

VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League

VOL. 51 NO. 3
APRIL 2016

Turning the page on child hunger

First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe
tells a new story about feeding
Virginia children

Inside:

VML's General Assembly
scorecard





VMLIP receives 2016 Award for Excellence in Performance

The VML Insurance Programs (VMLIP) Leadership Development Program has received the 2016 Award for Excellence in Performance from the Association of Governmental Risk Pools (AGRiP). This is the second year in a row that VMLIP has received this award.

The program was designed to provide growth opportunities for staff and to facilitate the retention of key talent in VMLIP's succession planning. Participants were exposed to learning on topics from finance, human resources, underwriting, claims, technology, safety, and more. VMLIP is dedicated to ensuring members receive high quality claims management from experienced and qualified staff.





About the cover

First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe reads to a class at Bellevue Elementary School in Richmond during Virginia Agriculture Literacy Week. In this month's cover story (page 7), Mrs. McAuliffe shares her vision for the No Kid Hungry Virginia Campaign.

Photo by Elaine Lidholm, Va. Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services

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Water crisis: What if this happened in your town?

On a winter morning, officials in the small southwest Virginia town of Chilhowie and Washington County woke up to a catastrophic water plant failure. Careful planning and a long range view made the difference between a public health crisis and just another day with clean running water.

By Nancy Chafin

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If I was in charge of the budget...

Now's your chance, citizens. Virginia Beach offers an online budget program that lets residents suggest changes to the city's proposed budget. They can raise or lower taxes, increase or decrease spending based on their priorities. But in the end, it has to balance. Challenge on!

By Marc Davis

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General Assembly 2016: Local government scorecard

Passed, killed, vetoed, amended. From Airbnb to proffers, local government concerns were at the heart of many of the most hotly contested issues in the 2016 General Assembly session. Here's a wrap up of the good, the bad and the ugly and what they will mean for your locality.

By VML legislative staff

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King of the code

When it comes to being a stickler for detail, no one beats a building code official. Where do they come up with this stuff? And why? Find out how the Virginia building codes are developed and why the process matters to your community.

By John Walsh

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Virginia Town & City (ISSN0042-6784) is the official magazine of the Virginia Municipal League. Published 10 times a year at 13 E. Franklin St., P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, VA 23241; 804/649-8471. E-mail: e-mail@vml.org. Reproduction or use of contents requires prior approval of the Virginia Municipal League and if granted must be accompanied by credit to Virginia Town & City and the Virginia Municipal League. Periodicals Postage paid at Richmond, VA. (USPS 661040) Subscription rates: members - \$8 per year, non-members - \$16 per year. Single copies - \$2 each. Postmaster: Send address changes to Virginia Town & City, P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, 23241-0164.

Virginia Town & City is printed on recycled paper.

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A well-rounded view of Virginia



Thomas R. Schiff has created 360° panoramic photos of many of Virginia’s most celebrated landmarks, including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (above).

FOR MY TWO-YEAR ANNIVERSARY with the Virginia Municipal League, the terrific staff here gave me and my family a membership to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA). It is a perfect gift because they know that we love museums of all kinds.

In fact, VMFA was one of the first places that we visited upon our arrival in the Richmond area. And, it was the subject of one of my first columns in this magazine as we began to discover Virginia. Throughout our time here, we have enjoyed numerous trips to VMFA to wander through special exhibitions as well as the permanent collection.

Most recently, we went to VMFA to see a unique photography exhibit that featured many of the historic and iconic places throughout Virginia. Thomas R. Schiff: Virginia 360° is a fascinating look at notable places such as Monticello, the State Capitol, and Montpelier through a 360° lens. Schiff’s use of a panoramic camera distorts scenes that are familiar and offers the viewer a completely different perspective.


My husband and children particularly enjoyed viewing the photographs and looking for the “overlap” in the scene. Because the camera that Schiff uses allows for a complete 360° view, there is often a point at which one side of the photo repeats on the other side. It’s as if you could take the photo off of the wall, make a circle with it and have a complete view of a certain space.

Interestingly, the camera that Schiff uses is a Hulcherama 360° panoramic that was designed by Charles A. Hulcher in Hampton, Virginia. For more about this unique piece of photography equipment, visit www.hulchercamera.com.

We truly loved seeing many of the sites that we have visited over the past two years in a new way. It was a reminder of the beauty of this great state

and the grandeur of its historic architecture.

The VMFA never disappoints with its high-quality special exhibits and permanent collection. The Schiff exhibit is a special one that is sure to be of interest to folks visiting Virginia as well as those of us lucky enough to live here in the Commonwealth.

The Schiff photography collection is on display at VMFA through June 16. For more information, visit the VMFA website at www.vmfa.museum. 



Top to bottom: Sunrise at Mount Vernon; the entry room at Monticello; and the historic courthouse in Petersburg at dusk.

Fredericksburg names city manager

The city council of Fredericksburg has named **Tim Baroody** to succeed Bev Cameron as city manager when Cameron retires on June 30. Baroody is Stafford County's deputy county administrator. He has been Stafford's director of economic development since 2003 and deputy county administrator since 2008. During Baroody's tenure, Stafford was upgraded to AAA status for bonding purposes and Stafford became No. 1 in job creation in Virginia by percentage of growth.



- Broody -

Appomattox hires town manager

Phillip Gabathuler will begin his work as Appomattox town manager on June 1. He currently works as a senior planner for the Region 2000 Local Government Council and wrote the town's first comprehensive plan that was approved last year. Gabathuler received the 2016 Vice Mayor's Award for Excellence from Lynchburg City Council. He succeeds Bill Gillespie who was interim town manager for the past five years.

Pennington Gap selects Harless as town manager

Keith Harless has been named town manager of Pennington Gap. Harless is a former member of the Pennington Gap Town Council. He replaces Phil Hensley who will remain with the town government as a project manager.

Prince George County has new police chief

Prince George County has appointed **Captain Keith Early** to the position of Police Chief. A Prince George County resident, Early was previously operations division commander for the city of Colonial Heights. Early began his law enforcement career as a patrol of-



- Early -

licer in the city of Petersburg in 1993. After accepting a similar position in Colonial Heights in 1994, he rose through the ranks holding positions as sergeant and lieutenant before being named captain in 2007. Early replaces Chief Ed Frankenstein, who retired October 1.

Rappahannock's Keyser to succeed retiring McCarthy

Rappahannock County Administrator **John McCarthy** has announced his retirement, effective June 30, after thirty years of service to Rappahannock County. McCarthy was hired as zoning administrator and administrative assistant to the Board of Supervisors in 1986 and became county administrator in 1988. He currently serves as chairman of Virginia Municipal League Insurance Programs (VMLIP).

Deputy County Administrator **Debbie Keyser** will succeed McCarthy as county administrator effective May 1. Keyser was hired by Rappahannock County in February 2015 as assistant county administrator, before being named as deputy in July 2015. She has previously served as county administrator in Jefferson County, West Virginia.

Charlottesville appoints human services chief

Charlottesville City Manager Maurice Jones has named **Kaki Dimock** as



- Dimock -

director of human services for the city. Dimock has served as executive director of the Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless (TJACH) for almost seven years. During her time at TJACH, she has led a coalition of service providers and local decision makers in an effort to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring in the community. Prior to her work with TJACH, she served as vice president of Community Initiatives for People's Regional Opportunity Program in Portland, Maine. Dimock will begin work with the city May 9.

Bellamy appointed to Board of Education

Governor Terry McAuliffe announced in March the appointment of Charlottesville Vice Mayor **Wes J. Bellamy** to the state Board of Education. Bellamy is also a teacher with Albemarle County Public Schools.

Virginia Beach hires tourism director

Brad Van Dommelen has been named director of the Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau. Van Dommelen was previously president of the Traverse City Convention and Visitors Bureau in Michigan since 2005. He replaces Jim Ricketts who died in March after nearly 42 years of service to the CVB.



- Van Dommelen -

Shenandoah County selects community development officer

Shenandoah County has hired **Bradley Polk** to lead its community development office. Polk was previously staff planner and proffer auditor for Loudoun County, where he has worked in its Planning and Zoning Department since 2008. Polk worked as Shenandoah County's zoning administrator from 2002 to 2003. He left the county to pursue a law enforcement career with the Winchester Police Department. He has also served as town administrator for Round Hill, Va.

Front Royal names community development director

Felicia Hart has been named community development director of the town of Front Royal. Most recently, she was downtown coordinator for the town of Strasburg. Prior to that, she held positions as marketing and communications manager for American Woodmark Corporation, marketing assistant for First Bank, executive director of First Night Winchester and marketing development director for the Community Foundation of the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

Solarize Vienna offers solarizing support and free home energy check-ups

SOLARIZE VIENNA IS BEING OFFERED again this year through May 15. The program is a community-based initiative jointly sponsored by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and Local Energy Alliance Program that allows residents to take advantage of free solar assessments, pre-negotiated bulk-purchasing discounts with vetted vendors, and warranties on installation and efficiency of panels.

Even for residents not considering solar energy, the Solarize Vienna program can be helpful. Through the program, residents can sign up for free home energy check-ups, valued at about \$200, during which they'll receive advice from an energy coach as well as energy-efficient products such as CFL light bulbs, smart power strips, pipe insulation, and door weatherization.

Councilmember Carey Sienicki and Community Enhancement Committee Chair Susan Stillman were among nine Vienna residents who installed solar panels as part of last year's Solarize Vienna. Both are now saving money on home energy bills and reducing their impact on the natural environment.



Susan Stillman, Chair of the Community Enhancement Committee in Vienna, installed solar panels on her home (above) last year. "I wanted to show people that solar is doable even with a big maple tree in front of one-third of the panels," said Stillman.

Manassas looks upward for inspiration

DO YOU EVER NOTICE what is overhead? People in Manassas are looking upward a lot more. During the month of April, historic downtown Manassas is displaying 60 fabulous works of art on banners fixed to the street light poles. Each piece is individually created by artists from the District, Maryland and Virginia.

More than 120 different pieces of art were submitted for the Banner Art Competition. One piece of art will be selected by a juried panel of artists to win the \$1,000 grand prize.

To select the 60 banners to be displayed, a group of business owners, artists, elected officials, students and community members gathered to judge.

A booklet is also available for those who wish to take a walking tour of the art.

Now in its second year, the Banner Art Competition is part of the City and Historic Manassas' initiative to create a positive atmosphere for art in the community. A new venture between Northern Virginia Community College and the City's Art Group will feature student sculptures at the spring Gallery Walk on May 6.



Roanoke celebrates art, music and literature with Art by Bus

RIDE SOLUTIONS, THE ROANOKE ARTS COMMISSION and the Greater Roanoke Transit Company are bringing back the Art by Bus program this spring. For the second year in a row, selected works from the city's public arts collection will be displayed on the exterior of four Valley Metro buses. The program works to promote the value of public transportation to our community by bringing visual arts, musical performances, and inspired writing onto the Valley's bus network.

The Roanoke Arts Commission chose four works of art from its collection of nearly 100 works by regional artists.

Also returning is the Writer by Bus program. Meighan Sharp of Hollins University was selected through a competitive process by a panel of arts commission and community members. She will ride various buses this spring to produce literary works about the people she meets and the neighborhoods she travels through. Her work can be followed at the Writer by Bus Facebook page.

Finally, RIDE Solutions will work with local musicians to sponsor a series of short concerts on the Star Line Trolley throughout the duration of the Art by Bus program.



Roanoke city buses are canvassed with the colorful paintings of regional artists.



Waynesboro opens Water Trail

THE CITY OF WAYNESBORO officially opened the Waynesboro Water Trail on April 12. The dedication came on the heels of the Water Trail being recognized at VMI's Environment Virginia Symposium. The Waynesboro Water Trail was one of eight projects in the state of Virginia to be awarded the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award.

The trail is a four-mile stretch of the South River which runs from Ridgeview Park to Basic Park. Each park has a new boat ramp to make it easy for paddlers to access the river. The ramps were completed with funding from the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as well as the City of Waynesboro.

Future plans are in the works to connect Waynesboro's parks with Augusta County's in Crimora and ultimately Grottos via water trail. This would add some 20+ river miles of trail making Waynesboro Water Trail the ideal starting point for multiple-day float trips.





Mrs. McAuliffe celebrates National School Breakfast Week with students at William Ramsay Elementary School in Alexandria.

Expanding — our — Virginia table

IT IS A STAGGERING REALITY that more than 300,000 Virginia children live in food insecure households. Even though our economy is improving, and job growth projections are encouraging, families are still struggling. Between 2008 and 2015, the number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals in Virginia grew by more than 30 percent.

This trend is true across the country as well. Last year, for the first time ever, more than half of the nation's public school students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. My husband, Governor Terry McAuliffe, and I were motivated to make it our mission to end childhood hunger in Virginia because it is absolutely unacceptable that children are suffering from hunger and malnutrition in a commonwealth as rich in resources as ours. It is a problem that demands our immediate, collective action.

By utilizing existing federal child nutrition programs and leveraging federal dollars, we can reach more children in need. Since 1946, Congress has made it a national priority to ensure that members of our next generation have the nourishment they need to grow healthy and strong, and reach their full potential in our public education system. Expanding access to free, healthy meal programs for children in and out of school is the most beneficial, practical, and scalable way to improve nutritional access for our children.

I am pleased to say that we are making progress in our efforts to expand the table for all Virginia children. The Governor and I have partnered with advocates from across the state to establish the Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide and to build the No Kid Hungry Virginia campaign.

The Council focuses on three main objectives: 1) eliminating childhood hunger in Virginia by increasing participation in nutrition assistance programs, 2) promoting Virginia's leading

While many students are looking forward to a fun-filled summer break starting in a few short weeks, others are filled with anxiety about where their meals will come from.



No Kid Hungry

industry – agriculture – and increase access to affordable, healthy, and local foods, and 3) facilitating efficient and effective local initiatives related to community nutrition, food access, and health strategies and programs across the Commonwealth. The Council will seek to achieve these three major objectives through partnerships across the Governor’s Cabinet, with state agencies, national, regional, and local nonprofits, local governments, schools, and private businesses, utilizing increased data sharing and cross-sector research.

The No Kid Hungry Virginia campaign is a unique partnership between my office and Share Our Strength, a national anti-hunger organization. Campaign staff members are embedded in the state agencies responsible for administering the federal child nutrition programs in Virginia, and provide direct outreach support, technical assistance, and state, federal and privately funded grant programs for schools, community organizations, and local governments who are working to feed hungry children throughout the year.

Hunger doesn’t take a summer break

While many students are looking forward to a fun-filled summer break starting in a few short weeks, others are filled with anxiety about where their meals will come from. Summer, winter, and spring breaks create a gap in nutrition services when children lose access to the school meals on which they and their families rely.

It’s a simple truth - kids cannot be hungry for knowledge, if they are just plain hungry.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool Meals Provision provide children with the opportunity to receive the nutrition they need year-round. Children obtain healthy meals and snacks while participating in fun activities when they are out of school. By providing federal reimbursements for each meal served, these programs can be budget-relieving for Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and others that provide child care and enrichment programming during out-of-school hours.

While the SFSP and CACFP make it possible for children in high-need communities to eat well 365 days a year, their reach is currently very limited. Despite our best efforts, only 13 percent of Virginia children who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches obtain a no cost meal in the summer, while only 4 percent receive afterschool meals. Through extensive marketing efforts, grant support, and technical assistance, Virginia served 170,000 more summer meals in 2015. While we are proud of this progress, we know we have more work to do. Similarly, we served nearly 300,000 more afterschool meals last year for an increase of 9.5 percent, but there are

By the Numbers

↑ 30%

increase in the number of Virginia students qualifying for a free/reduced price lunch from 2008 to 2015.

Only 13%

of Virginia children who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches obtain a no-cost meal in the summer.

\$2 million

amount appropriated by General Assembly over the next 2 years to expand Breakfast After the Bell programs.

many more eligible schools and afterschool care providers that are not yet participating. School breaks should be filled with fun, not concern about having enough food. We need to fully leverage the SFSP and CACFP. We can do better for our children who need us.

Success in our schools

By providing up to three meals per day, school divisions have the power to make a huge impact on the health and well-being of our local communities. It’s a simple truth – kids cannot be hungry for knowledge, if they are just plain hungry.

It is proven that students perform better in the classroom, especially in vocabulary, math, and on standardized tests, when they start each day with a healthy breakfast. We would not expect our students to succeed without pencils and books, so why would we expect them to do so without breakfast? School meals are a staple of our education system and ensure all children are properly equipped with the fuel they need to thrive, grow, and achieve.

The School Breakfast Program has been nationally authorized by Congress since 1975. Unfortunately, traditional models of serving breakfast fall short of reaching children in need. It is a sad truth that nearly half of the Virginia children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches at school, are not receiving a school breakfast. Schools that transition to alterna-



The First Lady presents the Governor’s proclamation recognizing Lights on Afterschool Day at Peter Paul Development Center in Richmond.



Mrs. McAuliffe celebrates the expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision at Perrymont Elementary School in Lynchburg.

tive breakfast models— where breakfast is served after the bell, often in the classroom — have seen their breakfast participation rates increase, student attention and focus improve, and their behavioral referrals decrease. Models like Breakfast in the Classroom and Second Chance Breakfast are a win-win for students and schools, helping to boost instructional time and attendance rates.

In 2015, more than 300 Virginia schools transitioned to an alternative breakfast model, and more schools sign up every week. The growth of alternative breakfast models has contributed to an increase of more than 21,000 additional Virginia students eating breakfast each day.

Many school divisions around the Commonwealth are taking the fight to end childhood hunger a step further with a new tool, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allows all students to receive school breakfast and lunch at no cost.

Schools that transition to alternative breakfast models — where breakfast is served after the bell, often in the classroom — have seen their breakfast participation rates increase, student attention and focus improve, and their behavioral referrals decrease.

As a result of cooperation between advocates, school divisions, and the Virginia Department of Education, approximately 100,000 students at 206 schools in 26 school divisions are participating in CEP. The benefits of CEP extend beyond improved access to healthy meals;

School divisions like Danville, Richmond, and Franklin City implemented CEP division-wide and saw their school meal participation grow rapidly.

As a result of cooperation between advocates, school divisions, and the Virginia Department of Education, approximately 100,000 students at 206 schools in 26 school divisions are participating in CEP. The benefits of CEP extend beyond improved access to healthy meals;

it means less paperwork for school staff, added administrative savings for schools, and more money back in the pockets of hard-working families.

Legislative action on childhood hunger

On the national level, red tape prevents many trusted community organizations from participating in federal nutrition programs and creates barriers to feeding hungry children. Rather than allowing children to bring meals home, they must consume their meals in one location, requiring families to travel great distances each day for children to access critical nutrition. The barriers many federal programs impose reveal the need for innovative and culturally-appropriate policies to promote healthy eating and increase access to vital resources.

During the last two years, I have continued to advocate for the expansion of federal nutrition programs and provide meal sponsors with more flexibility. Last year, I had the privilege of testifying to Congress when the House Education and Workforce Committee first began debating the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act 2015, which provide funding so that low-income children across the country have access to nutritious meals each day. This legislation includes funding for vital programs like the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast, and many more. While I am encouraged that many common-sense approaches to improving our federal nutrition programs are being considered, there is still much to be accomplished. As the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act is still debated in Congress, I urge you to reach out to your Senators

No Kid Hungry

and Representatives and ask them to move forward and to act with Virginia children in mind.

During the 2014 budget session, the General Assembly passed the Governor's breakfast budget amendment that provided \$537,000 to help 244 schools expand breakfast participation across the Commonwealth last year. Unfortunately, 310 additional schools applied but were denied due to lack of funding. In this year's budget recently passed by the General Assembly, an additional \$2 million was appropriated over two years to expand Breakfast After the Bell programs. This funding was a bipartisan recognition of the need to expand school breakfast as a part of our commitment to education.

Six simple actions to end summer hunger

We hope you will partner with us to end child hunger in and out of school. Whether it is asking your superintendents about their plans for alternative breakfast and CEP, or placing a phone call to your congressman, there are many ways to contribute to the No Kid Hungry Virginia campaign and to bring vital resources to your community.

With summer rapidly approaching, you can make an immediate impact by taking one or more of the following steps in support of summer meals expansion:

- 1. Issue a city proclamation.** Declare No Kid Hungry in your community this summer.
- 2. Host a summer meals kick-off event or visit a site.** Coordinate with the organizations in your community that provide summer meals to host a city- or community-wide kick-off. Mayors can promote the event and frame the issue of child hunger as a top priority of the city. This will build momentum for the program, which will help increase the number of kids who access summer meals. Additionally, mayors can schedule an Summer Food Service Program site visit to heighten awareness and visibility of the program. Be sure to inform the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia No Kid Hungry so we can support your event!
- 3. Sponsor Summer Food Service Programs and/or serve as a meal site.** City agencies, like Parks and Recreation or Housing Authorities, are well equipped to act as sponsors and sites for the Summer Food Service Program. These agencies have the expertise to successfully implement a federal program and are locations where children congregate naturally. Additionally, their connections with key community partners are essential in increasing SFSP meal sites in your locale. Ask your department leadership if they will consider becoming a sponsor for 2016.
- 4. Use the bully pulpit to raise awareness of child hunger and promote strong nutrition programs.** Mayors, schools boards, town and city



Be sure to visit the VML website to find the Virginia SFSP Local Government Toolkit with template proclamations, press releases, web buttons, poster templates and more!

council members, and administrators can be strong champions for reducing child hunger and expanding the Summer Food Service Program. You can use your media platform to increase awareness and visibility of the SFSP in your community.

5. Establish a child hunger task-force or work group. The mayor's office has the ability to bring key partners around the table. Staff from your office can coordinate the group and help identify priority areas and key strategies to end child hunger in your community. Virginia No Kid Hungry can provide support in this effort.


Many communities have established task forces like those in Petersburg and Fredericksburg. By bringing partners together with a shared mission, they are finding creative ways to stop hunger in its tracks. Over this past winter break, the City of Petersburg and its local schools, library, YMCA, food bank, and community centers coordinated daily activities for kids and teens. Activities like college-prep and boxing lessons drew kids off the streets for safe, fun events and nutritious meals.

- 6. Help spread the word.** Reach out to trusted places where families already receive information – like grocery stores, community health clinics, local social services offices, or WIC clinics – to ensure they are advertising the SFSP. Promote the summer meals hotline and texting number on city government websites and outreach materials.

This summer, SFSP meal sites across the Commonwealth will be kicking off summer meals programs and raising awareness and coordination. This coordinated event will be sure to generate buzz and encourage more families to seek summer food sites. I urge you to connect with local schools, departments of parks and recreation, libraries, community centers and the No Kid Hungry Virginia Campaign to explore ways find out how you can participate in the state-wide Summer Kick-Off on June 27.



The time to act is now

There is no time to waste when it comes to our children's success and well-being. It is our responsibility to take action to end childhood hunger this year! There is much more to be done and it will take communities across Virginia, working together to truly make progress. The results we have achieved in a short amount of time are a testament to what we can accomplish. Please visit nokidhungry.org/va to get in touch and take the next step. 



About the author

Dorothy McAuliffe is First Lady of Virginia.

Harrisonburg Firefighter Museum is a rare historical gem

IN ADDITION TO THE GREAT STAFF and firefighters, the Harrisonburg Fire Department (HFD) is also home to its very own fire museum.

The Harrisonburg Fire Museum is located in HFD headquarters and contains a large collection of fire department relics. Most of the artifacts were once used by HFD and have been collected and saved over time by Harrisonburg's Fire Chief Larry Shifflett.

By providing an in-depth look at fire service throughout the years, the museum shows visitors how their local fire department started and how much progress has been made.

The collection contains uniforms, medals, the city's first fire alarm, photographs, articles, and equipment that were once used by Harrisonburg firefighters. The collection even includes interactive components, where kids can wear fire gear and participate in fire safety computer games. Chief Shifflett and his staff have meticulously preserved items with corresponding dated photographs depicting HFD's history.

"Due to the many changes within fire service over the years, a variety of equipment has been phased out or expired," explained Chief Shifflett. "I wasn't interested in throwing the items away because each item told the story of our department

and was a visual experience of our operations."

One of the most unique features about HFD's Fire Museum is that it winds through the administrative offices. Guests are able to look back in time while speaking and interacting with current staff and having the opportunity to ask questions about the exhibits.

"I wasn't interested in throwing the items away because each item told the story of our department and was a visual experience of our operations."

— Chief Larry Shifflett

The fire museum was opened to the public around 2005. Several expansions have taken place over time to accommodate new donations and acquisitions. Visitors have come from all over the United States and some foreign countries to tour of the museum. Since 2010, approximately 2,500 people have visited the museum.

The HFD Fire Museum is open Monday through Friday and admission is free to the public. For a virtual tour or preview of the museum, folks can visit www.HarrisonburgVA.gov/HFD-museum.



A look inside the main room of the Harrisonburg Fire Museum reveals a gallery of professional quality exhibits.

History of the Harrisonburg Fire Department

Since the founding of Harrisonburg in August 1779, there have been many major fires. On December 25, 1868, the “Great Christmas Fire,” destroyed most of the downtown buildings during the early morning. The community grappled with how to adequately handle future fires with leather fire bucket brigades, some of which are on display in the fire museum.



The fire museum has several hose reels that were used to deliver water to a fire in the early 1900s.

Also on display are several hose reels that were used to deliver water to a fire in the early 1900s. Several men would pull the hose, which was mounted on two large wheels, to the fire. There is no braking mechanism on this device and the question still remains how the men properly stopped the equipment.

It was not until 1870 that the citizens of Harrisonburg committed to improving their firefighting equipment. That year, a Christmas Eve fire broke out and destroyed an entire city block. This prompted the formation of a committee to research the purchase of a better pumper to replace a locally made hand pumper.

The committee instructed Thomas Bassford, the city’s first fire chief, to pursue an ad in the Richmond newspaper featuring a hand pumper named “Rescue.”


The pumper was purchased and delivered to the city by stage coach. It became central to fighting fires in Harrisonburg.

It was mostly likely during this period that the concept of mutual aid was first used – an agreement among emergency



Helmet shields worn by firefighters with the Harrisonburg Fire Department over the years.

responders to lend assistance, when requested, across jurisdictional boundaries.

“Rescue” was deployed to neighboring towns to assist with major fires and proved to be of great value to those towns before they, too, were better equipped. 

About the author

Mary-Hope Vass is the Public Information Officer for the City of Harrisonburg.



Museum founder Chief Shifflett to retire

FIRE CHIEF LARRY SHIFFLETT, who founded the museum, will officially retire on August 1 after serving the department for 47 years.

As a second generation firefighter, Shifflett was exposed to the culture at a very young age. Chief Shifflett’s father served as assistant fire chief for the city for more than 30 years, including a stint as acting fire chief.

In June 1969, Shifflett was hired as a full-time firefighter with the city. He went on to be promoted to lieutenant in 1978, captain in 1982, and chief in 1983.

Over the course of his career, Chief Shifflett has introduced many valuable practices to HFD. The department has expanded in fire suppression, added the fire prevention division, incorporated state-of-the-art technology, and added the fire museum. Under his leadership, the city’s Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating went from a Class 3 to a Class 2, on a scale of one to ten with one being the best rating. The department has also won numerous state and national awards and is a consistent leader in the training of firefighters and overall preparedness.

When the water and no one knew **stopped**

IT WAS THE KIND OF LATE WINTER DAY that melts the snow and water runs into the creek. That's when employees at the Mill Creek Regional Water Treatment Plant made a grim discovery.

A routine test on the water filter cartridges found that all three stages failed a turbidity test. Further investigation found that nearly all of the 120 membrane cartridges treating the

water service to residents as well as a local hospital, clinics, nursing homes, secondary schools, Emory and Henry College, industries, businesses and the Southwest Virginia regional jail.

"If we could not have gotten water from another source, thousands of people would have been on a boil water notice and under an imminent health threat," said John Clark, town manager of Chilhowie.

Fortunately, there was a nearby alternate source. Just 10 months earlier, a new plant had been opened by the WCSA and its capacity had recently been expanded from 4.6 million gallons a day to 12 million gallons a day. The Middle Fork plant, located on the Holston River just south of Abingdon, was the saving grace.

The Town of Chilhowie and WCSA shut off the Mill Creek valves and began piping in water from the Middle Fork plant within hours of discovering the Mill Creek failure. The Middle Fork Plant continued to serve as the source of water for the Chilhowie system from March to September, as well for the WCSA system in the central and

northeastern portion of Washington County.

The ability of the Middle Fork plant to provide the emergency water supply was no accident. In planning and building the new facility, WCSA factored in a possible failure at another plant and added capacity to send water to additional communities.

water in the plant had catastrophically failed. A period of highrain and melting snow had churned up the water so much that it clogged the filters and, in turn, caused the membranes to stretch and tear. In short, nature had put too much stress on the system.

With a 2.5 million gallon-per-day capacity, the Mill Creek regional water treatment plant is operated by the Washington County Service Authority (WCSA) and Town of Chilhowie. The WCSA serves all of Washington County, including three towns, and has over 21,000 connections. The Town of Chilhowie is the second largest provider of water in Smyth County and has over 2,800 connections in the Town and Smyth and Washington County.

Local officials were faced with a possible interruption of

"If we could not have gotten water from another source, thousands of people would have been on a boil water notice and under an imminent health threat."

— John Clark, Town Manager of Chilhowie

"You want to build in some redundancy," said Robbie Cornett, WCSA General Manager. "That additional capacity paid big dividends when the unexpected happened at Mill Creek."

Clark agreed, "Without the public investment by Wash-





Opened just months before the Mill Creek Plant failure, the Middlefork Plant (above) provided water to residents for nearly six months. That recent investment in infrastructure made the difference between a public health crisis and an uninterrupted supply of clean running water.

ington County, the Chilhowie system would not have had safe drinking water.”

The next step in the crisis was a short-term solution: replace the membrane filters and repair the membranes at the Mill Creek Regional Plant. The Virginia Municipal League Insurance Program (VMILP) helped Chilhowie and the WCSA to pay the costs to get Mill Creek plant up and running with 120 new cartridges. The Mount Rogers Planning District in Marion, through the Southwest Virginia Water and Wastewater Fund, also covered the costs of permanent interconnection and pumping improvements that made it possible to back feed water to the town for a long period. The Mill Creek plant went back online on August 31, just shy of six months since the disaster.

Both the WCSA and the town of Chilhowie were effusive in their praise of the VMILP, and wondered if the commercial insurance carrier would have covered the disaster.


The long-term solution is the construction of a new water treatment plant to be started this year and scheduled to be completed in 2017 through a \$3.5 million grant and loan from Rural Development. The project will upgrade the old plant with many improvements, not the least of which will be to re-

place the old canister filtration system with a state-of-the-art one.

“Thousands of people lost a water source and no one knew it,” said Clark. “The public was barely inconvenienced.”

Though most residents may have never known about the water plant failure, the town and WCSA took every precaution to stay in constant contact with the Health Department, the Chilhowie Town Council and WCSA Board. The bodies met jointly on the crisis in April.

Clark said the story of the Mill Creek plant failure is a sobering reminder to all municipalities and the public about the importance of investment in infrastructure: “Just because you don’t see it doesn’t mean it isn’t needed.”

Cornett added that the emergency capacity built into the Middle Fork system is also a reminder that solid redundancy planning can make all the difference between a public health crisis and a typical day with clean running water. 

About the author

Nancy Chafin is Editor of Virginia Town & City.



2016

General Assembly

Local government at the heart of hot-button issues in 2016 session

TYPICALLY, ABOUT HALF of the legislation introduced each session affects local governments in some way, and this year was no exception. In fact, it seems that local governments were at the heart of many of the more hotly contested issues, including Airbnb and proffers.

What follows is a quick overview of what is in the biennial budget and a summary of other legislation of interest to local governments.

VML cannot emphasize enough how important it is for local officials to communicate with their legislatures during the session. Your calls and emails and visits made all the difference on a number of issues.

Budget enacted with fewer resources, new policies

The General Assembly approved, on time, budgets for the remainder of the current fiscal year (HB 29) and the new biennium beginning July 1 (HB 30).

The biennial general fund budget totaled \$40.6 billion; \$12.1 million lighter than what was originally introduced by Gov. McAuliffe in December. Non-general fund spending decreased as well, dropping from \$69.9 billion to \$64.8 billion for the biennium. Factors included the revenue forecast becoming a little less robust between December and February, and the Assembly's rejection of McAuliffe's amendments to use federal funds to expand Medicaid coverage in the state, which would have freed up considerable financial resources for other purposes.

Environmental issues

In the area of water quality, the budget authorizes \$59.0 million in bonds for DEQ's program to reduce nutrients in Chesapeake Bay.

Although the General Assembly provided no appropriations to the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF), the budget expanded the use of the Fund to include the acquisition of nonpoint nutrient credits. (While the budget did not add funding for SLAF, the bond package approved under HB 1344 and SB 731 includes \$20 million in bond proceeds for SLAF. This is welcome news because the SLAF would have been exhausted without the authorization, leaving no money available for grants in FY 17.)



Economic development

Legislators gave a hard look at the Governor's economic development spending, carving out a role for themselves to evaluate tax incentives and grants on a regular basis. A gubernatorial initiative to provide financial assistance for biotechnology spinoff companies was zeroed out with the \$60.0 million re-programmed to other areas of the budget. Increases for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund and the Virginia Biosciences Health Research Corporation were reduced.

The most significant spending increase affects the GO Vir-

2016 General Assembly Wrap-up

ginia initiative with a \$10.0 million increase for the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund. The Enterprise Zone Program was also boosted by \$1.0 million per year.

Fines & forfeitures

The budget language authorizing the state to seize a portion of selected local governments fines and forfeitures will finally be removed from the Appropriations Act beginning July 1, 2016. This long-sought change, a VML legislative priority, came as a result of a Governor's amendment which the General Assembly agreed to in their reconvened session on April 20.

Education

The budget includes the reinstatement of a lottery fund distribution to school boards as well as state funding for a two percent teacher salary increase, effective Dec. 16. In exchange the budget removes the funding for some initiatives in the introduced version, including funding for the state share of 2500 new instructional positions, a good portion of the increased funding for at-risk add-on and hold harmless money.

The lottery fund distribution will be on a per-pupil basis and is expected to equal \$36.6 million in FY17 and \$157.2 million in FY18. There is a local maintenance of effort provision but no local match. At least 50 percent of the funds will have to be spent on non-recurring items; the rest can be spent on other items so there is broad discretion on how the funds could be used.

A two percent salary increase will have to be given by Dec. 1, 2016, to receive the state salary funding for teachers. A local match is required.

Adjusting for inflation, FY17 state spending will still be 12 percent below FY09 state spending. Without adjusting for inflation, state FY17 funding will finally exceed FY09 funding.

Compensation

In addition to funding the two percent salary increase for teachers, the budget includes funding for a two percent across-the-board salary increase effective Dec. 1, 2016 for state-supported local employees.

New language in the budget requires that employers have to certify that the listed employees will receive the stated pay increase.

The budget also funds a compression salary adjustment for sheriffs' deputies and regional jail employees.

Jail per diems

The General Assembly adopted the VML-initiated budget amendments to add funding in the 2016-2018 budget to more fully recognize the state's share of per-diem costs for local and regional jails. No additional funding was needed or added for the current year.

State assistance to local law enforcement

Local governments with police departments will see a boost in funding in the new biennium – not as much as initially proposed in Gov. McAuliffe's introduced budget, but still an annual increase of \$5.5 million over the FY16 funding level.

CSA and Human Services

The General Assembly agreed to the concept of VML-initiated amendments to increase administrative funding to local governments that administer the Children's Services Act (CSA) program. This additional \$500,000 each year of the new biennium is the first increase in funding since FY 2000.

Also in CSA, the General Assembly adopted new budget language requesting the State Executive Council to develop options for two issues studied last year: tracking the progress of, and looking for ways to re-integrate children in private day special education programs back into their community school; and developing options for paying the education costs of children whose parent/guardian makes a direct placement into a private residential treatment facility in which treatment costs are covered by Medicaid.

Local social services departments will get some much-needed administrative funding (\$4.3 million each year) to help them with the increased volume of work with Medicaid eligibility determinations and redeterminations.

The budget includes a pared-down version of a program entitled "Fostering Futures." This program helps young adults who would otherwise age-out of foster care at 18 years of age make a more successful transition to adult life by providing them with housing assistance and other basic services and supports until they turn 21 years of age. By participating in this voluntary program, these young people may continue their education or become more successfully established in the workforce. It also reduces the chances they will become homeless or involved with the criminal justice system. Participation in this program will also help local governments by providing access to federal funds to pay for certain services otherwise picked up by local and state government under CSA.

Budget Highlights

\$40.6 billion

total for the biennial general fund budget

\$59.0 million

in bonds for DEQ's program to reduce nutrients in Chesapeake Bay

↑ 2%

salary increase for teachers

\$5.5 billion

annual increase in state assistance to local law enforcement

continues on page 18

Local Government Scorecard

Thank you for speaking up on legislative issues.

EVERY SESSION VML ASKS you to get in touch with your legislators in support or opposition to bills. Legislators have to hear from the “folks back home.” As you’ll see, we didn’t win every battle but, with your help, we did win most! Here’s the scorecard on the bills that we asked you to weigh in on. Thank you for your help. It is invaluable.

| Bills as introduced | Outcome |
|--|-------------|
| Airbnb HB 812 & SB 416 would have overridden local taxing and zoning authority for Airbnb and similar companies. VML opposed the bills as introduced but supported the version as enacted, which has a re-enactment clause and sets up a study group. | Win |
| Party identification for local elections SB 767 requires party identification for candidates for local races. VML opposed and asked the Governor to veto. The Governor’s veto was upheld. | Win |
| Local grievances HB 1293 would have invalidated local grievance procedures. VML opposed the bill, which did not pass. | Win |
| Liability exposure for localities SB 746 would have broadened liability exposure for localities. VML opposed the introduced bill. The version that passed does not apply to local governments. | Win |
| Minutes of closed meetings HB 800 would have required recording and minutes for closed meetings. VML opposed the bill, which did not pass. | Win |
| Assessment appeals HB 910 & SB 597 make changes in the assessment appeals process. SB 597 passed, but was neutralized during the amendment process. VML opposed the original bill. | Win |
| Changes to Line of Duty administration HB 1345 changes the administration of the Line of Duty Act. While the bill was not as far-reaching as VML had hoped, it is an important first step in reforming LODA. VML supported. | Win |
| Social Service filing petitions with J&DR? SB 417 allows social services employees to file routine petitions with J&DR courts. VML supported. | Win |
| Proffers, parks, new developments HB 770/SB 749 limits the use of off-site proffers to parks and recreational facilities and requires proffers to be specifically attributable to new developments. VML opposed the bills. While SB 749 passed, it was not nearly as harmful as when introduced. | Partial win |
| Eminent Domain SB 478 makes changes to the eminent domain process. VML opposed the bill, but was pleased that the final version exempts public utilities from the changes. | Partial win |
| Claims Process SB 611 makes changes in the notice of claims process against the Commonwealth or localities. VML opposed the introduced version, but the version that passed was much improved over the introduced version. | Partial win |
| Redistricting Reform VML supported a number of bills dealing with redistricting reform, but none passed. | Loss |
| Regional gas tax SB 477 would have established a price floor for the regional gas tax. VML supported, but the bill died. | Loss |

Continued from page 16

The program will be limited for now to youth who turn 18 on July 1, 2016, or afterward.

Other legislation

While the budget is always of keen interest, hundreds of other bills were adopted that affect local governments. Here is an overview of the most important ones.

New FOIA requirements affect most localities

The most noteworthy Freedom of Information Act bill that passed is HB 818, requiring counties, cities, and those towns with a population of more than 250 designate a local FOIA officer, and place a link on the local homepage to FOIA information. The FOIA information to be posted includes:

1. The rights and responsibilities regarding requesting and providing information.
2. The contact information for the local FOIA officer.
3. A list or index of the types of public records maintained by the locality.
4. A list or description of exemptions that allow public records to be withheld.
5. Any local policy about the types of public records that are routinely withheld.
6. A prescribed statement regarding reasonable charges.

The designated FOIA officer is responsible for the localities' FOIA requests and must be trained annually either by the local government attorney or the FOIA Advisory Council.

Another noteworthy provision of this bill states that constitutional officers are local public bodies and therefore also need to be aware of this legislation.

be filed with the Council, requiring the forms to be submitted annually rather than biannually. The new forms and filing submissions will be effective for the January 2017 filing.

The definition of gift was decreased from fifty dollars to less than twenty dollars. The definition of procurement transaction now stipulates a dollar threshold of \$5 million or more. In addition, records relating to formal or informal advisory opinions (notes, correspondence, etc.) are excluded from the mandatory provisions or FOIA. However, formal advisory opinions are public documents upon approval by the Council. These provisions of the bill are effective immediately.

The annual filing and the forms should make compliance easier.

Another COIA bill, SB 288, allows the attorney for the Commonwealth or the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council to issue an advisory opinion and shield a local officer or employee from a "knowing" violation if they relied upon that opinion.

Budget adoption date extended to May 15

SB 445 and HB 148 extend the date from April 15 to May 15 by which local governments must set their real property tax rate for taxes due on or before June 30. The legislation does not include an emergency clause, meaning the change in dates will be effective in calendar year 2017. By extending the due date, localities will be given additional flexibility to set the tax rates when the amount of state appropriations for education and other programs are unknown because of delays in enacting a state budget.

Tax exemptions affected

HB 80 affects local property tax exemptions for certified pollution control equipment and facilities; certified stormwater management developments and property; certified solar energy equipment, facilities and devices; and certified recycling equipment, facilities and devices. Under the bill's provisions, real or personal property, machinery, equipment, facilities, devices, or real estate improvements that have been certified by a state or local certifying authority will be deemed exempt as of the date the property is placed in service. The current law sets the property tax exemptions date at the beginning of the first tax year in which the certification is in effect on tax day, which is generally January 1. The provisions of HB 80 do not apply to property tax exemptions tied to environmental restoration sites (§ 58.1-3664).

HB 127 and SB 99 expand the determination of soldiers "killed in action" to correspond with the definitions used by the U.S. Department of Defense. The Virginia Constitution

UPDATE

In the reconvened session on April 20, the General Assembly rejected the Governor's amendment. The Governor has 30 days to decide if he will sign the bill as explained in this section or if he will veto the bill. If vetoed, the COIA law will remain as enacted last year.

Omnibus Conflict of Interests Act bill brings improvements, clarity

HB 1362 was the big COIA bill incorporating numerous other pieces of legislation (over 10 bills) that were introduced this year. The bill attempts to make the Conflict of

Interests Act function more effectively. First, the forms that were

actually written into the Code of Virginia were all deleted, and the Virginia Conflict of Interests and Ethics Advisory Council ("the Council") was instructed to draft relevant forms. The bill also changes the number of submissions to



(Article X, Section 6) mandates a real property tax exemption for a surviving spouse's principal residence. The bills as introduced were open ended, permitting a property tax exemption years after a soldier had expired. The final version of the bills tightened the eligibility criteria.

HB 421 expands the real property tax exemptions for certain disabled veterans and surviving spouses of disabled veterans and soldiers killed in action to include real property improvements made to the land surrounding the residences provided that the improvement is used to house or cover motor vehicles or household goods and personal effects for other than business purposes. The bill as introduced was sufficiently broad to have included swimming pools and barns.

HB 1203 and SB 366 expand the definition of principal residence to include manufactured homes for the real property tax exemptions provided for certain disabled veterans and surviving spouses of disabled veterans and soldiers killed in action. The bills as introduced would have allowed trailers to qualify for the tax exemptions.

HB 545 and SB 218 did NOT pass. The bills would have excluded wages, salaries and other benefits paid by a staffing firm to an independent contractor working on behalf of the staffing firm's clients under a temporary help services or a professional employer organization services contract from the gross receipts of the staffing firm in calculating the BPOL tax.

Airbnb bill turns into a study

An unending roller-coaster ride of ups and downs throughout the session on Airbnb finally ended with passage of a bill that is slimmed down to a study with an additional provision requiring the General Assembly to re-enact the bill in 2017.

As introduced, the Airbnb bill (SB 416) preempted local zoning and tax authority for these short-term rentals in residential dwellings. While the bill passed, it has to be reenacted next year. Further, in the meantime, the Housing Commission is charged with convening a work group with representation from the hotel industry, hosting platform providers like Airbnb, local government, state and local tax officials, property owners, and other interested parties to explore issues related to registration, land use, tax, and other items of public interest tied to short-term rentals.

The work group will take into consideration existing local ordinances governing the activities of bed and breakfast inns, vacation rentals, and other transient occupancy venues. The group has a December 1, 2016, deadline to complete its work with the goal of developing recommendations and draft legislation for the 2017 session.

VML thanks its members as well as the hospitality industry for working together with us to effectively shape the outcome



of these bills. VML is also indebted to Speaker Bill Howell and Senate Majority Leader Tommy Norment for their leadership and guidance.

Proffer bill poses problems for localities

Localities will be limited in the use of proffers as a result of SB 549. (Proffers are offers made by developers, usually dealing with infrastructure like schools and roads, to account for the growth that the development projects will cause. Local governments are authorized to accept proffers for rezoning land.) Off-site proffers will be limited to parks and recreational facilities (to include playgrounds), public safety, roads and schools. In addition, the nexus between the new residential development and the proffer must be "specifically attributable" to the new development.

Despite the concerns of localities, Governor Terry McAuliffe signed the bill without amendments. The Governor's staff suggested that local government could offer amendments next year if needed.

VML thanks the many local officials who worked on this bill, which was a top priority for the Home Builders Association of Virginia. Working together, localities successfully managed to address some of the problems with the bill.

Eminent domain process changed ... again

By the end of the session, legislation that would have increased the cost of public projects and made out-of-court settlement of condemnation cases more difficult was improved. The final version of SB 478 preserves the current exemption from having to pay landowners' appraisal costs when acquiring easements valued at less than \$10,000 and exempts local government utility departments and water/sewer authorities.

As introduced, the bill would have made out-of-court settlement of condemnation cases more difficult and would have added significantly to the cost of public projects.

The negative aspects of the bill will still apply to local condemnations for roads and other non-utility public projects, but exempting local government utilities from the bill's provisions was a big victory.



GO Virginia set to start

HB 834 and SB 449 establish the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Board and the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund for regional economic and workforce development projects. The legislation authorizes regional councils to be set up across the Commonwealth, consisting of representatives of government and the business and education communities. Councils may submit applications for collaborative projects in their region that enhance private-sector growth, competitiveness, and workforce development. A portion of the grant funds will be awarded on a population basis and a portion on a competitive basis. The General Assembly appropriated in the 2016-18 biennium over \$35.0 million for regional grants and an additional \$450,000 for staffing and administration.

As part of the GO Virginia legislative package, the General Assembly also enacted SB 459 and HB 846 to create the Virginia Collaborative Economic Development Performance Grant Fund. Localities with an approved collaborative economic development plan and making agreed-upon investments for specific projects can apply for state grants of up to 50.0 percent of the total investment or contributions made by the participating localities. This Fund would be capitalized by up to 45.0 percent of the total annual amount of personal income taxes paid to the state by the project's new employees. Although the legislation provides for exceptions, an eligible project must create at least 200 net new jobs with personal benefits and with salaries in line with the average wages paid in the participating localities. There is also a capital investment threshold of at least \$25.0 million.

LODA reform bill watered down

The Line of Duty Act reform bill approved this session will have some long-term savings for the state and localities, but fewer immediate savings.

Under HB 1345, employees who become eligible for LODA benefits on or after July 1, 2017 will be required to move to Medicare at age 65 unless they are catastrophically disabled.

The Virginia Retirement System will determine eligibility for the program and LODA recipients will receive health insurance coverage from a statewide health insurance plan run by the state Department of Human Resource Management.

Del. Chris Jones has said that the next step in reform of LODA is to identify a funding source for the benefits.

Local DSS filing of petitions with courts

The General Assembly approved SB 417, giving certain local department of social services staff the official permission to file routine social services-related petitions with the juvenile and domestic relations courts. VML supported the granting of this authority.


Many local departments were previously filing petitions,

until a complaint was filed with the State Bar last summer accusing local departments of the "unauthorized practice of law." It turns out that the Code of Virginia gave this authority to file petitions to state, but not local, DSS staff. HB 417 puts local DSS staff on the same footing as state staff, and comes as a relief to many local governments, both large and small.

Look for constitutional amendments on ballot this November

Voters will see two constitutional amendments on the ballot this November. One allows the General Assembly to authorize local governments to exempt from real estate taxation the primary residence of the surviving spouse of a hazardous duty officer killed in the line of duty (HJR 123 and HB 865). The second enshrines the state's right-to-work law in the state Constitution by stating that union membership cannot be a condition of employment (HJR 2 and HB 4).

JLARC to focus on early childhood development

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission is charged with a two-year study of early childhood development programs (prenatal to age 5) under SJR 88. The resolution directs JLARC to develop recommendations on the best strategy for future early childhood development investments. 



About the authors

This report was compiled by VML legislative staff.

Balance this budget

New Virginia Beach online tool asks citizens to make the choices

BALANCING THE CITY budget is all about making choices – hard choices. It's easy to propose more spending for favorite projects, but hard to find money to support them. Easy to propose cutting taxes, but hard to cut programs to compensate.

In March, Virginia Beach City Manager Dave Hansen introduced his proposed \$1.9 billion operating budget for 2016-17. At the same time, the city unveiled a new online tool that lets citizens suggest changes to the proposed budget.

Lower taxes? Higher spending? Sure, but here's the thing: You have to balance the budget, too.

The new software, called Balancing Act, forces citizens to make choices – just as city leaders do. They can set their own priorities and service levels. They can lower the real estate tax, or spend more on libraries and police. But when they hit the SUBMIT button, the budget cannot have a deficit.

“When we saw a demo of Balancing Act several months ago, we were impressed by how easy it is to use,” Budget Director Catheryn Whitesell said. “Now we want citizens to try it. There are hundreds of ways to balance the budget, and we spent several months on the city manager's recommendation.

Now it's the citizen's turn. We want them to show us how they would change the budget to reflect their priorities.”

Citizens can set their own priorities, raise and lower taxes or services. But when they hit the SUBMIT button, the budget cannot have a deficit.

It's all part of Virginia Beach's ongoing effort to engage more citizens on more issues.

Virginia Beach gives residents several ways to comment on the proposed FY17 budget. Three are old and traditional: a pair of public hearings, a pair of town hall meetings with city council members, and good old e-mail.

In 2013, Virginia Beach introduced a virtual town hall for citizens to help set budget priorities. Using online software, citizens divvied up a hypothetical \$500 (representing the total city operating budget) among all city services.

In 2015, Virginia Beach unveiled another online budget tool, an open data app called Open Budget. It lets people drill

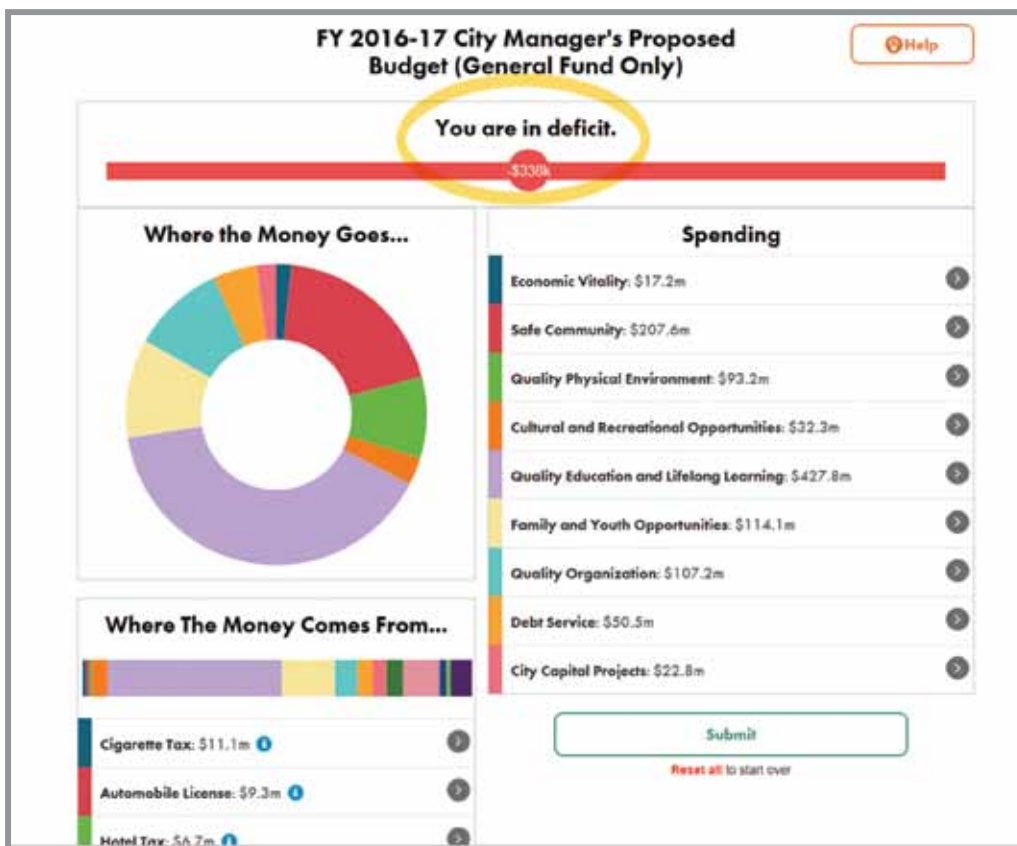
deeply into the city budget – down to each individual line item for spending and revenues. Open Budget makes the budget easy to understand and easy to access, without having to wade through the 394-page operating budget or the 413-page capital improvement program.

Now, here comes Balancing Act.

“There are a lot of moving parts to the budget,” Whitesell said. “We wanted to get people thinking about it. What are your priorities? How do you balance them against other priorities? Mostly, we want to know if the choices we made in our proposed budget match the choices the community would make, given the same opportunity.”

Like most cities and counties, Virginia Beach suffered during the

Citizens can adjust the amounts up and down in all of the categories, but if it doesn't balance, they'll get an error message like this one (above left circled in yellow). Check out the Balancing Act at www.virginiabeachva.abalancingact.com.





“We know most citizens don’t have time to come to a public hearing...But if they have just a few minutes, they can be the budget director at home, on their computer. Balancing Act is just another tool to get the conversation started.”

- Catheryn Whitesell, Budget Director, City of Virginia Beach

recession. Real estate assessments dropped for five straight years, from FY10 through FY14. In one year alone – 2012 – the City Council had to close a \$90 million budget gap for the city and schools combined. Positions were eliminated and services were trimmed.

Now the economy is slowly bouncing back. Unemployment in Virginia Beach is down to 3.9 percent, the lowest in Hampton Roads. And for the third straight year, real estate assessments are up. The average home value rose 2.8 percent this year. A hiring freeze, which started in September, helped bridge a projected \$33 million budget gap.

As a result, Virginia Beach proposes to cover existing services and add more – a new fire/EMS station, a new recreation center, 11 new police officers, 15 new deputy sheriffs, 450 police body cameras over four years, and a new Housing Resource Center – without a tax rate increase.

But are the changes what citizens want?

Balancing Act gives residents a chance to propose their own budgets.




What did you buy? A taxpayer’s itemized receipt

Another new online tool, called Taxpayer Receipt, lets citizens see an estimate of how much they pay in city taxes and what they get for their money.

Residents anonymously enter their age, income, value of their home and value of their car. The tool shows an estimate of the resident’s total tax bill and where the money is spent. It calculates taxes on real estate and personal property, and estimates taxes on restaurant meals and sales based on age and income. It does not include fees for water, sewer, trash and stormwater management.

So far, 546 residents have viewed the Balancing Act web page, and 70 have used it to propose changes.

Whitesell will pass along the suggestions and comments to the city council, along with more traditional comments received at public hearings and the virtual town hall. The city council will vote on the budget May 10.

“We know most citizens don’t have time to come to a public hearing on a Thursday night,” Whitesell said. “But if they have just a few minutes, they can be the budget director at home, on their computer. Balancing Act is just another tool to get the conversation started.” 

About the author

Marc Davis is the Media and Communications Manager for the City of Virginia Beach.

BalancingAct About

Want a receipt for your taxes?

Answer a few questions to find out how much you paid.

What's your annual income?

What's your age?

Do you own a home? Yes No

Do you drive a car? Yes No

[View Your Tax Receipt](#)

The taxpayer receipt lets residents see how much they paid and what they got for their money. Check out the taxpayer receipt at www.virginiabeachva.abalancingact.com.

New community care mobile app puts family resources at your fingertips



GETTING THE INFORMATION you need is sometimes difficult, and it only gets more challenging when you are in need of help quickly. The new Community Care mobile application, available for Apple and Android devices, provides Chesterfield County and Colonial Heights residents and families with children the information they need in a quick, easy-to-navigate format.

Many residents are not aware of the depth of services the county offers. Whether it's help with parenting, disabilities, transportation, substance abuse or finding a great park, the free Community Care mobile app helps connect users to the right people who can provide assistance. The interactive app enables users to browse by category or search department descriptions to learn how to get help as well as where departments are located and contact information.

“We quickly embraced the idea of having program information in one easy and accessible, convenient spot that directs people to services and information.”

— *Karen Reilly-Jones, Chesterfield County comprehensive services administrator*

“The intent of the Community Care mobile app is to increase community awareness by providing an easy and convenient platform for people interested in community resources to find information,” said Karen Reilly-Jones, Chesterfield County comprehensive services administrator. “We know people rely heavily on their smartphones and tablets to find information, so we wanted to give them a resource they would use.”

The concept for the app stemmed from the System of Care team, comprised of representatives from several children and family services agencies in Chesterfield County and Colonial Heights as well as representatives from public schools. The main focus of this group, which meets bimonthly, is to promote a shared mission and vision through collaboration and communication across all child and family services agencies.

In 2013, Chesterfield County, as part of a regional partnership with other localities and a nonprofit organization, United Methodist Family Services, was awarded a three-year grant to expand its System of Care efforts for children and families. Other localities that make up the regional partnership range from urban to rural, including the city of Richmond and the counties of Henrico, Goochland and Hanover. The grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration allocated each locality an equitable amount of money to use for specific purposes for community engagement.

After receiving the grant, the county's System of Care

Community care mobile app

committee saw the next obvious step for improved coordination and communication was through mobile technology.

“We kept asking ourselves, how do we get information about our community’s resources out to the people who need it?” Reilly-Jones said. “We quickly embraced the idea of having program information in one easy and accessible, conve-

The funds awarded from the federal grant covered the cost of the planning and development of the app. The cost to other localities as they join will be significantly less since the format has already been established.

nient spot that directs people to services and information. It was also important to the team that we use modern technology so the free app was the perfect platform.”

The app launched in December 2015, and it currently includes resources for Chesterfield County and Colonial Heights, but the team expects additional localities may wish to join in the future.

“When the concept for the app was being discussed, we knew we wanted it to have the option to add additional localities,” Reilly-Jones said.

The funds awarded from the federal grant covered the cost of the planning and development of the app as well as the second year maintenance cost. The cost to other localities as they join will be significantly less since the format has already been established.

“There are so many resources and services available for families through local government, schools and private nonprofits,” said Jacque Hale, Smart Beginnings RVA director of programs and community impact, mother of two and Chesterfield County resident. “The Community Care app brings information to parents on their smartphones and in a way they are comfortable using. Smartphones are everywhere, and research shows that low-income families tend to be even more smartphone dependent.”

Chesterfield County and Colonial Heights share many family and children services, such as social services, court services and the health department, but there are other services that operate separately, including public schools, public mental health and youth services. Jana Carter, Chesterfield County director of juvenile services, is part of the System of Care committee and sees great value in the app.

“It can get complicated and confusing to navigate these services,” Carter said. “In some cases, a person would have to visit multiple websites to find the information they are looking for.”

Since the app’s launch in December, the county’s Communications and Media Department, in cooperation with Chesterfield County Public Schools, have worked to spread the word through social media, website placement, emails to parents, newsletters, ads in the Richmond Times-Dispatch,

news releases and other community outreach tactics including an upcoming video segment promoting it. Additional outreach will continue over time with the hope to continue to reach new audiences.

Community Care has seen measured success since it launched. The app has been downloaded over 793 times with 1,168 active sessions, which is the period of time a user is engaged with the app. There have been 5,557 screen views with an average of 4.8 screens viewed per session.

And, based on the analytics, people are finding what they need quickly. On average, each user is spending nearly two minutes on the app.

Cathy Surowka, family engagement coordinator for Virginia Preschool Initiative, has found the Community Care app to be an invaluable tool in her daily work.

“When I meet with families and discuss their needs, I have all the information to share with them right at my fingertips,” Surowka said.



Want to see how the app works?

Download it for free by searching “Community Care Chesterfield” on your Apple or Android device.

Surowka noted in one particular meeting with a mother of a pre-kindergarten student, she was able to go to the app, find the agency that she knew could help and make the call right from her office to help set up an appointment. The mother went straight to that agency after leaving Surowka’s office.

“I have shared the information about the Community Care app with all of my Virginia Preschool Initiative families and will continue to spread the word with new families,” Surowka said.

According to the national grant funder, the Community Care app is the first local resource mobile app of its kind with endless growth potential.

“We are proud of the partnerships and coordination demonstrated between all departments to develop the app as well as the shared commitment to market it to its fullest potential,” Reilly-Jones said. 

About the author

Teresa Bonifas is Public Information Officer for the Chesterfield County Communications and Media Department.

Understanding the building code development process

What's in it for me? And for my community?

SIXTEEN PENNY WEIGHT nails – no more, no less. At one time or another, we've all joked about the seemingly arbitrary standards for building codes, yet we all appreciate living and working in safe buildings.

Over the next 18 months, building and fire officials, architects, engineers, and client groups will spend a lot of time looking at proposed changes to the Uniform Statewide Building Code, the Statewide Fire Prevention Code, the Manufactured Housing Safety Regulations and the Industrialized Building Safety Regulations.

This process, led by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, occurs every three years so that Virginia's safety standards keep pace with industry advancements and technical developments.

What are building codes and why do we need them?

Building codes are sets of regulations governing the design, construction, alteration and maintenance of structures. They specify the minimum requirements to adequately safeguard the health, safety and welfare of building occupants. They reduce economic losses from natural disasters and other prevalent hazards. Additionally, they incorporate energy efficiency and sustainable building principles in an effort to prolong the lifespan of the built environment.

Because of newer codes that incorporate the latest technology and products, structures can now survive hurricane-force wind gusts that once would have torn houses to pieces and produced dangerous projectiles.



Building code

For example, building codes specify the types of building materials that can be used in single-family houses, multi-family apartments, retail stores, factories and hospitals; structural soundness of wall, roof and foundation systems; proper wiring methods for electrical equipment and appliances; proper sizing of pipes for gas and water distribution and waste drainage. These codes spring from the need to protect people where they live, work and play.

Where do the building codes come from?

Virginia is one of a number of states in which there is a uniform, statewide building code. From the viewpoint of the construction industry, a uniform code makes it easier to know the rules guiding construction regardless of the location of the project.

Virginia and its localities, as well as most of the communities and states across the U.S., follow the model codes and standards developed by the International Code Council. This association is made up of building safety professionals, contractors, architects and engineers, all of whom participate in the code development process.

Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development works with the ICC codes to develop the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, which by law is enforced in all jurisdictions, primarily by local building officials and their staff.

Localities have the authority, but are not required, to adopt and enforce the Virginia maintenance code, which ensures that existing buildings and structures are maintained in accordance with the code they were constructed under.

Localities also have the option to enforce the Statewide Fire Prevention Code; if the locality does not choose to enforce this code, the State Fire Marshal's office performs this function.

What is the code development process at the national level?

Anyone can propose a code change, modification or new requirement to the International Code Council model of codes. ICC committees review proposed changes in a public forum where proponents and opponents can state their positions. The committee then votes to approve, deny or modify proposals. The final versions are published for state and local adoption.

What is the code development process at the state level?

States are not required to adopt the International Code Council model of codes but most, including Virginia, do. Because of varying state laws, however, the ICC codes are likely to be modified to fit state law. The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code falls under the Virginia Administrative Process Act, so the process is long and contains specific time periods




for public comment. The minimum amount of time for the process to finish is 18-24 months; typically, Virginia's adoption of a revised building code comes about three years after the ICC has published its updated code.

During Virginia's regulatory process, DHCD sets up individual work groups that focus on the specific codes under review. The work groups develop positions on code changes through a series of meetings and hearings. A draft then goes to the Board of Housing and Community Development for further modification and changes before publication as a proposed regulation. There is then even more time built in for public comment and review, before the regulation takes effect. By the time the code changes take place, the proposal also has been vetted by the Office of the Attorney General, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade and the Office of the Governor.

It's a long process but one that is designed to ensure that the broad range of stakeholders involved in building construction have the opportunity to make their voices heard. Workgroups will be meeting from April through August of this year, and again from July through November 2017. The projected effective date for regulations coming from this year's code change process is March 2018.

Why should local building and fire officials, inspectors and plan reviewers participate in the code development process?

Virginia building and fire officials traditionally have been very active in code development at the national level. Because of that, the Virginia code generally has to undergo fewer modifications than in some states. Code officials should participate in the development and enhancement of codes to learn and understand the 'how and why' or the science behind them. When customers are advised as to the rationale behind code provisions, they respond more favorably in the name of building safety.

Participation also gives Virginia officials the opportunity to learn about how code issues are handled in other parts of the state and nation, to network and identify best practices from other Code officials, as well as to learn about new issues coming down the pike. 

About the author

John G. Walsh is the Code Enforcement Operations Manager for the city of Richmond and is the current President of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association.

Calendar

May 4-6

VGFOA Spring Conference

The Virginia Government Finance Officers' Association will host its spring conference at the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel in Virginia Beach. To register, go to www.vgfoa.org.

May 18

Wetland Professionals Meeting

The Virginia Association of Wetland Professionals (VAWP) will host its annual spring meeting May 18th at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia. This

event will focus on the regulations, standards, and research related to Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). Presenters include representatives from local, state, and federal agencies, as well as Virginia localities, consultants, and academic institutions. Register at www.vawp.org.

May 19-June 23

VML Spring Regional Suppers

VML will host six regional suppers throughout the state, providing local officials with latest news and developments affecting local government. Register for one near you at www.vml.org.

The schedule of regional suppers is:

May 19 – West Point

June 2 – Winchester

June 15 – Big Stone Gap

June 16 – Danville

June 22 – Suffolk

June 23 – Gordonsville

July 22-23

Institute for Local Officials

The 2016 Institute for Local Officials will be held July 22-23 at the Hilton Richmond Downtown in Richmond, Virginia. This event replaces what was previously known as the Newly Elected Officials Conference. This event is open to newly elected officials and veterans alike. Topics to be discussed will touch on the fundamentals of serving as a council member, making the most of meetings, budgeting, the Freedom of Information Act, the Conflicts of Interest Act, interacting with constituents, dealing with media and public officials liability. Cost: \$175 for Members and \$75 for Guests. Register at www.vml.org.

July 28-29

VML policy committee meeting

Nominations are now being taken for VML's six policy committees for 2016. VML policy committees bring together members of VML communities throughout the commonwealth to discuss issues of mutual concern, hear speakers on current policy issues, and develop policy positions that reflect local governments' views on a wide variety of statewide issues affecting communities. This year, policy committee meetings will be held as follows:

Thursday, July 28, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Environmental Quality Committee, Finance Committee, Transportation Committee

Friday, July 29, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Community & Economic Development Committee, General Laws Committee, Human Development & Education Committee

All committee meetings will be held at the meeting center of the Virginia Society of Certified Public Accountants (VSCPA) in Glen Allen (suburb of Richmond). For more information, email or call Janet Areson at jarson@vml.org or 804/523-8522.

The New Way To Manage Fund Balances



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Marketplace

Codes Enforcement Officer, Waynesboro

Performs building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical inspections for residential, commercial, and industrial structures. Requires thorough knowledge of Uniform State Building Code. H.S. diploma/equivalent. 5 years minimum experience in general construction or inspections field. Application deadline: June 10. Full time. Salary: \$34,944- \$38,434 DOE/DOQ Full benefits.

Water Plant Manager, Manassas

Manages daily operations of the water treatment facility including lake impoundment, dam and storage tank facilities within the City of Manassas. Manages plant operators and shift supervisors. Associates degree required supplemented by three years' experience in water plant management; or equivalent combination of education and experience. Application deadline: May 30. Full time. Salary: \$79,081.60-\$104,769.60/DOQ Full benefits.

Deputy City Manager, Harrisonburg

Assists City Manager with the preparation of the annual operating budget and capital improvement budget. Provides direct supervision to multiple department directors. Application deadline: May 29. Full time. Salary: \$87,484 - \$139,984. Full benefits.

Director of Public Works, Alleghany County

Requires knowledge of water, sewer, solid waste management, planning, zoning, building inspections, engineering, and code compliance; preparation, administration, and evaluation of the budgets for the same. Must possess three years of experience in similar field and relevant bachelor's degree; experience in public works preferred; licensure as a professional engineer preferred. Application deadline: May 20. Full time. Salary: DOQ/DOE. Full benefits.

Project Engineer, Herndon

Provides project management for a wide variety of capital improvement projects, including facilities construction and renovations, facilities system upgrades (HVAC, electrical, etc.), park improvements, streetscape improvements, utility relocations, and other assigned projects. Application deadline: May 30. Position type: Full time. Salary: \$55,389 + DOQ Full benefits.

Police Officer, Colonial Beach

Duties entail full police services to the community. Current Virginia Law Enforcement Certification and experience is preferred. Application deadline: May 29. Full time. Salary: DOQ/DOE. Full benefits.

Want to see more jobs?

Go to www.vml.org for the most comprehensive listings of local governments jobs throughout Virginia. Jobs in every discipline are added weekly. VML members can also post job openings at the site free of charge.

Director of Finance, Front Royal

Directs financial functions for the Town including utility, tax, and license billing, budget preparation, oversight of payroll and purchasing systems, coordination of audits, and other services. Requires 6+ years of municipal experience. First review of applications on April 29. Application deadline: May 29. Full time. Salary: \$64,896 - \$103,708. Full benefits.

Budget Manager (Analyst), Hanover County

Prepares annual budget; responsible for analyzing projects and programs; prepares accurate revenue and expense projections. Bachelor's degree in finance, accounting, public administration or related field required. Application deadline: May 27. Full time. Salary: \$55,000 - \$75,000. Full benefits.

Wait for it....


If you've been waiting for the call for entries for the VML Achievement Awards, hang in there.

VML is updating the awards program and starting the call for entries later this year. Look for the call for entries in the May issue of Virginia Town & City. The deadline for entries will be in late July. So relax, you've got two extra months to prepare your award-winning entry!

The new VML Achievement Awards

Coming soon

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