

# Piecemeal budget can resolve impasse

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enough already. They don't want to expand dependency, they (properly) don't think federal money is some free gift from afar, and they worry that any work rules or premiums instituted today over progressive objections will be nerfed or dismantled tomorrow. Everything the governor has said during the budget dispute has reinforced their opposition rather than softening it.

The legislative branch retains the primary authority over fiscal policy in North Carolina and clearly plans to use it to bypass a recalcitrant governor. Unless he offers a peace meal, they'll do it piecemeal.

*John Hood (@JohnHoodNC) is chairman of the John Locke Foundation and appears on "NC SPIN," broadcast statewide Fridays at 7:30p and Sundays at 12:30p on UNC-TV.*

# Rose Hill town administrator resigns

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"The only comment is that I've enjoyed 10 years as public works director, and the past three to four years as town administrator," Cavanaugh said on Monday. "Rose Hill is a great town to live in and work in."

When asked his future plans, Cavanaugh said that he's working on getting back into his home in the Northeast community, which was heavily damaged by Hurricane Florence.

He said he wished his resignation "could be on better terms," but added, "It was the board's decision and I respect their decision."

Cavanaugh's exit follows the resignations of Mayor Gary Boney and former Mayor Pro Tem Wade Hall earlier this year.

The commissioners voted unanimously on June 5 to enter into an "investigative/consulting agreement" with Protus3.

Heath said then that the agreement would include a \$5,000 retainer, and an hourly rate would be established if the number of hours went beyond the retainer.

Final figures on the cost of the contract with the investigative firm were not available as of press time.

Town officials also did not comment on the hiring of a new town administrator.

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# 'An empty gas tank, a broken gauge, and you're still on my mind'

In the middle of a lake is no place to be powerless. But there is usually a measure of life-affirming experience that comes from running out of gas.

It was a long time ago, and I'm not sure if I was there or if I've just heard the story so many times. What I know happened is that the boat ran out of gas, and the owner immediately found a positive light to shine on the situation.

"This is good," he said. "I needed to know how far it would go on one tank."

His friends have had plenty of fun with that during the years since. But he wasn't saying that being dead in the water was a good thing. He was saying, "This isn't as bad as it seems, guys. And look, here comes another boat to tow us in."

Most boaters who spot a vessel in distress will immediately motor over to offer assistance. It might not be a rule of law, but on the water it's considered a moral code — on the water.

So when I ran out of gas driving home from work the other day, I tried to look on the bright side. "At least I know how far it will go," I said out loud.

"Yep. All the way to the side of the road," I could hear my friends laughing.

The gauge's needle had been slowly losing its mind for weeks, launching into a twitching, spinning fit after about the half-tank mark. I thought it had finally gotten over the



**MARK RUTLEDGE**

shakes. Turns out it had somehow balled itself up in a holding pattern at the quarter-tank mark.

Being stranded on the side of a highway is different from being in distress on a lake. You don't need an anchor to stay in one spot, and the other motorists know that.

Even those who might have stopped to help 20 years ago now see that you have a cellphone and figure you have the situation under control. I know because I'm one of them.

"Well, looks like he's got help on the way," I say to myself, and I motor on.

The question is, how is that guy going to use the downtime spent leaning against a guardrail. I spent some of mine pondering the way that a fully loaded semi moving at 80 mph can visibly shake a half-ton pickup from 20 feet away. That's power.

I spent some time peering through the cars and trucks speeding past, staring at a white cross and a small, wooden cutout of a double tractor-trailer planted like signs in the median.

The spot where I ran out of gas is someone's hallowed ground from something far worse.

I doubt that she considered it a moral code, but my wife did finally



Submitted photo

A cross and a wooden cutout of a tractor-trailer stand as a silent memorial in the median along Interstate 81 in Greene County, Tennessee.

swoop in and rescue me in her trusty minivan. It was about 10 minutes before she arrived when I realized that I should have been writing a country song during all that time against the guardrail.

"We met on the highway  
I flagged her down  
No gas in my pickup  
No friends back in town

'You look sad and lonely'  
She said with a grin  
'Climb in here beside me, we'll go for a ride  
Who knows where the party might end'"

And there I was thinking my tank was dry.

Contact Mark Rutledge at [mrutledge@reflector.com](mailto:mrutledge@reflector.com) or like him on Facebook at Mark Rutledge Columns.

# Duplin Re-Entry Council continues fight to become an established council

Lauren Branch  
Staff Writer  
KENANSVILLE — The Duplin Re-Entry Council held a meeting on Thursday, August 22 at the Duplin County Department of Social Services (DSS) building.

The council continues their strides to become an established council. Re-entry councils are started at the local level first by the community, and upon creation ultimately serve as a voice for individuals re-entering the community after incarceration.

This in turn could reduce crime and victimization rates in Duplin County.

"The re-entry council is supported by the governor, but there are currently no funds for the program," said Susan Thigpen, director of Duplin County DSS. "I do think it will be invaluable, and I do think Duplin County is headed in the right direction. It's just a matter of really getting started, and really getting the right passionate people to the table. And we're getting there."

Thigpen added that she feels the council's biggest struggles have come from not being able to get the right people on the team.

Most of North Carolina's inmates— 95 percent— are expected to be released, according to Gregory Singleton, director of Community Workforce Readiness and project manager for The Craven Pamlico Re-Entry Council. Currently, Duplin County is at capacity and is housing 95 inmates at the county jail.

The council and their supporters want those inmates to be prepared to integrate back into the community upon release without repeat offenses.



Duplin Times photo/Lauren Branch

Various organization leaders take notes from re-entry council specialist Gregory Singleton, director of Community Workforce Readiness and project manager for The Craven Pamlico Re-Entry Council.

"I can't put a number on it, but I would say that it is a significant amount (of repeat offenders)," Sheriff Blake Wallace explained.

If constituted, the council would be responsible for coordinating resources in the community with efforts to assist formerly incarcerated individuals, those under supervision, and their families that will help facilitate a better transition back into society. Those resources can come from organizations such as DSS, mental health organizations, local churches, food banks, and support and rehabilitation organizations, such as one organization that was in attendance, Taking Care of Me, My Journey, a mental health support services organization located in Warsaw.

When asked how a partnership with the council could help the community, Toya Hooper, founder of Taking Care of Me, My Journey, explained, "I think it will have a huge impact because mental health is so important. Stud-

ies show that a large number of those incarcerated deal with mental health issues... These inmates leave jail with no understanding of what went wrong in the first place. You have to understand yourself in order to get better, and it's going to take everyone's partnership to make it work."

At Thursday's meeting, the topic of discussion led by Singleton seats vs. talent. Attendees discussed what resources were in the room and how they could utilize what they already had available to them.

"They are strong in numbers, but they have to get the community buy-in and get the community at large to address it," Singleton said.

There are three things that are greatly impacted by re-entry councils, Singleton explained: public safety, collateral cost of incarceration, and getting people back to work and into tax-paying citizens.

With a good process in place and the right people on the council, the re-entry coun-

cil can greatly impact Duplin County. Based off of the 105 people that have come through the re-entry program and are now working and the cost per incarceration per inmate per year, the Craven Pamlico Re-Entry Council, along with help from Singleton and his team, have saved their county \$2.6 million in just two years.

"I think really helping folks understand that it is critical, and I think we all need to be invested in a successful re-entry council," Thigpen said. "And as a community, we have a lot that we need to invest in making sure that it is successful."

"I think the comment was made in the meeting that we can be paying all of this money to house individuals in prison or we can help them successfully reintegrate into the community allowing them to become working individuals paying taxes instead of our taxes being paid to house them in prison," she continued. "So while ultimately we want what's best for everyone in the county, it's good business too."

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