

THE NASHVILLE GRAPHIC

Nash County's First Newspaper Since 1895 – SPECIAL SECTION, JANUARY 30, 2025

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



An estimated 5,000 people packed the Rocky Mount Event Center Oct. 30 amidst heavy security to attend a rally for President-Elect Donald Trump, beginning with remarks by attending officials at 11:15 a.m. and ending with a 1 p.m. speech by Trump that lasted nearly two hours. People were still streaming in at 11 and extra chairs had to be set up until finally, there was standing room only after all the stands were full. Graphic photo



Roy Cooper, North Carolina's 75th Governor, came home to say his official good-byes, delivering his Farewell Address Dec. 18 to a packed Brown Auditorium at Nash Community College. Graphic photo



Nash's newest District Court Judge, the Honorable Alicia M. Slaughter, was sworn into office April 8, with her first day on the bench April 15. Slaughter won the March 5 Democratic primary and was appointed by Governor Cooper to fill the vacancy created by the appointment of the Honorable Beth Freshwater-Smith as a Special Superior Court Judge. Graphic photo



Close to 100 people packed Nash County's historical Superior Courtroom to show their love and appreciation for the Honorable Anthony "Tony" W. Brown, Nash District Court Judge, (pictured above, right) left Nash County after twenty years to head for the wild West. Brown, 72, who lives in Spring Hope with his wife of 35 years Betty Brown, was due to start his next job the following week in Texas as a federal judge hearing immigration cases. The Aug. 15 courthouse celebration was presided over by the Honorable William Farris, Chief District Court Judge. Graphic photo



Braswell Family Farms hosted its first New Year's Eve Egg drop on the grounds of the Nashville Junction on Dec. 31, 2024. An estimated four thousand-plus attended, with almost half watching fireworks from their cars parked on adjacent streets in the evening's chilly temperatures. Graphic photo




Lillian "Kinnie" Pruden of Red Oak competes in an international triathlon after nine months of training - and an injury. Pruden competed in the 2024 VinFast Ironman World Championship, held Sept. 22 in Nice, France consisting of a grueling 140.6-mile triathlon for women only that begins with a 2.4 mile ocean swim, then a 112 mile "hinterland" or rural endurance bike race, and finishes with a 26.2 mile run. Contributed photo



The U.S. 64 Bypass split bridge that crosses over N.C. 58 in Nashville got its own name Oct. 9, when it was named in a NCDOT dedication ceremony for Nick and Mayo Boddie, who passed in 2011 and 2020, respectively.

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2024
YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY

Nashville Fire Chief Chris Joyner, having worked as Interim Head over both the Fire and Police Departments since the end of October, was appointed Public Safety Director over both departments for one year.

Former Red Oak Town Clerk Tracy Shearin joined the Town of Castalia as its interim clerk. Shearin replaced Susie Haughwout, who retired after serving around a year with the town. Shearin, a Nash County native, served as town clerk in Red Oak for six years before her resignation in June 2023. Prior to serving as clerk, Shearin worked with Nash County Social Services, where she retired with around 30 years of service.

A Red Oak man was recognized in Hollywood and received notice of his third Best Actor award. Brian George, a native of Nashville, received notice that he had been named in The Best Shorts Competition for his lead role as 'Lance' in "The Audition," directed by David Wenzel and produced by DMAC Studios. IMDB (Internet Movie Database) described the film, released in 2023, as "a short dark comedy that explores the life of the struggling artist looking for their big break."

Nashville Town Planner Sherry Moss left the Town of Nashville returning to Vance County to serve as planning director.

The Town of Nashville began random enforcements of the two-hour parking limit on Washington Street between Barnes and Boddie Streets and on South Boddie between Washington and Church Streets. Code Enforcer Shawn Lucas went business-to-business Jan. 5 with notices from Randy Lansing, Town Manager, quoting Section 36-97 (b) of the Nashville Code of Ordinances, which prohibits parking

in designated areas for more than two hours at a time Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Spring Hope's historic pedestrian bridge, still in use despite warning signs and barriers composed of chain or tape, was the topic of a public hearing. The bridge, which has one end on public property at the intersection of Bridge and Railroad streets, lands on private property on the other side, divided between two homes on East Branch Street.

The posted speed limit on six Momeyer town roads was lowered from 55 to 45 after a request by town officials was approved by DOT. Town Clerk Sheila Alford told council members that she'd received a call from the state Jan. 5 approving speed limit changes, pending ordinance changes that would need to be signed by the town council and the installation of new speed signs.

The Nash County Board of Commissioners made a public statement in response to a smear campaign launched against board chair Robbie Davis and the board's alleged "failed leadership." A mass mailing sent out at the end of the first week in January by the anonymous group "Liberty & Justice" had a photoshopped image of Davis' face wearing a white hat and suit and holding a cigar and referred to him as 'Boss Hogg' of Nash County. Liberty & Justice, which lists a Raleigh address of 3801 Lake Boone Trail #225, identifies itself on its flyer as "an independent expenditure campaign not affiliated with any candidate or campaign."

Supporters of the Spaulding Family Resource Center in Spring Hope came to make a case for continued Nash County funding, and to make sure the Center was still eligible to ap-



Governor Roy Cooper came back to his roots in a visit to Nashville Elementary School, where he toured classrooms and spoke with students and teachers prior to making an address and signing a proclamation designating 2024 "The Year of Public Schools." Cooper, who attended Nashville Elementary, handed out "A Lesson Plan for Strong Schools and a Strong North Carolina" and bade the crowd of approximately 200 parents, teachers, students, school administrators and board members, business and county leaders to "do their homework" and call their elected officials to urge more teacher pay in the upcoming legislative session. The Governor also called for more funding to early childhood programs and said there should be a moratorium on private school vouchers until public schools are fully funded. Graphic file photo

ply. John Perry, SFRC President, backed by Spring Hope Mayor Kyle Pritchard and former Nash County Commissioner Lou Richardson, spoke on behalf of the Spaulding Center at the Jan. 22 Nash County Board of Commissioners meeting, which was also attended by approximately twenty members of the public to show

their support. The Spaulding Center, located at 600 S. Pine Street, Spring Hope, is in dire need of new or used HVAC systems, Perry said, and would be able to support itself and no longer ask the county for help if it had them.

FEBRUARY

The State Department of Environmental Quality chose a remedial clean-up plan for the Red Oak Landfill. The Red Oak Landfill, which operated as a municipal dump beginning in the late 1960s and was closed in 1977, covers 22.6 acres of a 35-acre wooded parcel owned by the Town of Red Oak. It is owned by the town, but is not within municipal corporate limits.

More new houses and higher home values are two causative factors for an anticipated adjusted increase in residential revaluation figures for Nash County, with appraisers relaying an average property value increase of 55.3% for residential properties. A raise of 42.7% has been assessed for commercial properties, and 34.5% for agriculture properties. The overall across-the-board increase in assessed value from revaluation will likely be in the range of 40-45%.

Nash County's premier grant-hunter, Patsy McGhee, retired after more than thirty-three years in local government.

Nashville Code Enforcement Officer, Shawn D. Lucas, was named as Nashville's Planning Director

Leggett Farming Partnership, owned by Brent and Sue Leggett, received the Farm Family of the Year award Feb. 2 from the North Carolina Tobacco Growers Association at the Southern Farm Show in Raleigh after having been nominated by the Tobacco Growers Awards Committee.

Nash County's most promising new sites for future business development, the 500+ acre Ammons site in Middlesex, received a \$500,000 boost from the North Carolina Railroad Company.

A proposed townhouse development off Liberty Drive has been approved by the Nashville Town Council, but only with a reduction of units and a list of conditions imposed by town officials on the developer.

Sewer extension projects to connect homes on Essex Road and in Regency Estates with town systems are officially "on go," after coun-

cil members approved contracts with Mack Gay and Associates. Approval of the contracts, whose costs are covered either fully or mostly by two grants from NCDEQ, were given at the Feb. 6 Nashville Town Council meeting.

A developer plans to turn 160 acres of open land next to Castalia's park into a subdivision. The property sits on Main Street, directly adjacent to the Castalia Community Park. A small portion of the 160-acre property sits in the town limits while the other 125 acres is considered to be out of the town limits.

Carolina Family Health Centers, which include the Harvest Family Health Center at 8250 NC Highway 58 South in Elm City and its adjoining Carolina Family Dental Center, got an unexpected Christmas present of \$5 million. The Health Centers, which service Nash, Wilson and Edgecombe County residents with additional locations in Wilson and Tarboro, received the money from Yield Giving, an organization created by philanthropist Mackenzie Scott.

Nash County Magistrate Matt McAuley ended his 25-plus years of service with Nash County. He was sworn in March 1 as magistrate for Surry County.

A West Mount firefighter with 63 years of experience under his belt is working to preserve that history - and the history of his department - writing and compiling books in addition to documenting changing times and people along the fire house hallway. David Winstead, 89, was congratulated at the February meeting of Nash County Commissioners in recognition of his achievements, which continue to pile up.

The second shell building in the Middlesex Corporate Centre was sold to GXP-Storage, which plans to build its international headquarters there and create up to 100 local jobs, anticipated to have annual wages of \$78,000. GXP-Storage will use an existing 62,500 square foot shell building on the site as its first in a multi-building campus, with a capital investment of \$80 million.



More than 80 firefighters participated in a tribute parade for Castalia Fire Captain David "Pac-Man" Braswell, an active member of the Castalia Fire Department for 38 years, was out on extended medical leave. Braswell watched the massive demonstration of support from his front porch along 58 in Castalia. Beginning with Castalia Truck 7-B, a well-maintained pumper dating from the late 1960s, and accompanied by the entire fire department compliment of 20-30 firefighters and their six other vehicles, the line extended for at least a mile. Every company in Nash County, along with multiple Captains, participated, including: Nashville, Coopers, Sharpsburg, West Mount, Stanhope, Momeyer, Salem, Spring Hope, Whitakers, Bailey, Middlesex, and Ferrells. Graphic file photo



A surprise local visit by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt to Nash County resulted in the unexpected announcement that Nash had been approved to receive \$40 million in Lottery funds to build a new Southern Nash Middle School, with an 1100 student capacity, in three to four years. It was the largest school grant that Nash County has ever received. Graphic file photo

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MARCH



Nash County Sheriff's Office Lt. Angel Ricks, nominated by Nashville's American Legion Post 110 for State Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, achieves that award for North Carolina and is considered for a district award. Ricks was due to receive state recognition at the State Convention in June. Ricks is the fifth NCSO officer to have been nominated by Post 110 and won at the state level, the others having been Brandon Medina, Liz Cahoon, Balthazar Rodriguez, who got it last year, and Misty Strickland. Strickland got the regional and national awards, receiving the latter honor in 2013 at the National Conference in Houston. The Nashville Police Department has also had officers win at state. Graphic file photo

Freddy Howell defeated Dan Cone in the primary election for District 3 County Commissioner. Allen Chesser, the Republican incumbent for District 25 in the N.C. House of Representatives, defeated challenger Yvonne McLeod. Alicia Slaughter won the vote for the NC District Court Judge District 8, Seat 7. Laurie Buckhout won the primary vote for US House of Representatives 1st Congressional District

The first annual Agriculture Forum at Nash Community College Feb. 29 drew a crowd of over 100, including farmers, ag industry partners, legislators and educators.

A \$500,000 award from Senator Lisa Barnes for street overlay projects means Nashville is looking to see which roadways are in greatest need. The Asphalt Street Overlay Project-Resolution 2024-12 was approved at the March 5 Nashville Town Council meeting, with eleven town streets on the list for repairs.

A second shell building at the Nashville Business Center to be constructed by Nash County has been approved by county commissioners, who have designated Jonathan Boone, Deputy County Manager, as staff design professional for the project. Boone is a professional engineer.

Renovation plans for the Railroad Depot Restoration Project in Spring Hope are taking shape, with an interior floor plan approved March 4 at the Spring Hope Board of Commissioners' meeting.

A multiple-agency investigation into the death of an 18-year-old Spring Hope man continued. Amir Keyshawn Hinnant was reported missing to the Wilson Police Department on Feb 24th, according to a copy of the missing person's report, which said he had been last seen at 1 p.m. Feb. 24 at a home in the 600 block of Vance Street East. Hinnant's body was reportedly found in a rural area near NC Hwy 481 near Enfield on March 4th, according to the Halifax County Sheriff's Office, themselves notified by Wilson Police at 4:10 p.m. on that date. The news was relayed to Spring Hope Police that evening.

Momeyer Town officials are taking steps to reclaim their history while also discussing ways to bring some older customs, such as a 4th of July celebration, back. At their March 11 Town Council meeting, Mayor Wil Funderburg gave an update on the Momeyer Historical Project, which began to take shape in the last several months with discussions about where and how to store printed materials and artifacts relating to town history.

A \$2.6-million-dollar new Driver Training Center designed to streamline training for Nash Community College programs requiring Commercial Drivers' Licenses had its groundbreaking March 6 next to the Pet Connection Center

at 3600 Eastern Avenue, Rocky Mount.

Red Oak Volunteer Fireman Brent Fisher, who may be better known in his capacity as Assistant Director for Nash County Emergency and Fire Rescue Services, retired after 30-plus years of service to Nash County to take a job at the state level. Fisher is the new Area 6 Coordinator for NC Emergency Management.

A site plan for Forever Oaks, an event/wedding venue owned by William Donald Poland under construction at 5730 Red Oak Road, Battleboro, passed its first two hurdles, receiving approval with stipulations from the town planning board and on March 11, from the Red Oak Town Council. The next step was to receive Nash County approval for a zoning change from Residential to Commercial.

A marathon Nashville Town Council session March 19 lasting nearly six hours, including the annual budget retreat session, culminated in a discussion about returning to the town's prior arrangement of having a police chief over the police department and a fire chief over the fire department.

Barnes Farming of Spring Hope, the subject of a North Carolina Department of Labor (NC-DOL) probe after the death of seasonal worker Jose Arturo Gonzalez Mendoza last September, was issued three citations for safety violations and \$187,509 in penalties but has issued a "notice of contest," according to DOL personnel.

Nash Central High School Senior Princess Holmes of Nashville took top honors at the Booker T. Washington Theater in Rocky Mount March 14, as, for the second time in two years, she was selected as "Youth of the Year," the highest honor a Boys and Girls club member can receive.

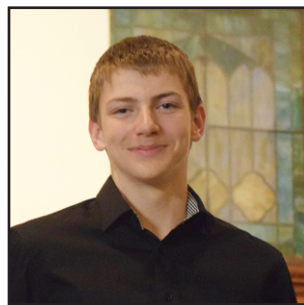
The Town of Castalia is down a board member, as long-time Commissioner Brian Hinkle submitted a letter of resignation at the board's March meeting. Hinkle submitted his letter to Mayor James Alston and said he was resigning from his post due to moving out of Castalia.

More than 40 people - a combination of farmers, educators, government officials and ag industry leaders - turned out Friday, March 22 at Nash Community College for the Farm to College Breakfast, a fact-finding workshop to cultivate ideas for NCC's Agriculture Certificate. "It's an excellent jump start to something that could be phenomenal," said Parker Phillips, well-known ag supporter, who was one of the attendees.

APRIL



Congressman Don Davis, center right, poses with Nashville town officials March 25th while presenting a check from Common Project Funds, to be used towards sewer improvements in the Regency and Essex Road neighborhoods. Graphic file photo



The 32nd annual Distinguished Citizen Awards Ceremony and Reception, presented by the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. Celebrated were Jordan Lytton, (above) Distinguished Citizen for 2024, and Alex Zipko, who was awarded the Junior Achievement Award. Graphic file photo



After more than six months of having North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services at the reins of Nash County's Child Protective Unit of the Department of Social Services, state officials retreated while complimenting Nash County on its speed and expediency of repairs.

Castalia Commissioners unanimously approved an annexation and rezoning request that will pave the way for a 160-acre subdivision to be built next to the town's park.

Nash County officials have signed on the dotted line and ponied up \$100,000 to begin planning for the expansion of the Senior Center in Nashville, selecting Oakley Collier Architects PA to begin the process. Nash Arts Center, which adjoins the Senior Center and needs repairs, is also part of the project planning. An anticipated project budget for both the Senior Center building and Nash Arts is approximately \$4 million dollars, according to a March 22 letter from Ann Collier to Boone about revised architectural/engineering design services.

Three years after opening their first U.S. production facility in Nash County, the Crump Group Inc. of Canada is planning an \$85 million expansion at its Nashville plant.

The Town of Nashville plans a public hearing regarding the purchase of 981 Old White Road, former site of the Fellowship Church of Nashville.

A Nash County commodity, eggs from Braswell Family Farms, was front and center in national news for the White House Easter Egg Roll April 1.

The proposed Nash County FY 2025 budget projects a drop in the property tax rate from the current 67 cents per \$100 assessed value to 63 cents per \$100 assessed value; after revaluation, even the drop is projected to generate a 20.8% increase, amounting to an estimated \$68+ million in property tax money for the county's general fund.

Nashville Town Council members, minus an absent Kate Burns, voted to move ahead with a \$1.5 million purchase contract for the old Fellowship Church at 981 Old White Oak Road, with the caveat that the 'due diligence' period be lengthened to 90 days and the town granted the right to "back out" of the purchase contract for any reason during that time.

Engine issues were blamed as a cause of a plane crash Sunday night in the city of Rocky Mount in the 1200 block of West Raleigh Boulevard.

Faith Christian Ministries of Nashville, celebrating 40 years of operation was lauded by both Town of Nashville and Nash County.

A budget work session for Red Oak Town Council members April 18 resulted in a proposed budget of \$1,247,500, which is a drop of 6%, or \$81,855 from last year.

Two prominent African-American women, a Judge and a recently retired Assistant Director for the State Bureau of Investigation, were speakers at the Voice of Nashville Community Group April 14 meeting. Alicia Slaughter, District 8 Judge for Nash, Edgcombe

and Wilson Counties, and Audria Bridges of Concord, NC, were introduced as was Tomamine Jones, Code Enforcer for the Town of Nashville.

The remaining two lots in Nashville's Business Center changed hands. Lot 4 was chosen as the site for Build-Labs' first U.S. manufacturing facility. Lot 3 is being handed over to Nash County in exchange for the county to build a 40,000 square foot shell building there.

Nash Arts was invited to come under the Nash County umbrella, but board members postponed any decision until they receive a proposal in writing to outline details of what that would involve.

The Nash County area is growing so rapidly along with the rest of North Carolina, that Duke Energy anticipates peak load growth by 2030 will be eight times what was projected just two years ago. Beth Townsend, Local Government and Community Relations Manager for Duke Energy, hosted a key leader update at Nash Community College March 26 to speak on the work being done to modernize the electric grid "as we prepare for the energy demands of a growing and vibrant regional and state," as Townsend put it.

Approximately \$6 million in capital improvement requests was trimmed to \$1.8 as part of the projected Nash County FY 2025 budget, with the three most costly recommendations a network server and storage solution, a replacement ambulance and detention facility capital.

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MAY



Good weather, festival food, vendors, carnival rides and back-to-back bands kept visitors busy in downtown Nashville during the 26th Annual Nashville Blooming Festival. The event, organized by the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, brought thousands of people to the town on Mother's Day weekend. Graphic file photo

Nashville Police Officers, in conjunction with other local law enforcement ran on May 28, carrying an actual torch for the Nash County lap of the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) for Special Olympics. This was the 4th year that NPD has participated, but the local run. In addition to active fund-raising to support the cause (NPD raised \$2,824 to date this year, not counting their part in the Dunkin' Donuts Campaign this month in Rocky Mount and Nashville when another \$1,500.53 was raised), NPD officers also took part in the Dare County Special Olympics' Polar Plunge March 9 at Jeanette's Pier in Nags Head, assisted with the local Special Olympics spring games at Nashville Elementary in April, and blinged out one of their Dodge Chargers with a special wrap. Graphic file photo



Nash County was chosen out of 99 counties for a new pilot UNC program for veterans called "Building Veteran Healthy Communities (BVAC)."

By unanimous vote, Nash County School Board members approved three "realignment" maps May 6 for elementary, middle and high school students whose school assignments were re-set based on their addresses and a desire to "even out" school population numbers after the coming merger from Edgecombe County schools.

Seventy-seven blue ribbons were placed in front of the Nash County Administration Building. Each ribbon stands for a Nash County child who is currently in Foster Care, a visual way to raise awareness for children and their families. May is National Foster Care Month.

After six months of work, a Community Economic Development plan for the town of Spring Hope is complete, with results presented at the May 6 town board meeting and formally adopted. Among the possibilities presented were putting apartments in downtown buildings, creation of a Spring Hope Historic Association, a Historic Homes Tour, and a "Walk of Fame" sidewalk featuring handprints or footprints from actors who film movies in the Spring Hope area.

With completion of the parking lot and stage and renovations nearly complete at the Nashville Junction, Nashville town officials have approved creation of a "Social District" for Nashville Junction allowing consumption of alcoholic beverages in the district.

Nash County's Department of Social Services added a new deputy director, Gwenetta Graves, who will oversee the Child Welfare Department. Graves is one of two deputy directors under Denita DeVega, who is Director of Nash Social Services. The other is Shea Neal, who focuses solely on economic services.

Calling Nash Community College's Vet Med Tech program the best of five in the state, and the only one located in the central and eastern portion, NCC President Lew Hunnicutt presided at a ribbon-cutting May 3 of the new Braswell Veterinary Medical Technology Building. The building is named for Scott and Mary Lou Braswell; the lobby is named for Danny and Jane Tyson.

Long-time former Nashville Town Councilwoman Louise Hinton was cleared of all charges relating to her November 2023 criminal summons for a misdemeanor charge of violating privacy of employee criminal records.

Two principal positions, 28 K-12 teacher jobs and 23 teacher assistant jobs went on the chopping block in Nash County schools as a result of declining enrollment, a decreased budget and loss of schools. Board members voted unanimously to accept the RIF (Reduction in Force) recommendations.

The Town of Momeyer cut its property tax rate from 13 cents to 9 cents per \$100 valuation, which is a 25% reduction that keeps the town 'revenue neutral.'

The proposed FY 25 budget for the town of Nashville barely got on the table for review before town officials started talking about cutting the tax rate, initially proposed as staying at 61 cents. At the end of a May 15 budget workshop session, council members voted to reduce it to 59 cents per \$100 valuation, and by a May 22 continued session, \$97,000 in general fund expenses had been cut.

Spring Hope Commissioner William Thomas Toney Jr., a former Nash County Sheriff's Deputy, officially ended his law enforcement career as of May 17, when a career celebration was held for him at the Nash County Courthouse.

Momeyer budgeted \$3,000 to reinstate community events for the town.

Nash Central Bulldog Athletes won a state award for community service for work done last fall to host a medical clinic at the high school.

The town of Red Oak passed its \$1,247,500 FY 2025 budget with nary a peep from the public during its May 13 town council meeting.

Nash County dropped its tax rate from 0.67 per \$100 valuation to 0.63 in anticipation of reaping an increase in tax revenues, while its projected overall FY2025 budget totals \$142,973,213 com-

pared to last year's \$134,587,602. A revenue neutral rate after revaluation would have been 0.575, which local officials are not required to adopt.

Close to 30 Nash County seniors made their mark on history May 16 at the Country Doctor Museum in Bailey when they took part in recorded interviews conducted by AP US History students from Southern Nash. It was the 5th Annual Oral History Day at the Museum, with this year's focus on memories about childhood illnesses and vaccines.

Almost two months after announcing an \$85-million-dollar expansion at their Nashville plant, the Crump Group was lauded for adding over 100 full-time jobs to the area, most of which concerned hiring people who were formerly classed having low-to-moderate income wages.

The State Bureau of Investigation was called in, and a Nash County Sheriff's Deputy placed on routine administrative leave, after a shooting outside of Spring Hope that left a man in critical condition. Deputy Sgt. Miguel Salazar, a seven-year veteran NCSO officer, responded to a call at 9698 US 64 Alternate, Spring Hope, according to Sheriff Keith Stone. The suspect was initially identified as a Juan Carlos Salazar, age 33, unrelated to Sgt. Salazar, but positive identification via fingerprints was pending so no information was available about the man's residency or work status, according to NCSO Sgt. Kevin Bisette.

JUNE



A new "patient bed tower" planned to host 150 patients, with 30 patient rooms per floor, is in the design development phase for UNC Health Nash in Rocky Mount, and new medical offices are planned for construction in Nashville and Middlesex.

Two weeks before an anticipated vote on the FY 2025 budget, Nash County Sheriff Keith Stone made several last-ditch requests for additional support, both funding and personnel, but was turned down by county commissioners.

Twenty-eight local seniors took the Imperial Centre stage May 28 for the Silver Follies, the performance division of the Down East Senior Games, which finished the 2024 season that evening. Best in Show was awarded to the Rowdy Rockin Seniors, a drum group from the Senior Center in Nashville.

Spring Hope adopted its FY2025 budget, with commissioners voting unanimously June 3 to leave the tax rate unchanged at 67 cents per \$100 valuation for the third year in a row.

The inaugural Women in Agriculture Banquet and Farm Tour, organized by the NC Cooperative Extension Nash County Center, drew a group

of about fifty to its Friday night event at Faithful Stables & Venue and twenty who took part in Saturday's Farm Tour series, beginning with the Nash County Farmers Market, a stop at Strawberry City and finishing up at the Enfield Cotton Ginney.

Red Oak Town officials are buying traffic cameras, giving off-duty Nash County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) deputies that work town security a raise and planning future security checkpoints.

Nashville officially has its FY 2025 budget after a unanimous vote by town council members and a public hearing at their June 4 meeting. The \$19,039,437 budget is 3.4% higher than last year's, but drops the town's tax rate to 0.59 cents per \$100 of taxable value, which is a drop of two cents from last year's.

Long-awaited street improvements to eleven Nashville streets are closer to coming about,



A former Nashville Town Council member has been honored with a proclamation in honor of her memory. Mary Kathryn Stanfield Dornseif, better known as "Kappy," was acclaimed at the June 18 Nashville Town Council meeting, when Brenda Brown, Mayor, proclaimed June 9, 2024, as a day of remembrance and celebration for Kappy's life and contributions. Graphic file photo

now that town officials have committed almost a half million dollars to fixing them- and at no cost to the town.

UNC Health Nash entered into a new lease agreement with Nash County, and also amended its bylaws to allow two county commissioners to sit on the Hospital Board as of July 1. The new lease agreement will require the hospital to pay Nash County two million dollars per year, with an additional increase after each five years in the 3.5% to 5.5% range over the next 40 years.

Nash County officials have adopted their \$142-million-dollar budget ordinance, although the vote to do so was not unanimous and starting salaries for sheriff's deputies and emergency services personnel were singled out for comment. The vote at the June 17 county commissioner meeting was 6-1, with the lone "no" vote coming from Sue Leggett, commissioner.

The Momeyer Ruritan Club celebrated its 60th anniversary at its clubhouse Monday, June 18, in a ceremony attended by state and national Ruritan dignitaries.

The largest swearing-in ceremony ever to be held at the Nashville Police Department, with three new officers taking their vows, happened Friday morning, June 21, bringing NPD up to its full capacity of 21 officers.

Nashville lost Public Works Director. Lee Brown put in his resignation and left on good terms, said HR Director Trey Sanderson, with Brown's last scheduled day July 8.

In an attempt to address the potential impact of opioids in school grounds, Nash County public schools officials considered the adoption of a new policy on emergency administration of Naloxone.

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JULY

Tony Cameron, Nash Emergency Services Director, issued a statement of resignation, apparently directed towards staff, saying that he had decided to step down as of July 8, 2024.

A last-minute agenda addition to the July 1 Nash Board of Commissioners' meeting produced introductions of two new department heads as HR Director and Public Utilities Facilities Director. Tim Kerigan, who is coming to Nash from the Town of Smithfield, where he served as head of HR, Public Information Officer and Economic Development Liaison, started July 15 as HR Director for Nash County. Mike Phillips, formerly Assistant Director of Public Utilities Facilities Director, was promoted to Director after having worked for Nash 6 and a half years.

Spring Hope's Downtown Development Board (DDB), armed with a list of potential economic development ideas, chose three to bring to town commissioners for approval to begin: a fall downtown cleanup, the designation of a specific area for the Hollywood-like "Walk of Fame," and establishing a social media presence for downtown merchants.

Parking vehicles in front yards or having a vehicle impounded in Nashville is about to get more expensive, with relevant new or increased fees added to the town's fee schedule for FY 2024-2025 as of June 18, 2024.

A partnership between the town of Nashville and Nash County looks due to hit paydirt, as town and county officials took to shoveling at a groundbreaking ceremony for the Nashville Business Center Shell Building. The 10 a.m. July 9 ceremony, while well-attended, was apparently planned short and sweet to get people out of the heat, taking just

20 minutes to complete.

The number of office referrals for students caught vaping, smoking, or possessing a controlled substance in Nash County schools increased, and a new program was developed to address the needs of students with vaping and substance abuse.

A much-lauded Coopers volunteer fireman was honored by Elks Lodge #1038 at Birchwood as the recipient of an American flag for Elks Flag Day 2024. Aaron Becerra, of Sandy Cross, was celebrated Thursday, June 27 in a ceremony at the Elks Lodge, with several of his fellow fire and rescue mates.

Nashville Town Council members decide that they needed to revisit the Fellowship Church site before the July 16 regular meeting, prior to the town's due diligence period ending, with a final vote on the purchase expected then.

A map amendment and rezoning approval paved the way for a new 26-27 unit housing development in Spring Hope. Bryson's Ridge, a multiphase development on about 68 acres, runs parallel to N. Louisburg Road, or NC 581 N.

A new 12-lot subdivision called River Stone is approved under a general rezoning request to be build off S NC 58 in Elm City. A 7.2 acre tract of land owned by Williams Builders of Rocky Mount just north of Winstead Crossroads at the intersection of Highway 58 and 97 was rezoned from RC Commercial to RA-40, single-family residential, by Nash County Commissioners July 1.

Pending Nashville Town Council approval, seed money to start up a Barn Quilt project on the side of the new Rec Center has been okayed by the Downtown Nashville Strong Advisory Board.

The number of Nash County farmers participating in farm field trials is the highest on record this year, with one farmer, Richard Sapp of Edwards Farm Equipment, Whitakers, handling one with soybeans and a second with corn. Sapp is growing two varieties of soybeans on Lonesome Pine Road as part of the NC Soybean On-Farm Trial Program, a joint initiative between the NC Cooperative Extension and the NC Soybean Producers Association. He is also participating in an irrigated corn hybrid trial. Charles Rose of JB Rose & Son, with a farm on Old Bailey Highway, Nashville, is working on a cotton variety trial, while Brent and Sue Leggett are participating in a dry land corn hybrid trial on their land in Sandy Cross. The Leggetts are growing 18 corn hybrids plus one of their own selection, making a total of 19 hybrid plants in the study. Sapp's corn trial also features 19 hybrids. This will give local farmers 19 choices of corn hybrids to plant with on-farm data from two different areas in Nash County.

The third of five community conversations about the Nash County Opioid settlement took place July 11 at the Nash County Agriculture Center, with participants given a chance to suggest how money should be spent after listening to overdose statistics and a "lived experience" panel with people who battle addiction.

An expected vote Tuesday night by the Nashville Town Council on the purchase of the Fellowship Church property is delayed until August 6.

A property donation may help rejuvenate the Town of Castalia's farmer's market. Castalia Commissioners approved the donation from Felton Parrish at their regular board meeting in July.

The property is at 8950 Main Street and is around .80 acres.

Unexpected issues with both the HVAC and septic system at the Pet Connection Center Monday led to a temporary relocation of fifty to fifty-two dogs, who were all back at the facility within days.

The next phase of the Spring Hope Historic Train Depot restoration project received a major shot in the arm with the arrival of a \$537,000 grant from the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

A state investigation was underway in the death of a 19-year city of Rocky Mount employee, Trace Christman, reportedly electrocuted Sunday evening at the Tar River Water Treatment Plant at 4489 Leaston Road, Rocky Mount.

Nashville town officials adopted an amended public comment policy which includes a reversal of a prior policy rule: a public comment period will no longer be held during special "called" meetings unless authorized by the Mayor.

A vigil was held for Roger Wade Ayscue, or Kojack as he was better known to those in the northeastern edges of Franklin County and into Castalia, who has been missing for 15 years.

Rocky Mount-Wilson Regional Airport hired Josh Pusser as its new director.

A tiny piece of land may have a big impact on visitors to Nashville, if its planned use for a monument-style welcome sign is put into place. Michael Hurt with Hurt LLC, the owner of the Nashville Junction, has donated a 0.15 acre of land at the corner of Barnes Street and Western Avenue adjacent to the Fuel Doc to the town, which was accepted by the town council at their July 16 meeting.



Don Davis, U.S. Congressman (left), and Bob Etheridge, State Executive Director for the North Carolina Farm Service Agency speak during a press conference regarding the drought conditions across the state. Graphic photo



Nashville Firefighter Jerry Sherrrod received a 50-year helmet from the Nashville Fire Department and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Office of the State Fire Marshal during a retirement ceremony. Sherrrod served three local companies Nashville, West Mount and Red Oak. Graphic photo

AUGUST

Nashville's Chamber of Commerce held its 33rd annual meeting at the Elks' Lodge at Birchwood with over 100 people in attendance.

A pilot program to benefit select jail inmates struggling with opioid use disorders got underway at the Nash County Detention Center.

A Middlesex beef farm is drawing attention from across the state as it works to promote the health benefits of Piedmontese Cattle, an Italian breed unique for its genetic ability to produce meat lower in fat and cholesterol.

At-risk students in Nash County middle and high schools, particularly those with multiple office referrals for vaping and tobacco use and any found in possession of a controlled substance, will have the opportunity to work with a student support specialist in lieu of a suspension under a new contract to be signed August 1.

A long-time Nashville resident and practicing attorney, John Ed Davenport, passed away July 24 in Raleigh.

By a unanimous vote, the Nashville town council passed a motion at its August 6 town meeting not to buy the Fellowship Church property on Old White Oak Road.

A 21-year-old Dortches man is dead and three people arrested, charged with first degree murder and armed robbery, after a fatal shooting in Nashville. Nash County Sheriff's Deputies responded to a report of a shooting at 1971 Exum Road at 3:16 a.m. Saturday and found Caleb Turner injured with multiple gunshot wounds.

Former Nash County Assistant Director for Emergency and Fire Rescue Services Brent Fisher was awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the highest award for state service granted by the Governor.

A state investigation is still open more than six

months after the death of a Nashville girl, 19-year-old Amariah CeAnna Smith, while the man accused of killing her, 29-year-old Jordan Isaiah Thomas with addresses listed in both Edenton and Elizabeth City, is still behind bars in Chowan County with no bail, charged with first-degree murder. Amariah, an Elementary Education major in her second year at Elizabeth City State University at the time of her death on January 16, 2024, was Nash Central High School's 2022 Senior Class President, a cheerleader and ROTC member. She also was an alumna of Nash Central Middle School and Nashville Elementary, and had worked part-time at the Nashville McDonald's, the Dollar Store and Zaxby's in addition to a cleaning agency.

Nash County appointed two new department heads: Mary Hogan as finance director and Marian Cascone as tax administrator.

Three people are dead, one of those a child, and two more hospitalized after an apparent murder-suicide series of events that began in Sharpsburg, Wilson County, early Sunday morning and ended up in Battleboro. Kiera Massenbourg, 27, and DaQuan Jones, 32, who lived together at 1301 Leggett Road, Apt. 49, Rocky Mount, died Sunday. Their 6-year-old daughter, Zoey Jones, injured during the shooting, died at Vidant hospital in Greenville from her injuries Monday evening. DaQuan Jones was found in a front bedroom of a Battleboro home deceased from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Six months after getting town approval to begin an "Officer-in-Training" program at the Nashville Police Department, that tree has borne fruit, with Officer Blanca Gonzalez sworn in June 21. Gonzalez, originally from San Diego, California and a resident of Bailey with her husband, Justino Benitez and two children, is the first NPD officer to be hired through the program,



Nashville Parks and Recreation Center, located at 200 S. Boddie Street, celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon cutting hosted by the Nashville Chamber of Commerce on Monday, Aug. 12 at its new location, formerly the Acme Cleaners. Graphic photo

which paid her a basic salary and provided school fees, books, supplies and training gear while she was at BLET (Basic Law Enforcement Training) at Wilson Community College.

A New York-based company plans to move into Nashville's Industrial Center and is set to receive tax incentives from both the town of Nashville and Nash County. BuildLabs, a custom design + build firm, will be building its first U.S. manufacturing facility on Lot 4 of Nashville's Business Center, located at 101 Industry Court. ACN07, the company representing BuildLabs, contracted to purchase the property in April for \$134,075 with the expectation of building between 150 and 200 homes and projects annually. It also made a \$12-million-dollar private investment for construction upfits, machinery and equipment required for operation. Company officials said they expected to hire nearly all of 24 promised jobs locally, with an average annual salary of \$60,000.

The Momeyer town council voted to purchase camera equipment for the purpose of recording town council meetings to post to YouTube.

Nashville town officials approved creation of a Barn Quilt Wall on the side of the new Recreation Center at 200 Boddie Street.

Nash County officials laid their opening hand on the table, delivering a draft memorandum of agreement to Nash Arts regarding a potential partnership between the two entities. The Nash Arts Council board, in turn, said its members will review the proposal and talk it over "to decide what is in the group's best interest" before getting back to the county with any decision.

An off-campus program to teach Bible education to public school students during school hours has been proposed for students at Nashville Elementary,

although it has not been approved by Board of Education members. Proponents of Lifewise Academy spoke at the Aug. 5 Board of Education meeting, relaying that the program is legal under a 1952 US Supreme Court ruling that release time during the day for religious instruction is permissible if the program is privately funded, parent-permitted and conducted off school property. Nashville Methodist Church has consented to physically host the program.

Paige Strickland, a Nashville 4H'er, was selected to represent North Carolina 4H at the National 4H conference in Georgia in November.

A 52-year-old Nashville man is hospitalized at Wake Med in stable condition with charges pending after he was wounded in an exchange of gunfire with two Nash County Sheriff's deputies late Sunday evening. The incident involved James Breheim and two deputies, Sgt. Miguel Salazar and Lt. David Walker, at a home on the 2000 block of Reges Store Road.

Brian Grice was named Nashville Public Works Director.

Nashville Police have another new recruit: K-9 "Knox," a one-year old Dutch Shepherd.

Four local elementary schools planned to start after-school programs for selected students in the fall thanks to just over \$1.4 million in federal grant money designated for targeted academic support. Nashville Elementary, Spring Hope Elementary, Middlesex Elementary and Bailey Elementary are scheduled to start after-school programs October 14 with expected service offerings to forty students at each of the four schools.

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SEPTEMBER

A plan to ask the town of Nashville to annex Nash Central Middle School is in the "preliminary stage," according to Steve Ellis, Superintendent for Nash County Public Schools, who said he wanted to bring the topic up "for information only" and to keep board members informed.

The Tar River Composite Squadron, Civil Air Patrol (CAP), celebrated its 44th birthday with an Open House Aug. 29 at the Rocky Mount-Wilson (RWI) airport.

A Spring Hope woman is in jail, awaiting a possible indictment to be heard in Supreme Court on charges of Patient Abuse & Neglect at a Nashville Assisted Living facility. Yolanda Elaine Street, 40, of 627 S. Pine Street, Spring Hope, was arrested by August 9th by Spring Hope police on charges stemming from a July 9, 2024 incident at The Gardens of Nashville, located at 1022 Eastern Avenue, Nashville.

New study data for visitor and tourism travel show record-breaking results for Nash County, which ranked 25th in the state for tourism dollars last year.

In the interests of school safety, and because elementary schools in Nash County do not have Evolv weapons detection systems installed, public school officials are instituting random 'wandering' checks of ten percent of elementary school students, beginning September 9.

Pressure on Nash County mounts to fill the position of Emergency Services Director, left vacant upon the July 8 resignation of Tony Cameron, with three commissioners and a local fire department calling for action.

Students in Nash County public schools did so well with their end-of-year test results that the entire district advances 75 positions in state rankings, moving from 108th to 33rd out of 115 districts in the state. Data released Sept. 4, from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction showed that NCPS was one of only six districts in the state to reduce its number of low-performing schools each year since 2018. Southern Nash Middle School ranked in the top 1% statewide for academic growth, while Early College High and Parker Middle also achieved top rankings for improvement. Overall, 12 NCPS schools placed in the top 25% for growth statewide.

A new School Resource Officer position - making the total 10 for Sheriff's Deputies - was approved for Nash County Schools, but Sheriff Keith Stone asked that his department have a deputy in every school next year, including in the 5 public schools on the Nash side of the city of Rocky Mount. In contrast, Rocky Mount Police Chief Robert Hassell wants to keep his officers in those schools, as they have been since 1995.

A well-known former Nash County Schools educator and superintendent, Richard "Rick" McMahon, passed away Sept. 6 at the age of 72.

A \$17-million state-directed grant washes down into Nash County coffers, with the target water and wastewater infrastructure projects. The money, facilitated through the NC Department of Environmental Quality under the 2023 State Appropriations Act, will be used for twelve projects across the county, with six for municipal projects in Nashville, Spring Hope, Bailey, Middlesex, Whitakers and Rocky Mount. The other six projects are county-related.

The 5th Annual Heroes Field of Honor 9-11 ceremony draws over one hundred people Wednesday, Sept. 11. Three hundred flags, bathed in light night and day out of respect, waved in the grassy lot at 1114 First Street, Nashville, on the grounds of the Fellowship Church. The event is hosted by the Sharpsburg Exchange Club.

Two intertwined trees at the corner of N. Pine and E. Franklin Streets in Spring Hope are due to be cut following a resolution from the Spring Hope Board of Commissioners, who believe the trees present a hazard.

The Town of Castalia now has a full board for both its town council and planning board after commissioners voted in new members. Commissioners Sadie

Atkinson, Lynn Hale and Sylvia Mann voted in Marvin Wood to serve on the town council and William Clark to serve on the planning board at the board's regular meeting. Commissioner Jessica Bradshaw was not in attendance.

A Nashville woman's service to her community was recognized Saturday night at the 2024 annual Community and Rural Development Banquet. Barbara Wright was the recipient of the Community Champion Award, which recognizes community leaders who have demonstrated outstanding community leadership and achievement over the years for their community.

The Nashville Junction, previously the Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association Warehouse, and later the home of Nashville Building Supply, is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Nash Arts announces it will not be joining forces with Nash County. Less than a month after a draft memorandum of agreement was delivered to the Nash Arts Council board outlining a potential partnership between the two agencies, Nash Arts voted it down but is asking for an updated building lease agreement.

Nash County's EMS Department is now 8 positions away from being fully staffed, with 19 hires coming on board since July, when there were 23 vacan-



The annual Red Oak Classic Tractor Show debuted several first-time events. The Whole Hog Cook-Off, organized by Rotary leadership in cooperation with the Red Oak Area Historical Preservation Society, had eleven teams competing from across Eastern NC, with grills fired up Friday night at W.B. Ennis Park. Friday night also featured the first Beer Garden and a performance by the band "Somewhere Between." Free tractor-pulled hayrides and a kidszone, featuring giant inflatable ride-in balls on an adjacent field, added to the fun, while Saturday's classic car show ran from 11 to 3 p.m. Russ Varnell & His Too Country band provided live music Saturday afternoon and a collection of vendors lined one side of the parking lot. The Classic Event was held to raise funds for the Red Oak Area Historical Preservation Society (ROAHPs) to support its Teacherage restoration project and to contribute to Rotary's mental health initiative in Nash County schools. Graphic file photo

cies. Pay for Paramedics went from \$22.17 to \$26.43 an hour, a 19.2% increase with the passage of the FY 2025 county budget. Advanced and EMT Basic pay both increased by 13.5%, with the same pay granted to part-time employees.

Nashville's Stoney Creek En-

vironmental Park is now legally protected from most forms of development, with the town council passing a 'declaration of covenants and restrictions' regarding future use.

OCTOBER

An EF-3 tornado touched down in Rocky Mount.

Nash County Health Department officials want to consolidate Nashville and Rocky Mount offices into the county-owned MedPark building on the grounds of UNC Nash Hospital, but commissioners delayed a decision until plan specifics are worked out for either mobile services or a satellite office in the southern part of the county.

Nashville's historic courthouse made more history Wednesday, Sept. 25, when it was the setting for a session of the NC Court of Appeals.

The planned Baker Property subdivision, planned for 137 acres on both sides of NC Highway 58 and along the north side of Boddie Mill Pond Road, Nashville, was narrowly approved for a conditional rezoning request Monday, Oct. 7, when its motion squeaked by in a

4-3 split vote by the county board of commissioners.

Glover Park may soon be in the running to host district and state all-star Baseball and Softball tournaments, now that a new audio/announcement system and upgraded scoreboard and have been approved by the Nashville town council.

Judge Quentin Sumner and Barbara Sasser were honored with courtyard stones in the Nash County Commemorative Courtyard.

An unexpected, last-minute job reclassification for Nash County's Emergency Services Director's position raised questions, some of which have to do with the legality of the move.

Less than five hours after Sue Leggett, commissioner, again addressed the priority of filling the position, the board went into closed session for approximately four

hours, re-convening for less than five minutes to vote in open session on "reclassifying" the Emergency Services Director job as "Emergency Services Manager," which carries a lesser pay grade; Charles "Tripp" Bunn, existing Assistant Director of Emergency Management, was given the position.

An attorney for Barnes Farming of Spring Hope, whose client was issued three citations and penalties for safety violations by the North Carolina Department of Labor after a seasonal worker died in September of 2023, now claims that OSHA's basis for action was incorrect based on newly-released autopsy results which state that the worker had a pre-existing health condition.

Sandy Hall, Director and 4-H agent for the NC Cooperative Extension's Nash County center in Nashville, moves up to become director of the NC Cooperative Ex-

tension's Northeast district, providing leadership for more than 160 extension agents over 22 counties, including Nash and Halifax.

The Nashville Graphic returned home with three awards from the 151st annual North Carolina Press Association (NCPA) convention held in Raleigh on Sept. 19.

Third generation Braswell Family Farms President, Ronald "Scott" Braswell Jr., passed away October 15, 2024.

A volunteer group of about 350 members, Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, is asked by the Town of Spring Hope to discontinue maintenance on the cemetery property.

Construction of a third shell building at the Middlesex Corporate Centre is greenlighted by Nash County officials, who approved a capital project ordinance earlier this month to transfer about \$1.5 million to get the ball rolling.



Danny Vester of Spring Hope poses with his state record breaking pumpkin which was weighed in at the 51st Spring Hope Pumpkin Festival. The pumpkin weighed 1,700 pounds. Vester's pumpkin measured 101 inches circumference, 125 inches side to side and 112 inches end to end. Pictured with Vester are his granddaughters, Colbie (left) and Callie (right). Contributed photo

NOVEMBER



Jason Knapp of Red Oak, also known as "the kitchen goat," raise moneys to buy Food Lion gift cards for cancer patients. Jason works with oncologist offices in Wilson and Roanoke Rapids to find cancer patients in need, also hearing from people he works with while at the Nash County Farmers' Market, where he routinely does cooking demonstrations featuring vegetables in season and varying ways to prepare them. Jason operates under the umbrella of H&R Produce, the brainchild of Terry Rhodes and Tyler Hudson, and will be starting back up with them the first week of April. The Kitchen Goat distributes Food Lion cards to cancer patients in Nash, Edgecombe, Wilson, Halifax, Northampton, Johnston, Moore and Franklin Counties.

Nashville approved implementation of an annual food truck permit fee of \$500 for food trucks looking to do business in Nashville and also increased the required distance from existing restaurants.

Nash County District 3 commissioner, T. Dan Cone, was celebrated by his fellow commissioners at their Nov. 4 meeting at what was Cone's last full meeting before his seat is assumed by Freddy Howell after elections. Cone had served on the board since 2016.

Nash Community College, currently home for two of Nash County Public School high schools, may be the future site of a new Health Sciences building - if funding and support can be secured.

The annual Town of Red Oak Veterans Day Ceremony, held Saturday, Nov. 9th, dovetailed nicely with the 2024 Ride of Honor's ride-through in Red Oak, where at least fifty people lined Red Oak Boulevard to wave flags as riders rode by.

Nash County leaders, at Spring Hope's request, amended

the wording from a September resolution routing \$1 million in state-directed grant funds to Spring Hope for "water or wastewater improvement projects." Originally, the money was earmarked for construction of a new 100,000-gallon elevated water tank.

New plans for another part of the renovation of Spring Hope's historic train depot were unveiled at the Nov. 4 board of commissioners' meeting, with the new addition the open platform to be connected with the depot.

Bobby Joe Fisher, 89, of Red Oak, was celebrated for his contributions to North Carolina agriculture with a flag presentation and recognitions at the National Farm to City Week special breakfast.

Nashville's Town Council approved an economic development agreement to allow Ripe Revival, a North Carolina produce company currently located in Rocky Mount, to purchase 55 acres in the West Nashville Commerce Center on Cooke Road for \$150,000.

Nash County Cooperative Ex-

tension celebrated area farmers at the annual Farm to City Breakfast. Nashville farmer Jonathan Evans was named the Farmer of the Year. Colin Leggett, also of Nashville, was the recipient of the Next Generation in Agriculture Award. A new award, the Women in Agriculture Award, was presented to Christina Wrenn, of Wrenn's Farm.

The life and military service of James Merritt House was remembered recently at a special flag raising ceremony in Rocky Mount House, of Nashville, was better known as Jim by family and friends.

Nash commissioners, by a split vote, postponed action on promoting farmland preservation initiatives until concrete financial details are provided. Robert Covington, chairman of the Nash County Agriculture Advisory Board, flanked by Regina Moseley, Interim Nash County Extension Director, requested county support "both human and financial" at the Nov. 4 board of commissioners meeting while updating

county leaders on various levels of farmland preservation and the current status of such lands in Nash County.

Spring Hope's signature event, the Pumpkin Festival, may die on the vine for lack of chamber volunteers who are willing to do the work to bring it together. Doubts about the festival's fate are expressed during a discussion of the town brochure, currently under development, at the Nov. 12 meeting of the Downtown Development Board.

The second phase of development plans are approved for the Birchwood Preserves subdivision, consisting of 200 new single-family homes to be built on the former Birchwood Country Club.

Castalia may be small on the map, but it could end up having a sizeable energy footprint, now that a Battery Energy Storage system (BESS) has been approved as an addition to one of two solar farms in development in the town.

DECEMBER



Nashville's Children Celebration and Bicycle Parade is held, a tradition in Nashville for more than three decades. Pictured right, Skyla Daniels of Nashville (in cart) with reindeer Indie Thompson, left, and Jadie Thompson, right are prepared for the parade. Graphic photo

Nash County leaders okayed the purchase of the Fellowship Church property at 981 Old White Oak Road, Nashville, to use for "existing county services and departments," approving a motion after closed session to enter into a purchase contract for \$1,250,000.

Nine months after being awarded \$400,000 from the state for the construction of a new Southern Nash Middle School, the hunt for a potential site has flushed out several potential locations, with the preferred option two adjoining parcels not far from the current school. Property identified is farmland with access to routes 97 and 581.

Nash County Public School board members will now have to operate under new, tighter restrictions on the conditions and number of times they can "remote in" to meetings, according to a state-enforced policy change.

A potential new subdivision in Red Oak draws resident concerns while still under review by town planners. Marvin Randolph Lewis of 2251 N. Old Carriage Road, whose property adjoins the 38.75 acre plot, owned by Royce Aswell and Michel E. Bone, referred to the potential project as the "Little Bone Development." The proposed subdivision site is located across from the Ridgefield subdivision.

A well testing high in manganese is shut down in Spring Hope, pending NCDEQ approval of improvement plans currently being formulated by an engineering firm.

The Town of Castalia starts a new tradition hosting its first ever Christmas tree lighting. Former Mayor Elene Leonard joined current Mayor James Alston for the tree lighting, marking what the town hopes will

become an annual event. The tree lighting was the culmination of the event, which included around a dozen vendors, caroling by local churches and of course, a visit from Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus.

Several dilapidated structures in the town of Spring Hope, both commercial and residential, are due for required code or zoning violation hearings as a first step in enforcing cleanup.

Megan Wordsworth of Nash County is Associate Producer of new Christmas movie, "Get Him Back For Christmas" released on Great American Family Dec. 14

A local Nashville ministry, "Helping Hands Outreach Ministry," continued its Christmas tradition of supplying local kids with bike and toys. The ministry was organized by Anne Richardson and her family in 2015. This year, they served lunches an all-time high of 400 people.

In a surprise move after a closed session during a special called meeting Dec. 16, Nash commissioners are turning over the deed to the Nash Arts church property to Nash Arts while retaining the right to take the property back if it is no longer used to support the Arts.

County commissioners took the first step Dec. 16 towards consolidating the two Nash Health Department offices into the MedPark building, which is owned by the county on the grounds of UNC Nash hospital. Commissioners voted to spend \$239,950 for a contract with Oakley Collier Architects to prepare design plans and specifications for interior building renovations and to advertise the project for bid, with a preliminary cost estimate at just over \$2.9 million.



Castalia held its first Christmas tree lighting event on Sunday. Pictured, little Ellis Taylor appears amazed when meeting Santa for the first time. Graphic photo

Momeyer hosted its first decorating contest, "Light up Momeyer."

Both Northern Nash and Southern Nash High Schools are set to be the recipients of grant-funded green stormwater infrastructure projects coordinated by the Sound Rivers environmental group

4-H families came together recently to pack over 200 bags of food and winter items for local youth and those displaced in Western North Carolina.

Momeyer Ruritans celebrated 60 years as a club. The club, established in 1964 and currently numbering 53 members, has increased since last year.