

WECR-AM  
Newland, NC

Issue and Programs Report  
For  
Station WECR-AM

Quarter 2, 2020  
April 1 – June 30, 2022

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## WECR-AM PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS COMMUNITY ISSUES

CR—Civil Rights & Activism  
CD—Crime & Drugs  
ED—Education  
EH—Environment & Health  
GA—Government Affairs  
GR—Growth/Transportation  
HSM—Health, Safety, Medical Affairs  
IA—International Affairs  
NS—National Security  
PA—Political Affairs  
RE—Religion  
SP—Sports

### WECR NEWS

Reports filed in news segments are aired weekdays at 5:55 am, 6:55 am, 7:55 am.  
Q2 news stories included:

#### 2022 Q2 NEWS

04/01

For the first time in nearly a year Watauga Medical Center reports zero cases of covid-19 at the hospital. According to the Watauga Democrat It's the first time since a brief period in July 2021 that WMC has reported zero COVID-19 patients. As of March 31, AppHealthCare is reporting only 18 new COVID-19 positive cases in the last five days which continues a two month decline of cases in Watauga County.

EH

04/05

The Inaugural High Country Jazz Fest will take over parts of Boone and Blowing Rock this June. The inaugural High Country Jazz Festival will have nearly a dozen free and ticketed events at ten different locations in Boone and Blowing Rock from June 8 through 12. Headliner performances by Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra and New York Voices take place in the newly-renovated Appalachian Theatre with the Stephen Gordon Trio performing outdoors under a tent at the Chetola Resort. Additional festival affiliated events will be hosted by the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, Casa Rustica, High Country Jazz Society, Lost Province, Ransom Pub, and the Town of Boone. The events include outdoor concerts, late night jams, jazz lunches, and a popular jazz-themed film. Curtis Media Group and Mountain Times Publications will serve as the official media partners for the event. Tickets go on sale to the public at 11 a.m. on Thursday, April 7. For more information visit the website at

[HighCountryJazzFestival.org](http://HighCountryJazzFestival.org).

CA

04/12

According to the NCDOT & Ashe Post & Times project purposes have been made that would add two roundabouts and replace two bridges on NC Highway 88 between Smithport and the NC Highway 194 intersection in Warrensville. The reports state The first roundabout would replace the intersection of Highway 88 and Highway 194 in Smithport. The second roundabout would replace the intersection at Highway 88, Highway 194 and Northwest School Road in Warrensville. The roundabouts would be a single lane but would include a truck lane to handle larger vehicles. Other parts of the project would include replacing two bridges that cross Buffalo Creek on Highway 88. The first bridge would be near Dollar<sup>TM</sup>s Carhartt Store north of Buffalo Road and the second bridge would be near Eller & Sons Auto Repair north of Stanley Road. The DOT estimates the total cost of his project will be \$72.7 million. Construction costs are estimated at \$44.6 million, right of way acquisition costs are estimated at \$25 million and utility relocation costs are estimated at \$3.1 million. If the project is approved, the required environmental impact study could begin as early as July of this year and right of way land acquisitions beginning in October. Construction could begin as early as June of 2024.

GR

04/14

North Carolina Insurance Commissioner and State Fire Marshal Mike Causey announce that the Banner Elk Fire District completed their inspection and received the ISO (Insurance Services Office) Class 5 Rating. According to Banner Elk Volunteer Fire Department Chief Tyler Burr, the district has had the lower rating of Class 6 for the past two decades. The inspection, conducted by officials with the Department of Insurance Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is required on a regular basis as part of the North Carolina Response Rating System. Insurance companies use the score to help set property insurance rates, as a home or business that is less likely to be severely damaged or destroyed by fire is cheaper to insure. State law requires OSFM officials to inspect departments serving districts of 100,000 people or less, which makes up all but 12 of the state's fire districts.

CD

04/27

Toe River Health has released its community health report for Avery County for the year 2021. According to the release a community wide 75-questionnaire was conducted in the spring and summer of 2021 to give residents an opportunity to express concerns and opinions about the quality of life in Avery County. A total of 225 Avery County surveys were analyzed: 200 via telephone interview and 25 via the publicly available weblink. Approximately 27% of respondents were classified as excessive drinkers and 12% reported using opioids in the past year, with or without a prescription. Twenty percent of respondents reported more than seven days of poor mental health in the past month and almost 20% did not get needed mental health care or counseling in the past year. Sixty-five percent of Avery County respondents had calculated BMIs in the overweight or obese range and less than a quarter of respondents got the recommended

amount of physical and strengthening activity in an average week. Twenty percent of respondents reported current smoking, 12% used smokeless tobacco and 7% used vape products. To view the full report go online to [toeriverhealth.org](http://toeriverhealth.org).

EH

05/04

With the first quarter of the year completed and Watauga County preparing for the return of summer tourism, the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce released its first Economic Indicators report of 2022. This quarterly report examines five key statistics within the Watauga County & High Country Economy, featuring a summary of local impacts. The report also includes quick stats and commentary on local commercial real estate activity. Data was compiled for residential home sales, net sales tax calculations, unemployment, occupancy tax collections, commercial real estate permit applications and transactions, and applications for permits of new single-family homes. These figures include the most recent data released for each category as well as historical data to help establish trends and further context toward the area's economic stability. According to President and CEO David Jackson Watauga County is seeing the slowing of residential real estate traffic partly due to the accessibility and affordability issues outlined in the recent Watauga Housing Forums. Watauga has also seen some employers struggle to find enough workers to fill open positions, despite having the 2nd-lowest unemployment rate in the State. Jackson also stated "As inflation, supply chain issues, rising interest rates and other factors continue to influence the world around us, it's never been more important to keep an eye trained on local trends and impacts."

EC HO

05/06

On Sunday May 1st App State Police attempted a traffic stop after officers noticed a vehicle that was driving erratically at a higher rate of speed. According to App State Police the event took place near the intersection of Highways 321 and 105 in Boone. When officers activated the emergency lights to initiate a stop, the vehicle increased its speed. Due to high traffic volume and the reckless driving observed, the officer terminated the attempt to stop the vehicle and did not pursue it. The suspect vehicle continued traveling on N.C. 105 at a high rate of speed and crashed into a gas pump at a Speedway gas station on Hwy 105 in Boone just after 6PM. App State Police arrested the individual, a 16-year old minor, who was charged with DWI, felony fleeing to elude arrest, careless and reckless driving, and running a red light.

CD

05/12

The proposed budget for the 2022-23 year in Watauga County could see a drop in property tax rates. The Watauga Democrat reports The proposed 2022-23 budget for Watauga County would lower the property tax rate by 8.5 cents to 31.8 cents per \$100 valuation, which would be the lowest tax rate in the state. As previously reported the Watauga County Board Of Commissioners will hold two budget work sessions May 12 and 13 at 9AM at the county administration building. The proposed property tax rate of 31.8 cents per \$100 in valuation is .03 cents is higher than the revenue neutral rate of 28.8

cents as the additional increase will be set aside for the planning and development of the new Hardin Park Elementary School.

GA

05/25

The subject of workforce trends and realities, and the importance of strong workplace culture were the central topics of the 3rd annual Vision Northwest North Carolina summit, held for over 170 attendees last Thursday, May 19, at Appalachian State University's Leon Levine Hall in Boone. Headlined by keynote presenters Ron Hetrick, author of *The Demographic Drought* and Adrienne Cole, President/CEO of the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, the event focused on the workforce realities brought by COVID-19 and changing population trends, while also underscoring the growing focus on strong and genuine workplace culture as a key attractor for people seeking employment. A total of 27 speakers and panelists discussed demographic trends, emerging labor markets, and provided examples of workplace culture initiatives that have a direct impact on employee retention. The event attracted business owners, local government officials, and State agency contacts from the 12-counties in the EDPNC's Northwest Prosperity Zone, which include: Alleghany, Alexander, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, McDowell, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey. You can get a full wrap up of the event online at [BooneChamber.com](http://BooneChamber.com).

HO

06/01

Over the last year, Appalachian State University's New River Light and Power has been working on two major projects aimed at improving reliability for its customers and the campus community. NRLP has completely replaced and upgraded its campus substation located behind the Holmes Convocation Center, which has increased the capacity from a 44,000-volt feed to a 100,000-volt feed to allow for future growth and added load. Additionally, NRLP is in the process of converting overhead power lines to underground in the University Village and Quail Meadows neighborhoods. The conversion project has been completed in the University Village neighborhood, and is expected to wrap up in Quail Meadows in the coming weeks, where NRLP is replacing older buried wire that is more susceptible to failure, to improve reliability for residential customers. For more information, visit [NRLP.AppState.edu](http://NRLP.AppState.edu).

GR

06/07

According to the Watauga County Sheriffs Office a man was found dead on Sunday at the High Country Fairgrounds. In a release from the Watauga County Sheriffs office they have confirmed that the victim 28 year old John Nicholas Porter allegedly died from a gunshot wound to the head. Officers responded to the report of a gunshot at the fairgrounds around 10am on Sunday morning. According to the Sheriffs Office the investigation is still ongoing but they are not seeking suspects.

CD

06/09

Beginning tonight Water Services in the Town Of Boone will be interrupted beginning at 11:30 pm. According to the release streets that will be affected are Westbrook Drive, Cherrybrook Drive, Council St and Cherry Drive. The road will be closed on King Street from College Street to Cherry Drive. Public Utility's suggest that you may want to draw out some water to have on hand for drinking and cooking. If you have an electric hot water heater or if your gas heater is not automatic with thermostat control, it is advisable to turn off the hot water heater until after water service has been restored. If you leave the premises before water has been restored, make sure that all faucets and water taps are shut off and all drains and sink waste lines are open and not blocked. If you have a refrigerator, which is water-cooled be sure to shut it off as soon as the water is turned off and do not operate it until water service has been restored. For any questions contact the town at 828-268-6250.

GR

06/10

The Boone Town Council has issued a response to a local law, House Bill 193, recently offered in the General Assembly at the initiative of Watauga County. According to the release the Town Council has discussed in closed session a local law introduced by the Watauga County Board of Commissioners relating to a parking garage that the County is planning for downtown Boone. This local law, if passed, would exempt the Count's proposed parking garage from Boone's Unified Development Ordinance, including the downtown historic district standards. In a statement the Council said it tried hard to improve relations with the County and to work together with the County. Most recently, the Town and the County reached an amicable settlement of a lawsuit over water service; and that they worked together to move the County's new 911 call center forward, and combined our 911 communication operations. The Council's statement indicated the Council would have been happy to talk to the County about its parking garage project, and to do what the Town reasonably could to facilitate it. Yet, the County did not even approach the Town to seek cooperation.

GA

6/13

A State Highway Patrol Trooper and a Caldwell Sheriff's deputy are on administrative leave after a man who fired at officers was shot and killed Sunday afternoon during a wreck investigation near Sawmills in Caldwell County. The officers responded to an overturned car on US-321 near Mission Road shortly before 3 p.m. Sunday. According to the Highway Patrol, when the two officers arrived on scene, the suspect fired shots at the officers, and they both returned fire. The suspect subsequently fled into a wooded area and was later located suffering from a believed gunshot wound. Authorities began life-saving procedures until emergency personnel arrived, and transported the suspect to an area hospital, but he did not survive. Neither officer was injured.

Authorities have identified the victim as Jerome Lavon Connelly, 35, of Morganton. The Highway Patrol says Trooper Bryson G. Bowman, a 3-year veteran stationed in Troop F, District 3 (Caldwell County) is the trooper involved. The North Carolina SBI is investigating.

CD

06/22

Watauga County and the Town of Boone have issued press releases about House Bill 193, requested by Watauga County, to exempt its proposed downtown parking garage project from the requirements of Boone's development ordinance. The County maintains that it had a valid legal concern about the enforceability of the Town's development ordinance as it relates to the recombination of lots within the historic district, that litigation would significantly delay the project and increase the project budget, and that the request for House Bill 193 was made in good faith. The joint statement said the County and the Town agree on the need for public parking to serve the courthouse and other government buildings located in the historic district, as well as the desire for additional parking after business hours for locals and visitors. In addition, both agree that it benefits both the town and the county residents, businesses and taxpayers that both entities work together cooperatively, respecting both the taxpayers' money and the Town's efforts to preserve its historic downtown. The statement indicates a consensus has been reached so that the local law will be withdrawn, litigation can be avoided, and consideration of the County's parking garage project can move forward consistent with the Town's development ordinance.

GA GR

6/24

Free breakfast and lunch for county school students, that have been available for the last two years due to COVID, will be ending this month, and the Watauga County School system wants parents to be sure to sign up for free and reduced meals for the upcoming school year that begins in August. Watauga Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Elliot said that with the rising cost of living, he expects demand for school meals will be higher, and urges parents to sign their kids up come fall. Elliott said with the cost of not only food, but other supplies and the fuel to ship them, administrators are working to minimize the effect of those increases. During the pandemic, the USDA passed waivers nationwide that allowed schools to serve breakfast and lunch to students without collecting payment. That waiver expires on June 30.

ED

6/27

Work on the new Watauga River Bridge on Highway 105 near Valle Crucis continues, with blasting operations taking place, this week. The blasting will result in traffic delays. North Carolina Department of Transportation says traffic may be stopped for as much as 30 minutes to allow for rock removal during blasting operations. As the work continues, the blasting and delays will happen only between 11 am and 2 pm, but will not occur every day. Safety precautions will be taken to prevent debris from getting into the road, and explosive experts and fire department officials will be on site.

GR

06/28

Three people died after being shot in a domestic dispute in Jonas Ridge. The Burke County Sheriff's Office says the call was about 5:30 Monday afternoon, and the Avery County Sheriff's Office and Avery EMS provided assistance, and were the first on scene. According to reports, one of the three victims was found deceased when authorities arrived, the other two were transported to Cannon Memorial Hospital, and were pronounced dead. One of the victims was the suspect. The victims have been identified as Polly Ann Keller, 56, who lived at the address. Jeremy Dean Clark, 32, of Newland, and Anthony Simon Franklin, 33, of Newland, were pronounced dead at the hospital. Authorities believe two of the three victims were firing shots. CD

06/29

Congress has passed, and the President has signed, the Keep Kids Fed Act to extend important funding and flexibility to provide children healthy meals this summer and support to schools and daycare providers to respond to supply chain challenges and high food costs for the coming school year. The legislation passed unanimously in the Senate and by voice vote in the House. The Keep Kids Fed Act ensures that students will continue getting school and summer meals, and make sure school and summer meal programs get much-needed support to deal with ongoing food service issues. Despite the legislation, students will still have to pay for breakfast and lunch unless they qualify for free or reduced meals. The legislation did extend the free meals through the summer for all students.

ED EH

6/30

Early Thursday morning, Boone Police responded to Boone Saloon on King Street about a possible impaired driver, who had been asked to leave the business after closing. The individual had left before officers arrived, but witnesses say the man fired a shot before leaving, from what was later determined to be a 9 mm handgun. A description of the vehicle was broadcast to law enforcement agencies, and Watauga County Deputies spotted the vehicle near the Watauga/Caldwell County line. The vehicle sped up after spotting law enforcement vehicles and crossed into Caldwell County, where he was later stopped and identified. Sumetha Sitthiphanh, 22 years of age of Morganton, was arrested on Watauga County warrants and placed in the Caldwell Detention Center under a \$5000 bond. He is charged with discharging a firearm in the city and going armed to the terror of the people. He has a court date of August 8. CD

The State Board of Elections on Thursday voted not to recognize the Green Party as an official political party in North Carolina, citing an ongoing investigation into evidence of fraud and other irregularities in the petition process used to seek ballot access for the party. Several counties and State Board staff identified numerous irregularities, including the same handwriting throughout a petition page and signatures that appeared to be written by the same person, Voters apparently signed petitions more than once, and voters whose names on the petitions claimed they never signed the petition. By a vote of 3-2, the Board concluded that the petitions were not yet shown to be sufficient under the law. Recognition would have allowed Green Party candidates to appear on ballots in the

November 2022 general election, and allowed North Carolina voters to register as affiliated with the Green Party. Currently, North Carolina voters can register as unaffiliated, or as members of the Democratic, Libertarian, or Republican parties. GA

## **CAROLINA NEWSMAKERS**

NCNN Public Affairs Programming airs Sunday at 6:00 am  
Q2 2022

CR—Civil Rights & Activism  
CD—Crime & Drugs  
ED—Education  
EH—Environment & Health  
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HSM—Health, Safety, Medical Affairs  
IA—International Affairs  
NS—National Security  
PA—Political Affairs  
RE—Religion  
SP—Sports

## **CAROLINA NEWSMAKERS PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS** Second Quarter - 2022

Carolina Newsmakers with Don Curtis  
2022 Q2

INTERVIEW WITH DR. SCOTT RALLS - PRESIDENT OF WAKE TECH  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
EDUCATION, CAREER TRAINING, BUSINESS GROWTH, TUITION, COST OF  
EDUCATION, JOB OPENINGS, RETAINING FACULTY, TEACHER SALARY,  
FUNDING, E-SPORTS, ONLINE LEARNING, AND STUDENT DEBT.  
ED EC

4-10

INTERVIEW WITH MIKE CAUSEY - NORTH CAROLINA INSURANCE  
COMMISSIONER  
ACCREDITATION, DISTRACTED DRIVING, AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE  
RATES, OPIOIDS, TELEHEALTH, HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE, FIRE  
DEPARTMENTS, STORM READINESS, SCAMS AND FRAUD.  
EC EH CR

4-17

INTERVIEW WITH DR. MIKE WALDEN - PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF  
ECONOMICS AT NC STATE UNIVERSITY

INFLATION, ECONOMY, STIMULUS, COVID-19, UKRAINE INVASION, NATO, TELEMEDICINE, MORTGAGE RATES, INTEREST RATES, BROADBAND, RECESSION, STATE ECONOMY, SUPPLY CHAIN, AND UNEMPLOYMENT.  
EC EH IA

4-24

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HOOD - PRESIDENT OF THE JOHN WILLIAM POPE FOUNDATION

UNITED STATES SENATE PRIMARY, CONGRESSIONAL PRIMARY, UKRAINE, ELECTIONS, FOREIGN POLICY, AFGHANISTAN, INFLATION, EMPLOYMENT, NEWS MEDIA, EDUCATION, AND IMMIGRATION.

GA IA EC ED

5-1

INTERVIEW WITH BOB PHILLIPS - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COMMON CAUSE NORTH CAROLINA

REDISTRICTING, UNAFFILIATED VOTERS, ELECTIONS, MEDIA, NEWS, COMMON CAUSE BACKGROUND, MONEY IN POLITICS, SUPER PACS, EDUCATION, POLITICAL ADS, VOTER REGISTRATION, ELECTION SECURITY, AND SAME DAY REGISTRATION.

GA

5-8

INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE STANLEY - PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE METHODIST HOME FOR CHILDREN

CHILD CARE, SOCIAL WORK, FUNDING, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, ALCOHOL, MARIJUANA, FAMILY DRUG COURTS, BINGE DRINKING, JUVENILE JUSTICE, GANGS, BULLYING, AND THERAPY.

EH

5-15

INTERVIEW WITH TOM JENSEN - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY POLLING

PRIMARY ELECTIONS, VOTING, UNAFFILIATED VOTERS, UNITED STATES SENATE RACE, UNITED STATES HOUSE RACES, JOE BIDEN APPROVAL, ECONOMY, ELECTION INTEGRITY, AND POLITICAL PARTIES.

GA

5-22

INTERVIEW WITH ERIC BOYETTE - NORTH CAROLINA TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

COVID-19, POPULATION GROWTH, HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION, BUDGET, TOLL ROADS, SAFETY, FERRIES, RAIL, MICRO TRANSIT, HIGH-SPEED RAIL, AND PORTS.

GR

5-29

INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BERG - PRESIDENT OF BEST NC  
COVID-19, EDUCATION, VIRTUAL EDUCATION, PARENT PARTICIPATION,  
ATTRACTING TEACHERS, TEACH NC, COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM,  
COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS, PRINCIPALS, TEACHER PAY, LICENSURE, AND  
LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

ED

6-5

INTERVIEW WITH BRAD CRONE - PRESIDENT OF CAMPAIGN CONNECTIONS  
POLITICS, MIDTERM PRIMARIES, 2022 ELECTION OUTLOOK, MEDICAL  
MARIJUANA, GAMBLING, MEDICAID EXPANSION, ALCOHOL, GUN  
CONTROL, ABORTION, EDUCATION, STUDENT DEBT, JOBS, AND  
TECHNOLOGY.

GA EH

6-12

INTERVIEW WITH TOM CAMPBELL - CREATOR OF NCSPIN  
MEDICAL MARIJUANA, MEDICAID EXPANSION, HOSPITALS, PRIMARY  
ELECTION RESULTS, POLITICS, POLITICAL AD, EARLY VOTING, GUN  
CONTROL, PRESIDENT BIDEN APPROVAL, SUPPLY CHAIN, GAS PRICES,  
NEWS MEDIA, AND POLITICAL PARTIES.

EH GA EC

6-19

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS STITH - NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE SYSTEM  
EDUCATION, DUAL ENROLLMENT, CONTINUING EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY  
SYSTEM, ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT, FUNDING, TAXATION,  
INFRASTRUCTURE, LEGISLATION, AND MANUFACTURING.

ED EC GA

6-26

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER CHUNG - CEO OF THE NORTH CAROLINA  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP  
ECONOMY, BUSINESS, BUSINESS RECRUITMENT, EXPORTS, EDUCATION,  
AUTOMOBILE PLANTS, TOURISM, ENERGY, MANUFACTURING,  
WORKFORCE, SUPPLY CHAIN, BROADBAND, AND PORTS.

EC