



News Roundup

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As the Charlotte Observer [reports](#), former North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice I. Beverly Lake Jr. died on Thursday after a period of deteriorating health. The Observer report notes that Lake's intense interest in preventing or rectifying wrongful convictions led to the establishment of the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission and made the state a national model for conviction review. Lake served on the court for 12 years and was Chief Justice from 2001 to 2006. He was 85 years old. Keep reading for more news.

No Charges. Wake County District Attorney Lorrin Freeman [announced](#) this week that Raleigh Police Officer Brett Edwards will not face any criminal charges in connection with fatally shooting Soheil Mojarrad in April while on duty. Edwards was responding to a reported cell phone theft at a gas station when he encountered Mojarrad and attempted to stop him. After disregarding Edwards's orders to stop, Mojarrad, who suffered from mental illness complicated by a traumatic brain injury, drew a knife and ignored orders to drop it. Edwards eventually shot Mojarrad after he stepped towards Edwards while brandishing the knife. Edwards was wearing a body camera at the time, but it was not recording. The incident raised questions about use of force and the police department's body camera policy. Mojarrad's family has said that they will pursue a civil lawsuit related to his death. Keep reading for more news.

Gag Order Challenged. The Greensboro News & Observer [reports](#) that the city of Greensboro has filed an appeal with the North Carolina Supreme Court asking for review of a Court of Appeals decision upholding a trial court order that prohibits city officials from publicly discussing police body camera footage of a 2017 encounter between officers and citizens. City resident Zared Jones has alleged that police officers harassed him and his friends in downtown Greensboro in 2016. A Superior Court judge had ordered that city officials could view police body camera footage of the incident but could not discuss the footage publicly.

Officer Mental Health. Following Jeffrey Epstein's suicide while in pretrial detention in New York, there was increased national [attention](#) on the issue of inmate mental health. [NBC News](#) has a report this week that takes a look at the mental health challenges faced by law enforcement officers. The piece says that in the past three years, more officers have died by suicide than in the line of duty, with the stressful and dangerous job putting officers at risk of suffering from depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Some departments are responding by developing policies that encourage officers to seek help without stigma and bringing mental health professionals onto their staff so that officers don't have to pay out of pocket for services.

Murder Charge Dropped. The Charlotte Observer [reports](#) that a Salisbury man who had been accused of murder was released from jail this week after his attorney presented video evidence that he was in Charlotte at the time when Mirah Turner was killed in Salisbury. Witt Darnell Alexander Jr. spent 14 months in the Rowan County jail awaiting trial. Despite being 40 miles from Salisbury at the time of the murder, Alexander apparently was picked out of a photo lineup by a witness. The murder charge against him was dismissed.

Vandalism Convictions. The News & Observer [reports](#) that two people were found guilty of misdemeanors this week for vandalizing a memorial on UNC's campus with racist language. The N&O says that Ryan Francis Barnett and Nancy Rushton McCorkle were found guilty of injury to real property and larceny related to vandalism of the Unsung Founders Memorial in March. An earlier report from the [Daily Tar Heel](#) says that the memorial, which is dedicated to enslaved and free people of color who helped build the university, was defaced with permanent marker and urine. In

addition to the injury to property and larceny convictions, Barnett also was found guilty of indecent exposure and public urination. Barnett and McCorkle were found not guilty of ethnic intimidation, with the trial judge saying that he believed that the pair intended to intimidate “a whole race of people” rather than a specific individual.

Chief Resigns. WLOS [reports](#) that Asheville Police Chief Chris Bailey announced this week that he will resign at the end of the month. Having just started in July, Bailey's tenure as chief will span only two months. Asheville has had four police chiefs in the past eight years, not including interim chiefs.

Magic Kingdom. It's been [well documented](#) on [this blog](#) that several folks at the School of Government are Disney super fans; it's also been well documented that [many folks](#) find [themselves](#) in legal trouble while visiting that magical place. Those threads spun together this week in a story that is entirely predictable for anyone who has even a passing familiarity with the nature of [criminality in Florida](#). WKMG Orlando [reports](#) that Disney super fan Ellen McMillion was arrested at Hollywood Studios after drunkenly attempting to slap a taxi driver after he, a non-smoker, was unable to satisfy her demands for cigarettes. McMillion allegedly also kicked a police officer during the incident. Disney banned her from the theme park for life, a punishment that I assume would violate the Eighth Amendment were it to be imposed by the government.