



# TOWNtalk

NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL  
VOLUME 18 ISSUE 9 • JUNE 2022

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## On the Front Burner



As we prepare to complete another successful fiscal year, I wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for your excellent work during the past twelve months. We have continued to provide high quality services during the highs and lows of a pandemic while also facing economic challenges. The Community Survey results earlier this year demonstrated the appreciation our residents have for the work you do. At its June 15th meeting, the Town Council took time out to thank you for your efforts, with Mayor Hemminger declaring that the great work of our organization doesn't happen without all of you. Those

accolades just confirm what we already knew—you folks are awesome!

I realize all of us are dealing with these uncertainties in the world today in our own way. But I want you to know we are here to support you and encourage you. One way to do that is to provide you with fair compensation and solid benefits. Our new budget strengthens those financial bonds with the following:

A tiered approach to raises in FY 2023, with a 4% tier for our employees who have been with us for fewer than five years while the 5% increase will be offered to those who have been here for five or more years. This will provide a bit of a buffer as we continue to address compression issues. We have taken some important steps in addressing compensation in the last year with a 3% across the board increase on July 1st of 2021; boosts to salaries as part of the Compensation and Classification Study; a 2%/3% salary increase for those who did not see an adjustment with Comp. and Class; and

now the raises in July of this year.

We have also set aside funding to strategically address the compression issues in the Town. We believe this next phase of our effort to alleviate compression is an important step in addressing an issue that has been a problem for many years.

We are also pleased to report that our health care costs are only rising by 2% for FY '23. That is a very modest increase compared to previous years, with no changes to coverage. Employees who have dependent care coverage will see an increase in their share of the deduction that begins on the August 12, 2022, paycheck.

We are also considering several other changes that could benefit employees. The first was approved by the Council on June 15th. The Council approved my recommendation to convert Funeral Leave into Personal Leave that can be used for any reason during the fiscal year. The conversion will take place in July 2022 when the annual vacation rollover occurs. This idea originated from the Employee Forum and its effort to give employees more flexibility with their leave throughout the year. We will continue to work with the Employee Forum to identify other ways to improve our benefits for our staff.

As we enter into the summer months, I hope that you will be able to take time away from work and simply relax, spending time with friends and/or family. We all need a break and we all deserve one. As always, thank you for your dedicated service to our organization. I am proud of our collective efforts and look forward to continuing our excellent work together in the new fiscal year!



*Town employees enjoyed good food and fun activities at the Employee Appreciation event at Southern Community Park on May 20. (see p. 2)*



## Juneteenth Celebration

Hundreds of people came out for the second annual Chapel Hill-Carrboro Juneteenth Celebration on June 19 at Hargraves Center. The event celebrates Black community and culture. The first Chapel Hill-Carrboro Juneteenth event was held in 2021.

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States. The Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro proclaimed the observance and commemoration of Juneteenth on June 19, 2020.

A coalition of local organizations planned the event, including the Chapel Hill-Carrboro NAACP and NAACP Youth Council, the Marion Cheek Jackson Center for Saving and Making History, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School Office of Equity and Engagement, the Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association, and the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

The event included live performances by local Black artists, including the Gospel Winds, Souls of Joy, Kevin "Rowdy" Rowsey, Mickey Mills & Steel, Chapel Hill Poet Laureate CJ Suitt, and Carrboro Poet Laureate Fred Joiner; and more.

Learn more with [CHPL's Juneteenth reading list](#).



Photos by Mark Losey

## Employee Appreciation Day 2022

For the first time since 2019, the Town held its annual Employee Appreciation Day on Friday, May 20, at Southern Community Park. Employees enjoyed the chance to sit down and chat up colleagues from across other Town departments. Al from Al's Burger Shack cooked up burgers on site, while Maple View scooped out ice cream for dessert. There were lots of door prizes handed out and the always-popular Bingo game was back. The Cal Horton Award was presented to Lisa Edwards, and a number

of Town initiatives were on display, from EAP to the LGBTQIA+ ERG. All in all, it was a fun day and fun way to appreciate our wonderful employees!

Big thanks go out to the 2022 Employee Appreciation Planning Committee – Alison Bender, Susan Brown, Nigel Frank, Michelle Sykes-Parker, Tammy Price, and Anggie Thompson. Special thanks to Parks & Rec for day of support and Community Arts & Culture for general event support and logistics.



## Public Works Week

As proclaimed by Mayor Hemminger, May 15–21 was Public Works Week. The Public Works Department held a day of celebration on May 19 to recognize, thank, and honor our dedicated employees who contribute to the Town's health, safety, sustainability, and resilience each day.

The Que House food truck provided delicious meals while staff enjoyed games like horseshoes, cornhole, and bingo. One of the more unique events was our fishing competition, where we saw some fantastic catches!





# Briefs

The Police Department and the International Co-Responder Alliance hosted more than 300 professionals from across the country at the 3rd Annual National Co-Responder Conference (CoRCon) June 6–8.

CoRCon is a gathering of first responder agencies, mental health providers, community stakeholders, elected officials, and other service providers who work together to effectively respond to behavioral health crises and other situations involving unmet behavioral health needs.

Police Chief Chris Blue said, “Every time our CHPD crisis unit counselors are called upon in our community, we know that they are making a difference, and I’m



confident that those agencies who are attending CoRCon will gain new insights into how they can provide the same level of service in their communities.”

The Chapel Hill Police Crisis Unit (pictured above) is a 24-hour co-response team that provides emergency response in crisis situations. The Crisis Unit was established in 1973 as one of the earliest examples of law enforcement and human services professionals working together.

The Crisis Unit has a new member of the team! **Laverne Burton** started working with Crisis June 13 in a new role, Peer Support Specialist. Laverne has worked as a CNA and with individuals in recovery from mental health issues and substance use. Please welcome Laverne, and be sure to introduce yourself when you see her!



Staff from the Fire Department (left) and Police Department (right) attended CoRCON.

## Seeking Success Stories on Community Engagement!

The Affordable Housing and Community Connections team is preparing to update the Council and community on the Town’s community engagement efforts and invite Town employees to share examples of successes from the past year.

Submit any stories, pictures, videos, or other materials that document engagement initiatives [HERE](#). For more information, see our [Community Connections Strategy](#).

Questions? Contact Shakera Vaughan ([svaughn@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:svaughn@townofchapelhill.org)) in Affordable Housing and Community Connections.



## New Name for Chapel Hill Transit Facility

The Chapel Hill Transit facility has been renamed after Howard Lee and his wife Lillian, who attended the renaming ceremony on June 20. Howard Lee, the first Black mayor of a predominantly white town in the South since Reconstruction, purchased the first buses for the Town in 1974. Chapel Hill Transit is fare-free and has the second-most transit ridership in the state (after Charlotte).



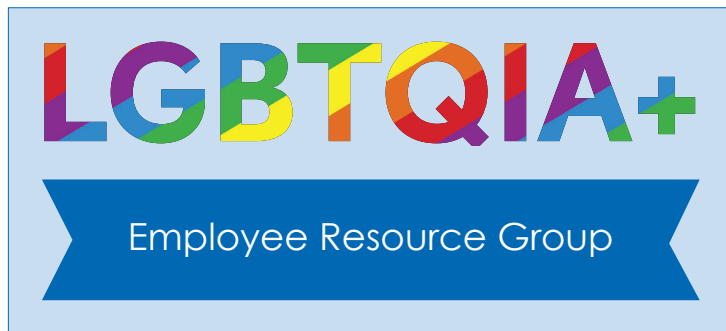
## June Is Pride Month!

### Celebrating LGBTQIA+ People

Pride month is a time for the LGBTQIA+ community to celebrate who we are, but it's also a time to make things better. This June, let's reflect on what it's like to be LGBTQIA+ today so we can understand the importance of our inclusion work.

Despite some legal victories, many of us are still in the closet for fear of losing our jobs, our relationships, or our safety. LGBTQIA+ youth are four times as likely to commit suicide as their peers, and are often kicked out of their homes. Transgender folks have to think about their safety every time they get dressed, give their name, or use a bathroom. We see very little of ourselves in mainstream media, and see too many celebrities and leaders belittling and threatening us.

To be who we are in the face of all this is an act of bravery that's worth celebrating. Make sure the LGBTQIA+ people in your life hear you say it.



### Small Town Pride Events

Chapel Hill and Carrboro are hosting Small Town Pride to celebrate LGBTQIA+ Pride Month. Through Small Town Pride, we aim to affirm community values ensuring that all residents, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, are treated with respect and dignity.

If you missed the Lunch & Learn on June 17 on how to be a better ally to the LGBTQIA+ community, led by Terri Phoenix, director of the UNC LGBTQ Center, you can view the video at [youtu.be/3dEvK0tQFu0](https://youtu.be/3dEvK0tQFu0).

More events are coming this month, including:

- Drag Story Time with Dustin Reames, Saturday, June 25, 3-4 p.m., Chapel Hill Public Library Meeting Room B
- Pride Piper Walk, Friday, June 24 at 4:30 p.m. at Carrboro Century Center; Pride Food Truck Rodeo & Dance Party, Friday, June 24 from 5-8 p.m. at Carrboro Town Commons

Learn more at [chapelhillarts.org/smalltownpride](https://chapelhillarts.org/smalltownpride).



### Ask the Ombuds: Why is everyone so touchy?

An employee—let's call them Dakota—came to talk to me about a recent interaction with a colleague. Dakota was mystified and upset that what they considered a basic discussion about work had quickly turned into a defensive exchange where their motives were questioned and a lot of frustration was expressed.

Dakota asked me, "Why is everyone so touchy?" That's a great question. It certainly seems like many of us are having more difficulty with interpersonal interactions. It's no surprise when you consider the following:

1. Our interpersonal skills have grown rusty in a virtual environment. The primary ways we've communicated over the past 2.5 years have either been non-simultaneous (email, texts, phone messages) or lacking non-verbal cues and context (Zoom and Teams). We are missing important information that helps us see a person's response to us and know when to ask more questions or check our thinking.
2. Our sense of security and safety is being constantly assaulted. We're living through a pandemic. Violence seems like a daily occurrence. Supply chain issues, inflation, and skyrocketing housing costs create insecurity and fear.
3. We are overwhelmed with information, much of it misleading and inflammatory. This information overload creates fatigue and distrust.

4. We are all tired. Learning how to operate in this new environment has been a lot of work. Change has happened much more rapidly and frequently than we've been used to in the past.

Let's acknowledge that it has been a hard time and give ourselves and others a break. Extending compassion to ourselves and to others is a good place to start. Assume that people have good motives but might be rusty in how they express themselves. Ask someone what's going on if the response you get is a lot different than you expected. Speak up early if you are having difficulty with an interaction. Let someone know if this is not a good time to talk, and honor that request if it's made to you. Ask for help if you are having difficulty with a colleague. Use our RESPECT values as a guide when you are interacting.

We are a team. All of us. Let's support each other that way. The Ombuds provides an informal confidential, neutral, and independent place to discuss your concerns. Please feel free to call 919-265-0806 or 919-260-3153.

Anita Badrock, Town Ombuds 919-260-3153 (private cell)  
919-265-0806 (office) | [abadrock@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:abadrock@townofchapelhill.org)



# Compliments

The LGBTQIA+ Employee Resource Group thanks **Keith Dodson** and **Robena Meek** (both Parks & Recreation) for their passion and support in Employee Pride activities; and thanks to the Wellness@Work Committee for their continued support of LGBTQIA+ staff and our Pride projects.

**Nickie Adkins** (Transit) was commended by Mrs. Ronnie Scarboro for her knowledge of the transit system and helping a new college student find her way around town using Chapel Hill Transit. Nickie handles many interactions each day with customers via phone, email and in-person. While some may look at those as basic transactions, each of these interactions are important to the people she talks with. Thank you Nickie for your good work and helping create a new transit customer and taking a little worry off this parents mind (and for all the times you have done this and it hasn't been noticed). Well done!

Fred Rogers thanked everyone in the **Solid Waste Services Division** for their hard work and sacrifices, especially during the last two years of the pandemic.

**Public Works staff** who worked to remove the lane closure from Franklin Street were thanked by Richard Terrell. "Thanks to those that reported in early this morning, and all seventeen staff members from four programs, that worked together in removing the devices!" The work included removing lane reduction barricades, flexible markers, and variable message boards and painting over temporary parking lines.

Sarah Poulton (Manager's Office) also expressed her appreciation for the crews who worked quickly to get this done. "I want to add a big THANKS – I was out there at 9 a.m. (five hours after the crews started!) and was amazed at how much they got done, how thoughtfully they adjusted the traffic design, and how they considered safety in their work. Thanks for your problem solving and hard work!"



Following a two year hiatus due to COVID, **Chapel Hill Transit** joined partners from across the region to provide transportation for participants in the 2022 Valor Games Southeast.

Thank you to **Mark Rodgers**, Assistant Demand Response Operations Manager, for leadership in coordinating our participation and finding a way for us to help at this important event, even with staffing challenges. Thank you to Demand Response Operators **Phillip Laney** and **Amanda Webb** for representing Chapel Hill Transit and our partners and demonstrating excellent customer service—well done!

## Transit Operators Show Their Skills

Congratulations to the transit operators who qualified to participate in the State Transit Rodeo by placing in the Chapel Hill Transit Rodeo on June 4. The Transit Rodeo is a contest of skill for professional bus/LTV operators, which requires contestants to maneuver through a timed course, negotiating obstacles that simulate the challenges they face daily. A special Thank You to all the Transit Team members who volunteered to serve as judges.

### Bus Category:

First Place: Ricky Hunter  
Second Place: Scott Gilliam  
Third Place: Reginald Paisant  
Rookie of the Year: Eddie Fuller

### LTV Category:

First Place: Amanda Webb  
Second Place: Phillip Laney  
Third Place: Tasha Harrington  
Rookie of the Year: Chance Benton



## Transit Retirees Come Back for a Visit

On May 27, Chapel Hill Transit hosted more than 25 Transit retirees. This was an opportunity to reconnect with our team members and honor those who helped build Chapel Hill Transit and served our customers and communities, by driving, fixing and fueling buses, and to remember those that were not able to join us. This also gave us a chance to show them our new electric vehicles and share some projects, including renaming the facility after Howard and Lillian Lee.

We plan to keep this tradition going so we can honor the service, dedication and passion that helped bring Howard Lee's and Robert Drakeford's visions for a community transit system serving Chapel Hill, Carrboro and the University into reality.

—Brian Litchfield, Transit Director





wellness@work

UNC HEALTH | FAMILY MEDICINE  
TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

## Getting to Know Wellness@Work

Wellness@Work Clinic staff had a great time socializing with Town employees at the first Employee Appreciation Day in three years! It was a wonderful opportunity to promote the clinic services available to employees, dependents and pre-65 retirees, including:

- Management of minor illnesses and chronic health problems
- Tobacco-Free Employee Program
- Nutrition counseling
- After-hours urgent care



- Reduced membership fee at O2 Fitness
- Access to Town gyms and pools
- Lots of wellness programming!

Learn more: [chapelhillwellnessatwork.org](http://chapelhillwellnessatwork.org)

## Summer Employment Program Welcomes Youth to Town Hall!

Affordable Housing and Community Connections has launched the Summer Youth Employment Program, which provides youth ages 14–18 with work experience in local government and non-profits, professional development training, and mentorship opportunities.

This year, youth will work within Town departments including Parks and Recreation, Public Housing, Police, Stormwater, and the Library, as well as with RENA, Orange County Department on Aging, and the Monet Richardson Foundation.



## In-Person Meetings Return to the Library!

Meeting rooms at Chapel Hill Public Library will open back up this summer with a simple, new reservation platform and new sustainable waste management guidelines.

Easily scan room availability for an entire month! Reserve a room in a flash! Reduce, reuse, and recycle! Take advantage of the kitchen's re-usable plates, cups, and utensils and commercial dishwasher! Compost your stale Danish and donuts. Help save the Earth.

Town staff will be able to reserve rooms for Town business starting June 21.



Members of the public will be able to request reservations July 1.

Stay tuned for more about planning sustainable meetings in TOWNtalk.

## Benefits Open Enrollment Ends July 22

2022–2023 Benefits Open Enrollment on has begun. The enrollment period will be open through July 22, 2022. During this period, you can make changes to your benefits such as:

- Health insurance (adding or removing dependents)
- Dental insurance (adding or removing dependents and coverage)
- Flexible Spending Accounts (you must renew these each year)
- Life insurance and short-term disability
- Update beneficiaries and report address changes

HRD will send out the forms by June 21. You must have all completed forms into HRD by Friday, July 22 at 5 p.m.

If you will be on vacation during this period, please contact Star Reams at 919-969-5060 or [sreams@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:sreams@townofchapelhill.org)

## Plain Language Workshop

Ready to learn about Plain Language? Be on the lookout for an introductory workshop 2–4 p.m. Monday, July 25, on Zoom.

Plain Language is more than words. It is a reader-centered mindset that helps us produce clear content that is easy to find and easy to use. It's words, design, images, and compassion working together.

Already have some Plain Language experience? Come for a refresher in July or stay tuned for a next-level Plain Language training in the fall.

Questions? Contact Mary Jane Nirdlinger at [mnirdlinger@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:mnirdlinger@townofchapelhill.org).

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