

ZERO SUGAR

The Rant

NOVEMBER 2025

Monthly

SANFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

KEEPING UP

DISCUSSIONS ARE TAKING SHAPE FOR A NEW
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN LEE COUNTY AS THE
AREA CONTINUES TO SEE SIGNIFICANT GROWTH



ALSO INSIDE: CCCC ANNOUNCES BIG PLANS | EMS CONTRACT TALKS | HOLIDAY CALENDAR



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The Rant Monthly

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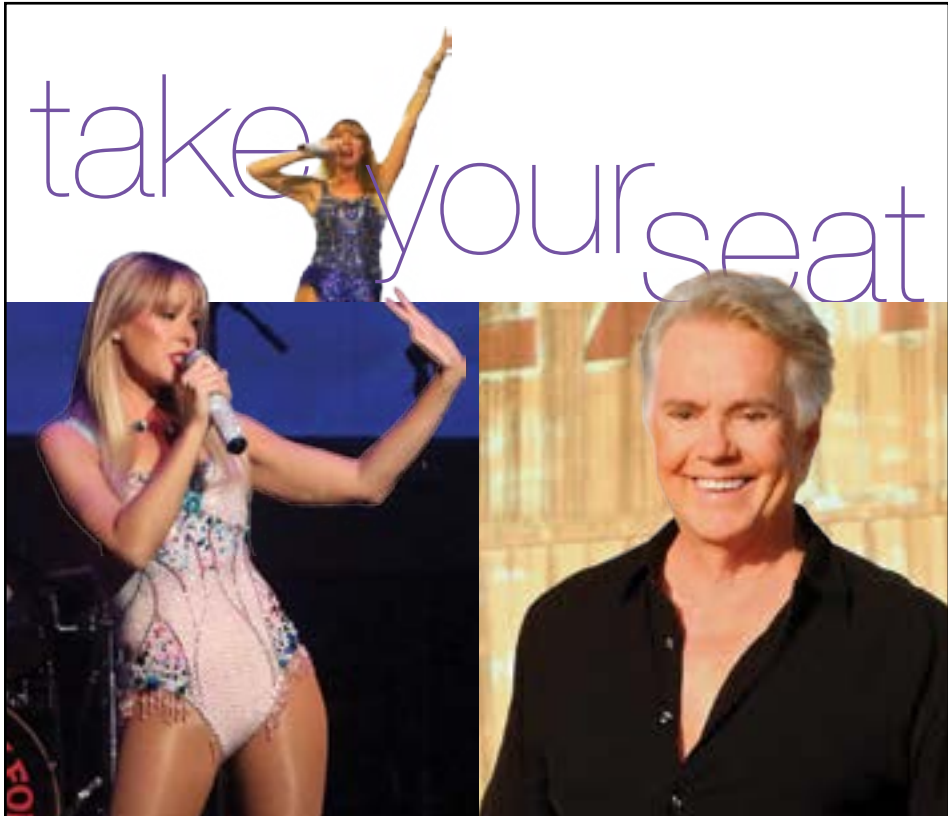
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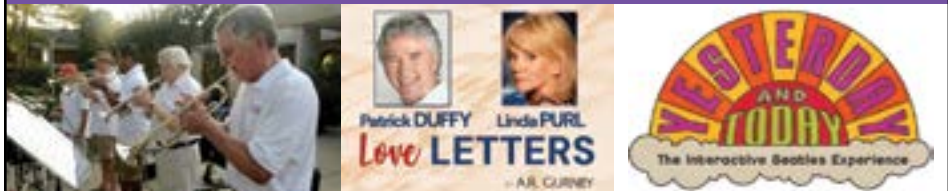


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COLD OPEN

Education continues to be top of mind in Lee County

This is the 80th edition of *The Rant Monthly*. Eighty. If you figure that we average between 36-40 pages each edition over that time, we’ve published 2,880 pages over the last six-plus years. Some of them have even been interesting.

I didn’t go back and officially count, but I’m guess of those nearly 3,000 pages, perhaps a third of them have been dedicated to local education — our public schools, our private schools, our local community college and nearby public and private universities. Teachers have been featured. Students have been featured. Sports teams. Funding. Lack of funding. Questionable tactics regarding tuition and state-funded scholarships.

Again, this isn’t an official count, but I’m guessing another third of our pages have been dedicated to growth in our area. Our rising population. The addition of new businesses. New subdivisions. The benefits of growth. The pain of growth.

Education and growth haven been huge for *The Rant Monthly*, in terms of content. And those two monster topics join forces for this month’s edition, as we look at how growth has impacted our public schools and the need for a new elementary school.

As you’ll learn in our cover story, written by the talented Gordon Anderson and Richard Sullins, there are approximately



9,000 students in Lee County’s public schools, and roughly half of them are in elementary schools. That 4,500 number is projected to grow to more than 6,000 within a decade.

This projection takes into account the new charter schools and the growth at private schools like Grace and Lee Christian. Lee County’s public schools are facing several challenges, and being over capacity at many of the elementary schools shouldn’t be one of them.

When we publish these stories on growth, we’re often met with comments from readers calling for more schools. It looks like those calls are being answered. We’re just hoping the county can catch up in time.

— Billy Liggett

FOUR THANKSGIVING BALLOONS

These are officially the best Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons of all time, so say we:



Felix the Cat First filled with air in 1927, Felix was the first large balloon used in Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.	Underdog Perhaps the most iconic of balloons, it floated from 1965 to the mid 80s, long after the show aired.	Kermit the Frog Kermit has been a part of NYC’s parade off and on since 1977. His balloon got an upgrade in 2002.	Eddie Cantor Who? Why? In 1934, comedian Eddie Cantor became the first human to have a balloon modeled after him.
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LEE COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Parks & Recreation

NOVEMBER HAPPENINGS

Athletics (Winter)

Basketball

Registration Ends: November 7th



6U Co-ed	\$30	M/T & S W/Th & S	Tramway Elem.
8U Co-ed	\$50	M/T & S W/Th & S	B.T. Bullock Elem.
10U Boys	\$50	M/T & S	Bob Hales Center
12U Boys	\$50	W/Th & S	Bob Hales Center
14U Boys	\$50	M/T & S	W.B. Wicker Elem.
11U Girls	\$50	W, S	W.B. Wicker Elem.
14U Girls	\$50	Th, S	W.B. Wicker Elem.

Special Events

Free

Family Movie Night: Double Feature!

Community Event!
Kiwanis Family Park
Friday, November 7th
6:00 PM



Special Olympics



Lee County

Unified Cheerleading

Registration Opens: Nov. 3rd

Ages: 8+
FREE

Gymnastics



Arctic Avalanche Camp

Registration Open

Dec. 29-31 & Jan. 2

7:30 AM - 5:30 PM

Ages: 5-12

Cost: \$120



Youth Programs

Cheerleading (Basketball)

Registration Ends: November 7th



Game Locations based on Basketball

6U	\$30	M/T & S	Greenwood Elem.
8U	\$30	W/Th & S	Greenwood Elem.
11U	\$30	M/T & S	Greenwood Elem.
14U	\$30	W/Th & S	Greenwood Elem.

Ladies Night Crafting

Registration Open

December 5th : 7:30pm - 8:30pm

Bob Hales Center

Ages 18+

Cost: \$25



Parent's Night Out

Registration Open

December 6th & 12th

6:00pm - 9:00pm

Bob Hales Center

Ages 5-12

Cost: \$30



Fees shown are for Lee County Residents.
A non-Lee County Resident Fee of +\$15 may apply.

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At FirstHealth of the Carolinas, we are proud to offer life-saving lung screening to current and former smokers. Lung cancer often has no symptoms until its advanced - but screening can catch it earlier, when it's more treatable. According to the American Lung Association, the 5-year survival rate is 56% when lung cancer is found early, compared to just 5% when detected late. Talking to your doctor about lung cancer screening could be one of the most important conversations you will ever have. It could save your life - or the life of someone you love.



Scan the QR code or call (800) 213-3284 to learn more about lung screening, who qualifies and the FirstHealth Lung Bus.

All patients scanned during the month of November will receive a customized lens cleaning kit.



FirstHealth

CCCC announces ambitious renovation plans

College reveals fundraising effort to match \$500K anonymous donation for renovation of Moore Center on Sanford campus

Courtesy of CCCC

Central Carolina Community College has launched the public phase of the most ambitious fundraising effort in its history — the Drive MOORE Solutions Capital Campaign — to pay for the renovation of the Moore Center on the school’s Sanford campus.

The college announced in October that an anonymous donor had pledged a match of up to \$500,000 for donations through Dec. 31. The gift not only jump-starts the campaign but also invites the community to take part in building a center that reimagines the relationship between education and manufacturing, catalyzing job growth and investment.

“With this match, we’re not just adding funds — we’re igniting energy and momentum in our community,” said CCCC President Dr. Lisa Chapman. “Every doubled dollar brings us closer to a center that equips people with skills, drives innovation, and strengthens our economy. It’s a powerful reminder that when our community comes together, great things happen for central North Carolina.”

The Drive MOORE Solutions Capital Campaign is a comprehensive public-private initiative to raise \$25 million to renovate the E. Eugene Moore Manufacturing and Biotech Solutions Center — known as the Moore Center. CCCC is seeking the community’s support to transform the former manufacturing plant and industrial site that is part of its Lee Main Campus into a world-class workforce hub that trains students, supports industry, and attracts new investment to the state and region.

As envisioned, the center will include a combination of integrated training labs and immersive workspaces, as well as “soft-landing” spaces, available to house



Central Carolina Community College is launching a capital campaign to turn the Moore Center into North Carolina’s premier training hub for advanced manufacturing and biotechnology.

and support manufacturing companies in the early stages of investing in the region.

The center’s flexible design will adapt quickly to new technologies and employer needs, giving students and businesses a shared space to innovate and thrive.

THE CAMPAIGN

A capital campaign is a focused, time-limited effort to fund major, long-term investments. Through the campaign, CCCC will Drive MOORE Solutions by addressing four challenges:

- Drive MOORE Investment: Solving the Challenge of Growth — As companies look to expand or invest in central North Carolina, they focus on

location, infrastructure, and workforce. Centrally located, the Moore Center will develop the skilled workforce that attracts new businesses to the region while strengthening and sustaining our existing employers — driving economic growth and creating high-paying jobs across central NC.

- Drive MOORE Partnership: Solving the Challenge of Alignment — Employers, educators and workforce agencies often work in silos. The Moore Center unites them — connecting universities, community colleges, and employers to innovate tailored solutions and then quickly scale for optimization and delivery.

- Drive MOORE Innovation: Solving the Challenge of Change — Rapid automation and biotech advances require constant adaptation. The Moore Center will offer cutting-edge labs, robotics, and automation spaces where students and companies can test and learn and find solutions together.
- Drive MOORE Talent: Solving the Challenge of Awareness — Many North Carolinians, from veterans to adult learners, need affordable, local pathways to high-wage careers, but are unaware of what steps they can take. The Moore Center will educate students about career paths while equipping them with the skills to move forward.

When finished, the facility will stand as North Carolina’s premier training hub for advanced manufacturing and biotechnology — the largest and most comprehensive center of its kind in the state — serving as a model for how education and industry can work together to drive innovation and opportunity.

“When we talk with employers across central North Carolina, they all say the same thing — they need skilled people ready to work,” Chapman said. “This center is our answer to that call. This campaign ensures we can meet employers where they are and prepare our students for where they’re going.”

Donors who give during the challenge period will be recognized in campaign publications, news releases, and events as early champions of the Drive MOORE Solutions effort. Anonymous giving is welcomed, and all contributions count toward the match. Recognition opportunities are available at multiple levels, including naming opportunities for labs, classrooms, and community spaces within the Moore Center.



To make a matched gift, visit cccc.edu/give, mail contributions to CCCC Foundation, 1105 Kelly Drive, Sanford, NC 27330, or contact Dr. Emily C. Hare, CCCC Foundation Executive Director at (919) 718-7230 or email ehare379@cccc.edu.



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OPINION

Not ready for what’s next

By Billy Liggett

They tell you very early on — when your child is still snuggly wrapped in the white, blue and pink striped blanket from the hospital — that it all goes by too fast. And for the first five years of my daughter’s beautiful life, I thought they were all full of it.



Those days of diaper changes, 3 a.m. feedings, unsuccessful attempts at getting them back to sleep, strapping them in and out of car seats, hauling that stroller everywhere you go, bringing them their own neatly sorted kit of food on trips, finding daycare, trusting daycare, cleaning up spills, cleaning up spills and cleaning up spills ... those days drag, my friends. If you’re lucky — and I was lucky — you love every long second of it, because deep down you know there will be a day when you don’t need to read a bedtime story, a day when you can no longer pick them up and a day when they’re not embarrassed to be around you.

But still. Years 1-5 take forever. Why “they” don’t tell you is that at some point, it does fly by. I’m writing this column two days after taking my oldest of three to the DMV to take her driver’s test. I write this just one day after the first time she asked if she could grab the keys, pick up her friend down the road and go get some ice cream. And in just a few days, we’ll be handing her the keys to a vehicle that will, whether I like it or not, will be hers.

And I say this without a shred of sensationalism for column’s sake — it feels like only yesterday she was performing a dance routing in her elementary school graduation ceremony. In fact, that was during COVID. It really was just yesterday, in the grand scheme of things.

Facebook is doing me no favors with its constant “memories” reminders showing me her first steps, her Harry Potter-themed birthday party and the first time she performed as a dancing plate in a “Beauty and the Beast” musical. I’m dumbfounded that we got to this point, and I find myself wanting to warn colleagues who’ve become new parents that it really does go by in a blink.

The knife in my heart was pushed in a little deeper while all of this was happening when my daughter received her first letter from an in-state college, letting her (and her parents) know that her next step toward adulthood is right around the corner.

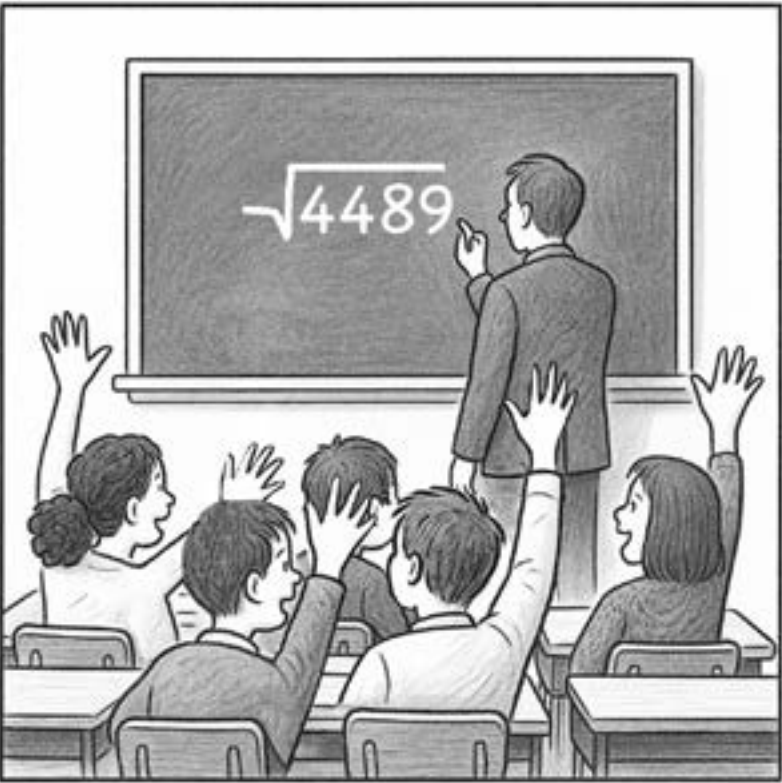
Thirty months away. Thirty months. Part of me wants to hide all future admissions letters, and part of me wants to be excited about this monumental time of life she’s about to experience.

Those same parents who were quick to warn me about the passage of time 16 years ago — I need their advice again. How do I not focus on the inevitable? How do I fully appreciate the time she still lives under my roof? How do I let go and trust that this world isn’t as terrible as I sometimes believe it can be? How can this be so sad and exciting at once?

It really doesn’t seem that long ago when I wrote my first “fatherhood” column, penned the night my daughter was born as I celebrated a new life shortly after witnessing, on a different floor of the hospital, a family saying their “good byes” to a dying grandparent.

It does go by too fast. All of it.

If you want to offer words of advice on dealing with college-bound or leaving-the-nest children, email billy@rantnc.com.



DEGENERATIVE AI

“My God, what have I done?”

TARGET NOT THE BULLSEYE IT ONCE WAS

Don’t get us wrong. We’re excited about the idea of a new Target coming to Sanford. We at *The Rant* have long been proponents of smart growth, and the addition of Target brings much more than just a new store — the economic impact the brand usually brings spreads much further, with “satellite” stores that typically surround the red and white logo.

But adding a Target to a city like Sanford isn’t the “sure thing” it might have been if this was, say, 2005 instead of 2025. Target, nationally, is coming off of one of its worst fiscal years in the business’ 63-year history, and recent news of layoffs at the corportate level do little to quell concerns.

The Minnesota-based retail giant announced last month it was laying off 8 percent of its global corporate staff (about 1,000 people) and closing hundreds of open positions. The decision comes on the heels of several missteps for the company in the last few years — scaling back its DEI efforts, 18 straight months of declining foot traffic and a 21 percent fall in net income in its net income.

Stock prices are falling, while other retailers like Walmart and Costco continue to see growth.

Cause for concern? Yes. Sears and JC Penny used to seem unsinkable, and both had a presence in Sanford until recent years.

Reason to oppose a Sanford store? Not quite. Should the company choose Sanford, it would be part of a recent strategy to build in smaller markets like Aberdeen just down the highway. Target’s layoffs, analysts say, are more of a corporate “fix” and less of a scale-back.

And Target stores continue to have an undeniable economic impact on the areas they build in. Restaurants, grocery stores and other retailers often follow when Target comes, and the revitalization of west Sanford will be no different (and will be much needed).

So, no, we haven’t changed our minds on the idea of Target in Sanford. It will provide an ecomomic jolt to the area, and it will make a lot of people happy. But we don’t dismiss those who question our local government’s decision to approve the deal, either.

READERS RESPOND: TARGET’S FUTURE IN SANFORD

The Rant’s cover story last month on the likely addition of a Target shopping center in Sanford has the city buzzing. The following are just a few of the comments from readers of The Rant Monthly:

Thank you to Commissioners Lovick, Reives Sr., Sharpe and Vorbeck for making this decision. This is a great step forward! From my experience, I anticipate Lee County will receive \$6 to 10 million annually in tax revenue, which will benefit the entire community by supporting schools, infrastructure, and emergency services. This is great news for Sanford and Lee County.

Jordan Hibbard

We moved from a small town in Georgia to Sanford. One of the reasons is because that once-small town started growing, but never stopped. Between new businesses and

huge 100- to 200-house subdivisions, traffic congestion, property tax increase and let’s not forget crime. Farms will be a thing of the past. We live close to White Hill Farm, Johnson General Store and Douglas Farm, and I love those farms to get fresh fruit and vegetables. I understand the need for new things, but please know when to stop.

Denise Cameron-Garner

For those who do not understand how this works, the incentives we provide for large businesses to come here increase our tax revenue, which pays for more schools, infrastructure and emergency services. This is wonderful news.

Beth Whitehead Bray

Look at how Holly Springs grew after their Target shopping center came in. This is great news for everyone if it’s built.

Dominic Balla

I think the difference will be all of the new construction going up on the west and north end of town, thats what’s selling in Sanford right now. They really need something on that side, and the fact that it’s a Target will pull the western Harnett side that currently go to Fayetteville for its Target.

Sherry Arnold

Do y’all remember back in the mid-90s, when Riverbirch was really booming and the county had only about half as many residents? The traffic could get pretty bad on some days, especially during the holidays. If this project goes forward, I really hope they address traffic flow improvements.

Jamie Quinn

Why do we think we need so much stuff? I moved here from Los Angeles and later Sarasota. What about the deer, the geese, the fishing and the hiking trails? Simple is sooo underrated.

Colleen Alexander

I concur there is much growth going on in the Sanford area. What concerns me is developing infrastructure, increasing the number of schools, affordable and safe daycare and such areas. Who is attending to these processes?

Meri Ann Worley

Make this area similar to Beaver Creek in Apex. Better stores brings in more jobs. This will also bring more value to the town. It may start the push to update downtown. There are too many empty stores for a nice town with so much potential.

Adrian Chavez

Please, for the love of God, tell me Roses is coming back. That’s the only place I can get good Wranglers at a decent price.

Richard Sherman

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COVER STORY

KEEPING UP

SANFORD AND LEE COUNTY’S RECENT SIGNIFICANT GROWTH HAS CAUGHT UP WITH ITS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND TALKS TAKING SHAPE ON HOW TO SERVE A RISING POPULATION



About 4,500 of the district’s roughly 9,000 students are at the elementary level. The N.C. State Institute for Transportation Research and Education estimates that number to grow to more than 6,000 within a decade.

By Gordon Anderson
and Richard sullins
gordon@rantnc.com | richard@rantnc.com

Growth presents challenges in every sector of a community. An influx of new residents means leaders, particularly in the public sector, have to weigh how to adequately provide government services at the scale necessary – water, transportation, public safety and more.

Nowhere is this more true than in the field of public education.

Public schools are often where the lives of everyday people intersect most directly with local government — kids need to be educated, after all, and even if one isn’t a particularly avid observer of local government’s doings, the education of your children is generally something you’re going to be interested in, and so it’s naturally where the rubber meets the road for lots of folks.

There are already plenty of kids to be educated, and families taking an interest in that education. Lee County’s rate of growth makes it clear there are probably going to be a whole lot more with each passing year. Current estimates put the county’s population at about 68,000 people, with a pace of for more than 75,000 by the start of the next decade.

Projections show 80,000 people living in Lee County by 2035.

Recent articles on new subdivisions and the county’s growth published by *The Rant* have been met with pleas for attention to the local public education system and “overcrowded” schools. As reported in recent months, Lee County’s schools are not technically overcrowded, but that doesn’t mean they won’t approach or even exceed capacity in the relatively near future.

Leaders in both the public school system and in county government

have been laying the groundwork for a new elementary school for some time. It’s a slow process, though, and a complicated one with a lot of steps. There’s the matter of finding suitable land, lining up financing to pay for its purchase, hiring an architect to design the school, hiring a builder to stand it up, staffing the school, drawing new district lines, and more.

Most of those steps are still fairly far away. But steps are being taken.

The last new school built in Lee County was W.B. Wicker Elementary, opened in 2019 amid a period when Sanford’s economic development efforts really began to pay off. Through partnerships between the Lee County Board of Education, the Sanford Area Growth Alliance, county commissioners, municipal leaders in Sanford and Broadway, and even Central Carolina Community College, the region was already seeing a steady influx of new industries and new houses and, with them, new residents.



According to Lee County Schools, the district’s most crowded elementary school is Deep River Elementary, which is fewer than 50 students away from capacity. Broadway and J. Glenn Edwards schools are projected to exceed capacity in the next five years.

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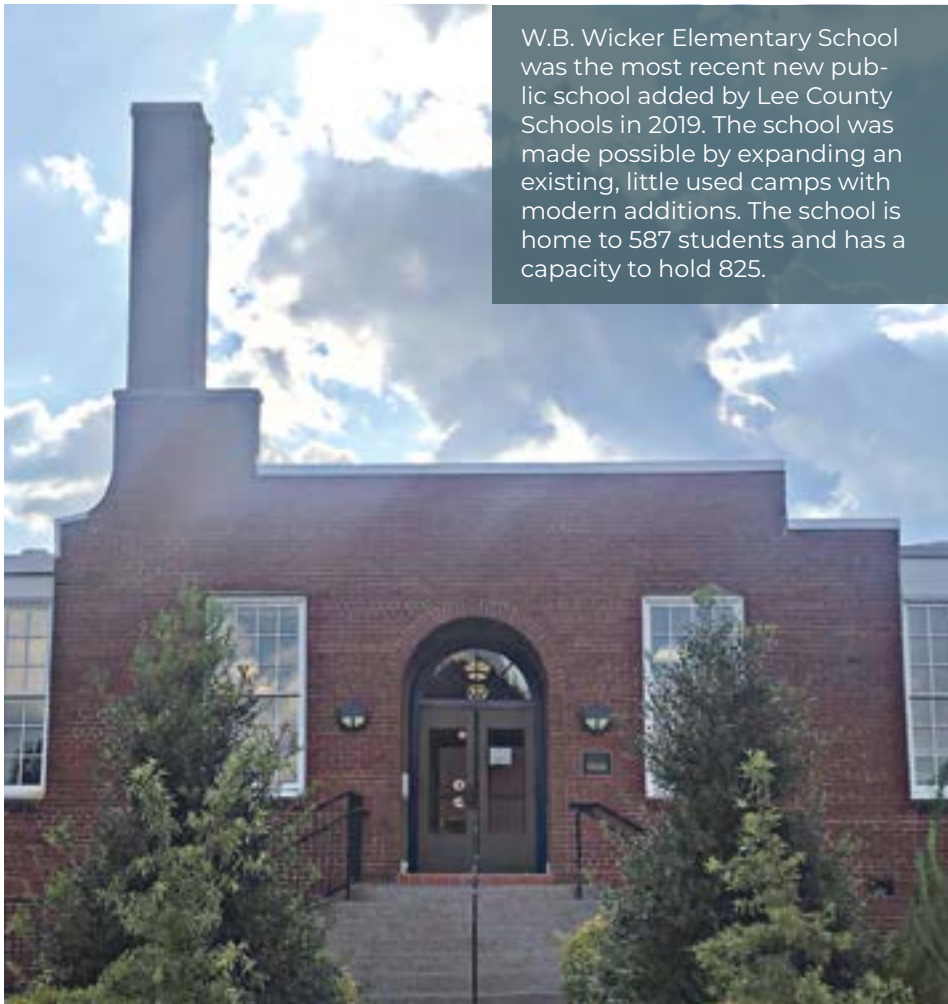
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W.B. Wicker Elementary School was the most recent new public school added by Lee County Schools in 2019. The school was made possible by expanding an existing, little used camps with modern additions. The school is home to 587 students and has a capacity to hold 825.

SCHOOL CAPACITY IN LEE COUNTY			
Current enrollment (K-12)		Projected growth (2035)	
~9,000 students		+15-20 percent	
BT Bullock Elementary		J.R. Ingram Elementary	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 599Current enrollment: 513Expected to exceed capacity: 2030-31		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 683Current enrollment: 424Expected to exceed capacity: N/A	
Broadway Elementary		Tramway Elementary	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 599Current enrollment: 521Expected to exceed capacity: 2029-30		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 599Current enrollment: 549Expected to exceed capacity: N/A	
Deep River Elementary		W.B. Wicker	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 599Current enrollment: 566Expected to exceed capacity: 2027-28		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 825Current enrollment: 587Expected to exceed capacity: N/A	
Greenwood Elementary		New-build estimated cost	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 683Current enrollment: 596Expected to exceed capacity: 2032-33		\$56 million - 850 students - 50-year lifespan	
J. Glenn Edwards Elementary		Expansion estimated cost (per location):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Capacity: 683Current enrollment: 592Expected to exceed capacity: 2029-30		\$25 million - 300 students	
		Cost per seat: \$65,882 (new) vs \$83,333 (expansion)	

— Source: Lee County Schools

These gains, however, came with mounting pressure: many businesses looking to relocate to the area asked what our schools are like, and the answer for Lee County Schools in many cases had usually been something like “passing but unremarkable.” Many parts of the state with similar demographics grapple with the same reality, so that’s not a judgment on the ability of the educators in our community. It’s just that the need for modern, high-quality educational facilities has become more clear with each passing month both as a matter of community pride, and in order to sustain economic growth.

Well before W.B. Wicker opened, there were already rumblings about the need for additional schools — maybe not in any one specific area, but needed all the same.

North Carolina State University’s Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) presented a land use study to the school board in September, offering a data-driven

view of the growth in Lee County and its impact on public schools. It reported that more than 79 residential developments are pending countywide and expected to bring more than 15,600 new housing units. It further reported that Sanford’s city limits continue to expand through annexation with robust industrial and commercial development, and that infrastructure capacity in areas like water, sewer, and transportation remains strong. But it concludes the schools will eventually reach capacity.

About 4,500 of the district’s roughly 9,000 students are at the elementary level. The ITRE estimates that number to grow to more than 6,000 within a decade. According to numbers presented to the school board in October, the district’s most crowded K-5 facility is Deep River Elementary, which was built in 1998 and already less than 50 students away from capacity. Broadway Elementary is projected to begin exceeding capacity by 2029-30, as is J. Glenn Edwards Elementary, built in 1987.



B.T. Bullock, Deep River and Tramway elementary schools all share the same late-1990s layout, and all three are expected to approach or exceed capacity in the next three to five years.

Other schools aren’t far behind. B.T. Bullock Elementary shares the same late-1990s building layout as Deep River and while not currently overcrowded, will likely reach its limit by 2030-31. Greenwood Elementary, Lee County’s southernmost elementary school, is holding steady for now, but even it is expected to operate near capacity by 2032-33. Only W.B. Wicker, which was built as an expansion of a historic campus with modern additions; Tramway Elementary, the county’s only year-round school which serves students across the county on a lottery admission basis; and J.R. Ingram Elementary in west Sanford have what could be characterized as breathing room. But even they could face pressure within 10 or 15 years if enrollment continues to rise as projected.

The Lee County BOE voted unanimously in to begin the process of selecting a site for a new elementary school (its ninth)

Coupled with the unpredictability of construction costs and the unpredictability of government funding sources the further you get from Lee County, the report essentially comes to the conclusion that if the best time to start planning for a new school was yesterday, then the next best time is now.

The Lee County Board of Education voted unanimously in September to begin the process of selecting a site for a new elementary school, which would be Lee County’s ninth (this doesn’t include campuses like Warren Williams, Floyd Knight, or Bragg Street Academy — those schools serve critical purposes, but also serve more niche populations).

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The school board’s motion authorizes Superintendent Dr. Chris Dossenbach to begin searching for suitable land, including hiring a real estate agent.

The decision marked a turning point after years of growing concern that Lee County’s existing school infrastructure can’t keep pace with development. Representatives from the ITRE warned the board in September that waiting any longer could mean losing out on millions in potential funding from the N.C. Education Lottery and other state-level programs — funding sources whose application windows are quickly closing.

It is not yet known where exactly Lee County’s elementary school might go, but a separate report presented to the school board in October — the School Expansion Feasibility Update — made clear that a new school and not an expansion of one or more of the district’s existing schools would be the most cost effective.

The School Expansion Feasibility Update made clear that a new school — and not an expansion of an existing one — would be the most cost effective

The price tag for a new elementary school which would seat about 800 kids is anticipated to be about \$56 million. Expanding existing campuses, by contrast, would run about \$25 million per location, but only add 300 seats in each one. That means each seat would cost just shy of \$66,000 in a new school, but more than \$83,000 in an expansion.

Further, many of the existing campuses are more than capable of serving their current populations, but are bound by limitations in acreage as well aging infrastructure (maintenance costs at a new facility would

be much lower than in an expanded campus, it’s noted), leading the study to conclude that expansion would be more of a “band aid” than a long-term solution for a county undergoing a rapid population boom.

For a local government project as massive as a new school, there’s more than one elephant in the room. The biggest one in this case is paying for it. A \$56 million price tag isn’t cheap, but there are indications that it might not be as painful for local taxpayers as it could be. Lee County Schools has applied for a grant from the North Carolina Education Lottery that would, if

approved, cover as much as \$42 million of that cost. The Lee County Board of Commissioners — responsible by state statute for funding educational facilities — has agreed to cover the remaining \$14 million if the state deems Lee County Schools’ application worthy of funding, giving some measure of hope that the price tag won’t overwhelm the county’s ability to meet all of its obligations without any kind of tax increase.

In North Carolina, the system for school construction funding is uniquely complicated. Counties are legally required to fund the construction and maintenance of public school buildings, but they’re largely or even completely removed from decisions about where or when those schools are built, how they’re staffed, and how they’re operated. Those decisions rest entirely with local boards of education, which identify the need, select sites, and request the necessary funding. This division of responsibility means the two boards have to

coordinate since one of them makes the spending decisions while the other has to put up the money. And that coordination often comes with tension — the schools and the commissioners have spent much of the past two years in a back and forth over pay for classified staff that lags many other areas of the state, so funding a new school is an issue likely to come with some intense deliberating and negotiating in its own right, to say the least.

School construction in North Carolina requires one of two mechanisms — either a bond referendum or the issuance of limited obligation bonds. In a bond referendum, voters are asked to approve the spending and, if they do, give county governments authority to issue bonds to pay for it (and increase property taxes if needed). But North Carolina also requires bond referenda to be held in presidential election years, and as laid out earlier, waiting until 2028 just isn’t feasible with the county’s rate of current growth.

That leaves limited obligation bonds, which come with slightly higher interest rates than voter-approved spending. Luckily for Lee County and Lee County Schools, limited obligation bonds are actually preferred for the N.C. Lottery grant that’s being sought. But if that grant funding doesn’t come through, the question of how to fund a new elementary school hasn’t really been discussed by the two boards.

The question of schools and their capacity to educate the children in Lee County is a valid one, even if they aren’t overcrowded today. And it may be a number of months before we know where a new school might be located or what it will look like, and further years before ground is broken, construction gets under way, and doors finally open. But the matter is on the radar for leaders in the area, as is determining how to pay for it. Expect more discussion going forward.



Spurred in large part by the growth of the Triangle area, North Carolina is pace to become the seventh largest state in the country in the next decade, as the state’s population will reach 11.7 million by 2030, new projections show. Lee County is one of 20 counties (out of 100) in the state with a projected growth of 6 percent or higher (7.3%).


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NEW CCCC PROGRAM
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BECOME TEACHERS

After six weeks of filling in as a teacher, Amanda Morse looked at her students and thought, “I can do this.” That confidence boost helped lead Morse, a teaching assistant, to check out Central Carolina Community College’s teacher preparation associate degree program.

Morse was among the attendees at a recent “TA to Teacher” information night in October, held by CCCC, East Carolina University and Lee County Schools to share information about a program called Partnership Teach with teaching assistants and other school support professionals.

Through Partnership Teach, students can earn an associate degree in teacher preparation at CCCC and then a bachelor’s degree in education from East Carolina University.

Students complete the program locally, with no need to relocate. School employees can continue to work while they are learning.

“I have just fallen in love with the kids and the job,” said Morse, who has worked in a special needs classroom at SanLee Middle School for three years. “I just feel sometimes that they need someone that’s like me.”

Partnership Teach is one of multiple paths that students can take, with help from CCCC, to gain the education and experience they need to become certified teachers.

“The best way to staff our schools is to grow our own,” Lee County Schools Executive Director of Human Resources Patricia Coldren told the event participants. “You know the kids, you know the families, you know the community, and you are already showing up for them every day.”

Ginger Harris Bartholomew, Department Chair for Education Programs at CCCC, said students can take CCCC courses in person, online, or a combination of both, at a flexible pace.

She also pointed out that many teaching assistants and other school employees have college credits they could apply toward the associate degree in teacher preparation.

— courtesy of CCCC

County surprises many with move to MedEx for ambulance services

By Richard Sullins
richard@rantnc.com

For the second time in five years, Lee County residents could have a new provider of emergency medical services when the next fiscal year begins on July 1.

After a second public hearing and questions from the commissioners in October, the county’s staff was directed after a 4-3 vote to prepare a first reading of an EMS franchise ordinance with MedEx, a privately-owned ambulance service based in Hertford County.

This first draft of the ordinance will serve as the basis for negotiations that will govern who will provide emergency medical services for Lee County, as well as the expectations of the county under which they will be provided. An earlier public hearing, held on Oct. 6, was sparsely attended. This second public hearing on Oct. 20 saw attendance of a little more than 100 people in the audience.

FirstHealth of the Carolinas has held the county’s EMS contract since October 2021, but that agreement ends on June 30. FirstHealth and MedEx both made submissions for the next contract which will cover EMS service locally until 2031.

The recent vote to move into a negotiation phase with MedEx came along party lines, with Republicans Andre Knecht, Taylor Vorbeck, Samantha Martin, and Chairman Kirk Smith voting to in MedEx’s favor. The board’s Democrats, Cameron Sharpe, Robert Reives Sr. and Mark Lovick, cast their ballots in favor of moving to the next step in the process with FirstHealth.

The selection of MedEx as the company with which to negotiate surprised many in Lee County. County staff had recommended to the commissioners earlier this year that selecting a vendor a full year ahead of the FirstHealth contract’s expiration in June would be advantageous to the board, given the commissioners have a plateful of

issues that need to be handled before the terms of four among their membership (Republicans Smith, Knecht, and Vorbeck, and Democrat Reives) are put before the voters 13 months from now.

The justification was that clearing the table of as many of these issues as possible before the election would help to prevent them from becoming campaign issues. The financing of a new elementary school, an unresolved dispute with the school board over locally funded positions, and a decision on the refurbishment or replacement of a new county jail and justice center are items already at the top of that list.

While the commissioners have been collecting cost estimates on those big-ticket items for the past several months, the estimated costs of a new five-year deal for EMS were still on the horizon. Almost no one anticipated the extent of surprise when the county’s Emergency Medical Services Advisory Committee was presented with a proposal from FirstHealth of the Carolinas, the current franchise holder, which proposed increasing the contract’s value by millions of dollars per year. The original contract with FirstHealth was agreed upon in 2021 after it wrestled the county’s business away from the service that had provided since 1997, Central Carolina Hospital.

FirstHealth assumed control of Lee County’s emergency medical service functions on Oct. 1, 2021. FirstHealth quickly hired some of the former CCH employees and occupied some of the spaces CCH had made use of before.

FirstHealth experienced some expected issues with the start-up of its own operations, and many of these were brought to resolution over time. As FirstHealth continued to make regular reports to the commissioners, the company appeared to be hitting its performance metrics most of the time and the commissioners appeared to be generally happy with the way things were going.

But an undercurrent of concern began to make itself felt more with each passing year, much of it centering around the ways the increasing costs of providing the service were being passed along to the county. Still, having the incumbency of an existing agreement gave FirstHealth an advantage. The company seemed to have a good relationship with the county and it was meeting the performance measures within the contract. So when the county’s EMS Advisory Committee issued a Request for Proposals in late spring, few were surprised when it recommended a renewal of the contract for another five-year term.

That feeling among the county’s own professional staff could be seen among the items in the packet of materials sent to the commissioners before Monday, in a draft of a franchise agreement between the county and FirstHealth that spelled out how the partnership would function between the two until the summer of 2031. Instead, the vote directed county staff to prepare a second EMS franchise agreement, this time with MedEx. That draft item is expected to be on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting of the commissioners on Nov. 3.

Many of the questions posed by the commissioners to MedEx CEO Dillon Lowe centered around the ability of his company to meet the performance metrics contained within the RFP that all applicants were asked to respond to.

The company makes use of more than 400 employees outfitted in upwards of 90 vehicles in its present footprint of 13 North Carolina counties, making more than 75,000 annual transports. MedEx projected it will make 7,386 emergency calls in Lee County during the first year, along with an additional 6,000 non-emergency transports during the same period, just over 13,000 calls in all.

By way of comparison, FirstHealth projected receiving 5,229 emergency calls, along with another 4,639 that would be

classified as non-emergency calls in 2026, for a total of 9,868 calls received. That’s a difference of 3,500 more calls projected to be received by MedEx than FirstHealth during the first year of the contract and making its projected costs \$3.3 million less than FirstHealth.

The disparity leaves anyone who sees the numbers at a loss to explain it. How could MedEx provide more care for fewer dollars? And how could FirstHealth’s costs have skyrocketed in such a short time? It was this stark difference between FirstHealth’s numbers and the “more calls, less price” proposal from MedEx that drew the greatest number of questions.

Matt Prestwood, president of FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital, said the cost for his company to provide emergency response capabilities this year in Lee County was \$6 million. Compare that figure with the amount contracted by the county in the first agreement between Lee County and FirstHealth for EMS services in fiscal year 2022-23 — that was \$795,000. The proposal submitted by FirstHealth would have increased those subsidies by \$5.2 million over three years. Prestwood couldn’t provide a specific explanation for the differences between the two, other than that it resulted from increases in the cost of doing business.

The 4-3 vote sends the matter back to county staff for revisions to the franchise ordinance, an action that would amend the proposed franchise ordinance to remove the name of FirstHealth and put MedEx in its place. Dillon Lowe has told *The Rant* his team is ready to come to Lee County once the remaining processes are finished, and that they plan to hit the ground running.

“MedEx is confident that, once approved, we can bring immediate enhancements to Lee County’s EMS system — not only through exceptional emergency medical services, but also by becoming a strong local employer and community partner,” he said. “Our commitment is to deliver dependable, compassionate care while investing in the people, infrastructure, and future of Lee County. We are optimistic about the opportunity to serve Lee County and confident that our team can provide both the exceptional medical care and community-focused values that residents deserve.”



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POLICE BRIEFS

DEPUTY STRUCK BY CAR WHILE DIRECTING TRAFFIC NEAR SCHOOL

A Lee County deputy who was directing traffic outside of Tramway Elementary School on Oct. 27 was struck by a vehicle.

According to Lee County Sheriff Brian Estes, the deputy was directing traffic during school dismissal, and a vehicle hit another one, which then struck the deputy. The sheriff's office said the deputy was "alert and conscious at the scene," but was taken to UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill to be evaluated and treated.

MEN FACE THEFT, DRUG CHARGES AFTER FARM EQUIPMENT REPORTED STOLEN

The Lee County Sheriff's Office received a report of a stolen John Deere backhoe from a construction site located near the 900 block of S. Franklin Drive on Oct. 20.

After an investigation, the stolen equipment was located on Tyndall Drive. Deputies identified Jeffrey Wayne Smith (43) of Sanford and Joshua Daniel Sistare (41) of Sanford as the men responsible for breaking into and stealing the backhoe.

During the course of the investigation, Smith was also found to be in possession of methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia. He was arrested on several charges. Both Smith and Sistare were taken before a Lee County Magistrate and held without bond.

DRUGS FOUND UNDER 'SKIN FOLD' DURING TRAFFIC STOP

Narcotic agents with the Lee County Sheriff's Office conducted a traffic stop that led to the arrest of two individuals on multiple drug-related charges on Oct. 17.

Agents observed a vehicle failing to stop at a red light at the intersection of South Horner Boulevard and Main Street. A traffic stop was initiated, and while speaking with the occupants, agents observed the passenger attempting to conceal a substance later identified as methamphetamine and fentanyl concealed by the driver beneath an abdominal skin fold.

The driver, Roger Lee Birt McCutchen, 44, was arrested on several drug charges.

Company withdraws application for construction landfill on Colon Road

By Gordon Anderson
gordon@rantnc.com

A Raleigh company has withdrawn an application to Lee County government for a construction and demolition landfill at Amos Bridges and Colon roads after facing a torrent of opposition from residents and business interests in the area.

Liberty Waste had proposed the landfill before the Lee County Board of Commissioners in September and requested a franchise from the county to operate the facility. Liberty had said the landfill would have operated for 15 to 18 years, after which it would have been covered and donated for use as a park.

The commissioners approved updates to the county's solid waste ordinance following the request in September, but didn't grant or deny a franchise agreement Liberty needed to operate. But Liberty met strong opposition at a public hearing in October and withdrew its application about a week later.

Bob Joyce, a former economic developer with the Sanford Area Growth Alliance who was working with Liberty on the project, told *The Rant* that Liberty was "evaluating options for the property." The Sanford Area Growth Alliance came out against the proposal in October, with CEO Jimmy Randolph telling the commissioners that if "there's a compelling need ... we strongly urge you to pursue a location somewhere other than the Colon Road thoroughfare."

The parcel in question was home to Sanford Brick from 1920 to 1945, but has been out of use for decades. Liberty owns the property, and it's unclear what options the company may have for it.

Proponents of the landfill had argued that it was different than a municipal solid waste landfill and would only accept items like construction debris, waste lumber, brick, sheet rock, concrete and other similar items, and that 50 percent of the facility would be dedicated to recycling. They also argued that other allowable uses

— uses not requiring approval from the county such as chemical plants, junkyards or slaughterhouses — would arguably be worse for neighbors in the area.

Still, opponents and neighbors said the recent economic development successes in the area — Bharat Forge, life sciences manufacturer Astellas, and numerous housing developments — would be negatively offset by the placement of a landfill.

"If we lose out on a 100 million or quarter billion dollar advanced manufacturing project because we can't supply adequate power or because a company wishes to be closer to downtown Raleigh, or because we don't have enough of a particular type of housing stock, so be it. But if we lose a project because we chose to grant a franchise for a C&D landfill that we didn't particularly need, on property adjacent to an otherwise prime industrial site, that would be on us," Randolph told the commissioners in October.

Sanford artist's work featured by the Louvre

By Gordon Anderson
gordon@rantnc.com

In what has to be a first, Sanford was recently represented at the world's most visited art museum.

Stuart Maynard of Sanford recently had three of his paintings digitally included in an exhibit at the Paris Carrousel Louvre Show. Maynard is the owner of FireSunArtWorks Studio in Sanford and a member of the Sanford Brush & Palette Club. He works in abstraction.

"My wish is (for) the viewer to look into what they see, add their process of sight and see what they feel. I make an alternate reality in my art," Maynard writes on his website. "What do you see?



What do you feel? Where are you now?"

Maynard's three pieces received rave reviews from the show's judges, who wrote: "This artwork seamlessly blended abstract form with a suggestive narrative,

inviting onlookers to engage with the duality of chaos and calm," and, "The incorporation of vertical lines and bold gestures created a rhythm that resonated deeply, encouraging reflections on personal experiences and cultural legacies."

"The explosive arrangement of colors — akin to confetti in motion — fostered a sense of festivity that was infectious, drawing visitors in and prompting smiles and conversations about the happiness encapsulated in your work," read another. "The interplay of form and spontaneity created a captivating visual experience that lingered with those who encountered it."

For more information about Maynard's work, visit stuartmaynard.com.

New access point for kayakers, tubers opens along Deep River

Special to *The Rant*

Local and state leaders gathered just north of the Lee-Chatham county line on Oct. 24 to celebrate the opening of a new public access to the Deep River.


The access is at 7140 Moncure Pittsboro Road in Moncure, and part of the Deep River State Trail, which stretches along its namesake from High Point to Sanford. Chad Spivey of Sanford has been instrumental in establishing boat accesses to the river in the Lee and Chatham county area, and played a large role in this one.

He was present as leaders cut the ribbon on the location.

"These projects cannot be completed without N.C. State Parks, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. Army Corps of Engineers, DOT, Lee County Parks and Rec, (Triangle Land Conservancy), (Deep River State Trail), Piedmont Land Conservancy, and local/state elected officials. I've met and now work with so many great outdoor leaders ... and so many other amazing people who have dedicated their lives to preserve land for generations to enjoy. I'm grateful to be a small part of this phenomenal team," Spivey wrote on Facebook.



Officials cut the ribbon on a new public access point along the Deep River on Moncure Pittsboro Road in Moncure.




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Q&A: Rhodes, Williams for Sanford Council

***Editor’s Note:** Part 2 of 2. The first half of this questionnaire appeared in the October edition of The Rant Monthly. The entire Q&A can be found online now at rantnc.com.*

Voters in Sanford will choose on Nov. 4 between Democratic incumbent Linda Rhodes and Republican challenger Louis Williams in the 2025 municipal race for an at-large seat on the Sanford City Council. Early voting begins on October 16. *The Rant* asked questions to Rhodes and Williams, and their answers are printed as received below.

Question: What issues are you hearing about from the people of Sanford as you campaign for this seat? What ideas do you have to address them?

Rhodes: Residents feel dissatisfied and disappointed with government, because they believe their voices aren’t being heard, decisions take too long or leaders are out of

touch with everyday concerns.

Trust is built when leaders listen, act transparently and show results. That’s where I choose to make a difference.

I believe in being accessible and open, not just during election season. By answering questions directly and keeping residents informed, I can make sure people feel included in the process.

I also want to focus on practical solutions to the issues that affect daily life — such as housing, jobs, safety, and infrastructure — rather than creating divisive political distractions. My current role in city council is to bridge the gap between residents and government, to bring their concerns into every decision, and to follow through with accountability.

By working together, we can restore trust and ensure government is responsive, efficient, and working for the people it serves.

Residents are frustrated that city coun-

cil races are partisan, when for years they worked effectively without party labels. People see national issues working their way into local issues, creating discord in a place where neighbors should be working together. Local government is about solving problems — fixing roads, supporting public safety, maintaining parks, and planning for growth — not about party loyalty. When you ask candidates to take an oath to a political party or you summon them to a “kangaroo political party court proceeding,” you are no longer interested in public service. You are interested in self-service.

I am a Democrat and my campaign manager, Richard Porter, is a Republican. Many of my supporters are Republicans. My focus is on the residents of Sanford, not political parties.

That means listening to all residents, respecting different viewpoints, and making decisions based on what benefits all of Sanford, not what fits into a political agenda.



Rhodes



Williams

My leadership style is transparent, accessible, and accountable. I work every day to restore confidence and maintain a common-sense approach that puts residents first.

Williams: I’m concerned for the overall health of our community. Developers are racing to build where their money can sway property owners towards their designs. Profit! When the nation’s largest development company DR Horton starts buying up land, smaller corporations follow suit. Imagine over 30,000 new homes in a county of 32,000. If each household averages 2.5-3 people per, the population will TRIPLE.

But what’s the real cost to those who live

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and work here? Expansion on the outskirts, but no revitalization of older neighborhoods is akin to allowing an open wound to fester and thinking it will heal itself and not require resources intended for elsewhere. Ward 3 has vacant houses and lots, houses in disrepair, almost constant police presence due drugs, prostitution and vagrants. The city is spending millions building a new agriculture facility, while commercial derelict buildings sit idle and decay a few yards away.

The vagrants know what to do with these structures. Jonesboro has a strip mall with more than 60% vacant business spaces. A solution for Jonesboro would be make a dining/entertainment area and social district. There’s ample parking and accessible from all directions. Ward 3 would benefit from community gardens on vacant lots, incentivize the updating or selling of abandoned properties so new home buyers can invest in their community and give the criminal element no place to hide. Then the resources spent in policing and apprehending criminals can be rerouted to more benevolent uses.

When the poorest of neighborhoods

prosper and thrive the rest of the city will thrive even more. We would also benefit from alternative living structures that could make home ownership obtainable for those with fewer resources.

Let me not forget that we have a dense Latin community that is still somewhat detached. With concerted effort, I know we can improve our relationship with that segment and make this city all inclusive.

Question: Are there any issues you’ve thought about that most people might not be aware of, and that you anticipate the council will need to address in the coming years? What are they, and what do you think the council should do about them?

Rhodes: These issues may not sound exciting, but can directly impact property values, safety, and quality of living.

Stormwater and Flooding: Poor drainage can damage property and roads. Approach: Invest in stormwater systems and educate residents on prevention.

Sidewalks and Connectivity: Gaps in sidewalks affect safety, especially for children, seniors and people with disabilities. Approach: Prioritize walkability in planning and secure grants for improvements.

Aging Infrastructure: Old water, sewer, and electrical systems often fail unexpectedly. Approach: Develop long-term replacement plans to prevent emergencies and rising costs.

Traffic Flow and Road Safety: Intersections, speeding, and poorly timed signals frustrate drivers and increase accidents. Approach: Use traffic studies and community feedback to guide improvements.

Parks and Green Spaces: Without care, they decline and lose their value to families and neighborhoods. Approach: Regular maintenance and community partnerships keep them vibrant.

Technology and Broadband: Unequal internet access limits education and business opportunities. Approach: Expand broadband infrastructure and promote digital inclusion.

I look forward to great days ahead and am grateful to live in Sanford. If you have ques-

tions, comments, or complaints please reach out. I can be reached at landchrhodes@icloud.com or (919) 353-1186.

I will close by saying thank you again, and please vote! Early voting begins on Oct. 16 and continues until Nov. 1 at 3 p.m.

Williams: I want to remind voters that WE are the government. Public office is an opportunity to serve the public as employees not controlling bosses. What benefits the most is the best for all.

We are experiencing a whirlwind of change and we pay for it in multiple ways. Don’t “We The People” get a say in our own future?

Shouldn’t our common goal be preserving the lifestyle and community that made Sanford and not have it become the southern point of the Triangle, aka the Diamond?

I believe that Sanford as a unique opportunity to become the model of a self-sustainable region, with farming and industry work side by side for the entire state and possibly the nation.

Let’s make government make sense. I ask for your vote Nov. 4.

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EDUCATION BRIEFS

**WILLIAMS NAMED
LCS BEGINNING
TEACHER OF YEAR**

Lee County Schools announced Virginia Williams, an educator at W.B. Wicker Elementary, as the district’s Beginning Teacher of the Year. According to the districts, Williams — now in her second year — has demonstrated “remarkable passion, creativity and dedication to her students,” to earn the honor.

As one of the original staff members who helped reopen W.B. Wicker Elementary in 2019, Williams began her career as an instructional assistant, a role that she credits with giving her the foundation to be the educator that she is today. She took advantage of the district’s TA to Teacher licensure pathway, completing her coursework and certification while employed in the district.

In her classroom, Williams fosters a dynamic and flexible learning environment that adapts daily to meet the needs of her students. She places strong emphasis on building meaningful relationships with students and their families, believing that connection is the key to academic and personal success.

Her teaching philosophy centers on high expectations paired with support, encouragement, and consistency. She is known for her willingness to step outside the box to ensure her students are engaged and growing.

“Success is growth — whether academic, emotional, or social — in a classroom where engagement is key,” said Williams.



CCCC’s Basic Law Enforcement Training graduates pose together at their Oct. 8 graduation ceremony at the Dennis. A Wicker Civic and Conference Center in Sanford. Pictured above are (front row, left to right) Savannah Godfrey, Christie Brink, Ethan Harris, Sage Dougherty, (middle row) Duncan Bisson, Jackson Parker, Payton Tickle, Denise Lopez, (back row) Dene O’Daniel, Anthony Dancy, Mitchell Kaczmarek and Tanner Whitt. Pictured right, Denise Lopez receives hugs after the ceremony.



**PTO THRIFT STORE GIVES
\$99,900 TO LCS SCHOOLS**

The PTO Thrift Store has made a \$99,900 donation to the eight qualifying schools in the district. Schools qualify individually by having volunteers serve a total of at least 150 combined hours during the course of the year.

Four elementary schools — Broadway, Deep River, Tramway and W.B. Wicker

— qualified for this year’s donation. Lee County and Southern Lee High School both qualified while SanLee Middle and Floyd L. Knight Center also exceeded the minimum volunteer hours for the year.

“It truly is a grassroots effort that makes the store successful and gives our schools a little extra support,” said Ashley Mel-polder, who serves as the president of the PTO Thrift Store Board and a teacher at Floyd L. Knight. “We are so thankful to

the store staff for what they do to make our volunteer program successful and give us the opportunity to make a big impact on our local school campuses.”

The store is located at 303 South Steele Street and accepts donations of new or gently used items. Schools that have volunteers who serve a combined 150 hours at the store qualify for the annual distribution of store profits.

**DEADLINES NEAR FOR
CAMPBELL SCHOLARSHIP,
EARLY ENROLLMENT PERKS**

Future Camels who want to take part of the new Early Campbell Commitment program must apply and be admitted to Campbell by Nov. 15 to qualify for priority housing, priority course advisement and additional financial aid opportunities; and students who want to compete for one of five full-ride J.A. Campbell Scholarships must be admitted and apply for the scholarship by Dec. 1.

College-bound students who want to take part in the new Early Campbell Commitment Program will not only have early access to housing and course registration, they’ll receive priority financial aid packaging and other benefits.

Those who apply and are accepted by Nov. 15 (and make their deposit by Jan. 15) will also be entered to win the following: a semester of free housing, a semester of free meals, book vouchers for a semester, one of five \$1,000 additional scholarships, one of 10 \$150 Camel Bucks prizes and one of two residence hall “essential packages.”

The J.A. Campbell Scholarship is a full-ride scholarship (valued at approximately \$41,000 per academic year) for eight consecutive semesters for undergrads. Recipients must be enrolled full-time, maintain strong academic standing, meet residence life requirements and continue to demonstrate strong leadership ability and commitment to service. Campbell will award five J.A. Campbell Scholarships for the 2026-2027 academic year.



Central Carolina Academy’s girls golf team celebrated its first-place finish in the NCHSAA East Regionals in Washington, North Carolina. Athletic Director Bob Pegram and the girls hoisted the trophy in front of their classmates at the school.

**Students, get your applications in for the
2026 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour!**

Each year, Central Electric sponsors two rising high school juniors or seniors on the trip of a lifetime to Washington, D.C. in connection with the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. While in D.C., you’ll join 1,800 other students from across the country to meet members of Congress, explore American history, and learn about electric cooperatives.

The trip will be hosted in June 2026 and the deadline for all applications is Jan. 20. Scan the QR code or visit CEMCPower.com to apply or to find out more information.



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DEEP RIVER ASST. PRINCIPAL NAMED AP OF THE YEAR

Deep River Elementary Schools Assistant Principal Elayne Monjar was chosen by her peers as the 2025 Lee County Schools Assistant Principal of the Year. District leaders surprised Monjar with the announcement during a staff meeting following the school day in October.

Monjar is now in her second year as Assistant Principal at Deep River after coming over from SanLee Middle School where she served in the same role. She is known for her positive attitude, compassion and creativity.

Superintendent Chris Dossenbach highlighted Monjar’s work, saying, “Elayne Monjar is a quiet but powerful leader whose influence is felt in every corner of her school She leads with compassion, integrity and an unwavering commitment to putting students and staff first.”

Monjar has worked in the district since 2013 when she started at Lee County High School. In 2022, she made her way to serving as an assistant principal at SanLee Middle before switching into the elementary ranks at Deep River to begin the 2024 school year.

“I love supporting students, staff and families every day to make them successful and help them thrive in school,” Monjar said. “After working in all three educational levels from elementary to high school, I know the impact each grade level has on students. So I strive to help in any way that I can, so our students and staff can get their ‘job’ done each school day, whether that is teaching or learning.”



Above: Sam Rubio (upper left) and Nataly Galeano (center), both of Sanford, compete alongside their teammates on Central Carolina Community College’s new women’s soccer team in a match against Cape Fear at the Lee County Athletic Park on Sept. 3.

Right: Ever Quintanilla, a member of Central Carolina Community College’s new men’s soccer team and graduate of Overhills High School, takes part in a match against Wake Tech on Sept. 22.



TWO CCCC STUDENTS EARN ΦΘΚ SCHOLARSHIPS

Two Central Carolina Community College students received \$1,000 scholarships this year through Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Christian Perry, who studies Information Technology: Business Systems & Operations Support at CCCC, was selected as a 2025 Chime Workforce Scholar.

The Chime Workforce Scholarship recognizes high-achieving college students who are pursuing career and technical educational opportunities. This scholarship, from the Phi Theta Kappa Foundation, assists students who are enrolled in a certificate or associate degree workforce development program at a two-year college.

Dominique Small, who studies Business Administration and Accounting & Finance at CCCC, was selected as a 2025

Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholar. Small serves as an officer of CCCC’s PTK chapter. Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholars are selected based on outstanding academic achievement and demonstrated leadership potential. The scholarship is sponsored by the Coca-Cola Foundation.

CCCC’s chapter of Phi Theta Kappa provides students with opportunities for leadership, service, and academic enrichment.

CCCC INSTRUCTORS JOIN EDUCATORS ON TOUR OF BOSNIA

For thousands of years, what is now the nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has stood at the crossroads of eastern and western civilizations and been part of key developments of world history.

Central Carolina Community College faculty Bianka and Ty Stumpf had the chance to visit the Southeast European country this summer on a 13-day study trip for educators sponsored by UNC-Chapel Hill’s Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies.

Flight and program expenses were covered by a grant from UNC and the U.S. Department of Education’s National Resource Centers. As the school year unfolds, the Stumpfs plan to share knowledge, insights, and personal experiences from the trip in the classes they teach.

“Students appreciate that our faculty are authentic people, that we are genuine,” said Bianka Stumpf. “They like it and feel connected to us when we open up a part of ourselves.”

At CCCC, Bianka Stumpf’s roles are history and social sciences lead instructor and Academic & Cultural Enrichment Series coordinator. Bosnia, she said, ties into the history she teaches her students in History 112, which covers world history and world civilizations from 1492 onward. From the mid 1400s to the early 1900s, Bosnia was part of the Ottoman Empire, an Islamic state that controlled vast territories across Southeast Europe, Western Asia and North Africa. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which sparked World War I, took place in Sarajevo at a site the Stumpfs visited.

Stumpf also said she teaches a unit on historiography, the study of the writing of history, that is focused on memorialization. While visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina, she saw many examples she could include. In the capital, they took a picture of a “Sarajevo Rose,” a type of memorial that was made by pouring red



CCCC faculty Ty and Bianka Stumpf, pictured in Trebinje, traveled to Bosnia and Herzegovina this summer on a study trip for educators sponsored by UNC.

resin into the almost-flowerlike patterns of scars and dents in the concrete made by mortar shell explosions during the siege of Sarajevo in the Bosnian war. Each rose marks lives lost.

Ty Stumpf is the chair of the Humanities Department at CCCC. For his teaching of literature, he planned to draw from “Sarajevo Marlboro” by Miljenko Jergovic, a book of short stories about life during the Bosnian war that he read for the trip. The idea, he said, is for students to get an understanding of what literature looks like during wartime in a modern context.

The Stumpfs saw evidence of a culture of reverence for literature, not just in Sarajevo, a big arts hub, but also in Trebinje, a city the size of Sanford. The poet Jovan Dučić is celebrated all over town there, including in a memorial park in the city center and in a monastery built in his honor.

More broadly, Ty Stumpf planned to reflect with his students on the idea of perspective-taking, which involves understanding a situation or concept from another person’s point of view.

“I think that’s always something interesting about touring or looking into places where you are the outsider for once,” he said. “To be in a place where you see things a little differently.”

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EVENT CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 9

DOWNTOWN SANFORD
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Downtown Sanford’s Holiday Open House will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Tis the season to shop and dine downtown — Temple Theatre Company will fill the streets with carolers to entertain you as you get a glimpse of all things Christmas at participating downtown businesses.

NOV 1: St. Luke United Methodist Church will host its annual **Bazaar & Craft Fair** from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the church. Admission is free. Arts, crafts, decor, books, sweets, gifts and children’s clothing will be available for treasure hunters heading into the holiday season.

NOV 1: BTD Conservancy will host the **6 Hour Siege of San Lee**, a cross-country mountain bike endurance challenge, at 9 a.m. at the park in Sanford. Prepare for six hours of pure endurance, grit and strategy on the rugged singletrack of SanLee Park. [backtodirtconservancy.com](#).

NOV 1: Raven Forge Games in downtown Sanford will host a **Rift-bound release** event beginning at 2 p.m. Admission is \$30.

NOV 1: The Sanford Farmers Market will host a special event **Day of the Dead Celebration** from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

NOV 1-2: The final performances of Temple Theatre’s mainstage production of **The Addams Family Musical** will be held over the weekend. Tickets at [templeshows.org](#).

NOV 1: Kiwanis Family Park will host a **Candy Drop in the Park** beginning at 5 p.m. Come dressed in your Halloween costume and be ready for an evening filled with candy and spooky films. Hosted by



the City of Sanford Parks and the Sanford Fire Department.

NOV 2: Raven Forge Games will host a **Pokemon casual tournament** at 1 p.m. Entry is \$5. The store’s Secrets of Power pre-release event will begin at 4 p.m. Entry is \$30.

NOV 2: Hugger Mugger Brewing and Sanford Yoga & Community Center will host **Beer Yoga** at 11 a.m.

NOV 7: Mike Edwards & His Only Friends will perform at Smoke & Barrel at 8 p.m.

NOV 7-8: Hugger Mugger Brewing will host **retro arcade games** from 3 p.m. to midnight — choose from any of the 15 to 20 games available.

NOV 8: The **Heart of Carolina Jazz Orchestra** will feature acclaimed jazz vocalist Evan Cornelious at Temple Theatre at 7:30 p.m.

Cornelious has performed around the world and collaborated with jazz greats including Ramsey Lewis, Roy Hargrove and Chucho Valdés. Learn more at [templeshows.org](#).

NOV 14: Guy Unger Band will perform at Smoke & Barrel at 8 p.m.

NOV 15: The Sanford Farmers Market will host a special event **Holiday Artisan Market** from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Get a jump on Christmas shopping while also seeing the best of what local farmers and artisans have to offer.

NOV 15: The **Southern Touch Craft Show Christmas in Sanford** will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Dennis A. Wicker Civic Center in Sanford. Admission is \$5, and free for children 12 and under. Shop from a large group of local hand-crafted artisans.

NOV 16: Hugger Mugger Brewing will host **Line Dancing** from 2:30 to 5 p.m. at the brewery. Tickets can be purchased at the door.

NOV 19: Greengate Manor and Gardens will host a **Christmas Craft-Tea: Vintage Ornament Workshop** with My So Called Crafty Life from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Craft vintage-inspired ornaments and enjoy cookies, tea and laughter in a beautiful 100-year-old home, glowing with twinkle lights and timeless holiday charm.

NOV 20: The 3rd Thursday Downtown **Sanford Pop & Shop** will run from 5 to 7 p.m. Take a holiday stroll through downtown and uncover pop-up vendors tucked inside your favorite shops.

NOV 21: Smokey Pines will perform at Smoke & Barrel at 8 p.m.



DEC 1: The Sanford Christmas Parade returns at 7 p.m. in downtown Sanford. The longest-running nighttime parade is an annual Sanford tradition.

NOV 22: Hugger Mugger Brewing will host a **Book Fair for Grown Ups** from 2-8 p.m. at the brewery in downtown Sanford.

NOV 22: The **Sanford Car News Cruise’N** will run from 1 to 4 p.m. in front of Camelback Brewing in the Spring Lane Shopping Center. Enjoy door prizes, music, a raffle and more while checking out sweet rides.

NOV 23: Downtown Sanford’s **Sunday with Santa** will run from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Visit Sanford Welcome Center, 229 Carthage Street. Crafts, performances, treats and more as Santa and Mrs. Claus make their annual visit to downtown Sanford.

NOV 25: Temple Theatre will host **A Very Embers Christmas** with guest Christopher Kyle beginning at 7:30 p.m. [templeshows.org](#).

NOV 28: The B Sides will perform at Smoke & Barrel at 8 p.m.

NOV 29: Downtown Sanford Inc. will celebrate **Small Business Saturday** with its eighth annual Holiday Punch Card program, where you can be rewarded big for shopping small in participating downtown Sanford locally owned businesses. Event runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

DEC 4-21: Temple Theatre’s take on **“A Christmas Carol”** returns for a four-week run leading up to Christmas. See showtimes and ticket information at [templeshows.org](#).

DEC 13: Hugger Mugger Brewing’s **Christmas Market** returns at 5 p.m. This year, they’ve added a food truck rodeo to the more than 20 vendors who’ll be on hand.

MONDAYS: Circle M City in Sanford will host **Monday Music Jam Monday** nights at 7 p.m. The town comes alive with pickin’ and singing — guitars, mandolins, banjos, fiddles, bases and their players will gather in the livery stables.

MONDAYS: Lee County Library hosts **Story Time in the Park** each Monday at 10 a.m., rotating between Horton Park and Kiwanis Family Park (check the library website for details).

TUESDAYS: Hugger Mugger Brewing hosts **Tuesday Trivia Night** at 7 p.m. Prizes await the winners.

WEDNESDAYS: Lee County Libraries hosts **Story Time for Toddlers** at the library in downtown Sanford at 10:45 a.m. The Broadway branch hosts its storytime Fridays at 10:45.

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

CROSSWORD: In the Woods

ACROSS

- 1. Flows' partners
- 5. "When Harry ____ Sally..."
- 8. Sound of laughter
- 12. *"Hide" behind the bush
- 13. B  b  s mother
- 14. *Age units in the woods
- 15. Rum cake
- 16. Placido Domingo's solo, e.g.
- 17. Concluded
- 18. *"Into the Woods" star Anna
- 20. Come clean, with up
- 21. Terra ____
- 22. Urge Spot to attack
- 23. One of seven gnomes
- 26. Prior to the present (3 words)
- 30. FEMA provisions, e.g.
- 31. Erratum, pl.
- 34. Int. org. in Brussels
- 35. Merge
- 37. Time frame
- 38. Right-hand page
- 39. 1920s art style
- 40. Cause of wheezing
- 42. Like The Hot Chili Peppers
- 43. ____ God we ____," on U.S. currency
- 45. Some vipers
- 47. Clairvoyant's gift
- 48. Source of chocolate
- 50. Form of payment
- 52. *Edible fungus
- 55. Multi-layered cake
- 56. M  lange
- 57. Utah's national park
- 59. Bake an egg
- 60. Plural of #22 Down

- 61. *" ____ the Woods" play and movie
- 62. Prefix for multiple
- 63. Japanese honorific
- 64. Barely got by

DOWN

- 1. Singular of #1 Across
- 2. *Woodpecker's pecker
- 3. *One lost in the woods
- 4. Posture
- 5. Boy Scout's badge
- 6. "Fear of Flying" author ____ Jong
- 7. *Furniture wood
- 8. *Conifer's dropping
- 9. Peters out
- 10. Def Leppard's "Rock of ____"
- 11. Psychedelic drug, acr.
- 13. St. Valentine, e.g.
- 14. Equip again
- 19. One of Seven Dwarfs
- 22. Rejuvenating spot
- 23. ____ Arabia
- 24. Wrinkle-prone fabric
- 25. Declaration of Independence, e.g.
- 26. 2002 Winter Olympics state
- 27. Mother-of-pearl
- 28. Weasel's cousin
- 29. *Golf's great
- 32. Catch one's breath
- 33. A in MOMA
- 36. *Scientific study in woodlands
- 38. Meteorologist's tool
- 40. Nile reptile

- 41. Masculine one and proud of it, pl.
- 44. Theater greeter
- 46. Something extraordinary
- 48. "Mea ____," or "my fault"
- 49. Hailing from the East
- 50. Type of salmon
- 51. *Seed covering
- 52. *Trunk growth
- 53. Sty cry
- 54. Speck
- 55. Recipe amt.
- 58. Go-ahead

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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