

ASHEVILLE
 Mayor Esther Manheimer
 Chair
CORNELIUS
 Mayor Chuck Travis
 Vice Chair
GREENVILLE
 Mayor Allen Thomas
 Treasurer
RALEIGH
 Mayor Nancy McFarlane
 Past Chair
APEX
 Mayor Lance Olive
BOONE
 Mayor Rennie Brantz
BURLINGTON
 Mayor Ian Baltitus
CARRBORO
 Mayor Lydia Lavelle
CARY
 Mayor Harold Weinbrecht
CHAPEL HILL
 Mayor Pam Hemminger
CHARLOTTE
 Mayor Jennifer Roberts
CONCORD
 Mayor J. Scott Padgett
DURHAM
 Mayor William V. "Bill" Bell
GARNER
 Mayor Ronnie Williams
GASTONIA
 Mayor John Bridgeman
GOLDSBORO
 Mayor Chuck Allen
GREENSBORO
 Mayor Nancy Vaughan
HICKORY
 Mayor Rudy Wright
HIGH POINT
 Mayor Bill Bencini
HOLLY SPRINGS
 Mayor Dick Sears
JACKSONVILLE
 Mayor Sammy Phillips
KANNAPOLIS
 Mayor Darrell Hinnant
MATTHEWS
 Mayor Jim Taylor
MONROE
 Mayor Bobby Kilgore
MOORESVILLE
 Mayor Miles Atkins
NEW BERN
 Mayor Dana Outlaw
ROCKY MOUNT
 Mayor David Combs
SALISBURY
 Mayor Karen Alexander
SANFORD
 Mayor Chet Mann
STATESVILLE
 Mayor Costi Kutteh
WINSTON-SALEM
 Mayor Allen Joines
WILMINGTON
 Mayor Bill Saffo
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 Julie White
 jwhite@metromayors.com
 919-539-7871
 3605 Glenwood Ave
 Suite 500
 Raleigh, NC 27612
 (919) 787-8880
 www.ncmetromayors.com

Metro Mayors Meet in Durham

Members of the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition held their annual meeting in Durham to celebrate the group's 15th anniversary, to elect new leadership, and to prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

Durham Mayor Bill Bell hosted the group which included events at the Durham Bulls Athletic Park and a tour of downtown Durham redevelopment.



Members of the Metro Mayors gather to celebrate the group's 15th anniversary and legislative dinner.

Attorney General Roy Cooper spoke to the mayors about his priorities for the coming year and his commitment to supporting economic growth. The Metro Mayors also heard from Attorney General-Elect Josh Stein and State Treasurer-Elect Dale Folwell about their perspectives on the state.

As part of the annual meeting, the group celebrated its 15th anniversary in conjunction with the legislative awards dinner. Sen. Rick Gunn of Alamance County and Rep. John Torbett of Gaston County were honored for their support of the Metro Mayors' priorities and their work in the legislature.

The Metro Mayors received a briefing on the upcoming legislative session and adopted the principles that will guide the organization's policy priorities and work at the General Assembly.

Looking Forward

The Metro Mayors recently celebrated its 15th anniversary. It was a wonderful occasion to see friends old and new and remember the genesis of the Coalition. We were born out of a spirit of cooperation and innovation and, most importantly, a shared commitment to moving our cities and state toward a bright future.

There have been many changes in the last 15 years. Our membership has grown, and our strategies have evolved. Our state has changed, too. We have more people moving to our cities every day, and our economy continues to shift toward high-tech, tourism and service. We begin this year with a new governor in Raleigh and a new president in Washington.

In the midst of all that change, our commitment to doing right for our cities, our people and our state has not changed. We continue to support policies and strategies that will grow our economy, keep our citizens safe, and support our local communities. We continue to work with our legislators to be a voice for cities in Raleigh. And we continue to partner with leaders and organizations that share our values and understand we have to work together for North Carolina.

I am proud to have been selected as the new chair of the Metro Mayors, and I know all the members of the

Finally, the mayors elected leadership for the organization for the coming year and who will



Members of the Metro Mayors at the group's annual meeting.

advocate on its behalf at the General Assembly. Asheville Mayor Esther Manheimer is the new chair; Cornelius Mayor Chuck Travis is vice chair; and Greenville Mayor Allen Thomas is treasurer. Past



Wool E. Bull greets Rep. John Torbett at the Metro Mayor's annual meeting.

Chair and Raleigh Mayor Nancy McFarlane and at-large officers, Concord Mayor Scott Padgett, Carrboro Mayor Lydia Lavelle, Apex Mayor Lance Olive, Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan, and Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts round out the leadership.



**Message from the Chair
& Asheville Mayor
Esther Manheimer**

Let's bridge NC's urban, rural divide

BY ESTHER MANHEIMER AND GRANT GODWIN

Esther Manheimer is the mayor of Asheville and chairwoman of The North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition. Grant Godwin is chairman of The North Carolina Rural Center

We – as a country and as a state – are inundated with narratives of division with constant reminders of our differences and our conflicts. Much of the country is still reeling from one of the most divisive elections in our history, and much of the current political rhetoric pits “us” against “them.”

Across our state and nation, one particular narrative has gained a stubborn foothold: the narrative of the rural-urban divide.

While that rhetoric may be politically expedient, it is not productive for our state as a whole. Our organizations – the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition and The Rural Center – understand that our rural communities are not competing against our cities. In reality, our fortunes are inextricably linked.

We cannot afford to have winners and losers as we work to secure a bright future for our entire state.

For North Carolina to be successful – for any of our communities to be successful – we have to work together across rural and urban lines. We have to support policies that create jobs and opportunity in all parts of our state. And our legislators and policy leaders need to embrace specific strategies to accomplish that goal. As a state, we cannot be afraid to innovate, to step outside our boxes or to reach out to the “other side.”

In short, it is time to throw out the divisive talking points about the rural-urban divide and get down to work, because we have more in common than we generally recognize. Shifting resources from one pot to another is not going to cut it. We need to make the pot bigger and allocate more strategically. We need to acknowledge that communities starved for resources inevitably fight with one another.

As a state, we need to focus on how urban and rural communities are linked as economic regions, as evidenced by our economic hubs and their commuting patterns. In this new economy, city limits and county

lines blur. New jobs anywhere in the region are a win for everyone as the employees to fill those jobs will come from throughout the region.

The Rural Center identifies 26 rural counties that are part of North Carolina's metropolitan regions. Those 26 counties account for more than 1.8 million rural people, nearly 46 percent of our state's total rural population. We must learn to appreciate the shared economic fate of our rural and urban counties.

We need to invest in the infrastructure – roads, rail, water and broadband – needed to make those regions successful. We need to understand the interconnected nature of our rural and urban communities, and acknowledge that improved health care and access to quality education for one resident pays dividends for us all.

We need to celebrate how each region's unique assets make our state better and at the same time fearlessly address the weaknesses that keep them from achieving their full potential. That's how we will accelerate job creation, attraction and retention, and create an economy that works for all of us.

We understand this. We have heard it in our large metro centers and in our small towns. It is what we see in communities across the state every day. It is why we – the mayor of Asheville and chair of an organization representing the more than three and a half million people who live in our state's largest cities, along with the chair of the organization that serves 80 rural counties – have pledged to work together closely on policy issues, and especially on economic development, and focus on building bridges between urban and rural.

Many of our legislators already understand this, and we are thankful for their support. House Speaker Tim Moore said on opening day of the 2017 legislative session that we need policies that allow cities to prosper but bring rural areas along as well. He is right – we need to change our thinking and our priorities.

Join with us and let's get to work charting an economic pathway that works for all of us. Let's be bold, be innovative, be creative. Let's lift up all our communities and leave behind the rhetoric of “us” versus “them.” It is how we will succeed and how we will unite North Carolina for generations to come.

This op/ed appeared in *The News & Observer* in January 2017.

City News

Rocky Mount Renovates Parks

Thanks to a grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and the nonprofit play-center organization KaBoom, the city of Rocky Mount received the funds to renovate two parks-Holly Street and Buck Leonard parks. The playgrounds are a part of Healthy Places NC, a long-term trust initiative to improve the health of 10 to 12 rural North Carolina counties over the next decade.

Winston-Salem Prevents Fires

The Winston-Salem Fire Department took a proactive step in fighting cooking fires by going door-to-door in targeted neighborhoods to distribute stove-top fire suppressors, canisters that attach with magnets to the stove hood. If a fire starts, the flame makes the bottom of the canister pop open, dumping a powder that smothers the fire before it can spread. In all, 75 sets of stove-top fire suppressors were installed.

Burlington Honored for Innovative Program

Burlington Recreation & Parks received the NC Recreation & Parks Association “Innovative Program Award” for the Hikes with Hounds program, where volunteers explore Burlington's trails with an adoptable dog from Burlington Animal Services.

Asheville Develops New Policy for Police Officers

This fall, Asheville Police Chief Tammy Hooper and other police department representatives met with members of the Community Police Policy Work Group, which is comprised of 16 representatives from various facets of the Asheville community — business, education, social

justice groups, LGBT and Latino. The group provided recommendations on the revision of the department's use of force policy with a focus on de-escalation, valuing all lives and providing additional training for officers..

Greenville Starts Construction on New Transportation Center

Greenville Mayor Allen Thomas and local officials recently broke ground on the new \$8 million Greenville Transportation Activity Center.



GTAC Groundbreaking

High Point Helps Neighbors Following Disasters

After Hurricane Matthew, 16 members of the City of High Point's Electric Department went to South Carolina to help restore power after Hurricane Matthew. The High Point Fire Department also sent 10 firefighters and two apparatus to assist with the fires in the western part of the state.

Metro Mayors In Action



Raleigh Mayor Nancy McFarlane presents Durham Mayor Bill Bell with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, among the most prestigious awards presented by the Governor of North Carolina.



Attorney General Roy Cooper talked to the Metro Mayors about his vision for North Carolina and his commitment to growing the economy.



State Treasurer-Elect Dale Folwell gave the Metro Mayors an update at the annual meeting.



Metro Mayors Chair Esther Manheimer presents Rep. John Torbett of Gaston County with the group's legislative award.



Concord Mayor Scott Padgett talks to Attorney General-Elect Josh Stein, who spoke to the Metro Mayor's annual meeting.



The Metro Mayors honored Sen. Rick Gunn with a legislative award for his work in the General Assembly.

Chair's Column *continued from page 1*

work on behalf of our members.

We know that North Carolina must remain focused on creating an economy that works for all parts of our state. There can't be winners and losers. Instead, we need new strategies and new opportunities to build an environment that supports and encourages job growth that is good for all North Carolinians. You can be sure our legislators will be hearing a lot about that in the coming months.

- Ensure the State of North Carolina and our local governments have the tools necessary to promote job creation.
- Ensure cities have the revenues and revenue creation tools needed

to provide the level of services and quality of life residents desire.

- Ensure cities have the statutory authority to develop communities in ways that will attract the talented workforce that brings high quality jobs.

Thank you for your service to our state and our communities. I look forward to hearing from you in the coming months, and I hope I will see you in Raleigh soon.

Accolades

- On Thursday, Aug. 25, 2016, the city of **Rocky Mount** was the first municipality to join NC ABC Commission Chairman Jim Gardner in the newly launched Talk it Out initiative.
- Three ratings agencies-Fitch Ratings, Inc., Moody's Investors Service and Standard and Poor's Financial Services LLC-have issued among the highest ratings for the city of **Rocky Mount** and for the special obligation bonds, which will be used to finance the acquisition, construction and equipping of the Downtown Community Facility (DCF), an upcoming sports venue.
- **Burlington** Mayor Pro Tem Celo Faucette was reappointed to the NC Rural Infrastructure Authority Board.
- **Burlington** Mayor Ian Baltutis was named one of Triad Business Journal's 2016 "Most influential." He was also chosen as one of the United Way of Alamance County's top 5 Volunteers of the Year.
- A total of 634 people participated in the **High Point** Big Sweep Campaign. The volunteers collected 8,100 pounds of garbage, 1,100 pounds of recycling and 75 tires.
- **High Point** and **Greensboro** officials recently celebrated the news that Expert Global Solutions, an Alorica company, will add more than 800 jobs in High Point. The customer service company is currently High Point's ninth-largest largest employer.

Contact Information: Julie White, Executive Director and Lobbyist
Cell: (919) 539-7871
JWhite@metromayors.com
www.ncmetromayors.com