

As the regular season winds down, Hough High is still top dog in the Magnificent Seven rankings

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

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« THE FRANCHISE: DEMOCRACY AT THE BALLOT BOX »



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

More than 3,000 Mecklenburg County residents are deployed to conduct election duties from preparing polling sites to checking voters' identification before they cast a ballot, according to elections director Michael Dickerson

At the heart of every election, there's community of support

The process of casting and counting ballots depends on civic-minded teamwork

By Herbert L. White
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This series was produced in partnership with the Pulitzer Center.

Elections are conducted by teams of underappreciated people.

They administer rules, prepare polling sites, verify voters' identity for check-in, answer questions and count ballots. In an era of heightened scrutiny over election security and voting rights, Election Day operations still rely on community participation and preparation.

"There is so much more to it than just meets the eye," Mecklenburg County elections director Michael Dickerson said. "I've got 100 training classes, and my people are teaching the 3,000 poll workers that we use … and I turn people away. That's how great this community is."



Dickerson

According to the state Board of Elections, anyone who wants to work as an election official in North Carolina must be a registered voter who lives in the precinct they serve. On Election Day, workers must be a registered voter or high school student at least 17 years old and in good academic standing.

Precinct officials can't be a candidate or relative of a candidate in the election. Elected government officials, political party officials, or managers or treasurers for a candidate or political party are also prohibited. Workers can't serve at the same polling place as a spouse, child, or the spouse of a child, sister, or brother.

As North Carolina's largest county by population, Mecklenburg needs a robust elections community to keep pace with growth in its 195 voting precincts. According to the county Board of Elections,

Please see **AT THE** | 2A

$4.1M city funding for Brookhill Village

Council approves money to transition site for mixed use

By Herbert L. White
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Charlotte City Council is committing more than $4 million to redevelop Brookhill Village beyond affordable housing.

The panel approved on Oct. 12 a $4.16 million investment to transition the 36-acre site in South End into a mixed-use development with new infrastructure. The city will reimburse Griffin Brothers Properties through the 2026 bond referendum or other municipal sources as part of a $92.6 million public-private project. Among the upgrades are an entertainment venue and community events space.



Mayo

"This has been a long time coming, and I'm incredibly excited to see this project move forward," said District 3 Council Member Joi Mayo, who represents Brooklyn Village. "Tremendous work went into making this vision a reality. Being able to preserve affordable housing and green space while investing in infrastructure improvements and amenities is a win-win for the community."

The initiative includes extending Dunavant Street across South Tryon Street to improve traffic and pedestrian flow between the Toomey and Tremont corridors. The project creates 8-foot-wide sidewalks that accommodate people with physical disabilities, new drainage, curbs, gutters and utility systems. More than 200 new trees and professional landscaping are included.

Brookhill Village, which opened as a racially segregated 418-unit

Please see **COUNCIL** | 2A

Despite progress, the challenges continue for Charlotte transit system

By Mackenzie Thomas
CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

A drop in crime points to efforts made to improve safety and security on Charlotte's light rail, but a new state audit shows the system still has much work to be done.

The Charlotte Area Transit System, notably the light rail, has come under increasing scrutiny following the murder of Iryna Zarutska on the Blue Line last year. The resulting public outcry from her murder spurred city leaders into action, promising changes to ensure the safety of riders.

While the system has made progress — a notable 69% decrease in crime on the Blue Line, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department said — a recent state audit highlighted a lack of fare enforcement on the light rail and bus systems and "limited interaction" between CATS and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. The audit raised questions about the system's use of its budgeted funds.

Those who use the light rail claim they are seeing an increased police presence after Zarutska's murder, which helps as a deterrent for violent or criminal behavior. But fare enforcement is still severely lacking, which can also play a role in influencing public safety.

Now more than a year since Zarutska's murder, riders are acknowledging improvements made but also expressing a desire for more to be done when it comes to safety and security.

What CATS has done well

CATS leaders have implemented many changes to

Please see **DESPITE** | 2A



HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POS

Ashley Park Elementary School teacher Ashley Williams (left) and principal Joline Adams say the Charlotte Post Foundation's after-school program have led to improved student proficiency in math and reading.

Post Foundation aims to expand after-school learning initiative

By Herbert L. White
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Personalized learning is at the core of a Charlotte Post Foundation initiative to improve reading and math proficiency among elementary school students.

The after-school program at Walter G. Byers and Ashley Park supports small-group tutoring sessions at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' Title I campuses. Teachers target literacy and math intervention tools in groups of no more than 10 students over two days of instruction per week. Instruction sessions are three hours in duration and take place from January through May to prepare for end of year testing.

"The program was put in place in schools that needed help with children that were performing below grade level," said Post Publisher Gerald Johnson, the foundation's CEO. "When we came in, we basically said

Please see **FOUNDATION** | 4A

Historic park reopens with new amenities

By Herbert L. White
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L.C. Coleman Park is more than a playground.

It's a historic testament to cultural life in Black Charlotte.

The 19.6-acre park in Washington Heights reopened last week with $2.9 million in upgrades that include a pair of basketball courts, tennis court, playground, a multi-use field, outdoor shelter and trails. There's also signage that conveys the facility's century-long history as a social and religious hub.

The park is named in honor of Lewis Cardinal Coleman Jr., a Washington Heights resident and advocate for equality in Mecklenburg County's park system.

"This whole area, the west side, was filled with leaders – filled with people who were fighting for this community and for the whole of Charlotte," said Lynn Coleman Hudson, Coleman's daughter. "L.C. — he wasn't a quiet person, but he didn't raise his voice much — but he was able to make change, and he was able to impact. So, that's our challenge: that we all do what we can to make a difference."

Please see **LC COLEMAN** | 2A

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Please Recycle

At the heart of elections, there's supportive teams

Continued from page 1A

each precinct must include a chief judge, a judge representing the Republican Party and a Democratic counterpart – all appointed by the board. A provisional ballot/transfer assistant and an equipment assistant round out the precinct team and extra assistants are scheduled as needed based on projected voter turnout.

Midterm and municipal election cycles typically don't produce the voter turnout of presidential years, but they all require infrastructure and people to ensure accuracy and access. The runup to Election Day is long, but the goal is precision.

"It is a lot of work," Dickerson said. "It's just one of those things that you as the voter walk out there and see somebody voting, and then we produce results on election night, albeit late. I know that gets (people) upset, but we're always latest on election night. But everybody expects to get the results. That's perfect. That's the way we like it here."

Election Day is made up of people working behind the scenes to ensure votes are cast without friction. That's where election officials, poll workers, and volunteers come in.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan voter empowerment organization, is leading a national initiative to raise awareness of the people who make elections work. LWV, which has nearly 800 state and local chapters across the country, does its share by providing nonpartisan voter information as well as supporting poll worker recruitment, and elections preparation.

Through a partnership with Power the Polls, it also recruits people to work the polls.

"Democracy doesn't run itself," league CEO Celina Stewart said. "It depends on everyday Americans who show up, serve their communities, and protect our freedom to vote, often in the face of intimidation and political pressure. Election workers are our neighbors, friends, and community members who deserve our gratitude, respect, and support."

The LWV's Charlotte-Mecklenburg chapter is involved, too. It's encouraging volunteers to monitor voting conditions across the region by making observational visits to early voting locations. The goal is to report situations that could affect voters — such as long lines, curbside voting conditions, maintaining electioneering boundaries or unusual law-enforcement presence.

Protect Our Vote NC, a nonpartisan voter protection coalition of more than a dozen legal, advocacy, and policy organizations, runs 888OURVOTE, a nonpartisan voter protection hotline. It also publishes explainer notes about deadlines for early voting – which ends on Oct. 31 as well as Election Day on Nov. 3.

"We want to remind voters that if they have questions about the voting process or need to report something that doesn't feel right at the polls, they can easily call or text 888.OUR.VOTE and speak with attorneys and advocates who can support them," said Joe Ward, the coalition's spokesman.

The coalition reported more than 700 hotline calls and 45 voter intimidation incidents across the state as well as nine reports of police presence at or near polling sites. More than 1.1 million ballots have been cast in North Carolina as of Oct. 22, more than 300,000 ahead of 2022's pace.

"The coalition is actively monitoring polling sites across the state to ensure all North Carolina voters can exercise their right to vote free from intimidation," Ward said.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Celina Stewart is chief executive officer of the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan voter empowerment organization.

"Democracy doesn't run itself. It depends on everyday Americans who show up, serve their communities, and protect our freedom to vote, often in the face of intimidation and political pressure."

League of Women Voters CEO
CELINA STEWART

For elections administrators, elections are always seasonal. There are primaries and general elections with ballots that swell or shrink depending on whether state or national campaigns are included. The poll workers – most of them veterans of multiple cycles – make the chaos manageable.

"It is a rhythm," Dickerson said. "It's a pattern – we've done this. We've hit this post, this mark. We made it, and now we are going to the next thing, and you plan everything as far as you can, without doing something completely stupid. … It has worked out well."

Poll workers are trained on elections rules, including what constitutes a legally-cast ballot. There's also the process of setting up polling areas and tabulation machinery. Poll workers are paid up to $200 on Election Day – relatively small compensation, Dickerson admits – but most consider it a civic duty.

"I think that's the reason why everybody does it anyway," he said. "Look back at 2020 – that was our COVID election. Right after we canvassed the [primary] election on March 13, on March 14, the governor ordered the state shut down because of COVID. We sent out an email and a survey to all our poll workers right after that and said, 'Hey, we're just getting an idea of how many of you will want to work in the election, although there's COVID out here.' I think 90% came back and said, 'Yeah, we're going to work.' It did not matter.

"We've always had about 4,000 people that want to work the elections every time we do them, and it's just great to see. These people like to help."

Despite progress, Charlotte transit challenges remain

Continued from page 1A

the system in the six months following Zarutska's murder, the audit report said.

CATS has identified higher-risk routes, times and places; conducted reviews of higher-risk stops with help from law enforcement; improved after-action review processes and increased security by bringing in off-duty Charlotte police officers and deputies from the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, the report said.

Riders are seeing the fruits of their labor, as they report seeing more police on the light rail now. Another audit released this year, this one from the Federal Transit Administration, noted that it was able to confirm the increased police presence. The FTA also found that a "significant number" of other safety risk mitigations from CATS' Integrated Security and Public Safety Plan — released in November 2025 in response to Zarutska's murder — were being implemented.

Roughly 1,000 hours weekly of off-duty officer presence have been added to the Blue Line, with rail operators indicating it's had a "positive impact" on overall security.

One rider, Naya Clark, told Carolina Public Press that she'll see officers typically in teams of two or three. A senior at UNC-Charlotte, Clark uses the Blue Line to get to class three days out of the week. She's been riding since before Zarutska was murdered and said things do seem a little different now compared to right after her murder.

"They have been doing a better job at asking people for their tickets, and there have been police on the trains a lot, but there's periods of where they're really on it, and then sometimes you don't see them for weeks," Clark said.

"But I guess it just has to do with timing, because they can only be in one car at a time."

The Blue Line has seen a 69% drop in crime compared to this time last year, Charlotte police said in an April Facebook post. In a press release that same month, the department credited "increased staffing, faster response and targeted deployment" for the change.

A few online comments suggested a drop in ridership could be to blame. Data from the American Public Transportation Association does show an overall decrease in ridership on Charlotte's light rail of 5.14% between the second quarter of 2025 and the same period this year. But Amy Thompson, the association's director of public affairs, told CPP that this isn't a significant change and attributed it to "reduced service due to scheduled maintenance."

The city adopted its 2055 Transit System Plan last May, which aims to improve the transit system by providing a 50% increase in bus service and an additional 43 miles of rail. A tax referendum that passed last November, which raised the local sales tax by 1 cent, will go to help fund these improvements.

Charlotte public transit user Kelly Waters LaFlash told CPP that while the system isn't perfect — cost and safety being two examples — she generally feels safe while using it, crediting a lifetime of "street smarts."

"Overall, Charlotte transit does have its faults, but I remember what it was like riding 30, 40+ years ago, and that certainly puts it in perspective," she said, thinking back to many years of riding the city's buses. The Blue Line was added to the city's transit mix in the 2000s.

The recent drop in crime on the transit system mimics a drop in crime citywide, with violent crime down by 32% from 2025, according to statistics from Charlotte police's mid-year public safety briefing. Overall crime was down 16% in the second quarter this year, though homicides had increased slightly by 3%.

The department credited more proactive policing for the overall change.

"These reductions reflect coordinated, proactive, precision policing and the involvement of the community," Chief of Police Estella D. Patterson said in a July press release.

"Public safety is a shared responsibility. When residents step forward and law enforcement agencies work together, cases are solved faster, trust grows and our city becomes safer."

What still needs work

The changes made by CATS weren't able to prevent a second stabbing that occurred on the light rail roughly two months after Zarutska's murder, though it was non-fatal, the state report said.

While some observations regarding security were promising, the audit from the FTA still identified 18 areas of noncompliance by CATS. It also found other areas of concern, including how the system evaluates risk and how it monitors or follows through on fixes for the system.

In a press release accompanying the release of its audit, the FTA noted that the rate of crimes against CATS users is three times the national average for 2025.

"FTA is determined to do its part to address the systemic failures within Charlotte's transit system that led to Iryna Zarutska's tragic death," FTA Administrator Marc Molinaro said in the statement.

"We look forward to seeing these 18 points fixed immediately to bolster safety for both transit workers and passengers."

In a February 2025 letter, the FTA told CATS that it must respond within a month with plans to address each of the noncompliance findings in its review, and that the FTA would meet regularly with CATS officials to monitor their progress until they decide those meetings aren't needed anymore.

When CPP reached out to the FTA to ask what progress CATS has made so far and what the FTA still wants to see from them, it pointed to the existing audit and related press release from earlier this year.

Fare enforcement is another big issue for the system, even going back to Zarutska's murder. Her alleged killer reportedly did not buy a ticket before boarding the light rail, and it appears other riders don't bother buying one either, the state report said.

As of December 2025, total nonpaying ridership among the light rail and bus was around 45%, and those not paying to ride the light rail specifically was around 60%. An estimated $5 million to $6.5 million per year is lost due to fare evasions, the report said.

Light rail user Jeanette Gallagher told CPP that she isn't surprised about the number of riders who don't pay.

Gallagher has been using the light rail regularly for about eight or nine years and currently rides it three days out of the week to get to and from work, she said.

"When you see how many people just hop onto that train, and it's way crowded, I'm like, not all these people bought tickets," Gallagher said.



MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Lynn Coleman Hudson stands next to a photo of her father, Washington Heights advocate L.C. Coleman, at the Oct. 22, 2026, reopening of L.C. Coleman Park in Charlotte.

Council commits $4.1M in city funding for Brookhill Village

Continued from page 1A

development in 1950, is owned by the Spangler-Cornwell family. Griffin Brothers controls the ground lease through 2049.

"We appreciate the City Council's support and the partnership that has made this project possible," said Griffin Brothers partner Mike Griffin. "There's a lot of history at Brookhill, and we want to build on that while creating something that serves the community. The infrastructure investment will help us connect the site, create new gathering spaces and bring private investment, jobs and new amenities to the area."

The project includes:

· Two new buildings for The Harvest Center of Charlotte to house corporate offices, classroom space, a commercial kitchen, gymnasium and other community space.

A permanent music and entertainment venue that holds around 4,400 people with a completion goal of March 2028

· Construction of 11 additional affordable housing units by 2028 that meets a goal of 100 such units

The developer estimates the project will bring approximately $88.5 million in private investment, including commercial, recreational, residential and entertainment uses. More than 250 construction jobs and about 75 permanent jobs are associated with the initiative.

City Council and Mecklenburg County in 2023 invested $3.5 million each as part of a $14 million plan to renovate 100 affordable housing units at Brookhill that were donated to The Harvest Center for the homeless.

The 36-acre parcel off South Tryon Street near Charlotte's urban core is part of a hot housing market with upscale retail, a booming housing market and access to light rail. Brookhill Village, though has low-income residents, run-down and shuttered homes and a complicated ownership structure that frustrated potential developers for years because of the relatively small window of time to recoup any investment before the ground lease reverts back to the Spangler-Cornwell family, heirs of C.D. Spangler, Brookhill Village's original builder.

LC Coleman Park upgrades includes a nod to its history

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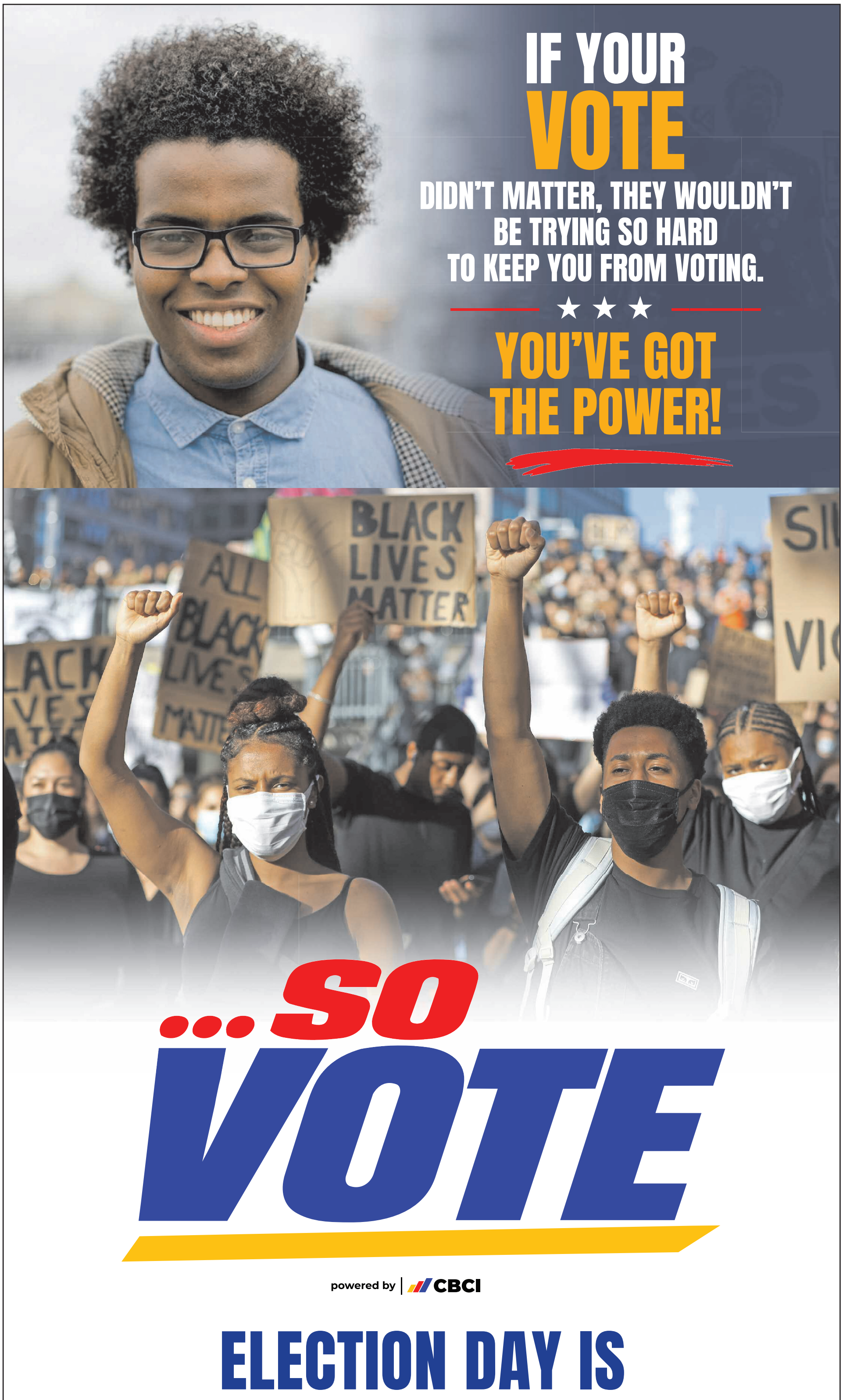
The investment included funds from the federal American Rescue Plan Act that were also used for improvements at Archdale Park, Druid Hills Park, and Monroe Road Park – each of which were identified in 2021 as most in need of improvements.

"We at Mecklenburg County are proud to continue our unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship, social justice, and increasing access to quality park and recreation facilities and amenities," commissioner Mark Jerrell said at the Oct. 22 dedication. "As a county, we're certainly aware of the strong equivalency that exists between parks and our quality of life, and this is why we continue to prioritize and support these types of investments as part of our environmental stewardship and, more importantly, our equity work."

In the 1920s, the space was known as Clinton Park or Clinton Beach and included a 100-room bathhouse, dance hall, and a lake where United House of Prayer for All People, led by founder Bishop C.M. "Sweet Daddy" Grace presided over mass baptisms.

After World War II, its name was changed to Sunset Park and Recreation Center, a private social club and venue for musicians, dances and club meetings as well as the only local pool accessible to Black people before desegregation and the site of swimming lessons conducted by the McCrorey YMCA.

The pavilion continued to operate under several names in the 1950s and '60, including Hi-Fi Country Club and Mona Lisa – where human rights activist Malcolm X spoke in 1963 – before the site was renamed L.C. Coleman Park.


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Foundation aims to expand initiative

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'we will allow you have an after-school program in your school where you take your teachers and you assign the students that need this education more than anybody else, and we gave them a limit of the number of students. They go into the classrooms with teachers that they already know. The teachers already know them, and the teachers basically have the time to spend with them to help them grow in terms of their educational need."

The partnership has made an impact in helping students succeed, said Ashley Park Principal Joline Adams, who was an administrator at Walter G. Byers School when the program launched.

"When I was the assistant principal at Walter G. Byers, at the time (it) was a low-performing school and very similar pre-K-8 school to Ashley Park – high needs, especially with literacy and the gaps in literacy," she said. "What was needed there's not enough time in the school day [for], so that partnership with The Charlotte Post at both Walter G. Byers and Ashley Park providing that additional support with resources to provide after-school tutoring, specifically in literacy … impacts every aspect of our kids' experience in school.

"I think that has been a core to the growth that we experienced when I was at Walter G. Byers, to also now here at Ashley Park."

The results are promising. Ashley Park has realized stellar results in two years, going from failing to average in large measure due to the after-school boost. The change has been steady and consistent, which pleases Adams.

"We went from an F to a D, or the previous two years ago, and then last school year we went from a D to a C," she said. "In two years, we've gone from an F to a C, and that is in strong part of our partnership with Charlotte Post and the after-school tutoring and literacy.

"We don't have the official growth scores reports yet from the state for this past school year, but the year prior we were top 5% in the state overall for growth, and in fact, we not only grew, we grew 100% for all subgroups … and either exceeded or met their growth, which is amazing."

After-school tutor Ashley Williams likens the improvements to mastering a life skill. As students become proficient, that success transfers to other subjects.

"The joy for me is when they realize that they're passing and they get it," she said. "They can read a text and that score pops up and they're proud of it and they're like, 'oh now I've got it.' Just seeing the joy on their faces … when it clicks for them, they know it, and it's exciting to see them when they finally they get it."

The Post Foundation aims to expand the roster of campus partners with a goal of adding two more schools by the end of the 2026-27 academic year. Applications have been sent to Title I schools to determine the best fits and corresponding leadership commitments.


Johnson

"We've learned that we can't put a program in a school where the principal isn't dedicated to it and working hard to make sure she gets the right teachers and the right overseer of the program to make the program work," Johnson said.

The after-school commitment is intentional, but so is the process behind getting students involved in the initiative. Student progress is measured three times a semester using an assessment system to track data across four skill areas: foundational skills, informational text, literature, and language. Teachers analyze data trends and adjust instruction as needed.

"We were very strategic about the kids that we selected to be able to attend," Williams said. "They absolutely love going down and having the snack time for the program, and kids are begging to come to the after-school program. We pick students based off their skills, and we have a lot of different teachers who have different strengths. Those kids are able to rotate between teachers and work on certain things they need help with."

Said Adams: "We worked with our teachers and our staff to identify the kids who needed it. Based on data, who are the kids that, even though we're providing core instruction or providing … interventions or enrichment, who needs more?

"Then we also looked based on data who are the teachers that can take depending on this group of students who can grow these kids – who have proven track records of data and growing these kids at the highest level."

Said Johnson: "In the regular classroom setting, teachers don't have time to slow down to help these children learn at the rate that they need to learn because they're dealing with kids that learn at a regular rate, kids that will learn at an exceptional rate, and kids that are slow learners. What this program really does is take these slower learners and put them in an atmosphere with other slower learners, and the teachers actually can teach them at a level and a rate that they are capable of learning. It basically gives them an opportunity to grow these children in a setting that could help them grow, and we pay the teachers to do that."

« ENDORSEMENT »

Support housing, improvements

THE CHARLOTTE POST BOARD

The city of Charlotte has three bond proposals totaling $405 million on the municipal ballot to address transportation, affordable housing and neighborhood improvements.

All have a place in addressing needs in a growing community, but we encourage voters to support just the affordable housing and neighborhood improvement measures.

City officials insist the bonds are built into the budget and won't increase property tax rates. That's fine, but we believe the people asked to foot the bill should have some fiscal relief, at least for on the transportation initiative. If approved by voters, the city would be authorized to repay investors who buy city bonds.

Because the city would repay using public money, voters must approve the authority to borrow.

Affordable housing

Charlotte is bursting at the seams, and the result is increased housing demands.

As gentrification continues unabated in lower income neighborhoods and market prices rise, pressure is increasing to locate answers. Charlotte is falling farther behind in building units for low- and moderate-income residents, and as a result, more is required to close the gap.

The $125 million in housing bonds is a necessary tool to improve affordable housing in the city, which is necessary to maintain Charlotte's overall economic health and improve access to opportunities for people who struggle to gain a step up the economic ladder.

Charlotte isn't going to suddenly become affordable but is taking steps to help people better access housing through city initiatives, which we applaud. If there's more help for people looking to keep pace with rent or close the gap to home ownership, we're for it.

Vote yes.

Neighborhood improvements

The $20 million package to improve neighborhood streets, sidewalks, drainage, public spaces, and other infrastructure is small potatoes compared to the other referendums and on scale alone, is a relatively small bill.

Sidewalk construction will certainly help pedestrians better navigate the city and making streets safer is a good idea.

Vote yes.

Transportation

The $280 million transportation referendum for construction of streets, sidewalks and bicycle paths, in our estimation, isn't as pressing an issue. Transportation has dominated much of the public discourse over the last couple of years between the 1% sales tax approved by Mecklenburg County voters last year and the I-77 South toll project saga that set neighborhoods against city and state government.

Between those projects and the cost involved as they continue to unfold, we're inclined to demand a pause on footing the bill on another initiative in short order. Our stance isn't that better streets and sidewalks aren't necessary – they certainly are – but local government shouldn't expect us to sign off on another project given the economic uncertainty facing residents and municipalities.

Vote no.

Our transportation future: Sales tax, bonds in tandem


David Howard

Last November, Mecklenburg County voters made an important decision about our region's transportation future by approving a one-cent sales tax for transportation improvements. That funding creates an opportunity to expand our transit system, improve roads and invest in the infrastructure needed to support our growing region. The promises made to our community during the one-cent sales tax campaign are underway with the support of a dynamic board of trustees, CATS staff and partner organizations.

Now, Charlotte voters have another great opportunity to vote yes on a $425 million city bonds package, including a $280 million transportation bond.

A reasonable question to ask is: Didn't we just approve transportation funding with the one-cent sales tax? Why is another transportation bond package needed?

The answer comes down to understanding how these two funding tools work together.

The one-cent sales tax provides a dedicated source of transportation revenue. Bonds provide a way to finance large projects upfront, using future revenues to repay the borrowing over time. Without bond financing, major improvements may need to wait while sufficient revenues accumulate year after year. With bonds, the city can make funding available for projects sooner and repay that investment over time.

This distinction matters because Charlotte's transportation needs are not years away. They exist today.

The city's proposed transportation bonds includes two major intersection improvements at Eastway Drive and Shamrock Drive and Ashley Road, Freedom Drive and Tuckasegee Road; one new street, phase two of Bryant Farms Road extension; and "complete street" improvements to better allow multiple modes of transportation; and improvements to Robinson Church Road, Brown-Grier Road, DeArmon Road and Shamrock Drive.

They also include $50 million for sidewalks, $24 million for street resurfacing and $22 million for transportation safety improvements.

These investments would complement the broader transportation promises funded by the one-cent sales tax, which includes light rail, streetcar, buses, microtransit, and road improvements.

As chairman of the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority, I see how important coordination will be as we develop our transportation network. Expanding rail and bus service is only part of building an effective transportation system. Our community also needs safe streets, accessible sidewalks, and reliable connections to reach transit stations, workplaces, and destinations throughout the region.

The transportation sales tax and city bonds serve different purposes, but their investments complement one another to build a transportation system for today and tomorrow.

An important note, the city has stated that the proposed bonds are already incorporated into its existing financial plan, with no additional property tax rate increase planned to repay them. The city anticipates using a combination of existing revenue sources, including sales tax revenue, to support repayment.

Financing alone, however, does not guarantee faster construction. Project design, permitting, available contractors, and coordination between agencies will determine how quickly improvements are made.

Our region has an opportunity to coordinate transportation investments on a scale we have not previously experienced. We need you to vote yes for bonds so we can turn available funding into completed projects, with clear timelines, responsible financial management and measurable results for the people of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

David Howard is the chairman of the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority.

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Sports

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2026



MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Brandon Miller, who signed a five-year $200 million extension with the Hornets last week, overcame a slow start in the season's first two games to score 34 and 39 points in wins against Miami and Washington. The Hornets were 3-1 going into their Oct. 28 game at Detroit.

Hornets lift off to a flying start

Aside an ugly home opener loss to Atlanta, Charlotte's remade roster shows promising early results

By Cameron Williams
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The Hornets got a serious wakeup call and responded.

After getting blown out against Atlanta in the home opener, the Hornets (3-1) responded by beating Miami 115-110 and Washington 110-103. The Spectrum Center debut was an eye-opener when Atlanta went on a 20-3 run to start the first quarter and Charlotte never recovered.

"It was a good learning experience for our entire group," coach Charles Lee said. "When things aren't going your way, what is your focus going to be? Are we going to look for excuses, are we going to look for people to bail us out, or are we going to band together and try to get out of it on our own?"

The home crowd wasn't pleased with the performance as boos started to echo around Spectrum Center. But, the next day against Miami they were cheering during a fourth quarter push to get over the edge against Miami.

"We're a family," Lee said. "They are a part of the Hive. (It) was one of those days where the family wasn't acting right. You have to let them know, and they did. We used it as fuel … and they gave us our flowers today, which is what family does. We love the fans, we appreciate them."

Said guard/forward Brandon Miller: "Every game is not going to be perfect. Whether we're up 20 or down 20, we have to play Hornets DNA basketball at the end of the day. I think our mindset and how we think about other teams going on runs; it's how we're going to respond to it. In the NBA, you have to fight a bit of adversity."

Miller got off to a shaky start to the season scoring 18 against Brooklyn and six against Atlanta. He responded with 34 and 39 against Miami and Washington.

"That's why you never overreact to shooting numbers or shooting slumps or one-game sample sizes," Lee said after the Miami win. "[Miller] has a body of work that is very impressive. Though he may be struggling offensively, he creates so many good things for us on the offensive end. We thought his defense today was much improved. That steal he got on Larsson was at a crucial moment. That's just who he is;

Please see **HORNETS** | 6A

Hough leads Magnificent Seven football rankings



MATT LACZKO

Hough High has been the class of Mecklenburg County since preseason as the top team in The Post's Magnificent Seven rankings.

By Herbert L. White
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It's rivalry week in Mecklenburg County, and the Magnificent Seven has some pretty juicy clashes to close the regular season.

Hough is still tops, but below them No. 2 Chambers and No. 3 Mallard Creek square off in a scrap for the Meck Power Six title while Ardrey Kell (fifth) and Providence (seventh) are competing for the top spot in the Southwestern 7A/8A.

This week's rankings with overall and conference record:

1. *Hough* (9-0, 4-0 Greater Charlotte 7A/8A). Kings of the county, per usual. Is the road to a second straight state title but a mere formality?

2. *Chambers* (9-0, 4-0 Meck Power Six). The Cougars might be the most surprising (if not impressive) unbeaten squad in the County. Give coach Captain Munnerlyn and quarterback Jamouri Nichols their flowers. Next is rival Mallard Creek with a chance to clinch the conference crown.

3. *Mallard Creek* (7-2, 4-0 Meck Power Six). The Mavericks are doing good things these days and hitting a competitive peak

Please see **IT'S** | 6A

Highest of stakes for JC Smith's campaign

By Herbert L. White
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Win and get in.

That's the equation Johnson C. Smith faces over the final two weeks of the regular season to play for the CIAA football title. It's not an unfamiliar task – consecutive losses in 2024 knocked the Golden Bulls out of the mix while last year's team got the formula right and won the crown.

This time, JCSU needs wins against Virginia State on Saturday and at Livingstone on Nov. 7 to qualify. The Golden Bulls (6-2, 5-1 CIAA) lost their first conference game last week at Bowie State to fall a game behind Virginia State and Virginia Union. The Trojans and Panthers play each other in their regular season finale.



Flowers

"There's not going to be a sense of panic anywhere," Smith coach Maurice Flowers said. "You're not going to see the coaches going crazy, you're not going to see us staying in the office until 12 or 1 o'clock at night. We're going to do our same thing that we normally do in how we prepare for a football game and prepare for an opponent and we're going to fix these things that we know went wrong. We're going to get ready to play against a very good football team in our place on Saturday."

JCSU, which had its six-game win streak snapped at Bowie State, were mistake-prone at critical moments. The Golden Bulls managed just one touchdown on five trips inside the Bulldogs' 20, and the defense was flagged four times on the Bulldogs' game-winning drive, capped by a 7-yard pass from Joshuah Keith to John Thompson with 34 seconds left. Other than the dramatic ending, JCSU's missteps were like the season-opening loss at Benedict.

"It's an area that we should

Please see **JC SMITH** | 6A

Panthers stick with Robert Hunt for better, worse

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Manhandling Carolina Panthers right guard Robert Hunt, Tampa Bay Buccaneers linebacker Al-Quadin Muhammad flashed by to sack quarterback Bryce Young, a fumble.

The misery didn't end there at Bank of America Stadium. It was just starting.

Buccaneers defensive lineman Calijah Kancey picked up the loose ball and rambled 32 yards for a touchdown, extending Tampa Bay's lead to 17-0.

Muhammad rushed so efficiently, coach Dave Canales said he didn't see what happened.

"I just saw the late win," he said. "I saw color (and) Bryce saw it about the same time as I did, probably. They made a great play and attacked the ball."

Moments later, with Hunt standing on the sideline with hands on his hips, Young walked over to offer encouragement. The next series, Young hit tight end Darren Waller for a 50-yard touchdown pass.

Thus ended Sunday's competitive highlights for the Panthers (3-3), who dropped an uninspiring 43-13 decision. The Bucs (2-5) compiled 258 rushing yards, controlling the line of scrimmage throughout.

"We didn't give ourselves a chance," Canales said.

The Panthers picked the wrong time to time to honor one of the franchise's top defensive players, Luke Kuechly. With the Panthers trailing 33-6, the Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee received his Ring of Excellence honor in a halftime ceremony.

"We got embarrassed, obviously, so that part sucks," said Hunt, who has struggled through much of the season. The seven-year veteran entered Sunday with a 47.2 overall grade, placing him No. 68 among 74 qualified

Please see **PANTHERS** | 6A

Tommy Tremble takes more relevant role in Carolina offense

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

About 10 minutes before kickoff at Lincoln Financial Field, Carolina Panthers tight end Tommy Tremble created a 50-year anniversary homage to one of his favorite movies, "Rocky."

After connecting with quarterback Bryce Young on a 12-yard touchdown pass in the Panthers' 25-14 win against the Eagles, Tremble recruited wide receiver Jalen Coker to re-enact a knockout scene, capped by an uppercut and a fall to the turf.

Tremble displayed more drama after his fourth-quarter score capped the scoring, which drew a taunting penalty. It may have been his first two-touchdown outing against the franchise his father Greg once played for, but his contributions were not limited to catching passes.

As a lead blocker, Tremble played a key role in Chuba Hubbard's 1-yard, fourth-quarter touchdown run and at least three first-down plays.

Lined up at fullback, he also could have rivaled "Rocky's" footwork in the ring. On a fourth-and-1, Young called for a hard count as Tremble motioned out of the backfield, frantically moving his arms up and down. The decoy worked, leading to an offsides call.

"I think he had one or two dances in his repertoire," coach Dave Canales said Wednesday. "Once he started getting a little further down into his toolbox that's where (his personality) came out."

Following father's footsteps

Tremble reminisced about stories his father told him about his lone NFL season in 1995, five years before he was born. The elder Tremble's career featured seven games with eventual Super Bowl champion Dallas Cowboys, and four outings with the Eagles. The former Georgia standout recorded six career tackles (four solo).

A 2018 graduate of Wesleyan (Ga.) School, the younger Tremble recalled a recruiting trip to the University of Pennsylvania, joined by his father. They took

See **TREMBLE** | 6A

It's Cougars-Mavericks for Meck Power 6 title

Continued from page 5A

after taking down Butler 35-3. Chambers, though, will provide an even clearer view of where they are going into the playoffs.

4. *Palisades* (7-2, 3-1 Southwestern 7A/8A). The Pumas keep rolling along after decimating Rocky River 49-0. Next is a postseason tuneup against East Mecklenburg.

5. *Ardrey Kell* (6-3, 3-1 Southwestern 7A/8A). The Knights beat up on East Mecklenburg 28-0 to keep their hopes for a share of the title intact. Their next opponent, Providence, will have a say.

6. *Myers Park* (6-3, 3-1 Greater Charlotte 7A/8A). The Mustangs were manhandled by Hough 35-0, but there's a chance to recover with South Mecklenburg coming to campus.

7. *Providence* (5-4, 4-0 Southwestern 7A/8A). The Panthers get into the rankings after squeezing by Ballantyne Ridge 28-21 to remain unbeaten in the conference. Next up is a key game at Ardrey Kell.



MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith linebacker Vincent Hill (0) gestures to teammates in the Golden Bulls' 40-6 win against Lincoln (Pa.) on Oct. 18, 2026. JCSU's defense, which is second in the CIAA at 10.9 points allowed per game, plays Virginia State, the conference's highest-scoring team at 40.5 points per game, on Oct. 31.

JC Smith takes on Virginia State in high stakes game

Continued from page 5A

have conquered," Flowers said. "I won't say it's frustrating; I'll just say it's an area that we still haven't mastered. Still have growth to basically get through. You master things when you move on and they don't come back up. Well, it's clearly shown that we haven't mastered it."

The Golden Bulls dominated statistically, rolling up 383 yards on offense (197 rushing) while limiting Bowie State (4-4, 4-2) to 194, with 44 yards passing. The difference was red zone efficiency, where the Bulldogs turned three trips inside JCSU's 20 into a pair of touchdowns and a field goal.

"Really not a great performance by the Golden Bulls – just didn't take advantage of a lot of opportunities," Flowers said. "First, they get off to a good start, but then you let them hang around. We had opportunities to go up two scores – we went up a score, and then defense held them, and then we got the ball on the plus-47.

"So, [if] we go score from 47 yards out, we're up two scores in the fourth quarter – game is essentially over. Well, we didn't take advantage of that opportunity."

JCSU has another chance to get right against Virginia State (7-1, 6-0), the CIAA's highest-scoring team at 42.5 points per game. The Golden Bulls, who've beaten the Trojans the last two seasons and allow only 10.9 points per game (second in the CIAA), understand the stakes.

"We expect to get their best shot," Flowers said. "They're coming off a bye week, also. This is a great opportunity for us to get back on track. We're going to be playing a good team. We're familiar with them. They're going to come in, I'm sure. with all guns blazing.

"But we're going to be ready for Saturday, and for our young men, this is going to be a great learning experience, what we just had losing to Bowie State. We're a resilient group, and we're going to get out and have a good week of practice each day, one day at a time, and get ready for Saturday."

Note: JCSU running back Fabian Duncan set the school single-season rushing record with 1,213 yards. The previous mark was 1,170 set by Ernest Williams in 1976.

Duncan, who ran for 138 yards on 35 carries against Bowie State, has rushed for 100 yards in seven of eight games.



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Carolina Panthers guard Robert Hunt (50) sets up to block during a the Panthers' 43-13 loss to Tampa Bay on Oct. 25, 2026, at Bank of America Stadium.

Panthers stick with Robert Hunt

Continued from page 5A

guards, according to Pro Football Focus.

The Buccaneers, led by Yaya Diaby's three sacks, tackled Young behind the line of scrimmage on pass plays five times Sunday.

Reflecting on the sack he yielded, Hunt anticipated a restless evening.

"I'm going to think about that all night," he said. "I just got to improve."

Needs to improve

Coming out of the off week, Canales opened his Oct. 12 press conference by publicly honoring Hunt on his marriage the previous weekend.

"Big congrats," Canales said. "The guys were fired up about that in the team meeting, but you know, this week has been about connection."

Has married life changed Hunt?

"Hopefully, it's changed him for good," Canales said with a grin on Wednesday.

Leading up to Sunday, Canales and offensive coordinator Brad Idzik worked on getting Hunt to perform like he did during his 2024 Pro Bowl campaign. Hunt suffered a torn left biceps tendon in Week 2 last season but returned for the NFC Wild Card loss to the Los Angeles Rams.

Hunt has experienced a lot since joining the franchise in 2024, agreeing to a five-year, $100 million deal.

Uniting with left guard Damien Lewis to reshape Carolina's troubled offensive line, the duo immediately made a difference, cutting the Panthers' sack total from 65 in 2023 to 36 in '24.

This season, the return on Hunt's multi-year investment remains minimal.

Despite an 84.7 pass-blocking grade during last week's win against Philadelphia, per PFF, Hunt registered a team-low 39.8 mark for run blocking. Penalized twice for illegally moving downfield on passes, he earned an overall game grade of 41.1, the lowest among offensive linemen.

With right tackle Taylor Moton (blood clots) missing the opening four games, Hunt started the season with two new linemates, first-round draft pick Monroe Freeling and free agent Luke Fortner.

Idzik said it takes time to develop on-field trust.

"It's two new guys, right?" Idzik said Thursday. "You're sitting next to a rookie at right tackle and a new center. I think that's often overlooked of how important it is to have those banked full-speed reps together and trust the guy next to me.

"I know exactly what he's going to do on these different looks, these different combos, these pass-offs and stunts. And those guys are settling in."

Taylor Moton suffers a bad break

Carolina's inconsistent line could remain shorthanded for a "significant" amount of time, Canales said, after Moton suffered a broken fibula during the third quarter Sunday.

"He got rolled up on pretty good," Canales said. "There's a fracture there."

Moton, who returned for Week 6, likely will be replaced by Freeling.

"Just sick for T-Mo," Canales said. "Working his way back, getting out there. (It was) just kind of an end-of-the-play thing."

Despite starting the season without their bookend tackles, Moton and Ikem Ekwonu (knee), general manager Dan Morgan reformed the line by drafting Freeling and signing free agents Rasheed Walker and Luke Fortner.

The results have been mixed.

In the win against Philadelphia, four of the five starting offensive linemen received below-average grades by PFF. Among the lowest grades, Walker (54.9) ranked No. 10, followed by No. 11 Fortner (54.2), No. 12 Lewis (53.5) and No. 14 Hunt (41.1).

"I think this O-line is trying to get a groove together," Idzik said.

Entering Sunday, the Panthers' No. 2-ranked offense averaged 404.4 yards per game, despite Young taking pressure an average of 19.4 times per game.

The "MVP" chants that serenaded Young during back-to-back wins over the Eagles and Detroit Lions are likely over after two interceptions and losing the blindside fumble Sunday.

Hunt shared the blame.

"We just got to be better, man," he said. "We've got to be better. You know, we put ourselves in a hole."

After surrendering 22 first-half points on turnovers, lowlighted by David Moore's muffed punt return and a blocked extra point that was returned for two Tampa Bay points, Canales said he'd never experienced a first half like Sunday.

"I'm just really disappointed," Canales said. "In every phase."

With the Panthers scheduled to face the Green Bay Packers on Thursday, Hunt said he will continue to focus on regaining his 2024 form.

For better or worse.

Hornets off to a flying start

Continued from page 5A

that's the type of consistent competitor he is. He wants to be an elite two-way player and he showed it today."

Washington — like Miami two nights prior — made a late run to narrow the gap. Lee was proud of how Charlotte closed the game out.

"I think in all games, you have to realize the game is far from over," Lee said, "and so I'd love to see our habits be sustainable until that last buzzer. I thought we had a little bit of a lapse in transition defense not protecting the paint in key moments, and then after the timeout Brandon gets a big-time block on Anthony Davis at the rim. I thought our shift activity improved, the contests were great, and they banged a couple of threes that were heavily contested, but for the most part I thought once we locked back in on our habits and our techniques, we got a little bit better. I was really happy with that."

One thing that was apparent in both wins was the Hornets' veteran presence. Newcomers Naz Reid, Grayson Allen and Dennis Schroder among others have been in clutch moments in big games and it's had a calming effect on the floor.

With starters Coby White and Kon Knueppel still out due to injury, for the Hornets to be 3-1 it lends one to think once the full crew can go — not to get too far ahead of ourselves — this team could win their fair share of games.

Tremble takes more relevant role

Continued from page 5A

time to take in the Philadelphia landmarks, like the "Rocky" monument and, of course, the NFL stadium.

"(While) in high school, we ran up the 'Rocky' steps ... all that stuff," Tremble said. "I remember standing outside, never thinking I was going to play in that stadium and thinking it was super cool that my dad used to play there back in the day. And to go and actually play in that stadium, let alone score twice, it was sick.

"It was super cool, man."

Proving recently to be a reliable target, Tremble caught all four of passes thrown his way against the Eagles, compiling a season-best 46 yards and his first two touchdowns this season. Tremble took pride in his "dirty work," prompted by offensive coordinator/play-caller Brad Idzik expanding his workload by moving Tremble to the backfield. As a lead blocker, Tremble helped Hubbard into the end zone for what proved to be the game-winning score.

"That's the stuff that we pride ourselves (on) as tight ends," Tremble said. "People only see the flashy numbers. We don't just catch touchdowns. We do the dirty work and try to help out the run game."

Expanding role

Tremble's teammates noticed.

During film review, they reviewed his pancake block and the effort that took out two defenders as Hubbard delivered a first-down run on fourth-and-1. They also saw him run out as a lead blocker on wide receiver David Moore's 27-yard catch and run with 4:07 remaining, effectively sealing the win for the NFC South-leading Panthers (3-3).

"Just the will and the want-to," running back Trevor Etienne said. "You see a guy go out there and give his all and just lay out key blocks in the game that we needed in pivotal moments. You can honestly tell it's a dream come true, you know. You can't write it up any better. You can't ask for nothing else."

The Charlotte Post

