

# Rocky Mount TELEGRAM

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ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA

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## Hunter to become assistant to city manager

BY WILLIAM F. WEST  
Staff Writer

Longtime key city official Kenneth Hunter has been reclassified to serve in the position of assistant to the city manager, effective on Nov. 1.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney on Monday made the announcement about Hunter as part of her community update during the City Council regular meeting. Small-Toney also congratulated



HUNTER

for nearly 15 years.

Councilman Andre Knight said he had not been notified in advance of the upcoming change in

Hunter.

Hunter has been serving as assistant to the city manager for budget and evaluation for about a year and a half and has been employed by the city

as well as to bring a great deal of experience and knowledge of the existing departments with the city.

Not long after Small-Toney made the announcement, Knight congratulated Hunter but at the same time made clear what he was about to say next was no offense to Hunter.

Knight said he would have appreciated if he had gotten the information before Monday so the council would have been prepared to altogether congratulate Hunter.

while she is the manager, to please let the council be informed regarding upper management positions.

Small-Toney told Knight, "Well, actually, sir," but Knight interjected and told Small-Toney, "No comment needed, thank you."

Small-Toney said, "No, a comment is needed."  
Knight, his voice rising, said,

See HUNTER, A7



WILLIAM F. WEST/ROCKY MOUNT TELEGRAM

Councilman Reuben Blackwell, center, talks about the city being named to receive \$25,000 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation during a news conference Tuesday at City Hall.

## City recognized by health foundation

BY WILLIAM F. WEST  
Staff Writer

The City of Rocky Mount is going to receive a \$25,000 prize from the largest philanthropic organization devoted exclusively to health.

Municipal officials on Tuesday at City Hall announced the money is coming via the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of Health award, with the city to be one of 10 to receive such an honor for 2020-21.

The foundation is located in Princeton, N.J., and

was formed in 1972 after the death of Robert Wood Johnson II, who formerly was the board chairman of health care giant Johnson & Johnson.

The Culture of Health awards honor and elevate communities in the nation working at the forefront of advancing health, opportunity and equity for all.

Councilman Reuben Blackwell said that the foundation is literally the defining health care organization in the nation that provides data and research for policy from the federal

government to state governments down to local governments.

Blackwell said that the foundation analyzes and assesses what health means and what health looks like in communities across the nation.

Of the \$25,000 to be awarded, Blackwell gave credit to City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney and to Assistant to the City Manager-designee Kenneth Hunter for "having the foresight to understand that we have so many great things in Rocky Mount that get

lost in negativity that sometimes is manufactured, such that data becomes not as important as what manufactured stories are.

"And what I want to say is the Robert Wood Johnson award for Culture of Health is like the Grammys of health care in America," Blackwell said. "To have this award, it's not the money — \$25,000 is great, but we know \$25,000 can't change anybody's true reality."

He told of the foundation

See AWARD, A7

## Nash board to consider redistricting

### Public hearing to be held

BY AMELIA HARPER  
Staff Writer

Nash County commissioners will hold a meeting at 2 p.m. today that includes a public hearing on the county's proposed redistricting plans and an announcement of a new county manager.

County officials said Tuesday in a statement that a public hearing on the redistricting plans will be added to the agenda for the recessed board meeting. This is the fourth time this month the board has met in a recessed meeting since its regular meeting on Oct. 4.

Most of the intervening meetings have been related to interviews for the hiring of the next county manager. Commissioners plan to announce that decision at today's meeting. However, the issue of redistricting was not on the agenda for any of

those meetings. The only time that a public discussion of specific county population data or proposed district maps occurred was at the Sept. 20 board meeting.

One version of the redistricting plan was presented to commissioners at the Sept. 20 meeting. Attorneys Craig Schauer and Amanda Hawkins with the Brooks Pierce law firm were on hand at that meeting. Peter Morrison, the lead demographer on the team, was present remotely.

County board Chairman Robbie Davis said the county hired the Brooks Pierce team to redraw the maps because of its reputation for fairness.

"The county manager picked a firm that had two attorneys working on the team. One is a Democrat

See HEARING, A2

## Local man sentenced on drug, gun charges

BY AMELIA HARPER  
Staff Writer

A Scotland Neck man was sentenced last week to federal prison in connection with an incident that took place in 2019 in a Rocky Mount hotel.

Gerard Roderkus Fenner, 40, was sentenced Friday to 192 months in prison for narcotics and firearm violations while on post-release supervision for a prior federal felony for which he was sentenced in 2013.

G. Norman Acker III, acting U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina, made the an-

nouncement after sentencing by U.S. District Judge James C. Dever III.

The Rocky Mount Police Department and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives investigated the case.

According to documents and other information presented in court, Rocky Mount police officers responded on Nov. 26, 2019, to the Days Inn after receiving a 911 call about a fight involving a firearm. The caller said the fight was over drugs, according to a news release issued by the U.S.

See SENTENCED, A7

## Police charge man with assault on woman

BY WILLIAM F. WEST  
Staff Writer

A local man with a prior record — and with a driving while impaired case already pending against him — is accused of attacking a woman, records said.

Marlon Batts, 41, is charged with felony assault inflicting serious bodily injury and misdemeanor assault on a female, Nash County District Court records said.

According to the records, Batts is accused of punching Syntheia Renolds



BATTS

and possible damage to her nerves.

The incident occurred on Sunday, the records said.

Batts was arrested the same day in the 700 block of South Franklin Street, which is in the Little Ra-

leigh area, a posting on the local Police to Citizen online link said.

Batts had listed an address in the 700 block of South Franklin, Nash County District Court records said.

Batts is being held without bond at the Nash County Detention Center and he is due today for a first appearance in Nash County District Court, Chief Deputy Brandon Medina told the Telegram.

According to Nash County District Court records, Batts is charged by Rocky

Mount police with DWI on June 13 on South Franklin in the area of Western Avenue.

The records also said that police cited Batts for driving while his license was revoked.

Statewide judicial system records online also said that Batts was cited on Jan. 4 in Wake County for driving without an operator's license.

Additionally, state Public Safety records said that Batts was convicted in 2000 in Nash County for possession of illegal drugs.



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