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William Massengill
A Recipe for Success
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2014-2015 Annual Report Summary
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Back in October, when League members gathered to consider the Municipal Advocacy Goals for the next legislative biennium, over 200 municipal officials raised their voting cards to finalize those priorities. It was an important day, and that wide participation was crucial, making a statement that these are the goals of a diverse set of cities and towns from all across North Carolina.

As important as it was, though, now is when the rubber meets the road. The North Carolina General Assembly is back in session, and the real work to try to achieve those goals begins.

Just like with every legislative session, how this current one plays out is not easy to predict. And where the League ends up in terms of reaching the goals that were finalized back in October is just as difficult to forecast.

However, there are some things, here in February, that we can reasonably expect to happen by mid-summer or before.

We can expect that, once again, there will be discussions around helping struggling rural communities and that some of that discussion will revolve around changes to how sales taxes are distributed. As the League has before, we need to continue to emphasize solutions that help all North Carolina, and not ones that mean determining winners and losers among us. We have to continue to promote an understanding that large numbers of North Carolinians live and work in regional economies that are not determined by municipal, county or even state borders.

What we also should do, as a part of any of those discussions, is emphasize League goals that involve the fiscal health of cities and towns – including a goal that our diverse municipalities need diverse and locally-controlled revenue options and another goal that would allow changes to the uses of room occupancy taxes.

Something else that we can reasonably expect from this legislative session are proposals that will require us to play defense and beat back ideas that would preempt local authority. One of those will almost assuredly be another bill to restrict municipalities when it comes to setting local billboard regulations. Those regulations are critical in order that towns and cities set their own course for how their communities will look based on the particular desires of their residents and the needs of their local economies. Obviously, a small mountain town with a tourism-based economy does not and should not have the same vision for itself as a larger Piedmont city.

Something else we surely know: A lot of what we accomplish as an organization – whether it involves achieving our actual legislative goals or pushing back against proposals that would undermine local authority – will be determined by our efforts.

As I said back in October upon assuming this position, it is your commitment that will define the League’s efforts and successes. So, be involved in the League’s advocacy efforts, whether that means calling a legislator, sending one a letter, or attending a League Lobby Day. For my fellow mayors out there, become involved in the League’s mayor discussions and meetings. And finally, let your fellow municipal officials know the importance of League efforts to achieving not just the collective goals of cities and towns, but their individual goals of having healthy, happy, thriving communities.
Former NCLM President Receives Order of the Long Leaf Pine

By Scott Mooneyham, NCLM Director of Public Affairs

Former Elkin Mayor and NCLM past-president Lestine Hutchens said she was amazed to receive the award. She shouldn’t have been. The Order of the Long Leaf Pine, bestowed at the direction of the governor, is given to North Carolinians described as exceptionally meritorious servants or providers to the people – words that perfectly lay out Mayor Hutchens’ decades of service to Elkin and the state as a whole.

NCLM Executive Director Paul Meyer presented Mayor Hutchens with the award at a ceremony held in November to recognize her and Town Commissioner J.L. Lowe, who were both retiring from the board and seeing their terms in office expire at the end of the year. Local county commissioners and former town managers also attended the event.

Mayor Hutchens, who was first elected as a town commissioner in 1992, said she would most miss working on seeing big projects move from concept to reality. She cited the Elkin Center, a former Food Lion location that, with the town’s help, was turned into a satellite campus for Surry Community College as a prime example.

“Making projects work is an amazing thing to see. When it looks like it’s unachievable and you keep plugging along and plugging along and make it work,” she told her local newspaper, The Elkin Tribune. She also discussed the revitalization of downtown as another example.

During her tenure as an officer and president of the League, Mayor Hutchens helped to lead the charge to restore the state historic preservation tax credits, which have been key to downtown revitalization efforts across the state. Prior to her time on the League Board of Directors, she served on League policy committees, which she has credited with helping her gain a broader understanding of the range of issues facing all North Carolina municipalities.

Mayor Hutchens often cited former Elkin Mayor Tom Gwyn as a mentor who helped her to understand that, as a mayor, her duties did not stop at the Elkin corporate limit, but that she needed to work through the League to help promote the interests of all municipalities.

Elkin is one of a handful of North Carolina cities and towns that hold municipal elections in even-numbered years, and Mayor Hutchens’ term came to a close on Dec. 12. She handed over the NCLM gavel to incoming League President Bob Matheny in October, at that time remarking that working with fellow municipal officials at the state level had been a remarkable experience.

“Getting to know so many of you, working with you on difficult issues, and then finding resolution to those issues, has been one of the great parts of serving in this position,” she said. SC
William Massengill acknowledges his impatience, and the Benson mayor has a simple explanation for it: In part, it’s a result of thinking about his children, and those of his fellow residents.

“I want to make things happen,” said Massengill, a Benson native and medical center CEO entering his 10th year as mayor of the historically agricultural but growing town of about 3,500 people. “I’m kind of impatient if it doesn’t move.”

He notes that his two children, both in their 20s, are roughly at the age of big, post-college choices.

“I want this to be a place where I think my children want to come back and live, if they choose to do that,” Massengill said when asked why he sought out municipal leadership to begin with, particularly its highest seat. “If you want things to change, you have to be willing to sometimes step up and make it be different.”

He added: “I think, if you’re in public service for the right reasons, what really appealed to me was that it wasn’t just about my children; it was about everyone else’s children. Are they going to have the same opportunities to come back to Benson, and want to be here? You start to look at it in a whole different sense.”

It adds up to why Massengill, shortly after winning the mayor’s seat, drove for a tighter economic development plan. Along with fellow leaders, he wanted to give Benson some structure amid all the growth possibilities spilling over from nearby Raleigh and as North Carolina swelled toward the rank of ninth
most populous state in the country.

“We didn’t have any strategic planning. We didn’t have any long-range plans. We just showed up at board meetings,” Massengill explained of a decade ago. “And I knew from my own personal experience that that wasn’t going to get us where we needed to go.”

He and fellow leaders tightly aligned the town with the local chamber of commerce, the county’s economic development director and a similar official at the public-power co-op of which Benson is a member. The goal was to string together a conversation from the local to statewide levels on how Benson could ready itself for the kind of business that may transform –

responsibly – a small, rural town.

Fast forward to the time of this writing, Benson is about to see shovels break ground for a high-quality Hampton Inn expected to influence new development all around it. And – you guessed it – it wasn’t just an independent business decision on the part of the hoteliers to build there.

“When we saw the receptiveness of the town and how willing they were to work with us versus other larger localities where you get bogged down in the planning process and the approval process, that was something that weighed very heavily on our decision,” Adam Leath, one of the hotel’s developers, told The Daily Record of Dunn. “It seemed it would be much easier to work with them because they’re very receptive to growth and intentional growth.”

Easier. Receptive. Intentional -- acknowledged by a developer and reported in the media. That’s how it’s done.

Massengill, who sits on the League’s Risk Management Services Board of Trustees, said the town had prepared economic development boosters specifically for hotels (known to be a feasible and desirable recruitment for Benson) to let that sector know it was serious.

And what’s subsequently coming is a first-class, pet-friendly hotel positioned
right off of Interstates 40 and 95 to make overnight guests of Northeast- and Florida-bound travelers – leaving money with the local economy.

A genius component on the part of the town’s government is its planned development of a dog park right next to the hotel. Massengill, during Southern City’s visit, pointed out the hotel and park locations on a giant sitemap hanging in the town commissioners’ chambers and gave Town Manager Matt Zapp the floor to explain.

“Those folks who travel, travel with their pets,” Zapp noted. “If you’ve got a pet-friendly hotel, they’re going to travel 45 minutes greater, or stop 45 minutes earlier to have a pet-friendly hotel.”

The dog park, while a great asset for Benson’s residents anyway, is an easy invitation to interstate travelers to stay in town a little longer – or even make the Benson hotel-visit a part of their planned itinerary.

That figured into the math that pushed the hotel proposal well beyond feasibility.

“What that does for us, just on a local level, is it takes our 2 percent hotel bed tax from $9,000 a year (in revenue) to $45,000 a year,” Zapp said. “And that allows us to go and encase (that part of) I-95 and I-40 ... as a tourism-driven, consumer-driven, traveler-driven oasis.”

That calculates new demand for restaurants and other businesses that feed off the same source.

“So how did we end up with the potential for a sit-down, full-service restaurant? It started with a dog park,” Zapp said.

It points right back to Massengill’s style and the doer culture inside Benson Town Hall.

But the mayor is also the first to remove himself from the marquis. He can’t talk about the hotel project without running out of fingers to count off the names of involved town officials, including the board of commissioners, and partner agencies like the N.C. Department of Transportation and ElectriCities, both of which worked with the town on the hotel project.

Now, the town is joining with N.C. State University to further sharpen Benson’s economic development plan. Never a moment for complacency.

“When you’re a small town, you really have to think about how you can maximize the resources that you have available to you,” Massengill said. Referring to outside partners, he added: “I think we have to listen to what other people say – especially people who have other experiences.”

This more worldly approach also has made the town stand out on the technology landscape, particularly among similar-sized peers. Benson recently was recognized by Government Technology magazine for its conversion
of electric and water meters to a two-way “smart grid” system that gives customers much better utility data, affords the town better load management, helps decrease leaks and enables staffers to respond to power outages more quickly – all saving residents money.

Massengill noted that it can be challenging to adopt new technology that many peers haven’t used, but that he also saw it as an investment that could be crucial for better government and quality of life.

“In the month of November (alone), the town saved $17,000 on electric charges in what we pay for power, just because we had load management,” Massengill noted. “In a low utilization month, $17,000.”

That’s big money when scaled over a year and adjusting for high-usage months.

“IT goes back into the economy,” Massengill said.

On a stroll of the downtown business strip, the mayor ushered a Southern City writer into a candy-and-cakes shop run by Jenny Campbell, who has run the business there for 18 years but didn’t live in Benson’s corporate limits until recently. Without prodding, she happily noted the power bills in Benson were lower than at her previous residence. She also said her business has thrived in Benson, so much that she’s been pitched several times about moving it to a different, more populous locale.

Campbell said she always refuses; Benson has her heart. “I just like being here,” she said.

That seems to be the bottom line for Massengill. This mayor champions intentional moves that will help locals today and make Benson a better place for its sons, daughters, new settlers and businesses tomorrow.

“There are strategic things that happen that will have long-term benefits, (such as) where you put water and sewer lines, infrastructure. This hotel (comes) at a very critical point for our town, and we knew that the quality of that development will certainly impact and color everything that’s around it for the next 20 years,” Massengill said.

It’s difficult to overestimate how important that is. Economic development sometimes has the feel of a space race, a sprint to the ribbon of business recruitment, of being able to bring all growth and employment opportunities home for today’s residents because, of course, portals to prosperity are always in demand, right now.

But without proper steering, without a plan to recruit the right kind of business for an individual town, it’s easy to blow off course.

“We had people who said to me, ‘Why don’t you just let any kind of hotel come here? You’re trying to get this, but why don’t you just be happy with whatever might come here?’” Massengill related. “And my comment to them was … I knew that the community wanted better than that. And I think that’s one of the things about this town that, to me, is special. I believe that the people here want really good things. They don’t want to settle.” SC

Downtown Benson offers a variety of locally owned businesses in charming, historic buildings. Photo credit: Ben Brown
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Manteo is one of only a handful of towns at this point that owns a drone, and by now, you probably already know where this is going. After the storm, the town sent the small, remote-controlled aircraft to the sky to document the damage with an attached, high-resolution camera.

“Previously, we were only able to assess damage that we could see driving down through our streets,” said Steve Jozik, information technology specialist with the Town of Manteo. He said the drone was especially helpful in checking over Pirate’s Cove, a Manteo residential community that sits out on a slender peninsula. “So it’s relatively low-cost for us to get out and fly and survey damage (where) we wouldn’t be able to

When October’s Hurricane Matthew swiped across the Outer Banks community of Manteo, it wouldn’t be long before detailed imagery of the aftermath would emerge – probably more quickly than most other towns could manage, at least in surveying sites inaccessible by car.

IN DRONES, CITIES SEE NEW FRONTIERS, AND CONCERNS

By Ben Brown, NCLM Advocacy Communication Associate
see it any other way,” other than a much more expensive and time-consuming helicopter or airplane flyover, Jozik said.

What’s perhaps most notable: Manteo is a pretty small town, with less than 1,500 residents and a limited governmental staff, making its drone purchase all the more innovative and experimental.

“There wasn’t really any precedent for a town operating a drone, and actually we were having issues finding support networks (and) other towns that had similar ambitions,” Jozik explained, adding that the initial idea for Manteo’s drone was to capture aerial imagery of special events, traffic or public works projects. A government access television grant paid for the aircraft.

The fact that there are so many different applications for drones in local government has municipalities across the state and nation dreaming. That’s not to say that drones — more officially called “unmanned aerial systems/vehicles” — are a brand new technology. They’re not. But awareness of their potential in public services — from search-and-rescue to land-planning surveys to environmental monitoring to traffic observation to inspections — is spreading quickly these days as costs come down and long-awaited federal rules take hold.

State Rep. John Torbett of Stanley, an expert on the technology and known in legislative circles as the “Drone Guy,” suggests the list of applications could stretch from Murphy to Manteo.

“I sat in my office desk one day — this is probably 15 years ago — and was trying to list all the applications I could just think of,” he began at a recent League forum on what drones mean for local government. “And I could still be sitting here today writing down additional applications. They are numerous, they are abundant, in both the governmental and civilian marketplace.”

And that civilian factor is nothing to ignore. Local governments across the state have been researching the ramifications of regulating private use of drones — which are available in variety and, increasingly, for low retail prices. For all their potential, they also bring about concerns over misuse (think public safety, privacy and nuisance issues).

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which has exclusive authority over the use of airspace in the U.S., left room for state and local government authority in its recent final rule for drones. That rule determined that federal preemption of state and local rules wasn’t warranted and that “certain legal aspects concerning small (drone) use may be best addressed at the state or local level.”

The National League of Cities (NLC), in a statement this past June, called that a great opportunity for the drone industry to work with municipal leaders. “Cities commend the FAA for taking this important step in acknowledging that broad federal preemption would
The N.C. Department of Transportation also offers resources, at ncdot.org/aviation/UAS/about, including a study guide and North Carolina’s existing laws with respect to safety and privacy in drone usage and for permitting. These laws do not interfere with the FAA’s rule.

For an extensive dissection of drones and local government in North Carolina, you can view the League’s recent forum in full online. Point your browser toyoutu.be/YKK_loUcbg0.

Episode 13 of Municipal Equation, the League’s biweekly podcast, also takes a close look at drones in local government, with insights from Jozik and other expert guests. Listen to it at soundcloud.com/municipalequation or at nclm.org.

Clearly, there’s a lot left to ponder, and a lot of questions to answer. Among them: Will this article appear naive to future generations in the same way we cringe at early pop-culture reporting on the Internet?

“‘All of the answers have not been determined yet,' Representative Torbett tells municipalities. ‘We’re going to rely on your expertise, your applications, your knowledge, your understanding, as you delve into this very unique and exciting emerging market....’

SC
In the previous edition of *Southern City*, my League colleague and fellow writer Ben Brown wrote a profile of state Sen. Bill Rabon that presents quite the different side of one of the most powerful legislators in the state. Make no mistake, as new chair of the Senate Rules Committee and a longtime chair of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Rabon is one of the big dogs at the North Carolina General Assembly. That legislative profile, like others, featured a question-and-answer format where much of the focus was, as it should be, on the policy and the process that takes shape in the Legislative Building in Raleigh.

In Senator Rabon’s case, though, the questions were put to him against a backdrop of performing his day job – running a veterinarian practice in the coastal town of Southport. It proved an interesting, and at times for Ben, challenging backdrop, as sometimes Senator Rabon’s furry clients demanded attention and forced a few pauses (and pawses) in the interview. Those interruptions put the spotlight, not so much on a state legislator, but on a dedicated veterinarian prone to laughter and still in love with his profession four decades after first opening his practice.

In our politically polarized world, it has become increasingly easy to see those on the other side of the political fence as the enemy, regardless of which side you sit on. When that person enjoys actual political power as an elected official – at any level – turning him or her into an object of scorn becomes even more instinctive when there is a failure to agree on policy or ideological choices. Meanwhile, the larger public can lose sight of the fact that most of those involved in the political sphere are driven by a desire to make changes that they believe will right a perceived wrong or make some part of the world a better place.

The profile of Rabon was a reminder of how, at the end of the day, our state legislators are just people with many of the same kinds of aspirations and foibles and hectic lives as the rest of us. His profile is hardly alone in that respect. In this current issue, you can read about how state Rep. Becky Carney of Charlotte very nearly lost her life at her desk in her legislative office (See *Finding a Way*, pp. 28-32). Going back a few issues, Rep. Chuck McGrady of Hendersonville discussed how his love of the outdoors brought him to North Carolina and led to a lifestyle change from corporate lawyer to youth camp owner.

Our member profiles offer an even deeper dive into the lives and longings of municipal officials, providing not only a look at their personal lives but at their efforts to improve their communities and the opportunities for the residents who live in them.

These are pieces, we hope, that can be helpful in bringing people together, maybe prompting readers to reach out to those featured in them in a positive manner, and maybe, just maybe, reminding us all that we are all in it together when it comes to trying to build a better North Carolina. SC
Enacting a Vision

After two years of work putting together a vision of where cities and towns should be by 2030, League staff began looking inward to see how it needed to change to help cities and towns achieve that vision. Vision 2030 focused on municipalities partnering with others to achieve economic success, better demonstrating the value they provide to a community’s quality of life, preparing for cultural and demographic changes and exercising more control of functions and revenues.

To help reach that vision, the League created five “strategic pillars” calling for the League to become a transformative organization that, among other things, would empower citizens, bolster leadership development and improve municipal positioning and influence. In response, the League formed a staff committee of 20, or “pillar team,” to look at ways the organization could develop tactics and strategies to become more effective. Among those already under way: a communications campaign to help cities and towns to promote their investments that grow jobs and the economy, developing podcasts on issues of interest to cities, and the development of a more comprehensive League directory to allow members to more easily find staff members based on their areas of expertise.

Still to come: More strategic partnerships including those with local chambers of commerce and others with whom municipalities share common interests, the development of mentorship and political leadership development programs for elected officials, and bolstering the role of field staff.

Legislative Accomplishments

The 2016 legislative session came one year after the League has seen one of its most productive sessions in years, with transportation and investment-related legislation in 2015 leading the way...
among measures that accomplished key League goals. The even-numbered year “short session” promised to be brief, and much of the Public and Governmental Affairs staff efforts would be aimed at defense, attempting to block any legislation harmful.

The tone of the session, though, would be set by a one-day March special session in which legislators responded to a City of Charlotte-approved anti-discrimination ordinance by passing HB2, the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act. The bill, in part, pre-empted local nondiscrimination ordinances like Charlotte’s, but also imposed other restrictions on local government including those affecting contractor requirements. The League was one of the first organizations to oppose the bill, issuing a statement that the restrictions amounted to a limit on the political power of local residents. The ensuing controversy that followed saw businesses, entertainment acts and sporting events pull out of the state in protest over the bill. Several lawsuits also challenged the law, while the state filed lawsuits challenging U.S. Justice Department authority in the case.

Against that backdrop, the League and its advocacy team entered the session well aware of the potential for all cities and towns to face recriminations due to the ongoing controversy. That being the case, the League focused on clear communication with lawmakers to help their understanding of how state legislation can affect, positively or negatively, the ability of a municipality to do the best for its citizenry, promote economic growth and meet local demands. Those efforts – strengthened by League member groundwork laid at meetings of the Legislative Action Committees, Regulatory Action Committee and in other gatherings – helped dramatically to improve legislative proposals as they moved through the channels. After an Action Alert to members, the League was able to eliminate several harmful provisions in a complex land-use regulatory bill.

In its previous form, HB 483 included language that would have incentivized litigation at local taxpayer expense, weakened protections for property. Other short-session successes for League members – many of them defensive wins as legislation harmful to municipalities was altered or died – include:

- The preservation of cities’ authority regarding Municipal Service Districts, with the approval of transparency, good-government provisions but the elimination of proposals that could have led to MSD’s being eliminated by a small minority of property owners.
- The appropriation of $5.7 million for downtown revitalization projects.
- The continuance of Powell Bill funding at last year’s level.
- The abandonment of problematic, immigration-related legislation that could have put Powell Bill funding at risk for individual towns and cities.
- The halting of legislation that would have de-annexed properties from the Town of Sunset Beach, a win that followed great teamwork among League staffers, members and legislators.
- The passage of legislation that gives local police much-needed clarification on the keeping of video records gathered by bodyworn or dashboard cameras, without mandating the cameras’ adoption.
- The passage of legislation with League-requested language to assure that a public water system’s solvency be taken into account when electricity providers are required to provide alternative drinking water supplies to property owners near coal ash impoundments.

The North Carolina Legislative Building is the scene of much of the League’s lobbying activity.

Photo credit: NCLM
Legal Update

The League wrote amicus briefs in five court cases and provided technical assistance in four other cases, all nine substantially affecting municipal authority. The most highly-publicized of those cases has been the City of Asheville v. State of North Carolina, the city’s challenge of state legislation mandating the transfer of the city’s water system to a regional water and sewer district. In October of 2015, the Court of Appeals ruled against Asheville. The League filed a new amicus brief as the case moved to the state Supreme Court, which overturned that decision in December in a momentous verdict for cities and towns.

The League also wrote an amicus brief in the State of Tenn. and State of North Carolina v. FCC before the U.S. Court of Appeal for the Sixth Circuit. The amicus brief came in support of the Federal Communication Commission’s decision to preempt state laws restricting municipal broadband service. Although the court ruled that the FCC did not have the authority to preempt the state laws, it did acknowledge that they had the effect of limiting broadband service and competition in some areas. The case has helped to highlight the issues of broadband access in rural North Carolina and caused the N.C. General Assembly to begin re-examining the issue.

Other cases where the League filed amicus briefs were: Duke Energy v. Gray, in which the state Supreme Court ruled in favor of condemnors, including cities, in a case involving protection of utility easements from encroachment; Wray v. City of Greensboro, a case still pending before the state Supreme Court affecting governmental immunity and local government discretion to provide defense to employees; and Wilkes v. City of Greenville, a case affecting workers’ compensation and the presumption of compensability for mental health issue that is also pending before the state Supreme Court.

Cases where NCLM provided technical assistance included Nies v. Town of Emerald Isle, a highly-publicized case involving public and municipal access to beaches that was decided in favor of the town in December after the state Supreme Court dismissed the case; City of Charlotte v.
University Financial Partners, affecting eminent domain and commercial property rights, decided in favor of the city; and Surgical Care Affiliates v. NC Industrial Commission, a case also affecting workers’ compensation still pending before the state Court of Appeals.

Finally, the League continues to be involved on a number of fronts, including providing legal technical assistance, in the Quality Built Homes v. Town of Carthage case affecting the ability of cities and towns to charge water and sewer impact fees to plan and pay for future growth. The state Supreme Court ruled against the town, but it has been remanded back to the Court of Appeals to address any statute of limitations on refunds and related issues.

**More Than Insurance**

The innovations in the League’ Risk Management Services, dedicated the proposition of being “more than insurance,” continued this past year. Those innovations included the rolling out of the Naturally Slim weight-loss program, designed to promote the health of HBT risk pool members by allowing those enrolling in the program to model their habits after others who have avoided weight gain.

On the Property and Liability side, the launch of a new Law Enforcement Risk Management Review is proving popular among members against a backdrop of headline-grabbing policy shootings. The Law Enforcement Risk Review Process is designed to assess an agency’s adherence to best practices, court decisions, and policies and procedures related to high liability activities in law enforcement. The goal of the review is to enhance public safety by reducing liability exposure, enhancing officer safety, and validating that policies, training, and operating procedures are meeting industry standards. The NCLM initiative is supported by the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police.

RMS continued its focus on encouraging members to take advantage of others tools designed to lessen liability and protect municipal employees and the public, including online training tools like training modules on land-use decisions, cyber risk management programs and the “train-the-trainer” police driver safety program.

The Workers’ Compensation Trust also this year increased the amount available for police body armor grant program to $100,000. More plans are in the works to vet and bring more programs to risk pool members.

**CityVision 2015**

CityVision 2015, the League’s annual conference held October 10-13, 2015 in Winston-Salem, became an energized and enthusiastic kick-off of cities’ vision for themselves for 2030.

The conference focused on that vision with NCLM Board members Jennifer Robinson, a Cary Town Council member, and Jody McLeod, mayor of...
Clayton, discussing the findings from the year-long League and UNC School of Government-led effort to examine how cities and towns can adapt to meet the demographic, financial and technological challenges ahead of them for the next 15 years. Councilwoman Robinson and Mayor McLeod – in a sharp presentation that focused on defined dilemmas and how cities and the League as an organization can meet them – noted the challenges include both the political, like declining public trust in government, and the financial, such as increasing infrastructure needs.

**Town Hall Day**

Donning League-green ties and scarves, more than 500 municipal officials from across North Carolina converged in Raleigh for one of the most successful Town Hall Days in the books – one that brought out Gov. Pat McCrory, House Speaker Tim Moore and other powerful guests who heard the League’s message directly from membership.

The annual day of municipal advocacy at the Legislative Building – under some of the prettiest weather all season – saw local leaders make positive connections with their House and Senate delegates in discussions over issues important to great hometowns of all sizes. While individual cities and towns had the chance to talk about specific local concerns or projects with their representatives, the overarching theme was “what municipal government brings to the state of North Carolina, how they help the state economically and are just a vital asset to the state,” said League First Vice President Bob Matheny, Mayor of Zebulon.

**Law Enforcement Meeting**

Law enforcement leaders, members of the N.C. Legislative Black Caucus, and representatives of the N.C. League of Municipalities met during a League-organized forum to discuss best practices in law enforcement training and examine potential solutions that might strengthen trust between police and the communities they serve.

More than 100 law enforcement officials from across North Carolina – including police chiefs, sheriffs, leadership from the State Highway Patrol and state Department of Public Safety, and the state Department of Justice – attended the forum. Speakers and audience members also included a number of officials involved in law
enforcement training and policy standards. Similar meetings on the local level, organized by the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, are occurring in cities across the country in the wake of tragic encounters that have led to the deaths of residents and police officers. Participants said they hoped the forum and candidate dialogue that resulted would lead to tangible proposals that would result in better trained and prepared officers.

**Communication Advances**

**Southern City**

The League's bi-monthly magazine continued to beef up its content with more issue-focused articles while improving on the already stellar design and photos. Since its redesign in 2014, Southern City has become a showcase municipal association publication and one that draws people's attention in town halls and other places all over the state.

**Municipal Equation Podcast**

In late June, the League launched Municipal Equation, a podcast examining municipal challenges and how innovation and technology are helping to solve those challenges. It was not long before each podcast, produced every other week, was receiving hundreds of listens and was being promoted by the National League of Cities and cited by other municipal and technologically-focused organizations around the country.

Early episodes included a look at the extraordinary life of NCLM Board of Directors member Denise Adams and an examination of ways that municipalities are bridging the infrastructure deficit gap. The podcast is

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Episodes of the League's biweekly podcast are found at soundcloud.com/municipalequation or at nclm.org
available on all major podcast players, including iTunes where it has a 5-star rating.

Ben Brown, the podcast's creator and NCLM Advocacy Communication Associate sums it up, "The bottom line is idea-sharing and storytelling – an important part of Vision 2030 and the League's Here We Grow campaign. Produced in the vein of a NPR-like radio show, this podcast reflects a modern approach to messaging, reach, education and personal touch.

Here We Grow

Several months in the making, the League launched its Here We Grow promotional campaign to promote the investments that cities and towns are making which bolster the state's economy and create job growth.

The campaign is rooted in the idea that North Carolina's economic strength lies in the diversity of its cities and towns – a diversity that's the direct result of allowing residents to pursue their own unique visions and allowing municipalities to make investments that improve residents' quality of life. To preserve the local decision-making authority that has allowed cities and towns to prosper, it is crucial that we tell that story. A major part of the effort is the Here We Grow website, www.herewegrow.org, launched in early October, to help provide tools to each municipality, individually, tell about its economic successes, and to help tell the collective story of how cities and towns are working hand-in-hand with the private sector to build our state's economic foundation.

Created as a crowdsourcing website, League members are able to post their economic success stories there and then share them through their social media accounts. The fall launch was only the beginning, with more plans underway to promote these efforts.

Grassroots Engagement

The League's continuing emphasis on grassroots organizing and advancing strategic partnerships paid dividends shown in increased League involvement by the membership and the effectiveness of mobilizing members and partners to take action on policy issues. In total, the League's two grassroots staff members made more than 55 visits across the state, from Spruce Pine to Southport. These visits emphasized how vital connections to legislators and others civic leaders are in advancing municipal interests and that of their residents. The below map illustrates each visit from the League's grassroots team and other members of the Public and Government Affairs staff.

Local Elected Leadership Academy

The Local Elected Leadership Academy continued this year to advance the education of county and municipal officials. The program – a partnership between the League, the UNC School of Government, and N.C. Association of County Commissioners – is designed to help officials develop skills to help them more effectively govern.

This year, 66 municipal officials attained the Practitioner level, 29 the Masters level and 51 the Mentor level. Another 12 members completed the Advanced Leadership Corps, the capstone course for LELA.
With the 2017 long session of the General Assembly convening on January 11, the season for requesting local bills has arrived. While every session sees hundreds of local bills introduced and enacted at the behest of individual municipalities and counties, there are also occasional local acts that impose requirements or remove authority in a way that is opposed by the affected local government. Encountering one of these bills, you might have wondered whether there are any legal limits on the General Assembly's power to enact such legislation. Two recent decisions of the North Carolina Supreme Court address this question.

First, a bit of constitutional background: The North Carolina Constitution, in Article VII, Section 1, gives the General Assembly the broad power to “provide for the organization and government and the fixing of boundaries” of local governments, and except as otherwise prohibited by the Constitution, to give them “such powers and duties…as it may deem advisable.” Article II, Section 24, in turn, prohibits the General Assembly from addressing fourteen specified subject areas through local, private, or special legislation. These matters may be addressed only in general laws. For example, the legislature may not enact a local bill to regulate trade or labor; to authorize the opening or closing of streets; or to extend the time for levy or collection of taxes. Of interest in the two cases, the General Assembly also may not enact local bills “[r]elating to health, sanitation, and the abatement of nuisances.”

The two Supreme Court opinions came down on the same day in December. City of Asheville v. State, in which the League participated with an amicus brief, deals with legislation mandating the involuntary transfer, without compensation, of the city’s water system to a metropolitan water and sewer district. Town of Boone v. State deals with legislation removing the town’s authority to exercise extraterritorial jurisdiction. In both cases, the legislative acts were adopted over the adamant opposition of the affected municipality. On appeal, the municipalities argued, among other things, that the acts were constitutionally prohibited because they related to health, sanitation and the abatement of nuisances in violation of Article II, Section 24.

Results were mixed. In the Boone case, a split Supreme Court upheld the local act removing the town’s ETJ authority. The majority held that the removal of territorial jurisdiction from the town fell squarely within the General Assembly’s broad authority, recognized in the first clause of Article VII, Section 1, to provide for the organization, government and fixing of boundaries of municipalities. In parsing the provision, the majority determined that the limitation language (“except as otherwise prohibited by this Constitution”) does not apply to the organization, governance and boundaries power in the first clause and limits only the delegation of powers in the second clause. Thus, once it determined that the act was one of organization, governance and boundaries, there was no need to apply the subject matter prohibitions in Article II, Section 24 to the local act. Of the seven justices, six agreed with the result, but only four agreed with this reasoning.

The Boone ruling came in contrast to the Asheville case, another split opinion, in which the Supreme Court struck down the water system transfer legislation, finding that it was a local act relating to the prohibited subjects of health, sanitation and the abatement of nuisances. In doing so, the majority opinion articulated a new test for determining what the constitutional provision means by “relating to”: “…whether, in light of its stated purpose and practical effect, the legislation

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In June, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared that our nation “is in the midst of an unprecedented opioid epidemic.” And it wasn’t the first time it’s been said. According to federal statistics from 2014, more people died from drug overdoses that year than in any year prior, most of those deaths involving opioids. Sadly, the latest figure of annual health and social costs related to prescription opioid abuse is $55 billion.

That’s going to change, public officials say, as research points to preventive solutions and initiatives develop to administer them.

“Appropriate treatment and early intervention can result in significant benefits for individuals, families, communities and taxpayers,” notes a recent report from the Fayetteville-area Task Force on Substance and Opioid Abuse, a joint effort of the City of Fayetteville and the Fayetteville Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Fayetteville, a town with a notable military and veteran population, stands out in the conversation. The task force will be the first to tell you – and does so at the top of its report – that a study this year ranked the city 15th in the U.S. for opioid abuse. But Mayor Nat Robertson, who co-chairs the task force, sees hope.

Already, the group’s work has led major medical centers in the area, including private practices and those run by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to change their protocols for prescribing opioids to patients – limiting those prescriptions, essentially.

“So when you have the major medical centers saying we’re going to change protocol and see if it makes a difference, then I think we’re going to be able to see a difference in outcomes,” the mayor said.

It’s been the biggest win so far on the supply side. On the demand side, the task force has launched a 24-hour hotline for crisis assistance, reached out
to the public with high-quality, city-produced promotional materials, and sought and received coverage by media partners.

City-produced public service announcements are commercial quality and take a compassionate approach.

“No one starts out with the intention of becoming addicted to painkillers or heroin,” the narrator says, over imagery of people from all walks of life struggling with opioids. “There is hope,” voices repeat before encouraging anyone in such a crisis to dial (910) 424-HOPE.

“We, as a group, understand that this is, and will always be, an ongoing battle that we must face as a community, but it is our hope that through this task force we will be able to get more people into treatment instead of jail, and therefore, begin to break the cycle,” Mayor
Robertson said.

For the task force, a recurring finding during the investigation stage was a disconnect between the individuals struggling with opioid abuse and the resources available to them – “a debilitating hindrance.” But awareness of the issue is helping the response in Fayetteville.

Cohen Veterans Network gives free mental healthcare to veterans and family members and, for sometime next year, plans to create a new Fayetteville facility estimated to cost as much as $12 million. Cumberland County Communicare, which runs the local crisis hotline, is set to open a recovery center in town with “open access for screening, assessments and referrals to services for anyone looking for recovery services, including substance use treatment, opioid treatment, 12-stop programs and other resources.”

But the work, while vital, isn’t as important as the outcomes, Mayor Robertson emphasized. The task force will soon measure the effects of its efforts, including the change in prescription protocols, hoping to see a difference.

“That’s what I’m looking forward to,” said Mayor Robertson. SC
I’m sure many of you have heard the term “buy low, sell high.” This saying comes from the time-honored financial advice of buying stocks when they are at the lowest price and selling them when they are at a higher price in order to generate a profit.

Although municipalities cannot invest in the stock market, there are ways for municipalities to stretch their taxpayers’ dollars by participating in two programs sponsored by the League: U.S. Communities Governmental Purchasing Alliance and GovDeals. In essence, these two programs allow League members to “buy low, sell high.” Let me explain.

U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance (US Communities) is a national government cooperative purchasing program that assists local and state government agencies in reducing the cost of purchased goods by pooling the purchasing power of local and state agencies nationwide. Through US Communities, League members have the ability to make purchases through existing competitively-solicited contracts between a supplier and the lead agency, typically a larger municipality, county or state agency, under the lead agency’s “Joint Powers Authority” or “Cooperative Procurement” program. Purchases made through the US Communities program eliminate the need for League members to go through their own bidding or procurement process, as the US Communities program meets the existing state and federal purchasing requirements. This allows League members to receive excellent pricing and contract terms on a wide range of products and services offered through the program. Participation in the US Communities is available to League members at no cost.

The US Communities program has developed an “online marketplace” that provides quick visibility into products and pricing, and integrates many US Communities supplier contracts into a single shopping environment, making it easy to shop and compare prices. US Communities offers access to thousands of products from multiple suppliers.

I often encourage League members, when in the process of purchasing products or services, to first review the products and services offered through the US Communities program to see if the product or service is available and to use US Communities’ pricing as a “baseline price” for budgeting purposes. This can help in assuring your municipality is “buying low”.

Products and services available through US Communities include: computer and office equipment, technology solutions, automotive parts and lubricants, building maintenance products and equipment, heavy equipment sales and leasing, playground and park equipment, uniform rental, utility and golf carts, and public safety equipment. Suppliers include well-known national manufacturers and retailers.

Considering the second half of my analogy, the “selling high,” is where GovDeals enters the picture. It is an on-line auction service for government entities. Since the program began in March 2003, millions of dollars worth of surplus equipment, vehicles and assets from NCLM member governments have been sold through the GovDeals.

Disposal of surplus property through traditional means, such as a local auction or sealed bids, often leads to a limited number of bidders and lower bid amounts. In some cases, municipalities may also encounter unqualified buyers or they may sell only a sporadic amount of the items listed, causing them to fail to cover the time and expense put into the auctioning or sealed bid process.

GovDeals, on the other hand, brings in qualified, ready buyers who are looking specifically for surplus items, creating a government-focused online auction system. Currently, GovDeals has registered buyers from all 50 states and 26 countries who are in the market of purchasing government surplus property. With GovDeals, your

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It's common to hear state legislators cite fewer hours of sleep as the annual sessions grind away on Jones Street. It's true: lawmaking is not a well-rested job. The 2016 agenda, for one, blared a particularly loud horn that, for both sides of the aisle, kept eyes open and feet shuffling around the clock. By the end of the year, the journals counted six legislative sessions, an unusually high tally that included the regularly scheduled, months-long session, along with five special sessions. Clearly not a sleepy time for North Carolina politics.

Awake on the front row of the House floor through it all was longtime Rep. Becky Carney, who isn't outdone by marathon workdays. The eight-term Charlotte legislator has run and won much tougher battles – including two amazing returns from death's door – and draws noticeable, new energy from each experience. In an interview with Southern City after 2016's adjournment, Representative Carney reflected on the busy year, her perspective on service, why she emphasizes communication between local and state officials -- and walks us, in detail, through the gravest times of her life.

**What impression did 2016 leave on you as a legislator?**

I think that we were all met with challenges, especially around social issues and the economic impact from those issues. And I think, for me, the whole session was trying to find, with all of my colleagues, common ground for the good of the people of North Carolina, beyond just one particular bill. There were good things that happened that I think were just overpowered and overshadowed with what was going on with HB2. … We may not have all agreed, but it was one of those issues that, whether we end up at the end of the day getting what we as individual legislators want for a particular issue ... it’s an opportunity that we all have to have input. Maybe there are legislators that feel like they don’t have that opportunity. I have found that, having been there for 14 years, I have learned that the most important thing that you can do to be effective is to network with all the members and build those relationships. … For me, each year that I am able to continue serving, I try to find purpose. I’m there, I’m in the middle of it. Being in the minority, I still push and try to have my voice heard, though it may have been challenging with issues. 2016 is one of those in my 14 years that stands out the most, in that all of the lights were on our state, from around the country.

“**When you come up and you’ve been in the trenches at home serving as an elected official, first of all you know the responsibility you have to the citizens.**”

Rep. Becky Carney
What do you see ahead for 2017?

We've got challenges again ... We're starting out with a lot of lawsuits again (such as Gov. Roy Cooper's challenge over recent legislative changes to his power). I will say that within the last couple of years, there have been more lawsuits than I have seen over my years (in the legislature). If things are tied up in the courts - we've heard members say, “The courts will make that decision.” And so things are just kind of left hanging, policies are left hanging, for the public. So I think our challenge is going to be gaining back the public's confidence in the legislature. There's a big change in the respect of the institution, from what I have known it to be, with the members and from the public. And that kind of saddens me. I consider it an absolute honor to serve. And the population of North Carolina is what, 10 million? (To think) that I am one of just 120 in the House of Representatives who gets to go there and serve. And I think that is an absolute honor and a privilege that the people of my district have bestowed on me with their vote of confidence. That's breathtaking to me.

Speaking of your district, how does representing an area as large as Charlotte or Mecklenburg County affect your service or role in the General Assembly? It's arguably the busiest part of the state, and a lot of legislators come out of that area.

Our delegation has always been known ... as a strong delegation that works together. Now, we haven't always agreed on the issues ... but we have always respected each other and worked together. So, collectively, we have always had that voice represented in Raleigh. What has happened more and more is the urban-rural divide. And we talk about it all the time. My local government experience (as a Mecklenburg County commissioner) was very helpful to me going in to the state level. I remember being elected as a county commissioner and going to my first training with the UNC School of Government for newly elected commissioners, and I was just astounded at issues that my rural colleagues faced as county commissioners. And it gave me a greater insight in knowing that all needs are relevant. For Charlotte, we have major needs. In Bertie County, they have major needs. They're all just maybe looked at differently. I loved county government.
I think that (NCACC) can play and the League of Municipalities can play major roles in bridging this urban-rural divide. So for me, from representing a busy city like Charlotte, which is one of the most diverse cities in the state, our needs to serve our particular population are quite different from some of our rural colleagues. Therefore, I think we have the clashing of differences there. So, moving forward into 2017, I have encouraged my council members and commissioners to work with their colleagues around each of those core urban areas to pull in the rural municipalities within their area, their region. You know, all government bubbles up from the local level, the issues. There’s an opportunity to educate each other.

**How else is local government experience beneficial to a state legislator?**

Health and human services, for example. That’s one of the major things that a county government deals with. Also education. Knowing those needs at my local level, and serving in Raleigh, I feel like I came in ahead of the curve. We have a county caucus at the legislature. The municipalities have one, too. They’re comprised of (legislators who are) former members of local governments, and they come together and talk about certain bills and ask, “How is this going to impact local governments?” And I’ve been involved with that since my good friend Carolyn Justice (the former Pender County Republican House member) was there, and we both came to the table having both been county commissioners. And those were the days when we all worked together. I was in the majority; she was in the minority. And yet, she got things done. And it was urban and rural. So I think our local government experience has put us closer to the people in understanding what those needs are back home.

**And the same applies to those with town council or mayoral experience.** Absolutely. School board (too). When you come up and you’ve been in the trenches at home serving as an elected official, first of all you know the responsibility you have to the citizens…. I will say that what I missed the most in moving from local government to state government is that connection with

Representative Carney had beaten medical odds more than once, by way of an unusually resilient spirit, family, and quality hospital support. Photo credit: Brian Strickland Photography
the people back home. When you’re on a local government, whether it’s the council or school board or whatever, you’re right there with your constituents every day. And they know you. They know you when you’re out in the public. I served three terms in local government, and people knew me, and knew the things that I had done, and they put their confidence in me to go to Raleigh. So when you go to Raleigh, you have to work really hard to reach the constituents in your district, because you’re isolated from what’s going on day to day. We rely so much on people reaching out to us and (us) reaching out to them. I tell people all the time: Come to Raleigh if you can. If you cannot, I publish all my numbers, so contact my office... Having that experience coming to Raleigh, I knew it was my responsibility to reach out to my constituents at home. But it’s also hard if you don’t know all that’s happening right down to the level of your district all the time... I think we’re at a point now where we’re seeing more local officials coming to Raleigh, and I think that’s a huge step forward for us to have better dialogue. Come up and talk to us. Don’t always come and say, “We need this, we need that.” Say, “This is our need. What can we do together?” We need to do more of that.

So it makes a big difference when local government leaders to reach out to you.

Absolutely.... I will tell you the first time I ran for office was school board. I’d never run for anything. I told my campaign manager I wanted to go to Raleigh and meet with the state superintendent (of public instruction), Bob Etheridge, and talk to him about the bloodline between Raleigh and the school board in Mecklenburg County. I knew that it was a very important issue at the state level and that they controlled a lot of what happened at the local level.... We walked in and he went, “Wow, this is a nice treat, but I’m not sure why you’re here.... What is the purpose of your visit?” And when I told him ... he looked at me and said, “Gosh, I don’t think I’ve had anybody ever ask me for an explanation.” When I heard that, I used that with just about everything that I tried to do with local government: reaching out to the state to get a better understanding.

Of course, to understand you best, we have to talk about how certain life events have shaped you. Major health incidents, including a ‘sudden cardiac death,’ twice at death’s door....

The summer of 2009. It was on a Thursday. Time to go home after session.... I went to my office, and was at my desk talking to my (legislative assistant). My phone rang. It was a colleague. She was saying something to me and – now, this is where I’m told what happened. Apparently, I sneezed and my LA said, “God bless you.” And I always say thank you. When I didn’t speak, she looked up and my head was on my desk. She immediately called for help.... They started CPR ... and then (legislative police and medical experts) came in and brought the defibrillator with them. My freshman class had donated it. We did not have a defibrillator in the legislature, so we had all collected money and bought one. That one was used to save my life. EMS came and took me to WakeMed.... I woke up at WakeMed, and the rest was kind of a comeback. My body had totally shut down.... I equate to when you reboot a computer. You can lose things, or everything comes back. I was fortunate enough that everything came back. My cognitive ability was still strong. My physical ability was still strong. I did have a pacemaker defibrillator implanted. I went through about two months of
rehabilitation, getting my strength back and courage back. But I knew that I was needed. And I had a responsibility. And I needed to push hard to get back over to the legislature. That happened on April 2nd, and on June I went back to the legislature. And of course, my colleagues were tremendous in support. My family was amazing. My constituents, they never judged me about the illness. In fact, the support was overwhelming. And with all of that around me – of course, I also have a strong faith and believe in prayer and God – I had a miracle. That support fed my strength. And more than ever I was determined to be a part of the process. And I had a couple of good bills that year that we pushed ahead. It was like, “I can’t walk away now.”

And so I’m still here, for whatever reason, and I’m ticking right along, in great shape, felt great. And then in July, we were out in Nevada for my son’s wedding. Got to the airport to fly back home and started experiencing feelings of fainting. And then apparently I went out. The EMS took me to a hospital. My defibrillator implant kicked in and started my heart back. So they put me in the hospital, pumped me up with some meds to fly me back, and I ended up at Chapel Hill at my son’s. And I just got worse. They took me over to UNC (hospital). My body was shutting down. Family was called in. My heart was too damaged. I didn’t have enough time to wait for a transplant. Two options: get meds and go home and wait to die, which would be in a couple of months; or, have the LVAD (left ventricular assist device) implanted. My family made that decision. It was an incredible decision. I have this wonderful device.

How does the LVAD work?
I have a driveline going into my body that is hooked to a pump in my heart. And that driveline, during the day, I plug into batteries that I wear on my back in a backpack. At night I unhook from the batteries and plug into a wall unit. I get fired up at night, and then hook up the batteries and I’m wide open to go all day. I feel stronger and better. Blood is flowing through my body stronger than ever.

And so you’re empowered to continue...
People asked, through both events, “Are you going to run again? Is this going to be your last term?” And I’ve said both times, “No.” I must still have something left. I have more energy now, more of a commitment now, to be in there and fight for what I think is right... and knowing that we all have limited days, limited hours. Make the most of it.... When you know you’re out of time on a test, you rush to get it all done if you didn’t study. You drag over the test and you linger over certain questions, and panic sets in and the bell’s going to ring. It’s over, and you rush through ... If you’d prepared and studied you would have done better and paced your time out. I know now that each day, I get up and I deal with that day. Of course I have a calendar, I know what’s coming up, but I don’t dwell on it.... It’s the quality of your stress, not the quantity of your stress, that’s going to make you stronger.... I don’t worry over any issues. I know that we’re struggling as a state right now. And I know that if we all work together and we band together and we take advantage of every day, we’re going to make this better. But it’s going to have to be a commitment from everybody. That’s what it’s been for me, what it’s like now to know that I’ve literally experienced death – I died, twice – in the legislature. And I’m still there. And each time, I have gotten stronger and more committed to making the most of the time that I have.
More Local Input on State Transportation Decisions? Legislators Consider It

By NCLM Staff

Just ahead of the current legislative session, a panel of lawmakers eyed ideas for transportation legislation that included a possible boost in local input on state-funded project decisions. Welcomed news, of course. A bill like that, if approved, would satisfy a policy goal that League members set out in October at CityVision 2016.

As it stands, local officials and state transportation engineers have an equal say in those transportation project decisions. A potential shift to greater local input came up for discussion on Dec. 12 at a meeting of the House Select Committee on Strategic Transportation Planning and Long-Term Funding Solutions, an interim legislative body chaired by Rep. John Torbett of Stanley. It was Representative Torbett who directed General Assembly staff to draft a bill that would change the say to a two-thirds/one-third break, with local preference being the greater weight.

He also asked staff to draft an additional provision that would meet another League goal: to increase state funding for infrastructure – in this case, for a state infrastructure bank that would provide low-cost loans to local governments for transportation projects. It’s an idea the League highlighted last year in Episode Two of its biweekly podcast, Municipal Equation, which also features a conversation with Representative Torbett on infrastructure funding solutions. Listen to that at soundcloud.com/municipalequation.

At the time of this writing, the committee was set to debate these ideas and others, and ultimately could approve draft language for this year’s legislative session.

“I think we’re going to make some good recommendations,” said Rep. Becky Carney, a Charlotte legislator and transportation committee member. Representative Carney added that her priorities include better urban-rural connectivity, which among other things could improve access to places of employment. “We’ve got a lot of members in the majority party and the minority party who are committed to strengthening our infrastructure in this state,” she said.

Representative Carney noted that the momentum for more infrastructure investment is growing. “We have a long way to go, but there’s been a good start over the last four years, and I think we’re building on that – and that’s a bipartisan issue,” she said.

General Assembly lawmakers passed the Strategic Transportation Investments, or STI, law in 2013 to reduce political influence on state-funded transportation projects. As part of that funding overhaul, the

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It’s hard to find an obvious, localized starting point in the conversation about Hurricane Matthew’s destruction.

The record-setting October storm beset so many North Carolina communities in so many ways, with statewide rippling impacts that included 25 to 30 deaths along with heartbreaking losses of property and setbacks for livelihoods.

It had been so long since the state – which has seen a huge influx of residential growth over the past decade – last felt a hurricane of this magnitude. But its cities, counties and state and federal governments were nothing if not prepared to respond and share resources.

Zoom in on any of North Carolina’s affected municipalities for the story.

Elizabethtown, for one, took a hard hit. The Bladen County town of about 3,600 people along the Cape Fear River, roughly 60 miles from the coast, saw flooded homes, broken transportation routes and a colossal mess of debris.

It also felt a massive gust of support from fellow municipalities who couldn’t bear to see their friends down.

Just as Elizabethtown’s leaders were getting a plan together for the cleanup and recovery, calls came in from the towns of Maiden and Rutherfordton in the drier, western third of the state, offering aid and services like debris collection. The towns deployed employees and special equipment and, according to officials, together hauled nearly 160 tons of debris from Elizabethtown.

“The Town of Elizabethtown will be forever grateful to these towns,” Elizabethtown Town Manager Eddie Madden told the League, adding that the town council at its Nov. 7 meeting adopted resolutions in recognition and appreciation, and to say that Elizabethtown would always be there to help its friends however possible.

Elizabethtown also sent gift baskets, containing local products, to town managers Todd Herms of Maiden and Doug Barrick of Rutherfordton.

Southern City readers should know well that this wasn’t an isolated story. Mutual aid is a great strength of cities, towns and counties across the state.

Rutherfordton also called on the public through social media and requested the donation of goods that local responders could ship to storm-battered communities, like those in coastal Craven County. The town tweeted out a photo of a forklift at a Rutherford County fire station loaded with basic, family necessities.

Social media ended up being a shining tool for municipalities’ connection with residents during Matthew, not only for donation efforts, but also for storm preparedness, beat-by-beat weather updates and timely information in the aftermath.

Greenville Mayor Allen Thomas hardly ever paused on Facebook and Twitter as the Tar River swelled and locals needed information on evacuations, curfews and shelters. He also pitched volunteer opportunities. City of Greenville web staffers were just as prolific.
The City of Raleigh in the aftermath used social media to, among other things, spread word that it would provide hot showers to residents without power and would waive fees at its yard-waste center to “make it a little easier.”

And the City of Fayetteville, which saw great amounts of local damage, shared helpful social media updates during site visits from state officials.

Again, not isolated examples.

It was no surprise, then, that the League saw strong participation in its collaborative efforts to help North Carolina recover and update plans for future weather. The League partnered with the N.C. Association of Feed America Food Banks to raise funds, made sure municipalities knew about readynclocal.org (the League's preparedness and recovery service for local governments), joined the governor’s hurricane recovery committee, shared every update on storm-aid eligibility, paired with the N.C. Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) to hold input sessions with local government leaders on what it would take to restore communities, and relayed this information to state and federal policymakers in letters from League President Bob Matheny and NCACC President Fred McClure.

These efforts played a big role in the $200 million disaster-relief legislation that came out of the third special session of the General Assembly for local governments, individuals and businesses to get back on their feet after Hurricane Matthew as well as the later disaster that brought out similar responsiveness – the western North Carolina wildfires. Legislators have indicated that more proposals aimed at
helping communities damaged by the natural disasters will be coming in the long session.

The legislation passed included:

- $20 million to the state-controlled Golden LEAF foundation to provide grants to local governments to construct new infrastructure supporting the development of new residential structures in areas outside the 100-year floodplain, or repair or replace existing infrastructure. Eligible infrastructure includes water, sewer, sidewalks, storm drainage, and other, similar projects that provide assistance or relief for Hurricane Matthew, the western wildfires, and Tropical Storms Julia and Hermine.

- $5 million to Golden LEAF for grants to eligible entities capable of making loans to small businesses affected by Hurricane Matthew, the western wildfires, or Tropical Storms Julia and Hermine.

- $10 million to the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for disaster-related infrastructure and cleanup needs, including fixes to wastewater and drinking water systems, dam safety, emergency permitting, and solid-waste cleanup. DEQ shall allocate a portion of these funds to assist local governments to mitigate impacts on burial sites and for other public health-protection efforts.

- $11.5 million to the N.C. Division of Emergency Management (DEM) for resilient redevelopment planning. The bill specifies that these dollars must go into the oversight and facilitation of strategic resiliency planning meetings at each of the 49 counties that received major disaster declarations related to Hurricane Matthew along with the five economic regions that the storm affected; into the development of strategic, resilient redevelopment plans for each of the 49 counties; into the oversight and submission of county-approved strategic resiliency action plans for federal approval; and into the provision of redevelopment expertise, technical assistance, and administrative support to the 49 counties and economic regions throughout the planning, design, and

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Cawley Appointed to NLC Policy Committee

Morrisville Town Council Member T.J. Cawley, who has enjoyed a history of involvement in League advocacy efforts, will be pitching in to help cities and towns at the national level in 2017. In December, Councilman Cawley was appointed to the National League of City’s Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Federal Advocacy Committee.

In that role, he will join a committee that has the lead responsibility for developing NLC’s federal policy positions on issues involving air quality, water quality, energy policy, national wetlands policy, noise control, and solid and hazardous waste management. The appointment was announced by NLC President and Cleveland Council Member Matt Zone after being endorsed by NCLM.

Councilman Cawley discussed the appointment as a natural progression. “I am looking forward to this opportunity with the National League of Cities to continue the advocacy efforts begun at the town and state level to safeguard our natural resources and promote a sustainable energy future for our country,” Councilman Cawley said.

As a member of the committee, Council Member Cawley will play a key role in shaping NLC’s policy positions and advocate on behalf of America’s cities and towns before Congress, the new presidential administration and at home.

NCLM Executive Director Paul Meyer said he was more than happy to support Councilman Cawley’s appointment. “The appointment is well-deserved, and the NLC will benefit greatly from his commitment to helping cities and towns fulfill their roles as service providers that protect and enhance the lives of residents,” Meyer said. “As a member of the League’s Planning and Environment Legislative Action Committee and through his other advocacy efforts, Councilman Cawley has been a true leader who has never tired or shied away from working to make cities and town better places to live and work for North Carolinians. We know he will do that same at the national level.”

In addition to his service on a League policy committee, Councilman Cawley is a well-known face at many of the League’s advocacy days and efforts, including Town Hall Day and lobby days. He has also served on the Triangle J Council of Government’s Smart Growth Committee.

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Unfunded Mandates Examined

By NCLM Staff


The bill would:
• Impose stricter and more clearly defined requirements for how and when federal agencies must disclose the cost of federal mandates
• Ensure those who will be affected have the opportunity to weigh in
• Equip Congress and the public with tools to better determine the true cost of regulations
• Provide an accountability mechanism ensuring that the federal government adhere to previous legislation to curb unfunded mandates.
Thanks to former and current City employees and a few local businesses, a piece of Morganton’s history has been restored. That piece of history is known as the “Police Box”.

The Police Box sat on the Historic Courthouse Square about 80 years ago. Originally, it was a cab off an old steam train engine, but the City repurposed it to serve as a satellite office for Morganton policemen and put it on the square sometime in the 1930s. The Police Box sat on S. Sterling Street and stayed in that spot for 10 to 12 years. Then, sometime in the 1940s or later, the Police Box disappeared.

Well, it didn’t vanish per se, it just disappeared from the Historic Courthouse Square, and most everyone forgot about it until a few years ago. That’s when Larry Whisnant, former City Councilman and Public Safety Major, became interested in finding out what happened to the Police Box.

“I found some old pictures and read an article about it in the paper, and I started wondering, ‘What happened to that building?’” Whisnant said. “To me it was, and is, an important piece of history for law enforcement and downtown Morganton.”

To help in the search, Whisnant recruited Claude Huffman, a former City fire captain. The two talked about the Police Box often, and they would ask friends about it. They’d talk to local business owners, anyone who may know about the box but no one had any idea where it had ended up. Then one day, their luck changed.

Whisnant and Huffman were relaxing at Huffman’s camper at the Daniel Boone Campground on NC 181 and were talking about the old Police Box, when Pee-wee, one of the campground workers, overheard the conversation.

“Pee-wee heard us talking about it and looked at a picture we had, and he said, ‘I think there’s a building back in the woods that looks like this, next to the river,’” Whisnant said. They trekked back in the woods, and there it was, sitting across the river at the north end of the campground, 11 miles from the Historic Courthouse Square in downtown Morganton. It looked a lot different than it did in the 1930s. It was dirty and rusty and the windows had been covered. The door was gone, and a lot of the interior wood was rotted and although it was damaged, Whisnant and Huffman knew they had found the Police Box.

Since then, they have been working to restore the building. City employees at the garage helped with a lot of the metal work, and several local businesses helped with painting and woodwork. They finished the restoration in July, and moved the Police Box to the History Museum Annex in November.

“Without the City employees, we couldn’t have gotten this done,” Whisnant said. “And I want to thank [City Manager] Sally Sandy for supporting the project and supporting us.”

Retired Morganton officials bring back a piece of history. Photo credit: City of Morganton
Longtime Newton council member awarded Order of the Long Leaf Pine

Newton City Council member and former mayor Tom Rowe was recently awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, one of North Carolina’s highest civilian honors.

State Rep. Mitchell Setzer presented the award to Rowe during the Newton City Council meeting on Dec. 6.

“Oftentimes we don’t take time to thank the people who have served the community, and they may think that their actions go unnoticed,” Setzer said. “Today is not going to be one of those days. Today, I have the honor of recognizing a member of the council who has served this city well. In my entire lifetime, he has always been someone who put the city first.”

Rowe has served continuously on Newton City Council since 1983. He was elected mayor of Newton in 1993 and served one term before returning to his seat as a council member, a position he holds to this day.

“Representing the people of Newton for so many years has been a great honor, and it is an honor for me to be awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine,” Rowe said. “I am very surprised and thankful.”

A retired land surveyor and volunteer firefighter, Rowe is a graduate of Newton-Conover High School and a veteran of the U.S. Army Reserves. He is active with the Newton Kiwanis Club and Newton Depot Authority. He lives in Newton with his wife, Jane, and is a member of Grace Reformed United Church of Christ.

Rowe said some of the most memorable accomplishments during his time as a council member and mayor include the annexation of the Startown community into the city of Newton and the construction of the current Newton Fire Department Headquarters. He said he is proud to have been able to support Newton’s recreation programs and economic development initiatives over the years.

“Serving a community as an elected official for more than 30 years is a rare accomplishment; serving a community with the integrity and effectiveness of Tom Rowe is almost unheard of,” Newton Mayor Anne P. Stedman said. “Tom is always ready to assist our residents and businesses. He puts in the time needed to understand the complex challenges we face, and he works every day to make Newton a better place. I can’t think of a more worthy recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, and I congratulate him on the award and his many years of dedicated service.”

Bike Racks Installed at Train Station in Kannapolis

The City of Kannapolis and the North Carolina Rail Division have teamed up to place secured bike racks at the train station in Downtown Kannapolis. The public is welcome to use the racks to store their bicycles while they are traveling on the Amtrak train. The project is not only practical but artistic as the bike racks were designed to look like the North Carolinian train which stops at the Kannapolis station.

“We love how the bike racks turned out. Hibish Ford helped us paint them professionally so they are eye
catching and a beautiful addition
to the Amtrak station and our
downtown,” said Irene Sacks, Director
of Economic and Community
Development.

The racks are conveniently located
in the parking lot of the train station.
Users simply lift the lid, roll the
bicycle into the unit, and lock the
cover with your own U-lock or
padlock. Each BikeLid unit holds up
to two full-size bicycles. For added
security, bikes can also be locked to
BikeLid’s interior steel frame, using a
U or cable lock. SC

New bikes racks find home at Kannapolis Amtrak station. Photo credit: City of Kannapolis
Economic Development Director – Cape Carteret

Cape Carteret is accepting applications for Town Administrator. Located in western Carteret County, this coastal town of 2,200 full-time residents boasts a low crime rate and excellent schools. Cape Carteret operates on a $1.63 million budget with a tax rate of 19.75. The Town Administrator must be responsive to citizens and ensure that the town government continues to deliver high quality services. He/she supervises all employees and reports to the mayor and a five-member board of commissioners. The ideal candidate will be a dedicated and driven public servant who executes the duties of his/her job to further the mission of the Town. As the chief administrative officer, duties will include, but are not limited to, those of budget officer, zoning/code enforcement, flood plain administration, CAMA coordination, and grant writing. Candidates should possess strong leadership, management, public relations and communication skills, as well as possess a solid understanding of the principles, laws, and regulations governing municipalities. Desired qualifications include a Bachelor’s degree in Public or Business Administration (or an equivalent combination of knowledge and experience). Candidates may distinguish themselves with a Master’s degree in Public Administration. The benefits package for this salaried position includes: participation in the North Carolina Local Government Retirement System; a 5% match for 401k; paid health, dental, vision, and life insurance; paid holidays, accrued vacation and accrued sick leave. Drug testing and background check will be required. Salary will be commensurate with candidate’s qualifications and experience. The position is open until filled with the initial review being held on February 1, 2016. Persons wishing to receive full consideration must submit a cover letter, a resume containing three references, and a completed Town application to: Monty R. Crump, City Manager, City of Rockingham, POP 9688. This is a newly created position with five-member board of commissioners. Salary range is $77,696 - $122,760. Application Deadline: Open until filled. Apply online: www.goldsboronc.gov.

Director of Safety & Risk Management – Rockingham

Rockingham Pop. 9688 – This is a newly created position with five-member board of commissioners. Salary range is $44,135.74 to $62,362.65 DOQ with a competitive benefits package. Pre-employment physical & drug test, EOE handicap compliant employer. Please submit resume and cover letter to: Monty R. Crump, City Manager, City of Rockingham.
PUBLIC SAFETY

Civilian Police Crime Analyst (Police Department) – Burlington – Apply By: Open until filled. Starting Salary: $41,745+ DOQ. The City of Burlington is seeking applicants for the position of Civilian Police Crime Analyst. An employee in this class is responsible for providing technical assistance to law enforcement personnel and the general public through the analysis of crime data and trends. The employee is responsible for maintaining a database of crime reports and creating graphs and maps; preparing accurate and concise reports and correspondence; conducting workload analysis; and collecting, compiling and analyzing data from a variety of sources to identify and evaluate crime series, trends and patterns. Work includes tracking and summarizing crime data to identify criminal offenders; conducting predictive, geospatial, and temporal analysis on collected data; preparing reports and charts based on this analysis. This employee also attends meetings (including evening meetings) to discuss and provide analysis and interpretation of data; conducts Uniform Crime Reporting and Incident Based Reporting training sessions for law enforcement and support personnel; prepares accurate and concise written correspondence and statistical reports; identifies crime and service call trends; conducts periodic workload analysis; and identifies safety concerns for department personnel and the public. Work is supervised by a police captain and is evaluated through direct observation and review and quality of work. A bachelor degree in criminal justice, statistics, or mathematics is desired in addition to some work experience in the area of statistical analysis and presentations involving criminal histories, patterns of crime, and other issues related to law enforcement or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Considerable knowledge and experience in police reporting systems; data entry and storage; data base management; data collection, cleaning, and reporting; and knowledge of computer-based operating systems preferred. The City of Burlington offers a comprehensive benefit package which includes health and dental insurance, paid sick and vacation leave, and retirement. To apply go to www.burlingtonnc.gov and click on the jobs link. Applications accepted until filled.

POLICE OFFICER

Requirements include: A high school diploma or GED, current BLET Certification, and valid NC driver’s license with clean driving record. State and department requirements including background check, medical/psych exams, and substance abuse testing. Hiring range $35,875-$41,256 DOQ + paid holidays. Excellent benefits package including full medical/dental, state retirement, & 6% 401(k) contribution. Applicants must complete a state application (PD-107). CPD Personal Disclosure Statement, and CJTS Form F-3 (available at www.cityofcreedmoor.org/jobs). Mail or hand-deliver to Korena Weichsel, Human Resources, Creedmoor City Hall, PO Box 765, Creedmoor, NC 27522. EOE. Open until filled. Applications accepted until filled.

OTHER

Transportation Planner – Burlington – (Transportation Department). Apply By: Open until filled. Starting Salary: $45,572+ DOQ. The City of Burlington seeks an energetic and team oriented individual for the position of Transportation Planner. An employee in this class will manage consultant contracts, grant compliance, and financial reporting for the Burlington-Graham Municipal Planning Organization (BGMPO) and LINK Transit System. This position also provides support and technical assistance to the LINK Transit System, BGMPO staff and appointed boards and is intricately involved in bicycle, pedestrian, greenway, and other related work to ensure transportation facilities are appropriately planned and implemented. Additional duties include assisting with preparation and financial planning of the Metropolitan Transportation and multimodal transportation plans, scheduling and conducting public meetings and communication programs, researching and collecting data, establishing and maintaining good working relationships with NC Department of Transportation, and BGMPO partners and staff, and special project management. Work is supervised by the Transportation Director and is evaluated through conferences, reports, presentations, project progress, and efforts. A bachelor degree in urban planning, transportation planning, engineering, or related field is required. A minimum of 3 years work experience in a land use or transportation planning/engineering agency is desired. Ability to effectively communicate with the general public, professional staff and elected and appointed officials verbally and in writing is required. The City of Burlington offers a comprehensive benefit package which includes health and dental insurance, paid sick and vacation leave, and retirement. To apply go to www.burlingtonnc.gov and click on the jobs link. Applications accepted via NEOGOV. Inquiries to Mike Nunn at mnunn@burlingtonnc.gov.

Code Enforcement Officer I, II, or III – Carrboro – Our PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT needs a Code Enforcement Officer (CEO). We are willing to develop someone with the basic qualifications, or hire a Level III CEO with extensive Q&E. Please visit our website to review the job descriptions for the entry and higher level. We offer an exceptional benefits pkg, opportunities for growth, & a friendly work environment. How to apply: Visit our website www.townofcarrboro.org and click on JOB OPPORTUNITIES at bottom of home page.
It is difficult to believe that it has been almost two years since the League, led by our then-new head of Governmental Affairs, Rose Vaughn Williams, played such a prominent role in helping to put together a high-profile legislative deal to stabilize state transportation revenue and preserve Powell Bill dollars. At the time, the League’s role and support of that legislation was noted both by legislators on the chamber floors and cited in the media.

That bill, and the League’s work on it, marked something of a turning point in the League’s relationship with the North Carolina General Assembly, even if tension continues between municipalities and the state over responsibilities, roles and authority – as it always has to one degree or another. It is still far from a perfect relationship, but that legislation and the League’s role was a big deal. And it was noted as such by League members, legislators and the media.

It was also something that took a lot of work by League staff and members, reflecting how the organization and our lobbying, grassroots and communications efforts were becoming more efficient and effective.

As I look back on that obvious success, I am reminded that a lot of blood, sweat and tears are expended by League staff and members on work that receives far less attention. Sometimes it involves highly-publicized issues, while the League’s work takes place largely in the background. Other times, that work takes place on issues that are hugely important, but do not receive a whole lot of public attention.

Just recently, we saw where the state Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit filed against the Town of Emerald Isle that threatened both municipal and public access to the state’s beaches. As the town’s insurer, the League’s Risk Management Services Department, as well as the Legal Department, played key roles – but ones that played out largely behind the scenes – in a court case that was hugely important in preserving North Carolina’s traditional public access to beaches.

Another momentous court case recently decided involved the state law that would have taken the City of Asheville’s water system and handed it over to a regional water authority. Again, the state Supreme Court sided with the city in decision that garnered headlines around the state. What did not grab headlines was the work by League General Counsel Kim Hibbard and Associate General Counsel Gregg Schwitzgebel on an amicus brief that helped spell out the importance of municipal control of assets created with the investment of municipal tax dollars.

Outside of the courtroom, League staff is involved in variety of efforts designed to create agreement among stakeholders on policy issues that affect people’s lives, even if those affected are not always aware of those efforts. Sometimes the League initiates those meetings; sometimes we act as participants. Just in the last several months, the League has been involved in meetings about police training, developing recommendations for hurricane recovery, the use of drones, small cell wireless technology, and the local government pension system, to name a few.

The League’s involvement in all of these issues reflects just how diverse the interests of North Carolina cities and towns are. It’s also another reflection of how cities and towns – whether individually or working through an organization like the League -- do an awful lot that affects people’s lives in a positive way.
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