

Bethel Rural Community Organization

Newsletter

www.bethelrural.org

April 2022

2022 BRCO Officers and Board Members

Officers

- President: Carol Litchfield
- Vice President : Greg Christopher
- Secretary: Beth Cook
- Treasurer: Mike McLean

Board Members::

- Frances Adamson, Vice Chair
- Carol Litchfield
- Lucas Sorrells
- Pat Carr, Chair
- Eleanor Porter



Message BRCO President, Carol Litchfield



It is springtime once again, a most welcome time of year to enjoy the beauty of the Pigeon Valley and the resilience of our Bethel community. Our BRCO Flood Relief activities and our Food Pantry service are going strong and have received very positive feedback from the families who have received assistance. Our Historic Preservation Committee is working on several important projects, including the filming of individuals who have special knowledge of the history of Bethel schools. Our Rural Preservation Committee is exploring how best to help landowners to protect their streambanks, create pollinator habitat, and enhance the long term viability of their land and water resources. At our May membership meeting, we will hear from a representative of the

Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy about land conservation efforts currently underway in our area.

As we continue to build on our past successes, we are also taking a look at our future needs and how best we can serve the Bethel community during the next five years. During February, BRCO was invited to participate in a Strategic Planning Pilot Project sponsored by WNC Communities. We were eligible to participate because we had earned the “Best in Class” award at the Mountain Laurel level in the WNCC Honors Program last December.

We began our involvement in the Pilot Project by attending a two-hour workshop in Waynesville on March 30th. Evelyn Coltman, Ted Carr, Beth Cook, and Bill Terrell joined me in attending the workshop. We learned about the steps in the Strategic Planning Process and how to conduct a needs assessment survey. During the next six weeks, we will be contacting our BRCO members, our partners, and those whom we serve in the community to assess the needs and identify the issues that BRCO can help to address during the next five years.

As a member of BRCO, you can help us with our needs assessment by thinking about your service to the Bethel community and the extent to which you are involved in our BRCO activities. Our goal is to match your skills and abilities to the tasks that will help us to meet the needs of the community. During April, Beth will be e-mailing a survey to BRCO members. We hope you will take a few moments to respond and let us know how we can better serve the community and how we can best utilize your talents. On May 16th, WNCC will meet with us in our BRCO Fellowship Hall to help us finalize our Strategic Plan based on the results of our needs assessment and the feedback you have provided.

Carol Litchfield, President

2022 General Meetings

- Tuesday, January 11, 2022
- Tuesday, March 8, 2022
- Tuesday, May 10, 2022
- Tuesday, July 12, 2022
- Tuesday, September 13, 2022
- Tuesday, November 8, 2022



BRCO's First Major Flood Relief Effort - Submitted by Ted Carr

Tuesday was a fine day to work outside. After a quick breakfast, I started loading my truck with a variety of tools at 7:30. I got to the jobsite at 8:40 and had time to do some preliminary work before the experienced ramp building crew from Riverside Baptist Church began arriving at 9:00. I didn't count, but at least a dozen men showed up.



Some began setting up their equipment, some attacked the 3,000 pounds of concrete and block steps that were damaged by the flood, some studied the design drawing I had taped to the shop wall, some used a floor jack and post to put upward pressure on the deck ceiling so the support posts could be cut loose from the old deck boards, and some began ripping up the damaged deck boards. Soon all the old was removed and the new was being put into place.

About noon the crew began to dwindle a bit. Some diabetics had to go eat, some had appointments, and some, perhaps, had done their daily volunteer/visiting time. The remaining men had the last nail and screw in and the deck swept by 4:00. Their two trailers were packed up and loose boards lashed down and were a cloud of dust at 4:30.

I got my tools packed up, my power cords rolled up, some unused lumber accounted for, and the design drawing off the wall and headed for home. Putting

tools back in place seems to always take longer than grabbing them and go. At 6:30, I kicked off my boots in the shop and walked up the stairs to call it a day and make a cup of hot tea.

Nathan was home by then so I called him and received an abundance of thanks and appreciation and total satisfaction. I wish each of you could have heard his genuine appreciation. I am totally satisfied that our donors received great value from their contributions.

BRCO Committee News

Beautification – Carol Litchfield, Acting Chair-We are working to replace the double doors at the entrance to the Fellowship Hall with a 42-inch wide, six-panel single door, preferably one made of fiberglass, but most places only have doors that are 36 inches wide. Ted Carr has been relentless in checking with multiple sources in hopes of finding a door that will meet our needs. If a 42-inch door has to be special ordered, the door may not be available for installation until later this summer. The new door will benefit our Food Pantry volunteers and others who have experienced frustration in dealing with the old, unwieldy double doors.

Building and Grounds Chair – Ted Carr, Chair - reported that he has contacted 3 companies for a quote on the 42-inch door. Window World declined to provide a quote, and Lowe's is currently trying to get a quote from their suppliers. Home Builders Supply has submitted a catalogue with the various styles available. Ted, Evelyn Coltman, and Carol Litchfield will look over the catalog and select a suitable door. Ted also reported that the tubes in the heating system for the sanctuary have failed. The unit is under warranty but there is a problem/delay in getting the replacement parts. He is working on determining the most economical/repair replacement option.



Participants at the Streambank Enhancement workshop helped scatter grass seed and pound live stakes into the streambank. The grass will emerge through the mulch during April, and the live stakes should be growing and leafing out by this summer.

Rural Preservation – Carol Litchfield, Chair

On March 10th, Carol attended a Streambank Enhancement workshop that was held along the Shelton Branch stream at Vance Street Park in Waynesville. Haywood Waterways Association had arranged for experts to be present to demonstrate how the work should be done, and everyone had the chance to help complete the tasks. It was an excellent training session. They also went over the information in the NC Cooperative Extension document "Small-Scale Solutions to Eroding Streambanks" which Beth later e-mailed to BRCO members on March 14th. The information in the document is very thorough and presented in a way that is easy to understand (with lots of pictures!).

Benevolence Committee - Lucas Sorrells, Chair - The Benevolence Committee paid one power bill last month in February. Ted Carr is working with one family to purchase building supplies to replace their deck that was damaged in the flood (see related story on page 2). He requested that an account be set up at Haywood Builders Supply to purchase building materials for this family and other families that may be identified.

Education Chair – Lucas Sorrells – The BRCO Scholarship application for 2022 has been distributed to Pisgah High School and Haywood Early College with a deadline for receiving applications the end of March 2022.

Food Pantry Committee - Julie Green and Stephanie Quis-Garrett, Co-Chairs

Eighty-five families and 184 individuals were served during January and February.

BRCO Committee News (continued)

Historic Preservation Chair - Evelyn Coltman

- The Historic Preservation Committee is holding an art competition to select an artist who will render a painter's conception of the Pigeon Gap Watering Hole. This historic site is situated atop Waynesville Mountain. During the 1800s, people traveling in both directions used the watering hole as a stopping point for rest and refreshment during their long journey over the mountain. In 1924, the Community Club of Waynesville built a wall and placed a marker there. In 2013, Joey Rolland, for his Eagle Scout badge, cleaned and restored the area and built a bridge so that visitors could view the marker. In 2016, the committee placed a marker adjacent to the highway so that passersby would be aware of the historic location.

The committee is in the process of voting on which of the five artists who applied will have the opportunity to paint the historic site.



At the left is Virginia Terrell (Bill Terrell's mother) standing in front of the Pigeon Gap Watering Hole.

The picture at the right is the Pigeon Gap Watering Hole after Joey Rolland cleaned and restored the area



- Fourteen post offices existed in the Bethel and Cruso communities prior to the Canton and Waynesville postal facilities taking on the job of, in 1942, of delivering mail to outlying neighborhoods in the county. Forks of Pigeon was Bethel's first post office. Colonel Joseph Cathey's Mercantile (located near today's Silver Bluff Village) housed the Forks of Pigeon postal service, beginning in 1841. At that time, mail was carried weekly by horseback from Asheville. As railroads expanded into the mountain region in the late 1800s, additional post offices developed in Bethel and Cruso: Cecil, Chinquapin Grove, Cruso, Garden Creek, Lavinia (Inman), Little East Fork, Livingston, Retreat, Sonoma, Springdale, Spruce, Sunburst, and Woodrow.

When Rural Free Delivery began in Haywood County in 1901, the need for so many post offices dwindled. The last post office to close in the area was the Cruso Post Office in 1942.

Several members of the Historic Preservation Committee have contributed to ferreting out information about historic post offices, and they have supplied photos of several postal facilities. One post office picture that had eluded the committee, however, was of the Cruso Post Office that existed across from today's Cruso Community Center. A tip from committee member Mike Clark, who lives in Montana, enabled us to contact Diana Fulbright Berg of South Carolina who supplied several photos as well as information about her family who lived in the back of the Ira Cogburn Store that housed the post office.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation continued)

We have collected photos of eight of the post office buildings and continue to solicit photos of the following post offices: Garden Creek, Little East Fork, Livingston, Retreat, Springdale, and Spruce.

For a complete summary of the history of post offices in Bethel/Cruso, please go to the website at www.bethelrural.org, click on the “About Bethel Community” header, then the “Historic Bethel/Cruso Post Offices” sub-heading.



Diana Fulbright Berg and Eva Pless Fulbright Cogburn standing in front of the Cruso Post Office. (1980s Photo provided by Diana Fulbright Berg)



1927 Photo provided by Diana Fulbright Berg

Additions to the Bethel Writers and Media Contributors section of our website include the following:

- The Reverend Kris Estep who is a *Mountaineer* writer for the religion section in the newspaper
- Nick Muerdter, a software engineer for the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado, who received the 2021 Governor’s Citizenship Medal for his development of an easy-to-use website called “Vaccine Spotter.org” that allowed not only Colorado citizens but individuals nationwide to access vaccine availability in their areas.
- Gerald Ledford and Ron Sullivan for their book about Sunburst Logging Village: *If Rails Could Talk...Logging the North Carolina Great Balsams, Volume 2, Sunburst and Champion Fibre*. They have collaborated on four other books about logging villages elsewhere in Haywood County. While they are not Bethel natives, we also list those who have written about Bethel.

Thus far, we have on our website eighty-eight writers/media contributors listings from Bethel, six BRCO affiliated writers who do not live in Bethel, and six writers who do not live in Bethel but who have written about Bethel topics.

SPOTLIGHT ON BRCO President and Rural Preservation Chair - Carol Litchfield



I was born and raised in Texas. I found myself in a unique situation being raised as a little Texan by a mother who was proud of her Czech heritage and Oklahoma roots and a father who spoke with a Boston accent. They both conveyed to me a love of history and a respect for the ancestral spirit. After spending 40 years researching the lives of my maternal Czech immigrant ancestors and my paternal New England ancestors (all the way back to the 1600s!), I discovered a new passion-- helping others to research their own family history. I love responding to research requests that have been referred to me by the Waynesville Library and the Haywood County Historical and Genealogical Society.

For a career, I was honored to work as a conservationist in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for 33 years. I worked in six different states before transferring to the NRCS Area Office in Waynesville in 2000. I served as Assistant State Conservationist overseeing the 14 NRCS Field Offices in Western North Carolina until I retired in 2011. I became a BRCO member in 2013. My love of history led me to become a member of the Historic Preservation Committee, and my love of conservation led me to volunteer as Chair of the Rural Preservation Committee. I believe that our greatest challenge in the future will be finding, training, and retaining a cadre of talented, dedicated volunteers who will be willing to serve in officer and committee chair positions within the organization.

WI-FI NOW AVAILABLE AT BRCO'S FACILITY

At the BRCO January meeting the board recommended to the membership that Wi-Fi be installed at our facility. The membership agreed. After discussions with AT&T and Spectrum, Spectrum was selected. Spectrum waived their \$100 installation fee and the monthly rates are about the same - \$80/month for 200Mbps. Money was budgeted in the 2022 budget for this expense. The Wi-Fi has been installed and is now available at our facility.



We Need Your Help!
YOUR OPINION MATTERS!

The BRCO Officers and Board would like to hear from you. We want to have programs at our general meeting that will be of interest to our members. Let us know what speakers you would like to hear, what topics are of interest to you and any other suggestions you might have for programs. Email your suggestions to our secretary at ehc78@bellsouth.net and your suggestions will be shared with the BRCO officers and board members.