

# Cornelius TODAY

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**Nannie  
Potts**



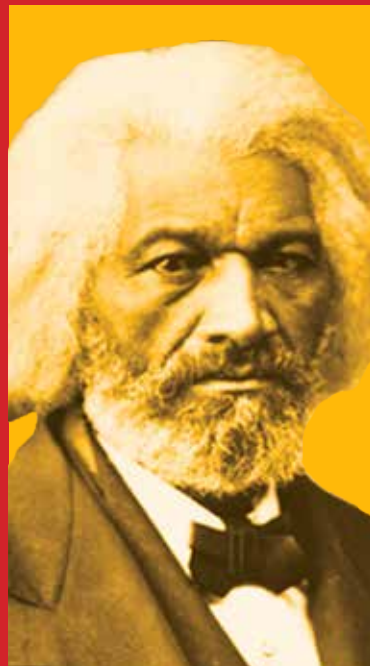
**Rosa  
Parks**



**Dr. Martin  
Luther  
King Jr.**



**Harriet  
Tubman**



**Frederick  
Douglass**

# BLACK HISTORY

**SUPER BOWL LIV**  
Miami, Fla.  
Feb. 2

**Mid Atlantic Boat Show**  
Charlotte Convention Center  
Feb. 7-9

# Month

**INSIDE**

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February 2020 • VOLUME 15 NUMBER 5

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**Nannie Potts Lane  
will honor late mayor**

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## February Things to Do

### Black History Month observed 1-3 pm at Town Hall on Feb. 1

The town's Black History Month Celebration will be 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 1 at Cornelius Town Hall.

The free event will include music, art and children's activities as well as refreshments.

Tracy Alston, a mental fitness consultant and licensed professional counselor, will be the guest speaker. More information: Cornelius PARC

Department at 704-892-6031 Ext. 192 or visit [www.cornelius.org/parc](http://www.cornelius.org/parc).

In conjunction with Black History Month, works by Charlotte artist Kevin Harris, an American portrait, figurative and abstract painter, will be on display in Town Hall from Feb. 1 through Feb. 28.

**See related story Page 12**

### Affordable housing is subject of Newsmakers Breakfast Feb. 28

Hundreds of people stood in line in the cold and rain for hours in late January in hopes they could land a place in a new affordable housing development in Charlotte.

People were applying at the Mezzanine at Freedom, which will have 185 units. But the same issue is apparent in North Mecklenburg where many workers are priced out of the housing market.

Cornelius Today and Business Today will host a Newsmakers Breakfast on Feb. 28 at The Peninsula Club on the subject of affordable housing.

Laura Belcher, the CEO of Habitat for Humanity, and Mecklenburg County Commissioner Pat Cotham will be the featured speakers.

The Q&A over breakfast will take a look at the solutions for the workforce housing crisis that is affecting not just

Charlotte, but Cornelius and the surrounding North Mecklenburg towns.

Newsmakers Breakfasts, which cost \$12 to attend, are open-forum Q&As with people who make the news. Anyone can ask a question.

Doors open at 7:15 a.m. for networking. The buffet-style breakfast gets underway at 7:30 a.m.

The Q&A begins at 8:05 a.m. and concludes at 9 a.m. The \$12 cost includes a full country breakfast.

Reserve a seat by calling 704-895-1335 with Visa or MasterCard.

The Presenting Sponsor is Ckezepis Law Firm, based in Huntersville. Breakfast Sponsors include Master Title and Aquesta Bank. Coffee Sponsors include Davidson Wealth Management and Dixie Dean & Christina Stone from Allen Tate Realtors.

**More local events every Thursday morning at 6 am  
Sign up at [www.corneliustoday.com/membership-join](http://www.corneliustoday.com/membership-join)**

### Adoptable Pets

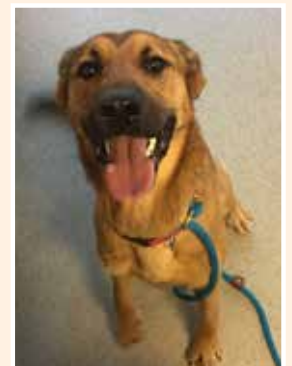
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## CMS Board of Education

Board members Jennifer De La Jara and Rhonda Cheek look for better news coming from Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools this year. Page 8



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The owner of JJ Wasabi in Mooresville will open a new eatery on North Main Page 14



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Cover by  
Darren Versace

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# Five months of budget work before tax rate is set

BY DAVE VIESER

The town’s operating budget is probably the Town Board’s most important work product. It’s a legal document that provides an outline of expenses vs. income, namely the revenue received from your property assessments. The budget sets spending for all departments, ranging from police and fire to parks, art exhibits and leaf collection.

In Cornelius, budget talks get under way in early February. It will take five months—including an intense two-day budget retreat at the Graylyn Conference Center in Winston-Salem in March—to put together a dollar-by-dollar accounting of how upward of \$24 million in tax monies will be spent.

The flip side is whether there is enough revenue from taxes to cover expenses, which includes “the Cornelius way” of doing things, not to mention the debt service on tens of millions of dollars in local road improvements not fully funded by the NCDOT.

Whether the tax rate remains the same or must increase is anyone’s guess. Some officials are saying a small tax increase is necessary to keep debt under control and maintain the town’s excellent bond ratings. At last year’s budget retreat, the town manager said municipal finances would become precarious in coming years based on rising debt and without an increase in revenue.

“I’m pretty sure the rate won’t go down,” one elected official said.

This year is an off year for local elections which means it could be easier to raise taxes without having to win over voters come November. Meanwhile budget hawk Dave Gilroy lost his bid for re-election and Kurt Naas, who voted against a mid-budget police pay raise last year, chose not to seek re-election.

The raise was a sticking point at the budget retreat last year. It became the prelude to a new tax rate of \$.222 per \$100 of assessed valuation, up 2 cents from revenue neutral. The additional 2.0 cents above revenue neutral was necessary to fund debt service.

The first step in the upcoming budget planning will be a special session Thursday Feb. 6 at Jetton Park. The meeting will begin at 6 pm and is open

to the public.

On March 25 and 26, the annual budget retreat will be held at the Graylyn Conference Center in Winston/Salem. By that time, more should be known regarding specific costs for the next fiscal year.

The biggest budget challenge will be the local dollars the town must spend on new roads and the debt service related to road improvements. Then, too, how long Cornelius can get by with funding a virtually full-time fire department with a part-timer’s budget is an open question.

The town manager traditionally unveils his proposed budget in early May and by state law, it must be adopted by the Town Board no later than June 30.

“There is much work ahead for staff and elected of-

ficials,” said Mayor Woody Washam. The process will include evaluating the financial impact of delays on some of the road projects.

The delay in two major projects—the widening of West Catawba Avenue and Hwy. 21—may actually work to the town’s fiscal advantage, at least for the short term. The latest projections from the NCDOT delay the start of the West Catawba and Hwy. 21 widening projects to 2024.

“With those projects delayed, our fund balance is \$2.2 million to the good,” said Town Manager Andrew Grant. “We are busy reviewing our financial forecasts but the short-term picture has improved.” Grant said the NCDOT’s timing could change. The customary downside to projects being delayed is that they will be more expensive when they are finally done.

With all these factors in play, local officials are hoping conversations at the budget retreat will go smoother than last year. At that time, a pay raise for some employees was approved 3-2, with Gilroy and Naas dissenting.

Both expressed concerns that raises were approved before the budget talks even began. At the same time, Grant said Cornelius was “at a crossroads” around finances and the tax rate.

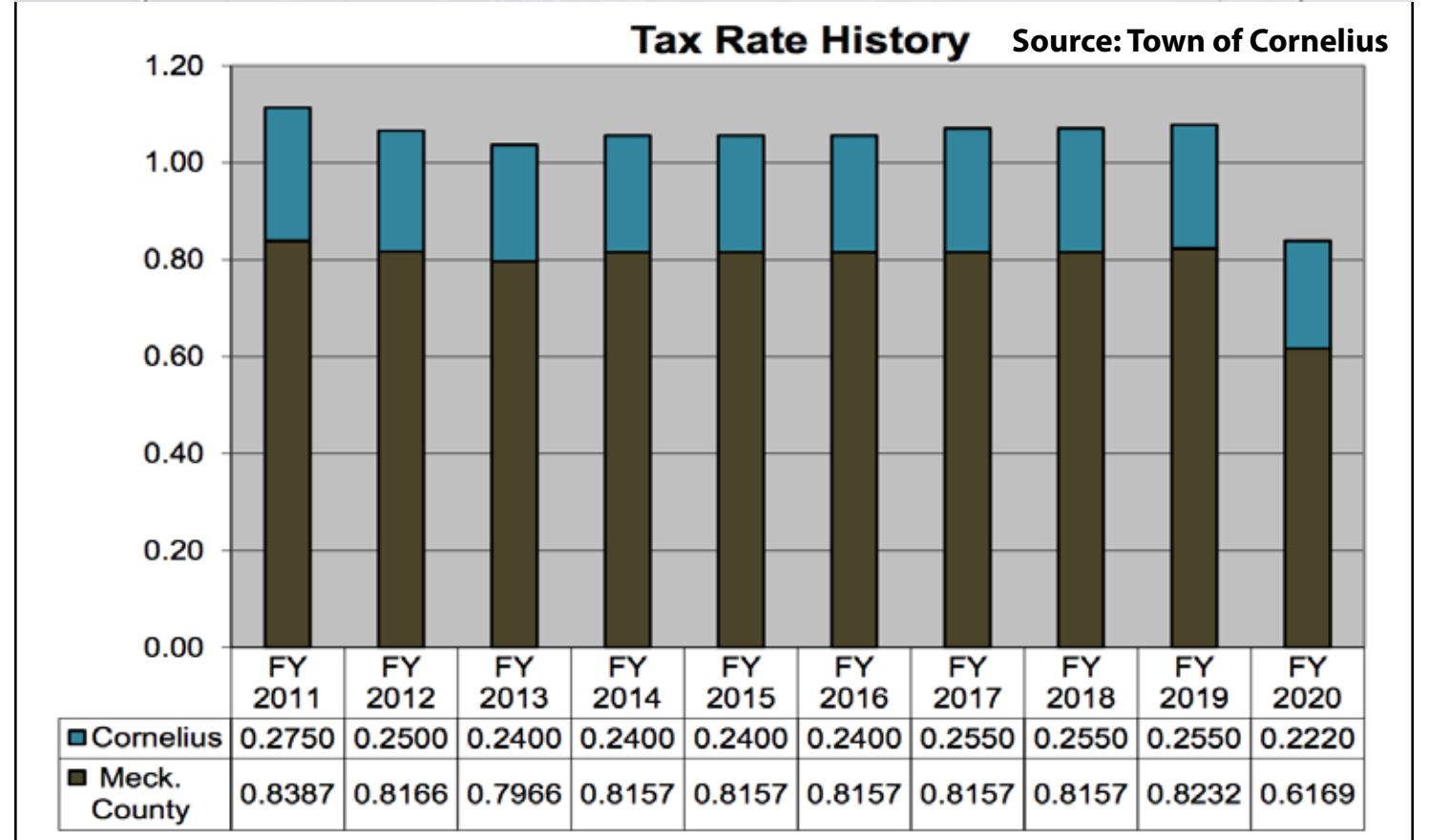
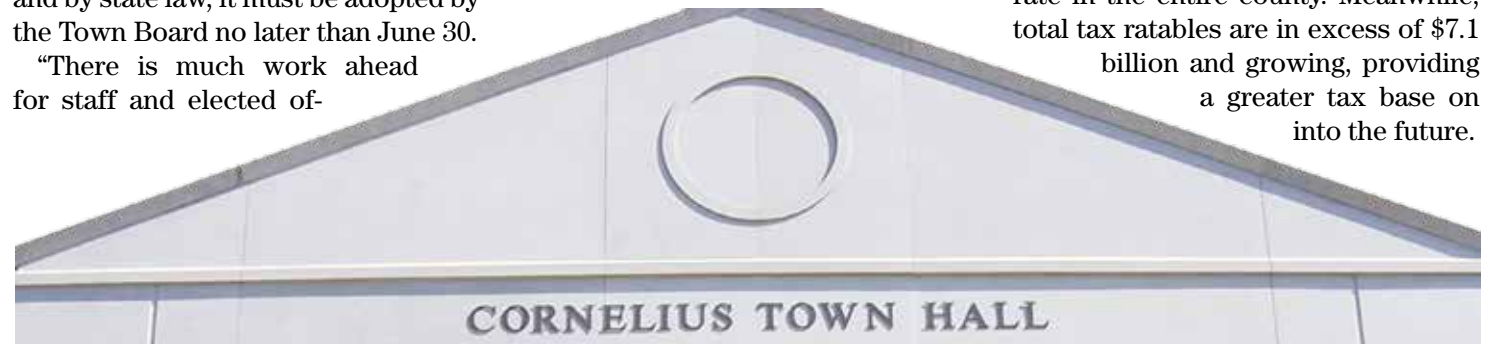
Regardless, taxpayers here are in an enviable position. The Cornelius tax rate has long been among the lowest in the state among towns of comparable size. Indeed, we have the lowest tax rate in the entire county. Meanwhile, total tax ratables are in excess of \$7.1 billion and growing, providing a greater tax base into the future.



Washam



Grant





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**Atrium Health**  
**Levine Children's**

# Alexander Farm developer providing land for fire station

BY DAVE VIESER

WIN Development LLC, the developer planning a large, mixed-use project on the iconic Alexander Farm site, has agreed to donate land for a new Cornelius Fire Station. Getting land for a new fire station, which would be located just east of the intersection of West Catawba and Westmoreland, was a priority for Mayor Woody Washam and the Town Board.

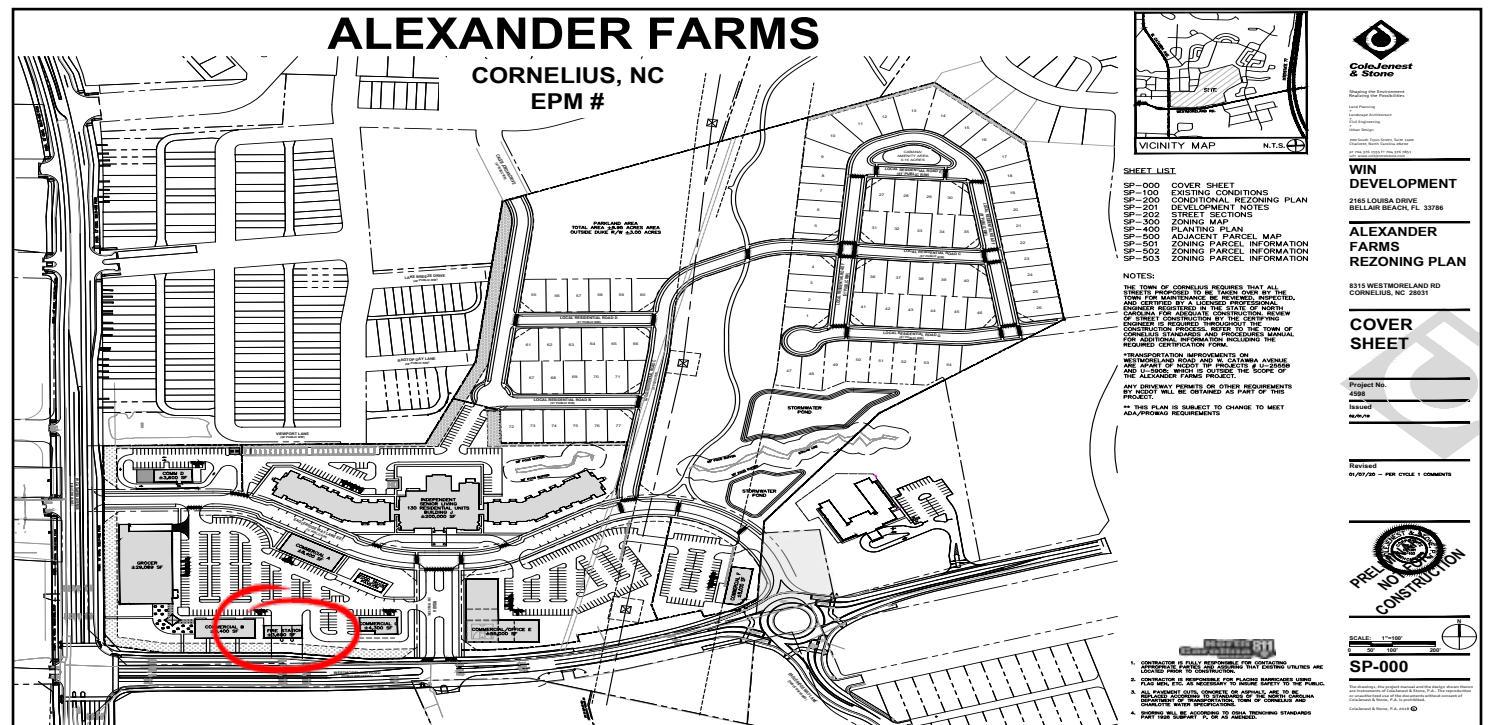
An updated site plan identifies the one-acre site which is valued at upwards of \$218,000 based on the \$12 million asking price for the 55-acre farm.

Buildout for the transformational project is valued in excess of \$100 million.

Donating the land represents a second significant modification by the developer. Their original site plan also called for a convenience store but it was removed after concerns were raised by residents during public hearings last year.

The Cornelius/Lemley Volunteer Fire Dept. has two fire stations: Station No. 1 on Main Street just south of downtown and No. 2 on Charles Towne Lane just off Jetton Road.

The department responds to both fire and medical calls in Cornelius, and has continued to experience a dramatic increase in calls. They also respond to what are called mutual aid requests from neighboring Davidson and Huntersville, both of which are experiencing rapid growth as well. Adding a third station would reduce



Alexander Farms planned development rendering. Circle marks the new fire station

response times for calls in the town and lower the number of times mutual aid help would be needed from Davidson and Huntersville.

**Meanwhile, don't look for any work to begin on the site this year.**

"I think it's safe to say any construction would at the earliest be next year for this project," said Town Planning Director Aaron Tucker. Part of the delay can be attributed to the lengthy approval process as directed by the town and the NCDOT. Another reason was a delay in receiving an updated site plan for the required Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) from

the developer.

"Although WIN paid for the study back in November, the town was unable to give our traffic engineering vendor, Stantec Engineering, notice to proceed until we had an updated site plan," said planner Tucker. "We are currently running the revised site plan by NCDOT and if things stay the course, the traffic study should be started in a few weeks."

**It will take six or seven months to complete.**

The TIA will then need to be submitted to NCDOT for final approval. Initially the Town expected final NCDOT approval on or before Aug. 1 of

this year, but with the delay that final approval date will no doubt slide.

At the conclusion of the traffic study, the town will be able to utilize any mitigation recommendations in the TIA to make final recommendations to the Town Board with regard to any zoning considerations.

The original proposal for the site by WIN Development called for developing the 55-acre farm into a mixed-use development consisting of neighborhood commercial, independent living, single-family residences, and open space.

The proposed zoning is Conditional Zoning (CA).

# Aaron Tucker is Cornelius' new planning director

Aaron Tucker, who has served in the Cornelius Planning Department since 2014, is the town's new Planning Director, taking over for Wayne Herron, who was named Assistant Town Manager last year.

"For the past year, Aaron has been working with Wayne to prepare for his new role and develop a smooth transition plan" said Town Manager Andrew Grant at the Town Board's January 6 meeting. "This is a well deserved promotion."

Tucker, whose first job was detailing cars at a body shop in Concord, will get a 12 percent raise boosting his pay to \$71,320 a year.

"I am humbled by the opportunity that I have been given by the Town" Tucker said. "I look forward to facilitating a dialogue between potential developers and the Board, enforcing the Town's land use code, and helping the Town prepare for future development, while preserving and enhancing the quality of life for our residents."

Tucker, 27, came to Cornelius after working in the City of Kannapolis Planning Office, and served as Cornelius' Lead Planner since 2018. He is single and a Concord NC native, where he still makes his home. Tucker possesses a Bachelor of Science Degree in Geography, plus a Minor in Community and

Regional Planning from Appalachian State University where he graduated in 2014.

As Planning Director, Tucker will oversee a department with six employees and an annual budget of \$627,660.

Tucker's promotion comes at a crucial time for the town, with several proposed major developments, including Alexander Farm and Charmore Center, nearing periods of intense planning department review. It will also free up time for Herron to function full time as Assistant Town Manager, rather than splitting his attention between Planning and general town functions.

## Aaron Tucker



Cornelius  
Planning  
Director  
Age: 27

### Mentor:

"My father is and has always been my mentor. I've always admired his loyalty and good work ethic."



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# Better grades for CMS from North Mecklenburg

BY DAVE VIESER

“I finally have a North Meck cheerleader by my side on the board,” said CMS District One Representative Rhonda Cheek as she introduced Jennifer De La Jara at Cornelius Today’s Newsmakers Breakfast in January. Cheek has been on the CMS Board of Education since 2009, while De La Jara was elected to an at-large seat in November, in effect giving northern Mecklenburg two representatives on the 10-member board.

**Cheek never had an ally from the northern suburbs until now.**

It became clear early on during the Newsmakers Q&A that, while strength in numbers would no doubt benefit the fast-growing north region, there was also much work ahead.

“One thing Jennifer will learn that I already know is that change comes slow,” Cheek said. “We know what needs to be done, but getting there can take a while.” Roadblocks can emerge along the way in any political setting.

Indeed, this has been a turbulent year for CMS—with the controversial departure of former Superintendent Clayton Wilcox, the apparent failure of a new panic button security system, and the sting left behind after some towns—Cornelius and Huntersville included—were penalized by CMS for supporting charter school legislation.

Even the FBI has jumped into the Wilcox case, requesting documents in an apparent attempt to ascertain whether federal funds were misspent.

However, with new board Chair Elyse Dashew, both Cheek and De La Jara are optimistic that better days—and more openness—lie ahead.

“We are working well with the elected officials in Cornelius and Davidson, and we are working on our relationship with Huntersville,” said Cheek.

In 2018, the school board issued the Municipal Concerns Act, which in effect told the towns of Matthews, Mint Hill, Huntersville and Cornelius to renounce their “local options” to build municipal charter schools or move to the end of the line for future school bond projects.

But it was a case of tit for tat.

The Municipal Concerns Act came in response to a controversial state law that allowed the towns to use local



Rhonda Cheek and Jennifer De La Jara discuss CMS at the Newsmakers Breakfast

tax money to open independent public schools. That happened because suburban towns were left out of a \$922 school bond in 2017.

It’s been a year and a half since that law passed, and so far none of the towns has taken steps to create town charter schools. Nor have any done what CMS required, by passing a 15-year formal vow not to do so.

Cornelius opted into HB514, the bill that would allow a town to operate a charter school, but Mayor Woody Washam, thanks to a good relationship with Cheek, worked on getting Cornelius out of the “penalty box.” For now, local municipal charter schools are a non-starter in Cornelius.

Questions from the audience demonstrated the issues on the mind of many residents in northern Mecklenburg County:

## Growth and over-crowding

Lake Norman Chamber Chair Richard Pappas questioned how the system was poised to handle more students in the years ahead. “We need to build trust and transparency with the community. Huntersville will be the

focus of growth in the north, more so than Cornelius or Davidson” said De La Jara. Cheek said CMS has some new schools that are not being utilized completely while others are overcrowded. “We will need to move some stu-

dents around to balance enrollment.” She said moving students is never easy but that an open dialogue with parents would go a long way in making it happen effectively.

In response to a question asking about the most urgent needs in the CMS system, both outlined two priorities: career development education and raising third grade reading literacy scores. De La Jara, who leads reading assistance classes in a number of CMS Schools, including Cornelius Elementary, said they have found that if a student falls behind in reading at the third grade level, it can be very difficult for them to ever catch up in older grades. As for career development courses, it’s also a huge need in CMS. “We have many students who are not destined to attend college so we must be responsive to their educational and vocational needs” Cheek said.

## Change in Superintendent

Shortly after Wilcox left last summer, Earnest Winston was named acting Superintendent, and then full time Superintendent several weeks later. He joined CMS in 2004 to as an En-

glish teacher at Vance High School. He eventually moved into district administration and was named district’s first ombudsman in 2017. Both had high praise for the new superintendent.

“He’s a really good guy and knows the system well,” Cheek said.

## Public schools vs. charter schools

The different manner in which the state funds the two systems doesn’t provide a ‘level playing field, according to Cheek. “We have numerous mandates which the state requires while the charter schools get a check and divide the funds as they see fit,” Cheek said.

However De La Jara admitted that CMS could do better.

“Public schools can be an easy target, and some of that is justified. We need to do a better job of communicating with the community so they know all that we are doing,” she said.

## Family literacy

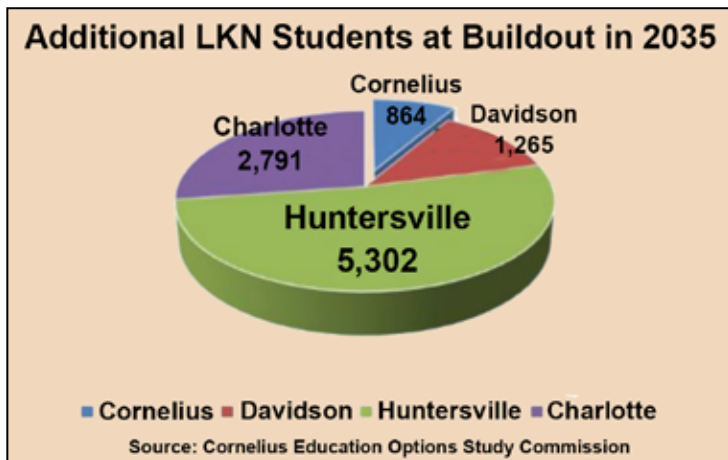
Both also emphasized the importance of getting parents involved in education early on. Unlike some other states, there is no state funding provided for Pre-K education in North Carolina within the K-12 funding formula.

“We really need to educate the parents so they can in turn educate their children. Family literacy is vitally important. When five year old children show up at our doorstep and have never held a crayon in their hand, we are starting out way behind,” Cheek said.

## Security

CMS signed a contract with Centegix to equip personnel and teachers with a panic button which they can use to call police in an emergency. The problem: In tests thus far, the product is just not working. “They have until Feb. 10 to get it working,” Cheek said. The district is considering other options should the system fail to succeed.

Both said they sensed a desire for better communication between the chair and North Mecklenburg. This was evident when Dashew, who also attended the breakfast held at the Peninsula Club in Cornelius, said: “We feel that our Cornelius schools are very important to us and we look forward to working with our residents and parents in town.”





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BOATING LIFE

# What's on deck at the Mid-Atlantic Boat Show



Mid Atlantic Boat Show convention floor

BY DAVE YOCHUM

The Mid-Atlantic Boat Show Feb. 7-9 will bring more than 30 dealers to the Charlotte Convention Center. There will be saltwater and freshwater power boats, with plenty of pontoon boats and specialty sports boats.

Prices run into the \$400,000 and above range, according to show organizer Les Gray.

For over 45 years parent company Southeast Productions Inc. in Greensboro has managed and produced seven of the top boating and fishing shows in North Carolina and Virginia. Total attendances is on the order of 60,000.

Soundings magazine's editors are forecasting 3 percent growth in unit retail sales in 2020.

Pontoons of course are big sellers on the Inland Sea, but the water sports segment continues to grow, as boats with built-in surf gates bring the fun of the ocean to fresh water lakes.

Vessel consoles come equipped with everything you'd expect in a luxury car: Touch-screen navigation, Bluetooth, USB ports, docking cameras, even heat and air conditioning.

Some have integrated with Amazon Echo to bring "smart home" technology to the lake.

Meanwhile, the personal watercraft segment is seeing continued growth as manufacturers expand the capabilities of their products with the goal of keeping users on the water longer.

Some PWCs have configurable decks

with coolers, dry bags and fuel caddies.

SeaDoo, in particular, has led the industry's development of sport fishing PWCs equipped with electronic navigation and fish finding systems, extended rear decks for increased stability and built-in coolers with rod holders and tackle storage.

Yamaha, which claims 42 percent of the PWC market share, is expecting even higher growth than the 9 percent it saw in 2019.

How to go: Charlotte Convention Center Feb. 7-9

Hours Friday and Saturday 10 am to 9 pm, Sunday 10 am to 5 pm

Cost: Adults \$10; Seniors/military \$9; Children 6-12 \$5

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

# Nannie Potts Lane will honor late mayor

Nannie Potts was the first female mayor of Cornelius and the only African-American mayor.

She was a devoted church worker at Torrence Chapel AME Zion, a political figure with whom future mayors sought counsel, she grew up on a farm near Hoke Lumber in Davidson and passed away in 2018 after a lifetime of community service.

A new road named in her honor is under construction now. Nannie Potts Lane will connect Hwy. 21 to Smith Circle about a half mile south of Catawba Avenue. The new road will be completed later this year.

Nannie Potts was born in 1938, the year before black opera singer Marian Anderson performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, having been denied permission to sing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. Politicians suggested that this was the end to racism and bigotry in America.



**Nannie Potts was first elected to the Town Board in 1983, giving a voice to the African American community**

But a quarter century later, as a student at historically black Barber Scotia College, Nannie participated in sit-

ins at the Belk Department Store and three other lunch counters in Concord. According to the Global Nonviolent

Action Base, “students organized prayers, where the black students gathered for prayer in public areas and places reserved for whites.”

After college, Nannie plunged into a life of family, teaching school, volunteerism and politics.

She was elected to the Town Board in 1983, giving a voice to the African American community that is centered in Smithville.

As top vote-getter on the Town Board, she was mayor pro tem, and when the mayor suddenly resigned, she became mayor.

She was known for honesty, compassion and intellect. Other politicians sought out her advice and counsel.

She received numerous awards and honors for her leadership and community activism, including the Business Today Top Women Award in 2015.

Her husband Mickey owns Potts Barber Shop in downtown Cornelius.



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# Asian eatery coming to North Main

BY DAVE VIESER

*Owner Jose Paolo ran JJ Wasabi in Mooresville for 10 years*

Mooresville's loss will be Cornelius' gain. JJ Wasabi's Sushi Bar and Asian Grill, a staple on Main Street in downtown Mooresville for more than a decade, will close at the end of April, relocating to 20822 N. Main St. in Cornelius. The eatery will boast a new name—DanielSan—and a new menu.

For owner/chef Jose Paolo, it was all about the rent, a great location and the chance to control his destiny. "A new landlord took over our Mooresville building and sought to impose rent increases of up to 30 percent. I really want to work for myself, not the landlord, so we had no choice but to find a new location."

Just a few miles to the south, he found it: A vacant free-standing build-



Jose Paolo, owner of DanielSan in Cornelius

ing which once housed Salon Cafe. An LLC that includes Paolo purchased

the building for \$565,000 in December according to Mecklenburg County records.

"We had a great loyal following in Mooresville," Paolo said. "Moving out is really bittersweet. However, our plans for the future are exciting, too, as we will have our very own building nestled in between Davidson and Cornelius."

The Mooresville site will close when the lease expires at the end of April. DanielSan will focus on modern, original, and reimagined Asian-inspired cuisine and a creative Sushi bar with original sushi rolls and dishes. Paolo plans to be open daily from 11 am to 10 pm.

# Aquesta net income rises 46.8% year over year

Aquesta Financial Holdings—Cornelius' only home-grown bank and public company—reports that 2019 net income took off. Earnings from continuing operations grew at the rate of 46.8 percent year over year.

Jim Engel, CEO & president, said he hoped the momentum from "excellent earnings and balance sheet growth" for the final quarter of 2019 would carry into 2020 as well.

Net income for the fourth quarter was \$1,094,000, compared \$942,000 during the fourth quarter of 2018. For the 12 months ended Dec. 31, net income from continuing operations was \$4.4 million compared to \$3 million in 2018.



Aquesta CEO said there were excellent earnings and balance sheet growth during 2019

lion for the 12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019 compared to \$14.7 million for the 12 months ended Dec. 31, 2018. This is an increase of \$1.9 million or 13.1 percent. The increase in net interest income continues to be directly associated with Aquesta's continued loan growth.

## Non Interest Income

Non interest income was \$2.8 million for 2019 compared to \$4.2 million during 2018. The decrease in Non interest income is due to the sale of Aquesta Insurance subsidiary in June 2018.

## Non Interest Expense

Non interest expense was \$13.7 million for the 12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019 compared to \$14.2 million for all of 2018. Personnel expense was at \$8.5 million during 2019 compared to \$9.1 million in 2018. The decrease was primarily due to the sale of Aquesta Insurance subsidiary in June 2018.

Occupancy expenses increased by \$167,000 in 2019 compared to 2018. The increase is primarily due to the addition of the Operations Center during the third quarter of 2018. Aquesta had \$18,000 in OREO gains during 2019 compared to \$43,000 in OREO losses in 2018.

## Key Highlights

- Loan growth of \$46.8 million for the 12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019 or 12.7 percent
- Core deposit growth of \$103.1 million year over year
- Core deposits grew more than double the amount of loan growth for the 12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019
- Asset growth of \$63.6 million during 2019 or 13.8 percent
- Continued solid asset quality with

no foreclosed property as of Dec. 31, 2019

- Earnings per share growth of 10.8 percent, exclusive of prior year one-time gain
- Paid the seventh annual consecutive cash dividend to shareholders

## Solid Balance Sheet Growth

At 2019 year-end, Aquesta's total assets were \$523.2 million compared to \$459.7 million at the end of 2018. Total loans were \$415.8 million at year-end 2019 compared to \$369.0 million

at Dec. 31, 2018. Core deposits were \$373.6 million at compared to \$270.4 million at the end of 2018.

## Strong Asset Quality

Asset quality remains strong. Non-performing assets were at \$1.2 million as of Dec. 31, 2019 compared to \$1.2 million at year-end 2018. The company held no foreclosed real estate at the end of 4th quarter 2019 or at year-end 2018.

## Net Interest Income

Net interest income was \$16.6 mil-

# Miltich new chair of CLT transportation planning

BY DAVE VIESER

Cornelius Commissioner Michael Miltich has been elected to a one-year term as chairman of the Charlotte Regional Planning Transportation Organization. The selection was made at the January CRPTO meeting of the influential planning body which carries out future transportation planning for the Charlotte Urbanized Area.

The federally designated group has road jurisdiction over all of Mecklenburg County as well as Iredell and Union counties. Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles chaired the CRTPO back when I-77 toll lanes were a riveting issue in Lake Norman.

“It’s really a huge honor to be selected CRTPO chair,” Miltich said. “This organization oversaw the distribution of approximately \$1 billion dollars in 2019 alone for planning, roads, pedestrian, bike, greenway, and rail projects. To be elected a leader by fellow municipal leaders is a humbling experience.”

CRPTO’s membership is comprised of 32 representatives from the region. Per the legislation which formed CRPTO, weighted voting gives Charlotte representatives a majority...a sore spot from which suburban members have been seeking change from their state legislators.

The entire region under CRPTO’s jurisdiction has seen tremendous

growth over the past 20 years, but its infrastructure has lagged due primarily to insufficient funding. New funding formulas were enacted at the state level in 2014, and the region is now being more appropriately funded.

“Despite the increase in transportation funding, it will never be enough,” Miltich said. “Our challenge is to be sure every dollar is efficiently spent across the region, and that there is coordination to make our transportation infrastructure effective. Land use plans across the region also need to be considered in the process.”

The CRTPO board meets at 6 pm on the third Wednesday of every month, and special meetings are called on an as-needed basis. Their meetings take place in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, located at 600 E. Fourth St. in uptown Charlotte.

Miltich, 68, was appointed as the Cornelius CRTPO representative four years ago. He was initially elected to the Town Board in 2015 and re-elected twice. He also served as Mayor Pro Tem from 2017-2019.



Miltich

## I-77 toll lanes

# We're watching you

After inquiries from Cornelius Today, I-77 Mobility Partners said crews are installing an occupancy detection system on the I-77 toll lanes. The system will determine the number of persons in a vehicle and compare it to the setting on a vehicle’s transponder, so the proper tolls are charged.

Facial images captured will automatically be blurred by the cameras for privacy purposes.

Previously, occupancy was determined visually. The cameras situated above the roadway cannot detect occupancy.

“We remind motorists that vehicles with three or more people can declare as a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV3+) and be exempted from tolls using a switchable NC Quick Pass transponder with the HOV3+ feature



**HOV violators are subject to civil penalties up to \$100 per toll section**

activated or declaring HOV3+ status through the NC Quick Pass app no less than 15 minutes before traveling on I-77,” said spokeswoman Jean Leier.

Drivers who fib could face a fines. In the coming weeks new signs will remind drivers that the proper use of I-77 Express is reinforced by cameras.

*Business Today*

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# NEWSMAKERS BREAKFAST

## Affordable Housing

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CEO/Habitat for Humanity



**Pat Cotham**  
Meck. County Commissioner

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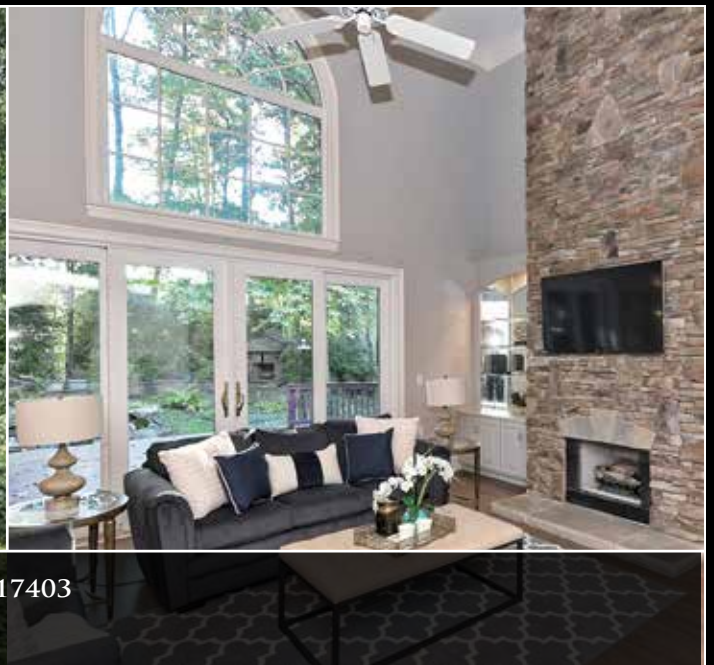
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# Home Sales

These property transactions in Cornelius and Davidson were recorded by the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds.

## Cornelius

12/18/19 \$183,000 Marie Riou to Joy Heslop, 9137 McDowell Creek Ct.

12/18/19 \$700,000 Christopher Franklin & Cathy Schindler to Michael Waltrip, 18720 John Connor Rd.

12/18/19 \$232,000 Offerpad to MUPR 3 Assets, 17853 Caldwell Track Dr.

2/18/19 \$183,000 Robert & Amy MCGuire to Maria Balletto, 9145 McDowell Creek Ct.

12/19/19 \$325,000 Thomas & Kathleen Fitzpatrick to Osama El-Badry & Fatima Abdalla, 9611 Willow Leaf Ln.

12/20/19 \$254,800 Legacy Pointe



**18410 Balmore Pines Lane in Cornelius for \$2,075,000**

Properties to The Wagoner Group, Unit 507 Cornelius Commerce Center Condominium

12/20/19 \$254,800 Legacy Pointe Properties to The Wagoner Group, Unit 508 Cornelius Commerce Center Condominium

12/20/19 \$653,000 South Creek Homes to Kenneth & Judy Rethmeier, 14906 Reese Finley Ln.

12/20/19 \$125,000 Bailey Forest Development to South Creek Construction, Lot 118 Bailey's Forest

12/20/19 \$339,000 South Creek Homes to Alysa Harrimann, 17603 Inver Dr.

12/20/19 \$70,000 Bluestream Partners to South Creek Homes, Lot 371 Bailey's Glen

12/20/19 \$864,000 Classica Homes to William & Tammy McMullan, 17732 Jetton Green Loop

12/20/19 \$548,000 Edward Hagen to Thomas & Nicole Beagle, 20219 Wave Ct.

12/23/19 \$450,000 Hybrid Homes NC to Carissa Abazia, 19728 Schooner Dr.

12/23/19 \$342,500 Roy & Myra Little to Amie & Jeffrey Carfagna, 20218 Middletown Rd.

12/27/19 \$1,287,500 Delbert & Judith Arrendale to John & Anna Balcerzak, 18125 Sunset Cove Ln.

12/30/19 \$172,000 Christopher & Maureen Miller to Canaan I LLC, 19901 Henderson Rd. Unit L

12/30/19 \$2,075,000 Vincent & Suzanne Pompili to Paula & Paul Wykle Jr., 18410 Balmore Pines Ln.

12/30/19 \$1,400,000 William & Royce Kimbrough to Daniel & Deborah Miller, 19529 Weavers Cir.

12/30/19 \$435,000 Lake Norman Land Group to Bradley & Julia Kroemer, 20306 Northport Dr.

12/30/19 \$260,000 Judith Uthe to Alexis Lehman, 9303 Glenashley Dr.

12/31/19 \$305,000 Kenda Ransom to Micah & Margaret Velasquez, 19133 Kanawha Dr.

1/6/20 \$240,000 Vicki & James Slade to Melony Powys, 18824 Nautical Dr. Unit 26

1/6/20 \$245,000 Nathan & Kathy Updike and Alton Updike to Fari-deh & Shadi Tayarani, 18832 Nautical Dr. Unit 40

1/7/20 \$1,050,000 Georgia Foulard & John Lazmar to Christopher & Sarah Teague, 17209 Green Dolphin Ln.

1/7/20 \$360,000 South Creek Homes to Jacob Palillo, 18611 Starcreek Dr.

1/8/20 \$259,500 Davide Cheney to Steven Harper & Jennifer Picknell, 20325 Willow Pond Rd.

1/9/20 \$190,000 Joshua & Alicia Stadlander to Samir Avasthi, 18801 Nautical Dr. Unit 202

1/9/20 \$315,000 Suzanne & Whit-

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# Home Sales

*continued from page 18*

worth Bird Jr. to W. Norman & Nadine Roth, 20250 Amy Lee Dr.

1/9/20 \$409,500 William & Cynthia Braun to Paul & Bethany Ruehlmann, 17131 Lake Park Dr.

1/9/20 \$775,000 Patricia & Robert Brand Jr. to Joseph & Katelyn Strumolo, 16731 America Cup Rd.

1/10/20 \$365,000 Daniel & Shannon Campagna to Philip Presley & Julia Perez, 19809 Coachmans Trace

1/10/20 \$365,000 Daniel & Shannon Campagna to Philip Presley & Julia Perez, 19809 Coachmans Trace

1/10/20 \$190,000 Joshua & Alicia Stadlander to Samir Avasthi, 18801 Nautical Dr. Unit 202

1/13/20 \$355,000 Debra & Thomas Church Jr. to Derek Hagen, Lot 90 Crown Harbor North

1/13/20 \$296,000 William Hessel & Marjorie Neureuther to Viktor & Tatiana Samsonova and Yuri & Dina Samsonov, 19611 Deer Valley Dr.

1/14/20 \$407,000 Opendoor Property Trust I to Arron & Samantha Price, 19731 Charles Towne

1/15/20 \$240,000 Matthew Greco to Fedor & Elizaveta Fomenko 10609 Conistan Pl.

1/15/20 \$235,000 Danny & Caroline Dalton to VSP Charlotte, 21140 Cornelius St.

1/16/20 \$2,400,000 John & Beth Gularson to Daniel & Sarah Phelps, 19300 Mary Ardrey Cir.

1/17/20 \$465,000 Joel & Jenissa Switzer to Brock & Brandi Hullinger, 18601 John Connor Rd.

1/17/20 \$245,000 Troy Frazier to Jenna Andrew Layman, 10940 Heritage Green Dr.

1/16/20 \$460,000 South Creek Homes to Joseph & Kathleen Pignio, 11402 Dublin Crescent Rd., Cornelius

1/17/20 \$70,000 Bluestream Partners to South CreekHomes, Lot 3532 Bailey's Glen.

## Davidson

12/18/19 \$369,000 Standard Pacific of the Carolinas to Karly Wood, 17620 Shasta Daisy Cir.

12/19/19 \$325,000 River Run LP to Vinay & Stuti Patel, 17324 Gillican Overlook

12/19/19 \$685,000 JCB Urban Co. to Marcy & Michael Salemi, 816 Patrick Johnston Ln.

12/20/19 \$350,000 SPH Two to Kane Kapustik, 139 Park Forest St.

12/20/19 \$801,650 Clay Investments Homes to David & Patricia Althuler, 1502 Matthew McClure Cir.

12/20/19 \$362,000 Eileen Mason to Nora Shepard, Unit 264 Building X A New Neighborhood in Old Davidson



**708 Amalfi Drive in Davidson for \$1,450,000**

12/20/19 \$886,500 Hart Foundation to Christ Bournias, 1510 Matthew McClure Cir.

12/23/19 \$427,500 Standard Pacific of the Carolinas to Erin Purves & Laney Robinson, 17628 Shasta Daisy Cir.

12/23/19 \$427,500 Standard Pacific of the Carolinas to Erin Purves & Laney Robinson, 17628 Shasta Daisy Cir.

12/27/19 \$420,000 Greg & Jennifer Coleman to Barbara Randolph, 114 Lake Davidson Cir.

12/27/19 \$380,000 Patricia Marino to Jessica Baker to Rshan Moe, 13540 James Ervin Way

12/30/19 \$506,000 Todd & Shannon Cunningham to Greg & Jennifer Coleman, 120 Lake Davidson Cir.

12/31/19 \$555,000 Fund 24-Davidson LLC to Shane & Suzanna Doty, 541 Griffith Village

12/31/19 \$419,000 Standard Pacific of the Carolinas to James & Amanda Hansil, 16915 Setter Point Ln.

1/8/20 \$255,500 Amanda Wile to Tiffany Crowe, 16419 Leavitt Ln.

1/9/20 \$270,000 Trustees of Davidson College to Jason & Molly Simons, 100 N. Lynbrook Dr.

1/9/20 \$1,450,000 Richard Enderby to Kristina Jo New, 708 Amalfi Dr.

1/10/20 \$1,450,000 Richard Enderby to Kristina Jo New, 708 Amalfi Dr.

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*16704 Yardarm Lane  
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List: \$1,075,000  
MLS# 3563794*



*16700 Flying Jib Road  
Waterfront, The Peninsula  
List: \$1,589,000  
MLS# 3567147*



*333 West 9th Street  
Charlotte  
List: \$885,000  
MLS# 3483561*



*139 Shelburne Place  
Waterfront, The Point  
List: \$1,500,000  
MLS# 3466683*



*18720 John Connor Rd.  
Water View, The Peninsula  
List: \$700,000  
MLS# 3563281*



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## New Corporations

These are new local corporations, as recorded by the NC Secretary of State.

### Cornelius

12/9/19 Bakery 28 LLC, Keli Marks, 18719 John Connor Rd.  
 12/9/19 Charlotte Restaurant Group LLC, United States Corporation Agents, 16911 Yawl Rd.  
 12/9/19 NikitaSokol LLC, United States Corporation Agents, 19520 One Norman Blvd. Apt. O  
 12/9/19 Pycons LLC, Anton Tarasenko, 21415 Nautique Blvd. Apt. 306  
 12/10/19 Howard K. Mell MD MPH PLLC, Howard K. Mell, 6106 Addie Hall Ln.  
 12/10/19 Long Range Investments LLC, Seth Loranger, 7616 Waterview Dr.  
 12/10/19 Sarver Holdings LLC, Matthew Sarver, 8829 Westmoreland Lake Dr.  
 12/10/19 SD Conover LLC, Jeffrey R. Wakeman, 16930 W. Catawba Ave. Ste. 100D  
 12/11/19 Bar City Inc., Sandra Reynolds, 16931 Belle Isle Dr.  
 12/11/19 Jillian Skeeters Woodruff DMD PA, Jillian Skeeters Woodruff, 8301 Magnolia Estates Dr. Ste. 4  
 12/11/19 JTALM LLC, Amber Mulligan, 17601 Springwinds Dr.  
 12/11/19 SD Springsteen 1 LLC, Jeffrey R. Wakeman, 16930 W. Catawba Ave. Ste. 100D  
 12/12/19 Cornerstone Commercial Properties Portfolio LLC, Christopher Couchell, 17115 Kenton Dr. Ste. 200A  
 12/12/19 Together Apart LLC, Kristina M. Reihl, 8100 Forest Shadow Cir.  
 12/13/19 Cartwheel Health Coaching LLC, Jillian Kowalski, 9625 Parma Dr. Apt. 202  
 12/13/19 Good and Organized LLC, Kiah Craig, 19207 Captains Watch Rd.  
 12/13/19 Landlord Association of North Carolina LLC, Susan Surane, 20460 Chartwell Center Dr. #3  
 12/16/19 C B Burrow Real Estate Inc., Connie B. Burrow, 19423 Booth Bay Ct.  
 12/16/19 Cardaddy Transport LLC, Douglas Smith, 19701 Bethel Church Rd. Ste. 103159



12/16/19 SD Conover LLC, Jeffrey Wakeman, 16930 W. Catawba Ave. Ste. 100D  
 12/16/19 The Sauce Wagon LLC, Jeremiah Osborne, 21426 Townwood Dr.  
 12/17/19 Berkeley East Adventures LLC, Lawrence Ivins, 17150 Freshwater Ln.  
 12/18/19 JNJ Capital One LLC, John N. Jones, 17312 Wavecrest Ct.  
 12/18/19 Lincoln and Leaf LLC, United States Corporation Agents Inc., 20129 Northport Dr.  
 12/19/19 HIS1 ORG Inc., Jesse C. Jones, 17391 Kings Point Dr. Apt. A  
 12/19/19 J. Tinsley Group LLC, Jeffrey C. Tinsley Sr., 19103 Kanawha Dr.  
 12/19/19 Sunset Slush Lake Norman LLC, Jeremiah Osborne, 21426 Townwood Dr.  
 12/20/19 21st Venture LLC, Kevin Blake Lauder, 12317 Bailey Rd.  
 12/20/19 Allergy America Holding LLC, Ken Allison, 19450 Zion Ave.  
 12/20/19 Casa & Associates Inc., Angela Casa, 19425-G Liverpool Pkwy.  
 12/20/19 Dan Ahlers Productions LLC, Daniel Ahlers, 22410 Market St. Apt. 2320  
 12/20/19 Mirage Outdoor Solutions LLC, Mark Sailors, 16833 Jetton Rd.  
 12/27/19 Let's Gogh Art Charlotte LLC, Donna Schiling, 10946 Shelly Renee Dr.  
 12/27/19 MMFC Transportation Inc., Eric T. Cichocki, 19805 One Norman Cir. Apt. H  
 12/30/19 Gate City Plaza LLC, Frank Sproviero, 19149 Celestine Ln.  
 12/31/19 Gaugemedia LLC, Gaige Keep, 20230 Sportsman Dr.  
 12/31/19 Tri-County Wastewater Management LLC, Jon Allen, 19109 W. Catawba Ave. Ste. 110  
 1/1/20 Calee Lucht Enterprises LLC, Rebecca Lee Lucht, 18627 Oakhurst

Blvd.  
 1/1/20 Champion Tire Holdings LLC, Laura S. Temple, 11106 Treynorth Dr.  
 1/1/20 Davina Chakon LLC, Davina Connelly, 9063 McDowell Creek Ct.  
 1/1/20 H2Glow Brow & Skin LLC, Karleigh Hybarger, 11239 Heritage Green Dr.  
 1/1/20 Houdini Construction Inc., Laura Castricone, 12225 Bailey Rd.  
 1/1/20 House of Hope Counseling PLLC, Emily See, 19837 S. Main St.  
 1/1/20 Lindley Counseling PLLC, Jennifer Lindley, 17912 Ragtop Day Ln.  
 1/1/20 Mason Beach Properties LLC, Thomas Lee Mason, 19207 Stableford Ln.  
 1/1/20 Polarity Books LLC, Michael Scott Alden, 18449 Streamline Ct.  
 1/1/20 PorchLife Co. Inc., Preston C. Newlin, 7616 Mariner Cove Dr.  
 1/1/20 Probest Solutions LLC, Stewart R. Smith, 10115 Meadow Crossing Ln.  
 1/1/20 Red Dot Concrete Inc., Laura Castricone, 12225 Bailey Rd.  
 1/2/20 JNJ Capital Three LLC, John N. Jones, 17312 Wavecrest Ct.  
 1/3/20 McCoy's MRO LLC, Eric McCoy, 19707 Charles Towne Ln.  
 1/3/20 Piedmont Farms & Land Corporation, Daniel J. Edwards, 19941 Madison Village Dr.  
 1/6/20 DTR Communications LLC, David Romley, 16802 Baywatch Ct.  
 1/7/20 AMG Logistics Sky LLC, Alex M. Galvan, 19927 Oak Leaf Cir.  
 1/7/20 Gaunt Holdings LLC, Martin N. Gaunt, 20612 Queensdale Dr.  
 1/7/20 SunDogs Services LLC, M J Montanaro, 18033 Nantx Rd.  
 1/8/20 Bright Ridge Consulting LLC, Stephen McGuinness, 11620 Truan Ln.  
 1/8/20 Renew Health and Wellness PC, Micah Kirscher, 19824 W. Cataw-

ba Ave. Ste. E  
 1/8/20 Southlake Mortgage Inc., Scott Wilkinson, 9410 Robbins Preserve Rd.  
 1/8/20 Summit Coffee Franchising LLC, Brian Helfrich, 18635 Starcreek Dr. Unit A  
 1/8/20 Summit Coffee Holdings LLC, Brian Helfrich, 18635 Starcreek Dr. Unit A  
 1/10/20 Martin – Miser Associates Inc, Joseph D. Ford, 19453 W. Catawba Ave. Ste. D

### Davidson

12/11/19 Giant Jungle Productions LLC, Daniel E. Coleman, 131 Potts St.  
 12/12/19 20310 Chartwell Center Drive LLC, Jesse C. Jones, 209 Delburg St. Ste. 203  
 12/12/19 Finch's Landing LLC, Shawn A. Copeland, 215 S. Main St. Ste. 301  
 12/12/19 GSI LLC, Mark Deli Siljander, 940 Jetton St. #11  
 12/12/19 Rafter K LLC, Jesse C. Jones, 209 Delburg St. Ste. 203  
 12/13/19 Parkstone Place Owners Association Inc., Parkstone South LLC, 568 Jetton St. Ste. 200  
 12/17/19 2001 Grey Road LLC, Jesse C. Jones, 209 Delburg St. Ste. 203  
 12/17/19 Weaver-Urban Footwear Inc., Jesse C. Jones, 209 Delburg St. Ste. 203  
 12/18/19 Continui Inc., Jesse Posey, 12448 Bradford Park Dr.  
 12/19/19 Macri Recruiting Services LLC, Giuliano Macri, 920 Jetton St. Unit 47  
 12/20/19 NMT1 LLC, Nora M. Thomas, 17208 Royal Court Dr.  
 12/20/19 Urban Estates Inc., Jesse C. Jones, 209 Delburg St. Ste. 203  
 12/30/19 Cinnamon Shore LLC, United States Corporation Agents Inc., 12707 Windsor Crest Ct.  
 1/1/20 Maple Ave Holdings LLC, Piedmont Land Development Inc., 568 Jetton St. Ste. 200  
 1/1/20 Reasonate LLC, Christopher Gilliam, 230 Harbour Place Dr.  
 1/2/20 TechAssure Association Inc., Henry G. Droeger, 210 Delburg St.

More New Corporations  
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# Chamber recognizes volunteers with awards

BY DAVE YOCHUM

At their annual gala, the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce recognized an organization and individuals who have gone the extra mile for the Lake Norman region. Outgoing Chamber Chair Tricia Sisson recognized Georgia Harris Krueger and some of her key staff present with the prestigious Duke Energy Citizenship and Service Award.

Krueger is the executive director of the outreach center which provides lasting solutions for health, education, and economic stability for people who need assistance from Huntersville to Mooresville.

Krueger said she and her team were honored to receive the Duke Energy award. "The Ada Jenkins Center is an important piece in making our region an even stronger place and it is so nice to be recognized as such," she said.

Last year more than 850 individuals



**2019 Lake Norman Chamber Board Chair Tricia Sisson presents Georgia Krueger, Executive Director of the Ada Jenkins Center with the Duke Energy Citizenship & Service Award. Also pictured, from left, Maritza Stutts, John Crutchfield, Bill Russell, and Leslie Wilson. Photo courtesy of John McHugh /Ocaid Photography**

volunteered at the Center.

The Chamber also recognized Andrew Schlessler with Sweet Dreams Mattress and Furniture with the John R. Cherry Community Service Award for his civic involvement. Schlessler,

utilizing an alter-ego character "Mat-tman," helps promote area charities including Angels of '97, Mooresville Christian Mission and Welcome Home Vets.

Chip Scholz, 2003 board chair, was

received the Scott Hinkle Servant Leadership Award for his work with the Chamber's Academy of Political Leadership.

Other recognitions included Steve Genebacher from Christian Brothers Automotive in Huntersville as the Volunteer of the Year, Don Oaks with Our Towns Habitat for Humanity with the Carbon Ambassador of the Year, and Jason Colvin with Colvin Insurance and Financial Services with the Starrette Service Award as the Outstanding Board Member of the Year.

Special recognition also went to Sylvia Spury, the chamber's executive vice president, who was singled out with the Chairman's Distinguished Service Award for her work on behalf of the Chamber's Women's Conference, Diversity Program and Women's Networking group.

The annual chamber gala was held at The Peninsula Club.



## Board of Directors 2020

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Tricia Sisson

### 2020 BOARD CHAIR

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Dale Gillmore

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# Jury awards \$21,500 to Sisson in business dispute

Jan. 21. By Dave Yochum. A Lincoln County jury has decided that both Bayport Holdings and Brian P. Sisson breached “a material term” of the management agreement that determined how Sisson would run The Range at Lake Norman in Denver, NC.

The agreement between Bayport, a partnership that includes Cornelius businessman Bob Watson and Kevin Lafone, and Sisson lasted less than six months before it misfired.

Meanwhile, Sisson hopes to run for the NC Senate seat that includes Cornelius. His wife Tricia is CEO of The Range at Lake Norman, as well as a newly elected member of the Cornelius Town Board.

Bayport sued Sisson and Sisson counter-sued, culminating in a five-day trial in Lincoln County Superior Court.

According to the jurors, Bayport breached the management agreement first.

The jury awarded Sisson nothing for Bayport’s breach as well as nothing to Watson et al for Sisson’s breach.

Around the subject of Bayport breaching the management agreement first, the jury decided not to award damages to Sisson.

Things went wrong between the two from the very beginning in January 2018, starting with Bayport apparently hiding the true nature of its financial position.

Bayport’s owners were in arrears on their bank loans, but they did not

tell Sisson before the agreement was signed. The jurors also decided the inventory of firearms and accessories was erroneous.

The matter of Bayport Holdings v. Brian Sisson may have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to litigate but the damages awarded are relatively small.

Sisson was entitled to \$18,500 from Bayport for converting Sisson’s property to their own use after the agreement collapsed and Sisson was banned from the multimillion-dollar shooting range on Hwy. 16 in Denver.

There were multiple verdicts. Among them:

Did Sisson convert Bayport’s property? NO

Did Sisson misappropriate Bayport trade secrets? NO

Did Bayport negligently misrepresent information to Sisson? YES

Did Sisson take advantage of a position of trust and confidence to take Bayport’s customer list? YES

Did Sisson take advantage of a position of trust and confidence to bring about the closing of Denver Defense? NO

Did Sisson take advantage of a position of trust and confidence to co-mingle Bayport’s finances with Lake Norman Sporting Arms (aka The Range at Lake Norman)? YES

The verdicts—all 48 of them—were a mixture of wins and losses for both sides.

Sisson won in terms of dollars and cents.

In addition to the \$18,500 in damages awarded to Sisson for Bayport converting his property, he was awarded \$3,000 in damages because Bayport negligently misrepresented information regarding the sale of Denver Defense.

The jury awarded Bayport \$1 for Sisson taking “advantage of a position of trust and confidence” to take a copy of Bayport’s customer list, operate Bayport’s business under his own bank account and co-mingle their operating finances.

The precarious nature of Bayport/Denver Defense financial situation was a contentious issue during the trial. The jury decided that Bayport/Denver Defense mislead Sisson around the size of the inventory, its default on bank loans, failure to pay several vendors and the fact that the partners had funded the operation to the tune of \$207,000 “to keep the business alive.”

Serious matters, all, but Sisson was awarded only \$4.50 due to Bayport’s conduct.

Sisson told Cornelius Today it is “regretful that Denver Defense was simply not a viable business.”

“In my testimony I made it clear that I made every effort to correct the ineffective financial situation created by the owners and employees of Denver Defense in the operation of their business, most of which I was not aware of when I entered into the management agreement. As it became known to me through the course of discovery and the trial, the hundreds of thousands of

dollars the owners infused into the business in shareholder capital calls to try and keep the business afloat in 2017 were a complete surprise, and in the end the financials simply could not work. The jury was made aware of that through the course of the trial and their verdict reflected those facts,” Sisson said.

Watson did not comment. Sources said Bayport investors were disappointed by the verdicts in the complex business case. Bayport had requested the jury trial, which is considered somewhat unusual in this kind of a matter.

## Update Jan. 29

*“Currently there has not been a judgment entered. The Judge instructed the parties (through the Plaintiff) to file a status report on Friday, Jan. 31 as to what the parties intended to do regarding post-trial Motions. I cannot elaborate at this time as to exactly what the Plaintiffs plan to do other than the Plaintiffs will be filing several post-trial Motions within the time limits that will be prescribed by the Court. I do not know what the Defendants plans are regarding post-trial Motions as they have not shared that information with me.”*

—Michael K. Elliott, Esq.  
Elliott Law Firm, Huntersville

*Elliott represented Watson, Lafone and Bayport Holdings in the litigation.*

# LKN business leaders take shots at each other in Lincoln County trial

Jan. 17. By Dave Yochum. If Hilary Clinton had been elected, none of this would have happened. It turns out the Donald Trump presidency coincided with a precipitous decline in the firearms and shooting range industry.

People didn’t feel like their right to bear arms wasn’t threatened, and business at Denver Defense, a gun range over in Lincoln County, went down. It also fell at The Range at Lake Norman where co-owners Tricia Sisson and Brian Sisson are fixtures in the Lake Norman business and political scene.

Besides being a Cornelius Town Commissioner, Tricia is the chair of the Lake Norman

Chamber for a few more hours—her term expires tonight—and Brian, the

actual boss-man at The Range on Bailey Road in Cornelius and The Range at Ballantyne in South Carolina and another gun shop in Pineville—has just thrown his hat in the ring for NC Senate District 41 as an independent.

Political observers say Brian’s petition drive to get on the ballot is no more than a shot in the dark.

But that’s not the story.

The other side is just as prominent, with names like Bob Watson, a leader in the Tea

Party movement, friend of many top Republicans and a business consultant and real estate investor, as well as Kevin LaFone, a Cornelius optometrist, and Craig Norfolk, the now retired head of the ElectricCities utility in



Huntersville and Cornelius as well as former chairman of Lake Norman Economic Development.

They, along with other investors in a company called Bayport Holdings and Denver Property Partners, opened Denver Defense in Denver NC when the gun range business was sizzling.

It was far enough from the Sissons’

Range at Lake Norman to attract new customers and for the Sissons and Watson to be friends and share ideas in a very expensive industry.

Gun ranges cost millions to build; the physical plant at Denver Defense was valued at more than \$4 million.

Today it’s empty, foreclosed on and for sale.

What happened is that a couple of years after Denver Defense opened, the bottom fell out of the firearms industry.

Denver Defense struggled with debt payments on the order of \$26,000 a month. Watson et al turned to then-friends at The Range at Lake Norman for help, where Brian Sisson was

*continued on page 25*



*continued from page 24*

well-regarded in the gun range-weapon sales industry.

Well-known business broker Joe Vagnone had been hired by Denver Defense to find a buyer. None was to be found, including Sisson, who said “no thank you.”

Watson et al., the Sissons and Vagnone then worked out a management contract and letter of intent whereby Brian Sisson would run Denver Defense until he could find a banker willing to refinance the business.

That agreement is the subject of Watson/Bayport/Denver Defense V. Sisson/The Range at Lake Norman/The Range at Ballantyne/The Pineville Gun Shop. The defendants have countersued.

Chief among the charges is fraud and deception. Denver Defense alleges that Sisson, as a competitor, came into the management agreement in January of 2018 with the intent to “run Denver Defense” into the ground.

Disputed is whether Sisson opened a new banking account to handle Denver Defense finances when he took over management two years ago.

**Brian Sisson testified that he ran Denver Defense revenue through existing accounts at The Range at Lake Norman.**

Watson et al allege that was a fraudulent and deceptive act. Sisson testified the account was separate in fact from Denver Defense and therefore within the spirit of the management agreement. Separate books were diligently maintained, Sisson testified.

Former Denver Defense bookkeeper Kim Contino, an independent contractor based in Mooresville, smirked often enough during Sisson’s testimony to be upbraided by Special Superior Court Judge Michael Robinson.

The court proceedings have been interesting since they got under way Monday.

The Range CEO Tricia Sisson—who was not named in the Denver Defense suit—has not been in court all week.

One of Brian Sisson’s attorneys repeatedly addressed Bob Watson as “Mr. Sisson,” apologizing each time.

And when Watson was posed with a hypothetical question involving turnips, Watson responded with an answer involving elephants. But that’s only half of it.

The jury was heard laughing about turnips and elephants. They were scolded by Judge Robinson.

Regardless, all Denver Defense funds went through The Range at Lake Norman accounts, under Sisson’s management, which lasted four and a half months. Watson et al. allege \$320,000 was diverted to The Range at Lake Norman.

Sisson testified Denver Defense profits were less than \$2,500 during his tenure. Meanwhile he paid the debt service for four months.

Sisson testified that his personal salary at The Range was \$980 every two weeks, that he did not draw a paycheck at Denver defense.

By the time the fifth payment was due, the relationship with Watson had become “adversarial,” Sisson testified. Rather than call or send a registered letter or overnight letter, he terminated the management agreement in an email to Watson.

Indeed, the management agreement failed to list an address for Watson, but he’s a known quantity in The Peninsula and Lake Norman politics where the Sissons are also active.

Sisson attorneys pointed out how an email was faster and much more efficient than any other kind of mail.

Watson attorneys said it was another example of Sisson violating the agreement. Contino used the word “co-min-

gled” to describe the treatment of funds during Sisson’s management.

Questions were raised about how sales taxes were handled among multiple county and state jurisdictions, but that may be a matter for tax officials.

Under cross-examination, Sisson said The Range at Lake Norman was also listed for sale when he began discussions, albeit reluctantly, to take over Denver Defense.

Sisson testified that Watson misrepresented the true nature of Denver Defense’s precarious financial situation.

**When Sisson “terminated” the management agreement by email, he also emailed Denver Defense customers saying the business was closed.**

This caused irreparable harm, Watson testified. The business did reopen a few days later—with Sisson banned from the premises—but it soon closed.

The building is for sale for \$2.6 million.

A Lincoln County jury will get the matter sometime today and render a verdict. Meanwhile, Tricia Sisson will preside over the Lake Norman Chamber gala tonight prior to turning the volunteer reins over to Richard Pappas, the incoming chair.



Paul & Judy Leonard with Chris Ahearn

## Our Towns Habitat merging with Charlotte H4H

Jan. 15. Our Towns Habitat for Humanity will be subsumed into Habitat for Humanity/Charlotte. The new affiliate will be headquartered in Charlotte.

The Habitat Restore retail operation in Cornelius will remain open as a “significant revenue” source for the \$55 million (asset) non-profit.

The merger, which will save \$6 million over 10 years, will result in an agency serving an area that runs from Pineville through Charlotte and Lake Norman to Statesville. The merger will be effective Feb. 28.

Laura Belcher will be president and CEO of the combined organization.



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## Brian Sisson launches signature drive to get on November ballot

Jan. 7. By Dave Yochum. Brian Sisson, a Cornelius resident and the husband of Town Commissioner Tricia Sisson, hopes to run for the North Carolina Senate seat held by Natasha Marcus of Davidson.

He has launched a petition drive to run as an independent for NC Senate District 41, the seat held by former Cornelius Mayor Jeff Tarte until he was defeated by Marcus in 2019.

Sisson is a former Huntersville Town Commissioner as well as an owner, with his wife, of The Range at Lake Norman on Bailey Road. The Sissons moved to Cornelius three years ago from Huntersville.

In an email, Tricia Sisson asked people to support her husband's would-be campaign to "give the voters in this district a real choice in the November election."

Marcus, a Democrat who has a B.A. in Public Policy from Hamilton College and a J.D. from Duke University School of Law, worked at the Ada Jenkins Center before becoming a member of the NC Senate.

Sisson is a registered independent.

As an unaffiliated candidate his name can't appear on the ballot unless he provides the Board of Elections with 6,500 physical signatures of the registered voters in this district.



Sisson

Local political observers said the BOE is stringent around the validity of signatures, so considerably more will be necessary.

If Sisson can obtain the necessary number of signatures by March 3, "you will have eight months to learn his platform and decide if you want to vote for him," Tricia Sisson said in an email.

The email went on to say: "If you're like me, you hold dear the right to vote and determine who the best person is to represent you in our government. Having only a single candidate running for office should never be a the only option."

## Oh oh oh: O'Reilly Auto Parts coming to Hwy. 21



Jan. 23. O'Reilly Auto Parts got the green light from the Town Board to build a store on Hwy. 21 in Cornelius just south of the Hampton Inn. Construction could begin in early spring.

O'Reilly, which dates back to the 1950s, has more than 5,000 stores across the country and revenues in excess of \$9 billion.

Napa Auto Parts is located just a

short distance north of the new O'Reilly store.

Developer Lawrence Bearden of Lawrence Development in Davidson said he was glad to provide new jobs and develop long-vacant land.

Bearden said he hopes to have the store up and running by year-end. Site preparation for the 7,200 square foot store is already begun.

## PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE

## Modern Dad

Twice a year my mom brings over an old copy of *Vanity Fair* for my wife, who puts it on the back of a toilet where it sits for three months until my mom brings over a newer issue. The pages are filled with stories and pictures of celebrities and society types I've

never heard of. So I usually just flip to the back, where each month a different celebrity offers their responses to the Proust Questionnaire, which was popularized in the 1800s by French writer Marcel Proust. Proust believed answers to the series of questions re-

vealed a person's true nature. A glimpse of the subject's neuroses, fears, dreams and regrets. I have never been satisfied with the results of any personality test I've ever taken, so this should be interesting. *Vanity Fair* meet's Cornelius Today. Let's go.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?** I don't know. Is solitary confinement a bad answer? I feel like that's a bad answer. What is your greatest fear? That moment when the vomit bug has torn through your family and you're the last person standing. You know it's just a matter of time so you plan your next meal based on the most pleasing thing to puke all night. **What is your greatest extravagance?** Most days at 4:30pm I pour myself a tiny bowl of these delicious rye garlic chips. They are so yummy. Sometime later my daughter will come into my office to ask me a question and tell me my breath smells terrible. Every. Time. **What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?** I can't keep junk food in the house because I don't possess enough self-control and will eat an entire bag of whatever it is in one day. The day after Halloween I consume enough candy to kill a water buffalo. **On what occasion do you lie?** When my kids ask me to take them somewhere I don't want to go so I tell them it's closed. "The trampoline park is closed on a Saturday?" Yes, kids, all day. **What is your current state of mind?** A good nap sounds great. Is that a state of mind? **Which living person do you most admire?** Room moms. Team moms. Coaches. Any parent who volunteers to deal with other parents. Most parents are fine but the vocal minority is a cacophony of idiots who would be best served living their lives alone in a dark room. **Which living person do you most despise?** You know when you're at Target and the parent in front of you decides now is the time to teach his or her three-year old how to work the credit card machine with two \$5 rebate gift cards and then they count out cash and coins for the balance? That person. **Which words or phrases do you most over-use?** Get in the car. Get in the car. GET IN THE CAR. **What or who is the**

**greatest love of your life?** Such an easy one. It's my children, of course. Precisely three minutes after they've fallen asleep. **When and where were you happiest?** I forgot exactly when this started happening but one day my kids finally woke up on a weekend and went downstairs to watch TV with-  
o u t  
w a k -  
i n g  
u s u p .  
That mo-  
ment we  
awoke and  
realized  
the sun  
was up, the  
kids were  
alive, and  
we were  
a l o n e ?  
Glorious.  
**Which talent would you most like to have?** I'd like to sing so we didn't have to listen to my kids' choice of music in the car. I know all the words to Roxanne. No, not that Roxanne.  
**If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?** My socks. I'm not entirely sure but I think I've been wearing them for two days. **What do you consider your greatest achievement?** Getting my kids to the bus stop every morning with their teeth brushed and dressed

in weather-appropriate clothes. This might also be the reason I can't recall if I'm wearing two-day old socks.

**Where would you most like to live?** Sometimes I think of moving to the first floor, where there is zero

chance I will wake up at 4am because my daugh-

ter accidentally mule kicks me in the kidney after sneaking into our bed. **What is your most treasured possession?**

E l e c t r i c  
s k a t e -  
b o a r d .

I'm trying to start a gang of mid-

d l e - a g e d  
electric skate-

boarding dads called Paunch and Jon. Our

gang vest would be sleeveless LAPD shirts from CHiPs.

**What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?**

The state of mind of the

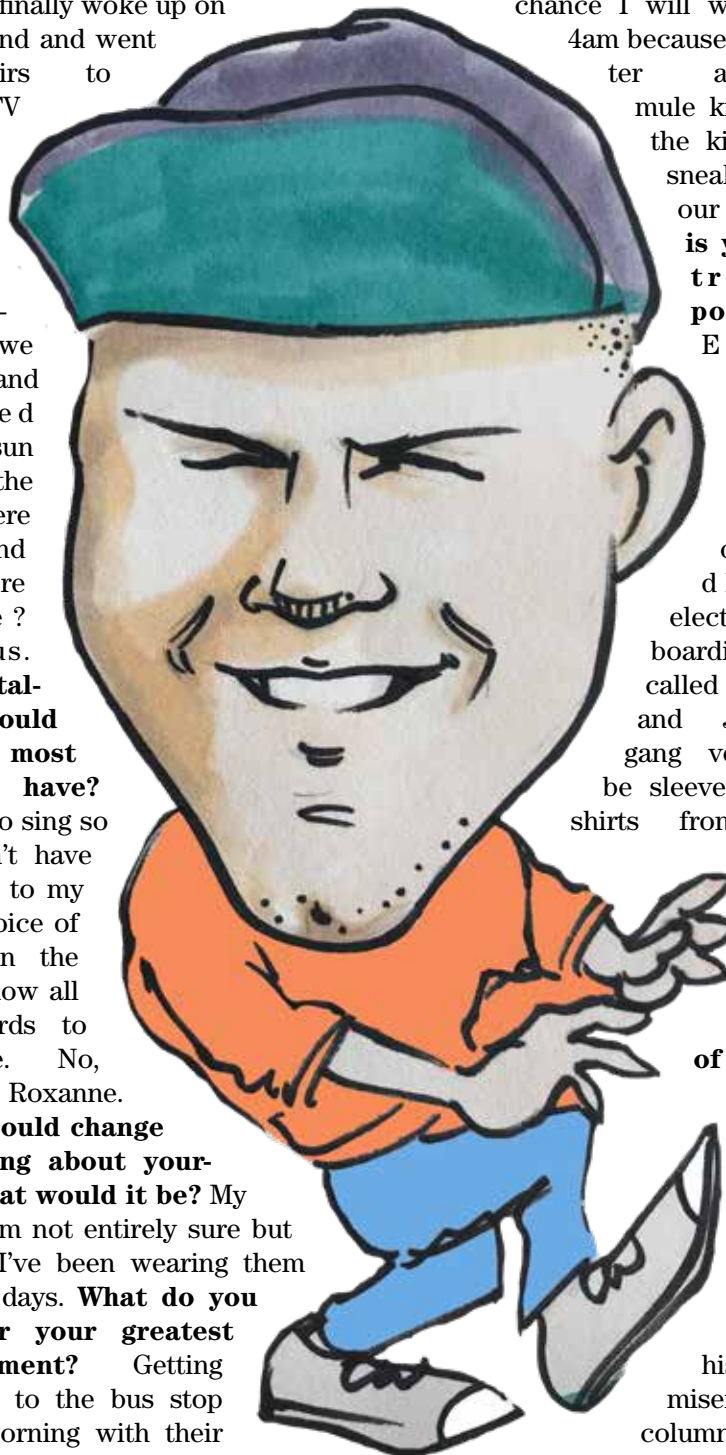
r e a d -  
er who felt the need to

project his or her misery on the

columnist at a community news-

paper by sending him a letter saying horrible things about his kids. **What is your most marked characteristic?** I'm bald and have oddly large calves. Every time I catch a glimpse of myself in a full length mirror I realize this could provide a genetically disastrous future for my daughter. **Who are your favorite writers?** The Pig and a Pancake lady. Every time you read a new one you're like, "No WAY she can bring this back around!" But she does. Every time. Doesn't matter if it's a pig, a mouse or a dog. I don't know how she does it. How does she do it? **Who is your hero of fiction?** Hard to beat Atticus Finch – who is somehow widely regarded as the greatest fictional father of all time despite the fact that he barely spent any time with his kids. Seriously, his kids would have been vagabonds without Calpurnia. **What is it that you most dislike?** People who take 75 items – 35 of which are non-scannable fruit and veggies – into the self-checkout line at Harris Teeter. **What do you consider your greatest achievement?** Three summers ago during a late afternoon at the pool the Mother of Dragons had just enough Rose to join me and the kids in attempting, and succeeding, to build a four-person shoulder-on-shoulder totem pole. **What is your greatest regret?** When I was potty training my son I told him to just pee wherever when he had to go. He's now 11 years old and won't stop peeing in the front yard. **What is your motto?** Go to your room.

*Jon Show lives in Robbins Park with his wife, who he calls "The Mother of Dragons." Their 10-year-old son is "Future Man" and their 7-year-old daughter is "The Blonde Bomber." Their dog is actually named Lightning.*



Online headline Jan. 7

## ‘Town Board changes local code on breweries’



**From Stacy** Sadly, Bayne Brewing went out of business many months ago. Looking forward to the new ones though!

Online headline Jan. 22

## ‘Do toll lanes really cut congestion?’



**From James Bailey** More fundamentally, do additional lanes reduce congestion? A growing body of research confirms the common sense of anyone who has seen the freeway building orgy in the America’s major cities: NO!



Online headline Jan. 16

## ‘Recent voting highlights changing demographics’

**From Jim Puckett** FYI for years it has been evident in North Mecklenburg that the interest of Charlotte have trumped the interest of our area, from the bait and switch of the commuter rail line (we pay for ALL of Charlotte’s light rail while it was never a “real” option for the north line) to the idea of managed lanes turning into For Profit Toll Lanes, to CMS purposely planing NOT to provide adequate facilities for the north. With the growth of new transplants in the area who don’t know the history we run the risk of this trend just getting worse. It is important that we make sure everyone knows that when you “partner” with Charlotte you need to have chiseled in stone deliverables OR you need to continue to vote in ways that make sure equity is a possibility. The Charlotte Metro area is a great place to live but as the first Chairman of the Metrolina Economic Development Commission I can tell you that our 900 lb Gorilla “partner” has their best interest at the forefront and IF we happen to gain anything that’s OK also.



**Puckett**

**From Lynn** When I see people comment on how we need to compromise or give in to CMS I can’t help but ask, “how long have you lived here and how old are your children “.That and voting for tax increases for Mecklenburg County.History matters! If you’ve lived here for more than a couple of decades you know what they say is totally different then what they end up doing.

**From Rick** Anytime you hear a Charlotte politician – and I particularly include the Charlotte Chamber among them – speak of “regional cooperation” you should put one hand on your wallet.

**From Richard** Cornelius could be so much more but 2/3 of the town population is stingy and self centered.

Online headline Jan. 15

## ‘Are we the fastest growing metro-area in the US?’



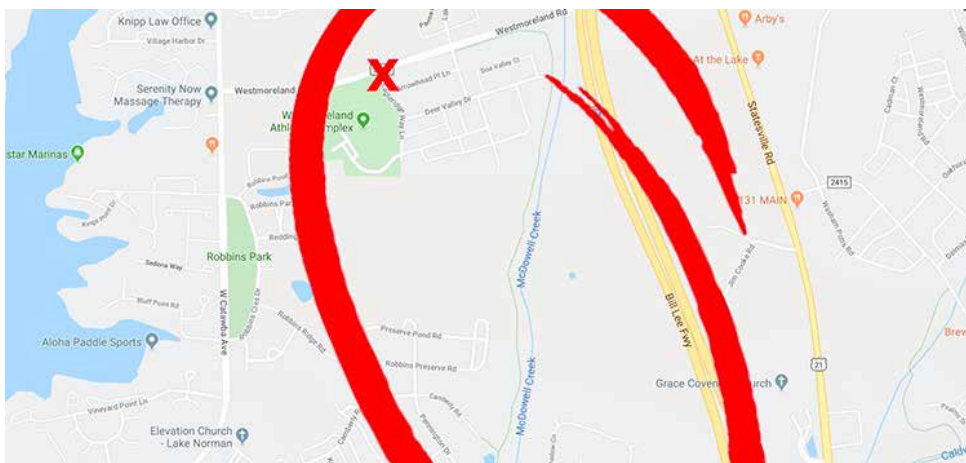
Mark Vitner and Pat Riley spoke at the Newsmakers Breakfast Dec. 13

**From Cheryl Doty** Interesting! I just moved here from the DC area. I mistakenly thought I was leaving the crazy traffic.

**From Linda Daley** Cheryl Doty And it's just going to get worse since NC-DOT has no money for our projects that were supposed to start this year. And all of the continued growth that we continue to let happen in this town as far as more shopping centers and

more apartments.

**From Nils Lucander** Many people think it's wonderful to be growing so quickly and so large. I think it's terrible and sad. Thirty years ago, the US population was 225 million. Today it is 331 million. Thirty years from now its projected to be almost 450 million. Yippee. Charlotte will be bigger and more difficult to live in as population grows. But...it is "world class." LOL.



Online headline Jan. 9

## ‘New road, roundabout will link Westmoreland, Hwy. 73’

**From Brian Stack** Has the city lost their circle's !!! Circles, Circles everywhere there's Circles . I'm getting dizzy... excuse me please.



Online headline Jan. 17

## ‘LKN business leaders take shots at each other in Lincoln County trial’

**From Thomas Anderson** So somehow Mr. Yochum and the editors have, based on the opening line of this story, managed to blame President Trump for what is clearly a business contractual dispute that led to the closing of Denver Defense. What a ridiculous stretch to make a clearly biased statement and what a complete departure from the role of journalism which used to be to inform the public of the facts of a matter. What a joke this is.

**From Bill Boan** Respectfully disagree with Mr. Anderson's comment. It's well documented (at least over the last decade) that gun sales and ammo spike in relation to respective political control. The intent of Mr. Yochum's comment is certainly within the scope of under-

standing. On a deeper level, the comment is saddening, in that political forces have allowed us to devolve into a fear-based population rather than searching for the god-given kindness, empathy, and humanity which is instilled in all of us.

**From Anette Powell** Well said Bill Boan.

**From Sam Garofalo** All poor management and business decisions aside, loved the article! The country is more secure, but if Clinton were elected we would be holed up in caves locked and loaded trying to protect the constitution. Looking back a few years it's scary!

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Online headline Jan. 5

# 'The Gillons' siding wasn't exactly the right shade'

**From Jaqueline Stroupe** Sometimes little people can't be trusted with authority. They equate force with leadership. Home Owners Associations frequently fine homeowners over the most minor infractions. I don't know if they are appointed or elected, but either way. They can be "ejected". The siding issue was ridiculous.

**From Van Moore** Different texture also.

**From Fred Locke** Sounds like something from the Berkshire community in Mt Ulla. HOA's and ARC's are generally made up of good people, but sometimes they are made up of people

who love to cause trouble for others.

**From Susan Dalrymple** I hate HOA and ARC. I understand why they need it (sometimes) but they think they have absolute control over what you do at your own home. My house is always well maintained and if they want to pay my taxes, then they can (maybe) tell me what I can and can't do. The reason I moved and bought a house NOT in HOA jurisdiction.

**From Vicky Kottyan** I really can't tell the difference. This is quite ridiculous.

**From Sandy McAlpine** Sucks that ARC had this much power. Those neighbors



have nothing else to do than screw with the Gillon family.

**From Lisa Turley** This is just ridiculous. No compassion. Makes my blood boil.

**From Angelo Larusso Jr.** ARC and HOA's should be drawn and quartered.

**From Marc Studer** Angelo A Lorusso

Jr, Amen.

**From Matthew Watts** Awful hard to match if your house wasn't built a month ago.

**From Paula Wolfe** So petty. Leave them alone. Their circumstances were extraordinary. Where is the humanity.

**From Cheryl Lineberger** Ridiculous.

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- ▶ Brooklyn South Pizzeria 19400 Jetton Rd, Cornelius
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 **Kiwanis**  
LKNKiwanis.org



Online headline Jan. 20

# 'Claude McConnell passes away at 95'

**From Jim Risco** Dr. McConnell's military and life-long service to community is a role model for everyone to aspire to be and do. My father also was a Staff Sergeant in WWII, having service in Europe & the Philippines for 3.5 years away from my mother. Oh, the PRICE of freedom paid by these great men and women. Prayers and thoughts to his family as he is surely to be missed. With deepest respect.

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