

# Man charged in fatal shooting

1 dead in  
Connelly Springs

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A man was charged with murder Monday night after a shooting at a Connelly Springs home.

Teddy Rathbone, 34, was charged after Joel Lynn McNabb, 69, was shot and killed at his home on Mountain View Boulevard off Laurel Haven Avenue in Connelly Springs, said Burke County Sheriff Banks Hinceman.

Hinceman said the shooting happened just before lunchtime Monday. A child was present at the time of the shooting, he said.

Rathbone fled the scene but was arrested by McDowell County deputies on Monday afternoon.

Jamie Hoyle, one of McNabb's neighbors, said McNabb was a Godly man who would give you the shirt off his back.



CHRISSE MURPHY, THE NEWS HERALD

Burke County deputies escort Teddy Rathbone to a patrol car on Monday night.

"He was better than gold," Hoyle said.

As he was walked out of the sheriff's office Monday night just before 10 p.m., Rathbone said he was sorry for his actions and told a woman he loves her.

"I never meant to do that," Rathbone said.

He said things "got out of hand."

"I regret what I did," Rathbone said. "I ruined not only my life, my kids' life."

Rathbone was held without bond at the Burke

County Jail.

The McDowell County Sheriff's Office, North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Burke County EMS and Salem Fire Rescue responded along with the Burke County Sheriff's Office.

Rathbone is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Chrissy Murphy is a staff writer and can be reached at cmurphy@morganton.com or at 828-432-8941.

# Long View hydrogen plant had fire

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OneH2, a hydrogen fuel plant in Catawba County, had a fire due to a hydrogen leak on Wednesday, Oct. 2.

The Long View Fire Department spent a little more than 10 hours controlling the leak, according to a release from the department.

The fire was caused by a pinhole leak in a pressurized hydrogen cylinder. The fire was extinguished quickly. For eight hours, the Long View Fire Department continued to spray water on the

cylinder to keep it cool while OneH2 employees slowly released the hydrogen, the release said.

The call came in shortly before 10 p.m. on Wednesday. The scene was cleared around 8:45 a.m. on Thursday, the release said.

No injuries were reported in the fire. The OneH2 factory is located at 620 23rd St. NW in Long View.

The OneH2 factory was the site of an explosion in April 2020, according to previous Hickory Daily Record articles. The cause of

the 2020 explosion was undetermined and no injuries were reported.

The Mountain View Fire, Icard, and Hickory fire departments also responded to the scene on Wednesday. The Catawba County Fire Marshal's Office, Catawba County Emergency Management, Catawba County EMS, N.C. Emergency Management also responded, the release said.

Sarah Johnson is the courts and breaking news reporter for the Hickory Daily Record.

# Medicaid, food stamp adjustments for hurricane relief efforts

**RICHARD CRAVER**  
Winston-Salem Journal

The state Department of Health and Human Services has issued several logistical updates on serving western North Carolina residents with food and Medicaid/Medicare benefits as they attempt to recover from Hurricane Helene.

The state Medicaid program has been granted additional temporary changes to help with continued care during recovery efforts. The changes will remain in effect until the end of the Hurricane Public Health Emergency declaration for North Carolina

The temporary changes are intended to support hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, critical access hospitals, cancer centers and long-term care facilities. The changes allow hospitals, including psychiatric hospitals, to treat patients who need emergency care at locations other than the hospital where needed. It allows hospitals to use addi-

tional spaces in their building to provide patient care.

For critical access hospitals, they can temporarily exceed their maximum of 25 beds, as well as keep patients for more than 96 hours and establish surge locations outside of rural areas. Inpatient rehabilitation facilities can serve people who need care as a result of the emergency.

Hospitals can allow new doctors to practice before the credentialing and privileging process is completed.

In addition, out-of-state practitioners who are licensed in another state can provide care as long as they are enrolled in Medicare, have a valid license and are not excluded from practice in North Carolina.

Hospitals in affected counties that participate in Medicare and are approved to provide post-hospital skilled nursing facility care can do so for patients who no longer need acute care. They can provide this care for patients who are unable

to find placement in a skilled nursing facility.

Nursing homes can admit new residents who have not completed typical pre-admission screenings and instead can complete those screenings postadmission so that people can get the care they need more quickly.

Long-term care acute hospitals do not need to follow the 25-day average length of stay requirement for patients who need longer stays due to the emergency. This will help people who may no longer have a safe place to transition to due to the emergency.

Intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities can use additional spaces like activity rooms as resident rooms.

To replace damaged medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics and supplies more easily, people will not need a face-to-face appointment or a new physician's order. Lost or damaged drugs covered by Medicare Part B can be refilled.

# Valdese councilman steps down and is immediately replaced

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

Valdese Mayor Charlie



Mears

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.

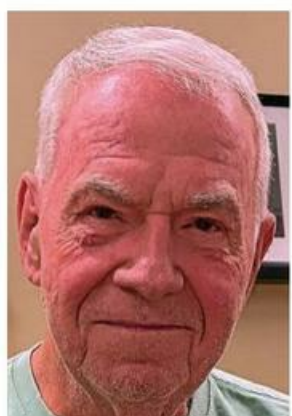
The letter from Mears said because of the recent devastation caused by Hurricane Helene, his family decided to rent their Valdese residence to a family that became homeless due to a large tree damaging their property in downtown Morganton. Mears said his family has moved to a home they recently remodeled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



Heavner

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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