committee meetings with training. However, the CAC is not yet allowed to enter the long term facilities.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) have been ordered through the CARES Act Funding. The Ombudsman Program is in the process of distributing the Kindle Fire Tablets which were purchased from the CARES Act. The tablets are for Family Care Homes as well non-corporate Adult Care Homes in order to assist with tele-therapy as well as virtual visits with family and friends.

One Aging Sensitivity class has been scheduled for December and will be provided to Blue Ridge Community College nursing assistant students in Henderson County.

Health Promotion/Disease Prevention: Virtual Health Promotion Programs have served approximately 70 residents in our region since July 1, 2020. We have also lead the way for the state and offering full session series (20 sessions) of Tai Chi for arthritis and falls prevention via Zoom and are currently registering participants for our 3rd Tai Chi offering.

Home and Community Care Block Grant Funding: Below are stats for services provided thus far in FY20:

| <u>Adult Day Care/Health</u> | <u>Meals</u> | <u>In-Home Aide</u> | <u>Legal</u> | <u>Transportation/Trips</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| 1,837 | 43,932 | 9,258 | 311 | 11,858 |

Staff began the steps of FY21 monitoring by creating the monitoring schedule for providers. Monitoring will be accomplished by staff this year with minimal contact and observing social distancing guidelines. Providers will have an option of either a facility visit where staff will be sequestered into a predetermined space with the needed files or they have the option to securely digitally transfer files to staff for me to perform a desk review. These options will be dependent on the program I will be monitoring and if they require a full programmatic monitoring.

The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) hired Haylee Johnson as the FGP Support Specialist position to assist with recruitment in Transylvania, Madison, and Henderson Counties. Haylee began her position officially on November 10 and will be working with FGP part-time until the end of June. Welcome Haylee!

FGP volunteers were mailed Thanksgiving cards, each with a packet of cider, as a small token to let them know they are thought of and appreciated.

Senior Companion Program: Volunteers are entering the last month of temporary stipends. This has been in place since April 2020. AmeriCorps Senior has allowed an average number of hours to be paid at \$3.00 an hour to volunteers. In January 2021, we will no longer be allowed to offer this temporary stipend and we will be offering a re-entry plan to our volunteers as allowed by North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The Covid-19 environment is difficult to navigate with our vulnerable populations.

The Senior Companion Program has applied and submitted a 5310 transportation grant to the North Carolina Department of Transportation and will hear in August 2021 if it has been awarded. This grant would support reimbursement mileage that our volunteers travel to support their clients in rural areas. The Senior Companion Program is in the application process for two more grants. One is with AmeriCorps Senior for support in safe engagement of the volunteers and their clients during the pandemic. The other is a 5310 transportation grant through the city of Asheville. This would mirror the transportation grant to support mileage reimbursement but with volunteers to travel in urban areas. The Senior Companion Program is still on pause. Currently there are three new applications for becoming a Senior Companion Volunteer. The SCP Manager, Dee Heinmuller, and Support Specialist, Kathy Maney, are working on safely creating a training program. There are 34 registrations for new clients and they are being held until the Senior Companion Program is “open” again.

Staff is busy watching over volunteers, connecting with them, and giving support. Social isolation is of great concern. Monthly phone calls and check-ins have been helpful. Clients are being supported with daily to weekly phone calls and support services as needed.

Family Caregiver Support Program:

- Completed Harnessing Tech to Connect Series – 263 people viewed live event. Series will continue to be available on Facebook and You Tube.
- Powerful Tools for Caregivers Had Largest Class to Date – 7 regular attendees for 6 sessions.
- Family Caregiver Program represented on caregiver panel for Buncombe Aging Services Alliance.
- Intern Edward Jones presented the webinar session on “Telehealth” as part of the Tech to Connect webinar series. He is also working with staff to develop the Amazon Kindle Fire for kinship caregivers.

5. Mountain Mobility

- The Administrative offices received \$5,000 in CARES Act funding to combat social isolation in senior adults in Buncombe County. We’ll be sending monthly CARE packages to our most vulnerable/isolated seniors beginning in January 2021.
- The Enka-Candler Trailblazer continues to show strong ridership despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Trips grew more than 15% from September to October. We saw growth in

other areas as well including medical trips for seniors, which was up almost 9% from September.

6. NEMT

- Nathan met with Philip Hardin with Buncombe County Government to discuss operations for FY21-22 with Medicaid Transformation. There is significant uncertainty at the state level and LOSRC will be prepared to support Buncombe County as needed.

7. Finance

- Charlotte attended MIP training (accounting software) on November 5, 2020. This session covered report set-up. Additional training will be scheduled after the holidays.
- Arranged a conference call with Bob Lloyd (Federal Grant Consultant). New regulations on procurement, contracts, and facility usage have been implemented.
- Continue to work with external auditors to complete the FY20 audit. LGC bumped up the audit deadline. Originally we had hoped to finish up by the normal deadline of October 30 – but since this is the first year for Anderson, Smith and Wike to audit Land of Sky they are making sure they have covered everything and understand all our grants, etc.
- UNC Asheville management and accounting student will join the finance team spring 2021 as an intern.