

# Chatham News + Record

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## As filing period ends, Chatham will see GOP primary for N.C. House 54 seat

Kinsey signs up to face former commissioner Walter Petty; winner faces Rep. Robert Reives II in November

BY TAYLOR HEEDEN  
News + Record Staff

The race for the N.C. House seat representing Chatham County will now feature a Republican primary, with former Chatham County Commissioner Walter Petty facing political newcomer Craig Kinsey, who signed up for the race on Friday's final day of filing.

The winner of the May 17 primary will face incumbent Rep. Robert Reives II for the Dist. 54 seat, which includes all of Chatham County and a small section of Durham County, in November. Kinsey originally announced

his intention to seek a seat in Congress in the 4th Congressional District in 2021. But after several gerrymandering court cases in late 2021 and early 2022, Kinsey said he decided to file for the N.C. House instead.

"I really feel you should live where you represent," he told the News + Record on Tuesday. "If you're a representative for a district you don't live in, how can you truly represent those people?"

So that's why I did not try to run in other (congressional) districts."

Kinsey has held a couple of town hall events in Chatham County during his time as a congressional candidate. At one of these events in Pittsboro, Kinsey talked about his platform, which focuses on education, limiting the powers of the government and election integrity.

"When a politician gets elected, it seems they forget about the people who elected them, and that's not something I want to do," he said during the Pittsboro Town Hall event. "I want to be different, and that's why I want to listen to what people have to say."

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during his tenure. "I started to look at Chatham and I have some disagreements with Mr. Reives, and I thought this may be a good fit because I can still help the future generations at the state level," he said.

Petty, a Republican and lifelong resident of Siler City who'd served as commissioner since 2010, made his announcement about the Dist. 54 race on Thanksgiving, stating his intent to file for the seat held since 2014 by Reives, who lives in Goldston.

"Serving as a county commissioner provided me the opportunity to see what it was like to

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## A DAY in the LIFE of Chatham Hospital



Andrew Hannapel, MD (left) and Laura Hester, MD, discuss the current status of patients in the Emergency Department at Chatham Hospital. News + Record photographer Peyton Sicles spent a day at the hospital to get a behind-the-scenes look at life there; see the photos on pages A14-16.

## As surge fades, vax demand is 'very low' across county

BY BILL HORNER III  
News + Record Staff

As the COVID-19's Omicron surge fades and mask mandates ease, Chatham's vaccination rates lag behind overall rates across North Carolina — and vaccine demand has trickled to "very low," according to county health officials.

North Carolina averaged more than 30,000 new coronavirus cases per day during a three-week period beginning the first week of January. On Monday, two months later — as most school districts across the state, including Chatham's, transitioned from mandates to optional masking — just 528 new cases were reported across the state. That was the lowest number since last July 7; also on Monday, for the fifth straight day, fewer than 5% of coronavirus tests results came back positive in N.C.

Across Chatham, 63% of the population — a total of 47,113 residents — have been vaccinated with at least one dose, according to data from the N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Services. Fifty-nine percent have received two doses (or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine), while 34%, or 25,381 people, have been vaccinated with one booster or additional dose. North Carolina's percentages: 61% vaccinated with two doses, 65% with one, and 49% with two doses and a booster.

In the meantime, the death toll in Chatham

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### 'WE'RE JUST DOING WHAT WE KNOW WORKS'

## With overdoses on the rise, groups step in to combat crisis

BY TAYLOR HEEDEN  
News + Record Staff

Second of two parts. Substance use disorder has increased drastically across the country, but it's been particularly prevalent here: the Chatham County Sheriff's Department responded to 11 overdose calls in 2019 and another 21 in 2020, but to more than one per week last year — 58 calls altogether, a 176% year over year jump.

Law enforcement has been on the front lines of tackling the increased use of opioids, but locally, organizations such as Chatham Drug Free and

Chatham Recovery are leading a charge to help combat the rise and provide solutions to addiction and overdoses.

### 'Helping people not to go down that road'

Chatham Drug Free was established in the mid-1980s by several community members, including George Gregor-Holt, the current community outreach director for the organization.

It is an organization aiming to curb the use of opioids,

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### 'THEY NEED SUPPORT FROM EVERY LEVEL'

## Local cafe to support Ukraine through 'Chicken Kyiv' special brunch

BY TAYLOR HEEDEN  
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — The Small B&B Cafe's "Brunch Around the World in 80 Days" has added a new stop: Ukraine.

Owners Lisa Verwerdt and her husband Christoffel have been working with their nephew, Chef R.L. Boyd, to create the global brunch tour at the cafe — located at 219 East St. in downtown Pittsboro — to allow customers to try new foods from a diverse menu. But now, they're also using it to bring awareness to the

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The Crew at Small B&B Cafe (from left): Jaxon Goldenberg of Pittsboro, Timothy Hall of Siler City, Chef R.L. Boyd, Abbie Barth (A.B.) of Siler City and Molly Prete of Pittsboro. The restaurant is offering a 'Chicken Kyiv' meal with portions of the proceeds to benefit Ukrainians under attack from Russia.

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