

22 January 2025

**Beech Community volunteer meeting with WNC Communities, an association dedicated to supporting WNC mountain communities.**

**Host:** Susan Garrett, WNC Communities, Community Programs Manager

**Participants:** Beth Berry, Larry Dodson, Bob Nesbitt, Pat Nesbitt, Erica Waltemade, Eric Wenzel, Cindy Wilson

**Background:**

Hurricane Helene sparked the interest among many Community members to increase our community engagement, including volunteering and programs to support the local community. Cindy Wilson and Larry Dodson reached out to WNC Communities to seek support to deepen our capabilities based on best practices identified by WNC Communities and other mountain communities.

## Key Take-a-ways

### Joining WNC Communities

There was discussion on the benefits of Beech Community re-joining [WNC Communities and what that process is like](#). Benefits include opportunities to learn from other organizations about what has worked for them as well as what has not. Susan talked about a past program where 2 computer labs were set up at community centers, and a future WNCC program where computer labs will be set up at many centers. WNCC offers other opportunities that benefit local communities financially through grants, with community building and organizational support, etc. Applications for WNCC are due early August.

### Honoring Volunteers

Susan Garrett highlighted the importance of gaining community involvement and honoring volunteers. Erica Waltemade and Beth Berry highlighted their own experience and work engaging and honoring individuals for their volunteering and professional work. Cindy Wilson reported on the outpouring of support Beech Community received after Hurricane Helene.

### Trust

Erica Waltemade and Beth Berry highlighted the importance of building trust across the community and that trust is an integral part of a good community. Susan Garrett underscored this as a key ingredient.

### Legacy and Newcomer Families

Pat Nesbitt highlighted the importance of honoring tradition but being open to change. Cindy Wilson shared about technology as one example of change that needs to be embraced and the remote door lock as something the community center has implemented technology-wise. Erica

Waltemade added that some believe there is a tension between legacy families and newcomer families to the community, but that she thinks there is a deep appreciation and collaboration happening across community members new and old. She also shared her appreciation for the traditions and community legacy. Beth Berry and Eric Wenzel voiced their support for honoring community traditions such as the 4th of July program and the broad support the community has for tradition.

### **By-Laws**

Those present, as well as other community members, believe that there is a need for well-defined, publicly available by-laws to support effective community governance. Larry Dodson and Cindy Wilson agreed to work together on creating an updated draft of by-laws for Beech Community. Beth Berry also volunteered to be involved in this process. Susan Garrett provided a by-laws template based on leading practices the WNC Communities has experienced to guide the discussion.

### **Next Steps**

**By-Laws:** Larry, Cindy, and Beth will connect on next steps for updating by-laws to make them relevant and functional for today's community. An invitation to others will be made for public feedback.

**February 14th 9am** - Meeting of active community volunteers to consider next steps for community building. Agenda TBD. Location, 45 Lula Cove (off Moody).. Larry Dodson's residence. Feb 13th Eve is the back-up date.

### **Steps to re-join WNC Communities**

In addition to having and following organizational by-laws, Susan Garrett noted that to be eligible to apply, a community must be formally organized with a President, VP, Secretary and Treasurer working together with others to improve the quality of life for all residents, and be engaging a broad range of community residents in various programs that have a positive impact on families, seniors and youth.

It was noted by Eric that many community organizations have a larger group of directors that have oversight for community programs. For example, Sandy Mush community has eleven (11) directors; Big Ivy has nine (9) director roles; the Leicester Community Center has nineteen (19) directors.

Cindy Wilson stated that the current officers are herself as President and Mandy Maude as treasurer. She also added that Ryan Baldwin is a new officer responsible for social media.