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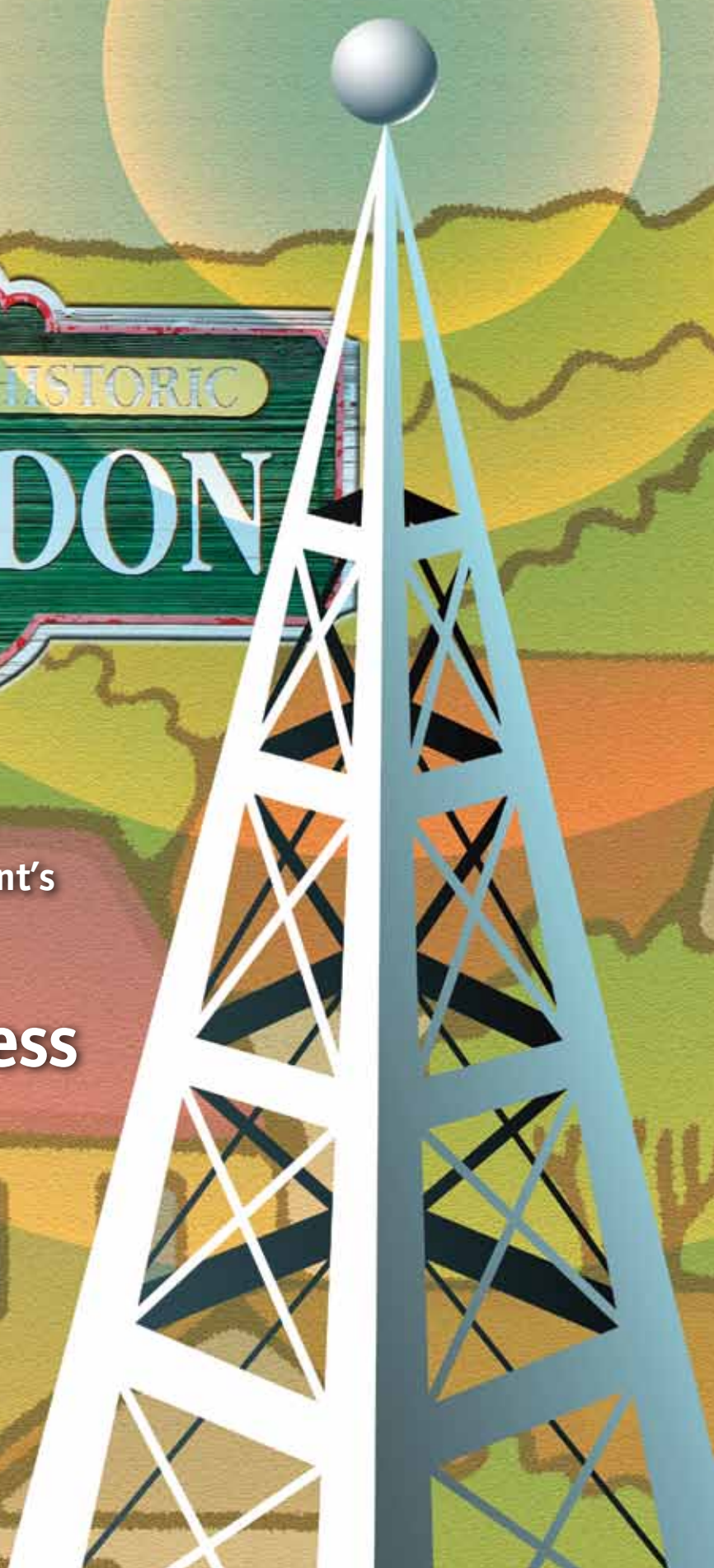
The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League

VOLUME 47 NO. 7 SEPTEMBER 2012



President's
Award

**Free wireless
Internet
coverage
blankets
town**



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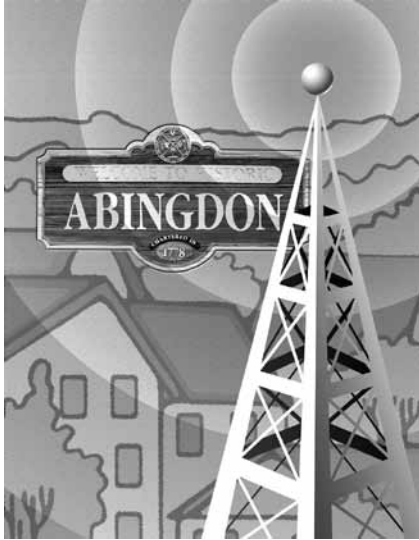
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More than 65 entries in six categories were received for judging in the 2012 VML Achievement Awards competition. The winner of this year's President's Award is the Town of Abingdon.

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POPULATION CATEGORY WINNERS:

Population more than 90,000 – City of Portsmouth

Faced with a staggering inventory of blighted properties spoiling the quality of life in the city, Portsmouth embraced a new state law that gave it more authority to deal with the problem.

Population 35,001-90,000 – City of Danville

Danville developed an incredibly effective targeted, multifaceted neighborhood improvement initiative that was crafted in response to a spate of homicides.

Population 10,001-35,000 – City of Falls Church

Falls Church created a Health and Safety Code Inspection Task Force that brings together representatives from multiple agencies to address shared problems and improve conditions in the northern Virginia city.

Population 5,000-10,000 – Town of Marion

Despite the fallout from a devastating recession, Marion succeeded in boosting economic development in downtown by building a new parking deck while preserving a historic 1908 schoolhouse and embracing the cultural heritage of southwest Virginia.

Population fewer than 5,000 – Town of Wise

Wise followed through on an important element of its downtown revitalization master plan by constructing the Big Glades Community Square, which includes a 1,053 square-foot amphitheater that provides a versatile venue for concerts, special events and recreation in downtown.



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Henrico's Hazelett to retire next year



- Hazelett -

Longtime Henrico County Manager **Virgil Hazelett** announced his retirement July 24 at a Board of Supervisors meeting. Hazelett, who has served as the county's top administrator since 1992, and who began work for Henrico government in 1972 as the county's first traffic engineer, will step down on Jan. 16.

"... There comes a time when each of us must step aside to make way for the next generation of leaders who can take Henrico County to new and different heights," the 67-year-old Hazelett said.

An important part of Hazelett's legacy as county manager is a rigorous stewardship of county finances. The Board of Supervisors adopted a long-term financial plan in FY02 that capped annual growth in general fund spending at 5 percent.

Adherence to this plan helped Henrico withstand sharp declines in real estate revenue associated with the Great Recession without laying off employees, reducing services to residents or raising taxes. Throughout the economic crisis Henrico was able to maintain a real estate tax rate of 87 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

Henrico names deputy manager



- Crawley -

Jane D. Crawley was promoted to deputy county manager for community services effective Sept. 8.

Crawley, who served most recently as director of the Department of Social Services, will succeed **George T. Drumwright Jr.**, who is retiring after more than 34 years in the position.

She began her Henrico career in 1991 as a casework supervisor in Social Services. She also worked as

the department's assistant director before being named director in 2006.

Arlington selects planning director



- Duffy -

Arlington County has hired a longtime local government planner as its next director of planning. **Robert J. Duffy**, AICP, served most recently as planning supervisor with

the Prince George's County Planning Department in Maryland. Previously, he was director of planning and community development for Brookline, Mass; assistant director of the Louisville Development Authority and Downtown Development Corp.; town planning and development administrator for Southampton, N.Y.; and the director of planning for Sanibel, Fla.

Duffy serves as a Technical Advisory Panel Committee member for the Washington District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), and a board member for the American Planning Association's National Capital Area Chapter.

Roanoke County names Hall new police chief



- Hall -

A 25-year veteran of the Baltimore County (Md.) Police Department was named the chief of police for Roanoke County effective Aug. 13.

Howard B. Hall, 47, joined the Baltimore County force in 1986 after graduating from the University of Maryland. He spent 20 years with the department as a commander and gained experience in the areas of patrol, traffic, special operations, training, administration, accreditation compliance, and human resources. In addition to receiving an MPA from the University of Baltimore in 1995, Hall attended the FBI National Academy and holds a graduate certificate in police administration.

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Arlington names Emanuel DES director



- Emanuel -

Greg Emanuel was promoted to director of the Department of Environmental Services (DES) in Arlington County effective Aug. 13. He served most recently as deputy director for

the department and succeeds **William F. O'Connor**, who retired.

Emanuel joined Arlington County in 2006 as director of the former Engineering and Capital Projects Division. He was promoted to deputy director of the department about six months ago and added Facilities Management to his portfolio. Prior to his experience with the county, Emanuel served 21 years with the U.S. Air Force, where he held a variety

of engineering leadership positions around the world.

Have news about personnel in your city, town or county government? Send information to David Parsons via e-mail at dparsons@vml.org.

NEWS & NOTES

Hampton/NASA plant wins energy award

A plant operated by Hampton city employees that converts trash to steam for the Langley Research Center won a 2012 Federal Energy and Water Management Award recently. Federal agencies across the country competed for the award, which honors individuals and organizations making significant contributions to the efficient use of energy and water resources.

The Hampton/NASA Steam Plant, built in 1980, generates energy for the research center by burning trash from Hampton, NASA Langley, Langley Air Force Base and Newport News Shipbuilding. City refuse trucks deliver loads of trash to the plant, which feeds the materials into a furnace system. The 2,200 degree flame it creates fires a pair of boilers that provide steam, which is used for heating and cooling and research operations in the center's wind tunnels. The ash that results is chemically inert, creates no landfill gases and uses about one-tenth the landfill space as its original form.

Williamsburg garners regional CED award

The City of Williamsburg has won a 2012 Community Economic Development Award from the Southern Economic Development Council, a regional economic development association that includes 17 states.

The city's Demolition Loan

Arlington Board OKs Rosslyn improvements

HE ARLINGTON COUNTY BOARD recently approved the rezoning and necessary site plans for the construction of three buildings to replace two old office buildings on 2.20 prime acres in Rosslyn. Developer JBG's planned Rosslyn Gateway, located at the base and entrance to the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor from the Francis Scott Key Bridge, will total nearly 1 million square feet of prime office and retail space, hotel rooms and residential units when fully built out.

The Rosslyn Gateway, one block north of the Rosslyn Metro Station, will occupy an entire block. The development will truly be a "gateway" for those coming from Washington into Arlington. Special attention was given to the architectural treatment of the buildings, with the heights tapering from south to north to present a variation of rooflines and building form.

"Rosslyn Gateway is a turning point for the county's efforts to transform Rosslyn into a more welcoming neighborhood for the people who live, work or visit there," said Arlington County Board Chair Mary Hynes. "This is exactly the sort of high-quality, beautifully designed, mixed-use development we hoped that the rezoning of Rosslyn would encourage." **VTC**



Rendering depicts how the new construction will enhance the gateway from Washington into the Rosslyn section of Arlington.

Program was the recipient of the award in Population Category Two (5,001-15,000). The program provides tools to stimulate enhancements in commercial areas by encouraging private development of underused commercial properties.

The Williamsburg Economic Development Authority developed the Demolition Loan Program to provide capital to demolish underutilized buildings to allow for redevelopment projects to take their places. This infusion of cash allows a property owner to prepare a brownfield property for the redevelopment market.

ELSEWHERE ...

The **City of Richmond** was able to obtain lower-than-expected interest rates in mid-June when it sold \$248.2 million in bonds that included \$101.3 million in continued funding for a \$500 million multi-year Capital Improvement Program. The city issued both a taxable and tax-exempt

series of bonds. It received an interest rate of 2.18 percent on the \$100 million taxable refunding bond issuance and 2.73 percent on the longer term tax-exempt series, about 1.5 percent below planning estimates. ... Appalachian Sustainable Development and the **Town of Abingdon** unveiled the "Rooted In Appalachia" farm-to-table campaign on Aug. 6. Supporters gathered at the Abingdon Farmers Market to get a look at the program's logo and branding promotion that will designate local restaurants and bed and breakfasts that use local food, wine and beer.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency awarded the City of **Falls Church** a Class 7 rating through the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System, an increase from the previous Class 8 rating. This improved score will allow city property owners to purchase flood insurance at a 15 percent discounted premium. The

city is one of only 20 Virginia communities to qualify for participation in the program, and one of only five in the state to achieve the Class 7 rating. ... For the 10th year in a row, **Albemarle County** has been named among the Top 10 most technologically advanced, cutting edge county governments of its size in the U.S. by the Center for Digital Government and the National Association of Counties in their 2012 Digital Counties Survey. ... The **City of Hampton** celebrated the opening of its first new fire station in 24 years with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house on Aug. 7.

Have news about your city, town or county government? Send information to David Parsons via e-mail at dparsons@vml.org



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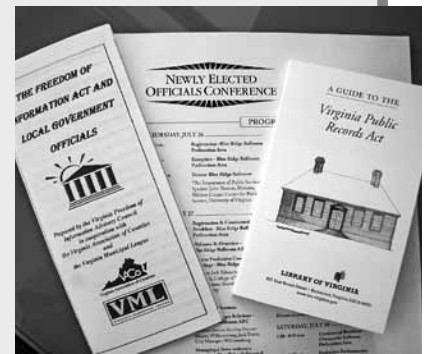
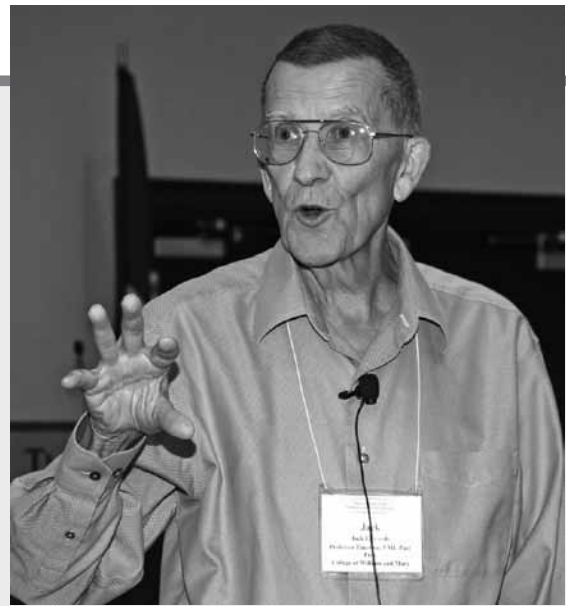
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NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIALS CONFERENCE



Newly elected

ABOUT 80 RECENTLY-ELECTED members of local governing bodies from across the state traveled to Henrico County July 27-28 to attend a VML-sponsored conference for newly elected officials. Among the speakers that those in attendance heard was Jack Edwards (top right), a former member of the James City County Board of Supervisors and a professor emeritus of government at The College of William & Mary, who explained the importance of conducting meetings effectively. Among the other topics discussed during the two-day conference were council-manager relations, budgeting, planning and the state Freedom of Information Act.





2012 VML Annual Achievement Awards

And the winners are ...

THE NUMBER OF RESPONSES to the call for entries in this year's Virginia Municipal League Achievement Awards competition is evidence that the commitment to creative, imaginative and cost-effective local government remains alive and well across the Commonwealth.



From some of the smallest towns to the largest cities and counties, the entries reflected the highest standards of professionalism and innovation, two traits that remain cornerstones of local government in Virginia.

More than 65 entries were received for judging in six categories – five based on population and one for communications programs and projects open to local governments of all sizes. In addition, a President's Award is presented to the winner of the population category judged to have fulfilled VML's entry criteria the best.

The VML Achievement Awards program has a distinguished history as the most prestigious local government awards program in the state, attracting more entries than any other competition. Judges for the 2012 program were **Pete Stith**, retired deputy county administrator in Chesterfield; **Marilyn Blake**, retired assistant county administrator of Hanover; **Anne B. Smith**, retired York County director of community services; **Todd Areson**, a retired research specialist with the state Department of Social Services and a former program director with the National League of Cities; and **Tedd Povar**, a former city manager and associate director of the Virginia Institute of Government.

This year's winner of the President's Award is the **Town of Abingdon**. Abingdon's entry describing its dogged pursuit to establish a wireless network throughout the town that provides free, high-speed Internet access to all residents, businesses and visitors was judged as the best of the five population category winning entries.

The winners of the other population categories for 2012 are:

The **Town of Wise** – for construc-

tion of the **Big Glades Community Square**, which includes a 1,053 square-foot amphitheater that provides a versatile venue for concerts, special events and recreation in downtown that has boosted business for neighboring restaurants and shops.

The **Town of Marion** – for its perseverance in boosting economic development in downtown by building a new parking deck while preserving a historic 1908 schoolhouse and embracing the cultural heritage of southwest Virginia.

The **City of Falls Church** – for the creation of a Health and Safety Code Inspection Task Force that brings together representatives from multiple agencies to address shared problems and improve conditions in the community.

The **City of Danville** – for a targeted, multifaceted neighborhood improvement initiative, crafted in response to a spate of homicides, which enjoyed extraordinary results.

And the **City of Portsmouth** – for embracing a new state law that gave cities more authority to deal with blighted properties that spoil the quality of life in the city.

The winner of the communications category is the **City of Fredericksburg** – for its innovative use of turning what could have been an ordinary Police Department blog into a communications tool that is building relationships throughout the community.

The winners will be presented their awards at a banquet during the VML Annual Conference in Williamsburg on Sept. 25.

Descriptions of the winning entries are included on the pages that follow.

Past VML Achievement Award winners

- 2011**
 Blackstone – under 5,000
 Abingdon – 5,000-10,000
 Winchester – 10,001-35,000
 Leesburg – 35,001-90,000
 Richmond – over 90,000
 Blacksburg – Communications
 Manassas – President's Award

- 2010**
 Elkton – under 5,000
 Purcellville – 5,000-10,000
 Herndon – 10,001-35,000
 Blacksburg – 35,001-90,000
 Alexandria – over 90,000
 Hampton – Communications
 Galax – President's Award

- 2009**
 Broadway – under 5,000
 Ashland – 5,000-10,000
 Falls Church – 10,001-35,000
 Leesburg – 35,001-90,000
 Henrico County – over 90,000
 Alexandria – Communications
 Virginia Beach – President's Award

- 2008**
 Town of Louisa – under 5,000
 Bridgewater – 5,000-10,000
 Fredericksburg – 10,001-35,000
 Lynchburg – 35,001-90,000
 Portsmouth – over 90,000
 Chesapeake – Communications
 Virginia Beach – President's Award

- 2007**
 Purcellville – 5,000-10,000
 Radford – 10,001-35,000
 Blacksburg -- 35,001-90,000
 Virginia Beach (Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake) – over 90,000
 Blacksburg – Communications
 Roanoke County – President's Award



Photo illustration depicts how easily Abingdon residents can access high-speed Internet service on any number of digital devices.

Mission accomplished: Town provides all residents, businesses with free wireless Internet access

ABINGDON is connected. Few towns that promote a storied past can say that they are just as enthusiastic about shaping a modern future built on technology. Since 1992, Abingdon has been doing just that.

In 1995, the General Assembly passed legislation that allowed Abingdon to become the only locality in the state to create a board to offer telecommunications infrastructure to the community. The future suddenly came into focus. By creating a fiber optic backbone through the town's

formed, a plan was drawn, a mission statement was written and the work started.

In addition to modem and ISDN connections, a fiber optic connection from the Town Hall to the former Johnston Memorial Hospital building and the Washington County Public Library was established. This initial fiber optic system was a partnership effort between the town and Sprint. After the trial period, it was determined that community interest in this proposed communication system was high and the project continued.

Hardwire to wireless

Since its inception, the town has viewed

EVA as a service, like water, sewer, streets and parking. After all, in the late 20th and early 21st century, it became evident that high-speed Internet connection was just as important in terms of infrastructure as more traditional services.

After fewer than 10 years of receiving Internet service payments from private residents and businesses, the town began to see competition for customers. Local utility boards began offering package deals throughout the region with which Abingdon could not compete. EVA needed to evolve or wither. But in the world of connectivity, how does one evolve without inventing the next "big thing?" It's simple. You provide what others are not.

In a small town with big expectations (pop. 8,300; 8.3 square miles), the creativity of Abingdon's town government staff is perhaps its greatest strength. Staff from the Planning and Information Technology departments took note of five unused telecommu-

nications towers at four neighboring Washington County schools. The

towers were the skeleton of a network dreamed up about 15 years earlier to connect the schools by wireless communication.

Unfortunately, the school system didn't take into consideration the tremendous obstacle preventing such a system from working in the region – mountain topography.

The school board agreed to sell the five towers as a bundle. Abingdon's modest bid of \$501.01 was the only one submitted. The town was awarded all five at about 10 percent of the cost of a single tower. Staff removed and stored the towers while planning for a townwide wireless network continued.

Because of the change in service that was envisioned, Abingdon negotiated with the local utility board to trade some of its EVA customers for higher bandwidth to be used in the tower signals. Abingdon traded 160 EVA customers to the Bristol Virginia Utilities Board for one additional mile of fiber-optic cabling and an additional 20 megabytes of bandwidth. The additional fiber allowed a direct feed between Town Hall and the central tower.

By 2009, two of the towers had been installed with their supporting infrastructure, to beam the wireless signal throughout a portion of town for testing. Last summer, the system was increased with the installation of the remaining towers and nodes. Today, Abingdon has installed four of the original five towers (one was left in its location to optimize the signal to the residents in the western part of town) and dozens of "nodes," to guide the signal through the town topography, increasing the availability to residents and businesses without line-of-sight to one of the towers. This is where the "mesh" comes in. Imagine



main corridor, Abingdon was able to provide high speed Internet access to dozens of businesses and hundreds of people. Abingdon went from "town" status, to that of a "village," as in the "Electronic Village of Abingdon" (EVA). Commonly called EVA, this project has increased the quality of life and business connectivity in town for nearly 20 years.

Since 1995, other communities have been granted the same authority by the General Assembly and have expanded on telecommunications to offer telephone, cable and electricity. Abingdon, however, did not stop there. It wanted bigger, better, faster, and more opportunity and access. It created the Abingdon Wireless Mesh.

EVA history

In 1995 a group of citizens met to discuss the potential of linking Abingdon to the rest of the world and the Internet via high-speed computer communications. Committees were



Abingdon residents, business owners and visitors can access the Internet for free from anywhere in the town.

these nodes, scattered throughout town creating an electronic web of signals, blanketing the town.

How it works

Town Information Technology staff has worked with Federal Signal, a firm specializing in building such systems. The installation of a Motorola Point-to-Point (PTP) Microwave device was installed to further boost the existing signal. The 300 megabytes per second wireless device is so fast that it will provide cutting edge technology and service for years of expansion.

The Internet feed has been upgraded to a 50 megabyte connection, which required an upgrade of the “old” (4 years) antennae. The signal is so robust that as many as 400 users have been counted on the mesh at the same time, all with high-speed service.

Within months of announcing the completion of the test phase, hundreds of residents “cut their hard line” and switched to the mesh


network only. Dozens of businesses have done the same, all relying on the now *free*, wireless communication service provided by the town.

Handling emergencies

Abingdon is well known for two visitor destinations: the Barter Theatre and the Virginia Creeper National Recreation Trail. Locals using the 35-mile Creeper Trail are familiar with its potential hazards. Its rural location and secluded spots have long worried officials about the possibility of crime.

When a number of “flashings” were experienced along the trail last year, the town acted. Staff began working with Federal Signal Corp. to devise an emergency call-box system that could utilize the mesh wireless capabilities. This was necessary because the local power company could not run electricity to the call-box destinations. So again, point-to-point technology was used and today, five emergency call boxes

have been installed, all powered by solar energy, along a four-mile section of the Creeper Trail in Abingdon.

In addition, in response to a tornado outbreak and a series of severe storms last spring, Abingdon tied-in its “Abingdon Alerts” system to a network of four sirens to alert residents of impending violent weather. 

What the judges said:

“Abingdon’s ‘mesh network’ project is the culmination of an extensive, multi-year effort to maximize the availability and universality of high-speed Internet access throughout the community. Through persistence, good timing and foresight, Abingdon has achieved something that many communities have only dreamed about. In addition, they have gone a couple of steps further by using this new capacity to enhance public safety for both residents and the thousands of visitors who avail themselves of the community’s attractions each year.”

Police blog became effective tool for building community relationships

IN THE WORDS of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, “Police agencies have an obligation to inform the public and news media of events that affect the lives of citizens in



PIO Natatia Bledsoe is the author of City Police Blotter, one of the most popular blogs published online by the Free Lance-Star newspaper.

the community with openness and candor.”

The City of Fredericksburg Police Department turned this duty into an opportunity by deciding to provide information via a dynamic internet-based platform hosted by fredericksburg.com, the online arm of the region’s newspaper, *The Free Lance-Star*. While many law enforcement agencies persist in maintaining an adversarial relationship with the media, Fredericksburg has forged a unique joint venture with its local news organization and created an open line of communication to city residents.

In late 2010, news editor Brian Baer approached the Police Department with a proposal for the public information officer to post the agency’s daily crime reports and press releases from her own blog on the fredericksburg.com website without external editorial control or input from the publisher.

Since the Fredericksburg Police Department already operated under a commitment to transparency and public engagement, a synopsis of the

daily reports of crime were disseminated on the city website and e-mailed directly to a list of media representatives and interested community members. The added inclusion of the reports through a blog on fredericksburg.com made the information immediately accessible to a much larger audience.

While other law enforcement agencies host official blogs on their department websites and use social media to connect with the public, the distinctive partnership that operates between *The Free Lance-Star*, fredericksburg.com and the Fredericksburg Police Department does not exist anywhere else in Virginia.

The *City Police Blotter*, written by Police Department PIO Natatia Bledsoe, at once became one of the most popular blogs on fredericksburg.com and increased by almost twenty-fold the number of local residents receiving the city’s daily crime information. With a monthly average readership of 25,000, a number greater than the population of the city, the *City Police Blotter* is consistently among the top two or three most popular blogs published by the *Free Lance-Star* online news site.

The popularity and wide distribution of the blog created the perfect platform to educate the public on broader topics related to law enforcement and engage city residents in a format that is personal and related to their own local interests. The blog subject matter is bounded only by the creativity of its author and has ranged from alcohol laws and safe teen driving practices to advice on how to be a good witness. Not surprisingly, the blog posts that usually generate the most interest and following are those that narrate stories about Good

Samaritans in the community.

In addition to publishing daily crime reports and providing the means to interact with the public about police issues and concerns, the *City Police Blotter* has also been the most effective communications channel available to the city in times of local crisis. During the last week of August in 2011, Fredericksburg suffered damage from a rare earthquake, a significant microburst thunderstorm, and the effects of Hurricane Irene – all within a matter of days. Thousands of city residents turned to the Police Department’s blog to receive the most up-to-date advisories and information about road conditions and services available to those affected by the emergencies. The value and expediency of the *City Police Blotter* was proven to be especially vital since the city website became inoperable during the worst of the storm events.

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, “Relationship-building should be the agency’s single most important



objective in its communication with the public. A law enforcement executive assisted by competent command staff members may actively seek innovative methods to reduce crime and efficiently serve the community. However, if that executive is unable to communicate trust and respect to the public, he or she is unlikely to have the support of the community ...”

That community support was tested severely last December when police officers and fire personnel responded at night to a flooded homeless campsite and were unable to

rescue a dog that had been left behind by its owners. After the incident became public, Police Chief David Nye was inundated with e-mails and telephone messages from outraged citizens all over the country who were critical of the department's response to the emergency. The *City Police Blotter* provided the opportunity to present a reasoned response to the condemnation and in many cases, changed the opinions of those who were upset. Bledsoe, the PIO and blog author, explained the department's actions that evening in an eloquent post.

She wrote: "Since the terrible story about the dog drowning was published in the *Free Lance-Star*, the Police and Fire departments have received numerous calls and e-mails critical of the decision not to attempt a rescue of the doomed animal. While newspaper stories are often constrained to limited details by the print space available, I am fortunate to have this platform to provide a comprehensive outline of the event.

"On Dec. 7 around 10:30 p.m., the police received a call from a resident of Hazel Hill Apartments who reported that she could hear a dog barking in distress. Officer Lee Ridenour responded and searched the area around the apartment complex, but he was unable to locate the animal. Officer Ridenour then walked onto the Dixon Street Bridge over Hazel Run, from which vantage point he could hear the dog yelping. He was able to determine that the dog was located in a group of tents that had been pitched near the creek bottom. Now joined by Officer Julie Keene, the two officers made their way down a steep embankment beside the bridge until they reached the edge of the water. Hazel Run was well over its banks and moving swiftly. The officers could see the dog's head and its eyes reflecting in their flashlight beams.

"Officers do not carry equipment that enables them to safely execute a water rescue. They had neither personal flotation devices nor lengths of rope to secure themselves to the trees surrounding the campsite. The water was moving fast and estimated at about knee depth, but the terrain under the water was unknown and full of unseen hazards. Officer Ridenour

called for the Fire Department to respond.

"When the Fire Department personnel arrived on the scene, the dog could no longer be seen or heard. The dangerous conditions were steadily worsening. It was completely dark and the water was still rising. While a rescue by boat may have seemed possible, the area is heavily covered by trees and littered with rocks, making maneuverability extremely difficult. Given the presumed death of the dog at that point, the fire commander decided that it was too dangerous to place the lives of his men at risk.

"Both the Police and Fire Departments operate under a system of command that is similar in structure to the military. Officers and firefighters do not freelance or fly solo. They take direction from their supervisors, who are highly trained professionals and proven in their experience. The greatest responsibility of any commander is to ensure the safety of his or her employees. While officers and firefighters are at risk every day simply due to the nature of their professions, the assumption of risk that unnecessarily places other lives in danger is considered reckless rather than heroic. Courage and audacity must be mitigated by actions that are rational and justifiable.


"Chief Nye said later: 'I would rather be the chief who is criticized for not rescuing that dog than be the chief who must explain to someone why their loved one was injured or killed during an irresponsible rescue attempt.'

"While many have suggested that the actions of the officers and firefighters on Wednesday night indicated a lack of compassion for the dog, nothing could be further from the truth. Both departments are full of employees who are animal lovers and owners. Nobody was more deeply affected by the events of Wednesday night than the people who were there and witnessed the tragedy.

"A surprising number of critics have suggested that the rescue of the dog should have been assigned the same priority as the rescue of a human being. We all operate under our own unique value systems, but I

can only assume that such critics have never had to face the reality of sending a subordinate into life threatening circumstances nor have they ever had to justify the reasons behind such a decision. In public safety, the assumption of risk for an animal cannot be expected to be the same as the assumption of risk for the sake of a human life.

"Officer Ridenour demonstrated his commitment to seeking justice for the dog's death by making it his personal mission to discover the identity of the person(s) responsible. By conducting interviews and researching files of known homeless individuals who have set up campsites in the area, he discovered evidence that helped firmly establish the identity of the dog's owners. On Friday morning, after the flood waters had receded, he returned to the campsite and recovered the body of the dog which he found chained to a tree. Officer Ridenour located the owners and interviewed them at the Cold Weather Homeless Shelter in Stafford on Friday night and on Saturday. Both were taken into custody. John Strother, 27, and Nachele Smith, 19, of no fixed address, were arrested and each charged with animal cruelty, animal abandonment, and failure to provide adequate care and treatment to a companion animal. Both Strother and Smith were incarcerated at the Rappahannock Regional Jail.

"The dog's name was Junior." 

What the judges said:

"The city's Police Department turned what could have been an ordinary blog into a communications tool that is building relationships throughout the community. By successfully partnering with a local news outlet, this initiative educates the community with not only daily reports of crime, but also crisis alerts and stories of good Samaritans that have proven popular. Perhaps most importantly, the blog tackles imperative subjects that have included alcohol laws, safety teen driving and how to be a good witness. It puts a human touch on law enforcement."

Community square tracked downtown revitalization plan

MORE THAN 1,000 people converged on the Town of Wise last August for the highly-anticipated opening of Big Glades Community Square, a 1,053-square-foot amphitheater in the heart of downtown. Vendors lined the streets, along with classic cars, but the oldies music rocking from the stage of the fully-equipped performance venue was the main event. The day kicked off a successful free concert season

Grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development in 2010. The money offset part of the cost of what would eventually become a \$1.5 million project that included the purchase of the land and construction.

The square is anchored by a 20-by-30-foot covered stage, complete with locking storage space and the capability to support lighting and sound systems. Lights and sound

equipment also were purchased for town-sponsored events. The stage is flanked by bays that can be used by vendors or park users who want to get out of either a sudden summer shower or the hot sun. Two

restrooms, outfitted with sturdy metal fixtures, are included. The facility's walls feature stacked natural stone that matches other recent projects in the downtown area, including a nearby park.

Instead of a drop-off at the edge of the performance area, the outdoor

stage tiers down to a dance floor/spectator area with three concrete risers. Not only does the tiered stage lend itself well to safety, it makes it easy to access when the facility is being used for a gathering that does not include a performance. Aside from a handful of metal benches around the grassy amphitheater viewing area, no fixed seating was installed, in an attempt to create both a flexible environment and provide for ease of maintenance.

Beyond the stage area, the portion of the square that faces the town's Main Street is a gently sloping plaza, including a flat, in-ground water feature. Again, flexibility was important. Traditional fountains occupy space that cannot easily be used for another purpose and are prime targets for vandalism. In-ground water jets, however, can be turned on for a pleasing effect, but when they are turned off, the flat area can be used for other purposes. Surrounding the water jet area are four covered picnic tables.

Since its opening in late summer 2011, Big Glades Community Square

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that drew people regularly into town not just to hear music at the new venue, but to shop and eat out with family and friends.

The community square project was one of the most visible and expensive elements of a downtown revitalization master plan completed in 2008. When the plan was developed, the town had just purchased a piece of property adjacent to a creek, centrally located near the Wise County courthouse and a busy shopping center. A dilapidated building containing apartments and a business sat on the land, the gentle slope of which provided a natural setting for an amphitheater.

Residents turned out for brainstorming sessions to shape the community square and stage, a concept floated originally in the master plan. Townsfolk, architects and municipal officials spouted visions of concerts under the stars, of children playing in a fountain, of a quiet place to eat lunch or have a chat. What emerged was a final design that placed an equal emphasis on the durability of materials and flexibility of function.

The town obtained a \$700,000 Community Development Block



Since the ribbon cutting, the Big Glades Community Square amphitheatre has breathed new life into downtown Wise.

Revitalized downtown preserved history, embraced cultural heritage

FACED WITH OBSTACLES that could have overwhelmed many communities, the Town of Marion recently completed significant improvements to its downtown despite the fallout from the worst economic conditions in three generations.

the heart of the downtown revitalization success story was the cooperation between the town and the county.

Several years ago, Smyth County faced an expensive predicament.

Its already tight budget was about to be busted by a court-mandated remodeling of the aging courthouse. Numerous proposals were debated, including moving the court facilities out of Marion's historic downtown district. Marion's leadership was disturbed not

requirements, security upgrades and the need for more courthouse space. In response, Town Council voted to close a section of Court Street immediately behind the courthouse to allow for an expansion that could extend through the street to an adjacent county-owned lot.

Problem solved? Not exactly. Parking became the new issue. Since the mandated courthouse remodeling and expansion was now in the hands of the state, the judges were requiring an additional 98-100 parking spaces to be made available for court use. Just up the street, the county owned additional property, so the first plan was to raze a structure and build a suitable surface parking lot there. Unfortunately, that structure was a 1908 schoolhouse that held a tremendous amount of community sentiment.

Todd Christensen, then deputy director with the Virginia Department

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By partnering with an assortment of state agencies and neighboring Smyth County, and by crafting solutions that solved more than the problem at hand, the town succeeded in revitalizing important parts of downtown by preserving history and embracing its cultural heritage. At

only by the prospect of losing one of the largest traffic generators in downtown, but by the thought of another abandoned or near-abandoned building on Main Street.

Remodeling on the existing downtown footprint was not feasible because of the cost of new ADA re-



Marion's businesses and attractions along Main Street have benefited from the town's commitment to preservation and the construction of a new parking deck.

Health and Safety Code Inspection Task Force is success story

WHEN FALLS CHURCH City Council adopted a vision statement asserting that neighborhoods should be “attractive, pleasant, safe and welcoming places to live,” city staff created a Health and Safety Code Inspection Task Force to help accomplish the goal.

This high-functioning, multi-jurisdictional endeavor coordinates responses to a variety of complaints of potential hazards and proactively conducts inspections to ensure the health and safety of residents. Among its many success stories, this unified city response confronted serious issues relating to hoarders and the inspection of a sprawling mall described as the “heart and soul of the Vietnamese-American community for the entire East Coast.”

At the outset of crafting a response to city council’s neighborhood vision, staff from several divisions that deal with property safety and maintenance

realized that they were often working with the same properties. What started as a handful of individuals from these divisions coordinating their efforts has expanded to include not only Zoning, Property Maintenance, and Housing and Human Services, but also the Arlington County Fire Marshal, whose responsibilities include Falls Church, and the Fairfax County Health Department. The city contracts with these jurisdictions to provide services. The intent was to address the unwieldy issues as a team, thereby increasing effectiveness, avoiding duplication of effort, and reducing anxiety on the part of the residents and business owners. The group developed a new and improved approach to dealing with trash, rats, fire hazards and

hoarding, among other things. As the effectiveness of this management style was validated, the group expanded its reach. It began coordinating swimming pool inspections that involved electrical work, chlorine content and more. Restaurant inspections

were discussed and any health issues dealt with collaboratively. An effective inter-jurisdictional partnership was formed. The city achieved its ultimate goals of providing higher levels of service and using staff time more effectively.

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Inspection of the sprawling Eden Center Mall by the task force resulted in an assortment of health and safety violations that were discovered with a minimum of disruption to tenants.

Safe & Sound Neighborhoods: Multifaceted neighborhood initiative made a difference

RIDE THROUGH the north-central neighborhood of Danville in the summer and you'll see elderly people sitting in chairs on porches fanning themselves in the warm evening air. It's a simple pleasure, but not one that these residents have always enjoyed.

This neighborhood was a troubled one. Though there were homes well maintained, stable and owner-occupied as much as any in the city, there were pockets of blight. What was more disturbing in this area, however, were the number of homicides – 13 in nearly five years.

That's when, in an effort to stabilize the area, the city of Danville launched a multifaceted initiative 19 months ago called "Safe & Sound Neighborhoods." The program was an outgrowth of activities conducted by the Coalition for a Safe Danville, a special municipal commission formed a year earlier to unite community stakeholders, share information, develop strategies, engage and inform the public, and undertake coordinated activities to address crime and public perceptions of diminished personal safety.

The coalition meetings provided clarity.

"We knew we had to look broader and deeper in our efforts to fight crime," City Manager Joe King says. "There's a lot more to it than simply arresting people."

The Safe & Sound program recognizes that criminal activity is enabled by poverty, joblessness, low educational attainment, dysfunctional households and racism, and that preventing crime requires a holistic, coordinated and sustained community effort deployed both citywide and at the neighborhood level.

"This will be more than responding to calls," King said at the outset of the Safe & Sound program. "We will be proactive and engage the entire community in our efforts to combat crime."

For that purpose, a Street Crimes Unit – with eight officers working as a team on nights and weekends – was created. Dressed in civilian clothing with identifying vests and windbreakers, the officers were tasked not with only being visible but to make themselves known to citizens.

The departments of Public Works, Community Development, Fire and Utilities were to sweep through the neighborhood and use their resources to improve the quality of life. That meant enforcing codes, installing smoke detectors and checking street lighting.

The initial focus area was determined by statistical analysis. The most alarming statistic was the 13 homicides in nearly five years. To put that

in perspective, more than half of the total 24 homicides in Danville during that time period had occurred in this north-central neighborhood, which covers less than one square mile in a city of 44 square miles.

"Our analysis of the victims and perpetrators showed that these were unemployed, unmarried, black males from single-parent households who had a criminal record, were known to each other and ranged in age from their late teens to late 20s," King said. "They are living for the moment, not the future."

This information was first introduced at meetings of the Coalition for a Safe Danville. With the blessing of the coalition, the Safe & Sound Neighborhoods program was developed. The foundation was comprised of four elements: 1) safety and security, 2) property conditions, 3) streets and public spaces, and 4) quality of neighborhood life.

Once fully developed, the program

was first presented at another meeting of the Coalition for a Safe Danville. Following that meeting, a newsletter was drafted, printed and mailed to every household address in the north-central focus area. The newsletter introduced the program, outlined the four essential elements that served as the foundation, displayed a map of the focus area, and alerted residents to a series of three neighborhood open houses at various locations in the neighborhood.

These open houses were held prior



to the launch of the program, and they allowed citizens the opportunity to talk one-on-one with city officials and to learn more about the program. After the final open house, the Safe & Sound Neighborhoods program was launched officially on Nov. 1, 2010.

The impact was immediate. For example, in two months:

- The Police Department's new Street Crimes Unit made 101 unique arrests, 57 of which were in the north-central area. Those arrests resulted in 146 charges, ranging from possession of drugs to drunk in public to trespassing.
- The Public Works Department's code enforcement group found and served notice on 87 inoperable vehicles in driveways and private yards, 23 abandoned vehicles in right of ways, and 51 illegal accumulations.
- The Utilities Department canvassed the area to ensure property street lighting.
- The Inspections Division initi-

ated 133 maintenance code cases in the area, nearly all of which resulted from a walking survey.

These results were reported in a second newsletter that was drafted, printed and distributed in January 2011. The second newsletter also contained a community survey for residents to answer and return.

Signs of success continued.

After six months, the city was able to report no homicides in the north-central area. And by various other measures, the goal of stabilizing the neighborhood had been met.

Consider the following activities during the program's first six months:

- The Public Works Department's code enforcement group served notice on 145 inoperable vehicles in driveways and private yards, 45 abandoned vehicles in right of ways, and 102 instances of illegal junk accumulations.
- Litter crews cleaned vacant properties and drainage areas and removed 2.5 tons of trash, a half ton of scrap metal and 200 tires.
- Storm drains and culverts were cleaned out, a dozen streets were repaved and trees were trimmed.
- The Utilities Department not only canvassed the area to ensure proper street lighting, but replaced 18,500 feet of old natural gas pipelines and 3,000 feet of water mains.
- The Housing Department completed or was in the process of completing seven single-family rehabilitations and four emergency repairs. Eight additional houses were on the waiting list.
- The Fire Department obtained a grant to purchase and install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in neighborhood homes and conducted a fire safety course in a neighborhood church.

The city soon began concentrating on a second focus area that had been established. This neighborhood was located in the south-central section of the city. Eight homicides had occurred

in this second neighborhood in five years. In turning attention to the second area, just as in the first focus area, this neighborhood experienced the presence of the Street Crimes Unit, the canvassing of the neighborhood by the Fire and Utilities departments, cleanup of sewers, pipes and storm drainage pools by Public Works Department crews, and code enforcement operations of Public Works and Commu-

nity Development departments.

While the Safe & Sound program is a multi-departmental effort, it was the Street Crimes Unit that garnered most of the media attention. Little of that attention, however, was given to how the officers were chosen for the unit or how the unit operated in contrast to regular patrol, community police and special investigative units, but that was the key to producing the results in which the attention had been focused.

All officers in the department were given the opportunity to volunteer for the unit, and from that group came a hand-picked unit that best exemplified the street-level knowledge and demeanor to carry out what they were asked to do.

This unit did not respond to calls as required of regular patrol units. Instead, the officers were free to go throughout the neighborhood and talk with citizens. When groups of people gathered at street corners, the officers would engage them to find out what was taking place.

"It takes a special kind of officer with a high degree of maturity to function in this unit," King noted.

Each officer wore a body camera, recording every action.

Of the unit's success, Police Chief Philip Broadfoot said, "Very quickly, the word got out that the Street Crimes Unit meant business." The neighborhoods adopted the moniker of the "red zone." Criminal activity slowed substantially in both neighborhoods. There were no homicides.


After one full year in operation, the Street Crimes Unit was disbanded.

Broadfoot says it was never the intention for the unit to be a permanent part of the department's operations. The break allowed the Police Department to further evaluate the unit, its scope and how it could best be used.

On April 1, 2012, the Street Crimes Unit re-emerged as part of the Community Policing Division, which allowed the unit to be more flexible. Instead of a team of eight officers working nights and weekends, each of the 20 officers in the division serves as part of the Street Crimes Unit. And with more officers, the unit now works seven days a week and responds to any neighborhood as needed.

While the media attention focuses on the Street Crimes Unit, it is the multi-departmental approach that makes this program unique. King, Broadfoot and others borrowed ideas heavily from the Street Crimes Unit operation of the City of Lynchburg.

However, there was no known precedent for the holistic approach that was adopted in Danville. For King, the approach seemed imperative.

"We don't consider ourselves as having all the answers and this program being the final solution," King says, "but we wanted to signal that we care about these neighborhoods. This approach is our best effort to get our arms around issues there." 



A newsletter explaining the initiative and promoting a series of open houses was mailed to every household in the neighborhood.

What the judges said:

"This was a multifaceted initiative. Its four elements – safety & security, property conditions, streets and public spaces, and quality of neighborhood life – illustrated the collaboration of the departments of Police, Public Works, Utilities, Inspections Division, Housing, Fire and Code Enforcement."

Portsmouth made most of new state law, resources to combat derelict structures

PORTSMOUTH'S DERELICT Structures Program was created through the coordinated efforts of several Hampton Roads cities and their residents. It endeavors to preserve and safeguard neighborhoods against blight, sustain property values, protect citizen investments and eliminate structures that endanger the health, safety and welfare of residents.

The program was made possible by the passage of state legislation backed by a number of cities, including Portsmouth, which felt hamstrung by the paucity of administrative tools at their disposal to get any kind of handle on the growing menace.

The problem was of such a magnitude that council members in cities such as Portsmouth and Norfolk were fielding complaints routinely from civic leagues worried about the side effects of blighted structures: increased crime, fire safety, rodents and declining property values. Before passage of the state law and implementation of local programs in Portsmouth and other cities, there was little that could be done to respond meaningfully to the problem.

The new state law, which took effect July 1, 2009, changed that. It gives programs such as the one in Portsmouth the authority to provide incentives for compliance and penalties for non-compliance. Previously, to remain in compliance with the existing structures

code, a building owner was required to make minimal effort, such as simply boarding up a structure to keep out intruders. City staff worked with citizen members of the Neighborhood Quality Task Force for two years to enact a derelict structure ordinance authorized by the new state legisla-

tion. Specifically, the new law gives localities the authority to require removal and repair of buildings that are declared to be derelict.

The city ordinance defines a derelict building as: "A residential or nonresidential building or structure, whether or not construction has been



Before and after: The Portsmouth Derelict Structures Program has been responsible for the demolition or repair of a number of problem properties, including this house on Weaver Circle.

completed, that might endanger the public's health, safety, or welfare and for a continuous period in excess of six months, it has been (i) vacant, (ii) boarded up in accordance with the building code, and (iii) not lawfully connected to utility services”

The new ordinance offers incentives to owners who complete an approved plan to renovate or demolish structures that are in violation of the ordinance. The city will, upon request, assess the property in its current condition. If renovation or demolition is recommended and complied with, up to \$5,000 in fees for permits, site plans or subdivision fees will be reimbursed.

In addition, after a reassessment occurs, the real estate taxes may be abated in an amount equal to the costs of demolition or the fair market value of the renovation for up to 10 years. This exemption is transferable with the property.

To demonstrate good faith, the owner is required to submit a plan to take action, either by renovating or demolishing the building within 90 days of receiving the Notice of Violation. If the owner has not submitted a plan within the 90-day time period, the locality may exercise other remedies as provided by law.

Repercussions also exist for an owner who fails to act in a timely fashion. If the city is forced to abate the violation with the use of city funds, it may prosecute the owner as provided by law. A lien also can be placed on the property and the money collected in the same manner as taxes, which is another tactic the city can utilize in deterring blight.

Since the legislation was passed, the Portsmouth communities of Brighton, Prentis Park and Truxtun, the highest-density areas of vacant, boarded structures in the city, are starting to realize benefits. The program has turned vacant, derelict and dilapidated structures into newly-renovated occupied dwellings whose increased values have helped stabilize the neighborhoods. Structures that were severely dilapidated have been demolished, which has created vacant lots for potential investors and/or non-profits such as Habitat

for Humanity to build single-family dwellings.

When the program began, 73 derelict structures were identified initially. Of those, 11 have been renovated and 35 demolished.

A bit of history

The concentration of blighted structures in Portsmouth is linked inextricably to its history of shipbuilding and ship repair. Throughout much of its 300-year history, thousands of workers relocated to Portsmouth to build and repair the Navy's massive fleet at what is now the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in the city.

This influx of workers created an unexpected insurgence, which produced a shortage of housing. In an attempt to address the lack of available housing, a poorly planned, short-term solution was created in response to consumer demand. During this period, many “affordable” structures, built to last a maximum of 15-20 years, were constructed quickly with cheap materials to avert a potential housing crisis.

Many of these original structures remain today with no inhabitants and no protection from the weather. The prospects of them being refurbished are slim.

Sustainability

Eliminating blight is the one of the primary goals of the program. It can be a time consuming and often tedious process for property owners and for the enforcement team. The return on the investment, however, is enormous and critical to the viability and future development of the city. Sustainability of the program is inherent with its success.


Property maintenance inspectors who conduct routine patrols endeavor to identify buildings that are at high risk for becoming derelict structures. The program is supported enthusiastically by city council and the city manager, and was identified as a

major action strategy of the Housing and Neighborhood Policy in the Destination 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

The sustainability of the program is exceptionally promising as the unit begins studying several innovative strategies to address blight in the future. Adaptive reuse of a building whose original function has become outdated or that no longer serves a useful purpose is one alternative to simply razing it.

The conversion of at-risk buildings to affordable housing is another potentially successful yet unique approach. Smart Growth practices



of blending existing older buildings with new uses in both emergent and reviving neighborhoods are a third possibility for sustaining blight removal programs. Finally, from a public policy perspective, the program is also exploring ways to improve neglected structures through modified zoning regulations. 

What the judges said:

“Saddled with a staggering number of abandoned structures through no fault of its own, the city is making the most of a new state law that it supported that gives local governments more administrative tools to deal with blighted properties that spoil the quality of life in the city.”



Wise

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has been a hub of activity. Concerts staged there have ranged from bluegrass to rock, including a KISS cover band that drew more than 2,000 people to downtown. In addition, the site has been used by an assortment of other performers, including a community choir, an avant-garde jazz group and contemporary Christian artists. It served as the home of the town's annual Fall Fling festival music line-up and was the venue for a popular senior citizen's event that featured a massive bingo game and pageant.

The popularity of the amphitheater has boosted the local economy. A nearby pizza parlor and hometown burger and shake joint have reported increases in business during events, while a fine dining establishment next door set up outdoor vending during concerts. Convenience stores and grocery stores reported increases in business as event attendees stocked-up on snacks for their evenings under the stars. Civic groups have benefited as well, with cheerleading groups providing face-painting during the KISS cover band concert and other groups setting up to sell drinks and popcorn.

Town-sponsored programs at the facility are funded by a \$63,000 Cultural Enrichment budget, which includes money set aside for advertising, printing and the contract services of musicians and technicians. Town staff plan the programs and approve leasing requests by the community. Staff's decisions have been steered and supported by a corps of volunteers split into several committees, modeled after the national Main Street program's structure. The town's blue ribbon design and promotion committees have been instrumental in planning and supporting Big Glades from its inception. 

What the judges said:

"While rather complex in its design/build details and financing, the amphitheater offers a practical example for replication and/or adaptation by other communities seeking to add more usable public facilities in their communities. Well done!"

Marion

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of Housing and Community Development, was invited to town to look at the school with an eye toward building upon the burgeoning "cultural heritage tourism" initiatives taking hold in the region.

A group of local entrepreneurs had been exploring the idea of establishing a school to teach Appalachian music and crafts. Leveraging the community support of the building and the new heritage initiative, the town submitted a proposal for a CDBG-R grant to help pay for this "shovel-ready" project that would transform the shuttered schoolhouse into a music and crafts school that embraced cultural heritage. To save the 1908 schoolhouse, even with the grant funds, the town and county still had to find a way to provide for the additional parking as mandated by the courthouse renovation.

Christensen worked with local leaders from Marion and Smyth County, and came up with a solution that benefited all parties. A \$1 million CDBG-R "stimulus" grant would be awarded to Marion with \$750,000 allocated for facade work on the schoolhouse and a row of Main Street and downtown buildings. The other \$250,000 would be used by the town to purchase the schoolhouse from the county, reducing the cost of building a new 98-space parking deck adjacent to the schoolhouse, across from the courthouse, and just one block off Main Street. This solution – construction of the first municipal parking deck in southwest Virginia west of Blacksburg – would serve not only the renovated courthouse complex, but also the downtown historic business district. The \$1.5 million price tag of

the parking deck was divided between the town and the county.

In addition, the town partnered with the Virginia Department of Transportation through its enhancement program to provide \$550,000 in streetscape improvements, including new pedestrian-scaled lighting fixtures, trees and brick-lined sidewalks for a second phase of the aesthetic improvement plan downtown.

The town hosts "Song of the Mountains," a nationally-syndicated television show highlighting bluegrass and old time music that is recorded in the historic Lincoln Theatre, one of only three existing Art Deco Mayan Revival theaters in America. Because the television program was named an affiliate of The Crooked Road heritage music trail, that allowed the community to partner with the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission to enhance the experience of visitors to the region. The community then partnered with a 501(c)(3) to manage development of the 1908 schoolhouse into the Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Music and Arts to enhance the heritage tourism initiative and tie Marion into a regional priority.

Following on the heels of this, the town partnered with the Appalachian Regional Commission and with DHCD for another round of grant funding, providing nearly \$1 million for the interior renovations for the 1908 schoolhouse.

As the public infrastructure continues to develop, the town's Main Street program and USDA Rural Development have provided ongoing technical assistance and grant funding to allow the town to develop its first-ever low interest loan pool, and to provide training and grant funding to set up three new "pop up" businesses – where the downtown association will pay rent and utilities for six months for new startups in the historic downtown.

In 2011-2012, nearly \$4.5 million is being spent to revitalize the historic downtown. In the depths of the greatest recession in three generations, Marion has seen storefront vacancies drop from 17 percent to under 10 percent. Two "white elephant" buildings, long vacant, have new owners

— one as a business services specialist, the other as a county museum. As a result, downtown continues to be a hub of activity, from a bustling farmers market to “cash mobs” supporting locally-owned businesses, from the 26th annual Chili Championship to the “Back of the Dragon” motorcycle rally, from bluegrass and performing arts at the Lincoln Theatre to a new “Summer Concert Series” at the new farmers market stage. Marion continues to position itself as one of the most vibrant, business-friendly communities in southwest Virginia. 

What the judges said:

“It is clear during these very challenging economic times that innovation and co-operation are critical to moving programs and projects forward. This application is all of that and more. By working at the same time to preserve the past, celebrate their culture, and cooperate with Smyth County, the town solved several issues, salvaged an historic structure, and retained a vital economic engine in their downtown. It represents a ‘can do’ spirit, and is a win-win-win for all concerned.”

Falls Church

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Ultimately, the group decided to call itself the Falls Church Health and Safety Code Inspection Task Force. It is comprised today of representatives from six city departments and includes the Fire Marshal, Environmental Services Solid Waste Inspector, Human Services Specialist, Building Official, Property Maintenance Inspector, Electrical Inspector, Housing Specialist, Animal Control Officer, Tax Assessor, Commissioner of Revenue, as well as Fairfax County Department of Health Environmental Health Supervisor, Food Safety Inspector, and Community Health and Safety. The task force meets quarterly and attendance is high. Agendas include results of restaurant, fire and other inspections, and lists of properties that need attention. Each is discussed and a plan of action developed.

A major recommendation of the

task force that came to fruition in 2012 was the passage of a Property Maintenance Code. As effective as the task force was in coordinating property-related efforts and dealing with the public, there were often few legal remedies to compel compliance, important with the more difficult cases. The task force proposed that sanctions be codified. As a result, a property maintenance chapter was added to the Falls Church Code of Ordinances on May 1, 2012. The code set civil penalties for maintenance violations and addressed tall grass, weeds, and brush; exterior storage; sidewalks, driveways, and parking areas; general building maintenance; fences; inoperable motor vehicles; and rodent and insect harborage. This was important because for the first time it allowed task force inspectors to compel individuals who were reluctant to maintain or repair property to work with them, such as in the case of hoarders. Also, since previously criminal penalties were the only sanctions allowable under law, these new civil penalties created savings in terms of the time and cost of an extensive court process, a process rarely pursued because of high proof standards.


Another innovation that came out of the coordinated approach was a full code inspection of the Eden Center Mall. Eden Center contains about 120 stores, including 44 restaurants, and considers itself “the heart and soul of the Vietnamese-American Community for the entire East Coast.” As a convenience to shop owners, in a span of two days, all of the various inspections (fire, building, health) were completed, minimizing disruptions. A higher than average number of complaints was found.

The city effectively managed the process as follows: Two Task Force planning meetings that included all of the participating units were conducted. In the interim, the building inspector contacted the attorney for the Eden Center’s property management company, to inform him of the inspection and ask that a representative be on site during the inspection. On the first day of the inspection, 16 Health Department inspectors met at the property and divided into teams.

The Falls Church inspectors proceeded separately as a team. The mall’s general manager was also on site. City and Fairfax County inspectors carried literature related to health and fire safety to give to tenants during the course of the inspections. In the event of a language barrier, inspectors also carried with them cards for the Language Line so that they could access a translator if needed. The inspections went quickly and smoothly.

The Health Department inspected 43 of the 44 food service establishments that turned up 177 critical and 281 non-critical violations. The city inspected 37 businesses and issued two notices of unsafe structure that were resolved within three days. A total of 81 fire prevention code violations were cited. The inspections ran so well that it was decided to continue this process annually.

Another success of the Task Force has been in dealing with hoarding cases. Problems associated with hoarding require several disciplines to be involved and the investigations can be a very time consuming.

The overall result of this unified approach to safety is that issues can be dealt with in their totality through a coordinated effort. For example, in one meeting the Fairfax County restaurant inspector can talk to the Fairfax rat abatement specialist, the City of Falls Church electrical inspector, and the city licensing official. The beneficiaries are clearly city residents and business owners. 

What the judges said:

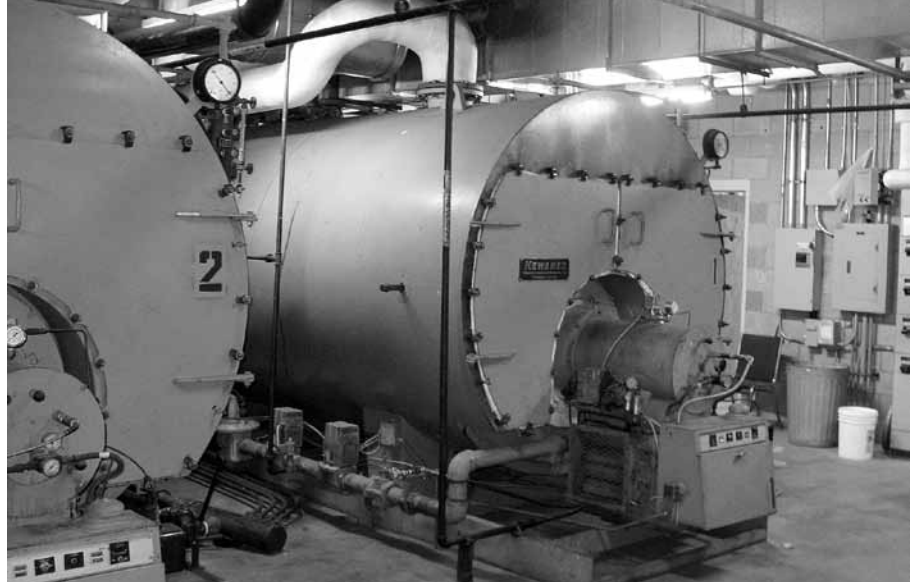
“The Health and Safety Code Inspection Task Force brings representatives from multiple agencies together to collaboratively address problems shared by each. Not only does this task force address such matters as unsafe structures and health code violations, but by involving representatives of service agencies it also recognizes the human impact of enforcement actions. This is a prime example of good government — collaboration that improves community conditions, provides solutions for what might otherwise have very negative impacts on segments of the public and does so without requiring resources beyond those already allocated.”

Energy audits identify ways to reduce consumption, cut costs

ENERGY COSTS ARE on the rise and municipalities are being faced with higher operating costs for facilities such as schools and government buildings. Unfortunately, as these costs rise, budgets typically don't rise with them, so local governments should consider seeking professional services to identify ways in which they can minimize operating and maintenance costs.

One way to do this is to conduct an energy audit. This type of audit aims to find ways in which a building's energy usage can be reduced, thus resulting in lower operating costs. This is usually accomplished by conducting a field investigation of the facility and modeling various scenarios to identify opportunities for increasing the building's operating efficiency. Once these energy conservation measures (ECMs) are identified, the cost to implement these measures is calculated, and the owner is presented with a payback schedule. The owner can then see the return they can expect on their investment dollar. Buildings with high energy intensities typically provide the highest return on investment. Such buildings can often be identified several ways: high occupancy loads such as gymnasiums or auditoriums, buildings with large amounts of electric heat, buildings using steam boilers for heat, or systems that operate at constant speeds without any provisions to modulate based on building use. If a municipality would like to explore the need for an energy audit, benchmarking can be a good indicator. The U.S. Department of Energy and Energy Star® have resources available on their respective websites that can be used for benchmarking.


When the decision is made to conduct an energy audit, the building owner should keep a few things in mind to ensure they are getting the most out of it. (1) Follow an industry standard such as the ASHRAE publi-



The steam boiler system shown was replaced with a high-efficiency condensing boiler system.

cation entitled *Procedures for Commercial Building Energy Audits*, which provides guidelines for conducting energy audits at certain levels of detail. (2) Consider large system overhauls; they can result in increased savings despite their larger implementation costs. (3) Ensure that all appropriate facility personnel are involved so that the auditing engineer is aware of any equipment or system issues. (4) Provide the auditor with utility bills for the past three years to increase the accuracy of the energy model. (5) Account for maintenance savings that would result from ECMs. (6) Lastly, be mindful to allow for sufficient contingencies in energy savings and construction cost estimates to account for unknown factors that may arise, such as changes in building use.

Once the energy audit has been completed, the building owner is provided with a summary report that describes the existing conditions and recommends ways to save energy. This report will also include financial information such as initial costs for implementing the energy conservation measures, savings that can be

realized, and payback analysis. Once the municipality is provided with these findings, they will have valuable information that can be used to make cost effective capital improvement decisions which will benefit the municipality and its taxpayers for many years to come. 

Contact: Wiley | Wilson; Tyler D. Morris, E.I.T., Mechanical Engineer-in-Training, Lynchburg, 434/455-3692; David A. Nardi, P.E., CEM, LEED AP BD+C, Department Manager, Lynchburg, 434/455-3239; or J. Frederick (Fred) Armstrong, P.E., Chairman and CEO, Lynchburg, 434/947-1629.

Wiley | Wilson, a VML sustaining member, is a full-service architectural and engineering firm founded in 1901. The 100 percent employee-owned firm has offices in Lynchburg, Richmond, Alexandria, and Atlanta. The firm focuses on projects for local government throughout Virginia and the Southeast Region. Its expertise includes sustainable energy design as well as energy audits. Visit wileywilson.com.

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

Because of the number of requests it receives to publish job advertisements, VML reduces the length of the position descriptions in Virginia Town & City. A full version of the job listings published here for the past two months appears on VML's Web site at www.vml.org. Visit the VML site and click on "Marketplace" to read the complete descriptions.

Clerk / Treasurer, Chatham

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Clerk duties involve maintaining and recording all town records, including minutes of all council meetings. Coordinates all council and committee meetings; drafts letters and resolutions; maintains town code. Treasurer duties include providing overall management of the accounting and fiscal reporting. This involves ensuring compliance with all applicable local, state and federal statutes regarding fiscal accountability and reporting; maintenance of a general ledger; preparing all financial documents; paying and posting bills; preparing and managing town budget. Supervise 2 employees. Prefer relevant college degree, but exper. in field will be considered. Submit resume and references to: Town Manager Edmund Giles, P.O. Box 370, Chatham, VA 24531 or e-mail to chathamva@comcast.net. Complete job description at www.chatham-va.gov. Deadline: Aug. 24. EOE.

City Manager, Gaithersburg, Md.

SALARY: \$119,688-\$189,170 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. (pop. 60,000-plus; \$51.5 million bdt.; 9 depts.; 378 FTEs) Performs duties of chief administrative officer for diverse community located in geographic center of Montgomery County. Appointed by and reports to the mayor and City Council. Reqs. master's degree in public admin. or related field with min. 10 yrs. professional mngmnt. exper., preferably in municipal govt. Detailed position profile available at www.gaithersburgmd.gov/cmsearch. Questions? Contact Margaret Daily, Director of Human Resources, at 301-258-6327 or mdaily@gaitersburgmd.gov. Deadline: Aug. 31. EOE.

Economic Development Specialist, Roanoke

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Handles key activities and programs within the Department of Economic Development. Responsibilities include:

business retention and expansion activities within the general commercial, office and manufacturing sectors; providing staff assistance and support to the Economic Development Authority (EDA). Reqs. relevant bachelor's degree supplemented by master's degree in appropriate field; or 2-plus yrs. of related exper. and/or training in economic development work, including exper. in the preparation of state and federal grants for economic development purposes; or equiv. comb. of educ. and exper. To apply, visit: www.roanokeva.gov. Deadline: Aug. 24. EOE.

Director of Finance, Hopewell

SALARY: \$94,601-\$135,144 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Manage and coordinate the functions of Accounting (to include General Ledger, Payroll and Audit), Purchasing, Information Systems and Real Estate to ensure that city assets, including all funds, are managed effectively and that the accounting and financial systems are properly maintained. Reqs. bachelor's degree (master's and/or CPA desirable) in business administration, accounting, financial management or related field. See detailed job description and apply online at www.hopewellva.gov. Deadline: Aug. 27. EOE.

Senior Planner (Community Development), Albemarle County

SALARY: \$47,356-\$56,827 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Performs analysis and makes recommendations regarding physical, social, economic and capital projects and related phases of the Comprehensive Plan; reviews subdivision plats and site plans for compliance with subdivision and zoning ordinance/regs; responds to inquiries from public; prepares recommendations relative to zoning matters; presents items to elected or appointed boards and commissions. Reqs. any comb. of educ. and exper. equiv. to graduation from an accredited college, supplemented by a master's degree in urban and/or regional planning, and min. 2 yrs. exper. in professional planning. Must possess valid Va. driver's license. Full job description at: <http://bit.ly/MZKDAD>. Online application at: <https://www.albemarle.org/applyforjob>. Contact: gilliam@albemarle.org. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Communications & Information Technology, Roanoke County

SALARY: \$77,030-\$132,049 (+) benefits. Oversee the Communications & Information Technology Department to ensure its alignment with the business objectives of the organization; develop and deploy

long-range strategic goals, including policy development, service delivery and regional involvement; ensure that operation of the Emergency Communication Center aligns with the county's overall public interest. Reqs. relevant bachelor's degree (master's preferred) and min. 8 yrs. exper., 6 of which were spent managing and/or directing an IT operation. Contact the Human Resources Department at 540-772-2018 or log-on to apply at www.roanokecountyva.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Building Code Official, Shenandoah County

SALARY: \$54,813 to start (+) benefits, including VRS. Inspects building plans and construction for compliance with legal standards. Plans, coordinates, participates and supervises building code enforcement activities. Approves and signs building permits, certificates of occupancy, condemnation orders and reviews building plans. Enforces adopted international codes as amended by the Va. Uniform Statewide Building Code. Reqs. H.S. diploma and extensive exper. in building code enforcement work. Prefer any comb. of educ. and exper. equiv. to graduation from an accredited college with major course work in engineering, planning, public administration, architecture or other relevant field. County application req'd. Complete job description available by contacting the Office of the County Administrator, 600 N. Main St., Woodstock, VA 22664, 540-459-6165, or visit the employment page at www.shenandoahcountyva.us. Job # 2131. Deadline: Aug. 24. EOE.

Wastewater Operator(s) and Trainee (3 positions), Nelson County Service Authority

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Seeking the following: Wastewater Operator III, who must hold a valid Class III Va. wastewater license; Wastewater Operator IV, who must hold a valid Class IV Va. wastewater license; and a Wastewater Trainee. All positions responsible for the operation of a Class III wastewater treatment plant located in Colleen. All applicants must have a valid Va. driver's license; H.S. diploma or GED; hold or have the ability to obtain with 12 mos. the license certification for the position as established by the Va. Department of Commerce Certification Board of Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators. Apply by sending resume to: Nelson County Service Authority, Attn: Human Resources, P.O. Box 249, Lovingston, VA 22949. No phone calls. Deadline: Aug. 31. EOE.

Grant Accountant (Financial Services Department), Lynchburg

SALARY: \$44,928 to start (+) benefits. Completes monthly/quarterly drawdowns request for CDBG and HOME Funds; prepares budgets, journal entries and performs fund reviews for the CDBG, HOME and City Federal State Aid Fund; reconciles grants in the City Federal State Aid Fund. Reqs. bachelor's degree in accounting, 6-8 yrs. relevant exper. and advanced financial software proficiency. Responsibilities include management, reconciliation and performance of financial reporting for: CDBG, HOME and City Federal State Aid Fund; reconciles the CDBG and HOME funds financial systems (AS400) to the federal government's IDIS system; works closely with grant administrator for CDBG and HOME funds; performs financial monitoring for the sub-recipients of CDBG and HOME funds; performs annual reporting - CAPER report for CDBG and HOME funds; reviews all expenditure, appropriation and transfer requests. More info and apply at www.lyncburgva.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Finance, Augusta County Service Authority

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Responsible for all financial functions, including a double entry cost accounting system, preparation and maintenance of operating and capital bdgts., customer rate modeling, investment of authority funds and borrowing (short and long term) through revenue bonding. Reqs. min. of bachelor's degree in finance or accounting, plus min. 5 yrs. related exper. in govt. accounting. Prefer certification as CPA, CFM, CFGM or an advanced degree with concentration in accounting (MBA, MPA, etc.). Also reqs. min. 5 yrs. mngmnt. and supervisory exper. Send cover letter, resume and ACSA application to: Executive Director, Augusta County Service Authority, P.O. Box 859, Verona, VA 24482 or through www.acsawater.com. Deadline: Aug. 31. EOE.

Superintendent of Wastewater, Fredericksburg

SALARY: \$58,724-\$70,870 start range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Manages daily operations of wastewater treatment plant; supervises staff and manages plant operations and maintenance to ensure plant runs efficiently and that wastewater processing meets regulatory standards. Reqs. graduation from H.S. or equiv. and formal training in wastewater treatment plant operations and min. 10 yrs. progressively

responsible exper. operating wastewater treatment plants; or any equiv. comb. of training and exper. that provides the req'd skills, knowledge and abilities. Must possess and maintain valid Va. driver's license and Va. Class I Wastewater Treatment Operator's certificate. Application and more info at www.fredericksburgva.gov or the H.R. Department at 715 Princess Anne St., Room 217, Fredericksburg, VA 22401, 540-372-1028. Prefer application submittal to H.R. Department by Aug. 31. EOE.

Civil Engineer III (Public Works), Suffolk

SALARY: \$57,877-\$75,241 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Work includes significant involvement in management of capital improvement projects and performing engineering reviews of private construction plans to ensure compliance with city codes and engineering standards. Reqs. bachelor's degree in civil engineering, civil engineering technology, or closely related field with 3 yrs. exper. and/or training that includes project mngmnt. for design/construction of engineering projects, engineering plan review, computer-aided engineering design, utility hydraulic analysis and personal computer operations. P.E. req'd. For more info and to complete application online, visit www.suffolkva.us and click on the employment link. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Economic Development, Roanoke

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. (pop. 97,000). Roanoke, an economic and cultural hub, is strategically located in an urban setting only several hundred miles from Richmond, Washington and Atlanta. Reqs. seasoned economic development professional who recognizes city's potential and can capitalize on it by helping create and maintain a thriving business environment and innovative workforce opportunities. Economic development and redevelopment within the city limits often depends on land assemblage, and furthering cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions and institutions is essential. Details at www.cb-asso.com under "Executive Recruiting"/ "Active Recruitments." E-mail resume to RecruitFive@cb-asso.com. Deadline: Aug. 24. EOE.

Marketing & Research Manager (Economic Development), Danville

SALARY: \$50,377-\$52,000 start range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Perform professional marketing and research tasks to promote increased business activity. Assists in research, development and imple-

mentation of target marketing initiatives by designing, producing, and presenting comprehensive, customized proposals, and by providing associated project research support. Develop and maintain research database. Reqs. educ. and exper. equiv. to graduation from accredited college with major course work in economics, marketing, public admin., business admin. or related field and considerable exper. in economic development, preferably with municipal govt. City residency req'd. To apply online, visit www.danville-va.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Executive Director, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (Washington, D.C.)

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Lead staff of diverse, dynamic and growing regional Council of Governments (COG), an independent, 501 (C) (3) nonprofit association comprised of elected officials from 22 local govts., members of the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and members of Congress. Reqs. bachelor's degree; prefer relevant master's and substantial exper. CAE certification a plus. Detailed description in position brochure at www.mercergroupinc.com. For additional info, contact consultant James L. Mercer, President/CEO of The Mercer Group, who is assisting the council, at 770-551-0403 or at jmercer@mercergroupinc.com. Send resume, cover letter and salary history via e-mail, hard copy or fax, to Mercer at: The Mercer Group Inc., 5579B Chamblee Dunwoody Road, # 511, Atlanta, GA 30338. Voice: 770-551-0403; Fax: 770-399-9749. E-Mail: jmercer@mercergroupinc.com. Deadline: Aug. 24. EOE.

Assistant to the Town Manager, Vinton

SALARY: \$56,800-\$63,800 start range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Performs broad-based duties in support of town manager, Town Council and management team. May supervise one or more depts. Responsible for management of economic development and procurement functions, public information dissemination and community development. Must be knowledgeable in municipal budgeting and program management. Prefer 2-5 yrs. administrative mngmnt. exper. in local govt.; master's degree in public administration. Will consider any comb. of exper. and educ. that would likely provide the req'd knowledge and abilities. Previous candidates remain in the active applicant pool and do not need to reapply. Complete town application available at www.vintonva.gov and attach resume, letter of

application and contact info, including e-mail addresses, for 4 professional references. Review of applications begins Aug. 13. Open until filled. EOE.

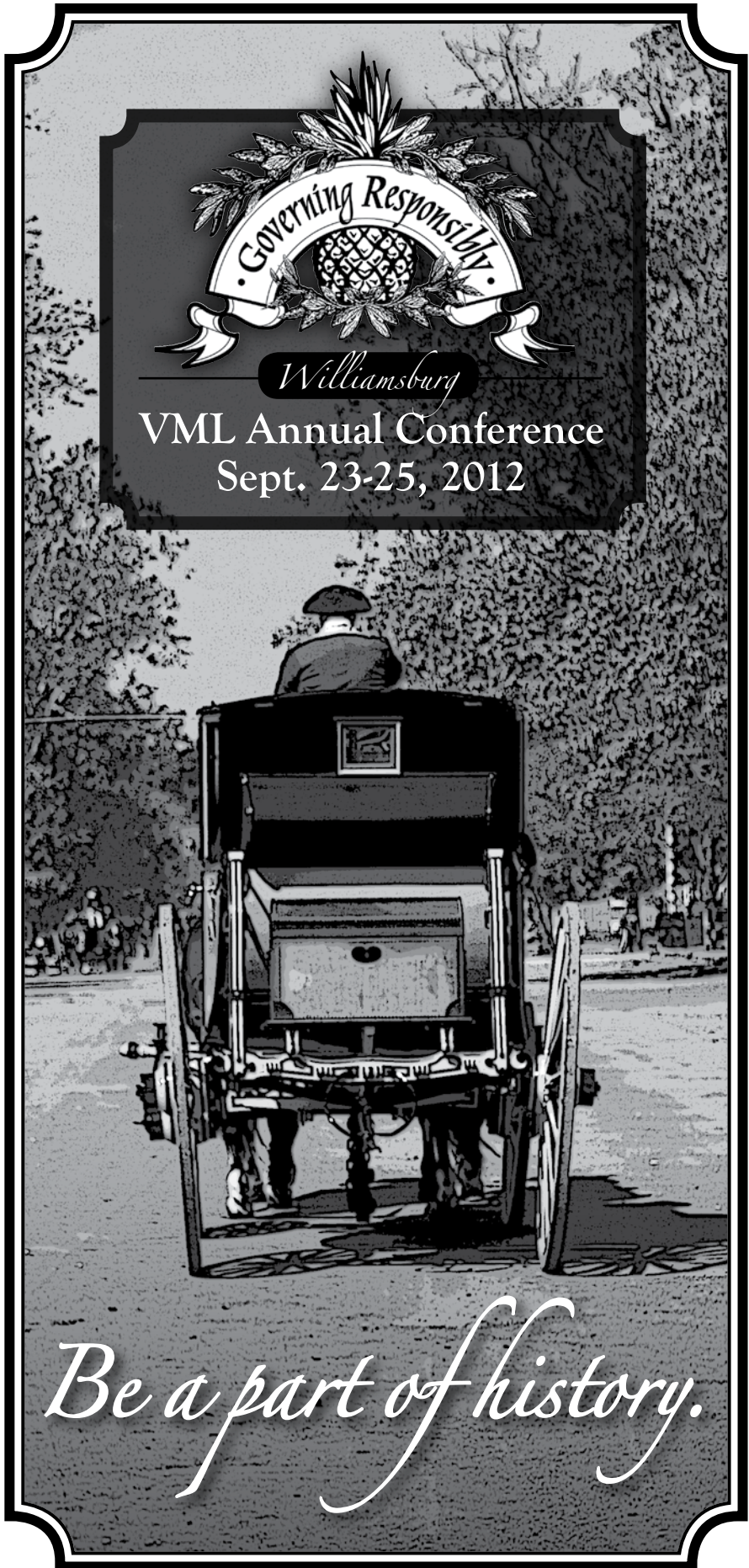
County Administrator, Powhatan

SALARY: \$110,000-\$130,000 (+) benefits. (pop. 28,046; 260 sq. miles; \$68.4 million FY12 bdt.; 142 FT/PT employees) Seeking visionary leader with solid management, organization and financial exper. to lead rapidly growing county just west of Richmond. Reports to Board of Supervisors and is responsible for day-to-day operations. Must have considerable skills in leadership, staff and public relations, land-use planning, budgeting, capital improvement planning and economic development. Submit confidential cover letter, detailed resume with salary requirements and salary history, 5 work-related references, and a completed Powhatan employment application. More information and application form at: <http://bit.ly/NK3qCH>. Send completed form to: Elmer Hodge, Interim County Administrator, 3834 Old Buckingham Road, Suite A, Powhatan, VA 23139. Deadline: Aug. 31. EOE.

Planner, Rockingham County

SALARY: \$33,000 min. DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Researches complex land use-related issues; assists with policy development; analyzes statistical data; prepares reports and plans; manages databases; works with maps; assists with development review; responds to public inquiries. Prefer bachelor's degree in planning or related field. Apply at Rockingham County Administration Center or send resume, completed application and references to: Stephen N. Riddlebarger, Department of Human Resources, Rockingham County, 20 E. Gay Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22802 or sriddlebarger@rockinghamcountyva.gov. A printable version of employment application is on website at www.rockinghamcountyva.gov. Deadline: Aug. 31. EOE.

SUBMITTALS: *Submit ads as text files via e-mail to David Parsons at dparsons@vml.org. VML posts job ads on its website at no cost to its local government members. Non-members are charged a flat rate of \$25 per ad, which includes a listing in the VML eNews newsletter and publication in Virginia Town & City (deadlines permitting). VML edits position descriptions in printed publications because of space limitations.*



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Can sustainability be sustained?

SMALL COLLEGE TOWN 35 miles SW of Cleveland.” That was the clue at # 10 across in a recent Sunday *New York Times* crossword puzzle.

The answer was “Oberlin.”

In addition to hitting the big time in puzzles, Oberlin College and the city of Oberlin, Ohio, have gained considerable attention for their sustainability work, most recently, the “Oberlin Project.” The latter is among the most ambitious of a large and growing number of campus-initiated “green” programs – from Oroville, Calif., to Muncie, Ind. to Middlebury, Vt.

Such campus efforts, sometimes in conjunction with the local government and sometimes not, are driven variously by educational purposes, by “anchor institution” ambitions, and by technological feasibility and evolving standards. These initiatives, says Tammy Zborel, NLC senior associate for sustainability, are worth the attention of municipal officials. “City leaders,” she says, “can learn a lot from the groundswell of activity happening on university campuses to advance sustainability, and the potential for collaborations is great.”

The Oberlin Project

The Oberlin Project aims to “revitalize the local economy, eliminate carbon emissions, restore local agriculture, food supply and forestry, and create a new, sustainable base for economic and community development.” (See: www.Oberlinproject.org) It’s this large, integrated agenda for “holistic urban management” that puts the project at the proverbial cutting edge of sustainability work.

Nestled in the Rust Belt and with nearly 2,000 of its 8,000 or so residents in poverty, both city and college leaders emphasize the economic development implications of the efforts. City Manager Eric Norenberg also reports that the collaborative work on this project has enhanced town/

gown relationships and “opened new opportunities for working together.”

The project itself is supported by foundation grants. It is, says Managing Director Bruce Stubbs, “not an institution;” it’s an “independent catalyst” that will last two-to-four years. The aim is to align incentives so that “sustainability is the default position” and to “embed the agenda in institutions” – the city, the college, and other local and regional actors – that will carry the effort forward.

The community is also one of three U.S. cities among 18 worldwide in the Clinton Foundation’s Climate Positive Development Program. The city of Oberlin is on target to reduce its emissions by 50 percent of 2007 levels by 2015, with 90 percent of its electricity coming from renewable sources.

Other efforts in the project’s purview include a 13-acre Green Arts District; business ventures that support aspects of the agenda; conserving 20,000 acres of green space and developing a local foods economy to meet 70 percent of local consumption; and creating a sustainability education alliance among schools at all levels in the area. The locals see their efforts as a model, a “beacon,” for other communities.

“Klaatu barada nikto”

Sustainability is a vague term; that’s both an asset and a disadvantage. A paraphrase of the statement from the 1987 United Nation’s Brundtland Commission has the virtue of longevity and brevity: Meeting today’s needs without compromising the future. This seems useful. The values implicit in the definition apply to the full range of our public concerns: economic development, fiscal management, education policy, as well as green buildings and environmental protection should all be “sustainable.”

In a thoughtful 1999 essay, Lamont C. Hempel concluded that a “lesson about sustainability” is that “lasting gains in quality of life

cannot be achieved without effective integration of environmental, social, and economic goals at the community and regional level.” Thus, the “real difficulty” around sustainability lies, not so much in definitions, but in governance, politics and management.

Not everyone has signed on to this work plan. Even beyond the normal tussles over whose ox is to be gored in specific projects, there’s ferment over the prospect of what one Oberlin alumni described as “a global socialist dictatorship.” “Smart Growth” and “sustainable development” are under attack in local planning commissions and zoning boards by well-funded advocacy groups and local activists who see themselves in an apocalyptic struggle against “collectivist attitudes ...the abolishment of private property [and] ...Tyranny.”

In the 2008 re-make of the sci-fi film classic, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, sophisticated aliens threaten to eliminate human life in order to “save the Earth” from humanity’s ecological destructiveness. (The 1951 original featured the signature line – “Klaatu barada nikto.” Aptly, no one knows what that means.) In the end, the re-make offers Hollywood optimism – at the “precipice” of environmental catastrophe (but only at the precipice), humans can realize the harm they are doing and “can change.”

Well, maybe.

Meanwhile, undertaking and accumulating arrays of effective initiatives – from marginal to transformative, from local to global, and under whatever label you prefer – seems more appealing and likely more effective than the dubious titillation of actually peering over that precipice.



About the author

Bill Barnes is director for emerging issues at NLC. He can be reached at barnes@nlc.org. He graduated from Oberlin College in the last century.



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