

**Mountain Resources Commission
June 11, 2010, 2:00-5:00 PM
Foothills Higher Education Center
2128 South Sterling Street
Morganton, NC**

MEETING SUMMARY

Members in Attendance :David Gantt, Charles Vines, Chuck McGrady, Bill Gibson, Max Hopper, George Santucci, Jay Leutze, Wayne Abele, Ruth Ann Suttle, Tom Massie, Rodney Locks (via phone), Jim Coman, Harris Prevost, Angie Chandler,

Members Absent: Maxine Dalton, Bob Shepherd, Tommy Jenkins

Others in Attendance: Suzi Berl / Consultant, Judy Francis NCDENR Staff to the Commission, Paul Muller / NCDENR Division of Air Quality, Dee Blackwell / Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Karen Smith NC Division of Community Assistance, DJ Gerken / Southern Environmental Law Center, Chris Commers/ Western North Carolina Alliance, Juleigh Sitton / Western Office of the Governor

Welcome & Introductions – Chairman Gantt

David Gantt opened the meeting at 2:00 PM and welcomed the Commission members and all those in attendance. He also expressed thanks to Wayne Abele and Ruth Ann Suttle for hosting the meeting in Morganton.

About the Higher Education Center – Wayne Abele

Wayne welcomed everyone and explained how the Higher Education Center used to be an old textile mill that has been renovated to increase the capacity of Western Piedmont Community College. The building has conference facility, classroom space, a catering kitchen, a four-year nursing program, and is also used for the Department of Corrections training. He invited all in attendance to help themselves to a buffet table provided with compliments of he and Ruth Ann Suttle.

Approval of May 14, 2010 Work Session Meeting Summary – All

David Gantt asked the Commission members if they had any corrections to the May14, 2010 meeting summary. There being no corrections offered, a motion to accept the summary as written was made by Jim Coman, 2nd from Wayne Abele and approved unanimously by the Commission.

Ethics Committee Decision and Requirements – Judy Francis

Judy Francis explained that Secretary Freeman had received a letter from the NC Ethics Commission that they had made the determination that the Mountain Resources Commission was subject to the state ethics policy and all members would have to complete the Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) and undergo ethics training. This is a direct contradiction to what the Ethics Commission had previously advised NCDENR when the Commission was initially established, but the new ruling became effective May 17, 2010 and now there must be compliance. She reminded the Commission members to make sure and fill out the proper form (available on the web) and return it to the Ethics Commission staff no later than July 16, 2010. Required ethics training, listed on the ethics commission webpage, is available at numerous locations throughout the western region – and must be completed by November 17, 2010. Chuck McGrady said he had written a letter to the Ethics Commission asking for an explanation of this change. He thinks that applying the state ethics policy to the Mountain Resources Commission is erroneous and too burdensome for members. Wayne Abele asked Judy to provide him with a print copy of the SEI.

Facilitated Discussion of Work Session Results – Suzi Berl

Suzi Berl asked the Commission members to provide feedback on the draft spreadsheet of Goals & Objectives developed during their strategic planning work session that had been provided to them prior to the meeting. She listed the concerns that Maxine Dalton provided before leaving on an overseas trip for consideration by those in attendance. David said he thought her points were good ones and that they could be covered in the structure being considered. Compilation of baseline data should be one of the charges to the Technical Resources Council once they are appointed. Dissemination of existing information should be handled by an Outreach and Education sub-committee. Administrative details can also be handled by a sub-committee. Identification of existing information gaps will be an ongoing process as the Commission works through various issues.

The group then began a discussion of various policy issues. Particularly significant were comments regarding slope development and ridge top protection. Other topics, such as inter-basin water transfers, establishing a small planning grants program, and encouraging legislative support for the state's trust funds were also identified as key issues for the Commission. Jay Leutze reminded the group that some issues will be controversial and the Commission should approach them diplomatically and cautiously. He suggested that the group focus on procedure rather than specific topics at this point. Tom Massie said we should “study” the issues rather than use the word “adopt”. Max Hopper suggested the term “formulate recommendations”. He recommended that a policy-focused committee be established and they could develop a procedure for prioritizing issues. There is already consensus on the ridge protection issue. Others include the Blue Ridge Parkway and small town / community threats. These issues should be made explicit.

Education goals were also discussed, including the Year of the Mountains recommendations, establishing an informational web-portal / data base information, a

calendar for public events, development / promotion of institutionalize training. Particularly important would be the development of a “Regional Report Card” to monitor baseline information over time. Angie mentioned that this was also identified as a priority by the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area board.

The need to organize and establish policies for the Administration of the Commission was also discussed. Topics included staffing, mission statement, committees, by-laws, technical advisory committee, branding, enabling legislation / housekeeping.

David Gantt suggested that sub-committees could do the initial work and report back to the larger Commission with recommendations. Pulling technical / scientific data together is job of technical resources committee. He suggested establishing four sub-committees that could meet independently of the full Commission (Education & Outreach, Legislative, Administrative, and Fund-Raising). Max Hopper supported the concept but thought that the Chairman should be able to establish additional ad hoc committees as needs arise. David asked each member to list their order of preference for committee assignment on a sheet of paper and pass them to staff. Once this was completed, the members took a short break during which staff listed the committees and members of each.

The committee’s duties and membership were presented to the Commission as follows:

Legislative Committee

Tommy Jenkins, Jim Coman, Chuck McGrady, Lay Leutze

The Legislative Committee will work to draft legislation regarding priority commission interests and advocate for its support to the General Assembly. Members will maintain good communication channels with legislators. Committee members may also suggest that the full Commission issue resolutions or letters to legislators about support for existing programs.

Administrative Committee

Harris Prevost, Max Hopper, Angie Chandler, Charles Vines, Wayne Abele

The Administrative Committee will work to establish Commission by-laws and policies for the internal workings of the Commission. It is their task to ensure that appropriate rules supporting the function of the Commission are identified, promulgated, and implemented. This committee will also oversee financial record-keeping and, should funds be realized to establish a small planning grants program, they will develop protocols for application evaluation and administration of that program.

Fund-Raising Committee

George Santucci, Ruth Ann Suttle, Bill Gibson, Bob Shepherd

The Fund-Raising Committee will be charged with establishing and maintaining relationships with potential donors and funding sources, and to assist staff with submitting funding requests that will be looked upon favorably by foundations, granting agencies, trust funds, and individual donors to obtain funding to accomplish Commission goals.

Outreach & Education Committee

Rodney Locks, David Gantt, Maxine Dalton, Tom Massie

The Education & Outreach Committee will work with the Technical Advisory Council (TAC) to identify information gaps and disseminate the information gathered by the TAC to interested groups. The Committee will outline an outreach strategy for the Commission including the development information outlets, delivering presentations to interested groups, attending meetings of regional groups, and being a “public face” for media contacts.

David thanked the members for their willingness to serve on the sub-committees. He noted that, though not everyone was able to be appointed to their first choice, he thought that everyone could participate in any committee meeting, but they were only obligated to participate on their assigned committee. He recommended that each committee select their own chair and establish conference calls or meetings that were most convenient for the members. Judy will coordinate with the committees to get them started up.

Mission Statement Report from Ad Hoc Committee – Chairman Gantt

Angie Chandler and Harris Prevost reviewed the ad hoc’s committee recommendations. They discussed a number of concepts that they wanted to encompass in the statement:

- It must not overstep the Commission enabling legislation.
- The primary emphasis must be on nature and not infringe on the work other groups are already doing.
- It must be short, to the point, and easy to remember.

The committee chose to forward two very similar statements for the full Commission to consider during their June 11 meeting as follows:

The mission of the North Carolina Mountain Resources Commission is...

#1. to take care of our natural resources to ensure the long-term health of our region and our people.

OR

#2. to take care of our natural resources to enhance and sustain the quality of life for our region and our people.

David thanked the ad hoc committee and asked the Commission to consider the choices and make any necessary additions or deletions. The Commission suggested that choice #1 be amended to reflect the following:

The mission of the North Carolina Mountain Resources Commission is to take care of our natural resources to enhance and sustain our quality of life and to ensure the long-term health of our region and our people.

A motion was made by Max Hopper to adopt the amended mission statement. The motion received a 2nd from Jim Coman and was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Discussion of Technical Advisory Committee / Technical Needs – Chairman Gantt

David asked the Commission members to begin considering potential nominations for appointment to the Technical Advisory Council. The Commission's enabling legislation provides for a 13-member body, appointed by the Commission, to assist with technical and scientific issues that may be considered by the Commission. Noting Max Hopper's suggestion that additional contacts may be consulted who may not be officially appointed, David asked for some potential names to be suggested – and received the following:

Jay Leutze said David Ray from The Nature Conservancy can help in several areas such as water resources, conservation planning, and land use law.

Chuck McGrady said DJ Gerken from the Southern Environmental Law Center would be outstanding because of his knowledge of land use law and environmental policy.

Judy Francis suggested Bill Yarborough from the NC Department of Agriculture, Rick Wooten from the NC Geological Survey, and Paul Muller from the NC Division of Air Quality.

Rodney Locks said the League of Municipalities environmental staff could be helpful.

George Santucci said that the NC Division of Water Quality staff person out of the Winston-Salem NCDENR office would be a good person.

Bill Gibson said that a staff person from the National Climatic Data Center might be helpful.

Judy Francis reminded the Commission that they had recommended an emphasis on small town vitality, and said that Karen Smith or Ginny Faust from the NC Division of Community Assistance both have experience in those areas.

Bill Gibson said that Andy Brown from Equinox Environmental would be good because he has experience in environmental planning. Angie Chandler mentioned that Andy had done the management plan for the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

Tom Massie said that Bill Eaker from the Land of Sky Regional Council has experience in air and water quality issues, and helped develop the steep slope report for Region B.

Charles Vines mentioned Marvin Hoffman from Appalachian State University as someone with extensive experience with public administration in the western region.

Jim Coman mentioned Garry Cooper, a retired professor of land use planning from ASU who now lives in Asheville.

Jay Leutze reminded everyone that legal expertise will be important.

Judy suggested that every member send her up to five names with qualifications and geographic location, and a sentence or two about why they would be good on the advisory council. She will compile the information she receives and send it out for an informal vote. She asked that the feedback be returned quickly so she can contact potential members to ascertain their willingness to serve.

Additional Comments - All

David said that the August 6 meeting will be held at Grandfather Mountain and he would like to begin the appointment of the Technical Advisory Council then. Harris said the Commission members could bring their spouses to the meeting. Grandfather Mountain will be providing lunch.

Max Hopper recommended that the Commission should invite the County Manager and / or Mayor of each place where future meetings are held to tell us what they need and what their issues are. All agreed that it would be a good and educational thing to do.

Adjourn - Chairman Gantt

There being no further business, Chairman Gantt adjourned the meeting at 5:10 PM.

**NEXT MEETING: AUGUST 6, 2010, NOON – 3:00 PM
GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN**