

Land of Sky Regional Council
January 25, 2023, 12:30 pm
Regular Meeting

Hosted by the Town of Woodfin at the Buncombe County Public Safety Training Facility,
24 Canoe Lane, Asheville, NC 28804



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. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

IV. Consent Agenda

- A. Modification/Approval of Agenda
- B. Approval of the Previous Minutes (November 2022)

V. Comments by the Chair and Delegates Roundtable (Delegates are requested to limit their remarks to three (3) minutes during the roundtable. Each month we will ask Delegates to focus on a topic of importance in the region. This month the topic will be affordable and workforce housing)

VI. Public Comment

VII. Recognition

- A. Land of Sky Regional Council Staff Years of Service Recognition

VIII. Presentations

- A. NC Attorney General Josh Stein
- B. Law Enforcement and Community Civility Training, Tanya Rodriguez, Executive Director of the National Institute for Racial Equity and Chair of City of Asheville Human Relations Committee and Shawn Freeman, Asheville Police Department and former Chief of Black Mountain Police Department, BLET Instructor
- C. Julie Roper, Economic Development & Local Government Manager, Dominion Energy and Martha Wegner, Western Region Representative, Duke Energy

IX. Executive Director's Report

X. Important Dates

- A. Next regularly scheduled Board meeting is planned for February 22, 2023.

XI. Adjournment

A tour of the Buncombe County Training Facility will be available to attendees following the meeting.



BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

Subject: Consent Agenda

Item Number: IV. Consent Agenda:
A. Modification/Approval of the Board's Agenda for January 25, 2023
B. Approval of Minutes from the November 30, 2022, Regular Meeting and Annual Awards Presentation.

Responsible Party: Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services

Attachment(s): Minutes from the November 2022 Regular Meeting

Background: Item B. November 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes Recap:
Quorum was present to conduct business at the November 2022 meeting and the minutes provide a recap of the Chair's comments and Delegates' updates from around the region. Presentations included the presentation of a check for \$35,000 from Duke Energy Foundation to the P20 Council/The Land of Sky Collaborative for myFutureNC. The meeting also included the annual awards presentations for the Charles H. Campbell Regional Leadership Award presented to Mayor Barbara Volk of Hendersonville; the Robert E. Shepherd Excellence in Local Government Award presented to Josh Harrold, Manager, Town of Black Mountain; the Robert C. Parrish, Sr. Intergovernmental Relations Award presented to George Morosani who served as Buncombe County's Economic Development Representative on the Board of Delegates for over 30 years; and an Extraordinary Public Service Award presented to Al Whitesides, Commission, Buncombe County and to Norris Gentry, Commissioner, Madison County; Extraordinary Legislative Service Awards presented to State Senator Chuck Edwards, Representative John Ager, Representative Susan Fisher, and Representative Brian Turner for their contributions to the Land of Sky Region and the State of North Carolina. Van Taylor Jones, Jimmy Brissie, Caleb Dispenza, and Kevin Shook, Directors for County Emergency Management Services in the four LOSRC counties were presented with an Extraordinary Public Service Award for exemplary service as County Emergency Management Director

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**

November 30, 2022

Minutes

- I. Call to Order – Vice Chair Copelof called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30pm.
- II. Silent Invocation – Vice Chair Copelof gave the invocation, and a moment of silence was observed.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance – Vice Chair Copelof led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- IV. Roll Call – Nathan Ramsey called the roll. The following members were present: Terri Wells, Tim Love, Norris Gentry, Matt Wechtel, Jason Chappell, Jonathan Kanipe, Larry Harris, Maureen Copelof, Preston Blakely, Barbara Volk, Jeff Young, Daniel Cobb, Mason Blake, and Elisabeth Ervin

Guests Present – Larry Hembree, Pam King, Shawn Slome, Jimmy Brissie, Kevin Shook, Caleb Dispenza, Al Whitesides, Karen Sanders, Elizabeth Morosani, George Morosani, Josh Harrold, Amanda Edwards, John Ager, Brian Turner, Archie Pertiller, Robin Ramsey, Caleb Rudow, Brian Stevens, and Julie Mayfield
- V. Consent Agenda – The consent agenda, consisting of the Board's November agenda, and the minutes of the October 26, 2022, meeting was presented for approval.

Jason Chappell moved to approve the consent agenda including the October 26, 2022 minutes and today's agenda as presented. Terri Wells seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Quorum was established by the roll call for the vote.

- VI. Chair's Comments and Delegates Roundtable -
Vice Chair Copelof encouraged Delegates to share information of interest from their jurisdictions.

Delegates Roundtable -
Commissioner Terri Wells – Shared that Buncombe County approved the bond referendum and is accepting applications for community members that want to serve on the steering committee.
Commission Chair Matt Wechtel – Madison County sincerely appreciates the service of Norris Gentry for his service to the county over the past many years.
Jonathan Kanipe – shared the Town of Biltmore Forest is gearing up for its anniversary year.
Council Member Pam King – Shared that the Town of Black Mountain has enjoyed working with Mayor Harris.
Mayor Maureen Copelof – Shared that the City of Brevard's is having its holiday parade coming up on Saturday. Also, on December 17, the Veterans Museum has a very special ceremony with a special guest from France in recognition of D-Day and WWII. This event is open to the public and everyone is invited to come recognize this WWII hero. The City is advertising for a public works director.
Mayor Preston Blakely – Shared that the Town of Fletcher has decided to allocate ARPA funds to staff salaries to free up funds for capital projects. The Town has a lot of good eateries coming in and everything is going well.
Mayor Barbara Volk – The City of Hendersonville held its tree lighting last Friday, and the first nighttime holiday parade is coming up this Friday. Last farmer's market, too. Also on December 17 is a holiday train ride planned with Mountain Fresh Orchards.
Town Manager Daniel Cobb – Shared that Santa is coming to the Town of Mills River on December 10 starting at 9am. The second picnic shelter at the Park is almost complete. This week, the Town Council decided to allocate its ARPA funding in two phases- first for land conservation and then for nonprofits that serve the community. Projects for the second phase of the funding will be decided in a few months.

Town Commissioner Mason Blake – Shared that the Town of Montreat has a good interim town manager while the search goes on for a permanent one.

Town Commissioner Elisabeth Ervin – Shared that the Town of Woodfin has worked on adopting new standards for short-term rentals and defined short-term rentals and homestays. Currently operating ones have a 30-day grace period.

VII. Public Comment -

Chair Fitzsimmons called for public comments. None were received.

VIII. Presentations/Recognition -

A. Annual Awards Presentation –

Special recognition for Commissioner Al Whitesides. Commissioner Terri Wells made the presentation to the Commissioner by sharing about his heart and passion and his patience. He has served the community for decades (ACS Board, UNC-A Board, Board of Commissioners). Commissioner Wells noted that Al knows about relationships, and he truly cares and is interested in the people he serves. Commissioner Whitesides accepted his award and shared his appreciation for this recognition and that Buncombe County is home for him, and his parents impressed upon him the importance of giving back to the community. He shared a memory from an interaction with Dr. MLK that he would be working for the rest of his life to lead people to equality and diversity and to make the quality of life here what it should be. Commissioner Whitesides shared that his hope is to leave the community better when his public service is completed.

Special recognition for Commissioner Norris Gentry, who also serves as the County Manager. Commissioner Matt Wechtel shared that it is his honor to present this award to Norris and he shared his appreciation to Norris for always working to find the common ground on issues. He recognized Norris for his service as the county manager. Norris is a life-long resident of Madison County and has held many roles serving the community. Commission Chair Wechtel read the recognition from the award citing's Norris' leadership, and he noted he's been honored with the Order of the Longleaf Pine from the governor. Norris shared that he is looking forward to the future.

Recognition of Legislators Chuck Edwards, John Ager, Susan Fisher, and Brian Turner. The Honorable Julie Mayfield recognized the service of Senator Edwards. She next recognized the service of Representatives Brian Turner and John Ager for the exemplary job they have done representing the region.

Representative Turner shared his appreciation for the recognition, and he noted that during the past 8 years it has been a tremendous honor to represent the communities and Buncombe County in WNC.

Representative John Ager accepted his award and shared that his job was to break down barriers and that is the job of the people at this meeting, too.

Senator Mayfield recognized Representative Susan Fisher for her nearly 20 years of service to the County and City. Senator Mayfield noted that this job is about more than representing the county and city and it encompasses the entire western region with the goal of working together.

Recognition of Emergency Management Directors- Jimmie Brissie, Caleb Dispenza, and Kevin Shook were present for their recognition. Brian Stevens, Emergency Management Director for Graham County shared about the exemplary service of the LOSRC's regions' Emergency Management Directors.

Avril Pinder accepted the award on behalf of Buncombe County's Emergency Management Director, Taylor Jones, who could not be at today's meeting.

Commissioner Wechtel presented the award to Caleb Dispenza for his service as Emergency Management Director for Madison County. Director Dispenza accepted the award and shared appreciation for his entire staff who are the real heroes.

Nathan Ramsey presented the award to Jimmie Brissie for the work he and his team do in Henderson County to keep everyone safe. Director Brissie shared that this job is all about relationships and he is thankful for the many partners who work to keep everyone safe, and the work done on behalf of the region.

Nathan Ramsey presented the award to Kevin Shook for the work he and his team have done to respond to the pandemic and other emergencies in Transylvania County. Director Shook shared that sharing (ideas and resources) is what the Emergency Management Teams do for the region; to respond locally, and across the State, working together all the time to solve problems and benefit the community.

Manager John Connet presented the Charles H. Campbell Regional Leadership Award to Mayor Barbara Volk. He shared that it has been a pleasure to work for the Mayor for the past 10 years and learn from her wisdom. Mayor Volk shared her appreciation for the award and noted that it has been her honor to serve on the LOSRC Board in support of the work done for the benefit of the region. She shared that she is blessed to have such a wonderful Council of Governments organization serving the region.

Mayor Larry Harris, Town of Black Mountain, presented the Robert H. Parrish Excellence in Local Government Award to Town Manager Josh Harrold by citing his many credentials and his amazing ability to deal with conflict and he noted that it is the Town Manager that interacts with community members when they have issues and complaints to resolve for the benefit of the community. Manager Harrold shared his appreciation for the award and stated his appreciation for everything that LOSRC done on behalf of the region.

Nathan Ramsey introduced Bob Shepherd, who served as the first Executive Director for LOSRC for 30 years, and this award is named in honor of him. Bob Shepherd presented the Robert C. Shepherd Award to George Morosani for his 31 years of service to the region as the economic development representative for Buncombe County on the regional board. Bob Shepherd related many of Mr. Morosani's accomplishments and involvement in economic development projects that have benefited the county and the region. George Morosani shared his appreciation for the award, and he noted that he and Al Whitesides trained with the Jaycees those many years ago and it has been a pleasure to see the region blossom over the past many years.

B. Duke Energy Foundation –

Nathan Ramsey recognized Emily Nicholson, Executive Director of the P20 Council who accepted the \$35,000 check from the Duke Energy Foundation for exemplary work through the P20 Council for the myFutureNC initiative in the western region. Emily Nicholson shared that increasing post-secondary credential attainment in the region is the purpose of the P20 Council. Collaborative partners include economic development, the colleges, universities, and public-school systems, among others. Nathan Ramsey shared his appreciation to the Duke Energy Foundation and the John M. Belk Endowment (JMBE) for their support of the work of the P20 Council.

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 meeting packet.

Nathan Ramsey shared that the FY21-22 Annual Report is under development and will be shared at the January meeting. The first housing planner has been hired who will focus on affordable housing in the western region. He noted that it has been a great year for LOSRC in support of local governments and he requested that members let him know how the organization could serve them more effectively.

X. Important Dates –

A. The next LOSRC Board of Delegates meeting is planned for January 25, 2023 hosted by the Town of Woodfin.

XI. Adjournment –

Vice Chair Copelof called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commission Chair Wechtel moved to adjourn the meeting, which received a second and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin

1. Finance

- Accounts Receivable Clerk has been hired to increase our finance capacity.
- FY21-22 audit is complete and the Council received an unqualified opinion with no findings.
- Unrestricted fund balance available for appropriation is just over \$2 million.

2. Economic & Community Development & Transportation Planning

Welcome!

We welcome Traci Thompson as our new Housing Planner. Welcome, Traci!

Kudos!

- Congratulations to Rosman and Mars Hill for completing the RC2 (Rural Community Capacity Building) Program through NC Commerce and their recent awards for small planning grants.
- Congratulations to Rosman for an RTFG award for a pedestrian bridge connecting their Town Park to the Elementary School.
- Congratulations to Brevard for receiving a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant for engineering and design for Ecusta Trail in Transylvania County.
- Congratulations to Madison County for Building Reuse for Highland Metalworks.
- Congratulations to French Broad Electric Co-Operative for their GREAT grant in Madison County
- Congratulations to Zitel Broadband for their GREAT grant in Transylvania County
- Congratulations to City of Asheville for their \$4.2M Low-No grant to support clean transportation fleet technologies.
- Congratulations to French Broad Electric Co-Operative for their CFAT grant in Madison County
- Congratulations to VW Grant Awardees in the region:
 - Transylvania Economic Alliance
 - Transylvania Habitat for Humanity
 - Town of Waynesville
 - Town of Hayesville

Upcoming Events

- 1/26 Western NC Digital Inclusion Celebration Gathering, 10 -11:30am (virtual event) <https://ncsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEvdOygpzosHtZZl3kni8lm3KribUgfe6gz>
- 2/13 Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) at NC State University - 2023 Emerging Issues Forum, Talent First Economics at the NC State University McKimmon Center in Raleigh.
- 3/12-15 NADO & DDAA Washington Policy Conference in Arlington, VA
- 3/20-21 Rural Summit 2023 at the Raleigh Convention Center
- 4/26-28 NCAMPO Conference *Transforming Transportation* in Greenville, NC

Transportation

1. MPO & RPO staff continue to work with local partners and NCDOT on project design and development.
2. Staff is assisting in TAB, STIP and CTP development and Board meetings.
3. RPO staff serving as NCARPO Association President, the NCARPO is the statewide organization representing Rural Transportation Planning Organizations in NC.

4. RPO staff is also serving on the new NCDOT EV/Clean Energy Committee.
5. RPO, MPO and ECD staff are assisting several communities write grants for transportation projects, including RAISE, FLAP, and the IJA Discretionary Funds.
6. MPO and RPO staff are serving on the state's Prioritization Workgroup with other representatives from MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT.
7. The MPO is providing funding to several special studies in the region getting ready to begin in FY 2023: Fonta Flora Trail Feasibility Study, Reed Creek Greenway Extension Feasibility Study (City of Asheville), Patton Avenue Corridor Study, and the Buncombe County Multimodal Master Plan.
8. The MPO is managing the Haywood County Greenway Master Plan; expected to wrap-up by January
9. The MPO is providing funding for on-going studies at the City of Asheville, including the purchase of bicycle and pedestrian counters and the Biltmore/McDowell study.
10. MPO staff is serving on a Locally Administered Projects Program committee with NCDOT to provide policy recommendations to achieve better success rates and more on-time delivery of LAPP projects.
11. MPO & RPO staff continue to update local governments on NCDOT's financial situation and the Draft 2024-2033 STIP. A public survey is planned to be distributed by the MPO in November.

Broadband

1. LOS partnered with NC DIT and the Division of Rural Health to distribute hotspots with 12 months service and digital literacy training for telehealth programs in WNC. To date 146 hotspots have been distributed to programs in three counties.
2. LOS is partnering with the Institute of Emerging Issues and Dogwood Health Trust to assist development and implement Digital Inclusion Plans in WNC with COGS across the region.
3. LOS received funding from Buncombe County to provide Wi-Fi in several Housing Authority of the City of Asheville (HACA) residential buildings. Staff received an update from the sub-consultant, Elawuit, that installation is proceeding as scheduled.
4. LOS is working with NEMAC to develop a broadband planning tool. The tool is aimed to consolidate many of the various data sources into a project planning catalyst for future broadband projects in the region.
5. LOS staff worked to set up public WIFI in the Broad River area of Buncombe County. Staff partnered with fire department and Skyrunner to implement this project.
6. LOS staff supported providers in the region with GREAT grant assistance leading to 21 applications across the region. To date award announcements in Madison, Transylvania, Buncombe, and Henderson have been made. We are hopeful to gain additional awards in the coming weeks. If your community wants to start working on CAB please get in touch with Sara Nichols.
7. LOS is supporting hot spot access to 325 individuals across WNC through Student Connect program thanks to the support of Dogwood Health Trust.

Community Development/Water, Sewer, Stormwater Infrastructure

1. Staff is continuing to support Fletcher, Laurel Park, Montreat, Weaverville and Woodfin with their MS4 (municipal separate storm sewer system) permit compliance.
2. Weaverville's 205j-funded stormwater system inventory and green infrastructure planning will kick-off in January.
3. Staff is evaluating and synthesizing water and sewer system needs throughout the region, starting with Transylvania County.

Housing

1. Staff has begun reaching out to Local Governments and Housing nonprofit providers to gather information and data for the Housing Asset Inventory and determine needs.

2. LOSRC was awarded a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, matched with a grant to Southwestern Commission from the Dogwood Health Trust, to create a WNC Housing Asset Inventory for the western 18 counties. This project will be completed through a multi-COG effort.
3. LOSRC was awarded a grant from Cares at the UNC-CH School of Social Work in partnership with North Carolina Money Follows the Person (MFP), for the initiative titled Building Capacity for Home and Community Based Services through Collective Impact. The project is called Remain at Home - Accessibility Assessment Program, in partnership with the Institute for Preventative Care and Advocacy, Mountain Area Health Education Center, RL Mace Universal Design Institute.
4. LOSRC has completed the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice for Buncombe County.

Economic Development/Workforce

1. Staff submitted the I26 Interchange/Access Road application to EDA to request \$2 million in funding on behalf of NCDOT. Staff assisted NCDOT receive \$2.5 million from ARC's Access Road fund.
2. Draft report for the Creative Manufacturing Sector Development plan are currently being reviewed by the core steering committee.
3. The Draft report for the Regional Economic Collaboration and Analysis led by the Region's Chambers of Commerce and business sector is under review by the Advisory Committee. Ernst and Young was selected as the Consultant for this effort and is being funded by the EDA and Dogwood Health Trust. Full results will be shared broadly.
4. Staff and partners have completed the 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. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/291e98f0291643c49a6462395ec3e6e5>
5. 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.
6. The TDM Coordinator is working with Workforce, Inspire, and employers to develop a vanpool for under-resourced individuals to access job sites.
7. 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.

Resilience/Hazard Mitigation

1. Staff is serving as a Steering Committee member for the statewide RISE project and for the NC Resilience Clearinghouse, both for NC Department of Public Safety, NC Office of Recovery and Resilience.
2. Staff served on the FEMA BRIC grant review panel to select applicants for NC.
3. LOSRC is supporting the development of the Domestic Preparedness Region 9 THIRA/SPR through the COG Disaster Recovery Grant.

Clean Cities/Clean Vehicles

1. Clean Cities Program is assisting local governments prepare for VW Settlement projects. During the first round of settlement funding released in 2020, the Land of Sky Clean Vehicles Coalition helped the region bring in more than \$4.1 million in grant funding to support purchases of new clean vehicles and EV infrastructure. During the second round of funding, all of the applications that LOS staff assisted with under the Level 2 Public Access Program were funded. Staff also assisted with applications for the DC Fast Chargers and Level 2 Multi-Unit Dwelling programs. Please contact Sara Nichols with questions on how to apply for more than \$68 million in state funding available for clean fleets: sara@landofsky.org
2. LOS received CMAQ funding to continue support of air quality outreach initiatives in WNC.

3. Staff supported applications for the EPA school bus rebate for Buncombe and Madison County Schools.
4. Cherokee Clean Vehicles participated in the first electric school bus in North Carolina ribbon cutting, including a visit from Governor Cooper and Administrator Reagan. Staff recently helped with a training for school leadership including a school bus drag race.
5. Staff are partnering with the Blue Ridge Electric Vehicle Club to host an electric vehicle car show for National Drive Electric Week.
6. CVC staff, Paul Moon, applied for and was accepted into the DOE national equity program to deep dive into equity in alternative fuel conversations with leading experts. Paul has been attending national level training over the last few months to gain perspective on how our work can incorporate DEI priorities in our region.
7. Staff supported the French Broad Electric Membership Corporation in submitting a Clean Fuel Advanced Technology Application for DC Fast Charging to North Carolina Clean Energy Technology Center.

Waste Reduction Partners

1. Staff conducted an environmental assessment with the American Red Cross to perform ESG sustainability assessments at pilot sites in North Carolina, beginning with the Asheville, WNC Chapter.
2. WRP engineers are working with Eaton's Avery Creek manufacturing site to identify energy projects to address corporate carbon emission reduction goals.
3. WRP staff completed an energy efficiency assessment for the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Marshall on September 7.

Planning Services

1. Staff continue to work with area communities providing land use planning and zoning assistance. Towns include Hot Springs, Mars Hill, Marshall, Montreat, Woodfin, Flat Rock, Maggie Valley, Montreat, Clyde, Canton, and Andrews. Note that we are partnering with Southwestern Commission, Region A staff to assist with communities in their region as well.

Grants & Project Development

1. 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 ARPA information can be found here: <https://www.nc.gov/agencies/pandemic-recovery-office/american-rescue-plan-act-information-and-resources>
2. Staff have been working with Sister Councils of Government on ARPA, Resilience and Multi-regional projects. Partnerships include sharing ARP policies, ordinances, and guidance; grant development; developing scopes of work and project delivery for ARPA State funds; budgeting and project development for housing, transportation and broadband tech assistance.
3. 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.
4. The NCGS 160D requires all Comprehensive Plans be updated to meet the new guidelines by July 1, 2022. (i.e. Municipalities and Counties must have a "reasonably-maintained" [updated within last 5-10 years] Comprehensive Plan in effect in order to legally continue having local zoning/development regulations. At minimum, a reasonably updated Land Use Plan must be in place by July 1, 2022 as a rational nexus to zoning/development regulations. (see Town of Canton's phased-approach, Phase 1: Land Use Plan by July 1, 2022; Phase 2: Other Comprehensive Plan elements to be included after July 1, 2022)
Please contact erica@landofsky.org if you have questions or would like assistance updating your plans.

3. Aging

Land of Sky Regional Council welcomes Kathryn Florack to the Area Agency on Aging. Kathryn joins Land of Sky Regional Council as a new Money Follows the Person Transitions Coordinator. Kathryn graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2010 with a degree in Sociology and a minor in Education. She spent much of her adult life working for a local camp program, Camp Henry, in Canton, in a variety of positions, lastly as the Camp Director. She has a passion for helping people and looks forward to her work with Land of Sky Regional Council.

The Regional Aging Advisory Council will meet on Thursday, March 9, at 10:00am. Location TBD. The focus of the meeting will be to learn about homelessness in the older adult population in our region. For more information, contact LeeAnne Tucker, (828) 251-6622.

Every May, the Administration for Community Living leads the nation's observance of Older Americans Month (OAM). The 2023 theme is *Aging Unbound*, which offers an opportunity to explore diverse aging experiences and discuss how communities can combat stereotypes and how we all benefit when older adults remain engaged, independent, and included.

SAVE THE DATE

AUGUST 27 - 30, 2023
THE OMNI GROVE PARK INN
ASHEVILLE, NC

Aging Adventures Await
se4a 2023

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advocacy | action | answers on aging

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has completed Supportive Service and Family Caregiver Support Program contracts. Some providers have begun spending ARPA funds. The AAA has received approval from the Division of Aging and Adult Services for all but one of our direct services waivers and the remaining waiver should be completed soon.

Family Caregiver Support Program

- Staff helped facilitate in-person caregiver and care receiver support groups in Hendersonville. There were 10 caregivers and 6 care receivers who participated 3 meetings.
- Staff continues to offer \$500 Respite Vouchers to family caregivers in Transylvania County. So far there are 8 caregivers who have received vouchers.
- Staff is working with AARP on developing a presentation to give to employers on how they can assist their employees who are caregivers.

Foster Grandparent Program

- Number of active volunteers: 30 volunteers are working one-on-one with children ages infant to 8 years old.
- Number of volunteers waiting on paperwork, placement, etc.: 3 volunteers are waiting for placement and 4 volunteers are waiting for their school to reopen to volunteers so that they can return to service.
- Number of active stations (schools, day cares, etc.): 10
- Number of stations waiting to sign MOU, volunteer placement, etc.: 2 of the schools, Head Start Centers, and childcare centers have not yet allowed volunteers to return to service.
- Recruitment efforts (press releases, presentations, etc.): Volunteer recruitment efforts are beginning now that the majority of Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) stations have reopened. Recruitment efforts include a recruitment bonus offered for FGP volunteers that refer someone, staff will participate in the Junior League Volunteer Expo in February and are plan to start running some articles and ads in local media.
- In-service/training update: During the months of December and January, six FGP volunteers are participating in a weekly Circle of Security Training. On January 17, Foster Grandparent volunteers attended in-person in-service training at Land of Sky Regional Council. Janet Price-Ferrell with First WNC presented on Special Education, Rights and Responsibilities and Individual Education Plans (IEP) and 504 plans. Upcoming in-services topics will be as follows:
 - February 14- WNC Fall Coalition will be presenting and doing fall screenings
 - March 14- Stewards of Children-Sexual Abuse Prevention

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Staff presented *Mission Matters, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs* at North Carolina Association of Area Agencies on Aging (NC4A) in January. Staff will also be giving this presentation at the Age + Action Conference in June.
- Staff is working closely with the North Carolina Center for Health and Wellness and Western Carolina University and Stony Brook University in New York to pilot a modified version of *A Matter of Balance* for participants with Parkinson's disease.
- Staff has continued the partnership with Western Carolina University and its Physical Therapy Doctoral program in 2023 to bring the Walk the Ease Program to Gerber Givens Park.
- In partnership with MAHEC, staff submitted an application proposal for the Administration for Community Living grant *Empowering Communities to Deliver and Sustain Evidence-Based Chronic Disease Self-Management Programs*.

- Staff attended the 42nd Annual Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast.
- Staff is working with volunteers at Jewish Family Services to provide fall prevention training.
- Staff is working closely with the MAHEC and is on the 2023 Fall Prevention Conference planning team.
- Staff currently serves as Chair of the Western North Carolina Fall Prevention Coalition.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers have begun planning for Older American Month events, including a spring health fair.
- Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers have reported an increase in event participation and the “Neighbor Knock” program enrollment.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to partner with MANNA, Trader Joes, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) volunteers to bring nutrition to residents. In November and December, 163 bags of groceries were distributed to residents, and 510 “Neighbor Knock” visits were conducted.

Home and Community Care Block Grant: December 2022 Report of Services Provided

- Adult day care/health days = 1,412
- Meals – delivered/congregate = 103,220
- In-home aid hours = 7,691
- Legal services hours = 831
- Transportation trips = 24,533
- Home improvement projects = 33

Money Follows the Person (MFP) Community Inclusion (serves 37 western counties)

- In November and December staff completed in-person 71 skilled nursing facility visits covering 13 Counties (Cabarrus, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Clay, Gaston, Graham, Macon, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Polk, Rutherford, Swain.) Staff provided applications packets, training, and materials.
- Staff provided 2 separate webinars to facility and county social workers and staff regarding program updates.
- Staff met with WNC Initiative for Supportive Housing (WISH) to learn about the program and discuss collaboration between WISH and Money Follows the Person.
- Staff attended Mountain Area Workforce Development Board 2022 Recognition Luncheon and shared program information with other guests.
- Staff hosted the Professional Social Workers in Long-term Care organization (PSWLTC). Staff secured a \$500 gift from the PSWLTC organization for the Ombudsman Program to distribute to facility residents in need.

Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator

Western counties: Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, Rutherford, Mitchell, Madison:

- The current caseload for the western counties is six.
- All six clients on the western caseload are waiting for housing.

The transition coordinator had located housing for a client that had been waiting for housing for eight months. Sadly, this client passed away on January 14, two weeks after locating housing.

Central counties being served: Forsyth, Davidson, Surry, Davie, Stokes, Yadkin

- The current caseload for the central counties is ten.
- Over half of the clients on the central caseload are waiting for housing.

Ombudsman Program

- The Long-Term Care Directory has been completed and is available on the Land of Sky website.
- Ombudsmen have been linking members of the Community Advisory Committees together in order to increase volunteer opportunities. By doing this, they have been able to discuss ideas that have worked for their specific committee.
- Ombudsmen provided “What is an Ombudsman” presentation to 10 Registered Nurses (RN). This class is provided through RN Patient Advocacy and is open to nurses throughout the country.
- Ombudsmen distributed over \$500 worth of gifts (personal care items, blankets, craft supplies, scarves, gloves, etc.) to the Region B Family Care Homes. These items were donated by the Professional Social Workers of Long-Term Care Committee.
- Due to Buncombe County funding, the Buncombe County Community Advisory Committees delivered lap blankets and FurReal pets to facilities.

Outreach and Assistance

- In December for the holidays staff created placemats with healthy tips for the holiday season. Giving out around 1,500 placemats to Meals on Wheels in Buncombe, Henderson and Transylvania counties, as well as seniors centers in all four counties, and other gatherings of older adults in all four counties.
- The past two months staff has been brainstorming and preparing for 2023 with new ideas and plans for outreach targeting volunteer recruitment and to share other resources offered by the Area Agency on Aging.
- The focus for 2023 is a reboot of volunteers for six different Area Agency on Aging programs (Regional Aging Advisory Council, Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program, Senior Tar Heel Legislator, Community Advisory Committee, and Wellness volunteers). Creating flyers, informational Facebook posts, and ideas on where to reach older adults.
- Staff continues to work on becoming an option counselor to better assist when folks call for help.

Project Care (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty)

- Staff applied for and received \$52,000 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allotted to the Area Agency on Aging. The funds are for caregiver respite care services only. Staff plans to distribute \$26,000 this fiscal year and \$26,000 next fiscal year and will be able to distribute any unused funds in FY25. So far, nine \$500 vouchers have been awarded to caregivers in Region B who are caring for a person with a dementia diagnosis.

Senior Companion Program

- Number of active volunteers: 60
- Number of volunteers waiting for placement: 1
- Number of active stations: 7
- Recruitment efforts: Givens Gerber Park and Vanderbilt Apartment recruitment meetings
- In-service/training update:
February: Handbook and file clean up
March: Dementia Care

The Senior Companion Program is currently completing end of year reports and applying for a renewal grant with AmeriCorps Senior. The program has been awarded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for mileage reimbursement support. The Senior Companion Program is in the process of being approved for an award with the City of Asheville, 5310 Urban Grant, for mileage reimbursement for 2024. The program has received funding from Dogwood Health Trust to support the continuation of our Senior Companion Support Specialist position until 2025.

4. Administration

- Christina is working to complete the FY21-22 Annual Report. We plan to post the report online on our website and mail all elected officials a hard copy report.
- We hosted an all-staff meeting on January 18.
- Nathan attended the COG Directors meeting in Kernersville.
- Nathan attended the Development Districts Association of Appalachia (DDAA) board meeting in Gainesville, Georgia. Nathan is the NC representative on the DDAA board. DDAA advocates for the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and supports the development districts in the 13-state ARC region.
- Nathan attended the Workforce Directors meeting in Wilmington and the My Future NC Collaboratives meeting in New Bern.
- Nathan joined the Clean Vehicles Annual Luncheon and former LOSRC employee received a special award from the US Department of Energy.
- Nathan participated in the Senior Companion Program Annual Holiday Luncheon.
- Nathan participated in the ribbon cutting for the Galen College of Nursing at Biltmore Park.
- Nathan attended the Henderson County Chamber Business Morning Update.
- Nathan made a presentation to the Council of Independent Business Owners.
- Nathan has joined the WNC History Museum steering committee in the effort to establish a NC History Museum in Western North Carolina.
- Nathan met with the Institute of Emerging Issues at NC State to share the many partnerships IEI has with Land of Sky Regional Council.
- Nathan met with NC House Representative Caleb Rudow and NC House Representative Jennifer Balkcom. Meetings are scheduled with Representatives Eric Ager and Lindsey Prather. Working to set up a meeting with Senator Kevin Corbin who now serves our region as Transylvania County is in his district.
- Nathan attended the MLK Breakfasts in Asheville and Flat Rock. Congressman Chuck Edwards joined the LOSRC table at the Asheville MLK Breakfast.
- Congressman Edwards and his staff stopped by the LOSRC office unannounced. He spoke to the French Broad River MPO board which was meeting at that time. Congressman Edwards serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

5. Workforce

- Region's unemployment rate of 3.1% for November 2022, metro has the #1 lowest unemployment rate in NC. Our region generally has more people working, more jobs and more people in our labor force than at any time pre-pandemic. There are monthly fluctuations with the data and subject to revisions.
- Philip Cooper, Coordinator of the Accelerate Buncombe program will be co-leading the Talent Economics Forum with the Institute of Emerging Issues in Raleigh, NC at NC State's McKimmon Center.
- We were awarded a \$4 million USDOL grant to serve youth in 11-counties in NC and 10-counties in TN. The grant will be focused on the two highest poverty census tracts in the City of Asheville to support youth ages 16 – 24 years old.
- We received \$1.3 million from the NC Department of Commerce: \$200,000 for substance use disorders, \$200,000 for reentry, and \$904,080 for small business training support. The small business grant application was submitted in partnership with NC IDEA and NC Community College System.

- We hosted the Mountain Area WDB Recognition Luncheon on December 13. Our board recognized outstanding employers, youth, job seekers and workforce partners. Special thanks to the Hendersonville High School Symphony for performing during the event.
- We are supporting the NC Small Business Workforce Forum on January 26 in partnership with several other workforce boards across the state.
- We transferred \$83,623.99 in youth funding to Southwestern Workforce Development Board. Our board has not met the 20% work-experience mandate for the past two years and we believe this transfer will help us meet this mandate. Our youth contractors are taking every step possible to expand youth work experience.
- Nathan provided a workforce and economy update to the Council of Independent Business Owners (CIBO) and the Asheville Rotary Club.
- We are in the process of planning WNC Construction Career Day on March 28 and 29 in Haywood County at the Smoky Mountain Event Center. Over 20 school systems will be participating.
- We are renewing the Transfr VR subscription for virtual reality software headsets pending approval from the Land of Sky Regional Council board and the NC Department of Commerce.
- We are considering submitting a grant to Dogwood Health Trust to support “recovery to work” and our INspire program.
- We have about \$150,000 in National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) funding available to support dislocated workers. This funding expires at the end of March 2023 and we are searching for ways to deploy these funds.

6. Strategic Initiatives

Mountain Mobility – Overall trips were down slightly – just above 5% - from November to December, but annually travel on public transportation typically falls during the holiday season. Our taxi voucher program – RIDE – also saw lower sales compared to the first quarter. The program still struggles to find reliable transportation partners as employers face a continuing labor shortage. Many of the 108 active participants cite a lack of responsiveness on the part of providers as a reason for their lower voucher purchases. We continue to work with providers to stay informed on current staffing levels to ensure participants have the latest information on availability.

Healthy Opportunities – We currently have 16 active cases of clients needing transportation through the pilot program – four (4) clients in Henderson, three (3) in McDowell, two (2) in Buncombe, and one each in Haywood, Mitchell, Burke, Rutherford, Transylvania, Jackson and Madison counties. In December, we successfully provided transportation for four (4) clients in Buncombe.