

**BURNSVILLE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Joint Special Meeting - Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 10am**  
**Burnsville Town Center**

On Wednesday, February 8, 2023, the Burnsville Town Council with Mayor Russell Fox and members Judy Buchanan, Denise Collier, Randy Ollis and Bill Wheeler present, held a Joint Special Meeting with the Yancey County Commissioners David Grindstaff, Mark Ledford, Stacey McEntyre-Greene, and Sandi Norton at the Burnsville Town Center. Also in attendance were Town staff members Heather Hockaday and Chad Fox, Yancey County staff members Donny Laws, Lynn Austin, and Sonya Morgan, Dogwood Health Trust's Sarah Grymes, Jennifer Bryan, and board member Jamie McMahan, Patrick Bowen of Bowen National Research, and McGill engineers Mike Dowd and Patrick Cusack. Phil Trew and Cory Osborne from the High Country Council of Governments moderated the meeting.

Call to Order - Mayor Fox, who presided, called the meeting to order for the Burnsville Town Council at 10am and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to have a joint work session with the Yancey County Commission to discuss housing and infrastructure.

Commissioner David Grindstaff called the meeting to order for the Yancey County Government. Mark Ledford seconded the motion.

Introductions - Phil Trew & Corey Osborne from High Country Council began the morning session with introductions. Former Yancey EDC Director Jamie McMahan introduced how the studies were funded, saying that Yancey County and the Town of Burnsville applied for a Dogwood Health Trust grant, receiving \$2.5 million. \$2.1 million has been earmarked for a residential development fund, with \$400,000 financing a comprehensive housing assessment and infrastructure study.

Overview & Findings of the Yancey County Housing Needs Assessment - Patrick Bowen from Bowen National Research presented on the 200 page Yancey County Housing Needs Assessment. He said that the study reviewed Yancey County as a whole and provided data on demographics, economics, trends, housing inventory, household changes, renter income, gaps in the market, and areas where the Town, County, and partner organizations could step in to address needs.

Mr. Bowen reviewed several demographic statistics such as a positive population trend and household growth since 2010. Households by age displayed an older population with a decline in ages 25 to 34. Data on renter household income suggested a need for affordable housing with some demand in higher income housing. The migration patterns implied that people are moving to metropolitan areas, common in rural America.

Mr. Bowen said that housing supply data suggested a concerning lack of available housing and that there appears to be a significant amount of pent up demand for senior housing. He said that this type of data would be very beneficial to developers, making the document a valuable marketing tool to demonstrate demand and help guide their decisions. He also highlighted data suggesting that three quarters of all rentals are non-conventional rentals, with an immediate need for assisted living facilities. The housing availability rate was significantly lower than what is needed to be considered healthy and he noted how much the median home price has increased recently. Mr. Bowen said that over 1500 current households are cost burdened with much of their income going towards housing. He reviewed several data points that suggested that current residents are struggling due to a lack of

availability and affordability, saying that there is a quality issue as the condition of many of the homes are below modern day housing standards.

Input from the community suggested a need for housing that is more affordable. An employer survey said that 40% of them would hire more if the housing was available.

The study documented advertised sites that could be development opportunities. Mr. Bowen said that being aware of what is available, outreach to developers, and getting involved in government programs could help begin the process of developing new housing. After reviewing a housing gap estimate, Mr. Bowen suggested that the County would need almost 1000 units to solve all of the housing issues.

Mr. Bowen reviewed a series of action initiatives. Recommendations included identifying where the focus should be, setting housing production goals, setting financial goals, finding funding sources, creating a position to spearhead the effort, communicating and educating stakeholders with a housing education program, and developing a marketing plan to attract developers and investors. The presentation concluded with a brief conversation on innovative ways that governments and employers are participating to encourage the building of housing.

Overview & Findings of the Yancey County/Town of Burnsville Infrastructure Master Plan - Mike Dowd and Patrick Cusack from McGill Associates began with a review of an update to the the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) which will include a new rate study, asset inventory, cost estimates, demographic and financial analysis, system and development fee update, and a water audit.

Mr. Cusack discussed the asset inventory update containing information such as age and expected life of Town facilities, aiding in proactive decision making. The data will be incorporated into the CIP which takes into account a ten year planning horizon. Projects will then be prioritized and fed into a financial model to help inform the process of funding the prioritized projects.

Mr. Cusack discussed population projections, capacity, and growth trends, projecting water treatment capacity used to be at 89% by 2032 and sewer treatment capacity at Pine Swamp to be at 71% used by 2032. With estimated growth the capacity projection jumps to 97%. Mr. Dowd added that if you connect the two sewer treatment systems, even with no expansion of the system, the capacity improves to 79% for the same time period.

Mike Dowd mentioned that 25% of the Town water supply is unaccounted for water or non-revenue water and how the water audit could help balance the amount of supply and demand, increasing capacity. Mrs. Hockday said that funding was in place to replace the aging Main Street waterlines.

The process of expanding wastewater treatment, getting additional permits from the state, and adding additional water capacity was discussed, including the two year legislative process to designate a new water source.

Mr. Dowd reviewed rough cost estimates for infrastructure to expand west. He said that it would cost \$10 million for an eight-inch waterline and another \$18 million for the sewer line and pump stations.

He said that the \$28 million would only serve a portion of the population on the west side of town. He added that expansions are harder to get grant funding for as they typically prefer the focus to be within your existing system.

Mr. Dowd said that next steps would be to incorporate the new GIS data, prioritize projects, complete the CIP, and local water emergency and water shortage response plans. He also mentioned performing a rate study, updating the financial model and SDF, beginning the lead and copper rule revisions, and conducting a water audit.

Recess for Lunch - Randy Ollis moved to recess the meeting at 11:50am. Judy Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried, the Council recessed for lunch.

The Afternoon Session was reconvened by Mayor Fox at 12:50pm.

Overview of Current Projects and Available Funding - Town Manager Heather Hockaday reviewed several ongoing ARPA and CDBG-I related projects.

County Manager Lynn Austin talked about \$13 million in recently approved funding. The projects that are earmarked include the construction of water wells at Bakers' Creek, obtaining more surrounding property if necessary, a sewer line extension up Charlie Brown Road, and \$3 million for work at the Pine Swamp WWTP. She also mentioned Dogwood funds to assist in adding sewer hookups to underserved areas.

Sarah Grymes from Dogwood Health Trust said that \$3.9 million had come to Yancey County for various projects, with \$2.1 million being for affordable workforce housing. She said that Dogwood helps hire grant writers, helps communities work with non-profit developers, helps with land acquisitions, and could help with pre-development costs in a variety of ways.

Identify Priority Projects - Mike Dowd reviewed a list of additional priorities that could follow the currently funded projects with water projects such as meter replacements, constructing a storage tank, and repairs to aging water lines at Green Mountain Drive, Meadow Road, Love Fox trailer park, West Burnsville Church Road, Burnsville School Road, and Bill Young Road. On the sewer side, he said that projects would include work on nearly a dozen aging sewer lines and an expansion of the Micaville WWTP.

There was some discussion of an industrial park with the County. Lynn Austin said that one of her top priorities is an expansion of the Micaville WWTP. Mr. Dowd estimated that the Micaville Plant would cost \$900,000 to rehab and \$9 million to build a mirror plant, doubling capacity. He said that the almost complete connection to Micaville, near the OMC pump station, would require 1000 linear feet of force main and that the size of the pump is limited.

Mrs. Hockaday mentioned possible funds to help raise treatment capacity at the Pine Swamp WWTP. She said that already made improvements have helped with the efficiency of the plant and the inflow and infiltration (I & I) improvements have helped. Improvements will also be made to the West and East Main sewer interceptors, addressing the primary I & I concerns, as they are both near

waterways. Mr. Dowd said that with the improvements to the Pine Swamp WWTP, not including the connection to Micaville, capacity is estimated to be in the same range for the next decade.

Corey Osborne, referring to the data, said that water capacity was more challenged and asked about water production with wells at Baker's Creek. Mr. Dowd said that wells are hard to estimate and their viability will not be known until they drill test wells. He reiterated that the current water plant is maxed out because of geography.

Sarah Grymes from Dogwood went over several ways that they can partner on housing developments such as pre-development grants and help with staffing. She emphasized the need for senior housing and how it could free up homes for younger families. Other efforts to increase housing included working with nonprofits for transitional housing, community assessments, grants to home repair partners, and grant initiatives for workforce development. She also referred to a high school program that builds homes and trains students to be job ready.

A discussion on how the County could develop the Brown property was had. Jamie McMahan said that the terrain would be a determining factor.

County Commissioner Mark Ledford said that sewer upgrades and connecting to the Micaville WWTP should be prioritized, with the rest of the funds used to expand westward as far as they could go. There was a general agreement among both governments that the upgrades and connection should be the first two priorities.

Mrs. Hockaday reviewed plans and possible funds from the State to upgrade the .5 plant at Pine swamp and add an additional .5 plant. She said that the bigger issue is the treatment capacity the Town has at the water plant. There was a discussion about wells being the best solution.

Mr. Dowd said that in addition to the connection and upgrades to the Micaville Sewer plant, he would recommend doing a phase one to maximize the amount of funds available, seeing how far they can get. Lynn Austin said that in the meantime they could be exploring available land that could take advantage of the infrastructure.

Corey Osborne circled back around to housing and how to help close the gaps proven out in the housing study. Mrs. Hockaday said that expertise to lead the effort would be helpful. Mr. Ledford said that getting the infrastructure in place is an important first step. Mayor Fox said that he would like to identify obtainable properties first, as there are limited options. Jamie McMahan said that the focus may be different for the Town as the County focuses on expanding west. He said that the Town may want to focus on how to address deteriorating housing stock, rehabbing homes, or acquiring infill properties. Mrs. Hockaday said that there were close to eighty parcels in Burnsville's 2021 Comprehensive Land Use Plan that would support smaller pockets of housing development. She said that housing and increasing inventory is a need and should be a priority.

County Manager Lynn Austin had to leave for another meeting.

Having a person to focus on housing was discussed. Sarah Grymes said that Dogwood could possibly help finance or partner on finding a person to lead a housing effort.

The notion of a housing consortium was asked about by Sarah Grymes. Phil Trew said that creation of one could be talked about with the Executive Director of High Country, an organization that could possibly facilitate the creation of a housing consortium for Yancey, Mitchell, and Avery counties. Mrs. Grymes said a housing consortium creates a housing plan and makes an area eligible for annual monies, helping to fund staff. Mr. McMahan said that Yancey, Mitchell, and Avery are the only counties to not have a housing consortium and it would be nice to see all of the counties under the Dogwood footprint have the same access to funding.

Phil Trew reviewed the priorities of connecting to and rehabbing the Micaville WWTP, extending utilities to the west, and adding staff to help with the intersection of housing and infrastructure. Mr. Trew said that it would be important to address the need for internal capacity through either a regional housing consortium or a single Yancey County effort. He said that including developers in future discussions would be helpful since the housing study contains a great deal of data to share.

Mayor Fox said that it should be a priority to identify a site that works for a project and is close enough to HWY 19 and a potential infrastructure connection. Jamie McMahan suggested that the Dogwood money, already available, could fund a deeper dive into the availability of suitable properties. Mrs. Hockaday said that earmarking money to expand on the two studies should be considered. The group discussed looking at properties west of Town to Opossum Trot Road for McGill to focus on.

Adjourn - With there being no further business, Randy Ollis moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:02pm. Judy Buchanan seconded the motion, meeting adjourned.

  
J. Chad Fox, Town Clerk



  
T. Russell Fox, Mayor

**YANCEY COUNTY & TOWN OF BURNSVILLE**  
**HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**JOINT WORK SESSION**

**FEBRUARY 8, 2023**  
**10am – 3pm**

**Morning Session**

- 10:00 am Elected Boards Call to Order**
- 10:05 am Introductions**
- 10:15 am Goals for Today's Work Session**  
**Phil Trew & Cory Osborne, High Country Council of Governments**
- 10:25 am Overview & Findings of the Yancey County Housing Needs Assessment**  
**Patrick Bowen, Bowen National Research**
- 11:25 am Overview & Findings of the Yancey County/Town of Burnsville Infrastructure Master Plan**  
**Mike Dowd, McGill Associates**
- 11:55 am Elected Boards Adjourn for Lunch**

**Lunch (noon – 1:00 pm)**

*Lunch will be provided on-site.*

**Afternoon Session**

- 1:00 pm Elected Boards Call to Order**
- 1:05 pm Overview of Current Projects and Available Funding**  
**County & Town Staff**
- 1:25 pm GROUP EXERCISE: Identify Specific Housing, Development, & Infrastructure Goals**
- 2:00 pm GROUP DISCUSSION: What Barriers Exist? What is the role of the County & Town?**
- 2:20 pm GROUP EXERCISE: Identify Priority Projects**
- 3:00 pm Adjourn**

Category	Action/Initiative
Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Outline Community's Overall Purpose &amp; Priorities</i></li> <li>• <i>Establish Housing Production Goals</i></li> <li>• <i>Establish Housing Funding Goals</i></li> </ul>
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify and Retain Expertise to Advise on and/or Lead Housing Initiatives</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify and Establish Housing Partnerships</i></li> </ul>
Education & Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Develop a Housing Education Program</i></li> <li>• <i>Learn from Others</i></li> </ul>
Housing Preservation & Development Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consider Establishing a Land Bank</i></li> <li>• <i>Explore the Creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund</i></li> <li>• <i>Consider Implementing/Modifying Housing Policies</i></li> <li>• <i>Explore Housing Programs, Funding Sources, and Initiatives</i></li> </ul>
Monitor Market Conditions & Keep Public Informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Periodically Assess Key Market Data to Adjust Goals &amp; Priorities</i></li> <li>• <i>Keep the Community Informed</i></li> </ul>