

**Land of Sky Regional Council**  
**March 23, 2022**  
**Regular Meeting via Zoom**



When joining the virtual meeting, Delegates are requested to mute themselves and to un-mute for discussion or moving on orders of business.

Delegates are requested 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. Approval of the Previous Minutes (February 2022)
- VI. Comments by the Chair and Delegates Roundtable**
- VII. Public Comment**
- VIII. Presentations/Recognition**
  - A. Hometown Strong, Anderson Miller, Director of Public Policy
  - B. NC State Auditor Beth Wood
  - C. Big Brothers and Big Sisters of WNC, Dorian Palmer, Recruitment and Development Specialist and Deon Lytle, Program and Recruitment Coordinator
- IX. New Business**
  - A. Nominating Committee Report
- X. Executive Director's Report**
- XI. Important Dates**
  - A. Next regularly scheduled Board meeting is planned for April 27, 2022.
- XII. Adjournment**



## BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** Consent Agenda
- Item Number:** V. Consent Agenda:  
A. Modification/Approval of the Board's Agenda for March 23, 2022  
B. Approval of Minutes from the February 23, 2022, Regular Meeting
- Responsible Party:** Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services
- Attachment(s):** Minutes from the February 2022 Regular Meeting
- Background:** Item B. February, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes Recap:  
Quorum was present to conduct business at the February 2022 meeting and the minutes provide a recap of the Delegates' updates from around the region. The meeting also included presentations from LOSRC staff regarding Years-of-Service Recognition for LOSRC staff, the Local Dues Structure and How Local Dues are Leveraged, the WNC Innovation Park and EDA Build Back Better, The Land of Sky Collaborative and the P20 Council, and the EDA Good Jobs Challenge grant opportunity.
- Staff Recommendation:** Recommend approval of the Consent Agenda
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented.

**Land of Sky Regional Council  
Board of Delegates  
Regular Meeting**

**February 23, 2022**

**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: Terri Wells, William Lapsley, Michael Garrison, Jason Chappell, Jake Dalton, Sandra Kilgore, Jonathan Kanipe, Barbara Jeter, Preston Blakely, Barbara Volk, Deb Bridges, Nathan Bennett, Sandra Goode, Jane Alexander, Patrick Fitzsimmons, John Mitchell, and Bob Tomasulo

Guests Present – Vicki Benavides, Marissa Turner, Robin Ramsey, Representative Caleb Rudow, Lane Bailey, Ann Bass, and Dr. Arthur Salido

A quorum was present to conduct business.

- V. Consent Agenda – The consent agenda, consisting of the Board’s February agenda and the minutes of the January 26, 2022, meeting was presented for approval.

***Terri Wells moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Jason Chappell seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

- VI. 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 some good work going on at the subcommittee level around affordable housing, etc. A new contract is in place for solid waste.

Commission Chair William Lapsley – Shared that Henderson County is going through its comprehensive planning process and over 6500 responses to the public survey have been received regarding the plan. He commended staff for their significant outreach to the community. He noted that the County formed a substance abuse task force a couple of years ago, made recommendations that the Commission followed through on, and the task force has been reestablished and discussion is underway on how to use the opioid settlement funds. Broadband task force formed by the Commission to examine how service can be provided to the rural areas in the County that are in dire need of broadband.

Commissioner Jason Chappell – Shared that Transylvania County, in the very near future would be finalizing the MOU with the Town of Rosman for major expansion of water and sewer utilizing federal and state dollars. Additionally, at the last meeting, the Commission voted for a significant cost of living raise for county staff (7%). This is also a way of showing the community how valued staff are who provide services.

Council Member Sandra Kilgore – Shared that the City of Asheville approved the Haywood Street community development project that will allow \$1.3 million for the purchase of the land and hundreds of thousands in funding for the development. Additionally, Council voted 5-2 against the Avery development, which could have reinvigorated the western part of downtown, but the design was not satisfactory.

Manager Jonathan Kanipe – Shared that the Town of Biltmore Forest is working on its comprehensive plan and has completed a transportation study. He gave thanks to Buncombe County for hosting all the municipalities in the County at its public safety event.

Council Member Barbara Jeter – Shared that the Village of Flat Rock has a public event coming up this Saturday for its public safety staff including the firefighters. Everyone is welcome.

Mayor Preston Blakely – Shared that the Town of Fletcher is doing well.

Mayor Barbara Volk – Shared that the City of Hendersonville has approved across-the-board increases for staff immediately and another COLA beginning July 1. The City received great response to the survey regarding what to do with the ARPA funds. Over 1000 responses were received and those will be reviewed during the planning process that begins tonight. The City has a 150th Anniversary celebration coming up in front of the Historic Courthouse and is asking businesses, nonprofits, and City departments to share their history with the community.

Commissioner Deb Bridges – Shared that the Town of Laurel Park has a new Town Manager- Alex Carmichael. The Town is very excited about the talent he brings to the community. Mike Morgan from Weaverville has been the interim Town Manager and has done a great job and the Town wishes him well in his retirement.

Manager Nathan Bennett – Shared that the Town of Mars Hill has partnered with NC Commerce to participate in the economic resiliency initiative to help the community recover from the pandemic and build resiliency for the future. He also gave a shout out to Erica Anderson as the Town has been notified that DHT and ARC will be providing \$650,000 for a significant project.

Manager Daniel Cobb – Shared that the Town of Mills River has a lot of housing developments underway, and a lot of property is changing hands. Other projects are underway around transportation. He shared that staff are working to rehabilitate the Town Park. Lastly, the Town is working to put a new picnic shelter at the Park, too.

Commissioner Jane Alexander – Shared that the Town of Montreat is pleased for Alex Carmichael and his new position with Laurel Park. Additionally, the Town is looking for a new manager.

Mayor Patrick Fitzsimmons – Shared that Weaverville has a new public wi-fi system and he extended thanks to LOSRC for the assistance provided to make the system a reality. The Town is looking for other potential partners for its water system expansion plans. He commended Mike Morgan and wished him many happy days in his retirement.

Aging Representative Bob Tomasulo – Shared that the Regional Aging Advisory Council (RAAC) is meeting on March 10 at 10am virtually and the speaker will be from the Industry for the Blind. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Commissioner Michael Garrison – Shared that Madison County has Brad Guth in place as the new Economic Development Director/Zoning Director. The County is glad to have him on-board. Last night, the Commission appointed a work committee for the new Justice Center (Courthouse renovations). The County is also getting ready to tackle the comprehensive plan and have contracted with a legal service to revamp some ordinances. The county is moving forward and getting everything in place to utilize the ARPA funds. The Commission is also working on an economic incentives grant program and hoping to have an announcement regarding that soon.

VII. Public Comment -

Chair Volk called for public comments. No comments were received from the public.

Barbara Darby, Assistant Workforce Director, announced the Local Government Job Fair on March 23 at the Virginia Boone Building at the WNC Ag Center. All local governments are welcome to participate and there is no cost. WNC Career Expo is slated for March 30 at Pack Place in Asheville from 11am to 4pm.

VIII. Presentations/Recognition –

A. Land of Sky Years of Service Recognition – Nathan Ramsey shared that there are five staff being recognized for their years-of-service to Land of Sky today including Danna Stansbury- 15 years, Zia Rifkin- 10 years, Nathan Ramsey- five years, and Glenda Brown- five years. Staff expressed their appreciation for the recognition.

B. How Does Land of Sky Leverage Your Local Government Dues? –

Nathan Ramsey provided a presentation regarding the Local Government assessments and how that funding is utilized by the organization. He provided the dues history at LOSRC, noting that dues have increased only (5.4%) over the past 20 years. Local dues provide the program match for ARC, EDA, and AAA grants. Over the past fiscal year, the total match requirements have increased and use most of the local dues collected.

Charlotte Sullivan shared that oftentimes, when the budget is under development for the next fiscal year, the exact match amounts are not known for the grants that require a local match.

Leeanne Tucker shared that the AAA operates many programs that require local matching funds including the Family Caregiver Support Program, Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program, the Ombudsman Program, Money Follows the Person, Project C.A.R.E., the Home and Community Care Block Grant Program, etc. The AAA has 17 staff who operate these programs in the region. The local dues match invests in administration of federal Aging funds on behalf of the counties, the ARPA and Coronavirus Aid, and the Relief and Economic Security funds. Additionally, the Nutrition Programs also require a local match. Dues make up a little over 10% of the required match on programs. The remainder of the required match is met through in-kind donations.

Erica Anderson shared that both ARC and EDA recognize LOSRC as the Lead Economic Development District for regional economic development, planning, and activities in the LOSRC region. Technical assistance is provided to many jurisdictions through local support. Transportation planning is the MPO and RPO. The ARC and EDA match for ECD is about 2% of the total ECD budget. Local funding allowed over \$85 Million in grant funding to flow into the region last year. Match requirements for Buncombe have increased as the County is now recognized as a Tier 1 county.

Nathan Ramsey shared that the important take away from this presentation is the impact that AAA and ECD programs have on local communities. Local dues are calculated based on county population from the decennial census. The total local dues amount is apportioned by populations for each of the four counties. Each county then determines how to allocate the local dues among municipalities in the county. Beyond matches, local dues support the Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) initiative, a portion of the NADO, NCACOG and SERDI dues, the governmental relations contract with EQV Strategic, meals at Council meetings, operational costs when there are not sufficient program funds, and support for recognition and awards, LOSRC branded items, etc., nonprofit expenses (legal, accounting and start-up costs, and other expenses that cannot legally be covered with federal, state or administrative funds. Local dues also support the cost of the annual holiday bonus for staff.

Discussion occurred regarding the nonprofit (FLOS), which was established to pursue grant opportunities that would not otherwise be available to the organization. Currently, there is a housing program operating through the nonprofit that complements the ARC INspire Recovery to Work program. Nathan Ramsey shared that before the nonprofit was established, departments have raised private donations for specific events.

Discussion occurred regarding the FTZ in WNC initiative. Nathan Ramsey shared information on the purpose of an FTZ, how it operates and the benefits it could provide to businesses in the Western region. Currently, there is not an FTZ within 90-minutes of LOSRC, meaning that there are no established FTZs that can serve the Western region of the state. Currently, Renee Boyette, FTZ Administrator for the organization is working with the Asheville Regional Airport to become an international port of entry. He noted too, that none of the neighboring FTZs could serve the entire western region. Renee Boyette shared that an application to the FTZ Board can be made by the Greer Board to serve some of the counties in the Western region.

#### C. WNC Innovation Park and EDA Build Back Better -

Erica Anderson, ECD Director shared information regarding the WNC Innovation Park, conceived for the EDA Build Back Better grant opportunity. She noted that the goal is to create opportunities where high-

growth industries can apply data and technology to product development, co-locate and collaborate with others within their cluster to create opportunities for expansion and economic resilience. Such a coalition would bring a higher level of research and applied technology to the region focused around a satellite approach or central hub, that would provide a lot of support and connection to higher technology in other sectors. Potential clusters could be Aerospace, Automotive, Cybersecurity and Recreation and Health Innovation and Climate Technology. The Innovation Park model is incorporated into an application to DHT with discussions underway to determine scale, focus and having an implementable project. Regional collaboration project led by the Chambers of Commerce and businesses in a five-county region (Haywood included). The process is to assess regional plan concurrence and priorities, targeted industry clusters analysis, and assessment of job opportunities and skills for emerging industry/sectors due to automation. Deliverables for the regional collaboration project include SOAR analysis and concurrence strategies, industry clusters analysis and job opportunity skills assessment. This is planned as about a seven-month process that includes plan alignment and leadership facilitation among the tentative frameworks. This project is an innovative approach to development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

Discussion occurred regarding the investments in infrastructure and broadband and how specifically some of the satellite hubs might need to be located.

#### D. EDA Good Jobs Challenge –

Emily Nicholson, P20 Executive Director, shared about the Good Jobs Challenge grant application, which was submitted February 4, 2022. Applicants selected for a grant award should be notified by July 2022. She noted that 13 of the total grant applications came from NC. Emily Nicholson shared that the P20 is one of fifteen collaboratives in the State to do the work of increasing the level of North Carolinians with a post-secondary credential by 2030. The P20 Council is funded by the John M. Belk Endowment as part of the myFutureNC initiative throughout the State. The term P20 refers to pre-school through college education. Partners on the P20 initiative include A-B Tech, BRCC, MAWDB, the public-school systems and private sector employers. Goals include academic readiness, career and college access, postsecondary completion, and employer alignment. The good jobs challenge is an EDA opportunity providing a \$500 Million pot of grant funds focusing on a three-phase system development: system design and program implementation; focus on industry-led training programs; and a focus on historically underserved populations. LOSRC partnered with the community colleges and the Asheville Chamber to submit a joint application for nearly \$11 Million for a three-year period focusing on training for careers in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and the Chamber's Inclusive Hiring Partners initiative. Other details of the collaborative grant application include an expansion of the Engaging Adults Initiative at BRCC, Scale and Inclusive Hiring Partners Model at A-B Tech and their Essential Needs Fund to lessen student financial burdens. Additionally, the grant design also focuses on rural residents and un- and underserved, unemployed populations.

#### IX. Executive Director's Report

Delegates and guests were encouraged to reach out to Nathan Ramsey with any questions or comments regarding the report, which is available in the agenda packet.

Nathan Ramsey requested Delegates to volunteer for the Nominating Committee to bring forth the slate of Officer and Executive Committee members at the Annual Meeting in March. It was shared that the new term for Officers and Executive Committee members begins July 1 and the swearing in ceremony would happen at the August 2022 Board meeting.

#### X. Important Dates

A. The next Board meeting is March 23, 2022. This is the Annual Meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin



## **BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM**

- Subject:** New Business - Nominating Committee Report
- Item Number:** IX. Nominating Committee Report
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** LOSRC Nominating Committee Report
- Background:** 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.



**2022-23 Officers/Executive Committee  
(Terms Ending June 30, 2023)  
Nominating Committee Recommendation**

**Chair:** Patrick Fitzsimmons, Mayor, Town of Weaverville (Buncombe)  
**Vice-Chair:** Norris Gentry, Commissioner, Madison County (Madison)  
**Secretary:** Maureen Copelof, Brevard (Transylvania)  
**Treasurer:** Preston Blakely, Mayor, Town of Fletcher (Henderson)  
**County Delegate:** Matthew Wechtel, Commissioner, Madison County (Madison)  
**Municipal Delegate:** Sandra Kilgore, Asheville City Council Member (Buncombe)  
**Past Chair Delegate:** Barbara Volk, Mayor, City of Hendersonville (Henderson)  
**Minority Representative Delegate:** Jason Chappell, Commission Chair, Transylvania County (Transylvania)  
**Aging Representative:** Bob Tomasulo, Chair, 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:** X. Executive Director's Report
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** Executive Director's Report for March 23, 2022
- 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 23, 2022

1. Finance

- MIP (finance software) training will begin the first week in May.
- FY 22/23 budget work is underway.
- The auditors have started their on-site compliance work the week of March 14.
- We have not determined what the proposed staff COLA will be for the FY22-23 budget. The Council's indirect rate will decline for the upcoming program year which will allow for a staff salary increase without reducing program funds. Health Insurance and retirement rates will increase for FY22-23.

2. Economic & Community Development & Transportation Planning

a. Planning Services.

- We are excited to share that Sara Nichols, Regional Planner, presented at the Net Inclusion 2022 Conference on a panel about Coalitions and Digital Equity Planning. <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/net-inclusion-2022/>
- January 25 & 27 the Clean Cities team hosted a workshop series to educate local government and school personnel on how fleet and building decisions can improve air quality while strengthening public budgets. These sessions included AICP credits for sustainability and hosted over 50 people.
- We have released an RFP to seek a Creative Manufacturing Consultant. The RFP closed and candidates were interviewed by the selection committee. The project will be moving forward with a contract soon.
- The WNC Innovation Park was selected as a Duke Sanford School of Public Policy's Spring Consulting Project. We are working with staff and students as they begin their project. Staff continues to seek funding for a feasibility study/strategy to develop the WNC Innovation Park with the coalition of 5 COGS, Dogwood Health Trust, WCU, Montreat College, Community College System, and many other partners.
- We have kicked off a Regional Economic Collaboration and Analysis led by the Region's Chambers of Commerce and business sector. Ernst and Young was selected as the Consultant for this effort and is being funded by the EDA and Dogwood Health Trust.
- Staff continues working with several local governments and partners on applications for economic development, community development, transportation, and infrastructure implementation with BRIC/FEMA, EDA, and foundations. These projects will support transportation connections, resilience, job growth, industry expansion, and place-based development.
- Staff are working with several jurisdictions to support ARPA projects and administration. Please connect with Erica if you would like to learn more: [erica@landofsky.org](mailto:erica@landofsky.org) ARPA information can be found

here: <https://www.nc.gov/agencies/pandemic-recovery-office/american-rescue-plan-act-information-and-resources>

- The NCGS 160D requires all Comprehensive Plans be updated to meet the new guidelines by July 1, 2022. Please contact [erica@landofsky.org](mailto:erica@landofsky.org) if you have questions or would like assistance updating your plans.
- Staff is working with the EPA's Office of Research & Development to explore future growth scenarios for the region through 2045 based on land use, transportation, population and employment using UrbanSim. Contact Mary for more information: [mary@landofsky.org](mailto:mary@landofsky.org)
- LOS has been awarded a 205j grant to support continued development of the WNC Stormwater Program. LOSRC has launched the Regional Stormwater Services Program to support small MS4s and interested communities with stormwater management and MS4 stormwater compliance. Contact Mary for more information: [mary@landofsky.org](mailto:mary@landofsky.org)
- Staff is wrapping up stormwater system inventories and integrated MS4 reporting field app deployment with Fletcher and Woodfin.
- Staff has been working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on a local GAC (Greening America's Communities) Project through a Pilot Program. The Project entails green infrastructure and stream restoration concept designs for A-B Tech's campus. Designs were completed and presented at 6 stakeholder and public meetings.
- Staff secured 319 funding for a new bioretention system for stormwater management in Black Mountain, part of the continued implementation of the Upper Swannanoa River Watershed Management Plan.
- Staff are wrapping up Student Connect- A partnership with NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and Southwest Commission to help reduce connectivity barriers for students across the state. This was a fast-moving effort with a tight timeframe to use CARES Act funds to distribute laptops, hotspots and materials throughout Regions A and B.
- Staff have contracted with the Department of IT to distribute and purchase service for 130+ hotspots for telehealth providers in the western region. The hotspots are being prepared to be distributed to the partner agencies.
- LOS partnered with NC DIT and the Division of Rural Health to distribute hotspots with 12 months service, for telehealth programs in WNC. To date 130 hotspots have been distributed to programs in three counties.
- LOS is partnering with the Institute of Emerging Issues and Dogwood Health Trust to assist develop and implement Digital Inclusion Plans in WNC.
- Clean Cities Program is assisting local governments prepare for VW Settlement projects. Please contact Sara Nichols with any questions or requests: [sara@landofsky.org](mailto:sara@landofsky.org)
- Staff are completing the survey, analysis and final products with Outdoor/Recreation Sector manufacturers to determine opportunities in supply chains, workforce and economic diversity in cooperation with High Country Council, Southwestern Commission and Riverbird Research. Final documents to be shared soon!

- Staff are working with several communities for planning and zoning assistance including Hot Springs, Mars Hill, Montreat, Woodfin, Flat Rock, Maggie Valley, Andrews. We are partnering with Region A staff to assist with communities in their region.
- We continue to partner with the Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Support Agencies, nonprofits, and economic developers to assist small businesses through COVID-19 impacts.
- Staff continues to serve as a Steering Committee member for the statewide RISE project for NC Department of Public Safety, NC Office of Recovery and Resilience.
- The TDM Coordinator is working with Workforce, Inspire, and employers to develop a vanpool for under-resourced individuals to access job sites.
- LOSRC's Waste Reduction Partners program is providing free water-use management assessments for large customers of the City of Asheville's Water Resources Department. These on-site assessments help identify utility costs savings for the City.
- LOS received CMAQ funding to continue support of air quality outreach initiatives in WNC.

b. Transportation Services

- MPO & RPO staff continue to work with local partners and NCDOT on project design and development.
- Staff is assisting in TAB, STIP and CTP development and Board meetings.
- RPO staff serving as NCARPO Association President, the NCARPO is the statewide organization representing Rural Transportation Planning Organizations in NC
- MPO and RPO staff are serving on the state's Prioritization Workgroup with other representatives from MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT.
- The MPO is providing funding to several special studies in the region getting ready to being in FY 2022: Haywood County Greenway Master Plan, Reed Creek Greenway Extension Feasibility Study (City of Asheville), and the Buncombe County Multimodal Master Plan.
- The MPO has completed corridor studies on Hendersonville Road and Tunnel Road, in cooperation with the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and NCDOT. The Studies can be found here: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/local-plans/>
- The MPO recently accepted the Regional Transit Feasibility Study. More information is available here: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/regional-transit-feasibility-study/>
- The MPO-supported Richland Creek Greenway Study was recently completed by the Town of Waynesville.
- The MPO-supported studies for McDowell/Biltmore Avenue (City of Asheville), Close the GAP (City of Asheville), and Bike/Ped Counters (City of Asheville) are on-going.

3. Aging

Last fall AARP in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia collaborated to present the highly regarded Livable Appalachia Series. We invited experts and community leaders who shared resources, stories, and examples of communities meeting the needs of older citizens for housing,

transportation, high-speed internet and other essential services. Staff is working with AARP to prepare another round of programs to assist and encourage citizens, professionals and public officials to continue to make our Region livable for all. AND WE NEED YOU! Please complete the survey below before March 25 to help us design programs that meet your needs and guide us all to achieve our goal of a Livable Appalachia.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LivableAppalachia>

### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

The Area Agency on Aging received feedback and suggested revisions from the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) about our ARPA plan that was submitted in December. We await further guidance from DAAS before we distribute funds to regional providers.

### COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach

With the new hire of Jenna Sharrits to the team, she has focused on outreach to agencies already doing the work of getting information, resources, and vaccines out to the community. Some of those connections include Healthier Together, WNC Health Network, MAHEC, Public Health Departments, UNETE, Kepro, senior centers/ community centers, and food distribution organizations. Through those connections, she has been able to give out educational material such as bookmarks, over 1,000 placemats to food distribution sites, and flyers. As Jenna continues to learn about the position and the work already being done in the community, she hopes to grow the resources and information available to homebound older adults.

### Family Caregiver Support Program

- Staff is facilitating the Caregiver Harnessing Tech to Connect Committee which presented a webinar on Advance Care Planning on March 8. Dr. Catherine Sevier, AARP State President, and Nansi Gregor-Holt, Geriatric NP, discussed how participants can complete advance care tools by using technological tools. They also discussed medical requirements for completing advance care plans and how to have discussions with family regarding these plans.
- Staff is working with providers to assist family caregivers of those who have been affected by the closing of the adult day care facility in Transylvania County.
- Staff is working with providers in the region on finding best ways to promote the use of the NC Caregiver Portal which offers training and information to help family and kinship caregivers.

### Foster Grandparent Program

- Staff participated in the Junior League of Asheville Volunteer Expo at the Crown Plaza on March 12 to promote the volunteer opportunities in our Foster Grandparent Program and the Community Advisory Council. There was a great turnout and a lot of good interactions with people in attendance.
- Five Foster Grandparent volunteers participated in the Literacy Together tutoring training at the end of February. We are excited about this new opportunity to partner with Literacy Together.
- Staff continues to reengage volunteers and partnering schools. Sixteen Foster Grandparent Program volunteers have been able to return to in-person service.

### Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Staff presented on Land of Sky Regional Council Area Agency on Aging at UNCA on March 17 and assisted with student-led focus groups in collaboration with former AAA Tai Chi participants to address workshop completion rates.
- Staff is working to bring an additional evidence-based health program to the region in the form of “Bingocize.”
- Staff is currently working with two Tai Chi instructors to bring a Tai Chi workshop to Buncombe County in the coming weeks.
- Staff is working with WNC Falls Prevention to seek ways to bring robust Falls Prevention educational opportunities and resources to the region.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to focus on the impact of social isolation and have added seven new residents to the “Neighbor Knock Program,” which provides daily check-in and reassurance visits.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to partner with MANNA and OLLI volunteers to bring nutrition to residents. In February, 102 bags of groceries were distributed to residents, and 222 “Neighbor Knock” visits were conducted.

#### Home and Community Care Block Grant

##### February 2022 Report of Services Provided:

- Adult Day Care/Health Days = 2,595
- Meals – delivered/congregate = 123,183
- In-home Aide hours =7,918
- Legal Services hours = 1,115
- Transportation trips =33,132
- Home Improvement Projects = 17
- Other: March 2022 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Senior Nutrition Program. Established in 1972, the Senior Nutrition Programs serve as hubs for older adults to access nutritious meals and other vital services that strengthen social connections and promote health and well-being. This year’s theme is “Celebrate, Innovate, and Educate.”

#### Money Follows the Person

##### Community Inclusion:

- Completion of new Community Inclusion Specialist training with start of community outreach activities.
- Outreach to 37 counties including 172 skilled nursing facilities to update database and provide education. 49 new social workers identified, and 12 facilities are without current social workers.
- Individual in-person and virtual training sessions held for six skilled nursing facilities in Anson, Buncombe, Henderson, and Macon Counties.

##### Transitions Coordinator:

Western counties being served: Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, Rutherford, Mitchell, Madison. The current caseload for the Western counties is 12.

- Four are waiting on housing before they can transition.
- Three clients are scheduled to transition April 1, 2022.

- Three clients are scheduled to transition May 1, 2022.

Central counties being served: Forsyth, Davidson, Surry, Davie, Stokes, Yadkin. The current caseload for the Central counties is 11.

- Five clients cannot locate housing.
- Three clients are scheduled to transition April 1, 2022.
- Three clients are scheduled to transition May 1, 2022.

#### Ombudsman Program

- Ombudsman staff is working with other North Carolina Ombudsmen as well as the State Ombudsmen to create a Community Advisory Committee Re-entry Plan.
- Ombudsman staff is working with facilities to provide updated information regarding visitation/regulations.
- Ombudsman staff is working with the newest Ombudsman, Donna Case, to provide both educational and shadowing opportunities.

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

Western counties being served: Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania

- Distributed all state respite funds to caregivers July – February; 83% of funds have been utilized by caregivers; remaining 17% to be utilized by June 15.
- Currently distributing \$11,000 in federal respite funds; half has been distributed; all federal respite funds to be utilized by August 15.
- Staff circulated information on Tropical Storm Fred Residential Recovery Program to Land of Sky staff and Project C.A.R.E. clients.
- Staff serves on AAA speakers/field trip committee. This month the speaker at AAA staff meeting was S. Vance Goodman, Benefits Enrollment Specialist, Council on Aging of Buncombe County. The Benefits Enrollment Center serves seniors and disabled persons living in Buncombe and surrounding counties.

#### Senior Companion Program

- Six volunteers retired in the last few months and two volunteers have been recruited with four additional volunteers in the coming weeks. Staff continues to reengage volunteers and agencies. The waitlist for older adults needing a Senior Companion Program volunteer is over 150. Staff will pause on adding more clients to the list until July and will be reassessed then. This will allow staff to review the list and determine how best to use available resources and volunteers.
- With a new ARPA grant, the program now has capacity for 72 volunteers. Currently, 60 volunteers are active and serving homebound older adults. Staff is actively recruiting volunteers the region targeting Madison and Transylvania Counties.
- Staff is looking for additional funding to support volunteer mileage reimbursement. Volunteers are reimbursed for their transportation of clients to the grocery and medical appointments. The program recently lost a large grant that supported mileage costs. As gas prices increase, it is important to secure new funding for this service.

#### 4. Administration

- Buncombe County will begin the renovations of our office on Wednesday, March 23. The purpose of the renovations are to align our office space to support the Healthy Opportunities project. It has taken time for Buncombe County to secure the construction supplies and contractors for this project. The renovation is being funded by a \$400,000 grant from Dogwood Health Trust. The March Board of Delegates and Executive Committee meetings will be virtual since we anticipate the first few days of the construction process to be very loud from demolition activities.
- Attended the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) Policy Conference in Alexandria, Virginia. Erica Anderson, Economic & Community Development Director participated in a panel on “Strengthening Regions Through Equity and Economic Inclusion.”
- Nathan was reappointed as the North Carolina representative on the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) board.
- Nathan attended the Southeast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI) new directors training in Atlanta.
- Participated in the UNC School of Government/ncIMPACT forum held in Chapel Hill, NC as part of our region’s my Future NC postsecondary credential attainment project.
- Met with Congressman Madison Cawthorn regarding establishment of a FTZ in WNC and Congressman Cawthorn provided a letter of support. We have been meeting with members of Congress and NC’s US Senators about the FTZ.
- Participated in numerous Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) meetings and partner discussions.
- Hosted DEI committee meetings
- Arranged meeting LOS and Buckeye Hills Regional Council, OH
- Our contract with Craft HR Solutions will transition to an as needed basis on July 1 with at an agreed upon hourly rate.
- We are overseeing ARC INspire Recovery to Careers and ARC POWER Early Childhood Workforce projects which are each over \$1 million serving 11 counties in Western North Carolina.
- Funding from Dogwood Health Trust about increasing COG capacity in WNC is in process. Funding available would enable COGs to provide more support for local governments and communities.
- Land of Sky Regional Council is scheduled to receive almost \$1 million in state funds to support our Economic & Community Development team. These funds will help our team more effectively respond to the needs of our local governments.



## 5. Workforce

- Region's unemployment rate of 2.6% for December 2021 is the lowest in the region since September 1999 when it was 2.0%.
- NCWorks Commission will hold a special meeting on Wednesday, March 30 at 1:00 pm to discuss and vote on the draft Workforce Board System Alignment Memorandum which was approved by the Governance and System Alignment Committee on February 18. A link to the draft memorandum is following: [NC Commerce: NCWorks Commission Draft Memorandum on Workforce Development Board System Alignment Study](#)
- We received preliminary notice that our workforce funding for PY22-23 will be just over \$2 million. That is higher than we anticipated and we are working on several strategies to increase capacity.
- Board staff are focused on meeting the 20% work experience mandate for our NCWorks NextGen Youth programs.
- We are hosting a federal, state, and local government job fair on Wednesday, March 23 from 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm at the Virginia Boone Building, WNC Agricultural Center in Fletcher.
- WNC Career Expo is scheduled for Wednesday, March 30 from 11:00 am – 4:00 pm at Harrah's Cherokee Center.
- NC Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) announced a Reduction in Force for the DWS staff as a result of declining WIOA funding for North Carolina. There will be reductions in staff at DWS in Raleigh and the NCWorks Career Centers across the state. There were sufficient number of DWS employees to take early retirement so there will not be involuntary separations.
- We are participating as one of 15 statewide collaboratives by ncIMPACT/UNC School of Government and my Future NC as regional efforts focused on increasing postsecondary credential attainment.
- We are supporting the workers at Continental as they announced several years ago this facility was closing and final operations will end this year.
- 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 received approval from our financial monitor for these expenditures and hopefully we will have the funding to support this project. We are committing \$50,000 to support virtual pre-employment training.
- The board received a grant from Appalachian Regional Commission to expand the number of early childhood educators in our region. This grant application was an effort to continue the work we have done supported by NCWorks Local Innovation Grant with Buncombe Partnership for Children and the Child & Family Resource Center. We are partnering with the Southwestern Commission to expand the project to 11 counties and Dogwood Health Trust has graciously agreed to provide matching funds for this project.

- We are applied for the EDA Good Jobs Challenge in partnership with Dogwood Health Trust, AB Tech and Blue Ridge Community College. The focus will be on the advanced manufacturing and healthcare sectors, the request is for \$10 million.
- The board is supporting incumbent worker training (Business Accelerator Grants) with 12 (twelve) local employers.
- We are working with NC Department of Commerce to support incumbent worker training at Raybow PharmaScience in Transylvania County through the NC Job Ready grant.

#### 6. Mountain Mobility

- Mountain Mobility saw steady trip numbers for February as compared to January. Inclement weather is still negatively affecting trip volume. We are hopeful that warmer weather will bring more consistent ridership in the next month.
- Also, our taxi voucher program - Ridership Independence for the Elderly and Disabled (RIDE) - has also declined as several of our organizational customers are losing clients due to the COVID pandemic and are being affected by the ongoing staffing crisis. Mountain Mobility is working to find new customers for the RIDE program as this provides a valuable service to our community.

#### 7. NEMT

- We are submitting monthly reports to Buncombe County on the number of clients and caseload. It appears we did not lose as many Medicaid clients during the transition to managed care.
- Total trips scheduled and total trips taken have increased compared to one year ago but the total active cases have declined.

#### 8. Healthy Opportunities

- The food domain launched earlier in March, and we are building capacity to launch transportation in May.
- We have hired Dalton Buckner from Hendersonville to serve as our Transportation Finance Specialist. Dalton starts work with us on March 28th and will be working to put transportation subcontracts in place as well as developing billing and reconciliation processes.
- We're excited to see the network start to come together to provide this needed service in Western North Carolina.