



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

June 16, 2026

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Charlotte Broadcaster
Mike Collins



Brian Kahn
Partner, McGuireWoods

Brian Kahn and Mike Collins *Charlotte Squawks 21: Hold My Beer!*

by Catherine Bracey

Past President William Bradley introduced Brian Kahn and Mike Collins by highlighting their professional accomplishments and their shared role as creators of *Charlotte Squawks*, Charlotte's long-running musical satire. Kahn and Collins quickly shifted into a humorous, self-deprecating tone, joking about the introduction, Rotary, and their own lack of civility and humor. They explained that *Charlotte Squawks* is a blend of *Saturday Night Live* and *Forbidden Broadway*. They take familiar songs, rewrite the lyrics, and use them to satirize Charlotte politics, civic issues, sports, and public figures. They note that because current events change so quickly, the material often has to be rewritten right up until the last show closes.

A large part of the discussion focused on the history and growth of the show. Collins explained that it began as a fundraiser for public radio (WTVI), originally tied to *Charlotte Talks*, but actually lost money in its first two years because the team made fun of sponsors rather than flattering them. Despite that, the show attracted enough audience interest that Blumenthal picked it up and helped it

grow from a small, low-budget nightclub-style production into a major annual event at Booth Playhouse. Over time, it expanded in scale, budget, and professionalism, with a strong cast, a live band, choreography, and increasingly sophisticated production values.

Kahn and Collins also describe the creative process behind the show in detail. Kahn begins collecting ideas for next year's production as soon as the current one closes. He tracks news, local controversies, and cultural moments that may become material. He then pairs those topics with recognizable songs, usually aiming for music that most of the audience will know. Collins takes the rewritten lyrics and figures out how to stage them, deciding which cast members appear in each number and how the scenes should be blocked or choreographed. They emphasized that the process is extremely fluid: songs, jokes, and even entire scenes can change during rehearsals or while the show is already running, especially when local political developments or breaking news alter the context.

In the Q&A, the duo shared stories that revealed both the reach and spirit of *Charlotte Squawks*. They spoke about involving prominent local figures in videos (including club member **Joel Ford**), including politicians and former mayors. They recalled that **Pat McCrory** was especially game for self-parody. They also describe the show's occasional serious moments, such as a moving tribute number in this year's show for Manolo Betancur that regularly earns standing ovations. Other questions touched on how they met, how they collaborate despite strong personalities, the chaos of costumes and backstage logistics, and the legal line between parody and satire when reusing popular songs. Overall, the program highlighted *Charlotte Squawks* as both a comedy institution and a civic tradition - one that uses humor, music, and local knowledge to bring Charlotte together.

The 2026 Charlotte Squawks 21 - *Hold My Beer!* runs through Sunday, June 28. Tickets are limited. Don't miss!!

The recording has been uploaded to Vimeo. You can find the recording here:

With Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1202285316?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Without Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1202286445?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Your introduction by William Bradley begins at about 22 minutes and 50 seconds.