

VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY

VOLUME 47 NO. 3 APRIL 2012

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League



Technology
Supercomputer
could transform
Danville's economy



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About the cover

Will Mitchell, a software architect, serves as the site manager in Danville for the nonprofit science and technology company Noblis, which oversees use of a Cray XMT2 supercomputer there. The Danville supercomputer is the only one of its kind in the nation not housed at a federal laboratory or academic facility. Photo by Steven Mantilla Photography 2012.

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By Kristen Helgeson

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Supercomputing in Danville: Cray XMT2 is evidence of transformation from manufacturing center to technology hub

Danville officials hope that the arrival of one of the world's fastest computers signals the transformation of the city's economy from tobacco and textiles to that of a technology hub with a more future-oriented mix of businesses.

By Arnold Hendrix



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Call for entries: 2012 VML Achievement Awards

The VML Achievement Awards program is an important forum for sharing some of the very best public service ideas in Virginia, a competition in which local government leaders can learn. By sharing winning entries with the public, the league demonstrates that Virginia's local governments are imaginative, highly professional and cost effective.



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Henrico taps Walter as finance director



- Walter -

Eugene H. Walter was appointed director of the Department of Finance for Henrico County effective May 1.

Walter, who served as Henrico's budget director, succeeded **John A. Vithoukas**, who was promoted in December to deputy county manager for administration. Under Henrico's county manager form of government, the director of finance assumes all duties typically performed by the constitutionally elected treasurer and commissioner of revenue.

A Henrico employee since 1997, Walter worked as a budget analyst and supervisor before becoming budget director in 2008.

Winchester names Iman city manager

Winchester has hired a 57-year-old veteran local government administrator as its next city manager. **Dale Iman**, who served most recently as city manager of Fayetteville, N.C. for five years, will take over in Winchester on April 23.

Iman will replace **Craig Gerhart**, who has served as interim city manager since the departure last year of **Jim O'Connor**. Before taking the job in Fayetteville, Iman served as city administrator for Southfield, Mich.; Moline, Ill.; and Grand Island, Neb. Prior to those stops, he was the city manager of Marquette, Mich.; Gallipolis Ohio; and Frostburg, Md.

Leesburg picks Wyks as new utilities chief



- Wyks -

Amy Wyks, the former assistant director of finance for operations in Leesburg, has been named the new director of the town's Utilities Department. She

succeeds former long-time director **Randy Shoemaker**, who retired last year.

Wyks joined the town in 2000 as an engineer for the Utilities Department. She was promoted to senior engineer in 2001 and transferred to the Finance Department as assistant director for operations in 2010.

Suffolk names city attorney



- Holland -

Helivi L. Holland began work as city attorney in Suffolk on March 16. She replaced **C. Edward Roettger Jr.**, who retired in December following

more than 18 years of service to the city. Holland served most recently as the director of the state's Department of Juvenile Justice, an appointment from Gov. Bob McDonnell that she accepted in 2010.

Before her recent stint with the state, she served beginning in 1991 as a senior prosecutor, an adjunct professor and as deputy city attorney in Suffolk, a position she held before heading up DJJ.

Herndon selects Kemp for public works post

Herndon has promoted **Charles T. Kemp** to superintendent of public works. Kemp had been serving as acting superintendent following the departure of long-time superintendent **Sonny Lynch** last summer.

Kemp has held positions of increasing responsibility since joining the Department of Public Works in 1986 as an engineering technician. Since 1993, he has served as general services administrator. In his new role, Kemp assumes responsibility for direction of field and emergency operations, including snow removal, refuse/recycling collection, infrastructure maintenance and management of field operations staff.

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Arlington chooses zoning administrator



- Cozart -

Norma Cozart has been named Arlington County's new zoning administrator. She has served as acting zoning administrator for the county since late last summer.

Cozart, who has worked for Arlington for 23 years within the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, has served as deputy zoning administrator, supervisor and acting zoning administrator.

Henrico names Yob Public Works director



- Yob -

Steven J. Yob, P.E., was promoted to director of the Department of Public Works in Henrico County effective April 7. Yob, who was serving as acting

director of Public Works, succeeded **Timothy A. Foster, P.E.**, who was promoted in January to deputy county manager for community operations.

A Henrico employee since 2001, Yob has served as chief of the Solid Waste Division of the Department of Public Utilities and as assistant director of Public Works.

Petersburg fills development post



- Tabor -

Reginald Tabor has been hired as the new economic development projects manager in Petersburg. He will concentrate as a staff member in the Department of

Economic Development on helping existing Petersburg businesses expand and on attracting new business and industry.

Tabor has worked in Wilmington,

Del., as a city planner, in Compton, Calif., as an assistant to the city manager and in Macon, Ga., as an assistant director of parks and recreation.

Richmond names Judkins deputy CAO



- Judkins -

Sharon O. Judkins has been named the deputy chief administrative officer of Finance and Administration for the City of Richmond.

Judkins has more than 25 years of leadership and executive management experience, particularly in financial planning, organizational development and performance-based management. She has served for more than 19 years in various leadership capacities for the city.

Richmond fills parks & rec post



- Morton -

Deborah E. Morton has been appointed deputy director of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities for the City of Richmond. Morton,

who has more than 27 years of local government experience, served most recently as the assistant director of Recreation, Parks & Open Space in Norfolk. She will oversee the Recreation Services Division and special projects in Richmond.

Prior to serving in Norfolk, Morton held positions in Richmond city government working for the Department of Planning and Community Development, the City Manager's Office and in the Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities.

Harrisonburg names Monticelli police chief



- Monticelli -

Harrisonburg has hired the deputy chief of police for Columbia, Mo., as its new chief of police. **Stephen Monticelli** will assume duties in Harrisonburg on

June 4.

Monticelli brings 32 years of law enforcement experience to Harrisonburg, having served in all areas of police operations, including campus law enforcement. The Columbia Police Department employs 220 sworn and civilian personnel and serves a city of 108,000, which includes the University of Missouri - Columbia. Harrisonburg is home to James Madison and Eastern Mennonite universities.

Suffolk selects interim fire chief



- Taylor -

Ed Taylor began serving as interim fire chief in Suffolk effective March 9. He filled the opening created by the retirement of former chief **Mark Outlaw**.

Taylor, a veteran of Suffolk Fire and Rescue, joined the former City of Nansemond Fire Department in 1973 and became a member of the Suffolk Fire Department as part of a merger in 1974. Taylor has served as deputy fire chief since 2002.

Otto S. Overton dies; served Farmville

Farmville Town Council Member **Otto S. Overton**, who served 42 years as chief of police for the town, died on April 17.

Overton joined the Farmville Police Department in 1951 and was appointed chief in 1954. He was elected to the Farmville Town Council in 1996 and had served for 16 years.

Portsmouth's Kahler earns CEcD designation



Mallory Copeland Kahler, development manager for the City of Portsmouth's Department of Economic Development, has earned the designation of Certified

- Kahler -
Economic Developer (CEcD).

The national recognition denotes a mastery of principal skills in economic development, professional attainment and a commitment to personal and professional growth. With more than 20 years in the field of economic development, Kahler serves as Portsmouth's enterprise zone administrator and as assistant secretary to both the Portsmouth Economic Development Authority and the Portsmouth Port & Industrial Commission.

LGA honors Posner as top assistant

The Local Government Attorneys of Virginia has named **Ellen F.M. Posner**, assistant county attorney for Fairfax, as winner of its 2012 award that goes to an outstanding deputy or assistant government attorney. Posner was presented the Cherin Award at the recent LGA Conference in Williamsburg.

Posner has dedicated more than 23 years of her legal career to serving in local government in the Fairfax County Attorney's Office. The Cherin Award recognizes a deputy or assistant local government attorney

who has demonstrated distinguished public service that has enhanced the image of local government attorneys and reflects a personal commitment to the highest ethical and professional principles.

Botetourt names Guzi administrator



- Guzi -

The Botetourt County Board of Supervisors selected **Kathleen Guzi** to serve as county administrator effective March 26. Guzi, who began her career in Bedford

County, rose through the ranks there serving as finance director, assistant county administrator, deputy county administrator and finally as county administrator, a post she held for seven years.

She succeeds **Gerald Burgess**, who retired at the end of March, after nearly 20 years of service to the county. A veteran of 25 years in local government management, Guzi is a past President of the Virginia Local Government Management Association.

John E. Petersen dies; local finance expert

Dr. John E. Petersen, an expert in municipal finance who taught public policy at George Mason University in recent years, and who served one term on Fairfax City Council in the early 1970s, died April 4 of a heart attack. He was 71.

Dr. Petersen served as a consultant to city, state, federal and international governments on finance issues during a career that spanned more than 40 years. He spoke on several occasions at VML conferences and workshops.

According to a story in *The Washington Post*, Dr. Petersen became known as "the godfather of municipal government finance," according to John Krause, the president and owner of Government Finance Group, an advisory firm that Dr. Petersen founded in Arlington in 1992. According to the newspaper account, Dr. Petersen advised local governments including Alexandria, Arlington and Falls Church on municipal bond issues while at Government Finance Group, which he ran until he joined George Mason in 2002.

Before founding his company, Dr. Petersen worked for about 18 years for the Government Finance Officers Association as senior director of its finance research center in Washington, according to *The Washington Post* story. There he became a leading expert on financial disclosure guidelines and the fiscal health of American states and cities.

In addition to his one term on city council, Dr. Petersen also served on the city's Economic Development Authority and with Historic Fairfax City Inc., a nonprofit historical preservation organization. Dr. Petersen was the father of state Sen. Chap Petersen of Fairfax.

NEWS & NOTES

Purcellville receives national 'green' honor

The Town of Purcellville was one of three municipalities in the United States to be chosen to receive a sustainable community award from the U.S. Chamber Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC) and Siemens Corporation recently.

Purcellville won in the small com-

munity category. Chicago and Santa Monica, Calif., won the categories for large and medium communities respectively.

The three communities were chosen from among 132 across 40 states to become this year's Siemens Sustainable Community Award winners. They were honored for their focus on a multi-disciplinary approach

to sustainability that has helped local businesses and enhanced the quality of life for residents.

"The awards show just how much the concept of sustainability has evolved for U.S. municipalities," said U.S. Chamber BCLC Founder and Executive Director Stephen Jordan. "Chicago, Santa Monica and Purcellville show that getting sustainability

right improves quality of life, the efficient use of resources, competitiveness and attractiveness for residents and visitors.”

Purcellville won the small community category for its proactive use of land and natural resources. Additionally, Purcellville’s “Go Green” goals are now part of the town’s comprehensive sustainability plan. Despite the national recession, Purcellville thrives economically and has received recognition from Gov. Bob McDonnell and former Gov. Tim Kaine for its sustainability efforts.

The U.S. Chamber BCLC and Siemens created the Sustainable Community Awards in 2008 to recognize communities that are taking steps to improve quality of life, be a steward of the environment, and increase the ability to sustain a successful community for generations to come. As part of the award, Chicago, Santa Monica and Purcellville will receive \$20,000 worth of trees each from the Alliance for Community Trees.

Manassas, Danville honored by APPA

The cities of Manassas and Danville were awarded the 2012 Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) platinum level recognition by the American Public Power Association (APPA) for outstanding reliability, safety, work force development and system improvement.

Manassas Department of Public Works and Utilities and Danville Utilities Electric Service were the only two of 16 public power providers in Virginia to be awarded the RP3 in 2012. Only 94 of the more than 2,000 public power utilities in the United States earned the Reliable Public Power Provider designation in 2012. It was the fourth year that Manassas Public Works/Utilities department has received this designation.

The RP3 designation recognizes public power utilities that demonstrate proficiency in four key disciplines: reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement. Criteria within each category are based on

sound business practices and represent a utility-wide commitment to safe and reliable delivery of electricity.

Richmond opens 2nd job help site

The City of Richmond opened its second workforce development community share site on March 14 in the East District Family Resource Center. The share site offers services and resources to assist residents in prepar-

ing and searching for jobs.

The center is partnering with RESOURCE, the Capital Region Workforce Investment Board, to teach classes on resume writing, interviewing and networking skills. Trained volunteers staff the center and serve as career agents and job coaches for interested residents looking for work.

“We recognize that many of our residents with the greatest needs cannot easily reach these services,”

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said Mayor Dwight C. Jones, who presided at a ribbon cutting ceremony on March 14. "Share sites serve our communities where the residents live by providing local services and a gateway to access the resources and services of the regional workforce system. This share site is one step closer to building a workforce system that is responsive and serves all of our residents."

Falls Church library adds MP3s to offerings

The Mary Riley Styles Public Library in Falls Church now offers free MP3 music file downloads on its website, www.fallschurchva.gov/library, through Freegal Music. Library cardholders are eligible for three MP3 downloads per week. A library card number and PIN are necessary to access and download songs.

Freegal Music is an online database that provides access to songs from Sony Music. The music files are Digital Rights Management-Free (DRM-Free) and do not expire. The files are compatible with PCs, Macs, iPods, iPads and other MP3-compatible devices. Freegal Music contains more than 500,000 songs from Sony Music artists spanning all genres, from Ke\$ha to Bruce Springsteen to Dave Brubeck and more. New music is added to the collection daily.

Herndon honors town volunteers

The Town of Herndon honored more than 425 volunteers from 38 service organization and groups recently for their service to the town. Each of the honorees contributed 100 hours or more of volunteer service in the community last year. The 28th Annual Mayor's Volunteer Appreciation Night was held at the Herndon Community Center during National Volunteer Week.

Citizens joined Mayor Steve J. DeBenedittis, members of the Town Council, Fairfax County Supervisor John W. Foust and state Del. Thomas Rust in celebrating the spirit of volunteerism. The town bestowed

special recognition on three individuals for their volunteer service and two businesses.

Falls Church adds 12 hybrid pickups

Falls Church has taken delivery on 12 hybrid 2012 Chevy Silverado pickup trucks. The vehicle purchase was fully funded by a grant from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program and enables the city to address an important air quality and transportation project as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

The pickup trucks will replace aging fleet vehicles for the departments of Public Works, Public Utilities, Recreation and Parks, and the Urban Forestry Division. The new vehicles are under warranty and will minimize the costs associated with operation and maintenance.

ELSEWHERE ...


The **City of Falls Church** was named a Tree City USA community by the Arbor Day Foundation for the 34th year in a row.

Out-of-school time summit set for June 6 in Richmond

RICHMOND MAYOR DWIGHT Jones will chair a special summit for local elected and appointed officials June 6 in Richmond on the effectiveness of out-of-school time programs for children.

The one-day session will feature information and ideas from programs across the country that are making a difference in the lives of not only children, but their families and communities. Attendees will learn about the many types of programs already operating in Virginia and elsewhere, and how they can encourage and promote programs that will help build a vibrant and highly skilled workforce of tomorrow.

The Virginia Municipal League is a partner in this effort, which has received support from a number of national foundations and the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families. For more information and to register, go to: www.v-post.org/events/event-registration.html.

VML members can earn four credits in the Virginia Elected Officials Leadership Academy (VEOLA) program for attending this session. If you are not currently enrolled in VEOLA, visit VML's website at www.vml.org and click on VEOLA to enroll, or call Kimberly Pollard at VML, kpollard@vml.org; 804/523-8528. 



Neighborhood pride at heart of goals in Norfolk



EDITOR'S NOTE:

This is the third in a series of articles tracking the success of the City of Norfolk's new Neighbors Building Neighborhoods program.

WITH THE ARRIVAL of spring, the unmistakable sound of lawn mowers and edgers signals a greater focus on the fourth and fifth goals of the Neighbors Building Neighborhoods (NBN) initiative in Norfolk. Attracting new homeowners, marketing the neighborhood and encouraging investment in homes are core concepts that NBN strives to promote, and are important to the growth of any neighborhood.

Building viable, competitive neighborhoods

About six years ago, building a viable and competitive housing market would have mostly meant increasing real estate values. The fourth of five NBN goals, however, offers an alternative way of looking at the charge by posing questions: Do people want to live in this neighborhood? Can the neighborhood attract new, good neighbors and encourage current residents to invest in their properties?

"Healthy neighborhoods are not only ones where neighbors care for their homes and yards, but are ones where they market their community," said Bob Batcher, director of communications for the city. "Even when they don't realize they are doing so, having a neighborhood newsletter, website and annual events are all ways that

residents promote their neighborhood."

An important project NBN pilot neighborhoods undertake is creating a neighborhood profile that looks at demographics, housing values and

By **KRISTEN HELGESON**

the current real estate market, crime stats, and even history. Residents of the NBN neighborhood of Norview received a pleasant surprise when their profile was completed. They discovered that their home ownership rate is 22 percent higher than the citywide rate. In addition, they found out that homes in the Norview NBN area tend to spend less time on the market than those in other neighborhoods across the city.

"I was incredibly impressed about our homeownership rate. That's phenomenal in Norfolk," says Denise Piatt of Norview and a Realtor® with ERA Real Estate Professionals. "The neighborhood has lots of character. People care about where they live."

Making quality property improvements

The fifth NBN goal introduces the idea of a neighborhood going beyond

minimum code standards by promoting attractive and quality property improvements. Since a municipality cannot impose standards higher than what ordinance allows, it is up to

residents to create a higher expectation. NBN looks at this as a process that each neighborhood needs to go through by getting as many neighbors involved in establishing the do's and don'ts for their neighborhood.

With some tools and guidance from the city, each NBN neighborhood is doing its own building condition survey. Neighbors decide what the rating scale is going to be and they do the rating. The overall message to residents is that just complying with minimum code standards in the maintenance and repair of one's home will not generate the market interest needed to create a competitive and reliable real estate market. They must go beyond.

Many neighborhoods are indeed trying to go beyond the minimum and assume more responsibility. In doing so they are encountering some hurdles in the improvement of the overall neighborhood – not from neighbors



Residents from the Elizabeth Park neighborhood gather for their annual picnic, which started in 2007.


but from the city. This has brought attention to an internal issue: The NBN philosophy isn't just for residents to embrace, but it's also for the city. As residents ask to do more when it comes to the maintenance of things such as rights-of-way, greenways and city trees, Norfolk city government is realizing that it, too, has to make changes in how it does business.

"Internally, we need to recognize that the people who know what's best for their neighborhood are those who are living in them," said City Manager Marcus D. Jones. "For our neighborhoods to truly grow and

become stronger, we – the city – must look at how to be solution-driven rather than approval-based."

Step-by-step, NBN is tackling these issues, especially in the implementation of the city's new neighborhood improvement grant program created to help accomplish NBN goals. The program, the Block-by-Block Neighborhood Pride Improvement Grant, is generating a number of creative ideas from neighborhoods. Although not all are doable, it has started some new and valuable discussions internally.

"Staff is doing a lot of talking on how to be a well-managed govern-

ment and it is through these conversations that we will achieve creating a sustainable, cultural change in how Norfolk does business," Jones said. 

About the author

Kristen Helgeson is a public information specialist for the City of Norfolk. Next month's article chronicling Norfolk's new approach to strengthening neighborhoods will look at the block-by-block grant awardees and process. More information on the goals and other NBN topics can be found at: www.norfolk.gov/NBN.

Arlington has proof that coyotes inhabit county

ARLINGTON COUNTY naturalists have received their first proof of what they and residents have long suspected – coyotes have come to Arlington.

A game camera at Potomac Overlook Regional Park took the first video of an Arlington coyote recently. "We've had reports of them for years now, mostly in north Arlington, along the Potomac River, but couldn't get any proof," said

County Natural Resources Manager Alonso Abugattas. "The public has sent us several pictures claiming coyotes but they were all either dogs or mangy foxes."

What brings coyotes, long an iconic image of the West – and paired with the Roadrunner in a beloved series of cartoons – to Arlington? Abugattas believes that the highly urbanized, densely populated county might actually be attractive to coyotes, who are skillful scavengers.

"Coyotes will make a living wherever they can find food, even in big cities," he said. "I think they are here to stay."

Not native to Virginia

In its 2011 *Wildlife of Arlington: A Natural Resource Heritage Technical Report*, the county reported that "it is considered likely that coyotes have found their way into Arlington, but they are extremely cautious, range very widely and move primarily at night." The coyote is not part of the historical native fauna of Virginia but is a master at adaptability and has steadily moved from

its western haunts. The coyotes spotted in the Eastern United States tend to be larger than Western coyotes.

"Eastern coyotes are larger than their Western cousins," said Abugattas. "Some naturalists think that as the coyote migrated eastward, they may have interbred with wolves, and the wolf DNA helped them grow a bit bigger."

Others believe these eastern coyotes simply grow bigger because there is more food available to them.



Image of coyote was captured on video in Arlington's Overlook Regional Park.


Coyotes avoid people

"Coyotes are very good at avoiding people, so residents shouldn't be overly concerned," said Cliff Fairweather, the new naturalist at Long Branch Nature Center. "The key is for resident to not feed them or to encourage them not to be afraid of people. The

longer they are afraid of people, the better it will be for coyotes and people."

To learn more about the strategic steps Arlington is taking to protect the county's natural areas, read its *Natural Resources Management Plan* at: <http://bit.ly/i6Trg4>.

"Since we've been making parks in Arlington more natural by eliminating exotic invasives, planting local native plants, introducing some historical animals, we have seen some great results," Abugattas said. "Our Barcroft Park has some unique and rare plant species. We've got spotted salamanders – that we had not seen for 20 years. We have White M Hairstreak butterflies and woodcocks."

Checkout (briefly) the Arlington County coyote on video at: <http://nmw.bz/ZuKP>. 

Supercomputing in Danville

**Cray XMT2 is evidence of transformation from
manufacturing center to technology hub**



Will Mitchell (right), site manager, and Phillip Hayes, a software developer, are two of the first employees on site at the Center for Applied High Performance Computing in Danville. Photos by Steven Mantilla Photography - 2012.

FROM THE OUTSIDE, the buildings along Bridge Street are typical of Danville's River District, which includes downtown and the historic Tobacco Warehouse District. Former factory and warehouse buildings line this cobblestone street, offering a glimpse of the city's past when tobacco and textiles dominated the economy.

From the inside, however, these buildings are anything but typical of those bygone days. Today, these buildings offer a glimpse of Danville's future – renovated for use as college classrooms, urban apartments and condominiums, and technology businesses.

Perhaps the most unexpected site sits inside the building known as Old Belt No. 1. Built in 1877, this building today houses one of the nation's most powerful computers, a next-generation Cray XMT2 supercomputer.

With the XMT2, Danville enjoys the unique status of having the only supercomputer in the nation that is not housed at a federal laboratory or academic facility. But more importantly, the supercomputer provides tangible evidence of the city's efforts to transform its economy from tobacco and textiles to a more future-oriented mix of businesses.

"All of us who live in Southside Virginia have great respect for and draw strength from the great heritage that we have here," Fifth District Congressman Robert Hurt said recently during a ceremony celebrating the arrival of the supercomputer. "And this heritage is represented in much of the bricks and mortar right where we are standing that provided generations of good jobs and generations of prosperity."

Hurt then shifted to the future.

"It's thrilling to be able to look at the next generation. And that is what this (supercomputer) represents," he said.

Many officials foresee Danville becoming a regional technology hub with the XMT2 at the center of activity – a view expressed by Mary Rae Carter, Virginia's deputy secretary of commerce and trade for rural economic development.

"This could be a game-changer for us," she said.

With the arrival of the XMT2, the Center for Applied High Performance Computing was established in Danville. The center operates under the guidance of a team of specialists from Noblis, a nonprofit science and technology company based in Falls Church.

The center will create 15 new jobs over the next three years and hire people in the fields of mathematics, computer science, engineering and software development. Noblis will use the center to assist clients in fields of national importance such as computational biology, DNA sequencing, air traffic management, semantic web applications, fraud detection and counterterrorism.

The organization also is interested in working with partners such as researchers and small businesses who want to develop services and applications for the XMT2. Therefore, as a business model, the center will draw other technology companies to the Danville area and expand Virginia's technology base.

"The XMT2 offers a level of computing power that is rarely found outside of federal laboratories and academic settings," said Gil Miller, Noblis corporate vice president and chief technology officer. "We are moving high performance computing out of the lab and into the field to solve real problems."

What's so super about this computer?

The XMT2 – named "Dan River" for the river that flows in sight of the center – allows researchers and companies to sift through large amounts of data and find commonalities between seemingly unrelated data "to connect the dots" and "find the needle in the haystack."



The XMT2 excels at tasks such as pattern matching, scenario development, behavioral prediction, anomaly identification and graph analysis.

Miller explains Dan River's value this way: "Every problem that the complex world faces can be represented as a network," he said. "If we have a cluster of people inside of the network who are living noticeably longer than other people, you might want to understand how they are related. Is it diet? Is it medical? What is actually causing this phenomenon to take place?"

Another application might be homeland security.

"You could imagine that we are very interested in the social network of terrorists," Miller said. "We are interested in exploring what that network looks like and when are there abnormalities in that network."

Whether in the fields of medicine or counterterrorism or other specialties such as air traffic management and fraud detection, Miller said, "This supercomputer is dying to get its hands on those problems."

And because the supercomputer is able to process data so quickly, Miller said Dan River can solve "problems the world faces that were previously thought impossible."

How fast is Dan River?

Looks can be deceiving, and that is certainly true in the case of Dan River, which is only about the size of three large refrigerators. Within that small space, however, is a set of processors that work together to accomplish a particular computing task. "This supercomputer works on

By **ARNOLD HENDRIX**

things called networks very, very efficiently,” Miller said. “It’s like NASCAR cars. They’re designed to go around that oval, and they do it very well. This supercomputer goes across networks very well.”

“If I were to draw a network by thinking of every person in China as part of this network, and we had 16 links connecting every person in China, then just think about all those links,” Miller said. “The supercomputer is the race car that is going to go across every one of those links – billions and billions of links. We can go across every one of those links in less than one second.

“We are no longer in the age of limited computing power,” he continued. “This supercomputer will do an amazing job of breaking down barriers and opening up avenues we never thought of.”

Miller said the XMT2 excels at tasks such as pattern matching, scenario development, behavioral prediction, anomaly identification and graph analysis.

When Dan River arrived in December, the immediate task was to take it on what Miller termed “a test drive.” That process was ongoing when federal, state and local officials gathered in late February for a ceremony marking the official opening of the center.

The test drive has been completed, said Will Mitchell, a software architect who serves as the Danville site manager for Noblis.

“We are proceeding with developing algorithms and a couple of actual solutions for problems that we have identified within our company and our customer community,” Mitchell said. “We are marching in the direction of being able to demonstrate we have a unique capability to address the problems that we have identified. This machine is very useful for a certain class of problems. What we are trying to do is be able to demonstrate that to our customers (federal agencies).”

Mitchell also is charged with growing the software team in Danville. Currently, the team consists of Mitchell, Curtis Bagby, who is the Cray system manager, and



The high-tech computer facility sits inside a refurbished building known as Old Belt No. 1, which was constructed in 1877.

Phillip Hayes, a Danville native who recently was graduated from Purdue University with a master’s degree in computer science. Hayes is a software developer, and he was able to return home because of the center.

Three interns will join the team this summer. “They will assist in developing foundations for the things we do,” Mitchell said.

Why Danville?

The center is a partnership in technology, created in collaboration with Noblis, Cray, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission, and the City of Danville.

At the center’s ribbon-cutting ceremony in February, Miller said, “Everyone that I meet wants to know two things. What is so super about this computer, and why Danville?”

The story begins, Miller said, when Cray company officials crashed a Christmas party of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, a state authority created in 1995 by the General Assembly to assist companies looking to locate or expand in Virginia.

Keith Boswell, managing director of the authority, recalls that day.

“It was in December of 2009 when I received a call. And the

call was ‘would you be interested in entertaining an idea about some kind of center that could do some really neat stuff?’ I said, ‘yes, we can talk. How about after Christmas?’”

Boswell said the reply from the Cray official was, “We need to talk now. How about tomorrow?”

Boswell said “tomorrow” was the authority’s annual holiday party.

“We invited them to the party,” Boswell said. “They came down and presented an idea that we could do some kind of supercomputer center with a company called Noblis. From that meeting, we were looking for partnerships.”

The authority found a ready partner in Danville.

“We looked at some other things, but Danville clearly got it,” Boswell said. “They were ready to go. They had some answers early, and we made a path forward. It wouldn’t have happened if we hadn’t had the vision that Danville had. Danville is on that edge. They can see what can happen. They are eager to make deals.”

This deal required a creative collaboration.

“This is not an ordinary economic development project,” Boswell said. “We added other partners – the Virginia tobacco commission. It became an idea in which I never heard ‘no.’ In my business, we look for the ‘no.’ We don’t want to waste time.” Not

only did Danville say yes, Boswell emphasized that the city reiterated its interest and willingness to do whatever was necessary to advance the project.


Among the questions for Danville was where to locate the center. The answer was to renovate the Old Belt No. 1 building on Bridge Street into ready-to-go space through federal, state and local money.

As part of the renovation, Danville's broadband fiber network, nDanville, was extended to the building. Danville's local network connects with the Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative, which was built with significant support from Virginia's tobacco commission. Today, the cooperative owns and manages more than 1,500 miles of fiber, connecting Virginia's rural southern region to long-haul fiber stretching from Atlanta to Washington, D.C.

Neal Noyes, executive director of Virginia's tobacco commission, said connectivity is essential in a global economy.

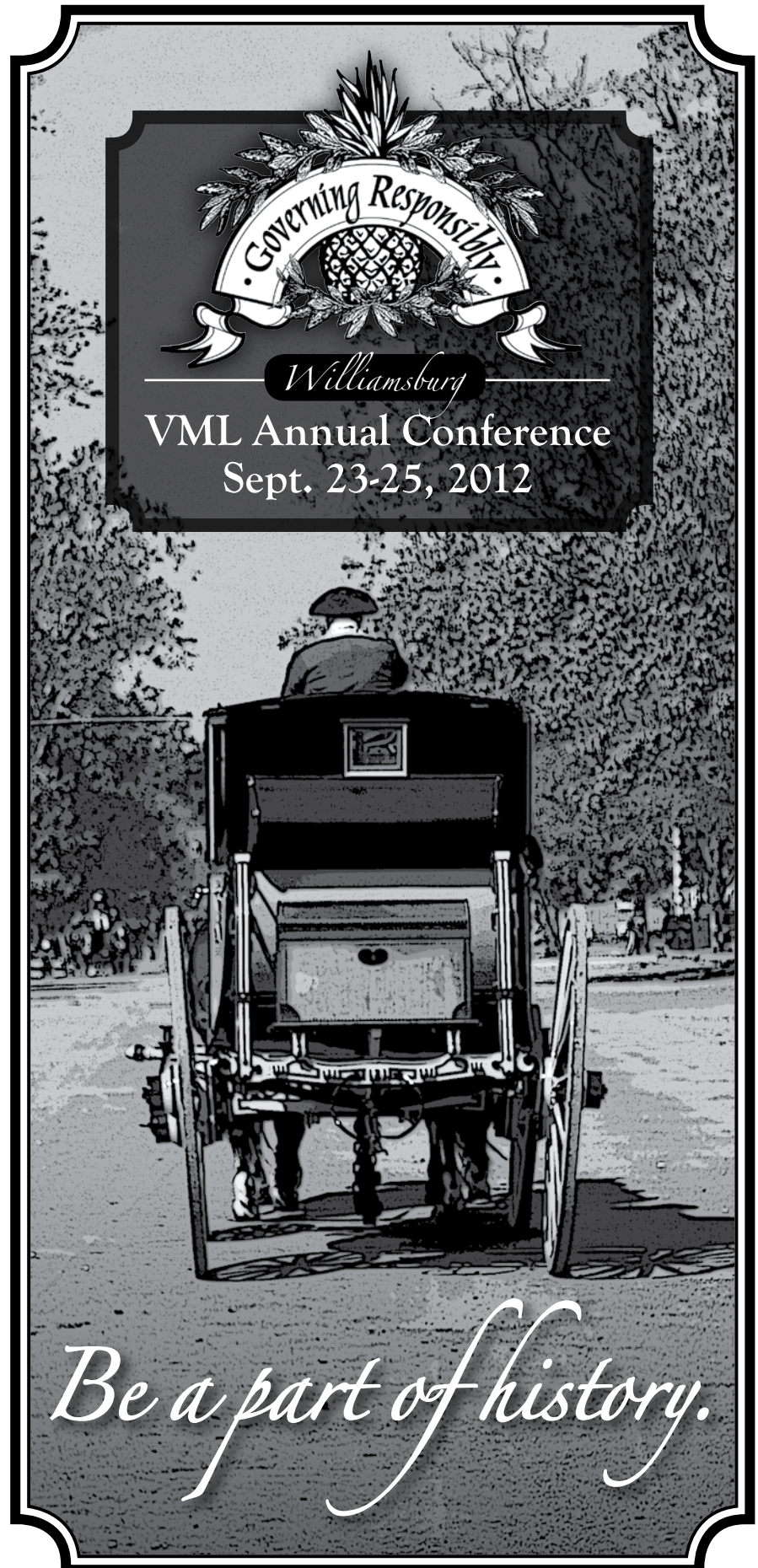
"When this project was first broached with members of my board, our understanding was and continues to be that no rural area anywhere in the U.S. has the computing capacity of this center," Noyes said. "And when you imagine how innovation can proceed based on the development of new applications and new software that can take advantage of the enormous capacity of this wonderful computer, the ability to innovate and to be competitive in a global economy begins anew right here (in Danville)."

Toward that goal, Danville Mayor Sherman Saunders hailed the center as a cornerstone for the region.

"We've all been hard at work transforming our economy," Saunders said. "To have a Cray supercomputer in Danville is something few of us could have even imagined a few short months ago." The center, Saunders said, is one that "screams loudly and clearly, 'We are making the transition from the old to the new economy.'" 

About the author

Arnold Hendrix is the public information officer for the City of Danville.



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VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The 2012 Virginia Municipal League Achievement Awards encourage and recognize the accomplishments of member local governments in meeting the challenge of operating vibrant cities, towns and counties. Innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, increasing citizen participation, and reaching toward higher service levels are all daily occurrences in Virginia local governments, and they deserve public recognition. This awards program seeks out the best of these programs. It is through this public recognition that all Virginia local governments can share and learn from these achievements.

POPULATION AWARDS

The VML Achievement Awards competition includes five categories based on population so that local governments compete with other local governments of comparable size. The population categories are: (1) under 5,000; (2) 5,000-10,000; (3) 10,001-35,000; (4) 35,001-90,000; and (5) more than 90,000.

A local government may submit up to three entries in its population category. One winner will be selected from each population category to receive an Achievement Award. The winner of the President's Award – the entry that does the best job of fulfilling the criteria set forth below – will be chosen from the five population category winners.

Entries in the five population categories will be evaluated on the following criteria, which emphasize innovation, efficiency and entrepreneurship:

- Generally speaking, accomplishing projects and implementing programs that enhance the vitality and quality of life in cities, towns or counties;
- developing more innovative ways of delivering government services;
- implementing new or improved approaches in addressing a significant community need, or significantly improving an existing program;
- reflecting excellence in management;
- increasing citizen participation;
- striving toward higher service levels;
- possessing ideas and approaches that make a project or program relevant to other local governments;
- having a long-term value to the community; and
- showing a documented record of effectiveness that illustrates how a project or program has achieved its goals.

NOTE: All submittals in a population category must list one of the five population brackets on the cover page of the entry. For entries that represent significant improvements to existing programs, the improvements must have been made between Jan. 1, 2011 and May 1, 2012.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The winner of the President's Award – the entry that does the best job of fulfilling the criteria set forth on the facing page – will be chosen from the five population category winners. The winning entry will, in effect, be the equivalent of a best-in-show selection.



COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

The Communications Award recognizes the best in local government communications programs. Local governments of all sizes may submit one entry for this award.

Projects may include publications, audio-visual productions, special events, speeches, crisis plans, Web sites, social media initiatives, etc. CDs and DVDs also may be submitted.

NOTE: All submittals in this category must list the entry as "Communications Award" on the cover page of the entry.

THE JUDGING

Entries will be screened by the VML staff and judged by a panel selected for its expertise in local government.

THE WINNERS

All winning entries will be featured in the September issue of *Virginia Town & City*. The Population Category winners, the winner of the President's Award and the winner of the Communications Award will be recognized and presented with their awards at the 2012 VML Annual Conference in Williamsburg on Sept. 25.

DEADLINE & ADDRESS

All entries must be postmarked by May 25, 2012 and mailed to:

VML Achievement Awards
P.O. Box 12164
Richmond, VA 23241

or shipped (UPS, FedEx, etc.) to:

VML Achievement Awards
13 E. Franklin St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Entries will not be returned. If you have any questions, contact David Parsons at dparsons@vml.org or by telephone at 804/523-8527.

RULES FOR ENTERING

Detailed rules on how to prepare and submit an entry were mailed to all VML member local governments in early March. The rules also are posted on the VML Web site at: <http://www.vml.org/WNEW/Achieve12.html>.

Bowling Green infrastructure benefits from PPEA approach

FOR MORE THAN 10 years – through several town managers, mayors and changes in the membership of Town Council – the Bowling Green infrastructure improvement and expansion project flourished.

Despite the fits and starts, elected officials, town staff and community members maintained a vision for strategic planned growth to maximize the commercially and residentially zoned properties along the Route 301 South corridor just outside the entrance to Fort AP Hill in central Caroline County north of Richmond.

The town struggled through the years with identifying the specific scope of the project, gaining support from property owners and obtaining financing. In 2010, however, Bowling Green reached out to Reid Engineering Co. Inc. for assistance with the planning and design of the project in hopes that it could become reality.

The water and sewer infrastructure improvements and expansion were part of the town's future growth plan. Not only did the project allow for commercial and residential development along the north side of Route 301 in the form of connections, but it also provided service availability for the existing development along the south side of Route 301. In addition, it called for the replacement of aging water and sewer mains along Broadus Avenue to provide both improved service and new capacity for future growth within the town limits.

The benefits of PPEA

In mid-2010, Reid Engineering recommended making use of an alternative design-build project delivery approach via the Public Private Education and Infrastructure Act (PPEA). The benefits of the PPEA approach became obvious shortly thereafter.




Bowling Green officials were on hand for the beginning of the infrastructure improvement project.

They included:

- cost savings in both engineering fees and construction;
- a defined scope of work that allowed the town to select a phased approach;
- a lump sum price that allowed creation of a special tax district, gaining buy-in from the affected property owners and financing through VML-VACo Finance;
- no upfront engineering or proposal development fees;
- reduced risk by contracting with a design-builder entity versus the traditional approach with separate contracts with an engineer and a contractor;
- development of a realistic, but fast-track design and construction schedule that allowed the town to plan accordingly, and
- the establishment of effective communication, collaboration and value engineering from all parties, including town staff.

As the project nears completion

this month, Bowling Green is on the verge of reaching a major milestone that it first envisioned a decade ago. In the end, Mayor David Storke and his fellow members of Town Council persevered with the help of a consulting firm that offered a creative alternative for building essential infrastructure improvements. 

Reid Engineering, a sustaining member of VML, was established in 1977. The environmental and civil engineering firm based in Fredericksburg provides engineering solutions in more than 36 states to the municipal, industrial and federal sectors in the core areas of water, wastewater and reuse.

Contact:

Shane Reid, P.E.
Vice President of Operations
1210 Princess Anne St.
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
(540) 371-8500
www.reidengineering.com

Longer version of job ads posted at www.vml.org

Because of the number of requests it receives to publish job advertisements, VML reduces the length of the position descriptions in *Virginia Town & City*. A complete listing of all of the job ads published here and more appears on VML's website at www.vml.org. Visit the VML site and click on "Marketplace" to read the complete descriptions.

Assistant Director/CFO, Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority

SALARY: \$52,562-\$84,094 (+) benefits. Assists the executive director in the management and day-to-day operations, including effective financial management. Financial duties include planning and accountability for fiscal and managerial results, and financial reporting to HUD and other regulatory agencies. Min. reqs. include relevant bachelor's degree ; 5 yrs. progressive responsible mngmnt and financial exper.; excellent fiscal, planning, administrative and communication skills; knowledge of HUD rules, regs, policies and procedures. Send resume and salary requirements to: Lynchburg Redevelop-

ment and Housing Authority, P.O. Box 1298, Lynchburg, VA 24505 or e-mail debra.guyot@lynchburgva.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Town Attorney (legal services), Haymarket

SALARY: Negotiable. Soliciting the interest of qualified professional law firms or individuals to provide a full range of municipal legal services serving as the town attorney on a part-time, contractual basis. Contact Town Clerk Jennifer Preli at www.jpreli@townofhaymarket.org or at 703-753-2600 for a copy of the Request for Qualifications. Deadline (for RFQ responses): May 18.

Town Sergeant, Glasgow

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. FT position. Reqs. H.S. diploma, law enforcement exper. and current law enforcement certification; ability to function without direct supervision and to work varying shifts, including nights and weekends; ability to communicate effectively with the public, perform administrative tasks, apply for grants and handle a diverse workload. Reqs. town residency or close proximity. Application and job description at www.glasgowvirginia.org. Contact town at 540-

258-2246 with questions. Send completed application and resume to: Ryan Spitzer, Town Manager, P.O. Box 326, Glasgow, VA 24555. Review of applications begins May 28. Open until filled. EOE.

Accounting Manager, Manassas

SALARY: \$67,954-\$113,506 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Manages the accounting function, including general ledger, accounts payable, payroll and fixed assets. Supervises and provides technical support to the accounting division staff, including training in job skills, planning, assigning and directing work and appraising performance. Coordinates, plans and directs the year-end closing of the financial records and the annual audit including preparation of audit schedules and the CAFR. Must have complete knowledge of all govt. accounting, auditing and regulatory pronouncements and federal, state and local laws (including payroll) to ensure that the city's financial records remain in compliance. Reqs. bachelor's degree in accounting or related field and 4-5 yrs. progressively responsible related exper. Prior supervisory exper. preferred. CPA desired. To apply, complete city application at www.manassascity.org/jobs. Deadline: June 11. EOE.

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Economic Development Specialist, Charlottesville

SALARY: \$53,000-\$61,000 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Responsibilities include business development activities and improving opportunities for entrepreneurial growth. Duties include: serving as a liaison to business and neighborhood associations; identifying, researching and implementing local solutions for key issues; providing assistance to city-based small businesses and working with partner organizations to ensure high level of service for entrepreneurs. Reqs. min. of a relevant bachelor's degree (master's preferred) and 2 yrs. exper. Master's may substitute for related exper. Work exper. above 2-yr. min. may substitute for educ. up to 4 yrs. Apply at www.charlottesville.org/jobs. Deadline: May 18. EOE.

Accounting Division Director, Hanover County

SALARY: \$73,242-\$110,775 (+) benefits. Direct daily financial operations. Will work closely with county department heads and staff to maintain sound financial practices and internal controls. Reqs. bachelor's degree in accounting or related field with min. 5 yrs. progressively responsible exper., including supervision. Reqs. exper. in payroll, budgeting, accounts payable, financial reporting, debt management, forecasting, information systems and local govt. financial administration; and extensive computer skills, with emphasis on Excel. Prefer CPA with local govt. exper. For more info and to apply, visit www.hanovercountyjobs.com or call 804-365-6489. Open until filled. EOE.

Executive Director, Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA)

SALARY: Negotiable up to \$95,000 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. WATA provides fixed route and paratransit service to James City County, the City of Williamsburg, York County, the College of William and Mary and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Reqs. relevant bachelor's degree (master's preferred) and min. 7-10 yrs. public and/or private sector mngmnt. exper. Reports to board of directors consisting of public and private sector members. Submit resume with complete salary history and 5 professional references to: John A. Anzivino, Springsted Incorporated, 1564 East Parham Road, Richmond, VA 23228. E-mail: richmond@springsted.com. Deadline: May 20. EOE.

Detention Specialist I (Male), Winchester

SALARY: \$32,323-\$51,729 (+) benefits. Provides primary security, care and custody of detained residents at the Regional Juvenile Detention Center. Reqs. ability to participate in large muscle physical

activities; excellent writing and verbal skills; valid driver's license; educ. and exper. equiv. to a H.S. diploma; and some exper. with youth. Because sections of the Juvenile Detention Center are gender-segregated, only men will be considered for the position. Weekend shift for Friday-Sunday with hours to be determined. To learn more or to apply, visit winchester.va.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Detention Specialist I (Female), Winchester

SALARY: \$32,323-\$51,729 (+) benefits. Provides primary security, care and custody of detained residents at the Regional Juvenile Detention Center. Reqs. ability to participate in large muscle physical activities; excellent writing and verbal skills; valid driver's license; educ. and exper. equiv. to a H.S. diploma; and some exper. with youth. Because sections of the Juvenile Detention Center are gender-segregated, only women will be considered for the position. Weekend shift for Friday-Sunday with hours of 7 p.m.-7 a.m. To learn more or to apply, visit winchester.va.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Finance, Fauquier County

SALARY: \$84,805 min. to start DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Seeking qualified and enthusiastic candidates to be responsible for management and supervision of the county government and school division's consolidated Finance Department in the areas of general ledger, payroll, accounts receivable, accounts payable and procurement. Must hold bachelor's degree in accounting, finance or related field. Master's degree in public administration, finance, or related field a plus. Local or state govt. exper. a must. For more info or to submit an application, visit <http://apply.fauquiercounty.gov>. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Public Works, Strasburg

SALARY: \$57,764-\$71,006 start range (+) benefits. Plans, organizes, manages and directs the Department of Public Works, which includes 19 FT employees. Oversees all dept. functions, including maintenance and repair of streets, utility lines, vehicles, buildings and grounds, meter reading, inspections and construction. Reqs. min. H.S. diploma and 6 yrs. exper. in civil engineering, engineering mngmnt., public works or closely related field, including 3 yrs. exper. as a supervisor. Prefer bachelor's degree in civil engineering or closely-related field and 8 yrs. exper. in municipal public works, including 5 yrs. exper. in a supervisory position. Submit town employment application, resume, salary history and list of references to: Town of Strasburg, ATTN: Director of Public Works Search, P.O. Box

351, Strasburg, VA 22657. Application packets may also be submitted via e-mail (PDF file) to solicitations@strasburgva.com. Deadline: May 16. EOE.

Jail Superintendent, Meherrin River Regional Jail Authority

SALARY: Negotiable DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Serves as superintendent of the Meherrin River Regional Jail, which is set to open in July in Brunswick County. The jail is a 400-bed rated local jail, with an additional 80-bed satellite facility that will open in Mecklenburg County in early 2013. The Regional Jail will employ 189 people and have an annual bldg. of appx. \$13 million. Authority members are the counties of Brunswick, Dinwiddie and Mecklenburg. Reqs. substantial management and budgetary exper. in corrections or govt. management. Send letter of interest, along with resume, to Brian Roberts, Sheriff, Brunswick County, P.O. Box 705, Lawrenceville, VA 23868 or broberts@brunswickso.org. Open until filled. EOE.

City Manager, Covington

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. (pop. 6,000 appx.; \$15 million operating and capital bldg.) Reqs. bachelor's degree (master's preferred) and knowledge of financial systems, budgeting, utility system management, economic development and personnel administration. Must have excellent administrative, PR and organizational skills; must be team-oriented and possess strong leadership, interpersonal and exceptional oral and written communications skills. Prefer local govt. exper. Send cover letter, resume, salary history and 3 professional references to: Gail Wood, City Clerk, City of Covington, 333 W. Locust St., Covington, VA 24426. Candidates strongly encouraged to apply by May 31. Visit us at www.covington.va.us. Open until filled. EOE.

Water Treatment Plant Operator, Bristol

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Bristol Virginia Utilities seeking a certified operator at its facility in Abingdon with strong electronic, telemetry and computer skills to fill a night shift position. Preferred candidate will have extensive exper. or an educational background in these areas or a related field, and will have state certification as a Water Treatment Plant Operator (preferably Class I), or be able to earn a Class I certification within the standard time frame. Submit letter of interest, resume and salary history to: Jackie McNutt, BVU Water Treatment Plant, 22479 Watauga Road, Abingdon, VA 24211. Direct questions to Jackie McNutt, Water Treatment Plant Supervisor, 276-628-7521; Fax 276-628-7227. Deadline: May 15. EOE.

Chief Accountant – Payroll (Finance Dept.), Albemarle County

SALARY: \$52,442-\$68,174 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Supervises either the Accounting Division or the Payroll Division and maintains the related system. Oversees successful management of assigned division (Accounting or Payroll), to include appropriate control and reconciliation mechanisms are in place and functioning effectively. Reqs. graduation from accredited college with bachelor's degree in finance, accounting or related field, or an equiv. comb. of educ. and exper.; min. 3 yrs. of highly responsible relevant exper. Prefer exper. preparing GAAP financial statements, comprehensive knowledge of GASB standards/governmental accounting, a master's degree in accounting, business, finance, public administration or related field, and/or CPA exper. Apply at www.albemarle.org/jobs. Deadline: May 14. EOE.

Business Auditor (Finance Dept.), Albemarle County

SALARY: \$45,556-\$59,224 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Performs difficult technical work in the inspection and investigation of business establishments to secure compliance with the state and local business license and tax ordinances. Works with business community by providing information and assistance for new businesses. Reqs. any comb. of educ. and exper. equiv. to a bachelor's degree in business management, finance, or a related field with course work equiv. to a major concentration in accounting and/or auditing; min. 2 yrs. audit exper. Prefer CPA or related certification. Reqs. valid Va. driver's license. Apply at www.albemarle.org/jobs. Deadline: May 14. EOE.

Division Manager of Revenue and Taxation (Dept. of Finance), Albemarle County

SALARY: \$64,768 - \$84,198 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Responsible for planning, organizing and directing the administrative and clerical functions of the Collections Division - including the collection of all taxes and miscellaneous payments. Reqs. graduation from accredited college with emphasis on public administration or management, and exper. in an administrative or supervisory capacity. Apply at www.albemarle.org/jobs. Deadline: May 14. EOE.

Submit ads to David Parsons at dparsons@vml.org. VML publishes job advertisements at no cost to its local government members. Non-members are charged a flat rate of \$25 per ad per issue, which includes posting on VML's website, publication in the Update newsletter, and publication in Virginia Town & City (deadlines permitting). VML edits position descriptions in printed publications because of space limitations.

CALENDAR

VML Town Section Meeting, Marion, May 11

First of four regional meetings of the Virginia Municipal League Town Section to be held beginning at 10:30 a.m. at the General Francis Marion Hotel. Registration information on the VML website. Contact Sherall Dementi at sdementi@vml.org or 804-649-8471.

Virginia Recycling Conference, Roanoke, May 15-16

Annual Conference at Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center. To register and find out more, visit www.varecycles.org.

2012 Virginia Transit Association Annual Conference and Bus Expo, Fairfax County, May 17-18

Taking place at the Hilton McLean at Tysons Corner. More information at www.vatransit.com.

Municipal Electric Power Association of Virginia, Virginia Beach, May 23-25

Annual Conference. For conference registration and agenda, contact Kimberly Pollard, kpollard@vml.org or 804-523-8528.

VML Town Section Meeting, Leesburg, May 24

Second of four regional meetings of the Virginia Municipal League Town Section beginning at 10:30 a.m. at the Lightfoot Restaurant. Registration information on the VML website. Contact Sherall Dementi at sdementi@vml.org or 804-649-8471.

VML Town Section Meeting, Farmville, May 25

Third of four regional meetings of the Virginia Municipal League Town Section to be held at the Farmville Train Station. Registration information on the VML website. Contact Sherall Dementi at sdementi@vml.org or 804-649-8471.

VML Town Section Meeting, Gordonsville, June 7

Last of four regional meetings of the Virginia Municipal League Town Section to be held in the Council Chambers at the Town Office. Registration information on the VML website. Contact Sherall Dementi at sdementi@vml.org or 804-649-8471.

VLGMA Annual Conference, June 13-15, Virginia Beach

Annual conference of the Virginia Local Government Management Association will be held at the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel. The conference includes general sessions and workshops, as well as an annual business meeting. Registration information is available on the VLGMA website at www.vlgma.org. For more information, contact Janet Areson at VML, jareson@vml.org, 804/523-8522

NLC Congress of Cities, Boston, Nov. 28-Dec. 1

Annual National League of Cities event. More information at www.nlc.org/events/coc

VML Annual Conference, Williamsburg, Sept. 23-25

More information at www.vml.org

ICMA 98th Annual Conference, Oct. 7-10, Phoenix

The 98th annual conference of the International City/County Management Association. Registration information will be available beginning June 18 on the ICMA website at www.icma.org.

VBCOA Annual School & Conference, Oct. 14-16, Fredericksburg

Annual school and conference of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association will be held at the Fredericksburg Hospitality House Hotel and Conference Center. Agenda will include biannual business meeting, election of officers and educational sessions. More information at www.vbcoa.org. Contact: Mary Jo Fields at mfields@vml.org or 804-523-8524.

VACo Annual Conference, Bath County, Nov. 11-13


More information at www.vaco.org

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Legislative inaction on transportation took us all another step closer to cliff

IN THE FINAL scene of the movie “Thelma and Louise,” the friends sit in Louise’s baby blue Thunderbird, 100 yards from the edge of the Grand Canyon. Behind them a dozen police officers sit and hope the ladies will turn around, do the right thing and face up to the sins of their past. Thelma and Louise sit there pondering their future.

The Virginia General Assembly finds itself in a similar situation with regard to transportation funding in the commonwealth. Behind them sits the 26 years of failing to adequately fund our transportation infrastructure. That’s how long it has been since the General Assembly provided meaningful, new funding for transportation by adding 1 percent to the sales tax on the purchase of motor vehicles, increasing the sales and use tax going to transportation by 0.5 percentage points and raising the gas tax to 17.5 cents. Ironically, that action came just a few years after President Reagan signed federal legislation raising the federal gas tax. Our gas tax, still at the same level, now places us behind 39 other states in the amount of state gas tax charged, and our per capita spending on transportation has dropped to 42nd in the nation.

The sins of the past are evident.

Virginia state law requires that maintaining and protecting our investments in transportation infrastructure takes priority over new construction. As a result, beginning in 2002, VDOT began taking money from its construction budget to fund basic maintenance (referred to as “crossover”). The annual “take” has now grown to more than \$400 million a year. It has been three years since VDOT has had enough money in its construction budget to distribute through the statutory “formula” that allocates money for interstate, primary and secondary roads. As a consequence, there is

almost no money trickling through the system down to our secondary roads, which represent some of the state’s most congested and dangerous roads.

Think about it ... Fairfax

County, our largest and possibly most congested jurisdiction, will get no construction money from the state for its secondary roads in 2012. With the General Assembly authorizing more and more borrowing by VDOT, its debt service – the amount paid off the top of its budget every year – continues to escalate. In 2012 VDOT’s debt service is \$314 million. In three years the debt service climbs to \$421 million. All the while, Virginia has more than 5,000 structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridges, with the latest price tag to fix them being \$4 billion. Finally, two of the most congested areas in the nation, Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads, are the economic engines that drive the commonwealth’s economy.

Last year, the secretary of transportation said that in less than five years there will be no more construction money for roads in Virginia.

We are now 100 yards from the cliff.

This year the General Assembly had another opportunity to address the transportation funding crisis and we saw approximately a dozen legislators, Republicans and Democrats, introduce bills that would have provided new, long-term funding for transportation.

But one by one, subcommittees and committees killed the bills, despite passionate pleas from the patrons and subcommittee/committee members who said “we have to do something about transportation.”

In the end, only two bills remained standing, the House and Senate versions of the Governor’s Omnibus Transportation Bills. Gunned by committees, which deleted provisions such as the creation of a statewide tolling authority,

the only substantive funding language in the bills was the House’s allocation of an additional 0.25 percentage point of the existing general sales and use tax for transportation (proposed by the governor) and the Senate’s indexing of the gas tax to inflation.

The bills went to a conference committee to “work out the differences.” The obvious answer was right in front of them: a blend or compromise of both versions. While neither funding idea was enough to make a dent in our chronic and growing shortfall in maintenance funds, together they could have restored the integrity of the construction fund in approximately six years.

After hours of conferring, neither idea survived. The House was unwilling to accept the Senate’s funding idea, and vice versa. So what emerged? VDOT will now sell naming rights for various crumbling roads and bridges. Original estimates pegged those revenues at a whopping \$25 million a year.

In “Thelma and Louise,” Thelma looks behind the duo and says, “Let’s don’t get caught.” Louise responds, “Are you sure?” They smile, hold hands and drive off of the cliff.

In front of the General Assembly lies the all too obvious cliff. The question remains: Will they turn, face and fix the problems of the past, or will they drive the commonwealth off the cliff, ignoring the fact that investment in our transportation infrastructure is critical for jobs, economic development, mobility, connectivity and safety?



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