



Incorporated 1927

# Town of Lake Lure

P. O. Box 255 • Lake Lure, NC 28746-0255 • 704/625-9983 • FAX 704/625-8371

## MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE LAKE LURE TOWN COUNCIL HELD TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1996, 9:30 A.M. AT THE LAKE LURE MUNICIPAL CENTER

**PRESENT:** Mayor Max E. Lehner  
Commissioner Bill Bush  
Commissioner Beth Rose

John R. Strutner, Town Manager  
Sam Karr, Finance Director

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Carolyn Cobb  
Commissioner Bud Schichtel

### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lehner called the meeting to order at approximately 9:30 a.m. and noted that a quorum was present.

### INVOCATION

Town Manager John Strutner gave the invocation.

### REPORT ON FLOOD ACTIVITIES

Town Manager Strutner gave a report on events and activities resulting from flooding in the Chimney Rock and Lake Lure area.

At approximately 9:15 p.m. on Wednesday, September 4, 1996, Ron Morgan, the Lake Lure Fire and Emergency Services Coordinator, received a call at his home from Thad Bryson, Area F, North Carolina Emergency Management Coordinator in Asheville. He advised that Henderson County Emergency Management had called to report that severe thunder storms were stalled in the Bat Cave area, causing tremendous amounts of rain and quoted "It was like a wall of water coming down the river."

Ron immediately called Buck Meliski, Chimney Rock Fire Chief, at his home, but received no answer. He then contacted Rutherford County Fire Central by phone and told them what Thad Bryson had reported, and asked them to contact Buck Meliski or Ronnie Wood, the

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Assistant Chimney Rock Fire Chief, and have them start evacuating the campgrounds if necessary. He recommended they call Rutherford County Emergency Management and notify Barry Davis of the situation.

Ron Morgan then called the Lake Lure Police Department on the radio and asked them to advise William Grimes, the Hydro Plant and Waste Water Treatment Operator, through Central Dispatch. The Police Department called Central and Central then called Grimes to advise him of the situation.

At 9:45 p.m. Grimes received his call from 911 that there was heavy rain in the area. Rutherford Central had received notice of heavy rains on Flat Top and Sugar Loaf Mountains.

Morgan went straight from home to Chimney Rock and met with Ronnie Wood at approximately 10:00 p.m. Wood notified Morgan that all persons had been evacuated from the campgrounds, except for the ones that had refused to leave the premises.

Morgan stated that he had never seen the river this bad and that they started evacuating the whole area and opened the shelter at the Town Hall.

Grimes had measured the lake level at 9:30 p.m. and the level was 9-1/2" below normal. Following receipt of the warning from Rutherford Central, he immediately started the second generating unit, (the big unit had been on all day and was pulling the lake down). By 10:15 p.m. Grimes had one gate all the way open (12 ft.) and the other gate was up approximately 7 ft. The trash gate was up and both generators were running.

At 10:30 p.m. the lake level measured 5" above normal with the gates open, both generators running and the trash gate open. At approximately 10:45 p.m. the second gate was opened all the way to 12 ft.

At 11:15 p.m. the lake level measured 15-3/4" above normal and at 11:40 the lake level measured 28" above normal. The highest peak was at 1:00 a.m. when the lake level measured 43" above normal. Therefore, from 9:30 p.m.-1:00 a.m., the level gained approximately 52" which was 3 ft. and 7 inches above normal with both generators running and the trash gate up and two flood gates fully opened.

There was approximately 3' of water running across the road at Living Waters on Highway 64/74A when Grimes checked it before 12:00 Midnight.

The first drop in the lake level after crest was a 1/4" drop at 1:30 a.m. The lake level was still two feet above normal at 6:00 a.m.

The Town of Lake Lure sustained some damage to its infrastructure. A large section of Washburn Road (approximately 110' length X 25' depth X 18' wide) that was washed away was

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repaired by late afternoon on Friday, September 6. There are several minor washouts on Boys Camp and Jack London Roads, but they don't impede traffic. The Town's beach incurred damage. A section of water line approximately 20' in length that hangs on the westside of the bridge across the Rocky Broad River and that provides water service to the Boys Camp Road area was broken and washed away in the flood. This water line was replaced and back in operation by Friday evening after rechlorination of the line was completed. The only customers that were without water for that period of time were those who live in the Boys Camp Road area and the few customers on the Lake Lure side of the Chimney Rock Fire Department. The sewage lift station was flooded and three pumps were damaged. Service personnel are currently working on one pump and hope to have it repaired by Tuesday afternoon which will put the sewage treatment plant back on-line.

There are two manholes on the west side of the river and possibly a third one that has not been found. One manhole was 6' under sand yesterday. Those manholes are being pumped out; a third manhole at the Lake Lure Campground must still be cleared. The rest were all clean.

Town Manager Strutner said that he would like to briefly recognize and acknowledge what he considered exemplary performance and service provided by many of the Town personnel during this emergency and to extend particular thanks and recognition to Ron Morgan, Fire and Emergency Services Coordinator, William Grimes and Lewis McDade who both work at the Hydro and Waste Water Treatment Plant, Public Works Supervisor Tony Hennessee and his public works crew, Police Chief Jake Gamble and his police department, Town Clerk Mary Flack and Deputy Town Clerk Anita Taylor for putting in many hours of overtime in clerical support.

There are many other agencies that assisted the Lake Lure and Chimney Rock area throughout this event including several Fire Departments, EMS units, Rutherford County Emergency Management Coordinator Barry Davis, County Commissioners, County Sheriff's Department, Highway Patrol, NCDOT, Crime Control Volunteers, Red Cross, County Health and Building Inspectors, Duke Power, Southern Bell, Wade Knox from the State's Rural Water Division, Roger Edwards with DEHNR and many others, including local residents.

"Our thanks are to all of you and our hope that you will continue to work with the clean up. There are copies of the press release prepared by the Lake Advisory Committee available. They are planning to continue the clean up of the lake everyday starting at 10:30 a.m. during the week. Persons participating in the clean-up should bring debris to the Gazebo Point. The Town has arranged for inmate crews from the Rutherford Correctional Center to remove and saw the trees, limbs, etc. and Town crews will haul away the debris."

Mayor Lehner said that the Town had put in a lot of new emergency procedures since the storm of 1994; it has a Fire and Emergency Coordinator who provided effective liaison and coordination throughout this emergency. The Town now has emergency procedures coordinated

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with the County that proved to work effectively. The County Emergency Coordinator was in Lake Lure immediately after being notified. The Sheriff's Department responded immediately. The rain in Lake Lure was more than double that which was forecasted by the Weather Bureau. "These things happen when you live on a river, lake, or ocean front; you have to expect these things might happen. You have to be prepared where possible and take the steps and learn from them. We will all learn from this storm as we did in the previous one."

### AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

The following persons requested to speak under audience of citizen:

1. Bettina Wolfe, a Lake Lure resident, asked what was the extent of damage sustained down river?

Town Manager Strutner said that the Town does not have a full report on the damage, and that the County is doing a property damage assessment. William Grimes, Hydro Plant Operator, had contacted individuals down stream on September 4, 1996, Wednesday afternoon because the Town was taking the lake down to let them know that there was more water coming down stream. Since the event he has heard from several property owners that sustained damage such as flooded basements. Mr. Strutner said that the Town has down stream responsibilities. He also stated that the new gate hoists had worked wonderfully.

2. Nancy McNary, a Lake Lure resident, stated that the Asheville Citizen reported the water up 2 1/2' and the lake front residents have reported between 3' 8" and 4' above the normal level. Mrs. McNary questioned where the Town's measurements were recorded. She said that three gentlemen currently on the Council were present for the August 1994 flood and asked what preparations have been made since then to warn residents and who was responsible for informing the residents/non-residents of this flood? She said that following the last flood, town officials reported minimal damage. Mrs. McNary asked did the assessment for that report include damage to boats, boathouses, seawalls and docks on lakefront property and will the same type of assessment be done this time. She also asked whether or not the new Municipal Center has flood insurance.

Town Manager Strutner stated that the Town does not have flood insurance and Town Hall is not in a flood hazard area. Mr. Strutner said that there is no flood insurance program in this gorge and lake that he is aware of and he has looked into it.

Mayor Lehner said that the issue regarding the notification of citizens has been

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in front of the Lake Advisory Committee and numerous other organizations, including the Lake Front Property Owners Association of which Mrs. McNary is a member. The Town has not yet found a suitable procedure to notify the people around the lake. He reported that there is a hookup for a siren located at the dam that was to be installed in the years prior to his election to Town Council, but that people downstream and around the lake had requested that it not be installed. Mayor Lehner said that the Town could reevaluate hooking it up if it was decided that such a siren was desired. Other than that there is no procedure that is known and can be put in place. Up to this point, people that live on the lake have taken personal responsibility for their property. He reported that the damage to the boats was limited to the tops of pontoon boats. Most people got their boats out or tops down, and the amount of damage was reduced greatly due to experience. The Town had no time to notify anybody except those people and agencies responsible for the protection of lives. Because of the notification, everybody was out of one campground at Chimney Rock Village that was completely annihilated and no lives were lost. Another campground was also notified and those people chose to stay and no life was lost. These things come first and you have to recognize that these agencies main responsibilities are to save lives, keep roads open, and perform other emergency duties.

Commissioner Rose said that she had attended the Lake Advisory Committee meeting last night and brought up sirens or ways to notify people; the Committee basically felt that this was more a Council matter.

Town Manager Strutner stated that FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) was due in Town today at the Lake Lure Municipal Center for preliminary assessment of damage to public facilities only. Mr. Strutner asked that attendees pass along to neighbors that FEMA is not looking at personal or individual damages yet. This is a very quick run through but while I have them in here today, I am going to ask them about the process by which individuals can make requests for damage relief. He agreed with Mayor Lehner that one siren was not going to address the notification situation, nor was he convinced that a phone notification system alone will work well. He suggested that the only way to ensure adequate warning is to do very extensive work at the dam and automate the gates and generators, and integrate it with an extensive (and probably expensive) warning system of sirens located up and down the Broad River and around the lake.

He stated that many people look on this lake as an asset and a boon, but events such as this and the other recent storms made it obvious to him and to others he had spoken with, that it is also a major liability. We have to face facts: there are some very real and serious problems and risks associated with owning and maintaining this lake. He thought that the Mayor was correct when he said individual property owners have got to realize that you

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cannot place the total responsibility for what happens on the lake with the Town which cannot control or predict the weather. He pointed out how fortunate it was that there had not been heavy rainstorms all over the county. The area of the county south of Lake Lure had received only 1" of rainfall during the storm. If the same amount of rainfall that fell north of here also had fallen south of Lake Lure, the many streams which feed into the river south of here would have been swollen. One can only imagine the impact that the high volume of water released from The Town's dam would then have made on downstream properties.

3. Gene Whitesides, a Lake Lure resident on Boys Camp Road, said that when the flood arrived, he went to Town Hall. Mr. Whitesides expressed his appreciation to the Mayor, Town Manager, and all the people that showed up. At 1:00 p.m. in the morning, the crew was out here with a backhoe and a frontend loader cleaning up the road and that was wonderful. He stated that in his memory he had never seen that much water run down the river. The work and hours that the Town did he appreciated as a citizen.

Town Manager Strutner thanked Mr. Whitesides for helping work with the radios and answering telephone calls for hours throughout the event.

4. Marsha Hardy, a Lake Lure resident, said that she would like to address a couple of things to the boat owners. Mrs. Hardy said that they were in Florida during this storm and watching the Weather Channel and heard about Bat Cave over the national weather channel. She said that all boat owners should learn how to tie up their boats right and let their tops down. When you live on a lake where the lake level varies one to two feet normally, people should learn how to tie up their boats correctly such as in a boating class, and how to store things when they are not there. She said that she didn't think that the Town Council, Policemen, or Fire Departments should be responsible for boathouses. They're responsible for the lives of people and she commended them for doing a good job and thanked them.
5. Raymond Newsome, a Lake Lure resident of Chapel Point Road, asked what are the health and safety concerns in the lake at this time from the stand point of cleanliness and was there any raw sewage coming out of Chimney Rock?

Town Manager Strutner said that Chimney Rock lost its sewer system. The Town took fecal coliform samples yesterday morning and they are at the lab now. The state requested that it be done and the lab is not open on Saturday and Sunday. Sewage probably did go down stream because of the broken sewer line in Chimney Rock. Chimney Rock is off line and is not suppose to be putting any sewage out since their system is down. Nobody should be using the sewage system in Chimney Rock. The Town will know more after the report on the samples come back. The Town has no control of what comes down stream into

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the lake. The lake is normally clean and the Town had taken several samples before the flood which indicated the lake's waters were clean and well within safe limits.

Mayor Lehner said that State and County Health Department immediately evacuated those occupants of houses/buildings connected to the public sewer system in Chimney Rock and prohibited them from using the bathrooms. Also, they had the Sheriff's Department and Highway Patrol Officers to make sure that occupants were evacuated and enforced a curfew.

Town Manager Strutner reported that the Town's water system is fine and all the water reservoirs are safe. The sewer lines in the lake are ok. He cautioned people who are helping with the cleanup in the lake of dangerous floating debris. The Town is asking a release form be signed by those helping with the cleanup of the lake and the Town is giving free gas vouchers to those helping with the cleanup in the lake.

6. Riley Hardy, a Lake Lure resident, said that he had a couple of observations that he would like to share. Sometimes disasters bring out the best in good people and the worst in others. He said that the citizens should have only one thing on their minds, that is helping their neighbors who are in need. He stated that approximately 15 to 20 boats were out on the lake yesterday to help with the cleanup of the lake out of all the boat owners on the lake. He asked why those citizens who own boats and complain about the City Hall and how bad are were not out to help with the cleanup of the lake. Also, he had observed one of the fine outstanding citizen who owns a business on the lake with which several citizen do business would not allow the Town personnel and the volunteers to use his dock for unloading debris. Instead volunteers are having to haul logs approximately four miles out down the lake to the Gazebo Point. Mr. Hardy commended all the businesses and organizations which helped support the community. Lets be good citizens and care about each other.
7. Eloise Mathews, Manager of Geneva Motel, asked when the sewer line would be repaired in Chimney Rock.

Mayor Lehner said that the County is trying to install up a temporary hookup up, but they can't use that until we clear our lines behind the Lake Lure Campground and those have to be uncovered, blown and cleaned out and then hooked up. Then the Town has to have the generators at the lift station at the dam in place and ready to pump. So all those things have to be done in order to bring the sewer system back on-line.

Town Manager Strutner said that it will take approximately 48 hours to repair the line.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Rose moved, seconded by Commissioner Bush, to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, August 27, 1996 Regular Council meeting and the Closed Session minutes as written and presented by the Clerk. The vote of approval was unanimous.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Other Old Business**

There was no other old business for discussion.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Appointment of Representative to the North Carolina Municipal League --  
Voting Delegate and Alternate**

The North Carolina Municipal League Constitution provides that each member municipality is entitled to one vote. The Board of Directors has established a policy that each municipality sending delegates to the annual convention designate one voting delegate and may designate one alternate voting delegate to be named in advance of the annual meeting.

Commissioner Bush moved, seconded by Commissioner Rose, to appoint Max Lehner as the voting delegate and to appoint Bill Bush as the alternate. The vote of approval was unanimous.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**b. Other New Business**

There was no other new business for discussion.

**STAFF REPORTS**

There were no staff reports given.



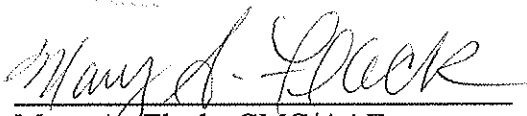
COUNCIL COMMENTS


Mayor Lehner announced that a fund to assist those Hickory Nut Gorge individuals, families, and businesses damaged by the flood has been set up by the Hickory Nut Gorge Chamber of Commerce. Anyone wishing to make a contribution may send a check to the Hickory Nut Gorge Chamber of Commerce (phone no: 704-625-2725). Offers to donate food and clothing are appreciated but not needed. Anyone wishing to donate time or equipment for a massive volunteer clean-up day is asked to call the Rutherford County Tourism office and leave your name and phone number. Mr. Lehner said that he had met with the Mayor of Chimney Rock and have tentatively set the date for this upcoming Saturday, September 14, 1996.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items of discussion, Commissioner Rose moved, seconded by Commissioner Bush, to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m. The vote of approval was unanimous.



  
Mary A. Flack, CMC/AEE  
Town Clerk

  
Mayor Max E. Lehner