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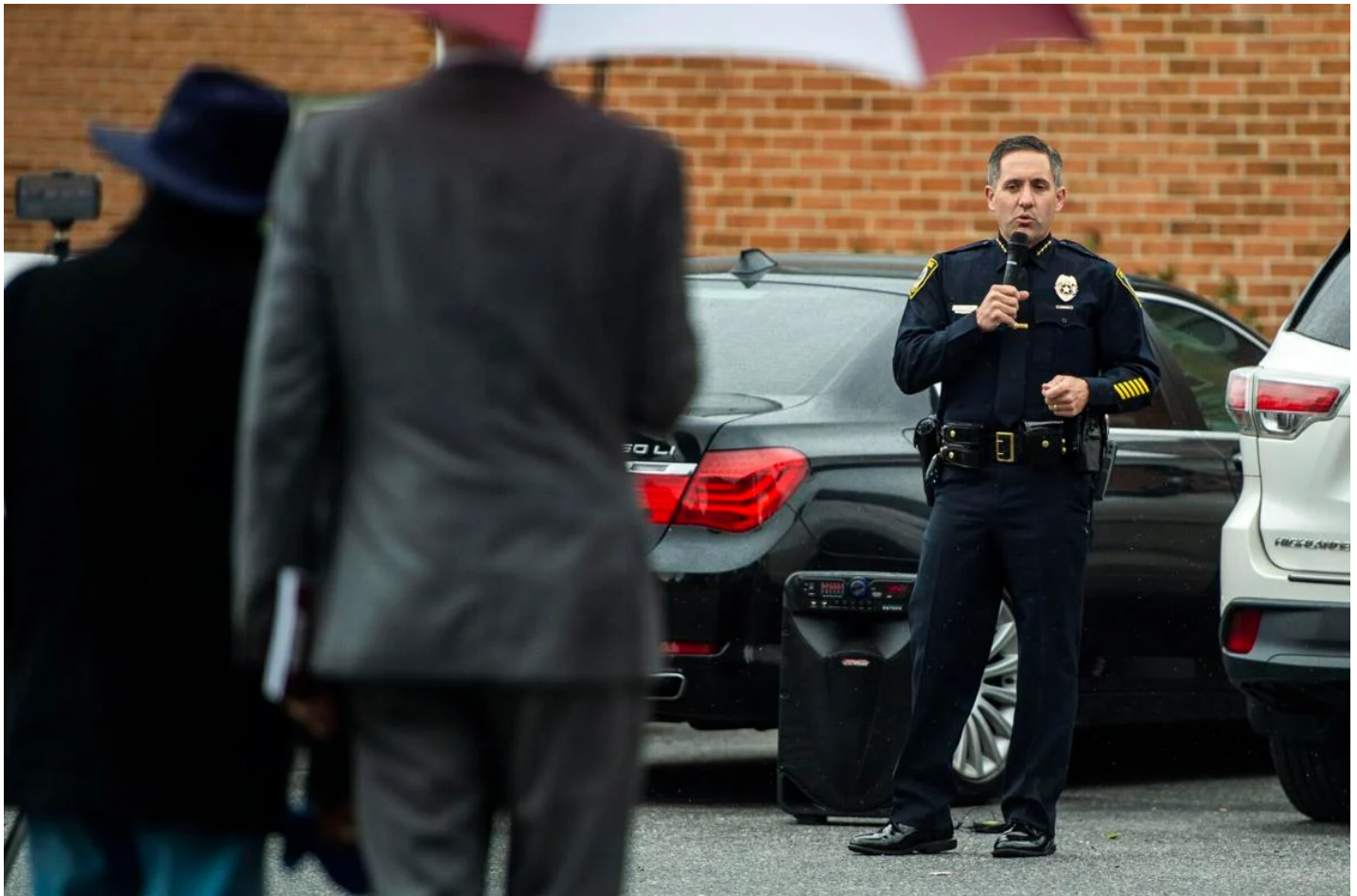
ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY

lynchburg

A youth curfew in Lynchburg? Leaders agree on action, yet questions remain

Bryson Gordon

May 21, 2023



Lynchburg Police Chief Ryan Zuidema speaks during a One Community, One Voice gathering at James Crossing Apartments on Friday.

Kendall Warner, The News & Advance file

Bryson Gordon

As Hill City leaders contemplate ways to address an uptick in recent criminal activity perpetrated by juveniles, a citywide curfew for minors is expected to be at the center of the discussion for Lynchburg City Council on Tuesday as a tool for local law enforcement to combat the recent surge.

But even as city leaders close in on the curfew vote, expected to take place Tuesday — prior to the summer release of Lynchburg City Schools on May 26 — questions around the effectiveness of juvenile curfews remain a topic of discussion.

Joseph Hoft, an assistant professor of criminology at the University of Lynchburg, said the research around if curfews work is “mixed at best.”

“I think the idea is there,” Hoft said. “If we implement a curfew, there will be less juveniles out causing trouble.’ But that’s not necessarily what happens in reality.”

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The latest solution proposed by city leaders to keep young people from being the target, or perpetrator, of crimes is a citywide curfew for minors, **formally proposed** by At-large Councilman Larry Taylor during city council’s May 9 meeting.

While the exact details of the curfew are sparse, Lynchburg’s Commonwealth’s Attorney Bethany Harrison told The News & Advance recently the ordinance to be proposed in Lynchburg will likely “mirror” that of the curfew ordinance passed in Charlottesville.

The proposed time for the curfew in Lynchburg is expected to be between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., according to a draft version of the ordinance provided by At-large Councilor Martin Misjuns, with a potential sunset clause for later this year.

Additionally, the draft ordinance proposes that any violation, even by parents who knowingly allow their children to be out past curfew, could potentially result in a Class 4 misdemeanor, which Harrison said carries a \$250 fine.

James Camm, the director of One Community, One Voice, said, given the recent uptick of criminal activity carried out by or targeted at juveniles, “As much as I dread to agree to it, I think it’s needed until we can redirect the negativity, the violence and balance out the community.”

Camm, whose organization has launched a **reward fund with all Bank of the James** locations in the area aimed at finding the killer of Kingston Campbell, the six-year-old boy who was shot and killed while in his own home on Floyd Street, said sometimes “extreme measures” need to be taken in order to address what is going on.

He did say, however, that he “would never agree to a permanent measure” when it comes to the curfew because things could change down the road.

What will the curfew do?

Without knowing the exact language of the ordinance, as it has not been officially presented, Lynchburg Chief of Police Ryan Zuidema told The News & Advance last week that the curfew is likely going to be a “tool” that will allow his officers to “detain individuals who are out after curfew who may very well be involved in other potential criminal activity,” but stressed his department isn’t looking to go around in a “large bus to gather up every juvenile who is out past curfew and put them in jail.”

“Right now, if my officers see a young man or young woman at let’s say, one in the morning, walking down the street, who appears to be under the age of 18, short of them seeing some type of action that that individual is doing that gives him

reasonable, articulable suspicion to detain them, they can't [detain them]," Zuidema said.

"So this is a tool that will allow us in those circumstances to do just that, right? And to investigate why that individual is out there," he added.

The police chief noted several area localities have had similar curfews in place for a while, such as Danville, Charlottesville and Roanoke. In speaking of his conversations with law enforcement leadership in those localities, Zuidema said they also stressed the benefits of using the curfew as a tool to investigate what other type of criminal activity might be going on in the curfew hours, rather than just arresting them for being out late.

In most cases, Zuidema said, his officers will get parents to come and pick their children up and get them off the street if they are out past curfew but not participating in any criminal activity.

Do curfews reduce crime or victimization?

Hoft, who focuses his work at the University of Lynchburg on juvenile delinquency, said research on curfews shows that "sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. And even in places it does work, it's pretty minimal."

"A lot of the time juveniles are rebellious," Hoft said. "So they are like well screw that, I go out every night and so I'm gonna go out anyway and then kind of see how it plays out."

He pointed out that many localities implement curfews as permanent measures without time after to examine their effectiveness, meaning there's "not a lot to it" on the research of the effectiveness.

"Some of them show that this actually increases crime; some of them show it increases crime initially, but then it kind of levels out; and some of them show that it decreases crime a little bit, but not enough for it to be worth it," Hoft said.

Zuidema said it's the hope of his department that the curfew will not only reduce criminal activity, but also reduce the victimization of minors, whether it be from juvenile or adult offenders.

"Curfews do not discriminate whether you're committing a crime or you're about to be a victim of a crime," Zuidema said. "... [The curfew] is not just to identify individuals who are involved in criminal activity as suspects."

Hoft pointed out, however, that generally, most crimes perpetrated by juveniles usually take place in the hours after school lets out, rather than in the late evening hours.

"When kids get out of school, they're with their friends and ... they may get in more trouble right outside of school hours, rather than late at night."

The professor said the best way to go about curbing juvenile criminal activity is a multifaceted approach, where "schools, families, the community, the police all work together to address the issues going on."

He added that it's usually a "case-by-case" basis when it comes to the effectiveness of curfews, largely dependent on the receptiveness of the city it's being enacted in.

"A lot of times when we create policies and things, we kind of think of it as this umbrella term across the country or even across the state that 'Hey, we need to do this because it's better for everybody.' But we don't know if this is good for Lynchburg. We need to find out."

How will the effectiveness be measured?

While the curfew comes in the wake of several shooting incidents, as stated by the chief of police, it's about more than just stopping gun violence.

Some members of council expressed their desire last week to see a sunset clause on the curfew, such as Misjuns, who wants to be able to look at the statistics of the curfew period once it potentially expires to compare to prior months without a

curfew.

“At the end of the six months, we should be able to look back on this and say, ‘How many stops were made? How many citations were issued? How many arrests were made? How many illegally possessed firearms were seized? What was seized in regards to drugs?’” Misjuns said.

Zuidema, who noted his department struggles with vehicle break-ins, most of which transpire during the proposed curfew hours, said a reduction in vehicle break-ins during the curfew period might be a measurement to determine the effectiveness of such an ordinance.

More ways the chief said they would be looking to measure success would be looking at a reduction in juvenile victims of crime, or seeing how many times officers get out of their car to have a conversation with those out past curfew.

“It would be great to see how many times we use the ordinance to get out with juveniles, regardless of what the outcome is, right?” Zuidema said.

“There’s a lot of different metrics we can look at, but the one ... we won’t be looking at is how many people were arrested for curfew violations.”

Hoft suggested a policy analysis on the curfew to take place down the road and even volunteered to do it himself.

“I would love to do a policy analysis of this a year or two from now to let the community know, ‘Hey, this is what happened. We implemented a curfew, and these are the results.’ And I hope that Lynchburg would be open to that and then say, ‘Hey, if this isn’t working then we need to scale it back.’”

Avoiding over-policing and under-protecting

All three shooting deaths that involved children this year happened in a small radius in Lynchburg’s Diamond Hill District.

Camm, who said he doesn't think the curfew amounts to over-policing, said his sentiments might not be shared by the community if the curfew is not enforced properly.

"I've spoken to someone, and they said to me that they think it's going to create over-policing. And at this point, honestly, for me, I think that we need to do something because a six-year-old boy was murdered — killed in his own bed. It's time for us to take some action on this," Camm said.

To strike a balance between patrolling the city's hot spot neighborhoods and ensuring residents do not feel over-policed, Zuidema said his department is going to lean on its decades-long efforts to build trust in the community.

"I think the educational piece of that is important," Zuidema said. "A lot of times when we talk about things like this, people think that we're going to be out trying to see how many people we can get locked up. And the reality is that we're going to try and focus our efforts on that small segment of our juvenile population that's responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime."

Zuidema said an example of that was the department's **recent completion of Operation Royal Flush**, in which seven gang members — a majority of whom were juveniles — now face criminal charges.

Hoft said one unintended consequence of curfews is the strain that they can have on single-parent households or low socioeconomic neighborhoods, perhaps due to transportation issues, parents who may work overnight, or inability to pay the civil fines that could come with a curfew violation.

"They're going to feel the brunt end of this," Hoft said. "I think public perception initially may be that this is a good thing, or a positive outlook. But I think a lot of that comes because we don't really see the nitty-gritty of it."

Zuidema said he doesn't think a curfew ordinance would have a negative impact on his department's perception in the community.

“It’s just about making sure, like we do with everything we do here, that our officers are focusing on actions of individuals, not appearances as individuals,” the chief said.

“The only appearance piece of this that plays in is the appearance of someone who looks like they’re under 18. And obviously, that’s an assessment our officers are going to have to make.”

Lynchburg City Council is expected to discuss the curfew this Tuesday, according to its agenda posted online. Council’s regular meeting is set for 7:30 p.m. inside Council Chambers in City Hall, 900 Church St. in Lynchburg.

By Bryson Gordon

ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY BREAKING

'A child of Lynchburg:' Community rallies behind family of slain six-year-old

Bryson Gordon

May 3, 2023



Family members and others hold candles during the vigil for six-year-old Kingston Campbell at Greater Peaceful Zio Paige Dingler photos, The News & Advance

Bryson Gordon



The Lynchburg community mourned together Wednesday night over the loss of a six-year-old boy, rallying behind the family of the child whose life was cut short late Monday night as a result of gun violence.

In the parking lot of Greater Peaceful Zion Baptist Church in Lynchburg, just steps away from the home where the boy's life was taken, a large crowd gathered to support the family of Kingston Campbell, the six-year-old who was killed late Monday night following a shots fired incident in the 1500 block of Floyd Street.

Wednesday night's vigil paid honor to the life of Kingston, with leaders from the city and faith community coming up one-by-one to offer their condolences to the family, as well as charge the residents of Lynchburg with one question: "What is it going to take?"

"It's unnatural for any mother to have to bury their child," Mayor Stephanie Reed said during the vigil Wednesday. "It's the greatest fear of every parent to lose a child ... from a mother to a mother, my heart breaks for you and for your family."

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-

Lynchburg Police Chief Ryan Zuidema offered his thoughts and prayers to the family, saying, "I'm sad being here. I'm sad we have a young man who will never see his seventh birthday, or any birthday after that."

The police chief said one way to help the family heal is by finding, arresting and prosecuting the individuals responsible for his death.

"If a six-year-old young man in his own home being shot and killed does not provoke you to take some type of action, there is something wrong with you," he added. "And I am specifically speaking right now to individuals that we know as a police department in this community have information about what took place the other night."

Lynchburg's Commonwealth's Attorney Bethany Harrison said nights like Wednesday are what Lynchburg is about.

"This is who we are. This is what we're about. And while we have many pastors here, elected leaders, fire departments and police departments ... we have so many people in this community who care and want to see our young people survive and be old enough to have a career, or children, or go to college."

Like Zuidema, Harrison remarked on the issue of gun violence in the community.

"You certainly don't go around in the streets shooting people like it's the wild west. It's not. That's not what Lynchburg is about. And for all of us, what we can do, we need to take back our city from this violence."

In addition to city leaders, faith leaders also took the opportunity to bestow prayers upon the family, like the Rev. Carl Hutcherson, who said, "Lynchburg is not the city of violence. Lynchburg is the city of seven hills; and seven is the number of completion in your Holy Word. Help us now to move forward."

Lynchburg City School Board Chair and Bishop of Providence Transformation Church International James Coleman implored the crowd to rally as a family behind this grieving family.

"As we pray for our family members, grief is the price we pay for love," Coleman said. "... I'm not praying this prayer thinking I'm not connected to [Kingston's family], that we're not connected to each other. We are."

Honoring a life cut too short, with candles and cell phone lights raised high to the heavens, words said by one speaker were echoed from the mouths of the large crowd on Fillmore Street.

"Kingston, this is for your life. Kingston, you did not die in vain. In the name of Jesus, it ends here."

By Bryson Gordon

https://newsadvance.com/news/local/one-of-the-worst-floods-that-ive-seen-storms-heavy-rain-wreak-havoc-in-lynchburg/article_ec41d7d0-228a-11ee-a947-0b8d03264f1a.html

ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY

Lynchburg storm

'One of the worst floods that I've seen': Storms, heavy rain wreak havoc in Lynchburg

Bryson Gordon

Jul 15, 2023



Water and debris rush from the Blackwater Creek at Hollins Mill Park on Friday.

Paige Dinger photos, The News & Advance

Bryson Gordon



Torrential rain and thunderstorms blanketed the Hill City and much of its surrounding areas for hours on Thursday evening into Friday morning, leaving in its path downed trees, power outages and streams of water flowing through yards, parks and city streets.

The downpours forced city officials to barricade several streets, some of which remained closed into Friday afternoon. Several parks across the city remained closed, such as the spray grounds at Riverfront and Riverside parks and Miller Park pool.

Even through the deluges of rain, College Lake Dam, which nearly failed following a large rain event in August 2018, remained stable without any evacuations made downstream of Blackwater Creek. Anna Bentson, the city's director of communications and public engagement, said water resources officials will continue to monitor lake levels.

Low-lying areas across the city bore the brunt of the downfall, City of Lynchburg's Public Works Director Gaynelle Hart said, with places such as Peaks View Park, Sandusky Park and the Hollins Mill Dam seeing severe flooding in the area.

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Joseph Bryant, a resident near Peaks View Park, told The News & Advance that he's lived in the area for about 50 years and said Thursday's rainfall resulted in "one of the worst floods that I've seen."

"I sat on my back porch and watched the water come up and it kept coming faster and higher and barrels and bales of straw were floating down the river," Bryant recalled.

The stream that was created flowed into his backyard, tearing down a large tree behind his house.

"Now I don't have a tree," he said. "But that's OK."

According to Richmond Times-Dispatch Chief Meteorologist Sean Sublette, between four and eight inches of rain poured into the greater Lynchburg area, a "freak" weather event due to the three waves of the storm that rolled in throughout the evening.

"It just so happened, in this case, to go over a very populated area repeatedly in that 12-hour timeframe," Sublette said. "These kind of things are not common, that's why I called it a freak event."

While other parts of Central Virginia saw a "good amount of rain" throughout the evening, Sublette said the storm was largely "localized," adding, "it just turned out that the bullseye was right over Lynchburg," with shades of red and purple focused

squarely on the heart of the city and down U.S. 460 into Concord.

Sublette also said perhaps the most recent similar event to hit the Hill City was the August 2018 downpour that threatened the integrity of College Lake Dam and ultimately led to the realigning of Lakeside Drive, **completed in 2022.**

Hart later concurred that levels of rain and flooding hadn't been seen in the city since the August 2018 downpour.

The public works director told The News & Advance that when the majority of the weather rolled in Thursday night, most of her crews were off-duty except for one 24-hour employee.

"But this storm overwhelmed this one person to respond to calls so we called in crews to respond to the flooding and downed trees," Hart said.

She commended her crews for their "tremendous response" in coming from off-duty to go out into the field, with some members working until 1 a.m., and a smaller crew working overnight.

As the sun was coming up Friday, Lynchburg resident Roy Evans said he made it out to the Hollins Mill Dam, where he witnessed a waterfall pouring over the dam with clay-colored water.

"I knew we got a lot of rain last night but I wasn't expecting as much as I saw," Evans said about the water rushing through Blackwater Creek. "The creek was nearly bank-level, so it was pretty close to coming over the top."

"I noticed some Canadian geese," he recalled, "and they weren't going anywhere near that water. It was truly flowing this morning."

At the same place later in the day, students from the University of Lynchburg's Department of Biology summer residential governor school were out collecting samples from the water rushing through Blackwater Creek to study its contamination levels and risk for humans.

“It’s given us a really good opportunity to talk about the importance of water management and runoff, and how storms can affect the transfer of bacteria and other biotic factors in places they shouldn’t be,” Jamie Brooks, a professor with the department, said.

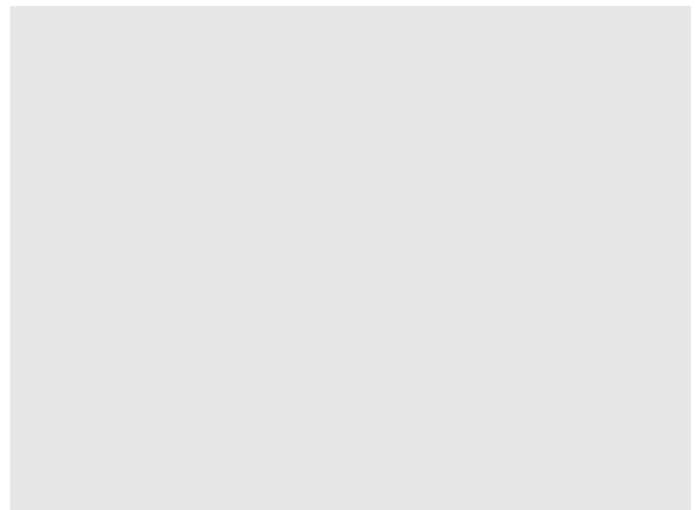
Another round of thunderstorms brought rain to the Lynchburg-area on Friday night and with chances of rain in the area remaining throughout Sunday, according to the **National Weather Service’s forecast**, the city is reminding residents to use caution when traveling, do not walk, swim or drive through floodwaters, treat out-of-service traffic lights as four-way stops and to report power outages to **Appalachian Power on its website**.

Hart also reiterated that drivers should not drive around barricades that are posted at streets, saying doing so could pose a significant danger to residents because the road could have a down tree or be flooded.

After Appalachian Power battled outages all across Central Virginia during the rain event, power was restored to an overwhelming majority of Lynchburg, as well as Amherst, Bedford and Campbell counties early Friday evening.

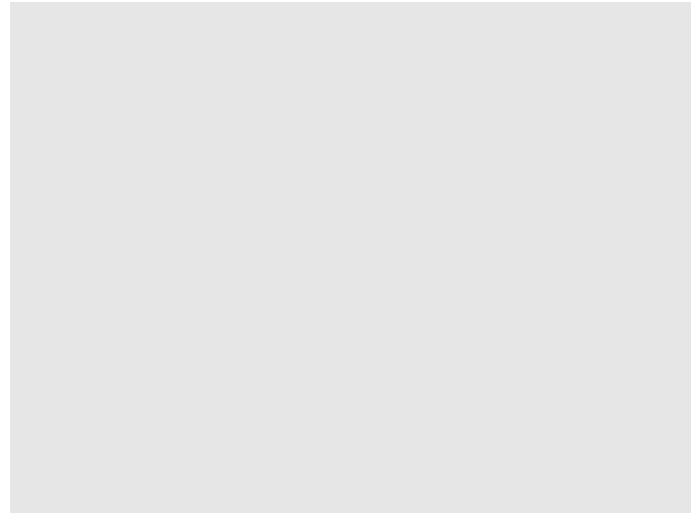
Water did not just flow through outdoor areas as a result of the rain event, however. Lynchburg’s Vice Mayor Chris Faraldi sent pictures of water damage at E.C. Glass High School Friday morning showing muddy water throughout the floor of a classroom at the school.

Lynchburg City Schools said Friday that their facilities and maintenance teams are currently assessing the impact of flooding in a handful of rooms at Glass. They added that most of the areas are non-classroom spaces and they will be ready to welcome students back in August.



Muddy water covers the floor of a classroom at Lynchburg's E.C. Glass High School after torrential rains rolled into Lynchburg Thursday night and into Friday morning.

Photo provided by Vice Mayor Chris Faraldi





Muddy water covers the floor of a hallway at Lynchburg's E.C. Glass High School after torrential rains rolled into Lynchburg Thursday night and into Friday morning.


Photo provided by Vice Mayor Chris Faraldi

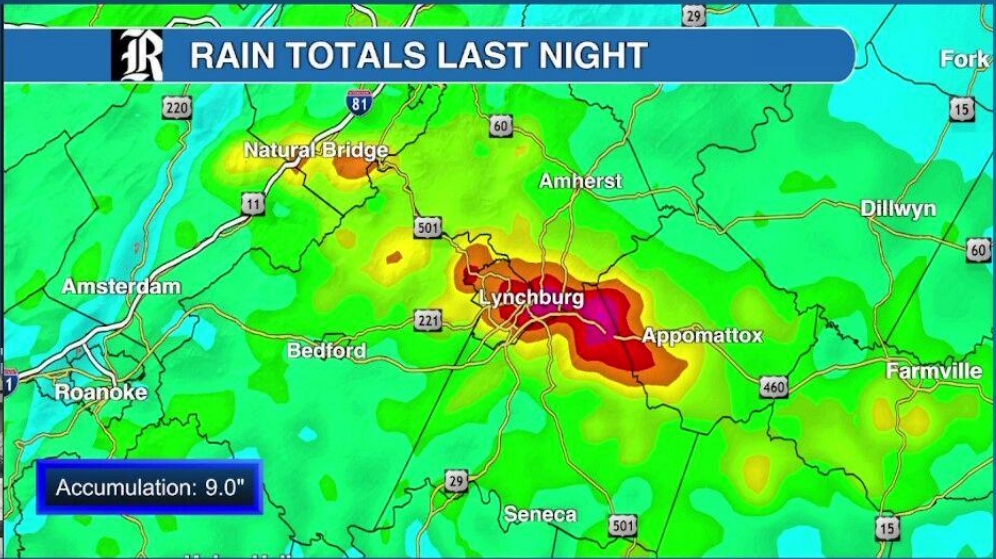
Morning Storm Review: Friday, July 14

A1 weather MINUTE

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RAIN TOTALS LAST NIGHT

Accumulation: 9.0"

The News & Advance

- 4-8 inches common Greater Lynchburg
- More rain later today



4-8 inches of rain were common from the west side of Lynchburg, extending eastward to Appomattox

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"I sat on my back porch and watched the water come up and it kept coming faster and higher and barrels and bales of straw were floating down the river."

- **Joseph Bryant**, resident near Peaks View Park

By Bryson Gordon
