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**To:** mVankamamidi@ashevillenc.gov  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** After-school coding classes, a new co-captain, & a police data update

News, updates, and announcements from Code for Asheville

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**In this edition:**

- After-school coding programs at the Grant Center
- Police data petition update: May 15 City Council meeting
- Meet Code for Asheville's newest co-captain
- News from the Network
- Upcoming events

Read about the Code for Asheville police data request [here](#) and [sign the petition!](#)

**Note:** We include the main articles in full so those without internet at home can download the email in advance.

## Babysitting Available for Community Night!

*We will have a Red Cross certified babysitter available at our Community Nights on June 12 and for the next few months. If you plan to bring your child, please email [info@codeforasheville.org](mailto:info@codeforasheville.org) and let us know your name, your child's age, and anything else important for the babysitter to know. There is no cost.*

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## Update From the May 10 Community Night

At our last meeting, Kimberly Zygmant helped us explore ways we might be able to help with a computer-related after-school program at the Grant Community Center. We talked about how it might work, recognizing that we are a volunteer organization made up of people who may already have full-time jobs.

Jim March volunteered to lead this project. He will meet with Kimberly to brain-storm possibilities, including putting on some sort of presentation at the Grant July open house. More to come!

P.S. Jim also reported that he had attended classes and met with Kathryn Bradley at Erwin Middle School. She expressed an interest in having a one-day "hackathon" for students who were taking her programming and robotics classes. Jim has asked her to follow-up with a list of potential goals for the hackathon.

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## Police Data Petition Update: May 15 City Council Meeting

Jaime Matthews, Assistant to the City Manager, and Scott Barnwell, Business and Public Technology Manager in the IT department, presented the staff report promised after Patrick Conant presented the [Petition for Police Accountability Through Data Transparency](#) at the April 24 Asheville City Council meeting.

The report was short on details and City Council members were not pleased. While a few of the easier requests are being fulfilled, five key datasets were not addressed, with staff citing a need for further discussion, proposing a new process of data engagement with the community.

The Council has asked that staff report back at the June meeting with much more concrete results. As Mayor Manheimer put it, they want to see "exactly what's being requested, and whether we do collect that data now, or not. Whether we do collect it in a format that is easy to release or not. And then, if yes, yes, we collect it, and we have it, then what is the barrier to producing that information to the public? What is the other reason that we can't do that? And if there is a barrier, then what is the alternative?"

The mayor invited Code for Asheville's Patrick Conant, who has led the petition effort, to comment immediately after the staff presentation. Patrick made three key points. First, he called out the underlying issue: that the Asheville Police Department does not want to move forward on data transparency. Second, he pointed out that the proposed process is flawed in that it gives staff the power to unilaterally block the release of any dataset and asked that the City work with the community to create a more balanced process, with City Council having final say. Third, he asked that City Council update the open data policy to clearly state that any data that is public record can be released as open data on request by the community through a straightforward process.

Check out the video of the presentation, discussion and response [here](#).

Please continue to sign and share the petition. We have over **1000** combined signatures online and in person, and have the endorsement of over **30** organizations and businesses. Let's keep it going!

## Meet Jim March, Code for Asheville's Newest Co-Captain

*We inaugurated Jim March at our May 10 Community Night as the newest co-captain of Code for Asheville. Jim has played a leadership role for quite a while, so you probably know him if you've been to any of our events. Here's a chance to learn a little more about Jim.*

Fifty years ago, I took my first computer programming class. Little did I understand how that class would change my life. I have spent the years since then finding ways for computer technology to help people make the world a better place. I have always struggled between the lure of technology (I'm addicted to new gadgets) and my heart's desire to help others. This tension continues to this day, and has been one of the keys to my success.



After two years at Reed College, I finished my education at Stanford, with a Bachelor's in Economics and a Master's in Statistics. It was at Stanford that I also completed two years of Digital Electrical Engineering. It was the mid-1970's, a time when the PC was in its infancy.

After some time working for the California Public Utilities Commission, I ended up working in risk analysis in the banking industry. Eventually I started my own software company where we built a very successful expert system to detect new account fraud. I sold the company in 2001 and retired. Since then, I have devoted my time and energy to serving those people in my community who struggle in our culture, one increasingly dominated by economic forces, to the detriment of moral forces.

As a leader of Code for Asheville, I hope to remind us, and focus us, on the important role of government in service to the people, where regardless of one's wealth, each of us counts as one, equal under the law, and equal in opportunity. To this end, I hope to continue to advocate that government's most important role is to address the inequalities introduced by our economic systems, our education systems, and our cultural systems, with Code for Asheville continuing to be a resource for those less fortunate by virtue of the circumstances of their lives.

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## News from the Network

### Automatic Expungement of Marijuana Convictions

Code for America is [partnering with the San Francisco DA to pilot a product](#) that will automatically determine eligibility for record clearance under state law, fill out the required forms, and generate a completed motion that the DA can file.

Why is this important? As District Attorney George Gascón notes, “California has decriminalized recreational cannabis use, but a marijuana conviction continues to serve as a barrier to employment, housing, student loans and more. Lack of access to employment and housing are two primary drivers of recidivism, so until we clear these records it’s the government that is effectively holding these people back and impeding public safety.” [Check it out here.](#)

Want more civic tech news? Subscribe to [This Week in Civic Tech](#).

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## Upcoming events

## 5/22 Brigade Planning Meeting - CANCELLED

This month's planning meeting is cancelled. Our next regular planning meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 26 at 5:30pm at the Battery Park Book Exchange. RSVP [here](#) or just stop by. You can find the agenda and notes from previous meetings [here](#).

## 6/14 Monthly Community Meetup

Our next Community Night will be on Thursday, June 14, 2018 at 5:30pm, at the Stephens-Lee Recreation Center. RSVP on [meetup](#) or just show up. We'll hear from Code for Asheville members who attended the Code for America Summit in Oakland. Free babysitting is available if needed - email [info@codeforasheville.org](mailto:info@codeforasheville.org) and let us know your name, your child's age, and anything else the babysitter should know.

*Community nights occur on the second Thursday of each month at Stephens-Lee Recreation Center.*

## Have a Story to Share?

We'd love to have your contribution. You can write something up about a Code for Asheville event or share something else going on in the civic tech world in Asheville or elsewhere. Email us at [info@codeforasheville.org](mailto:info@codeforasheville.org).

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