

2020 BRCO Officers and Board Members

Officers

- President: Mike McLean
- Vice President (interim) Carroll Jones
- Secretary: Beth Cook
- Treasurer: Stephanie Quis-Garrett

Board Members::

- Frances Adamson
- Tom Kolaski
- Lucas Sorrells
- Pat Carr
- Mike McLean



A Word from our president, Mike McLean



2020 – A year to remember!

It is hard to believe that we are in December and the “memorable” year of 2020 is drawing to a close. While it is easy to list all the challenges and areas of our community that did not occur or receive our attention, there is a very respectable list of accomplishments in spite of the pandemic. This newsletter and the submissions from the Committee chairs and members speaks for itself.

During my first year as your President, it is clear that BRCO and its success comes from the clear commitment of our members and community to support each other. The conversation of your Board of Directors and Officers always results in how we do something not if. As your new President, I wondered how to lead a group that is already fully functional and committed to its Mission - “BRCO’s mission is to coordinate local and regional resources to perform programs and projects that enhance the quality of rural life in Bethel Community.” This Mission has no timeline, no limitations, and no obligation other than a personal commitment by its members and leadership. With this commitment, we see the Vision of BRCO, “*Preserving yesterday - Helping Today - Planning for Tomorrow*”, as a daily accomplishment and not something only for the future. My conclusion about how to lead BRCO was very simple, provide support.

I have worked with many organizations to define their Mission and create their Vision using their concepts. It is always important to simplify both of those into clear and basic elements that represent the approach and the expected results of all constituents of that organization. What I found at BRCO needs no changes or enhancements. In many organizations, once the Mission and Vision are created, the challenge is to create ownership at all levels. Once again, I found the ownership at the committee level already in place and functioning without guidance from the Board or Officers other than the large scale decisions that all organizations make.

So, for my final message in 2020, I want to express how easy BRCO has made my position and responsibilities. There is an old management phrase “*You can manage energy but not complacency*”, and the energy of BRCO is a real pleasure to be associated with. Our committee chairs and their regular actions speak to the heart of BRCO. I am proud to be part of this and support your efforts.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year as we begin another year in 2021 with whatever challenges are presented, knowing that BRCO is ready.

Thanks for all you do!

Mike McLean
President – BRCO

BRCO OFFICERS and BOARD Members Elected



At the November BRCO General Meeting (held via Zoom) the following officers were elected for 2021-22

OFFICERS:

President: Mike McLean
Vice President: Greg Christopher
Secretary: Beth Cook
Treasurer: Stephanie Quis-Garrett

BOARD MEMBERS:

Lucas Sorrells was elected to serve as Board Member for the 3 year term ending 2023, and President Mike McLean appointed Pat Carr to the one year presidential term. Other board members are:

Chairman Tom Kolaski - term ending 2021
President Mike McLean

BRCO Members Assist the Shelton House Tinsel Trail

Kara and Tom Kolaski, representing BRCO, helped the Tinsel Trail Team collect Christmas Trees from a defunct Christmas Tree farm on Saturday, November 28. The trees had been growing unmaintained for years. So the work included falling very tall trees, and chopping off the tops. The work was not easy, but the trees were all free, which was very important as the Shelton House budget has been severely curtailed this year due to Covid.

There was a group of 11 volunteers who helped select trees, cut down trees, then drag them to trailers and tow them to Shelton House. There were a number of other volunteers at the Shelton House that unloaded trees and set them up for the organizations who will ultimately decorate them, including BRCO.

Kara helped Pam Reece select the trees and Tom helped Kevin Reece with the cutting, dragging and loading, while several horses came to watch the action.

Kara also made time to bend the ear of reporters from the Mountaineer who were present to help gather trees. She explained the meaning of the Elements of Bethel in detail and hopes to get a lot of good press for BRCO.



Historic Preservation Committee Receives Award



BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee and Evelyn Coltman are receiving the North Carolina Society of Historians Multi-Media Award for our collection of twenty-four art prints that are on display in our dining hall and are also featured on our website. Due to COVID-19, the ceremony will be conducted in January via Zoom. Out of hundreds of submittals, BRCO is one of forty recipients to receive NCSH recognition. **Congratulations!!**

BRCO Tinsel Trail at the Shelton House



Elements of Bethel Tinsel Tree

Thanks to BRCO members Kara and Tom Kolaski for decorating BRCO's Tinsel Trail Tree at the Shelton House. The Tinsel Trail will be open nightly through January 2, 2021. Stroll the ground of the Shelton House to view all the beautiful Christmas Trees on the Tinsel Trail. You can also vote for your favorite tree!



*Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season!
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*



BRCO Committee News

Beautification – Nancy Armstrong, Chair

On November 19 committee members plus Ted Carr completed refurbishment of the entry ramp to the Hall. Sanding, new threshold and painting have greatly improved the appearance of our property. Thanks to the Dogwood Health Trust, the graders, the landscapers and our volunteers, the completed circular drive and entry look very attractive and will safely and conveniently provided good access to the Hall. We are taking this opportunity to announce Carroll Jones' retirement from this committee. Please join us in thanking Carroll for serving. His dedication and hands-on efforts have been without fail for many years. Thank you Carroll! Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to All from us!



Race – Lucas Sorrells, Chair

Lucas reported that this year's race had to be a virtual race due to Covid 19 restrictions. They only had five participants register for the virtual race; however, there was no cost for race expenses this year. They are still talking with sponsors/donors for contributions.

Rural Preservation – Carol Litchfield, Chair

Families in need have been using coupons from BRCO to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from produce stands in the Bethel area. BRCO reimburses the produce stand operators for the coupons they collect. Due to Covid 19 the coupons will continue to be distributed through the end of 2020.

Food Pantry – Julie Green, Chair; Stephanie Garrett, Co-Chair

This year has seen an increase of 70% in the number of families served over last year.

Benevolence – Lucas Sorrells, Chair

We will be presenting \$500 checks to Bethel Middle & Bethel Elementary School for Christmas Shopping this week. We will also be giving \$500 to the Sherriff's Department to go to Bethel Students on the Shop With a Cop Day. We also decided to present \$500 checks to the Lake Logan and Center Pigeon Fire Departments for community support.

Maintenance – Ted Carr, Chair

Ted reported that there are several areas he is addressing including repairing the key-lock on the door to the Fellowship Hall. The committee will also be making some repairs on the ramp. He and Nancy Armstrong will coordinate on getting the ramp repaired and painted. (See photos above)

BRCO Committee News (continued)

Historic Preservation — Evelyn Coltman, Chair

As part of the ongoing filming process for the upcoming *Historic Schools of Bethel* DVD, the Historic Preservation Committee recently filmed a session at the Cruso School that featured Ann Crawford and Brenda Raulerson. Cruso School, built in 1928, is one of the few remaining early 20th century buildings in the county that has become a community center while retaining its educational institution vintage appearance.

Committee members have conducted a great deal of research concerning the location of 19th and 20th century educational structures in Bethel. The earliest school is considered to be a log structure built in 1825 that was situated near the juncture of Highway #276 and Sonoma Road. Another log building that served as a meeting house/church/school sat near today's Bethel Middle School gymnasium (date unknown). The first frame structure came into existence in 1838 near today's Bethel Middle School. Bethel Academy, an outstanding institution of higher learning, occupied a space during the late 1800s – the early 1920s where today's Masonic Lodge is standing on Birdsong Trail. The Reverend Riley Covin recently donated a photograph of Bethel Academy for our file library.

New photos of the Lavinia and Sunburst Post Offices have been added to the "Historic Bethel/Cruso Post Offices" section of the website. We are searching for photos of the following post offices in order to complete our post office section: Cecil, Cruso, Forks of Pigeon, Little East Fork, Livingston, Retreat, Springdale, and Spruce.

The committee was recently gifted information, photographs, and insight from researcher John Olin about the Cold Mountain B-25 Bomber crash that occurred on September 13, 1946, killing five service men. Prior to Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* book, this famous event brought hikers and researchers from all over the country. After Frazier's book, people hiked to Cold Mountain for a new reason.

Another gift includes Clark family photos and a 1976 *Foxfire* journal that featured several individuals from Cruso. The donation is from committee member, Mike Clark, who lives in Montana. Bill Holbrook donated documents concerning the 125-acre Confederate Veterans Memorial Forest and marker on the Blue Ridge Parkway that was established in 1956. The forest contains 125,000 Red Spruce trees – one tree for every soldier from North Carolina in the Confederate Army.

Committee members researched the history of a sawmill off of Little East Fork on Panther Branch Road and the Sapphire Mine on Shovel Creek off of Edwards Cove Road. Bill Terrell conducted a walk-about of the location of the Civil War era William Stewart Terrell House and the Terrell Store. Committee members have worked with Western Carolina University's Archive Department to identify several historical photos from the Plott family collection.

The committee has added the following names to the "Bethel Writers and Media Contributors" section of our website: Mary Hargrove (*Piney Grove Church History*), Ronnie Mills (*Quinlin*), Bill "Tater" Phillips (Nashville musician who has written numerous songs), Dr. Garrett Smathers (Bethel principal, teacher and coach who wrote the words to the "Bethel the Beautiful" school song as well as *Hawaii: The Fires of Life*), Caleb Smith (musician with Balsam Range Bluegrass Band who has written numerous songs), and Jim Van Cleve (Nashville musician who has written numerous songs).

Organizational History of BRCO

A November 1990 meeting initiated by Steve West, Haywood County Extension Agent, and Marilyn Coleman, WNC Communities representative, began the initial efforts to form a community club in Bethel.

Bethel Community Development Organization held its first official meeting on January 22, 1991, in the Bethel Middle School library. At that meeting attendees passed a temporary constitution. The group elected officers and focused the organization's efforts on preserving the rural nature of Bethel. Thirty-two people attended. The group agreed to meet the second Tuesday of each month.

During the years of existence, this original organization presided over Bethel Community Day during the 1990s and, in 1993, started the Bethel Half Marathon Race that has evolved into the longest continuing half marathon event in the state.

The organization came to be known as Bethel Community Organization and continued in some capacity until approximately 2000.

By 2000, rumblings from the County Commissioners indicated a desire by Haywood County to extend water and sewer services into Bethel. That announcement raised concerns among community residents that water and sewer extension would promote accelerated growth that would decimate rural landscapes with resulting degradation in water quality. A loosely organized group of approximately 30 citizens formed "Pigeon Valley Citizens for Rural Preservation" to counter the county's sewer extension efforts. By early 2006, members of Bethel Rural Community Organization, many of whom belonged to the concerned citizens group, encouraged Haywood County commissioners to allow Mars Hill College to conduct a telephone survey regarding the wishes of Bethel citizens. That survey revealed that a vast majority of Bethel citizens desired to retain the rural nature of the community, protect farmland and waterways, and emphasize the agricultural focus of the area. The survey ended the county's push to extend water and sewer services into Bethel.

Bethel Community Organization, during this transition period, blended interests of the original community organization with concerns of the Pigeon Valley Citizens for Rural Preservation group, and the two concepts melded into Bethel Rural Community Organization. The first available recorded minutes were from a meeting held on April 24, 2001, though the group met for several months prior. A record of regular meeting minutes began on July 17, 2001.

Bethel Rural Community Organization was incorporated on March 23, 2006 and became a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization on May 30, 2008.

The article above was written by Evelyn Coltman, BRCO Historic Preservation Committee Chair.