

MOUNTAIN
Xpress

To our readers

In some respects, the *Mountain Xpress* voter guide is among the most straightforward documents we publish. Our reporters reach out to every candidate running in a contested local race to represent Buncombe County, record their answers to the same set of questions and present the results side by side. It's a direct amplification of the voices that seek to be heard in the halls of government.

But behind the simple commitment to publishing this guide lies the mission that has powered the paper since 1994: "to build community and strengthen democracy by serving an active, thoughtful readership at the local level, where the impact of citizen action is greatest." Our guide is

an act of service, an attempt to give our readers tools for change.

Those who live in these mountains have the right to make informed decisions about their representatives. And those who desire power over others should explain their views on the record, where they can be considered and debated and held to account. People who want the best for Western North Carolina can disagree with passion and respect over how our society should work, but they need a shared set of facts to advance that conversation.

2020 has brought unprecedented challenges to our region's health, economy and civic life. Yet even with more news to report than ever before, we believe that in-depth coverage of elections

remains one of our most critical responsibilities to the public.

Early in-person voting begins Thursday, Oct. 15, and the Buncombe County Board of Elections has more information about when and where to vote at avl.mx/44w. Absentee ballots to vote by mail may be requested through Tuesday, Oct. 27. Polls are open 6:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3.

No matter the way in which you cast your ballot, we hope this guide provides the information you need to choose your elected officials. And we hope you'll continue to see *Mountain Xpress* as a companion in building community, the work that will not end once the last vote is counted.

— Daniel Walton 

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Keep our coverage strong through the Tuesday, Nov. 3, general election and beyond at

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U.S. House of Representatives

District 11



The shadow of President **Donald Trump**, as well as the national attention it brings, looms large over the race for North Carolina's westernmost congressional district. Republican **Mark Meadows**, the previous four-term holder of the U.S. House District 11 seat, left his position vacant to become White House chief of staff in March. Both Meadows and Trump endorsed Madison County real estate agent **Lynda Bennett** — who was soundly defeated by **Madison Cawthorn**, a 25-year-old political newcomer, in a June runoff for the Republican nomination.

And Cawthorn's strongest opponent, retired Air Force Col. and former Guantanamo Bay chief prosecutor **Moe Davis**, has repeatedly tied Cawthorn and Trump together in strident social media posts as he campaigns to become WNC's first Democratic representative since **Heath Shuler**, who retired in 2013. "My #NC11 opponent pledged his allegiance to Donald Trump and will do as he's told. My allegiance is to the Constitution and Western North Carolina," Davis wrote in a representative Sept. 24 tweet.

Aiding Davis' chances to take the seat are new maps approved by North Carolina state judges in December, which place the entirety of Buncombe County (and its large Democratic voter base) in District 11. Asheville residents currently represented by Republican Rep. **Patrick McHenry** in District 10 will now cast ballots in the NC-11 race, a move a panel of federal judges had ordered in 2018 to remedy unconstitutional gerrymandering.

Green Party candidate **Tamara Zwinak** and Libertarian **Tracey DeBruhl** are also contending to represent the district. Zwinak, a licensed clinical social worker, mounted a previous Green Party bid for county office in New York; DeBruhl's 2018 campaign for Buncombe County Sheriff featured campaign signs that said "Paid for by Christ."

— Daniel Walton X

MADISON CAWTHORN



Republican

Website:
MadisonCawthorn.com

Occupation:
Owner and CEO of a real estate investment company

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: National Right to Life, National Federation of Independent Business, Henderson County Sheriff Lowell Griffin, Transylvania County Sheriff David Mahoney, President Donald J. Trump

Amount of money raised: \$438,209 through June 30 (including primary)

Top three donors: N/A

MOE DAVIS



Democrat

Website:
MoeDavisForCongress.com

Occupation: Retired judge with the U.S. Department of Labor

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.); Gov. Roy Cooper; Dr. David Crane, Maggie Valley resident who is the former chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, former Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and commissioner on the N.C. Commission of Inquiry on Torture; VoteVets.org; North Carolina Association of Educators.

Amount of money raised: Through June 30 reporting period: \$493,434

Top three donors: N/A

THE QUESTIONS

COVID-19 is having significant negative effects on the WNC job market while the area's cost of living has continued to rise. What will you do to create employment opportunities that pay a living wage?

Right now, businesses are suffering due to COVID-19. The economic shutdown in North Carolina has harmed hardworking men and women across the state. I firmly believe that free-market solutions are the best way to put financial freedom back in the hands of the people in Western North Carolina. I want to slash regulations, incentivize entrepreneurship and invest in our lower-income population. Through policies like opportunity zones, I believe we can significantly increase wages across the state.

I support raising the minimum wage to a living wage because no one who works full time should live in poverty. The key to improving our job market is to make Western North Carolina more attractive for companies and individuals to relocate here. To do that, we must make health care affordable and accessible, expand broadband internet to our rural areas and invest in education to have a workforce that is prepared for high-tech jobs that we can then recruit.

How does your approach to climate change address its accompanying social challenges, such as climate-driven migration and disproportionate impacts on low-income communities?

America needs to be at the forefront of addressing climate change. Low-income communities are often more seriously impacted by climate change. From financial barriers to locational impediments, lower-income earners feel the effects of climate issues long before others. My solution is aggressively opening up the market for climate solutions, lowering burdensome regulations on environmental innovations and generating competition to lower prices for lower-income workers.

We need to approach climate change on a local, state, national and international level. Start by supporting green energy that brings good jobs that pay well and protect the environment so critical to our regional economy. We need state and national goals for reducing our use of carbon-based fuels, which is good for national security. And we must return to the Paris Agreement. Restoring leadership around the world will let us lead policy on migration and other social impacts of climate change.

What specific federal funding do you intend to pursue on behalf of WNC projects?

I plan to pursue an increase in Payments in Lieu of Taxes funding, as well as a standard formula so that communities know how much in funding they can expect to receive each year. I plan to aggressively pursue an increase in broadband for rural areas in NC-11. This COVID-19 crisis has showcased the importance of fast and effective internet across the entire district. I will also fight for increased access to federal incentives like opportunity zones.

I support Jim Clyburn's \$80 billion Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act, similar to the rural electrification of nearly a century ago, that would bring broadband internet to rural Western North Carolina. The Great American Outdoors Act will provide much-needed funding for our parks and forests, but we also need infrastructure investment throughout our district to move projects ahead, including funding for green energy expansion.

What WNC residents do you believe have the least voice at the federal level, and what message do you hope to bring from them to Washington?

Over 60% of the voters in this district don't have a college degree. I am one of them. For too long, our views have been represented in Washington by people who aren't representative of our backgrounds. I believe that people like my opponent who look down on those with less education are not going to provide functional solutions for the working people of this district. I represent a key demographic that, all too often, is not heard on the federal level.

Our rural residents have been forgotten by Washington. Look around the district. We have shortages of doctors and nurses in almost every county. Almost 1-in-5 live in poverty in some counties. We have among the highest rates of uninsured in the country. Some counties have less than 50% access to broadband. We can't grow and thrive unless we change. Mark Meadows did nothing for this district. We need someone who will work for us, not someone owned by corporate interests.

Given your social media history, which political opponents have found to be offensive or inflammatory, how can voters trust that you will represent all of WNC?

My opponent has enjoyed accusing me of being many things on social media. That's fine; mudslinging is part of politics. But what he can't argue with is my desire to serve and my dedication to the people of this district. I was born in these mountains, raised by these people. He moved here in 2019 to seize political power. I spent my life here to protect our values from people just like him. My only duty is to the people of this district, and I can promise you that I will represent you well.

The question misrepresents the target of those tweets: politicians, not the good people of WNC who are victims of their games. Remember what the N.C. GOP did to override Gov. Cooper's budget veto in 2019? The veto came because Republicans wouldn't allow Medicaid expansion, but they tricked Democrats to override the veto and voted to deny health care to thousands. I lashed out because they hurt Republicans, Democrats and independents alike. I was fighting for all of WNC then, and I will in Congress.

TRACEY DEBRUHL



Libertarian

Website: avl.mx/8jm

Occupation: Construction/marketing business owner, charity and disaster relief volunteer, musician, U.S. Marine

Previous candidacy or offices held: Candidate for Buncombe County Board of Commissioners and Buncombe County sheriff

Key endorsements: N.C. Industrial Hemp Association, and mostly churches, charities, family and friends that, to prevent political retaliation as the Democrats and Republicans are notorious for doing, I will protect by not naming!

Amount of money raised: I don't beg for money; personally, I would prefer your voices in uniting to help our children have better options.

Top three donors: The original game plan was a \$45,000 sale that was lost due to COVID-19 shutdowns. So it's been in God's hands!

What if there's other solutions? The Democratic and Republican minds are limited and limiting society too! I know where billions are being wasted. I know where jobs are being lost. And I have a project that will bring multibillions into our nation. As for solving the plague the DNC and GOP idiots have unleashed on US? They panicked and released a Pandora's box that might not be fixable; time will tell! I'm gonna make us money and make it so doctors can do their jobs!

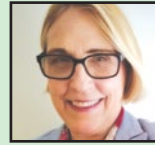
I'm not going to try to change the climate or control Mother Nature! We have homeless initiatives that are working I will grow! I will promote environmental programs while making/saving us money! So the scientists can more proficiently do their jobs! And we will help the less fortunate be more successful with more resources I know how to earn US!

LOL. Wow ... 1 step ahead, ain't I? Just shows why America trusts its Marines! All I am needing is our legal department to draw the paperwork, a few materials and the location to do it, or a meeting with the Commandant USMC/Joint Chiefs, or a private industry to fund it. Off already proven figures, \$10 billion to \$100 billion initial return. With a residual return. That I won't tell my competitors for free! Any doubts? I called the police issue before it happened and spoke of this in 2018, didn't I?!

Whoever's party is not in office and only the donors or ones with money ever see justice! Unless it benefits the Democrat or Republican in office! So my message of hope! COMES BY EVERYONE SEEING A MARINE AND COMMUNITY VOICE LIKE MYSELF TAKING THE UNDERDOG ROLE! And RUNNING LIBERTARIAN!

Some will say ME! After all, I have went head on into the storm and have been fighting the crooked Democrats and Republicans on their doorsteps! Marines' pet peeves are cowardly bullies! After seeing how racist and abusive the parties are to our poor, how they disgrace our Constitution and rights! I have got in their faces and stayed there! And you're welcome for showing you how weak the bullies really are! BUNCOMBE'S NOW GOT MORE INDY! Than either! You're welcome! And you already know I will! Cause I already AM!

TAMARA ZWINAK



Green

Website: avl.mx/8go

Occupation: Licensed clinical social worker

Previous candidacy or

offices held: Green Party candidate for a New York county legislative seat

Key endorsements: None

Amount of money raised: None

Top three donors: N/A

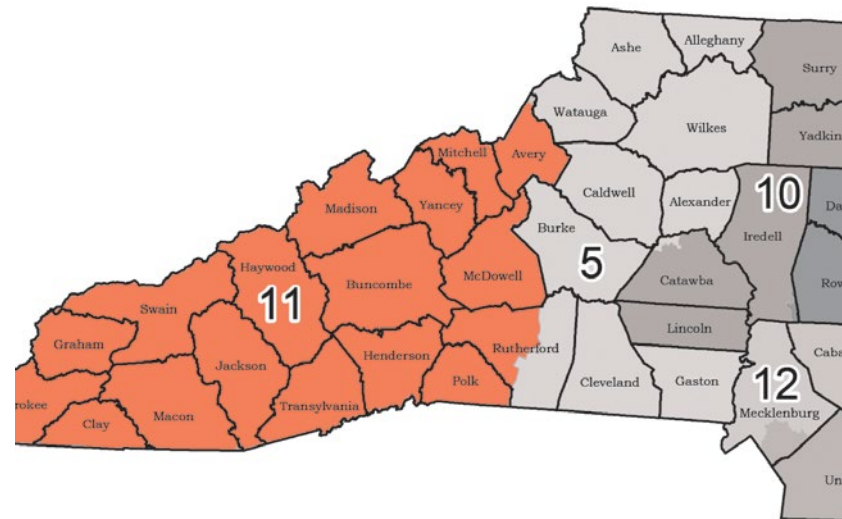
The pandemic shuttered business and caused record unemployment rates. Government stepped in to provide stimulus checks and additional unemployment benefits. The way to create employment opportunities in the region is by lowering taxes on business or offering tax incentives. In a capitalist economy, free markets are the best way to increase employment and start innovative businesses. I support raising the federal minimum wage to \$18 an hour.

We are in a global emergency that is much larger than climate change. The pandemic is the result of the destruction of the rainforests and natural habitats. Plastics are destroying the coral reefs and contaminating our water and food sources. Industrial waste is polluting our soil and streams. I plan to create the U.S. Department of Sustainability, tasked with formulating a comprehensive National Sustainability Plan to address the complex and intersecting aspects of this global emergency.

Accessible health care is a top priority for the people of WNC. I will increase federal block grants to keep public clinics and hospitals open and easily accessible. I will also sponsor funding for block grants to deliver a coronavirus vaccine, delivery items such as syringes, rapid testing results, medication and PPE.

The homeless have no voice in Congress. Renters have the least say in federally funded housing programs, resulting in displacement and homelessness. When elected, I will reform the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program to mandate the inclusion of a Tenant Association at each development and mandatory eviction tracking. No one should be homeless in America, and I will end homelessness if elected.

I find Madison Cawthorn the most offensive in his brazen unrestrained display of high-capacity weapons and handguns in our climate of gun violence. Too many young people are influenced by this behavior from a person in leadership, and this sometimes ends in tragedy. We all must realize the impact we have on people. When you send me to Congress, you will be going with me. My office is your office. My door will be open to everyone, and I will listen to your opinions and concerns.



ALL GO WEST: North Carolina's 11th U.S. Congressional district has been redrawn to include the entirety of Buncombe County, which was previously split with District 10.

Buncombe County's 2020 voting timeline

Mark your calendar!

Take note of the following important dates to make sure your vote is counted before state deadlines:



- **Thursday, Oct. 15:** Early voting begins at 16 locations across Buncombe County. Sites are open 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on weekends. Voters can also deliver absentee ballots to these sites. Eligible individuals not yet registered to vote may use "one-stop" combined registration and voting at early voting sites.
- **Tuesday, Oct. 20:** Last day the U.S. Postal Service recommends requesting an absentee ballot.
- **Tuesday, Oct. 27:** Last day to request an absentee ballot.
- **Saturday, Oct. 31:** Last day for early voting in Buncombe County. Polls run 8 a.m.-3 p.m.
- **Tuesday, Nov. 3:** Election Day. In-person voting will be held in 80 county precincts. Polls are open 6:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m. All mailed absentee ballots must be postmarked by this date, and those delivered by hand must arrive at Buncombe County Election Services, 77 McDowell St., by 5 p.m.
- **Friday, Nov. 6:** Mailed absentee ballots must be postmarked and arrive at the Buncombe County Board of Elections by this date to be counted.
- **Friday, Nov. 13:** The Buncombe County Board of Elections will finalize its official canvass, or ballot authentication process, and formally declare winners.

N.C. Senate

Voters might be forgiven for thinking that Republican Sen. **Chuck Edwards** is running to represent Asheville. Since last October, the District 48 incumbent has tangled with Asheville City Council over the conduct of local elections, blasted local reporters as “20-something journalists whose most frightening experience is learning they have a gluten allergy” and threatened to withhold state funds from the city’s government after Council voted to reallocate \$770,000 from the Asheville Police Department budget.

But under district maps adopted by the General Assembly in September 2019, no one who lives in the city will cast a vote for Edwards in 2020. The new District 48 trades parts of South Asheville for Buncombe County’s more sparsely populated east, including Barnardsville, Black Mountain and Swannanoa. “I will work just as fervently to represent this new district,” Edwards wrote about the changed lines, in response to a question in the *Xpress* voter guide.

Edwards’ opponent is **Brian Caskey**, the mayor pro tem of Mills River in Henderson County. The only Democrat on the Mills River Town Council, located in a county where registered Republicans outnumber Democrats by over 14,000, Caskey has said he hopes to bring bipartisan appeal to district voters.

In District 49, which now covers all of Asheville and the western two-thirds of Buncombe County, Democrat **Julie Mayfield** hopes to represent many of her current constituents on a larger stage. The Asheville City Council member has the endorsement of outgoing Democratic Sen. **Terry Van Duyn**, who gave up her reelection chances to mount an unsuccessful campaign for lieutenant governor. Mayfield faces Republican **Bob Penland** of Candler, a Navy veteran and first-time candidate.

— Daniel Walton 

District 48



THE QUESTIONS

The recently redrawn Senate District 48 traded Arden and Biltmore Forest for Black Mountain, Swannanoa and Barnardsville. How will these new boundaries influence your approach to representing your constituents?

The new boundaries are a result of the courts demanding that District 48 — the most gerrymandered Senate district in North Carolina — be redrawn. I believe that this is a positive change for District 48, since eastern Buncombe tends to be rural farm country, just like much of Henderson and Transylvania counties. My family lived in Riceville Valley for many years, so while we currently live in Mills River, we’re very familiar with the area.

Candidates elected this year will draw new electoral district lines for North Carolina based on the 2020 census. What would be the fairest process for drawing those district boundaries, and how would you advocate for that process?

My opponent, Chuck Edwards, has attended American Legislative Exchange Conference (ALEC) seminars on how to perfect the gerrymander. Incredibly, attendees were encouraged to burn their notes afterward. I believe that legislators, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, cannot be trusted to draw their own districts. The only real solution is to establish a nonpartisan commission that will draw fair legislative districts and to protect their work with a constitutional amendment.

What further state-based COVID-19 relief efforts are appropriate, given the likely long-term damage of the pandemic on the local economy?

The pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of North Carolina’s social safety net. It has also exposed the General Assembly as “all talk, no action.” They are too busy undermining the governor to take positive actions. We must expand Medicaid, since the federal government pays for 90% of the cost (and we’re already paying for it). We must fix our broken unemployment insurance program, make sure that corporations pay their fair share and create a more diverse array of high-paying jobs. And we can.

What do you see as the state government’s role in promoting racial equity?

We are becoming a more diverse society by the day, and this should be celebrated. Unfortunately, the fires of racism still burn bright in some pockets of North Carolina. We must encourage investment in Black-owned startups and other businesses, and we must always be striving to ensure that intentional investment in communities of color takes place. We must push for a pathway to citizenship for our farm workers as well. Farmers want this, and it is the ethical and moral thing for us to do.

North Carolina is one of nine states with a legal restriction against third-party power sales. What legislation would you support to improve consumer access to renewable energy and fight climate change?

As a council member in Mills River, I advanced the idea of installing solar panels on every town-owned building and was successful in that effort. The result is that we have reduced our carbon footprint by 77%. Solar power is a passive and extremely efficient way to create electricity, so I will make reestablishing tax breaks and incentives for solar power — available to each and every citizen — a priority in the first legislative session in 2021.

BRIAN CASKEY



Democrat

Website:
BrianCaskey.com

Occupation: Educator

Previous candidacy or offices held: Mayor pro tem, Mills River Town Council (current)

Key endorsements: N.C. Association of Educators, AFL-CIO, Planned Parenthood, Moms Demand Action, Equality NC

Amount of money raised: \$75,000

Top three donors: My campaign has over 1,000 donors and has taken zero PAC money.

CHUCK EDWARDS



INCUMBENT Republican

Website:
ChuckEdwardsNC.com

Occupation:
Small-business owner

Previous candidacy or offices held: N.C. Senate District 48

Key endorsements: N.C. Police Benevolent Association, N.C. Troopers Association, National Federation of Independent Business, N.C. Right to Life, N.C. Values Coalition

Amount of money raised: Please refer to N.C. Board of Elections website

Top three donors: Please refer to N.C. Board of Elections website

My approach will not change. I will work just as fervently to represent this new district.

I will advocate for an open and transparent process that will adhere to practical district drawing procedures that adhere to the N.C. Supreme Court’s Stephenson v. Bartlett ruling.

North Carolina will require continued monitoring of infection rates and providing support to medical facilities, research facilities and our education system.

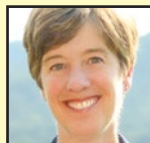
State programs and resources should be accessible to all races and should not favor one over another.

I will continue to advocate for an “all of the above” energy strategy that considers costs and reliability. I served on the conference committee for H589 that rewrote Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act regulations. In this bill, I was proud to have helped incorporate 6,880 megawatts of renewable energy into the North Carolina energy portfolio.

DISTRICT 49

JULIE MAYFIELD

BOB PENLAND

District
49


Democrat

Website:
MayfieldForNCSenate.com

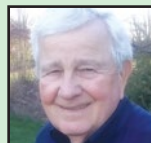
Occupation:
Co-director, MountainTrue;
Asheville City Council member

Previous candidacy or offices held: Asheville City Council

Key endorsements: Sierra Club, Equality NC, Lillian's List, N.C. State AFL-CIO, Sen. Terry Van Duyn

Amount of money raised: \$121,253

Top three donors: Mack Pearsall, \$7,900; Fred Stanback, \$5,400; Ron Edgerton, \$2,500



Republican

Website:
BobPenland.com

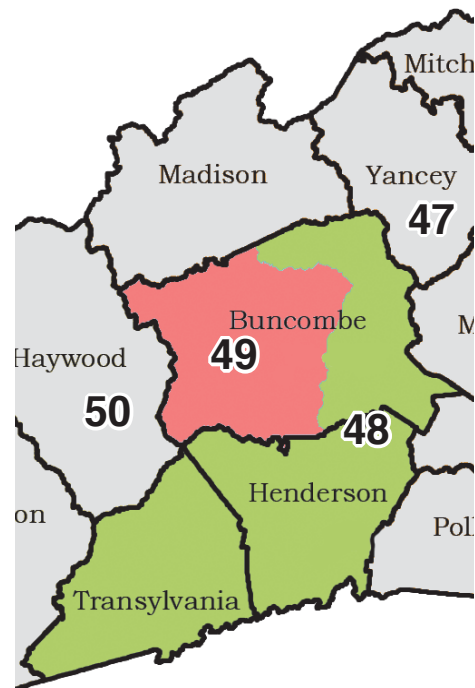
Occupation:
Retired military

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: NRA A rating, Grass Roots NC 97%

Amount of money raised: \$14,000

Top three donors: Fremont Brown, \$5,400; Meadows for Congress, \$1,000; Stan Shelley, \$1,000



THE QUESTIONS

What action by outgoing Sen. Terry Van Duyn have you most disagreed with?

I disagree with her withdrawal of legislation that would have tightened religious exemptions for vaccines. Thinking ahead to when we have a COVID-19 vaccine, everyone will need to be vaccinated, with few to no exceptions.

I have not researched her voting record, as I am not running against her.

Candidates elected this year will draw new electoral district lines for North Carolina based on the 2020 census. What would be the fairest process for drawing those district boundaries, and how would you advocate for that process?

I support appointing an independent commission that would draw lines based on neutral, nonpartisan criteria developed and adopted by the legislature. I would be happy to introduce or co-sponsor such legislation.

It is up to the legislative branch to redraw district lines. This is spelled out in the Constitution.

What further state-based COVID-19 relief efforts are appropriate, given the likely long-term damage of the pandemic on the local economy?

Resources for rent/mortgage assistance, extending and increasing unemployment benefits, extending the eviction moratorium for residences and businesses.

Open the businesses back up and let the economy recover.

What do you see as the state government's role in promoting racial equity?

Just as we are doing here in Asheville, the state should examine all structures and programs to ensure they promote equity and should make new investments in programs that support people and communities of color, particularly in education and housing. Police reform is also a key factor in promoting racial equity — improving use-of-force policies, requiring intervention when force is excessive, better training and more focus on race awareness and intrinsic racism.

I feel that each person should be treated equally and fairly but should have no special treatment from any government.

North Carolina is one of nine states with a legal restriction against third-party power sales. What legislation would you support to improve consumer access to renewable energy and fight climate change?

North Carolina should allow for third-party sales as part of a larger climate change agenda that will get the state to 100% renewable energy.

I have not researched this enough to give a reasonable view at this time.

GIVEN THE SPLIT: New North Carolina Senate districts keep all of Asheville in District 49; some of South Asheville was previously included in District 48.

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**North Carolina Association of Educators,
Asheville City Association of Educators,
and Buncombe County Association of Educators
Recommend...**

State House

SUSAN FISHER*

District 114

JOHN AGER*

District 115

BRIAN TURNER*

District 116

State Senate

BRIAN CASKEY

District 48

JULIE MAYFIELD

District 49

County Commission

BROWNIE NEWMAN

Chair

TERRI WELLS

District 1

JASMINE BEACH-FERRARA*

District 2

JOE BELCHER*

District 3

County Board of Education

LINDA TATSAPAUGH

Owen

ANN FRANKLIN*

North Buncombe

AMANDA SIMPSON

At Large

AMY CHURCHILL*

Roberson

Asheville City Council

RICH LEE

KIM RONEY

SAGE TURNER

**incumbent*



More Info at <https://ncaevotes2020.org/>

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N.C. House of Representatives Districts 114-116

The same trio of Democrats that has represented Buncombe County in the N.C. House of Representatives since 2015 is running for yet another term in 2020. Thanks to new district maps developed by the General Assembly last year, however, those usual suspects won't serve the same constituents should they be reelected.

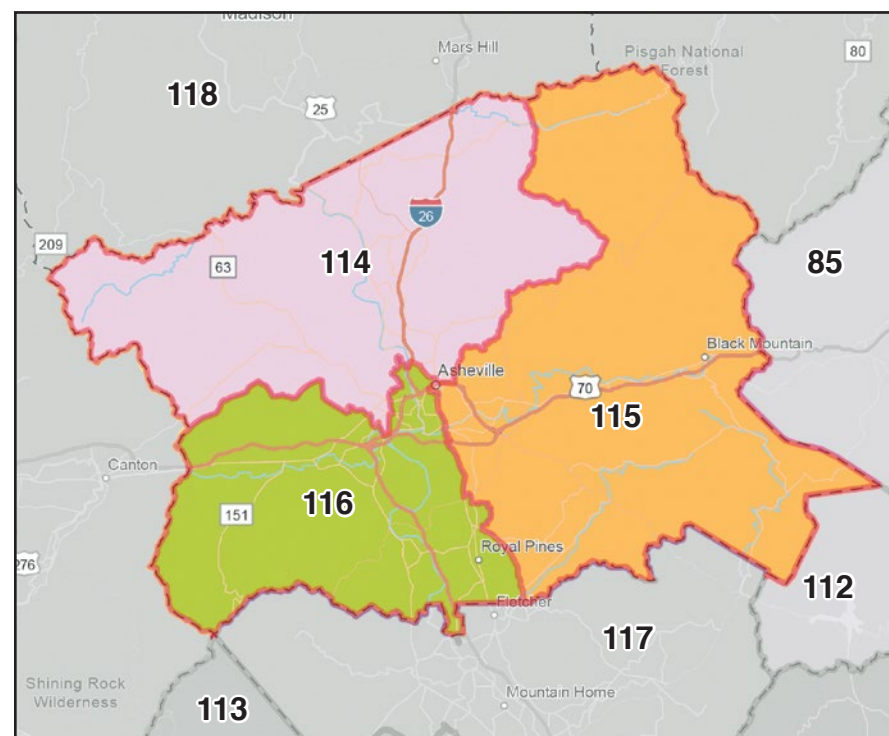
Eight-term incumbent **Susan Fisher**, whose District 114 previously centered on Asheville's urban core, would instead represent Buncombe County's northwest, including Leicester and Sandy Mush. She faces first-time Republican challenger **Tim Hyatt** and Libertarian **Lyndon John Smith**; in the 2018 election, Fisher won the most decisive victory of any local candidate, besting Republican **Kris Lindstam** with over 82% of the vote.

Fisher's new district dips just south enough to include her West Asheville residence, thereby avoiding an overlap with the new District 116

seat sought by **Brian Turner**. The Biltmore Forest representative's district now covers a chunk of Asheville and the county's southwestern communities, such as Candler and Bent Creek. Opposing him is Republican **Eric Burns**, whom Turner has previously blasted for holding in-person campaign events during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rounding out the county's representation is **John Ager**. His new District 115 loses Weaverville and much of the county's north while retaining Fairview and gaining constituents to the east and south. Republican **Mark Crawford**, who last served in the General Assembly in 2001-02 after being appointed to fill the term of former Rep. **Lanier Cansler**, is seeking Ager's place in the House after a failed 2018 bid to unseat Democratic Sen. **Terry Van Duyn** in District 49.

— Daniel Walton X



SLICES OF PIE: Buncombe County's redrawn North Carolina House districts for 2020 give each a more even mix of urban and rural areas.

District 114



SUSAN C. FISHER

**INCUMBENT
Democrat**



Website:
ElectSusanFisher.org
Occupation:
Legislator

Previous candidacy or offices held: Chair, Asheville City Board of Education

Key endorsements: N.C. Association of Educators, Sierra Club, Equality NC, National Association of Social Workers, Lillian's List

Amount of money raised: \$20,000

Top three donors: Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, \$5,400

TIM HYATT

Republican



Website:
None
Occupation:
Retired/Disability

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: None

Amount of money raised: \$150

Top three donors: Self, \$100; Mark Crawford, \$50

Hyatt did not provide a candidate photo.

LYNDON JOHN SMITH

Libertarian



Website:
None
Occupation:
COO/Self-employed

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: None

Amount of money raised: None

Top three donors: N/A

THE QUESTIONS

All of Buncombe County's recently redrawn House districts include a broader mix of urban and rural areas. How will these new boundaries influence your approach to representing your constituents?

My redrawn district is very similar to how my district was drawn at the time I was first elected in 2004. My approach will be to be as responsive to everyone in the entire county as I can be, which is the same way I have approached the job from the beginning.

It won't. I will represent all fairly.

Elected officials are bound to vote the preferences of our constituents. A more diverse constituency does present challenges, but the task remains the same: to listen, learn and best represent the interest of our community. Balanced consideration of the issues and a focus on enabling a free market will be the guiding principle of my service.

Candidates elected this year will draw new electoral district lines for North Carolina based on the 2020 census. What would be the fairest process for drawing those district boundaries, and how would you advocate for that process?

I co-sponsored an early bipartisan bill, which passed the House and failed in the Senate, calling for a nonpartisan redistricting commission. That is the process that I continue to support. I look forward to co-sponsoring a similar bill in the next biennium of the N.C. House.

I would advocate for the future boundaries based on the needs indicated in the census and from input from the constituents instead of using these boundaries to gain votes.

District lines should be drawn by a nonpartisan independent commission with 100% transparency and accountability. Members of the commission should be tasked to draw districts based on clear criteria and be devoid of all partisan and racial considerations. Contiguous, rational borders for districts will induce trust and reinforce a diverse vested community of voters. Equally as important is to keep money out of politics, which is why I do not accept campaign contributions.

What further state-based COVID-19 relief efforts are appropriate, given the likely long-term damage of the pandemic on the local economy?

More aid to front-line workers in the form of pay, increased broadband accessibility, aid to small businesses in the form of grants similar to what Buncombe County and the city of Asheville have done but on a larger scale and increased resources/pay to schools and school personnel, as well as more aid to county and municipal governments.

Truth, not fear, from the governor to the media. People need to be able to return to their jobs; children need to be able to return to school; churches need to be able to return to regular services. It's time to move forward.

The role of the state throughout the pandemic should be to provide accurate information and guidance and to assist in and facilitate providing medical supplies and services to those in need. The sad reality is the state can't fairly identify and allocate resources to individual businesses that have been impacted. The state can provide advisory services and training to support recovery efforts through targeted university extension programs accessible to all our farmers and business owners.

What do you see as the state government's role in promoting racial equity?

We should be looking at ways to remove the vestiges of institutional racism within government and the agencies it oversees, e.g., removal of statues and painful reminders of an oppressive time in our history. We should look to help support cities and counties in their work with regard to racism and racial equity, remove barriers to voting for all people and further examine our criminal justice system to rid that area of government of institutional racism.

Racial equity begins with each individual.

The Declaration of Independence states that we are all created equal. The Constitution is amended to ensure that every citizen has the same opportunities and is treated equally under law. Socioeconomic determinism and racial inequality have old and deep roots, and it is the government's duty to remove systemic inequities. It is critical as well to hold all government functions, services and officials accountable for implementation of this fundamental standard.

North Carolina is one of nine states with a legal restriction against third-party power sales. What legislation would you support to improve consumer access to renewable energy and fight climate change?

Over the past decade, the current leadership has successfully taken North Carolina from its position as one of the top producers of solar energy in favor of traditional power sources. We need to revive incentives for renewable energy companies and individuals to promote the creation and installation of alternative energy sources in our state. I look forward to continuing this effort with new, more forward-thinking leadership in the state House.

Any legislation that includes a plan to make all energy a clean and reliable source of usable energy.

It goes against the spirit of the Constitution to limit innovation and prevent citizens from choosing how they receive services. A third-party power sales ban is wrong. Legislation removing barriers to entry for innovative solutions to complex problems is what's needed. Removing subsidies and unfair contractual advantages for large power companies, requiring them to repair the damage to our environment — both past and ongoing — would level the playing field for eco-friendly companies to flourish.

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N.C. House of Representatives Continued

Districts 115-116



THE QUESTIONS

All of Buncombe County's recently redrawn House districts include a broader mix of urban and rural areas. How will these new boundaries influence your approach to representing your constituents?

Candidates elected this year will draw new electoral district lines for North Carolina based on the 2020 census. What would be the fairest process for drawing those district boundaries, and how would you advocate for that process?

What further state-based COVID-19 relief efforts are appropriate, given the likely long-term damage of the pandemic on the local economy?

What do you see as the state government's role in promoting racial equity?

North Carolina is one of nine states with a legal restriction against third-party power sales. What legislation would you support to improve consumer access to renewable energy and fight climate change?

2020 GENERAL ELECTION VOTER GUIDE

DISTRICT 115

JOHN AGER

INCUMBENT
Democrat



Website:
ElectJohnAger.org
Occupation:
Farmer

Previous candidacy or offices held: N.C. House District 115

Key endorsements: N.C. Association of Nurse Anesthetists, Police Benevolent Society (PBA), Sierra Club, NC Association of Educators (NCAE), State Employee Association of NC (SEANC)

Amount of money raised: \$70,000

Top three donors: Fred Stanback, \$5,400; Ron Edgerton, \$5,200; Rich Wasch, \$2,500

MARK CRAWFORD

Republican



Website:
None
Occupation:
Teacher

Previous candidacy or offices held: Past member, N.C. House of Representatives

Key endorsements: Grass Roots North Carolina, N.C. Right To Life, and past endorsements of the Fraternal Order of Police, Police Benevolent Association, and State Employee Association of North Carolina

Amount of money raised: \$30,000

Top three donors: J. L. Kirk, \$500; M.A. Durand, \$200; Self, \$200

My redrawn District 115 does include more suburban and urban voters than before, but I have always represented my district as if it were Buncombe County as a whole. As a buy-local farm (Hickory Nut Gap), our sales go to restaurants and retail outlets in Asheville. Most of our outlying workers drive into urban areas for employment. Rather than emphasize the urban/rural divide in North Carolina, I believe in trying to bridge those divisions to the economic and cultural benefit of everyone.

I have been appalled by the manipulation that has gone on in drawing political boundaries in North Carolina. If our elections cannot be free and fair, how can we expect our government to be free and fair? I would be in favor of introducing an End the Gerrymander bill on day one of our 2021 long session. That bill would allow for the least possible involvement by the N.C. General Assembly. The League of Women Voters has come up with the parameters for the best outcome.

The glaring failure has been our unemployment insurance system. In 2013, UI was changed to become the stingiest among all the states, both in money paid and duration of benefits. We will need to look at help for local governments as their budgets are strained. The Department of Transportation will need financial help as gas tax revenues have fallen. And I would like to see low-interest loans available to small businesses teetering on bankruptcy.

Our racial attitudes are primarily matters of the heart that we all need to confront. That being said, the NCGA should take the leadership in promoting equity among all of our citizens. State hiring practices should be colorblind. We need to build on the success of our HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities). The NCGA needs to partner with minority churches to find ways to promote public safety and deliver social services. And we need a higher minimum wage and Medicaid expansion.

Balancing reliable power, the Duke electric monopoly and renewable energy third-party sales is a challenge for the legislative process. North Carolina had robust incentives to promote solar installations, resulting in a state No. 2 in the U.S. for solar power generation. We have lost much of that momentum. Easing restrictions on third-party sales will be a start, and we should actually take a look at the pros and cons of maintaining Duke's monopoly. The climate crisis needs to inform much of our work in 2021.

I have always sought to represent my constituents 100% equally, no matter where they live, who they are or their personal politics. I state this based on my past service in the N.C. House of Representatives and use this as the example on which I stand.

In 2001, when I was serving in the N.C. House of Representatives, when then-Rep. Larry Justus introduced one redistricting plan for the N.C. House, I was the ONLY representative, on either side of the aisle, to stand up and call for totally impartial drawing of districts. The former Buncombe legislative districts redrawn last year are now just as gerrymandered as they were previously, but for different reasons: the principles of "overvoting," lack of minority party representation, etc.

I believe the greatest and most useful state-based COVID-19 relief efforts would be in the form of enhanced and greater numbers and speed of tests, increasing the availability of any resources which actually have been proved to assist in recovery (e.g., blood plasma with antibodies, etc.), provision of personal protection gear and ongoing economic assistance wherever possible.

From our Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Our state government's role is simply to treat all persons equally and protect all citizens' lives, liberties and their abilities to conduct their respective pursuits of happiness.

I am proud that my father, long before it was popular to do so, installed solar heating on our home back in the late 1970s. I am a supporter of everyone's right to generate power from their own resources, so I envision generation of power as a product, like any other product in our economy, and it should be able to be marketed/traded/exchanged like any other commodity or commercial product. So, I support these activities pursuing renewable energy and conservation.

ERIC BURNS

Republican

Website:
None

Occupation:
N/A

Previous candidacy or offices held:
None

Key endorsements: None

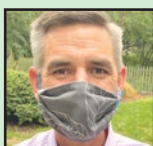
Amount of money raised: N/A

Top three donors: N/A

Burns did not provide a candidate photo.

BRIAN TURNER

INCUMBENT Democrat



Website:
TurnerForNCHouse.com

Occupation:
Commercial Realtor

Previous candidacy or offices held: Currently serving third term representing House District 116

Key endorsements: Sierra Club, Planned Parenthood, State Employee Association of North Carolina, Police Benevolent Association, Equality NC

Amount of money raised: \$100,000

Top three donors: Dean Debnam, \$5,400; Fred Stanback, \$5,400; Mack Pearsall, \$5,400

Not much will change with my approach to representing the community. I will continue to hold town halls when possible and actively listen to the constituents I represent so that I can make the best decisions possible when I'm in Raleigh. Many of the challenges we face, such as better funding for public education, climate change, food insecurity and access to broadband, aren't rural or urban issues; they are issues that affect all of us.

Every term that I have served in the minority, I have supported independent redistricting. Last year, I was the primary sponsor of bipartisan House Bill 69, which calls for independent and nonpartisan redistricting. If I am in the majority next year, I will still believe that independent redistricting is critical to a functioning democracy and politicians should never be in charge of drawing their own maps.

First of all, every North Carolinian should have access to affordable and reliable broadband. In a COVID-19 world, remote learning and working from home are realities, not luxuries, and we need to make sure there is an even playing field. Secondly, North Carolina has one of the most meager unemployment benefit systems in the country. The Republican majority slashed benefits from a \$535 weekly maximum for 26 weeks to a \$350 weekly maximum for 12 weeks. Third, we need to expand Medicaid immediately.

We need to recognize that many of our state and local laws, policies and programs have racial bias built into them. North Carolina should develop a tool to audit our policies and programs for bias. In auditing our own policies, we could ensure we are rooting out bias written into everything from how we fund education and home financing programs to purchasing and contracting. We could provide this tool to local government bodies to assess and remove bias written into their own policies and programs.

We are repeatedly told that free market competition benefits the consumer. If that is true, there should be no objection to third-party sales of electricity. I think giving people choices in how and from what sources they receive their power could support the adoption of renewable energy. This is why I co-sponsored House Bill 245, which would allow for third-party sales of electricity in North Carolina.

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Buncombe County Board of Commissioners

The last time Democrats held complete control of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners was 2012, when state legislation introduced by then-Rep. **Tim Moffitt**, R-Buncombe, broke the county into districts and led to the election of three Republicans. New district lines now in play for the 2020 election won't completely reverse that change, but they're likely to come close.

Moffitt's law required board districts to follow the same boundaries as those of Buncombe's state House seats. Those lines, redrawn last year, give each district a substantial slice of heavily Democratic Asheville. Previously, all Asheville voters were packed into District 1, giving Republicans proportionally greater say in more rural Districts 2 and 3. When the entire county is considered, registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by nearly 30,000.

Republican incumbents **Joe Belcher** and **Anthony Penland** thus find themselves in demographically challenging contests. Penland, who was appointed in March to fill the District 2 vacancy left by the late Commissioner **Mike Fryar**, faces Democratic incumbent **Jasmine Beach-Ferrara**, who had previously represented District 1. Fryar won his 2016 race against Democrat **Nancy Nehls Nelson** under the more favorable old lines by slightly more than 300 votes.

Belcher's District 3 opponent is Democrat **Parker Sloan**, a first-time candidate with the endorsement of local party figures such as Sheriff **Quentin Miller** and Register of Deeds **Drew Reisinger**. Sloan bested **Donna Ensley** by over 1,400 votes in the March Democratic primary; Ensley herself had previously proven a strong candidate in the old District 3, losing to incumbent Republican **Robert Pressley** by fewer than 700 votes in 2018.

Pressley's seat remains secure through 2022, so at least one Republican will stay on the board if Belcher and Penland are ousted. But Pressley is also taking a shot at the chair position held by Democrat **Brownie Newman**. His chances may be suggested by the 2018 countywide election for sheriff, in which Miller trounced Republican **Shad Higgins** with over 61% of the vote.

The only race not featuring an incumbent is for District 1. Political newcomer **Terri Wells**, a farmer from Sandy Mush, represents the Democratic side of the ballot and is opposed by Republican business owner **Glenda Weinert**. Weinert previously ran in 2018 against Democrat **Amanda Edwards** to represent District 2, losing by over 4,200 votes.

— Daniel Walton X

THE QUESTIONS

How will you work as the chair of a board with significant ideological diversity to conduct county business while ensuring all viewpoints are respected?

As commission chair for the past four years, I have managed our meetings in a manner that allows all commissioners' voices to be heard and for a full and open discussion of the issues. One result of this is that our meetings are longer, but it is worth it to ensure commissioners can get their questions answered and share their perspectives.

What approaches will you take to keep Buncombe County county fiscally healthy amid the COVID-19 recession?

Buncombe County has had the lowest rates of COVID-19 of any metropolitan county in North Carolina. We were the first county to declare a public health emergency and to cancel nonessential gatherings. These early actions helped keep cases lower. Of the 100 counties in the state, we were the second to require masks and face coverings for indoor environments. This has also helped reduce COVID-19 transmission. All Republican commissioners voted against the face mask policy.

How should Buncombe County direct the Sheriff's Office in response to community discussions around defunding or reimaging the police?

We are fortunate to have Quentin Miller as sheriff in our county, a progressive person and the first African American elected to this role. He has enacted policies to require officers to intervene if they see inappropriate or dangerous behavior from fellow officers. We are working now to reform the 911 system to create the capacity to dispatch mental health and social workers for calls where these staff would be better to respond than a traditional officer with a gun.

Aside from supporting renewable energy, what specific steps should the county take to manage the impacts of climate change?

Scaling up deployment of renewable energy is the most important action to address the climate crisis. We must close the existing power plants that burn coal and gas and replace them with renewables (coupled with storage) as soon as possible. Doing this within the next two decades requires us to increase renewable deployment about 10 times over current rates. We also need to electrify our vehicle fleets, improve community transit and locate future growth in transit- and pedestrian-friendly areas.

What one board decision in the past year would you have handled differently if it had been left entirely up to you?

I opposed the additional funding to expand the drug interdiction team at the sheriff's department, but we lost that vote on a 5-2 vote. If it were up to me, I would have redirected those funds toward addressing chronic homelessness.

BROWNIE NEWMAN

INCUMBENT

Democrat



Website:
BrownieNewman.com

Occupation:
Solar energy sector

Previous candidacy or offices held: Elected to Buncombe County Board of Commissioners District 1 in 2012. Elected Commission Chair in 2016. Previously served two terms on Asheville City Council.

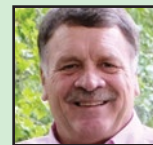
Key endorsements: Equality NC, N.C. Sierra Club, Buncombe County Education Association, Asheville City Association of Educators

Amount of money raised: \$22,000

Top three donors: Mack Pearsall, \$3,000; Ken Brame, \$1,000; Barry Evans, \$1,000

ROBERT PRESSLEY

Republican



Website:
RobertPressley.net

Occupation:
Retired

Previous candidacy or offices held: Current Buncombe County commissioner serving second term

Key endorsements: The citizens of Buncombe County

Amount of money raised: \$33,000

Top three donors: Tom Thrash, \$2,500; Mike Summey, \$2,000; Toby Cole, \$2,000

As chair of the board, it would be my obligation to represent the entirety of Buncombe County. I would do that with the best interests of everyone involved. Voting would be the result of working together with fellow commissioners, with decisions made in the chamber and not behind closed doors.

One of the exciting results of recovery will be the increases in our sales tax from consumer confidence. Article 39 (a portion of our sales tax) goes to fund our school capital projects. So I will do what I can to safely assist our small businesses and families in Buncombe County to improve their fiscal and financial well being.

Unlike my opponent, I recently voted to fund a matching federal grant that assisted the sheriff's office in helping reduce the jail population. As the board chair, I would be concerned about the direction of Asheville City Council and Asheville Police Department defunding discussions. The safety of ALL citizens of every community in Buncombe County would be my priority, and I would fund accordingly.

I would use my influence to work with commissioners and leaders at the state and national level to protect Buncombe County and its beauty.

I would have abstained from voting for any politically motivated resolution.

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DISTRICT 1

GLENDA WEINERT

**Republican**

Website:
GlendaPWeinert.com
Occupation:
Business owner

Previous candidacy or offices held:
Candidate for Buncombe County commissioner

Key endorsements: Commissioner Robert Pressley

Amount of money raised: \$30,000

Top three donors: D&T Luck

TERRI WELLS

**Democrat**

Website:
TerriWellsForCommissioner.com

Occupation:
Director of community and agricultural programs, WNC Communities

Previous candidacy or offices held: First-time candidate

Key endorsements: Buncombe County Association of Educators, Asheville City Association of Educators, WNC Sierra Club, Equality NC, and farmers across Buncombe County

Amount of money raised: \$40,889, with more than 180 people contributing

Top three donors: Patricia Campbell, \$2,050; Bernard Arghiere, \$2,000; Kevin Jones, \$1,200

Buncombe County Board of Commissioners

Continued

District 1



THE QUESTIONS

All of Buncombe County's recently redrawn commission districts include a broader mix of urban and rural areas. How will these new boundaries influence your approach to representing your constituents?

It is important as a commissioner to represent all constituents. Regardless of the boundaries, all members of our district must be fairly represented. The boundaries will not change how I represent anyone that lives in my district.

I have a record of working respectfully with diverse groups of people to get goals accomplished. My deep roots in our rural farming community, as well as my experience working with the Asheville City Schools Foundation, will serve me well in bringing people together to work toward a broad vision that includes strong schools, economic opportunity, improved transportation, high-quality broadband internet, affordable housing, recreational opportunities and conservation of our natural resources.

What approaches will you take to keep Buncombe County county fiscally healthy amid the COVID-19 recession?

I will work to open our county safely so that all businesses can work to be restored. While it is critical to be safe, it is critical to reopen our county. We must help our business community start to regain its stability.

I will use my oversight and budget management experience to ensure that we provide the funding to keep all necessary county services operating with efficiency and effectiveness. As commissioner, I will ensure that we always review each budget with a strategic lens to assess how best to invest county funds in our community to improve the lives of our residents while maintaining a strong fiscal foundation that will allow us to maintain solid services even through challenging times.

How should Buncombe County direct the Sheriff's Office in response to community discussions around defunding or reimagining the police?

I believe it is critical to defend the police, not defund them. Training is critical; we should focus on more resources for police, not less. The safety and well-being of our constituents is our responsibility.

By a wide margin, people throughout Buncombe County elected Sheriff Miller to provide professional oversight and public safety. As commissioner, I will work with Sheriff Miller to ensure that our sheriff's office is providing equitable, just and professional services to protect and serve everyone. We must include the community in these important conversations about policing. It is incumbent upon all of us to work together to ensure that all of our citizens feel safe and supported.

Aside from supporting renewable energy, what specific steps should the county take to manage the impacts of climate change?

County commissioners should always take into consideration anything that impacts our community and the resources it requires to meet those demands.

I will ensure that we proactively work as a community to mitigate the impacts of climate change. We must have a broad vision. We can implement carbon sequestration by conserving large intact forests and by using soil conservation practices. Expanding broadband will reduce vehicle miles traveled and emissions, in addition to many other benefits. As a commissioner, I will also push to implement the best management practices for transportation and planning to support our community's sustainability.

What one board decision in the past year would you have handled differently if it had been left entirely up to you?

We need a commission that is open and transparent. I've observed a tremendous number of decisions being made before they come to the floor. I also believe we need to allow more public discussions.

It is clear to me that the Waste Pro contract and services do not provide the necessary benefits to our county residents. I would have carefully assessed the contract and raised specific questions. There are multiple valid reasons that residents are not satisfied with the service. As someone who considers various perspectives and tries to think of unintended consequences, I realize that a one-size-fits-all approach to waste management across Buncombe County is unlikely to meet our varied needs.

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Brian is a successful small business owner; he and his wife own a tutoring company in South Asheville. As the first Democrat ever elected in Mills River, Brian is a believer in working across the aisle. He was elected to serve on the Mills River Town Council as Mayor Pro Tem by Republican council members last December. Brian and his family attend Grace Mills River.

A Pro-Business Democrat

- Brian reduced property taxes and increased services
- Brian created high paying jobs (Amazon, Gaia Herbs)
- Brian has helped create a business-friendly environment

A Leader Who Believes in the Future

- Solar panels have saved Mills River 77% on electric bills
- Brian has saved hundreds of thousands in taxpayer dollars
- Brian believes we should invest in education, parks, trails, and also in healthcare. Medicaid expansion costs us nothing and will save 1,000 lives per year. Let's take that deal.

A Man Who Pays His Own Way

- Brian believes in fiscal responsibility
- Brian has run a grassroots campaign. He will represent YOU in Raleigh, without owing favors to PACs or corporations

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BRIAN CASKEY
FOR NC SENATE

Brian's opponent in the District 48 race, Chuck Edwards, grabbed almost \$2 million in PPP bailout money for his fast food joints, and got his money the first week. Meanwhile, businesses like Brian's and so many others suffered. Brian and his wife went without pay for months while making sure that their employees were paid. Ask the question...who passes the test of leadership?



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DISTRICT 2		
Buncombe County Board of Commissioners		
Continued		
Districts 2-3		
		
THE QUESTIONS		
<p>All of Buncombe County's recently redrawn commission districts include a broader mix of urban and rural areas. How will these new boundaries influence your approach to representing your constituents?</p>	<p>JASMINE BEACH-FERRARA Incumbent (District 1) Democrat Website: JasmineForBuncombe.org Occupation: Executive director, Campaign for Southern Equality</p> <p>Previous candidacy or offices held: Buncombe County commissioner</p> <p>Key endorsements: WNC Labor Council, Buncombe County Association of Educators, Asheville City Association of Educators, Sierra Club, Equality NC</p> <p>Amount of money raised: Approximately \$28,000</p> <p>Top three donors: Bernard Arghiere, \$2,000; Brownie Newman, \$1,500; Jeffrey Cooper, \$1,000</p>	<p>ANTHONY PENLAND INCUMBENT Republican Website: AnthonyForDistrict2.org Occupation: Fire chief</p> <p>Previous candidacy or offices held: Buncombe County commissioner</p> <p>Key endorsements: Woodfin Mayor Jerry VeHaun, Southern States Police Benevolent Association</p> <p>Amount of money raised: \$7,664.19</p> <p>Top three donors: Edward Harwood, \$1,000; George Morosani, \$1,000; Jerry VeHaun, \$500</p>
	<p>It's an honor to listen to the stories of Buncombe County residents from across District 2. My approach to representing constituents will remain consistent—it starts by listening closely, especially to impacted communities; researching best practices on policy issues; and working with key stakeholders to develop local solutions that work for people in our community.</p>	<p>The new boundaries will not have any influence in how I represent a county citizen. Each citizen will be represented to the best of my ability no matter their location throughout Buncombe County.</p>
<p>What approaches will you take to keep Buncombe County county fiscally healthy amid the COVID-19 recession?</p>	<p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to vigilantly remain focused on saving lives, safely reopening and helping our community be as resilient as possible during this protracted crisis. Specific measures to keep our county fiscally healthy include leveraging state and federal aid programs and philanthropic funding to support local response efforts and reassessing planned growth in key strategies to assess the most effective and responsible ways to proceed.</p>	<p>A CNBC August 2020 news article is reporting data that begs the question are we in a recession. The housing market is booming, almost bubbling, with a near-record stock market and robust retail sales. But we also know that individuals and businesses are struggling. My approach will be, no matter the circumstances, to make sure we are good stewards of our citizens' money and to make sure that our decision-making keeps the county financially healthy.</p>
<p>How should Buncombe County direct the Sheriff's Office in response to community discussions around defunding or reimagining the police?</p>	<p>Buncombe County should work closely with community members — particularly impacted communities — and BCSO leadership to reimagine how public safety services function in our community. I support developing a model of mobile mental health crisis services that are part of 911 response protocols, sustaining the reduced jail population and reinvesting the resulting savings in community programs and taking substantive action to eliminate racial disparities in our local criminal justice system.</p>	<p>I am and will be a big supporter of our law enforcement community. Of all the important topics in our community, we must be reminded that safety and security are part of a person's basic needs and is one of the most important roles of government. Public safety will be supported by me but will also be held accountable</p>
<p>Aside from supporting renewable energy, what specific steps should the county take to manage the impacts of climate change?</p>	<p>I support increasingly robust efforts to manage the impacts of climate change, including expanding a current project to install solar panels on public infrastructure, adopting resilient community practices related to extreme weather events and migration, collaborating with the city of Asheville to increase access to and use of public transportation and supporting new jobs in the green economy.</p>	<p>Advertisers and marketers have learned that labeling a product "environmentally friendly" sells. I want to examine every possibility so that we may have a positive impact on protecting our environment while also remaining cost effective. Powering our county buildings should bring a cost savings to our citizens, not a burden. My platform of "Focus on our Future" is inclusive of applying common-sense protection to our environment.</p>
<p>What one board decision in the past year would you have handled differently if it had been left entirely up to you?</p>	<p>I don't think any decision should be left entirely up to a single county commissioner.</p>	<p>The inclusion of all commissioners in the discussion phase of resolution preparation so that questions can be asked prior to the meeting where the resolution will be voted on. There are times when we are just not going to agree on the issues, but there should not be a time when we do not reach out to others.</p>

DISTRICT 3

JOE BELCHER

INCUMBENT

Republican

Website:
BelcherForCommissioner.com

Occupation:
Retired

Previous candidacy or offices held:
Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
District 3 for 8 years

Key endorsements: Asheville City Association
of Educators, Buncombe County Association
of Educators, N.C. Manufactured and Modular
Home Builders Association

Amount of money raised: \$7,500

Top three donors: On file at the Board of
Elections.

As an 8-year incumbent I serve the entire county, so I will
continue to do so.

Continue to support our small businesses and get
families back to work. Buncombe County received a large
share of sales tax, and part of it is used for school capital
needs, so it is important to safely move back to consumer
confidence countywide. I expect as our numbers improve
we will rebound quickly. That is the mountain culture:
come together and move forward.

I will continue to practically support the Buncombe
County Sheriff's Office. As a commissioner, my job is to
fund the office; it is the sheriff's responsibility to run that
office. I think many entry-level pay positions should even
be increased to retain and attract the best people. I have
voted to fund an extensive training facility for all our first
responders and will continue to do so.

I voted for the two largest solar investments in Buncombe
County. One is a joint venture with Duke Power on the
old landfill, and the most recent is to install solar on 47
Buncombe County buildings and schools. I believe we all
should be good stewards of God's creation, and I intend
to support policy that mirrors that view.

We voted to include \$200,000 to begin the "One
Buncombe Fund" for COVID-19 relief. If it was up to
me, I would have funded more (up to \$1 million) for
job recovery and small business protection. Because
the need was so great in Buncombe County, I did work
with the legislature and local hotel association to fund
\$5 million in the Buncombe County Jobs Recovery Act,
which benefited 360 tourism-related businesses and put
4,800 people back to work safely.

PARKER SLOAN

Democrat

Website:
ElectParkerSloan.com

Occupation:
Senior community and
economic development
manager, Cypress Creek Renewables

Previous candidacy or offices held:
Buncombe County Planning Board member,
Buncombe County Democratic Party vice chair

Key endorsements: Sheriff Quentin Miller,
Register of Deeds Drew Reisinger, Retired
Asheville Housing Authority Director Gene Bell,
Sierra Club, Equality NC

Amount of money raised: \$26,000

Top three donors: Mack Pearsall, \$2,500;
Bernard Arghiere, \$2,000; Brownie Newman,
\$1,500

Buncombe County is a place that we share — we're all
in this together. We're blessed with natural beauty and
caring people. I am committed to keeping it that way while
expanding equity and fighting climate change. I have the
skills and experience to lead our commission to adopt the
professional planning mindset that we need in order to
manage growth and provide for our residents. Everyone
deserves access to high-quality housing, education, food
resources, recreation, jobs and transportation options.

Promoting recognition that working together to contain
the virus is key to our economic and physical health.
Monitoring our budget and reassessing spending to
ensure we provide essential services. Continuing
advocacy for proven preventative measures (masking
and the 3 Ws), investment from Dogwood Health Trust
and federal assistance for virus containment and day-
to-day essentials for our residents. Compassionate,
equitable approach to addressing disparities made worse
by the pandemic and federal failures.

Work with the community and the sheriff's office to get
clear on what we want from officers, what services we
want them to provide, at what standards, and what
services others can provide. LEOs are public servants
who work for and within our community. I support the
CAHOOTS model for dispatching medical professionals
to provide safe, effective response to nonviolent
substance abuse and mental health emergencies. I look
forward to input from our sheriff, who has proposed a
"police as guardians" model.

I'll get our county to 100% renewable energy by 2024
(not 2030) and leverage my solar policy and development
experience and our county's successful solar requests
for proposals to decarbonize our community before
2042. Expand broadband, implement community-based
planning and multimodal design — all of which reduce
vehicle miles traveled and emissions and improve equity.
Lack of planning expertise on the commission has hurt
us. We've missed opportunities to mitigate climate
change and protect our waterways.

I'd have jump-started the doubling of affordable housing
in our county by proposing an Inclusionary Zoning
Ordinance for review by the county's Affordable Housing
Committee, and then lobbied fellow commissioners
to adopt it. The policy would require the creation of
affordable housing for low- and moderate-income
households by requiring developers to construct a
percentage of units to be sold or rented below market
prices. It's a fair, effective policy that somehow isn't on
the commissioners' radar.

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your name takes you
to a page with sample
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Buncombe County Board of Education

In a normal year, the Buncombe County Board of Education would spend its meetings considering school budget requests and policies for student behavior. But members have instead found themselves thrust into the contentious debate surrounding how schools should approach their duties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

That issue has sharply divided the board in recent months. On July 28, plans for some students to start the year with in-person instruction passed 4-3; after a 5-2 vote on Sept. 10 to bring all pupils back to the classroom, the board changed course on Sept. 17, voting 4-3 to stick with virtual high school through at least the end of the fall semester. Another 4-3 vote on Oct. 1 directed high schoolers to return two days per week starting Monday, Oct. 19.

Voters will have a chance to shift the nonpartisan board's approach to school reopening and other issues in November, with two seats up for election. In the Owen District, incumbent **Peggy Buchanan**, who cast the deciding vote in the Oct. 1 decision, faces challengers **Everett D. Pittillo**, a business manager, and **Linda Tatsapaugh**, a summer camp administrator. (Although board positions are assigned to represent different districts, all county citizens vote for all seats.)

At-large member **Donna Pate**, who also voted for in-person instruction, is not seeking another term on the board. Running to fill her spot are two former teachers: **Amanda Simpkins** and **Mark Watman**.

— Daniel Walton X

AMANDA SIMPKINS



Democrat
(Personal voter registration)

Website:
Facebook.com/
ElectAmandaSimpkins

Occupation:
Currently a real estate agent, formerly a high school mathematics educator

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: Buncombe County Association of Educators, Asheville City Association of Educators, Buncombe County Board of Education at-large member Donna Pate

Amount of money raised: None

Top three donors: N/A

MARK WATMAN



Unaffiliated
(Personal voter registration)

Website:
ElectWatman.com

Occupation:
Buncombe County substitute

teacher

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: This is a nonpartisan race. All the students, teachers and staff at the schools where I have worked

Amount of money raised: None

Top three donors: Self, \$700

THE QUESTIONS

What aspect of Buncombe County Schools most needs improvement, and how will you address that need?

We need to continue to work toward equity in our district. The truth is that schools shouldn't be being funded solely based on enrollment. Many of our schools and districts have higher needs than others. This needs to be taken more seriously to bridge the gap across Buncombe County.

The school's current crisis plan only covers external threats. There is no organized plan or policy to deal with an internal crisis due to social, psychological or behavioral events that cause a major disruption of the school day. The source of this disruption could be from an event originating inside or outside of the school. This would involve counseling and support for students and staff at the beginning, during and potentially after school. I would assist in amending the crisis plan.

How can Buncombe County best prepare for further disruption to schooling due to COVID-19 or other challenges?

We need to continue to follow the data and make data-based decisions with regard to returning to the classroom. Our local health department needs to be weighing in. Plans for many different scenarios need to be made.

Fortunately, the county's numbers are dropping. We may be able to go to an every-other-day A/B schedule, combined with remote learning, to get students closer to daily attendance. If it turns out that many of our students have fallen significantly behind with their academic progress, we may have to consider an alternative to the current school calendar to get them caught up.

What priorities will you set in future education budget requests to a county with reduced revenues due to the COVID-19 recession?

My priorities are funding for equity across the county and better funding our BCS teachers and staff so that we can retain our top-tier employees and stop losing them to other districts and states.

As we emerge from the effects of COVID-19, there will be some short-term shortfalls. There are several possibilities to fund these deficits, and none of them are popular. They will evoke a strong reaction from taxpayers. Things like deficit borrowing, selling short-term bonds, briefly cutting back on some academic and extracurricular programs and possibly a time-limited raise in taxes. We also need to seek alternative sources of revenue, including available grants.

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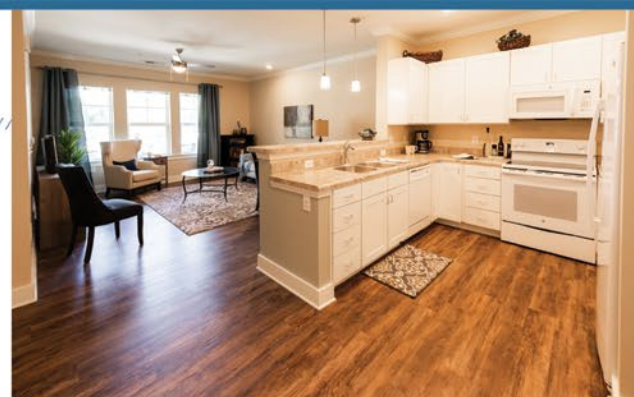
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OWEN DISTRICT

MARGARET (PEGGY) BUCHANAN

INCUMBENT

Democrat

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
None

Occupation:
Retired registered nurse and
clergy

Previous candidacy or offices held: Currently
on Buncombe County Board of Education

Key endorsements: None

Amount of money raised: None

Top three donors: N/A

EVERETT D. PITTILLO

Republican

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
ElectEverettDPittillo.com

Occupation:
Business manager

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: None

Amount of money raised: \$20

Top three donors: N/A

LINDA TATSAPAUGH

Democrat

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
LindaForSchoolBoard.com

Occupation:
Summer camp administrator

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: Buncombe County
Association of Educators, Julie Mayfield, Jan
Blunt

Amount of money raised: \$1,756

Top three donors: Victoria Rankins, \$200; Julie
Mayfield, \$100; Greg Brisendine, \$100

Do I need
to bring my
ID?

- Voters will not be required to show photo identification for the 2020 elections, according to the N.C. State Board of Elections. State and federal courts have temporarily blocked the state's photo ID requirement, passed by a statewide referendum in 2018, from taking effect this election cycle.
- However, eligible voters registering to vote at a one-stop voting site must provide one of the following: a North Carolina driver's license or an identity card from the N.C. Department of Motor Vehicles; a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck or utility bill showing the voter's name and address; a student photo ID plus a school document showing the student's address; or any document from a government agency showing the voter's name and address.
- Having trouble? Call the N.C. State Board of Elections at 919-715-0135, the Buncombe County Board of Elections at 828-250-4200, or 866-OUR-VOTE, a nonpartisan election support hotline by the nonprofit Election Protection.

Currently, the biggest issue is getting all students back to school. While this is of prime importance, the safety of the students is first and foremost. I will address that need by listening to all concerned parties, administration, teachers, students and their families and voting on return to school considering all.

Most schools within the county are becoming outdated due to age. Because of their age, this has also caused overcrowding with the increase of people having moved to our area. Our county is in need of a full-time grant writer to supply funding from sources other than our local government. This will generate necessary revenue to update and build more innovative locations.

Schools need more resources to meet the complex needs of students so that they are ready to learn. This includes increased social, emotional and behavioral supports, social workers, counselors and nurses. I will promote inclusion of funds for these in the budget and support strengthened and expanded community partnerships as well.

I am proud of the way the schools responded to the current crisis. I will support all efforts to achieve the best outcomes for our students. I feel we were prepared for our initial response and have learned to use resources to their best advantage.

First and foremost, our board needs to be more transparent. It seems these decisions are being made without first acknowledging staff and parent concerns. Next, the virtual program needs to be implemented with better training and devices for staff and families. Other school districts have long used virtual learning for snow days, giving them a slight edge over our county.

To successfully bring students back into schools, we need adequate health and safety supplies and consistent adherence to sound safety policies. For now, families need the continued option to learn remotely, and we must ensure they have internet access. The school system should continue to develop quality remote learning tools so that, when it is needed, students continue to learn at a high level. At the same time, we need comprehensive plans for safely reopening fully as soon as possible.

1. Recruitment and retention of teachers. 2. Improve the safety of our schools. 3. Investigate why students are lost to charter schools and amend our programs where possible.

Right now, the main concern is safety within our system. So many are unsure about this virus, and everyone should feel safe. Long-term, we need to consider our children and the economic burdens on families due to the recession. All requests need to keep the children and their families as a priority. Eventually, this shall pass, and requests will be made to better our educational processes, having all children treated and taught equally.

We must continue to raise teacher and support staff pay, even if in small increments. We need to meet the mental health needs of students, perhaps with the help of creative partnerships. The arts should not receive disproportionate cuts to other subjects. And we need to scrutinize facility improvements to prioritize the most urgent and necessary.

JOE BELCHER

for County Commissioner



Endorsed by Asheville and Buncombe County Association of Educators

Paid for by Joe Belcher for Buncombe County Commissioner



Asheville City Council

Much has changed since the March 3 primary for Asheville City Council. The fiscal fallout of the coronavirus pandemic has mostly scuttled candidates' support for new taxes to fund city programs such as transit; existing concerns over racial justice and policing have come to dominate the conversation after months of street protests.

The political landscape of the Council race has also shifted over the past several months. Activist **Nicole Townsend**, who had finished fifth in a 10-way nonpartisan primary with over 9,600 votes, withdrew her candidacy in August, citing concerns over COVID-19's impact on her family and city government's role "in the continual perpetuation of systemic harm." And on Sept. 22, attorney **Antanette Mosley** was sworn in to serve out the remaining term of **Vijay Kapoor**, one of Council's most fiscally conservative members.

Amid these big developments, the race still promises to bring a significant shake-up to City Hall. With three seats up for election, even if incumbent **Keith Young** wins another term, he'll be joined by two new colleagues out of the five-candidate field to replace outgoing Council members **Brian Haynes** and **Julie Mayfield**.

Two challengers, **Kim Roney** and **Rich Lee**, are familiar Asheville faces who have yet to win a seat on Council. The two placed fourth and fifth, respectively, in the 2017 general election; Lee made his first Council bid in 2015 and finished fourth. Notably, Roney is the only unaffiliated candidate in an otherwise all-Democratic field.

New to electoral politics are **Sage Turner** and **Sandra Kilgore**.

However, both have served on various appointed city boards and commissions, and both claim the endorsement of Mayor **Esther Manheimer**. Turner also led all other candidates in the March primary by over 1,200 votes; Kilgore narrowly made the cutoff for the general election, finishing in sixth over **Kristen Goldsmith** by about 650 votes.

— Daniel Walton ✕

SANDRA KILGORE



Democrat

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
ElectSandraKilgore.org

Occupation:
Real estate broker/owner

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: Sierra Club, Former Asheville Housing Authority CEO Gene Bell, Mayor Esther Manheimer, Buncombe County Commissioner Amanda Edwards, Buncombe County Commissioner Al Whitesides

Amount of money raised: \$11,500

Top three donors: Realtors Political Action Committee, \$2,500; Jon Sarver, \$500; Kathy Kline and Donna Engley, \$250

RICH LEE



Democrat

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
RichLeeForAsheville.com

Occupation:
Financial adviser

Previous candidacy or offices held: Two previous runs for City Council

Key endorsements: Asheville City Association of Educators, Buncombe County Association of Educators, WNC Central Labor Council, Sierra Club, N.C. Rep. John Ager

Amount of money raised: \$12,000

Top three donors: My mom and I have each contributed over \$1,000. After that, Bernard Arghierre at \$800.

THE QUESTIONS

How will you manage the city's budget to maintain quality of life in light of revenue shortfalls driven by COVID-19?

I would recommend we reanalyze the entire budget with Council, the city manager and department leaders. Our goal would be to map out a strategy to ensure the city remains sustainable in light of our present state of uncertainty. The budget for essential services would have to be solidified before determining and prioritizing all other city expenses. It is important for the city to be frugal and maintain a healthy reserve as we move forward in repairing the damage caused by the pandemic.

These times need comprehensive fiscal management, and I think that's my strength as a candidate. On Council, I would be open to new bonds for capital works, restructuring city departments, selling or leasing city-owned land, building affordable housing and transit partnerships with the county and finding new ways to access the tens of millions in hotel taxes collected by the TDA for local needs.

What actions will you take to fulfill Asheville's recent commitment to reparations for the Black community?

First, I would reach out to the community to find out what are their most immediate needs and take actions to address those concerns. The community needs to feel that this is not another broken promise and that the city is devoted to reversing the damage caused by decades of systematic racism. We will not be able to change things overnight; however, providing assistance with basic necessities such as health and safety should be our first course of action.

I think the evidence shows it's possible to reduce the police budget by as much as 50%, if done carefully, and a model of public safety that eschews violence and bias against Black Ashevilleans would be a form of reparations. Other forms should come from a citywide conversation, but I expect they would include a return of land taken during urban renewal, closing the opportunity gap in schools and a robust program of community investment.

How will you reduce the gap in opportunities and academic performance between white and Black students in the Asheville City Schools?

Reducing the achievement gap must be addressed from many angles. My first step would be to restructure the oversight committee to provide more transparency and accountability. Improving early education and preschools is the foundation. We must use proven techniques, such as personalized learning, culturally relevant topics and more profound relationships with the parents. Benchmarks must be put in place to track and monitor student progress for the programs to be successful.

Council can most directly impact the achievement gap by: 1) Moving to an elected school board. I've struggled with this for years, but I think it's time. 2) Addressing factors outside school. That means housing security, community development, safer public housing that's integrated into the community and building the Black middle class. 3.) Controlling the local school supplement paid by the ACS tax. We like to pretend the city's responsibility ends with setting the tax rate, but it doesn't.

How will you ensure progress toward Asheville's emissions reduction and renewable energy goals as COVID-19 stresses the city budget?

I would like to see the city form more alliances with clean and renewable energy companies. By partnering with them, we can then provide more educational awareness, as well as product incentives that will thereupon increase community utilization. Forging these types of relationships would not only save residents money but would help in reducing emissions immensely.

The good news is the shutdown has done more to reduce Asheville's carbon output than lots of previous efforts. The bad news is with things reopening into recession, there's going to be pressure to sacrifice environmental goals for economic ones. Asheville needs to see they're the same thing. This is a chance to rebuild a greener and a better economy at the same time. Rewriting zoning, creating density around transit, planning trees and green spaces — those are all goods that can come from this.

What new opportunities for collaboration do you see with Buncombe County and state government?

Buncombe County and state government have a great opportunity to work toward improving the split for the hotel occupancy tax. The hotel industry has offered a 67/33 split; however, I feel the city should pursue more favorable terms. This would also be a good time for the state to consider imposing impact fees on all new construction to assist in the funding of our dilapidated infrastructure while also easing the tax burden on our local residents.

First on my list is transit. The only way to have a truly useful and sustainable bus system is with county support. That would allow routes to run more frequently and extend outside city limits. Next is jointly lobbying the state to redirect hotel taxes to local needs. After that, development standards around tree loss, pollution and stormwater runoff outside the city. A development in Swannanoa floods businesses in Biltmore Village, and it's time for county zoning to recognize that.

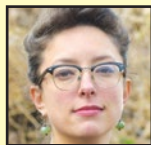
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KIM RONEY



Unaffiliated

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
KimRoney4Asheville.com

Occupation:
Piano teacher, service industry worker, community radio producer

Previous candidacy or offices held:
2017 candidate for Asheville City Council, 4-year volunteer on Asheville Multimodal Transportation Commission and Transit Committee

Key endorsements: Council member Sheneika Smith, Council member Brian Haynes, Rev. Amy Cantrell, Sunrise Movement AVL/NC, Sierra Club

Amount of money raised: \$16,497

Top three donors: Kendall Wright-Oliver, \$2,000; Esther Cartwright, \$2,000; Amy Mandell, \$500

To ensure a just transition through the pandemic, systemic racism, economic instability and climate change, we need to map all our local resources, including our city budget, hotel occupancy taxes and regional funding such as the Dogwood Health Trust. As a Council member, I will instruct staff, welcome public engagement, build coalition and be steady in the work to get our city budget in line with our shared values with healing as our focus, equity as our demand and resiliency as our goal.

In solidarity with Black AVL Demands and the Racial Justice Coalition, I'll listen and follow through with community-led solutions locally while we work toward [federal reparations bill] HR40 nationally. Local efforts may include a moratorium on the sale of city-owned land acquired through urban renewal, investment in long-term safety strategies and ensuring organizational accountability by having our Office of Equity and Inclusion report directly to Council.

We need investment in long-term safety strategies that serve students in every part of life, including housing, transit, expanded hours for community centers and mentorship partnerships, including Word on the Street, My Sistah Taught Me That/My Daddy Taught Me That, YTL: Youth Transformed for Life and Hood Huggers. To support culturally competent education with a trauma-informed approach, we must consider an elected Board of Education held accountable to equitable outcomes.

Climate change is the biggest public safety issue of our time! We need a Green New Deal with a race and class analysis and to act on the Cadmus [100% renewable energy] report with appropriate urgency. I didn't support the recent suggested tax increase because of potential impact on renters; however, I'm ready to lead our next bond program through public engagement, community partnerships and creative protections for renters and local businesses as we work to heal people and planet.

We have to collaborate for a Green New Deal as we secure our food and water systems; support local, living-wage jobs; partner for resilient neighborhoods; restore our tree canopy; and increase accessibility to economic mobility. We'll coordinate planning and zoning for deeply affordable housing on transit corridors, overhaul the TDA and reform our hotel occupancy tax and build coalition for community renewables legislation! Join the movement to Be 'Bout it Being Better at kimroney4asheville.com.

SAGE TURNER



Democrat

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
SageForAsheville.com

Occupation:
Finance and project manager

Previous candidacy or offices held: None

Key endorsements: Sierra Club, Mayor Esther Manheimer, Council member and N.C. Senate candidate Julie Mayfield, Asheville and Buncombe Associations of Education, former Buncombe County Democratic Party Chair Emmet Carney

Amount of money raised: \$23,708

Top three donors: Russell Shuler, \$5,400 (in kind), Keith Wright, \$5,000 (in kind); Mack Pearsall, \$1,000

Safety first: Let's get everyone through COVID-19 alive and well-positioned for good long-term health. Home in on our primary goals and take on only emergency initiatives. This means no more studies, consulting contracts or personnel expansions unless funded by external programs. Continue moratorium until lodging taxes are committing more to city needs. Continue to reimagine policing and divest/invest in community needs. Focus on spending down the bonds and building affordable housing.

Implement the Reparations Committee to plan and advocate for community goals. Increase prioritization of contracts and business incubation. Much of the lack of equity for Black Asheville is rooted in lack of access to housing and ownership or removal of such through redlining and urban removal. I will put my expertise with housing, affordability, homeownership, programs and funding opportunities to work to restore ownership and entrepreneurship and create equity.

We need to work on the factors that bookend the school day and impact children's ability to learn and be at their best, including housing and food security, access to the internet and assistance with virtual schooling. Continue to provide grant funds for orgs helping impacted youth. Move the school board to elected seats, reinstate joint meetings of Council and the school board and request quarterly updates on the gap, initiatives, results and needs.

Continuing to implement the Transit Master Plan and solar initiatives. Await changes in lodging tax legislation before changing hotel rules to assist in funding for transit and a workforce shuttle. Upzoning all residential zones within 0.5 miles of transit corridors to multifamily. Repairing and increasing electric vehicle infrastructure using available grant money. Updating the UDO to induce better planning and reduced reliance on personal vehicles. Fare-free transit periods to increase ridership.

City and county partner on: return to paratransit and transit support pledge; on LUIG (Land Use Incentive Grants) to create affordable housing in the city; building of a new public housing community and redevelopment of existing public housing communities every 4 years; on policies for short term rentals. City/NC: Recovery funding; lodging tax and restrictions, vacancy tax on second homes, inclusionary zoning, municipal transit tax, banning plastic bags, tax increment financing, Green New Deal.

KEITH YOUNG

INCUMBENT

Democrat

(Personal voter registration)

Website:
ElectKeithYoung.com

Occupation:
Deputy clerk of superior court

Previous candidacy or offices held: Asheville City Council

Key endorsements: Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity Action Fund

Amount of money raised: \$4,400

Top three donors: Bonnie Matherson, \$1,500; Albert Sneed, \$1,500; Self, \$500

In light of new revelations from our budget staff, our fund balance will not take as big of a hit as initially expected, thus remaining between 16%-17%. We are in a good position to weather the storm, as well as continuing to take advantage of federal aid that is currently covering a great deal of some of our COVID-related expenses.

My next initiative, which I'm currently working on, will be to establish a blended component unit and a permanent or restricted fund to establish a permanent funding solution that will fund reparations in perpetuity and take advantage of public and private donations from a myriad of parties.

By continuing to support the joint venture established by the city of Asheville, community and the school system. Also, by supporting our Community Development Block Grant/Strategic Partnership Funds funding process through an equity lens that suggests funding community resources specifically tailored to closing the achievement gap. (Since we are prohibited from funding the school system directly.)

This is definitely tough, considering the tight squeeze on finances. However, I'm inclined to follow the recommendations of our sustainability department and listen to our partners in the community that have a foothold and track record for doing this type of work. Also, continuing to utilize federal funding to leverage upgrading our fleet of buses with hybrids that have better emissions standards. (Because of terrain and other factors, electric buses have sadly been a struggle here.)

Civilian review boards for police accountability, reparations, public transportation, tax allocations, TDA structure and allocations and extraterritorial jurisdiction review.

NICOLE TOWNSEND

Townsend will appear on the ballot but announced that she was dropping out of the race in August.

Voter guides beyond Buncombe

This year's ballot covers far more than the local — and let's face it, Xpress can't do it all. The following nonpartisan voter guides offer information and candidate profiles for state and national races:

- **Vote411**, a bilingual voter guide sponsored by the League of Women Voters, can be personalized to match your sample ballot. avl.mx/8im
- **Democracy NC** offers a comprehensive guide to state races in both English and Spanish. avl.mx/8in
- **Common Cause NC's 2020 Voter Guide** breaks down each candidate's responses to questions by issue. avl.mx/8is
- **The NC Values Coalition** has teamed up with iVoterGuide to create a nonpartisan voter guide that scores candidates on their adherence to "life, family and religious freedoms." avl.mx/8iv
- **The N.C. State Board of Elections 2020 Judicial Voter Guide** focuses solely on the 16 candidates running for seats on the NC Supreme Court and the NC Court of Appeals. avl.mx/8io

Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors



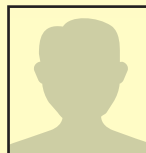
Near the bottom of this year's ballot lies a position that's literally down to earth. The Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors manages programs to conserve Buncombe County's natural resources, from rivers and streams to quality farmland.

Three of the board's five seats are elected positions, but only one is up for election in 2020. Incumbent **Gary Higgins**, who was appointed to fill the seat vacated by **Jeff Foster** in February, is making his first run for office after a nearly four-decade history as a civil servant in county soil and water conservation.

Opposing Higgins is perennial candidate **Alan Ditmore**, who has run unsuccessfully for a Board of Supervisors or Buncombe County Board of Education seat in every election since 2008. Ditmore did not respond to multiple requests for participation in the *Xpress* voter guide. However, his previous campaigns have repeatedly proclaimed a belief that contraception and abortion, through preventing human overpopulation, are the most effective means of protecting the environment.

— Daniel Walton

ALAN DITMORE



Unaffiliated

(Personal voter registration)

Website: N/A

Occupation: N/A

Previous candidacy or offices held: N/A

Key endorsements: N/A

Amount of money raised: N/A

Top three donors: N/A

Ditmore did not provide a candidate photo.

GARY HIGGINS

INCUMBENT

Democrat

(Personal voter registration)

Website: None

Occupation: Retired from Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District

Previous candidacy or offices held: Presently serving as chair of the Buncombe SWCD Board of Supervisors

Key endorsements: None

Amount of money raised: None

Top three donors: None

THE QUESTIONS

How can the local work of the Soil and Water Conservation District support broader efforts for environmental protection and climate change?

DITMORE DID NOT RESPOND TO MULTIPLE REQUESTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE *XPRESS* VOTER GUIDE.

The Buncombe SWCD assists landowners with planning, designing and installation of soil and water conservation practices that result in increased resilience to climate change. This includes conservation practices that conserve and retain water. The district is participating in the WNC Carbon Farm Planning Pilot, which is a regional effort promoting agricultural weather resilience at the farm level. The program will use computer-based programs that will document on-farm carbon sequestration.

What new collaborative opportunities do you see for Soil and Water given the district's recent merger with the Buncombe County Center of N.C. Cooperative Extension?

The recent change was primarily administrative and will allow one county director to oversee two separate departments. The Agriculture and Land Resources Department director works with both the SWCD and Cooperative Extension, but there has not been a merger (meaning that there is now just one department). Both departments will continue to direct their separate programs. We might anticipate some increased collaboration, but at this time, I am not aware of any specific steps that are planned.

How will you make the district's work more visible to the public?

I will promote a strong environmental education and marketing program which includes utilizing the county website, social media, newsletters and other outreach. We need to make a strong effort to reach out to local media to tell our story and let the general public know what we do every day to protect our soil resources and water quality. We have a lot of good projects and initiatives that we need to publicize more effectively.

Vote by mail



- If you'd like to vote by mail, request an absentee ballot through the N.C. State Board of Elections' online ballot request portal (avl.mx/8ii) or by filling out and submitting an absentee ballot request form (avl.mx/8ij) by mail. All forms must be returned to the corresponding county Board of Elections by 5 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 27; request forms can be mailed, emailed, faxed or delivered to the county election office in person by the voter or a near relative.

- When your ballot arrives, follow the enclosed directions. You must mark the ballot in the presence of a witness, who must sign the absentee ballot envelope upon completion.
- The completed absentee ballot can be mailed back to the county Board of Elections (you will need your own postage stamp) or delivered to any early voting site or the county Board of Elections. An absentee ballot can be delivered

by a near relative, but it must be postmarked or dropped off by 5 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3. Absentee voters can sign up for text or email updates on the status of their ballot through BallotTrax (avl.mx/8il), run through the N.C. State Board of Elections.

- Absentee request forms in Spanish can be found at avl.mx/8ik.