

# A look at Cleveland County's 100th year

October 8, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star | Section: News | 304 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Cleveland County's 100th fair was one to remember.

The much-anticipated event was set to open simultaneously with the arrival of Hurricane Helene, and opening day was delayed until Saturday after the storm dealt widespread power outages and damage from fallen trees.

This year, the first ever drone show was added, and it was a hit with crowds.

According to the fair's Facebook, in honor of the 100th year anniversary, the fair hosted a speedway legends meet and greet to celebrate the now-retired speedway's rich history and the county's racing legacy that continues to live on in the community.

The event honored the track, drivers and stories that helped shape the fairground's legacy and featured Matthew Dillner, co-host of the Peacock TV show Lost Speedways, which also includes an episode on Cleveland County Fair's speedway, and dirt track legend and many-time winner Chuck Piazza. The two signed autographs and shared racing stories.

In addition to special attractions, there were the usual favorites, such as the midway rides, rat wheel color game, livestock show, chainsaw art, exhibit hall and the demolition derby.

The fair also collected cash or check donations with the proceeds going directly to hurricane relief efforts through Manna Food Bank. Carolina Derby Promotions also had a donation station and collected non-perishable food, first aid kits, baby and hygiene items and more. The donations went to ASR Grain Company in Lattimore to be taken to be distributed in towns across Western North Carolina.

Calls to Cleveland County Fair Manager Bobby Jenks for additional information were not returned in time for this story.

Reach reporter Rebecca Sitzes at rsitzes@gannett.com.

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# Red Cross blood drives set for Iredell in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 8, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: SPECIAL TO THE RECORD & LANDMARK | Section: Wellness | 387 Words OpenURL Link

The American Red Cross continues to work to restock critically needed blood products uncollected due to the ongoing impact of Hurricane Helene's devastation in the Southeast. Donors outside of affected areas are encouraged to make an appointment to give now and help keep the blood supply stable in the weeks to come.

Since making landfall, the storm and its aftermath have led to the cancellation of more than 100 blood drives, causing thousands of blood and platelet donations to go uncollected. For so many people living with urgent medical care needs, blood transfusions are essential, and donations in the Southeast are key to keeping our nationwide network stocked. The Red Cross operates through a national inventory with the ability to move blood wherever and whenever it is needed most.

The time to give blood or platelets is now. Bring hope to those in need by visiting RedCrossBlood.org, calling 1-800-RED CROSS or by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App. As the Red Cross continues to urge people to give blood or platelets now, our teams are also on the ground providing vital relief — like food, water, shelter and support — in communities devastated by Hurricane Helene. Anyone able to help those impacted by disasters big and small across the country, like Helene, consider making a gift of any amount.

All who come to give blood, platelets or plasma Oct. 1-31 will receive a \$10 Amazon.com gift card by email, plus be automatically entered for a chance to win one of three \$5,000 gift cards. For full details, visit RedCrossBlood.org/Treat.

#### Mooresville

Oct. 16: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Michael Weinig, Inc., 124 Crosslake Park DriveOct. 17: 2-6:30 p.m., Good Soul Yoga, 236 Raceway Drive, No. 1Oct. 21: 3-7:30 p.m., Rocky Mount Church, 1739 Perth RoadOct. 22: 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Victory Lanes Entertainment and Events Center, 125 Morlake Drive

# Statesville

Oct. 16: 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Statesville Family YMCA, 828 Wesley DrOct. 16: 1-5:30 p.m., First Baptist Church, 815 Davie Ave.Oct. 23: 1-6 p.m., Rose Chapel Methodist Church, 813 Turnersburg HighwayOct. 29: 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Statesville High School-Aux. Gym, 474 N. Center St.

# Troutman

Oct. 14: 2-6:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Lutheran, 225 Morgan St.Oct. 14: 2:30-7 p.m., Watermark Church, 321 Clontz Hill Road

### **Taylorsville**

Oct. 13: 12:30-5 p.m., Friendship Lutheran Church, 5300 Church RoadOct. 15: 2-7 p.m., Salem Lutheran Church, 4005 NC-16 (North)

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# Helene cast a pall over the Blue Ridge Mountains

October 8, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Mapping | 748 Words OpenURL Link

CAMDEN, S.C. — "Chill" is the word that comes to mind when thinking of Asheville, North Carolina, the center of Hurricane Helene's devastation last week. A hub for musicians, artists, writers, chefs, animal lovers and entrepreneurs nestled among the Blue Ridge Mountains at a temperate 2,134-foot elevation, Asheville today is bordering on a nervous breakdown.

So is the Southeast, generally. For generations, the Blue Ridge Mountains have provided a summer refuge for people from all around the Deep South. My family has been among the fortunate who could escape to higher climes during insuff erably hot and humid summers. Mornings there were often cool enough to justify building a fire.

It seems almost everyone knows someone who lives in "the mountains," and nearly everybody else spends time there. We expect hurricanes and tropical storms to visit our coastline and Lowcountry, but who could have imagined that one could become a threat to towns hundreds of miles from the ocean?

Helene was a tropical storm by the time it reached the Carolinas, but it was still so big and so powerful that its lashing rain and winds reached South Carolina's Midlands, and people across the region are feeling the storm's pain.

When Mark Edens, a friend and part owner of a popular antiques store here in Camden, saw me the day after the storm, he skipped any greeting and went right to, "How bad are you hurting?" His despair was palpable. "You know, I physically live here," he said, "but my soul lives in the mountains. It was just too much. It broke me."

"Soul" is another word that fits the Blue Ridge. Something about the mountains nourishes the soul. It's the cooler air as you climb higher with each turn of the road. It's also the aroma of millions of trees that remind you of Christmas. Some might say when you're in the mountains, you're closer to the angels.

Asheville's fortunate location at the junction of two rivers, the French Broad and the Swannanoa, proved to be its undoing when Helene blew through and the waters rose to depths of massive destruction.

If there were an apocalyptic film named "Helene," the soundtrack would have to be Rhiannon Giddens's "Swannanoa Tunnel." The song, sometimes called "Asheville Junction," was first sung in the late 19th century to the sound of hammers pounding steel. It tells the story of the railroad tracks built by wrongfully imprisoned Black people who were labor for the Western North Carolina Railroad.

Towns along that rail line, including Swannanoa, Black Mountain, Ridgecrest and Old Fort, were almost completely destroyed by the storm. In Asheville, little was spared — certainly not the River Arts District, a mile-long oasis for artists and collectors that includes galleries for 240 artists and 23 converted warehouses off ering art, food, music, breweries and what's understood as the Asheville vibe. Artsy, laidback, cool and dog-friendly, it's a fl annel-and-fl ip-fl ops mecca for hikers, mountain bikers, foodies and culture connoisseurs.

One of my favorite haunts was the Marquee, a 50,000-square-foot emporium of fantasy and over-the-top sensory stimulation. Architectural elements, paintings, vintage furniture, jewelry, clothing, olive oil — it's all there. Or was.

In the immediate wake of the storm, the Asheville vibe was fully engaged, as neighbors and strangers helped one another by any means available. My son, John, who lives in Asheville, saw people going out of their way to share what others needed. But the novelty of shared catastrophe cannot last forever.

"A week later, now that so many have cleared out, the neighbors-helping-neighbors vibe has subsided somewhat," he texted me, "and it just feels like one of the bleakest places I've ever been." I asked him what the area smells like, because the mountains usually smell so fresh and clean.

"Mildew," he said. "It's not so much the smell as the ambiance. It feels like a bomb went off . Very empty and quiet, except for the occasional siren or helicopter every 20 minutes or so." Businesses are closed, except the odd gas station or grocery store with lines outside. Many people are going without power and water.

It's hard to imagine how long it will take for the Blue Ridge to recover and rebuild. At least the birds are singing, John tells me. And the bears, who had been displaced by overdevelopment, are back to wandering the neighborhoods and downtown. John saw one walking down his street Thursday morning, probably scouting abandoned houses for leftovers.

Chill, it seems, isn't just for people. Let's hope it lasts.

Parker writes for The Washington Post.

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# Monetary donations most needed for hurricane relief

October 8, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Mapping | 366 Words OpenURL Link

Dear Citizens of Statesville, The overwhelming out-pouring of support from our community for the victims of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina has been nothing short of extraordinary. In the face of such devastating loss, the spirit of Statesville has shone brightly, demonstrating our unity, resilience, and unwavering commitment to helping those in need. In recent days, I have been in close communication with the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, and after careful consideration, we have reached a consensus: it is time to temporarily pause the collection of physical supplies until a more coordinated relief plan can be implemented.

As the immediate need for physical donations shifts, I now ask that you consider continuing your support through monetary contributions. These funds are vital to sustaining the ongoing recovery eff orts, and I urge you to direct your support to the following trusted organizations:

North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund

American Red Cross: 1-800RED CROSS or text the word "HELENE" to 90999 to make a \$10 donation;

Emergency Disaster Services of The Salvation Army give.salvarionarmyusa.org

Feeding the Carolinas at feedingthecarolinas.org

Samaritan's Purse disaster relief at samanritanspurse.org

I want to take this moment to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone involved in the Hurricane Helene Airlift Relief at the Statesville Regional Airport. The dedication of the organizers and the tireless eff orts of the countless volunteers who have worked around the clock since last Saturday have been a source of immense pride and inspiration.

To every individual and family who has generously donated supplies, thank you. Your contributions have made an immediate and tangible diff erence to those aff ected by this disaster. Your kindness refl ects the strength of our community, and it is this spirit that will continue to uplift those recovering from the storm. The spirit of Statesville is strong, and we won't stop until our neighbors have fully recovered and rebuilt their lives.

Together, we will ensure that our compassion and generosity continue to provide hope and healing. The road to recovery may be long, but Statesville's spirit is unshakable, and we are committed to seeing it through until every neighbor has been restored.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and for making Statesville a beacon of strength and hope.

Costi Kuteh is the mayor of Statesville.

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# Statesville mayor: Donations of money most needed for hurricane relief

October 8, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Donna Swicegood | Section: Local | 354 Words OpenURL Link

Dear Citizens of Statesville,

The overwhelming outpouring of support from our community for the victims of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina has been nothing short of extraordinary. In the face of such devastating loss, the spirit of Statesville has shone brightly, demonstrating our unity, resilience, and unwavering commitment to helping those in need. In recent days, I have been in close communication with the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, and after careful consideration, we have reached a consensus: it is time to temporarily pause the collection of physical supplies until a more coordinated relief plan can be implemented.

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Thank you for your unwavering commitment and for making Statesville a beacon of strength and hope.

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# Kindness Closet moves to bigger space in Mooresville, plans to give more hygiene products

October 8, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Ben Gibson | Section: Wellness | 448 Words OpenURL Link

The Kindness Closet in Mooresville hands out hygiene products to those in need. A recent move to the Design Center in downtown Mooresville will give the nonprofit more room to work in.

The nonprofit worked in a corner of the Mooresville Christian Mission's building since 2022. Founder Anne Mautner said that organization was critical in getting the Kindness Closet to a point where it could grow large enough to need its own space.

"We can buy in bulk, we can store more products, we can deliver farther to organizations that need it," Mautner said. "I'd like to see it grow into other counties. The need is incredible, and this warehouse will enable that growth."

Mautner began the Mooresville Kindness Closet after she heard what some students face when it comes to hygiene poverty. She said stories of students being unable to find toilet paper, toothbrushes, soap and period products motivated her to address that need.

The organization gave out 65,000 products at the expense of about \$100,000 so far this year.

Mauther said there are palettes of hygiene products waiting to be given out to help thousands in the area and the move to 532 Patterson Ave. will enable the nonprofit to do that.

She said a survey the Kindness Closet performed with Iredell County Partners for Young Children shows that 21% of respondents missed school, work or other commitments because they didn't have hygiene products. About 43% said in the last year they have been without hygiene products when needed.

"What we do is very simple. Having these basic products enable people to move through life, normally," Mautner said. "Once we give products to the people who need it, they can stay at work. They can have upward mobility."

All of the respondents to the survey said that receiving free hygiene products allows them to purchase other basic needs, like food and clothing.

The Kindness Closet began as Little Helpers in 2018 when one of its Kindness Cupboards — imagine a little library box, but with hygiene products — was put at Academy Street Park. A year later, the Kindness Closet was incorporated in November 2019 and has grown since.

Maunter said Kindness Closet is also involved with relief efforts from Hurricane Helene and will support those in need in the western parts of North Carolina as long as needed.

Fundraising for the nonprofit

The Kindness Closet is set to have its inaugural fundraising event on Oct. 9 at Daveste Vineyards in Troutman from 6-8 p.m. Tickets are \$75.

There will be Daveste wine and craft beer, hors d'oeuvres, music and a silent auction. Each guest also has the opportunity to pack hygiene kits as part of the event.

For more information on the fundraiser and organization, see www.mooresville kindnesscloset.org.

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# Helene set to shove aside 1916 event as area's worst

October 8, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: History | 725 Words OpenURL Link

By Jim Buchanan

A frequent question heard in these parts after Helene swept over us, sparing a good chunk of Jackson County but wiping a large chunk of Western North Carolina clean off the map, is how Helene stacks up to the big historic storms in Jackson – Frances and Ivan in 2004 and the floods of 1940 and 1916 (hurricanes didn't receive names until 1950).

In a nutshell, Helene didn't do the most damage to Jackson, but it did the most damage by far to the region.

And it isn't even close. We're not talking apples-to-oranges comparisons, we're talking elephants to oranges, with Helene the elephant whose damage has yet to be fully quantified.

About the only things the historic storms have in common is that they all packed a one-two punch.

In 1916 a tropical system swept in from Alabama and dropped torrential rains in the mountains, followed about a week later by a system that hit Charleston, S.C. and charged inland. The saturated ground couldn't hold the second storm and caused heavy flooding in the mountains, leaving around 80 dead and damages estimated at \$22 million in 1916 dollars. Asheville suffered heavy damage; at Altapass near Grandfather Mountain, rainfall of 22.22 inches fell in one day, at the time the heaviest rainfall ever recorded in the U.S.

In terms of loss of life and property damage, the 1940 flood was the worst in Jackson history. Again, it was a two-stage event, with heavy rains from a tropical system in mid-August followed by a freak localized system that hit the Caney Fork and Canada sections. Four people were swept away in Canada, three in the same McCall family. Five-year-old Journey McCall's body was found on Governor's Island in Bryson City. Young Dale McCall's body was never recovered, nor was the body of his father, Albert.

Reports from the era describe devastating landslides, and that "people in that part of the county say that all the water did not fall from the skies in the torrential rains, but that explosions like the discharges of dynamite were heard and the water gushed from the craters in the earth. Explosions and the roar in the mountains was said to be deafening... gardens, crops, livestock, and feed prepared for the winter and places in houses, barns, springhouses and smokehouses were all carried away..."

Every bridge across the Tuckaseigee was destroyed. Rains were so hard in other parts of the county that East Fork Creek in the Savannah Community, which normally runs mere inches deep, carried away a heavy-duty truck.

There were some miraculous stories of survival, and one involved Jim Ed Norton's cow.

The cow was contentedly safe in her barn when the flood came, and she was found carried 10 miles downstream, past East LaPorte and Cullowhee, to the home of Burke Painter. She was led back home the next day.

The 2004 floods hit Jackson hard, and hit neighboring Macon, Haywood and Buncombe harder. Helene knocked the entire region back to the Stone Age with another soaking of heavy rain before the main event.

North Carolina's Climate Office writes, "Helene exceeded the coverage and calamity, along with the heaviest rainfall totals, from that (1916) event. During Fred, the National Weather Service issued one Flash Flood Emergency – used only rarely during life-threatening and catastrophic water rises – along the Pigeon River. By comparison,

portions of 21 counties in North Carolina had those Emergency warnings issued during Helene. At the few river gauges in the region that observed both Helene and the 1916 storm, the crests since Helene have broken those long-standing records. The French Broad River and Swannanoa River – which collided at high speeds and high volumes in 1916 to overtake Biltmore Village – both saw new record crests during and after Helene. The French Broad River in Asheville rose 1.5 feet above its previous highest crest, and downstream at Blantyre, the river surpassed its 1916 crest and was still rising when the gauge stopped reporting on Friday afternoon. The Swannanoa River at Biltmore crested at 26.1 feet, more than five feet above its 1916 maximum and slightly above the apparent 26-foot crest in April 1791, making this effectively the worst flood along the river since North Carolina became a state."

Again, Helene's effect have yet to be fully quantified. But it's one that certainly is writing tragic new chapters in the area's storm record book.

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# FEMA responds to Hurricane Helene rumors, scams

October 8, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Katie Nixon; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 523 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

As rumors and misinformation continue to plague social media feeds and infiltrate communities devastated by Hurricane Helene, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has launched a web page in response to dispel some of the more common claims related to ongoing response and recovery efforts.

The federal agency typically uses a rumor response page in the wake of natural disasters to circulate critical information to survivors, a release noted, as false or misleading claims can confuse survivors and prevent them from seeking help.

Amid ongoing response and recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, the rumor response page provides accurate information about the agency and explains federal disaster assistance programs and their processes.

Here's a closer look at 5 common rumors and facts:

1. Rumor: FEMA does not have enough money to provide disaster assistance for Helene.

Fact: This is false.

The agency has enough money for immediate response and recovery needs, the release noted.

Its Disaster Relief Fund can support immediate response and recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene's destruction throughout the Southeast region.

2. Rumor: FEMA will ONLY provide \$750 to disaster survivors to support their recovery.

Fact: This is false.

Disaster survivors may receive an upfront, flexible payment of \$750, known as Serious Needs Assistance, soon after they apply to purchase essential items like food, water, baby formula, medication and other emergency supplies.

However, as applications continue to be reviewed, people may receive additional forms of assistance for other needs like temporary housing, personal property and home repair costs, the release noted.

Unsure of what you may qualify for or have questions about a disaster assistance application?

Contact 1-800-621-3362 to speak with a FEMA representative in your language.

3. Rumor: FEMA is asking for cash donations and turning away volunteers.

Fact: This is false.

According to the release, FEMA does not ask for or accept any cash donations or volunteers.

Anyone claiming to represent FEMA and asking for donations is likely a scam, as government employees are not authorized to solicit money or donations.

Officials encourage people to volunteer or donate cash to reputable, voluntary or charitable organizations.

To connect with a volunteer organization involved in Hurricane Helene response, visit www.nvoad.org.

4. Rumor: Funding for FEMA disaster response was diverted to support international efforts or border-related issues.

Fact: This is false.

Money is not being diverted from disaster response needs, the release said.

The Disaster Relief Fund is a dedicated fund for disaster efforts. Funding for communities to support migrants has nothing to do with this fund and its resources have not been diverted to other non-disaster related efforts.

5. Rumor: FEMA is confiscating donations meant for survivors.

Fact: This is false.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency does not take donations and/or food from survivors or voluntary organizations, conduct vehicle stops or handle road closures with armed guards.

Voluntary agencies handle donations, while local law enforcement conducts vehicle stops and road closures.

FEMA officials urge communities to find trusted sources of information, share information from trusted sources and discourage others from sharing information from unverified sources.

For more information on these and other rumors, visit fema.gov/disaster/current/hurricane-helene/rumor-response.

Katie Nixon can be reached at knixon@gannett.com.

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# Advocates worry for Asheville's homeless after Helene

October 8, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Mary Ramsey; Staff Writer | Section: News | 918 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Asheville When Helene barreled through Asheville, it was like nothing Renee Maynor had ever seen.

Maynor, who is experiencing homelessness, grew up in Charlotte. Like many in the region, when thinking about big hurricanes, she always thought of 1989's Hurricane Hugo.

But now, she'll think of the disorienting chaos she and her community felt in the week since Helene hit.

"I don't know if I'm coming or going ... I haven't had a shower. I just got a cup of coffee this morning," she told The Charlotte Observer Friday.

The storm caused devastating flooding and landslides, leaving Asheville and residents in the surrounding area without power or running water. It was a brutal hit for the more than 700 people without housing in the city, Maynor and local advocates say.

"This has been an unprecedented event," said Micheal Woods, the executive director of Western Carolina Rescue Ministries.

As the community works to find out who survived the storm and provide immediate assistance, they're also worried about the long-term impacts in a place where housing already was tricky.

"The magnitude of the families and individuals who need housing will be insurmountable," predicted Melissa Duong, the board president of Homeward Bound.

'They thought they were going to die'

Maynor, who has been in Asheville for three years, took refuge during the storm at the emergency shelter at the Harrah's Cherokee Center.

There, she focused much of her energy on trying to care for older adults experiencing homelessness she knew and were also at the shelter.

"They thought they were going to die, and they didn't want to die," she said.

A week later, she was still exhausted.

"The days are running into nights and the nights are running into days because there's always someone needing help," she said. "My muscles hurt from helping tote and carry people's stuff."

She already knows of some friends who didn't survive. She's bracing herself for more bad news.

Woods, whose group has worked in Asheville for 43 years, is especially concerned about people he knows who camped by the Swannanoa River, which swelled during the storm and flooded the area.

"Our hope is that they got out," he said.

'Working around the clock' to help, find survivors

Service providers are keeping "lost and found lists" of people they've served previously and want to track down since the storm, Woods said.

Due to ongoing safety concerns, his group will leave searches to authorities. But he's worried that his "invisible neighbors" are left out of the missing persons numbers.

Western Carolina Rescue has received calls and social media messages from "all over the country" from people seeking assistance with finding loved ones who are unhoused in the Asheville area.

"There's a lot of people that we're thinking about, caring about, praying about that right now we don't know," Woods said.

Teams with Homeward Bound, which focuses on placing homeless people in permanent housing and gaining access to services including mental and physical health care, "have been working around the clock for over a week" to check on clients, Duong said.

As of Friday, they had confirmed three clients died, all of whom lived in mobile homes in Swannanoa. More are "unaccounted for," and case managers are trying to get to them for wellness checks.

"We're boots on the ground as long as the roads are safe," she said.

Potentially 'insurmountable' challenges

Both Western Carolina Rescue Ministries and Homeward Bound also continue to shelter people.

More than 130 men, women and children are staying at Western Carolina. Another 80 people live at Homeward Bound's Compass Point Village, and more stop by the group's AHOPE Day Center.

All lack clean running water.

Woods said his group got help from donors to get portable toilets, and on Friday morning they were testing a system to get people hot showers.

"We've been problem solving on the fly," he said.

Both groups say they need monetary donations and water, as well as gas cans, undergarments for people who can't wash their clothes, phone chargers and food, especially non-perishable food and food that's kid-friendly.

Long-term, the storm creates even more challenges.

Rescue ministries had to cancel its annual fundraising gala.

"That was a part of our budget ... We're going to have to figure out how to make that up," Woods said.

Service providers will also have to grapple with how to help people now dealing with "trauma on top of trauma."

"No one as a kid wakes up and says, 'when I grow up I want to be homeless.' For us, we want this to be a place of stability, a place of safety, a place of love," he said.

He predicted Helene will "create a new kind of paradigm when it comes to the unhoused in Buncombe County."

"The magnitude of just the number of people that we know are going to be displaced because of this ... These are

folks who were already probably in substandard housing, housing is very tough anyway in this community. We're going to have the introduction of a whole new group of people into the homeless community," he said.

Duong is worried about people who were already struggling with affording housing in the expensive Asheville market.

"We live in a gorgeous area, but that prohibits us from being able to use a lot of the land," she said.

Tears welled in Maynor's eyes as she walked around downtown Asheville Friday to check on friends and get a meal. But she also remains optimistic.

"I'm tired, but I'll keep going ... I went through the storm, but the storm made me stronger," she said.

### Mary Ramsey: @mcolleen1996

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Mary Ramsey, Staff Writer, 'Advocates worry for Asheville's homeless after Helene', *News & Observer, The* (online), 8 Oct 2024 1A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1778115D49F80">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1778115D49F80</a>



# 'Heartbreaking' landslides reshape community's landscape

October 8, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1339 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

CRUSO Arlen Heatherly walked up the mountainside, using a walking stick to pick his way through mud and boulders and uprooted trees.

This land, in the unincorporated community of Cruso, North Carolina, had been in his family for 65 years. This past week it was the site of one of the 326 landslides triggered by Tropical Storm Helene that had been detected by the U.S. Geological Survey as of late Saturday. Of those, 231 had impacted homes or infrastructure like roads.

The Cruso landslide carved a 150-foot swath through what had been forest. Full-grown trees were downed and caked in mud as the side of the mountain flowed downhill. Michael Heatherly, Arlen's son, estimated that the slide had started near the top of the mountain, and had run all the way to the bottom.

"It's just devastating," Michael Heatherly said.

As Arlen stood near a huge downed tree, the home he'd grown up in was downhill. Now owned by a Raleigh family, it was partially ringed by a 2-foot-deep layer of mud still settling from squishy to a dry cake.

Mud nearly reached the seat of a rocking chair on the back porch. As the landslide slammed against the building, some of the mud had splattered across its yellow paint. Still, there wasn't any obvious structural damage.

Uphill from where Arlen stood was largely ruins. An aging silo and barn had been wiped out, crumpled roofs and building materials and sheet metals lying where the mud had taken them.

Saturday, a small mountain stream gurgled down the middle of that path, its gentleness as it flowed through a ravine carved into the hillside a reminder by contrast of how violent the thunderous landslide that reshaped the mountainside must have been.

Many of the landslides associated with Helene took place in Western North Carolina, with clusters east of Asheville near places like Bat Cave, Bear Hollow and Summerhaven. They have taken 11 lives, according to the state Department of Health and Human Services.

In Cruso, a pair of landslides fell - one on the north side of a mountain and one on the south. Neither was fatal.

The one on the northern side is the slide that reshaped the Heatherly land.

'Pretty heartbreaking' landslide

Arlen Heatherly, now 81 years old, was the first member of the family to see the mudslide that had effectively split their land in half.

"All I could think of was my dad. He worked so hard. And I did, too," Arlen said.

The Heatherleys had grown potatoes, tobacco and tomatoes on the land. They'd raised livestock.

Michael had also worked on that land. For the last 20 years, he's been clearing old logging roads that run up the mountain, making it possible for he and his sister to have small cabins in the forest, with a pizza oven at Michael's.

"I had it looking really good," Michael said Saturday as he stood in the middle of the landslide's scar.

The landslide cut many of those logging roads in half. Sections of them are buried under what Michael estimates are 12 to 15 feet of mud. The cabins are now only accessible by hiking up the mountainside

In the days since the landslide, Michael has tried to count how many trees fell in a forest he's played and worked in since he was a child. He hasn't come close to an answer.

"To see it like this, it's pretty heartbreaking," he said.

He wants to know what to do next.

He's worried about what will happen if another heavy rain comes - will it trigger another landslide? And in the meantime, will water carry high levels of sediment into the Pigeon River?

When Tropical Storm Fred hit Western North Carolina in August 2021, it killed six people in Cruso. Linda Heatherly, Michael's mother, said that storm also left debris in the Pigeon River, including a red Chevy Suburban that was clearly visible from the access road to their property.

A private citizen finally got the permits for and finished removing that car from the river, Linda Heatherly said - about two weeks before Helene arrived.

Michael and Linda, who is retired from the U.S. Forest Service, expressed interest in planting grass seed to try to stabilize the landscape.

"I'm just trying to figure out what to to do," Michael Heatherly said.

Creek becomes a 'meat grinder'

On the southern side of the Cruso mountain, Roger Largent knew a landslide had happened shortly after 10:30 a.m. on Friday, Sept. 27 - the day the storm arrived.

As he watched the stream that runs past his Cabin Creek Road home rise, Largent heard a roar that sounded like thunder coming from somewhere up the mountain.

Then the rushing water changed color.

What had been a muddy firehose stream became black, almost the color of oil. And the consistency changed, with the water so full of dirt that it almost seemed to become a dangerous, dancing solid.

As the water gushed downstream, Largent filmed on his phone.

In one video, he can be heard shouting that the creek has become "a meat grinder."

As the thick water rushed down the hill, it took out a five-foot culvert and road that Largent and his neighbor Dale Smith used to access their properties.

Largent nearly froze at the sight.

"It landlocked me," Largent said. "I couldn't freaking move."

He jumped into his Jeep and floored the gas pedal, sluicing across the yard to get away from the raging creek. He leaned on the horn, trying to get the attention of Smith, who had headed up the the creekside road not 10 minutes

before.

Unbeknownst to Largent, Smith had come back down after seeing that a normally calm tributary to the creek had turned angry.

"I guess it was just the Lord telling me to get out," Smith said Saturday as he picked his way through the creek bed, jumping from bolder to boulder and clambering over fallen trees, many of them still coated in the mud that had carried them down the side of the mountain.

Smith has lived in the area for 71 years. During Frances and Ivan, he heard the sound of boulders being carried down the creek. He also rebuilt the culvert to reach his and Largent's homes after Fred.

"This one was a lot worse because we had the slide up through there," Smith said.

The mudslide started in Pisgah National Park's Shining Rock Wilderness, Smith said, rushing downhill before hitting the creek that is part of his property line, carrying the mud and trees with it.

Some of those trees snarled together across the creek, the logs and rootballs creating a dam. When the next storm comes, Smith worries, the heavy flow of water will eat away at the land on the southern edge of the creek. That will imperil the road leading to his property.

He hopes the National Park Service will help remove the logs and chop them up before another storm causes the creek to swell and the gushing water to wear out everything holding the road up.

"The government needs to get up here with something and fix it before that happens," Smith said.

He walked through his own landslide and crossed the creek via a makeshift bridge he'd made out of two fallen logs, heading to the bottom of the mountain.

There, he jumped on a compact excavator to help the Heatherly family rebuild the culvert they all need to reach their property.

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# A deadly mosquito virus is spreading in the US. Could it come to NC? Here's what to know

October 8, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Evan Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 674 Words Page: 4A

OpenURL Link

**Brunswick** 

A person in New York died Monday, Sept. 30, after a contracting a rare virus not seen in the state in more than a decade.

The person died after being diagnosed with eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), a virus spread to people by the bite of an infected mosquito, ABC News reported.

Only about 11 human cases of the virus are reported each year in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Though the virus is rare, roughly a third of all people who develop a severe version of the virus die, and those who survive are left with long-term physical and mental problems, ranging from personality disorders to paralysis, the CDC says.

Could the virus make its way to North Carolina? Here's everything you need to know.

Could eastern equine encephalitis come to NC?

There's no evidence to show that EEE will be worse in North Carolina this year, but rain from recent tropical storms and Hurricane Helene could lead to more mosquito activity in the state, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Entomologist Mike Doyle told The Charlotte Observer.

"The extra rain from Debbie...has increased water significantly on the eastern part of the state, so there's more mosquito larval sites, or mosquitoes growing in the water presently, but we don't have the evidence of infection within the mosquitoes or humans so far," Doyle said.

There haven't been any human cases of EEE reported in North Carolina this year, but there have been cases in the past, CDC data show. The most recent case occurred in 2021.

ľ the

North Carolina averages about one case of EEE per year, and the disease is more common in the eastern part of state than in other geographic regions, according to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services.
Historical CDC data show that at least one human case of EEE has been reported in the following counties since 2003:
Catawba
Mecklenburg
Pitt
Perquimans
Pender

Cumberland
Hoke
Robeson
There have been 10 human cases of EEE reported in the U.S. this year, according to CDC data.
Non-human cases and infections, or cases found in mosquitoes, birds and other animals, have been reported in the majority of coastal and piedmont counties in North Carolina since 2003, CDC data show.
Who is most at-risk of contracting eastern equine encephalitis?
The CDC says the following groups are at increased risk of infection:
Residents of and visitors to areas with eastern equine encephalitis virus activity (the Atlantic and Gulf Coast states)
People who work and participate in recreational activities outdoors in endemic areas
People over 50 years of age or under 15 years of age
What are the symptoms of eastern equine encephalitis?
Most people with EEE have no symptoms, but the CDC says symptoms of severe cases include:
Fever
Headache
Vomiting
Diarrhea
Seizures
Behavioral changes
Drowsiness
The symptoms of EEE are similar to other neuro-invasive mosquito viruses, such as West Nile virus and La Crosse encephalitis, which are more common than EEE, Doyle said.
"They all start very similar," said Doyle. "It's not something that the average person or even physician, in many cases, could tell the difference early in the disease. And so we encourage people to seek medical attention from a health provider, and the provider can order a test through the state laboratory that covers all of the known viruses here."
How to prevent eastern equipe encephalitis

Here are some ways you can prevent mosquito bites, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:

mosquito bites, according to the CDC.

There are no vaccines or treatment for EEE, but you can reduce your chances of contracting the virus by preventing

Remove mosquito habitats by eliminating standing water in rain gutters, old tires, buckets, plastic covers, toys, or any other container where mosquitoes can breed.

Use structural barriers by covering gaps in walls, doors, and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering and making sure window and door screens are in good working order.

Avoid getting bitten by keeping mosquitoes away from exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks. You can also tuck your shirt into your pants and pants into socks to cover gaps in your clothing where mosquitoes can get to your skin. Using insect repellent can also be helpful.

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# UNC, NC State, Duke grades at midseason - UNC, N.C. State are struggling. Duke has shown promise, yet at the midpoint of the college football season, it feels like basketball already

October 8, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Andrew Carter; Staff Writer| Section: Sports | 2050 Words Page: 1B OpenURL Link

Well, that was a wild college football Saturday, wasn't it? Vanderbilt taking down Alabama, and then delirious Commodores fans parading one of the goal posts through downtown Nashville and depositing it into the Cumberland River.

Arkansas beating Tennessee (see, N.C. State: such a thing is possible!).

Michigan losing. USC losing.

Miami, in a special edition of ACC After Dark, coming back from 25 down (!) lateish in the third quarter to win at Cal, which put on a show and reveled in the national spotlight that ESPN's College GameDay provided.

Whew. A lot happened.

It's college football Saturdays like that that have allowed this sport to maintain such a hold, despite all its obvious flaws. It's Saturdays like that that keep fans following and tuning in, despite the reality that we pretty much know, right now, which three or four teams actually have a real chance of competing at the highest level (sorry, about 130 other schools).

And it's Saturdays like the one we just witnessed that can leave us, in North Carolina, with something of a sense of longing. A sense of ... missing out? Something like that. At its best college football can be a delightful and unpredictable spectacle. At its worst, or most mediocre, it can make anyone question why schools continue to pour money into it, with so little return.

Such is the case, sadly enough, for the majority of FBS programs in North Carolina these days. We're at the midpoint of the regular season and only one out of the seven teams in this state - Duke - can say with any confidence or grounding in reality that it's happy with how things have gone over the past six weeks. (And OK, maybe Charlotte qualifies here, too.)

The others? Well, some fleeting hope mixed with a good amount of letdown.

Given we're at the midpoint, a progress report is in order for the three Triangle schools. Warning: It's not especially encouraging for two of the three. For State and Carolina, it's the sort of report card they'd hide from their parents before forging Mom's signature and turning it back in.

Hey, we've all been there. No? Just me?

The grades

Duke (5-1, 1-1)

Midpoint grade: A.

Why: Easy schedule, yes, but Duke has exceeded all expectations under a new coaching staff. The Blue Devils have also been ... what's the word? Fun? Yes, that's it. A fun team to watch, which is more than its two Triangle

counterparts can say.

The highlight: Erasing a 20-point deficit in a 21-20 victory against UNC gave first-year head coach Manny Diaz an early signature moment - and sent a rival further into despair. Can't beat that.

The lowlight: Duke couldn't hold a third quarter lead of its own Saturday night in a loss at Georgia Tech, which ended the Blue Devils' perfect start.

From here: The schedule doesn't get any easier, even against downtrodden Florida State later this month. But the question is not so much how Duke finishes, but what kind of foundation Diaz is building in his first year. And that part of the equation looks strong.

Predication: An eight-win regular season, which would be fantastic in Year One under Diaz.

N.C. State (3-3, 0-2)

Midpoint grade: D.

Why: This was supposed to be The Year for the Wolfpack. It ... has not been.

The highlight: Ummmmm ... [10 minutes later] ... hmmmmmm ... [15 minutes later] ... uhhhhhh ... coming from behind to beat Western Carolina and Louisiana Tech? That probably says it all, doesn't it?

The lowlight: State suffered blowout losses against Tennessee and Clemson, in games the Wolfpack pointed toward as opportunities to prove it belonged on the national stage. The only thing they proved is how far away State really is from ever doing that.

From here: The Wolfpack rallied a season ago amid a similarly uninspired start. But that team had Payton Wilson, and strong leadership. This team has underperformed just about everywhere. Who does State beat from here? Its best chance for another win is probably against UNC.

Prediction: Five wins, which is half as many as State expected.

UNC (3-3, 0-2)

Midpoint grade: D-minus

Why: Allowing 70 points against James Madison, the Mack Brown locker room fiasco that followed, blowing a 20-point lead days later at Duke ... that pretty much covers it, no?

The highlight: Well, at the time, the season-opening victory at Minnesota really was a big deal, and a good moment for a program that needed it. And then came ...

The lowlight: The 70-50 defeat against James Madison, and whatever happened in the locker room in the aftermath, will be worth a chapter whenever the book is written on Brown's UNC's tenure (both parts of it). Surrendering a 20-point lead at Duke days later did not help matters.

From here: This more and more has the vibe of Brown's final season, barring some sort of spectacular (and probably impossible) turnaround. Crazy thing is, given the schedule, there's not a game UNC can't win. But it can also lose every one of them, too. There's a decent chance that UNC and State meet in Chapel Hill in late November as two three- or four-win teams.

Prediction: A 4-8 finish and a likely and merciful program reset.

In other words, with all of this said: It's pretty much basketball season in the Triangle.

#### ONE BIG THING

The question is not whether N.C. State quarterback Grayson McCall has played his final football game but whether that should be the case, given he was on the other side of another horrific collision that ended with him on a stretcher, on the back of a cart on Saturday against Wake Forest. McCall's courage and competitive spirit is admirable. He came back this season after missing half of last season - while still at Coastal Carolina - after sustaining a hit that looked a lot like the one he took Saturday. But some things - a lot of things, in fact - are bigger than football.

#### THREE TO LIKE

1. Some mountain camaraderie at Marshall.

The only good thing about the aftermath of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina (and other devastated parts of the southeast) is how people have come together in support of each other, and their communities. And so it was at Marshall, which hosted Appalachian State on Saturday. The Mountaineers' band did not travel. The Marshall band filled the void, and played the App State fight song early on. A small but humanizing and empathetic moment between two rivals.

2. ACC after Dark in ... Berkeley.

OK, it's time to admit it: We were wrong about Cal in the ACC. Well, maybe not, in terms of logistics and the fact that Berkeley remains on the other side of the United States from most of the rest of the conference. But for the sake of this argument, we'll say we were wrong. Outside of the absurd geographical conflict, Cal has been a great fit in the ACC. Its online-minded, meme-generating fans are smart, and fun. Its football team is worthy. The atmosphere Saturday night for Miami was incredible. And Cal even lost in heartbreaking, confounding fashion - which is also very ACC-like.

3. Charlotte has its first signature moment under Biff Poggi.

Don't look now, but the 49ers just might have something going under Poggi, Charlotte's second-year head coach. The Sleeveless Wonder led Charlotte to a dominant victory against ECU Saturday at Jerry Richardson Stadium, and Charlotte, at 3-3, has already equaled its win total from each of the past two seasons.

THREE TO ... NOT LIKE AS MUCH

1. N.C. State's late collapse against Wake Forest.

The aforementioned collision that sent McCall to the hospital was by far the most concerning moment from the State-Wake game - one whose significance extends well beyond the field. In a football sense, though, the Wolfpack's late collapse - surrendering a 10-point fourth quarter lead - is the sort of nightmare finish that can send a season into a tailspin.

2. Fourth-and-short and ... lining up in the shotgun.

Here's an Old Man Rant (or, OK, Middle Aged) about how the game is played these days: Whatever happened to just lining up in the I-formation in short yardage situations and plowing ahead? We see this every week nowadays: teams lining up on 4th-and-1 in the shotgun, and then handing to a running back two or three yards behind the line of scrimmage. And it seems like those plays fail fairly often. It happened to Duke in the third quarter at Georgia Tech. Why do teams do this? What is the logic? Why make a 4th-and-short play ... longer ... than it needs to be?

3. Tar Heels fans tuning out.

Look, we get it, UNC fans: The JMU loss was demoralizing. The collapse against Duke was embarrassing. But still: It's so easy to rip on the football culture at UNC exactly because of the scene at Kenan Stadium on Saturday, where empty seats reigned even more than usual when the Tar Heels are struggling. Like it or not, this much is true: There may not be another athletics-minded, major-conference school in the country where football fans bail faster on their program or coach than they do at UNC.

#### THIS WEEK'S BEST PROGRAM IN THE STATE

As impressive as Charlotte was during its dismantling of ECU, the honors go to another formerly-downtrodden program that celebrated a big moment against an in-state rival. Yes, Wake Forest, that means you. These haven't been the best of times for Wake and Dave Clawson, who built a very strong program on the idea of finding underthe-radar talent, keeping it and developing it and turning those players into major contributors by the time they were juniors and seniors. In other words: Clawson's program-building philosophy worked perfectly in a time that no longer really exists in today's college football environment, thanks to NIL and the transfer portal.

Even so, Wake found a way at N.C. State on Saturday. Leave it to the Wolfpack to help the Demon Deacons get right.

#### CAROLINAS RANKING

The sentimental top spot will belong to Appalachian State this week and for the rest of the season. The Mountaineers are dealing with (and will continue to deal with) something much larger than football. Here's hoping Boone and the surrounding communities find some normalcy and peace sooner than later. Beyond that, on the field, it continues to be Clemson, a huge gap ... a gap after that gap ... another gap even after that other gap ... and then everyone else, in some order. But Charlotte is not last this week. That much is clear.

ECU? Well, there's nowhere to go but up.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER

- \* I think the weekend wasn't a total wash for the Triangle despite the 0-3 record for Carolina, Duke and State. If you're looking for a bright spot, there was N.C. Central, with an impressive 45-14 victory against Campbell. The Eagles have won three straight, and all by at least 27 points. That run includes a 66-24 victory against North Carolina A&T. We see you, NCCU.
- \* I think the reaction to Vanderbilt's stunning victory against Alabama told us a lot about media narratives and how things are talked about in college football. Where were the takes about the SEC being an inferior league, because its supposed worst team took down one of its best? The national talking heads didn't have much to say. Yet when a similar thing happens in the ACC, there always seems to be a lot to say about the ACC's perceived strength (or weakness). Why is that?
- \* I think it's easy for State and UNC football fans to become disillusioned and, OK. Understandable, to an extent. But let's keep some perspective. Last week, led by graduate defensive end Davin Vann, State came together to do important work in aiding the recovery from Helene in Western North Carolina. And at UNC, Mack Brown on Saturday asked for prayers for Tylee Craft, the Tar Heels receiver who for years has been fighting cancer. There's a lot more important things going on than the weekly results in this absurd (yet occasionally delightful) game.

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# Musician Ben Folds to hold concert benefiting Western NC. Here's when & where

October 8, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Renee Umsted, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 381 Words OpenURL Link

Ben Folds will hold a concert later this month benefiting North Carolinians affected by Helene.

The concert, scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 29 in Wilmington, will also feature musicians from Western North Carolina.

All proceeds from the event will support charities helping with food, housing and home repairs via the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund, managed by United Way of North Carolina.

"I'm honored to share the stage and stand in unity with other North Carolina music artists to help those whose lives and livelihoods have been tragically lost or forever altered by the horrific events triggered by Hurricane Helene," Folds, who grew up in Winston-Salem, said in a statement. "Our goal with this benefit concert is to raise awareness and funds to support the massive rebuilding efforts now underway, and that will be ongoing for months and years to come."

Thursday, organizers announced the artist lineup with acts from Western North Carolina, including Jim Lauderdale, Moonshine State, Caleb Caudle & The Sweet Critters, and Josh Goforth.

Tickets are now on sale for "From Wilmington, With Love," which will be held at Wilmington's Greenfield Lake Amphitheater.

This is not the first time Folds has used his musical talents to support a cause. In 2020, he was among several other North Carolina artists who participated in "Under One Roof," which asked viewers to donate to the North Carolina Arts Foundation, The News & Observer previously reported.

Folds is also not the first musician to hold a benefit concert following Helene, a storm that has left more than 100 people dead in North Carolina alone.

Luke Combs and Eric Church, along with James Taylor and Billy Strings, are giving a concert at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte on Saturday, Oct. 26.

"I'm glad we can help, but ... I wish we were never here," Church previously told The Charlotte Observer. "So now it's a matter of trying to figure out the best way that we can rebuild where we're both from ... the place that made us who we are as artists."

Tickets for the "Concert for Carolina" go on sale at 10 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 10.

Ask NC service journalism team EMBED

Combs, Church on Helene benefit: 'We wish we didn't have to be having this conversation'

4 music stars to band together for NC hurricane relief show at BofA Stadium this month Copyright 2024 The News and Observer

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8A4FE296A8DE8>



# NC homeowners' insurance rate hearing opens, likely to continue through election

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As many in Helene-ravaged Western North Carolina pick through the remnants of their lives, the state's department of insurance (DOI) kicked off a hearing into insurance companies' request to raise homeowners' approved rates statewide by an average 42.2%.

On Monday, attorneys on both sides met for the quasi-judicial proceeding in the department's second-floor hearing room in Highwood Towers at 3200 Beechleaf Court in northeast Raleigh.

The hearing is expected to take weeks. One person close to the case, however, was noticeably absent.

Unlike his predecessors, Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey wasn't there to preside over the hearing. State law allows him to designate someone else. So Amy Funderburk, the department's general counsel, is the hearing officer.

"Both of my predecessors were attorneys. I'm not an attorney," Causey told a gaggle of reporters in the building's foyer outside, just before the hearing began. However, he assured those gathered that the final decision rests with him. "I've always made those decisions and will continue to do so."

The hearing is the first under the two-term commissioner's watch. In eight years as the commissioner, Causey has raised property insurance rates 16 times - all without a public hearing.

On Monday, he defended his record. "In past years, we've been successful in negotiating settlements. In this case, we were not able to come anywhere close. So that's why we're here today."

Shortly after making his comments, Causey left the floor. He did not attend the morning session and was not present for opening statements.

What insurers want

After a moratorium on rates lifted in January, the Rate Bureau, which represents some 110 companies operating in the state, submitted a rate filing asking for a statewide 42.2% average increase.

The proposed increases are based on past payouts and future claims projections and vary greatly by county.

In Durham and Wake counties, it's asking for a 39.8% increase. In Chatham and Orange counties, it's requesting 25.1%.

Meanwhile, coastal regions - like Brunswick, Carteret, New Hanover, Onslow and Pender counties - could face the steepest increases. The Rate Bureau wants to nearly double premiums in those counties - a 99.4% jump.

In places hit hardest by Helene like Buncombe County, home to Asheville, it's around 20.5%.

(Premiums don't automatically increase by the percentage of the finalized approved rate. That depends on the insurer's assessed risk.)

On Feb. 6, Causey rejected the request, calling it "excessive and discriminatory."

It's been almost four years since the last homeowners' rate increase - in November 2020 when the Rate Bureau asked for an overall rise of 24.5% and ultimately received 7.9%.

Inside the hearing room on Monday, the Rate Bureau's attorneys presented 2,000 pages of data in two five-inch white binders to justify its latest proposal.

Rising construction and labor costs, billion-dollar-loss events like Helene and the state of the reinsurance market - the insurance that covers insurance companies - are driving up costs, argued the Rate Bureau attorney Marvin "Mickey" Spivey, an attorney with Raleigh-based Young Moore Attorneys.

"Whether you want to call it climate change or not, there's no denying that we are having bigger, stronger and more costly catastrophic storms than we've seen in any of our lifetimes," he said in his opening statement.

The department's witnesses would seek to either reduce current rates or limit increases by less than 3%, he added. "To put it bluntly, that just does not make sense," he said.

As underwriters tighten guidelines, more residents are being subject to "consent-to-rate" notices, which allow insurance companies to charge rates higher - up to 250% more - than the state-approved rate. They're also turning to the "insurer of last result," the North Carolina Insurance Underwriting Association (NCIUA), or the "beach plan," he said.

These realities signal that the current rates are "not adequate," he said. Without a "fair rate," many companies may "choose not to write at all."

The insurance department's attorney, Terence Friedman, countered by calling the bureau's requested rates inflated. He also argued its filing relied on outdated data and practices. "They're continuing on using the same methods, regardless of the commissioner's admonitions," he said.

He also criticized the Rate Bureau's mention of Helene in its opening statement.

"The tragedy shouldn't be used as grounds to raise homeowners' rates," Friedman said, pointing to the growing reality that much of Helene's damage was caused by flooding. (Standard homeowners' policies do not cover flooding, landslides or anything caused by moving water.)

This case is going to be "long and very dense," he warned. But ultimately, the department's actuaries would prove that alternative rates would allow the bureau's members to earn "what they're constitutionally entitled to," but which are also "fair and reasonable."

Looking ahead

State law gives the commissioner 45 days to issue an order once the hearing concludes.

Causey, a Republican, is up for reelection Nov. 5, casting an even greater spotlight on proceedings.

Earlier in the morning, his challenger, state Sen. Natasha Marcus, a Democrat, held a news conference outside on the steps of DOI's headquarters. She criticized Causey's decision not to officiate, calling it "a ridiculous dereliction of one of the most important duties of his office."

She also took a swipe at the hearing's timing. With only 28 days until the election, a ruling is not expected until after voters hit the ballot box. "Voters won't get a chance to weigh in," she said.

North Carolina is one of very few states where a Rate Bureau still exists. In almost every other state, each carrier files its own homeowners' rates independently. But here, the Rate Bureau, created in 1977 by the General Assembly, has the responsibility to file and negotiate rates on behalf of the entire industry.

The hearing is open to the public. Attendees will be seated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Transcripts of each day's hearing are expected to be posted online the following day.

For additional information, see the homeowners' rate hearing webpage.

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# • Citation (aglc Style)

Chantal Allam, News & Observer, 'NC homeowners' insurance rate hearing opens, likely to continue through election', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 8 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6F4A22351DECO>



# Problems with USPS might disrupt mail-in voting, elections officials say. Could it affect NC?

October 8, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Renee Umsted, News & Observer | Section: voter guide | 823 Words OpenURL Link

Elections officials from across the United States, including North Carolina, are concerned about the ability of the U.S. Postal Service to handle mail-in votes this year.

In a Sept. 11 letter to U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, the National Association of Secretaries of State and National Association of State Election Directors outlined widespread issues with the mail system that could affect the election. The letter was signed by state election officials in many states, including Sara LaVere, the president of the North Carolina Association of Directors of Elections.

DeJoy said in response that the Postal Service is equipped to handle the election mail, that it will collect and deliver mail ballots more often in the days ahead of the Nov. 5 election and that it will keep processing centers open Sunday, Nov. 3, according to the Associated Press.

What are elections officials' concerns with the mail system?

The Sept. 11 letter describes a few issues that state and local elections officials believe could affect the upcoming general election.

Inconsistent training for Postal Service workers: Staff are uninformed about the service's policies regarding election mail, which has led to ballots being delayed, held deliberately or processed improperly. Long delivery times: In the past, local officials have received timely postmarked ballots after Election Day and outside the Postal Service's First Class delivery window. Increase in mail returned as undeliverable: Mail sent to voters or ballots sent to election offices are returned to sender, marked as undeliverable, even when mail is addressed properly or voters haven't moved. Voters may be disenfranchised or be put on the path to having their registration record canceled.

According to a report from the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General released July 2024, an audit found "processes and policies that could pose a risk of delays in the processing and delivery of Election and Political Mail," along with issues that "pose a risk of individual ballots not being counted."

The report observed 15 mail processing facilities and 35 delivery units in 13 states and Puerto Rico, including one mail processing center and two two delivery units in North Carolina.

2024 Voter Guide001.JPGLaura Klein and Andrew Witkins vote with their children, Prince, 6, and Otis, 8, at White Rock Baptist Church on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, in Durham, N.C.

Will issues with the mail system affect NC voting?

The Postal Service is able to work with county boards of elections across the state, said Karen Brinson Bell, the executive director of the North Carolina State Board of Elections.

"Delivery and receipt of mail seems to be happening with all county boards of elections at this point," she said during a meeting with the press on Monday, Oct. 7.

The state board has a "good working relationship" with the Postal Service and meets with the service regularly to discuss issues regarding the sending and receiving of absentee ballots, Patrick Gannon, the public information director for the North Carolina State Board of Elections, told The News & Observer in an email.

There is a distinction, however, between the Postal Service's accessibility to county boards of elections and the service's accessibility to communities, said Paul Cox, general counsel for the state board. Especially after Helene, some communities may be difficult for the Postal Service to reach.

The state board will not change deadlines for receiving mail-in ballots.

"The messaging is already out there that these are the deadlines, and because of some of the communication channel issues, difficulty in cell service and internet connectivity, it is very hard to communicate a different deadline to voters." Brinson Bell said Oct. 7.

All absentee ballots must be received by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day, which is Tuesday, Nov. 5.

2024 Voter Guide010.JPGNorth Carolina absentee voters are encouraged to return their mail-in votes as soon as possible.

What can voters do to mitigate USPS issues?

Voters are encouraged to return ballots to their county board of elections as quickly as possible, Danner McCulloh, the public records coordinator for Wake County Board of Elections, told The N&O.

Ballots may be returned by mail or in person.

« If returning in person, ballots may be dropped off at the voter's county board of elections office or to an early voting site between Thursday, Oct. 17 and Saturday, Nov. 2. Absentee ballots may be returned to a voter's county board of elections office on Election Day, but voters may not return the ballot to a polling place on Election Day.

Voters should mail their completed ballot at least one week before their state's deadline, DeJoy wrote in the letter responding to elections officials.

How many people vote by mail in North Carolina?

During the 2022 general election, 187,746 people voted by mail, according to the State Board of Elections.

In the 2020 general election, 18% of ballots cast in North Carolina were absentee by mail votes.

Ask NC service journalism team EMBED

How Helene's destruction could affect voting in North Carolina's election

NC elections board authorizes western counties to change voting plans due to Helene

Misinformation spreads after 750k names removed from NC voter rolls. Here are the facts.

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Renee Umsted, News & Observer, 'Problems with USPS might disrupt mail-in voting, elections officials say. Could it affect NC?', News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 8 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6F4A2201BF880>



# With Hurricane Milton aimed at Florida, NHL's Tampa Bay Lightning head to Triangle early

October 8, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chip Alexander, News & Observer | Section: carolina hurricanes | 822 Words OpenURL Link

The Carolina Hurricanes and Tampa Bay Lightning will open the 2024-25 NHL hockey season Friday at the Lenovo Center. That much we know.

And beyond that? Who can say?

The Hurricanes and Lightning are scheduled to play again Saturday night at Amalie Arena in Tampa, Florida. But with Hurricane Milton set to slam into western Florida, with evacuation orders in place, there is much uncertainty about such things as hockey games.

The Lightning left Florida on Monday to come to the Triangle, canceling a final preseason game against Nashville. The team is staying in Chapel Hill after some hastily made reservations and practiced Tuesday at Invisalign Arena in Morrisville.

The players were allowed to bring their families and pets with them to North Carolina, Lightning general manager Julien BriseBois said Tuesday. All of the staffers also made the extended trip, he said.

For now, no one can say if the game Saturday in Tampa can or will be played. Or what will happen if it's not played..

"This is not ideal," BriseBois said.

N.C. State has a football game against Syracuse on Saturday night at Carter-Finley Stadium, which could create logistical problems with holding a game at the Lenovo Center.

Playing Sunday at Lenovo Center might be an option. But BriseBois noted that should Hurricane Milton preclude a return to Florida because of extensive storm damage, the team likely would not be in the proper mindset to play Sunday.

"It's unfortunate what's going on, right, but what I see out of the guys is it's a burden being disrupted in what we're doing but we have the ability to bring our families and loved ones and pets with us," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said Tuesday. "There is a bigger picture, as I told our guys. We got to get away. There are a lot of people at home who haven't been able to get away, so a lot of our thoughts are that hopefully everybody is going to be OK and what can we do when we get back to help everybody out."

For now, so much remains in flux.

"I've heard they might not be going back after our game, so whether that means we'll be playing here, I'm not quite sure how it will unfold," Canes captain Jordan Staal said Tuesday. "It's part of the gig when things like this happen, and you battle through big things and small things and how schedules work. We'll play the game (Friday) and figure it out as we go.

"It's not just our team but their team, too. Obviously they're displaced from their homes and going through a lot more stuff than we are."

USATSI\_24403761.jpgOct 4, 2024; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes center Jordan Staal (11) and Tampa Bay Lightning left wing Nicholas Paul (20) skate after the puck during the third period at PNC Arena.

Staal noted his parents had a Florida vacation home near Naples, saying he was "praying for everyone that it doesn't look as bad as it does right now."

First there was Hurricane Helene, which worked its way north and into Western North Carolina, leaving behind much destruction and loss of life. Now, Hurricane Milton, which rapidly became a Category 5 storm in the Gulf of Mexico and was growing in intensity at an explosive rate.

The storm was expected to make landfall on Florida's Gulf Coast on Wednesday, the projected path taking it near Tampa, an area that has not had a direct hit from a major hurricane since 1921.

"At the end of the day as long as your family is safe that's the most important thing," Tampa Bay forward Luke Glendening said Tuesday.

IMG\_5487.jpgThe Tampa Bay Lightning practice Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2024 at Invisalign Arena in Morrisville, NC., the Carolina Hurricanes' practice facility.

The Lightning took the ice at noon for its practice. Missing was forward Jake Guentzel, who played for the Canes last season before leaving in free agency, but Cooper said he expected Guentzel to be ready for the opener.

The Hurricanes did not practice Tuesday but held team meetings at Invisalign.

"We planned it this way," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Tuesday. "Obviously you don't want to practice four days in a row going into a game. We'll get in a couple of practices, then drop the puck.

"I think everybody has been ready and itching for a while to play a real game, so I think we'll be ready to roll."

Many NHL teams will have played their season openers before Friday, leaving the Canes somewhat antsy about getting on the ice, getting started.

The Canes took a trip Monday to Fort Liberty in Fayetteville. Later Monday, a 25-man roster for opening day was turned into the league.

"For me, going there was important just to show our appreciation for what those guys do for us," Brind'Amour said. "It's very understated, in my opinion. It's nice to kind of be in their area and hang out with those guys a little bit. To get our guys around that environment is always good."

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# TIME TO CLEAN UP

October 8, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: SHARON MCBRAYER smcbrayer@morganton.com| Section: Time To Clean Up | 740 Words OpenURL Link

#### **HELENE | AFTERMATH**

A thick layer of dried mud blankets parts of Morganton, while other parts of the city appear untouched by the path of destruction left behind by Hurricane Helene on Sept. 27.

A week later, businesses in Morganton were cleaning up and some have started the process of rebuilding.

Silver Creek Restaurant on West Union Street suffered flooding that reached halfway up the building. On Friday, the place had been gutted down to the brick inside and work to rebuild had started.

John Hipple, owner of Mobile Services in Morganton, ate at Silver Creek a lot with his grandson before he took him to school.

Hipple said the company started gutting the restaurant the Monday after the storm.

Ryan Cook, who is helping with the rebuild of Silver Creek, said owner Tom McCombs expects it will be 60 to 90 days before the restaurant will be ready to open.

Cook said it will be a new restaurant except for the walls.

Silver Creek is just one of about two dozen businesses that Mobile Services is helping clean up from the flood. Hipple said another one they will be working on is Ekornes, which had around 2 feet on is Ekornes, which had around 2 feet of water inside. Ekornes is a furniture producer off N.C. Highway 181 and N.C. Highway 126.

"There's just so many places, so many places that you wouldn't think would flood," Hipple said.

Hipple said while all of the businesses he's working with won't need to be gutted, many need 3 to 4 feet up the walls to be pulled out and redone.

"I've never seen a storm like this before," Hipple said. "Nothing in my whole life."

The restaurant was one of many businesses in the city on Friday that had a yellow sticker either on the door or window.

The city of Morganton has inspected most of the businesses that were impacted by flooding from the storm and tagged them with either a yellow or red tag, city officials said.

Businesses that have a yellow tag on the door are not open to the public. The yellow tag says the structure is unsafe and unfit for human habitation.

Businesses that have a red tag on the door are not safe for anyone to enter at all, according to the city.

There have been no businesses that have been given a red tag, city officials said.

Across the street from Silver Creek sits Mimosa Hills Shopping Center. It is home to Kimbrell's Furniture, Ollie's, Planet Fitness and Dollar General, among others. All of the businesses in the shopping center had yellow tags on the

doors and all appeared to be cleaning up from the flooding on Friday. Nearby KFC also appeared to be cleaning up.

Meanwhile, for McDonald's at the top of the shopping center parking lot it appeared to be business as usual on Friday.

A little farther down the road, Ingles Markets grocery store had a yellow tag on its door. Work crews were inside on Friday and some workers were throwing items away in a dumpster sitting between the parking lot and one of the entrances.

Even businesses that didn't suffer flooding and destruction lost thousands of dollars in product.

Dara Phrakousonh, owner of Pho Lao restaurant in the Magnolia Plaza shopping center on Burkemont Avenue, lost power and water to the business. She got power back to the restaurant on Sunday and spent Monday throwing out food due to the power loss.

She opened back up Tuesday but saw few customers, Phrakousonh said. She spent several days searching for and buying food she needs for her business.

Phrakousonh said she hasn't been able to get some items she regularly uses in her dishes.

"The customers, they're very nice," Phrakousonh said. "They understand."

While keeping her restaurant going, Phrakousonh still didn't have power at her home on Friday. She's been boiling water on a small propane stove to bathe and carries water to flush the toilet at home. She said it's made her reflect on how her grandmother lived. And it has taught her patience, she said.

"So I bet it's a lot of people it's going to have to learn, this one is going to be a very expensive lesson for everybody to learn how to survive without all this internet and modern conveniences," Phrakousonh said. "Because you kind of get used to the modern (conveniences) and you forget what you're supposed to do, which is going to be a lesson for some from now on. That something like this happen, we'll be OK."

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# H.S. ROUNDUP: Local sports restart with Freedom-Patton volleyball, 2 others

October 8, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: From staff reports | Section: High School | 312 Words OpenURL Link

The Patton volleyball team returned to nonconference action following a two-week break due to Hurricane Helene, getting back into rhythm with a Senior Night sweep of visiting crosstown rival Freedom on Monday in Morganton, 25-23, 25-21, 25-19.

The Lady Panthers' seniors include Abigail Carpenter, Reece Edwards, Kate Clark and Anna Lynn Ripley.

Offensively, PHS (14-4) was led by Hannah Huggins (10 kills, six aces), Ripley (eight kills, four aces), Soraya Hartman (seven kills), Edwards (six kills, four aces), Clark (four kills, ace), Kynzlee Worley (two kills), Carpenter (kill, 24 assists), Carly Setterlind (kill, ace, four assists) and Emma Griffin (seven assists). The Patton defense was paced by Setterlind (21 digs, 35 receptions), Carpenter (six digs), Clark (five digs, seven receptions), Ripley (five digs, 15 receptions), Edwards (five digs), Huggins (two digs, block), Griffin (dig, reception) and Hartman (reception).

The Lady Patriots (3-14) were led offensively by Kaitlyn Hagmann (five kills, two aces), Ava Whitaker (three kills, two aces), Madelyn LeMaster (kill, two aces), Kennedy Denton (kill, ace, six assists), Kaitlyn Taylor (kill), Mia Furches (kill) and Cassidy Taylor (ace). FHS' defensive leaders were Hagmann (five digs, block), Whitaker (two digs, block), Katie Settle (two digs), Denton (dig), Cassidy Taylor (dig) and Kaitlyn Taylor (dig).

**GIRLS GOLF** 

East Burke in CVAC match at Glen Oaks

The Lady Cavaliers (184) placed fifth in Monday's Catawba Valley 2A Conference match at Glen Oaks Golf Club in Maiden, finishing behind West Lincoln (137), Maiden (165), Bandys (177) and Newton-Conover (182) and ahead of Lincolnton (185).

EBHS was led by Sophia Vaughn (59), Reagan Austin (62), Sara Evans (63), Jolina Moua (63) and Alexis Russell (63).

**BOYS SOCCER** 

West Caldwell 6, East Burke 0

The Cavaliers (1-9-1, 0-4 CVAC) were shut out in their return to action at home in Icard on Monday, giving up four first-half goals and two more after the intermission.

Jaydon Fair (five saves) and Slate Walsh (two) manned the goal for EBHS.

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# Catawba County deputies help with rescues in Yancey, McDowell and jails in Burke, Buncombe

October 8, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: SARAH C. JOHNSON sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News | 533 Words OpenURL Link

The Catawba County Sheriff's Office sent deputies to help with rescue and recovery efforts in western North Carolina following the flooding caused by Hurricane Helene on Sept. 27.

A small group of Catawba County deputies were sent to Yancey County with a Bearcat armored vehicle on Sept. 27 during the storm, Maj. Aaron Turk said on Thursday.

As of Thursday, 15 deputies were still in Yancey County to assist with rescues, recoveries and cleanup. Turk said the largest number of deputies in Yancey County was 25 on Monday.

Catawba County Sheriff Don Brown also went to Yancey County to help, Turk said.

The deputies are scheduled to be in Yancey County until at least Oct. 9, Turk said.

Five Catawba County deputies are helping in McDowell County.

The Catawba County Detention Facility sent 11 staff members to Buncombe County to assist with the county jail there, Turk said.

Currently around 90 inmates from Burke County are being housed at the Catawba County Detention Facility due to the major flooding that hit Morganton, Turk said.

A helicopter pilot volunteering with Operation Airdrop at the Hickory Regional Airport helped fly some of the Catawba County Sheriff's Office staff to areas in Yancey County, Turk said.

Other responses from Catawba County

The town of Maiden has sent out police officers, electrical crews and public works crews to western North Carolina to assist in relief efforts, Maiden police Chief Tracy Ledford said on Thursday. Ledford said Maiden crews have been working since Saturday to assist. The police officers were deployed to Marion and Asheville. Public works crews were sent to Morganton, he said.

Maiden is also accepting donations at the fire department, police department and town hall. Donations will be taken to Asheville by the fire department, Ledford said.

The Long View Police Department is focusing their efforts on helping local people in Catawba County and Burke County since the town is on the county line, Long View Public Information Officer Heather Minor said.

Long View police have been delivering meals to the Hickory Regional Airport for volunteers and first responders helping with Operation Airdrop, Minor said.

Long View police have also helped Christ United to deliver supplies to Hildebran. On Tuesday, officers will deliver supplies to Burke County, Minor said. Donations can be delivered to the Long View Town Hall.

Long View police officers are also delivering supplies to Long View residents without power. Minor said some areas of Long View were still without power on Thursday.

School resources officers with the Hickory Police Department went to Boone to help with traffic since Hickory City Schools did not have classes on Monday and Tuesday, Hickory Police Department Media & Community Services Coordinator Kristen Hart said. Other Hickory officers are part of the Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve. Those officers have been deployed to serve, Hart said.

The city of Conover is coordinating with municipalities in Catawba County. Conover will send out public works crews to help with clean up as well as water and sewer restorations, Conover Public Information Officer Madeleine Epley said. Donations can be brought to the Conover Fire Station #3 on Village Square Northwest.

The Brookford Police Department is accepting donations at 1700 South Center St. in Hickory, according to a post on the department's Facebook page.

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# Valdese councilman Mears steps down and is immediately replaced

October 8, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Sharon McBrayer | Section: Government Politics | 563 Words OpenURL Link

A Valdese Town Council member resigned from his seat and was immediately replaced during the council meeting Monday night.

Valdese Mayor Charlie Watts read a letter of resignation from Council Member Paul Mears, who said he was leaving the board because he has moved out of town.

The letter from Mears said because of the recent devastation caused by Hurricane Helene, his family decided to rent their Valdese residence to a family that became homeless due to a large tree damaging their property in downtown Morganton. Mears said his family has moved to a home they recently remodeled at Silver Creek in Morganton.

"Due to this change in residence, I regret that I am no longer eligible to remain on council," Mears said in the letter. "I thoroughly enjoyed my time on council these past 34 months and on the Valdese planning board for nearly seven years, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve and give back to the Valdese community that has given so much to my family."

Mears said he will continue to remain connected and committed to Valdese with his business, which is Mears Insurance Group.

Council Member Glenn Harvey said he shares the disappointment of all the council members in losing Mears, saying he's been a solid member and contributor to the council.

Harvey then said there is no prescribed process for filling a vacant seat and he nominated Roger Heavner to fill Mears' term. Most councils in Burke County and the school board go through an application process when they have vacant seats. The boards gather applications from interested residents and then select the replacement.

Before Harvey nominated Heavner, Council Member Rexanna Lowman took issue with immediately filling the position. Lowman said the council has used an application process to fill previous vacant positions. She said she believes that is the process they should use to fill Mears' seat.

Harvey said the way the council filled the previous two vacant positions caused backlash in the town. He did not go into detail about those issues.

Harvey read out Heavner's qualifications to fill the seat. He said Heavner was born and raised in the town. He served in the military in the Vietnam War and spent 30 years in project management for CenturyLink. He also has a personal business doing construction, renovations, roof replacements, HVAC and generators, his application says.

Heavner has a bachelor's degree in industrial management and a master's certificate in project management.

Mears' term ends in November 2025.

Lowman made it clear that she has no problem with Heavner but did have a problem with the process of filling the vacancy.

She told Harvey that he chose Heavner as the replacement without any input from town residents and without giving anyone else a chance to apply for the seat.

"And this is not being very transparent, and this is not involving citizens in the procedure," Lowman told Harvey. Lowman voted with the other three members of the board for Heavner to fill the seat.

# Planning director to retire

Valdese Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel announced that Planning Director Larry Johnson will leave his position as of Nov. 8. Johnson has been with the town for 45 years, Weichel said.

"He's ready for his next chapter in his life," Weichel said. "So we're going to miss Larry. We'll wish him well. I've been grateful for the opportunity to work with him over the last couple years and learned a lot from him."

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