

Grammy Award winner Kwamé Ryan, music director of Charlotte Symphony, signs contract extension through 2031-32 season



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The planned Interstate 77 tollway expansion would stretch from Brookshire Freeway to the South Carolina border.

Agency urged to continue opposition to I-77 tollway

Foes lobby Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning to maintain recission

By Zamone Perez

NORTH CAROLINA NEWS SERVICE

As a Charlotte transportation planning agency considers the expansion of the southbound side of Interstate 77, opponents are encouraging people to speak out against the project.

On Sept. 23, the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization will reconsider its opposition to the nearly \$4 billion, 11-mile tollway expansion project. A provision passed by the General Assembly earlier this year gives North Carolina municipalities voting against the tollway expansion until October to reverse their vote.

Otherwise, they will have to pay a portion of \$69.6 million already put into the

project.

The Republican-sponsored state budget signed into law in July by Gov. Josh Stein requires municipalities that oppose North Carolina Department of Transportation projects to compensate the agency for initial costs. The bill became law after Charlotte City Council, which controls 41% of CRTPO's vote, withdrew support for the project.

Kennedy Williams, environmental justice program manager for the nonprofit CleanAIRE NC, said major interstate expansions can expose communities to harmful substances like fine

particulate matter.

"There's obviously going to be dust and things that are going to be released into the air that could potentially get into your lungs, and you can be exposed to it by living so close to it," Williams said. "Noise is part of it. There's obviously the environmental impacts of just constructing anything."

Proponents of the planned expansion argue the tollway expansion is more than just a road project and there are economic development benefits, making the project important for the Charlotte area. They said one benefit is how the tollway would intersect with other major transportation projects, such as the

Please see **TOLL** | 2A

Secret deal for \$10B NC data center

Amazon promotes economic impact for Richmond County

By Lisa Sorg

INSIDE CLIMATE NEWS

HAMLET — Steel skeletons of two-story buildings jut from the landscape strewn with building supplies, the site of a \$10 billion Amazon data center touted as the largest economic development project in state history.

Yet many residents in this city 75 miles east of Charlotte vehemently oppose it. Richmond County officials secretly crafted the deal, which includes significant tax breaks for Amazon, then sprung it on an area already encumbered by pollution.

Sources in the county include two rock quarries, an asphalt plant, a company that processes wood pellets, a facility that turns railroad and landscaping ties into biochar, a poultry slaughterhouse and a natural gas power plant.

On top of that, there's a Superfund site about 5 miles west of Hamlet where a company in the early 1980s discharged contaminants associated with antifreeze and oil into tributaries of the Pee Dee River, a drinking water supply.

"They're in every corner and the center," said Shaun Ingram, a Richmond County native. "You've got nowhere to run."

When the Amazon project is finished, it will include 21 buildings,

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Changes to entitlement eligibility in Mecklenburg

By Herbert L. White

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Tightening federal Medicaid and food voucher eligibility rules will impact thousands of Mecklenburg County residents.

While changes to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly referred to as food stamps, will push some people off the rolls, Mecklenburg County officials are encouraging people to check their eligibility to maintain benefits. The changes include new or expanded work requirements, more frequent Medicaid renewals for some recipients, and expanded prohibition of certain noncitizens.

According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, more than 132,000 Mecklenburg residents receive SNAP benefits. Another 343,000 residents receive Medicaid, a prepaid health care initiative for the poor, according to the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

Please see **CHANGES** | 2A

Professor questions spate of southern hangings

By Kylie Marsh

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

Recent hangings of Black Americans across the South have resurrected lynching fears.

The hanging death of a man in Raleigh last month was ruled a suicide, as Raleigh Police Chief Rico Boyce stated at a press conference. Widespread conversation regarding the incident, whether on social media or the press, has focused on historical and psychiatric evidence, calling the police department's investigation into question.

Christopher Edwards, North Carolina Central University adjunct professor of psychology, said a Black person committing suicide by hanging from a tree "would be considered epidemiologically rare."

In 2024, Javion Magee, a truck driver from Illinois, was found hanging from a tree in Henderson. In April 2025, Mario Kaiser Jr. was found hanged in Charlotte. In September last year, Demartravion "Trey" Reed and Cory Zukatis were found hanged in Mississippi. In May, Juliana Nzita was found hanged in Charlotte. In June, Cedric Tayuhe's body was found in Harrisburg. On Aug. 3, Tasia Fortune's body was found hanged in Mississippi. Demetrius Fleming was found

Please see **NCCU** | 2A

Developers make preservation pitch for historic Torrence-Lytle School

By Cameron Williams

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HUNTERSVILLE - Torrence-Lytle School is more than a set of shuttered buildings to Varona Wynn. It's part of her family's legacy.

Wynn, a Torrence-Lytle alumnus whose father was a teacher there from 1949-66, supports saving and preserving the campus, originally named Huntersville Colored School when it opened in 1937 as the only public school for Black students in north Mecklenburg County.

"It would mean a whole lot of my life is appreciated," she said. "...I still live down the street. It means everything to know that we were not abused for 50 years just letting this sit here after promising that it would be a school when it closed because they could not complete the integration process in this spot because we were a Black community."

The property was put up for sale by



CAMERON WILLIAMS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Varona Wynn of Huntersville is a Torrence Lytle School alumnus whose father also taught at the school.

the county in April and a public presentation on Sept. 12 included the first pitch for a preservation project given by Jerry Lee, founder of Little Sugar Creek Developments.

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Please
Recycle



Toll road opponents urge commitment to recission

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Silver Line light rail, though some local leaders push back on the assertion.



Langley

Sean Langley, president of the McCrorey Heights Neighborhood Association, believes the project would not address the congestion issue his community is trying to resolve.

"Obviously, adding any kind of highway construction adjacent to our neighborhood or the

neighborhoods along this 11-mile stretch would also decrease property values as well," Langley said. "The other big issue that we have is that we fundamentally do not believe toll lanes will actually solve traffic congestion."

The payback costs associated with opposing the expansion have led some municipalities to reverse their opposition to the project, but others remain defiant, despite facing millions in fees.

Herbert L. White of The Charlotte Post contributed to this report.

NCCU professor questions cause of Black hangings in the South

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in Roanoke Rapids about a week after the Raleigh man's body was found.

Magee's, Kaiser's, Nzita's, Reed's and Tayuhe's deaths also have been publicly declared suicides.

Edwards said the deaths are "suspicious" because they all happened in the South.

"It is inconsistent with the mechanisms that men, in particular Black men, use for suicide," he said. "It is typically a private affair. It is not designed to be public. Hanging from a tree is a public event designed to show you that you could be next, and so the nonsense that black people are hanging themselves from trees in public places is as inconsistent as the belief that shifting power structures has nothing to do with lynchings."

In 2023, The Suicide Prevention Resource Center reported that the most common method of suicide is by firearm. For men, over half (55%) choose this method, and suffocation is No. 2, but the incidence drops to 24%. Similarly, outside of firearms, the incidence rate for poison-

ing and suffocation among women is tied at 26%.

Edwards said for the cases to be suicides there must be forensic evidence on both the trees where the victims were hanged and the bodies that indicate they had been scaled to accomplish the task. This "suspends common sense," he added.

The resurgence of hanging deaths is to "terrorize" Black people into submission, Edwards surmised. Motivated by resentment toward advances in racial equality, he argues the destabilization of white power in the South over the past 20 years has led to lynchings.

"It is a way of balancing what politics cannot do," he said. "... If you are a white man looking around you, what you see is the number of people like you is increasingly shrinking, and it does not give many avenues to continue your social standings to actually fix that. Lynching allows you the same autonomy to adjust your environment that lynching did in the 1800s."

Changes to entitlement eligibility in Mecklenburg

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sioners. "We want to help our residents understand how the changes can impact them," County Manager Mike Bryant said in a statement. "The rules have changed and we have to educate our community, especially our residents who count on this support for their everyday needs."

Some SNAP changes are already in effect. Certain adults may be required to work, volunteer or participate in approved community activities for at least 80 hours a month.

Eligibility rules for some noncitizens have also changed, and changes to how household expenses are calculated may affect benefit amounts. Exemptions may apply based on age, health, disability, caregiving responsibilities and other circumstances.

People who receive Medicaid or SNAP should:

- Make sure Mecklenburg County has your mailing address and phone number.
- Read every notice from the county and respond by the deadline.
- Document work, school, or volunteer hours.
- Get an enhanced ePASS account, an app that allows for uploading documents with the county.

"SNAP changes are already have already started," said Yulonda Griffin, director of Mecklenburg's Department of Community Resources. "What's changed around SNAP is the work requirements. Able-bodied adults [eligibility] ... is someone who's previously between the ages of 18 to 54 ... now that age limit is 18 to 64. Additionally, if you are a parent of a child that's 14 or over, you are also going to be required to participate in those work hours."

"Additionally, there were some program exemptions we had before. There were certain exemptions for veterans, for homeless, for former foster youth, and those have been changed, have been eliminated as well. There have been

changes regarding receiving standard utility allowance, and that can impact how much benefits you actually receive."

As part of the Trump administration's crackdown on undocumented immigration, federal rules prohibit eligibility for non-citizens.

"There were changes around that started in February of this year, where certain individuals that would have been eligible, for example non-citizens like refugees and asylees that would have been eligible are no longer eligible for the program," Griffin said. "Medicaid has some similar changes, but those are actually going into effect soon."

Medicaid changes will take effect next month and early 2027.

Starting on Oct. 1, changes to federal eligibility rules will affect Medicaid coverage for some noncitizens. Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, recipients ages 19 through 64 will also be required to meet work or community engagement requirements including school enrollment, job training, volunteering and community service. Also, some recipients will be required to renew their eligibility every six months instead of annually with exemptions for people with disabilities or serious medical conditions, pregnant women, parents, and caregivers.

"Part of why we wanted to push this awareness because those changes are coming quickly upon us with Medicaid," Griffin said. "The non-citizen eligibility has changed - before it was larger groups of non-citizens that were here for humanitarian reasons primarily that would have been eligible with the Medicaid now effective Oct. 1, it really narrows down the eligibility for who's eligible."

"You have to be a lawful permanent resident. You can be a child that's living here up to 19 if you're lawfully residing, pregnant, or have given birth in the last 12 months, Cuban and Haitian entrants, as well as some citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Kalu living in the U.S. It's really limited the folks that were here under those humanitarian reasons."



MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Mecklenburg County is selling historic Torrence-Lytle School in Huntersville, built in 1937 to educate Black students during state-sponsored segregation in North Carolina.

Developers make preservation pitch for Torrence-Lytle School

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Little Sugar Creek Developments and Dream Keys are the two developers the county is taking proposals from. Dream Keys will give its proposal on Sept. 19.

"Several people have made it clear to me that the Torrence-Lytle School's story is far deeper than simply where Black children were educated," said Little Sugar Creek Development founder Jerry Lee, who led the presentation. "They took pains to make sure that I understood this was also a place where Black culture and community was nurtured and passed down and celebrated. This was a place where people came together, contributed and grew."

John Howard, Mecklenburg's historic preservation manager, said it is important the winning bid preserves all four buildings. It's also important the developer crafts a plan with depth and understanding of the future with them in mind. Lee's proposal would start with the old cafeteria, then move to the original school building and conclude with the wings. If funding is realized, he envisions completion between 2030-2032.

"The proposal that we are putting in front of the community is one that will preserve all four buildings," Lee said, "and to shepherd the process so that it activates this campus again. Our vision for [the original building] is to be turned into a community-focused core with various uses. ... We also have the plan to preserve [the old cafeteria] and our vision for that is to have it a small neighborhood-sized food retail hub where you have a bakery, a cafe and a small grocery store. And, on the wings, our vision for that is to turn them into small residential loft apartments about 900 square feet in total."

Lee acknowledged there are still fund-

ing questions and, in his proposal, acknowledged a one- to two-year process of realizing the initiative if preservation is feasible.

"Our first plan if we get awarded this project is to seek the pre-development funding possible to do the work," he said, "to get more educated and that will then allow us to create the package and engage the partners and take this vision one step further."

Lee said community feedback is important.

"You've got to do your homework," he said. "You've got to be very realistic about the evolution of the community, what it was, what it's become, how it became, what it is. And I think you need to talk with a lot of people and understand where they're coming from. Go into almost every conversation with an open mind, which is tough to do. But everybody's got their own personal story, and everybody's personal story is true, and you have to honor that. I think that's where you know you start with doing that."

Residents had lots of questions. Wynn said Mecklenburg should take the lead in preserving the campus given the county has owned the property since Torrence-Lytle's launch. In addition to its place in history, finding new uses for the campus will benefit the community.

"I am glad [Lee] didn't divorce his plans from what government should be doing," she said. "I am basically opposed to the county selling it. They should be rehabilitating it because of their responsibility. They have always owned it beginning in 1937. I don't know how we can keep the community involved enough to demand that the county puts its money and resources into rehabilitating what they have owned for over 50 years."

State Health Plan avoids cost hikes at some Atrium hospitals

By Lynn Bonner

NC NEWSLINE

Some North Carolina employees and teachers insured through the State Health Plan and seeking care at certain Atrium Health hospitals and clinics won't see big jumps in their out-of-pocket costs after all.

State Treasurer Brad Briner announced Monday that a dozen Atrium hospitals will be in a benefits tier that will keep their out-of-pocket expenses next year about the same as they are this year. Costs won't change for members who see Atrium primary care doctors.

In an attempt to control costs, the State Health Plan is moving to a tiered benefits system intended to push members to "preferred" hospitals and providers with which it has contracts. Atrium Health, the state's largest health-care system, was originally

frozen out of the two lower-cost tiers with its "non-preferred" status, meaning that out-of-pocket costs for members would increase for hospital visits, specialists, out-patient surgeries and other services.

Atrium complained and at least one legislator came to its defense.

Rep. Brenden Jones, Republican majority leader from Columbus County, wrote Briner after State Health Plan trustees approved the system that relegated Atrium Health to a more expensive tier, saying it would hurt rural residents, doctors and hospitals.

Atrium hospitals in Alleghany, Anson, Cleveland, Columbus, Lincoln, Scotland, Stanly and Wilkes counties, and the Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte, the Jeff Gordon Children's Hospital in Concord and the Brenner Children's Hospital in Winston-Salem are moved into what's called the "access" tier, Briner's office announced. That designation will mean out-of-pocket costs for members

who seek care at those hospitals will remain about the same next year.

"This agreement includes meaningful affordability commitments from Atrium Health that help us improve access for members while supporting the long-term sustainability of the Plan," Briner said in a statement. "This new provider tier system, which has now forged partnerships with all of the state's leading hospital systems, is putting us on the right path."

UNC Health and Novant Health are preferred providers. Duke Health is an access provider.

"We appreciate the collaborative work that made this agreement possible and look forward to continuing discussions about how we can continue to improve access, quality and affordability for North Carolinians in the future," Michael Parkerson, executive vice president and chief managed health officer for Advocate Health, said in a statement.

Atrium Health is part of Advocate Health.

Fayetteville State University reports record enrollment and student retention

By Kate Denning

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

Fayetteville State University may be among the smaller public institutions in North Carolina, but it's punching above its weight.

With the onset of the academic year, the university is celebrating historic benchmarks like 80.7% student retention and the enrollment of more than 7,700 students. Both are all-time records for the school, which bounced back from a retention rate of 63% and has grown by more than 1,000 students since 2021. Last year's graduating class was its largest ever.

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success Tavoria Freeman, who has worked at FSU since 2006, told Carolina Public Press that, while there has been steady growth over time as the university aimed for new heights, it's seemed to have soared in recent years.

"I've been here a long time, and these last five years, it feels like we've just pushed ahead really, really fast," she said. "I can of course see how we have slowly grown over the years, but I feel like we've had a lot of accelerated growth in the last five years. It's really exciting."

But none of these achievements come by surprise, and they certainly didn't happen overnight, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Cierra Griffin said. The growth has been a result of strategic and intentional partnerships and marketing efforts, including a heightened focus on transfer and military student populations.

Griffin also credits the leadership of Pam Baldwin, the university's inaugural vice chancellor for strategic enrollment and student success, who was appointed to the position in 2024 after serving as the associate dean of academic partnerships. Baldwin often tells fellow administrators to look at the data, consider what story it tells and what the strategy should be.

The university's partnership with a number of North Carolina community colleges, Bronco Benefit, was born out of Baldwin's assessment that there needed to be a better strategy for attracting transfer students, for example. The university also uses the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association to its benefit, the athletic association Fayetteville State is a part of, which is made up entirely of historically Black colleges and universities.

Inside a secret deal to approve \$10 billion data center

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each of them 200,000 square feet. Each will have its own 12,000-gallon bulk storage tank to hold low-sulfur diesel fuel to power 592 emergency generators that could emit hundreds of tons of pollution each year, according to Amazon's draft air permit.
"We rely on the utility grid to power our data centers and serve our customers," an Amazon spokesperson told Inside Climate News. "To ensure uninterrupted service for critical customers including hospitals, schools, and emergency services, our data centers include backup generators in case of rare power disruptions."
Nationally, data centers' diesel generators run more often than their emergency designation would imply, pumping significant pollution into neighboring communities, researchers have found.
Duke Energy, the electric utility serving the Amazon site, has applied to the state to operate another 57 diesel generators that would temporarily power the data center until a transmission line is built. The utility's generators could add several hundred tons of pollutants to the air, as well as 70,000 tons of greenhouse gases in one year.
Shortly before the state's recent public hearing on the proposed air permits, dozens of residents rallied in the cool breezeway of Richmond Community College's business school in downtown Rockingham. "It is shameful to sign away public trust while residents are left to ask basic questions about our energy, wells, water, wild-life and our health," Ingram said.
Yolanda Steele, who lives near a quarry, said the Amazon data center is among the many burdens the community faces. "Richmond County has made this an industrial

area," Steele said. "There should be no permit for the AI center, not anything. The county commissioners did this without talking to the people who are paying the taxes."
As the rally wound down, the day's stock market news streamed on a digital ticker inside the school: "Amazon soars on booming cloud growth."
A secret deal
The Amazon data center had a code name: Project Blue Marlin.
Many residents, even those living close to the site, say no one ever told them a data center would be their new neighbor. Lee Quick lives across the road from the southern part of the Amazon property. "I don't recall any public hearing," Quick told state environmental regulators at the recent meeting. "No one informed me that it was coming."
Only a select few county officials, among them County Manager Bryan Land, knew the identity of the company behind Project Blue Marlin, which was named after a prized fish. Land did not return email and phone messages from Inside Climate News.
A review of the county commissioners' meetings and minutes reveals how the deal unfolded, but only in vague terms.
Over three months in the spring of 2025, commissioners held the legally required public hearings on the rezoning and the land sales. No one from the public spoke. However, no public documents or commission discussions disclosed that the land would become a data center, so Richmond County residents would not have known what the commission was actually deliberating.
Public records show that county officials drafted a confidential purchase agreement with Project Blue Marlin on March 19, 2025, for a 646-acre forest

and a moribund chicken farm owned by the county.
The terms of the agreement required the county to rezone the old chicken farm to heavy industrial. The commissioners did so two weeks later.
A confidential agreement dated April 3, 2025, detailed the incentives for Project Blue Marlin: a 50% property tax break on the buildings and a 65% reduction on machinery and equipment over 20 years.
The incentives were contingent upon the then-unnamed company spending \$1 billion in capital investments and creating 50 full-time jobs, including contractors, by 2030. After the deal became public two months later, Amazon announced it would create 500 jobs once the site is fully built out.
Amazon would also receive state sales tax exemptions on certain equipment, the value of which can legally be kept secret. Energy and water usage would also be confidential.
In May 2025, Richmond County commissioners publicly voted to combine several county-owned parcels — the forest and the chicken farm — and sell them for \$26 million to Project Blue Marlin for a heavy industrial development.
The next month, the commissioners unanimously approved generous property tax breaks for an unnamed company at a public hearing but did not openly detail them.
The county manager was among the few who knew what the commissioners had done.
"You just approved [Project Blue Marlin] a few minutes ago," Land told the commissioners at the June 4, 2025, public meeting. "Tomorrow, we will announce Project Blue Marlin and you'll finally figure out who those guys are. It will transform our community in ways we can't imagine."



Yolanda Steele (center) and Shaun Ingram (left) are among the hundreds of Richmond County residents who told state officials at a public hearing to deny the air permits for Amazon and Duke Energy.

Adding to the air pollution burden
Tendrils of smoke streamed from tall piles of smoldering stumps, the last of the forest that once stood on property owned by Amazon. This was last fall, just a few months after Richmond County officials sold the tract to the tech giant, which then clear-cut the site to make way for the data center.
William and Shaun Ingram watched the stumps burn. The Ingrams are brothers who co-lead the Richmond County Coalition for Justice and Black Empowerment. They grew up in the county, as did generations of their extended family before them, Black and Indigenous people who passed down the history of the land and stories about discrimination and displacement but also reverence for nature.
"The resources are being extracted before any construction even begins. This was a natural habitat," William Ingram, an Army veteran, said as he gazed over the scoured landscape.
"There has been no one else in our community to share this information and educate people on a level that relates and connects them back to the land, because that's what we're protecting here, land and

water."
Quick, who is among the neighbors of the data center site, told state environmental regulators at the public hearing that when Amazon burned the wood, ash fell on his property. "I had to buy covers for my two cars," Quick said. "I couldn't sit on my porch."
Amazon tried to keep its air permit application confidential, N.C. Department of Environmental Quality records show. The agency's Division of Air Quality then asked for "additional justification to support the confidentiality request" or a resubmittal with all the emissions data disclosed.
Without the disclosure, the public wouldn't have known the full extent of the estimated air emissions.
Two weeks after the division's letter, Amazon re-submitted the application without a request for confidentiality.
The company said its request focused on proprietary equipment specifications and operational details that could have revealed competitive business information. All of the information relevant to air quality and public health is part of the public record, according to Amazon.

Amazon's generators would use low-sulfur and renewable diesel fuel, which can be sourced from vegetable oils and waste fats. The company did not answer a question from Inside Climate News about whether plastic was among the sources for the renewable diesel.
Depending on fuel usage, operational time and engine specifications, the generators could emit up to 249.9 tons per year each of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds. That figure is significant: At 250 tons, those pollutants would trigger additional environmental review.
Other air pollutants the company expects to emit include fine particulate matter, essentially soot that can burrow deep into the lungs and bloodstream, as well as hazardous air pollutants such as cancer-causing benzene and formaldehyde.
The company would install advanced pollution-control systems on the generators that "significantly reduce emissions below required levels to protect public health," an Amazon spokesperson said. "We take air quality very seriously."

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The wedding party looked like a funeral

This month my parents are beginning their seventh decade of marriage despite a law that tried to stop them.

Sixty years ago, they were married in a church in Washington, D.C. They had to leave Maryland to do it. My mother is Black. My father is white. In Maryland their marriage was a crime.

They met in West Baltimore. Her city. Two student teachers at Harlem Park Junior High, the same classroom, one semester after the other.

They wrote each other every week that spring. Their students. Life back on campus. What they believed. When my mother came home to Baltimore for the summer, they were both seeing other people. They went on a date anyway.

That date was at the recently desegregated movie theater. They slipped in like racial fugitives. They found two empty seats. He walked down one aisle. She walked down the other. They sat side by side but didn't want their entrance or exit to cause a stir. They knew the looks wouldn't all come from white people. It was the summer of Goldsboro, after all.

My father proposed three times in two weeks. She turned him down twice. She was not being coy. What he asked was against the law. The third time she said yes.

My father's uncle told him he believed the love was real. Then he explained that if my father wanted to stay in the family, and in his grandfather's will, he would need to fall in love with someone else instead. Others said, "Think about what it will be like for the children."

They married two months later. They arrived at the church separately, the way a bride and groom do. This time it was tradition.

Afterward the caravan drove back to Baltimore with its headlights on. Cars on the highway pulled aside to let it pass. In the city people stopped walking to turn and stare and then pray for them. Men took off their hats. Everyone thought it was a funeral. The lights were only so nobody would get lost on the way to my grandparents' house in West Baltimore, where the reception was.

At the reception my father danced with my mother. He is red-headed and freckled and looks as English and Irish as he is. One woman watching them decided the groom had to be Black. Apparently she could not imagine a White boy dancing like that. My father was delighted.

Somewhere in there my father made her an offer. Jealous is a strange name to carry. He told her he would take hers instead. He would become Fred Todd.

She said no. She took the name Jealous. Telling that used to make me chuckle. Who turns down any name for such a notorious adjective? I hear it a little differently now.

His grandfather had already disowned him and cut him out of the will. His own father had died years earlier, of his third heart attack. My father was the eldest grandson of an industrialist. He had a great deal to lose, and he lost all of it. His mother and his brothers stood by him. Much of the rest of the family did not. His name was the last thing that was his to give, and he offered to give that up too. She would not let him.

The following June the Supreme Court decided Loving v. Virginia. When my parents stood in that church, nobody knew it was coming. They married anyway.

They went west. With Loving grinding through the courts, they apparently decided the nation didn't need Jealous v. Maryland too.

San Diego first, then the Monterey Peninsula. There my father taught soldiers home from Vietnam, many of whom could not read. Later he founded a community where men learn to listen to one another, and to be listened to, most of them for the first time. My mother spent her career as a therapist. They raised us in California, far from her mother and her church and her city.

Every summer they sent me back east. Baltimore for her people. Maine for his. The move had cut them off from all of it. They handed it to me.

A decade ago, they returned to St. James Episcopal Church on Lafayette Square and renewed their vows for the 50th anniversary of Loving. My mother was baptized in that church. So was I. So was my son.

My mother wore the dress. Her grandmother sewed it for her in 1966, when my mother was 25. She sewed it for that church, where she worshipped. Then the law sent the wedding to Washington, and the dress never went down that aisle.

A half century later it did. My mother was crying. I told her to stop bragging. She looked at me, confused, tears still on her face. I told her she just wanted everybody to know it still fit.

Sixty years. My father is still the man who offered to give up his name. My mother is still the woman who would not let him.

They were never a test case. They were a marriage. They still are.

Ben Jealous is a professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania and former president and CEO of the NAACP.



BEN
JEALOUS

Let's discuss Christian nationalism

As a pastor, I have shied away from talking about the movement called Christian Nationalism that has hijacked the church, infused hate, dismissed traditional Christian values, and forgotten the mandate to love your neighbor as yourself.

A movement that grows on the seedbed of hating your enemy, killing and de-



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porting the immigrant, starving your own citizens by cutting food programs like SNAP, is not Christian. We don't hear any of the devout MAGAs talking about living the life of Jesus through acts of sacrificial giving, charity, hospitality, gratitude, and love like Jesus called us to love.

Christianity is an incarnational faith. Jesus is God Incarnate. We incarnate Jesus. As Paul says, "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me." We are called to live as Christ lived and love as Christ loved. The very people whom Christ elevated were the marginalized, the poor, the strangers in a foreign land, widows and children.

Jesus would be aghast at how his whole life story

has been corrupted.

Allegiance to Donald Trump is blasphemy. He is flawed like no other president we've ever had. Nixon came the closest and he resigned over his Watergate debacle.

Nixon had a Congress that held him to account. Neither Mike Johnson nor enough in our Congress are strong enough or morally centered enough to do that. Even those exiting Congress are keeping their remarks on the safe side.

The adage, "politicians spend more time keeping their jobs than doing them," is living itself out before our very eyes.

We are participants in a sad American story. People have forsaken American values, American pride, and the dream that America that has always been. And for what?

Donald Trump is a cancer destroying America. He is getting richer. He acts with impunity. His bullying is legend. His sycophants have sold their souls for him. He has never done anything for anybody when he did not expect to get something back. He is 100% transactional in his dealings. Trump wants all the cards, all the time, winning every hand, adoring fans cheering his every move.

He is like a toddler going potty, expecting his parents to cheer his performance.

Lazy patriotism is like lazy discipleship. The fruit it bears shrivels and rots.

This administration is like a rewrite of Peter, Paul and Mary's song, "Where have all the patriots gone, long time passing." Time once lived will not come again. Time keeps on "ticking, ticking, ticking into the future."

Nobody knows if our Democracy can ever be fully restored. We have never been a perfect people, but we have always striven for that more perfect union.

Institutions, like the church and the government, need tending by faithful, careful, thoughtful people who incarnate the values that have been handed down for centuries.

Churches split over stupid things, like slavery and homosexuality. Our country has been split once, in the Civil War. We are possibly on the verge of another split - into the Red and the Blue.

There are no winners in war. War is expensive. There are always unforeseen consequences. Both winners and losers come home shattered, broken, and defeated. War is a

great price to pay.

Wrapping our arms around the American flag does not make us great. Nor does it make us Christian.

In church this morning, we heard a young preacher speak from Esther, Chapter 4. The king is ruthless and will strike dead all who speak without being called upon. Mordecai calls upon Queen Esther to talk to her husband on behalf of her people, the Jews. Mordecai calls forth bold action for "such a time as this." Mordecai recognizes what Captain Jack Sparrow called the "opportune moment."

We are in an opportune moment when truth must be told to power. This is no time for cowards. This is the time to turn over tables and get loud in a righteousness that calls us to right living with God, with one another, and with all creation. Now is our moment.

America was founded on the hope of freedom of religion. Believe what you believe. You are free not to believe anything. We are one people under God with liberty and justice for all.

That all means ALL. Lib Campbell is a retired Methodist pastor, retreat leader, columnist, and host of the blogsite Avirtual-church.com. E-mail her at libcam05@gmail.com.

Scabies cases identified at NC prison

By Rachel Crumpler
NORTH CAROLINA HEALTH NEWS

For weeks, dozens of men at Neuse Correctional Institution, a medium-custody prison in Goldsboro, have experienced intense itching and pimple-like bumps appearing all over their bodies.

Many of the men believe they have scabies, a skin condition caused by microscopic mites that burrow into the skin and lay eggs.

"You can't resist scratching at it," one incarcerated man told NC Health News. "It's unbelievably uncomfortable."

"At nighttime, when you lay down to sleep, it feels like things are crawling on you," another said.

"I'm digging away at a spot on my leg right now," a third man told NC Health News in July.

The men requested anonymity due to concerns of retaliation from prison staff and officials.

At least two men at the 788-bed prison received diagnoses of scabies in July, according to N.C. Department of Adult Correction communications director Keith Acree. One man was diagnosed at a local hospital, he said.

Scabies outbreaks more commonly occur in crowded or group settings, such as correctional facilities, nursing homes and child care centers, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It spreads through prolonged skin-to-skin contact or by sharing clothing, towels, bedding or furniture used by an infected person. Symptoms can take up to two months to appear after infection, allowing scabies to easily spread undetected.

Acree acknowledged that other men at Neuse Correctional have reported skin symptoms and been screened, but said many did not have exam findings consistent with scabies.

"Dermatologic concerns are one of the most common conditions for which patients seek evaluation, and the same applies to incarcerated individuals, particularly in the summer months," Acree wrote. "These concerns are naturally heightened when individuals in close proximity such as correctional facilities are diagnosed with conditions such as scabies."

But four incarcerated men at Neuse separately told NC Health News that they've spent many summers in prison without experiencing itching and bumps like this.

One man said weeks of sleepless nights and near-constant itching have

taken a toll on his mental health, prompting him to submit a request to see a mental health provider.

"I just think that there's a culture of nonchalance when it comes to medical treatment for prisoners," he said. "When you constantly feel like something is crawling on you, that really weighs on your mind, and we've been going through this for months."

The men said they wish their symptoms had been treated more seriously

sooner.

"We shouldn't have to get our families to call Raleigh, to call lawmakers, to call the health department to pressure them," one said.

Bumps, itching

Four incarcerated men told NC Health News they first noticed bumps on their skin and experienced intense itching in late May. But it wasn't limited to just them. They said at least two dozen men in their dorm of about 60 men complained of the same symptoms. Soon, they

learned of men in another dorm experiencing similar symptoms.

"During the course of the whole month, it was just gradually affecting more people and more people and more people," one man said.

The itching felt so severe that a handful of men experiencing symptoms filed sick call requests to see a provider in early June. Each sick call came with a \$5 medical copay, a cost that deterred some others from putting in a call.

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HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith won its CIAA opener with a 31-6 result against Winston-Salem State on Sept. 12, 2026, to improve their record to 2-1. The Golden Bulls play Fayetteville State Sept. 19 in their home opener.

‘Still not scratching the surface’

Now above .500, JC Smith’s trending in the right direction ahead of Fayetteville State rematch

By Herbert L. White
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Jamaris Stevens sees himself making big plays.

Last week, he changed Johnson C. Smith’s fortunes with one.

Stevens, a redshirt freshman line-backer, flipped the momentum with a one-handed interception and 57-yard return to break open the Golden Bulls’ 31-6 win at Winston-Salem State in the CIAA opener. His second-quarter pick – Stevens’ first as a collegian – ignited a 14-point swing by killing a Rams’ drive deep into JCSU territory that resulted in Fabian Duncan’s 14-yard

touchdown run for a 17-0 advantage.

“I would say that’s something I never expected – to be a one-hand – but coach tells us visualize our play on the field the day before a game,” Stevens said. “I just visualized me getting a pick, making a bunch of plays and put my team in better position.”

Stevens’ heroics – he added a team-high 10 tackles and a sack – was indicative of his growth over three weeks. In the opener at Benedict, he was over-



Stevens

whelmed; against WSSU, he was a menace as Smith limited the Rams to 191 yards total offense, including 88 passing while tallying three sacks.

“He had a really rough game ... against Benedict,” Golden Bulls coach Maurice Flowers said. “He looked like a new starter.

If you look at him last week [in a win against Albany State], he got better. You look at him today, my goodness, a one-handed interception to thwart a scoring drive, just a heck of an athletic play. But

that’s just some of what he possesses.

“It’s not about talent in this group. This group has talent up and down the roster, but it’s about that continuity and now the consistency. That’s the thing with us. We have to be consistent with everything that we do. That’s what we’re looking to improve upon is the consistency, but that play he made definitely gave us the momentum.”

Said Stevens: “I’m not going to lie. At the Benedict game, I did have a rough game. I talked to my coach about it. He gave me some words of encouragement, so after that, it just stuck with

Please see 2-1 | 6A

Young holds reins to Panthers offense, resilience



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Bryce Young fell to 0-4 as an opening-day starter with the Carolina Panthers’ 59-37 loss to the Chicago Bears on Sept. 13, 2026.

By Jeff Hawkins
for the Charlotte Post

On NFL Week 1 Monday and Bryce Young entering a pivotal campaign, the Carolina Panthers quarterback took time to get to know a rookie special teamer a bit better during a 10-minute walk from the locker room at Bank of America Stadium to the practice fields.

Not a big deal, in the grand scheme of a season, but the moment proved “cool” to a sixth-round draft pick.

“We were chattin’ it up,” Jackson Kuwatch said after Monday’s practice.

With so much at stake this season, Young’s early-week focus wasn’t on the legacy of the 2023 blockbuster trade between the Panthers and Chicago Bears, but on solidifying ties within the locker room.

“Bryce is a great person, and I really enjoy talking to him, getting to know him better,” Kuwatch said. “That speaks to the team we have here. A reason why Bryce was voted a captain. He’s a leader on this team.”

One who set out to buck a season-open-

Please see YOUNG | 6A

Lawrence adds name to NCCU classic lore

By Bonitta Best
THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

DURHAM – Indiana State transfer running back Plez Lawrence hadn’t experienced an Aggie-Eagle Classic before Saturday’s game at O’Kelly-Riddick Stadium.

Not only did Lawrence show off for the home crowd, but North Carolina A&T won’t forget his name anytime soon, either.

Lawrence rushed for 210 yards and three touchdowns to help the Eagles (2-1) defeat their archrival 30-22 in a game that was weather delayed by 1 hour 41 minutes in the third quarter. Lawrence’s total was more than the entire Aggies (0-3) team. Former RB J’Mari Taylor was the last Eagle to run for over 200 yards (206 against Howard in 2024).

Still, NCCU needed a defensive stop late in the game to preserve the win.

Down 30-22 with 2:01 left, NCAT drove to the Eagles 4-yard line with 14 seconds left. After an offensive pass interference call pushed NCAT back to the 13 with five seconds remaining, defensive back Jakarri Martin II stepped in front of the receiver to intercept quarterback Kevin White Jr.’s pass in the end zone to seal the win.

Coach Trei Oliver hasn’t lost to the Aggies since Oct. 25, 2021. He is now three wins shy of 50 at NCCU.

NCCU QB Nelson Layne shook off some pregame jitters facing his former team to complete 13 of 19 passes for a TD and zero interceptions. Joshua Truesdale recorded a game-high 10 tackles and one interception.

White was 21 of 44 for 259 yards, three TDs and two interceptions. Wide receiver Elijah Kennedy led all receivers with 112 yards and two TDs.

NCCU travels to Gardner-Webb Sept. 19 for a 6 p.m. matchup.

Takeaways from Charlotte-Ole Miss for the future

By Cameron Williams
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Charlotte walked into Vaught-Hemingway Stadium with nothing to lose.

After a week one loss to The Citadel, it would have been easy to not show any fight against the No. 9 Ole Miss, but they did. Charlotte lost 41-9 but covered the massive 47.5-point spread and outscored the Rebels 6-0 in

the third quarter. So, there are plenty of things to still clean up, but certainly positives to glean from this game — which subsequently made the 49ers’ program \$1.8 million as well.

Here are three takeaways:

Charlotte answered the call at halftime
Down 27-0, after just failing to put points on the board before halftime due to an interception, it would have been easy to be

discouraged and lose fight. The 49ers didn’t do that. Coach Tim Albin said he challenged the team and the message was well received.

“Get your pad level down and let’s go out there and get a running game,” Albin said he told the 49ers. “We got after it in the run game. I think we ran the ball four times and got down inside the red zone. Obviously, you

have to get touchdowns, everybody knows that. I want to address it at the presser on Tuesday, what that looks like. But I am happy with our guys’ ability to go out there offensively and get something done on the ground.”

The 49ers outgained Ole Miss 116 yards to 60 in the third quarter and forced a three-and-out on

Please see CHARLOTTE | 6A

Hough and Chambers remain first and second in rankings

By Herbert L. White
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Hough High and Chambers are still first and second in the Magnificent Seven rankings, but there’s movement after that.

The Huskies, who have been in the top spot since the season opener, continue their dominance after dismantling Mooresville on the road. Chambers, though, had to work hard at dispatching Palisades 24-20.

West Charlotte moved up to third while Palisades slipped to fourth followed by Ardrey Kell, which was No. 7 the week before and Hopewell, which debuts at

No. 6.

The Magnificent Seven, overall record and previous ranking.

1. Hough (4-0, No. 1 last week). Another week, another easy breezy win for the top-ranked Huskies. Mooresville was barely a speed bump as a 49-10 victim. Next up: at Mooresville. Next up is out-of-state competition in Green Run (Va.).

2. Chambers (4-0, No. 2 last week). The Cougars sweated out a 24-20 win at Palisades in a game that was everything it was cracked up to be. They take on No. 6 Ardrey Kell in the most compelling game of the week.

3. West Charlotte (3-1, No. 4 last week). The Lions are on a three-game heater after a season-opening loss, with the latest conquest a 36-0 result against West Mecklenburg. The competitive rigor will be much tougher with a trip to Carrolton (Ga.).

4. Palisades (3-1, No. 3 last week). Coming up four points short against Chambers is an indication of how good the Pumas are and can be despite adversity. Independence, which is down this season, is next on the menu.

5. Ardrey Kell (3-1, No. 7 last week). The Knights a doing a fine job of taking care of business

with last week’s 37-14 win against South Mecklenburg. Playing Chambers is going to be a massive upgrade in difficulty.

6. Hopewell (3-1, not ranked). Another newcomer to the rankings. The Titans are moving into a competitive phase after rolling Rocky River 27-0 last week. North Mecklenburg is next.

7. Mallard Creek (2-2, No. 4 last week). Does losing 28-28 to Myers Park qualify as an upset? Absolutely. The Mavericks are learning about top-level competition, which is why they could become a sub-.500 team after going to McCallie (Tenn.).

2-1 Golden Bulls ‘not scratching the surface’

Continued from page 5A
me. I just know the type of player I am, so I just improved every day, every week at practice.”

Stevens isn't the only newcomer settling in at Smith (2-1, 1-0 CIAA). Quarterback Damien Mazil, a graduate transfer, completed a modest 12-of-27 passes for 187 yards, but a pair went for touchdowns to All-CIAA receiver Brian Lane, including a 70-yard strike. Another transfer, running back Fabian Duncan, continued his hot start by churning through WSSU for 164 yards on 22 carries. It was the third straight game of at least 140 yards rushing for Duncan, a North Mecklenburg High graduate who transferred from Allen.

“I feel like we're still not scratching the surface of where we can be and where we should be,” Mazil said. “But at the end of the day, it's still good to get a win, it's good to see that we're winning and we're still not playing our best football. The future's bright, and I'm excited to see what's going to hap-



Duncan



Mazil

pen.” That starts against Fayetteville State, which is expected to challenge for the CIAA crown along with Smith. The Golden Bulls rallied late to beat the Broncos in Fayetteville last year to seize a berth in the conference title game, and they expect similar intensity Saturday at McGirt Field. “Every game in conference is a pivotal game,” Flowers said. “This game just happened at the end of the season last year. When you play Fayetteville State and [Broncos coach] Richard Hayes it's going to be a well-coached, disciplined team that's very athletic. They're going to have good-looking bodies at every position. They're going to be explosive. You know you're going to have to play. You're going to have to earn it.”

Said Mazil: “No matter who we're playing, we still see every game as a competition. No matter who plays us, we always know they're going to give us their best game no matter what, so we're excited to play them.”



CHARLOTTE FC

After an upset loss to The Citadel in their season opener, the Charlotte 49ers made enough improvements to beat a 47.5 point spread against Ole Miss. No. 9 Mississippi beat Charlotte 41-9.

Charlotte makes strides, but more work to be done

Continued from page 5A
the Rebels' first drive after intermission. Charlotte running back Chance Williams set the tone, ripping off a 59-yard run in the quarter.

Defense was better but still a long way to go

In week one against The Citadel — in the second half specifically — a turnstile seemed to have more resistance than the 49ers defense. That can't be said for the way they came out against the Rebels.

Rebels' quarterback Trinidad Chambliss was able to pick Charlotte apart for 225 passing yards and two touchdowns. A large reason was soft coverage concepts to avoid getting beat over the top, especially by Rebels star receiver Deuce Alexander, who was still able to haul in eight receptions for 76 yards.

However, Chambliss is can also hurt defenses on the ground. In week one he had 61 yards on the ground and a touchdown, but Charlotte held him to 2 yards on three attempts. The 49ers can build on that. However, Ole Miss running back Kewan Lacy had his way in the first half on his way to 87 yards and two touchdowns.

There were improvements but Albin knows there are still more to be made.

“I think the biggest thing from the first to second week, we were leaving our feet was a big thing in the first game,” he said. “We missed some tonight. I think I think as we were leaving our feet a little early, particularly at the corner position. But everybody in the country makes an improvement on tackling from the first game to the second game. I want to have another. I'm going to have another jump going into week three.”

Depth was utilized

The game was out of hand late, and as a result more players got a chance to play. However, even in early parts of the game Albin was inserting guys that didn't get

much run if any against The Citadel in week one.

Charlotte used five running backs: Chance Williams, Khamani Alexander, D'Mariun Pertee, Henry Rutledge and Jariel Cobb.

Rutledge had a fair share of snaps in the middle two quarters, Pertee came in late and had a 20-yard rush. The 49ers out-gained Ole Miss on the ground and the depth at running back could have played a factor.

After the was out of reach, Charlotte quarterback Conner Harrell completed 5-for-6 passes for 50 yards. Albin was thrilled that Harrell was able to get back on the field after missing most of last year with a knee injury.

“I am almost in tears, to be honest with you,” Albin said. “That kid has battled the injury that he had. He's worked his tail off like nobody's business. I'm very, very happy for him to get to this point. There was a point in early spring that they thought it might be mid-October. It's mid-September, so he's a month ahead of schedule from what they said, so I couldn't be happier for him, and because he's got some game experience. We'll see how it goes as we move forward.”

Where does Charlotte go from here?

The 49ers' next opponent, Appalachian State, are 2-0 with wins over Maine in the opener and another in-state rival, East Carolina, in week two.

Charlotte lost to the Mountaineers 34-11 last season but the leading receiver in that game for App State was Jaden Barnes, who transferred to Charlotte and will need to make an impact.

Charlotte looked completely different in week two and there was plenty to glean from Ole Miss. Now the question becomes how the 49ers clean up mistakes to win games.

Young 0-4 in season openers

Continued from page 5A

ing trend and reinforce the franchise's belief that he can be the long-term answer at quarterback. Despite throwing for three touchdown passes and running for another, the Panthers couldn't stop Bears quarterback Caleb Williams in a 59-37 loss.

Young fell to 0-4 in Week 1 starts.

Young eager for quick strikes

On 2024's first play, Young dropped back and unleashed a downfield pass over the middle of the Caesars Superdome field.

Disaster.

With no Panthers in the area, New Orleans Saints safety Will Harris intercepted the uncontested toss. Following a shaky Week 2 performance, coach Dave Canales benched Young after delivering three interceptions and no touchdown passes during a 0-2 start. In 16 starts as a rookie, Young endured an NFL-high 62 sacks.

After veteran Andy Dalton suffered a thumb injury in a car wreck, Canales reinserted Young for a Week 8 start. Young, who was praised by teammates for his continued leadership, emerged with new confidence, throwing for more than 2,000 yards with 15 TD passes and six interceptions the rest of the way.

In 2025, Young posted career highs in most categories, helping the Panthers the 2025 NFC South title and the franchise's first playoff appearance since 2017.

In his final preseason drive against the Jacksonville Jaguars on Aug. 21, Young directed a 58-yard touchdown drive, capped by running back Jonathon Brooks' 1-yard scoring run.

Unlike his opening two seasons ago, Young started

efficiently Sunday. Taking advantage of an opening-possession turnover by the Bears, he dropped back on his first snap and completed an over-the-middle pass to tight end Tommy Tremble for a 12-yard gain. Young capped the six-play, 42-yard drive by connecting with running back Chuba Hubbard on a 4-yard scoring pass.

Carolina failed to engineer a first down during the next two possessions, allowing Williams to direct three consecutive scoring drives to take a 21-7 lead at 13:57 in the second quarter.

Williams opened with a perfect passer rating and continued to take advantage of Panthers' ill-timed mistakes - 11 penalties for 84 yards.

“Seventeen points off turnovers,” coach Dave Canales said after the defensive debacle. “I wish I could sit here and tell you about the good stuff that happened, but that doesn't matter.”

The Panthers tied a club record by yielding 59 points Sunday. It was the 10th time an NFL defense allowed that many points since the 1970 merger.

Panthers-Bears 2023 trade fallout
The Panthers and Bears will be linked for years.

Will they be for generations?

Leading up to the 2023 draft, the previous Panthers regime engineered a trade with the Bears, acquiring the rights to the No. 1 overall draft pick. In return, the Bears also landed wide receiver DJ Moore, the 2023 second-round pick, 2024 first-round pick and 2025 second-round pick.

Quite the haul, to say the least.

Despite the Panthers picking up Young's fifth year on his rookie deal, his future

with the franchise remains in doubt. General manager Dan Morgan said he will wait before opening long-term extension talks - or part ways.

Young is the lone member of the team's 2023 draft class still in Carolina.

Not only will the Panthers and Bears be linked by that deal, so are the quarterbacks. With Young struggling through a 2-15 rookie campaign, the Bears utilized the 2024 No. 1 overall pick on a franchise quarterback in Caleb Williams.

In all, the Bears garnered the rights to seven contributors: Williams, offensive tackle Darnell Wright, cornerback Tyrique Stevenson, wide receiver Luther Burden III, tight end Sam Roush and cornerback Malik Muhammad.

The Panthers were left with Young, who completed 23-of-37 passes for 361 yards and four total TDs Sunday compared to Williams, who went 21-of-29 for 269 yards and two scores.

Young wasn't interested in rehashing the dynamics of his relationship with Williams afterward.

“I've known Caleb for a while,” Young said during his post-game press conference. “I have a ton of respect for him. I love his game, love watching him on film.”

Will he still after viewing Sunday's video?

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