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WPCOG - Newsletter

August 2021

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WPCOG Meetings Calendar

Highlights from the August 2021 Housing Forum



On Friday, August 27, the WPCOG, Chamber of Catawba County, Caldwell Chamber of Commerce, and Burke County Chamber of Commerce partnered to present the second Regional Housing Forum. This year's event focused on local community housing project updates, a panel discussion with local leaders, and featured a guest speaker. The guest speaker, Chad Meadows, discussed housing regulations, streamlining local ordinances to assist with speeding up and enticing development, and impending State legislation. A recording of the event and the presentations can be found by following the links below.

Presenters:

- Sally Sandy, Morganton City Manager
- Warren Wood, Hickory City Manager
- Jacky Eubanks, Catawba County Planning Director
- Scott Hildebran, Lenoir City Manager
- Sherry Long, WPCOG Asst. Exec. Director

Guest Speaker:

- Chad Meadows, Founder and Principal with CodeWright Planners, LLC

Presentations/Recordings

- [Presentations](#)
- [Recorded Live Stream 1](#)
- [Recorded Live Stream 2](#)

Area Agency on Aging Emergency Preparedness for Seniors



After the pandemic of COVID, we have all become concerned about our safety, especially those who are older adults or caregivers of older adults. There are many steps to prepare for an emergency. You have to prepare for the members of your household, gather necessary supplies and finally, you need to stay informed.

First, create an information packet to include placing important documents in a waterproof container such as a Ziploc bag or other waterproof container. This is not an all-inclusive list, but should include:

- A written list of the emergency support network for you and the person with Dementia, including names, addresses and phone numbers. This should include information on additional friends of family members who may be of support to you or your loved one.
- Copies of these identification and medical documents in that Ziploc or other water proof container:
 - An emergency medical file that includes copies of driver's Licenses or Identification cards, social Security cards, insurance cards, up to date list of medications and dosage instructions, and telephone contact information for you and your family and friends support network, including physicians. Immunization records should also be included. The packet should include pertinent medical documents such as power of attorney, living will, do not resuscitate orders, health care power of attorney and any other pertinent medical paperwork.
 - Include a section for non-medical legal documents such as birth and marriage certificates, deeds, car titles, financial information (statements), and wills.

If you receive instructions to shelter in place, these items are important:

- Keep your gas tank full and your cell phone charged
- A three-day supply of canned (non-perishable) food for each person in the home including a manual can opener
- A three-day supply of incontinence supplies for those who need them.
- A three-day back up of oxygen tanks or other medical supplies that may be needed.
- One gallon of water per day for each person in the home. Have enough to cover at least three days of need. This includes a three-day supply of items for personal needs and pet supplies
- A solar radio is suggested, since electricity may be out.
- Batteries and solar cell phone chargers are important
- Basic tools for emergency repairs

If you are directed to evacuate, you will need a large carryall (make sure it is on wheels or you are able to carry) to include your personal essentials.

- This would include personal care needs, medications, glasses, hearing aid batteries, dentures, incontinence supplies.

- Additional items to meet your basic needs for a short time, such as water bottles, snacks and a change of clothes.
- Face masks, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer.
- Pet supplies- food and water, leash or muzzle, shot records, identification tags and proof of ownership.
- Flashlights and a whistle(to signal for help)
- First aid kit
- An extra set of house and car keys
- Cash may be a necessity if the power is out. Try to include \$100 as a goal.
- Turn your refrigerator to the coldest setting to preserve food.

You need to be aware of the evacuation route for your area and have a plan for evacuation. You should develop a transportation plan with your support network in case transportation is limited. Officials will generally instruct you on the safest means of transport. This may be difficult for a person with Dementia or other health issue. Explain the type of emergency and the plan to everyone including the person who receives care and any "helpers". Obtain assistance from your support network as possible. Inform all the "helpers" of the special needs of the person to whom you provide care.

Last minute reminders:

- Try not to panic; we are all in this together.
- Find the "helpers"- Family, Neighbors, Police, EMS, Fire Department, etc.
- Consider a backup electrical source such as a generator.
- Have information prepared and ready in a waterproof container.
- Have to go bag packed and ready.
- Place all medication and your cell phone or a weather radio in the container.
- Know your emergency route and shelter location. Decide the best means of transportation to follow based on instructions provided by authorities for the specific emergency.
- Grab your prepared container, gather loved ones, your pets and activate the plan

Article by Karen Phoenix

Community & Economic Development

Sherry Long Named Chair of VEDIC Board

WPCOG Assistant Executive Director Sherry Long has been named board chairman of the Valdese Economic Development Investment Corporation (VEDIC), a regional non-profit that assists small business.

Long began her two-year term earlier this summer and is guiding the 22-member VEDIC board that seeks to provide assistance to businesses primarily in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, McDowell, and Rutherford counties.

Based in Valdese, VEDIC was founded in 2009. The organization offers loans for start-up costs, working capital, equipment, real estate, and debt refinance in order to support job creation and retention, increase economic opportunities, and strengthen the small business sector by providing access to capital for businesses that cannot qualify for bank loans.

Through its loan programs, VEDIC has helped to create or retain 543 full-time jobs and 220 part-time jobs. The organization currently has a loan portfolio of \$2.5 million spread across 73 accounts. The loans range in size from \$5,000 to \$250,000. Since its inception, VEDIC's loan loss rate has been below 2 percent out of more than \$6.8 million in lending from 140 loans.



"Over the past 12 years, VEDIC has been there to assist small companies that otherwise would not have many other options," Long said. "The organization has helped forge strong partnerships throughout the region - from the business communities to the local governments to the community colleges."

The VEDIC Board of Directors consists of local business and civic leaders, along with representatives from area local governments. The Town of Valdese provides offices and utilities at no cost to VEDIC. The organization has two employees, one full-time and one part-time.

In addition to financial support, VEDIC has collaborated with the Small Business Centers at McDowell Tech Community College, Isothermal Community College, and Western Piedmont Community College to provide individual client counseling along with business funding and financial management seminars.

For more information about the VEDIC program, visit vedicnc.com.

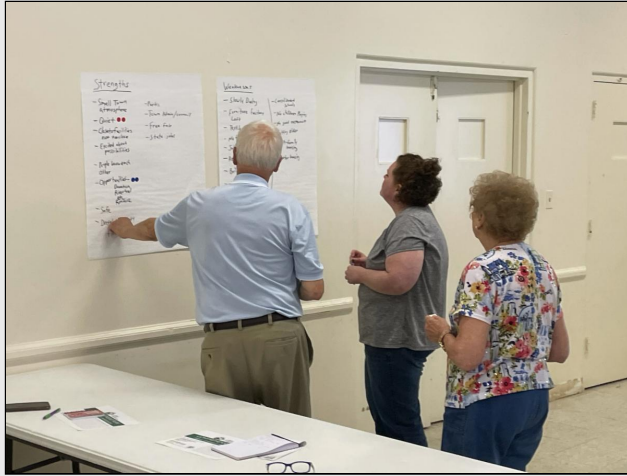
VEDIC Loans by County

County	Sum of Amount	Sum of Jobs FT/PT
Alexander	\$135,000	2
Burke	\$4,625,952	569
Caldwell	\$90,000	9
Catawba	\$711,149	56
Cleveland	\$34,711	6
Iredell	\$100,000	2
McDowell	\$720,000	51
Mecklenburg	\$100,000	1
Rowan	\$48,624	34
Rutherford	\$375,000	31
Grand Total	\$6,940,436	761

Article by Paul Teague

Community & Regional Planning

There Are No Good Plans without People: The Importance of Public Engagement



Drexel Public Meeting June, 2021



Granite Falls Public Meeting July, 2021

There are many steps to creating a high-quality plan for a local government. Planners must collect and analyze data, review maps and charts, consider economic trends and geographic features, consult with dedicated stakeholder teams, and connect with other governments or organizations to check how their plans may affect the one in progress.

The plan will always fall critically short, however, if it does not include the input, feedback and wisdom of the public. The citizens of a place are the ones who know it best. They know its greatest assets and its hardest challenges. They know the highest priorities for an area, and when the plan is done, they are the ones tasked with helping to implement its goals. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments and its planning staff understand the importance of public input and engagement, both for giving a plan legitimacy and for creating a true, community-led and community-oriented document.

"Plans don't matter if they don't reflect what the people actually want and need in their local communities," said WPCOG assistant planning director John Wear. "Citizens have a vision for the future. It's our job as planners to take that vision, and to take those challenges they identify, and collaborate on a roadmap for achieving that vision and overcoming those challenges."

While the COVID-19 pandemic forced many municipalities to delay citizen input and engagement meetings over the last year, the WPCOG hosted two recent engagement sessions this summer, one in the Town of Drexel on June 10th and one in the Town of Granite Falls on July 21st. Public engagement meetings like these allow citizens to come together and talk with staff, local officials, and each other to help guide the creation of a plan and to help review it once it is drafted.

In Drexel, for example, planners heard from citizens about the most critical issues in the town, and citizens provided input on how they envisioned the Town developing over the coming years. Citizens can also give input after the plan is drafted and recommendations are proposed, as they did in Granite Falls. In that meeting, citizens dropped in and out of a presentation room, reviewed illustrated boards and maps, and spoke to planners and other citizens about the plan and whether it had missed anything.

"The more input citizens and stakeholders have on a plan as it is developed and reviewed, the more valuable, relevant, and focused the plan is for the community," said Wear. "When we listen to people, we make better plans, and work to create better places."

Article by Scott Berson

Regional Housing Authority Congratulations to Our New HCV Homeowners!

Were you aware that the WPCOG Regional Housing Authority has a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Homeownership Program? The program is open to all eligible HCV participants at the RHA. The income-based

program works by paying a portion of the homeowner's monthly mortgage payment each month making the payments more affordable. This year, two of our HCV participants bought homes in our service area - one in Hickory and one in Lenoir. What was once a dream is now a reality and now they are their own landlords!

Eligible HCV Homeownership participants must:

- Have an active voucher. They will either be new voucher holders from the waitlist or active tenants who have leased with WPCOG for at least 12 months.
- Be employed full-time for at least a year and earn at least \$14,500 per year before deductions. There is an exemption if you are disabled.
- Have good credit. Several FREE credit counseling agencies in our area can provide advice to improve your credit score.
- Have savings. HUD requires a down payment of 1 - 3 percent of the sales price.

If you meet the above requirements, please call us and we can discuss the next steps toward homeownership. What if you need to work on steady employment or your credit? A program operated inside the RHA, called REACH can help. The REACH Coordinator can guide you toward resources that will help you achieve your homeownership goal. For additional information regarding the REACH program, please contact Kim Duncan at 828.485.4299 or kim.duncan@wpcog.org.

The WPCOG also has a First-Time Homebuyer Down payment Assistance Program. Once you are credit-ready, this program can assist you with 20 percent of the purchase price up to \$30,000. Please contact Rick Oxford at 828.485.4245 or rick.oxford@wpcog.org for additional information.

For more information about the HCV Homeownership Program, please contact Elizabeth Moncrief at 828.485.4244 or elizabeth.moncrief@wpcog.org.

[Article by Elizabeth Moncrief](#)

Transportation

New Transportation Priorities Paused in Response to Cost Increases

North Carolina follows a data-driven process called "Prioritization" for ranking major transportation project needs and to determine funding priorities for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) submits project needs for scoring to the Strategic Prioritization Office (SPOT), a unit of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Last year as part for the latest round of Prioritization (P6.0), GHMPO submitted 31 highway projects, 3 aviation projects, and 4 bicycle-pedestrian projects totaling \$1.2 billion as part of the Prioritization 6.0 cycle. Not all of these submitted needs would normally end up funded, but all are still scored competitively against other needs across the state. Three years ago, the prior round of Prioritization (P5.0) resulted in 7 newly committed highway projects and 1 new bicycle-pedestrian project for GHMPO. These 8 projects scored well enough in P5.0 to be added to the current 2020-2029 STIP.

Recently, NCDOT announced that the current round of Prioritization (P6.0) would not result in any new projects. Updated cost estimates on existing STIP projects now exceed the total available funding for the next ten years. Bottom line is that rising construction and real estate costs have caused the outlook for the future 2024-2033 STIP to be a major concern. When considering just committed projects, little to no funding would be available for programming new project submittals resulting from P6.0 scoring. However, NCDOT still continues to develop quantitative scores on all submitted P6.0 projects, as this will help area local governments evaluate and reconsider unfunded projects in the future.

To learn more, visit the WPCOG/GHMPO Prioritization web page at: www.wpcog.org/spot-prioritization.

[Article by Brian Horton](#)

Workforce Development Board

Regional Human Services Career Pathway Endorsed by State

After many months of work, peer review, and preparation, Western Piedmont, High Country, and Foothills Region Workforce Development Boards submitted a regional Human Services Career Pathway criteria packet to

the NCWorks Commission (NC Governor's state-appointed workforce board) in July for their endorsement consideration. After extensive committee review, the NCWorks Commission officially endorsed the regional career pathway during the Commission's August 11 meeting.

Developing and meeting the criteria for the Human Services Career Pathway was a regional team effort of the following agencies and organizations: Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, High Country Workforce Development Board, Foothills (formerly Region C) Workforce Development Board, NCWorks Career Center staff (regional), NC Department of Commerce, Northwest Zone Regional Ops Director, Vocational Rehabilitation, Goodwill NWNC, Dept. of Social Services (Alleghany, Ashe, Burke, Mitchell, Wilkes, Catawba, Caldwell, Alexander), Watauga-Avery, Mitchell-Yancey Community Action (WAMY), Wilkes Recovery Revolution, Western Piedmont Council of Gov. (Regional Housing Authority), Northwest (K-12) Career & Technical Ed Coordinators, Gardner Webb University, Appalachian State University, Mayland Community College, Wilkes Community College, Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute, Catawba Valley Community College, Western Piedmont Community College, McDowell Technical Community College, Isothermal Community College, and Cleveland Community College. There are many pathways to entering the Human Services field, and this opportunity will help shed light on the entry and advancement points for future jobseekers.

The next step will be to form a small regional group to develop branding and messaging for this pathway. The branding material, especially, can help with recruitment efforts by engaging interested students and jobseekers. Over the past few years, the region has certified other pathways such as [Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Energy Services](#). The Western Piedmont Workforce Board is excited to continue this work through the Human Services Career Pathway.

Social and Human Service Assistants PRINTER-FRIENDLY

Summary
What They Do
Work Environment
How to Become One
Pay
Job Outlook
State & Area Data
Similar Occupations
More Info

Similar Occupations About this section

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of social and human service assistants.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2020 MEDIAN PAY
	Childcare Workers	Childcare workers attend to children's needs while helping to foster early development.	High school diploma or equivalent	\$25,460
	Health Education Specialists and Community Health Workers	Health education specialists develop programs to teach people about conditions affecting well-being. Community health workers promote wellness by helping people adopt healthy behaviors.	See How to Become One	\$48,140
	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	Home health and personal care aides monitor the condition of people with disabilities or chronic illnesses and help them with daily living activities.	High school diploma or equivalent	\$27,080
	Marriage and Family Therapists	Marriage and family therapists help people manage and overcome problems with family and other relationships.	Master's degree	\$51,340
	Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists	Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists assist in rehabilitation of law offenders in custody or on probation or parole.	Bachelor's degree	\$55,690
	Rehabilitation Counselors	Rehabilitation counselors help people with physical, mental, developmental, or emotional disabilities live independently.	Master's degree	\$37,530
	Social and Community Service Managers	Social and community service managers coordinate and supervise programs and organizations that support public well-being.	Bachelor's degree	\$69,600
	Social Workers	Social workers help people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives.	See How to Become One	\$51,760
	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors provide treatment and advise people who suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction, or other mental or behavioral problems.	Bachelor's degree	\$47,660

(Occupational Outlook: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-and-human-service-assistants.htm#tab-8>)

Article by Wendy Johnson

WPCOG MEETINGS CALENDAR

- **Bi-Monthly WPCOG Policy Board Meeting - September 28, 2021**
- 6:00 pm - City of Claremont
- **TCC Meeting - September 22, 2021**
- 1:00pm - WPCOG Offices
- **TAC Meeting - September 22, 2021**
- 3:30pm - WPCOG Offices

Stay Connected



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