

Land of Sky Regional Council
April 27, 2022
Regular Meeting

Hybrid: In-Person at City of Hendersonville Police Department,
630 Ashe Street, Hendersonville, NC 28792 or Remote 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 (March 2022)

VI. Comments by the Chair and Delegates Roundtable

VII. Public Comment

VIII. Presentations/Recognition

- A. Brandon Nudd, CEO, Advent Health Hendersonville
- B. Kendra Straub, Management and Program Analyst, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Proposed Smokies Parking Fee and Fee Changes
- C. Dan Gerlach, Dan Gerlach LLC, ARPA Update

IX. Executive Director's Report

X. Important Dates

- A. Next regularly scheduled Board meeting is planned for May 25, 2022.

XI. Adjournment

For those attending in-person parking is very limited in the side lot at the Police Department. Attendees will need to park in the gravel lot on E. Pace Street across the street from the Police Department's gated lot. A tour of the Police Department will be available following the board meeting at 2:00 pm.



BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** Consent Agenda
- Item Number:** V. Consent Agenda:
A. Modification/Approval of the Board's Agenda for April 27, 2022
B. Approval of Minutes from the March 23, 2022, Regular Meeting
- Responsible Party:** Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services
- Attachment(s):** Minutes from the March 2022 Regular Meeting
- Background:** Item B. March 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes Recap:
Quorum was present to conduct business at the March 2022 meeting and the minutes provide a recap of the Delegates' updates from around the region. Presentations were provided by Anderson Miller with Hometown Strong, Beth Wood, NC State Auditor, regarding the purpose of this agency-to audit State-level agencies including educational institutions and to investigate and oversee jurisdictions that have instances of fraud and abuse of public funds, and by Dorian Palmer and Deon Lytle of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of WNC.
- 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**

March 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: Tim Love, William Lapsley, Norris Gentry, Michael Garrison, Larry Chapman, Sandra Kilgore, Maureen Copelof, David Dethero, Preston Blakely, Barbara Volk, Carey O’Cain, Nathan Bennett, Forrest Gilliam, Jeff Young, Daniel Cobb, Jane Alexander, Patrick Fitzsimmons, Shannon Tuch, Sheri Powers, George Morosani, Brad Guth, and Bob Tomasulo

Guests Present – Andy Miller, Dorian Palmer, Shawn Slome, Deon Lytle, and Beth Wood, State Auditor

A quorum was present to conduct business.
- V. Consent Agenda – The consent agenda, consisting of the Board’s March agenda and the minutes of the February 23, 2022, meeting was presented for approval.

Larry Chapman moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Norris Gentry 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
Tim Love – Shared that Buncombe County’s second round of ARPA RFPs have launched, and proposals are due April 12, 2022. He shared also that the Billie Jean King Cup (formerly the Federation Cup) is coming to the region April 15. Finally, the County kicked off a project to install three new turf fields at the Soccer Park.
Commission Chair William Lapsley – Shared that Henderson County Commission met last night and had a lengthy discussion with broadband providers to extend that service into the rural parts of the County and to support that expansion with ARPA funds. He shared also that the County is halfway through the 2045 Comprehensive Plan. The public survey for the Plan has garnered over 6800 responses from taxpayers since the survey was sent out with property tax notices.
Commissioner Norris Gentry – Shared that Madison County moving forward with a number of substantial economic development activities, the comprehensive plan, and moving forward on initiatives supported with funding from the current state budget. Everything is good in the County.
Commissioner Larry Chapman – Shared that Transylvania County and the City of Brevard have received funding for the Ecusta Trail. Additionally, there is lots of discussion in the County on how to move forward with the \$68 million school bond that was approved a few years ago. The American Legion Post in the County is planning a Memorial Day service at the County Courthouse.
Council Member Sandra Kilgore – Shared that the City of Asheville unanimously approved the City’s Parks and Recreation request to give the Memorial Park \$4.4 million for a variety of improvements including a six-lane competitive track. The City is very excited about this accomplishment. The City is also working on figuring out the best people to qualify for the ARPA funds as there is about \$17 million to distribute.

Mayor Maureen Copelof – Shared that the City of Brevard is having ‘Arts in March’ in downtown Brevard on Saturday and Sunday with lots of artists and live music. The first roundabout has opened in Brevard (one of many more coming) and the City is putting out guidance and safety information for navigating this feature. Also, there’s road work on Highway 64. In addition, ‘Assault on the Carolinas’, in conjunction with the Rotary Club includes 50k and 100k bike rides. Everyone is welcome to attend the event! The City is continuing to work on the Ecusta Trail, and an advisory board has been formed to work collaboratively with Henderson and Transylvania Counties, and the towns and cities the trail goes through. The City is continuing the search for a new manager.

Council Member David Dethero – Shared that the North Highland Lake Road project is getting started in the Village of Flat Rock and should take two or three years to complete. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is under development and should be complete in April. The ‘Celebrate Flat Rock! Ice Cream Social’ is back this year on June 4. The Park is open for all kinds of activities next month. Please come visit the Park. The Village is working on developing plans for the ARPA funding and making progress. Council Member Dethero shared appreciation for the help from LOSRC.

Mayor Preston Blakely – Shared that the Town of Fletcher had its budget meeting yesterday and demolition is upcoming for the Town Center project. The buildings for the mixed-use facility will be coming in the next couple of years.

Mayor Barbara Volk – Shared that the City of Hendersonville has its budget workshop meeting tonight and they are working on handling the ARPA funds with input from citizens. Starting the mulch and compost giveaway tomorrow and it’s free- just haul it away. The City is in the process of applying for a grant to connect the Oklawaha Greenway to the Ecusta trail and make a better destination for folks walking and hiking through the City. The Farmers Market opens the first weekend in May, the bears come out in May, and the first Rhythm and Brews of the season is in May. Mayor Volk mentioned that the City is planning to host the Regional Council for their April meeting. The meeting is planned at the new Police Station and lunch will be provided. Officers will be available to take people on tours. The City would love to have a big turnout for that meeting!

Mayor O’ Cain – Shared that the Town of Laurel Park had its budget workshop yesterday and the Town is trying not to raise taxes this year. The Mayor mentioned the good work that new Manager Alex Carmichael is doing, and he thanked Montreat for training him so well.

Town Administrator Forrest Gilliam – Shared that the Town of Marshall has its next big street repair project beginning soon to repair slide damage from 2018. The Town is concerned with the rising costs of construction and supplies. The Town is working with other jurisdictions on water and sewer projects and planning to purchase vehicles for the town. There’s been great weather and people are asking about zoning permits.

Manager Nathan Bennett – Shared that in the Town of Mars Hill things are going very well with a lot of projects under management. The Town has a Trust Fund Grant to do improvements at Bailey Mountain Preserve.

Manager Daniel Cobb – Shared that the Town of Mills River is very busy with exciting projects including a new picnic shelter for the park and working with NCDOT for a pedestrian plan. The Town completed repaving of the bike paths through the Park that were damaged in last year’s storm. The Town is also working on the budget and plans to present that to Council in the next couple of weeks. There’s a rising number of building permits, which has remained strong.

Commissioner Jane Alexander – Shared that the Town of Montreat appreciates the compliment but Manager Carmichael mostly came to the Laurel Park the way he is. The Montreat Native Plant Sale is happening April 23 from 9 to 3 around the lake. This is the time that the Town really works on its environmental concerns. Plenty of native plants to see and buy and entertainment is planned. Everyone is welcome!

Manager Shannon Tuch – Shared that the Town of Woodfin voted to move to a Council/Manager form of government. The Town is knee deep in the budget planning process with a close eye on the cost of living and the rising cost of procurement. The Comprehensive Plan is underway and should be completed by early fall. Coming up on April 21 is the ribbon cutting for the Silverline Park, which is a nice addition to the Town’s greenway system and connects to the French Broad River Greenways, too.

Economic Development Representative Brad Guth – Shared that Madison County is in the midst of the Comprehensive Plan, that should be done around August.

Ageing Representative Bob Tomasulo – Shared that the Livable Appalachian Survey was sent out and the RAAC would appreciate everyone responding. This survey is a follow-up to AARP's Livable Appalachian series that was presented last year.

VII. Public Comment -

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

VIII. Presentations/Recognition –

A. Hometown Strong – Anderson Miller, Director of Public Policy shared that the Hometown Strong initiative, which is a partnership between rural jurisdictions and state government is three years old and was started by Governor Cooper to offer a more personal and hands-on approach to state government for the rural communities. Mr. Miller shared that his role is to act as a liaison between rural counties and state government officials. The goal is to help rural towns with any issues across state government. This translates to partnering with NCPRO to encourage rural communities to apply for available funding and to work with their Council of Government (COG) organization in their region. In the LOSRC region, Mars Hill is working with Hometown Strong regarding NCDOT projects. The initiative has many focus areas and in particular, the water infrastructure issues across the state. He encouraged any towns who need assistance with water infrastructure to please reach out to him as there is a lot more funding in the revolving funds and other funds than there has ever been. He concluded by sharing that he wants to be a point of contact with the rural communities when dealing with state officials.

B. NC State Auditor – Beth Wood, State Auditor, shared that the focus of the auditor's office is to audit state government agencies including educational institutions. The Auditor's Office is also called on whenever a jurisdiction has charges of embezzlement or fraud, and misuse of taxpayer dollars. She encouraged all local governments to get their annual audit done as that is the law. Six local governments have had their operations taken over by the Local Government Commission due to being on the verge of bankruptcy. She noted that particularly in the rural areas, there is not the talent available to be a finance officer. Currently the Auditor's Office is working with CPA firms to take on the financial work of some cities and counties. They do this by managing multiple jurisdictions and spreading the cost out. She shared about a recent case of fraud regarding utilities and other instances of embezzlement. She cautioned that auditors need to have the requisite background in order to complete required audits effectively. Governmental accounting is different than for-profit or personal accounting. Jurisdictions have their numbers audited to assure those are in the right category and to assure that funding is applied as per laws, rules, and regulations. She noted that fraud can go undetected through an audit. In instances of fraud and misuse of money, if the bank reconciliations were being done accurately and timely, the fraud may have been caught early before significant damage was done to jurisdictions. The Auditor's Office also receives tips from the community, which are investigated as warranted. Ms. Wood noted that jurisdictions have their own auditors, but they may not be looking for fraud. Accounting needs to be kept up to date, and local officials need to understand what is being budgeted in a jurisdiction's departments. Credit card abuse is rampant and there is a lot of misuse of vehicles. She encouraged jurisdictions to be vigilant with regards to potential fraud.

Discussion occurred regarding the best ways to discover fraud and misuse of public funds and Beth Wood shared that bank reconciliations being kept up to date and a set of processes that ensure separation of financial duties and adequate internal controls are some of the best ways to prevent fraud and abuse. She noted the importance of reviewing budgets against expenses and documenting costs.

Beth Wood shared that NC General Statutes 159 states all the things that a financial officer/director and an accounting system should be able to do to keep adequate records to guard against fraud and abuse of public funds.

C. Big Brothers and Big Sisters of WNC -Dorian Palmer, Recruitment and Development Specialist and Deon Lytle, Program and Recruitment Coordinator shared information regarding Big Brother and Big Sisters of

WNC (BB/BS). Dorian shared that he has been involved with BB/BS for 16 years. He shared that BB/BS serves the entire LOSRC region and the entire 18- western most counties. Dogwood Health Trust (DHT) provided funding to expand from 9 to 18 counties. Currently, Madison and Transylvania Counties are being built back up. BB/BS give kids a chance through mentoring. Mentoring makes a huge difference in a child's life. In addition, BB/BS gives back to the communities. Community service is a big part of the organization, in addition to the one-to-one relationship with kids. BB/BS started in New York as a mentorship to decrease recidivism of juveniles in the justice system. BB/BS provides emotional and educational supports for at-risk kids. The goal is to help children be more successful.

IX. New Business

A. LOSRC Nominating Committee Report – The LOSRC Nominating Committee was appointed pursuant to the Bylaws & Charter at the February meeting. Nominating Committee members were Bill Lapsley, Commission Chairman, Henderson County, Terri Wells, Commissioner, Buncombe County and George Morosani, Economic Development Representative- Buncombe County. The newly appointed Slate of Officers and Executive Committee members terms are effective July 1, 2022. The swearing-in ceremony may occur at the August 2022 meeting.

Nathan Ramsey provided the following Nominating Committee report for the recommendation for Executive Committee members and the Officers' Slate.

Chair: Patrick Fitzsimmons, Mayor, Town of Weaverville (Buncombe)

Vice-Chair: Norris Gentry, Commissioner, Madison County (Madison)

Secretary: Maureen Copelof, Mayor, City of 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

The floor was opened by Chair Volk for nominations, and none were forthcoming and the nominations were closed.

The nominating committee report was presented as a motion not requiring a second. The roll was called, and the Slate of Officers and Executive Committee members was unanimously approved upon a vote, and without further discussion.

X. 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 mentioned that office renovations began today with demotion for the Healthy Opportunities Pilot Project.

Nathan Ramsey extended thanks to Danna Stansbury, who is leading the Excellence in Local Government Job Fair today at the WNC Ag Center.

XI. Important Dates

A. The next Board meeting is April 27, 2022, hosted by the City of Hendersonville.

XII. 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:** IX. Executive Director's Report
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** Executive Director's Report for April 27, 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

1. Finance

- MIP (finance software) training will begin the first week in May.
- We will add a finance software module for payroll and other accounting functions.
- FY 22/23 budget work is underway.
- We will be proposing a 7% COLA for the FY22-23 budget. The Council's indirect rate will decline for the upcoming program year, health insurance and retirement rates will increase for FY22-23.
- We are working with Dr. Jim on budget spreadsheets for the upcoming fiscal year.
- We are working with the ECD team on several quarterly reports that are due.

2. Economic & Community Development & Transportation Planning

a. Grants & Reporting.

- **NEU Reports are due April 30 for ARPA Funds!** 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>
- **Rural Transformation Fund Grants are due May 2** for Round 1. Please see more information here: <https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/rural-transformation-grants>
- **DEQ grants for water/sewer infrastructure are also due May 2** <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-infrastructure/i-need-funding>

b. Planning Services.

- Staff attended the NADO Policy Conference in Washington DC. Erica was on a panel discussion about the Racial Disparity Report and Equity work in the Region.
- Staff attended the Rural Summit in Raleigh and made connections about housing and broadband.
- Transportation Staff attended the NCAMPO Conference in Wilmington. This is a conference hosted by the State's MPOs and attended by staff from NCDOT, RPOs, MPOs, local governments, and consultants. Tristan was on several panel presentations and Vicki Eastland gave the RPO update since she is the President of the State RPO Association.
- Staff attended the NC WRRI (Water Resource Research Institute) conference in Raleigh. Mary presented on the EPA Greening America's Community project on A-B Tech's campus.
- 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.
- We have chosen a Creative Manufacturing Consultant and the project has kicked off. First regional meeting will be held May 5th from 11-12:30 at Center For Craft. Please register here <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/western-nc-regional-listening-session-asheville-tickets-320931704367>
- The WNC Innovation Park was selected as a Duke Sanford School of Public Policy's Spring Consulting Project. The staff and students presented their final project report last week and the final paper will be forthcoming. There will be several recommendations we can discuss to work toward a stronger high-tech workforce. 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. Applications have been submitted to several entities including ARC and Dogwood Health Trust.

- We have completed the three Business and Practitioner meetings for 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 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. The project will be discussed at Policy on Tap, hosted by the Asheville Buncombe Chamber of Commerce on May 19 at New Belgium Brewery.
- 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.
- The NCGS 160D requires all Comprehensive Plans be updated to meet the new guidelines by July 1, 2022. Please contact 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
- 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. LOSRC is hosting rain barrel workshops in several communities and developing regional educational campaigns related to stormwater management. Contact Mary for more information: mary@landofsky.org
- 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. The project will begin in May 2022.
- 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. 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. 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
- Staff are working with several communities for planning and zoning assistance including Hot Springs, Mars Hill, Montreat, Woodfin, Flat Rock, Maggie Valley, and Andrews. We are partnering with Region A staff to assist with communities in their region, and recently signed a contract with the Town of Clyde.
- 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.
- LOSRC hosted an AccelAdapt (our regional resilience decision-support platform) User Group Training and Kickoff with planning staff and emergency managers from all four counties.

- 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.
- Clean Vehicles has been participating in outreach events across the region including City of Asheville Parks and Recreation Truck City, Evergreen Charter School Better World Day, Careers on Wheels, Cherokee Electric Bus Ribbon Cutting.
- 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 hosted the annual broadband leadership summit with national level speakers and nearly 200 registrants on April 20, 2022.

c. 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.
- RPO staff is also serving on the new NCDOT EV/Clean Energy Committee.
- RPO, MPO and ECD staff are assisting several communities write grants for transportation projects, including RAISE, FLAP, and the IJJA Discretionary Funds.
- 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 is providing funding for on-going studies at the City of Asheville, including the Close the GAP Plan, the purchase of bicycle and pedestrian counters, and the Biltmore/McDowell study.
- 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.
- 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.
- MPO staff provided an orientation for new members to the MPO's Board, TCC, and the general public on March 3, 2022.

3. Aging

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): The Area Agency on Aging received the draft American Rescue Plan Act Administrative Letter from the Division of Aging and Adult Services and written input from all AAA's was due back by April 14. We wait for the final Administrative Letter to be released from DAAS before we distribute funds to regional providers.

COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach

- Staff continues to monitor and learn the new state covid plan, “Moving Forward Together” plan. Which included a new way of monitoring and reporting covid throughout the state.
- Staff promoting the “Spring into Summer” Campaign from NC DHHS to help continuing pushing vaccination and boosters.
- Staff distributes COVID-19 informational flyers to places around town.
- Staff visited Transylvania County to give out AAA “swag” and covid information at community and senior centers.
- Staff continues to connect with other organizations to create ideas and plans on how to partner together in COVID-19 outreach.
- Staff is preparing for Older Americans Month in May with planning and scheduling events to participant in to give out COVID-19 information.
- Staff will have upcoming radio and newspaper ads to reach homebound older adults.

Family Caregiver Support Program

- Staff is working with area providers to reach out to Kinship Caregivers (Grandparents Raising Grandchildren) to assist them with funds for summer camps and other needs.
- Staff is working with Friends of Transylvania County Adult Day to find ways of getting Adult Day Care back up and running in Transylvania County.
- 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 worked with volunteers at AARP in presenting Powerful Tools for Caregivers which is an interactive training for caregivers which teaches valuable skills and information on resources family caregivers can go to for assistance.

Foster Grandparent Program

- AmeriCorps Seniors just announced that all stipend programs including the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs will receive a permanent increase to support an increase in the stipend from \$3.00 to \$3.15 per hour, effective July 1, 2022.
- President Biden’s FY23 Budget Request Continues to Grow National Service. The President has proposed a robust budget for national service and volunteerism providing \$1.34 billion for AmeriCorps - a 16 percent increase over last year. It provides increases across every program and support account. On the heels of the recent increases in the FY22 enacted budget, these FY23 investments reflect the Administration’s strong support for national service as a strategy for meeting pressing challenges and building a more equitable future for all Americans.
- In recognition of National Volunteer Week, April 17 – April 23, volunteers of the Foster Grandparent Program were recognized with a luncheon for their dedication and the differences they make each day in the lives of the children they work with.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Staff welcomes the return of fully in-person evidence-based programming. The first offering is Tai Chi being provided at the Senior Opportunity Center in Asheville. Additionally, Walk with Ease is currently available to older adults in the four-county region.
- Staff is currently completing Bingocize leadership training and is in talks to bring this new evidence-based program to a regional senior center.
- Staff represented the WNC Falls Prevention coalition at the North Carolina Fall Prevention quarterly meeting.

- Staff is working with WNC Falls Prevention and MAHEC to bring a September Falls Prevention conference to the region.
- Staff is working with Lakeview Center for Active Aging to complete recertification.
- Staff continues to work with Blue Ridge Pride and Generations Plus to bring monthly content to social media, including the Rainbow Inspiration series for LGBTQ+ adults.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers are eager for more in-person events and are currently planning to reintroduce both ongoing activities including crochet, gardening, and “color my world” groups.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to partner with MANNA and OLLI volunteers to bring nutrition to residents. In March 126 bags of groceries were distributed to residents, and 347 “Neighbor Knock” visits were conducted.

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

- Adult Day Care/Health Days = 2,923
- Meals – delivered/congregate = 142,720
- In-home Aide hours =8,853
- Legal Services hours = 1,294
- Transportation trips =37,641
- Home Improvement Projects = 24

Money Follows the Person (MFP) Community Inclusion

- Staff held first regional webinar for Money Follows the Person program review with 21 skilled nursing facilities were in attendance.
- Staff attended the *Essential Jobs, Essential Care (EJEC)* Direct Care Workforce Convening.
- Staff joined the Buncombe County World Elder Abuse Awareness Day planning committee and attended first planning meeting.
- Staff visit Skilled Nursing facilities in Henderson and Buncombe Counties to conduct trainings and offer support to social workers and discharge planning teams.

Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator

Western counties served: Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, Rutherford, Mitchell, Madison. The current caseload for the Western Region is 11.

- Six are waiting on housing before they can transition.
- Three clients transitioned April 1, 2022.
- Two clients are scheduled to transition May 1, 2022.

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

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

Ombudsman Program

- On April 12, Donna Case was Certified and Designated as a Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman.
- Staff is working with other North Carolina Ombudsmen as well as the State Ombudsmen to finalize Community Advisory Committee Training Modules and Schedule.

- Ombudsman staff provided Aging Sensitivity a CNA 1 class at Blue Ridge Community College in Henderson County.

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

- 93% of the State respite funds have been utilized by caregivers in the Western Project C.A.R.E. region (15 counties); 100% of State respite funds have been awarded to caregivers.
- Project C.A.R.E. received federal funding this fiscal year to supplement State funds. The Western Region had \$11,000 (federal) to start and then received an additional \$4,000 (federal). Caregivers receiving federal respite funds will need to use them by end of August. 60% of the funds have been allocated to caregivers needing respite and the balance will be allocated very soon.
- Staff will resume doing home visits after having taken a long pause from doing home visits during the COVID pandemic.
- Staff will do outreach in the Region A counties (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain) to increase referrals. Project C.A.R.E. strives to serve caregivers in all 100 counties and in the Western Region all 15 counties.

The Senior Companion Program is adjusting to the new norm. The VA has opened again so several of volunteers are serving there. Staff has been alerted that AmeriCorps Seniors will receive a 15 cent per hour raise for stipends in July 2022. This will allow volunteers to receive \$3.15 per volunteer hour. Staff continue to apply for grants to support the mileage reimbursement for our volunteers who drive their clients to medical, grocery, and needed errands. There will be a big push beginning in May 2022 for recruitment of new volunteers.

4. Administration

- Buncombe County has begun renovations of our office. 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.
- Hosted quarterly local government managers meeting on April 25.
- Nathan attended the COG Directors and Forum Meeting in Pembroke, NC at the Lumber River COG office.
- Several staff attended the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner.
- Nathan and Danna attended the Southwestern Commission March 28, 2022 board meeting in Cherokee. The board meeting featured a presentation by Philip Cooper, coordinator of the INspire “recovery to career” effort which covers 11-counties in Western North Carolina.
- Nathan attended the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond “Investing in Rural America” conference in Greensboro.
- Nathan participated in an online UNC SOG course “Cultivating Workplace Culture.”
- Nathan attended the Asheville Chamber Leadership Circle meeting focused on workforce housing.
- Nathan and Danna attended the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Annual Dinner in Hickory.
- Met with City of Brevard regarding their RAISE grant application for the Ecusta Trail.
- Participated in numerous Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) meetings and partner discussions.
- 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. We will be supporting Foothills Commission (formerly Isothermal Planning and Development Commission) as part of this effort.
- 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 3.1% for February 2022, metro is the #3 lowest unemployment rate in NC. The March data will be released on April 27.
- NCWorks Commission approved a framework for workforce board consolidation. The framework encourages consolidation but does not indicate how many workforce boards NC should have. A link to the 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.
- Will be making a presentation regarding the region's labor market to Explore Asheville (Asheville CVB) on April 27.
- Board staff are focused on meeting the 20% work experience mandate for our NCWorks NextGen Youth programs. Although we were very close the board failed to meet the 20% mandate last year.
- Federal, state, and local government job fair held on Wednesday, March 23 at the WNC Agricultural Center in Fletcher attracted over 20 employers and about 70 job seekers.
- WNC Career Expo was held on Wednesday, March 30 from 11:00 am – 4:00 pm at Harrah's Cherokee Center in downtown Asheville. Over 120 employers participated and around 230 job seekers attended.
- We hosted a visit by USDOL VETS (Veterans Employment and Training Service) Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Margarita Devlin. DAS Devlin visited ABCCM Veterans Restoration Quarters (VRQ), NCWorks Career Center Asheville, Blue Ridge Community College and Survival Innovations. Our region has many efforts to support veterans.
- The Board released a RFP for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth WIOA Services and for One-Stop Operator. A bidders conference was held on April 4.
- 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. Continental held a job fair on March 23 for workers who were laid off at the end of March.
- We are planning a "\$19 per hour and beyond" job fair for June 2022.
- 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

- Because the federal mask mandate for public transit expired on April 18th, Mountain Mobility has proceeded with a “mask optional” policy for both vehicle operators and passengers.
- The system saw increased ridership during the month of March. Overall, Mountain Mobility provided 500 more trips than the month of February, with significantly higher numbers in our Enka-Candler Trailblazer service. Additionally, we provided three hundred more trips to medical appointments and grocery/shopping destinations for our senior population – an indication that the community has a more positive view of mass transit.

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 (HOP) Program

- Land of Sky Regional Council is spearheading the transportation domain of the Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP) Program as part of Medicaid transformation in North Carolina.
- Thanks to a grant from Dogwood Health Trust, LOSRC will soon open a new call center that will house both our Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation department and the HOP transportation specialists. Under this program, LOSRC will assist with transportation in the 18 western-most counties in the state, building a network of both private and public transportation providers in each county. The transportation domain will begin services May 1st.
- As part of this process, we have hired Dalton Buckner as our Transportation Finance Specialist. Dalton is responsible for contracting with the transit providers in the LOSRC network and processing payments. We’re excited about the launch of the HOP and to have Dalton on board for this program.