

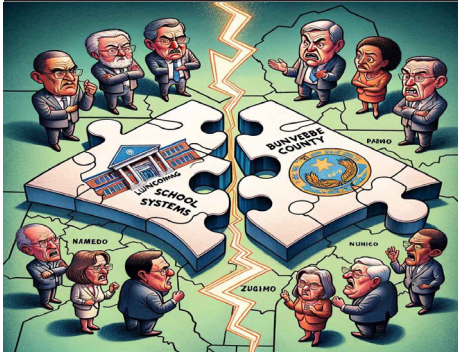


FIRST TUESDAY

— Amplifying conservative voices. —

Another Wake-up Call Monthly Newsletter

Issue 42A | November 13, 2023



Tense Trail to Education System Merger Study

In a follow-up to our ongoing conversation, Buncombe County finds itself at the center of a political maelstrom over the future of its educational structure. Cast your mind back to our September newsletter, where we discussed the Board of Education’s pushback against House Bill 66, legislation that seeks to restrict school board elections to district-only voters. The bill received a nod from conservatives, hopeful it might carve out a place for their voice within Buncombe County’s largely Democrat-run local government.

At an August Buncombe Schools board meeting, board member Amanda Simp-kins and the board’s private attorney, Dean Shatley, expressed frustration over the bill’s stipulations. Then came a surprising development. While not a call for an outright merger, State Senator Julie Mayfield announced that Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County’s school system are mandated to organize a merger study needing completion by 2025.

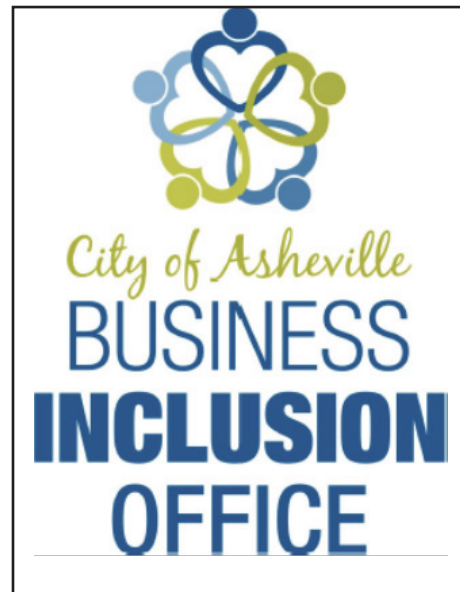
Fast forward to the October 17 Board of Commissioners meeting, where the commissioners, somewhat begrudgingly, voted to lead the School Consolidation Feasibility Study. They tasked county staff with procuring a firm to conduct this assessment, outlined by the county’s Strategic

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Another Taxpayer Investment in Discrimination

Asheville’s journey to equalize business opportunities has been fraught with contentious debate and policies that incite strong opinions. In 1993, the city’s first disparity study reported that significant inequities for minority- and women-owned businesses existed in municipal contracting. The subsequent Minority Business Plan of 1998 sought to level the playing field without considering race or gender—a nod to neutrality that now seems a distant memory.

Fast forward to 2018, another disparity study indicated the problem persisted, laying the groundwork for 2020’s Business Inclusion Policy, activated in 2021. This



policy, created amid a climate charged with social unrest and activism, focuses on counteracting “past discrimination and barriers.” Skeptics see this as a divisive measure, influenced by the very forces that have polarized our community, questioning the impartiality of a policy shaped under pressure.

Asheville City Council decided at their

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“I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy.”

— John Adams



Multimillion Dollar Environmental Agenda Spend

The October 17 unanimous decision by the Buncombe County Commissioners to allocate nearly \$4 million towards the Barnardsville Dillingham Creek Stream Restoration Project, while commendable for its environmental intent, has bypassed a critical step in the process of responsible governance: rigorous public scrutiny and debate.

When asked by the board chairman for comments on the proposed spending, the Commissioners did not delve into the necessity of allocating a substantial sum from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and an additional state grant for this project. At the heart of conservative values is the belief that public servants should scrutinize every dollar they spend to ensure that each dollar is treated with the utmost respect for its source—the taxpayer. We must ensure that these funds are only being used effectively, efficiently, and on projects deemed essential to the community’s well-being.

Inflationary pressures and the deficit-spending patterns of our current administration should make us even more vigilant. Why should COVID relief funds,

see Environmental Agenda on page 4

In Search of Transparency

When we at First Tuesday submitted a public records request on August 25 for comprehensive data on Buncombe County's various boards and commissions, it was more than an inquiry—it was an exercise in fortifying democracy. The county's webpage, tasked with providing a list of board vacancies, had been stuck in the past, showing outdated information that could potentially stifle active citizen participation in local governance. It was a matter of concern, particularly for conservatives seeking to understand their representation in these local entities.

Our mission was clear: We aimed to ensure that our members would be well-informed about upcoming vacancies to encourage participation and bolster the conservative voice in local government. Transparency is the foundation upon which the pillars of governance should stand, and access to such information is a right, not a privilege.



However, despite our repeated requests—and those made on our behalf by SunshineRequest.com—no updates have been forthcoming as of November 3. This silence raises an eyebrow. Is it plausible that the very architects of county administration struggle to compile this information? If so, the rust on the gears of the county clerk's office is more than just an annoyance—it's a systemic problem that undermines the principles of open government.

In an era where data is king, and digital solutions are at the fingertips of every sector, the absence of a simple, efficient records system within the county's infrastructure is a red flag. These are not just clerical tasks; these roles are fundamental to the operational integrity of our county. With reasonable salaries and the resources of a modern IT department, one would expect a streamlined process to fulfill such

see Transparency on page 3

Update: Buncombe County Muni Elections

As of November 7, 2023, the Buncombe County Municipal Elections have concluded successfully. The Buncombe County Election Office worked diligently to orchestrate these elections, focusing on efficient execution of early voting.

In a proactive move, the elections office inaugurated an additional early voting site in Weaverville to facilitate voter access. Both early voting locations concluded on schedule, and the subsequent audit process was conducted with notable enthusiasm.

The October 31st board meeting, which occurred before the elections, highlighted an important aspect of electoral balance. During the absentee ballot review, a solitary GOP member was present, underscoring the necessity for bipartisan participation. This critical team oversees voter ID verifications, witnesses, and notaries on ballots and organizes the early and absentee ballots by precinct.

Deliberations included discussions about the validity of IDs that expired within a year, the nuances of provisional licenses, and the utility of an affidavit form for certain ballots. Proposals were tabled to refine the process in future elections. The board unanimously approved the duplication of UOCAVA ballots and the absentee-by-mail ballots reviewed during this meeting. Attention was given to the precincts actively involved in the municipal elections for Weaverville, Woodfin, and Woodfin Water & Sewer, where voters wielded their democratic power. The election, marked by a conspicuous absence of Republican candidates, served as a strategic opportunity for the board to fine-tune voter ID and voting machine protocols, ensuring readiness for more bustling future elections.

While the elections have concluded, civic engagement remains vital. Upcoming Board Meetings:

The board will meet again on November 13 at 9:00 AM to conduct a sample audit, followed by a general board meeting at 5:30 PM on the same day.

The Election Board's website lists several other future meetings that will be held as necessary through the end of 2023.

Observing the Meetings: Instructions for observing the meetings remotely are available on their website. However, citizens are also welcome to join the meetings in person at the Election Services Office, located at 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville, NC 28801.

Merger Study

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Partnerships Director Rachael Nygaard. The project's timeline is as follows:

- Oct 2023: Develop the study's scope.
- Nov-Dec 2023: Request for Proposals.
- Jan-Feb 2024: Evaluate submissions.
- Mar 2024: Vendor selection and budget approval.
- Apr-Dec 2024: Execution of the feasibility study.
- Feb 2025: Presentation of the study to the General Assembly.

Commissioner Parker Sloan voiced disdain at the meeting, highlighting what he called the state's 'intrusion' into local educational matters—a sentiment that resonated with his peers. The requirement for a study does not ensure a merger, but it does underline a contentious relationship between local authorities and the state legislature.

This mandated study is a step into uncharted waters. It doesn't spell out consolidation but certainly brings the possibility to the forefront. With this, the expectation of a smooth collaboration between the city and county school systems is tempered by an undercurrent of apprehension. The public, meanwhile, waits on the edge of their seats, anticipating the "real fireworks" to come post-study in 2024.

This mandated study is more than a formality – it catalyzes a larger conversation about local governance, state involvement, and the future of our children's education in Buncombe County. As the study progresses, we will continue to provide insights and updates.

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Discrimination Investment

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October 24 meeting to keep this policy going, based on more study findings. This decision shows a never-ending cycle: each study justifies new rules, leading to more studies. Critics say this is like being stuck in a never-ending loop, with the city spending taxpayer money on efforts that don't have clear goals or ways to tell if they're actually working. It's concerning to some that the very firm conducting these studies—tasked with impartial assessment—may have an inherent conflict of interest, given the nature of the policy it's evaluating. Such arrangements can undermine trust in the process, drawing parallels to the age-old adage about foxes and henhouses.

As the city moves forward with its business inclusion policy, now extended until at least 2028, the question remains: How can Asheville foster an environment where all businesses, irrespective of their owner's identity, can compete fairly and succeed on merit?

Environmental Agenda

from Page 1

intended to revitalize an economy battered by a global pandemic, be directed toward a creek restoration project without clear, public justification of its urgency or relevance to the pandemic's economic impacts?

This unanimous approval, without batting an eye, is concerning. The Commissioners' silence on the matter is deafening for those who listen to the whispers of fiscal responsibility. While environmental preservation and infrastructural resilience are vital, they do not exist in a vacuum. They must be balanced with economic prudence, particularly when the funds were sourced for pandemic relief.

The silence of our Commissioners raises questions. If we do not demand accountability and transparency in these decisions, we risk the erosion of not just our creek banks but the very foundations of local government accountability.

Taxpayers of Buncombe County deserve an explanation. We deserve assurances that our hard-earned money is only used thoughtfully – in ways that will directly

benefit our community in these trying times, not on projects that – while potentially valuable – do not align with the intended purpose of the funds used.

I urge my fellow citizens to join me in asking for a more detailed accounting of this decision and before any future unquestioned spending of public funds. It is our right and duty to ensure our collective resources are managed in a way that reflects our community's immediate needs and priorities. Tell your elected representatives to control their urges to spend public funds without regard for the current state of the economy.

Transparency

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a basic request.

This lapse points to a more problematic pattern: a potential deficiency in record-keeping across the board. If meeting minutes, which are the written record of democracy in action, are neglected or withheld, what does that say about the value placed on accountability and citizen engagement?

Navigating the Murky Waters of Buncombe County's Public Records We've previously nudged several committees toward greater transparency, advocating for the diligent creation and dissemination of public records. It's a push that should be unnecessary. After all, it is their duty to serve the public interest without prodding or prompting.

This isn't just about a missing list of names or the frustration of unmet requests; it's about the cornerstone of civic involvement. It's about ensuring that the hard-working citizens of Buncombe County can hold their officials accountable and contribute meaningfully to the community.

Let's not accept the status quo of opaque operations. It's time to demand the transparency and efficiency we expect and deserve from our local government. Together, we can transform how our public records are maintained and, by extension, how our society functions.

Stay informed, stay involved, and remember: Vigilance is the price of liberty.

Keep abreast of our journey toward a more transparent Buncombe County by following our updates. We are committed

to bringing these issues to light and ensuring that every citizen has the tools and information to participate in our local government effectively. Your voice matters—let's make it heard.

Upgrading First Tuesday's Tech

We're excited to share some updates about ongoing improvements at First Tuesday, along with great news about cost savings!

Addressing Website and Newsletter Issues:

You may have noticed that our website has recently been a bit under the weather, which delayed our newsletter distribution. Though we're still experiencing some sluggishness on the site, we're happy to report that the newsletter is now complete.

Strategic Enhancements for a Better Experience

We're committed not only to fixing these issues but also to enhancing your overall experience with First Tuesday. Here's what we're working on:

1. Switching to a More Efficient Host: Our website will soon move to a new hosting service, promising a smoother and faster browsing experience.
2. Printable Newsletters: We're adding a printable version of our newsletter for those who love the feel of paper in their hands.
3. Transitioning to MailChimp: We're migrating our email list from Constant Contact to MailChimp for more streamlined communication.

The best part? These changes are not only about improving quality but also about saving costs. We're always looking for ways to be more financially efficient, and these updates will help us allocate resources more effectively.

We Need You! As we navigate these exciting changes, we welcome any volunteers who can lend a hand, especially those with a passion for tech and innovation. Your support could significantly affect how quickly and smoothly we implement these improvements.

If you're interested in joining our tech-savvy team of volunteers, please get in touch via email or phone. It's your support that fuels our drive for improvement and efficiency.

Environmental Agenda

from Page 1

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Threat to Election Integrity

The John Birch Society has brought the following information to us:

Ranked-choice voting (RCV), also known as instant runoff voting (IRV), is gaining momentum as the Left seeks to implement it in every state. While it may sound appealing on the surface, RCV poses a significant threat to election integrity and undermines the electorate's ability to choose the best candidate in elections.

RCV requires voters to assign a rank to each candidate on the ballot, regardless of whether they support that candidate. If no candidate receives a majority of first-place votes, the lowest-performing candidate is eliminated, and the process continues until one candidate finally secures a majority.

Contact your state legislators and urge them to oppose all attempts to enact ranked-choice voting, whether at the state or local levels.



Our Mission

First Tuesday is a conservative advocacy organization that amplifies the voices of Buncombe County conservatives through public events, social media, and other channels. We believe that all voices deserve to be heard, and we strive to give conservatives a platform to share their perspectives.

Our Vision

We envision a community of active and vocal WNC conservatives who are informed about the issues affecting our quality of life and who are willing to use their voices to influence the government, business, and media in a way that promotes conservative values.

Our Beliefs

- We believe that conservative values are essential to a healthy society, and we promote those values through our actions and our words.
- We believe that conservatives have a unique perspective to offer on a wide range of issues, and we share that perspective with the public.
- We believe diversity of voices is essential to a healthy democracy, and we promote that diversity.
- We believe that we can make a difference in the world by working together.

Visit us on the web:

<https://www.FirstTuesCons.com>

- Calls to Action
- Citizen Resources
- Local Government Activities News
- Local Govt Committees Information
- Newsletter Archives

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First Tuesday Conservatives - Asheville, Inc.

4 Long Shoals Rd., Ste B459

Arden, NC 28704

828/348-4180

Check Your Voter information



Snap the QR code (or browse to the url below) to be taken to the NC State Board of Elections Voter Registration site.

Do you know your jurisdictions? That information is also available at the voter registration site.

- Precinct Number and voting location.
- Congressional District
- NC Senate District
- NC House Districts
- County Commissioner District
- School District.

Ensure that your registration status reflects "Active"

Confirm you are registered for your current address.

<https://vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLkup/>