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## County's proposed tax rate is above revenue-neutral

**Sarah Honosky**  
Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE — Buncombe County taxpayers could see an increase in their property tax bills if the newly recommended budget is passed as proposed. For someone with a median-valued home of \$446,500, they would pay \$192 more a year.

County Manager Avril Pinder recommended a rate of 43.52 cents per \$100 of

assessed value. That is a 4-cent increase, or about 11%, over “revenue neutral,” meaning the rate the property tax would need to be to achieve the same amount of revenue if revaluation had not occurred.

Buncombe County Commissioners took no action at the May 5 meeting where the budget was presented. They will vote on the final budget June 2. Commissioners will continue to

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Buncombe County Manager Avril Pinder speaks with attendees during an event at Deaverview Mountain in Asheville on April 13. JOSH BELL/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

## Family says teen charged with murder was groomed



Kim and Travis Grant. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BRITTANY TUSSEY



From left, Travis Grant, his mother Sharon, his wife, Kim Grant, and their 16-year-old daughter, Star Grant. Star Grant is accused of killing both her parents and her grandmother.

## Star Grant, 16, accused of killing parents, grandmother with 28-year-old

**Kara Fohner**  
Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Kim Grant, a hair stylist from Fairview, wanted to become a mother, but had a difficult time in her early adult life trying to conceive a baby, according to her niece, Brittany Tussey.

Grant had lost several pregnancies, but joy finally struck when she became pregnant with her daughter, Star, said Tussey, 32, of Andrews, who was close to Kim growing up.

“Star was in her belly being stubborn, not wanting to come out,” Tussey told the Citizen Times May 11.

Tussey had put headphones on her aunt’s belly and played music.

“It was probably some 2000’s R&B and hip hop and I’ll be darned after I put those headphones on my aunt’s stomach that it wasn’t much longer after that and Star arrived in the world,” Tussey said. “And so I’ve always said that I brought Star into this world.”

But life took a tragic turn for the fam-

ily. Kim Grant, 42, and her husband, Travis Eugene Grant, 41, were found dead May 7, by Buncombe County sheriff’s deputies while conducting a welfare check at their home on Ashworth Drive in Fairview. Travis’ mother, Sharon Harwood Grant, 66, was also found dead. Buncombe County Sheriff Quentin Miller said May 8 that all three had been shot to death.

The wished-for baby, Star Grant, now 16, and Devan Oneal Loving, 28, were arrested May 8 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and each charged with three counts of first-degree murder and one count of felony conspiracy to commit murder.

The shooting deaths and subsequent charges have shocked relatives who remember the couple as upbeat people and protective parents.

### Slain couple were ‘amazing parents’

The Grants were “happy-go-lucky people, just all the time. There was no negativity around them,” Tussey said.

“They were just lively at all times. They were godly people. They were strong in their faith. ... Travis’ mother, she was an absolute sweetheart as well.”

Kim and Travis had known each other all their lives, Tussey said. They went to different high schools, but dated when they were teenagers, got married and then divorced. They met again and remarried after Kim Grant had Star, whom Grant then adopted.

“He took her on as his own flesh and blood and never treated her any different,” she said.

Kim Grant graduated earlier this year from Asheville-Buncombe Community College with a degree in cosmetology, and was on the Dean’s List every semester, Tussey said. Kim most recently had been working as a hair stylist, while Travis Grant worked in a manufacturing facility.

“They were amazing parents, they did nothing but try to protect their daughter and keep her safe and do

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## Surging fuel costs lift prices in April

**Rachel Barber**  
USA TODAY

Americans already struggling with affordability saw prices rise again in April as surging oil costs stemming from the Iran war kept driving up prices at the gas pump and affected supply chains for other goods.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index, its measure of inflation, revealed prices rose 0.6% from March to April and were up 3.8% from a year ago. Those readings came in above forecasters’ expectations and mark inflation’s highest level in nearly three years.

A 5.4% rise in gas prices over the month again drove the increase, following a record 21.2% spike in March. Over the year, gas prices are up 28.4%.

“American households continue to feel the brunt of surging energy costs, adding to the deluge of inflation they have weathered since the pandemic,” James McCann, a senior economist of investment strategy at Edward Jones said in a note to USA TODAY. “Moreover, with the Strait of Hormuz still effectively shuttered, the risk that we are not past the peak of these price pressures is rising.”

The cost of energy, shelter and food also increased over the month, while the price of new vehicles and medical care declined, the agency said.

While elevated gas prices are one of the fastest and most noticeable impacts of the war, John Groton, a sector lead for energy, materials and utilities at Thrivent, said supply chain disruptions for fertilizers, metals and freight also risk driving up the cost of groceries, housing and other consumer goods.

Core inflation, the metric excluding more volatile energy and food costs, rose 0.4% in April, a bit more than it did in March or February and a surprise to Principal Asset Management Chief Global Strategist Seema Shah.

“While the pickup in headline inflation was expected, the upside surprise in core is more consequential,” Shah said in a note to USA TODAY. “It tentatively hints at broadening price pressures, something the Fed will be reluctant to dismiss.”

Over the year, core inflation is up

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