

Tega Cay Sun



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February 2026

Foltz Edges Out Duda by Eleven Votes in Razor-Thin Tega Cay Election



Patrick Byrne, Editor

In a hotly contested special election defined by its narrow margins and

digital acrimony, military veteran and financial services executive Jim Foltz defeated Liz Duda for a seat on the Tega Cay City Council.

Unofficial results released by York County on Tuesday, February 3rd reflected Foltz besting Duda by a mere eight votes. The York County Board of Voter Registration and Elections held a Provisional Ballot Hearing on Thursday, February 5th where officials recounted to include 3 provisional votes, reflecting an 11 vote margin and formally certifying Foltz as the winner. The final results were 1,194 to 1,183 votes, with 24.74% voter turnout in the special election.

The high-stakes race featured two candidates with professional roots in the financial services sector, though their community profiles offered voters different perspectives. Foltz leaned on his background in military leadership and executive management, while Duda pointed to more than 20 years of residency and an extensive history of local volunteerism and advocacy.

The election of Carmen Miller as Mayor of Tega Cay created a vacancy on the City Council, necessitating a special election to fill her former seat.

Peace pilgrimage brings thousands to Fort Mill as Buddhist monks cross into North Carolina



Chris Coffee, Sports Editor

A 2,300-mile spiritual odyssey reached a major milestone Wednesday as a group of Buddhist monks journeyed through Fort Mill, greeted by thousands of local supporters before crossing the state line into North Carolina.

The "Walk for Peace," now on its 81st day, moved through the heart of York County along Highway 21. After departing from an overnight stay at Catawba Baptist Church in Rock Hill, the monks made a scheduled stop at the Anne Springs Close Greenway, where a crowd of over 1,000 people gathered to hear a message of mindfulness.



The Venerable Monks -- on their Walk For Peace -- take a moment on their Walk for Peace to offer a prayer for those in need.

Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara, the walk's organizer, addressed the rain-chilled crowd, offering a lunchtime talk on compassion.

The procession has become a major event across the South, with local communities showing deep support. In Fort Mill, the monks stopped at The Peach Stand, while students at nearby Fort Mill High School were permitted to watch from the roadside as the saffron-



robed group passed by.

Pannakara, a Vietnamese native who credits these daily interactions with helping him learn English, emphasized that the walk is not a protest but a "silent movement" to inspire inner peace.

Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara accepts flowers from those in attendance during a scheduled stop at the Anne Springs Greenway.

Update on Aloka the Peace Dog

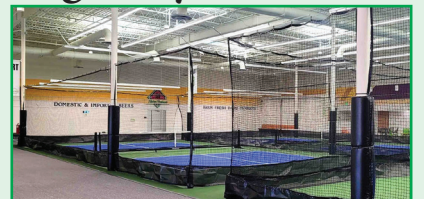
The group's beloved companion,

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Summary of the Tega Cay City Council Meeting – January 28, 2026

Patrick Byrne, Editor

The Tega Cay City Council meeting held on January 28, 2026, focused on community achievements, significant infrastructure updates, and the first steps of new legislative ordinances. The session began with the celebration of the Fort Mill High School Girls and Boys Cross Country teams for their state championship wins. Pinnacle Golf Course Management provided a robust update on the club's record-breaking fiscal year and ongoing capital improvements, including pavilion renovations and new cart paths. Key administrative actions included the award of a \$90,000 bid for the Windjammer Shoreline Stabilization Project (Phase 2) and the first reading of a new Private Well Ordinance. Public safety was a major theme, with the City Manager commending staff for their response to recent ice storms and announcing the arrival of a new fire ladder truck.

Detailed Agenda Item Summary

1. Presentations & Reports

1.a. & 1.b. Cross Country Proclamations: Council recognized the Fort Mill High School Girls Cross Country team for their third consecutive 5A Division 2 State Title and the Boys team for their second consecutive title. Head Coach Lee Whitaker was honored as the Coach of the Year for both programs.

1.c. Pinnacle Golf Update: Pinnacle reported that the golf club is in a very healthy financial state, operating out of a reserve account with no debt.

Membership: The club is capped at 185 members with a waiting list of 94.

Projects: The pavilion renovation is underway (expected completion in

April); new cart paths for the "Pines 9" will begin in late February; and green reconstructions for holes 10 and 18 are slated for March through July.

1.d. City Manager's Report: * Public Safety: The Emergency Operations Center was activated for a recent ice storm. The new Ladder 1 fire truck has arrived and will soon have a "pushing in" ceremony.

Development: Infrastructure work continues at "The Grove," and grading for "Alderwood" begins in February.

Recreation: Spring sports registration is closing; Catawba Park will host a national US Quadball qualifier on February 21-22.

Wildlife: The 2025-26 wildlife management program concluded with the culling of 80 deer; meat was donated to the Catawba Indian Nation.

2. Public Comments

Nancy Freys: Requested clarification on the Private Well Ordinance (Item 4.c.), specifically asking if existing wells would be grandfathered in and the reasoning behind the new rules.

Judy Roar: Spoke in support of Liz Duda for a leadership role, highlighting Duda's 20 years of community service, including bike safety programs and youth sports expansion.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.a. January 5, 2026: Council unanimously approved the minutes from the special meeting held earlier in the month.

4. New Business

4.a. Windjammer Shoreline Stabilization (Phase 2): Council moved to award the construction bid to Lake Wylie Dock Construction LLC for an amount not to exceed \$90,000. This project follows the successful completion of Phase 1 last year to protect city property from erosion.

4.b. Lawn Maintenance Services: (Item listed on agenda; bid tabulation documents were provided for consideration).

4.c. Private Well Ordinance (1st Reading): Council introduced an ordinance to adopt Chapter 54, Article V. This relates to the regulation of private wells within the city. (Public concerns regarding grandfathering were noted during the earlier comment period).

5. Council Comments

Council members praised the cross country teams and thanked city staff—including Public Works, Police, and Fire—for their grueling 48-hour shifts during the recent inclement weather.

6. Executive Session

The Council entered into a closed session to discuss:

Food & Beverage Agreement contractual matters.

Legal advice for 4067 Triton Drive.

Abandoned motor vehicles and watercraft ordinances (Section 50-97).

Cell Tower contractual discussions.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned following the executive session.

TEGA CAY SUN

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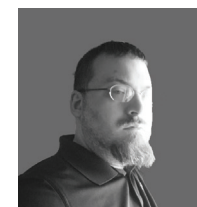
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Fort Mill Announces Expansion of Doby Bridge Park

Patrick Byrne, Editor

The Town of Fort Mill shared an update earlier today regarding the expansion of its local park system. Officials announced the purchase of approximately 7.57 acres of land located directly adjacent to Doby Bridge Park, a move intended to bolster recreational offerings for the growing community.

The acquisition is a direct response to public feedback gathered during the Town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan process. Residents consistently identified the need for more outdoor space and diverse activity options as a top priority for the area's future.

Strategic Growth and Potential Amenities

The purchase aligns with a long-term strategy to preserve land and provide high-quality recreational spaces. While a specific development timeline has not yet been set, town leaders indicated that the new acreage offers significant flexibility for both active and passive use.

Possible additions to the park include:

- Disc golf course
- Low-impact recreational amenities
- Enhanced trail systems
- Passive green space for families
- Leadership Perspective

Mayor Guynn Savage emphasized that the property provides a unique opportunity to create additional options for residents while supporting healthy lifestyles and outdoor activity. The investment is viewed as a critical step in maintaining the quality of life for families across the community.

Town Manager Cary Vargo noted that the site's versatility is a key asset. He explained that the land can accommodate a wide range of interests that align with long-range planning goals and will serve residents of all ages. The Town of Fort Mill plans to evaluate the best uses for the property as part of its ongoing parks and recreation planning efforts.

Mr. Penny Pincher: Sentimental vs. Actual Value



Patrick Byrne, Editor

As silver prices recently reached an all time high, I figured it was a good time to get an estimate on the price of one hundred year old flatware that had once been owned by my grandmother. As part of a family with few cherished heirlooms, the set represents more than forks, knives and spoons. It's a piece of our family history and something my family uses sparingly on holidays and special occasions.

With this in mind, it was doubtful I'd sell the set, but I was curious how much they were worth. Once the set was weighed and fees to the dealer were considered, the value of the silver amounted to \$1330. This was less than what I would've expected. Part of me was disappointed, the other part was happy not to be faced with a difficult decision.

Would I actually have considered selling if the value was higher?

In short, probably not. I have several objects throughout my house that hold zero value in dollars but huge value in the sentimental department. My wife pokes fun at me occasionally that I'd be a hoarder if given the opportunity. I'm not sure I'd disagree given my propensity to collect things that "mean" something to me on a consistent basis.

How much would it have taken for me to consider selling? To be honest, I'm not sure. I would assume a figure above ten thousand dollars would have given me pause, but I'm still doubtful I'd move forward with a sale. Anything I'd purchase with the money would've been tarnished. It would be difficult to enjoy it, almost as though I were a Judas-like figure to my grandmother and a possession she'd held so dear.

Things are just that, things. The price

someone is willing to give you to own what you have should exceed whatever attachment you may have to it. This much is true. But what if your attachment isn't altogether reasonable? Once emotions get involved, the value of something to you may be inflated compared to what it's actually worth.

This can be seen in any number of items being sold on websites at inflated prices. It's either this or the people doing the selling are less emotionally reasonable and just unreasonable in what they think something will sell for.

Even though it's been over forty years since I played, snuggled or slept with any number of stuffed animals in my storage closet, it's difficult to comprehend parting with any of them. I'll own the fact that this may be unhealthy. I'll also revel in the fact that, in keeping them, I've been able to share them with my daughter. The joy I once felt has been transferred to my own child. No amount of money can replicate that feeling.

So, what's to be done? Do we keep every item holding an emotional attachment? Definitely not. The key is determining which items we can part with and when. It's possible something may hold value at one point in our lives and not in another. I've thrown out plenty of items over time that I never thought I'd be able to part with. Enough time had passed where I needed the space, was attempting to declutter or simply no longer cared.

Grandma, I know you're long gone, but your silverware is safe with me.

For now, at least.



UPCOMING EVENTS 2026

FEB 9TH

Planning Commission- will meet at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers.

FEB 9TH

Storm Water Committee- will meet at 6:30pm in the Hearth Room.

FEB 23RD

City Council Meeting- at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers.

FEB 23rd

Economic Development Commission- will meet at 7:00pm in the Council Chambers.

TUE. Weekly

Dr. Tom's Trivia - 6:30pm at Model A Brewing..

THUR. Weekly

Bingo with Shane - 6:30pm at Model A Brewing..

WED-SAT. Weekly

Live Music - Live music four nights a week at the SC Shore Club

Saturdays Bi-Weekly

Tega Cay Lions Club - 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month, the Tega Cay Lions Club meets in the lower level of the Glennon Center. More information available at <https://tegaylions.wixsite.com/tegaylions>

Last WED. Monthly

Tega Cay Good Life Club - Meets the last Wednesday of each month. More information available at <https://tegoodlifeclub.wixsite.com/teglc>

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Fort Mill Middle School Designated As A School To Watch

Thomas Hyslip, Editor



Fort Mill Middle School (FMMS) was designated a School to Watch by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. The school's emphasis on strong academics, sensitivity to young adolescents' needs and interests, and commitment to providing all students equal access to a high-quality education resulted in the well-deserved recognition.

FMMS was one of five South Carolina Schools to receive the designation for 2026. Schools are recognized for a three-year period, at the end of which they must apply for re-designation and demonstrate that they are continuing to meet the National Forum's rigorous criteria.

To be selected as a Schools to Watch, schools need to be: Academically Excellent. Is the curriculum rigorous and relevant to the real world?

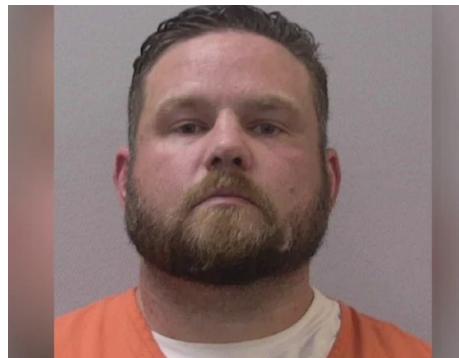
Developmentally Responsive. Do students have a safe, healthy and personalized learning environment that is responsive to the unique needs and interests of young adolescents? Socially Equitable. Do all students have access to high-quality classes and the support they need to achieve at high levels?

Organized with Supportive Structure. Is there shared leadership, collaborative learning communities, targeted professional development and effective organizational structures?

"This recognition belongs to the entire FMMS community—our dedicated educators, our hardworking students, and our supportive families," said Principal Dr. Emily McQuay. "Being named a 'School to Watch' proves that when we align our efforts toward excellence, we create a space where students truly thrive. I couldn't be prouder of the collective heart and soul that went into achieving this honor."

Former S.C. Lawmaker R.J. May Sentenced to Over 17 Years for Distributing Child Sexual Abuse Material

Thomas Hyslip, Editor



COLUMBIA, S.C. — Robert John "RJ" May, III, a former member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, was sentenced Wednesday to more than 17 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to distributing child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

United States District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie sentenced May, 39, to 210 months in prison, followed by a 20-year term of court-ordered supervision. Additionally, May was ordered to pay \$58,500 in restitution to eight identified victims and must register as a sex offender for life. There is no parole in the federal system.

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, Judge Currie noted during sentencing that the prison term was higher than the average for similar charges due to the extreme severity of the content May distributed.

Investigation and Evidence The investigation began in May 2024 when the Lexington County Sheriff's Department (LCSD) received a cyber tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The tip flagged that 50 videos containing CSAM had been uploaded from a West Columbia IP address using the mobile messaging app Kik.

Investigators traced the IP address to May. Because May was a sitting state lawmaker at the time, the case was referred to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

According to court documents, May utilized the Kik account "joebidennnn69" to distribute 479 videos to over 100 users across 18

states and six countries over a five-day period. The content was described as involving toddlers depicted in physical pain and subjected to humiliating sexual abuse.

HSI agents executed a search warrant on May's home in August 2024, seizing 35 electronic devices. Forensic analysis revealed that while the Kik app had been deleted from his phone, the device's user dictionary stored the phrase "joebidennnn" and an email address linking him to the account.

Officials React May was indicted by a federal grand jury in June 2025 and pleaded guilty to five counts of distributing child sexual abuse material in September 2025.

"He was elected to make a positive impact on his community, but instead he exploited the most innocent and vulnerable in our society. This is simply inexcusable," said U.S. Attorney Bryan Stirling.

Kyle D. Burns, Acting Special Agent in Charge of HSI in the Carolinas, emphasized that May's former political status offered no protection. "Those who exploit and abuse children are among the most reprehensible offenders in our society, and today's sentencing sends a clear message: no one is above the law, regardless of their position or title," Burns said.

The case was prosecuted as part of Project Safe Childhood, a Department of Justice initiative designed to combat child sexual exploitation.

* The term "child pornography" is currently used in federal statutes and is defined as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a person less than 18 years old. While this phrase still appears in federal law, "child sexual abuse material" is preferred, as it better reflects the abuse that is depicted in the images and videos and the resulting trauma to the child. The Associated Press Stylebook also discourages the use of the phrase "child pornography."

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Fort Mill High School Band to Honor Hometown Heroes in France for Memorial Day 2026

Thomas Hyslip, Editor

FORT MILL, S.C. – The Fort Mill High School Band will travel to France for Memorial Day 2026, embarking on a poignant journey to honor the local soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the First and Second World Wars.

In a ceremony coordinated by the American Battle Monuments Commission, the band will provide all ceremonial music at the St. Mihiel American Cemetery in eastern France. The performance will serve as a tribute to the 40 soldiers from Fort Mill who died while serving in the U.S. military during both World Wars.



The location holds deep historical significance. In September 1918, over 500,000 American soldiers fought at the Battle of St. Mihiel, a critical prelude to the Meuse-Argonne offensive and the final Allied push to break the Hindenburg line. The U.S. First Army's 89th Division fought across the very land that is now the cemetery.

Fort Mill's Band of Brothers

The students will honor the legacy of 40 local heroes known as Fort Mill's "Band of Brothers," including 13 who died in World War I and 27 in World War II.

Among them, Pvt. William G. Patterson rests at St. Mihiel, Pvt. Odell Myers is buried at the nearby Epinal American Cemetery, and Sgt. Thomas L. Hall earned the Medal of Honor for his actions in Montbrehain.

Help Us "Feed the Band"

To make this once-in-a-lifetime educational experience accessible for all students, the Fort Mill Band Association is launching a fundraising initiative to help cover the cost of travel and meals.

Because the cemetery is located near the French border with Switzerland, the band will fly into Zurich before making their way into France. The Association is seeking business, corporate, and individual donors to sponsor the band's evening meals from May 20 through May 24.

Group meals in the region are a significant expense, and sponsorship will directly lower the cost of the trip for the nearly 200 students and staff attending. The Fort Mill Band Association, a registered 501(c)(3) organization, has established three sponsorship tiers:

Gold Sponsor: \$6,000
Silver Sponsor: \$3,000
Co-Sponsor: \$1,500

Community support is vital to ensuring Fort Mill students can stand on the ground where their hometown heroes fought and use their musical talents to honor a legacy of service.

For more information on how to donate or become a sponsor, residents are encouraged to contact the Fort Mill Band Association at patelh@fortmillschools.org



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Healthy Living with Dr. Hall: How Safe Is It to Walk Barefoot at Home? Doctors Explain

Dr. David Hall

Kicking off your shoes at home can feel freeing — but is it good or bad for your feet? Experts say walking barefoot indoors can actually help strengthen your feet, though there are a few things to keep in mind. When you go barefoot — meaning no shoes or socks — your foot muscles work harder to support your body.

Dr. Robert Conenello, a podiatrist, says this helps keep those small muscles strong, which is important for balance and mobility especially as we age. Many foot problems, he adds, come from weak muscles that don't get used enough because we wear shoes all day.

Dermatologist Dr. Hannah Kopelman agrees and adds that barefoot time lets your skin breathe. This helps prevent sweaty buildup that can lead to fungal infections like athlete's foot. Feeling the texture of the floor can even have a calming, grounding effect, similar to a light foot massage.

Still, barefoot walking isn't risk-free. Floors can collect dust, pet dander, or cleaning chemicals that may irritate sensitive skin. There's also the chance of stepping on something sharp or slipping. People with diabetes, poor circulation, or skin conditions like eczema should avoid going barefoot since small injuries can lead to complications. Standing barefoot for long periods on hard floors can also cause foot fatigue or heel pain. In those cases, experts suggest wearing soft, supportive shoes or socks to protect your feet.

In short, walking barefoot around a clean home can help build foot strength, improve circulation, and even boost mindfulness. Just keep your floors clean, wash your feet often, and wear protection if you have medical issues or spend lots of time standing. Like most things, balance is key — a little barefoot time can go a long way toward keeping your feet healthy.

*Tree Hugger Note: Earthing, also called grounding, is the practice of walking barefoot on natural surfaces such as grass, sand, or soil so your skin touches the Earth directly. The idea behind this practice is that the Earth's surface carries natural electrical energy, and when your body connects with it, electrons may flow into your system.

Supporters of grounding believe this exchange can help balance the body, ease inflammation, improve sleep, and support overall health. Some also suggest that direct contact with the Earth's energy may have effects similar to antioxidants, helping the body reduce stress and feel more restored.

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Buzz around Town



Emilio's Pizza Kitchen Brings Their Delicious Italian Offerings to Tega Cay

Patrick Byrne, Editor



Late last summer, Tega Cay Village Pizza and Italian Restaurant closed its doors after 36 years. Positive comments flooded social media as past patrons relived happy memories with one another. A pillar of the community was closing, providing a sense of sadness and longing for what was and will no longer be again.

Almost as quickly, that sadness was replaced with pure joy at the news of its new tenant, Emilio's Pizza Kitchen owned by Ray and Meghan Cariseo, taking over the space (the new location should be open by early Spring). This was especially exciting considering Tega Cay was one of a few locations that had been considered for expansion. Reflecting on the outpouring of support, Ray said "When we announced it, it was one of the most humbling moments of my life."

Ray and Meghan moved to Fort Mill from New York in August 2021. Originally from Syracuse and Rochester respectfully, they both decided it was time to flee the cold weather and taxes. Parents to 5 kids ages 8 to 19, they had always joked with their children that they should move when they got older. Rather than waiting for them to grow up, they asked themselves, "why don't we just move."

Moving anywhere new can be hard.

See Emilio's, Page 9

A Night of Elegance and Excellence: The 2026 Miss Fort Mill High School Pageant



Thomas Hyslip, Editor

The lights of the auditorium dimmed, the music swelled, and the community of Fort Mill gathered for what has become one of the most anticipated traditions of the school year. The 2026 Miss Fort Mill High School Pageant was more than just a competition; it was a vibrant celebration of talent, poise, and the school spirit that defines the Yellow Jackets.

Hosted by the FMHS Student Council (StuCo) and their dedicated teacher leaders, the evening ran seamlessly, showcasing the hard work of dozens of contestants who spent weeks preparing for the stage. From the opening numbers to the final crowning moments, the atmosphere was electric with support from family, friends, and fellow students.

The Royal Court: 2026 Winners

The judges faced the difficult task of scoring an exceptionally talented field of contestants. Ultimately, Antonia Pop was crowned Miss Fort Mill High School 2026, taking home the top honor of the evening.

The grade-level winners and runners-up also demonstrated incredible grace:

| Title | Winner | Runner-up |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Miss Senior | Hannah Serena | Caroline Chamberlain |
| Miss Junior | Kennedy Cilley | Beatrice Dodson |
| Miss Sophomore | Annaliese Miller | Leah Davis |
| Miss Freshman | Olivia Stiles | Maxci Grace Wichman |

Beyond the Crown: Special Awards

While the titles celebrate overall excellence, the pageant also recognizes specific strengths through its special category awards.

Miss Entertainment: Annaliese Miller

Miss Photogenic: Reagan King

Miss Congeniality: Hannah Serena

Miss Sweetheart: Vivian Bunting.

To all the contestants: your courage and confidence on stage inspired everyone in attendance. Congratulations to all our winners and to the entire Fort Mill High School community for another unforgettable night!

Upscale Smoke and Spirits: Charterhouse Cigar & Barrel Opens in Downtown Fort Mill



Thomas Hyslip, Editor

FORT MILL, SC — The landscape of Main Street is getting a sophisticated upgrade. Charterhouse Cigar & Barrel has officially opened its doors at 237 Main Street, bringing a premium tobacco experience to downtown Fort Mill, with a high-end whiskey component close on its heels.

Located in the spaces formerly occupied by the Puckerbutt Pepper Company and Tavern on Main, the new establishment from owners Carl Manco and Cody King aims to fill a gap in the local market.

"We are trying to provide the area something new and different, a place to unwind while taking a step back in time," said King.


A Look Inside: House Blends & Premium Selection

The cigar shop is designed to cater to both seasoned aficionados and those new to the hobby. The layout includes a full-length walk-in humidor featuring a wide array of selections.

Pricing is designed to accommodate every budget, ranging from less than \$10 for a "house blend" to over \$50 for a luxury cigar. However, King notes that the shop focuses heavily on value, with the majority of the inventory priced under \$20.

A highlight of the humidor is Charterhouse's exclusive line of house

See Charterhouse, Page 9


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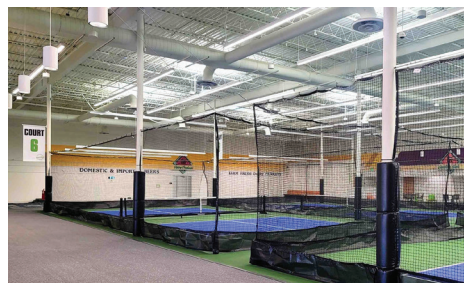

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SPORTS



Pickleball Goes Indoor in Fort Mill: Massive New 10-Court Facility Set to Anchor Peachtree Plaza



Thomas Hyslip, Editor

Pickleball enthusiasts in Fort Mill finally have a solution for rainy days and the sweltering South Carolina heat. Peachtree Pickleball is officially coming to the revamped Peachtree Plaza, bringing a premier, state-of-the-art indoor experience to the heart of one of the fastest-growing sports communities in the Southeast.

The Hub of Activity: Peachtree Plaza

The new facility will serve as the 42,000-square-foot anchor for Peachtree Plaza, located at 100-601 Springcrest Drive. For locals and commuters, the location is unbeatable:

Strategic Access: Situated right at the intersection of Highway 160 and I-77 (Exit 85).

Neighborhood Perks: Located directly across from Kingsley Town Center and Piedmont Medical Center, the facility makes it easy to squeeze in a match before dinner at Kingsley or a quick session during a lunch break.

The Indoor Advantage

While Fort Mill has several popular outdoor spots, like the courts at the YMCA Complex, Peachtree Pickleball is raising the stakes by offering a professional-grade indoor environment. The facility is

meticulously designed to eliminate the common frustrations of outdoor play:

10 Climate-Controlled Courts: Fully air-conditioned and heated, ensuring the game never stops for a summer humidity wave or a winter chill.

Pro-Grade Lighting and Surface: Ten high-performance courts featuring specialized, low-glare LED sports lighting to ensure perfect visibility.

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Amenities: The complex will feature a user-friendly court booking app, free Wi-Fi, lockers, and a selection of sports drinks and healthy snacks.

Peachtree Pickleball is now open and reservations can be made at www.peachtreepickleball.com.

Catawba Ridge and Indian Land Headline Preseason Rankings



Chris Coffee, Sports Editor

The crack of the bat is just around the corner, and if the preseason polls are any indication, the road to the state championship in multiple classifications will run squarely through our area. The South Carolina Baseball Coaches Association (SCBCA) has released its preseason rankings for the 2026 season, and local programs have secured top spots across the board.

Class 5A Division 2: A Loaded Field Perhaps the most competitive bracket in the state this year is Class 5A Division 2, which features three local teams in the top 10 and a renewal of fierce rivalries.

Indian Land enters the season ranked #2, sitting just behind the defending state champions, Berkeley. The Warriors will be looking to build on a deep postseason run from 2025, which ended in a heart-wrenching semifinal loss to their neighbors, Catawba Ridge.

Speaking of the Catawba Ridge Copperheads, they open the season ranked #4. The Copperheads are coming off a stellar 2025 campaign where they finished as the state runner-up, falling to Berkeley in the South Carolina State Championship series. With Berkeley sitting at #1, Indian Land at #2, and Catawba Ridge at #4, the stage is set for a high-stakes rematch of last year's playoff drama.

Not to be overlooked, Fort Mill has
See Baseball, Page 9

Trio of Local Coaches Named State Cross Country Coaches of the Year

Thomas Hyslip, Editor

SCTCCCA 2025
Cross Country
Coaches of the Year



Three local high school coaches have been recognized as the best in South Carolina following championship-winning seasons. The South Carolina Track and Cross Country Coaches Association (SCTCCCA) recently announced its 2025 Cross Country Coaches of the Year, with top honors going to leaders from Fort Mill, Clover, and South Pointe.

Fort Mill High School Fort Mill's Lee Whitaker received dual recognition, being named both the 5A Division 2 Boys Coach of the Year and the 5A Division 2 Girls Coach of the Year. The awards cap a historic season for the Yellow Jackets, as Whitaker guided the girls' team to their third consecutive state championship and the boys' team to their second consecutive title, completing a “sweep” of the division.

Clover High School In the 5A Division 1 classification, Clover High School's Ben Clark was named the Girls Coach of the Year. Clark led the Blue Eagles to a state championship victory. His team's effort was spearheaded by senior Ella Nighbor, who captured the individual state title with a time of 17:37.78.

South Pointe High School South Pointe's Trish Sacco was selected as the 4A Boys Coach of the Year. The Stallions secured the 4A boys team state title, edging out Bishop England for the victory. The team was led by senior Keller Brown, who dominated the field to win the individual state championship with a time of 15:39.84.



Michael Matus

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**David Rolland Nelson,
66, Fort Mill, SC**



David Rolland Nelson passed away at the age of 66 on January 19, 2026, in his home in Fort Mill, South Carolina, after 22+ years of living with Huntington's Disease. He lived a life filled with love, determination, adventure and struggle.

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, on February 26, 1959, to Rolland and Eunice Nelson, Dave's childhood revolved around family and church, horses, guitars, and books. After high school Dave attended St. Benedictine College for his undergraduate studies. While attending college he simultaneously worked for UPS to pay his entire tuition through college and medical school.

Dave then attended Rush Medical College where he obtained his MD. He went on to do a residency in radiology at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and then trained for a fellowship in Neuroradiology at Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona. He was a member of several medical groups, practicing radiology until 2008. Dave met his wife, Ann, at the University of Iowa Hospital, and they were married in November 1989. They have two daughters, Claire and Audrey.

Some of Dave's passions included playing guitar, golfing, traveling, cars, and gathering with family and friends. He will be remembered for his love and devotion to his family, his quiet and gentle demeanor, a hearty laugh, a strong work ethic, and a generous heart, always giving of his time and resources to help family, friends and those in need.

Dave was predeceased by his father, Rolland, and three younger sisters, Joy Beth, Ruth, and Sarah.

He is survived by his wife, Ann; daughters, Claire and Audrey; and mother, Eunice Nelson; as well as loving in-laws, nieces, nephews, and cousins.

**Youth of Diverse Faiths
Unite for South Carolina
Interfaith Panel in York
County**



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently hosted the South Carolina Interfaith Youth Panel, sponsored by the South Carolina Interfaith Partners, welcoming over 120 youth from across York County for an evening of dialogue, learning, and unity.

The panel brought together teens representing a wide range of faith traditions, panelists were Kate Marker-The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Orchid Childs-Jewish, Reyansh Goel-Brahma Kumaris, Levi Burt-Catholic, Harnoor Kailey-Sikh, and Mahnoor Ehsan-Muslim communities. The event was moderated by Mela Borawski of the South Carolina Interfaith Partners, who guided the discussion in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.

Youth panelists responded to five questions centered on faith, values, and personal experiences. One key question asked participants to identify a quality they all shared in common. Despite differing beliefs and religious practices, the panelists emphasized shared values such as compassion, service, respect, and a desire for peace. Borawski said, "The youth were prepared for conversation and handled the questions like professionals. They spoke courageously about their personal faith and practices. It was the perfect addition to Interfaith Harmony Month in South Carolina."

In her closing remarks to the panel and audience, Borawski described the collective responses as a "recipe for peace," underscoring the importance of listening, empathy, and collaboration in building stronger, more connected communities.

Following the panel discussion, attendees gathered for refreshments and informal conversation, allowing youth to ask additional questions, learn more about one another's beliefs, and form new friendships in a welcoming environment.

Love at First Bloom

Monica Rylski & Gardening by the Cay

Hello Garden Friends. We are surrounded by beauty, and our world is filled with endless wonder. We gain a new perspective when we spend time outdoors and reflect on its rhythm, timing, and harmony. Nature is a grand classroom where class is always in session. There are layers upon layers of lessons we can apply to our lives when we look closely.

Consider flowers growing freely in a field. There is no to-do list and no rush. They are given patient time, and grace to grow. There is no pressure to perform or have the most petals. There is no competition with the other shapes and sizes. Each flower type adds value, is unique, and has remarkable beauty. Flowers showcase the diversity of all the colors of the rainbow. These gardens are a work of art.

Nature has known all along that each curated flower will cheerfully bloom in its season with its intricate design and for its creative purpose. Each seed is a baby plant protected by a hard outer shell. The embryo has a root that will grow into the ground, a shoot where the first true leaves grow above the ground, and seed leaves for its initial food source. The roots are refreshed when it rains and anchor deep to draw nutrients. The leaves gather light to make food and get energy. Flowers gain strength and grow towards the sparkling sunlight. They are like arrows pointing to the sky, reminding us to look up.

There are priceless seeds within us, too. They are planted just below the surface in our lives. These seeds survived everything and have not been dismantled. They are ready to receive warmth from the sun and thirst for fresh water so they can expand. These resilient seeds grow when they become grounded and rooted. They can finally break through because they have the depth needed to flourish above. The wind will carry away the seed's shell, allowing it to grow to full maturity. Then, we come full circle by multiplying and releasing the next generation of seeds. These gardens are a work of heart.

The present is the perfect moment for these buried seeds to transform and come alive. Just like flowers, we are provided with time, space,

**Fort Mill Man Killed in
Officer-Involved Shooting
on Pine Ridge Court**

Thomas Hyslip, Editor

Authorities have identified the man killed during an officer-involved shooting in York County on Friday as 22-year-old Allen Josue Topete-Guevara.

The incident occurred on the morning of January 30, 2026, at a residence on Pine Ridge Court in Fort Mill. At approximately 9:20 a.m., York County Deputies responded to the home following a report of a person who was unconscious and not breathing.

According to the York County Sheriff's Office, the situation changed rapidly upon arrival. When deputies entered the home, they found Topete-Guevara was conscious and armed with a knife. He reportedly retreated into a room and barricaded the door.

Deputies ordered Topete-Guevara to drop the weapon and exit the room. Officials state that he eventually opened the door but refused to relinquish the knife. When he allegedly charged at a deputy, the officer discharged their service weapon, fatally wounding him.

No deputies were physically injured during the incident.

Sheriff Tony Breeden has requested the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) to lead the investigation, a standard procedure for officer-involved shootings. The deputy involved has been placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of the inquiry.

and resources to thrive. There is anticipation with each new bud and happiness with each small growth. Oh, the joy when we witness petals unfolding and opening to the sun above. The aroma from a full bloom is a delight to the one who sowed the seed.

We are all connected, and there is a strength in that connection. Likewise, we are connected to nature because it has cradled, nurtured, and provided for us with air, water, sustenance, and sunlight. With all the beauty that has ever been created, it was missing one piece to complete the divine masterpiece ... You. It's love at first bloom.

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Emilio's, From Page 6

Making friends, becoming part of the community and feeling settled can all be challenges faced by both parents and kids. Opening a successful restaurant that's instantly beloved by the community you're serving makes things a little easier. Previous success with a similar concept doesn't hurt either.

Ray has worked in a restaurant since he was fifteen years old. He has a love of the service industry saying, "There's a culture in the restaurant world and if you don't love it, you shouldn't be in it." He followed his passion to be a restaurateur, acting as an apprentice in Florham Park, New Jersey to a gentleman from Sicily.

Once the appropriate amount of knowledge was acquired, he moved across the country, opening a pizza place in Santa Monica, California. One restaurant became two and he and his partners sold the business in 2003. Not only did he profit from the sale, he profited personally as well, meeting and eventually marrying Meghan during his time in California.

The two moved back to their home state of New York and settled down with their family. Meghan remained at home with the kids while Ray leaned on his engineering degree to forge a new path away from the restaurant industry for a period of time. When they decided to open Emilio's in 2021, he was still working full time selling semiconductors while moonlighting at the restaurant on nights and weekends.

An eventual layoff found Ray migrating to church looking for guidance on what their next step should be. That same morning, opportunity literally knocked on their door when a former employee of Tega Cay Village Pizza confirmed the restaurant was for sale. The couple met with the owner and they knew right away it was going to work out. "Our meeting was very positive. This is a restaurant that's been in business for over 30 years, it made sense in my

mind to go there."

The Tega Cay location should mirror Fort Mill's in almost every aspect. One of the only differences mentioned was the bar area, which will be smaller (a "non bar" bar according to Meghan), and feature craft beers and wine only. Specialty menu items like Chicken Riggies, Utica Greens (both Utica New York favorites) as well as various subs, wings and starters will carry over. The delicious pizza will be ever present as well of course.

As if opening a new location in Tega Cay wasn't stressful enough, the couple is also opening a small to-go only catering/kitchen/Italian market next door to their Fort Mill location. This additional space will hopefully reduce long lines and wait times in the restaurant on busy nights, allowing patrons a little breathing room to enjoy the atmosphere.

Five years later, the couple and their kids are settling into their Southern lifestyle. "I love being a part of the local Fort Mill community, it's nice that people are enjoying NY pizza," says Ray. We're "very fortunate and blessed to be here," added Meghan.

Do yourself a favor and try their food. You'll realize pretty quickly that we're the fortunate ones.

Baseball, From Page 7

also cracked the top tier, earning the #8 spot in the preseason poll. Their inclusion ensures that this division will be a gauntlet of local talent, with every region game carrying potential playoff implications.

Class 2A: Andrew Jackson in the Hunt

In Class 2A, the Andrew Jackson Volunteers have earned respect statewide, debuting at #7 in the rankings. The Volunteers are looking to make noise in a bracket topped by Batesburg-Leesville and will be a team to watch as they navigate their region schedule.

Monks, From Page 1

Aloka the Peace Dog — a stray rescued during a previous walk in India — was absent from the pavement Wednesday. Aloka underwent surgery on Monday for a leg injury. While a veterinarian initially recommended a two-week recovery period, Pannakara expressed optimism that Aloka could rejoin the walkers in about one week. In the meantime, the "Peace Dog" is resting in a support vehicle.

The Road Ahead

The monks officially entered North Carolina on Wednesday afternoon, bidding farewell to South Carolina via social media: "Thank you for the incredible warmth and the open hearts we encountered at every stop. North Carolina, we are honored to walk your roads."

The journey, which began in Dallas, Texas, is scheduled to continue through Charlotte tonight. Over the next several days, the monks will travel toward Greensboro and Raleigh as they make their way to the nation's capital. The group plans to reach Washington, D.C., and return to Texas by early May to host an international Buddhist event.

Supporters can continue to track the monks' real-time progress through a live map at dhammacetiya.com.

The Walk for Peace made a scheduled stop at the Anne Springs Greenway where the Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara delivered a message of peace to those in attendance.

Charterhouse, From Page 6

blends, crafted to offer distinct flavor profiles:

The Natural: A Dominican Puro with a natural wrapper, offering a light and sweet profile with subtle notes of vanilla and coconut.

The Habano: A medium-bodied cigar with a rich flavor profile, featuring notes of toasted almonds, leather, and undertones of light molasses.

The Maduro: A full-flavored, medium-bodied delight resulting from double fermentation, delivering tastes of semi-sweet chocolate and sea salt caramel.

The Barber Pole: A unique 50/50 blend of Natural and Habano wrappers that enhances cinnamon and nutmeg flavors—described by the owners as reminiscent of "banana bread in the fall."

On the other side of the shop, customers will find essential accessories, including cutters, lighters, cases, humidors, and Boveda humidity control pouches.

Coming Soon: The "Barrel" Speakeasy


While the cigar retail side is open, the "Barrel" cocktail lounge next door is in the final stages of development. The venue will lean heavily into the look and feel of a Kentucky rickhouse and speakeasy.

While the outside may look old and worn, the inside is being transformed by a massive overhaul. Extensive renovations peeled back layers of plaster to reveal the building's original aged brick, while the removal of drop ceilings opened up the space, creating an industrial atmosphere complete with exposed beams and ductwork.

The bar is expected to open in the coming weeks. When the lounge officially opens, guests can look forward to a menu of small bites paired with handcrafted cocktails and an extensive selection of spirits, eventually boasting hundreds of different bottles. (Stay tuned for a follow-up article dedicated exclusively to the cocktail lounge opening).

Hours of Operation

Charterhouse Cigar & Barrel is currently open 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM daily, and is closed on Mondays.



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Charlie's Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

- 1) Feet in some meters
- 6) Register worker
- 11) Mauna ___ (Hawaiian peak)
- 14) One of the strings
- 15) Eagle abode
- 16) Browbeat
- 17) Strong effort in cleaning
- 19) Make a goof
- 20) Lawyers' org.
- 21) Sample, as wine
- 22) About 2 o'clock, on a compass
- 23) Spotlight
- 27) All together
- 29) Hallow ending?
- 30) Applaud
- 32) Tern relative
- 33) Rankle
- 34) Pueblo Indian dwellings
- 36) Steer and pig products
- 39) Longest river
- 41) It takes a bow
- 43) Like silk
- 44) Get ready to kick-off
- 46) Blueprint details
- 48) No longer an amateur
- 49) Warner ___
- 51) "Family Guy" creator MacFarlane
- 52) Companion of flow
- 53) Some operatic songs
- 56) Matadors
- 58) His wife was a pillar
- 59) Rum ___ Tugger ("Cats" character)
- 60) Mat victory
- 61) Flowery poem
- 62) It can prevent hand-holding
- 68) Racket ending
- 69) One in a cast
- 70) Seoul spot
- 71) Letters of distress
- 72) Full of cattails
- 73) Instrument in 1980s pop music

DOWN

- 1) "Correct" suffix
- 2) Have something the matter
- 3) Gang
- 4) Puff up, as an ego
- 5) Bill for a carpenter turned cowboy?
- 6) It gets in and out of jams
- 7) "Summer of Sam" director Spike
- 8) Use a pencil end
- 9) Getting up
- 10) "Don't say a word!"
- 11) Really funny joke
- 12) Makes money honestly
- 13) Be concordant
- 18) Clove item
- 23) Juke
- 24) Weirdly strange
- 25) Small children, in slang
- 26) Roof attachments
- 28) Stout relatives
- 31) Insect sensors
- 35) Winter hazard
- 37) Sort of engine
- 38) People with self-proclaimed superiority
- 40) Currency foreign to the U.S.
- 42) Army threats?
- 45) Antebellum's opposite
- 47) Brings down to size
- 50) Reporter's aid
- 53) Skin-cream ingredients
- 54) Drive in Beverly Hills?
- 55) Clobber, old-style
- 57) Take pleasure in
- 63) Turf squares
- 64) Sit in judgment
- 65) Keats praised one
- 66) Abbr. for a professor emeritus
- 67) Slangy affirmative

JOINT COMPOUND

By Tim Burr

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Tega Cay Luxury Real Estate: 2026 Market Insights

By Sally Awad, Sotheby's Realty

Tega Cay has long been recognized for its lakefront setting and close-knit community. Still, in recent years, it has also emerged as one of the Carolinas' most consistent luxury housing markets. As 2026 begins, the city continues to attract buyers seeking both lifestyle and long-term value—particularly those relocating from major metropolitan areas.

A More Balanced Market Takes Shape Following several years of rapid appreciation, the Tega Cay housing market has entered a more measured phase. Median home values are currently hovering around \$600,000, reflecting steady growth rather than speculative spikes. In the luxury tier—particularly along the waterfront and golf course—prices frequently exceed

\$850,000, driven by limited supply and enduring demand.

One of the most notable shifts is the increase in average days on market, now approximately 91 days, compared to just over 50 days in previous years. This change has introduced a level of balance that benefits both sides of the transaction. Buyers have more time to evaluate options, while sellers are placing greater emphasis on preparation, presentation, and pricing strategy.

Inventory has also expanded modestly, with 80 to 120 active listings at any given time. This broader selection includes custom homes, renovated lakefront properties, and residences that reflect evolving buyer preferences for modern design, energy efficiency, and flexible living spaces.

Why Tega Cay Continues to Outperform

Despite a calmer pace, Tega Cay remains one of South Carolina's strongest luxury performers. Several factors continue to support demand:

- **Community Stability:** With owner-occupancy rates exceeding 85%, Tega Cay offers a level of residential continuity that appeals to long-term buyers.
- **Lifestyle Appeal:** Access to the lake, golf amenities, walking trails, and the yacht club reinforces the city's reputation as a resort-style community.
- **Strategic Location:** Many buyers are drawn by South Carolina's favorable tax structure combined with a convenient commute to Charlotte's financial and corporate centers.
- **Durable Luxury Demand:** Turnkey waterfront homes and properties with private docks remain highly sought

after, often maintaining near-full list-to-sale price ratios when accurately positioned.

Looking Ahead to 2026

As the Tega Cay luxury market normalizes in 2026, success will depend more on informed decision-making than speed. With the community's natural beauty and thoughtful planning ensuring continued stability, buyers and sellers must focus on understanding specific neighborhood trends and value drivers. Ultimately, navigating this evolving landscape requires relying on up-to-date data and local market expertise to make the best moves.

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February 2026

Judge Dismisses Silfab Solar Lawsuit

Thomas Hyslip, Editor




A South Carolina Circuit Court judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed by property owner Dennis Floyd Bivins that sought to halt the Silfab Solar facility in Fort Mill. The judge dismissed the case with prejudice (meaning it cannot be refiled) based on three main factors:

Lack of Standing: The court ruled that the plaintiff's claims of health and welfare risks were "speculative" and failed to prove he would suffer specific injury distinct from the general public.

Failure to Follow Procedure: The plaintiff did not appeal the original zoning approvals when they were issued in December 2022, thereby failing to "exhaust administrative remedies."

Valid Permits: The judge rejected technical arguments regarding missing signatures, affirming that county staff had the authority to issue the permits.

While this specific legal challenge has ended, a separate lawsuit involving the non-profit Citizens Alliance for Government Integrity (CAGI) regarding the facility remains ongoing.



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Federal Court Awards Maximum Damages to Clover Artist in Landmark Mural Case



Thomas Hyslip, Editor

A federal judge in the South Carolina District Court has issued a final judgment awarding \$158,400 to artist Todd Atkinson after another artist destroyed and "rebranded" his iconic 1982 mural.

The case, *Atkinson v. Shepherd*, involved the mural titled *Water Tank*, which was commissioned in June 1982 for a building located at 111 N. Main Street in Clover, S.C. Atkinson had retained all rights to the work, which depicted a historic water tank and train—a recognized symbol of the town's founding.

The Violation: "Obliterating" an Artist's Identity

In September 2023, the property owners hired defendant Chan Shepherd to re-paint the mural. Instead of a new original work, Shepherd created a nearly identical copy that "obliterated" Atkinson's name and replaced it with his own signature.

Before filing the lawsuit, Atkinson attempted to have his authorship restored, but one of the property owners reportedly responded by telling him to "get out of here with that mess," claiming the new work was not a copy and that Atkinson had no valid copyright.

The Judgment: Maximum Penalties for Willful Conduct

U.S. District Judge Sherri A. Lydon found Shepherd liable for both copyright infringement and violations of the Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA). Because Shepherd failed to appear in court, a default judgment was entered.

The final award included:

\$8,400 in Actual Damages: Based on a professional appraisal of the mural's retail replacement value.

\$150,000 in Statutory Damages: The maximum penalty allowed by law for willful VARA violations.

The court emphasized that Shepherd's actions were willful, noting that as a fellow artist, he intentionally removed Atkinson's attribution. Judge Lydon ruled that the maximum penalty was necessary to provide "strong deterrence" against such abuses of artists' moral rights.

72-Year-Old York Man Charged with Attempted Murder Following Road Rage Shootout

Thomas Hyslip, Editor



YORK, S.C. — A 72-year-old man faces serious charges, including attempted murder, following an alleged road rage incident that escalated into a shootout on East Alexander Love Highway.

The York Police Department arrested Michael Thomas Bean, 72, of York, in connection with the confrontation that occurred around 10:30 a.m. on Saturday. Bean is currently being held on a \$125,000 bond.

According to investigators, the violence stemmed from a dispute between Bean and an 18-year-old male driver. Police say Bean "aggressively maneuvered" his vehicle and entered into a verbal altercation with the teenager. The situation turned dangerous when Bean allegedly retrieved a handgun from his car and opened fire on the victim.

Authorities report that the 18-year-old, who was armed, returned fire in self-defense, striking Bean in the left arm. The teenager immediately called 911 to report the shooting and remained at the scene. Upon arrival, officers detained the 18-year-old, but following an investigation, determined he had acted to protect himself.

Bean was treated for the gunshot wound to his arm before being taken into custody. He has been charged with: Attempted Murder, Pointing and Presenting Firearms at a Person, Malicious Injury to Personal Property (value less than \$2,000)

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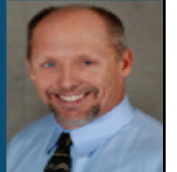
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