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FOOD & DINING: SOCIAL MEDIA EATS

Are TikTok recipes worth the hype? Writer puts them to the test, **Page 1C**



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An aerial photograph showing a residential area that has been severely flooded. The water is a murky, brownish-grey color, covering most of the landscape. Several houses are visible, some of which are partially submerged, with only their roofs and upper floors above water. The surrounding area appears to be a mix of residential and possibly some commercial or industrial structures, but they are mostly obscured by the floodwater. The sky is not visible, as the water covers the entire ground area shown.

A history of resilience

Princeville, created by freed slaves, has repeatedly been destroyed ... and resurrected



The root of the problem

Watch this video to get to know Princeville and to understand why it floods so often.



Princeville history

An interactive timeline of the the oldest town chartered by Black people in the U.S.



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Resilient Princeville



TRAVIS LONG tlong@newsobserver.com

Shakira Bond gives De'Korius Whitley a high five at Princeville Elementary School on Feb. 15. The school underwent major repairs and renovation after it was flooded by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Princeville, the nation's oldest town chartered by Black people, has suffered major flooding nine times in its 137-year history.

Flooded and rebuilt 9 times, this city stands as a monument to freedom

BY ADAM WAGNER
awagner@newsobserver.com

PRINCEVILLE
The drive south from Tarboro to Princeville involves crossing a bridge over the Tar River, descending down a slight incline and passing Freedom Hill, which got its name when a Union soldier made the first local announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. Freedom Hill became a settlement and 20 years later the settlement became Princeville — the first town in the country to be chartered and incorporated by Black people.

Princeville was built on low-lying ground at a hook in the Tar River, swampy land that white farmers couldn't use. The Tar flows north to south along the town's border. Signs of the struggles the river has brought are visible throughout the town. So are signs of residents' efforts to hold steady on what many consider hal-lowed ground. East of Freedom on Mutual Boulevard is an updated mobile museum emblazoned with "1885" — the year the town was found-ed — outside the flood-damaged former school that officials hope will one day hold the museum again. South of Freedom Hill is the renovated senior center, sitting 14 feet off the ground, thanks to efforts to repair it

after Hurricane Matthew flooded 80% of the town in 2016. Princeville has suffered major floods at least nine times since its incorporation, and each time talk inevitably turns to whether it should be abandoned. Each time — like after Matthew, after Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and after the floods of 1940 and 1954 — some people leave, but Princeville inevitably decides to largely rebuild in the same place. "Our forefathers came across that Tar River Bridge in 1865 with absolutely nothing but their God-given gifts and talents, and they took swampland that nobody wanted


SEE PRINCEVILLE, 6A

A HISTORICAL RETROSPECTIVE PUBLISHED IN TARBORO'S DAILY SOUTHERNER IN 1982 SAID THAT WHEN NEWLY FREED BLACK PEOPLE BEGAN GATHERING AROUND FREEDOM HILL IN THE 1860S, "THE LAND WAS OF SUCH POOR QUALITY AND SO SUSCEPTIBLE TO FLOODING THAT IT HELD LITTLE VALUE OR INTEREST FOR WHITE PLANTERS."



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On the left, contractors work on repairing Princeville Elementary School in October 2016, after being damaged by floodwaters from Hurricane Matthew. On the right, the same hallway, photographed on Feb. 15.



Take our survey
Let us know who do
you think was
influential in the Black
history of the Triangle.



Damage in Princeville, photographed in October 1999, was caused by flooding from Hurricane Floyd.

News & Observer file photo

FROM PAGE 4A

PRINCEVILLE

and built that into Freedom Hill,” said Princeville Mayor Bobbie Jones.

”And they used their blood, sweat and tears just to have something that they could call their own. For us to turn our backs would be a slap in the face to our ancestors, and I’m not willing to do that.”

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE AND HISTORY

As climate change brings wetter storms to Eastern North Carolina, the town is working to rebuild in a way that celebrates its history while also protecting the people who live there in the present. This can be seen in Princeville Elementary, the only school within town limits and a building that stood vacant for three years after Hurricane Matthew.

There is no carpet on the school’s floor, and vents are built into the walls of every classroom to keep floodwater

from sitting in the newly renovated building — physical acknowledgments that the school is virtually certain to flood again.

Yolanda Jones has been the school’s guidance counselor for nearly a decade. After Matthew, she and other Princeville Elementary staff tracked which hotels and shelters students were living in and guaranteed they could make it to classes at the school’s temporary home in Tarboro.

Even now, when there is heavy rain, Jones said, students become anxious.

Jones said she tries to reassure them that she and other school staff are there to help, even if there is another flood. In her conversations with kids, Jones said she tries to tell them, “We’ll do the best that we can in the event that something like that happens — hopefully it won’t — that we’re in this together. You know, we’ve come

ABOUT 87% OF PRINCEVILLE SITS IN THE 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN, MEANING IT HAS A 1-IN-100 CHANCE OF FLOODING EACH YEAR. A MAP CREATED BY THE COASTAL DYNAMICS DESIGN LAB SHOWS THAT SUCH A FLOOD WOULD INUNDATE NEARLY ALL OF PRINCEVILLE, POSING PARTICULAR RISK TO THE WESTERN AND NORTHERN PARTS OF THE TOWN, INCLUDING THE AREA AROUND FREEDOM HILL AND THE REBUILT TOWN HALL.

through one, we’ll come through another one. ... We’re in this together.”

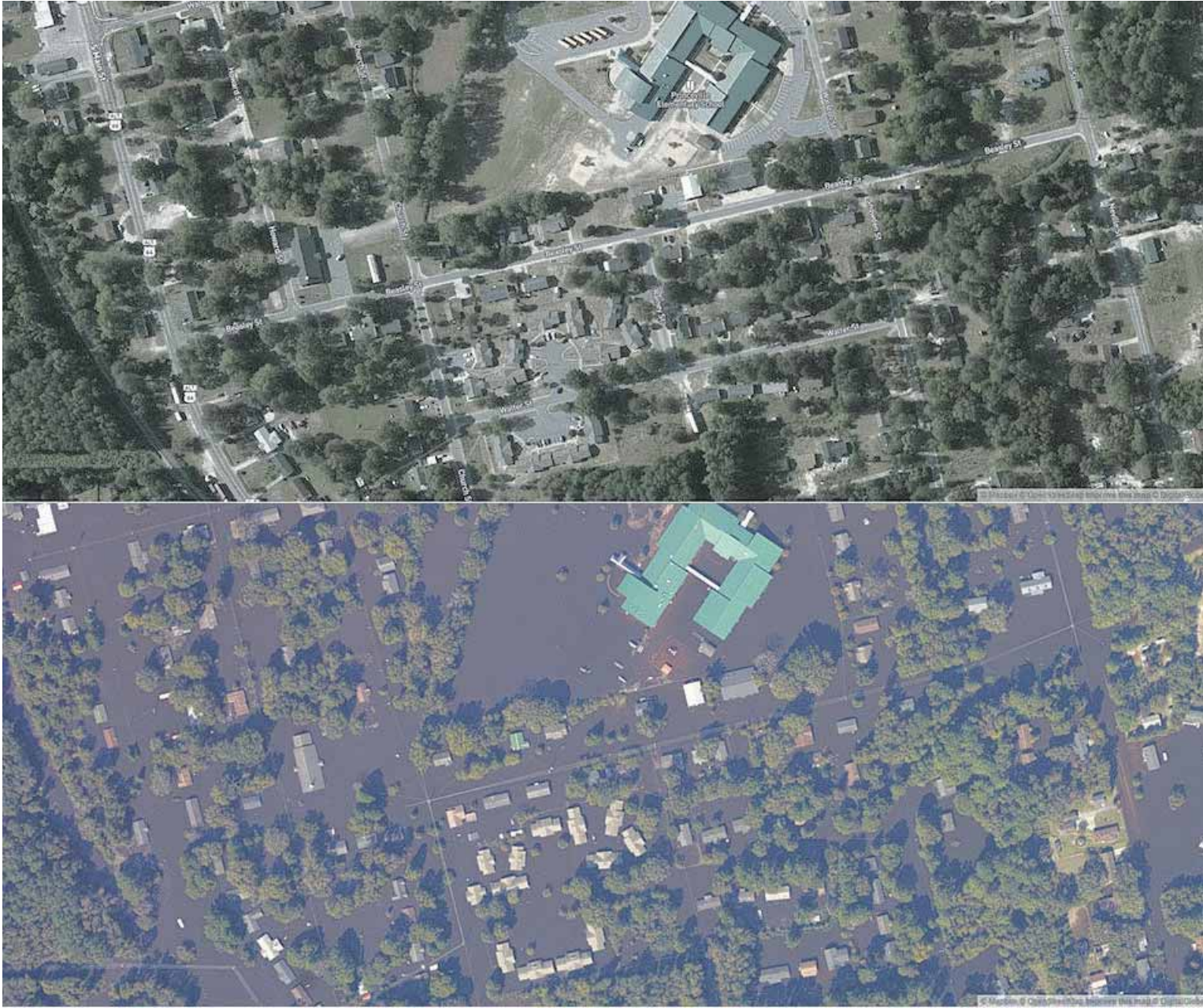
The efforts being taken now by Princeville also offer a kind of model for other North Carolina communities that suffered widespread damage during Matthew and 2018’s Hurricane Florence — and that seem likely to suffer flooding again in future storms.

“Princeville is one of the first communities in North Carolina that will be experiencing floods and learning to live next to flooded rivers, but it’s not going to be the last as the climate continues to change,” said Mary Alice Holley, the director of community innovation at the N.C. Conservation Trust, which has helped Princeville with multiple projects.

A LONG-AWAITED PROJECT

When the town was incorporated in 1885, it was named for Turner Prince, a carpenter and formerly enslaved person who in 1873 became one of the first people to purchase land within

SEE PRINCEVILLE, 7A



These before-and-after photos show flooding in Princeville caused by Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

NOAA Photo

“

OUR FOREFATHERS CAME ACROSS THAT TAR RIVER BRIDGE IN 1865 WITH ABSOLUTELY NOTHING BUT THEIR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS AND TALENTS, AND THEY TOOK SWAMPLAND THAT NOBODY WANTED AND BUILT THAT INTO FREEDOM HILL.

Princeville Mayor Bobbie Jones



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A temporary mobile Princeville Museum Welcome Center sits outside the flood damaged museum in Princeville, photographed on Feb. 15.

FROM PAGE 6A

PRINCEVILLE

town limits.

Within two years, by 1887, the town had suffered its first major flood. It would suffer flooding again in 1899, 1919 and 1940 — and lesser flooding in other years — raising concerns about water-borne diseases and chasing some residents away each time.

After a large flood in 1958 stirred lingering concerns about Princeville’s survival, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built a 2.5-mile dike on the southern edge of the Tar River.

As the Corps started work on the dike in 1965, Ray Matthewson, then Princeville’s mayor and a champion of the project, told the Associated Press that “fear of the river” was keeping the town from making progress.

Matthewson said, “We have high water practically every year, and every five or six years things get so bad that some families have to leave.”

For more than 30 years, the dike was enough to protect Princeville, allowing the town to grow behind it.

But in early September 1999, remnants of Hurricane Dennis saturated ground throughout Eastern North Carolina and raised the Tar River. That was followed less than two weeks later by Hurricane Floyd, which left Princeville, a town that sits at an elevation of about 30 feet, entirely underwater.

The Tar reached 41.5 feet near Princeville after Floyd, topping its previous high by more than seven feet. Following Matthew, the Tar reached 36.29 feet. The Tar River’s flood stage in the area is at 19 feet, according to the National Weather Service.

Since 1992, Princeville has averaged about 45 inches of rain annually, according to data from a nearby rain gauge. But in 2016, the town received nearly 65 inches of rain. And in 2020, without a major hurricane, there were nearly 62 inches of rain near Princeville.

17 YEARS OF STUDIES

In the wake of Floyd, the levee received increased attention and was the subject of multiple studies to determine its future. The studies went on for 17 years — until July 2016.

But before money could be allocated for the upgrades that Hurricane Floyd made clear were necessary, Hurricane Matthew doused the region; the Tar spilled around both ends of the dike and into the town.

Comparing Floyd and Matthew, Jones said, “In ’99 we lost every building and every house. In 2016, it was amazing because

on one side of the street we lost everything, on the other side of the street you lost nothing.”

In 2019, the federal government appropriated \$39.6 million to the Corps to extend the levee east, build an additional part of the levee near the interchange of U.S. 64 and U.S. 258, and raise some roads. The announcement was hailed as a long-awaited win for Princeville, with U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield saying its impact “cannot be overstated” and Sen. Richard Burr calling it a “long-needed project.”

But after receiving the funds, the Corps conducted more analysis and found that the planned improvements could not move forward, said Dave Connolly, a spokesman with the Corps’ Wilmington District.

“It would cause impacts to Tarboro and structures outside of the Princeville floodplain itself,” Connolly said.

Connolly said the Corps is still analyzing the project but that changes to the dike would cause flooding in “multiple locations upstream and downstream” of Princeville.

Nearly three years after being funded, construction on upgrades to the levee has not started, and Connolly said he’s not sure when it will.

Jones, Princeville’s mayor, said town officials understand the Corps has more work to do on the dike and don’t want something that protects their town to cause problems elsewhere.

But, Jones said, “It should not take 20 years.”

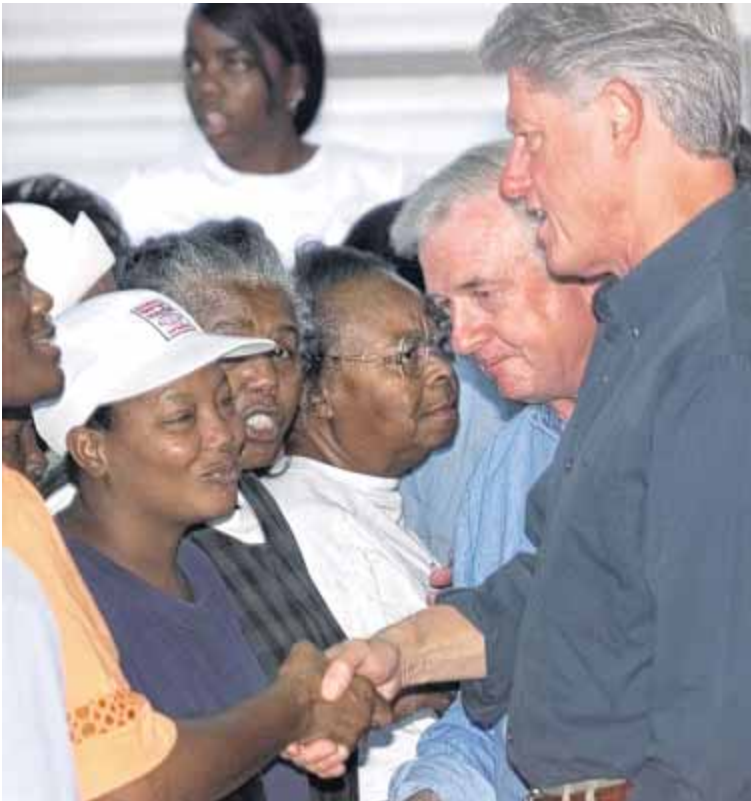
“The study should have been completed, and work should have been completed,” he said, “but here we are. We’re not going to dwell on the past, but we certainly want them to move forward with upgrading the dike now.”

‘ALTERNATIVE METHODS’ TO PREVENT FLOODS

Even as they push for the dike to be extended, Princeville officials are working on other projects that they hope will make it easier for the town to cope with future flooding.

“It’s very critical that Princeville find alternative methods and plans to better protect this community because the reality to the levee is that it may be some time before the experts land at a secure, safe place to pursue construction of that project,” said Glenda Knight, Princeville’s town manager.

Knight, a former Princeville board member, coordinates with emergency management officials about disaster recovery



Associated Press

During an inspection of flood damage wrought by Hurricane Floyd in 1999, then-President Bill Clinton and then-Gov. Jim Hunt give encouragement to victims gathered at Martin Middle School in Tarboro, which had been set up as an emergency shelter by the Salvation Army. After seeing entire communities submerged in water, Clinton promised that “the American family” would do all it could to help the victims of floods caused by Hurricane Floyd.

“

IT’S VERY CRITICAL THAT PRINCEVILLE FIND ALTERNATIVE METHODS AND PLANS TO BETTER PROTECT THIS COMMUNITY BECAUSE THE REALITY TO THE LEVEE IS THAT IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE THE EXPERTS LAND AT A SECURE, SAFE PLACE TO PURSUE CONSTRUCTION OF THAT PROJECT.

Glenda Knight, Princeville’s town manager

efforts like the elevation of homes, has successfully completed repairs to the town’s stormwater system, and plans to move the town’s fire department and public works department out of the 100-year floodplain.

After Matthew, the town’s offices were located in Tarboro for about five years. In November 2021, Knight and her staff finally moved back across the river to a restored town hall on

Princeville’s Main Street.

In the ongoing Matthew recovery, Knight said, 75 homeowners are working to elevate their homes, 19 are seeking a buyout and three are having their houses rebuilt entirely.

PRINCEVILLE HAS PLANS TO GROW ... OUTSIDE THE FLOODPLAIN

Town leaders are also trying to grow Princeville outside of the floodplain, with the purchases of two parcels — one 53 acres, the other 88 acres. Knight hopes the 53-acre tract can be used to bring businesses to the area to grow the town’s tax base, while the 88-acre tract could be used to build affordable housing.

Jones said, “That will allow us to grow — not to leave Princeville, not to abandon Princeville, but allow us to grow.”

N.C. State University’s Coastal Dynamics Design Lab has studied the town’s flood risk and evaluated some of the ways its land could be used to better control floodwaters.

“Princeville is of national and statewide historic importance, and so understanding why Princeville is where Princeville is in the landscape and why it is vulnerable to floods is part and parcel of the history of its settlement,” said Andy Fox, the Coastal Dynamics Design Lab’s co-director.

About 87% of Princeville sits in the 100-year floodplain,

SEE PRINCEVILLE, 8A



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Edgecombe County and Princeville city officials walk hand in hand into Princeville along side members of the National Guard’s 875th Engineer Company on Oct. 18, 2016. Back then, the National Guard’s 875th Engineer Company based in North Wilkesboro and Lexington pumped more than 76 million gallons of water from Princeville into the Tar River using as many as six pumps running 24 hours per day.

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meaning it has a 1-in-100 chance of flooding each year. A map created by the Coastal Dynamics Design Lab shows that such a flood would inundate nearly all of Princeville, posing particular risk to the western and northern parts of the town, including the area around Freedom Hill and the rebuilt town hall.

This area flooded during both Floyd and Matthew, storms that swelled the Tar River beyond the levels of a so-called 100-year flood.

A historical retrospective published in Tarboro’s Daily Southerner in 1982 said that when newly freed Black people began gathering around Freedom Hill in the 1860s, “the land was of such poor quality and so susceptible to flooding that it held little value or interest for white planters.”

HOW FLOOD-PRONE LAND CAN HELP PREVENT FLOODING

Fox said his lab is not necessarily focused on a hurricane or similar flooding event. Instead, it is considering how flooding from heavy rainstorms can be prevented on the town’s roads or how flood-prone property that has been bought out can help the whole community.

Among the projects suggested by the plan was a “rain garden” featuring plants that retain large amounts of water. The Conservation Trust for North Carolina and the Conservation Corps North Carolina built the garden at Princeville Elementary School to help control water running off the roof. “People who reside in those areas have this fear any time

there’s a possibility of a flood,” said Tenika Mercer, Princeville Elementary’s principal. “So the importance of this is to show kids flood interventions so that we can embrace stormwater instead of being so fearful of it.”

The N.C. State lab’s plan also led the two groups to build a quarter-mile walking trail that connects the school with the Princeville History Museum. The museum building suffered significant damage during Matthew and has not yet been repaired, but N.C. State designed and donated the trailer that now serves as a mobile museum.

The Conservation Trust and Conservation Corps will build another walking trail in the town this summer, helping the creation of a local farmers market.

Within the next two years, the groups hope to build rain gardens and possibly community farms on four to six properties that have been bought out using federal disaster money, returning the property to the community while lowering the financial strain that maintaining the sites can pose to local government.

The Coastal Dynamics Design Lab has also created flood-mitigation plans — “floodprints” — for Lumberton and Pollockville. Over the next three years, Fox expects to do similar work with four other communities in Eastern North Carolina.

In Princeville, all of the ongoing projects come together to create a townwide effort to reduce the risk of flooding, to try to curb the impact of another Matthew-type

storm. In many ways, Jones faces the same challenges that Matthewson and other mayors faced before him.

“Once we do all that we can do, that’s humanly possible, and it floods again maybe we need to consider moving someplace else,” Jones said. “But until that time, there’s no reason we should move.”

HONORING PRINCEVILLE’S HISTORY

Mercer, the Princeville Elementary principal, often can be found walking the hallways talking with each student, asking them a series of three questions including what can be improved about the school.

The school has lessons about reading comprehension and math, just like every elementary school in the state. But there are also lessons about Princeville’s history and what the town means.

Gwanetta Revis has taught second grade at Princeville Elementary for three years, starting at the former location in Tarboro and now teaching at the restored Walston Street building that flooded during Matthew.

This year, Revis and her second graders researched Princeville’s history, looking up how Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation led to the town’s beginnings, and then how Turner Prince came to purchase land and become the town’s namesake.

“It lets them learn about their ancestors, it lets them know where they came from, it lets them know they can be proud about where they live,” Revis said.

Under Revis’ guidance, the class wrote a play about the town’s history featuring roles like Lincoln, Prince and other freed enslaved

people.

The second-graders performed the play on Feb. 18, the last school day before Princeville’s 137th birthday celebration. In doing so, the students re-enacted the town’s past inside a building designed to protect its future.

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ON THE COVER



News & Observer file photo

Shattered by Hurricane Floyd, Princeville, N.C. sits submerged under several feet of floodwaters from the Tar River in September 1999.

Trudeau’s emergency powers upheld

BY AMY CHENG
The Washington Post

In a 185-to-151 vote Monday, Canada’s House of Commons affirmed the use of special emergency powers invoked by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to quell weeks-long blockades by self-styled “Freedom Convoy” protesters.

Ottawa was largely cleared this past weekend of the protests that clogged the capital’s

streets and frayed residents’ nerves, and major U.S.-Canada trade routes have been restored. But speaking to reporters ahead of the vote, Trudeau said the state of emergency he declared last week is not over because there continue to be “real concerns” over new demonstrations cropping up.

“The Emergencies Act is not something to undertake lightly, and it’s something that needs to be

momentary, temporary and proportional,” Trudeau said, pledging that his government would evaluate whether to extend the order on a daily basis.

Even though the prime minister was allowed to use the powers authorized under the Emergencies Act immediately, parliamentary approval is required within seven days for the declaration to be valid. Canada’s Senate must also vote on whether

it approves the use of emergency powers, though no date has been set.

Monday’s vote was largely divided along party lines, with the New Democratic Party joining Trudeau’s Liberal Party to secure the majority. Lawmakers from the Conservative and Bloc Québécois parties all cast opposing votes, reflecting the pushback and criticism that Trudeau has received from the right for his

handling of the protests.

Provincial leaders were also split over Trudeau’s emergency powers: Doug Ford, premier of Ontario, supported the invocation, while Alberta’s leader, Jason Kenney, promised to challenge the federal government in court.

The 34-year-old law, which was put to use for the first time last week, gives the Canadian government broad powers and tools to respond to national emergencies, authorizing federal authorities “to intrude into areas that would normally be under provincial juris-

diction during an emergency,” one legal expert explained.

Under the Emergencies Act, the protest area on Parliament Hill and in the surrounding parliamentary precinct has been declared prohibited for public assembly. The millions of dollars raised for the protesters through crowdfunding sites could also be denied under Canada’s money-laundering and terrorism-financing laws, and at least 76 accounts have been frozen.

Supreme Court takes case on refusal to serve gay couples

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to decide whether a conservative Christian woman who designs websites may refuse to work with same-sex couples, even though a state civil rights law requires businesses to be fully open to all customers without regard to their sexual orientation.

The case will be scheduled for arguments in the fall.

The case is seen as a follow-up to the Masterpiece Cakeshop case, which posed a clash between religious rights and

gay rights, but left the matter largely unresolved.

In that case, baker Jack Phillips, who refused to make a wedding cake for two men, won a narrow victory with a 7-2 decision in 2018 that found he had been treated unfairly by the state’s civil rights commission.

The justices did not rule on his constitutional claim based on free speech. Since then, two new conservatives—Justices Brett M. Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett—have joined the court.

Now the same lawyers for the Alliance Defending Freedom who represented the baker are back before the court and are seeking a broader ruling that would

give conservative Christians a partial exemption from state laws that would require them to participate, even indirectly, in a same-sex marriage.

The exemption, they say, would be based on 1st Amendment rights to freedom of speech and free exercise of religion. In agreeing to hear the case, however, the justices limited the issue to freedom of speech only.

If they win, the decision could have a significant impact in California and 19 other states that forbid businesses from discriminating against LGBTQ customers. It could give business owners an exemption based on their religion to refuse to provide flow-



PATRICK SEMANSKY AP

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a new clash involving religion and the rights of LGBTQ people in the case of a Colorado web designer who says her religious beliefs prevent her from offering wedding website designs to gay couples.

ers, photography or other products or services for a same-sex marriage.

Their client, Lorie Smith, is a graphic artist and web site designer who says she wants to expand her busi-

ness to design custom websites for weddings, but not for same-sex-couples.

She is “willing to work with all people regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, and gender,” her

lawyers told the court. “But she cannot create websites that promote messages contrary to her faith, such as messages that condone violence or promote sexual immorality, abortion, or same-sex marriage.”

She sued seeking a ruling that would uphold her right to a free-speech exemption, but she lost before a federal judge and in a 2-1 decision by the 10th Circuit Court in Denver.

Her appeal in 303 Creative vs. Elenis contends the appeals court “took the extreme position that the government may compel an artist-any artist-to create expressive content, even if that content violates her faith If left in place, the 10th Circuit’s decision will allow officials to compel Democratic speechwriters to plug Republican candidates and Muslim artists to create cartoon parodies of Allah.”