

**Item Title:** Resolution Supporting a Request to the North Carolina Department of Transportation to Dedicate a Bridge in Honor of Dr. William Weston Hedrick

**Specific Action Requested:**

**That the Board of Commissioners approves a resolution supporting a request for the North Carolina Department of Transportation to dedicate the bridge at United States Highway 401 and the Neuse River in honor of Dr. William Weston Hedrick.**

**Item Summary:**

**Purpose:** Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute §136-18(8), the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) may name roads, including designating names to transportation infrastructure such as roads and highways, bridges, ferries, and interchanges. The NCDOT coordinates the naming process, which requires the requester to collaborate with local governments to consider a resolution supporting the name designation. Local resolutions are part of NCDOT's vetting process and must pass with unanimous support for a request to move toward full consideration from the North Carolina Board of Transportation.

**Background:** The proposed bridge dedication is located on the United States Highway 401 over the Neuse River, just south of the intersection with Ligon Mill Road near the City of Raleigh's Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve. If approved, this bridge will be named in honor of Dr. William Weston Hedrick. This designation request is coordinated by members of Dr. Hedrick's family.

The NCDOT bridge name designation request process is distinct and separate from North Carolina General Statute §153A-239.1, which establishes that counties may name or rename any road within its county and not within a municipality. If NCDOT approves the request, the bridge name designation will not impact public safety emergency responses, and no residents will be impacted by address changes.

**Strategic Plan:** This action supports standard County procedures and business.

**Fiscal Impact:** This action has no financial implications for Wake County. The requester will cover NCDOT's administrative costs associated with the bridge name designation, including installation and maintenance of the signs, from private contributions.

**Additional Information:**

Dr. William W. Hedrick is a family doctor who was born on September 26, 1932, in Raleigh, North Carolina. He graduated from Wake Forest College (1954) and Bowman

Gray Medical School (1957) and ran a solo family practice in Raleigh for over 60 years before retiring in July 2023 at the age of 91.

After graduating from medical school, Dr. Hedrick served the United States as a Captain in the US Army Medical Corps: 34th General Hospital, Commanding Officer, 760th Medical Detachment in Orleans, France (1959-1961).

Deeply dedicated to his community, Dr. Hedrick became known for making house calls and treating anyone regardless of their ability to pay. In 2023, he had the privilege of still treating the same patients who first came to him when he opened his practice in 1962, as well as their children and grandchildren. In addition to his solo practice, Dr. Hedrick was the first Emergency Room doctor at Wake Med Hospital and the Chief Medical Examiner for Wake County for 10 years (1964-74).

In the early 1970s, Dr. Hedrick tirelessly advocated for improved medical care in North Carolina. Testifying before the North Carolina Senate, he championed a campaign that successfully lobbied the North Carolina General Assembly to provide funding for Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) across the state and appropriate \$43 million to create a four-year medical school at East Carolina University. In 1975, Dr. Hedrick was elected President of the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, and he continued to pioneer efforts that established formal family doctor training at North Carolina's medical schools.

In the mid-1980s, Dr. Hedrick again crusaded on behalf of North Carolinians and spoke before the North Carolina Senate in support of the state's first-ever seat belt law. Statements by Dr. Hedrick before the committee illuminated the importance of seatbelts in tandem with the helmet requirement for motorcyclists, thus providing decisive merit for the seat belt law, which was thereafter enacted.

An environmental activist, Dr. Hedrick was also responsible for creating Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve, a City of Raleigh Park that was once his 150-acre family farm. Sitting in the bend of the Neuse River, the farmland that Dr. Hedrick donated completed the final section of the popular Neuse River Greenway Trail—the longest greenway trail in North Carolina. In 2017, the City of Raleigh formally dedicated the historic farmhouse at Horseshoe Farm, where Dr. Hedrick raised his family, the “Dr. Bill and Merrie Hedrick Homestead at Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve.” The following year, Dr. Hedrick was inducted into the Raleigh Hall of Fame for his enduring contributions to the City of Raleigh.

The North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians presented Dr. Hedrick with the Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997 and the Distinguished Service Award in 2012. He was awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine in 1997 by Governor James B. Hunt, Jr.

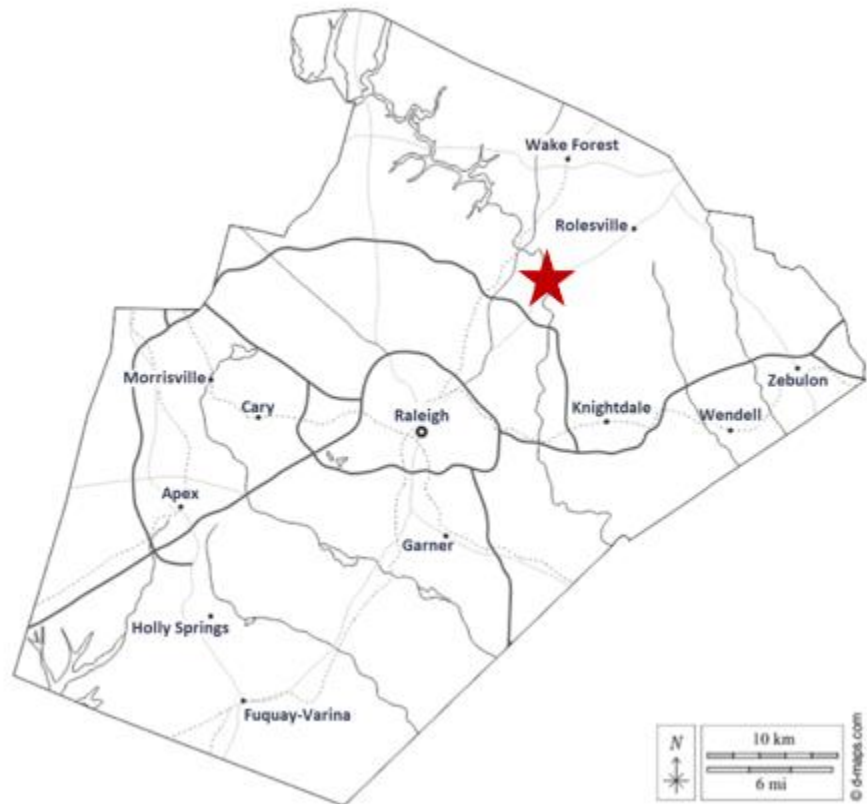
Dr. Hedrick has been a distinguished member of the American Board of Family Medicine, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians (President, 1975 – 1976), the North Carolina Medical Society, and the Wake County Medical Society.

Dr. Hedrick lives on a farm in Wake Forest, NC, with his wife, Merrie, of 45 years. He is a member of Wake Forest Baptist Church and a lifetime member of New Hope Baptist

Church, where he has served as a Deacon. He has eight adult children, seven grandchildren (and another due in October), and six great-grandchildren. In his free time Dr. Hedrick enjoys his vegetable garden and chickens, sailing, golf, and riding his 1952 Ford tractor that has been in his family since he was a sophomore in college.

This request seeks to name the Neuse River Bridge on United States Highway 401 North by Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve in Dr. Hedrick's honor. At 91 years old, Dr. Hedrick is one of North Carolina's longest-serving family doctors. He has crossed the Neuse River Bridge on Highway 401 nearly every day for the last six decades to faithfully provide and advocate for medical care for North Carolinians until his retirement in 2023.

### **Approximate Location of the US Highway 401 Bridge at the Neuse River.**



In accordance with NCDOT's "Road, Bridge or Ferry Naming or Designation Request Process," the requester must coordinate with local governments to unanimously pass resolutions in a public forum supporting the designation request. The bridge at United States Highway 401 and the Neuse River is partially in the City of Raleigh and Wake County's jurisdiction. The requester must gather resolutions from both jurisdictions for the application to move forward in the NCDOT request process.

If approved by the North Carolina Board of Transportation, this bridge designation will be one of five in Wake County. The other four include:

- Marshall Watson Bennett Bridge, Old Milburnie Road over I-540 (designated May 31, 2006)

- Trooper Robert R. East Bridge, US 1 North at the Neuse River (designated December 5, 2007)
- F. Donald Rohrbaugh Bridge, Timber Drive Extension over Mahlers Creek (Garner, designated November 30, 2011)
- Officer Ryan A Hayworth Bridge, Knightdale Boulevard over I-540 (Knightdale, designated May 3, 2023)

Dr. Hedrick was previously honored by the Wake County Board of Commissioners on August 6, 2012, unanimously passing a Proclamation Honoring Dr. William Weston Hedrick for Providing Over 50 Years of Medical Care to the People of Wake County.

**Attachments:**

1. Wake County Board of Commissioner's Resolution
2. North Carolina Department of Transportation's Road, Bridge or Ferry Naming or Designation Request Process
3. North Carolina Department of Transportation's Road, Bridge or Ferry Naming or Designation Request, Application (DRAFT) for Dr. William W. Hedrick
4. Map of the Bridge Location at US Highway 401 and the Neuse River