

Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Western Piedmont Council of Governments. Don't forget to add jason.toney@wpcog.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

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September 2020

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Community & Regional Planning

Time is Running Out to Participate in the 2020 Census

The 2020 Census response deadline is **October 31, 2020**, and as of September 1, 20% to 25% of households in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties have not been counted yet.

The Census data brings \$1,823 per person per year in funding back to our region for health care, education, highways, community development and more. You can safely do your part to provide for the future of your neighborhood by completing the Census online (my2020census.gov), by phone (844-330-2020 in English, 844-468-2020 in Spanish), or by paper form postmarked by **October 31**. Census workers are also going door-to-door now to complete the 2020 Census count. You may get a visit from a Census worker even if you have already responded. Although a second visit can be frustrating, Census Director Steven Dillingham explains why:



Census takers are now visiting households across the nation that have not yet responded. Understandably, some households that have already responded have expressed confusion over why they too are being visited. These visits are part of our efforts to be absolutely sure that we count everyone. If you get a visit and you've already responded, please be patient and kind and answer the census taker's questions. So, if you've already responded to the 2020 Census, why might a census taker visit?

The most common reason is that we're clarifying information about your address. You may have responded using your address instead of the Census ID printed on your census invitation. This ID links your response to your address so that we count you in the right place. We've received millions of responses that used an address instead of a Census ID. Some of these addresses don't match one already on our list, so we're following up with those to be sure we count them in the right location. If you're in that situation, you may in fact get two visits-one to verify the address you responded with and another to get a response from your address the way it appears on our list. We want to be sure we count everyone.

In rarer cases, we may have two addresses on our list that refer to the same housing unit. This occasionally happens if an address update we receive from the U.S. Postal Service or state and local governments is different enough in spelling or formatting that it's not clear the address is the same as one already on our list. Out of an abundance of caution, we would include both addresses in the census. If we get a response from one of those addresses, we still need to follow up on and resolve the other one.

Finally, for a small number of addresses, we conduct a second interview as part of our quality assurance measures. I know that being visited when you've already responded may be annoying, and even a bit confusing, but please be patient with our census takers-their work is critical to the mission of the Census Bureau and to your community receiving its fair share of funding for critical services. We are making sure that we count everyone in the right place and not leave anyone out.

And please don't worry about being counted twice. By cooperating with the census taker, you're helping us count you in the right place, and we have established methods and processes to remove duplicates. We would much rather have to remove some duplicates than miss you entirely or risk your community being underrepresented and underfunded.

Time is running out to participate in 2020 Census. Please take a few minutes to go online or call to fill out the 2020 Census form. Thanks for your participation in the 2020 Census.

Article by Taylor Dellinger

Regional Housing Authority Updates, Reminders and Announcements

The Regional Housing Authority (RHA) has recently received several notices from landlords regarding non-payment of rent from Section 8 tenants. The RHA would like to remind all Section 8 participants that paying their portion of rent is a family obligation. Under the HUD guidelines, the RHA is able to terminate a family if they break a family obligation. The RHA is strongly encouraging families who have had NO income changes to pay their portion of rent each month. The RHA will also re-calculate rent for any family that has had an income change. Please report any changes in income to your County Housing Specialist. For tenants residing in Alexander or Catawba County, please contact Kala Guido, 828.485.4282 or kala.guido@wpcog.org. For tenants residing in Burke or Caldwell County, please contact Ashley Dale, 828.485.4227 or ashley.dale@wpcog.org.

Recently, the RHA was awarded 40 Mainstream Vouchers. These vouchers are for non-elderly disabled families. The RHA is currently using the existing waiting list to offer those vouchers to the public. This addition of 40 vouchers makes 171 total Mainstream Vouchers for the RHA.

In August, the RHA signed contracts with two different property owners to begin Project Based Voucher (PBV) Contracts. A Release for Proposals (RFP) was advertised to the public requesting PBV applications for up to 20 vouchers for pre-existing properties within the RHA jurisdiction Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba County, NC. Two agencies responded with a need for these vouchers and the RHA was able to accept their proposals. Twenty Housing Choice Vouchers will now be used for "Hard to House" families. Hard to House families are those experiencing substance abuse disorders, behavioral health disorders or recently released from incarceration. The RHA is working with two community partners, Integrated Care of Greater Hickory and Safe Harbor to use these vouchers to provide rental subsidy while the participants receive specialized treatment planning for behavioral health disorders and/or substance abuse disorders.

Pictured below are Kala Guido | RHA Housing Specialist, Corey Richardson | CEO ICGH, and Stephanie Hanvey | RHA Director, in front of the property that passed inspection with flying colors. The RHA is extremely proud to partner with both organizations to provide decent, safe and sanitary housing while residents receive the specialized treatment they need. The RHA staff is looking forward to sharing several success stories from our PBV families.



Reminder, the RHA has transitioned to Housing Management Software. Please use our new Housing Manager Portal <https://housing.wpcog.net/>. Through the portal, waiting list clients can check their status on the waiting list and retrieve their number in line. Landlords are able to track their monthly payments for each of their tenants, and 1099s will be available through this website in 2021. Lastly, current tenants can check this site for updates to their rent portions due to income changes or rental increases.

Transportation

Greenway Launches Catawba Re-Route 2021

WPCOG is assisting Greenway Public Transportation on a recently launched community-led effort to re-design their fixed-route bus system. Branded "Catawba Re-Route 2021," the year-long project will follow a community-led process to recommend the first potential bus system overhaul in at least ten years. The project will involve current riders, as well as community stakeholders, like area non-profits, major employers, and local governments. To learn more, visit the project web page at: www.mygreenway.org/catawba-re-route-2021

The project will explore bus route changes within Hickory, Conover, and Newton, as well as expansion scenarios beyond these cities. Now through October, the project seeks public input on where bus service is needed, plus other ways to improve bus service. To provide your input and share with others in your community, visit the initial survey at: catawbasurvey.metroquest.com/

After compiling survey results and other comments, several route scenarios will be evaluated. These will include cost-neutral options for existing funding partners, plus optional scenarios for potential new partners. These alternatives will then go back out to the public for comment to help inform the preferred scenario to tentatively be adopted in spring 2021. The end goal is to implement a newly enhanced system in summer 2021.

Article by Brian Horton

Workforce Development Board

Stepping Up to the Challenge!

Through the COVID-19 impacts of the past six months our regional NCWorks system has stepped up to the challenge, tackling virtual platforms and continuing an effective customer outreach plan. We have provided 52 scholarships just in July and August, adding to that are seven virtual job fairs and over 1,600 outreach calls to jobseeker and business customers.

In the last month we have also added virtual workshops covering topics like Resume Prep, Interviewing Skills, and Financial Budgeting. Beginning in September, the Western Piedmont NCWorks Career Centers reinstated the monthly HIRE (Helping Individuals Regain Employment) meetings, hosting workforce partners virtually so that work can continue and be strengthened by what we do together as a workforce system. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tiktok!

The Last 28 days of Our Facebook Impact/Insights

Insights

[See All](#)

Last 28 days : Sep 7 - Oct 4 ▼

People Reached

14,943

▲ 85%

Post Engagements

1,281

▲ 24%

Page Likes

35

▲ 67%



VIRTUAL EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS

October 2020

RESUMES 101

Learn tips to create a Resume that will get you the interview!

Tuesday, October 13th @ 11am

EXPUNGEMENT

Do you or someone you know qualify? Learn what you need to know about having charges removed from criminal records.

Tuesday October 20th @ 2pm

INTERVIEWING

Learn tips on how to ACE a job interview!

Tuesday October 27th @ 2pm

Call your local NCWorks Career Center to REGISTER!

(See information below)



A proud partner of the
American Job Center
network

www.ncworks.gov

NCWorks Career Center-Alexander

604 7th St. SW | Taylorsville, NC 28681 | (828) 632-4631

NCWorks Career Center-Burke

720 East Union St | Morganton, NC 28655 | (828) 438-6161

NCWorks Career Center-Caldwell

1909 Hickory Blvd SE | Lenoir, NC 28645 | (828) 759-4680

NCWorks Career Center-Catawba

403 Conover Station SE | Conover, NC 28613 | (828) 466-5535



www.westernpiedmontworks.org

1880 Second Ave NW
Hickory, NC 28601
828.322.9191

The NCWorks Career Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services. Auxiliary aids or services for individuals with disabilities are available upon request.

Article by Wendy Johnson

Area Agency on Aging
Exercise Your Right to Vote!



Take a drive down any local highway or turn on the TV and you will soon realize election season is here! But due to COVID-19 and social distancing, this year's voting process may look a little different for some voters. Whether you choose to vote in person or by mail in ballot it is important to be familiar with North Carolina's voting process. Here are a few facts about voting in North Carolina.

- You must be registered to vote by October 9, 2020 in order to vote in the 2020 election. You can register to vote online at <https://www.ncsbe.gov/registering> or at your county Board of Election office.
- You have the right to vote by absentee ballot. Voting absentee ballot is a three step process done by requesting a ballot through the State Board of Election, completing the ballot, then returning the ballot either in person to your County Board of Elections, in person to an early voting site during the early voting period, or by mail to your county Board of Elections.
- The deadline to request your absentee ballot is 5pm Tuesday, October 27th. It is best to request your ballot as soon as possible as North Carolina is expecting a larger than usual number of absentee ballots. You can request your ballot through the State Board of Elections at <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/vote-mail/absentee-ballot-tools>. You may also request your county Board of Elections mail you a copy of the absentee ballot request form which can be returned by mail, fax, or email to your county Board of Elections.
- It is not currently possible to vote online but you can request and track your absentee ballot using this website <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/vote-mail/absentee-ballot-tools>.
- The deadline for returning your ballot is 5pm Tuesday, November 3, 2020. You may deliver your ballot in person to your county Board of Election or mail in your ballot which must be postmarked by 5pm on Election Day. Only a voter, voter's near relative, legal guardian, or Multipartisan Assistance Team (special teams provided by your county to assist with the voting process) may return your ballot. Do not give it to someone else to return.
- You do not need a photo ID to vote by mail or in person.
- In 2020, the in-person Early Voting period begins Thursday, October 15, and ends Saturday, October 31. You may cast your ballot at any Early Voting site in your county.
- Curbside voting is available for eligible voters. To see if you are eligible, visit <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/help-voters-disabilities/curbside-voting> or contact your county Board of Elections.
- Long-Term Care residents (those living in facilities like assisted livings and nursing homes) have the right to vote. Only the resident, a family member, or a Multipartisan Team member can complete and return the ballot to the board of elections. If you or a loved one need assistance with the voting process, notify a facility representative or contact your county Board of Elections.

For more information about voting in North Carolina you can visit <https://www.ncsbe.gov/> or contact your

county Board of Elections. Happy Voting!

Alexander County Board of Elections

370 1st Avenue, SW

PO Box 326

Taylorsville, NC 28681

www.alexandercountync.gov/departments/board-of-elections/

Phone: 828-632-1381

Fax: 828-632-1381

Burke County Board of Elections

2128 S. Sterling Street

PO Box 798

Morganton, NC 28680

www.burkenc.org/1264/Board-of-Elections

Phone: 828-764-9010

Fax: 828-764-9011

Caldwell County Board of Elections

120 Hospital Avenue

Lenoir, NC 28645

<https://www.caldwellcountync.org/elections>

Phone: 828-757-1342

Fax: 828-757-1195

Catawba County Board of Elections

145 Government Drive

PO Box 132

Newton, NC 28658

www.catawbacountync.gov/county-services/elections/

Phone: 828-464-2424

Fax: 828-464-9832

Article by Christina Franklin

Community & Economic Development

NC Commerce Awards Grants for Burke Businesses

The North Carolina Department of Commerce has awarded two grants to help businesses in Burke County and create more than 150 new, full-time jobs.

UNIX Packaging, a California-based bottling company, received a \$500,000 Rural Economic Development Building Reuse grant to renovate a 319,000-square-foot building in Morganton. The company is a contract manufacturer of branded and private label beverages. UNIX Packaging will create 151 new jobs and invest nearly \$3.7 million. The project is part of an overall investment of \$19 million by the company that ultimately will create 226 new, full-time jobs.

Meanwhile, Silver Creek Family Practice - a medical facility in Glen Alpine - has been awarded a \$60,000 Rural Health Care grant for a new building. The health care plans to create 6 new, full-time jobs and will invest more than \$500,000.

WPCOG Staff provided assistance to both businesses in writing and submitting the grants to NC Commerce. Additional support was provided by Burke County, Town of Glen Alpine, and Burke Development, Inc.

Article by Paul Teague

All scheduled meetings are currently being conducted electronically. For a listing of upcoming meetings and information on how to participate or attend, please visit www.wpcog.org/electronic-public-meetings.

Stay Connected



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www.wpcog.org