

**Meeting of  
Land of Sky Regional Council  
June 24, 2015**

**Minutes**

- I. Call to Order - George Goosmann called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.
- II. Invocation - The invocation was given by Mr. Goosmann.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance -
- IV. Roll Call - The roll was called by Justin Hembree. The following members were present: Denise Braine, Mike Hawkins, Gwen Wisler, George Goosmann, Ryan Stone, Larry Harris, Charlie Landreth, Anne Coletta, Bob Davy, Dona Mennella, Lawrence Ponder, Gene Knoefel, Brenda Mills, George Morosani, Mark Burrows, Charles Dickens, Kathe Harris. The following guest was present: April Riddle. It was announced that a quorum was present.
- V. Modification and Approval of Agenda -
- VI. Public Comment - No public comment was forthcoming.
- VII. Recognition of Special Guests - George Goosmann recognized April Riddle, the Governor's Western Region representative.
- VIII. Chairman's Comments and Roundtable - George Goosmann- the Town of Biltmore Forest has passed its budget and the Town will be implementing a whole recycling program which will include containers for residential customers that will be picked up in the same manner as trash collection. He continued that the NC House passed Senate Bill 369 which if it becomes law would allocate a higher level of sales tax to rural areas. In order to remain revenue neutral, should the legislation become law, sales tax increases would have to be adopted by municipalities in the region. Dona Mennella- shared that the Town of Laurel Park passed its budget too and this year for the first time, in order to rein in healthcare costs; the Town of Laurel Park will no longer provide benefits to spouses of Town staff if that employee's spouse is covered by health insurance of their own. She mentioned as well that interviews are underway for the hiring of a Town Manager. New staff should be in place soon. Gene Knoefel- shared that the Town of Weaverville passed its budget and he reiterated the concerns that local municipalities have regarding SB 369. Lawrence Ponder- shared that the Town Of Marshall passed its budget too. He shared that the Town had a lengthy meeting about the bicycle race which was recently held. The event was a great success and residents are enthusiastic about the event returning next year. Gwen Wisler-shared that the City of Asheville passed its budget last night. She shared also the City's concern about the House passage of the SB 369. City Council looked at easing up on accessory residential limits to encourage more of these types of rentals and, in August, the City will take another look at short term rentals. Kathe Harris- shared exciting news from Volunteer Services: this year, Operation North State will partner with Volunteer Services' 9/11 Day of Service. Additionally, all nine Walgreen's stores in the region will participate too. She invited Council members to put out collection boxes from September 1<sup>st</sup> through the 11<sup>th</sup> to collect donations. Anne Colletta- shared that the Village of Flat Rock passed its budget with a 2.6 cent tax increase which was mainly due to an increase in the fire service contracts which service the Village. The Park Foundation has received several major gifts and grants to continue work on the Welcome Center and parks. Denise Braine- shared great news for Buncombe County- the Enka Jets won the State Championship and are currently ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the Nation. April Riddle - shared about Governor McCrory's Connect NC bond proposal. If passed the bond proposal would provide Buncombe County with a Medical Examiner's Office which would save the county money and improvements would be made to the Western NC Agricultural Center. Other projects proposed for the region include replacing the NC Forest Headquarters in Madison County and improvements to

Chimney Rock State Park. Two of the biggest projects proposed under Connect NC would be a new Science and STEM facility for Western Carolina University and Appalachian State would receive a College of Nursing. All told, the proposed bond proposal includes more than \$1.4 Billion for infrastructure projects and nearly \$1.4 Billion for road projects. George Morosani- shared that New Belgium is about six months ahead of their construction schedule; Wicked Weed is expanding its facility and the old GE building is being looked at by businesses locally that want to increase their facilities. Charles Dickens- shared that the Aging Advisory Committee is looking forward to meeting in Brevard at the Silvermont Opportunity Center on July 9<sup>th</sup>. Ryan Stone- shared that Black Mountain passed its budget without a tax increase. This budget has an emphasis on paying down the municipal debt of the Town. Black Mountain's Town Clerk is retiring at the end of the month. The new Town Clerk is Angela Reese and she was sworn in this morning. The Town will also be undertaking an in-house update of its pedestrian/bicycle plan. Mr. Goosman mentioned that Biltmore Forest borrowed money several years ago to improve its water lines and the Town has finally figured out that the money in the bank for fund balance was not making any money and so it was decided to pay off the debt.

- IX. Approval of Minutes from the May Regular Meeting - Dona Mennella made a correction to the minutes to record the correct increase in Laurel Park's FY15/16 budget which was four-cents. A motion was made by Ms. Mennella to accept the minutes of the May meeting as corrected. A second was provided and the motion was approved without further discussion.
- X. Consideration and Approval of Consent Agenda Items - A motion was made by George Morosani to approve the Consent Agenda including items: A) May FY2015 Treasurer's Report; B) FY 2015 Budget Amendment #4; C) FY2015/16 Family Caregiver Support Program Contract/Service Providers; and D) Council Meeting Minutes (January, February and April). The motion was seconded by Ryan Stone and approved unanimously upon a vote and without further discussion.
- XI. Presentations/Recognition -
- XII. Old Business -
- A. Election of Executive Committee & Officers - Justin Hembree, Executive Director presented the proposed Officers' Slate and Executive Committee nominations to Council. He shared that usually at the Annual meeting, Council elects its Officers and Executive Committee members; however, due to quorum issues, this is the first meeting where a vote could be considered. If approved the Officers' Slate and the Executive Committee members would serve until the next annual meeting of the Council. He shared the proposed slate for the Executive Committee and the Officers' with Council:
- Executive Committee  
Buncombe County – George Goosmann (Mayor, Biltmore Park)  
Henderson County – Dona Mennella (Commissioner, Laurel Park)  
Madison County – Wayne Brigman (Commissioner, Madison County)  
Transylvania County – Mike Hawkins (Commissioner, Transylvania County)  
At-Large – Gene Knoefel (Councilman, Weaverville)  
At-Large – Brenda Mills (City of Asheville)  
At-Large – Bob Davy (Councilman, Fletcher)  
At-Large – Larry Harris (Alderman, Black Mountain); and
- Officers  
Chair – George Goosmann (Mayor, Biltmore Park)  
First Vice-Chair – Mike Hawkins (Commissioner, Transylvania County)  
Second Vice-Chair – Dona Mennella (Commissioner, Laurel Park)  
Secretary – Gene Knoefel (Councilman, Weaverville)  
Treasurer – Larry Harris (Alderman, Black Mountain)
- A motion was made by George Morosani and seconded by Ryan Stone to approve the slate as presented. Upon a vote the motion was unanimously approved without further discussion.

XIII. New Business -

A. FY2015/16 Budget Adoption - A motion was made by Gene Knoefel and seconded by Mark Burrows to open the public hearing for the FY2015/16 Budget Ordinance. Hearing no public comment, Brenda Mills made a motion to close the public hearing which was seconded by George Morosani. Upon a vote and without further discussion the Budget Hearing was closed.

Vickie Thomas, LOS Finance Director shared that a balanced Budget Ordinance must be adopted by Council prior to July 1<sup>st</sup>. Kathe Harris made a motion to approve the Budget Ordinance as presented. Gene Knoefel seconded the motion which was then approved unanimously upon a vote and without further discussion.

XIV. Executive Director's Report -

A. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program - Mr. Hembree shared about the challenges faced by Council (and all the local governments in North Carolina) when trying to develop CDBG proposals as currently, two-thirds of the funds are going to one-third of the State. Basically what this means is that two-thirds of CDBG funds are going to infrastructure needs in the eastern third of the State. He continued that after discussion with municipalities/partners, it has been determined that it is time for the General Assembly to step in. Fifty-five percent of the non-entitlement population lives in the western region of the state while the City of Asheville is an entitlement region. Based on current scoring criteria for these funds, 85% of those are thereafter distributed to the eastern third of the state. Regional Councils (including LOSRC) in the State believe that it is time to push for a more equitable distribution of those funds. Mr. Hembree shared that this should be a regional legislative priority. It's really frustrating when trying to work with our communities, that these funds are extremely limited. He shared that the development of a one-pager to provide information on this issue is planned and when that is available it will be provided to Council.

Discussion occurred regarding the scoring criteria for these funds. Mr. Hembree commented that the scoring criterion is weighted to the advantage of the more rural communities down east. In a general, overall picture of things, there is not more poverty in eastern North Carolina than western. What happens is that if you look at county-wide socioeconomic data, there are pockets of really high rates of poverty but when the data is examined by county it looks like the area is not plagued by these pockets of poverty. Mr. Hembree stated the hope to be able to sit down with the professional staff to relate to them what the data is.

B. Council By-Laws - Mr. Hembree shared that one of the major projects at the staff level is the revision of Council's By-laws. Staff will be researching during the summer months (till August) changes that should be made to the By-laws. A first draft should be available for Executive Committee /Council review by the August meeting with the intention to have a new set of By-laws enacted by the beginning of 2016.

XIV. Important Dates - Mr. Goosmann mentioned the date of the next Council meeting which will be August 26<sup>th</sup>. He reminded Council that there is no meeting in July.

XV. Adjournment - Mr. Goosmann adjourned the meeting.