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Report By: Michael Cooper
Governmental Affairs Director

Greetings! Thanks to everyone who came to Raleigh last week for Legislative Meetings. It was a great week. And our HCAR members had productive meetings with Representative Ray Pickett and Senator Deanna Ballard.



Pictured: HCAR President Jim Lewis, Bill Aceto, Senator Deanna Ballard, Marcella Coley, GAD Michael Cooper, and Emily Bish

If you're interested in getting involved more with the state association, you're interested in politics, or you just like to travel, our annual meetings in Raleigh are a great way to be engaged. Make plans to be a part next year.

Now for news you can use. From nearby in Western NC. From Carolina Public Press: "A small mountain city is challenging the nation's largest hospital system in court. Brevard officials say that, after years of community complaints and declining medical care, they saw no other option."

> *"On June 3, attorneys from Greensboro and Washington, D.C., filed a lawsuit on behalf of the city of Brevard alleging a scheme by HCA Healthcare to monopolize medical services in seven Western North Carolina counties — a scheme that the lawsuit claims has led to inflated prices, lower quality of care and loss of services."*

> *"HCA bought roughly a third of the hospitals in Western North Carolina … from nonprofit Mission Health System in 2019."*

From WUNC RADIO: "The North Carolina School of Science and Math campus in Morganton is celebrating its grand opening this week. The publicly funded high school seeks to offer the same opportunities the original campus in Durham has given gifted students across the state since 1980. In August, an inaugural class of 150 high school students will move to the residential campus in the foothills of western North Carolina to begin their junior year."

From the Associated Press: “North Carolina House and Senate budget-writers are close to completing their work on proposed adjustments to the second year of a two-year state spending plan approved last fall, top Republican legislators said Tuesday.”

> “Republicans, who control both chambers, have been deciding what to do with $6.2 billion in projected revenues above and beyond what they anticipated state government would receive this fiscal year and the next year that begins July 1. The enacted budget already tells state government how to spend about $27 billion for the next 12 months.” **…** *Look for things like more teacher pay or some tax cuts.*

Construction permitting. From Kyle Ingram of the NC Insider: “The Senate Commerce Committee advanced a bill Tuesday that would require local governments to perform initial plan reviews on new construction projects and issue permit decisions within 21 days.”

> “The bill would also let local governments contract out plan reviews to the Department of Insurance Marketplace or another third party if they do not believe they can reach a decision within the deadline. … The bill is now on its way to the Senate State and Local Government Committee for consideration.”

Locally … **Banner Elk named among best small towns to visit by Smithsonian magazine**

Blasting operations to start near N.C. 105 bridge-replacement project

Watauga County approves budget, agree to not pursue further litigation over Rainbow Trail asphalt plant

> *“Months of work from the board and county staff culminated in a plan that is based on anticipated revenues of $76,579,140, even with the lowest property tax rate in the state, according to board Chairman John Welch. With the new budget, the property tax in rate in Watauga is set to drop from 40.3 cents per $100 to 31.8 cents.”*
>
> *“Also included in the budget is more than $15.8 million dedicated to Watauga County Schools, a $4 million increase in capital improvement projects budget intended for the planning and development of a new Hardin Park School and construction of a new 911 dispatch center, among other projects.”*

Boone, Watauga in disagreement over parking garage on site of old Turner Law Office

Filing period open for Watauga Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisor

Boone provides update on town manager hiring process

Avery County receives first payment in 18-year national opioid settlement

(Avery) Local officials plan to address school security

(Avery) Economic Development Committee holds workshop to address staffing shortages

Finally… Check out Joe Chamberlain's recent piece in the Ashe Post and Times:

> *"The High Country Association of REALTORS® recently donated $22,000 to the New River Conservancy to build a new access point on the South Fork of the river. It's a contribution to conservation, tourism, and our shared quality of life here in the Ashe County."*