

Nearly a month after Helene, small section of Blue Ridge Parkway reopens in NC

October 23, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Richard Stradling, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 460 Words OpenURL Link

A section of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina reopened Wednesday morning for the first time since the remnants of Hurricane Helene slammed the region, but it will be a long time before the entire road is open in the state.

The National Park Service is again allowing drivers to use the parkway between milepost 285.5 at Bamboo Gap and milepost 305 near Beacon Heights in the Blowing Rock area. That 20-mile section is one of several that local residents rely on to get to and from their homes.

"We realize how critical the Parkway is for our region," Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Tracy Swartout said in a written statement. "While much work remains, we are prioritizing our efforts in less-damaged areas that have the most impact for community connectivity, and that we are able to reopen safely."

Swartout said the park service expects to soon open additional sections of the parkway that serve adjoining communities.

The park service says tens of thousands of trees fell across the parkway and that heavy rain caused nearly three dozen rock and mud slides in North Carolina. The slides occurred above and below the road and severely damaged or swept away the roadbed in numerous places.

blue ridge parkway closed.jpegHelene ripped parts of the Blue Ridge Parkway away, including this section near Gooch Gap in McDowell County.

Damage along Blue Ridge Parkway from Helene

The worst damage appears to be in a 189-mile stretch from near Grandfather Mountain to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, south of Blowing Rock. The damage includes places where buildings, such as the Linville Falls Visitor Center, were destroyed.

The park service says it has found no significant damage to the Linn Cove Viaduct, which carries the road along the edge of Grandfather Mountain.

The park service initially closed all 469 miles of the parkway after Helene, between Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina. The road was less damaged in Virginia, and the Park Service was able to reopen nearly 200 miles of it there on Oct. 11.

Moses Cone Manor House lot, trails also reopen

Also reopening Wednesday is the Moses Cone Manor House parking lot and carriage trails near Blowing Rock, though the interior of the house and the carriage barn restrooms remain closed.

blue ridge 10 roa_fitted.jpegNearly three dozen landslides were reported along the Blue Ridge Parkway during Tropical Storm Helene, park officials say.

The remnants of Hurricane Helene brought historic wind and rain to Western North Carolina on Sept. 26 and 27. More than 100 Blue Ridge Parkway employees have been working on the road since Sept. 30. The park service says they've received help from more than 275 workers from 64 national parks and park offices in 37 states, the District

of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

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NC Gov. Cooper proposes \$3.9B in Helene disaster relief from the state

October 23, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan, News & Observer | Section: politics government | 849 Words OpenURL Link

Gov. Roy Cooper is proposing \$3.9 billion in state Hurricane Helene relief for the western part of the state devastated by flooding.

Total damage in Western North Carolina is estimated at roughly \$53 billion, Cooper said. His proposed \$3.9 billion would be for costs that won't be covered by the federal government or private insurance, he explained during a news conference Wednesday.

He called the money a "down payment on Western North Carolina's future."

"Evidence from past storms shows that communities that recover fastest and strongest are the ones that get fast and strong investment after the storm," he said.

Mitchell, Yancey and Buncombe counties suffered the most damage and need the most help to rebuild the grid, Cooper said, with schools still closed.

"These businesses need cash fast, and our plan would provide grants and loans to keep businesses afloat, just like we provided during the pandemic," the governor said. "Our proposed investments also include roads and bridges, health care centers, schools, downtown and other vital needs. But this is just a start."

How the estimated damage will be recovered

State Budget Director Kristin Walker told reporters the \$53.6 billion in total damage and needs is broken down as 62%, or \$33.4 billion, unfunded. She expects \$13.6 billion in federal funding, \$6.3 billion in private and other funding, and \$273 million already funded by the state.

Some of the total estimated costs may never be recovered. That unfunded amount of about \$33 billion is close to the state's annual budget.

The estimated amount of total damage is the "overall assessment of how much damage and need there was," Walker said. "Certainly, especially when you get into things like induced or indirect, you don't expect anyone to really recover that loss."

She doesn't think "anyone anticipates that the full, anywhere near the full, \$53 billion will be recovered."

What Cooper is requesting

Here's the breakdown of what money Cooper is requesting in the \$3.9 billion of relief.

- « \$650 million for the economy, most of which \$475 million would go to a Helene Business Recovery Grant program.
- « \$650 million for housing, with half of it going to a Homeowner Recovery Program.
- « \$578 million for utilities and natural resources, \$289 million of which is to match federal money, with other money going toward water, parks, storm abatement and stormwater projects.

- « \$422 million for agriculture, with more than half going to the Helene Agriculture Disaster Farmer Recovery Program.
- « \$55 million for transportation, mostly for private roads and bridges to be repaired or replaced.
- « \$594 million for government and recovery operations.
- « \$252 million for Health and Human Services.
- « A yet to be determined amount to assist tribal and federal lands in the state.

RAL_100124-HELENE-KLM-02.JPGA person walks next to a demolished building in Frank, N.C. on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024, days after Hurricane Helene brought heavy rain and flooding to the western part of the state.

Republican plans for Helene relief

The General Assembly will meet Thursday to pass its second wave of relief, after approving \$273 million Oct. 10, a bill quickly signed by Cooper.

The governor is a Democrat and the legislature is Republican-controlled. GOP lawmakers have not yet released the bill, which they plan to vote through the same day.

Sen. Kevin Corbin, a Macon County Republican, told Haywood County officials he expects the bill to fund about \$1 billion in relief, according to the Smoky Mountain News.

Lawmakers spent the past two weeks gathering more information for what exactly is needed in disaster relief this month and expect much of the relief to come from the federal government.

Republican Senate leader Phil Berger and Republican Sen. Brent Jackson criticized the part of Cooper's proposal that would include \$175 million in funding not for Helene relief, but for the N.C. Office of Recovery and Resilience (NCORR) Hurricane Florence Homeowner Recovery Program.

"For years, Gov. Cooper has shrugged off what has become the most botched, long-term hurricane response in the country. It's a stain on our state and it keeps me up at night thinking about what may come as we start to recover from Hurricane Helene," said Jackson, a Sampson County Republican who chairs the legislature's Hurricane Response and Recovery Subcommittee.

The state's Savings Reserve, also known as the rainy day fund, has \$4.47 billion in it as of Oct. 18, according to the Office of State Budget and Management, which is under the Cooper administration.

Republican House Speaker Tim Moore told reporters when the last bill passed two weeks ago that the second bill would likely be funded from the Savings Reserve, too. He noted the state also has about \$700 million in a separate disaster response fund.

CLYDEHELENE-NE-101624-RTW_5.jpgQuint Earl Barker warms himself by a fire at his property on Broad Street on Wednesday, October 16, 2024 in Clyde, N.C. Barker lived in the back of the historic family home that dates to the late 1800's. He evacuated before Helene flooded the Pigeon River, sending water into the second story, destroying his living quarters. He has been using a tent or staying with friends in the weeks since Hurricane Helene flooded Haywood County.

Under The Dome embed (2022)

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Under the Dome: Robinson reduces damages in suit against CNN; hearing date set for after election

October 23, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC)
Author: Caitlyn Yaede, correspondent, News & Observer | Section: politics government | 825 Words
OpenURL Link

Good morning and welcome to the Under the Dome newsletter. I'm Caitlyn Yaede.

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson reduced the amount of legal damages he is requesting from CNN after its bombshell report on posts the network said Robinson had made to porn websites.

The Republican candidate for governor amended his lawsuit against CNN on Monday to seek in excess of \$25,000. The suit, originally filed on Oct. 15, requested "no less than fifty million dollars" in damages.

As The Assembly reported, this language violates a section of North Carolina state law, which states that pleas demanding more than \$25,000 in damages should not specify the amount.

The lawsuit was amended on Monday to request damages, "in an amount to be proven at trial, in excess of twenty-five thousand dollars."

A spokesperson from Robinson's campaign gave a statement to Queen City News: "North Carolina state courts limit plaintiffs to stating in a complaint whether the damages are more than \$25,000. The exact amount of damages will be determined by a jury at trial. We have every confidence that the jury will get it right."

The first hearing in the defamation lawsuit is slated for Nov. 18 - two weeks after the gubernatorial election.

REALITY CHECK: 'HURRICANE HELENE PEOPLE FINDER'

A Google Doc featuring the names of more than 4,000 people is circulating online, claiming to represent those missing following Hurricane Helene. Brian Gordon reports how this inflated estimate has fueled conspiracy theories on social media.

While the document includes a note that it "is NOT an official source" and not associated with "any county, state or federal agency, nor the American Red Cross," viral posts on X and TikTok cast doubts on Gov. Roy Cooper's statements and the media's coverage of the disaster.

The News & Observer was able to account for two individuals on the list - Karen Bruggemann and Summer Broadbent, whose names were submitted by concerned family members.

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services reports 26 missing people and 96 deaths, as of Monday.

WEBSITE NAMED FOR RALEIGH FLAGGED BY INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

A news website titled the "Raleigh Herald" was named in a report from the FBI and the federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency last week.

The PSA listed websites suspected of or that are likely to be the subject of Russian interference, in regard to election information. It includes websites like "washingtonpost.pm" and "foxnews.in," which pose as official news organizations to disseminate misinformation.

The URL leads to a WordPress site named for North Carolina's capital, but only featuring global and national news

stories.

POLL WATCH

Polling released on Tuesday from High Point University shows a tight race for the presidency in North Carolina. Kamala Harris received support from 47% of those polled by HPU, with Donald Trump receiving 46%. This same poll shows a strong lead for Josh Stein in the race for governor - polling at 50% of those surveyed, compared to Mark Robinson's 34%.

WHAT ELSE WE'RE WORKING ON

The largest DMV office in Western North Carolina reopened on Monday following Hurricane Helene. The driver's license office serves Buncombe County and was closed due to water shortages, Richard Stradling reports, and it remains under a boil water advisory. Donald Trump stopped in Greensboro for a rally Tuesday night. This comes after the former president paid visits to Swannanoa, Greenville and Concord on Monday. Avi Bajpai has more. N.C. House Speaker Tim Moore took the stage with Trump in Swannanoa on Monday and claimed the White House did not reach out about Helene relief. Uncovered emails reveal that this is not true. The Observer's Mary Ramsey has the details.

WHAT FLSE WE'RE READING

The Buncombe County Sheriff's Office says it overcounted the number of deaths in the county following Hurricane Helene, The Associated Press reports. In a statement Tuesday, officials said they incorrectly reported 72 deaths on Oct 3. Instead, the state estimates that Buncombe County had 42 deaths.NPR reports that a North Carolina state judge has ruled against the Republican National Committee's request to set aside the ballots of some overseas voters. This ruling came down on Monday - the same day a Michigan state judge dismissed a similar case brought by the RNC.

VOTER GUIDE

In the latest candidate questionnaires from our 2024 NC Voter Guide, see what candidates for U.S. House District 14 have to say about the issues, and learn more about their biographies.

Two candidates answered our questions:

Democrat Pam Genant

Republican Tim Moore

Today's newsletter was by Caitlyn Yaede. Check your inbox tomorrow for more #ncpol.

You can sign up to receive the Under the Dome newsletter at newsobserver.com/newsletters. Want your friends to get our email, too? Forward them this newsletter so they can sign up. We want to know what you would like to see in the Under the Dome newsletter. Do you like highlights from the legislature? Political analysis? Do you have a question you'd like The News & Observer team to answer? Tell us here. You can also email us at dome@newsobserver.comDon't forget to follow our tweets and listen to our Under the Dome podcast for more developments.

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'Social butterfly' was rescued from home with 200 cats. Then came special adoption

October 23, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Simone Jasper, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 349 Words OpenURL Link

A "friendly" cat was rescued from a home with more than 200 animals - then came a special adoption.

"As fate would have it, Mino's new mom already had a connection - her roommate had previously adopted Mino's twin brother, Bojangles, also from the same hoarding situation," a North Carolina animal shelter wrote Oct. 21 on Facebook. "When the time came to find a companion, who better to show him the ropes than his brother?"

The Humane Society of Eastern Carolina shared the heartwarming update after Mino experienced a rough patch. He was rescued from the hoarding case and landed at the shelter in July.

"Upon intake Mino was fairly matted, had tapeworms and required grooming," Morgan May, assistant director of the humane society, told McClatchy News in an email. "Despite his physical condition he was very social and playful."

IMG_8248_fitted.jpegMino the cat landed in a special home after he was rescued from hoarding, a North Carolina shelter said.

At the shelter, Mino started "thriving" and was eager to eat as many treats as possible. He became known as a "social butterfly" who loves receiving affection, according to social media posts.

"This striking one-year-old orange and white feline has a personality as bright as the vibrant orange in his fur," the shelter wrote. "A true volunteer favorite, Mino charmed everyone he met with his sweet, social nature. Always the first to greet you, this friendly guy was impossible to miss!"

Then, after about three months of waiting, the shelter shared the good news that Mino got a new home. The fresh start allows him to reunite with his brother Bojangles, whose owner "had him scooped up the moment he was ready for adoption," the shelter wrote in September.

"Staff was thrilled when Mino got adopted especially since he will be with his brother Bojangles," May wrote.

The humane society is in Greenville, a roughly 85-mile drive east from Raleigh.

'Heartbroken' family surrendered 'loving' cats after Helene. Now, they have new home

Kitten with heart murmur needed a home. Then came adoption that was 'meant to be'

'Sad' cat struggled with loss of feline sibling. Then came a heartwarming adoption

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Former President Donald Trump holds campaign rally in Greensboro. Here are photos from his visit.

October 23, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Kaitlin McKeown, News & Observer | Section: election | 555 Words OpenURL Link

Former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump held a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

The rally is Trump's fourth campaign stop in the state in two days. On Monday, he surveyed damage from Hurricane Helene in Swannanoa, held a rally on the campus of East Carolina University and ended the day with a speech in Concord.

Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii, announced at the rally that she's joining the Republican party.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-12.jpgFormer President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-01.jpgPeople gather next to a cut-out of former President Donald Trump prior to a rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-06.jpgTulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii, with former President Donald Trump after announcing that she's joining the Republican party during a rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-10.jpgA person holds up a sign in support of former President Donald Trump during a rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-14.jpgFormer President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-13.jpgPeople cheer as Peter Navarro speaks during a rally in support of former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-09.jpgGuests arrive at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex prior to a rally in support of former President Donald Trump on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-03.jpgCrowds gather outside of Greensboro Coliseum prior to a rally held by former President Donald Trump on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-02.jpgButtons feature former President Donald Trump and Republican vice presidential candidate J.D. Vance outside of Greensboro Coliseum prior to a rally on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-21.jpgSupporters of former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gather outside the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-18.jpgA supporter of former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump holds up a shirt during a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-05.jpgU.S. Sen. Ted Budd speaks during a rally in support of former President Donald Trump at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-17.jpgMarla Ritter wears earrings in support of former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump during a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-11.jpgFormer President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump smiles during his remarks at a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-16.jpgSupporters acknowledge former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at the conclusion of a rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-19.jpgSupporters of former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump cheer during his remarks at a campaign rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

102224-TRUMP-GBORO-KLM-07.jpgFormer President Donald Trump smiles at the conclusion of a rally at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C.

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Ingles in Morganton working to rebuild after Hurricane Helene flooding; store may get remodel

October 23, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Sharon McBrayer| Section: Business | 355 Words OpenURL Link

Keith Flynn said he has gotten emotional several times since Hurricane Helene moved through Morganton, damaging homes and businesses, including Ingles Market, where Flynn works.

Flynn has been the manager of the Ingles in Morganton for 26 years. He considers the store a second home.

The store is a source of pride for Flynn, and he gets sentimental about it. Over the past three weeks, he's found himself crying, Flynn said.

"I love the place, and I didn't know how much until this happened," Flynn said.

When the nearby Catawba River rose over Carbon City Road, it brought water inside the store. The flood rose 2 to 3 feet inside, Flynn said.

After the storm, the store's equipment, shelving and perishables were removed, and the interior is currently empty, Flynn said.

He said the corporate office is deciding whether it will go ahead and remodel the Morganton store — it was scheduled to be remodeled in five years — or just replace everything.

Flynn said the store didn't suffer any structural damage. He said crews have cleaned out all the drywall to alleviate any potential for mold. Environmental workers are coming in to make sure it is all taken care of, so the store can get everything back in stock, Flynn said.

Helene didn't just flood the store. It also scattered the store's employees, whom Flynn calls family.

There are employees at the store whom Flynn has worked with for 30 years. He said employees of the store have been relocated to other locations for now.

Flynn said he doesn't have a definitive date for when the Morganton store will reopen.

"We're just trying to make sure we do it right, you know, and don't just throw it together and just try to take our time to make sure it's done right," Flynn said.

In addition to Morganton, Hurricane Helene damaged three other Ingles Markets stores in Swannanoa, Newland and Spruce Pine, Flynn said.

"Definitely, it'll be going again," Flynn said of the Morganton location. "I know that 100%."

Ingles Markets near Morganton that are open include the Marion store at 625 W. Henderson St., and the store across Castle Bridge at 2630 Connelly Springs Road, Granite Falls.

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Freedom starts three-week NWC stint away from home at Ashe County

October 23, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: High School | 695 Words OpenURL Link

WEST JEFFERSON — After three weeks off due to Hurricane Helene, followed by back-to-back "home" games at crosstown Patton High School because of storm damage, the Freedom football team now must hit the road for three straight Northwestern 3A/4A Conference games away from Morganton to conclude the regular season.

First up is a team to which the Patriots have never lost as FHS travels to take on Ashe County this Friday night in the mountains.

All three all-time meetings between the Patriots (4-3, 1-1 NWC) and Huskies have been since they became members of the NWC together ahead of the fall 2021 season. Freedom won 54-28 in Morganton that autumn, 55-26 in their only previous trip to West Jefferson in 2022, and 38-22 at home a season ago.

FHS is hoping for more of the same in its second trip to Ashe County this week, but the Huskies are 4-2 so far this season and won their NWC-opener at Hibriten the last time out, winning a 46-38 shootout on the road in Lenoir.

Ashe County's air raid offense is led by junior quarterback Bryce Peters, who so far this season has completed 130 of 200 passes for 1,457 yards and 15 touchdowns with seven interceptions. His favorite receivers are seniors lan Graybeal (45-546-5), Bridger Fairchild (35-398-5) and Preston Edgell (13-117-2) and juniors Cole Treva (17-203-2) and Jaxson Dillard (5-108-2).

On the ground, the Huskies are led by the dual-threat Peters (41-101-3), along with junior Riley Estes (40-93-1) and senior Luke Osborne (12-82-2).

Freedom's offense is more balanced, and that has only increased since the Patriots returned from their hurricane hiatus with the return of senior running back Jaiden Belin, who ran for 175 yards and two touchdowns on just 10 carries in a 36-22 win over South Caldwell last week. Sophomore Jaiveon Belin and junior quarterback Kaden Davis also are heavy contributors to the ground game.

Davis has been efficient through the air this season, connecting with targets Tiras Walker, Kobe Johnson, Kaleb Pearson and Justice Dominguez most often.

Prediction: Freedom.

Draughn (3-3, 1-1) at Rosman (0-6, 0-2)

The Wildcats will make the trip west to face the winless Tigers in Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference action this Friday night.

DHS has won each of the teams' three all-time meetings, with none of them being close, since joining Rosman in the WHC in advance of the fall 2021 season. The Wildcats won 32-2 in Valdese that year, 63-8 in Rosman in 2022 and 56-12 at home last season.

The Tigers, who are 1-40 since the start of the spring 2021 season, are led on the ground by senior Quintin Forbes and sophomore Brayden Newman. The quarterback is sophomore Garrett Connor, whose leading receiver is classmate Hudson Reese.

Draughn in led by dual-threat senior quarterback Sterling Radabaugh, senior running back Marshall Brinkley and a

receiving corps of seniors Kayden Lytle, Cayden Roscoe, Jacob Mull and Connor Houston.

Prediction: Draughn.

East Burke (1-5, 0-3) at West Lincoln (5-3, 3-2)

Entering the final weekend of October, the Cavaliers remain in search of their first Catawba Valley 2A Conference victory and may have a tough time finding it in Lincolnton on Friday.

The Rebels hold a 5-1 all-time lead over EBHS, including all three meetings as CVAC foes. That includes a 16-14 win in lcard in the fall of 2021, a 56-12 victory in Lincolnton in 2022 and a 26-0 triumph on the road last fall. West Lincoln also won nonconference games, 48-0 in Lincolnton in 2018 and 69-21 in lcard in 2019, after the Cavs won the first-ever matchup, 36-32 in overtime, at home in 2017.

This year's Rebels, like most of those squads, are run-heavy, led by senior running back Jaylin Winnex, junior ball-carrier Grae Ponder, senior dual-threat QB Gideon Allan and classmates Keegan Bostic and Shawn Blackburn. Allan's top target is senior Jayce Rowe.

Points have been at a premium for the EB offense, which was blanked 38-0 by Lincolnton last week. The ground game is led by junior Zayne Newman and senior power back Darren Hammons. Sophomore Carter Bennett has been the starting quarterback, but left last week's loss to the Wolves with an injury and was replaced by Calvin Vue. Seniors Barger Shook and Cannon Morrison are the team's top receivers.

Prediction: West Lincoln.

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Lenoir, Caldwell County approve Google campus expansion

October 23, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com| Section: Archives | 872 Words OpenURL Link

The Caldwell County Board of Commissioners and the Lenoir City Council held a joint meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 22, at 5 p.m. to discuss a number of interconnected issues related to Project Cardinal, an economic development project by Google.

It was standing room only in the city and county's meeting chamber in downtown Lenoir as dozens of local residents and local government personnel filed into the chamber to speak at a pair of public hearings to be held at the joint meeting.

Three measures were considered. First, the economic development incentives to be awarded to Project Cardinal, a development project by Google that will expand the Lenoir campus. The project promises investments of at least \$600 million in the county, bringing in crucial tax revenue, community investment and attracting other businesses and investments into the area. As part of the incentive package, Lenoir and Caldwell County governments will be providing annual grant funding to Google equal to 50% of the taxes they pay on improvements to the property and 85% of the taxes on equipment. The incentive is set to last for 20 years after Google receives its certificate of occupancy.

Community members and representatives of local nonprofits including director Ashley Bolick of the Caldwell Department of Economic Development, superintendent Dr. Martin Poarch of Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, President Brian Moore of the Caldwell Chamber, Hannah Morrison of United Way, executive director Michael Dineen of the Lenoir Housing Authority and more.

These representatives discussed Google's corporate citizenship, its relationship to the community since the company came to the area in 2007. Google has sponsored local educational events like the Gravity Games, has donated to local nonprofits such as CCC&TI and offered crisis support during the COVID-19 pandemic and the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene.

The crisis support Google offered included outfitting busses with wifi to ensure students could complete schoolwork during quarantine and donating laptops to the community college to aid in remote learning as the pandemic started.

Moore said Google representatives were some of the first to reach out to him to offer support to local businesses following Helene's destruction and noted other support for local businesses for the company's time in the county, including during the pandemic.

Former Granite Falls town manager Jerry Church discussed some of the local projects, such as the new county courthouse and CCC&TI Health Science building that will soon begin construction, will be greatly aided by the investment made by Google through Project Cardinal.

After consideration, the council and board each unanimously voted to approve the incentives.

After the first item was approved, a second public hearing was held by the Lenoir City Council to discuss the proposed closure of a section of Virginia Street, between 815 and 1005-C Virginia Street. Google owns the land on either side of the street, and wishes to close the road as part of its campus expansion for operational security purposes, said Hannah Williams, Lenoir's planning director.

Williams noted that no public utilities or services, including the Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services,

said that the closure would impact their response times or ability to render services to residents on either side of the road. Williams also said that the closure would not excessively add time or distance to the travel of residents, with other routes into and around the area being available. The closure would divert nearly 2,000 daily trips in traffic to other routes.

As the public hearing was opened, the closure did not enjoy the same widespread support that the economic incentive did. The chamber was filled with residents of the Dulatown community, which lives near the Google campus and regularly uses Virginia Street.

Speakers at the hearing generally expressed displeasure with the proposal, arguing mainly that the closure would deprive the area of a safe street for travel. Other streets in the area present safety concerns that would only be exacerbated by an uptick in traffic, claimed many of these speakers, and crossing an access point into the community could present safety or fire concerns not considered by local services.

Other speakers expressed frustration that Google was not forthcoming enough with its reasons for seeking the street's closure and wanted additional explanations and alternatives to be presented.

In spite of the objections, the council approved the closure after a period of discussion, on the condition that the city redouble its efforts to solve the traffic problems raised by community members. Lenoir Mayor Joseph Gibbons said the city had a responsibility to take the best option for the community as a whole.

Regarding the concerns presented by community members, Gibbons said, "Those roads ... the problems are relevant. We want to take a look at those streets and see what we can do and what improvements can be done. Those are things that we can do as we move forward, and we will.

Likewise, Council member Jonathan Beal said that the concerns had been heard and that the city would work to address them.

After the closure, one final decision was made to approve a water purchase and allocation agreement for Project Cardinal, which was also passed. The agreement will increase the amounts of water flow available to Google as the campus expansion was undertaken.

"This is good for everyone," Gibbons said, "because it helps our entire water system to grow."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com, 'Lenoir, Caldwell County approve Google campus expansion', *News-Topic, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C69956AB282050>



Cooper includes \$175M for state disaster agency in latest Helene funding request

October 23, 2024 | North State Journal (NC) Author: A.P. Dillon | Section: Article | 492 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — According to a press release from Senate Leader Phil Berger (R-Eden), the state agency responsible for helping natural disaster victims needs more money in order to operate.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper's Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) has "informed legislative leaders it requires an additional 27% of its budget to continue operations," per Berger's press release. The dollar figure attached to that 27% is \$175 million.

Berger's release calls the ask a "financial catastrophe" that is a "direct result of top-down mismanagement from the agency."

"For years, Gov. Cooper has shrugged off what has become the most botched long-term hurricane response in the country. It's a stain on our state and it keeps me up at night thinking about what may come as we start to recover from Hurricane Helene," said Hurricane Response and Recovery Subcommittee Chairman Sen. Brent Jackson (R-Sampson).

"There are no magic words that can get victims of Hurricane Florence back in a home, and no amount of money that will root out the incompetence at the NCORR," Jackson said. "There needs to be changes in leadership."

The press release said some 1,600 citizens impacted by Hurricane Florence, which devastated eastern areas of the state in 2018, are still not in a permanent home. Berger's press release also noted legislative hurricane subcommittee hearings held in 2022 on NCORR's issues in getting hurricane victims back in homes.

"NCORR leaders have repeatedly tried to cover up their failures at the expense of hurricane victims," said Berger.
"Their attempts to hide problems rather than own up to their incompetence has resulted in a continuing disaster for hurricane victims. Now, Gov. Cooper is asking for an additional \$175 million with little to no time to evaluate the request.

"It's past time for Gov. Cooper to take accountability for his six years of mismanagement and financial carelessness."

Berger also foreshadowed hearings to come, stating he "looks forward to GovOps getting to the bottom of this astounding failure."

The news of NCORR's funding issue comes as legislative leaders are about to return to Raleigh to address more Hurricane Helene funding measures and on the same day Cooper held a press conference outlining a proposal for \$3.9 billion in Hurricane Helene recovery funds.

The \$175 million in additional NCORR funding needs are on pages 98-99 of the proposal, along with a request for \$200 million for "remaining" Hurricane Matthew and Hurricane Florence needs.

"Initial damage estimates are \$53 billion, roughly three times Hurricane Florence estimates in 2018 and the largest in state history," Cooper's press statement on the proposed funding package says.

According to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, as of Oct. 23 there are 96 confirmed fatalities in North Carolina due to Hurricane Helene.

Topline items in the \$3.9 billion proposal include:

The proposal lists tribal and federal lands needs as "to be determined."

Presentation slides from Cooper's press conference are available here.

The post Cooper includes \$175M for state disaster agency in latest Helene funding request first appeared on The North State Journal.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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Kiwanis provides support for western NC children

October 23, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC)

Section: news | 162 Words

OpenURL Link

Through the efforts of the membership of the Kiwanis Club of Robeson-Lumberton, 100 children in Burnsville impacted by Hurricane Helene will receive social-emotional support bags. Included in the bags are items to help children reduce stress, anxiety and regulate their emotions, most importantly providing comfort. Children will receive a bookbag that includes blankets, teddy bears, coloring books, crayons, snacks, calming toys, playdough, notepads and pencils. The club thanks Walmart Supercenter of Lumberton for its financial contribution, the First Baptist Church youth group from volunteering to help with the project, and community members who support Kiwanis to make these efforts possible. Pictured, from left, are Kiwanis members Carey Read and William Gentry, past Carolinas District Kiwanis Governor Mary Winfree, Club President Erika Nolley, board member Carmin Russ, Kiwanis member Tina Bowen and board member Dan Kenney.

Pictured, youth volunteers from First Baptist Church in Lumberton help assemble care social-emotional support bags to send to children in western North Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene.

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'Kiwanis provides support for western NC children', *Robesonian, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C640591B2EB1C8



Editorial: Legislature must fund learning recovery

October 23, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Editorials | 510 Words
OpenURL Link

Last January the state Department of Public Instruction reported North Carolina public school students, on average, were making academic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of the 2022-23 school year, elementary school students showed improvements in reading, math and science.

Those improvements were not uniform across the state's 115 school districts. Economically disadvantaged students, those from schools in poor communities or economically challenged rural school districts, lagged.

While noting the laudable learning recovery achievement, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt was reserved in her assessment and offered a cautionary request: "We need to continue designing academic programming in subjects where students need additional support while allowing us to better target resources."

The state legislature has ignored the need, even as evidence continued to pile up as to the urgency to help public school students. While approving half a billion dollars in taxpayer-funded aid for private school students, no state learning-loss recovery funds have been included in legislation sent to Gov. Roy Cooper.

Six months after Truitt's remarks, the national Education Recovery Scorecard said too many North Carolina students were being left behind in learning recovery.

"No one wants to leave poor kids footing the bill, but that is the path North Carolina is on," said Tom Kane, faculty director of the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University and co-author of the report (who grew up in Winston-Salem). "Even if North Carolina schools manage to continue improving at last year's rate of recovery, they will not have caught up by the time the federal funds run out."

As Kane warned — and two weeks ago we learned — with the loss of federal funds that paid for the learning recovery programs during the pandemic, many students who still need help won't get it. And that doesn't account for the impact of Hurricane Helene on disrupted public schools in the western part of the state.

Without the state stepping up, too many North Carolina students will continue to lag in acquiring basic learning skills.

The loss of those temporary federal dollars — about \$1 billion for learning recovery — paying for the programs means scaled-down or eliminated programs in the state's public schools. Loss of these programs jeopardizes continued improvement and gains in learning.

Rachel Wright Junio, director of the state Department of Public Instruction's Office of Learning Recovery, described the situation facing public schools as a "fiscal cliff."

Cooper included, in his updated budget proposal for 2024-25, \$217 million to increase support for disadvantaged students.

But the leaders of the General Assembly don't share those concerns for the learning progress of all the state's public school students, instead using \$289 million in taxpayer dollars to subsidize non-needy kids' private school tuition.

Legislators have been playing politics with state spending and failed to pass an updated state budget. It is public school children who suffer.

It is past time that the General Assembly fulfilled its duty to provide for the education of North Carolina's students. There's plenty of money available to fund learning recovery for ALL public school students. The need is there. It must be a top priority.

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Major western NC tourist site to reopen next month - Biltmore Estate grounds ravaged by flooding

October 23, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC)
Author: Jacob Biba and Christopher Cann; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 446 Words
Page: A13
OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – More than three weeks after remnants of Hurricane Helene ravaged western North Carolina, Biltmore Estate, one of the area's most popular tourist attractions and largest employers, announced it will reopen on Nov. 2.

Helene's historic flooding ravaged portions of the Biltmore grounds, including its entrance and multiple low-lying buildings, the Citizen Times previously reported. Several of the estate's animals were killed in the storm, according to a statement the estate released on social media, adding the vast majority of the animals were safe and accounted for.

Many of the attraction's other facilities, including the Gilded Age Biltmore House, the conservatory, winery, gardens and the estate's hotels, received minimal or no damage.

The reopening, which was announced in a company statement, will mark the beginning of the holiday season for the 8,000-acre estate, which employs approximately 2,400 people.

While the Biltmore House, restaurants and other estate attractions will be open to visitors, the company is still cleaning up roads and wooded areas ravaged by the deadly storm. The company said its trails and outdoor adventure center will remain closed until further notice.

"We are incredibly grateful for the outpouring of support for our community and the determination of our first responders, utility workers and community volunteers," Bill Cecil Jr., president and CEO of Biltmore, said in a statement. "As recovery unfolds, welcoming guests back to Biltmore not only means we can open, but also brings critical support to our region's economy to aid area employees, local businesses and friends."

No storm-related deaths were reported among staff, Marissa Jamison, a Biltmore spokesperson, said in an Oct. 19 email to the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network. All staff have been accounted for, though several employees lost their homes in the storm, Jamison said.

Some are also out of work, at least temporarily.

Citing "a significant decline in tourism that is expected to persist in the near term," Biltmore, one of the largest employers in Buncombe County, furloughed an unspecified number of employees, according to Jamison.

But the furlough is temporary, she said, and staff members will return to work "in phases after reopening."

Helene made landfall along the Gulf Coast of Florida on Sept. 26 before it barreled inland, carving an immense trail of destruction across the Southeast. The storm wrought billions of dollars in damages and killed at least 228 people, making it the deadliest hurricane since Katrina in 2005.

Jacob Biba reports for Asheville Citizen Times; Christopher Cann reports for USA TODAY.

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Jacob Biba and Christopher Cann, USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Major western NC tourist site to reopen next month - Biltmore Estate grounds ravaged by flooding', *Star, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 A13 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C630F39E96E308>



Gov. Cooper proposes state legislature spend billions more in Helene recovery

October 23, 2024 | StarNews (Wilmington, NC) Author: Sarah Gleason, Wilmington StarNews| Section: News| 728 Words OpenURL Link

Gov. Roy Cooper is asking the North Carolina legislature to fund \$3.9 billion in Helene recovery efforts.

Cooper, who announced his relief proposal on Wednesday, said the state has sustained about \$53.6 billion in damages. The investment would be a "down payment on Western North Carolina's future," Cooper said.

He called it a "jaw-dropping damage figure" and said that the most important thing is to get aid to the western counties as fast as possible.

The governor's proposal "strives to put money into these communities as quickly and flexibly as possible," said Kristin Walker, the state's budget director.

Despite the ask, it's unlikely all of the need will be met.

"Even after, if the state were to invest that whole amount, you can see that we would have almost \$30 billion in unfunded needs." Walker said.

The governor's proposal also included billions in asks from the federal government.

Natural disasters are hard to compare, Cooper said, but Helene was "the deadliest and most damaging storm ever to hit North Carolina" with damages being worst in Mitchell, Yancey and Buncombe counties.

Helene, which brought more than 30 inches of rainfall, resulted in 96 causalities and impacted 39 FEMA declared disaster counties, will be a lasting recovery effort. Just a few weeks ago, the General Assembly passed an initial relief package consisting of \$273 million, but that will not be the last of it.

Cooper's proposal was broken into nine primary areas of relief. Here is each category with a brief look into damages and programs that would assist in recovery.

Economy: With about 45% of North Carolina's GDP found in the 39 disaster declared counties, the economy will take a big hit, Walker said. Notably, Cooper's proposal suggests allocating \$475 million into a Helene Business Recovery Grant Program that could be dispersed very quickly, among other funding areas.

Housing: Cooper hopes to ask Congress for help with housing funding, but that can take around 18 months, Walker said. In the meantime, Cooper suggested the state fund \$325 million to support a Homeowner Recovery Program that can get to residents faster.

Utilities and natural resources: There were almost \$7 billion in damages to utilities from the storm and Cooper is asking that the state fund \$577.8 million of that.

Transportation: With almost \$10 billion in damages and 5,000 miles of roads damaged, Cooper is recommending the state spend almost \$55 million in this area.

Agriculture: Damages of about \$3.4 billion were found to Western North Carolina's agriculture community. With the area growing specialty crops, Walker said it will likely take them even longer to fully recover. Cooper is recommending the state contribute \$422 million in this area.

Government and recovery operations: Many parks, state-owned land and government facilities were damaged and Cooper estimates the state should spend about \$594 million to repair those facilities.

Education: The affected area is home to over 1,000 schools and 900,000 students. Cooper recommends the state spend \$100 million on community colleges and K-12 schools, among other things, totaling a \$282 million ask from the state government.

Health and Human Services: With about \$700 million in damages, 55 childcare centers sustaining damage and 145 healthcare facilities impacted, Cooper is asking for over \$250 million in state funding.

Tribal and Federal Lands: They are still surveying damages in the area that is home to about 16,000 enrolled members.

Ultimately, it's the state legislators who pass any of the governor's spending requests and they are scheduled to meet Thursday for another round of Helene recovery aid talks.

Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, sent out a response to the proposal titled, "Gov. Cooper's Disaster Recovery Agency Blows \$175 Million Hole in Budget," saying Cooper's office was mismanaging their information by withholding until now.

"NCORR leaders have repeatedly tried to cover up their failures at the expense of hurricane victims. Their attempts to hide problems rather than own up to their incompetence has resulted in a continuing disaster for hurricane victims," Berger wrote in the press release. "Now, Gov. Cooper is asking for an additional \$175 million with little to no time to evaluate the request. It's past time for Gov. Cooper to take accountability for his six years of mismanagement and financial carelessness. I look forward to GovOps getting to the bottom of this astounding failure."

Walker responded to those claims saying her team has been talking to the General Assembly and that it took their office time to sort out what exactly the need looked like.

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C681ED03B3A5A8>



Letters to the Editor

October 23, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Letters To Editor | 2496 Words OpenURL Link

S-W Fest success a community effort

To the Editor:

The members of the Sylva-Webster Alumni Committee would like to thank all those who supported the Sylva-Webster Fest. People supported in so many ways... monetary gifts, discounts, verbally, with labor, news media (Sylva-Herald, WRGC Radio, Allisons Outdoor), information (The Town of Sylva), services (Sylva Police), etc. This support helped make the Fest one for the ages, and created memories the S-W alumni will cherish for the rest of their lives. Thank you for keeping a part of Jackson County's history alive.

A special thanks to the Class Representatives: Lana Clark Phillips ('61), Mary Ellen Moody & Bennie Reynolds ('62), Ken Nicholson ('63), Annie Dillard Estes & Frankie Bowers ('64), Wanda Stephens Herren ('65), Jean Buchanan Carr & Barabara Ray Sitton ('66), Joyce Cooper & Sandy Plemmons Brooks ('67), Nell Clayton Nations ('68), Cathy Stillwell Gibson & Patricia Ferguson ('69), Mary Bradley ('70), Diane Dillard Cabe ('71), Rickey Taylor ('73), Sherrie Beshears Peeler ('74), Rob Sutton ('75), Rita Ward McConnell & Sherry Burns Wilson ('76), Arlene Booth Price & Lin Hooper ('77), Vickie Maynor Bradley & Teresa Mashburn Vreeland ('78), Tammy Cunningham Cogdill ('79), Sherri Booth ('80), Paula Mathis & Beverly Smith Bradley ('81), Traci Franklin ('82), Mary Ward Carpenter ('83), Erik Sandborg ('84), Pauletta Hoxit Clark ('85), Myra Gillespie ('86), Angie Russell Dean ('87), Angie Farmer & Sherry Hall Maney ('88), Toby Norman ('89), Nikki Young & Kevin Stanberry ('90), and Kim Hensley & Tiffany Shuler ('91). We couldn't have done it without you!

On behalf of the Sylva-Webster Alumni Committee: Andi McNair, Angie Farmer, Angie Dean, Arlene Price, Beverly Bradley, Cathy Gibson, Connie Brooks, Karissa Henson, Mark McNair, Myra Gillespie, Paula Mathis, Sherri Booth and Traci Franklin.

Sherri Booth, Whittier

Who am I voting for, and why

To the Editor:

That moment when someone says, "I can't believe you would vote for Trump," I simply reply, "I'm not voting for Trump."

I'm voting for the First Amendment and freedom of speech.

I'm voting for the Second Amendment and my right to defend my life and my family.

I'm voting for the next Supreme Court Justice(s) to protect the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

I'm voting for the continued growth of my retirement and reducing inflation.

I'm voting for a return of our troops from foreign countries and the end to America's involvement in foreign conflicts.

I'm voting for the Electoral College and for the Republic in which we live.

I'm voting for the police to be respected once again and to ensure law and order. I am tired of all the criminals having a revolving door and being put back in the street.

I'm voting for the continued appointment of federal judges who respect the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

I'm voting for keeping our jobs to remain in America and not be outsourced all over the world - to China, Mexico and other foreign countries. I want USA-made.

I'm voting for secure borders and to have legal immigration. I can't believe we actually have flown 380,000 illegal immigrants into our country and at least 400 terrorists have entered our country during the Biden/Harris term (confirmed by Homeland Security).

I am voting for doing away with all of the freebies given to all of the illegals and not looking after the needs of the American citizens.

I'm voting for the military and the veterans who fought for this country to give the American people their freedoms.

I'm voting to keep men out of women's sports.

I'm voting for peace progress in the Middle East.

I'm voting to fight against human/child trafficking.

I'm voting for freedom of religion.

I'm voting for the right to speak my opinion and not be censored. I am voting for the return of teaching math, history, and science instead of indoctrination of our children and pronouns.

I'm not just voting for one person; I'm voting for the future of my country.

I'm voting for my children and my grandchildren to ensure their freedoms and their future.

If you agree, vote with me - Trump/Vance 2024!

Kitti Chisholm, Whittier

Lt. Gov. Robinson's response to Hunt

To the Editor:

On Oct. 10, Lieutenant Governor and Republican nominee for Governor of North Carolina Mark Robinson issued the statement below in response to far-left Democrat Rachel Hunt's racist campaign ad:

"Jim Hunt must be beyond embarrassed to see this ad playing on North Carolina airwaves. Imagine how he feels to see his daughter not just slinging mud against her opponent, but outright lying to the people of North Carolina. Will the news media report that a white liberal just cut an ad claiming she needs bleach – a common household whitening agent – to clean up the office of the first black Lt. Governor of this state? I suspect not.

"Just like my far-left opponent Josh Stein – who likened the prospect of electing North Carolina's first black governor to the old Jim Crow South – Rachel Hunt's radical policies will transform what it means to be a North Carolinian.

"My message to the voters is this: do not allow these racist, radical attacks and lies to divide us. Election Day is coming and We the People are ready for a better and brighter tomorrow." – Mark K. Robinson, Lieutenant Governor

and Republican nominee for Governor of North Carolina

Background: Democrat Rachel Hunt said she would clean out the office of the first black Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina with a gallon of bleach in a campaign ad. "And since I'm moving into Mark Robinson's office, I'll start with a gallon of this [hydrogen peroxide bleach]". – Rachel Hunt (Rachel Hunt for NC Campaign Ad, Twitter.com, Accessed 10/10/2024)

Democrat Josh Stein likened electing North Carolina's first black governor to the old Jim Crow South: "...A state where we stand up for our fundamental rights like voting rights and women's rights, not one that sends us back to the 1960s. Mark Robinson wants to turn back the clock. And then break that clock." – Josh Stein (WRAL TV, Stein casts NC gubernatorial race as referendum on rights, 6/1/2024).

Keith Blaine, Sylva

Blaine is Chair, Jackson County GOP.

Phil Haire left a towering legacy

To the Editor:

Phil Haire was a giant among us. His legacy of love of freedom and service above self will endure through the ages. His contributions to his community, state and nation dwarf most of his fellow humans, even if we lived twice his 88 years. I was always in awe of him when I was around him.

During a Veterans Day ceremony years ago at the Veterans Memorial Park in Cherokee, on behalf of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Cherokee American Legion Post, I was honored to present him with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Its wording of exemplary professionalism, dedication to excellence and service above self could not possibly describe the impact of his beloved brother whose legacy of love and leadership is, and always will be, an example to us all.

We in the Cherokee community are deeply saddened that his bright light of leadership has been temporarily dimmed. But because of his amazing vision and accomplishments it will again shine brightly throughout our history. We are all better people because of him.

Peace and love forever to you, brother Phil. You have shown us all the way.

Lew Harding, Sylva

Morrow's response to recent attacks

To the Editor:

From Michele Morrow's response to the most recent media slander in an Oct. 18 press conference:

"I'm here in response to recent news stories implying that I am calling for a nationwide armed revolution if I don't win the superintendent of schools race.

"You, the media, have fallen hook, line and sinker for the distraction campaign being run by my opponent. It seems you drink the very same Kool-Aid that you serve your audience.

"Thankfully, I have faith that the American people and the voters of North Carolina are much smarter than the press gives them credit for.

"It's shameful that at a time when our schools are in such crisis, the media refuses to report the truth.

"The real danger here is the irresponsibility of a press that would twist words to manipulate the public rather than report on the actual violence in our schools.

"Where are the stories addressing the 84 percent increase in drug use, gang activity and violent crime in our schools? The nearly 1,500 North Carolina teachers assaulted in the classroom just last year? In Wake County we had a student stabbed to death at school, in the gym and it barely made the 6 o'clock news. What about all the young people that committed suicide at NC State last year? With all your resources why are you not digging into the root causes of these tragedies?

"Is it any wonder that out of all American institutions, media is trusted the least? And yet you continue to mislead the public and ignore the most important issues.

"Why have you been negligent in looking into my opponent's history of funding violence, chaos and assaults on our police officers?

"Why have you turned a blind eye to his dangerous rhetoric that is fueling an attack of vicious slurs and actual death threats against me? When what I am doing is working tirelessly to affect positive change and to solve these incredibly significant problems.

"Families and teachers are leaving in droves. Proficiency rates are at an all-time low. Many of our young adults are graduating wholly unprepared for adult life.

"So, do I talk about a culture war? Yes. Absolutely.

"Am I fighting for our children? Yes. Absolutely.

"Will I continue to fight to fix this school system, win or lose? Yes. Harder than ever.

"It's ridiculous to imply that I am calling for an armed revolution when what I am doing is trying as hard as I possibly can to undo the damage that has been done to our young people.

"With your help, my opponent has tried to bully me into silence and compliance, just like the system has done to thousands of teachers and students.

"Let me say this to every person who has not felt free to speak truth to power: I see you, I hear you and I am fighting for you.

"That is why I will be voting Michele Morrow for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

"I encourage every concerned citizen in NC to do the same."

Lori Richards, Cullowhee

Relief effort: The real record

To the Editor:

Our friends and neighbors are going through incredible stress while being lied to for political gain. Examples are cited by PolitiFacts, North Carolina.

Chimney Rock residents were told their land "was being seized by the federal government. There's no evidence to support this. The claim appeared in an Oct. 2 X post read by more than 2.5 million people. The local county government, FEMA, and North Carolina House of Representatives Speaker Tim Moore, a Republican who represents

western North Carolina have rebutted it. An elderly lady sent FEMA away out of fear they were going to take her home.

Joe Biden told the people of North Carolina they had no more supplies for us: Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, who is running for governor made this claim in an Oct. 2 X post. We were told by others the money from FEMA is going to immigrants. Biden said the main obstacle to helping North Carolinians isn't a lack of resources, but crippled road networks.

A man identifying himself as Jonathan Howard of the Florida State Guard Special Missions Unit said he flew into North Carolina over the weekend and that the local sheriff's department stopped him from taking off for a rescue mission. Speaker Moore said he wasn't involved and has been trying to help integrate more civilians and National Guard personnel into North Carolina's rescue efforts. Moore said he appreciates that Howard tried to clear his name, but said people are still blaming him for Howard's problems.

One thousand troops authorized to respond in North Carolina are "sitting around twiddling their thumbs" because Cooper hasn't "written up the mission orders that the troops need in order to be deployed," according to Mark Robinson. Cooper asked Biden on Sept. 30 to make all necessary federal resources available to respond to this catastrophic storm, his office said. Also Cooper granted consent for Brig. Gen. Charles W. Morrison of the North Carolina Army National Guard to lead response efforts as "Dual-Status Commander for the Tropical Storm Helene response in North Carolina."

"When Hurricane Helene was on its way to North Carolina, Gov. Cooper was too busy hobnobbing with rich folks in New York to care about preparing for the storm." claimed Robinson. Cooper attended a New York conference on climate a day before Helene made landfall in Florida. Cooper was preparing for a possible weather emergency Sept. 24, when he formally asked top members of the state's executive branch for emergency powers.

The response from the Biden administration, Governor Cooper and our Republican representatives deserve our gratitude for EPA, FEMA, National Guard and volunteers. While coping, politics becomes a distant consideration. But our elected official's votes impact climate disasters and remediation. I will remember that my vote for civility, truth and community service is a vote for you. May I encourage us to pull away from stress long enough to vote? Voting began Oct. 17. I'm voting for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz. How about you?

Ron Robinson, Sylva

Let's put planet over profit

To the Editor:

A vote for Trump is a vote for Project 2025, the incredibly dangerous game plan for a far-right authoritarian government that would strip away vital protections enjoyed by the American people today. The agenda puts the planet at risk in many ways including eliminating the National Weather Service (NWS), the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and to severely downsize and restructure FEMA and many other scientific government agencies that we rely on for critical information. Imagine not knowing that a hurricane as dangerous as Helene is on its way. How many more lives would be lost? Project 2025 also proposes opening public lands and parks to drilling and mining operations where these sacred spaces would be sold to the highest bidder instead of being prized for their significant cultural and natural attributes by the American public. Most significantly, the plan is to halt scientific climate study, preparedness and action plans. Trump pulled out of the Paris Climate Accord in his first term and will do so again putting even more Americans at risk. Hurricane Helene was THREE TIMES the size of Katrina! How big will the next disaster be? The EPA and other environmental agencies will be further deconstructed to bow to corporate interests over the rights and protections of all Americans.

For only the second time in 179 years Scientific American endorses a presidential candidate. Their rationale is protection of the environment and public health. They describe two futures: one which relies on science, evidence and learning from experience. The other, which relies on conspiracy theories, rejects evidence and endangers

public health and safety.

The scientific community, many CEOs of major companies and over 200 high ranking republican staffers and representatives are rejecting Trump and endorsing the Harris/Walz ticket, including half of Trump's former Cabinet members who worked with his administration. These educated people are examining Trump's record and voting for Harris, how about you?

Jane Finneran, Cullowhee

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Commissioners OK grants for businesses hit by storm

October 23, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 185 Words OpenURL Link

By Beth Lawrence

Owners of businesses in Dillsboro damaged by Hurricane Helene will soon have some help coming their way thanks to the Office of Economic Development.

At their Oct. 15 regular meeting, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to create the Hurricane Helene Business Response Grant program.

Economic Development estimates that 14 businesses in Dillsboro were impacted by the storm.

"They are the only area of Jackson County that had businesses impacted with flood damage or physical property damage due to the hurricane," Director Tiffany Henry said.

The program is a one-time \$1,000 grant to cover the cost of cleanup; it will allow owners to clean or repair storm or flood damage to their facility. It does not cover inventory, lost revenue, or other losses.

Of those businesses affected, some remain closed, but a few have reopened while incurring "significant cleanup costs," Henry said.

This fund can be used to help those already up and running by reimbursing cleanup costs.

A total of \$15,000 will be allocated to Jackson County Chamber of Commerce who will oversee disbursement. Funds will be allocated until Nov. 30 or until they are expended.

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Be prepared for disruption, misinformation and turmoil

October 23, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Opinion | 821 Words OpenURL Link

The County Compass is a tabloid-sized weekly publication distributed free to Pamlico, Beaufort, Craven, Jones and Carteret Counties. It claims to offer "360 degrees of thorough and honest news coverage – furnished FREE to thousands of loyal readers every week." The truth is that it is about 90 percent ads and any editorial content is so far to the right as to make Atilla the Hun look liberal.

The issue for September 12-16 caught our attention. On page 15 and bleeding over to page 16 is a big article for the 2nd Amendment Patriots of North Carolina. We assume it was a paid ad, however it is not identified as such.

There is a slug in a box within the message showing the County Compass logo. The group further identifies itself with the Pamlico County GOP and the ad was published within the Pamlico GOP website.

In a big bold box heading the ad is the slogan "If you want peace, prepare for war."

The message attempts to connect the modern-day group to colonial militiamen, reminding readers that men between 16 and 60 were required to train regularly. It urges gunowners to stock up on ammo, get to the range and practice, claiming that protecting freedom is their job today.

Unwritten, but implied, is the message that if this election doesn't turn out right, with Trump winning, there will be violence and bloodshed.

In 2023, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 50 hate and anti-government groups in our state. Twelve have a statewide footprint. But there is only one legal militia in North Carolina – The North Carolina National Guard.

"Be prepared" appears to be a common theme of these groups. All North Carolinians would be well advised to heed this warning.

The misinformation campaign since Hurricane Helene struck our state has grown to such proportions that federal officials have joined Governor Cooper and leaders from both political parties in warning people not to listen to the lies. Trump has been the genesis of many of the lies about disaster response. Marjorie Taylor Greene is posting garbage saying the National Weather Service and meteorologists can control the weather. Because of malicious and fallacious social media posts federal officials who are trying to help have received threats in at least two counties.

Already we see attempts trying to discredit and disrupt our elections. The State GOP filed a lawsuit trying to get 225,000 registered voters thrown off the rolls. Another lawsuit from them claims the state is not canceling the voting registration of persons who refuse to serve on a jury because they aren't a citizen. The State Board of Elections vehemently denies this claim. Republicans are challenging absentee ballots that aren't sealed in the proper envelope...there are two envelopes enclosed with the ballot. They are also challenging ballots of overseas voters born in our state but who aren't living in our state. And the most preposterous of their claims is that Helene was merely an attempt to steal the election.

Some of the polling places in the western part of the state no longer exist and The State Board of Elections is doing all they can to ensure western voters are able to cast their ballots. It could only benefit Republicans if they helped instead of trying to disrupt. A close look at voting trends shows these western counties are almost solid red Republican.

And we need to be prepared for interference in polling places.

We're told outcomes might be learned later than election night this year to assure votes are accurately reported. It might take a week before the final presidential outcome is known. Our State Board of Elections has implemented rigorous procedures to ensure votes are recorded and tallied accurately, however they are also preparing for a barrage of expected challenges.

Donald Trump has intimated that if he doesn't win there might be bedlam. In an April Time magazine article, Trump, when asked about possible violence said, "If we don't win, you know, it depends." In another interview he said, "If everything's honest, I'll gladly accept the results. If it's not, you have to fight for the right of the country."

Trump has never thought any election he was involved in was honest. He's never accepted the results. Not with Hilary Clinton. Not with Joe Biden. And he won't with Kamala Harris.

He is still claiming the 2020 contest was rigged.

Are we so gullible, so partisan and mistrustful that truth no longer matters?

Can we not understand that these deliberate misinformation campaigns are designed to cause us to lose faith in all institutions? What happens when we no longer trust anyone?

Is it too late to stand up for the values that we once held dear? I cannot believe that lies and misinformation, that authoritarians who divide us, and that fairness and justice no longer matter.

What has happened to us?

Tom Campbell is a Hall of Fame North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965. Contact him at tomcamp@carolinabroadcasting.com.

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Brenda Dries

October 23, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Obituaries | 245 Words OpenURL Link

Brenda Denise Dries, 70, of Sylva, passed away on Oct. 19, 2024. She was born on May 30, 1954 in Starke, Florida to the late Cline Deitz and the late Jewel Deitz Crawford. In addition to her parents she was preceded in death by a sister, Diane Deitz Roten; a brother, Daniel Cline Deitz; and paternal grandparents, Danah and Alvin Deitz.

She was a graduate of Sylva-Webster High School and of Southwestern Tech where she graduated with a degree in nursing. Brenda worked for over 48 years in nursing at various hospitals throughout western North Carolina and Illinois.

In 1977, she married Joseph Dries of Lake Lure, North Carolina and together they had a son also named Joseph (Joey).

She is survived by Joseph, Joey; two sisters, Darlene Stokely (Bob) and Donna Sullivan of Starke, Florida; two brothers, Randy Crawford of Starke, Florida and Ronnie Crawford (Eva) of Morristown, Tenn.. She is also survived by her aunt Frankie Ward and uncle Loy Deitz of Sylva, as well as many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

The family would like to thank the many doctors and nurses of the Harris hospitals of Sylva and Swain for the great care that was provided to Brenda over the last months of her life.

No services are planned.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Helene Relief Fund or to East Fork Cemetery Fund, care of Randall Buchanan.

Arrangements are in care of Appalachian Funeral Services, an online registry is available at www.appalachianfuneralservices.com.

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Smoky Mountain's fall sports season nears completion

October 23, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Smoky Mountain | 327 Words OpenURL Link

As October draws to a close, Smoky Mountain High School's fall sports teams, including cross country, women's golf, men's soccer, women's tennis and volleyball are wrapping up their competitive seasons.

Cross country

Smoky Mountain capped off a successful cross country season with a strong showing at the Mountain 7 Conference Championship, held at the International Paper Sports Complex in Canton.

The men's team finished third, with Aiden Menickelli placing 10th overall. The women's team took fourth place, with Ellie Miller finishing 9th.

Women's golf

Seniors Tatum Griffin and Chesney Coggins and junior Giselle Rodriquez represented Smoky at the regionals on Oct. 21. held at Cramer Mountain Club near Charlotte.

Their path to Regionals followed a highly competitive season, which included three rounds of play in the Mountain 7 Conference Championship.

The 2024 Women's Golf Team consists of seniors Tatum Griffin, Chesney Coggins and Giselle Rodriquez; juniors Emma Burnes and Ella Small.

Men's soccer

The Smoky Mountain Mustangs improved their season record to 9-7 with a 1-0 victory over West Henderson, marking their fifth straight win. SMHS is 5-2 in the Mountain 7 Conference.

Eduin Maldonado netted his 12th goal of the season, assisted by John Blanton.

Junior goalkeeper Devlin Bright recorded four saves in the shutout.

In junior varsity action, the Mustangs defeated West Henderson 3-1, moving to 6-3-4 for the season.

Smoky Mountain returns to the field on Wednesday, October 23rd, when they take on Franklin.

Women's tennis

The doubles team of sophomore Braelyn Milligan and senior Kailey Broom advanced to the second round of the 3A West Regionals in Hickory after a commanding 6-4, 6-0 victory over the North Gaston team.

Volleyball

In a hard-fought match on October 16th, Tuscola edged Smoky Mountain 3-1. The Mountaineers took the first set 25-21, but the Mustangs bounced back with a 26-24 win in the second. Tuscola claimed the final two sets 25-22 and 25-21.

Senior players from volleyball, tennis and golf were recognized during the match. Due to disruptions from Hurricane Helene, the Mountain Seven Conference volleyball tournament will not take place this year.

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Dillsboro drying out, opening up

October 23, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Top Stories | 738 Words OpenURL Link

By Dave Russell

Hurricane Helene pushed Scotts Creek out of its banks and into Dillsboro last month, but the town bounced back in a hurry. Almost all of Dillsboro's restaurants and small shops are welcoming customers.

At the western end of Front Street Scotts Creek invited itself into a little corner of the little town. Business owners have mostly dug out and moved into deep-cleaning phase.

Visits from the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad, a lifeline for shops all through the "Walkabout town of Dillsboro" as it bills itself, have resumed.

"The train was in town Saturday and Sunday and we had really good numbers," Dillsboro Town Clerk Debbie Coffey said. "One business owner reported on Thursday that although visitor numbers are down for October, the folks who are here are spending money."

GSMR has resumed both its Nantahala Gorge and Tuckaseegee River excursions. It visits Dillsboro nine more days in October and 26 days in November.

The murky, sandy waters of Scotts Creek crept into only six or seven businesses. Jill Bray, of Haircuts by Jill, and her family took everything out of the shop to pull up the carpet and consider new flooring. The shop opened on Monday.

The Corn Crib might be the last to open, hopefully by Nov. 1.

Visage Salon opened last Tuesday, according to owner Julie Painter.

"We had enough water that it got in the side door and our dryer vent shifted, leaving a hole for more water to come in," Painter said. "We're hoping to save these floors because they are 100 years old, but we have a lot of buckling. We're hoping they can be planed down and saved because I am sure they have been through a lot."

About 1-3 inches came into the building, she said.

Painter's husband, Bobby, took 10 days off work to dry out the area beneath the shop and begin on the cleaning and mold prevention, Painter said.

"He got underneath this place every day since the storm," she said. "He pulled out all the wet insulation and set the fans. Once we had everything pretty dry under there he sprayed for everything."

Staff and volunteers formed a sort of bucket bridge to save artwork at Dogwood Crafters. About 8 inches of water seeped into the building, primarily in the back section on the railroad track side.

"We set up card tables and started moving everything up to the higher levels of the shop," volunteer staffer Marjorie Eyre said. "There was this family that came, this guy with five foster children. I don't know who he was, but they stopped and the kids all helped."

Only a few items were damaged, she said.

The craft collective is open regular hours and keeping an eye on any potential problems with mold.

Abby Barnes, owner of the Carolina Southern Peddler, will need a new HVAC system but is open for business, she said.

"We had about 6 inches of mud after the water left," she said. "The water came right up to the top of the porch but not inside."

Workers have started on cleanup.

"The insulation and ductwork that had ripped loose has been removed and we have fans under there drying it out," Barnes said. "It will probably be about three weeks before we have a new system."

Pop-up gallery

The Green Energy Park will open a pop-up gallery in the old visitor center through December. Artists from GEP, just west of Dillsboro, did demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday in front of town hall, Coffey said.

"That went very well, and they are working a pop-up Art Market on the third Saturday of November," she said. "It is an idea to help artists who lost studio space or shows due to the hurricane."

For more on the JCGEP shows, call Morgan Kennedy at 631-0271.

Grants

Jackson County will offer grants to help Dillsboro business owners. Jackson County Economic Development Director Tiffany Henry and Marne Harris, director of the Small Business Center at Southwestern Community College, held a Wednesday meeting about the grants with Dillsboro business owners and town staff.

About 15 businesses had some kind of damage, but only six or seven had direct water damage, Coffey said.

For more information about the funds, contact Coffey at info@dillsboronc.info.

Park

Picnic Park remains closed "until we get it cleaned up," Coffey said. "We're working on the removal of a lot of sludge and mud and debris. Then we will need to re-gravel the parking lot."

The Tuckaseigee River delivered litter, logs, trees, building materials and more to the little park under the U.S. 23/441 bridge.

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Festival gives to Helene relief

October 23, 2024 | Tabor-Loris Tribune (NC)

Section: News | 115 Words

Page: 27 OpenURL Link

While Yam Festival leaders are hoping for plenty of fun this Saturday, they are keenly aware of the ongoing challenges in western North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Directors approved a donation of \$500 in badly needed supplies, materials that have been delivered with contributions from others by the Tabor City Fire Department. Not all of the requested supplies were easy to find, Festival Secretary/Manager Cynthia Nelson said.

"Sleeping bags were nowhere to be found," Nelson said in an e-mail to directors. "We purchased 20 sleep fleece blankets, warm socks for men, women and children.

"We also purchased toothbrushes for all ages, toothpaste, over the counter ibuprofen, and acetaminophen, children's chewable ibuprofen, baby bottles, etc."

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