

Third Quarter— 2007

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Southwestern Commission  
125 Bonnie Lane  
Sylva, NC 28779

828-586-1962 Phone  
828-586-1968 Fax

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES WORKSHOP HELD IN JUNE

*The following article is excerpted from the July 4 edition of The Macon County News.*

Local leaders of the westernmost N.C. counties joined efforts at a “Growth Management Challenges” workshop Thursday, June 28, to address the common issues that have come with unprecedented growth and development in the traditionally rural counties. During a work session, participants identified slope and ridge top development, protection of streams and rivers, access to clean drinking water and preserving farmland and open spaces as the biggest areas of concern. Commissioners, planning board members, county employees and others from Macon, Jackson, Haywood, Swain, Cherokee and Clay counties participated in the forum at the Macon Bank headquarters in Franklin. The Southwestern Commission, Macon Bank, the Local Government Training Program at WCU and McGill Associates sponsored the event. Vicki Greene facilitated the forum.

Counties have addressed growth management at varying levels and through the means of county ordinances. Jackson County has gained the attention of Carolinians as far as east of Asheville, by being the first in WNC to enact a moratorium on new subdivisions in order to write subdivision and steep slope regulations. The public forum on the moratorium held in February drew about 1,300 people and a demonstration of dump trucks in opposition.

Haywood County Erosion Control Officer Marc Pruett has seen first hand just how devastating poor development can be. The county has implemented steep slope and subdivision regulations within the last few years. The steep slope ordinance was put into place in March. Since then, the county has received between 50-60 permit applications a month.



*(L-R) Fred Alexander, Linda Cable, Marc Pruett, Stacy Guffey and Barry Patterson led a panel discussion on solutions for growth management*

See **Growth** on page 3

## HERITAGE AREA RECEIVES NEARLY \$750,000

The following article is a reprint from the Asheville-Citizens Time.

With \$748,955 in federal funding for this year, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area is looking ahead to opening a visitors destination center this fall to steer travelers off the popular Blue Ridge Parkway and toward other attractions in Western North Carolina.

Parkway visitors will be able to buy “go-passes” at computer kiosks for attractions stretching across the mountains, from “Unto These Hills” in Cherokee to a tour of the Biltmore House in Asheville to the mile-high bridge atop Grandfather Mountain.

U.S. Rep. Heath Shuler announced the federal appropriation of \$748,955 for 2007 at a news conference on Monday, April 23, 2007 at the Blue Ridge Parkway headquarters, then took a tour of the new \$5 million Blue Ridge Destination Center taking shape

next door.

“These funds will enable the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and its partners to continue the work they have been doing to preserve the heritage of our mountains while stimulating the economy of the region,” Shuler said, pointing to the importance of the tourism industry in WNC. The heritage area covers the 25 counties of WNC and the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

With the center’s computerized displays, families will be able to map out their visit with an “I-Wall,” a 22-foot-long interactive map of the parkway, explained Penn Dameron, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area executive director. A TV screen will slide from milepost to milepost on the virtual parkway, showing highlights of different attractions from Cherokee to Boone.

Over the past three



Betty Huskins, Advantage West; Janice Brummit, Chair, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area; Congressman Heath Shuler; Rebecca Williams, Executive Director, Handmade in America; Penn Dameron, Executive Director, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area; and Bill Gibson, Executive Director, Southwestern Commission

years, the heritage area has awarded \$1 million in grass-roots grants, mostly to nonprofit groups, which have been matched by more than \$2.7 million in other contributions.

Dameron pointed to success stories like the Weaving Room at Crossnore School, which received a \$10,000 grant from the Heritage Area. Sales have increased at the local gift shop, which has attracted more visitors,

he said.

Economic development is also the goal of the \$25,000 grant to Mitchell County Development Foundation, to expand retail space for the Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree Project and develop a craft demonstration center, he said.

## BUILDING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES:

### *WHY, HOW AND WHAT ROLE FOR LOCAL LEADERS*

A workshop sponsored by the Institute of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill, focusing on ways that local governments can boost their communities’ economies by

supporting small business creation and development, will be offered in western North Carolina later in the summer at a location and time still to be determined.

The workshop is

designed to help local elected officials and other leaders understand the role entrepreneurship plays in local economic development and ways to get started in building entrepreneurial

communities.

Once a location and date for the workshop has been decided, that information, as well as ways to register, can be found at <http://www.cednc.unc.edu/trainingadvanced.htm>

**GROWTH** *continued from page 1*

Haywood County has witnessed some of the worst failures in development including a water line break and landslide in Hunters Crossing, where six to seven families were forced to move. Many are still paying on their homes and Waynesville is requiring them to pay for the demolitions.

**Water and sewer**

As the population in WNC grows, so does the impact on water, not only through sedimentation in the waterways, but also on water supply.

Counties in WNC are just



Ryan Sherby and Vicki Greene, Southwestern Commission and Ben Brown, Communications Consultant

beginning to recognize the need for oversight. “We’re seeing an increase in the number of dry wells being reported,” stated Macon County Environmental Health Director Barry Patterson. Most are shared wells. Patterson said his department will begin working on a well

ordinance for Macon County next summer. The ordinance will include provisions for siting, setbacks, deeper drilling and consumption issues.

N.C. is one of the top two states in the country for the number of septic systems per capita.

Slope plays a part in all of it too, with the challenges for safe septic systems and good soils for septic systems increasing as development climbs higher and higher up the mountains. Fractured rock and the soils mean

that contaminants can travel hundreds of feet and reach the groundwater system. “Sixty-five to 70% of the septic permits are on slopes greater than 30%,” said Patterson. Patterson said that the possibility of old, failing septic systems contaminating well water is alarming.

Joel Storrow, President of McGill Associates, echoed a concern for addressing water infrastructure needs. “For the past five years, WNC has seen drought, flood, and drought again,” said

Storrow. “The impact on potable water has been significant. We’ve seen so many wells in this area dry up, it’s really unbelievable.”

Storrow said that wells continue to go deeper and more wells drilled increases pressure on the aquifers and more development, namely pavement, means less absorption. He said that it would be “prudent” to pass law governing groundwater assessment and lot sizes.

**Working together for solutions**

On a regional level, Bill Gibson, Executive Director of the Southwestern Commission, said the Commission can help host more forums, but in the end, counties are responsible. Despite joint exercise powers that allow counties or towns to work together, ordinances and taxations are exempt. Educating the public about the challenges that the mountainous landscape poses and about regulations put in place was considered a primary goal. Fred



Tom Tyre, Community Development Specialist with the Southwestern Commission

Alexander, Business Relations Manager with Duke Energy put it this way, “I believe we need to educate our new residents for their sakes, our sakes and the future.”

The N.C. General Assembly is considering a bond for water and sewer in the Clean Water Act of 2007, House Bill 127 and Senate Bill 208. The bill would authorize a state bond of \$500 million to address water infrastructure needs and would provide loans locally for wastewater and drinking water systems. The bill would issue the funds through the non-profit Rural Center and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, releasing a maximum of \$100 million a year.

## MARY BARKER RECEIVES AWARD



On Friday, May 25, 2007, during the Senior Celebration held in Cherokee, NC, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Administrator Mary Barker received the “Lifetime Achievement Award” for her dedication and commitment to Region A and the senior adults

who reside in the region.

Mary began her service to the region over 30 years ago when she became the nutrition coordinator for the senior population. She has been the AAA director since 1979.

Over the past 25 plus years as AAA administrator, services

to the elderly have increased and improved through her advocacy on behalf of the senior population both regionally and statewide.

Please join us in congratulating and thanking Mary for her many years of outstanding service.

## ADVANCED MACHINING CENTER CELEBRATES START-UP

Dr. Rose Johnson, President of Haywood Community College, hosted an open house on July 16<sup>th</sup> in celebration of the official start-up of the Western North Carolina Advanced Machining Center. Primarily funded by a \$1.7 million dollar grant from The Golden Leaf Foundation, the Center’s offerings will include: applications in CNC machining, CNC EDM machining, advanced five-axis

machining, customized and new expanded industry training, customized worker training/certification, reverse engineering, trainer development, advanced machining equipment maintenance and operations, injection molding, and CAD/CAM/CAE training. The Center will also offer regional training and indoctrination for high school machining programs and assistance in aerospace

company qualification for the manufacture of aircraft parts. The Advanced Machining Center is affiliated with the North Carolina Aerospace Alliance which was established to identify opportunities for government/industry partnership to improve readiness and reduce the cost of maintaining aging aircraft weapon systems. The Aerospace Alliance develops capabilities to manufacture critical aviation parts in North



Local dignitaries observe Dr. Rose Johnson, President HCC, and Mark Sorrells, Vice-President Golden Leaf Foundation, cut the ribbon to officially open the new Advanced Machining Center at HCC’s Regional High Tech Center



A technician with the Advanced Machining Center explains operations to Bill Gibson, Southwestern Commission’s Executive Director and Boyce Deitz, Congressman Heath Shuler’s District Representative

company qualification for the manufacture of aircraft parts.

The Advanced Machining Center is affiliated with the North Carolina Aerospace Alliance which

support the Cherry Point Aviation Depot as well as other military facilities and defense subcontractors.

Current students gave demonstrations of the Advanced Machining Center’s computer-operated machinery and Dale Haddock, lead machining instructor, provided an overview of the facilities and

operation. Mark Sorrells, Vice President of The Golden Leaf Foundation was on hand to congratulate Haywood Community College on the innovative endeavor. The Advanced Machining Center is located at Haywood Community College’s Regional High Tech Center.

## GREENE NAMED 'PEACEMAKER OF THE YEAR'

Each year, Mountain Mediation Services honors a community member for contributions to peacemaking and conflict resolution in the counties they cover. Past awards have gone to sheriffs, university professors and organization heads; this year, however, they chose one of their own for her efforts in Jackson County.

Vicki Greene has been a volunteer mediator, board member and two-time past board president for Mountain Mediation during her eight-year tenure. She's also the director of planning and development services at the Southwestern Commission, where she's been working for nearly 32 years, and says she uses the peacemaking skills

learned in mediation in both her everyday life and her professional career.

"I tell everybody this – it took me 50 years before I realized that for me to win, somebody else doesn't have to lose," she said. "I've gotten more out of Mountain Mediation than I could ever get back. It's really changed my world view."

However, Greene's road to the commitment she made to the non-profit group wasn't an easy one.

She began as a volunteer, and with the encouragement of then-President Steve Eller, completed the mediation training and accepted a position in her second year as vice-president of the board. Following Eller's unexpected 2002 death, Greene found it

was her role to fill his shoes on the board as president.

At her first meeting as chairman of the non-profit, Greene was ready to hand in her resignation, thinking she couldn't possibly devote the time required to the leadership position – but before she could, then-director Suzanne Vincent, who's still marginally involved in the group, handed in her own resignation due to the expected birth of her child.

"At that point it seemed like, OK, I'm supposed to stay here and do this," Greene said. "It made for a lot of opportunities to learn



and grow."

The presentation of the award wasn't just a time for fun and fellowship – Greene also took that opportunity to raise money for the non-profit group. She and Bill Gibson, Commission Director, paid out of pocket for food and drinks to be provided, and used the \$15 fee that attendees paid for tickets to raise funds for Mountain Mediation.

## WHO SAYS AGING CAN'T BE GLAMOROUS?

On Friday, May 25, 2007, the Southwestern Commission's Area Agency on Aging staff dressed to the nines for the recent Senior Celebration at Harrah's in Cherokee. The theme was, "A Red Carpet Affair".

Approximately 700

attendees from across the region filled the ballroom of the Harrah's Cherokee Hotel. This was the 17th year the celebration has been held during the month of May as part of Older Americans Month. Senior centers from across the region

received "Oscars" in recognition of the service to the senior population in their counties.



Sarajane Melton (Ombudsman), Mary Barker (Administrator), Ann Keith (Aging Assistant), Cindy Miles (Family Caregiver Support Coordinator), and Jeanne Mathews (Aging Program Coordinator).

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING OFFERS WORKSHOP

Over the course of our life, each of us will experience the loss of someone we love. Whether this loss occurs as a result of an illness, accident, or the natural aging process,

we are left with a mixture of thoughts and feelings.

Southwestern Commission's Area Agency on Aging is presenting a workshop providing information

on the five stages of grief, the grief cycle and coping with loss and grief entitled "Life is (Not Always) Good".

If you are interested in having this workshop presented to your

employees, in-home aides, family groups, etc., please contact Jeanne Mathews or Sarajane Melton at 828-586-1962.

## PHOTOS FROM THE AAA'S VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION LUNCHEON



**SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION**  
**125 BONNIE LANE**  
**SYLVA, NC 28779**