

JUNE

BID vote sparks backlash



Photo by Brooke Randle

While protesters banged drums and played horns in front of Harrah's Cherokee Center – Asheville on June 11, City Council members inside the arena voted, 6-1, to create a business improvement district (BID). The vote ignited one of the year's biggest local controversies.

The BID will raise taxes on downtown property to pay for enhanced litter removal, landscaping and beautification efforts and to create a staff of downtown safety ambassadors. Many downtown business owners and activists opposed the plan out of fear the ambassadors would further marginalize the city's unhoused population by moving them out of sight from visitors and tourists. Opponents also said City Council members did not listen to their concerns.

As backlash grew, the cars of two volunteers on the BID's steering committee were spray-painted with anarchy symbols and anti-BID messages. On June 18, anonymous anarchists released a statement on Abolition Media, a self-described "news site for revolutionary movements," and claimed responsibility

for the vandalism. Community members raised \$6,000 for a reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible, but as of mid-December Asheville Police said no arrests have been made. If anyone has any information, APD requests they contact 828-252-1110.

City Council is scheduled to consider a contract for a BID service provider at its Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025, regular meeting. The provider will set objectives and provide services for the BID stemming from community input gathered in July and August. ❌



The car of Larry Crosby, a local business owner and supporter of a business improvement district, was vandalized with an anarchy symbol. Photo courtesy of Asheville Police Department



BROADER PERSPECTIVE: Building Bridges, a group that brings Black and white people together for facilitated discussions on racism, celebrated its 30th anniversary on June 22. Featured, board of director co-chairs **Walter Bradley**, far left, and **Heather Tate**, far right, with **Jackie Simms**, second from left, and **Tyrone Greenlee**, second from right, and co-founder **Susan Presson**, center. Photo by Caleb Johnson

TDA cuts Sports Commission funding

In June, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) decided to cut all funding to the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission, the nonprofit responsible for bringing the SoCon basketball tournaments and other events to town. The TDA decision came after a period of strained relations between the two entities and forced the commission to scramble for alternative funding sources. ❌



Photo courtesy of SoCon

Taxes go up

The City of Asheville and Buncombe County both voted to raise property taxes for residents and increase salaries for employees.

On June 11, the same day they approved the BID, City Council members narrowly approved a \$250 million city budget for fiscal year 2024-25. The budget increased property taxes 0.63 cents, which translated into \$25.20 more this year for the owner of property valued at \$400,000. The increased tax revenue will help fund raises in compensation for the Asheville

Fire Department, Asheville Police Department and other city employees.

Seven days later, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners approved a \$440 million budget for fiscal year 2024-25. The budget raised the tax rate by 1.96 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The new rate — 51.76 cents per \$100 of value — means the owner of a home valued at \$400,000 will pay \$2,070 in taxes to the county, \$78 more than in 2023-24. The budget included a 4.89% cost-of-living increase for employees. ❌



Photo courtesy of Todd Carter

COVER OF THE Month

Woodfin had a groundbreaking event June 21 for Taylor's Wave, an artificial whitewater river wave that will be a key component of the town's ambitious \$34 million Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project. The under-construction wave later sustained only minimal damage from Tropical Storm Helene, but work has been delayed.

IN CONVERSATION WITH Jason Mogen

"When we announced the market's return after Helene, a market regular reached out to share some kind words. North Asheville Tailgate Market (NATM) is where she gets most of her produce; it's her community space and Saturday morning ritual. In the weeks since, our neighbors have asked after our farmers, bakers, producers, and craftspeople by name, wondering how they fared, if they were healthy and safe, and if they needed more support. Our market is home to so many, built on the connections our vendors make with the North Asheville community. The hugs and tears at the first few markets were overwhelming. While we were rushing to find a temporary home, one of our farmers reminded me, 'food is essential,' hopeful that a community partner would quickly emerge to support the market. Having witnessed the joy for reconnection and the gratitude for something as fundamental as fresh produce and food, those words will stay with me for a long time."

— **Jason Mogen**, executive director of the North Asheville Tailgate Market, which relocated multiple times throughout the summer.

For the full interview, visit avl.mx/ee0. ❌

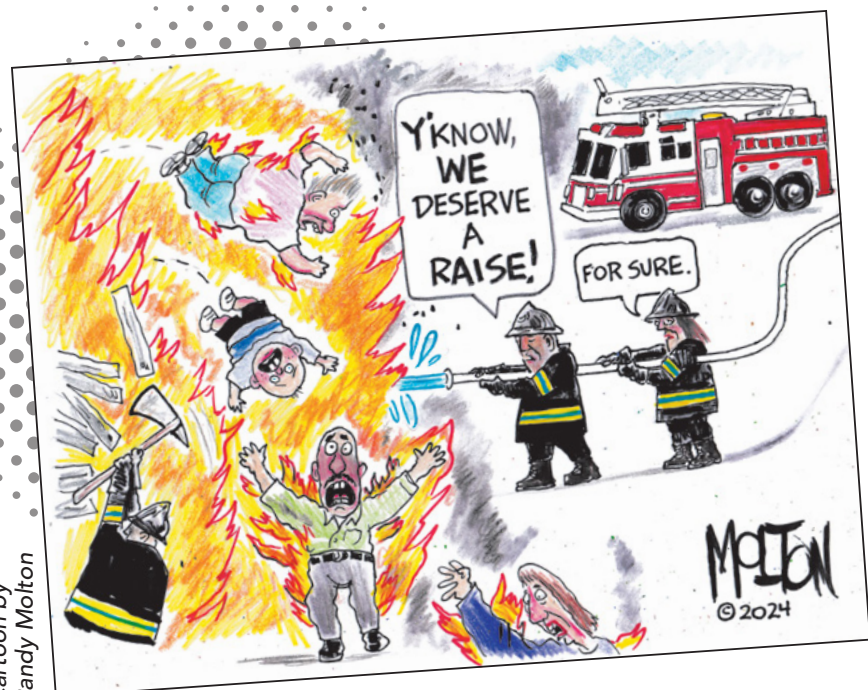


Photo courtesy of Mogen

FOOD NEWS

Paperhouse Pizza, a new food truck, came onto the scene this month. As did Romeo's Vegan Burger at 640 Merrimon Ave.

Gallivant Coffee closed this month in Woodfin.



Cartoon by Randy Molton

Bacoate Branch Trail dies



Photo by Caleb Johnson

Plans for the Bacoate Branch Trail, which would have connected Aston Park and the River Arts District using land owned by the Asheville City Board of Education, died after neighbors opposed it at a June 10 City Board of Education meeting. The trail would have been part of AVL Unpaved, a project to build natural surface multiuse trails within Asheville on underused and undevelopable land. ❌

"The issue of housing for low-income earners is a real problem, but [infill housing] is not the answer. Destroying the lure of Asheville to tourists is not the answer either. Many service workers, teachers, nurses and others cannot afford Asheville housing prices because they are poorly paid. The 'living wage' is not that. For a typical example, Applebee's corporate earnings in 2023 were well above \$800 million. How much of that did they share with our local chefs and servers? This is the elephant in the room."

— **Sherrill Osborne Knight**, a local teacher, wrote in a letter to the editor published in the June 5 edition of Xpress.

SONG OF THE Month

The Dead Tongues, "Dirt for a Dying Sun"

Ryan Gustafson's immense musical talents were on full display this summer as the revered indie artist dropped a pair of complementary albums. Following the meditative title track on the first release, *Body of Light*, he kicks into high gear on this banger, featuring stacked arrangements that still allow for guitars and harmonica to shine through. Meanwhile, the chorus lyric "Summer nights and fireflies / make it easy to love someone" sets the scene for more natural imagery to come.

Listen at avl.mx/edf.

— **Edwin Arnaudin** ❌



Photo by Hunter Savoy Jaffe