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NC League of Municipalities
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Southern City

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WRITERS THIS ISSUE

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Back in March, as I spoke at a news conference regarding the release of the League’s important whitepaper on broadband access in North Carolina, I mentioned the importance and the obvious nature of people’s attachment to the towns and cities across the state that they love and hold dear. There is little doubt that we are living in times of tremendous change, and a big part of that change involves demographic shifts and increasing urbanization.

I think one of the things that we can be proud of at the North Carolina League of Municipalities is that we have evolved into an organization that takes seriously the challenges and opportunities created by this change. Yet, we continue to recognize the tremendous value in the diversity of our cities and towns. As I noted in March, yes, we have growing, bustling cities that have become national drivers of the economy. We also have a rich tapestry of small towns that have unique characteristics and abound with nearby natural beauty. As a mission-driven organization, we know that it is our duty to help all of these places thrive and allow the residents of each to pursue their own individual visions of what their communities should be.

Over the past year, as your President of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, I have had the distinct honor of helping this organization continue to develop into one that is mission-driven, one that is keeping pace with the pulse of change.

We have accomplished great things together.

As I mentioned at the outset of this column, the release of the League’s broadband report and efforts in promoting better Internet access across the state represented a major step forward. It was the first effort of its kind for NCLM, and one that we hope creates a template for future major policy campaigns.

During 2018, we also created a Municipal Operations Consultants program, putting four former municipal managers in the field to assist towns and cities. These folks are meeting with municipal officials to help with questions or concerns over finances, difficult audit results, and management or operational issues. By providing hands-on help in this way, we believe the League is making and can make a real difference when it comes to ensuring the vitality of municipalities.

I am also very proud of our organization’s continued efforts to better position ourselves politically. Though this can seem a two-step-forward, one-step-back process, where we are today in terms of legislative relations was never better demonstrated than during the first-ever Town & State Dinner. Being able to better connect with our legislators over a meal, and seeing how receptive they have become to working together on common purposes was heartening.

The year also saw continued changes in the Risk Management Services Division and our insurance operations, making offerings more responsive to pool member needs.

Finally, by the time that you read this, an effort to rebrand the organization with a new logo and associated messaging, to better reflect the goals of the Vision 2030 strategic visioning plan will have been well under way. And we will have unveiled an opioid crisis toolbox (see page 22) so that all of our members can emulate the best practices of those members that finding success in addressing this terrible crisis that is harming individuals, families and communities.

As I leave the post as NCLM President, I want to thank all of my fellow member of the Board of Directors and all the other elected
Amazon Chooses Garner for New Facility

In each edition, Southern City will regularly feature one of the local stories uploaded by member municipalities to HereWeGrowNC.org as a part of the League's campaign promoting investments by cities and towns that aid economic growth. To learn how your local story can be featured, go to HereWeGrowNC.org.

Town of Garner officials are hailing Amazon’s selection of the Garner Technology Center as the location for a new 2.6-million-square-foot, state-of-the-art distribution center. The Seattle-based e-commerce company will invest approximately $200 million in the site on Jones Sausage Road, formerly the location of the ConAgra plant where a deadly explosion occurred in June 2009. The investment will create an estimated 1,500 jobs, making the distribution center Garner’s largest employer.

Amazon hopes to open the center by fall 2019. The e-retailer’s investment in Garner will be approximately four times the amount of peak investment by ConAgra at the site, while the number of employees at the facility will be several hundred more than peak employment at the ConAgra plant.

“This is a historic day for Garner. Today will be remembered as the day that Garner entered a new era of prosperity and opportunity,” Mayor Ronnie Williams said at the Aug. 10 news conference announcing the e-retailer’s decision. “Amazon’s selection of this site is an important milestone for our town as we continue to move forward after the ConAgra tragedy.”

Town Manager Rodney Dickerson noted that the new investment at the site will help the Town move closer toward a 50-50 balance of commercial and residential tax base. “As a result of this major new investment in our community, our citizens will have to shoulder less of the tax burden in the years ahead,” Dickerson said.

“I commend the work of the Town Council and staff in enhancing the Town’s long-term fiscal stability.”

The Town Council on July 2 unanimously approved a special-use permit request by Dallas-based Hillwood Development Company to develop nearly 88 acres of the approximately 98-acre tract with a four-story building that will have a footprint of 680,000 square feet. The nonprofit Garner Economic Development Corporation (GEDC)—established after ConAgra donated the site to the Town to take ownership of the property and oversee its redevelopment—closed on the sale of 88 acres of the property to Hillwood on Aug. 8. “This project meets the goals the GEDC set out to accomplish,” GEDC board chair Bruce Andrews said. “Sale of the property will allow us to continue to be an instrumental force in Garner’s future economic development efforts.”

Hillwood will partner with the Town and NCDOT to make critical road improvements along Jones Sausage Road and also the Jones Sausage/Garner

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Mayor Pro Tem Lazzara Has Predisposition for Bringing People, Ideas Together

By Ben Brown, NCLM Advocacy Communication Associate

When a young U.S. Marine named Michael Lazzara settled into his uniform at Camp Lejeune in the early 1980s, he wasn’t getting the friendliest vibe from the surrounding city of Jacksonville. Interaction was cold. Services, like cab rides, came at gouged-up rates. For Marines, anyway.

“Things weren’t right between the civilian community and the military community,” the Chicago native said. In his four-year stationing at Lejeune, Lazzara joined a number of cold-weather deployments (“your Norways and your Koreas”) only to come home to what seemed like a lack of appreciation.

“I always knew this could be a better town,” he said. “But I didn’t know how I would play a part in that.”

Lazzara told his story to Southern City recently in a conference room at Jacksonville City Hall, where staffers know him as Mayor Pro Tem Lazzara and, for the past year, as president of the North Carolina League of Municipalities. Coming to latter 2018, his service as president is drawing to a close, but in both roles he’s kept the concepts of mutual respect and cooperation at the front of his mind. He knows there’s no good future in division and adversity.

In other words, his service with the League has focused heavily on relationship-building among local and legislative officials. Starting much earlier, this once-a-Marine-always-a-Marine applied the same mentality to help make Jacksonville a city where...
everyone -- military and civilian alike -- felt welcomed and supported.

But there’s more backstory.

While Lazzara could’ve chosen anywhere to live after his service was up at Camp Lejeune, he had already met his future wife and decided to make Jacksonville his permanent home. He hadn’t put any real thought into elected office; just a good, private-sector career, family and community involvement.

By that time, the cold vibe he experienced as a Marine was changing -- sadly with no small credit to a global tragedy 6,000 miles away that rippled heavily through the Onslow County town.

On Oct. 23, 1983, a suicide bombing on buildings housing peacekeepers in Beirut, Lebanon, killed 241 U.S. service members, a large number of them Jacksonville-based Marines. “The town really got together and understood the impact of losing neighbors, coaches, Sunday school teachers. They really started to come together,” Lazzara said, noting a local tree planting for each peacekeeper killed in the bombing, and in 1986 the dedication of the Beirut Memorial that has been ceremoniously observed each year since.

“So, essentially, that was the opening salvo of our community,” said Lazzara.

The memorial’s dedication came the same year he finished his service with the Marines. As a private citizen, the ensuing years would see him as a successful businessman, starting with automobile sales and later as the owner of several pizzerias, earning him a number of recognitions along the way. He’d joined the local chamber of commerce early on and got heavily involved. He climbed its ranks, joining its military affairs committee.
to maintain good relations with the Marine base, enlistees and their families. He eventually became the committee's chairman, and later the chairman of the chamber's board overall.

“I always had a flavor for -- I didn’t know what the term meant back then, but -- public service,” he said. “I was always a volunteer of some sort.”
(He even remembered leading a fundraiser for UNICEF while in grammar school.)

At the chamber, he saw the rollout of a project after Operation Desert Storm that worked to support military families.

“We knew that we had to play a part in retaining family members here and making sure that they were comfortable and all their needs were met while their loved ones were away serving our country.”

Per the effects of that outreach, which led to better services at businesses and discounts for military spouses and children, Jacksonville was named an All-American City in 1992.

“That gouging mentality has been gone for a long time,” he said, referring to that past tension between the military and civilian-run businesses. “We’ve become one as a community.”

And so as a unifier, a civic honor awardee and a businessperson of the year, Lazzara became known in the community, both military and civilian.

In 2003, he got the inevitable call.

“What led to public office was a friend called and said, ‘You’d be great for local government. We need someone,’” Lazzara said.

He didn't flee from the suggestion. “I've been very blessed. I’ve always worked hard at everything I did. I'm just a believer that giving back is essential. If you're blessed, you have to give back,” he explained.

The bad news was that the candidate filing period for city council had already closed.
“So I had to do a write-in candidacy,” he said. “I think I got like 1,480 votes as a write-in, which was unheard of.”

It wasn’t enough to win, but it was enough to fuel his filing the next time around, which saw him victorious.

He continues his focus on unity with attention to detail, listening to what Jacksonville’s various communities need to feel happy and cared for at home, whether its parks for families to enjoy, festivals, bike lanes and other connectivity, or well-maintained infrastructure. Of course, the Marine base now has partnerships with the community as well.

“We handle all their signal repairs now. We work on water resource issues together. Things in the past that just never took place,” Lazzara said. “And that’s a result of relationships and understanding what our relationships are in service to the people that we all serve, which is the young military families, and then of course our community. If you don’t have that communication -- that constant dialogue and communication -- then it’s them-and-us. And that doesn’t work.”

Above: Lazzara calls community involvement essential. “If you’re blessed, you have to give back,” he says.

Left: The Beirut Memorial in Jacksonville is ceremoniously observed each year.

Photo credit: City of Jacksonville
As president of the League this year, Lazzara in May hosted one of the best gatherings in the organization’s memory with the Town & State Dinner, bringing municipal officials and state legislators together to break bread, discuss common challenges and strengthen bonds that make working together possible.

“We have more in common than not, and we have to be able to communicate that... Because I believe, at the end of the day, that’s what makes you effective,” he said. “You don’t have to agree on everything, but to be able to sit down and talk and work on issues together ... always ends up in the best results.”

Asked what he’s learned or taken away from his League presidency, he discussed his “rewarding” interactions with fellow municipal officials and with League staffers. “We’ve been able to do so many things together.”

He listed an array of League services that go beyond legislative advocacy, such as legal advice, insurance, municipal operations and financial consulting, and statistics and analysis, which he said can go a long way for cities and towns that aren’t able to access such information with in-house resources.

“That’s taught me a lot over this year,” Lazzara said. “And it’s sort of solidifies the fact that if you’re fortunate, you need to help somebody that’s not as fortunate.”

Work continues back home, where he and fellow officials are thinking of future growth and preservation of that united character. Recreation opportunities and connectivity remain on the shortlist, thinking on what will make life as good as possible for the next generation while still as enjoyable for the older generation, which includes retired senior officials from Camp Lejeune.

“I think that says a lot about our community” that they decided to stay, he said.

Lazzara hopes Jacksonville’s younger residents pick up on the effects of cross-sector work. The city has a youth council made up of high schoolers who are, it turns out, showing local leaders an impressive grasp of municipal governance.

“They represent the youth in our community... We believe those are our future leaders, and so we take a lot of pride in that,” said Lazzara. “Such great young men and women... I’m in awe. They’re just so smart and talented, and so we hope to develop these young leaders for our replacements.”

Asked how he’s able to balance his involvement in government with his family and the demands of his private businesses (still owning pizzerias in addition to a sign fabrication business), he wasn’t clear on it, himself.

“I just feel like if you’re going to do something, you need to do it,” Lazzara said. “Be involved and do the best you can.”  

SC
CityVision 2018

Crafting A Future in Hickory

By Ben Brown, NCLM Advocacy Communication Associate

The old Hollar Hosiery mill in Hickory has received new life in the private sector following a public-private partnership, a great example of repurposing the city’s legacy buildings.

Due to Hurricane Florence, CityVision 2018 was postponed. As of press time, the League was exploring options to reschedule.

When the City of Hickory rebranded itself a few years ago with the message, “Life. Well Crafted.” it was all a focus on history and possibility, catching the city’s rich heritage in industries like fine furniture-making with the broader idea of building something beautiful and enduring, together.

“Hickory’s past and future prospects have drawn to this place a people with an eye for detail and a hand for hard work, a passion for making something of themselves and of the future,” says a synopsis from the city’s government.

That’s a motivator. And it fits perfectly with the League’s goal for a great coming-together of municipalities in Hickory, Sept. 19-21, for CityVision, the League’s annual conference.

“Hickory sets the right tone,” said League Executive Director Paul Meyer. “Municipalities, united as the League, are working together to take on challenges and grow their economies for a best North Carolina collectively, and no other event captures that like CityVision.”

Full days of programming this year spotlight technology in service delivery for cities and towns of any size, efforts to expand broadband access, economic development, infrastructure challenges, grants and other helpful resources. Concurrent sessions focused on “Municipalities of Tomorrow,” with speakers Matt Thornhill and John Martin of the Institute of Tomorrow, looking at topics like the power of regional partnerships. “By working together, small, medium and large municipalities can complement each other’s offerings and give residents endless amenities and services,” says the session’s description.

Dan Gerlach of the Golden Leaf Foundation was set to discuss funding streams and how to make grant proposals shine. Brian C. Hooker of Fort Mac LRA in Atlanta is on the agenda to discuss how an unoccupied former Army base has transitioned to a planned mixed-use development with retail and market-rate housing – all made possible by broadband.

Addressing another standout challenge for our communities, North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein was among those to present on the opioid crisis, resources available to municipalities, and how his office is hard at work to bring relief.
In perhaps the most important session of the conference, municipal leaders will determine key takeaways to put into specific plans of action for their cities and towns. CityVision’s programmers designed the event specifically for practical use.

The Hickory Metro Convention Center will be the center of action this year. Dana Kaminske, the city’s communications and marketing manager, said much awaits conference-goers.

“CityVision attendees will experience and learn about Hickory’s rich traditions, along with the new enhancements that are coming soon to Hickory,” said Kaminske. Beyond the Convention Center programming, she listed mobile tours, music and more.

“The city is proud to present an exciting Rock the Block Host City event that will showcase Downtown Hickory, The Sails on the Square, the Hickory Downtown Development Association’s Art Crawl event, as well as fabulous and unique retail establishments,” Kaminske said.

The League’s selection of Hickory for CityVision caught the local newspaper’s attention in early August. “The City of Hickory is proud to be the host city for such a high caliber conference,” City Manager Warren Wood told the Hickory Daily Record. “With all of the exciting projects currently underway in Hickory, we can’t wait to showcase
our vibrant community and all it has to offer to both residents and visitors.”

These projects are on the map, too. Here We Grow, a statewide website from the League and WRAL TechWire highlighting local economic development stories penned directly by municipalities, pushed a pin recently in Hickory’s efforts to bring old, vacated buildings of the craftsmanship industry back to life.

“Although weathered and aged, even with the gloom that comes with an abandoned building, there’s pride and hometown spirit felt by remembering the hard work that made Hickory a booming manufacturing town,” the piece begins. It points out that local sites like the former Piedmont Wagon, Moretz Mill, Simmons Hosiery, Hollar Hosiery, and Lyerly Mill have transformed under public-private partnerships that revitalized them and put them to new private business use, with millions of dollars invested, while preserving their historic character.

“It’s binding the past to the future, crafting a new Hickory with new industry, while acknowledging the roots from which Hickory has grown,” the city explained on Here We Grow.

Kaminske said CityVision’s mobile tours would highlight some of these renovations.

“The CityVision Conference will give Hickory the opportunity to show municipal leaders from all across the state just what it means to enjoy Life. Well Crafted. in Hickory,” she said. SC
Two years ago, League members emerged from the biennial Advocacy Goals Conference with a goal that had specifically resulted from a court ruling regarding one municipality which threatened operations for many.

The Quality Built Homes Inc v. Town of Carthage ruling in the summer of 2016 imperiled the water and sewer impact fees charged by numerous municipalities all around the state as law firms sought clients to bring similar lawsuits.

The League and its members certainly had a case to make, and made it, that had the ruling dismantled those fees statewide, a long-term result would have been that residential growth would have been slowed as existing local taxpayers and utility ratepayers balked at picking up the price of new development.

NIMBYism would have become more in vogue in many communities, putting more pressure on local elected officials to respond to those concerns.

Without the fees paid by developers to support the required infrastructure needed to serve those developments, one of the long-term losers would have been the very developers bringing the lawsuits.

Nonetheless, emerging from the Advocacy Goals Conference with a clear statement that North Carolina cities and towns were demanding clear authority to “assess the level of fees and charges necessary for continued growth and economic development in the future” was incredibly important to what was to follow.

In the weeks and months after the conference and after the North Carolina General Assembly reconvened, state lawmakers ultimately passed legislation on virtual unanimous votes that created specific authorization for uniform development water and sewer impact fees moving forward.

The clear, unequivocal statement from League members on the issue had an effect.

The reason? Increasingly state legislators recognize that the advocacy goals coming from the League are representative of the views of the entirety of North Carolina cities and towns, big, small, rural, urban, and everything in between. And that includes the cities and towns in their districts.

It’s that representation and involvement from member municipalities across the state that gives those legislative priorities their heft, improving the League’s political influence and positioning in the state capital. A process that involved only a handful of cities and towns, or a non-representative cross-section, would not carry the same weight.

And, of course, that is why each member’s involvement in the goal-setting process is so important.

The next Advocacy Goals Conference is just around the corner, set for November 29 in Raleigh. That conference is where all League members will have the opportunity to vote on the legislative and regulatory goals that will then be pursued over the next two years.

It comes after a summer and fall in which League staff solicited proposed goals from member cities and towns, and then policy committees met to mull over, combine, refine and whittle those ideas down to a manageable number to present to the League’s Board of Directors and general membership.

The League is and strives to be a member-driven organization, and no aspect of member participation is more important that setting the advocacy goals that will direct staff and member advocacy activities in 2019 and 2020.
This conference is where League members discuss and vote on which issues municipalities will prioritize when working with the NC General Assembly and state government policy makers. Register to attend so you can:

- Represent your municipality’s positions and ideas
- Cast your municipality’s vote for League members’ 2019-2020 regulatory and legislative goals
- Hear from NC Governor Roy Cooper (invited) & NC Treasurer Dale Folwell

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REGISTRATION OPENS IN OCTOBER
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municipal-advocacy-goals
With so much variety in modern communications and outreach tools, it’s a new era of exploration and experimentation in government. What’s the most effective way to engage our citizenry and foster lasting involvement?

In Gastonia, City Manager Michael Peoples is hard-pressed to find anything better than an open door, citing the connections created when residents arrive for the municipal citizens academy.

“It is unmatched from any other interaction that we have, really, with citizens in their level of excitement,” Peoples said.

Citizens academies have taken shape in cities and counties around the country with similar effects. Residents might show up a little skeptical, but they so often leave with unexpected enthusiasm for the inner-workings of their city or town, organizers say. In a 2016 op-ed that appeared in Next City, Mayor Scott Fadness of Fishers, Ind., cited his local citizens academies first on a list of ways to amp up community engagement.

“An ongoing program like this helps citizens understand the big picture and how they can best contribute; when they do, they are more invested in the outcome,” Fadness wrote. “Participants ride along with police officers and partake in firefighter training. The ‘classes’ even develop alumni groups, which have raised money for bulletproof K9 vests and served as support units for large fire events.”

The Gastonia Municipal Citizens Academy, which brings participants together twice each month for a six-month period, just graduated its second class -- and yes, there’s already an alumni group there as well.

For Gastonia, it began with a city council discussion a couple years ago on ways the city could better tell its story. “The purpose of the Academy is to provide a forum where participants develop a basic understanding of municipal government,” Director of Community Services Vincent Wong.

The Gastonia Municipal Citizens Academy gets residents up-close and hands-on with city services, from budgeting to fire fighting. Photo credit: City of Gastonia
And it goes deep, resident Bill Marino confirmed.

"Being exposed to it like that, I was fascinated," he said. "And I think a lot of people should do it, actually... There were things that I didn’t know and it gave me an education of how it works."

Both Marino and Pearson named the fire and police departments among highlights, in getting a better understanding of their gear, training, procedures and character.

"They actually did a 1,300-square-foot house to show you how they tackle a fire," Marino said of the local firefighters. "Now, that was okay. But then when they got into a propane fire -- I had never seen a propane fire, and they set off a large one. .... How they tackled this. Unbelievable."

But even the budget class delivered.

"Even the ones that sounded boring, like budget planning, I was like, 'Oh my gosh, who knew they do all this to plan a budget? ... Everything was just so eye-opening.'"

Peoples said the two academies Gastonia has done so far drew a promising cross-section of residents: different walks of life, ages and professional skills. While this city has 75,000 residents, Peoples says any kind of locality can put one together that fits its own context.

"Involve your elected officials," he emphasized when asked for advice.

"An ongoing program like this helps citizens understand the big picture and how they can best contribute; when they do, they are more invested in the outcome."

Scott Fadness, Mayor, Fishers, IN

explained in a recent city hall dispatch seeking new enrollees. But participants describe it with total surprise.

"After every class, I came back home and was like, 'Oh my goodness, that was my favorite one,' and then the next week I’ll be like, 'Oh my goodness, that was my favorite one,'" said Amy Pearson, a graduate of the most recent academy class.

It’s not that Pearson is easily impressed. She said she approached it expecting the dull tone of her high school civics class, with sleepy lectures and uninspiring charts and graphs.

"But once you got into it, it was completely and totally different than that," she said, before explaining the up-close time it afforded her with the city’s various departments, employees, lesser-known services and unusual tools of the trade. "It was interactive and fun and you learn so much stuff."

continued on page 43
In a lot of lines of work, making a mistake is usually no big deal; you realize the error, correct it, maybe offer up an apology if it’s warranted, and move on. The key to making mistakes, according to countless leaders, bosses, teachers and parents out in the world, is to learn from them and do your best to not repeat them.

But, thinking about the decisions that municipal employees make every day, it is a real possibility that a mistake can result in a big loss, financial or worse. The potential for big mistakes can be found every day – directing traffic around a water main break, fixing a downed power line, or responding to a domestic violence emergency call.

The League’s Risk Management Services staff works to help members keep these responses as routine as possible – and reduce the chances of mistakes happening -- through education, training and prevention. It’s not just about mitigating claims. More importantly, it can be about saving lives and protecting the public.

That’s particularly true for law enforcement officers and the daily work that they do.

The newest risk management safety training opportunity for League members is through its recently-developed Response-to-Resistance Simulator for law enforcement agencies. “The simulator came at the League’s Police Chiefs Advisory Committee’s recommendation and is based on trending claims and the gaps in training member law enforcement agencies face,” explained Bryan Leaird, the League’s Interim Associate Executive Director of Risk Management Services. “The departments have said they just don’t have a resource for de-escalation training. It’s a skillset that is needed.”

Focusing on decision-making as a part of de-escalation is a main component of the Response-to-Resistance Simulator and the training and policy review that accompanies it. “Where we see failure is in the decision-making,” said Tom Anderson, the League’s Public Safety Risk Management Consultant, who will be taking the simulator into the field and training law enforcement agencies across North Carolina.

So how does the simulator and training process work? The simulator’s setup involves a large screen, projector, and a computer programmed with more than 800 scenarios an officer might encounter in the field, such as an active shooter or domestic disturbance.

“Officers have to communicate effectively in order for the simulation to end successfully; I can adjust the scenario on the computer based on how the officer responds. The focus is on de-escalation,” explained Anderson. The scenarios can also be tailored to what a specific agency may encounter frequently or need additional training on.
Anderson brings small groups of officers together for the trainings, and each officer from the group is taken through a 20 to 35-minute simulation where they have access to a range of realistic weapons – firearm, taser or pepper spray – that discharge a laser at the screen if used. The focus, however, isn't on what type of weapon is present. Instead, it is about proper decision-making and selection of the most reasonable force option, if any. As Anderson warns, “it doesn’t matter what the trigger is attached to. Once you pull the trigger, life potentially changes for everyone involved.”

The small group dynamic not only allows officers to witness multiple scenarios and gain valuable peer review, but also serves to place the responding officer in a situation where his or her colleagues are witnessing and evaluating reactions, which serves to mimic some of the elevated stress levels that actual encounters produce.

The officer goes through the simulation adjusting as the scenario develops, and afterwards, explains his or her thought process, addresses any mistakes made, and is given the opportunity to try again. If an officer doesn’t effectively communicate and de-escalate the situation, the simulation may end poorly. Likewise, if decision-making is sound, Anderson adjusts the scenario to have a positive outcome. Either way, the simulation training is where mistakes can be made without real-life effects.

Because effective training and policy development affects law enforcement response, agencies that go through the Response-to-Resistance Simulator start submitting their training policies and procedures that must include a reflection of current North Carolina and federal case law; if the current policy is not up-to-date, Anderson works with the agency to incorporate any necessary updates.

Addressing policy to make sure it is providing proper direction and best practices relative to the law is imperative, according to Anderson. “It doesn’t matter the size of the agency; the Constitution and best practices are one-size-fits-all.”

The Response-to-Resistance Simulator training is available at no charge to municipal law enforcement agencies that participate in the League’s Property and Casualty Trust. For more information, contact Bryan Leaird at bleaird@nclem.org or Tom Anderson at tanderson@nclem.org.

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Focusing on decision-making as a part of de-escalation is a main component of the Response-to-Resistance Simulator and the training and policy review that accompanies it.

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NC League of Municipalities
Durham, Winston-Salem Selected for NLC Hunger-Fighting Effort

The National League of Cities has selected the cities of Durham and Winston-Salem as two of six cities nationally for the next round of its CHAMPS initiative designed to combat hunger. Durham will receive a grant of $125,000 and Winston-Salem will receive a grant of $115,500, as well as 18 months of technical assistance.

Hunger continues to be a daunting challenge for many families in the United States. Nationally, one in six children lived in a household struggling to put food on the table in 2016. Some cities had much higher rates.

To help cities address this ongoing challenge, the National League of Cities (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education and Families has partnered with the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) to launch CHAMPS 2018. This two-year initiative is supported by the Walmart Foundation, and the cities of Durham and Winston-Salem participated in the CHAMPS Cities Combating Hunger Leadership Academy in late May.

The two North Carolina cities were among six nationally chosen for the grants. The other four were Allentown, Pa.; Jackson, Miss.; Little Rock, Ark.; and Miami Gardens, Fla.

As part of a competitive selection process, the cities’ applications demonstrated a commitment by their mayors to lead a city-wide anti-hunger campaign coupled with a willingness to strengthen and expand programs that bring federal nutrition dollars into cities, such as the Afterschool and Summer Meal Programs.

“We are thrilled to have this grant and we will be using it to increase the capacity to serve meals through Durham Public Schools, the Durham County Department of Social Services, and community partners,” Mayor Steve Schewel said. “Our goal is to triple the number of children and families served after school and in the summer from five thousand to fifteen thousand per day over the next four years.”

In Durham, the grant will expand local summer and after-school meal sites, and will serve an additional 14,850 meals to students.

Peter Skillern, executive director at Durham's Reinvestment Partners, worked with others at the nonprofit to write the grant application at Schewel’s request. Now he says he’s excited to see how the grant will create a surplus of resources for existing food insecurity programs.

“We hope the grant will help Durham Food Services serve more clients, or rather, more students,” Skillern told Triangle-based publication Indy Week. “Our agency is deeply involved in supporting our local food system.”

Clifford M. Johnson, executive director of NLC’s Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, says that city leaders play an important role in

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In September, the League unveiled its Opioid Solutions Toolbox, the culmination of months of work that included the guidance of NCLM President Michael Lazzara, input from Attorney General Josh Stein’s office, and the help of League member law enforcement agencies from around the state.

The toolbox, which can be found on the League’s website at www.nclm.org/opioidssolutions, includes real-world advice from police chiefs who are on the ground fighting the opioid epidemic and have implemented programs that are making a difference. That advice comes from video episodes compiled by the League’s Ben Brown. There are also web links to numerous information resources provided by the Attorney General’s office, as well as other links showcasing programs and best-practices to address the problem. An episode of the League’s podcast, Municipal Equation, focusing on the opioid crisis also appears on the toolbox page.

“By highlighting best practices that are already addressing opioid abuse head-on, we hope that you will find a solution that can work for you,” Lazzara said in an introduction to the resource page. “Our law enforcement leaders tell us we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. We can, though, find better ways to promote prevention, enhance enforcement and improve treatment.”

From 1999 to 2016, more than 12,000 North Carolinians died from opioid-related overdoses, and in 2010, drug poisonings surpassed motor vehicle death rates for the first time since those statistics began being kept in 1968, according to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. In 2016, nearly five North Carolinians per day died of unintentional drug overdoses. Although North Carolina was not among the states that have seen the highest incidences of drug overdose deaths, it has been among those seeing the largest increases in those deaths in 2015 and 2016, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
“Yeah, it touches everybody. There’s no one socioeconomic group that it gets, or race – it doesn’t matter. Clergy, nurses. It gets everybody.”

Tom Bashore
Nashville Police Chief

In creating the video episodes featured on the page, Brown credited Tom Anderson, NCLM’s Public Safety Risk Management Consultant, for helping facilitate and direct the interviews. Police chiefs Bill Hollingsed Waynesville and Tom Bashore of Nashville provide advice after implementing some of the state’s more successful programs to combat opioid abuse.

“We’ve got to think outside the box. We’ve got to do something different. We’ve got to get outside our comfort zones. I’ve been a police officer for a long time. This (diversion program for addicts) initially was a concept that was outside of my comfort zone. But I am optimistic about doing something different,” Hollingsed said.

He noted that this is an addiction crisis that is affecting young and old alike, and that many people began their addiction because of a legitimate medical need. Hollingsed said success is about breaking down silos between the law enforcement and medical communities.

Bashore reiterated the point of how opioid abuse has affected a wide cross-section of people.

“Yeah, it touches everybody. There’s no one socioeconomic group that it gets, or race -- it doesn’t matter. Clergy, nurses. It gets everybody,” he said.

The League hopes that this Opioid Solutions Toolbox will help towns and cities in need of solutions to address this crisis begin a conversation regarding what a program could look like in their community. The video segments and the linked information resources recognize that no one solution will work in every community.

It does attempt, though, to help answer some tough questions. How does a city start the conversation toward an opioid relief or diversion program? How does such a program actually work? Who pays for it? How do you get addicts to trust the program? What are the outcomes for the towns that have tried it?

The League also anticipates the resource page changing over time to add or adapt the information available to better reflect the latest expert advice on addressing opioid abuse. If you have any information you would like to share, feel free to contact Scott Mooneyham, NCLM Director of Public Affairs, at smooneyham@nclm.org. 

Far left: A used hypodermic needle clearly visible in a North Carolina grocery store parking lot island.
Left: Waynesville Police Chief Bill Hollingsed.
Lower left: Nashville Police Chief Tom Bashore.
Photo credits: Ben Brown
The NC League of Municipalities’ Health Benefits Trust is excited to welcome 42 new employer group members for the 2018-19 plan year!

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The law generally presumes that elected officials, who take an oath of office at the beginning of their terms, approach their numerous duties acting in good faith. Accordingly, it is further presumed that elected officials will be allowed to complete their respective terms of office, absent some form of misconduct and removal for cause. Given those presumptions, what process allows the removal of an elected official for misconduct?

If the official is convicted of a felony and has not had his or her citizenship rights restored, the individual no longer qualifies for office under the state constitution and a vacancy may be declared, but such a situation is likely to be rare. Some states allow for citizen-initiated recall elections, but in North Carolina the general law does not provide for them. (There are only two dozen or so municipalities that have been authorized to conduct recall elections by local act of the General Assembly.)

In the absence of a felony conviction, or authority to hold a local recall election, a few local jurisdictions have turned to amotion proceedings. The term “amotion” refers to a common law procedure for removing elected officials that actually has its origins in corporate law. (Recall that cities, towns, and villages fall under the umbrella of municipal corporations.) English common law reflects that the power was first exercised by municipal corporations in the middle of the 18th century, and the first North Carolina Supreme Court opinion dates to 1883. The cases recognize an inherent power of boards to remove their members for just cause.

Most of the appellate cases date back to the early 20th century. For many decades, amotion lay unused, and legal experts were unsure whether it remained a valid option in modern times. However, it has seen something of a rebirth in recent years, with several city and county governing bodies initiating amotion proceedings. While a modern amotion case has not yet reached the higher courts for review, in 2013 a trial court recognized it as a viable action, provided that due process is properly afforded and the decision is supported by competent evidence and rendered by an impartial decision-maker.

Amotion is a very serious matter and should be reserved for the most extreme cases. In a sense, it stands in direct contravention of the ballot box – that is, the will of a majority of voters at a particular moment in time. Accordingly, it is a procedure to be treated with the utmost care. Amotion is a quasi-judicial procedure, utilized by the council from which the member is sought to be removed. That means the amotion proceeding requires notice and an opportunity to be heard. There must be appropriate procedural safeguards including settled rules for the hearing that address matters such as opening and closing statements, the right to counsel, the presentation of both evidence and testimony, and applicable time limits. The council’s ultimate findings and conclusions for an order of removal must be supported by sufficient objective evidence of just cause for removal, related to the duties of the office, to withstand review on appeal. A local governing body considering amotion proceedings to remove one of its members should consult closely with its attorney.

It is also important to note that amotion can only be initiated by the body itself and not by disgruntled citizens. If an action for an amotion proceeding were filed by a citizen, the court would find that the plaintiff-citizen is not an elected member of the board from which the official is...
When Sen. Jay Chaudhuri of Raleigh won appointment, and election shortly after, to the General Assembly in 2016, he gave his chamber new perspective as North Carolina’s first Indian-American in the role. And whether it’s his background as the son of civically active first-generation Indian immigrants, or as a key player last year in a wide collaboration of government and private entities to recruit a major employer – Infosys, an India-based firm that announced 2,000 high-paying jobs in his district – Senator Chaudhuri knows diversity and cooperation is so often the missing link for success.

He called the Infosys recruitment "a really insightful process in understanding how state government and local government, and the local chamber and the community college – Wake Tech in this instance – and North Carolina State University all came together to land one of the largest economic development job announcements this decade."

That level of collaboration is often missed in the everyday dialogue, the senator said, adding being a direct witness to it amazed him and made him "truly reflect and appreciate what we have here in Wake County – the ability of folks to set aside their egos, or advancing the importance of their respective organizations, to come together to recruit a company."

You weren’t totally green to the government world, though, being involved with the state from a staff standpoint. What prompted your interest in elected office?

I was prompted really to run for the state Senate because in many ways it was a natural extension of my public service work that I had carried out at the highest levels of all three branches of government beforehand. And that began first with serving as a law clerk...
to now-Chief Judge Linda McGee at the North Carolina Court of Appeals, and then included a very brief stint as legislative counsel to then-state senator Roy Cooper, when he was majority leader here at the General Assembly, and then proceeded to be almost a decade and a half serving as a senior counsel to then attorney general Roy Cooper and former state treasurer Janet Cowell. So the natural extension of public service certainly was one reason to run for public office. The greater desire was just to continue to give back to the state of North Carolina, because my parents are immigrants to this country, and they made the decision relatively early in their lives when they emigrated to this country to move to North Carolina back in 1972. And I’ve always found it curious, and I think I know why, that part of the reason that they have this deep love for this state as first-generation Americans is the welcoming nature of this state, and its people and to what I attribute to progressive leadership. The second reason, more from a personal level, is I had read a column by David Brooks in the New York Times. He has this column called “Life Reports,” where he asks his readers who are over 70 to submit comments and recommendations to younger people about what they would do if they could live their life over differently. And the number-one response that came back from his readership was to take a risk earlier in life. Obviously running for office is a huge risk. One, there’s no financial upside to it. Two, you obviously have to put yourself under public scrutiny. I made the decision that I was at a good point in my life to take this risk and to run for office.

Has anything surprised you since your initial appointment to the legislature? What came as new to you?

I’ve experienced a lot of ups and downs serving in the Senate. The upside of serving in the North Carolina Senate is really the honor and privilege of serving almost 200,000 people in my district, in Wake County. And the interactions I have with my constituency, the interactions that I have with the businesses in this district, whether its high-tech businesses like SAS or being able to recruit a company like Infosys to the district, or working with small business owners on challenges they have, it’s really kind of a reminder of how great the district is and what an honor and a privilege it is to represent them. The downside, I think, certainly is serving in the superminority and the inability to get things done focused on the larger issues challenging our state. That said, I think a lot of the general public, I don’t think they have a sense of the relationships that exist across the aisle with other members. There are a number of Republican senators that I would count as personal friends. But once we get on the Senate floor, the probability is very high that we’re not going to agree on the bigger issues. On the small issues .... we tend to come together.

How about communication with leaders at other levels of government? What do you and your municipalities talk about?

The three municipalities I represent right now -- Raleigh, Cary and Morrisville -- are very diligent in, one, setting a legislative agenda, and updating their respective legislative delegation on what is important for them to carry out going into the legislative session. And then throughout the session there’s ongoing communications either by the members of those town or city councils or by the lobbyists that represent them. There’s quite a bit of interaction that takes places with members of those three cities. And oftentimes we find ourselves at the same events. And so I think having that open door and being able to be collaborative to the degree that we can do so here in the General Assembly is important. When I was sworn in for my first two-year term, I intentionally had my swearing in ceremony at the Town of Morrisville.

“Diversity of thought is critically important when you’re making decisions…. In many ways, I think that’s reflective of the challenges we have here in the General Assembly”

Sen. Jay Chaudhuri
The Republican mayor then, Mark Stohlman, was the head of the city. And symbolically it was important to me that so much of the way the Town of Morrisville functions -- where you have Democrats, Republicans and independents working together -- is in many ways a model that we should be trying to emulate here in the North Carolina General Assembly.... I think in so many ways, what we see in municipalities, where you have members of town councils coming together regardless of party ideology working together, is a great goal for us to strive for here.

**Let’s talk more about the dynamics of your background, going back to your parents.....**

They originally emigrated (from India) to St. Louis, Missouri, back in 1965, and spent a brief period of time in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where I was born, and then a brief period of time in Boston, Massachusetts. But they have spent the bulk of their time here. In 1972, they moved to Fayetteville.

**Looking at the concentration of the Asian-American population in and around Morrisville, and looking at the higher number of Indian-American elected officials in North Carolina today, do you see an energy in that group when it comes to civic presence?**

I do. I think following along the lines of immigrant groups, you have first-generation immigrants such as my parents who focus on their economic security, and then you have second generation immigrants that now focus on engaging in the political and civic aspects of their communities. And so we now have two Indian Americans that serve on the Morrisville Town Council.....And then we have an Indian-American city council member that sits in Charlotte. And then we also have an Indian-American city council member that serves in Asheville. And I think what is interesting is, if you look at our city council representatives -- and in fact you have two members of the city council that are first-generation Indian-Americans that have actually immigrated from India now have come here and have decided to run for office, successfully, and now serve at the municipal level.

What about your parents’ background influenced your perspective on what it is to be involved in America?

Growing up in Fayetteville, for me -- both my parents were very active with the larger community in Fayetteville. They were very involved in giving back to their communities and both involved with nonprofits ... and having my parents serve as role models in the active life that they lived, not only in their professional careers but also recognizing that it’s important to give back to the larger community really instilled my sense of public service. I remember my father wrote letters to soldiers that were serving in Iraq during the first Gulf War. That was something that the community members of the Cumberland County community really rallied around and tried to figure out different ways that they could support their troops, back in 1991. My father is a physician; he began his service serving

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in the VA hospital there in Fayetteville, and so the interactions that he has had with veterans is always a reminder of the sacrifice that veterans make for our community. But I think listening to those stories growing up is also a reminder of the sacrifices that veterans have made for our country too.

**What about your children? Any aspirations for public office?**

(Laughter) My daughter definitely has a great interest in politics. She’s 11 years old. I think that’s good and bad, but I certainly encourage her civic interest and I think it’s great to be able to see a young girl who has an interest in politics in today’s age. My younger son, who is 7, seems to be well versed in politics. I’m not sure politics is in his blood. He seems more interested in the arts. One of the things that you hear, and I certainly learned in my time serving with then-attorney general Roy Cooper, is politics, in order to be successful for the elected official and the family, you try to make it as much of a family experience as possible. And so it’s important, if I go to events, to try to take the kids with me or take the entire family. If we have legislative conferences, we try to attend as a family because I think that exposure is important, and it means that I’m not experiencing those conferences or interactions with individuals in a vacuum, but it’s something that I can share with the rest of my family.

**How are you able to turn off the work part of the brain when you need to?**

My feeling is that, I think if you want to be successful in politics, you have to have times in your day and your week where you turn it off. I think it’s also incredibly important to remind oneself that there are bigger and better priorities for oneself. Particularly when it comes to family. At the end of the day, family and faith are very important to me. From my perspective, I really try to maintain a division between when I serve in this elected role from when I serve as a lawyer in private practice to when I’m a husband and father.

**That’s encouraging. Sometimes people have the qualifications to serve in state elected office but worry they don’t have the time or ability to balance their family time and finances and so on.**

It’s a great question. I’d say a couple things. One, I think anybody who has an interest in running ought to spend time either attending those committee meetings for that respective body that they might be interested in, or even shadowing a member to see what the day is like for the office that they seek to hold. But what I think is surprising is that perhaps people who tend to run for office are obviously ambitious and can put a lot of pressure on themselves as to what is expected in their ability to carry out the job. I think it’s important to remind people that once you hold that elected office, you do have a fair amount of control over your schedule, and how you decide to spend that time will reflect your priorities, I think both on what is important to your constituency and your policy but also what is important to you and where you are in your station in life. I mean, the challenges of an elected official who’s retired versus one who has a family like I do are very different.

**Being that you’ve made the sacrifice, what do you want to accomplish here?**

I would like to see a state where we’ve invested more in public education, where our teacher pay, as Governor Cooper talks about, is top-10 teacher pay. I would like to see our state expand Medicaid so that we can provide affordable health care to those who deserve it. I would like to see our state focused on investing more capital in

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Since late June, the League’s grassroots staff has been leading a series of Regional Roundtable Discussions at sites around the state, meetings that are scheduled to continue into the fall as NCLM staff now gears up for more of the same.

The purpose of these meetings is simple: It’s about having municipal officials from across the state share, in facilitated discussions, how they are meeting the challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow with one another.

“We hope these meetings provide local officials with information, tools, and contacts they need to tackle current and future municipal challenges. We want League members to take away that we are here to help cities and towns meet their goals so that they can be competitive well into the 21st Century,” said Vickie Miller, NCLM Grassroots Coordinator.

At one of the Roundtable Discussions held in Durham in late August, NCLM Board of Directors member and Morrisville Town Councilmember Liz Johnson focused the discussion on how cities and towns are coping with demographic and population changes, a challenge directly from the League’s strategic visioning plan identified by member cities and towns in 2014. “I am a firm believer in not reinventing the wheel, so if you have something going on in your community that is working, we want to know to know about it,” Johnson said in facilitating the discussion.

From the discussion that ensued, officials in both smaller towns and larger cities are coping with these issues, even if they present themselves in different ways.

The group that gathered in Durham represented a cross-section of League members and the various sized municipalities that make up that membership – Durham, Hillsborough, Creedmoor, Oxford, Stem, Butner, Morrisville and Clayton.
Durham Council Member and NCLM Board Member Mark-Anthony Middleton remarked that, for his city, a booming population and economic growth has created a tremendous need for affordable housing as demand for the homes there and corresponding prices have risen. He also discussed all that Durham is doing to try to connect residents – from its work on connecting bike-able and walkable trails, to its plans for high-speed rail – from a transportation perspective.

“To be a great city, people have to be able to get to the great things in that city,” Middleton said.

His comments, particularly about affordable housing, were echoed in remarks by Durham Mayor Steve Schewel as he opened the session.

Even more pressing for the municipalities in southern Granville County are needs associated with sewer and water capacity, even as regionalization has occurred there. Elected officials from Creedmoor, Stem, Butner and Oxford all discussed how crucial adequate water and sewer is to growth and continued viability.

Oxford Mayor Jackie Sergent discussed how that city obtained millions in grant and loan funds that were a part of the Connect NC bonds and administered through the N.C. State Water Infrastructure Authority to replace aging water and sewer infrastructure.

The sessions, in Durham and elsewhere, have also included a legislative update and an overview of League services.

One of those services, the new Municipal Operations Consulting program, designed to help cities and towns with technical help to meet financial challenges and obligation, has been featured as a part of the sessions. In Durham, Municipal Operations Consultant Harold Owen spoke about how he and his three colleagues assigned to different parts of the state are working to assist cities in a program that is free of charge.

Owen, former City of Burlington manager, noted that for towns to remain vital that they are going to have to remain attractive to young people and that means providing them with economic opportunity. He said a part of the solution has to be public investment. “The legislature is getting very concerned, because they are hearing this. But let’s be honest. The private sector is not going to fix this,” he said.

To date, in addition to Durham, the Regional Roundtable Discussions have been held in Sanford, Jacksonville, Morganton, Greenville, Sparta and Roanoke Rapids. Another round of meetings will be held from mid-October through early December.

“At each of the meetings held so far, it has been great to see city and town officials share ideas with each other about the ways they are growing jobs and the economy in their regions,” Miller said. SC
It’s the holidays at your beautiful, three-bedroom home. You, your spouse and two children are unboxing ornaments, lighting cinnamon-scented candles, humming seasonal classics and whiffing sugar cookies from the oven. The doorbell rings. You knew it would. Peering through the living-room blinds you see a dozen cars (minivans, mostly) crammed into your driveway and onto the lawn, each one roof-racked high with luggage. In the remaining yard-space stand roughly 45 chittering members of your extended family, with firm plans to stay all month. In your little, three-bedroom home.

Are you ready?

That’s what a number of municipal officials ask themselves yearly as the calendar heads into tourism season, when their local population can mushroom 10 times or more. Think back to that old-fashioned family beach vacation when you were young, or the one you took your kids on this past summer. Odds are, you were one of thousands upon thousands of out-of-towners enjoying that little piece of sand and sun. The time it took you to park the car reminds you.

In essence, you were a resident of that small beach town for that weekend or week or month of your stay; the town itself actually planned and budgeted for it. Think. How could the town function under the pressure of 10 times the normal population without enough police officers, fire protection, water and sewer capacity, traffic planning, trash pickup and other essentials?

“The focus of a lot of the structure in the government is to handle that,” said Brian Kramer, town manager of Pine Knoll Shores, a coastal Carteret County municipality whose year-round population of 1,600 surges to 10,000 in the summer. “The way we’re structured for public works, for public safety, and so on and so forth is in fact, ‘What are we going to do when there’s 10,000 folks here?’”

Kramer spoke as a panelist on the challenges that tourism communities face and how they overcome it all year after year. Joined by Pine Knoll Shores Police Chief Ryan Thompson and Greg “Rudi” Rudolph of the Carteret County Shore Protection Office, the panel was part of the N.C. Local Government Budget Association’s recent conference in Atlantic Beach and was recorded live
The misconception is common that beach towns, with their desirable properties and retiree populations, are wealthy enough to cover needs easily. “Everyone thinks everyone who lives at the beach is a gozillionaire,” Kramer said. “That’s absolutely not the case....” The beachfront property values are indeed impressive, but coastal towns like Carteret County’s have impressive demands.

Beyond the police, fire, traffic and other priorities is the beach strand itself. There’s no way a beach town can thrive without it. It’s a priceless piece of infrastructure that the town has to maintain.

Call it beach nourishment, sand replenishment, coastal storm damage reduction or something else, it’s an expensive must for coastal communities against erosion. One such project, in which the beach is widened and dune system fattened with sand dredged up from offshore, can cost $15 million easily. “Just to get a dredge here is $3-$5 million,” Rudolph told the audience. He noted that’s before a single grain of sand arrives. Sand is purchased for $10 a cubic yard -- with millions of cubic yards per order.

Rudolph has seen about 14 million cubic yards of sand pumped onto Bogue Banks since 1999. For reference, a dump truck holds about 12 cubic yards, he said. “I wrote down how many dump trucks that is,” he added. “It’s a lot.”

A wide, healthy beach and beautiful duneline is clearly attractive to tourists. But more importantly, it creates a buffer from storm surge to keep property and lives safe -- a core function of government, which cued the panel’s third member.
“Two hours ago, my cops and I were on the beach because somebody reported human remains had washed up,” said Chief Thompson. He said no summer is dull in a coastal town, and that there’s no way to make a shortlist of unforgettable moments.

His department has to beef up on personnel to cover the seasonal demand, and usually does so with officers already working in the region (as opposed to the “rent-a-cop” approach). Being the beach, it’s not all that hard to recruit. But what’s difficult is Pine Knoll Shores’ inability to train officers in the summertime, when many of the training sessions and conferences take place. They’re too busy responding to anything and everything. Domestic calls are pretty common, the chief said.

“Unfortunately, when folks come on vacation, they think they’re going on vacation to leave their problems at home,” said Chief Thompson. “But I can tell you, they bring their problems with them.”

Otherwise, it’s “everything under the sun,” he told the audience.

Those “human remains” turned out to be animal parts, but Chief Thompson said those calls are frequent. If the carcass can’t be identified easily, his office has to call in scientists for an answer.

For nearly an hour, the three panelists heaped on the surprising details and answered audience questions about what makes beach town governance different -- from environmental and developmental issues to revenue sources and other tourism dynamics in that hard and fast population crush.

“It’s very unique,” Chief Thompson said. “I’ve worked for other municipalities and it’s the most interesting, I think, place to work.”

The panel’s entire recording can be heard in Episode 54 of the Municipal Equation podcast at nclm.org/municipalequation.
“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'd do things differently,” – Warren Buffett.

“Reputation is like fine china. Once broken, it's very hard to repair.” – Abraham Lincoln.

I had two opportunities lately to consider this advice. First, when I delivered my children to college for yet another year. I'm sure many of you can relate to the lack of control you feel as you drive away. After a summer of having some purported influence over them, here you are. Leaving them to their own devices and praying that their judgment (or luck) holds.

Knowing they were chomping at the bit to get back to “independence,” I merely handed them each a note with the words above and instructed them to pin it on their mirror. Fingers crossed that Buffet and Lincoln would hold sway with them where I might not.

The second opportunity was here at the League. As many of you know, in 2014 we embarked on a strategic planning initiative, dubbed “Vision 2030.” Vision 2030 was born of a desire to assist North Carolina cities and towns in meeting the challenges of the 21st century, and to continue to reflect their own diverse visions for each. Some of those challenges included: urbanization patterns, changing perspective of government among voters, changing economic forces, technological pressures and demographic trends.

Helping our members navigate through these issues has been a touchstone of the work we've been doing here at the League over the past four years. We've arrived at the point where we knew our brand of “Good Government. Great Hometowns” needed to yield to the broader Vision 2030. Therefore, early this summer, we embarked on a rebranding effort that better captures the spirit and purpose of the League.

After a nationwide RFP, we hired a local Raleigh firm, Clean, Inc. Clean has worked with several North Carolina municipal entities: Carolina Beach, Fuquay-Varina, Wilmington and Beaches CVB, Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau. It also created the very successful Go Triangle campaign for Triangle Transit. For those of you that attended CityVision 2018, you saw a glimpse of what is to come in our new brand.

Most importantly though, we knew that before Clean could get to work, we had to engage in some reflection. The outward message needed to reflect our internal values. Therefore, we decided to have an honest, lengthy discussion about League values and organization culture. In July, department managers and other staff members spent a day digging deep into these topics. What emerged from the group were some pretty inspiring themes of strength, unity and teamwork. Taking a step farther, we talked about the League as a supporter and promoter of communities, as an agent of societal change and as a contributor to the success of North Carolina.

What began in Charlotte in 1908 as the Carolina Municipal Association is as vibrant and relevant an organization as ever. The League's reputation -- years in the making -- remains intact. It is a reputation of service, of integrity, of expertise. It is a reputation built on serving and sustaining our owners ... you, the cities, towns and municipal entities of North Carolina.

To that end, it is your reputation as well. Maybe that's why we "do things differently." Because our reputation is your reputation. So, as always, thank you for your trust, for your business and for allowing us to serve you.
North Carolina Cities in Partnerships to Educate and Protect Homeowners

The NLC Service Line Warranty program is being adopted by more and more North Carolina cities. A preferred vendor of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, this program partners with cities and towns to offer affordable protection against the results of a water or sewer line emergency. One such city is Hendersonville, who partnered with the program approximately seven years ago. Hendersonville city officials were finding an increase in calls to the city from citizens with water and sewer line breaks. The City learned about the NLC’s service line warranties program and decided to partner with SLWA and offer this voluntary program to its customers based its affordability and excellent coverage.

“We wanted to offer an optional program that would educate homeowners about this responsibility so, regardless of whether or not it was purchased, residents would at least be informed and not confronted with an unexpected and potentially-costly repair,” said Jeremy Poss, Hendersonville’s Technology and Metering Manager. “This program has been extremely positive for City homeowners and I would highly recommended that to offer this important protection to their residents,” he said.

In the past seven years, 3,253 Hendersonville residents purchased 3,863 service plans. These plans have saved homeowners nearly $400,000 in repair expenses during this time. According to Mr. Poss, the city has also received positive feedback from customers who have not chosen to purchase the warranty but appreciate the information.

For more information please visit www.utilitysp.net.
The National League of Cities has announced a new program, City Innovation Ecosystems, dedicated to helping cities thrive in the modern economy. The program marks a major new push by NLC to support regional entrepreneurship, innovation and STEM pathways in a time when too few cities are fully participating in the high-tech, global economy.

In partnership with and support from Schmidt Futures, a philanthropic organization begun by former Google chair Eric Schmidt, the initiative will challenge city leaders to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and STEM education by partnering with businesses, colleges and universities, foundations, entrepreneurs, school districts and community-based organizations to commit to solutions. Within the initiative’s first year, NLC will bring together a new cohort of cities that have made specific commitments to strengthen their regional innovation ecosystems. These
commitments will include actions to accelerate the spread of innovation and technology, improve the climate for entrepreneurship and give more young people exposure and experience with STEM learning.

“Cities are the lifeblood of American ingenuity. They provide the necessary opportunities for inventors, scientists, educators and entrepreneurs to come together and solve our most pressing challenges,” said Clarence E. Anthony, CEO and executive director of the National League of Cities (NLC). “This new partnership with Schmidt Futures underscores NLC’s commitment to helping all cities — from small towns to major metropolitan areas — adapt and succeed in a time when technology is re-writing the rules of work, urban life and global competition.”

NLC will also help cities create the next generation of innovators by supporting two communities of practice of senior city staff who are working to improve local government through technology and expand STEM learning opportunities for young people. These groups will focus on citywide innovation initiatives, advancing STEM, maker-centered learning, technology and innovation through afterschool and summer learning, K-12 education and postsecondary and workforce development policies and programs.

“Schmidt Futures is delighted to support the National League of Cities and its new initiative to support entrepreneurship and innovation at the local level,” said Tom Kalil, Chief Innovation Officer of Schmidt Futures. “Mayors and other civic leaders can increase opportunities for entrepreneurs in communities across the United States — fueling innovation, economic growth and the creation of high-wage jobs.”

The initiative is aimed at supporting projects similar in nature to the Wake Forest Innovation Quarter in Winston-Salem, though for municipalities of all sizes. That project is featured as a part of the N.C. League of Municipalities’ Here We Grow (www.herewegrownc.org) initiative promoting the investments by cities and towns across North Carolina that are creating economic growth and improving residents’ quality of life.

The City of Winston-Salem has invested about $50 million in the Wake Forest Innovation Quarter.

The City Innovation Ecosystems program seeks to support municipal efforts to encourage innovative entrepreneurship. Photo credit: Shutterstock
Forest Innovation Quarter, which is a collaborative effort involving state and local government; Wake Forest University; Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center; and private businesses to create a downtown business park focused on data analysis, biotech health research and medical education.

On the site of the old R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. cigarette manufacturing plant, the city and other partners in this venture are using the past to turn to the future. Today, the quarter boasts state-of-the-art biomedical laboratories and a number of businesses devoted to medical research. There are software and data analytics firms. One of the buildings has been turned into 243 residential units. A new 211-room hotel has opened. And restaurants and shops are moving to the area to take advantage of this hub of activity.

Featured in a 2016 New York Times article, Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines noted the more than $1 billion in private investment in the city’s downtown in less than two decades. “The Innovation Quarter has been a big part of why that’s happened,” he said.

NLC invites mayors and other local leaders who are working in partnership with businesses, foundations, colleges and universities, school districts and community-based organizations to strengthen entrepreneurship, innovation and STEM learning to be part of this exciting initiative.

Contact Scott Andes, program director, City Innovation Ecosystems, to describe your city’s strategy, program, idea and partnership at andes@nlc.org or with further questions. NLC will compile the best ideas and will feature the most innovative and bold commitments at City Summit in Los Angeles, California, November 7-10. SC

When it comes to architecture and construction for municipal buildings and community spaces, integrated DESIGN BUILD is the way to go. Bobbitt has delivered state-of-the-art facilities for municipalities across the Carolinas. View our portfolio on our website and contact us to learn more.
Concord and Kannapolis Police Complete Nutrition Training with Impressive Show of Culinary Know How

Concord and Kannapolis Police wowed a panel of judges with their culinary skills at this morning’s Cooking for a Healthy Life Law Enforcement Challenge, held at Restaurant Forty Six in downtown Kannapolis.

Cooking for a Healthy Life is the newest program of the City of Kannapolis’ Discover a Healthy Life initiative. Today’s interactive training was designed to give practical nutrition tips and provide easy recipe ideas that law enforcement officers could apply while working 12 hour shifts. The hands-on segment was to help the officers become more confident in their ability to make quick, healthy meals.

In 50 minutes, each team of 10 officers created a fruit smoothie, grain and vegetable bowl and a wrap using a pantry of food provided for them as part of the challenge. Each team also showed their creativity by adding snacks like pretzels and guacamole and vegetables and hummus to their entries. They packed their items in containers and a cooler as well as plated them for the panel of evaluators. They were scored on nutritional content, taste, teamwork and the portability of their dishes.

Evaluators for the event were:
- Concord Mayor Bill Dusch
- Kannapolis City Council Member Roger Haas
- Executive Chef John Blumreich, Restaurant Forty Six
- Colin Kay, PhD, Associate Professor of Translational Nutrition and Food Sciences, NC State Plants for Human Health Institute
- Chef Mark Allison, Director of Culinary Nutrition, Cabarrus Health Alliance

Each evaluator praised the teams on the aromas, color, flavors and presentation of their food entries. “The blueberry smoothie and the rice bowls were all restaurant quality,” commented Kay. “Everything was balanced with lots of protein for energy. I was very impressed.”

“I’m not a nutritional expert,” Haas remarked. “So what struck me the most was the teamwork and sharing of ideas.”

“Lots of color and texture and good aroma and taste, and,” Allison emphasized, “all of this food is fresh so you know it has the highest nutritional value.”

Blumreich added, “I’m impressed with the roles you take in the community, and all you’ve done here.

The visual appeal, the aroma, the combining of textures – great job!”

The challenged kicked off with a discussion on basic nutrition principles led by Cabarrus Health Alliance’s Nutrition Program Coordinator Meghan Charpentier, MS, MPH, and Dole Food Company’s Nutrition and Health Communications Manager Melanie Dwornik, RD, whose father is a retired New York City police officer.

Kannapolis Police Chief Woody Chavis commented that the experience of the challenge today, “showed us the options that we have to eat healthier and explained why we should explore them.”

At the end of the event, Concord edged out Kannapolis during the scoring round.

Raleigh’s Public Utilities Department Receives National Recognition for Leadership in Clean Water Advocacy

The City of Raleigh Public Utilities Department has received national recognition for Leadership and Advocacy for responsible national policies that advance a sustainable approach to clean water from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA).

NACWA’s new Advocacy Recognition Program honors...
outstanding advocacy work undertaken by NACWA Member Agencies to further municipal clean water priorities. The annual recognition publicly acknowledges direct actions taken by member agencies to help advance the Association’s interests—along with the larger clean water sectors—in the public affairs and public policy arenas, furthering the collective mission to build a strong and sustainable clean water future.

Special appreciation was reserved for the services of Associate City Attorney Daniel F. McLawhorn, who is a nationally recognized leader in Environmental Law and its application in North Carolina.

Public art is among the interim uses the Haywood Street Advisory Team recommended for the property. As the City continues to work toward planning for permanent uses for the adjoining Page Ave. and Haywood St. City-owned properties, temporary use of the properties is available to the public. This includes the Elder & Sage Community Gardens at 33 Page Ave. and a Mobile Vending Food Truck Pilot Program at 68 Haywood St. In June, 68 Haywood played host to a traveling musical play by the American Myth Center, “The Ballad of R & J.”

As part of this creative mix, an ad-hoc committee including representatives from the Haywood Street Advisory Team, Downtown Commission and Public Art and Cultural Commission cultivated plans for a temporary mural that will be painted on panels to be installed on a wall of 68 Haywood Street walls that reads “LOVE ASHEVILLE.”

Each of the 13 letters of the Love Asheville Mural are being uniquely designed by a different local design agency or graphic designer, with the overall theme reflective of Asheville Grown’s brand and on-going campaign to support local businesses. Coordination with the designers is being led by Jenny Fares of Sound Mind Creative and Asheville Design Salon. Contributing designers are: 828 Design, (Tom Petruccelli), Atlas Branding, (Taylor Sutherland and Lisa Peteet), Curve Theory, (Reggie Tidwell), Dena Rutter Design, Element Advertising, (Matt Levin), Gigantic, (Scott Smith), Harkness Design (Marc Harkness), HNYCMB Creative (Tim Scroggs), Homestead (Eric Pieper), Image 420 (Brent Baldwin), Martha Skinner & Sophia Arbelaez, Novus Architects (Sydney Gilmore), Project 13 (Richard Norris) and Sound Mind Creative (Jenny Greer Fares).  

‘Love Asheville’ mural collaboration coming to 68 Haywood

Soon a new temporary public art piece will be installed on a portion of the wall surrounding 68 Haywood — one that shows residents’ spirit, creativity and love of Asheville!
areas that don’t attract a lot of capital -- particularly those micropolitan and rural areas. I would like to see more job skills and reskilling programs in those areas so that we can bring middle class jobs to areas that are in many ways outside of the district that I represent, because I think focusing on areas outside of Wake County becomes a win-win for the entire state. One of the things that frustrates me is we tend to see in the legislature that we are pitted against each other, with a lot of those issues being views as rural and urban, and I think it can be a win-win for everyone. From my perspective, I would like to see a North Carolina that is more compassionate toward its people. And obviously we garnered a lot of unfortunate national attention with what happened with the passage of House Bill 2 (in 2016). Yesterday (on Aug. 13), I held a press conference calling for the passage of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, one day after the anniversary of Charlottesville. I think those protections are important -- not only because it’s the right thing to do, but also because it sends an important signal to the business community both here in the country and around the world that we embrace diversity, which is an incredibly important factor for businesses that are looking to relocate here in the state….. Diversity of thought is critically important when you're making decisions….. In many ways, I think that's reflective of the challenges we have here in the General Assembly…. In an ideal world, which again is what we see in municipalities, when you have a diversity of thought come together and you incorporate that diversity of thought, then you're making the best decisions that are possible. 

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Speaking Out

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and appointed municipal officials dedicated to addressing the larger issues that affect us all by becoming involved in an organization like the League. Your insight and willingness to work with me and with each other has been priceless. It’s that commitment and involvement that ultimately ensures the North Carolina League of Municipalities will continue to evolve and grow to meet current and future challenges faced by cities and towns of all shapes and sizes. 

SC
Legal Eagles

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to be removed and would have to dismiss for lack of standing. For that reason, amotion is not a tool that can be used by citizens seeking to challenge the wisdom of an elected official's decision on particular policy matters. The concept generally resonates in the principle that the departments, divisions, and agencies of government should not be hampered, on a day-to-day basis, by lawsuits from citizens merely disagreeing with the difficult, multi-faceted policy decisions of governmental officials.

Lacking the ability to initiate amotion themselves, and lacking a recall option in most jurisdictions, citizens must rely on the formidable power of the ballot box. The primary remedy for citizens dissatisfied with a local elected official is to duly cast their votes at the next election for that office.

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Rebranding Our Organization

By Paul Meyer
NCLM Executive Director

Over the course of the last few years -- in these pages, at League events and individually to those involved in the endeavors associated with municipal government -- I have spoken a lot about the North Carolina League of Municipalities becoming an organization that is more responsive to member needs and to the shifting landscape of local governance.

The staff at the League and municipal officials all around the state recognize what a huge challenge we face regarding changes in population and demographics, technology that is radically shifting how services are provided and how we communicate to residents, and engaging the public that we serve amid ever increasing demands on people's time.

Each of those challenges, and others associated with this shifting technological, economic and governance landscape, is encompassed in the goals that came out of our Vision 2030 strategic visioning plan. That should not be surprising. Those goals came directly from you, from research and communication with member cities and towns. They are about how this organization better prepares members to meet this future.

None of that may be news to some of you. What may be news is that the League has embarked on an effort to rebrand our organization. And that rebranding will be designed to reflect our commitment to those strategic visioning goals and the values of this organization, both as a staff and as a federation of cities and towns working toward a common purpose.

Yes, one outcome of this process will be the development of a new League logo and associated messaging designed to reflect that vision of who we are today, as well as where we are headed tomorrow. In some respects, it will be just letters, words and colors -- a new visual representation of NCLM.

But if we have done it right, it will also encapsulate our values. And out of this effort will come a values statement that we incorporate into all of our communications to reinforce the common values of North Carolina's cities and towns acting as the North Carolina League of Municipalities, and your League staff will begin to reinforce the "why we do what we do" to all of our audiences -- member cities and towns, other advocacy organizations, allies in the business community, state policymakers, the news media, and even at times the larger public.

I want to let you know that, just like with our strategic visioning effort, this effort too is member-driven. The public relations firm that we have been working with conducted an extensive survey of members, did individual interviews with a cross-section of municipal officials and others familiar with the League, and held a focus group session with a group of our Board of Directors to better understand the organization's mission, goals and perceptions about it.

Finally, in addition to those audiences that I mentioned above, the League's staff is an essential audience for whom understanding why we do what we do is crucial.

To be our best, serving towns and cities so that they can better serve their residents, it is critical that all members of our staff see the connections between the agreed upon values of our cities and towns, and what they do on a daily basis, and how our staff efforts help each of you make your towns and cities better places to live, work and raise families.

Having a brand that incorporates all of those ideas -- and that better allows people to connect us to them -- is the "why" of why we have embarked on this effort.

By Paul Meyer
NCLM Executive Director
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Kermit S. has been a Town of Manteo employee for 30-plus years, currently as town manager. He’s also a long-standing member of LGFCU and serves on the Credit Union’s Advisory Council. It’s in this role that he loves to share information about the tremendous value the Credit Union offers to all his employees.

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Kermit S., Town of Manteo Town Manager Member since 1988

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