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Asheville to further restrict panhandling

Sarah Honosky
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE - City Council adopted expansions to its panhandling ordinance Aug. 26 amid community outcry, with critics of the change fearing criminalization of the city's unhoused and asking instead for solutions to address the root causes of poverty.

The changes will prohibit panhandling using gestures or spoken words in new areas of the city, including West Asheville's Haywood Road and Patton

Avenue. These streets are now dubbed "high traffic zones," a designation that already encompassed Biltmore Village and a majority of downtown. It also expands the downtown zone into South Slope and sections of Merrimon Avenue.

In all those areas, people can still panhandle with a written sign. They just cannot verbally solicit.

Some City Council members touted safety as a reason for the expansion.

Police Chief Mike Lamb said medians, like those on Patton Avenue, are where the department is seeing the

most pedestrian accidents. It was already illegal to panhandle on the median, roadside or non-sidewalk shoulder before the expansion — which is the case citywide.

Panhandling is generally allowed on sidewalks everywhere in the city, as long as it does not fall under several prohibited actions, like using obscene language, threatening someone, blocking someone's path or the entrance to a business, or being within 20 feet of a bank or ATM. This was also already part of the existing ordinance.

The vote came at the tail end of a City

Council meeting that lasted more than six hours. The majority of the nearly a dozen public commenters opposed the expansion.

The expansion passed 6-1, with council member Kim Roney the sole holdout.

This ordinance will return to City Council for a second vote at its Sept. 9 meeting, as a recent state law requires any ordinance with a criminal penalty to pass two votes before being enacted, according to a city news release.

See PANHANDLING, Page 2A

WORD FROM THE SMOKIES



Remembering summers at Camp Margaret Townsend

Nancy Locklin-Sofer Asheville Citizen Times

I was at least an hour and a half into my conversation with June Goforth when I joked that she hadn't given me a chance to ask any questions. She paused a moment before laughing and said, "Oh, I didn't know you had questions." • I had sat down with Goforth to talk about Camp Margaret Townsend, a Girl Scout camp that was a summer home away from home for hundreds of girls between 1925 and 1959. Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont now occupies the site in Great Smoky Mountains National Park near Townsend.

Goforth, one of those people whom former campers recall with great fondness, had no shortage of memories to share. She started attending the camp as a child in "1943-ish," working her way up to be a counselor-in-training and eventually a counselor. As a college student, Goforth was a swim instructor and "Director of the Waterfront."

The camp that would come to mean so much to Goforth and countless others like her was founded through the efforts of Mabel Ijams, a Knoxville Girl Scout Council member and daughter of Little River Lumber Company President "Colonel" W. B. Townsend. Mabel fell in love with the site, convinced her father to donate it to the Girl Scouts, and named the camp for her mother, Margaret Townsend, who had died two years earlier.

See CAMP MARGARET, Page 8A



In a 1933 photo, Girl Scouts at Camp Margaret Townsend learn to dive in a pool made from a dammed-up tributary to the Little River.

TOP: Girl Scout campers practice archery in the summer of 1933.
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY GIRL SCOUT MUSEUM AT DAISY'S PLACE.

Minneapolis families mourn lost 'angels'

Loved ones cope with loss after school shooting

Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY

Families describing "unimaginable loss" mourned for their slain children Aug. 28, the day after an attacker fired through the windows of a Minneapolis Catholic church and sent worshippers diving behind and under pews for cover.

Jesse Merkel, the father of Fletcher Merkel, 8, called the suspected shooter a "coward" who took his son's life.

"Please remember Fletcher for the person he was and not the act that ended his life," Jesse Merkel said. "Give your kids an extra hug and kiss today."

The second child killed in the shooting was identified as 10-year-old Harper Moyski, according to a statement shared to news outlets on her family's behalf.

The deadly shooting occurred at the church connected to Annunciation Catholic School, a private elementary school with about 395 students, just before 8:30 a.m. local time on Aug. 27, authorities said. According to Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara, the shooter approached the outside of the church building and fired inside toward the children sitting in pews.

Eighteen other people, 15 of them students ages 6 to 18 and three parishioners in their 80s, were struck by gunfire, authorities said. All the injured were expected to recover, though family members of some say they will have long roads to recovery from serious bullet wounds.

Authorities have not publicly released the names of the victims shot in the attack, but families and friends began to identify their loved ones.

"We as a community have a responsibility to make sure that no child, no parent, no teacher ever has to experience what we've experienced today ever again," Annunciation School Principal Matt DeBoer said at a news conference Aug. 27. "We lost two angels today. Please continue to pray for those still receiving care. Never again can we let this happen."

See SCHOOL SHOOTING, Page 5A



Camp Margaret

Continued from Page 1A

The camp ran from late June through the middle of August, with many girls staying for as long as a month. They hiked, played games, rode horses, and made crafts but also had to haul wood, water, and supplies for cooking and cleaning. Goforth and others I interviewed also told of using pickaxes to cut trails and local timber to build platforms and other camp features. The “swimming pool,” a section of the Middle Prong of the Little River surrounded by great boulders up against a steep cliff, is a beloved memory for many former campers. A cement dam with a removable board allowed the river to flow freely when summer ended. A wooden platform forming a “crib” around the pool gave swimmers a diving board and a place to stand in the deep end.

As one of my interviewees, Carol Ware (née Goodwin), said, the water was “cold as whiz.” Still, many a girl learned to swim in those frigid waters. Margaret Weirich (née Mann), who attended camp for several years in the 1950s and credits Goforth with teaching her how to swim, would go on to participate in a synchronized swimming club during her college years at University of Tennessee.

“Forever after, the cold water of the Smoky Mountains has been imbedded in my fondest memories,” she said.

Not everyone, alas, learned how to swim. In a written account of his time working as a handyman at the camp, Ted Witt detailed how Goforth had once assured him that anyone could float. She instructed him to enter the water and float face-down, grasping his knees. Well, the poor young man sank like a stone. As he sputtered back to the surface, Goforth shrugged and said, “You don’t float.”

While feelings about the frigid swimming pool are mixed, most former campers fondly remember gathering around the campfire at night for songs and stories. Weirich recalls “wonderful summer nights” spent singing “completely a cappella, with harmony we newcomers picked up by just participating as we sat on the floor, with only Coleman lanterns for lighting.”

Most of the former campers and staff I spoke with remain in contact with lifelong friends they met at camp.

“The friendship aspect of Girl Scouting in general, and specifically in our camp, was very special,” said Elizabeth French. “We had no electricity, no plumbing, no telephones. We were out there just having the most wonderful time, in the most simple environment.”

The camp years live on as beloved memories in the women’s minds but also brought their share of harrowing experiences. Anne Lacava (née Loftis) described an overnight camping excursion next to Laurel Lake in Townsend that was interrupted by heavy rains. The campers had pitched their tents on a hillside and were initially miserable because it was too wet to get a good fire going for s’mores. As the lake rose, the bottom set of tents began to float away, and the girls in those tents joined campers further up the hill. Then the middle set of tents was also lost, and the girls moved to higher ground once more. Lacava said no one was scared.

“All of us apparently spent the night until they did come and evacuate us eating Hershey’s bars and graham crackers and marshmallows, and that kind of takes the fear away when you know you’ve got enough of those to last you,” Lacava said.

Witt had dropped the campers off earlier in the evening and then, seeing that he wasn’t needed, left them to their adventure. Around midnight, Camp Director Judy Nickerson roused him, worried about the rain. As the two adults approached the campsite, the light from their headlights revealed “several drenched campers standing in water and mud.”



A group of students engages in outdoor learning at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. Though Camp Margaret Townsend is no more, the site continues to enthrall and inspire new groups of young people each year. PHOTO BY JOYE ARDYN DURHAM

“The tent pegs had come loose, so no tent was left standing,” Witt told me. “Sleeping bags were on the verge of floating!”

He helped load the campers into the truck and got them back to camp to warm up, returning in the morning to gather the sodden gear.

Lacava remembers that rainy night mostly for the camaraderie she felt with the other girls. Later, as an adult, she realized how scared the staff must have been for the girls in their charge.

“If you think about it,” she mused, “the fact that they could maintain their fear and not feed it to us is another pretty neat thing; we were just clueless.”

Animal encounters could also inject moments of fright into camp life. Witt remembered hearing a noise in the camp as he prepared for bed one muggy August night and realized it was a bear. He put down his lantern, got out a powerful flashlight, and shined it right in the bear’s eyes. It growled, so Witt started clapping his hands. Joined by Margaret “Cookie” Cook, he chased the bear away from the sleeping campers. The next morning, several campers sheepishly relinquished contraband snacks they had been keeping in their units.

Other campers weren’t so willing to sacrifice their stash. Penny Cole and Lynn Crowell remembered one night when a mouse ran right across the face of one of their sleeping tentmates. They got scolded for having food in their tent, but rather than give it up, they decided to keep the kerosene lamp lit all night to prevent the mouse from coming back. Their counselor, Mary Stewart Neely, warned them they would use up their kerosene and wouldn’t get any more for the next night. They thought she was bluffing, but she wasn’t. The next night, they suffered through pitch-black darkness.

Camp Margaret Townsend closed in 1959 after the Girl Scouts’ lease with the National Park Service ran out. Everything that couldn’t be salvaged was bulldozed, and the old mess hall was burned to the ground. Many campers remember being devastated. Goforth said the closure was such a “painful experience” that she did not return to the place for years.

The Tanasi Girl Scout Council opened a new camp more than 60 miles away on the shores of Norris Lake. Though some campers did move on to Camp Tanasi, those who spoke with me said it was never the same. Jean Dysart and Marty Marsh summed up their feelings succinctly, agreeing that, “There never has been, and there never will be again, a camp like Camp Margaret Townsend.”

Camp Margaret Townsend alumnae and current Girl Scouts are invited to celebrate the camp’s legacy at a reunion Saturday, September 27, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. For more information and registration links, visit www.GirlScoutCSA.org.

Nancy Locklin-Sofer is a professor of history at Maryville College with a research focus on women’s roles in the family and the economy. This story was originally published in the spring 2025 issue of Smokies Life Journal, a twice-yearly magazine that is the primary benefit of joining for the 29,000-member Smokies Life, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the scientific, historical, and interpretive activities of Great Smoky Mountains National Park by providing educational products and services such as this column . To read more stories like this while supporting Great Smoky Mountains National Park, visit Smokies-Life.org/Membership and become a Park Keeper.

Obituaries

TODAY’S DEATH NOTICES						
Name	Age	Town, State	Passed	Arrangements	Service Time	Service Location
*Whelpley III, David Bullard	33	Asheville, NC	Jul 02	-	-	-
*Additional information in display obituaries Obituaries appear in print and online at citizen-times.com/obituaries						

David Bullard Whelpley III

ASHEVILLE - David Bullard (“Trey”) Whelpley III May 13, 1992 — July 2, 2025 Asheville, NC

David Bullard Whelpley III (“Trey”) of Asheville, 33, departed this life on Wednesday, July 2, 2025. He was born on May 13, 1992, in Charlotte, North Carolina to David Bullard Whelpley, Jr. and Teresa “Tess” Whelpley (néé Dugger). Trey is survived by both of his parents, his beloved brother and sister, James Whitney Austin Whelpley, of Austin, Texas, and Dr. Hannah Elaine Whelpley, of Park City, Utah, and the love of his life, Juliana Groce of Asheville, North Carolina. He is also survived by many beloved aunts, uncles and cousins.

Trey attended high school at The Fletcher School, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and The McCallie School, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, before moving on to attend Appalachian State University, in Boone, North Carolina. After working several years for a residential general contractor, he discovered a love and talent for master carpentry and wood working. He found great joy in creating things with his own hands, especially with beautiful hardwoods, revealing a heart and soul of an artist. Later, Trey sought a degree in mechanical engineering from Western Carolina University and Oregon State University prior to his untimely passing.

Trey was an avid reader from a very early age, devouring each Harry Potter book as it was released before quickly moving on to The Hobbit and J.R.R. Tolkien’s other works. Trey continued to be a vivacious reader his whole life, mostly reading novels, ranging from folk and americana to English and Russian literature, but he later also delved into biographies and philosophy. Anyone who had the benefit of engaging Trey in genuine conversation quickly understood the depth of his knowledge and understanding of life and the



struggles of humanity. As a writer and a poet, Trey’s own short stories and verse cut to the beauty and cruelty of life.

From family, friends, professors, and co-workers, to the random person he happened upon, each would recount what a meaningful and substantive pleasure it was to encounter Trey’s sincerity, intellect and caring. Just the sight of Trey entering a room brought a smile to one’s face, for you knew that with his quick wit and seemingly boundless knowledge, you were definitely going to laugh and most likely learn something.

Trey’s other primary passion was music. Although his tastes in artists and composers appeared eclectic, ranging from Classic Rock, The Grateful Dead to Indie Folk, Country Music to Jazz and Classical music. Trey had the uncanny ability to draw parallels among genres, being able to articulate the influences an artist drew upon those who preceded. Trey’s analysis of a composition or body of work and his perception of the artist’s motivation in choosing the lyrics or how the music was composed was always eye opening ... always a great conversation. Trey also was a self-taught guitarist, although he only ever played for a select few, and an accomplished craftsman.

Trey was interred at the Green Hills Cemetery on August 24, 2025, surrounded by family and friends, followed by a wonderful celebration of Trey’s life, in Asheville. North Carolina.

As an avid outdoorsman, Trey loved to fish and hike the beautiful streams and mountains of Western North Carolina with his faithful rescued redbone coonhound, July (named after Sheriff July Johnson of Larry McMurtry’s sweeping epic, “Lonesome Dove”). He hiked a great portion of the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Virginia, always hoping to complete it all the way to Maine. Memorials and donations may be made in Trey’s memory to carolinamountainclub.org or ashevillehumane.org.

“Like the morning sun you come, and like the wind you go” Robert Hunter/ Jerome Garcia 1969