

MEETING SUMMARY
NC Mountain Resources Commission
November 19, 2010
Jackson County Senior Center
Sylva, NC

Members Present: David Gantt, Harris Prevost, Maxine Dalton, Wayne Abele, RuthAnn Suttle, George Santucci, Jay Leutze, Tom Massie, Chuck McGrady, Tommy Jenkins, Robert Shepherd, Charles Vines

Members Absent: Rodney Locks, Jim Coman, Angie Chandler, Max Hopper

Others Present: Ray Rapp, Judy Francis, NCDENR; Mike Butrum, Juleigh Sitton, Steve Henson, Eric Romaniszyn, bill Eaker, Jim Fox, Karen Smith, Bill Yarborough, Rick Wooten, Paul Muller, Michael Cheek, Ken Westmoreland, Helen Bryson

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Gantt opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. He recognized the recently re-elected Rep. Ray Rapp, and newly elected Rep. Chuck McGrady. Jackson County Manager and Jackson County staff member Helen Bryson, led the group on a brief tour of the Senior Center. Tom Massie said the senior center is a new building. The \$4 million cost was paid for with general funds and it took three years to build. The facility is very popular with county residents and is used heavily.

Approval of September 17, 2010 Meeting Summary

Chairman Gantt asked if there were any corrections to the September 17 meeting summary that had previously circulated. Maxine Dalton said there was one misspelling on page one ("Scotch" should be "Scots"). With that correction, Tommy Jenkins made a motion to approve the summary. The motion received a second from Chuck McGrady and was approved unanimously.

Technical Advisory Council Presentation

Chairman Gantt then asked Jim Fox to provide the Commission with an update from the Technical Advisory Council (TAC). Jim provided a PowerPoint presentation that explained that the TAC is working on preliminary evaluations and recommendations regarding the slope issue as per the request from the Commission. He said they are currently reviewing the slope report from Land of Sky Regional Council, developing some baseline slope maps for the western region, reviewing a summary of local slope ordinances, and putting together some presentation components. They currently have 24 counties done right now on the map and the average slope is approximately 31%. They are still working on what is relevant information. For example, they will probably be removing public lands from the equation totals since it is basically removed from the possibility of development. They are reviewing local slope ordinances and comparing them to one another. What they are coming to agreement on is that there should be priority placed on pre-development consultation planning to make sure that key questions are being asked. Chuck McGrady mentioned that Henderson County has slope provisions in their zoning ordinance, it's just not a freestanding policy.

Jim then discussed the Sustainability Report Card and suggested that the Commission recognize the need to focus on values as much as data, specifically the fairness issue. How is fairness measured – public safety, economic well-being, natural beauty, etc. The Report Card on Forest Sustainability project measures sustainability in seven ways: biodiversity, production, ecosystem health, soil / water / air, carbon cycle, socioeconomic benefits, and policy. It is value centric with metrics from the Montreal Accord. He explained how the report card could be used to identify issues to be studied further. Additional metrics could be added to expand the scope of the report card – but we need to understand the value drivers for the metrics that are added. It is only for 18 counties now, but could easily be expanded to cover additional counties. He said that he and Judy spoke with Susan Fox who is willing to contribute 25-30% of the funding to expand this to the balance of the Commission-covered counties if the Commission can find additional funding partners.

Tommy Jenkins asked if he could get a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. Judy said she would put it on the MRC website so the members can access it. Bill Eaker said it would be almost impossible to build new reservoirs now due to new regulations. We need to look at water reuse and conservation techniques. Water allocation is an emerging study issue here and throughout the state.

Maxine Dalton asked when the TAC will be able to begin offering the recommendations? Jim said they hope to give a preliminary report maybe next month, but that's because there is so much existing material available. Walter Clark will be doing a presentation soon about his work with the Coastal Commission. Sometimes those recommendations from their technical advisors took over a year. You have to be realistic about budget issues. There is no money available to generate any new data or undertake new research.

Jay Leutze said the report card integrates many issues. He liked that it would be an efficient use of funds and a useful product for a variety of reasons and projects. Judy reminded the Commission to consider that the product would need to be expanded to cover additional counties as per their legislation. The audience for such a product should be primarily local decision-makers, and they should think about possible formats that would be most useful.

David Gantt said he thought that tourism needed higher priority in the metrics. He suggested that Commission members look at the report card in more depth and get comments in at December meeting. Harris Prevost said that tourism is dependent on scenery. If we wreck the views, tourists will stop coming. Tommy Jenkins added that scenery is also the main draw for entrepreneurs. Large corporations may be less interested in scenery, but smaller businesses are more interested in quality of life issues and scenery is important to them.

TAC replacement

Judy Francis said that the TAC had discussed the vacancy on their Council and asked the Commission to consider appointing someone with an economics background associated with a regional economic development organization. Chairman Gantt appointed a sub-committee of

George Santucci, Harris Prevost, and Tommy Jenkins to identify a new member. They will get information to Judy prior to the December meeting so she can circulate it to all the Commission members prior to a formal vote for appointment.

Committee Reports

Fund Raising Committee: George Santucci reported that the Fund-Raising Committee had not met since the last Commission meeting.

Administrative Committee: Max Hopper is still working on draft bylaws but had a conflict and was not able to attend today's meeting. Judy reported that she met a graphic designer at NCDENR who offered to provide three draft logos for the MRC to choose from at no charge. The three drafts will be ready for the December meeting. Once the Commission selects which one they want to go with, then they will prepare a PowerPoint slide frame and letterhead for the Commission without charge as well.

Outreach & Education Committee: David Gantt reminded the Commission members that they don't represent a particular political party, but they do represent the interests of the region. The mission of the Commission is just as important as ever. It is important to get the outreach presentations finalized and begin doing presentations at COG meetings. Each member needs to make personal contacts with area elected officials and local groups. Ask people what they need from us. We have to be responsive to local needs.

Legislative Committee: Jay Leutze provided a brief update on election results and changes that occurred. There will be new sub-committee Chairs. He urged Commission members to reach out to elected officials and let them know about the Commission and our activities. He will be helping to organize a legislative breakfast later this winter with the western delegation to introduce new members to the Commission. The legislative session begins on January 26. Harris Prevost said there used to be annual western meetings when everyone would agree on five legislative priorities.

Maxine Dalton asked Jay to clarify the need for continued strategic planning on legislative issues. Jay responded by saying that there is a concern that we not be seen as a continuation of the past MAMA program, that we are not a "top down" organization. Maxine also asked if the agenda for year #1 excludes legislative recommendations on slope and wind operations. Jay said it is not the Commission's place to be a "mini General Assembly" and that they need to focus on building our credibility through study and having reasoned recommendations. Maxine said she was worried the Commission would be too timid. Jay said until the Commission has bylaws, he is hesitant to have resolutions on the table dealing with pending legislation. Tommy Jenkins said for the legislators to back any recommendations we have, we have to build public support. That's a longer timeline than many of us would like, and it won't be before the session opens. Bob Shepherd agreed that ground level support will be necessary. Maxine said she still wanted further clarification about what will happen with TAC recommendations.

Chuck McGrady recommended that the Commission partner with COGs on regional meetings with legislators. He would be willing to host a breakfast for the MRC in Raleigh if the Commission would prefer to do that. He stressed that the Commission should understand the issues before advocating specific points. Tommy Jenkins asked if it would be appropriate to send a package of information about the Commission to legislators? Chuck said it would be best to act as a liaison for the MRC with your local legislators. Make it your responsibility. Schedule a meeting about the Commission and make it local. Action steps on this issue are:

1. Letter to all legislators in west from David with info (Jay has draft).
2. Get with COGs and piggyback with them on breakfast event (COG reps report back).
3. Meeting in Raleigh – hold until December to discuss.
4. Schedule meetings with reps. (Judy / Jay will circulate spreadsheet with contact information)

Chuck McGrady said that Tom Apodaca will be #3 on the Rules Committee.

Other Business

Headwaters Tract Resolution: Chuck McGrady said he is on the Clean Water Management Trust Fund Board and they funded a portion of this property. It's about 8000 acres and is critical for watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and trail connections. The Conservation Fund is meeting in mid-December and is getting mixed signals from the state of North Carolina. Most funding would likely come from federal sources, but the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has expressed its intent to manage the property if it is acquired. Tommy Jenkins asked if there was a release on the contract if financing fell through? Can the contract be exercised in pieces? Chuck responded that the property can be purchased in pieces. The first part is the trail corridor, but the order can be changed. The cost is a little over \$4,000 per acre. Tom Massie recused himself from the vote. Chuck McGrady made a motion to approve the resolution of support. Tommy Jenkins provided a second and the motion was approved unanimously.

Chuck McGrady will work with Judy to get copies of the resolution to the appropriate parties. Chuck said the Commission should adopt a resolution in December supporting funding for the state's conservation trust funds.

NEXT MEETING: DECEMBER 10, 2010

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25.