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Charlotte mayor's meeting attendance hits a low point

BY NICK SULLIVAN
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Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles has missed more than one-third of City Council meetings since December, marking the lowest attendance rate of her five-term tenure.

Lyles, the second-longest serving mayor in Charlotte history, announced Thursday she will resign at the end of June and won't seek reelection. She did not offer a specific reason beyond being able to spend more time with her grandchildren.

The decision follows a sharp change in her meeting presence after years of gradual decline.

The Charlotte Observer reported last

year that council members were starting to take notice of her absences, particularly during zoning meetings. Beginning with her fourth term, Lyles almost never attended zoning meetings from start to finish, if at all. She has only attended two zoning meetings since the start of 2025.

Councilman Malcolm Graham emailed the mayor and the rest of City Council about the issue in July, noting her "participation has been limited and her absence felt."

Lyles explained the issue at the time by telling the Observer she wanted to give then-Mayor Pro Tem Dante Anderson experience facilitating meetings. The mayor pro tem can only lead meetings in the mayor's absence.

But Lyles continued to miss zoning meetings this term, too, after the City

Council appointed a new mayor pro tem in longtime councilman James Mitchell.

Her current attendance rate across all City Council meetings is 61.1%, down from 82.2% last term.

Lyles did not respond to a request for comment on this story.

WHY HAS LYLES' ATTENDANCE RATE DROPPED?

Here is a breakdown of the mayor's attendance over time, according to an Observer analysis of meeting minutes and recordings:

- First term: Seven missed meetings for a 92.9% attendance rate
- Second term: 11 missed meetings for a 91.2% attendance rate
- Third term: Nine missed meetings for

an 85.3% attendance rate (this was an abbreviated term due to COVID disruptions)

- Fourth term: 16 missed meetings for an 82.2% attendance rate
- Fifth term: Seven missed meetings so far for a 61.1% attendance rate

The sharp drop from last year isn't as seismic as the raw numbers suggest.

Zoning accounts for a disproportionate number of meetings this term compared to last because the City Council no longer holds meetings with the full council and mayor on committee days. And one business meeting was canceled due to winter weather.

Aside from zoning — she has missed all five — Lyles has been absent from two meetings. One of those absences was to attend a hearing on safety with the House Select Committee on Oversight and Reform in Raleigh, where Lyles answered legislators' questions.

Still, her attendance habits have noticeably shifted compared to earlier years. For example, she has missed as many meetings during the first five

SEE ATTENDANCE, 5A



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Esther Carter-Buie, left, and her daughter Gwen Carter-Adamson look at old photos of Carter-Adamson's friends from when they lived in McCrorey Heights.

McCrorey Heights memories amid I-77 South expansion debate

BY DESIREE MATHURIN
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Gwen Carter-Adamson doesn't remember everything from 1965. She was 13 years old and finishing eighth grade at Our Lady of Consolation off of Statesville Road.

But there are two memories she vividly recalls.

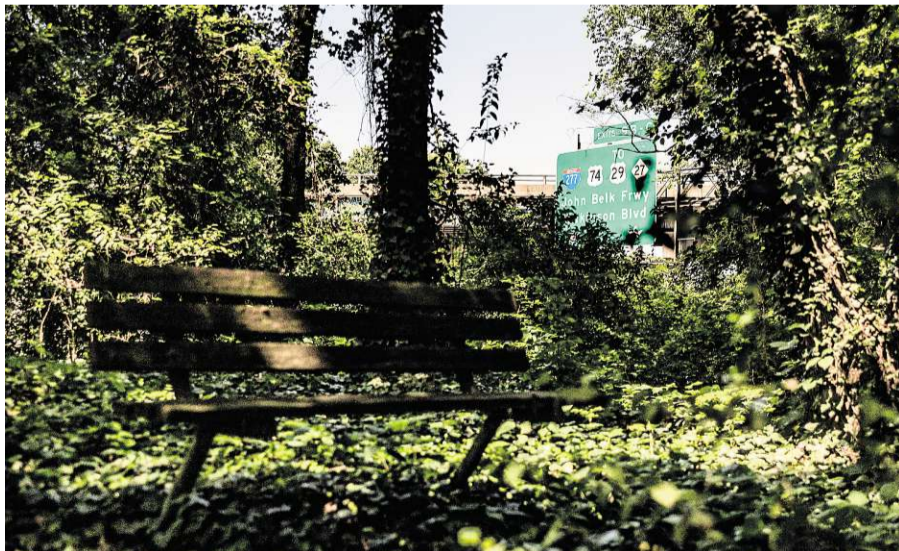
One, she was living the teenage dream, throwing pajama parties surrounded by friends and neighbors on Platinum Hill in the McCrorey Heights neighborhood of Charlotte. At 643 Fairfield St., Carter-Adamson was carefree and content.

The second memory: all of that would change because a highway was being built straight through her house.

"My friend said one time, 'Gwen is going to be in the bathtub taking a bath and the highway is going to come right through her house,'" said Carter-Adamson, now 74 and living in High Point.

That highway was the Brookshire Freeway, or NC-16. And as the Brookshire, along with Interstates 77, 85 and 277, were constructed they would tear through Carter Adamson's home, the seven or so houses on Platinum Hill and hundreds of other residents' houses in the West End and other historically Black communities.

In the name of growth and connec-



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Wilmore Park, which sits along Interstate 77, would be torn down due to the I-77 South toll lane project.

tivity, the North Carolina Department of Transportation strolled through McCrorey Heights and other neighborhoods telling, not asking, residents to leave.

Now, NCDOT is knocking again, this time for a nearby interstate.

The controversial I-77 South toll lane project is underway and in the design phase. Some 29 homes in or around the Wilmore neighborhood will be taken via eminent domain.

Most residents understand Charlotte's growth needs. They understood it 58 years ago. But residents then and now are asking why they're being displaced for cars and a highway?

People like Carter-Adamson and her mother are still around to tell the story of what happens when a highway and city grows on top of its residents.

"I just remember when they came

SEE I-77, 7A

Customers lost nearly \$2 million after NC log firm closed

BY AMBER GAUDET
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Thomas Daniels was looking for a new beginning.

Just on the other side of a divorce and two brain surgeries, Daniels' life in the years leading up to 2021 had been rocky. His career as a marine mechanic behind him thanks to his physical limitations, Daniels was coming to terms with a future that looked much different than he'd imagined for himself.

But one dream still seemed within reach.

"Out of its materials alone, log homes have the power to create a serene oasis in an otherwise chaotic landscape," read the website of American Log Homes and Cabins, a Charlotte-area company Daniels had found online.

He'd always wanted a log cabin.

American Log Homes and Cabins had been advertising discounted kits online and in newspaper ads across the country. The kits — packages of pre-cut logs that promised an affordable alternative to traditional building — had been partially paid for by customers who later abandoned them, the company claimed. That meant lucky would-be owners like Daniels could pay just the remaining balance to make the "dream homes" theirs.

After reading glowing online reviews about the Better Business Bureau-accredited company, Daniels, who had just relocated to western North Carolina from Florida, wired American Log Homes \$16,500 in September 2021. He got his blueprints, and the company promised he could have the logs delivered whenever he was ready. All the company's invoices promised customers there was no deadline.

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