

NOVEMBER

And the winners are ...

Residents voted back into office Asheville City Council members **Sage Turner** and **Kim Roney** while **Roberto "Bo" Hess** won the third open seat.

Voters also elected **Amanda Edwards** as the new chair of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners. Meanwhile, first-time candidate **Jennifer Horton** won her race for District 1; incumbent **Terri Wells** retained her seat in District 2; and fellow Commissioner **Parker Sloan**, who was unopposed, won his race in District 3.

Republican U.S. Rep. **Chuck Edwards** defended his District 11 seat, earning nearly 57% of the vote against Democratic challenger **Caleb Rudow**. And Republican state Sen. **Warren Daniel**, District 46, and Democratic state Sen. **Julie Mayfield**, District 49, cruised to reelection. X



Photo by Thomas Calder

COVER OF THE Month



Featured, starting left, Phil DeAngelo, Andrea Kulish, Mark Harmon and Jeffrey Burroughs. Photo by Cindy Kunst

RADfest 1.0 brings hope back to district

The River Arts District hosted RADfest 1.0, a two-day gathering billed as a weekend of art, resilience and community, Nov. 9-10. Despite its success, the loss of creative capital from Helene remains staggering. An estimated 80% of the district was effectively destroyed by the flooding, according to ArtsAVL.

But many within the community say they are unwilling to see the RAD go down without a fight.

"The arts district is not only a beating heart for this city, it's a place where people have come to live their dreams," says **Jeffrey Burroughs**, president of the River Arts District Artists, an

all-volunteer nonprofit. "While it's hard and almost feels tone-deaf to even have a conversation about the future, it's something that has to happen now." X

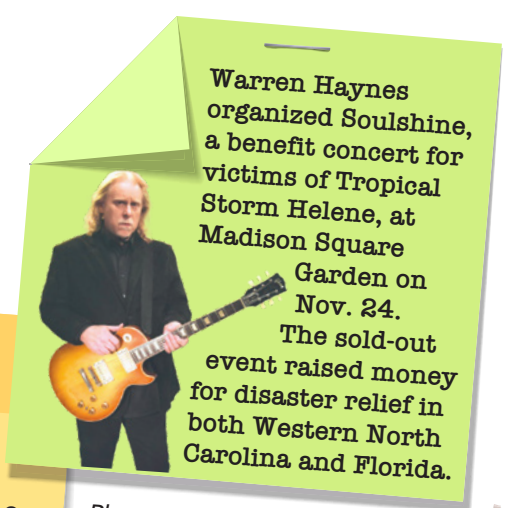


Photo courtesy of Press Here Publicity

Warren Haynes organized **Soulshine**, a benefit concert for victims of Tropical Storm Helene, at **Madison Square Garden** on **Nov. 24**. The sold-out event raised money for disaster relief in both Western North Carolina and Florida.

H2O updates

At the Nov. 14 daily Helene briefing, Asheville Water Resources spokesperson **Clay Chandler** informed the community that lead had been detected in seven area schools. In response, the City of Asheville offered customers free lead test kits. Both city and county governments also launched "Lead Awareness" campaigns. For more information, visit avl.mx/ecu and avl.mx/ecv.

Four days after the discovery of lead — and 53 days after being issued — the City of Asheville lifted its boil water notice. X



Photo by Thomas Calder

Asheville City Council unanimously approved 12 contracts at its Nov. 12 meeting to help the city recover from Tropical Storm Helene. The contracts, which passed 7-0, totaled about \$16.3 million, including \$14 million for repairing Asheville's water system, \$1.2 million for solid waste disposal and debris removal, and \$850,000 for meals and lodging for emergency responders.

The Buncombe County Board of Commissioners voted 7-0 on Nov. 19 to approve \$1.5 million for rental assistance and expanded the definition of emergency housing within the county in response to Tropical Storm Helene.

"This has been a spiritual experience that none of us will ever forget. COVID separated us; Helene united us."

— **Jan Dooley**, in a letter to the editor published by Xpress in the Nov. 6 issue



Photo courtesy of the White House

On Nov. 20, a delegation of local leaders joined Gov. **Roy Cooper** and Gov.-elect **Josh Stein** in Washington, D.C., seeking over \$25 billion in federal aid. Among those to attend were Asheville Mayor **Esther Manheimer**, Buncombe County Commissioners **Amanda Edwards** and **Parker Sloan**, Canton Mayor **Zeb Smathers**, Madison County Manager **Rod Honeycutt**, Lake Lure Mayor Pro Tem **Dave DiOrio** and Chimney Rock Mayor **Peter O'Leary**. While there, the group met with President **Joe Biden**. X

IN CONVERSATION WITH Bo Hess



Photo courtesy of Bo Hess

On Nov. 5, local voters elected **Bo Hess** to Asheville City Council. This is Hess' first time serving in public office. He was sworn in Dec. 2 by Superior Court Judge **Alan Thornburg**.

Xpress: How has Helene transformed the way you're thinking about your role as a member of Asheville City Council?

Hess: Helene reshaped my understanding of the responsibilities inherent in my role as a member of Asheville City Council. This devastating event has underscored the critical importance of preparedness, resilience and equitable recovery strategies in our governance.

As we rebuild, my focus is on ensuring that recovery efforts are not only swift but just and inclusive, prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable and ensuring that our rebuilding efforts lay the groundwork for a more resilient Asheville. This collective experience has deepened my commitment to serving with empathy, urgency and an unwavering focus on the common good, driving home the fact that effective leadership is as much about fostering hope and resilience as it is about policy and governance.

What was your favorite community event in 2024 — pre- and post-Helene?

This year, both before and after Hurricane Helene, Asheville hosted an array of community events that truly captured the spirit of our city. Before the storm, memorable moments included GrindFest AVL, where our vibrant local culture was on full display, and the Asheville Symphony in the Park, which brought us together through the universal language of music. The Blue Ridge Pride Festival, occurring just before Helene, was a celebration of diversity and unity that resonated deeply with me.

Following the storm, the community's resilience and collective spirit were beautifully exemplified at the candlelight vigil in Pack Square. This event was not just about remembrance; it was a profound gathering that brought comfort and renewed strength to our community. Additionally, the festive atmosphere at the Grove Arcade Tree

Light Block Party was a heartwarming reminder of Asheville's enduring charm and the joyous spirit of its people.

Each of these events, in their own way, has reinforced the importance of community engagement and the powerful connections it fosters. As a Council member, these gatherings have deepened my appreciation for Asheville's community spirit and have been pivotal in shaping my efforts to support and participate in our city's rich tapestry of public events.

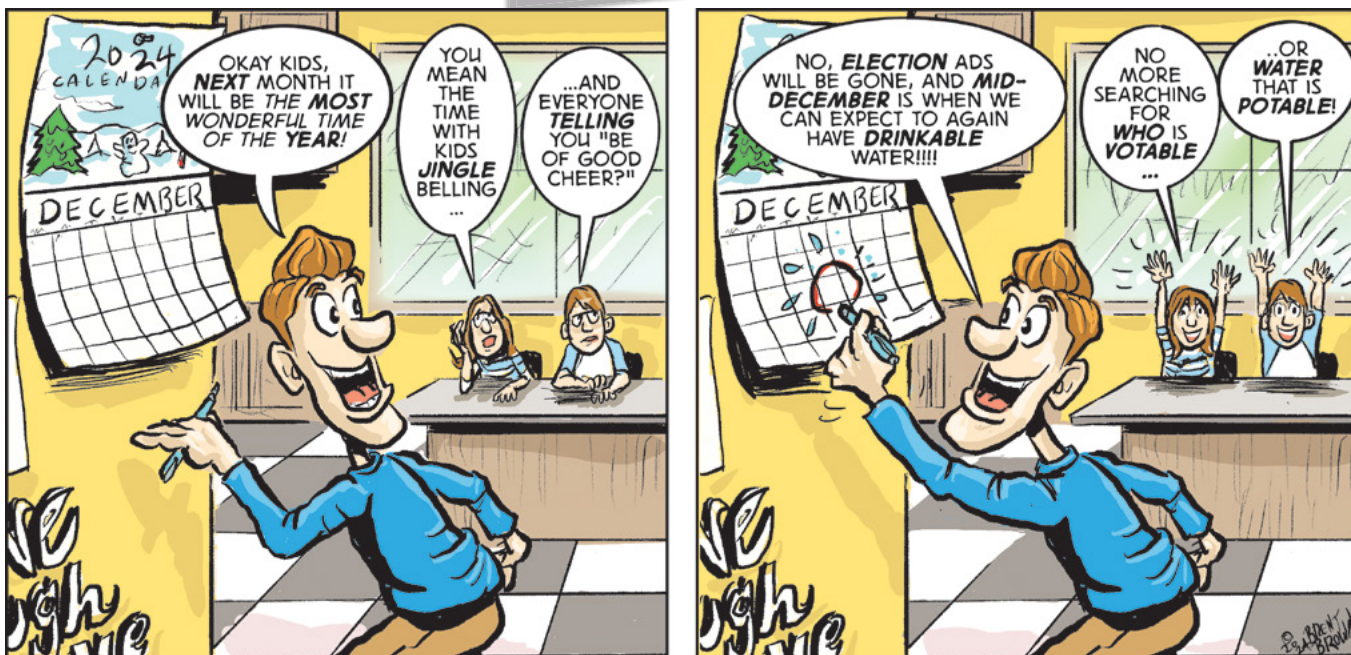
For the full interview, visit avl.mx/ee5. X

SONG OF THE Month

Secret Agent 23 Skidoo, "Tomorrow's Cost"

Written and recorded in a matter of days for the BeLoved Asheville benefit compilation, *Caverns of Gold*, this soulful hip-hop collaboration conveys the community's post-Helene fears and resilience the way only **Cactus'** lyrics can. Featuring the talents of fellow local artists **Whitney Moore Roda**, **Juan Holladay**, **Matt Williams**, **Jacob Rodriguez**, **Alex Bradley**, **Kyle Snuffer**, **Justin Aswell Blackwood** and **Ben Bjorlie**, the track is a testament to the power of unity and a loving tribute to those committed to rebuilding. Listen at avl.mx/ed8. — **Edwin Arnaudin** X

Photo by Fiasco Media



Cartoon by Brent Brown