

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Caring for the Commonwealth

From the Bay...



...to the Blue Ridge

Also Inside:

Member Spotlights on
Warsaw, Newport News,
and Brookneal

PFAS Update

A growing movement to
get moving outdoors

Innovation Awards
call for entries



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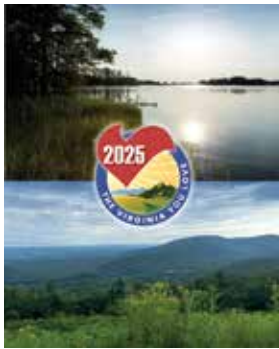
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ABOUT THE COVER

The Chesapeake Bay gets its name from the Algonquian word "Chesepiooc," which many translate as "Mother of Waters". The Blue Ridge Mountains were called the "Shaconage" by the Cherokee people, meaning "Land of the Blue Mist." The Blue Ridge Mountains formed 1.1 billion to 250 million years ago. The Bay is a relative youngster having been formed about 18,000 years ago. So, what do these two amazing natural places have in common? We've got both in Virginia! But this issue of VTC isn't about what makes them great, it's about some great organizations helping to keep them healthy.

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A growing movement to get moving outdoors

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Staying cool in the Commonwealth

EVERY YEAR AT this time our magazine features something to do with the outdoors in Virginia and this time we decided to feature some organizations that are helping to take care of our natural places. I know you will enjoy learning about their work as much as I did!

With summer now in full swing, I hope that everyone is staying cool and having some fun vacations. I was recently reminded how one can experience different climates without ever leaving Virginia when VML's Rob Bullington and I drove to Roanoke for some conference planning work. As soon as we stepped out of the car in Roanoke, we both noticed the lower temperature and humidity. In fact, the temperature difference allowed us to eat lunch outside. This may not seem like a strange thing for all of you reading this in SWVA, but if you live in Richmond the idea of eating lunch outside is a novel concept this summer!

We had a great time visiting the Star City and they are so excited to host VML this year; the events being planned and sessions will be informative and also very cool (in a different sense of the word, of course). Even the Towns of Vinton and Rocky Mount are getting involved so stay tuned for updates.

While it may be summer, the work continues! In fact, the league's policy committees have just finished their meetings. Thanks to all who participated in those calls. There were so many interesting topics to include this year...the car tax, school funding, housing, economic development and speed cameras (just to name a few). Next up, the legislative committee will meet in September to discuss the VML legislative priorities for the 2026 General Assembly Session.

As you know those legislative priorities and policy statements will be voted on at the VML Annual Business meeting which will take place during the Annual Conference in Roanoke. Also being voted on are some proposed changes to the VML constitution that were part of the Board of Director's strategic plan discussions that have taken place over the past few years. The proposed changes to the constitution are substantial and I ask that you

take the time to review them. The summary and changes are posted to our website and printed on pages 46-49 of this issue. One of the biggest proposed changes is that there will no longer be Section Chairs that will have seats on the Board of Directors. Instead, there will be 9 Board members who will come from each of the VDOT transportation districts. There are a couple of reasons for this change. First, the section chairs are only on the Board for one year, but these 9 regional seats will have 3-year terms. This will provide more continuity in VML's leadership and ensure that the Board has members from all over the Commonwealth. Also in the interest of continuity, there is a proposed change to have the Vice President automatically move to President-Elect. Finally, another change is to allow the Board to cover items in the Annual Business meeting agenda in a different order than listed. This is to permit more flexibility to adapt to changing conditions during the Annual Business meeting at the annual conference.

The Board members and I are happy to discuss any thoughts, proposals, or comments about these proposed changes prior to the Annual Business meeting.

In conclusion, since there is an article about the Town of Warsaw in this issue of the magazine, I want to give a shout out to one of my favorite gift shops – Colonial Collectibles! It's a great little store that sells everything from Yeti coolers to earrings. Next time you're in Warsaw be sure to pay them a visit.



Learn more about these events and additional opportunities at www.vml.org

CALENDAR



Aug. 25

Innovation Awards Submission Deadline - Open to all VML members. Information at www.vml.org. See page 44 for complete rules.

Oct. 11-12

2025 VML Mayors Institute - Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center. See page 19 to register.

Oct. 12-14

2025 VML Annual Conference - Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center. See page 19 to register.

In Memoriam:

Former Kenbridge Town Manager Charles Donald Neblett Jr.



Charles Donald "Donnie" Neblett Jr., 73, of Kenbridge passed away on June 16.

Neblett served in the Virginia Army National Guard, owned and operated Neblett Carpet Cleaning, and completed his working years as town manager for Kenbridge. He loved his family, his animals, fishing, working on his yard, listening to beach music, and watching

Duke basketball.

In a statement, the Town of Kenbridge shared, "Donnie, as we all knew him, held the office of town manager in Kenbridge from January 2010 to June 2015 and served the citizens of Kenbridge. Donnie was instrumental in many things that changed while he was in office. His presence was felt while he served. Our condolences go out to his family and friends as well as our thanks for the many years of service he gave to the Town of Kenbridge."

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions to Southside SPCA (designate Ruff'n It), 797 Starlight Lane, Kenbridge, VA 23944 or Duke Children's Health Center at [gifts.duke.edu](https://www.duke.edu) (designate Duke Children's).

Former Bridgewater Town Manager Bob Fred Holton



Bob Fred Holton, 76, of Staunton passed away on June 14. He was born on November 5, 1948, in Palestine, TX, but spent most of his life in Virginia. Holton was employed by the Town of Bridgewater for 46 years and was an adjunct faculty member of James Madison University for 23 years.

The following is excerpted from a statement written by Holton himself before his passing:

before his passing:

"If there is one thing I know about my life, it's this... from the moment I was born to the day I died, I have been surrounded by people who loved me. When you have that going for you, the day-to-day problems of life seem pretty small. In the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, it takes divine intervention before the main character, George Bailey, can appreciate what his family, work, and friends meant to him. I have known it all along! I truly had a wonderful life!"

Share condolences and memories online with the family by visiting www.charltonandgroomefuneralhome.com.

Memorial contributions may be made in Holton's memory to the Augusta Health Foundation c/o Shenandoah Hospice, P.O. Box 1000, Fishersville, VA 22939.

Rowe is VML's new chief administrative officer



- Rowe -

In early June, **Rebecca Rowe** began as the Virginia Municipal League's new chief administrative officer. Rowe comes to VML with a wealth of experience working with local governments and project/staff management. Most recently, Rowe worked for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHD) where she served as a program manager (2016-2019) and as an associate director (2019-2025). In the latter role, Rowe oversaw the operation of programs such as Virginia Main Street, Commonwealth Capital for Communities Fund grant, Virginia Enterprise Zone, Virginia Individual Development Accounts, Industrial Revitalization Fund, and other technical assistance programs.

In her new role, Rowe will report directly to VML's executive director. She will be administering the day-to-day operations of the league and its staff with particular emphasis

on refining and documenting work processes, human resources development, and oversight of budget and finance operations.

Rowe holds a Master of Science in Architectural Studies from Texas A&M as well as a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from SUNY Geneseo. She is active in several civic organizations including the Virginia Economic Developers Association, the City of Richmond Planning Commission, and the Richmond Federal Reserve Bank's Rural Investment Collaborative Steering Committee.

Montgomery County Blacksburg Christiansburg Regional Tourism Office selects Livesay as executive director



- Livesay -

On June 3, **Samantha Livesay** began as the executive director of the Montgomery County Blacksburg Christiansburg Regional Tourism Office.

"After conducting an extensive and competi-

tive search, we are thrilled to have Samantha lead the regional tourism office," said Montgomery County's Administrator Angie Hill in a press release. "Samantha's experiences and skills will allow her to be an excellent advocate for our regional tourism efforts, while providing strategic guidance and vision to the tourism office."

As executive director of the regional tourism program, Livesay will report to the Blacksburg town manager, Christiansburg town manager, and Montgomery County administrator. Working in close collaboration with the Montgomery County Tourism Board, her role will involve the strategic marketing of the region's diverse attractions and the variety of events and activities hosted by Virginia Tech.

Earlier this year, the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg and Montgomery County signed a renewal on a joint tourism cooperative agreement, which has been operational for over a decade. This unified regional approach recognizes the significant economic impact of tourism in Montgomery County, which generated over \$270 million in spending in 2024.

Prior to joining Montgomery County, Livesay was the senior director of business engagement for Onward New River Valley. Before that, she served as the community relations coordinator for Community Housing Partners. In addition to previously serving as co-chair of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce's Ambassador Team (2018–2020), she has served on the chamber's Board of Directors since 2023 and currently co-chairs its Business Resource Committee.

Livesay is a graduate of Radford University with a Bachelor's in Communications and Public Relations.

Clair hired as next Blacksburg police chief



- Clair -

The Town of Blacksburg has named **John Clair** the new Blacksburg chief of police. Clair now leads the nationally accredited department of 70 sworn officers and 12 civilians, succeeding Chief Todd Brewster when he retired on July 1. Clair began his duties in Blacksburg on June 16.

Clair most recently served as chief of police in the Town of Marion, where he led a comprehensive department transformation, overseeing a \$2.1 million budget and a team of 22 sworn officers. Under his leadership, Marion saw a 35% reduction in overall crime and the launch of community engagement programs focusing on local and regional media, area youth, and vulnerable populations. He also implemented significant advancements in officer wellness and career development programs during his tenure.

Prior to his service in Marion, Clair served as chief of police in the Town of Quantico, where he was instrumental in restoring organizational integrity and launching new public safety initiatives. He also served as an officer with the police departments of Prince William County and the Town of Dumfries and held protective service roles with the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of State. A veteran of the U.S. Army, Clair served as a military police sergeant in the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard).

"We are excited to welcome Chief Clair to Blacksburg," said Town Manager Marc Verniel in a statement. "John brings a solid track record of law enforcement leadership and is well known for building trust, develop-

ing staff, and practicing community-focused policing. I am confident he will be a great addition to an already outstanding team and will continue to build upon the positive culture in our nationally accredited police department."

Clair is a certified Law Enforcement Chief Executive Officer through the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police and the current first vice president. He has authored numerous articles on community policing, been an expert advisor for various professional organizations, and recently served as a guest instructor at the Appalachian School of Law, lecturing on crisis communications and negotiations.

Clair has a Bachelor's in Religion, Philosophy, and Humanities, and recently completed a Master's in Executive Leadership. Additionally, he is a graduate of the Police Executive Research Forum Senior Management Institute for Police, which brings together faculty from top universities, successful law enforcement chief executives, and subject matter experts to address the issues faced by today's law enforcement leaders. He is currently attending the UVA Sorensen Political Leaders Program, and he's a graduate of the Virginia Rural Center's Leadership Institute.

Roanoke County's Baker named one of top 50 economic developers in North America



- Baker -

Roanoke County Economic Development Director **Megan Baker**, CECD, has been named one of the top 50 economic developers in North America by Consultant Connect, a consulting agency connecting economic developers with site consultants to promote best practices in the industry. The annual recognition honors outstanding economic development professionals nominated by their peers for innovative strategies, strong practices, and measurable impact in building thriving communities.

"I'm honored to be recognized among so many talented professionals," said Baker. "This recognition reflects the collaboration and momentum we've built in Roanoke County to attract investment and create opportunity."

"Megan's leadership has brought a new level of energy and focus to our economic development efforts," said Roanoke County Administrator Richard Caywood in a press

release. "This recognition is well deserved, and we're proud to have her representing Roanoke County."

Baker has served as Roanoke County's economic development director since October 2022. Under her leadership, the county has celebrated \$144 million in new project announcements and the creation of 1,300 jobs, including major investments from Wells Fargo, Mack Trucks, Southern Team Hyundai, and Vistar Eye Center.

Suffolk's Rudy receives Library Journal Movers and Shakers Award



- Rudy -

Clint S. Rudy, director of libraries in Suffolk, has been selected as one of the recipients in the "Change Agents" category for the 2025 Movers and Shakers Award by Library Journal (LJ), a prestigious honor recognizing leaders who are shaping the future of libraries in innovative and transformative ways.

Rudy was recognized for his work leading the Virginia Library Leadership Academy (VALLA) Task Force, which celebrated its first cohort of graduates in 2024. By forming a dynamic task force of colleagues representing a variety of libraries and experiences, Rudy helped lead them in challenging the status quo and providing a unique and impactful experience for future library leaders.

"Library Journal's 2025 Movers and Shakers represent the best creative, inspiring, visionary, and committed individuals advancing the library field," said LJ Editor-in-Chief Hallie Rich in a statement. "We're grateful to our sponsor, Hoopla, for helping LJ to highlight the Movers' important work supporting students, families, and individuals lean in to learning, connect with community, and engage with reading."

Rudy's recognition by LJ reflects appreciation both locally and statewide for his role in shaping accessible, responsive, and community-driven library services. Through his leadership, Suffolk Public Library has become a model for libraries looking to make a lasting impact.

To learn more about the awards and all the winners, visit www.libraryjournal.com/page/movers-and-shakers-2025.

Maddux named managing director of Charlottesville City Attorney's Office



- Maddux - John Maddux joined the City of Charlottesville on May 14 as managing director of the City Attorney's Office. He comes to Charlottesville from Asheville, NC, where he served for more than a decade as deputy city attorney. Maddux brings a broad range of legal experience in both the public and private sectors. Prior to his tenure in Asheville, he worked in New York City in corporate law and served in the Raleigh City Attorney's Office with a focus on environmental law.

While in Asheville, Maddux provided counsel on a wide array of municipal legal issues, including employment law, land use and zoning, policing, and complex intergovernmental matters. He was part of the legal team that led the city's response to numerous high-profile crises, including a major police misconduct incident, the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest following the death of George Floyd, and Hurricane Helene.

Internally, Maddux played a key role in modernizing Asheville's personnel systems. He led reforms to the city's civil service rules to promote fair and merit-based employment practices and was known for his collaborative approach with colleagues across departments.

Maddux holds Bachelor's degrees in Music Performance and Music Industry Studies from Appalachian State University, a Juris Doctor from Campbell University School of Law, and a Master of Laws (LL.M.) from New York University School of Law.

Fredericksburg welcomes Taylor as sustainability coordinator



- Taylor - The City of Fredericksburg has introduced **Hanna Taylor** as its new environmental sustainability coordinator. Originally from Florida, Taylor's passion for environmental stewardship began in high school and shaped a career dedicated to conservation, environmental analysis, and renewable energy systems.

Taylor earned her Bachelor's in Environmental Science with a minor in Biology

from Florida State University. She began her career in conservation through AmeriCorps, managing invasive plant species across 22,000 acres at Payne's Prairie State Park. She then worked as an inorganic analyst and project manager at an environmental laboratory before pursuing her Master's in Renewable Energy and Sustainable Systems, which she completed through Penn State University in spring 2024.

In 2019, the Fredericksburg City Council adopted a resolution committing to 100% renewable energy use for all municipal operations by 2035. That same year serves as the city's baseline for emissions tracking. Since then, the city has achieved a 5.59% reduction in emissions from electricity use in municipal buildings and streetlights – equivalent to removing approximately 57 cars from the road annually.

Short to head Loudoun County Office of Emergency Management, Safety and Security



- Short - On June 5, **David Short** began as the director of the Loudoun County Office of Emergency Management, Safety and Security. In a press release, County Administrator Tim Hemstreet stated, "David brings a wealth of experience in emergency management and homeland security at the federal, state, and local levels of government. I believe his professional background as well as his leadership roles in our Combined Fire and Rescue System will serve the county well."

Short, who previously served as the president and principal consultant for an emergency management consulting firm, has more than 20 years of extensive experience in emergency management as an executive level consultant, as well as direct experience as a first responder. He also previously served as fire chief of the Sterling Volunteer Fire Company.

The Office of Emergency Management, Safety and Security oversees the county's comprehensive emergency management program; ensures operational coordination in response to significant events impacting the county; conducts community outreach and education as well as training; and works to improve the safety and security of county employees, facilities, and customers by providing comprehensive training, performing security assessments and screenings, updat-

ing policies and procedures, and investing in countywide emergency medical equipment.

Short earned a Master's in Business Management from Linnaeus University and a Bachelor's in Business Management from George Mason University. He also has professional certifications in the areas of public safety and project management, and as a FEMA Master Exercise Practitioner.

Jordan is new deputy city manager in Hopewell



- Jordan - At the May 27 Hopewell City Council meeting, Interim City Manager Michael Rogers announced the appointment of **Stacey Jordan** as the city's new deputy city manager. Jordan had been serving as the city's chief financial officer for the previous nine months, during which time she led significant improvements in financial operations, system implementation, streamlining processes, and enhancing efficiency and transparency across the department.

With over 20 years of experience in financial management, business leadership, process improvement, and corporate strategy, Jordan brings a strong background to her new role. She holds a Master of Accountancy from the University of Phoenix and a Bachelor's in Accounting from Strayer University. Her professional credentials include an ISO 9001 Lead Auditor certification, additional ISO certifications, and a Six Sigma Green Belt certification.

Before her tenure in Hopewell, Jordan served as chief financial officer for the Town of Dumfries and the City of Petersburg. In those roles, she oversaw finance, budget, procurement, treasury, DMV Select, and IT operations. She played a key role in restoring financial stability, transparency reporting, compliance reassurance, policy development, and cash flow management in each locality.

As deputy city manager, Jordan will apply her extensive expertise to solve complex challenges and support strategic initiatives. She assumed her new responsibilities immediately while continuing to serve as chief financial officer until a successor is named.

Jordan is a member of the Government Finance Officers Association, the Virginia Government Finance Officers Association, and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority.

Gordonsville appoints Schienschang as town manager

Following a closed session meeting held on June 2, the Gordonsville Town Council unanimously voted to appoint **Anthony**



C. Schienschang II as town manager, effective August 1.

Schienschang replaces Debbie Kendall, who resigned on March 28. Following Kendall's announcement, the town council solicited applications to fill the impending vacancy. The town received 11 applications from prospective candidates in Virginia and other states. These were interviewed and narrowed down to three finalists for a second interview by council.

Schienschang comes to Gordonsville from the Town of Orange, where he served as economic development manager and currently resides. Schienschang has extensive experience in developing interagency and business relationships, leading boards and committees, and addressing complex and sensitive issues. He has almost two decades of management

experience across private industry, state and local government, and the military.

Schienschang brings significant project management experience, including infrastructure development projects, law enforcement, and emergency management operations. Schienschang is currently serving in the Virginia Defense Force, the reserve component of the Virginia National Guard, as a company commander. He previously served in the United States Army, where he completed two combat tours in the Middle East.

He is a graduate of Texas A&M University – Central Texas and the University of Virginia.

Meredith is Radford's new city manager

Radford City Council appointed **Todd Meredith** as the new city manager at its June 5 special meeting. Meredith began work with the city on July 21.

Meredith previously served as the town manager of Pearisburg since 2017 and prior to his work in local government, spent a decade as a public school teacher. During his tenure in Pearisburg, he led initiatives focused on infrastructure improvement, fis-



- Meredith -

cal responsibility, and regional cooperation. He also served as the board chair of the Giles County Public Service Authority (PSA), and as a member of the board of directors for both the Carilion Giles Community Hos-

pital and Virginia's First Regional Industrial Facility Authority. In a statement following its June 5 meeting, the Radford City Council said: "We are pleased to announce the selection of Todd Meredith as the new city manager of Radford. Mr. Meredith brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise, particularly in the areas of finance, data analysis, and government transparency. These qualities, among many others, make him exceptionally well-suited to help guide and enhance our city. As we move forward on a path toward a more secure and sustainable future, we are confident that Mr. Meredith's leadership will be instrumental in advancing the goals and values of our community. We look forward to working together to continue building a strong, resilient Radford."

Meredith earned his Master's in Public



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Administration (MPA) from Virginia Tech in 2012 and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Public Administration at Virginia Tech. He also holds a Bachelor's in Social Science and a Master's in Education from Radford University. In 2023, he completed the Senior Executive Institute at the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. He has completed Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certification through the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia, with specialized training in organizational efficiency and performance improvement.

Meredith is an ICMA Credentialed Manager (ICMA-CM) and a member of the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA).

Barnard-Bailey retires as Chesapeake deputy city manager; replaced by former Police Chief Wright



Chesapeake Deputy City Manager **Wanda Barnard-Bailey** has retired after two decades of service with the city, and former Chesapeake Police Chief Kelvin Wright has been hired to

- Barnard-Bailey - fill the role.

Bailey began working with the city in 2005. In 2020, she was named the city's chief equity officer. She previously served as a Navy Mid-Atlantic Region Counseling and Advocacy coordinator for fleet and family support programs, and as a hospice social worker and school social worker in North Carolina.

"Dr. Bailey represents the very best of what it means to be the 'city that cares,' and she has meant so much to the community and our team," City Manager Chris Price said in a statement. "Under her leadership, the city has taken significant strides in areas from homelessness and quality of life to substance abuse, wellness, and much more."

Bailey holds a Bachelor's in Recreation Administration and a Master's in Social Work from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and a Doctorate in Philosophy from Norfolk State University.

Kelvin Wright was appointed deputy city manager in April, with his term beginning in June. In this role, he oversees the departments of Human Services, Human Resources, Libraries, the Call Center, and Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. He also serves as the liaison to the Chesapeake Re-



- Wright -

gional Medical Center and the Chesapeake Health Department. Before his appointment, Wright served as Chesapeake chief of police from 2008 to 2022, following earlier roles as police major (2003–2008) and police captain (1999–2003). Throughout his tenure, he introduced innovative crime reduction strategies that significantly enhanced public safety and quality of life in the city. He also developed and implemented numerous programs and training initiatives that strengthened police operations and fostered stronger community relations.

Of Wright's selection, City Manager Price said, "We are confident that Wright will bring the same dedication to this new public service role as he demonstrated for so many years in public safety."

Wright holds a Master's in Public Administration from Troy University, a Bachelor's in Sociology from Saint Leo University, and an Associate of Applied Science in Criminal Justice from Tidewater Community College.

Newport News appoints Saunders as director of communications



- Saunders -

The City of Newport News has appointed **Jody Saunders** as its new director of communications. Saunders, who previously served as the chief communications officer with the Virginia Beach Police Department

(VBPD), will succeed Cleder Jones, who retired in June after a distinguished career of more than 40 years serving the city. With her vast background in local government, Saunders will be an integral member of the city manager's Executive Leadership Team, contributing to the continued growth and development of the city. In her new role, she will oversee the city's communications strategy, public relations efforts, and media relations, ensuring transparency and an informed community.

Saunders brings over 15 years of experience in strategic planning, public safety communications, media relations, and crisis management. She will manage the daily operations of the city's marketing, tourism, 311 Center, and local television station. Her tenure with the VBPD has earned her a reputation for professionalism, collaboration, and

excellence in communication, particularly during high-pressure situations.

"I am thrilled to welcome Jody to the City of Newport News," said City Manager Alan K. Archer in a press release. "Her experience, leadership, and dedication to public service will make her an invaluable asset to our city as we continue to grow and strengthen our relationship with the community. Jody's deep understanding of local government operations and her proven track record in communications will be vital as we continue to advance our goals."

Saunders, who officially began her new role on May 19, expressed her excitement for the opportunity to serve the citizens of Newport News and build upon the work of her predecessor.

"Cleder Jones has been a tireless advocate for the city, and I am grateful for the strong foundation she has built over the years," Saunders said. "I look forward to continuing the city's efforts to communicate effectively with residents and to support our ongoing initiatives."

Jones, who established the city's Communications Department in 2015, played a pivotal role in shaping its communications strategies. Her leadership and commitment to transparency helped foster trust between the city and its residents. As she enters retirement, Jones expressed confidence in Saunders' ability to continue advancing the department's work.

"It has been a privilege to serve this community, and I'm excited to see Jody take the reins," Jones said. "I have no doubt she will continue to elevate the city's communications efforts and maintain the high standards we've worked hard to establish."

Saunders holds a Bachelor's in Graphic Design from James Madison University and a Master's in Integrated Communications from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Prince George names Enos as director of General Services



- Enos -

Prince George County Administrator Jeffrey Stoke has announced that **Scott Enos Sr.** has been appointed as the director of the Department of General Services, effective June 16. This department serves as an internal resource division and provides a full range of services to county departments and agencies, helping them in their mission to serve the Prince George County community.

Enos is a seasoned professional with over 40 years of experience in the trades and construction industry. He has been with the county since March, when he was hired as the maintenance supervisor on the General Services team.

"We are excited to bring Mr. Enos into the Prince George County leadership team and look forward to the General Services Department having a positive impact on our buildings and grounds operations," Stoke said in a statement.

A Virginia Beach native, Enos began his career in mechanical trade in 1984. His extensive background includes running his own business, working as a service technician, technical trainer, and service advisor to provide guidance and support to private and federal contractors in Virginia.

Crittendon chosen as director of Hampton parks department



The City of Hampton has selected **Darrell Crittendon** as its new director of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services.

Crittendon has 35 years of experience in parks administration, including serving as director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Norfolk since 2006. Before that he worked in a similar capacity in Charles City and Durham, NC, and as administrator of recreation opportunities in Newport News. Crittendon retired from his job in Norfolk on June 1 and started his new role in Hampton on July 14.

Crittendon currently serves as the president of the Virginia Recreation Parks Society Foundation Board. He is one of only two people to serve two terms as president for the Virginia Recreation and Parks Society. He serves on the national Board of Directors for the American Academy for Parks & Recreation Administration. Under his leadership, the parks departments in Norfolk and Durham achieved national accreditation.

Crittendon will take the place of Laurine Press, who returned to Hampton to head the department in an interim role after the retirement of Director David McCauley earlier this year.

City Manager Mary Bunting said in a statement, "I am absolutely convinced, as is Laurine and the other members who served on our selection committee, that Darrell is the best person to take our department to the next level. Darrell is a firm but compassion-

ate leader who will help us reach national accreditation status."

Crittendon is a graduate of Norfolk State University and has served in the U.S. Air Force Reserves.

Manassas Mayor Davis-Younger honored with namesake legacy award for local leadership and vision



- Davis-Younger - ing exemplary leadership, service, and community impact in the greater Manassas region.

The award, which will be presented during the 2025 BCN Annual Awards & Year-End Celebration in December, pays tribute to the lasting legacy of Michelle Davis, whose dedication to equity, community engagement, and personal integrity has inspired a generation of leaders in Northern Virginia and beyond.

"Michelle Davis opened doors through her courage, compassion, and unwavering service to the community," said Liletta Harlem, president of My Natural Me and director of BCN. "This award is about honoring that legacy and recognizing others who lead with the same heart and impact."

Each year, the award will be presented to a local individual – whether in business, service, education, or advocacy – who exemplifies:

- Visionary leadership
- A deep commitment to equity and service
- The ability to create opportunity for others
- Integrity, impact, and forward-thinking change

Nominations for the award open on October 15. For more information, nomination guidelines, or sponsorship inquiries, contact info@mynaturalme.info.

Ashland Vice Mayor Hodges steps down after eight years of service

During Ashland Town Council's regular meeting on July 15, Mayor Steve Trivett announced the resignation of Vice Mayor **John Hodges**, who stepped down from the council effective July 14 due to health concerns. A



- Hodges -

dedicated public servant and trusted leader, Vice Mayor Hodges has been courageously battling cancer and shared with the council that he could no longer serve at the level he believes the town deserves.

"John's steady presence, institutional knowledge, and kind heart will be missed at Town Hall," said Mayor Trivett. "He is the very best of public service – humble, honest, and wholly devoted to his community."

"Vice Mayor Hodges has given so much of himself to this community," said Town Manager Joshua Farrar. "His legacy will guide our work for years to come. We're grateful for his service and we'll continue moving forward with the same spirit of integrity and care that he exemplified."

In his resignation letter, Hodges wrote: "It has been the greatest honor of my career to serve the people of the town over the past eight years (August 2017 to July 2025). The support I have received from fellow council members and the staff has been outstanding and beyond expectations. I know I am leaving the town in good hands and hope for nothing but the best for everyone in our wonderful community."

Originally appointed in 2017 to fill a vacant seat, Hodges was elected to town council in May 2018 and selected by his peers as vice mayor in July of that same year. Prior to his service on council, he worked for Hanover County for 30 years, retiring in 2010. With a professional background in planning, he brought his considerable expertise to bear on behalf of the town, offering thoughtful insights and sound judgment on growth, development, and regional coordination. He represented Ashland on key regional bodies such as PlanRVA and the Central Virginia Transportation Authority, bringing a steady, collaborative approach to local governance. His tenure has left a lasting impact on Ashland's progress, values, and connection to the greater region.

Movers and shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to vtc@vml.org.

Poquoson opens new Public Safety building

IN LATE MARCH, the City of Poquoson held a grand opening ceremony for its new Public Safety building. Located at 101 City Hall Avenue, the new facility now houses the Poquoson Police Department and Poquoson Fire and Rescue Administration offices, as well as the city's Emergency Operations Center.

The public was invited to attend and tour the building at the grand opening, before the police and fire offices moved into the facility in April.

During his remarks at the ribbon-cutting, Mayor David Hux noted, "The citizens of Poquoson will benefit from a \$12 million facility, which is a generational accomplishment for us." He added that it cost the citizens of Poquoson just \$3 million of the \$12 million needed for the project, with the remaining \$9 million funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies that the city received from the federal government as revenue replacement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. City Manager Randy Wheeler and his team worked quickly, utilizing the feasibility study conducted two years

before to meet the federal guidelines for use of the ARPA funds.

The 20,000-square-foot building triples the space for the Poquoson Police Department and enables all police staff to be housed in the same building; detectives were previously located in a separate facility due to space constraints. Chief Stephen Keatts said that the new space "allows the department to have all functionality and personnel under one roof. Employees no longer have to share desks, and officers now have ample space to effectively do their jobs." He also noted that it is easier to communicate when working in the same facility, in addition to making it easier for supervisors to stay in touch with each other and monitor the work of their staff. Officers now have locker rooms, as well as shower and laundry facilities and ample restrooms included in their workspace.

Technology in the building includes closed circuit TV and a higher level of security, along with other security features such as gated secure parking for on-duty staff. The police department

also has a conference room and a common area to serve as a briefing space that includes digital messaging for assignments, schedules, and announcements.

The new training room is multifunctional and can accommodate up to 50 people, or split into two smaller rooms, each with separate AV capabilities. It will be available to host community classes such as rape aggression defense training, and defensive tactics training for officers. This room also serves as the main space for the city's new Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The EOC areas of the building also include workspaces for radio operators and call takers, a small conference room, plenty of storage for technology and other equipment, and a kitchen facility that can easily accommodate those staffing the EOC's 12-hour shifts. The new facility will allow the city to act much faster to activate the EOC, which previously had to be converted from the City Council Conference Room, with limited space to accommodate all roles needed during an emergency.

The fire administration portion of the building doubles the functional space previously occupied by the team. It includes spacious offices for the fire chief and deputy fire chief, an office for battalion chiefs and light duty personnel, a conference room equipped with video conferencing technology, and plenty of workspace for the office manager. Both the police and fire departments share a spacious and welcoming lobby with reception windows on either side.



Historic Alexandria participates in the 2025 Blue Star Museums program

HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA IS PARTICIPATING in Blue Star Museums, a program that provides free admission to currently serving U.S. military personnel and their families during the summer. The 2025 program began on Armed Forces Day (Saturday, May 17) and will end on Labor Day (Monday, September 1).

Blue Star Museums is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and participating museums across America.

“The National Endowment for the Arts is honored to help connect military service members and their families with their communities through the Blue Star Museums program,” said Mary Anne Carter, senior advisor for the National Endowment for the Arts. “Institutions like Historic Alexandria offer opportunities for military members to create special memories and connect with our country’s heritage and culture.”

“It is a true honor for us to once again be a Blue Star Museum this year at Historic Alexandria,” added Gretchen Bulova, director of the Office of Historic Alexandria. “We are deeply grateful for the service and sacrifice of our military families, and we warmly welcome them to connect with the history that shapes our shared American story.”

“For 15 years, Blue Star Museums has opened doors for military families to explore, connect, and feel at home in their communities,” said Kathy Roth-Douquet, CEO of Blue Star Families.



“Thanks to our continued partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and participating museums nationwide, we’re proud to continue this tradition of belonging and enrichment. Museums are more than cultural spaces; they’re places where military families feel seen, welcomed, and celebrated.”

The free admission program is available for those currently serving in the United States Military – Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, and Space Force, members of the Reserves, National Guard, U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps, and NOAA Commissioned Corps – and up to five family members. Qualified members must show a Geneva Convention common access card (CAC), DD Form 1173 ID card (dependent ID), DD Form 1173-1 ID card, or the Next Generation Uniformed Services (Real) ID card for entrance into a participating Blue Star Museum.

Blue Star Museum participants include a wide range of institutions – history and art museums, children’s museums, zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, and more – across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The current list of participating museums will continue to grow as organizations register to be a Blue Star Museum throughout the summer.

Learn more and find the list of participating museums at arts.gov/BlueStarMuseums.

Dixon Park Connector to expand downtown trail network in Fredericksburg

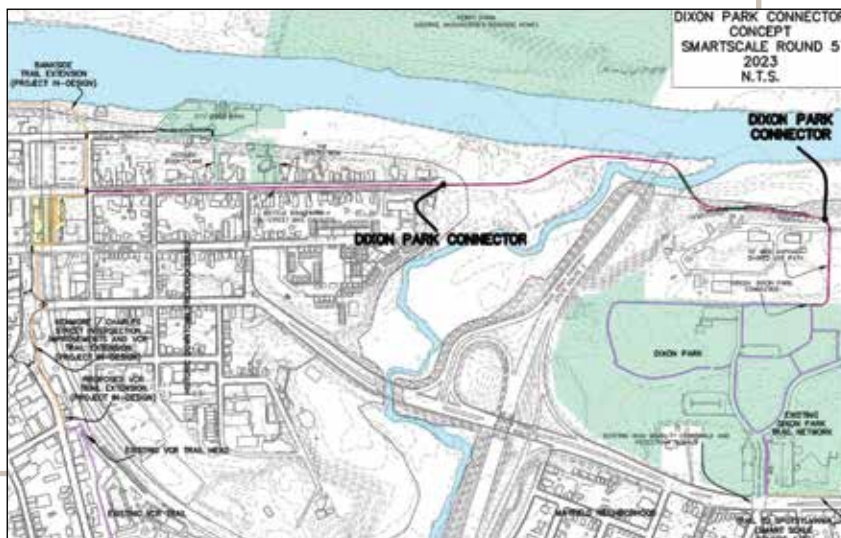
THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG has announced plans for the Dixon Park Connector, a new multimodal project designed to enhance the city’s trail network and promote safer, more connected options for walking and biking.

The Dixon Park Connector will link several existing and planned trails, including the future Bankside Trail, the Virginia Central Railway (VCR) Trail, and the Dixon Park trail network. The project includes a new on-street bike lane beginning at the Fredericksburg Train Station and continuing south along Caroline Street to the street’s end. At this location, the route will transition to a shared-use path connecting to Dixon Park and its surrounding trail network.

Proposed design plans are not yet available. Once plans are available for review, opportunities for public involvement and comments will be scheduled and announced.

Funded through Smart Scale Round 5 in 2023, the project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase by VDOT. Construction is expected to coincide with the city’s wastewater treatment plant project, and the trail’s completion is anticipated in FY28–FY29.

The Dixon Park Connector serves as a critical link in Fredericksburg’s long-envisioned citywide trail network, which has been in development since the 1990s. Once complete, the network will span from Motts Run in the northwest to Dixon Park and the city’s southern boundary, providing expanded recreation and transportation options for residents and visitors alike.





Danville earns Nature Everywhere Community status

DANVILLE HAS BEEN DESIGNATED as a Nature Everywhere Community, the first city in Virginia to earn this distinction. This recognition is part of the Nature Everywhere Community Action Challenge, a partnership between the Children & Nature Network, the National League of Cities, and KABOOM!, aimed at ensuring children have access to nature where they live, learn, and play.

“Being nationally recognized as a Nature Everywhere Community is a great achievement for Danville,” said Bill Sgrinia, director of Danville Parks and Recreation. “We know there are many benefits for children that have access to nature-based learning and play. Danville Outdoors, and all the partners involved, provide a great example of groups coming together to make a difference for our community. We’re proud to join a national movement that prioritizes the health, well-being, and future of our children.”

This recognition highlights Danville’s dedication to creating safe, inclusive, and enriching outdoor spaces that support childhood development, academic success, and community well-being.

“The evidence is clear: spending time outdoors in nature is essential for children’s healthy development,” said Sarah Milligan-Toffler, president and CEO of the Children & Nature Network. “From supporting academic and social-emotional learning to enhancing physical and mental health, children thrive when they can play and learn outdoors. By completing the Nature Everywhere Community Action Challenge, Danville has showcased its commitment to providing these essential benefits to children in the community.”

The Danville Outdoors initiative has been central to this achievement. Led by Danville Parks and Recreation, this initiative is powered by a broad coalition of partners, including the Dan River Basin Association, Danville Science Center, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Master Naturalists, the Danville Master Gardener Club, the Garden Club of Danville, the Gabriella Garden Club, and Danville Public Works. These groups work collaboratively to provide meaningful, hands-on outdoor learning experiences across the city.

“We couldn’t have succeeded without the support of our local partners and city departments,” said Maggie Wiles, outdoor pro-

grams coordinator for Danville Parks and Recreation. “By working together, we can provide unique outdoor educational opportunities to our schools and community. We’re excited to continue learning from other cities and build on our efforts as a Nature Everywhere Community.”

A key initiative within Danville Outdoors is the Ballou Park Reforestation Project, which aims to restore the park by planting trees to replace the more than 100 trees lost over the past 80 years. The inaugural tree-planting event drew more than 250 participants, including local families and youth, who learned tree-planting techniques from the city arborist and explored available outdoor resources. Inspired by this success, Danville Outdoors extended its outreach to local schools, leading to a tree-planting event for 75 third graders from Schoolfield Elementary. Danville Parks and Recreation’s Junior Naturalist program, which partners with Danville Outdoors, guides children through local parks as they learn about native wildlife, wetlands, plants, and insects through hands-on exploration.

“Connecting children to nature helps foster a sense of belonging and responsibility in their community,” said Krista Hodges, director of environmental education at the Dan River Basin Association. “We’re excited to be part of this national movement and learn from other cities as we work together to engage kids with the outdoors.”

Looking forward, Danville Outdoors is focused on expanding access in underserved areas and Danville Public Schools. The team is actively pursuing grants and additional designations, including recognition as a Bee City, which will support pollinator gardens and sustainability education.

Through the national Nature Everywhere Community network, Danville will benefit from shared resources, success stories, and insights from more than 80 other participating cities committed to creating equitable access to nature, fueling continued growth and impact in outdoor education and environmental efforts.

Learn more about the Nature Everywhere Communities program at www.childrenandnature.org/nature-everywhere-communities.

Staunton Parks and Recreation marks summer solstice with Play All Day VA

STAUNTON RESIDENTS MADE the most of the longest day of the year on June 20, thanks to a celebration spearheaded by the Staunton Parks and Recreation Department and Play All Day VA.

Organized by the Virginia Recreation and Park Society (VRPS), Play All Day VA is a statewide initiative to highlight the importance

of play for all ages, abilities, and interests. Communities across Virginia participate with free or discounted programming, special events, and park-focused fun.

Play All Day VA is celebrated annually on the summer solstice, the longest day of

the year, giving everyone an opportunity to get out and discover all that their local community has to offer. The Staunton Parks and Recreation Department specifically encouraged locals to explore new parks or try a new activity, hosting events at Gypsy Hill Park Bandstand including yoga, tree climbing, gaming, a foam party, a magic show, and a grand finale family movie night.

“Play is essential to our well-being, no matter our age,” said Recreation Programmer Ana Fugate. “Whether it’s swinging at the playground, climbing a tree, or watching a movie under the stars, Play All Day VA is a joyful reminder of how much our local parks offer and how they bring our community together.”



Arlington County celebrates new Fire Station 8 and Halls Hill heritage

THE OFFICIAL OPENING of Arlington County's new Fire Station 8 was celebrated with an event on April 26 that reflected the inspiring story of the men who created the company in service to its community in the historic Langston Boulevard corridor.

Founded in 1918 as the Halls Hill Volunteer Fire Department in a segregated Black neighborhood, Fire Station 8 remained for decades the only Arlington station staffed exclusively by Black firefighters – even after the firemen became paid members of the Arlington County Fire Department in 1951.

The grand opening ceremony celebrated the completion of the \$27.9 million project with remarks by County Board Chairman Takis Karantonis; Fire Chief David Povlitz; Department of Environmental Services Director Greg Emanuel; former Arlington County Board Member Libby Garvey; Fire Station 8 Task Force Chair Noah Simon; Delegate Patrick Hope; John M. Langston Citizens Association President Wilma Jones; and Mercedes Clark Baker, daughter of former Fire Captain Alfred W. Clark. The event also included an open house and family activities, along with tours of the station and its powerful historical exhibit.

Attendees saluted the last living member of the first paid Fire Station 8 team, honored guest Hartman Reed, and the last station volunteer firefighter, honored guest Jerome Smith, for their courage and commitment to the Halls Hill community. Also acknowledged were retired first responders and the families of many others who served at the station over the decades.

A popular notion holds that Arlington's Fire Station 8 was the first officially Black-run and Black-operated fire station south of



the Mason-Dixon line. The Arlington County Fire Department and Fire Station 8 were integrated by early 1963.

The three-story, state-of-the-art fire station features a wide four-door apparatus bay, a decontamination zone, and a pharmacy room. As Arlington's first fire station to incorporate many of the county's sustainability goals, it includes an underground stormwater vault, a green vegetated roof, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and 57 solar panels on the roof to help reduce demands on the local energy grid.

Design and construction led by the Department of Environmental Services began in 2016 after the existing Station 8, opened in 1963, was deemed inadequate. Strong community advocacy and recommendations from an appointed Fire Station No. 8 Task Force convinced the county to build the replacement at the existing historic location of 4845 Langston Boulevard.

Charlottesville selected for grant program to boost economic growth and resilience

THE CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE has been chosen to participate in the Southern Cities Economic Initiative (SCEI), a program led by the National League of Cities (NLC) in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Charlottesville received a grant of \$15,000 from NLC through funding by SCEI's philanthropic partners and will join 19 other cities from across the Southern United States to develop strategies that boost economic mobility for residents and drive long-term economic growth.

SCEI programming includes tailored technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and access to data and experts from the Federal Reserve Bank. The organization also provides connections to national funders and assistance to leverage longer-term funding, including an opportunity to apply for additional NLC grants of up to \$60,000 and deeper assistance with strategy implementation.

"Being selected for the SCEI is a tremendous honor for Charlottesville" said Ashley Marshall, deputy city manager for social equity. "This opportunity will ultimately help us build a more resilient and inclusive economy that will uplift every resident and position our community for sustainable growth."

"Local governments play a critical role in driving economic growth and expanding opportunities for all residents," said NLC CEO and Executive Director Clarence E. Anthony. "The South has significant potential to lead on economic resilience and serve as a model for the nation. We are thrilled to collaborate with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta on the Southern Cities Economic Initiative to provide the tools to build stronger, more resilient economies."

SCEI's initial planning phase will run through October 31, 2025. Upon completion of the initial planning phase, participating cities will have an opportunity to advance to a more intensive implementation phase, which extends through December 2027.

This initiative is made possible through the generous support of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Learn more at the NLC website: www.nlc.org.



Newport News recognized as a top military spouse employer

THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS was named a 2025 Top Military Spouse Employer by Military.com, the only municipality to receive this distinction. The recognition underscores the city's steadfast commitment to supporting military spouses through inclusive hiring practices and career development opportunities.

"Being named a Top Military Spouse Employer is a true honor and a reflection of our unwavering commitment to supporting military spouses – dedicated individuals who make profound sacrifices alongside their loved ones in uniform," said City Manager Alan K. Archer.

The acknowledgement highlights Newport News' proactive approach to military spouse employment. The city has implemented targeted recruitment strategies, offering remote and hybrid work options and fostering career advancement for military spouses. Participation in programs such as the Department of Defense's Military Spouse Employment Program (MSEP), American Cor-

porate Partners (ACP), and Hiring Our Heroes further demonstrates the city's dedication to creating pathways for military spouses to thrive.

"As a military spouse, it's not always easy to find opportunities to build experience and

grow professionally, especially when you move often," said Jennifer Owen, Military Spouse Employment Program selectee. "That's why this fellowship means so much to me. I'm truly excited to be part of it and to finally have the chance to use what I've learned, gain hands-on experience, and grow alongside supportive mentors."



Hampton dedicates behavioral health center to former Sheriff B.J. Roberts

THE HAMPTON-NEWPORT NEWS Community Services Board cut the ceremonial ribbon in May to mark the official opening of the B.J. Roberts Behavioral Health Center, a state-of-the-art facility named in the memory of the former Hampton sheriff who made mental health a personal crusade.



The facility, totaling more than 20,000 square feet of space, will specialize in the assessment and treatment of people who are in urgent moments of mental health crisis. The services provided will include medication, suicide prevention, counseling, and therapy. The goal is to offer an environment that is calming, contrasted with the bright lights and noise often associated with a conventional emergency room.

"Today is not just opening a door," Mayor Jimmy Gray said. "It's opening a door to a stronger, healthier future for our community."

By providing a space specifically designed to handle mental health crises, the center, located at 300 Marcella Road, will allow hospital emergency rooms to focus on patients with physical injuries and illnesses.

Many revenue sources were used to fund the center, including the cities of Hampton and Newport News, Sentara Healthcare, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and an allocation through Governor Glenn Youngkin's "Right Help Right Now" initiative.

Nelson Smith, commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, said: "When a community comes together, anything is possible. What I see here today is every part of the community coming together. That's what it takes. Because of that, I know this facility will live up to the legacy of the man you're naming it after."

Roberts, who died in 2020, capped a long career in law enforcement by spending 28 years as Hampton's sheriff. Mental health was a lifelong passion for him, and he bequeathed a monetary gift to the community services board in his will.

Waffle House coming to Emporia

THE CITY OF EMPORIA is about to get scattered, smothered, covered, chunked, topped...

In partnership with its Economic Development Authority, Emporia has announced that Waffle House will open a new location within the city limits. Known nationwide for its iconic 24-hour service, friendly atmosphere, and comfort food classics, Waffle House's arrival marks an exciting milestone in the city's ongoing economic development efforts. This addition not only brings a beloved brand to the Emporia community but also represents a boost to the local economy through new job creation, increased commercial activity, and enhanced visibility along the city's high-traffic corridors.

"This is the kind of economic growth and development we've been working toward," said City Manager William E. Johnson III. "Welcoming a nationally recognized brand like Waffle House to

Emporia is a clear sign of our city's momentum. It will create jobs, strengthen our commercial base, and serve as a strong attraction for both residents and travelers."

Mayor Dr. Carolyn S. Carey echoed this excitement, stating, "Emporia is open for business, and this announcement proves it. Waffle House is more than just a restaurant, it's a destination. We are proud to welcome them to our city, and we look forward to the many ways they will contribute to our community."

The new Waffle House location will be strategically placed to serve both locals and the thousands of motorists passing through Emporia daily, thanks to its position along the busy I-95 corridor. This development is part of a broader strategy by the Emporia Office of Community and Economic Development to attract high-visibility businesses, support entrepreneurship, and revitalize key commercial areas throughout the city.

Leesburg celebrates groundbreaking of Veterans Park at Balls Bluff

MAYOR KELLY BURK and members of the Leesburg Town Council gathered to celebrate the official groundbreaking of Veterans Park at Balls Bluff on May 10.

Mayor Burk was joined by Vice Mayor Todd Cimino-Johnson, Councilmembers Neil Steinberg and Zach Cummings, Loudoun County Supervisors Kirsten Umstattd and Juli Briskman, Vice Chair Michael Turner, Delegate Marty Martinez, and Delegate Geary Higgins.

Also in attendance was retired Judge Frank Buttery, who served on the bench from 1994 to 1999. He played a key role in the negotiations between the Town of Leesburg and NOVA Parks – formerly the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority – that ultimately brought Veterans Park within the town's limits.

Town staff involved in the project, representatives from the project's contracting firm Madigan Construction, and members of the Leesburg Parks and Recreation Commission were also present to mark this important milestone in the park's development.

The Veterans Park project has been years in the making, with the town first acquiring the 86 acres for park use in 2001 at a cost of \$2 million. Over the course of the last 20-plus years, the town developed a comprehensive master plan for the park project and worked with local stakeholders, including NOVA Parks and the nearby Balls Bluff Battlefield, to ensure that the development of the park protected local natural and historic resources while providing additional recreational amenities to town residents and the surrounding Potomac Crossing community. In 2021, Loudoun County contributed \$4 million toward the project's overall cost of \$4.2 million.

The first phase of the project will include a ¾-mile, two-lane park access road from Balls Bluff Road to the

Potomac River, parking facilities, a ramp for non-motorized watercraft, and other related improvements. It will be the first town park to have direct access to the Potomac River. Construction of this first phase is expected to be finished in summer 2026.

The second phase, to be completed in fall 2029, will include roadway upgrades, additional parking, a picnic pavilion, upgrades to the existing silos, and trail improvements.

"To say this day has been years in the making is an understatement, as it's been more like decades," said Rich Williams, Parks and Recreation Department director. "The excitement for this new town park is shared by all of our project stakeholders, including our residents and the members of our staff and contractors who have been working behind the scenes to bring it to fruition. We believe Veterans Park will offer our residents something truly unique."

Mayor Burk added, "This project has been a great collaborative effort between the town and Loudoun County. We are very thankful for the county's financial support in helping make this project a reality. I am so excited for our residents to enjoy this new park."

More information on Veterans Park can be found at www.leesburgva.gov/veteranspark.



NVRC receives SolSmart Platinum designation

THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA Regional Commission (NVRC) has received Platinum designation from the SolSmart solar program. It is the first community in the South and the first regional organization in the country to earn this prestigious distinction. The NVRC previously received Gold designation in 2019.

“NVRC is honored to receive this prestigious designation from the SolSmart program,” said NVRC Chair John T. Chapman of the City of Alexandria. “We are proud to work with our local government partners and others to assist our communities reach their climate and sustainability goals. Having that work recognized is greatly appreciated.”



About SolSmart

SolSmart is led by the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office.

The SolSmart program has two key parts. First, the program provides no-cost technical assistance to help local governments follow national best practices to expand solar energy use in their jurisdictions. Second, it recognizes and celebrates these communities with SolSmart designations of Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze.

To date, 555 local governments in 44 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico have achieved SolSmart designation, representing one in three Americans. Six permitting localities in Northern Virginia (Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Falls Church, and Loudoun) have received some level of SolSmart designation, and one other is in the application process.

NVRC's Support of Solar

NVRC has long been a supporter of renewable energy sources. Starting in 2014, the commission launched the region's first Solarize NoVA program with its local government partners and the Local Energy Alliance program. Through 2024, Solarize NoVA has resulted in more than 1,000 contracts for more than \$27 million in private sector investment and greater than 9.4 MW of solar.

Overall, solar in Northern Virginia has grown from 51 arrays for 208 kW in 2009 to 12,274 arrays for more than 115,000 kW in 2023 (data for 2024 is still being updated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments). Working with the SolSmart program, NVRC has hosted several informational webinars on a wide variety of topics related to solar, including permitting, zoning, inspection, and siting.

NVRC also created the Commonwealth's first regional solar map to provide a bird's-eye view of how large a solar array may fit on the roof of a business or home, the potential energy generation, and the environmental and cost-saving benefits.

“The Northern Virginia Regional Commission's achievement of the Platinum SolSmart designation is a powerful testament to the region's leadership in solar readiness,” said Vince Maiden, director of the State Energy Office with the Virginia Department of Energy. “This recognition reflects the hard work of NVRC and its member localities in removing barriers to solar energy adoption and accelerating Virginia's all-of-the-above plan for a reliable, affordable, and increasingly clean energy future.”



Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad receives Governor's Award for Outstanding EMS Agency

THE BLACKSBURG VOLUNTEER Rescue Squad (BVRS) has been awarded the prestigious Governor's Award for Outstanding Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency.

This award recognizes and honors an EMS agency that exemplifies exceptional professionalism, a strong commitment to community service, and excellence in patient care, demonstrated through innovative training programs, public health initiatives, robust community engagement, and leadership within the EMS system at local, regional, state, and national levels.

On May 19 – the first day of National EMS Week – Governor Glenn Youngkin presented Chief David English with the award, which English accepted on behalf of the entire Blacksburg EMS team.

"The town offers its congratulations to the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad for receiving this prestigious award for the second time in eight years," Deputy Town Manager Steve Ross said in a statement. "Being recognized a second time demonstrates the outstanding EMS services the rescue squad continues to provide our community. Additionally, we are appreciative of all the individuals who volunteer their time to provide this valuable service."

The BVRS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing prehospital emergency medical and technical rescue services to the Town of Blacksburg, portions of Montgomery County, and neighboring communities. In 2024, BVRS responded to 3,885 calls for service, achieving 100% first team and 99.3% overall coverage rates while also handling over 100 calls for neighboring agencies. Their 170 active volunteers contributed 89,866 hours of service valued at over \$3 million. The organization actively participates in various community events and provides training to the public and other public safety agencies.

"I'm truly honored to accept this award on behalf of Blacksburg Rescue," said Chief English. "It is a testimony to the dedication and professionalism of our team. In a time when many volunteer agencies are struggling, it's especially meaningful that our all-volunteer rescue squad can achieve this distinction from among the hundreds of other volunteer, career, and combination departments across Virginia."

In addition to emergency response, the BVRS is a pillar of the Blacksburg community through public education, safety training,

and participation in local events. The award underscores the organization's sustained impact and commitment to excellence in emergency medical services. For more information about the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad and its programs, visit www.blacksburgrescue.org.



Blacksburg Rescue Chief David English accepts the Outstanding EMS Agency Award from Governor Glenn Youngkin.



Blacksburg Rescue Chief David English (left end, back row) proudly showcases the Outstanding EMS Agency Award with other honored recipients.

Engineered for Nature series highlights green infrastructure projects in Ashland

AS COMMUNITIES GROW and climates shift, the Town of Ashland is investing in green infrastructure – projects that blend engineering with ecology to protect natural resources, manage stormwater, and create healthier, more resilient neighborhoods. In a new series, *Engineered for Nature*, the town highlights two current projects that demonstrate how Ashland is building with nature in mind: the Stony Run Stream Restoration and the Maple Street Trail & Swale. Both projects are expected to be completed in fall 2025.

Efforts like these are key parts of Ashland's strategy to protect natural resources, enhance neighborhood safety and beauty, build climate resilience, and meet important environmental regulations and standards. They don't just manage stormwater; they also restore ecosystems, prevent future infrastructure damage, and make Ashland a greener, more vibrant place to live.

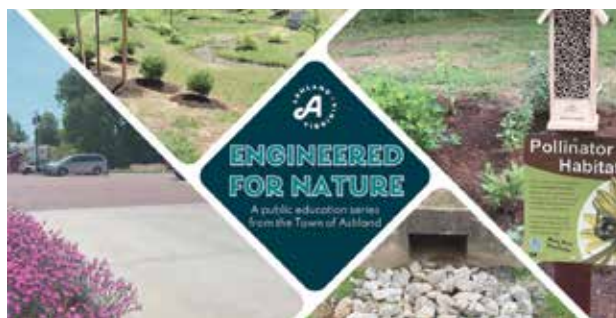
Stony Run Stream Restoration. Part of a larger environmental effort to help the Chesapeake Bay, this project aims to restore and stabilize the Stony Run stream corridor (which runs adjacent to DeJarnette Park), rebuild eroded streambanks using natural materials, reintroduce native plants, and reestablish natural stream flow.

These actions will protect the Chesapeake Bay by trapping sediment and nutrients before they reach downstream waters, further reducing erosion and property risk during storms, improving water quality in local streams and creeks, creating animal habitats, and helping the town meet state and federal environmental guidelines for stormwater and watershed health.

Maple Street Trail & Swale. This two-in-one project will extend the Fall Line Trail to improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and install a bioswale alongside the trail to manage and treat stormwater runoff.

A bioswale is a shallow, landscaped channel planted with native vegetation. It slows stormwater from streets and sidewalks, allowing it to filter into the ground naturally. As water passes through the bioswale, pollutants are filtered out by the plants and soil. The result? Cleaner water, less flooding, and a healthier ecosystem.

A bioswale captures and treats runoff before it reaches local streams, reducing pollution and improving overall water quality. This helps the town comply with state and federal stormwater management requirements, enhances the environment with green space and wildlife-friendly plants, and adds visual interest and ecological value to a key community corridor.



Neptune Shield awarded EDIP grant to expand innovation hub in Virginia Beach

THE VIRGINIA BEACH DEPARTMENT of Economic Development (VBED) has awarded a \$162,681 Economic Development Investment Program (EDIP) grant to Neptune Shield, a Virginia Beach-based, veteran-led startup supporting companies creating advanced dual-use technologies that strengthen national security.

Founded by former Navy SEAL Nick Rocha, Neptune Shield plays a critical role in the regional innovation ecosystem by providing U.S. and international companies — particularly those in the maritime, defense, cybersecurity, and government contracting fields — with the infrastructure, technology, resources, and secure environments needed to bring high-impact solutions to market.

The EDIP grant will fund the expansion of Neptune Shield's Mid-Atlantic Innovation Tech Hub, located in the Lynnhaven area near Naval Air Station Oceana. Planned upgrades include private offices, coworking and R&D space, collaborative areas, and the addition of a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) — a key resource

for companies working with classified or sensitive information. The EDIP award is tied to Neptune Shield's projected \$2.4 million capital investment and the creation of 22 high-wage jobs to support the hub's operations and growth.

"Virginia Beach is proud to be the home of Neptune Shield's Mid-Atlantic Innovation Tech Hub," said Christian Green, director of Economic Development for the City of Virginia Beach. "This forward-thinking initiative is a significant addition to our region's growing defense and technology ecosystem. Neptune Shield's deep commitment to innovation, research, and collaboration will leave a lasting mark on our region's entrepreneurial landscape and further solidify Virginia Beach as a leader in the national security and defense sector."

The Mid-Atlantic Innovation Tech Hub serves as a regional launchpad for the growth and commercialization of dual-use technologies. The expanded facility will support both U.S. and international startups by providing "soft-landing" infrastructure, technical assistance, access to capital, and collaboration opportunities with government agencies, contractors, and academic and industry stakeholders.





Prince George County and partner localities to launch Mobile Overdose Response Unit

PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY has been awarded \$113,981 by the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) to support the creation and operation of a Mobile Overdose Response Unit. This initiative will serve Prince George County and its partner localities of Dinwiddie County, the City of Hopewell, and Surry County.

The grant includes \$60,451.90 in Cooperative Partnership funds and \$53,529.10 in matching awards from the OAA's Individual Distribution and Gold Standard Incentive programs. These funds will be used to enhance rapid response capabilities, provide critical support to individuals and families affected by opioid overdoses, and strengthen prevention and education efforts across the region.

"Addiction crosses over county and city lines, and its impact is felt in all our communities," said Denise Waff, director of Riverside Criminal Justice Agency. "By working together, we

are better equipped to fight the opioid crisis and make our region safer and stronger."

The Mobile Overdose Response Unit will focus on:

- Prevention, education, and awareness, delivering programming to hundreds of children, adults, teachers, healthcare professionals, and local officials each year.
- Supporting adults seeking detox, counseling, and treatment for communicable diseases.
- Distributing Naloxone and fentanyl test kits, and connecting at-risk individuals to mental health care, peer support, housing, and job training.

The performance period for the grant is July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Prince George County is acting as fiscal agent for this regional initiative, working closely with its partner communities.

Virginia Capital Trail to expand into Williamsburg

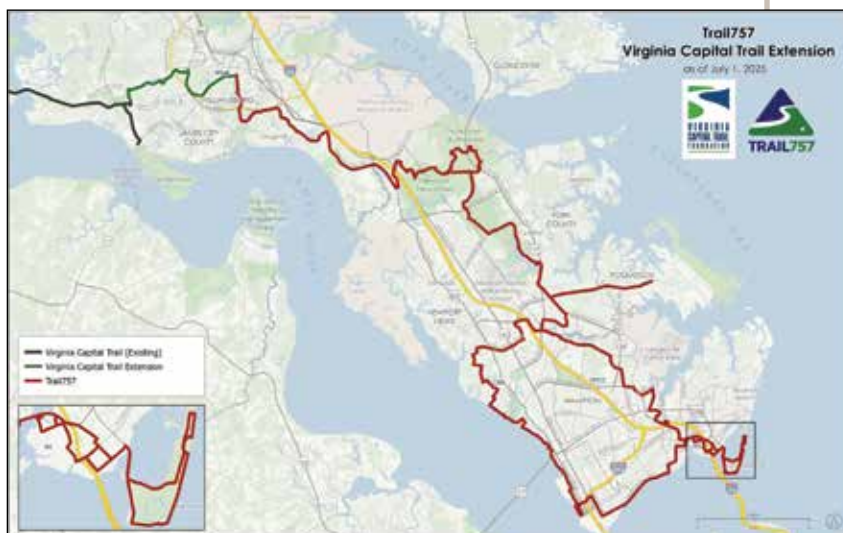
THE VIRGINIA CAPITAL TRAIL Foundation (VCTF) and the Tidewater Trails Alliance (TTA) have announced a landmark partnership that will expand the Virginia Capital Trail into Colonial Williamsburg and lay the groundwork for future trail connectivity throughout the region.

Through this strategic collaboration, VCTF will lead the development of approximately 7.5 miles of new trail that will extend from Jamestown High School to South England Street in Colonial Williamsburg. This expansion will be branded as an official extension of the Virginia Capital Trail, estimated to cost \$25-\$33 million, and serve as a vital link between the existing Capital Trail and the proposed TRAIL757, creating a continuous and unified trail experience.

"This is a transformational moment for the Capital Trail and the region," said Cat Anthony, executive director of the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation. "Expanding the trail to Colonial Williamsburg has long been a priority, and this partnership brings that vision within reach. It not only strengthens our ability to deliver a high-quality trail experience, but also moves us closer to creating a fully connected network linking Richmond to the heart of Hampton Roads."

As part of the agreement, VCTF will fund a full-time project lead to oversee advocacy, planning, and coordination with local and state stakeholders. TTA, a grassroots leader of trail development and the driving force behind TRAIL757 since 2018, will continue to focus on advancing trail connections across the Peninsula and South Hampton Roads area.

"We are excited to collaborate with VCTF to bring this shared vision to life," said Reed Nester, chair of the Tidewater Trails Alliance. "This agreement amplifies our collective efforts



and marks the next step toward a safe, accessible, and connected trail system that supports long-term economic vitality across the region."

The partnership has already garnered early support from the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, which will serve as regional advisors and advocacy partners. Additional support has been received from James City County and the City of Williamsburg. Funding for the project will come from a combination of grants from government agencies, private foundations, individual donors, and corporate partners.

To learn more about the proposed extension and view the preliminary route, visit: virginiacapitaltrail.org/CapTrailExtension.



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Supporting small towns creates big wins for the Chesapeake Bay

ACROSS VIRGINIA, MUNICIPALITIES are quietly leading one of the most important environmental efforts of our time — restoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. From the Blue Ridge Mountains to the coastal plain, local government leaders are making critical decisions on land use, upgrading infrastructure, and stewarding the natural resources that flow through their communities. While these efforts may not always make headlines, local governments play an essential role in the success of watershed restoration. At the local level, stormwater infrastructure removes excess nutrients, zoning ordinances guide smart growth, and regional initiatives take shape through tangible, on-the-ground actions.

As the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership undertakes revisions to the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, a foundational document guiding restoration efforts for over a decade, local government leadership is more important than ever.* Virginia's municipalities are not just partners in this work; they are its backbone. This is a chance to recognize past contributions and invest in the future successes only they can achieve.

**For more information on the work being done on the agreement and how your community can provide feedback, see the section at the end of this article.*

The local burden: Big expectations with limited resources

Local governments must juggle a wide array of responsibilities, often with limited resources. Aging infrastructure, changing development patterns, and increasingly severe weather events strain the ability of officials to advance environmental goals. These pressures come on top of everyday duties such as responding to residents' needs, managing constrained budgets, and pushing forward community priorities, often with small, overstretched staff. As a result, water resource projects are sometimes pushed to the margins.

Yet, when technical assistance is made available, many communities have been able to bring these projects to the forefront. Tailored support ensures that local leaders are not navigating these complex challenges alone. With the right tools and guidance, local governments can turn big aspirations into real, measurable progress.

Fortunately, several programs and partnerships across the Commonwealth are delivering customized technical assistance to the communities that need it most.



A great blue heron searches for food in Mulberry Creek in Belle Isle State Park in Lancaster County.

KAITLYN DOLAN / CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

Case study 1: Stormwater Technical Assistance for Virginia Towns

One such program is the **Stormwater Technical Assistance for Virginia Towns (STAT)** initiative, led by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. This initiative provides small towns with support to implement nature-based stormwater solutions. Through on-site evaluations, partnership development, and funding identification, towns receive a customized Green Infrastructure Action Plan tailored to their local needs and goals.

STAT emerged directly from conversations with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) and the Virginia Municipal League (VML), who voiced the need for more technical support to help localities take meaningful action. The Alliance and VML worked together to identify municipalities for the program's first year.



Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay staff tour new accessible trail and boat launch along North River

CHRISTINA BONINI / ALLIANCE FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Mount Crawford, a town with fewer than 500 residents, was the first locality to participate in the STAT program. During a 2024 regional roundtable hosted by LGAC, Mount Crawford's town manager emphasized that technical assistance can often determine whether a small town can pursue water resource projects.

After several site visits and meetings with town officials, the Alliance and Mount Crawford identified the best use for the town's new technical assistance funds: combating erosion and the newly installed public access point for the North River. The Alliance coordinated with the local engineer who had designed the boat ramp to redesign a bioswale into the existing trail to reduce erosion. To mitigate costs, the Alliance is using funding to pay for the redesign and is supporting the town in incorporating the cost of construction into another nearby project.

The Alliance also connected Mount Crawford with their local Department of Forestry (DOF) representative to complement the work happening at the boat ramp. DOF provided recommendations on potential native species and locations for tree plantings that would complement the bioswale and further reduce erosion. This site visit also supports Mount Crawford's ability to apply for the DOF Trees for Clean Water Grant Program, by serving as the pre-application site visit and site plan development. The Alliance plans to present its recommendations to the town in August to support improvements to the "Crown Jewel of the North River."

Have a riparian buffer or street tree planting project? Looking to convert turf to trees or host a tree giveaway in your community? The Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant Program provides grant funding for "tree-planting efforts that raise public awareness of the benefits of trees and impacts on water quality."



Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay staff discuss flooding issues with town council members and residents in Town Commons.

RICK MITTLER / ALLIANCE FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Irvington, another participating town, joined the program after learning about it at VML's Elected Officials Conference in January 2025. Flooding at the Town Commons, a community hub for events like the monthly farmers market, prompted the town to seek solutions to preserve this important site. This space presents a unique challenge as it needs to maintain vehicle access, protect nearby septic systems, and preserve the area's historic character.

From the start, the Town of Irvington demonstrated how much a small town means to the people who call it home. During the initial site visit, the mayor, council members, residents, and the Village Improvement Association shared personal stories and historical context about the Commons. Irvington representatives highlighted key locations that flooded, all while sharing stories of how their families had used the space for generations. The Alliance is currently crafting potential recommendations, including permeable pavers and bioswales. These recommendations will be explained in detail with the town during a follow-up visit.

STAT has also initiated outreach and assessments in other towns, including Woodstock and Louisa. To scale its impact, the Alliance hired a local government specialist, dedicated to supporting additional communities on the Delmarva Peninsula.

Is your town looking for green infrastructure recommendations, potential funding, or implementation partners to address stormwater issues? Check out the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's Stormwater Technical Assistance for VA Towns Program and apply to receive free, tailored technical assistance to address issues that matter most to your community.



Case study 2: Supporting resilience and economic development

Planning District Commissions (PDCs) are another key partner in providing technical assistance to localities. The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC) has been particularly effective in advancing environmental resilience through voluntary, community-driven efforts. Their strategy is grounded in aligning environmental solutions with local economic development priorities.

One of MPPDC's hallmark initiatives is the Fight the Flood program, which started as a way for municipalities to create loan and grant opportunities, business development and marketing, and community databases to identify flood-related funding needs and partner those problems with solutions. Over time, the program evolved to connect residents with businesses offering resilience services. Recognizing the lack of implementation funding as a major barrier, MPPDC also launched a low-interest loan program focused on shoreline stabilization and septic upgrades. Currently managing over 30 such loans, the MPPDC uses the Fight the Flood database to get funding to the people, businesses, and projects that need it most. To increase their impact, they have bundled submissions to the program for larger-scale grant applications.

Learn more about the Fight the Flood Program led by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission at www.fightthefloodva.com. Want to connect with your local planning district commission? Check out the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) website at www.vapdc.org.

To address long-term infrastructure challenges, MPPDC is exploring innovative technologies, particularly in wastewater management. Data indicates that by 2040, more than 20,000 septic systems in the region will need repairs, many of which are in flood-prone areas. Through the RISE Challenge, MPPDC worked with Triangle Environmental to design raised septic systems that sit above the floodplain, reducing contamination risks. This work is complemented by ongoing research and demonstrations at the Captain St. Claire property in Gloucester, a public site where MPPDC tests and showcases a variety of resilience techniques, from energy-neutral home redesigns to environmentally-friendly shoreline stabilization solutions.

Looking ahead, MPPDC continues to expand its resilience toolkit. With support from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Community Flood Preparedness Fund, they are embarking on a new initiative involving the deployment of tide gauges to support a parametric flood insurance program and improve local flood insurance policies. This innovative approach, coupled with ongoing efforts to offer communities a "menu" of flexible, locally relevant solutions, reflects MPPDC's commitment to equipping the Middle Peninsula with the tools, knowledge, and resources to thrive in the face of environmental change.

Learn more about the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF), a state-local grant and loan program to help communities assess flood vulnerability and implement resilience and flood mitigation projects.



MIDDLE PENINSULA PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION



A weathered skiff sits in waters on Virginia's Middle Peninsula, an enduring symbol of the region's watermen identity and the challenges of its coastal communities.

Passage Creek, a tributary of the South Fork Shenandoah River, flows through Caroline Furnace Camp and Retreat Center in Shenandoah County.



Case study 3: Riverine restoration

Private sector partners also play a vital role in delivering technical assistance. Ecosystem Services, a Virginia-based natural resource consulting firm specializing in ecological restoration, has helped numerous municipalities with projects from stream repair to stormwater retrofits. Their approach emphasizes grant-funded implementation, collaborative project development, and capacity-building for small municipalities to achieve high-impact results without overextending local budgets.

The Town of **Elkton** partnered with Ecosystem Services and public agencies to transform a degraded stretch of the South Fork Shenandoah River. Once the site of a landfill, the eroding banks brought sediment, waste material, and excess nutrients into the river. The town sought to both mitigate the ecological threat and enhance the area as a recreational space. With guidance from Ecosystem Services and support from partners like the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Elkton implemented a restoration project that addressed multiple challenges while delivering long-term community benefits.

The project design incorporated best practices in stream restoration, including the installation of rock vanes to redirect flow and minimize erosion, removal of landfill materials from the bank, and extensive native riparian planting to stabilize the site and improve water quality. The work helped establish natural resilience while preserving and enhancing public access. Completed in 2019, the site has since become a destination for anglers and river enthusiasts and is now integrated into Elkton's greenway network. The initiative was fully grant-funded, leveraging resources from the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) and the DuPont NRDAR Settlement funds. Ecosystem Services supported the town in connecting with James Madison University for mercury testing. The restored site serves as a DEQ model for effective big-river restoration by a small town.

Monitoring data indicates that the project is stable and functioning, and even more impressively, no maintenance has been needed since its completion. Elkton's work with Ecosystem Services and other

partners highlights how targeted, science-based restoration, paired with strategic funding and community engagement, can yield outsized impacts that turn a liability into a restored natural space that supports both ecological function and community well-being.

Learn more about utilizing the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) to reduce water pollution and meet the Chesapeake Bay and impaired stream requirements, and the DuPont NRDAR Settlement funds to support habitat restoration, water-quality projects, recreational access improvements, and land protection.



Learn more about DuPont NRDAR Settlement funds to support habitat restoration, water-quality projects, recreational access improvements, and land protection.



Takeaways and results

When small towns receive the technical assistance they need, they rise to the occasion. These communities are ready to act; they just need the support to do so. And when they succeed, the benefits extend far beyond their borders.

Local actions are at the core of meeting statewide and regional environmental goals. Whether it's reducing nutrient pollution or improving stream health, it's municipal governments that bring these targets to life. Small towns are not on the sidelines; they're leading with ingenuity, dedication, and a deep sense of place. As we shape the future of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed restoration efforts, we must ensure that their voice and role are recognized and supported.

A New Chapter for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

SINCE 1983, THE CHESAPEAKE Bay Watershed Agreement has provided a framework for regional cooperation on water quality, land conservation, and resilience. As a voluntary pact among watershed jurisdictions and federal agencies, it outlines goals and outcomes aimed at restoring the Bay's health and sustaining the land, tributaries, and communities that surround it. Many milestones set in the 2014 edition of the Watershed Agreement have a deadline of December 2025. As we are quickly approaching this deadline, the Chesapeake Executive Council charged the partnership with outlining a plan to meet the remaining Bay goals and envision a path for the future.

The result is the draft revised Watershed Agreement, released on July 1, 2025. This updated roadmap aims to streamline the structure and process of the Chesapeake Bay Program to support the partnership in collectively working towards its commitments and goals. With this revised agreement comes the opportunity to weigh in on the future of the restoration effort and voice the interests of your community!

As the next chapter of the Watershed Agreement takes shape, it's clear that supporting small towns must remain a top

priority. These communities are constantly innovating despite limited resources, benefit enormously from strategic technical assistance, and can create lasting environmental impacts when they have the tools, resources, and support to do so. When it comes to clean water and resilient communities, no town is too small to play a big part!

Learn more and provide input

Feedback on the draft revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement can be submitted by emailing comments@chesapeakebay.net and will be accepted until September 1.

Want to learn more about the proposed revisions to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement? Use the QR code to visit the Planning for 2025 and Beyond webpage where you can view draft revisions, explore the process, and support shaping the future of the Bay.



KAITLYN DOLAN / CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM



Mulberry Creek fishing pier is seen at Belle Isle State Park in Lancaster County. Mulberry Creek flows into the Rappahannock River nearby.

About the author: Rick Mittler is the local government projects coordinator for the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.

The FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge are the best friends a Blue Ridge community can have

JUST HOW FRIENDLY are the FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge? Well...

...when a community group in Waynesboro wanted to build the Blue Ridge Children's Museum, FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge stepped up with \$35,000 for a new natural playground and giant mural featuring artwork by local kids...

...and when folks in the Town of Floyd began restoring the historic Roberson Mill, FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge injected \$13,000 to repair the flooring and build a parking lot...

...and when Nashville musician Addie Levy envisioned a live music series of Appalachian artists performing in her hometown of Radford's Glencoe Mansion & Museum, FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge not only underwrote all expenses but arranged for professional livestreaming of each "Glencoe Sessions" concert, resulting in the archived performances being aired throughout April of this year on Blue Ridge PBS.

So yeah, they're pretty friendly.

FRIENDS recently announced a second season of The Glencoe Sessions that will take place on first Fridays in September through December this year featuring:

- Sept. 5: Addie Levy and the Avalanche
- Oct. 3: Caitlin Krisko Trio
- Nov. 7: Newfound Gap
- Dec. 5: Highland Reverie

A unique place deserves good friends

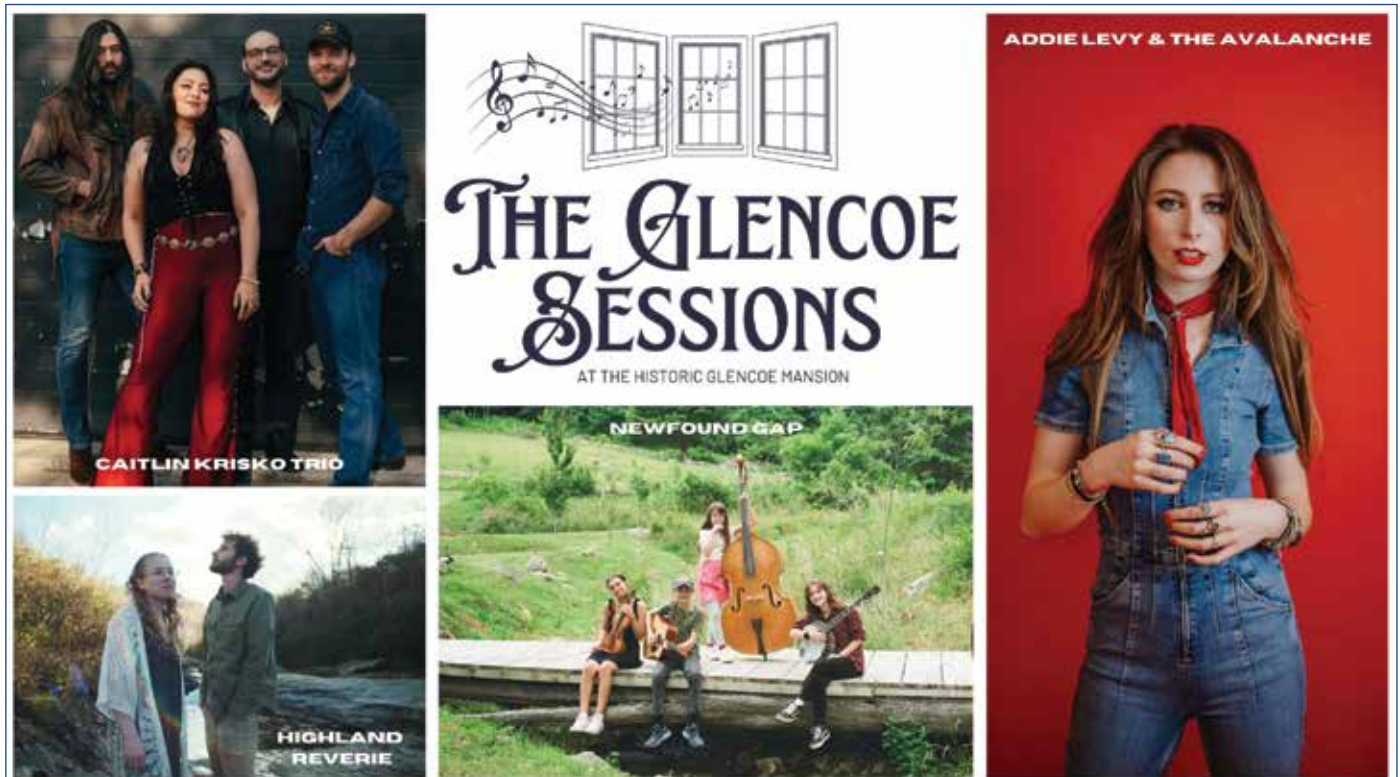
"Until you come here, you don't realize what a unique place the Blue Ridge region is," says FRIENDS Executive Director Julie Whalen. "I grew up in Texas and moved here from Indiana, so the landscape here is dramatically different. And it's not just the outdoors, but the people, the culture, the music, and sense of community."

The FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge mission is to enhance that natural beauty, along with the region's culture and quality of life, to make Blue Ridge communities even better.

With Whalen as the only full-time employee, and a staff of three part-timers, FRIENDS relies on a network of passionate volunteers who belong to chapters in localities like Waynesboro, Hillsville, Staunton, Galax, Covington, Bedford, Roanoke, Floyd, Galax, Hillsville...and more!

Funding comes from a variety of sources: membership dues, charitable contributions, grants, and proceeds from FRIENDS' specialty license plate, which has been purchased by more than 16,000 Virginia motorists.

"Our iconic license plate provides critical funding for us to remain such a good friend to so many Blue Ridge communities," says Whalen.



Good works galore

In addition to the recent work in Waynesboro, Floyd and Radford outlined above, in the past couple of years FRIENDS has:

- Planted pollinator gardens from Camp Alta Mons in Montgomery County to the Wharton Gardens in Bedford and the historic Sidna Allen House in Hillsville.
- Invested more than \$50,000 in Roanoke County's Explore Park, funding a new playground, outdoor education center and an audio system for the park's popular "Illuminights" celebration.
- Restored the Otter Space Playground at Claytor Nature Center in Bedford and portions of the Children's Discovery Area at Natural Bridge State Park.
- Provided the start-up funding for the Carroll County Creative Arts Center and continues to fund the center's concerts, educational programs, and awards for art contests.
- Hosted Alternative Breaks for students from across the U.S. to learn about Appalachian culture.
- Restored trails in Devil's Den Nature Preserve in Carroll County.
- Helped build a fence around the inclusive Britni's Playground in Hillsville.
- Supported children who wanted to learn to play traditional Appalachian instruments at Floyd County's Handmade Music School.
- Funded hurricane repairs to the campground and boat ramp, plus a new zip line, at Camp Dickenson in Fries.

"Without FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge," writes Carroll County volunteer extraordinaire Cary Simms, "the Joy Ranch Christian Home for Children would not have an Educational Resource Center; the Hillsville VFW would be without updated equipment in their community kitchen; the Carroll Christmas Fund would not have been able to serve 125 families; the Hope House would not have funds to replace aging items in the facility; Devil's Den Nature Preserve may have had to close; the new accessible playground in Hillsville would not have been able to open when it did; the Sidna Allen Historic Home would not have beautiful grounds; and Camp Dickenson would not have a zip line course and a new boat ramp!"



Investing in the future of the Blue Ridge

FRIENDS also launched a scholarship program in 2023 that to date has awarded almost \$100,000 to nearly 100 deserving high school seniors who have pledged a commitment to pursue college degrees – such as environmental science or cultural studies – that will enhance their ability to improve the quality of life in their Blue Ridge community.

The scholarship program is named in honor of FRIENDS co-founder Lynn Davis, a retired communications director for Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment.

"It's fundamental – good air, good water, beautiful landscape," says Davis. "The Blue Ridge is one of the most biodiverse places in all the world. I love the fact that we can give kids who are interested in studying natural resources or our legacy Appalachian music a chance to help them with their educational studies because they're our future leaders. We want them to have the science and the background to know how to be good land stewards and manage it in a sustainable manner."

In his application essay, recent scholarship recipient Zach Grohs of Bedford wrote:

"I love the scenery and beauty of wetlands. As I grew up and spent time on wetlands, I realized that they not only serve as an alluring part of nature but also perform a crucial role in the ecosystem... yet a study reveals that over half of the 221 million acres of wetlands in the lower 48 states have been destroyed since the 1700s. This discovery has sparked my desire to preserve these beautiful parts of the environment."

In 2025, FRIENDS began an endowment that, once fully invested, will provide a sustaining source of scholarship funding in perpetuity.



Be sure to bring your bike

Just as its scholarship program inspires future conservationists and artists, FRIENDS has also begun work to inspire bicycle enthusiasts. In 2023, the organization began a bike rack venture to support recreational opportunities and eco-tourism. Manufactured in Roanoke, FRIENDS' bike racks, customized with their localities' branding, have been installed in the cities of Roanoke, Salem, and Covington, towns of Floyd and Vinton, Roanoke County, Botetourt County, and Roanoke College.

"The Blue Ridge Parkway, 469 miles long, connects the Skyline Drive of the Shenandoah National Park to The Great Smoky Mountains National Park," says Roanoke native and bicycling enthusiast Gary Duerk. "The Blue Ridge Parkway is a bicycling destination for international and local bicyclists. The bicyclists frequently visit the

unique communities along the parkway for food, lodging, supplies, and sightseeing. FRIENDS' bicycle racks provide a safe and functional location for the bicyclists to park and lock their bicycles while visiting these communities."

From hurricane to holler

In response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene to Blue Ridge communities throughout Virginia and North Carolina, in November 2024 FRIENDS coordinated the "Blue Ridge Holler," a 10-day concert series that raised more than \$20,000 for relief efforts.

FRIENDS is bringing its hurricane relief to the heart of Helene's destruction when it hosts another Blue Ridge Holler concert on Nov. 20 in Asheville, NC.

"Community partnerships between our volunteer chapters and the areas they serve are the foundation of FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge's impact," says Whalen. "The collective efforts are a win-win for everyone. That's the heart of being a FRIEND."

You can learn more about the FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge and explore ways to get involved at www.blueridgefriends.org.

About the author: *Michael Hemphill is the assistant executive director of the FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge.*





Land Savers United: Virginia's land conservation "empire" in the Blue Ridge

LAND SAVERS UNITED may sound more like the name of an English Premier League soccer team than a nonprofit conservation organization, but it is in fact the legal name of a sprawling Roanoke based land trust covering 16 counties and five independent cities in the western part of Virginia.

Land trusts like Land Savers United are 501(c)(3) charities whose mission is to permanently protect land (and water) from overdevelopment. Their primary tool is the conservation easement, which is a legal agreement that limits how much development can take place on a property, although land trusts also own land outright.

If you've never heard of Land Savers United that's because the name only appears on its legal documents and tax returns. As far as the public is concerned, the organization goes by other names.

In Roanoke and the surrounding counties, the organization operates as the **Blue Ridge Land Conservancy**. In the Lynchburg region, it is known as the **Central Virginia Land Conservancy**, and in the Danville area, it's the **Southern Virginia Land Conservancy**.



David Perry, executive director of Land Savers United, says the unique structure came out of mergers and expansions that the original organization, Western Virginia Land Trust (WVLT), couldn't have envisioned.

"We worked in the Roanoke area pretty much from 1996 until 2012 as Western Virginia Land Trust, except for a brief period of time in the beginning when we covered everything from Roanoke to the Tennessee and Kentucky borders in the southwest corner of the state," says Perry. "That was too much."

And then the first urge to rebrand the organization hit.

"People confused us with the West Virginia Land Trust, which is our sister organization across the state line in the Mountaineer State," Perry explains. "And the only other things named 'Western Virginia' were the sewer department and the regional jail."

Not wishing to evoke associations with sewers or prisons, in 2013 the Western Virginia Land Trust rebranded as the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy (BRLC).

A land conservation "empire" takes shape

In 2019, the BRLC began to get calls from its neighbor to the east, the Lynchburg-based Central Virginia Land Conservancy (CVALC). An all-volunteer organization, CVALC was reluctant to take on conservation easements, and instead focused on educating landowners about them while referring projects to state agencies.

"Then the state agencies stopped agreeing to place easements on what we thought were no-brainer properties," says Wendy Kendrick of Amherst County, former president of CVALC. "I called Dave, and after a while, we decided it would be easier to merge."

CVALC had name recognition in the central region, having been active since 2003, and they had volunteers. BRLC had paid staff and the systems in place to both accept conservation easements and monitor them annually in perpetuity.





“But the CVALC volunteers wanted to keep their name and not lose their identity,” Perry says. “That left us with a two-headed monster covering 12 counties and three independent cities.”

At about the same time, Perry says, the Blue Ridge office was getting calls from landowners in the Danville area asking about conservation easements.

“There was no private land trust from the New River Valley in the west all the way to Emporia in the east,” Perry says. “We extended ourselves a little and began to work to our southeast, and others filled in south of Richmond. But we soon realized that if we were going to be the most effective at saving land, we needed a local presence in Danville, Martinsville, South Boston, and other southern Virginia communities.”

Thus, the Southern Virginia Land Conservancy was born, adding a third branch, four more counties and two independent cities to the organization’s footprint. This brought the total service area to 16 counties spanning from Blacksburg to Halifax and north almost to Charlottesville.

“And at that point, we really needed a new name,” Perry says. The board agreed on a structure with Land Savers United becoming the surviving legal entity, with DBAs operating in Roanoke, Lynchburg and Danville. Each community has its own local subcommittee of the board, and the bylaws of Land Savers United were changed to require board representation from all three regions.

We want to be a useful resource for landowners, local elected officials and anyone with an interest in their community’s future.

- Executive Director David Perry

While most empires are formed through military campaigns, arranged marriages to unite foreign crowns, or colonization of far-off lands, Land Savers United is “truly an empire that just fell into place,” Perry says of the organization’s Bigfoot-sized footprint. “We wanted to help, and we wanted to maintain a very local presence. I think those are two big parts of our organizational philosophy: we want to be a useful resource for landowners, local elected officials and anyone with an interest in their community’s future, as well as being locally based, so that people are talking to someone who lives and works in their community and understands local issues.”

“It works”

Today, Land Savers United houses four full-time staff members at its headquarters, the Lemon House in the historic Old Southwest neighborhood of Roanoke, while also fielding a remote staff member in both Lynchburg and Danville. The organization protects over

35,000 acres of land with nearly 140 conservation easements, in addition to owning land outright. Crown jewels include conservation easements on Roanoke's Carvins Cove Natural Reserve and Mill Mountain Park, and two properties owned by the conservancy: an island in the James River in Amherst County, and more than 200 acres of land that buffers the City of Martinsville and Henry County's Dick and Willie Passage rail trail, donated to the conservancy a few years ago.

"It works," Perry says, "even though the geographic and demographic diversity of our localities is amazing."

For example, on any day the six-person staff may be working with descendants of Scots-Irish settlers in a mountain hollow in Craig County, a farmer looking to make former tobacco land more profitable in Pittsylvania County, and a retired forester growing acres of pine trees in Appomattox County for future harvest.

"We've been beating the bushes and picking the low-hanging conservation fruit in the Roanoke area since 1996," Perry says. As such, the focus around Roanoke has become more strategic, identifying the properties with the highest conservation value that are at the greatest risk of development.

On the other hand, in the central and southern regions there hasn't been a locally-based land trust to work with landowners for decades, so there is pent-up demand from owners wanting to conserve their land. This has led to a flurry of activity. "In those regions, the phone rings off the hook," says Perry. "Most of our new conservation easement work is coming from south and east of the Blue Ridge."

"People support what they value"

Perry hopes the future holds two things: visibility and sustainability.

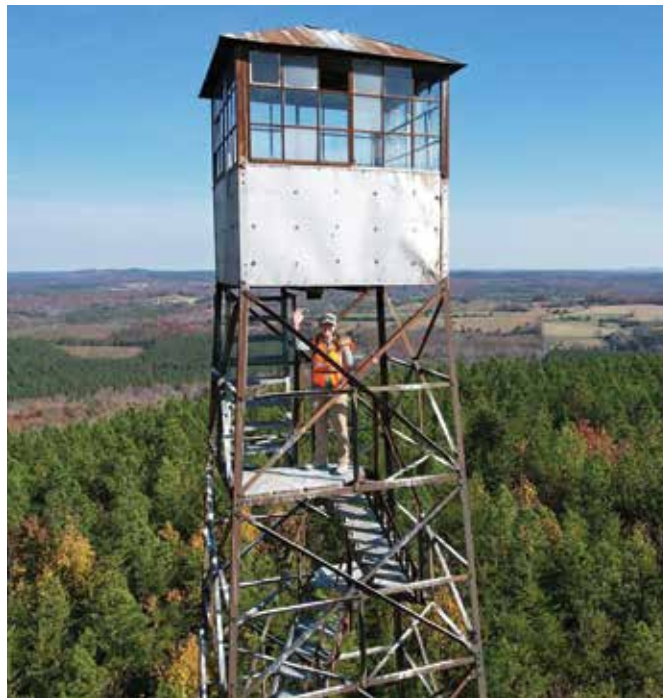
"We've been very active and present in the Roanoke community for quite some time," he says. "When a Roanoke City Council member asked in a recent council meeting if the Blue Ridge Land

Conservancy could assist with a land use issue, I felt like we'd arrived!"

Perry says the goal is to become just as much a part of the community fabric in the other regions where they operate.

"People support what they value," he says. "And I think we bring a lot of value to the table, helping our elected and appointed officials, farmers and rural landowners protect what makes their hometowns special places to live."

Learn more about the organizations operating under the Land Savers United banner at www.landsaversunited.org.



THE TOWN OF WARSAW

By Rob Bullington

Warsaw: A Northern Neck community makes its own luck

IN MID-JUNE, THANKS TO a suggestion from Jeff Stodghill with PMA Architecture, *Virginia Town & City* paid a visit to the Town of Warsaw. Jeff had contacted us because he had recently driven through the town and, even though his firm had played a large part in the work to revitalize its downtown, he was reminded how far it had come.

"It's a complete transformation," Jeff told us. "You've got to go check it out!"

Jeff is a nice guy, and PMA Architecture is a Community Business Member of VML, so we were inclined to follow his advice. Besides, when does anyone need to an excuse to visit the Northern Neck on a nice day in June?



Wood carving artist Tom Rhodes.

I knew that in 2022 the town had successfully removed a vacant, dilapidated strip mall on the main route into town, but I still managed to drive past the old mall site without realizing it. Instead, I thought, "That's a nice looking park. I wonder why I don't remember it?"

Warsaw's town manager, Joseph Quesenberry, met VML photographer Manuel Timbreza and me at the town hall where we piled into his car for a drive around town. The first stop was the park I had passed on the way in. "This is The Bounds recreation area," Quesenberry informed us. "It used to be an abandoned strip mall."

As we gazed across a beautiful open greenspace with a stormwater remediation pond graced by lovely fountains, my mind tried to close the gap between what I remembered the site looking like to what I was now viewing. I think I uttered something particularly profound such as "Ah" or "Well, then."

Before I could formulate a coherent response, however, Quesenberry followed up with, "And that's the edge of the Enchanted Forest over there."

At this point I realized I would be best served by abandoning all my previously held notions about Warsaw and simply going with the flow. "Let's go check out this Enchanted Forest," I heard myself saying. And off we went.

Over the course of the morning, we visited the Enchanted Forest which, true to its name, proved to be enchanting with walking paths cutting through groves of trees, many of which featured colorful wood carvings of popular characters and critters. We even had the good fortune to meet the artist, Mr. Tom Rhodes, a retired VDOT employee who has made the wood carvings his retirement project. We also learned that the town had plans for 321 new homes to be built on the park's perimeter. This, combined with another anticipated housing project, would bring over 500 new homes to the town. Bearing



The Bounds recreation area.

in mind that the town is currently home to 700 residential units, one begins to get an idea of the growth that is being anticipated.

We also drove around the periphery of the town to see some of the old and new commercial operations in Warsaw. These include Helena Chemical, Holtzman Propane, Health Harvest Food Bank (with hydroponic gardens and live fish), and an old brick Levi's factory that has found new life as an Amazon last-mile facility and Herbalife location.

Returning to Main Street and the center of town, we passed Rapahannock Community College, the Northern Neck PDC building, and the Rivermont School for students with autism and emotional disabilities.

All of these were impressive for a town of about 2,400 folks, but then we got to Main Street...and, wow.

I'll let the pictures tell the story.



“You’re going to enjoy living here”

A chat with Town Manager Joseph Quesenberry and Mayor Randall Phelps



VTC: We just got the tour of the town and to be honest, I don’t recognize it. There’s a lot of things that have happened to it. All good, I might say. It’s incredibly cute. There are people out and about. What happened?

RP: We started about 10 years ago, and we said, “Something’s got to change.” We talked about the change from the ground up, from everyone we saw, everyone we met, all the stakeholders that were in the room, and we decided what worked before will not work now. So, we changed our perspective and started thinking outside the box. We said nothing was off the table. We may be elected bureaucrats, but we’re not going to act like elected bureaucrats! What makes sense? What can be done? What can we control?

We made a brainstorming list on the wall, and no idea was off the table. If it wasn’t illegal, we wanted to hear about it. A couple of times, Joseph may have just been a little bit worried, but he always managed to keep us out of jail and out of trouble.

JQ: We’ve had good collaboration with the council and staff and stakeholders, and it’s been an arduous journey. But I think the creativity piece that the mayor just cited, and the tenacity have been a winning combination for us.

VTC: I didn’t realize when I came into town today that I would be journeying through an Enchanted Forest. If I’m not mistaken, it’s become a destination for a lot of people. But it wasn’t always like that. In fact, I remember when it was next to an abandoned shopping center.

RP: It’s a sad story, but a true one. We had this shopping center that back in the 1960s and the 1970s was vibrant. And then by the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, it was a dead plaza. We looked for some grants and found out that DEQ was there to help us if we were willing to make it a stormwater facility. So, we decided to co-brand it as a park as well and tie it into the Enchanted Forest.

Mr. Tom Rhodes [the artist] has done a wonderful job there. He’s been featured across the state in several publications.

VTC: Joseph told us that the old shopping center was full of black mold and asbestos and that you, Mayor Phelps, contracted a serious illness after going through it. But he also told us that you got your revenge by doing the first hit for its demolition.

RP: To be honest with you, it was more of a mess than we ever imagined. But every time we hit a hurdle, we were able to get across it. And yes, I did have a little problem with black mold, it will hit you before you know it! But we had a lot of fun tearing that thing down.

To offset the cost of the project we increased the tax rate by three cents, which is a lot for us. But we got our money’s worth. The town was ready to get rid of that shopping center. I think the county was ready. I think the whole Northern Neck region was ready! We never had one complaint about what we were planning to do.

VTC: Tell me about the 321 housing units that are planned to go in around the park.

RP: It’s going to be an amazing place to live. Phase one approvals have been granted by the Planning Commission and town council. So realistically, within the next 12 months or so, we’ll probably have some form of approval, and shovels on the ground. There will be some single-family homes, patio homes for the older folks, and apartments. A good mix for the area.

Once upon a time, Warsaw was primarily a retirement community, and that’s fundamentally changing. We’re getting 30-year-olds and 20-year-olds who are just getting started. We have a good mix of 40-year-olds getting their families going. All these are folks that really feed a community, and that’s a wonderful thing.

VTC: On our tour we learned that the town had used forgivable loans to attract businesses to the downtown. For anyone that maybe doesn’t know how those loans work, can you explain?



JQ: It's an interesting program and we've had a great success rate. We amortize a loan over a five-year period. During that time the business must employ a certain number of people at a certain wage level and be open a certain number of days per week. When those benchmarks are met over that period of time, the loan is forgiven in a proportionate manner.

We work with the council to identify what sorts of businesses we want to attract, where those gaps in the options for the community exist. This has been a really successful tool for us. The extra neat thing is not only do we fill a gap, we also generate a lot of revenue from it.

For example, we decided we needed a new breakfast location in town. We really didn't have one. So we went to a restaurant that we know is reputable and does a good job, and we enticed them to come to town with a forgivable loan. So, with an initial investment of about \$25,000 we have got a fantastic new breakfast restaurant and we'll collect about \$50,000 to \$55,000 annually in meals tax.

I think we've done a really good job in deploying that tool and it can be seen all over Main Street.

RP: It's a perfect example of taking leadership of a municipality. Finding out what the community needs and strategically going out there and recruiting that prospect. We've identified a hardware store, we've identified several restaurants, the brewery, the list goes on. And we continue to do so. And I think the way it's been so successful, I think we will never stop.

VTC: I only noticed one national chain on Main Street strip so it's all local and regional businesses. When you were reimagining downtown, and you were imagining the business you wanted to go in, how did you figure that out?

RP: A lot of talking. When we go outside of Warsaw and are wowed by a business, we look at that. I will send Joseph and the assistant town manager, Missy Coates, and I'll tell them, "We need that. Go talk to them, figure out how you can get them here, or how you can clone them."

JQ: We try to take the best of each community and implement it here in our community. Sometimes we would do small town tours where we go with the mayor and some town staff. We went to places like Scottsville, Louisa, and Mineral to just see what they had; see what we wanted. Our brick sidewalks are modeled after Gordonsville's sidewalks. So, shout-out to Gordonsville!

VTC: What was working with PMA Architecture like during that time?

RP: The thing that sticks in my memory the most was that when we were going through the process of getting citizen input, Jeff Stodghill from PMA took all that together and the map he put in place for us I think was really good. There were a few little changes, but he did a great job for us.

VTC: Of all the things that have happened with Main Street, what's the thing that brings you the most satisfaction?

RP: I'll answer it this way. When I look down Main Street, the thing I'm most proud of is how we reacted during the COVID crisis. We put steps in place where we could support our restaurants and support our citizens at risk. I had a lot of fear then that we would lose businesses if we didn't do something. We were at a precipice at that moment with about seven independent local restaurants just getting off the ground.

We deployed about \$100,000 worth of CARES Act funds to support folks age 65 or older. That demographic was really suffering at that time. Three days a week, the town staff loaded up food from every local restaurant, paid the local restaurants for it, and delivered it to those homes that qualified. It was just enough to keep the restaurants afloat, and we did not lose a single business during the pandemic. We actually grew and did more ribbon-cuttings than we ever have during the pandemic.

Another example from that time, we built an outdoor patio at one of the restaurants to help them have outdoor dining when they needed it most. It's the little stuff like that that makes a difference. You go into a lot of government offices, and you have rules, regulations, ordinances, things that tell you "No." We are of the perspective: "How can we say yes?"

VTC: Speaking of little things, my favorite thing about Main Street is the 100-year-old clock that's at the old supermarket building. It works! How often do you walk down a small-town Main Street and see a 100-year-old clock and realize it's telling you the right time?





JQ: That's what it's all about, attention to detail. I'll text my public works director if there are some weeds on the sidewalk here. Or, if the mayor drives by and sees some flowers aren't looking so good, he'll let us know. And it may be a little annoying, but stuff like that matters, it's community. I say in every presentation: perception is reality. Like with the abandoned shopping center, who wants to invest in a town that doesn't invest in itself? And so, little things like that, you know. The clock was a big deal for us, and we are OCD enough to make sure that it is on time.

VTC: You have a large council – eight members – for a small town. How do you keep everyone aligned?

JQ: Yeah, it's huge for a very small town. And not only that, but our mayor is one of only a handful in Virginia that have veto power and voting power. So, it does help to herd the cats sometimes when you have those abilities. But we have a great mayor and a great council and that sort of trickled down to our staff. We barely have turnover.

RP: We have problems. We have issues. And we figure them out. You know, I have never been able to use my veto power. In fact, I don't know of a four-four vote in my nine years as mayor. We've had a few three-to-fives, but we haven't experienced a tie vote during my time.

VTC: That's crazy. I mean, that's great! It sounds like you do your homework as a council before it comes to a vote?

RP: We try. We send these packages out once a month, but you can't just look at these packages the day before the meeting and think you're going to be prepared to do what you need to do. So, we engage them. We have some legal conversations offline, and Joseph shares educational material with all of us from time to time. And we bring in trainers and experts every now and then, especially if we're getting ready to do something that we think is controversial or hard.

VTC: So now that Main Street is looking good, do you feel like it has its own momentum? Are you looking for a new challenge?

RP: It's so funny, we were just having this conversation. I'm the mayor and sometimes recently I've felt like I'm out of projects! But businesses need customers, and they need employees, so our focus now is largely on housing, which has been great timing, because I know the General Assembly and a lot of others are focusing on that too.

JQ: We don't really have to go out as much and recruit businesses to come here, but I miss it! On the other hand, I don't have to cross the bridge to have breakfast.

RP: I think that boredom will breed complacency, so I do think that we need to stay active. Once the housing developments get started, I think we're going to be very busy. We're looking at a hotel project trying to get that off the ground.

VTC: All told, you are looking at adding over 500 new units, so you're almost doubling the housing capacity of the town. That's huge!

JQ: We've grown 64% in population in about seven years.

RP: We're always thinking about how much we are growing and planning for it. Our school system has tons of capacity. Matter of fact, we have so much capacity, we bring in about 225 out-of-county students a year just to fill the seats. So, we have a lot of room for organic growth in our school system. When you look at our sewer plant, any given month, we're going to be at 50 to 60 percent capacity. We have room to grow. And the more users get on that system, the better that is.

VTC: What would you like to see in terms of commercial development for the town?

JQ: We only have one hotel in the town limits. Another model we've used when looking at other towns is Floyd, which of course has Hotel Floyd in the middle of downtown. They do a phenomenal job, and it brings in people. So, we're working to acquire a parcel or two in our downtown corridor, issue an RFP to developers and have them come in and submit potential projects, and then maybe we could do something creative with economic development and give them the land.

RP: I think a hotel's good. I think we need it. But what I would like to see are more destination type places and medical care practices. Last weekend, we had a Play Indoor Fun location open in town. In this region, there's nothing like that. Folks are going to come here and have a great time, and if they get hungry while they are here...well, there is more meals tax for the town! I'd like to see more of that.

Also, we are in desperate need, the whole region is, of medical care. We have a doctor that opened a private practice about two years ago, and he's got a mile-long waiting list. If we could source a little medical village to have dermatology, optometry...those sorts of things. That makes us another destination venue that raises quality of life for the citizens, and it's going to generate commerce.

JQ: Doctors want to have a good quality of life, and you can get that in Richmond and Fredericksburg. We're trying to show them that we're an hour away from those metro areas, but we offer a really good quality of life. We have built that. Now we can tell them, "open your practice here." You're going to enjoy living here.

VTC: Thank you so much for your time. I would wish you luck, but I think you all are making your own luck.

RP: Thank you for the visit. And spread the word. We're open for business!

Putting people first: A local government model rooted in service

AS COMMISSIONER OF the revenue for Newport News, I've always believed that politics in its purest form is about people. Local government should reflect the diversity, realities, and aspirations of the residents it serves. That means more than collecting taxes — it means building trust, creating access, and ensuring that everyone in our community feels seen and supported.

This philosophy is the foundation of every initiative our office leads. From small business engagement to senior tax relief and youth empowerment, our goal has been simple: make government feel local, reachable, and relevant.

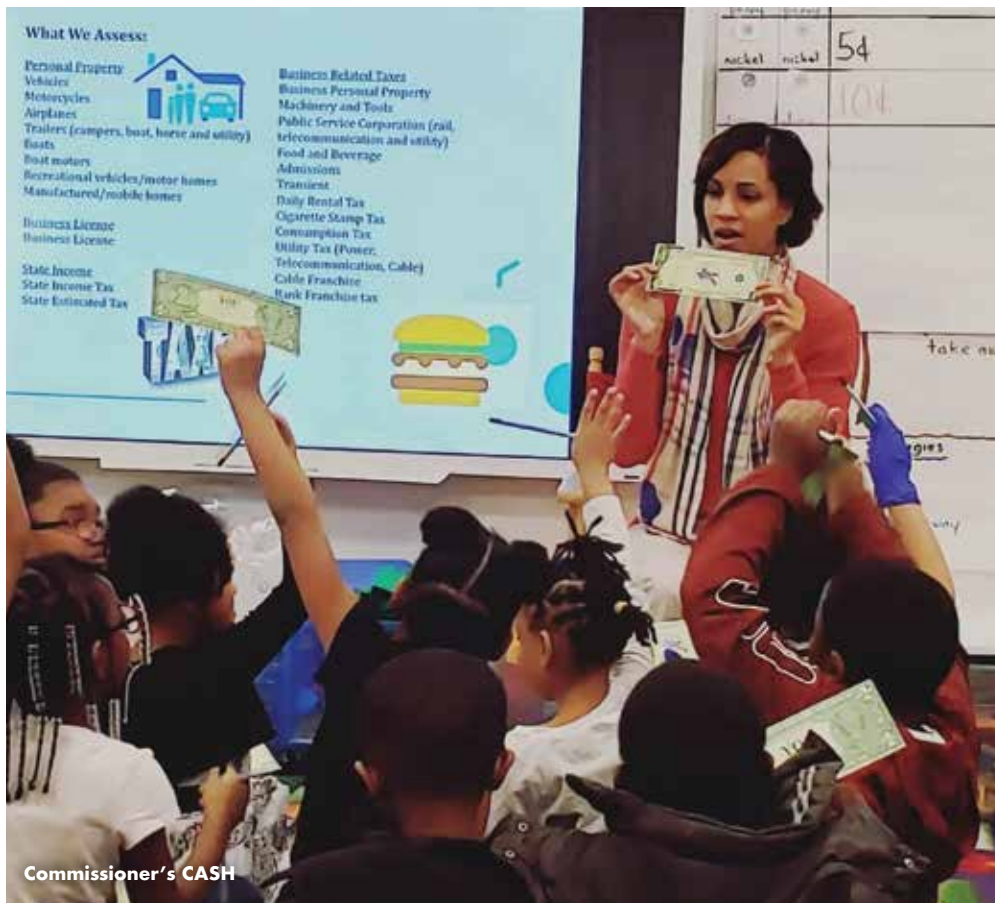
Our **BOSSES workshops** (Businesses Operating for Successful Stronger Economies) are tailored for new and existing entrepreneurs who need guidance on licensing, compliance, and local resources. By partnering with Newport News Economic Development and the Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center, we've made those touchpoints clearer and more accessible to the people who are investing in our economy.

Our **TIPS forums** (Tax Information Preparing Seniors) help senior citizens and their caregivers understand the programs and tax relief options available to them, often hosting open Q&A sessions with state and city representatives.

We also developed **Commissioner's CASH** (Children Achieving Success through Hardwork), an interactive goal-setting activity designed for schools, after-school programs, and summer camps. Children receive green "cash-style" goal sheets that help them break down personal goals by the same questions adults use in planning: who, what, when, where, and how.



In addition, our **LEED** (Labor, Education, Entrepreneurship, and Diversity) tour series gives us the opportunity to engage directly with local businesses in their own spaces. It's part listening tour, part education, and part real-time feedback. We get to hear about the impact of tax policy straight from the people living it — and that feedback informs how we show up.



Each of these programs aligns with the Virginia Municipal League's core belief that economic development and livable communities must be built through meaningful state and local cooperation. The diversity of our cities and towns is a strength — and local government must reflect that in both policy and practice.

and community voice. That's not just a Newport News model. It's a Virginia model — and it's working.

About the author: *Tiffany Boyle is the commissioner of the revenue for the City of Newport News.*

That's why we've produced multilingual PSAs in Spanish, Korean, and American Sign Language, and built a permanent accessibility ramp outside our office so no one has to enter through the back door. It's also why we launched **Commissioners & Cans**, a food and fund drive that started in Newport News and now reaches across the Commonwealth, supporting all seven food banks in Virginia.

And because economic inclusion requires policy as well as practice, I was proud to serve as a founding member of Virginia's Minority Business Commission — working to elevate regional voices and ensure minority-owned businesses are represented in our statewide economic strategy.

Whether we're helping a resident find their tax relief eligibility or helping a small business owner navigate state compliance, we remember one thing: taxpayers aren't just customers. They're stakeholders. Investors. And they deserve to be treated that way.

Local government works best when it's rooted in dignity, access,



TOWN OF BROOKNEAL

By Rob Bullington

How a small town is making the most of its summer intern (and vice versa)

THE EVENING OF Thursday, June 5, I was on top of the Hotel Wyanoke in Farmville hunting hors d'oeuvres. A large group of elected officials and staff from towns across the Commonwealth had gathered for a rooftop reception following the first day of VML's 2025 Small Towns Conference. The weather was perfect, and everyone was enjoying the camaraderie and the chance to relax after a full day of programming. As I made my way through the crowd, VML Executive Director Michelle Gowdy pulled me over to meet a young man named Andrew Betson. I learned that Andrew, a Hampden-Sydney student, was interning with the Town of Brookneal for the summer. Knowing that not many small towns have the staff or resources to run an internship program, I wanted to know more about his experience so far. However, the setting was not conducive to an interview, so we made plans to chat later.

What follows is that chat. Specifically, a phone conversation with Andrew and Town Manager Craig Hughes that took place in late June.

Note: Our conversation has been edited for clarity and length.



(L-R) Andrew Betson and Town Manager Craig Hughes.

VTC: Andrew, you are a rising senior at Hampden-Sydney College. What are your interests and what are your plans?

AB: I'm a government major, minoring in national security. I'm also on the football team and serving as the president of the Tiger Athletic Club. After I graduate, I'm really interested in working in the government field, possibly lobbying for the Department of Defense.

VTC: How did you become an intern for the Town of Brookneal?

AB: During my junior year I was applying for a bunch of federal jobs at the college's Ferguson Career Center. The director, Scott Crocker, reached out to me because one of the members of Brookneal's council is an alumnus, and he recommended me to Mr. Hughes, who contacted me to let me know they were looking for an intern. I sent him a resume and heard back a couple days later. I started my internship on June 2.

VTC: Wow, so when I met you at the Small Towns Conference you'd only been on the job for a few days!?!?

AB: Yeah, I really enjoyed that.

CH: I found out about the Small Towns Conference on the Monday of the week it was happening. I asked if we had enough money for us to attend and the answer was "Yes."

I learned so much at that conference, just listening and talking to other people, but I think it was also a really great opportunity for Andrew to see how big Virginia is and all the things that are going on and hear people tell stories and listen to the sessions. I think we got our money's worth out of those two days.

VTC: Thanks Craig! The reason I wanted you to be part of this conversation is because I find it interesting that a small town like Brookneal, with a population of around 1,100, has an internship program. I know a lot of small towns would like to have an internship program, but don't have the resources. How did you get this going? What are Andrew's duties as an intern?

CH: I've only been the town manager here for about seven months. But, when I came in, I did an initial assessment of the town and found that, like all small towns in the state of Virginia, we're short on manpower. I had used interns before when I was in the federal government, a ton of them. So, I knew that it could be an avenue to get a good person here.

As part of the internship, I teach the ins and outs of managing a small town. And it's good from the town's perspective because we need extra help. Andrew's already done a couple of projects for us. He's highly motivated, extremely intelligent, and gets the job done.

When he started, I asked him, "How much do you want to know?" He said, "Everything."

So, we're doing the good, the bad, and the ugly. We're looking at sewer lines. We're doing some grant things. He's done a complete study on our cemetery here.

Before he leaves at the end of July he'll be riding with the chief of police and going out to see work being done. Just recently, a citizen came in to report a sinkhole in their road. So, Andrew and I went to check it out and then went back when the guys were working on it. We also include Andrew in the staff meetings, except of course, personnel issues, but he sits in, listens, and takes notes.

We're lucky to have him and we'll be using the school again for interns.

VTC: Is it a paid internship? I ask because I'm thinking about other towns trying to replicate this kind of model.

CH: It's not a paid internship from the town. The program is actually run by the college. I'll let Andrew explain...

AB: When I officially accepted the internship, I had to apply for funding. I'm currently staying at the college right now, where I live during the year, and they also help provide money for my gas and food.



VTC: I'd like to hear more about how the internship is beneficial to both the town and to Andrew.

CH: It takes a long time to get enough experience to manage a town. I mean, this town is small, but still, we have the same problems that large towns have – everything from sewers to federal government shutdowns. We're trying to look at new and innovative ways to get our work done. So, one thing I'm using Andrew on is technology. When I came here, our IT game was pretty weak. I started working on it, but he's helping us, and helping me personally, with it. Some things I just hand to him and he fixes. It's good to have a young person, with a different set of eyes. For example, I thought it would take him two weeks to do the cemetery project, but it actually took him about three days, because he knows how to use applications, new programs, and AI.

VTC: You mentioned a cemetery project. Tell me more about that please.

CH: Brookneal owns the cemetery. The church didn't want it anymore, so the town took it over. The state requires accountability so we needed to know exactly where all the plots taken were located and where there might be plots available that we could sell. Nobody had looked at it that way in more than 20 years. Andrew took on the challenge.



AB: Some of the headstones were at the head and some were at the foot. And some of them were just like a four-by-four square with a letter on it.

VTC: You told me that Andrew's internship will wrap up at the end of July. What else will he be working on during his time with the town?

CH: He's put together a complaint form for citizens to use. Currently, people just call or come in to lodge a complaint. Like the person who came in to complain about the hole in the road. He was angry. So, I said, "Well, let's go up there right now. We'll follow you."

The mayor had the idea that we have a form for citizen complaints. I gave Andrew the task. I never gave him an example, and he built it himself in no time at all. Like half an hour. He's standing at the front of my desk, and he goes, "Here it is. Take a look."

I was thinking, you know, "Take a day to think about it!"

But the mayor was pleased and I passed it out and everybody liked it. It still needs to be approved but it looks good.

VTC: Andrew, how did you get the complaint form done so quickly?

AB: I made a template in Microsoft Word and I looked up an example...I think it was Warrenton...and then I just set the basic stuff like headline, name, issue.

CH: I also asked him to do some research on ordinance changes for trash pickup. I gave him some guidance. He listened in on the meetings and then I said, "Give me all the information you can find this topic." We took that information and built the new ordinance.

VTC: Andrew, do you think you'll come back to Brookneal to visit when your internship is over?

AB: I would love to see the stuff that I've been working on this summer and ultimately help the town make things easier here. It's a pretty cool town and I definitely want to do that. Also, there's a float

down the river, I would like to do that one time.

VTC: Be careful, you'll get the bug, and you'll end up in local government instead of national security.

CH: That's what I'm hoping for.

VTC: Converting one soul at a time?

CH: Yeah, that's it. That's what you have to do.



AB: We had this big sheet that we printed at Staples that showed the cemetery plots. There's an older section, a semi-old section, and two newer sections. I had to look on Google Maps to see the boundaries and it appeared that one of the areas was completely overgrown. So, when I first went out, I pinpointed certain headstones and looked around to see what was added. I had to do some measurements because the plots are about 16 feet long, and there's walking paths in between. When I came back, I broke the map up into the four different sections, and went section by section, over the course of about three days to fill in the names. It was very difficult because some of the headstones are so old that the weather had erased the names.

CH: Andrew hand-colored the walkways and plots. He added the names of the people and did the math. It turns out we have 65 plots left, but it was painstaking work; the stones are not lined up. There was no rhyme or reason to it.



PFAS Update: The clock is ticking on municipal recovery opportunities

STAYING UP TO DATE with the status of PFAS litigation is an important step in ensuring that your municipality recovers the funds it deserves. As we discussed in our April 2024 article in *Virginia Town & City*, “PFAS: What it is and how your municipality may be entitled to recovery,” historic settlements have been reached with 3M, DuPont, Tyco, and others that will now collectively pay close to \$15 billion to participating public water systems. However, the January 1, 2026, deadline for Phase 2 municipalities and public water systems to submit claims to participate in settlements related to PFAS in aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) is fast approaching. As a reminder, Phase 2 municipalities and public water system are those that either tested after June 30, 2024, or have not tested wells to date.

A PFAS refresher

Per and Polyfluorinated Substances, often referred to as PFAS, are a group of man-made “forever chemicals” characterized by their strong chemical bond. Due to their unique chemical structure, PFAS are extremely stable and are highly resistant to oil, grease, water, and heat. As a result, PFAS have permeated many aspects of our everyday society, including food packaging, pesticides, adhesives, clothing, furniture, automotive parts, and non-stick pans.



Recent studies show that PFAS have serious adverse impacts on human health. Exposure to PFAS, even at low levels, is associated with various cancers, decreased immune system function, and fertility issues. PFAS also migrate easily, and because of their persistence, can travel far from where they were released into the environment.

One major use of PFAS is in aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF), which was commonly used for decades to suppress fuel fires at locations such as airports, military bases, industrial facilities, and fire training centers. AFFF contains extremely high levels of PFOS or PFOA, two PFAS compounds, and were manufactured or distributed for decades by large corporations such as 3M, DuPont, Chemours, Tyco, Corteva, Kidde Fenwal, BASF, and Dynax. The use of AFFF is banned in many states and by the U.S. government at military bases, subject to emergency exceptions.

PFAS from AFFF released into the environment have migrated into public drinking water sources, and given its strong chemical bonds, are difficult to remove and require complex and expensive treatment solutions.

Regulations and lawsuits

On April 10, 2024, the EPA finalized a legally enforceable maximum contaminant limit (MCL) for several PFAS, including limits of four parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOS and PFOA. To put things in perspective, imagine an Olympic-sized swimming pool filled with sand. If four grains of sand are found to contain PFAS, that would

be equivalent to the four parts per trillion. Where PFAS are found at levels that exceed these standards, systems must implement solutions to reduce PFAS in their drinking water within five years. Estimates from the American Water Works Association project PFAS treatment costs to be upward of \$100 billion dollars for the country's public water systems.

This is why public water systems across the country have filed lawsuits – both Phase 1 & Phase 2 claimants – against the companies that manufactured and distributed AFFF for the recovery of costs associated with removing PFAS from drinking water. The settlements provide funding for public water systems with any amount of PFOS or PFOA in any of their water sources, even if below the four-ppt limit, and systems are not required to demonstrate that the PFOS or PFOA originated from any particular AFFF use in the area. The funds are also general funds that are not tied to any specific abatement measures.

Now is the time to file a settlement claim

Deadlines are fast approaching in these settlements, and it is crucial that public water systems consult with experienced legal counsel to take necessary action and protect their right to recovery. Additionally, litigation remains ongoing against many of the remaining AFFF defendants, and public water systems should consult with counsel regarding their rights as to these defendants.

It is important to file a timely settlement claim before the January 1, 2026, deadline or risk forfeiting any rights to a claim. Information on the settlements and deadlines may be found at www.pfaswater-settlement.com.

What's on the horizon?

Although much has already been won, there is still more to come! The next round of settlements will involve AFFF claims for airports. For example, Part 139 airports are those serving scheduled air carrier operations with aircraft designed for more than nine passenger seats, or unscheduled operations with aircraft designed for at least 31 passenger seats. Currently, Part 139 airports are beginning to file AFFF recovery claims as well. These airports were required to use AFFF for fire suppression and training by the Federal Aviation Administration, which has led to ground and equipment contamination. Training with foam was also required, leading to contamination of firefighters' uniforms and clothes, which in turn could have brought PFAS into personal vehicles and their homes, further endangering family members. If your municipality owns an airport or participates in an airport authority, seek counsel from your city or board attorney on any rights to recovery the airport may have.

About the author: John Gallagher is senior counsel with the law firm of Milberg, Coleman, Bryson, Phillips, Grossman, LLC, a national environmental and toxic tort law firm that represents municipalities, public water systems, and airports across the country in PFAS litigation. John Gallagher may be reached at jjgallagher@milberg.com.

A growing movement to get moving outdoors

Virginia communities advancing public wellness with help from the National Fitness Campaign and Aetna



IN CITIES AND TOWNS across Virginia, local leaders are taking bold steps to invest in community health and wellness. With the support of Aetna and the National Fitness Campaign (NFC), municipalities are bringing free, world-class outdoor fitness spaces to their residents, fostering a culture of movement and accessibility. Now, with over 10 Fitness Courts open statewide and more on the way, Virginia's campaign for better public health is stronger than ever.

Imagining healthier communities

Municipal leaders across Virginia understand that creating healthy communities goes beyond traditional healthcare, it requires accessible wellness infrastructure. Aetna and NFC have partnered to launch a statewide initiative that offers free outdoor fitness opportunities to communities of all sizes. Localities like the City of Richmond and the Town of Dumfries are witnessing the positive effects of these efforts firsthand.

Aetna's 170-year commitment to health took a big step forward with its statewide sponsorship of the National Fitness Campaign, debuting Richmond's first Fitness Court at Broad Rock Sports Complex in September of last year. This initiative aligns with the city's Equity Agenda, enhancing wellness access in historically underserved areas.

"Aetna is committed to the health and wellness of the members and communities we serve," said Bill Deal, market head of public and labor with Aetna. "The path to wellness starts by getting people engaged in their own health. The Fitness Court is an innovative, chal-

lenging, and fun way to provide opportunity and empower people on their path to good health."

This movement is about more than just exercise; it's also about access, equity, and engagement. By providing accessible, free workout spaces, Virginia's civic leaders are prioritizing preventative health solutions that serve residents of all ages and fitness levels. The Fitness Courts are designed to create a sense of community while addressing rising health challenges, including obesity and sedentary lifestyles.

Virginia's initiative reflects a broader national trend in which communities are increasingly recognizing the role that accessible fitness infrastructure plays in improving public health and promoting long-term wellness.

Dumfries: A case study in collaboration

Known for its rich tradition and heritage, the Town of Dumfries is now gaining recognition for its forward-thinking town council and mayor, Derrick Wood. With a passion for health and wellness, Wood and the council are revolutionizing the town. A proud Dumfries resident and former United States Marine, Wood has long been dedicated to promoting healthy lifestyles within the town. Recognizing the lack of convenient and affordable workout options, he set out to bring fitness equipment closer to home.

The Town of Dumfries exemplifies how local leadership can drive meaningful change. In 2024, Wood helped bring a Fitness Court to



Gettin fit in Dumfries.



Town of Dumfries first responders leading demonstrations on the Fitness Court.

the community's heart, turning a vision for a healthier Dumfries into reality.

"We have so many wonderful parks and trails in Dumfries, and the Fitness Court is a natural extension of that," Wood stated. "It's a place where residents can come together to improve their health in an inclusive, supportive environment."

The Fitness Court at Ginn Memorial Park offers a free and engaging fitness experience, designed for everyone from beginners to elite athletes. With support from Aetna and NFC, the town was able to activate a resource that aligns with its broader health and wellness initiatives. The Fitness Court features a variety of bodyweight exercise stations, allowing residents to build strength, flexibility, and endurance. Additionally, the open-air nature of the Fitness Court provides a unique opportunity for outdoor recreation, helping residents incorporate movement into their daily routines.

Local leaders in Dumfries recognize that creating a culture of fitness goes beyond providing equipment; it involves creating spaces that encourage social interaction, community bonding, and engagement. The Dumfries Fitness Court has become a place not just for exercise, but for connection.

Richmond: Pioneering a statewide movement

Richmond was the first city in Virginia to introduce an Aetna-sponsored Fitness Court, launching a campaign that has since spread statewide. Then-Mayor Levar Stoney emphasized the importance of such projects in addressing health disparities and expanding access to fitness resources.

"Health and wellness are priorities for the City of Richmond," Stoney remarked. "By bringing an innovative and accessible fitness opportunity to our community, we are setting an example for cities across Virginia."

The ribbon-cutting ceremony in September 2024 saw a strong representation of city leaders, first responders, Aetna leadership, and even an appearance from the Richmond Flying Squirrels mascot, Nutzy. The Aetna Wellness on Wheels RV was also on site, providing residents with a variety of free health screenings, education, activities, and resources available for Richmond residents.

Richmond's local leadership also recognizes the broader implications of such investments. Chris Frelke, director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities for the city, emphasized the importance of public parks and recreation in addressing broader health challenges. "Public parks and recreation play a crucial role in addressing challenges like obesity, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity," Frelke said. "By providing accessible facilities and safe, connected routes, we create spaces where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can engage in healthy activities."



Ribbon-cutting in Richmond.

Expanding across Virginia: Key partnerships and success stories

Since Richmond's groundbreaking launch, cities and towns across Virginia have followed suit, each adding its own unique contribution to the growing network of Fitness Courts. A few leading partners in Virginia include the towns of Dumfries, Bedford, Sterling, Wise, and Big Stone Gap, as well as Pulaski and James City counties. There are now over 10 Fitness Courts open across the state, and plans are in place for additional locations. This expansion reflects a growing recognition of the role that outdoor fitness infrastructure plays in fostering healthier communities.

Community engagement on the Fitness Court

One of the most compelling aspects of this initiative is the way it has fostered collaboration between public and private sectors. The partnership between Aetna and NFC has provided municipalities with the resources and support needed to bring these projects to life. Additionally, local businesses, community organizations, and fitness professionals have played a vital role in promoting Fitness Court usage and encouraging active lifestyles.

For example, in Dumfries, Chef Freddy of That Bowl Meal Prep hosts weekly Functional Fitness classes at Ginn Memorial Park, providing a structured and supportive environment for residents to engage in fitness activities. This partnership with the local fitness community not only increases engagement but also strengthens the relationship between the town and the wellness industry. Wood exemplified his commitment to community health by participating in a "Move with the Mayor" challenge last year, joining fitness classes at the Fitness Court and encouraging other community members to take advantage of this new resource.

James City County has also embraced this movement, offering free classes at the Warhill Sports Complex Fitness Court. These classes, which will continue through April, provide additional opportunities for residents to get involved in fitness and wellness activities, further solidifying the importance of outdoor fitness infrastructure in fostering a healthier community.

Many community groups have also organized fitness challenges, wellness fairs, and social gatherings at the Fitness Court, helping to create a culture of health and movement. The involvement of local businesses has been key in promoting these projects.

The future of Virginia's fitness campaign

With new funding in 2025, the Virginia campaign is poised to leave a lasting impact, inspiring cities nationwide to rethink how they support the well-being of their residents. Through continued collaboration, investment, and engagement, Virginia's localities are setting a precedent for public wellness that will resonate for years to come.

Civic leaders looking to join the movement can draw inspiration from the successes in Richmond, Dumfries, and beyond. These projects not only provide free fitness resources but also serve as catalysts for broader conversations about health, equity, and civic engagement. The lessons learned from these cities can help guide future developments, ensuring that each new Fitness Court is tailored to the specific needs of its community. By leveraging partnerships, engaging local leaders, and prioritizing health equity, communities are building a sustainable framework for the future. The success of this initiative demonstrates that when civic leaders take a proactive approach to public health, the benefits extend far beyond just fitness — they create stronger, more connected communities.

To learn more about the partnership with NFC and Aetna, please visit the National Fitness Campaign website by scanning the QR code.

About the author: Sarah Morgan is the communications and marketing coordinator for the National Fitness Campaign.



Richmond Fire Department participates in Richmond's ribbon-cutting ceremony.



2025 VML Innovation Awards CALL FOR ENTRIES

THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE'S INNOVATION AWARDS celebrate the programs and individuals that make it possible for our local governments to solve pressing

problems, address emerging needs, and adapt to changing circumstances.

Local governments of all sizes are encouraged to compete for coveted Innovation Awards across seven categories. The **entries will be judged based on the scope and results of the project in relation to the community's size**, thereby putting all localities on a level playing field.

One of the seven category winners will be selected for the prestigious President's Award for Innovation. The winner of the President's Award will be revealed when all the award winners are honored during the Awards Banquet at the VML Annual Conference in Roanoke in October.

Don't miss this premier opportunity to spotlight innovative programs that make your town, city or county a great place for people to call home!

Enter online at www.vml.org/Opportunities/Innovation-Awards

Criteria

Projects and programs are judged on how well they demonstrate the following:

- **Innovative problem solving**
- **Improved quality of life**
- **Excellence in management**
- **Making the most of local resources**
- **Increased citizen participation**
- **Long-term value to the community**
- **Adaptability to other communities**

Award-winning projects typically demonstrate innovative ways of delivering services, addressing community needs, or significantly improving an existing service.

2025 CATEGORIES

AWARD CATEGORIES are based on broad topics. As such, many projects relate to more than one category. The same project cannot be submitted for more than one category. When deciding what category best fits your project, consider the primary goal of the project and which components of the project demonstrate the greatest innovation.

Localities may submit only one entry in each of the seven following categories (i.e., a maximum of seven submissions total per locality):

Community Health

Includes building healthy community environments through active lifestyle programs, nutrition education, and improving access to healthier food choices.

Economic Development

Includes business development and retention; international competitiveness; infrastructure development and investment; planning, land use and zoning; blight; enterprise zones; housing; transportation; workforce development; and historic preservation.

Environmental Quality

Includes natural resources and the authority of local governments to manage the environment, including water resources and quality, solid and hazardous waste management, air quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

Public Safety

Includes police, fire, rescue services, emergency planning and coordinated response, building code enforcement, jails, health, and mental health related to public safety.

Working with Youth

Includes civics education, pre-k-12 education, summer programs, parks and recreation, and literacy programs.

Communications

Includes promotional campaigns, branding campaigns, crisis plans, events, customer service programs; media can include online, video, print, social and other formats.

Risk Management

Includes a proactive process of identifying, assessing and mitigating a locality's risks. This includes but is not limited to fiscal and physical assets, information technology and data, governance and management.

President's Award for Innovation

One winning project from the category winners will be selected for the top prize – the President's Award for Innovation – and will receive this top honor in addition to the award in their category. The President's Award can come from any of the categories.

Deadline

All entries must be received via email by 5 p.m., Monday, Aug. 25, 2025.

Rules for entering

The competition is open to all VML local government members.

All entries must be submitted via email. Localities must download the entry form at www.vml.org/Opportunities/Innovation-Awards and fill in all of the requested information directly on the form. The completed form must then be emailed to mtimbreza@vml.org.

Entries must cover **new projects** or programs completed between Jan. 1, 2024 and June 1, 2025. For **existing projects**, entries must cover major enhancements during the same time period.

Each entry form must be fully completed and must be signed by the local government's chief administrative or elected official.

A local government can only submit one entry in each of the seven categories. The President's Award for Innovation is not a separate category.

Supporting materials totaling no more than 10 pages, including photos, brochures, charts, or other information, can be included in a separate document. This document must be emailed as an attachment.

NEW FOR 2025: The video component is now optional. If you want to include a video, please provide a link to the video in your supporting materials. The video should be posted to a readily accessible website or platform (i.e., YouTube, Vimeo, etc.). The video should be no more than five minutes in duration.

Judging

Entries are screened by VML staff and judged by individuals chosen for their expertise. The judges generally represent a variety of backgrounds.
Please note: The scoring will remain confidential throughout the process.

Winners

Winners in each category will be announced ahead of the Annual Conference happening October 12-14, at the Hotel Roanoke. The awards will be presented during the Awards Banquet on October 12 at which time the winner of the President's Award for Innovation will be revealed. All winning entries will also be featured in VML's magazine *Virginia Town & City*.

Questions?

For more information about completing your entry or other details, contact Manuel Timbreza at mtimbreza@vml.org or call 804-649-8471.



Enter online at
[www.vml.org/
Opportunities/
Innovation-Awards](http://www.vml.org/Opportunities/Innovation-Awards)





BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

Proposed changes to the VML Constitution

THE CHANGES TO THE VML CONSTITUTION outlined below will be voted on by members at the Annual Business Meeting which will be held during the 2025 Annual Conference at the Hotel Roanoke.

Executive summary

The proposed changes to the VML Constitution are part of the VML strategic planning process and were approved by the Board of Directors on June 27th in concept and the exact text via email thereafter.

The four major changes are:

1. Add a category of membership for retirees.
2. Allow the Vice President to automatically move to President-Elect and state that a Board member cannot be President, Vice President or President-Elect twice in 10 years.
3. Amend the quorum language to make it easier to achieve without hand counting the members at a meeting.
4. Change the non-leadership Board of Director positions to be nine (9) at large members, one from each of the nine Virginia Department of Transportation districts. Each of the nine (9) at-large board members will represent a district; there will not be two from the same district.

The other changes are minor and include compiling the types of membership for ease; making language more consistent and some formatting.

Line-item summary of proposed changes

Lines 10-12 – amended to match the VA state code (see below)

§ 15.2-1303. Associations to promote welfare of political subdivisions.

The governing bodies of two or more of the political subdivisions of the Commonwealth may, in their discretion, and in addition to powers prescribed in § 15.2-940, form and maintain associations for the purpose of promoting, through investigation, discussion and cooperative effort, the interest and welfare of the several political subdivisions of the Commonwealth, and to promote a closer relation between the several political subdivisions of the Commonwealth. Any such association so formed shall be an instrumentality of the political subdivisions which are members thereof.

Lines 14-15 – clarifying language

Lines 18-19 – using “local government” as the standard term

Lines 20-21 – clarifying

Lines 23-24 – clarifying

Lines 30-31 – an attempt to remove the issue of “active” vs. “regular member” for consistency

Lines 38-41 – adding the corporate business program into this section rather than create a separate section (hence the deletion of 44-50)

Lines 42-43 – adding the retired local official piece and attaching the link to VLGMA who has a lot of types of membership

Constitution & Bylaws — Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA) (this is only for the board)

Line 67 – making Emergency Meetings the “title”

Lines 80-82 – using the local government attorneys of Virginia language for the definition of a quorum

Lines 89-93 – amends process of making determinations on procedure in the Annual Business Meeting

Lines 110-113 – allowing flexibility in the order of the agenda at the annual business meeting

Lines 121-144 – streamlining the resolution process

Line 152-153 – changing the failure to pay dues date

Lines 176-182 – amended the board composition to include 9 members from the VDOT transportation districts and the VP now automatically would become President-Elect

Lines 192-193 – clarifying

Line 205 – outlining the Vice President with separate duties

Lines 209-210 – adding the Vice President in the line of succession

Lines 212-213 – ensures that 10 years pass before someone can be in the officer track more than once

Lines 217-235 – removes the section succession and adds in succession for the 9 seats as VDOT districts

Lines 263-284 – removes the Section chair process

Lines 288-290 – clarifying

Lines 309-311 – changed to 3 required meetings per year

Lines 322-330 – amends the composition of the legislative committee to make it consistent with the board districts

Lines 341-342 – codifies current practice

CONSTITUTION VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Proposed changes discussed by the Board of Directors at its June 27th meeting

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this organization shall be the VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE, hereinafter referred to as the "League."

ARTICLE II

Purposes

The purposes of this organization shall be:

1. To serve as an association for the purpose of promoting, discussion and cooperative effort, the interests and welfare of political subdivisions of the commonwealth instrumentality of the local governments in Virginia and to promote their general welfare.
2. To assist local government administration by conducting and sponsoring investigation, research, study, training and interchange and exchange of ideas related to local governments with respect thereto.
3. To collect, compile and distribute information relating to local government and administration of local government affairs.
4. To study and to advocate necessary and beneficial legislation affecting local government cities, towns and urban counties and to oppose legislation detrimental thereto.
5. To promote intergovernmental harmony, and cooperation and preservation of local government authority.
6. To publish and circulate official League publications.
7. To take such other action as may be necessary or beneficial for Virginia local governments, cities, towns and urban counties:

ARTICLE III

Membership

1. **Regular Members.** Any Virginia city, incorporated town or county (each as defined by Virginia law) may become a regular member of the League by written application to the Executive Director, accompanied by an appropriate resolution of its governing body and payment of the first annual dues. ~~+~~ If a regular member fails to pay its dues within 30 days of the invoice they will no longer be a regular locality.
2. **Associate Members.** Any governmental unit or agency whose membership, in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors, will not be incompatible with the interests of the League or its regular members may become an associate member of the League by written application to the Executive Director, accompanied by an appropriate resolution of its governing body or board and by payment of the first annual dues, but subject in each case to approval of the Board of Directors of the League. Associate members shall be non-voting members. In addition, any individual, corporation, or organization interested in the activities of the League, and whose membership, in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors will not be incompatible with the interests of the League or its regular members may also be associate members.
3. **Retired Local Government Officials.** Any retired local government official from Virginia may be a member of the League by paying their annual dues.
3. **Sustaining Members.** Any individual, corporation or organization interested in the activities of the League, and whose membership, in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors, will not be incompatible with the interests of the League or its regular members may become a sustaining member of the League by written application to the Executive Director, accompanied by an appropriate resolution of its governing body or board and by payment of the first annual dues, but subject in each case to approval of the Board of Directors of the League. Sustaining members shall be non-voting members.
4. **Service Contracts.** The League may enter into Service Contracts with individuals, corporations, organizations or governmental units or agencies, whether or not members of the League, to provide research and other services. Contracts for which funds have been budgeted may be approved by the Executive Director; those requiring new funding shall be approved by the Board.

ARTICLE IV

Meetings of Members

1. **Definitions.** As used in this Constitution the term "meeting" shall include both meetings at which participants are physically assembled in one place and "virtual" meetings at which some or all participants are connected by electronic means. The term "mailed" shall include the sending of written messages by electronic mail or text messaging.

2. **Annual Meeting.** There shall be an Annual Meeting of the League for the purposes of transacting business of the League and such other purposes as determined by the Board of Directors. The Annual Meeting of the League shall be held at such venue and time in the State of Virginia as shall be determined by the Board of Directors.

3. **State of Emergency New Section.** During a state of emergency due to public health threat, natural disaster, state of war or civil unrest or for other good cause, the Board of Directors may approve conducting annual or special meetings of the League as virtual meetings, with such adjustments or changes in voting or other parliamentary procedures as circumstances may require.

2.4. **Special Meetings.** Special Meetings of the League may be held on call by the Board of Directors, or by request of the governing bodies of not less than fifteen regular members, at a time and place within the State of Virginia and for such stated purposes set forth in the notice thereof.

13.5. **Notice of Meetings.** Notice of each meeting, Annual or Special, shall be given by writing mailed to each regular member at least ten days prior to the date thereof or, in lieu thereof, published in an issue of the official League publication circulated to members one month in advance of the date set for such meeting.

22-346.. **Quorum.** A quorum in any meeting of the League's membership shall consist of 20 members or one-half of the regular members whichever is less, not less than twenty-five percent of the regular members of the League.

35-7. **Voting.** At any meeting of the League's membership, each regular member shall be entitled to one vote on every question presented to the membership, including election of each elective officer. The vote of each regular member shall be cast by its duly authorized representative present at the time the voting is taken. Voting may not be by proxy. Any question, except a procedural or parliamentary question, may, unless a greater percentage shall otherwise be required by this Constitution, be decided by a majority of the regular members present and voting. The President shall conduct the meetings and shall rule on interpretations of procedural rules and rules of parliamentary procedure. General Counsel shall advise the President on parliamentary matters. Procedural and parliamentary questions shall be decided in accordance with parliamentary procedures specified by the officer presiding at the meeting. Voting on any questions, including the uncontested election of elective officers, shall be via voice unless prior to the taking of such vote it shall be determined by favorable action of not less than two-thirds of the regular members present and voting, that such vote shall be cast by secret written ballot; provided, however, that all contested elections for officers shall be by secret ballot.

48.6- **Voting Representation.** The Mayor or Board Chairman, as the case may be, of each regular member shall be deemed to be its official representative for the purpose of voting upon matters considered by an Annual or Special Meeting of the League. In lieu of the Mayor or Board Chairman, the governing body of a regular member may designate another official of the member to vote on behalf of the member. Such designation shall be by writing filed with the Executive Director or such other person acting as Secretary of the meeting prior to any vote. In the absence of the Mayor or Board Chairman or other officer designated by the governing body as above specified at a vote taking, a majority of the elected and appointed officials present and registered at a meeting may file with the Executive Director or Secretary of the meeting in writing designating one of the regular members' officials present and registered to vote in behalf of the member, said filing to be in advance of the taking of any vote in which such person casts a vote.

59.7- **Order of Business Agenda.** At each Annual Meeting of the League, the items listed below may be included in the agenda which shall be prepared and distributed prior to the Annual Meeting: order of business; unless otherwise determined by resolution of the Board of Directors, shall be as follows: (a) Roll Call (b) Report of the President (c) Report of the Executive Director (d) Addresses, Papers, Discussions (e) Reports of Other Committees (f) Reports of Standing Committees (g) Election of Officers (h) Ratification of Board of Directors' Directors' Recommended Venue of Subsequent Annual Meetings (i) Other Business

6810.. **Resolutions.** Resolutions proposed for consideration by the League membership at any annual or special meeting thereof may be (a) proposed by the Board of Directors, or (b) in accordance with the following provisions (i) by a regular member or (ii) by the Legislative Committee or a policy committee after bringing the proposed resolution to the Board of Directors. Any proposed resolution not so submitted to or originating within the Board of Directors shall not be considered by the League membership for action except upon the affirmative vote or not less than three-fourths of the members present and voting: (a) Any regular member desiring to submit a resolution of any nature for consideration by the League membership shall first submit the same to the Board of Directors or the appropriate committee depending on the nature of the resolution as set forth in (b); (c); and (e) below: (b) Resolutions expressing the League's position on substantive issues of public policy, programs or procedures of state or local government, enactment, repeal or amendment of State and federal laws and similar matters shall be submitted for consideration by, or originated within, the appropriate policy committee of the League; except that matters with issues involving two or more policy committees may be retained by the legislative committee to develop a resolution; (c) Resolutions calling for specific action by the General Assembly of Virginia or the Congress of the United States or expressing the

League's position on legislation pending or expected to be pending before either body shall be submitted for consideration by, or originated within, the Legislative Committee of the League. (d) Resolutions related to the organization, functions or programs of the League and all other resolutions not specifically referred to in (a), (b) or (c) above shall be submitted by, or originated within, the Board of Directors. (e) Resolutions of appreciation and honorific resolutions shall be considered by, or originated within, the Board of Directors. (f) Any proposed resolution not so submitted to or originating within the appropriate committee, or having been submitted to but not approved by that committee, shall not be considered by the League membership for action except upon the affirmative vote of not less than three-fourths of the regular members present and voting.

ARTICLE V

Dues and Finances

1. **Dues.** The annual dues for each membership, or class thereof, shall be fixed annually by the Board of Directors; provided, however, that if the Board of Directors takes no action to change dues in effect, such dues as are then in effect, or as prescribed for the preceding year, shall continue from year to year.
2. **Payment of Dues.** Dues shall be payable annually by each member in advance of or before July 31 of each year. Failure to pay dues ~~within 30 days of the invoice after six months past due date~~ or upon earlier notification by the member that such dues will not be paid will result in termination of membership.
3. **Other Charges.** The Board of Directors may authorize the Executive Director to establish other charges for services rendered by the League for meetings, publications, including advertising rates therein, and other appropriate purposes.
4. **Fiscal Year.** The fiscal year of the League shall begin on July 1 and end on the following June 30.
5. **Annual Budget.** Annually, the Executive Director shall prepare and present to the Board of Directors for its adoption, a budget of anticipated income and expenses for the ensuing fiscal year. Such budget shall be presented and approved not later than the beginning of each fiscal year. 4
6. **Checks.** The Executive Director, and any such other persons as may be designated by the Board of Directors, shall draw checks or authorize electronic payments or transfers from or among the bank accounts maintained by the League. The Executive Director and such other persons may be authorized by resolution of the Board of Directors to draw checks or who may have access to League monies shall be bonded for the faithful performance of their duties in such amount and with such surety as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VI

Officers and Duties

1. **Elective Officers.**
 - (a) **Titles of Officers.** The elective officers of the League shall be a President, President Elect, Vice President and ~~nine~~ ~~"at-large"~~ ~~six at-large~~ Board of Directors members ~~one from each of the Virginia Department of Transportation Districts "VDOT Districts"~~ all of whom shall be elected by the membership of the League. The President, President-Elect and Vice President shall serve for one year or until a successor shall be elected and qualified; provided however, that the President-Elect ~~and the Vice President~~ shall automatically succeed to the offices of President-Elect and President respectively at the conclusion of a preceding President ~~or President-Elect's~~ term of office. At-large members of the Board of Directors shall serve for three year terms or until successors are elected and qualified, and may be reelected. The terms of at-large members shall be staggered to provide for the election of two such members annually.
 - (b) **Eligibility of Elective Officers.** Persons elected to the offices of President, President Elect or Vice President or membership on the Board of Directors shall at the time of election be an elected or appointed official of a regular member. The President, President-Elect and Vice President ~~must~~ have served not less than one year on the Board of Directors immediately prior to election.
 - (c) **Nominations.** Nominations for elective officers shall be made by a Nominating Committee of not less than five ~~persons whose localities are regular members of the League and they who~~ shall be appointed and announced by the President not later than thirty days prior to the day of the opening business session of the Annual Meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the time of presentation of nominations by the Nominating Committee.
 - (d) **The President.** The President shall be the principal officer of the League and shall preside at all Annual and Special Meetings of the League and all meetings of the Board of Directors. Except as hereinafter otherwise provided, the President shall appoint all committees with the approval of the Board of Directors and shall have the powers and duties prescribed herein and by resolution of the Board of Directors.
 - (e) **The President-Elect.** Working with the staff, the President-Elect shall be responsible for the oversight and coordination of the program for the annual meeting and such other duties as shall be assigned by the Board of Directors.
 - (f) **The Vice President.** The Vice Presidents shall have such duties as may be assigned by the Board of Directors. 5

(g) **Absence or disability of President or President-Elect.** In the case of the absence or disability of the President, the President-Elect shall assume the functions of the President. ~~If there is an absence or disability of the President-Elect the Vice President shall assume the functions of President-Elect.~~

(h) **Re-election.** Neither the President, President-Elect or the Vice President shall be eligible for any re-election to the same office for the next succeeding term ~~or within a 10-year period of their service in the aforementioned roles~~; provided, however, that should such an elective officer fill, as provided in sub-paragraph (i) below, an unexpired term of another elective position then such officer shall be eligible for election to a full term to the position being so filled.

(i) **Termination of Position and Filling Vacancies.** In the event a member of the Board of Directors, ~~including an elective officer and a Section Chairman serving thereon~~, shall terminate or be terminated as an elected or appointed official of a member, then such terminated person shall simultaneously also terminate as an elective officer and as a member of the Board of Directors. All vacancies on the Board of Directors including those resulting from termination as aforesaid shall be filled as follows: (A) Vacancy of ~~an at-large member Section Chairman~~ serving on the Board of Directors shall be filled by ~~any person eligible to serve from the applicable VDOT District y the Vice Chairman of such Section~~, and if they ~~are~~ ~~a~~ ~~Vice Chairman is~~ unable to serve, the Board of Directors shall appoint another official in said ~~VDOT District Section~~ to fill such vacancy who shall serve until the next annual meeting, ~~or until such time as the Section shall select a new chairman.~~

(i.B) Vacancy in the office of President shall be filled by the President-Elect.

(ii.B) Vacancy in the ~~position positions~~ of President-Elect ~~shall be filled by the Vice President.~~

(iii.) Vacancy in the position of ~~and~~ Vice President shall be filled by the election thereto by the membership of the League.

(d) Vacancies in the position of Board of Directors ~~man at-large shall be filled by the election thereto by the Board of Directors of any person eligible in accordance with sub-paragraph (b) above:~~

2. **Executive Director.** The Executive Director shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors, which shall determine the terms of such employment, including the annual compensation therefor and the terms of any contract for the employment. The Executive Director, under the direction and supervision of the Board of Directors, shall: manage the affairs of the League, act as Secretary of any Annual and Special Meetings of the League and at all meetings of the Board of Directors; make and maintain accurate minutes of meetings of the League and the Board of Directors which minutes shall be open to inspection at reasonable times by all ~~active~~ members of the League; keep accurate records of all other proceedings of the League; attend to timely notification of the members of the League of all Annual and Special Meetings thereof; collect and deposit and keep accurate accounts of all dues and other League monies; make all proper disbursements in accordance with the League's budget and the direction of the Board of Directors; at each Annual Meeting, make a written report of the Executive Director's administrative actions and of all financial transactions during the preceding fiscal year; and, submit a statement of the financial condition of the League as of a date reasonably proximate to the date of such report. The Executive Director shall also be responsible for the publication of the official publications of the League. Unless the Board of directors shall direct otherwise, the Executive Director may delegate any of the foregoing duties or functions to other staff members. 6 At a time determined by the Board of Directors, the Board shall annually evaluate the ~~preceding preceding~~ year's performance of the Executive Director. The Board shall cause this evaluation to be shared with the Executive Director.

3. **Other Personnel.** The League shall employ such other staff members and personnel as shall be provided herein or as deemed necessary and proper for the conduct of the League's business. : Subject to the limitations of budgeted funding, the Executive Director shall have the power to employ and discharge and to direct, supervise and assign the work duties and responsibilities and determine the compensation of such other staff members.

ARTICLE VII Organization 1: Sections: The League shall be organized into three sections:

- (a) One, titled Urban Section, for cities and counties having population in excess of 35,000;
- (b) One, titled City Section, for cities and counties having population of 35,000 or under;
- and (c) One, titled Town Section, for towns: 2: Section Organization: At each Annual Meeting of the League, each of such sections shall conduct an organizational meeting and shall elect a Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair of each such section upon their election shall automatically be a member of the League's Board of Directors; provided such Chair is not already a member thereof as a result of having been elected by the membership of the League as a President or a Vice President or as a member-at-large of the Board of Directors; or by reason of being immediate past President of the League: 3: Voting: Voting in each section shall be conducted as follows: (a) In the Urban Section meeting only, each locality shall have one vote per 100,000 population in the locality, rounded to the nearest 100,000; except that each city or county shall have at least one vote. The governing body of each locality in the Urban Section shall appoint an official delegate and alternate. The delegate, or the alternate, if the delegate is absent, shall be the voting representative of their locality in all votes of the Urban Section meeting; (b) In the City and Town Sections;

each locality shall have one vote. The governing body of each locality in the City and Town Sections shall appoint an official delegate and alternate. The delegate, or the alternate, if the delegate is absent, shall be the voting representative of their locality in all votes of that Section meeting. For all purposes in this constitution, population shall be based on the most recent census determined by the U.S. Census Bureau or from the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia, whichever is more current. 7

ARTICLE VIII

Board of Directors and Committees

1. Board of Directors

a. (a) **Composition.** The Board of Directors shall be composed of the President, President-Elect, the Vice President, ~~ninesix~~ at-large members, ~~the three chairs of the sections~~, and the Past President. In the event the immediate Past President is unable or unwilling to serve, or is no longer an elected or appointed official of a regular member, the next preceding Past President who is eligible shall serve on the Board of Directors.

b. (b) **Duties.** The Board of Directors shall manage all the affairs of the League, effect the purposes of the League as set out in Article II of this Constitution, be responsible for and supervise the Executive Director and other staff and personnel of the League; and, arrange for the Annual Meeting of the League. It may appoint subcommittees of its own members and of any members of the League or officials thereof and prescribe the powers and duties of such subcommittees and make and alter bylaws for its own government not inconsistent with this Constitution. In the event it becomes necessary to express the League's official position with respect to significant pending legislation and there is not sufficient time for the League to develop a position by utilizing normal League procedures, the Board of Directors may determine and express such position it deems to be in the League's best interest, notwithstanding Article IV § 8 (c) and (f).

2.

a. (c) **Meetings.** The Board of Directors shall meet ~~at least 3 times per year~~ ~~quarter-annually~~ and at other times upon call of the President or any three members of the ~~Board of Directors + Committee~~, on at least ten days notice by the Executive Director to all members of the Board of Directors, such notice stating, at least in general terms, the purposes of the meeting.

3.

a. (d) **Quorum and Voting.** A majority of the full membership of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum at all meetings. Any question may be decided by a majority of those participating. Voting may not be by proxy.

4. 2. Legislative Committee.

a. (a) **Composition.** A Legislative Committee, consisting of twenty-four persons holding elective or appointed positions with regular members ~~who~~ shall be appointed by the President to hold office for one year, ~~eighteen~~ ~~twelve~~ of whom shall be representatives of ~~member localities with 2 from at-large district cities and counties with population in excess of 35,000; 5 policy committee chairs and one member who shall be designated by the President as the Chair, six of whom shall be representatives of the cities and counties with population of 35,000 and less; and six shall be representatives of the towns. One member of the Legislative Committee shall be designated by the President as its Chair and one as its Vice Chair. If during the term of the Committee, one or more members shall resign or cease to be members, such reduction in membership shall not limit the functioning of the Committee.~~

b. (b) **Duties.** The Legislative Committee shall have the duty to consider and report upon existing or proposed State and Federal legislation or regulations as may effect the membership of the League and to urge the enactment, or amendment of, or opposition to such legislation or ~~a~~ regulation as the Committee shall deem appropriate. The League's legislative program as promulgated by the Legislative Committee shall be subject to the approval of the League membership. ~~Nothing shall prohibit the Legislative Committee from creating subcommittees to assist with their work.~~

(c) **Meetings.** The Legislative Committee shall meet on call of the Chair or of any six members thereof, on at least ten days notice, by the Executive Director to all members of the Committee. The notice shall state in general terms the purposes of the meeting.

c. (d) **Quorum and Voting.** A majority of the full membership of the Legislative Committee shall constitute a quorum at all meetings. Any question may be decided by a majority of those participating. Voting may not be by proxy.

d.

3. **Special Committees.** The Board of Directors may establish such special committees as it deems necessary and appropriate and the President shall make all appointments to committees so established.

6.

7. ARTICLE IIXIX

8. Associations

1. **Affiliation.** Associations of local government officials such as assessors, attorneys, building inspections, fire personnel, electrical and plumbing, inspections, police officers, clerks, engineers, finance officers, health officers, municipal managers and administrators and others engaged in local government administration may be affiliated with the League as allied members thereof upon approval of the Board of Directors. Such affiliated associations and members thereof, as such, shall have no vote on questions presented to the League and shall pay such dues, fees and other charges, if any, as shall be determined and assessed by the Board of Directors upon recommendation of the Executive Director. The Board of Directors may terminate any such affiliation at any time.

10.2: **Agreements.** The Board of Directors may enter into agreements with groups or associations of local government officials or personnel for the purpose of providing services to such groups or associations under terms and conditions as set forth in the agreements and provided such agreements or the administration thereof are not inconsistent with the purposes of functioning of the League.

ARTICLE IX

Amendments

This Constitution may be amended, altered or repealed upon resolution offered by the Board of Directors or a regular member in accordance with the provisions of Article IV, Section 8 hereof, at the Business Session of any Annual Meeting, or any Special Meeting called for such purpose, which need not be the sole purpose thereof, upon a favorable vote of not less than two thirds of the regular members present and voting, provided that at least thirty days prior to such meeting a copy of the proposed amendment or alteration or repealer shall be filed with the Executive Director at the League headquarters. The Executive Director shall cause a copy of the proposed amendment, alteration or repealer to be mailed to each regular member of the League 9 at least fourteen days prior to such meeting, or in lieu thereof publish the same in an issue of an official League publication circulated to the membership not less than such period of fourteen days.

ARTICLE XI Effective Date This ~~Constitution~~ ~~Constitution~~ as amended shall become effective immediately following final adjournment of the 2020 Annual Meeting of the League.

Adopted by the Annual Conference ~~Of~~ of the Virginia Municipal League Adopted October 13th 8, 2025⁰ Effective date of prior versions: October 21, 2008, October 8, 1991 and October 3, 2017, ~~October 8, 2020~~



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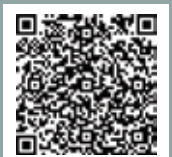
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