

# Home: 'Use federal funds to solve local problems'

continued from page 1A

a small couch to Batts, which she has slept on for the past few nights. A new neighbor gave her a small TV, which sits on a tiny stand. She doesn't have a bed frame or mattress or even a shower curtain yet, but she isn't complaining.

"As long as I have a place to rest my head and a roof over my head, all the other things will fall into place," she said with a large smile. And that first night in her own home felt like a burden had been

lifted.

"I slept like a baby," Batts said. "I didn't realize how much I cherished a bath tub."

It's the small things most people take for granted, she said.

## HOMELESSNESS A PRIORITY

Kelly Vick, president of the Wilson Housing Authority, said he became aware of the homeless population in Wilson a few years ago when he attended several meetings

among various agencies.

"I listened to the frustrations of the group that there were no permanent housing solutions that were available at the time," Vick said. He said he couldn't offer a solution at the time because there were long waiting lists for both of their programs — Public Housing, which are federally subsidized units that the Authority owns and operates, and Section 8 program, which allows eligible families to choose a private landlord and the Authority subsidizes the

rent.

"I started looking at ways that we could help solve this problem," Vick said. "The first step was to make a policy change."

The federal government allows local preferences to be given to lower wait times for clients that meet certain criteria.

"WHA Board agreed that we should make homeless people a priority for housing as well as veterans," Vick said. "We received approval from HUD and put this into place in 2014. This still didn't fully solve the problem as we still had a wait list in both programs of nearly two years. In April of 2015 we opened our wait list to all applicants and incorporated the new preferences. We had an overwhelming number of applicants and had to close the wait list shortly after opening it."

Vick said they have housed nearly all qualified applicants and they have now opened the wait list for homeless only to apply.

"We rely on our community partners with DSS, Hope Station, Wesley Shelter, Flynn Home and the Red Cross to refer the homeless to us," he said. "We have received almost 50 referrals in the first month."

Vick said he is proud that the Authority can now offer a solution to the problem of permanent housing for the homeless.

"It has been a collaboration between a number of agencies to solve a serious problem," he said. "I believe this is a great way to use federal funds to solve local problems."



A woman hangs blinds in her new apartment after receiving assistance from Hope Station and the Wilson Housing Authority Thursday. Brad Coville | Times

Federal funding only allows them to pay rent.

That's where community partners have stepped up to help the homeless with monies for deposits when needed.

The Rev. Linda Walling, Hope Station's executive director, said for those receiving Section 8 vouchers the major challenge is funding the move-in process. While Hope Station administers the local federal grant that provides such funding, monies were cut this year statewide for rural counties. "The number of families that will need to be assisted just in a few short weeks is close to the number of families served all of last year," Walling said.

Hope Station and Wilson County Department of Social Services are working together to determine if they have funds that can be used to facilitate that process, Walling said. Even with funding from both agencies there will still be a gap to help families move in.

Hope Station will now accept contributions from the community in hopes that they will "adopt" a homeless family or homeless individual who are now in a new home.

Walling said their hope is that churches, civic organizations, businesses and others would make donations for move-in costs, plus needed items to make their house a home, including beds, pieces of furniture, towels, kitchen items and such.

"I am so grateful for community partnerships that make this kind of effort possible," Walling said. "This collaboration with the Wilson Housing Authority and the Department of Social Services to provide housing for those who are homeless is a testament to just how great this community is. Wilson County is blessed with generous people who are willing to address needs when they see them, so I believe that the rest of the funds will be in place to assist all these folks."

Walling said by addressing these needs now those families and individuals' future emergency needs will be reduced.

## 'I'M ON MY OWN AGAIN'

As Batts hung up her window shades in her new apartment Thursday, another person was by her side. Shana Baum, Hope Station's social worker, was there helping Batts in any way she could.

Batts said Baum and instrumental in helping her get into stable hous-

ing.

"I see myself growing," Batts said, adding that officials are helping her find work through the Vocational Rehabilitation.

Her new apartment is a short walk to Wilson Community College. She's thinking about going back to school.

"I'm not going to sit idly by," she said. "I'm on my own again."

Baum smiled as Batts spoke.

"She has a good spirit and is incredibly grateful," said Baum, who also works with Hope Station's shelter clients and other homeless families. "She's a beautiful person."

Baum said the united effort combating homelessness here has been an incredible thing to watch.

"This is a miracle — just like Christmas — that all of these people can be placed in affordable quality housing in a short period of time," Baum said about the program. "This would not have been possible without Kelly Vick's leadership at the Wilson Housing Authority and the outstanding work of his staff. I have worked with the homeless in other areas of the country and have never seen this level of public and private cooperation and concern. There is absolutely no way that all of these people could be housed so quickly without such an effort, along with additional assistance from the community."

## 'DON'T EVER GIVE UP'

Batts said some people may think those who are homeless must have done something wrong to deserve it.

"There is nothing I did," she said. "I'm not a bad person."

Batts said while the journey has been difficult, it's now a part of her story. And she wanted to share it with others.

"If you don't let someone know, nobody can help you," she said. "You may give out, but don't ever give up."

And everything she's been through has made her stronger in her faith and in herself.

"I trusted God would take care of me," she said.

Donations for homeless families and homeless individuals who are in this program can be made to Hope Station at P.O. Box 2164, Wilson NC 27894 or online at [hopestation-wilson.org](http://hopestation-wilson.org). Donations should be marked as "homeless."

For more information contact Hope Station at 291-7278.

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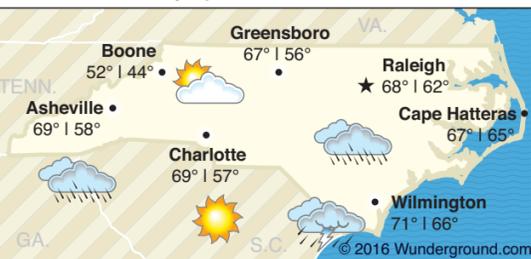
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## Today's Forecast

Forecast for Saturday, April 2

City/Region  
High | Low temps



	<b>Sunday</b>	High: 58 Low: 40
		Rain: 0%
	<b>Monday</b>	High: 72 Low: 45
		Rain: 0%
	<b>Tuesday</b>	High: 56 Low: 34
		Rain: 0%
	<b>Wednesday</b>	High: 61 Low: 44
		Rain: 0%

## Local Readings

(through 7 a.m. Friday)  
Precipitation: 0"; high: 76, low: 67  
Buckhorn Lake: +3.36  
(Reading based on level above or below full pond)

Normal temperature: 70 | 43  
Record high: 86 in 1974  
Record low: 28 in 1987

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## COMMUNITY HELP

Vick said they have a basic screening requirement they must do to meet federal regulations and then the client has some things they have to do as well including having monies needed for security and utility deposits.



**4-H SHOW AND SALE, 7A**

# The Wilson Times

## Building repairs start prior to festival

**By Rochelle Moore**  
Times Staff Writer

Repairs to a downtown building are under way

and may be finished late next week prior to the official start of the Eyes on Main Street photo festival. The former Super Ten

building, at 204 Nash St., has been barricaded from public access for nearly two months after an aging canopy was found unsafe

and in need of repair. Jerome De Perlinghi, creator and director of Eyes on Main Street, recently started asking city

officials about the repair process, due to concerns that the building would continue in disrepair at the start of the festival.

Repairs, involving the removal of concrete stucco from the canopy, See BUILDING, Page 3A

## HOMELESS TO HOME



Shana Baum from Hope Station helps a former homeless person move belongings into an apartment in one of Wilson's public housing complexes Thursday. Brad Coville | Times

## Unprecedented partnership works to put people in permanent housing

**By Olivia Neeley**  
Times Staff Writer

Nobody knew it unless she told them. And she rarely did. She didn't want sympathy. She didn't want a hand out. She didn't want people to feel bad for her or judge her. Instead, Iris Batts carried on, remained as positive as she could despite the struggle. Her momma taught her that. "Regardless of what you are going through, you don't have to look or act the part," her mother told her growing up. "Keep your head up at all times." And Batts lived by that wisdom each day for several years as she moved from place to place staying with

whomever would let her rest her head. Other times, she would stay up all night at 24-hour Wilson business just to keep from being on the streets. "Anybody who has never been homeless can't begin to understand what it's like," Batts said. "Sometimes you don't have control over it. It's been a hard struggle." Batts didn't have a place to call home until this week thanks to an unprecedented collaboration among area agencies working together to place homeless families in permanent housing in an effort to overcome it. Those agencies include Hope Station, Wesley Shelter, Wilson County Department of Social

Services and Wilson-Greene Regional Committee, which works on getting people into stable housing. The initiative was launched this month when Wilson Housing Authority announced its waiting list would be opened only for homeless individuals and families. To date, nearly 50 families have secured a spot for the next step in the process. Officials said for most of the applicants, the next step means receiving a federal Section 8 voucher that subsidizes private rentals and utility payments based on income. Others will remain as priorities on the waiting list for Wilson Housing Authority units. Batts is one of the first of

these who has completed the entire process. She moved into her new home at EB Jordan Homes Thursday. **A PLACE TO CALL HOME** When Batts received the keys to her new home, she was overwhelmed with gratitude. "It was like they had given me pearls," she said. Tears of joy streamed down her face. "I love it," she said Thursday seated in her living room. "I thank God for giving me a place and a home again. I feel so blessed." Hope Station donated See HOME, Page 2A

## Wilson police: Man robbed at gunpoint

A Wilson man faces a charge after he allegedly robbed a 60-year-old man at gunpoint. On Wednesday, Wilson police were dispatched to an armed robbery that occurred earlier. Officers spoke to the victim who said he was robbed at gunpoint at a home in the 500 block of Park Avenue. Police said the victim was taken back to the residence of where the alleged incident occurred on Park Avenue to verify the address. The victim told police he went to the Park Avenue home around 11 p.m. to visit a person he knew. He said the cousin of the person he knew was there and opened the door and allowed him in, according to the police. That's when police said Gerame Arta Applewhite, 28, robbed the man at gunpoint, stealing money and some personal property. Police said the victim left the home and called police later. Police said they obtained a warrant for Applewhite's arrest after he was identified by the victim. Police arrested Applewhite Friday. He is charged with robbery with a dangerous weapon. Applewhite, of 1805 Fountain Drive, was given a \$10,000 secured bond. Police ask anyone with information regarding this case to contact them at the Wilson Police Department at 399-2323 or CrimeStoppers at 243-2255. Olivia Neeley



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# Budget: No action taken

continued from page 1A

are widespread, with all areas showing a mix of decreases and a few increases.

"This is not a revaluation that was based on a geographic quadrant of the city," Goings said.

One surprise was a decrease in property values for new car dealerships on Raleigh Road Parkway and properties located in the Wilson Corporate Park.

"Our economic development office was absolutely shocked to see (the decrease in values)," Goings said. "We found the results to be confusing and we're trying to get more understanding."

Goings and Kim Hands, Wilson chief financial officer, talked about state law that now requires local governments to publish a revenue neutral tax rate in the annual budget during a revaluation year. Goings said governments are not required to adopt a revenue neutral rate.

Councilman James Johnson III said a property tax increase could be possible this year.

"With us losing another \$1.6 million or \$1.7 million, there's going to be a tax increase, obviously,"

Johnson said. "To be fair, the county's in the same boat we are."

Wilson County's tax administrator, Randy Faircloth, told the Wilson County commissioners on Monday that the county-wide revaluation resulted in a 5 percent decrease in property values. Faircloth confirmed that the 5 percent decrease is equivalent to \$2.2 million in county property tax revenue.

In the city, property tax revenues are the largest source of general fund revenue. The general fund primarily supports close to \$21.4 million in public service needs, including police and fire. One cent on the property tax rate produces \$400,000 in revenue, Goings said.

City staff offered tax rate and revenue examples on a \$100,000 home. If the property declined by 7.3 percent in value, the city would need to increase the property tax rate by 4 cents to produce the same amount of tax revenue.

On a \$100,000 home, a 7.3 percent decrease would drop the value of the home to \$92,700. The property tax rate, at the current 51.5 cents per \$100 in valuation, would

reduce property taxes from \$515 to \$478.

If the property tax rate increased by 4 cents, the homeowner would pay almost \$515, making the change revenue neutral.

"The revenue neutral approach brings in the same revenue without increasing the tax burden," Goings said. "A lot of people will pay less with a revenue neutral rate and some people would pay more."

The city's property tax rate continues to be lower than rates collected in other comparable cities. Kinston's rate is 66 cents, Goldsboro's rate is 65 cents, Rocky Mount's rate is 63.5 cents and Greenville's rate is 55 cents, Goings said.

The council retreat included discussion on city goals and future challenges. Some of the topics included city communication initiatives, economic resiliency and public safety costs.

The council didn't take any action or make any recommendations on the property tax rate, but discussions will continue as the city budget proposal is reviewed prior to its June adoption. The budget goes into effect on July 1.

rochelle@wilsontimes.com | 265-7818

## LOTTERY NUMBERS

Sunday, April 3

Carolina Pick 3, Daytime — 9-1-3 SUM: 13

Carolina Pick 3, Evening — 6-5-6 SUM: 17

Carolina Pick 4, Daytime — 1-1-7-0 SUM: 9

Carolina Pick 4, Evening — 7-5-9-8 SUM: 29

Carolina Cash 5 — 10-15-18-19-35

## Housing: Donations accepted

continued from page 1A

director, said after Batts' story was featured in the Wilson Times phone calls from the community poured in.

"People were wanting to reach out and help," Walling said. "Several people said they had so much and they didn't need it all and were happy to share."

She said those donations ranged from house-warming items to furniture and monetary donations.

"This is just the first of 50 families that will be moved into permanent housing over the next few weeks," Walling said. "It's ongoing. This will be a major effort for the next two months. I'm hoping the community will con-

tinue to respond to help the other families."

Walling said the community is contributing to the long-term success for these clients.

"This is not just a Band-Aid, this is to help people move into stable, permanent housing," Walling said. She said the community's willingness to help these families and individuals up front will help them be successful.

Walling said they hope churches, civic organizations, businesses and others will make donations for move-in costs plus essential home items, including furniture.

Walling said two churches have already reached out to help. Walling said when the Wilson com-

munity knows of a need, residents are always there for those who need it most and respond in extraordinary ways.

Other agencies involved in the united effort include Wesley Shelter, Flynn Home, Red Cross and Wilson-Greene Regional Committee, which works on getting people into stable housing.

Donations for homeless families and homeless individuals who are in this program can be made to Hope Station at P.O. Box 2164, Wilson NC 27894 or online at hopestation-wilson.org. Donations should be marked as "homeless."

For more information, contact Hope Station at 291-7278.

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**Today's Forecast**  
Forecast for Wednesday, April 6

City/Region High | Low temps

Boone 53° | 28°  
Greensboro 63° | 32°  
Asheville 63° | 33°  
Charlotte 65° | 35°  
Raleigh 65° | 33°  
Cape Hatteras 64° | 42°  
Wilmington 66° | 36°

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Thursday High: 68 Low: 45 Rain: 70%  
Friday High: 62 Low: 38 Rain: 0%  
Saturday High: 52 Low: 30 Rain: 0%  
Sunday High: 55 Low: 39 Rain: 0%

Local Readings (through 7 a.m. Tuesday)  
Precipitation: 0"; high: 76, low: 44  
Buckhorn Lake: +2 (Reading based on level above or below full pond)

Normal temperature: 72 | 45  
Record high: 88 in 1986  
Record low: 33 in 1992

## Mullett: Conviction history

continued from page 1A

delay and obstructing an officer.

Mullett was given a \$21,000 secured bond.

Mullett has several pending charges out of Wilson County from 2015, including seven counts of obtaining property by false pretense, felony breaking and entering, felony after breaking and entering and felony larceny of a firearm.

He also has felony forgery of instrument, felony uttering forged instrument, felony obtaining property by false pretense and misdemeanor assault on a government official charges pending as well in Wilson.

Mullett has a felony conviction history mostly pertaining to fraud dating

back to 2005 and spanning several counties including New Hanover, Pitt, Onslow, Carteret and Wilson. In 2005, he was convicted of forgery, financial card fraud, obtaining property by false pretense and worthless check, according to N.C. Department of Correction. Mullett was convicted of obtaining property by false pretense and counterfeiting forgery and uttering, possession of counterfeit instrument and sell and deliver of Schedule IV in 2010, records show.

In 2012, he was convicted of misdemeanor common law uttering out of Wilson.

### ESCAPE AND APPEAL

In March 2012, Mullett ran from the Wilson

County Courthouse after a judge revoked his probation and activated his 14-month suspended sentence. He was initially charged with escaping from a local jail and resisting a public officer.

A year after the alleged incident in 2013, a state appellate panel ruled he should not have been convicted of the probation violation. The N.C. Court of Appeal vacated the ruling. Mullett won the case on a technicality — the probation officer couldn't prove he had reported Mullett's violation before his probationary period had expired.

Prosecutors later dismissed charges related to the alleged escape, according to records.

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## DEFENDANT IN HUSTLE MART CASE SENTENCED TO DEATH: PAGE 3A

# The Wilson Times



## Will budget shortfall lead to tax hike?

By Rochelle Moore  
Times Staff Writer

The Wilson City Council learned Tuesday that the countywide property tax revaluation figures resulted in a 7.3 percent decrease in values, equiva-

lent to a \$1.6 million loss in city revenue.

For the past 10 years, the city has maintained the same property tax rate at 51.5 cents per \$100 in property valuation. With the increasing cost of public services, the council

could be looking at whether to increase the tax rate during budget deliberations in May.

The revaluation figures were discussed Tuesday during a daylong council retreat, held in the city's Customer Service Center

on Nash Street.

"We got a 7.23 percent drop in general fund revenue due to current revaluations," said Grant Goings, city manager. "All of our expenses have continued to rise, so we depend on that reval once

every eight years to get the revenue growth and then we try to milk it out to the next eight-year period.

"Obviously, what happened this year is not only did we not get any growth, we actually lost revenue."

The council was pre-

sent with a city map showing property tax value changes, with most experiencing a drop in value and some with increased valuation results.

Goings said the changes

See BUDGET, Page 2A

## 'MORE THAN A HOME'



Iris Batts cooks in her new Wilson apartment Tuesday afternoon. Brad Coville | Times

## Community responds to program placing homeless into permanent housing

By Olivia Neeley  
Times Staff Writer

A week ago, Iris Batts had little to make a house a home. But thanks to the Wilson community, her needs are being met.

"It was so touching," Batts said Tuesday afternoon. "It's just unexplainable and emotional and deep within. It's so genuine. I've never met people like this before."

Batts, who was homeless for several years until last week, is a part of an unprecedented collaboration among area agencies working together to place homeless families and individuals in permanent housing. The initiative was launched this month when Wilson Housing Authority announced its waiting list would be opened only for homeless families and individuals.

After Batts shared her story with the Wilson Times last week, community members stepped up to help not only her but other homeless families who will be placed in per-

**'This is not just a Band-Aid, this is to help people move into stable, permanent housing.'**

The Rev. Linda Walling

manent housing soon.

While Batts was grateful about moving into her new house at EB Jordan Homes, she needed several things to make her home complete. A family reached out to Hope Station, who is spearheading the effort to help several families with move-in related expenses and items.

On Monday, that family brought Batts a TV stand,

desk, dishes, a shower curtain, ironing board, silverware and other things.

"It's such a blessing," Batts said through tears. "I feel like it's more than a home."

Batts said the family also gave her a devotional book and special wooden cross.

"These things are very special to me," Batts said about all that was given to her. "This is the greatest start a person could ask for."

### THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

To date, nearly 50 families have secured a spot for the next step in the process for permanent housing. Officials said for most of the applicants, the next step means receiving a federal Section 8 voucher that subsidizes private rentals and utility payments based on income. Others will remain as priorities on the waiting list for Wilson Housing Authority units. Batts is one of the first who has completed the entire process.

The Wilson Housing Au-

thority has basic screening requirements they must do to meet federal regulations and then the client also has some things to do as well including having monies for security and utility deposits.

Federal funding only allows the Housing Authority to pay rent. There are many needed items and move-in costs that are needed when going from being homeless to permanent housing.

Hope Station and Wilson County Department of Social Services are working together to help with that process. But there are still gaps to fill. Hope Station announced last week they would accept contributions from the community in hopes they will "adopt" a homeless family or homeless individual who will be moving into their new home.

### REACHING OUT TO HELP

The Rev. Linda Walling, Hope Station's executive

See HOUSING, Page 2A

## Wanted man found hiding in attic

By Olivia Neeley  
Times Staff Writer

A Wilson man wanted on multiple felonies for alleged fraud-related crimes was arrested Sunday after he tried to hide from police in his Hanover Avenue home, officials say.

The Wilson Police Department was contacted by a New York resident on

March 18 regarding fraudulent checks being cashed in Wilson linked to her account, according to police.

Police identified the person who cashed those checks as Joshua R. Mullett, 33. Police said fraud-related warrants were obtained on Mullett, of

1108 Hanover Ave., as a result of the investigation.

On Sunday, a police officer on patrol saw Mullett at his home on Hanover Avenue. The officer called for additional units and contact was made with a woman at the home, according to Sgt. Steve Stroud.

Police said Mullett was found hiding in the attic of the Hanover Avenue home where he was subsequently arrested. Mullett is charged with three counts of felony forgery of instrument, two counts of felony uttering a forged instrument, two counts of felony obtaining property by false pretenses, one count of felony attempted uttering and one count of attempting to obtain property by false pretenses, court records indicate. He is also charged with resist,

See MULLETT, Page 2A

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