

Town of Fletcher
Town Council Local Government Committee for Cooperative Action Meeting
Henderson County Historic Courthouse
Commissioner Meeting Room
1 Historic Courthouse Square
Hendersonville, NC 28792

Minutes
April 15, 2025

Call the meeting to order at: 3:00 PM

<u>City of Hendersonville:</u>	Mayor Barbara Volk, Council Member Melinda Lowrance
<u>Henderson County:</u>	Chairman Bill Lapsley,
<u>Village of Flat Rock:</u>	Mayor Ann Coletta, Vice-Mayor Matt Toner
<u>Town of Fletcher:</u>	Mayor Preston Blakely,
<u>Town of Laurel Park:</u>	Mayor Carey O'Cain, Commissioner Travis Bonnema
<u>Town of Mills River:</u>	Mayor Shannon Gonce, Council Member Sandra Goode

Also Present: Henderson County - County Manager John Mitchell, Assistant County Manager Chris Todd, Financial Services Director Samantha Reynolds, Emergency Services Director Jimmy Brissie. Laurel Park - Town Manager Cara Reeves, Town Clerk Stephanie Banks. Flat Rock - Town Administrator Pat Christie. Town of Fletcher - Town Manager Mark Biberdorf. Town of Mills River - Town Manager Matt McKirahan.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Mayor Blakely led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments:

No comments were made at this time.

Consideration of Agenda - Additions or Deletions

Mayor Blakely asked for any additions or deletions to the agenda as presented.

Mayor Ann Coletta requested that an addition be made under new business concerning land use regulations that is currently before the general assembly.

Mayor Blakely asked for a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of the legislative update discussion.

Chairman Lapsley motioned to approve the agenda, and it was seconded by Councilmember Sandra Goode.

Motion all in favor.

Approval of minutes - corrections, additions or deletions

January 21, 2025 meeting

Mayor Blakely asked for any additions, corrections or deletions to the minutes as presented. Hearing none, do we have a motion to the minutes as presented?

Mayor Gonce motioned to approve the minutes as presented, and it was seconded by Mayor Volk.

Motion all in favor.

Discussion Items

Old Business

There was no old business at this time.

New Business

Discussion on land use regulations is currently in the General Assembly right now (House Bill 765).

Mayor Coletta spoke about her concerns about the land use regulations in the General Assembly right now, and she stated that they are having a special call meeting on Monday in Flat Rock to discuss this. She said that they want to be able to present a Resolution to our elected officials in opposition to this. She stated that the way it is written right now, a property owner could put at least 4 dwellings on one acre of land, which totally changes the character of our historic village. There is no carveout for our historic districts, which concerns us a lot. I did not know if any other municipalities had talked about this or reached out to our elected officials to formerly oppose this.

Mayor Blakely stated that we have not formally opposed it, but we have communicated to our legislative delegation that we have an issue with it.

Mayor O'Cain stated that" we have communicated to our legislative delegation that we are formally opposed to this as a lot of our 35-miles of roads are very narrow and could impede traffic in general and for the fire department or rescue vehicles.

Mayor Gonce stated that we are very much opposed to this bill. I actually went down to talk to Jennifer Balkcom and Mr. Moffitt in person about some other issues and we are trying to work on our flood plain ordinance as we did not have one before the storm. So this no-down zoning will create an issue. We are just trying to get our facts together.

Mayor Volk stated that at this time we have not taken a formal stance as we have talked informally among ourselves. We have contacted our legislators and let them know we are concerned.

Chairman Lapsley stated that they had not formally discussed this among themselves, but we have taken a position on down zoning and passed a Resolution and sent it to our legislators and to the sponsors of this bill to share our concerns. I suspect that we will be taking formal action before long.

Vice-Mayor Toner stated that I just wanted to add that we mentioned only one bill (765) but I wanted to add that there are at least five or six bills that have the same intent, which is to remove any type of control from municipalities. I would recommend that everyone gets on top of this as we want to make sure that we can maintain our local control. I know the League of Municipalities has set out some type of language as they are opposing it as well.

Mayor O'Cain stated that Laurel Park would be more than willing to sign some sort of joint LGCCA letter if we wanted to do that.

Chairman Lapsley stated that LGCCA is not an official required governmental unit, that this is just a county committee that everyone was invited to participate in long ago. I think that every municipality should have a resolution with the same language in it to send in to show that you want to maintain your local (zoning) control. I think that this would have more impact than a letter from a local committee.

Mayor Coletta stated that she would be happy to send copies of the resolution out to everyone once they approved it on Monday.

Updates

City of Hendersonville

Mayor Volk stated that this is event season. The Hendo Earth event is downtown this Saturday on Main Street. On May 3rd, the Farmer's Market opens for the season, and we will be having the Seventh Avenue Street fest to celebrate the completion of the work on Seventh Avenue. On May 7th, the bears will be coming out, so you will be seeing them up and down Main Street. At the end of May, on the 24th & 25th, there will be the Garden Jubilee.

Being in the middle of the budget season, we are trying to deal with the increases in health insurance rates, and we will also have to put off some capital improvement projects as well.

Village of Flat Rock

Mayor Coletta stated that we also have a lot of events going on. On Thursday, May 1st, we have a shred day pill drop off going on from 10:00 am to noon at the Village hall. On May 3rd, starting at 10:00 am, we have Arbor day going on in our park. On Saturday, June 7th, There is our annual Ice Cream social.

We are also working on our budget. We had a budget workshop last week and things are moving along. Just like Mayor Volk said we are dealing with healthcare costs and how that fits within our budget. In our park over the last seven to nine months, we underwent the

restoration of Die Creek, which runs through the middle of our park, and is now complete. This was mostly before Helene hit, and it weathered Helene very well. We applied for some grants from the Department of Environmental Quality, and they did their final review a week or two ago and hopefully those funds will be released to us soon. We also had a North Carolina PBS show do some taping in our park and there will be a segment about Flat Rock and our park on May 15th. Do you know the name of the show, Matt?

Vice-Mayor Toner stated that he was not sure of the program but thought it was North Carolina weekend and that segment would be about 4 minutes, and it would be good.

Mayor Coletta mentioned that on the North Highland Lake road project that we do not have a definite end date at this time. Once again, we are having a special meeting on Monday at 9 am to discuss these proposed bills and how they impact our zoning authority.

Mayor Blakely congratulated Flat Rock on the PBS show and stated that Henderson County was next.

Henderson County

Chairman Lapsley stated that for the last five months the county commissioners have been concentrating on storm recovery and at the first of every meeting they have been getting an update from county staff. We think that things are getting better, at least from the county's perspective. The list of debris sites is going down a lot faster, I think, and there are still places, and we are knocking them out as fast as we can. I know that you get calls from constituents that say you have forgotten my street, and why don't you come to my street? Staff have done a good job following up and responding to those people. I think that is about it. We are doing OK and FEMA is a great thing, and I am very grateful for them. I am just extremely concerned about us getting reimbursed in a timely manner, or we will be facing a serious cash flow situation.

On the plus side, this event happened when people were paying their taxes, and we were concerned that people who had damaged property would not pay their taxes. The fact of the matter is that Henderson County folks have responded and are paying their taxes. In fact, our finance director tells us that people paying their taxes are up to 98.6%, close to 99% from last year. This says that 99% of taxpayers appreciate the job that we are doing and that is a good sign.

We have a preliminary workshop on our budget that we started in January with a six-month look at where we stand countywide, and our concern is where we stand with the tax valuation of properties. Last year, before the storm, a property was valued at x dollars last year and this year it may be valued at minus x, and we are very concerned about that. So during January and February, we had our staff at the tax office visit all the properties that have been damaged by the storm at least once and maybe twice, and we have confirmed that the valuations have changed and this has a direct impact on your budget and ours as well. There have also been a lot of new developments coming up (and rebuilds) and we were told that this will add value to properties. It appears things are not slowing down any, so as far as our budget is concerned, it looks like we are going to make it through this.

Town of Mills River

Mayor Gonce stated that last Thursday night we were able to pass a flood plain moratorium for commercial builds inside the floodplain. This is the only way we can get control of it until we can put some kind of ordinance in place. This does not restrict residential, and it does not have any impact on agriculture at this point.

I wanted to mention Roger Snyder and, for the ones of you that knew Roger, he was a mess. He will really be missed. He was the mayor of Mills River for ten years and was like a brother to me. I feel honored to mention his name here today. I am going to turn it over to Sandra as she has some things to say.

Council Member Goode stated that we just held our first Earth Day in the park and about 250 people attended. It was a cold, windy Saturday but this was a great turn out for our first event.

We are now taking non-profit funding requests for the upcoming budget cycle, and we are also currently working on a unified development ordinance. This is our first, and we already had it in place before this senate bill came out. So we are carrying on with this so that when the time comes we can do something with this in place. The main goal is to promote public health, safety and general welfare. It is also protecting our community character and our agricultural heritage.

On June 14 we will have our first movie in the park, and it will be Wild Robot. We are also going to celebrate our volunteers that helped us through Helene.

The river cleanup has started at the French Broad, and they are going to work their way up to the reservoirs through Mills River. With the water coming through the City of Hendersonville and Buncombe County, it is important that we keep it maintained. We sure appreciate all the help that we have been getting. Once the river is cleaned up (opened), we can start kids fishing again with the tackle learner program.

Town of Laurel Park

Mayor O' Cain stated that one of the biggest impacts from the storm is that we are trying to figure out how to deal with our losses. We have a list (3 pages) of all our losses from the hurricane. Our latest estimate is about 11 million, which is small compared to the county. We have received a loan of about a million and a half dollars, and we are trying to figure out if we have to pay off that 11 million over 20 years. That would be a half million dollars a year. So we have to look at this as a solution as it may be forgivable at some point with a grant, but we don't know that. Mr. Lapsley commented on the slowness of reimbursement from FEMA. Their average reimbursement is 650 days and that is a long time. So we expressed at our meeting over in Asheville on Friday that we need money, money. So I am reaching out to our legislators to try and help move this along. So we are continuing with our budget process and doing emergency repairs. Mr Lapsley talked to you about property taxes. Do we know anything about sales tax?

Chairman Lapsley stated that right out of the gate we became extremely concerned in October

and November about that and, as you know, the money comes to us, and we divvy it up and send it out. So we do not receive the revenues until 90 days after the end of the month, so here we are in October, concerned about tourism etc., and we had no clue what was going to happen. To our surprise, in January our finance director informed us that it was only down a little and not of real significance, so this was a good sign. So November's revenue did not come in until February and, surprisingly, it is holding its own at just a hair lower than last year. In January, we asked the county manager to put a hold on our capital improvement projects amounting to 2 to 3 million because we were afraid that we would see a drop in sales tax by that much. So in March it looks like we are holding our own.

Mayor Carey O'Cain thanked Chairman Lapsley for this information as it helps us with our budget process.

Mayor O'Cain stated that you can expect to see some construction on Hwy 64 within the next 30 days. They have paved a portion of the Ecusta Trail near Davis Drive and some more will be done this week. The ribbon cutting will be in the first week of June. That is all I have.

Town of Fletcher

Mayor Blakely stated that we had our budget workshop last month to hear full budget requests from department heads. Staff are now working on revenue estimates and final expense calculations in advance of our budget meeting on May 8th to hear the manager's recommended budget. Sales tax revenues are continuing to come in below budget and that is causing us to lower our projections for the new fiscal year.

Our Planning Board is currently working with our engineering consultant to discuss potential changes to our Floodplain ordinance. Over the next several months, council should be discussing those recommendations and then making decisions on what we will implement. The revisions to our ordinance could include things such as increasing our elevation requirements and prohibiting certain uses like schools and multifamily housing in the flood zone.

We recently started repairs to the fencing on the ballfields, our multi-use courts, and the dog park. We hope to be finishing that up within the next month. Repairs to the bridge at the back of the park and shoring up some of our streambank are next.

We held a Spring Shred and Pill Drop event this past weekend at the town hall. Over 4,000 pounds of documents were shredded.

We are excited to be hosting our first ever Farmer's Market starting in May. It will be on Tuesdays from 3 to 6 pm near Town Hall. We have had a lot of interest in doing this and are looking forward to getting started. The first market will be held on May 6th.

The town has started assisting with picking up vegetative debris and staging it in an area near the town hall for SDR to pick up. We have also been helping with picking up C&D debris and I think that is almost completed.

Mayor Blakely asked if anyone had anything else?

Chairman Lapsley mentioned that the county commissioners are considering some changes to our flood plain ordinance, but after this down zoning bill was approved, our council advised us that this could be construed as restricting a property owner from higher-density development. If we started restricting more in the flood plain, that might be considered down zoning, and we would need to get written approval from the property owner. So our interest in making some changes is put on hold until we see what the legislature does with this issue.

Adjourn

Mayor Blakely asked for a motion to adjourn.

Chairman Lapsley motioned to adjourn, and it was seconded by Mayor Coletta.

Motion all in favor.

Adjourned at: 3:31 pm

Next Meeting July 15, 2025 - hosted by Laurel Park

Approved.

Date

Signed