

Robert Shepherd

Side 1:

[1/1] Introduction, Land-of-Sky Regional Council acts as a "broker, catalyst and planner."

[1/8] He graduated from N.C. State in economic research and as a native of North Carolina wanted to make his home here. His predecessor was fired and he was hired in 1973.

[1/43] The early concern of the council regarded the dams and local distrust of the big government represented by the TVA.

[1/56] The TVA plan was defeated and the river remained free flowing but there was no access to the river over 117 miles. He and his group were responsible for establishing public access points for fishermen and boaters along the river which flows through the 4 counties.

[1/71] The attitude of "awful Asheville and big Buncombe" is diminishing as some are reluctant to partner with Asheville but realize that the future is tied to what happens to Asheville.

[1/92] Counties are assessed according to population. Studies which necessitate more than a day special work are charged to the requesting group.

[1/107] Assistance to the aging requires the largest amount of time and resources. "Regional Vision '95" is an ongoing study which hopes to anticipate further needs. One strategic project is the study of I-26 corridor with the Corridor Association. The council works with tourism groups, economic promotion programs and tele-communication. Free time is left to assist groups in making applications for state and federal funds.

[1/151] The council has the expertise in grant application and knows how to help the city and county secure funding.

[1/177] The service to the aging takes the largest expenditure - such as noon-time meals (held at congregate sites), in-home services, home health aid, homemaker services and volunteer assistance. The council submits guidelines and contracts with profit or non-profit organizations to render the service. There is no "means test" for the services and meals are usually served in park and recreation facilities - depending on the counties needs.

[1/215] In three counties (not Buncombe) jobs were secured for 5,000-6,000 people a year in low-skilled positions.

[1/297] His position is in relating needs of the 4 counties to Raleigh and then Washington, DC.

[1/234] The council is headquartered in Asheville because of the convenience in transportation - and 1/2 of the members are in the Asheville area - Woodfin, Weaverville, Black Mountain, Montreat and Biltmore Forest.

[1/255] This "intra-governmental vehicle" helps counties create guidelines and help in implementation.

[1/264] TVA has not been well-received in the area in the past, with picketing demonstrations at the airport. However over time the people have seen that the TVA has something to offer and services have been requested. This has taken education and cooperation.

[1/307] "Carolina West" is working on market development for 7 counties. The competition used to be between counties, now it is with the rest of the country.

[1/323] Unemployment is low but so are salaries. While anyone who wants to work can find a job, it takes two earners to keep a family above the poverty level. Service jobs and tourism are being encouraged. "North Carolina is the land of the working poor." By improving education and skill training, manufacturers can be attracted.

[1/384] Cleaning the river has had an impact on industry. The French Broad River Task Force had a regional water forum which brought the government, business, industry and various independent groups together. The Jean Webb River Park was a development from the task force and the River Foundation is self-sustaining. [RiverLink, Jean Webb]

[1/473] The council tries to "work itself out of jobs" and go on to other needs.

[1/490] There are 100 people working on "Vision '95" which concerns growth management and land use planning throughout the 4 counties. Strategies for getting public input on the need for maintaining balance between property rights and mountain beauty with pure water is an ongoing project.

Side 2:

[2/1] Several plans are being discussed regarding the route of I-26 which will go to Tennessee.

[2/26] The controversy regarding I-240 which went through Beaucatcher Mountain is reviewed.

[2/69] The dichotomy of growth or no-growth is constantly being addressed by environmental groups and groups which see that without growth and a tax base for education the area will die.

[2/101] Small towns have no planning staff to plan for annexation and the council helps with suggestion. N.C. is considered to have one of the most progressive annexation laws.

[2/140] He recounts the major contribution of the council over the past 19 years. Schools have been built, health facilities and roads have been funded. The program is flexible with a minimum of red tape and the greatest input is through the local governments. Its existence was threatened by Reagan, and the stand to be taken by Clinton is unsure. [Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton]

[2/184] Key vocational areas are stimulated by assisting public schools and community colleges to coordinate programs. Job training youth programs - year round and summer - help raise educational standards.

[2/214] The Asheville Regional Housing Consortium (ARC), through assistance of the council, was able to secure a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. Over a 5-year period from this fund, the state and federal governments, several million dollars will go into low income housing. [Mr. Bush, Mr. Kemp]

[2/245] There is an infrastructure in all counties for care for the homeless. He is a past board president of the A-B Community Christian Ministry which represents about 100 churches and provides volunteers, food, clothing, furniture and shelter.

[2/275] The Land-of-Sky Council is an intergovernmental organization which allows the staff to be creative.

[2/291] He has a wife and two sons. His oldest is an assistant city manager, the second son a musician. [Brenda Lawrence Shepherd]