

SEPTEMBER

Property assessor fired on eve of reappraisals

Just months before the county was to begin its every-four-years property appraisal, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners fired longtime property assessor **Keith Miller** on Sept. 17 for failing to disclose a financial relationship with a subordinate. Miller and the woman bought a Hilton Head, S.C., condominium together. The dismissal likely cost Miller his \$140,000 salary and 28-year county retirement. Miller denied having a sexual relationship with the woman, who resigned earlier in September. The *Asheville Citizen Times* later reported that Miller's wife sued him for divorce in November, saying the couple separated in September. She also accused him of an extramarital affair. Documents did not disclose with whom. Miller and his wife were married in 2001. ❌



Keith Miller, left, and his attorney Brian Elston. Photo by Pat Moran



Photo by Caleb Johnson

Walz rocks Salvage Station

Democratic vice presidential candidate and Minnesota Gov. **Tim Walz**, in a bit of foreshadowing, spoke to thousands standing in the pouring rain at the Salvage Station on Sept. 17. The outdoor venue, already slated to close at year end to make way for the Interstate 26 Connector, was destroyed by Tropical Storm Helene. As for Walz, he returned to town Oct. 30, appearing at The Orange Peel as part of a benefit for storm victims. ❌

Low-barrier shelters get \$3.6 million from county

On Sept. 17, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners approved spending \$3.6 million in COVID Recovery Funding for emergency shelter beds at three area low-barrier homeless shelters. Haywood Street Respite received \$1.6 million to expand from nine to 25 beds; Safe Shelter received \$1 million for up to 25 beds at Trinity United Methodist Church in West Asheville; and the Salvation Army received nearly \$1 million to maintain its current 65-bed operations for another year. "We've finally reached a point where we're not kicking the can down the road," Commissioner **Al Whitesides** said. "We can see where we're going." ❌

Boomtown launches

The Boomtown FestAVL took over Pack Square Sept. 6-7, celebrating the city's history of arts, music and architecture. LEAF Global Arts and the Asheville Symphony Orchestra joined on as community nonprofit partners. The event featured music, storytelling and walking tours. ❌

Photo and illustrations courtesy of Randy Molton



COVER OF THE Month



Lauren Groff & Tessa Fontaine. Photo by Thomas Calder

Lit festival's first chapter

Punch Bucket Lit Festival, featuring award-winning author **Lauren Groff**, was staged at the Diana Wortham Theatre Sept. 20-21. It featured readings, workshops, panels and a book fair. ❌

SONG OF THE Month

MJ Lenderman, "She's Leaving You"

No Asheville artist had a bigger year than this homegrown talent. After memorably duetting with Waxahatchee on Song of the Year candidate "Right Back to It" in March, the Wednesday guitarist took his witty slacker lyrics and early Neil Young-esque arrangements to new heights on *Manning Fireworks*, recorded at Asheville's own Drop of Sun Studios. This catchy lead single about a midlife crisis continues to captivate listeners around the globe with its vivid imagery and earworm chorus: "It falls apart, we all got work to do/It gets dark, we all got work to do." Listen at avl.mx/edi. — Edwin Arnaudin ❌

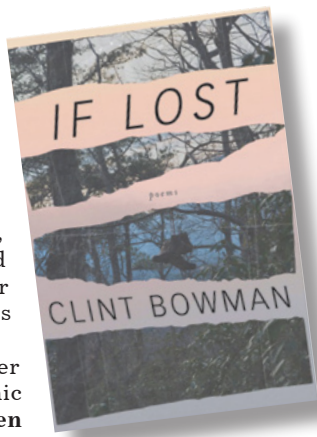
"I think any action prompted by homophobia is bound to have ill effects."
— **Sam Cook of Asheville** wrote in a letter to the editor published in the Sept. 11 issue of *Xpress*, referring to Yancey Library pulling out of the regional library system over objections to LGBTQ book displays.

BOOK

RELEASE

Local poet **Clint Bowman** released *If Lost*, his latest book of poetry, on Sept. 5. Divided into three sections, the collection is both a love letter to and a lament over Appalachia — a series of works where interstate traffic rushes past forgotten towns; where blue jays make nests out of styrofoam and cigarette cartons; and where, despite the odds, nature still finds small and occasional victories. Bowman is co-founder of Dark City's Poet Society, which meets regularly in Black Mountain.

Other notable releases in September include **Andrew Clark's** Southern gothic novel *Where Dark Things Grow*, **David Allen Voyles's** horror novel *Edgar* and poet **Michael Dechane's** collection *The Long Invisible*. ❌



Benne on Eagle closed in September. Meanwhile, Character Study, a neighborhood cocktail bar in West Asheville, opened.

FOOD NEWS

Helene

Sept. 27, a date we'll never forget. Tropical Storm Helene roared into the area a day after a storm dumped 4 inches of rain at the Asheville Regional Airport. A total of 13.98 inches of rain fell at the airport between Sept. 25-27. Helene's wind and rain blew down trees and enraged waterways, killing 103 people in North Carolina as of Dec. 4. It took out 79% of the cell service infrastructure in Buncombe County, cutting people off from the outside world for days. Water taps went dry across Asheville. Power went out for more than 1 million people in the western Carolinas. For nearly 400,000 people in WNC, it took days or weeks for power to return. Helene's impact on mountainsides, streams and forests made it a geological event, meaning it literally changed the world around us. ❌



Photo by Kara Southwick