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VIRGINIA
TOWN & CITY



VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

— ROANOKE —

HOTEL ROANOKE & CONFERENCE CENTER
OCT. 12-14

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

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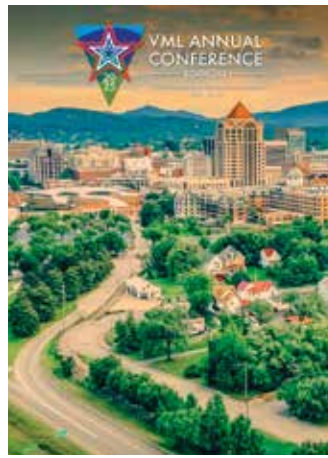
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ABOUT THE COVER

2025 VML Annual Conference in Roanoke: It's Annual Conference time again! This year that means it's time to head for the hills of Roanoke...unless of course you already live in the Roanoke region, in which case stay put. We are coming to you! VML looks forward to seeing everyone at the beautiful Hotel Roanoke Oct. 12-14 to learn together, share stories together, and most of all to just be together. See you in Roanoke!

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VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ROANOKE

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OCT. 12-14



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Welcome to the Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference!

I am delighted to welcome you to Roanoke, the Star City! From the natural beauty of our landscape to the diverse beauty of our people and multi-cultural city, we are honored by your presence!

Roanoke was officially chartered in 1882, yet prior to this was known by other names. Originally home to the Tutelo Indigenous people, the first organized town in this area was the Town of Gainsborough in the early to mid-1800s, its history still alive and surrounding the Hotel Roanoke. The first official name of Roanoke was Big Lick – named for the ample salt marshes and salt licks that dotted the landscape.



Roanoke is an eight-time All-America City, the first Hall of Fame All-America City, and the only Certified Welcoming City in the Commonwealth of Virginia. We are home to over 110 nationalities, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, the Virginia Tech/Carilion School of Medicine, the new Carilion Cardiac Care Center, the fast-growing Innovation Corridor, and have recently broken ground on the new Carilion Taubman Cancer Center. We are the growth hub of Virginia.

Downtown Roanoke is home to many wonderful restaurants, shops, and museums. Be sure to visit the historic City Market Building. Built in 1922, the City Market Building is an easy walk from Hotel Roanoke and features many distinctive, locally owned eateries. Also check out Center in the Square, home to the Pinball Museum, Starcade, KidsSquare, Science Museum of Western Virginia, and Mill Mountain Theatre. Art lovers will enjoy perusing the collections at the Taubman Museum of Art, which boasts an impressive permanent collection of over 2,000 works of art, from counterparty artists to ancient Egyptian ceramic figures. Come see why *Newsweek* recently recognized it as the best free museum in Virginia, and #3 in the nation!

No visit to Roanoke is complete without visiting the famous Roanoke Star, located at the top of Mill Mountain, a natural oasis located just a stone's throw from downtown. Originally constructed as a Christmas decoration, the Roanoke Star has shined over our city since 1949. Combine your visit to the Star with a hike along the scenic trails that wind through the surrounding woods, a stroll through the Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden or a stop at the Mill Mountain Zoo. You may also want to walk, run or cycle along our 36 miles of greenways!

As you stroll through downtown, keep your camera ready to capture the many beautiful murals and mosaics that adorn our streets.

On behalf of the City of Roanoke and our City Council, welcome! We hope you'll enjoy exploring all that the Star City has to offer.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Cobb
Mayor, City of Roanoke



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Mobile Workshop: Building connections in Wasena

The VML Annual Conference mobile workshop for the Wasena neighborhood project will take place, along with the other mobile workshop offerings, the afternoon of Monday, Oct. 13. Representatives from the City of Roanoke and the Timmons Group will serve as guides. Seats on all the mobile workshops are first come, first served.

ROANOKE'S WASENA NEIGHBORHOOD has always been a place where people gather – whether to enjoy the river, grab a bite at a local spot, or spend time at the park or on the greenway. Today, Wasena is also where the City of Roanoke is making some of its most exciting investments, pairing major infrastructure work with community-driven projects and continual engagement that keeps the neighborhood and its businesses at the forefront.

Replacing a landmark: The Wasena Bridge

At the heart of this effort is the replacement of the Wasena Bridge, a vital connection that has served the city for nearly 100 years. At 815 feet, the Wasena Bridge is the longest bridge in the city's inventory and replacing it will be the largest public works project Roanoke has undertaken in the last 30 years. The new bridge will provide safe and reliable access for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians well into the future. While such a large project inevitably brings disruption, Roanoke has worked closely with neighbors and businesses to make sure the story of Wasena during construction is one of opportunity, not just inconvenience.

City staff worked closely with the Wasena Neighborhood Forum to support their efforts to build community engagement. The Wasena

Bridge Bonanza held on April 13, 2024, was a festive farewell to the bridge that nearly 5,000 residents attended. The event featured live music, food from local Wasena restaurants, a vendor fair, and the opportunity for residents to make their mark on the bridge with chalk art on the sidewalks and retaining walls.

Now just over a year into this project, notable milestones that have been achieved include the completion of Phase 1 demolition, the construction of four of the five Y-piers, and the placement of tub girders. The bridge project is on track for completion in the summer of 2026.

Virginia's first in-river park

Even more transformative is the announcement of Virginia's first in-river whitewater park, set along the Roanoke River in Wasena. This project will create a wave feature for kayakers and tubers, ADA-compliant entry points, and calm wading areas for families. River-bank seating and native plantings will add comfort and sustainability, while making the river more accessible than ever before. Construction began in summer 2025, with completion expected in 2026.

A regional skate park built together

Another highlight of the Wasena project is the construction of a new regional skate park – made possible through a remarkable partnership across the valley. The \$1.6 million project was funded through \$1.07 million from the City of Roanoke, \$200,000 from Salem, \$50,000 from Vinton, and \$280,000 in private community donations. That level of collaboration transformed the project from a local amenity into a 24,000-square-foot regional facility, complete with a community-funded asphalt pump track. This project represents what's possible when municipalities and community partners pool resources toward a shared vision.

Editor's note: Work on the skate park is being completed by VML member organization Timmons Group. For more on the innovative work being done to scale this project to the site, see the accompanying article on the next page.

A balanced approach

What's happening in Wasena is more than just a bridge replacement or a park project. It's a coordinated effort to strengthen connections – between neighborhoods, between people and the river, and between City Hall and the local businesses that give the area its charm.

Roanoke's approach in Wasena shows how municipal projects can go beyond concrete and steel. By combining infrastructure upgrades with recreation and small-business support, the city has turned a challenging season of construction into a model for resilience and community partnership.



TIMMONS GROUP

By John Brodie

Roanoke's Wasena Skate Park represents a new era of scalable park design

The era of scalable park design is here, and it is giving leaders the tools to rethink recreation, community livability, inclusivity, and long-term investment.

ACROSS VIRGINIA, MUNICIPALITIES are tasked with designing parks that reflect the unique needs of their communities. Luckily, with so many design possibilities available today, parks can be tailored to scale for each setting, no matter the available acreage, budget, or resources. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to park design, and that's not a drawback; it's exactly what makes each community's spaces unique.

At its core, scalable design recognizes that the needs of a dense urban neighborhood are different from those of a suburban county – and that both types of sites (plus everything in between) deserve spaces that encourage recreation and connection to community. The goal is not to compare one municipality's resources to another's, but rather to emphasize that no matter the available resources, any park can be created as a meaningful and enriching addition to a community.

Whether designed to host regional festivals or neighborhood gatherings, communities provide valuable input that allows design teams to meet people where they are.

A neighborhood investment: Wasena Skate Park, Roanoke

Wasena Skate Park in the City of Roanoke displays how much impact a smaller-scale facility can have. At 24,000 square feet, the park is modest in footprint and ambitious in purpose, and for Roanoke, it is a prime example of specialized recreation in an urban community that Timmons Group is proud to be a leader in delivering.

A district of the larger Roanoke footprint, the Wasena area is a tight-knit urban neighborhood with an emphasis on walkability, farm to table dining, and sports shopping. The addition of a skate park to the neighborhood has been long awaited by the community, and its design reflects the hours of input and advocacy from residents who are invested in shaping their neighborhood.

Opening in late 2025, the skate park is designed for skaters of all ages and skill levels, while also accommodating BMX riders, rollerbladers, and other wheeled sports. The facility will feature rails, bowls, boxes, and a pump track, giving residents a safe and modern place to gather and practice their kickflips. Just as importantly, it will be free and accessible to the public, reinforcing the idea that parks – no matter their scale – are essential civic assets.

Designing for scale and community impact

Traditionally, large parks were seen as the pinnacle of municipal recreation. While they remain valuable, there is growing recognition that smaller-scale facilities can be just as impactful. Instead of being limited by size, communities are embracing creativity and intentionality to maximize value in the space they have to work with. Whether situated on 100 acres or a half-acre, and when designed with the community in mind, park projects offer functional, transformative, and adaptable recreation for all.

About the author: John Brodie is a Project Manager at Timmons Group and a resident of the Wasena neighborhood in Roanoke.



PILLAR DESIGN STUDIO



A rendering of the completed Wasena Skate Park.

Social Event: Taking in the Taubman (Museum of Art)

The City of Roanoke is pleased welcome VML Annual Conference attendees for an evening of art, victuals, and libations at the Taubman Museum beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 13. The event will immediately follow VML's "Bluegrass Reception" featuring the Hot Seats band at the Hotel Roanoke 5:00-6:30 p.m.

THE TAUBMAN MUSEUM of Art is the largest fine arts museum in Southwest Virginia and a cultural cornerstone of the Roanoke Valley. Founded in 1951 as the Roanoke Fine Arts Center, the museum has grown steadily over more than seven decades, culminating in the opening of its landmark downtown facility in 2008. Designed by internationally recognized architect Randall Stout, the striking 81,000-square-foot building symbolizes the region's creative spirit and has become a defining architectural landmark for the area. In 2026, the Taubman will mark its 75th anniversary, celebrating its enduring impact on the community and beyond.

Most recently, *Newsweek* named the Taubman Museum of Art the #3 Best Free Museum in the Nation and #1 in Virginia.

The museum's mission is simple yet powerful: to bring people and art together for discovery, learning, and enjoyment. Free general admission sponsored by AEP Foundation ensures that everyone in the community, as well as visitors from across the globe, have access to world-class art and enriching experiences. More than 88,000 guests

visit each year, including 16,000+ K-12 students who participate in exhibition-based programs aligned with Virginia's Standards of Learning.

The Taubman Museum of Art maintains a permanent collection of more than 2,300 works, with particular emphasis on American art and regional talent, hosting 10 to 12 exhibitions annually. The museum also partners with leading European institutions to debut stunning exhibitions in the United States, further enhancing its reputation on the international stage. In addition, the Taubman is a leader in innovation, producing in-house, award-winning immersive art experiences that merge technology and creativity to bring classical and contemporary works to life.

Beyond exhibitions, the museum serves as a community convener. Signature events such as the Sidewalk Art Show, STEAM Day, Lunar New Year Festival, and Roanoke Arts Pop bring tens of thousands together each year. Partnerships with local organizations — from Feeding Southwest Virginia to Carilion Clinic — extend the museum's reach to underserved members of the community. Programs such as Happy HeARTs provide art-based therapy designed to foster creativity, healing, and inclusion for participants of all abilities.

About the author: Sunny Nelson is the deputy director of marketing and public relations at Taubman Museum of Art.



A message from VML President Steven Trivett



THANKS FOR ALLOWING ME to serve as the Virginia Municipal League president this past year. I appreciate your support so much! As I write this, my term is moving toward an exciting conclusion. That excitement isn't about me, it's about our upcoming Annual Conference in the Star City, Roanoke! I hope you are looking forward to it as much as I am.

I enjoy every VML event for the valuable local government fellowship, along with great networking and learning opportunities, and of course, the fun of catching up with old friends and making new ones. But what I enjoy most about our events is what I think of as the "back story." By this I mean the powerful dynamic that happens when all of us gather and participate in both the celebration and the work of maintaining and advancing good local government across the Commonwealth. Certainly, leading our communities through ever-evolving challenges requires much work and deserves much celebration when it succeeds. This work isn't always easy, nor is it always appreciated, but it is always worthwhile! And, of course, it's the work we signed up to do – listening, learning, and leading. In these ways we sustain (and sometimes improve) the features and finances necessary for a good quality of life in our cities, towns, and counties.

My year as your president has seemed to move along quickly. Although I didn't get to experience the unique charms of each member locality, the VML Board has been mindful to try to "spread the joy" of Virginia's scenery by scheduling different events across the state. Indeed, since the last Annual Conference, we've all done some traveling for VML events like the Elected Officials Conference, Local Government Day, the Small Towns Conference, and assorted regional meetings and briefings. Thank you for your

time (and thanks to your local budgets for the cost) to travel and attend these offerings to sharpen your skills and build valuable relationships to be better prepared to serve.

In closing, I'll mention something closer to home, but certainly not unique to my Town of Ashland. We recently lost our

beloved Vice Mayor, John Hodges, to cancer. John was a tremendously experienced and dedicated member of our Town Council. He had decades of planning experience that served all of us – locally, regionally, and on VML committees – very well. With John in mind, I want to express condolences to other VML member localities who have lost local leaders this past year. These people are our mentors, peers, and friends, and they will be missed even as we carry on their good work and hope to achieve success like theirs.

Among the many sentiments of grief and gratitude at John's service was that he "approached every meeting with a spirit of cooperation, a willingness to listen, and his specialty: resisting any notion of there being 'sides' to be on. John focused on solutions, not controversy."

I hope all of us across the Commonwealth are mindful every day that we have stepped up, and stepped out, for good government. And like my departed colleague, we will partner with our peers, staff, and citizens to maintain a spirit of cooperation, a willingness to listen, and a focus on solutions rather than 'sides.'

I hope that we all agree, though our locations are scattered and our challenges vary, we stand strongest when we stand together. With that in mind, I have no doubt that VML's President-Elect, Amherst Mayor Dwayne Tuggle, is going to do an excellent job in the coming year after he receives the gavel in Roanoke! See you there!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "ST 75", likely representing Steven Trivett.

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THESE ARE UNCERTAIN TIMES for local governments, but the Virginia Municipal League is proud to be a steady presence that our members can rely upon for robust advocacy, timely education, and reliable information to help navigate the uncertainty.

This past year we saw some real successes in the General Assembly. A couple of examples are an amended state budget that finally addresses the funding cap previously placed on K-12 support positions and legislation that permits the use of first-class mail, instead of costly certified or registered mail, for some zoning notices.

Beginning with a successful Annual Conference in October marked by some great Virginia Beach weather, VML created several opportunities this past year for our members to learn together. January kicked off with another offering of our Elected Officials Conference which was quickly followed by Local Government Legislative Day and a chance for our members to make their delegations aware of the issues important to local governments. In June we were pleased to host the second annual Small Towns Conference which took place at Longwood University in Farmville.

This past year was also a great year for connecting with our members. VML staff are here for regional meetings to provide information and training tailored to those communities, to attend council meetings for legislative updates (or present essay contest awards), and to shine a light on what our localities are doing by interviewing officials and staff for our magazine...in all these ways (and many more) we love supporting Virginia's local governments and fulfilling our mission of "Better Communities Through Sound Government."

We look forward to the coming year for more opportunities to work with you to make the Commonwealth work for everyone.

Thank you for being part of VML!

Lobbying & Advocacy

2025 General Assembly Session



The 2025 General Assembly Session started in a most unanticipated way – with no water in the building or the city! The outside of the General Assembly building was lined with porta johns and for a few days no one was allowed inside the building except staff and the members of the General Assembly. Needless to say, it didn't stop them

from doing business and they probably enjoyed the relative peace in the halls! Once everyone was allowed to enter the building, however,

it seemed like record numbers of people were vying for time with the delegates and senators. Given that it was already a short session this year before it was made even shorter, it certainly felt rushed.

The General Assembly members, as usual, had a cascade of bills to consider during the session with 3,107 bills and resolutions introduced this year. A total of 1,989 passed; 1458 failed, and Governor Glenn Youngkin vetoed 158 bills – many of which were similar to legislation he vetoed last year.

During the reconvened session on April 2, the General Assembly dealt with all the gubernatorial vetoes and amendments to regular bills. They also dealt with 205 proposed changes to the 2024-2026 biennial budget and the eight vetoed budget amendments. The General Assembly ultimately rejected 172 of the 205 amendments.

Budget

When the House and Senate released their respective budgets in early February, it was striking how similar many of their proposed budget amendments appeared to be. To many of us it seemed clear that budget leaders in the General Assembly had been comparing notes as they pulled together their fiscal plans.

Moreover, it suggested that lawmakers wouldn't need overtime this year to settle their spending and saving differences. As it turned out, they did not! For the second year in a row, the General Assembly completed its work on the budget with time to spare.

When the budget returned to the Governor for his final review (and possible amendment), it appeared that we would have certainty about the Commonwealth's fiscal plans just as local governments were beginning to put the finishing touches on their 2025-26 budgets.

As luck would have it, even though state fiscal certainty was within reach, the federal government threw us a curveball that put many local budgeteers on edge. The Trump Administration's decision to freeze, reduce, or eliminate federal grants in addition to eliminating federal positions at certain agencies, forced localities to think about the potential downside of some of these federal actions.

Fortunately, state lawmakers included several provisions in the recently agreed-upon conference budget to monitor federal funding decisions that impact state revenues or costs and initiate conversations between the Governor and the General Assembly about how to respond, if necessary. [These amendments were ultimately vetoed by the Governor.]

In addition, the House and Senate established bipartisan committees to assess the impact of these federal actions on the Commonwealth.

As the 2025 Session was winding down, House Speaker Don Scott

2025 Annual Review

announced the creation of a bipartisan House Emergency Committee on the Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions that is charged with assessing “the potential impacts of cuts to the federal civilian workforce and programs and ensure[ing] the General Assembly can adopt measures to protect Virginia families and mitigate impacts to the state budget.” The committee met multiple times during 2025, including in Richmond in February, August, and September, Alexandria in April, Wytheville in May, and Norfolk in June. Attempting to get a better sense of the regional impact of these federal policy actions led the committee to visit Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and Southwest Virginia, in addition to covering an array of policy issues. Their findings and recommended actions are being circulated within the House of Delegates.

Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee Chair, Senator Louise Lucas, announced a Special Subcommittee on Federal Impacts to Resources with a similar charge to its House counterpart. The committee met twice during the interim, first in Richmond to frame the discussion by looking at the current state of Virginia’s economy, and wrapping up in Alexandria, assessing the potential impact on Northern Virginia.

In retrospect, the budget the General Assembly sent to Governor Youngkin in late February looked quite different from the budget he rolled out in December 2024.

Gone from the Conference Report was his proposal to create a three-year Car Tax Relief Program using one-time revenues of \$1.1 billion with future costs estimated at \$375 million annually once those general funds were exhausted. In its place the General Assembly recommended a one-time tax rebate of \$200 for individuals and \$400 for dual filers, at a cost of \$978 million. Those checks will show up later this year.

Also missing from the conference agreement were Youngkin’s K-12 proposals that provided:

- \$25 million for new College Partnership lab schools.
- \$50 million for a Virginia Opportunity Scholarships Program.
- \$50 million for School Performance Supports.
- \$66 million for a new K-12 State Assessment Contract.

Instead, the General Assembly repackaged Youngkin’s K-12 funding initiatives and steered monies from other proposals to provide sufficient resources to eliminate the cap on funding to school divisions for support positions, a budget cutting relic from the Great Recession. The agreed upon conference budget also added funding for students with special education needs and one-time funds for a bonus

of \$1,000 for SOQ-funded instructional and support positions with no local match requirement.

Not to be outdone by the General Assembly’s rewriting of his proposed budget, the Governor sent down more than 200 amendments for lawmakers to consider at the Reconvened Session in April 2025.

The largest single spending item proposed by Governor Youngkin was a deposit of \$300 million to the Revenue Reserve Fund. The Governor’s action was a nod toward the General Assembly’s concerns about the potential impact of federal actions on state revenues. The Governor suggested that “we should create even more reserve cushion as we recognize that the moves to restore fiscal sanity in Washington are needed, and such moves can cause near-term uncertainty.”

The biggest reduction the Governor proposed was to slash \$138 million to eliminate the K-12 funding cap on support positions. The Commonwealth has chipped away at this Great Recession-era budget gimmick for years, and the 2025 General Assembly finally fully restored funding for local school divisions in February. But the proposed amendment would have reduced general fund support that schools were scheduled to receive while localities were finalizing their budgets that began on July 1, 2025.

When state lawmakers returned to Capitol Square on April 4 to take up the Governor’s proposed amendments, the question was how many of Governor Youngkin’s amendments and vetoes would survive. In the end, not many.

As a reminder, the Governor proposed 205 changes to HB1600 (the 2024-26 biennial budget) and eight vetoed budget amendments. The House rejected 164 of his amendments while the Senate tossed an additional eight. In summary, 172 of the Governor’s proposals were disposed of, leaving only 33 amendments standing.

Still smarting from the General Assembly’s decision to toss most of his proposed budget amendments at the April Reconvened Session, a month later, the Governor wielded his veto pen liberally. The Governor zeroed out \$900 million in spending that the 2025 General Assembly had approved, padding the general fund’s bottom line if additional resources are needed to respond to federal budget actions using these one-time funds.

Looking back, Virginia’s budget ride this year had more ups and downs, and twists and turns, than many of us care to experience outside of an amusement park’s rollercoaster. Given continued uncertainty about the health of the Commonwealth’s economy and its general fund revenues, we may need an iron stomach to get through the next budget iteration. We’ll begin that process anew in December, when the Governor proposes his outgoing budgets.

Budget amendments of interest that passed

School Construction Assistance Program. Item 125 #9c adds \$10 million from nongeneral funds in the second year for the School Construction Grant Fund. This funding comes from casino gaming revenues; the additional money reflects an expected increase in 2025 casino gaming proceeds coming to the state. An additional \$50 million from nongeneral funds was added for School Construction at the Reconvened Session, increasing the amount available to \$250 million in FY 2025.

Direct Aid – Raise Support Cap to Prevailing Ratio of 27.89 per 1,000 Students. Item 125 #11c allocates \$222.9 million in the second year of the biennium to raise the funding cap placed on support positions from the current rate to 27.89 SOQ-funded positions per 1,000 students. The funding allocated is adequate to fully remove the cap, however, the budget significantly increases the cap as opposed to a full removal. This is a recommendation of the Joint Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education Funding following the 2023 JLARC report recommendation for removal.

CSA state reimbursement cap. The state broke its long-standing commitment to the Children's Services Act (CSA) program by capping its share of funding for private special education day program tuition costs. It began with the introduced budget's inclusion of a proposed cap on state funding if the cost of a private special education day placement increased by more than 2.5 percent over the previous year. The average cost increase for placements has been about 10 percent. The budget conference report increased the state cap amount to five percent (a \$5.0 million savings for the state and cost shift to localities) starting in fiscal year 2026. The conference report stated that its \$5.0 million savings would go towards additional state funding of special education programs in public schools.

Legislation of interest that passed

Tax & Finance. HB2029 (Hernandez) / SB816 (Rouse) revises provisions of the local real property tax exemption and deferral program for elderly and disabled individuals, by allowing a locality to require that an individual either:

- (i) pay all delinquent taxes, penalties, or interest assessed by the locality for the property that were incurred prior to becoming eligible for an exemption or deferral for the elderly or disabled;
- (ii) enter into an installment agreement with the locality for the payment of all such delinquent amounts in installments for a period not to exceed 72 months;
- (iii) submit and obtain the treasurer's agreement to an offer in compromise; or
- (iv) a combination thereof.

The bill also permits notice of the terms and conditions of the elderly or disabled exemption and deferral program be included in any notice of change in assessment and require the terms to be posted on the locality's website. This bill allows localities to provide a prorated exemption or deferral for the portion of the taxable year during which the taxpayer would have qualified for such exemption or deferral but had not yet filed an application. The bill limits any such proration or deferral to the taxable year in which the taxpayer qualified for such exemption or deferral and not any prior year.

Use of first-class mail for certain property notifications. HB2330 (Hodges) stipulates that when there is a proposed change in the zoning map classification of 25 or fewer parcels of land, notice is currently sent by registered or certified mail. This legislation changes that to be one notice sent by registered, certified, or first-class mail to the last known address of certain property owners affected by a proposed change in the zoning map classification of 25 or fewer parcels

of land provided that a representative of the local planning commission shall make affidavit that such mailings have been made and file such affidavit in the file.

Development and use of accessory dwelling unit. HB2533 (Sewell) allows a locality to consider in the comprehensive plan tiny homes or accessory dwelling units. Tiny homes are defined as a dwelling of 400 square feet or less in floor area and accessory dwelling unit means an independent or attached dwelling unit as defined in the legislation.

License plate readers. HB2724 (Herring) requires the Department of General Services to determine and approve automatic license plate recognition (LPR) systems for use in the Commonwealth and requirements for the use of LPR systems by law-enforcement agencies. It limits the use of such systems by law-enforcement agencies to criminal investigations where there is a reasonable suspicion a crime was committed or as part of an active investigation related to a missing or endangered person or to receive notifications related to a missing or endangered person, a person with an outstanding warrant, a person associated with human trafficking, a stolen vehicle, or a stolen license plate. It also requires law-enforcement officers to collect data on whether a stop of a driver of a motor vehicle or stop or temporary detention of a person was based on a notification from an automatic license plate recognition system and if so, the specific reason for the notification as set forth in relevant law. This legislation also permits the use of LPRs on state right-of-way subject to VDOT right-of-way permitting. It requires systems approved for use in the Commonwealth be publicly posted by Jan. 1, 2026. Finally, the bill requires annual reports from law-enforcement agencies using LPR systems. Data collected using an LPR system can only be retained for 21 days.

Fire Programs Fund eligibility. HB2065 (Thomas) / SB1282 (Durant) stipulates that for localities to remain eligible for funding from the Fire Programs Fund, they must report all emergency incidents through the National Emergency Response Information System while sharing such emergency incident data with the Department of Fire Programs. The bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2026.

Public school buildings' air quality requirements. SB1413 (Surovell) establishes several requirements for local school divisions to ensure adequate indoor air quality in every public school building in a division. Requirements include providing an inspection and evaluation once every two years and an industry-recognized uniform inspection and evaluation every four years.

Digital accessibility. HB2541 (Tran) makes several changes to the Virginia Information Technology Act to align the Virginia Code with Federal Standards all local bodies must comply with by 2026 or 2027. This bill adds small adjustments above federal standards.

Petitions for relief of care and custody of a child. HB1733 (Cole) / SB1372 (Suetterlein) require a local department of social services (LDSS), as a part of its investigation after the referral of a request for a petition for relief of the care and custody of a child, to refer the parent to the Children's Services Act (CSA) local family assessment and planning team (FAPT) and also to create a written report. The Virginia Department of Social Services, in coordination with the Virginia League of Social Services Executives, will create a template and guidance for the written report.

Rainwater harvesting. SB851 (Diggs) pre-empts local ordinances requiring connections to a municipal water supply when the most stringent permit for a rainwater harvesting system has been issued by the state board of health.

Photo speed monitoring. SB852 (New Craig) expands the criteria for who is allowed to swear or affirm a violation has occurred that was captured by a photo speed enforcement camera. Permits retired sworn law enforcement officers in addition to sworn law enforcement officers currently permitted to review violations under a photo speed enforcement program.

HB2718 (Leftwich) requires that a photo speed enforcement camera operating in a school zone demonstrate through images or documentation that the school zone lights were activated and blinking at the time a violation occurred.

Workgroups & Studies

When the General Assembly wraps up each year, the efforts of the studies and workgroups mandated by its legislation begin. VML staff work throughout the summer and fall to represent the interests of local governments during these meetings. 2025 has been a busy year for workgroups and studies as outlined below.

Workgroup: License taxes; deduction for out-of-state receipts, effective date, report.

HB1743 (Watts) as introduced, this bill expanded Business Professional and Occupational License (BPOL) tax deductions for businesses operating in other states. Under current law, any receipts attributable to business conducted in another state or foreign country in which the taxpayer is liable for an income or other tax based upon income are deductible from gross receipts or gross purchases for license tax purposes.

The bill proposed to expand the definition of “income or other tax based upon income” to mean “net income tax, as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 383, or any other tax the measure of which is based in whole or in part on gross or net income, or receipts.”

The change was likely to decrease BPOL tax revenues. But the amount in question was unknown, which is why VML, VACo, the Commissioners of the Revenue, and other local finance officials pushed for a thorough review before proceeding.

The bill sailed out of the House of Delegates but ran into trouble in the Senate. The Senate converted HB1743 to a Section 1 bill, requiring the Department of Taxation to convene a work group that includes VML, VACo, and the Commissioners of Revenue to review:

- The current policy and methodology of out of state deductions.
- Concerns regarding the existing laws governing these deductions.
- The potential impact of proposed changes, including local revenue impacts, administrative complexities, and complexities to taxpayers.
- Any impact to such deductions from other existing provisions of law.

The department is required to submit workgroup findings and recommendations to the Joint Subcommittee on Tax Policy by October 1, 2025.

Workgroup: Deed fraud

HB2396 (Simon) / SB1270 (Hackworth) directed the Virginia Housing Development Authority to create a technical advisory group to evaluate the prevalence of deed fraud to include notary fraud, seller impersonation, owner impersonation and fraudulent lien filing. The group is to provide recommendations to prevent these types of fraud. VML is part of the technical advisory workgroup.

Study: Faith and Housing; comprehensive plan; zoning

HB2153 (Carr) requires a locality in its comprehensive plan to obtain input on strategies to support affordable housing on religious organization property and other tax-exempt nonprofit organizations property.

Study: Petitions for relief of care and custody of a child.

HB1733 (Cole) / SB1372 (Suetterlein) directed the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman to convene a work group to (a) determine the factors a court should consider when determining good cause is shown for a petitioner’s desire to be relieved of care and custody and

(b) examine the issue of raising the standard of evidence for granting temporary relief of custody from the current standard of preponderance of the evidence to clear and convincing evidence. This report is due Nov. 1, 2025.

Study: Consolidation and scheduling of general elections in Virginia

SJ253 (Surovell) / HJ443 (Simonds) created a two-year study on the feasibility of consolidating and scheduling general elections. A 13-member joint subcommittee will study the potential and probable effects of moving some or all of Virginia’s state or local elections to even-numbered years coinciding with the federal election schedule. This change would require a constitutional amendment. As such, the legislation must pass again next session before being sent to the Governor for a signature.

Policy & Legislative Committees

VML’s 2025 Legislative Committee, led by City of Hampton Mayor James Gray and Town of Farmville Mayor Brian Vincent, began its work in June with an overview of the 2025 General Assembly Session, several studies underway by the General Assembly this year, and presentations on the federal funding situation with staff from the offices of Senator Tim Kaine and Senator Mark Warner.

All five of VML’s policy committees met during July to receive presentations on a host of issues and to discuss issues including local revenue sources and authority, taxing authority for school construction, stormwater and water quality funding, and accessory dwellings. Each committee voted on items to forward to the Legislative Committee for further consideration.

The VML Legislative Committee continued its work at its Sept. 12 meeting, catching up on issues discussed in June, including the federal funding cuts affecting Virginia, and discussing the issues proposed by the five policy committees. The Committee will meet a third time at the beginning of the VML Annual Conference in Roanoke, finalizing the proposed program for a vote by the full membership during the Annual Business Meeting during the conference.

Events, Education & Training

Mayors Institute & Annual Conference

The 2024 Mayors Institute & Annual Conference was held at the Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront Oct. 13-15. Due to the religious holiday on Oct. 12, the format for the Mayors Institute was amended to one full day on Oct. 13 with expert facilitator Matt Lehrman guiding attendees through a series of visioning exercises. Nichole Weiler, an accomplished mental health support specialist, joined Matt for a portion of the program dedicated to handling the stress that comes with public office.

While the Mayors Institute was underway, attendees at the Annual Conference had the opportunity to sit in on a series of “Local Government ABCs” sessions that covered topics ranging from social media for elected officials to council/manager relations. Everyone came together for the reception and Awards Banquet that evening to celebrate the winners and the big announcement that the Town of Hillsville had won the President’s Award for Innovation. On Monday, breakout sessions covered topics such as PFAS regulations, Dominion Energy’s offshore wind power project, the future of data centers, and supreme court updates for local governments (to name but a few). Grant roundtables were hosted by DHCD and a variety of organizations that discussed topics such as speed cameras, youth sports, and cybersecurity.

Before, during and after the conference, VML members had op-

opportunities to review VML's draft policy and legislative statements. During the Annual Business Meeting the afternoon of Oct. 14 these statements, as well as an updated VML slate of officers, were voted on and approved. Town of Ashland Mayor Steve Trivett became the new VML president.

The final day of the conference wrapped up with an interactive "Futurecast" closing session hosted by Matt Lehrman.

Virginia Elected Officials Conference

The Virginia Elected Officials conference (formerly Newly Elected Officials conference) is a valuable, annual offering that includes topics relevant for both new and long-serving elected officials. The 2025 event was held on Wednesday, January 8 at The Place at Innsbrook. The return to this venue after the prior year's event was held in Downtown Richmond proved fortuitous as the date coincided with Richmond's water outage. Attendees heard presentations on topics including (but not limited to) Cannabis and Marijuana in the Workplace, Zoning and Land Use, Council Manager Relations, and Cybersecurity. The event also included the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Conflict of Interest Act (COIA) training required of all elected officials in Virginia.

The next Elected Officials Conference will take place Thursday, January 8, 2026, at The Place at Innsbrook. The offerings will once again include FOIA and COIA training.

Local Government Legislative Day

On January 30, more than 200 elected officials and staff from VML member localities gathered at the Richmond Hilton Downtown for 2025 Local Government Legislative Day. VML hosted the annual Local Government Day with participation from the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions. This was a departure from previous years in that the event was not co-hosted by the Virginia Association of Counties. As such, the targeted program was designed to more effectively cover legislative items of interest to VML's member towns and cities. The event kicked off at noon with remarks by VML President and Town of Ashland Mayor Steve Trivett. VML President Elect and Town of Amherst Mayor Dwayne Tuggle spoke in his capacity as President of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions on the working relationship between PDCs and VML. Attendees also heard from Chloe Rote, associate director of Affordable Housing with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

VML policy staff then walked attendees through the legislation and budget items important to local governments. After the briefing members visited the General Assembly to meet with their delegations and voice the concerns of their communities.

That evening, attendees were joined virtually by Senator Mark Warner and Senator Tim Kaine. During the reception that followed their remarks, attendees were joined by several state elected officials as well as Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears.

Thanks to everyone who came and spoke with their delegation members! This event is essential to furthering the goals of the VML Legislative Program and making local voices heard at the General Assembly each year. The next Local Government Day will be held Thursday, February 5, 2026, at the Richmond Hilton Downtown.

Broadband Together

VML was once again a co-host of the Broadband Together event held annually at the Hilton Short Pump outside of Richmond. The 2025 conference was held May 14-15 and as in years past brought industry experts and community leaders together to work on bridging the digital divide and leveraging broadband opportunities for all

of Virginia. Among this year's offerings were remarks from Governor Glenn Youngkin and presentations on topics such as Charting the Future, Advancing Universal Broadband for All Communities, Cybersecurity in a Connected World, and Resilience in Broadband Infrastructure among others.

Small Towns Conference

Building on the success of 2024's inaugural event in Abingdon, on June 5-6 over 100 elected officials and staff from small (and not so small) towns across Virginia gathered for two days of learning and networking. This year the event was held on the campus of Longwood University in the Town of Farmville with an evening reception on the Catbird Rooftop Terrace of the Hotel Wyanoke. Presentations were tailored to the unique concerns and capabilities of Virginia's smaller localities with topics such as Making the Most of Economic Development Opportunities, Helpful Hints for Working with VDOT on Local Projects, LED Streetlight Conversions for Towns, Water & Wastewater Considerations for Towns, Housing Resources Available to Towns and Emergency Management & Disaster Preparedness.

The next Virginia Small Towns Conference will be held in Chincoteague, May 14-15, 2026.

Communications

Magazine: *Virginia Town & City*

If you've noticed that recently VML's magazine *Virginia Town & City* (VTC) has arrived less frequently – but when it does arrive it seems a bit heftier – you're not imagining things! Beginning this year, VTC changed to a bi-monthly (six issues per year) schedule. This means that each issue has even more of the latest comings and goings in local government officials and staff, highlights of the achievements and fun events of our local government and Community Business Member organizations, and features on topics from across the Commonwealth. Since the last Annual Report, some of the topics featured in VTC have been:

2024:

- **October** – Conference Wrap-Up with photos and features on each of the Innovation Award winners.
- **November** – Managers matter! A feature article by longtime City of Falls Church Manager Rob Stalzer as well as interviews and articles with managers from Vinton, Amherst, and Gordonsville. Also, articles on DHCD's Main Street program and the Virginia Tech Certificate in Local Government.
- **December** – Meet VML President and Town of Ashland Mayor Steve Trivett. Plus, articles on tax and revenue challenges and the Supreme Court 2024-25 term preview for local governments.

2025:

- **January / February** – Talking Tappahannock: A small town doing big things. Also, Cybersecurity checklist for municipalities and highlights from Local Government Day.
- **March/April** – Celebrating Women's History Month including interviews with women leaders across Virginia: Amanda Pillion (Town of Abingdon), Maureen Coffey (County of Arlington), India Adams-Jacobs (Town of Bowling Green), Sue Way (Town of Buchanan), Letty Hardi (City of Falls Church), Deanna Reed (City of Harrisonburg), Kelly Burk (Town of Leesburg), Michelle Davis-Younger (City of Manassas), Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond (City of Virginia Beach), Bonnie Svrcek (Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute). ALSO – the 2025 General Assembly Wrap-Up!

- **May/June** – Education issue featuring the winners of our “If I Were Mayor” essay contest, and articles on the long-sought end to the support cap, a Falls Church intern’s education in legislation, the importance of continuing education for local government staff from American Public University, and understanding and building local government capacity from Crewe’s town manager.
- **July/August** – Caring for the Commonwealth from the Bay to the Blue Ridge featuring organizations doing good things for these natural wonders. Also included are articles spotlighting Warsaw, Brookneal, and Newport News, a PFAS update, and the National Fitness Campaign’s Fitness Courts.

Newsletter: eNews

2024-2025 was the first full year of eNews being accessible only to officials and staff from VML member organizations and those approved for access. Based on the regular inquiries VML receives from outside organizations to receive eNews, we are confident that our newsletter is considered a valuable resource by those interested in local governments. Throughout the year the bi-weekly eNews covers the issues, opportunities, and events that matter to Virginia’s local governments. This is especially true during General Assembly Sessions when eNews is published sometimes as often as several times a day to keep our members abreast of happenings at the General Assembly and to distribute legislative “Action Alerts.”

Website: www.vml.org

Not only is our website the repository for back issues of our newsletter and magazine, VML’s website is your resource for everything VML! Want to know who is on which policy committee? Want to download the latest edition of the Handbook for Virginia Mayors and Councilmembers? Need to register for a VML event? Want to post a job opening for your locality?

All these things (and so many more) are available to our members at www.vml.org.

Awards

Innovation Awards

In September, VML was pleased to announce the winners of its annual awards for excellence in local government. The statewide competition recognizes innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, citizen participation, and improved services to citizens.

The judges selected one winner in each of the eight categories. VML President and Town of Farmville Vice Mayor A.D. “Chuckie” Reid selected the Town of Hillsville’s entry in the Working with Youth category as the 2024 winner of the President’s Award for Innovation.

The winners of the 2024 VML Innovation Awards were:

WORKING WITH YOUTH & PRESIDENT’S AWARD FOR INNOVATION

Town of Hillsville – Youth Entrepreneurship Program

COMMUNITY HEALTH

City of Chesapeake – Chesapeake Thrives: A Plan for Health and Well-Being

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Town of Elkton – Downtown Marketplace

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Town of Leesburg – Treesburg Project



RISK MANAGEMENT

City of Bristol – Bristol Virginia Fire Dept. Active Shooter/Stop the Bleed Program

COMMUNICATIONS

City of Falls Church – East End Small Area Plan

PUBLIC SAFETY

City of Roanoke – Lock in Safety, Unlock Hope

“If I Were Mayor” essay contest

The annual “If I Were Mayor” contest invites seventh and eighth graders from throughout Virginia to submit essays describing what they would do if they were mayor of their hometown. The essay contest is a key component of VML’s civic education programming, which seeks to teach schoolchildren and adults how local government works and how they can become involved in making their communities better places to live, work, and play.

The challenge to the students is to present an issue in their locality, talk to others about possible solutions, and then identify what solution would best address the issue.

In addition to a certificate each regional winner received a gift card for \$150. The statewide winner received a certificate and a gift card for \$250. The certificates and gift cards were presented at council meetings over the summer. All the winning essays were featured in the May/June issue of VML’s magazine.

The 2025 winners were:

- Statewide winner: **Jelena Ly** of Edward W. Wyatt Middle School in Emporia
- Region 1: **John Sawyer** of Gate City Christian School in Gate City
- Region 3: **Foster Pickett** of Lylburn Downing Middle School in Lexington
- Region 4: **Adrienne Eagle** of Cornerstone Christian Academy in Appomattox
- Region 5: **Caroline Le** of Harper Park Middle School in Leesburg
- Region 7: **Noelle Harris** of E.W. Wyatt Middle School in Emporia
- Region 8: **Ellie Stevens** of Poquoson Middle School in Poquoson

*Note – VML did not receive any entries from regions 2 and 6 this year.

New Staff Member



In June, **Rebecca Rowe** began as the Virginia Municipal League’s new chief administrative officer. Rebecca came 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).

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.

Annual Briefings from VML's Affiliate Organizations



President: Sara McGuffin, Town Manager, Town of Amherst

VML Staff: Janet Areson, VML Director of Policy Development & VLGMA Executive Secretary

The **Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA)** is a statewide association of local government management professionals. Our mission is to support local government managers and administrators who work with their elected leadership to help build great communities in Virginia. Our priorities include offering professional development and networking, promoting principled leadership and ethical behavior in ourselves and our organizations, facilitating civic engagement in our communities, and fostering the development of the next generation of local government management professionals.

VLGMA offers members two statewide conferences each year that focus on professional development and information sharing. The association offers a statewide network of regional support coordinators and senior advisors, as well as access to a national coaching program through the International City-County Management Association (ICMA). The coaching program offers topical articles and webinars and allows for professional mentoring with seasoned managers.

Since the early 2000s, VLGMA has committed itself to developing the next generation of local government management professionals. VLGMA created and supported the development of the Local Government Certificate Program housed at Virginia Tech. That program has since become an established part of Virginia Tech's academic curriculum, and VLGMA continues to provide scholarship support to the program. Begun as a program targeted toward individuals working in a Virginia local government, it now includes full-time students who want to learn more about local government management. All courses are available through a virtual platform and are taught by current or retired Virginia local government management professionals. Several current managers and administrators in Virginia have completed the program.

VLGMA also actively supports the Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute, a program created in partnership with the Virginia Women Leading Government coalition and

the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center. This program offers women working in local government connections and skill building opportunities to improve their knowledge of local government management principles and practices. Additionally, VLGMA supports partial scholarships to the Senior Executive Institute and Leading, Educating and Development (LEAD) programs operated by the Virginia Institute of Government at the University of Virginia. Finally, VLGMA has recently begun to offer partial scholarships to selected first-time attendees to ICMA's annual conference.

The association's "Deputies, Assistants and Others" (DAO) group actively promotes professional development for individuals who are key non-chief administrative officer leaders in our local governments. The group offers one-day meetings each fall and spring, hosted by DAOs in communities around the state. These sessions focus on a specific topic or issue and give participants an opportunity to meet and learn from colleagues from across Virginia.

Recognizing the importance and value of deputy and assistant management staff, each year VLGMA recognizes an outstanding assistant or deputy manager/administrator with its Marcia Mashaw Outstanding Assistant Award. This year's recipient was Donna Cogswell, assistant county administrator in Westmoreland County.

VLGMA is led by a board consisting of seven officers and 12 executive committee members and is a state affiliate of the ICMA and an affiliate association of VML. To learn more about VLGMA, visit our website at www.vlgma.org.

If you are an elected leader, ask your CAO if they are a VLGMA member, and if they are not, please encourage them to get involved. Let them know that you actively support their membership in an organization that provides opportunities for professional growth and information sharing that will benefit them, your organization, and your community.



**President: Carey Saffelle, Director of Energy Services,
Town of Front Royal**

VML Staff: Sandra Harrington, MEPAV Secretary/Treasurer

The **Municipal Electric Power Association of Virginia (MEPAV)** was founded in 1954 with the main purpose of fostering a continuing spirit of cooperation among the various Virginia municipalities operating their own electric utilities and the various privately-owned and cooperatively owned utilities that supply most of the energy distributed by the municipalities.

MEPAV consists of 16 members including: Town of Bedford, Town of Blackstone, Bristol Virginia Utilities Authority, Town of Culpeper Light and Power, City of Danville Power and Light, Town of Elkton, City of Franklin Power and Light, Harrisonburg Electric Commission, City of Manassas, City of Martinsville, City of Radford, City of Richlands, City of Salem, Virginia Tech Electric Services, and the Town of Wakefield. Additionally, MEPAV is a member of the American Public Power Association (APPA), an organization

that advocates for over 2,000 towns and cities nationwide.

MEPAV is also supported by associate members which consist of persons, firms, or corporations engaged in or closely aligned with the generation, transmission, or distribution of electric energy; manufacturers and suppliers of utility equipment; or members of municipalities not engaged in operating electric systems.

MEPAV is governed by an elected board of directors and meets several times throughout the year. In addition, MEPAV annually hosts an Engineering and Operations Seminar and Annual Conference. These events provide training, information sharing, and networking opportunities for MEPAV members and associate members.

For more information about MEPAV please visit the website at www.mepav.org.



**President: Jason Laws, Assistant Director,
Building Inspections Department, Chesterfield County**

VML Staff: Sandra Harrington, VBCOA Executive Director

The **Virginia Building and Code Officials Association (VBCOA)** is a statewide association of building safety professionals dedicated to the health, safety, and welfare of all persons who live, work, and visit the Commonwealth of Virginia. Since 1929, VBCOA has worked to foster partnerships among all groups associated with the construction industry. Membership includes over 1,000 members including building and safety professionals from across the Commonwealth dedicated to the protection of health, safety, and welfare.

VBCOA is governed by an elected and appointed Board of Directors that meets quarterly. Additionally, VBCOA provides educational opportunities at the Mid-Year and Annual Conference and provides educational opportunities all year long. VBCOA is also a member of the International Code Council (ICC) and has many members who have either served on, or are currently on, the ICC Board.

For more information, please visit the VBCOA website www.vbcoa.org.



**Chair: Stephen Burr, Energy Manager,
Arlington County**

**VML Staff: Sandra Harrington,
VEPGA Secretary/Treasurer**

Dating back to the 1970's, local governments in the Dominion Energy service territory formed a Steering Committee to collectively negotiate electric power rates and terms and conditions of service. For more than two decades, the Steering Committee negotiated multi-year electric contracts with Dominion Energy that included rates based on cost of service as well as terms and conditions reflective of government needs. This joint effort ensured that localities could benefit from the ability to share legal, consulting, and administrative costs related to these activities.

In 2002, the Steering Committee was formally organized as a joint powers association and became what is now known as

the **Virginia Energy Purchasing Governmental Association (VEPGA)**. VEPGA continues to negotiate contracts on behalf of its members, monitors state regulatory and legislative developments, and maintains several committees to advance its members' interests. VEPGA is governed by an elected board of directors which meets quarterly, provides educational opportunities throughout the year for its members, and holds an Annual Meeting. VEPGA membership includes over 170 Virginia local governments, public school systems, authorities, and other governmental entities.

Please visit www.vepgg.org to learn more.

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The VML Voice is the official podcast of the Virginia Municipal League. Each episode explores a different locality or issue but the focus is always on Virginia and the local governments that make the Commonwealth work for everyone.

Contact Rob Bullington, rbullington@vml.org to suggest topics, ask questions, or inquire about sponsorship opportunities.

Subscribe at www.vml.org or scan the QR to listen to all episodes.



2025 VML Local Government Members

Cities

City of Alexandria
City of Bristol
City of Buena Vista
City of Charlottesville
City of Chesapeake
City of Colonial Heights
City of Covington
City of Danville
City of Emporia
City of Fairfax
City of Falls Church
City of Franklin
City of Fredericksburg
City of Galax
City of Hampton
City of Harrisonburg
City of Hopewell
City of Lexington
City of Manassas
City of Manassas Park
City of Martinsville
City of Newport News
City of Norfolk
City of Norton
City of Petersburg
City of Poquoson
City of Portsmouth
City of Radford
City of Richmond
City of Roanoke
City of Salem
City of Staunton
City of Suffolk
City of Virginia Beach
City of Waynesboro
City of Williamsburg
City of Winchester

Towns

Town of Abingdon
Town of Accomac
Town of Alberta
Town of Altavista
Town of Amherst
Town of Appomattox
Town of Ashland
Town of Bedford
Town of Berryville
Town of Big Stone Gap
Town of Blacksburg
Town of Blackstone
Town of Bluefield
Town of Boones Mill
Town of Bowling Green
Town of Boydton
Town of Boykins
Town of Branchville

Town of Bridgewater
Town of Broadway
Town of Brodnax
Town of Brookneal
Town of Buchanan
Town of Burkeville
Town of Cape Charles
Town of Capron
Town of Cedar Bluff
Town of Charlotte Court House
Town of Chase City
Town of Chatham
Town of Cheriton
Town of Chilhowie
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All localities are encouraged to participate on policy committees. Nomination forms are sent to each locality in the spring. Let a VML staff member know of your interest or send an email to e-mail@vml.org and we will follow up with you.



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Downtown Inventory + Redevelopment: A blueprint for community revitalization

How the Downtown Survey and Property Inventory Project helped communities across Southwest Virginia this summer.

VIRGINIA'S DOWNTOWNS AND Main Streets are more than just physical spaces; they are economic engines, cultural anchors, and community hubs. However, some historic Main Streets throughout the Commonwealth have recently faced shifting economic and population trends while also grappling with deferred maintenance of historic buildings and aging infrastructure. To help overcome these challenges, Virginia Main Street (VMS) partnered with the Friends of Southwest Virginia in the summer of 2025 to launch the Downtown Inventory and Real Estate Redevelopment Strategy Project, supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

As part of that effort, the Downtown Survey and Property Inventory Project visited ten communities in Southwest Virginia – **Bristol, Buena Vista, Covington, Galax, Marion, Martinsville, Pulaski, St. Paul, Tazewell, and Wytheville**. The project provided each community with a detailed inventory of available downtown properties and offered both new and experienced developers critical insights to reduce investment risks and accelerate development. These insights identified areas of strength, opportunities for growth, and gaps within the small and large developer ecosystems.

“We hope that the findings of the Downtown Survey and Property Inventory Project will serve as a foundation for fostering a new generation of real estate developers and investors, addressing the region’s housing and economic growth needs.”

- Courtney Mailey, Program Manager – Virginia Main Street

Why focus on downtowns? Why now?

Through the Department of Housing and Community Development’s Virginia Main Street program, communities can turn revitalization into a pathway for economic opportunity. In 2024, Virginia Main Street communities generated nearly \$39 million in private investment with 239 new or expanded businesses and 661 jobs created. These outcomes prove that focusing on and investing in downtowns pays off over time.

“Downtowns are the heart and soul of Southwest Virginia’s communities. Beyond just being commercial and civic centers, downtowns act as hubs of economic vitality and cultural identity. These are the places where small businesses can take root, where historic buildings add a sense of place, and where residents and visitors can experience the best the region has to offer.”

- Jessica Lawrence, Outdoor Recreation Development Manager – Friends of Southwest Virginia

Main Street districts are often the first to reflect evolving retail patterns, changing demographics, and structural adjustments in traditional industries. With this in mind, Joe Borgstrom and Kirsten Borgstrom of Place + Main Advisors, who led the ARC project in summer 2025, used extensive market and visitor data as well as in-depth community engagement. They also partnered with local Main Street organizations to identify achievable real estate strategies for each of the participating communities. Joe notes, “By arming communities with current data, market insights, and real estate redevelopment strategies, municipalities can help ensure that Main Streets are not just preserved but positioned for the future.”

Kirsten observes, “Investments in downtown create a ripple effect: they support entrepreneurs, attract visitors, grow the local tax base, and reinforce community pride. Strong downtowns and Main Streets are at the center of vibrant regions. They are one of the most effective places for municipal leaders to direct resources if they want to see broad, long-lasting returns.”



The process: Analyze. Tour. Inventory. Envision.

Each of the 10 communities that participated in the 2025 project has an active Advancing Virginia Main Street or Mobilizing Main Street organization. The leaders, staff, and board members of these organizations know their community’s aspirations and achievements. Moreover, they have influence among stakeholders including local government leaders, businesses and property owners, and residents. Having these local Main Street organizations involved from the start also means that they are well-positioned to help implement the project’s recommendations.

The process included:

1. **Data Analysis:** Before visiting each community, Place + Main Advisors analyzed current third-party market and visitor data to determine which retail business opportunities the community could support. These analytics focused primarily

on the spending power and patterns of the local consumer market but also included trends in the days and hours visitors frequent the downtown or Main Street districts. Any shortage in specific retail offerings showed which business types would have the best chance of succeeding.

2. **Community and Property Tours:** At the start of each site visit, the local Main Street organization led a familiarization tour to provide context for the Main Street district. The local Main Street organizations also facilitated individual downtown property tours of significant underutilized properties that could be redeveloped for new businesses.
3. **Downtown Property Inventory:** A detailed geospatial property database of all the properties in each Main Street district was created using Main Street America's Building Opportunities on Main Street (BOOMS) tracker (see QR code below). This tool inventories vacancies, usage, owner contact information, size, year built, assessed value, number of storefronts and housing units, availability, and historic register status. The dashboard of the BOOMS tracker visually reports and tracks building changes and opportunities over time.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the BOOMS tracker.

4. **Community Visioning Tour:** Each community hosted a tour to give residents the opportunity to indicate what businesses and uses they would want to see in their downtown or Main Street district. The community visioning tours invited citizens, business owners, property owners, local elected officials, and potential investors. These walking tours of up to 45 people visited key underutilized properties and brainstormed future uses of vacant properties. Each person compared ideas with others in their group and wrote their ideas on sticky notes

that were posted to the building. The Place + Main team then cross-referenced the notes with market data to identify business opportunities with significant community support specific to each building.

Recommendations and themes

Several common themes emerged from the project's recommendations:

- Raise standards and expectations
- Invest in entrepreneurial support
- Add housing
- Strengthen connections to cultural and recreational assets

Raise standards and expectations

A common trend in the region's downtown and Main Street districts was that the community had low expectations about local purchasing power to support quality businesses and commercial tenants. This attitude led some property owners to accept below-market rental rates, defer building maintenance, and adopt lower standards than the community's market power justified. In some cases, potential new businesses faced high upfront costs that made the downtown location too risky and led them to choose a different location. These upfront costs were not only burdens for the property owners (who are expected to provide market-ready retail shells with utilities), but also for potential tenants (who are responsible for upfitting the shell to create a customized retail experience).

It was also recommended that clear and fair enforcement of building codes and regulations, as well as incentives such as façade grants, low-interest loans, and help navigating historic tax credits (discussed further below), would incentivize owners to rehabilitate spaces to make them move-in ready. A building that falls into disrepair not only lowers the returns for the property owner, but also devalues neighboring properties by creating environmental risks such as fire and safety, and degrades the appearance of the district overall.



On the other hand, well-maintained and upgraded properties lead to increased tenant retention and more stable rental rates, helping both property owners and their tenants succeed.

Throughout the project, most communities developed a greater appreciation for their market strength and came to see that their downtowns are ripe with opportunities for new businesses to thrive.

Invest in entrepreneurial support

Another common recommendation from the project was for the communities to create a more formal and coordinated approach to supporting small businesses. Even in small communities, the downtown can be a hub for local entrepreneurship, from retail to restaurants to small-scale manufacturing. Main Street organizations and municipal leaders can support entrepreneurs by helping to create a variety of retail spaces that allow businesses to grow over time. This is helpful because oftentimes the buildings in a downtown district can be too large for a single small business to occupy. For example, demising walls can partition different areas of a building, allowing property owners to transform their large space into smaller footprints with the flexibility to change the layout when needed.

Similarly, Main Street organizations and local leaders can assist entrepreneurs by creating and marketing micro-retail properties with shared retail space and mobile retailers. These can be a huge enticement to entrepreneurs because they allow businesses to evolve as they become more successful and sustainable.

Finally, it was recommended that Main Street organizations and other economic development partners share the market data generated from the project with entrepreneurs. This can provide the rationale for proprietors to expand an existing retail footprint, expand to a new location in the district, or open a new brick and mortar store.

Add housing

An increased supply of housing in and around a downtown area creates year-round customers for businesses and can often have out-sized benefits. For example, in many of the communities that participated in the project, it was determined that adding just 25 additional housing units to the downtown would increase local purchasing power

by more than \$1 million!

One of the best options to increase housing is to make use of upper-story residential development, which not only fills vacant or underutilized space but also returns value to property owners and the municipality. These units usually leverage current water and sewer systems, thereby avoiding many of the costly extensions or upgrades required for suburban or exurban development. Other “missing middle” housing types allow downtown living to be more accessible to a range of residents. Options such as upper-story apartments, row housing, duplexes, townhomes, and mid-rise apartments not only diversify the housing stock but also respond to shifting demographic trends, including single-person households, young professionals, and retirees seeking more walkable, connected lifestyles.

Strengthen connections to assets

The 10 communities that participated in the project all had proximity to nearby cultural and recreational assets. A short walk, drive, or bike ride in any of these localities takes downtown visitors to some of Virginia’s best natural assets and cultural amenities such as trails, rivers, scenic areas, historic sites, and regional attractions. However, it was found that too often visitors to these attractions do not go the other way because it was not clear how to get from the attractions to the downtown.

The project identified strategies to create links between these assets and the downtown districts. These included:

- **Install branded wayfinding signs.** These direct visitors to downtown parking, lodging, shopping, and dining. While traditional wayfinding can be an expensive and timely process, communities can install temporary signs that attach to existing infrastructure to guide visitors to the downtown attractions.
- **Capture more cycling tourists.** Cyclists are a high-value audience that visit trails and other outdoor attractions. They are great for downtowns since they tend to spend more per day on food and local experiences than the average visitor. Cycling infrastructure such as bike racks, repair stations, and cyclist maps enable downtowns to attract more of these desirable visitors.





- **Work to increase awareness of connectivity.** Marketing campaigns are a great way to position downtown as a gateway to natural features and assets. Friends of Southwest Virginia, for example, works to cross-promote between tourism assets and is a valuable regional partner for this kind of effort.
- **Partner with local institutions.** When it makes sense to do so, partnering with established, local organizations to host joint events or promotions can increase awareness of the connections between assets and the downtown.

Case Study: Turning visitors into investors in downtown Wytheville

Downtown Wytheville, Inc. (DTW) already knows how to attract visitors to its downtown. From 2023 to 2024, the Main Street district received over two million visits with 262,000 unique visitors, indicative of a strong level of foot traffic. The built environment is in good condition with businesses doing well and vacancies relatively low. Wytheville's healthy tourism presence brings a unique opportunity to leverage those visitors into long-term customers, investors, and advocates for the downtown.

The Virginia Downtown Inventory and Real Estate Redevelopment Strategy pilot project market analysis for DTW revealed that there is more opportunity for capturing local spending by visitors and residents. While some retail categories are oversupplied for the current market, other categories clearly show unmet demands. Specific opportunities and the square footage they would need to meet demand include furniture and home furnishings (9,000–12,000 sq ft.), women's clothing (6,000 sq ft.), cosmetics and beauty supplies (6,000 sq ft.), and sporting goods (12,000 sq ft.). For the downtown business to fully benefit from the high foot traffic, DTW can pursue strategies such as intentional entrepreneurial support, retail recruitment, property readiness, and existing business expansion in the key categories identified in the market analysis.

Promote and provide education on historic tax credits

The rich tapestry of historic buildings in each Main Street district distinguishes it from newer commercial districts and strip centers. These buildings are part of a community's character and reinforce its history and local identity. Yet the very qualities that make these buildings so valuable can also make them challenging to redevelop. It is impossible to build a new historic building, but maintaining a historic building's architectural integrity while ensuring it meets modern standards can often be more difficult than building something new. That's why it is essential to educate property owners on the benefits of federal and state historic preservation tax credits.

For public and private property owners alike, tax credits can be the difference between a vacant, deteriorating building and a restored downtown anchor for thriving businesses and housing. Federal and state historic tax credits can provide up to 45 percent of eligible rehabilitation expenses. These credits bring funding that can make the difference between a project that works on paper and comes to fruition versus one that looks too risky to move forward.

Despite the incentives that historic tax credits offer, many property owners are either unaware of the opportunity or believe the process is too complicated to feel confident using them. By offering education sessions and technical assistance, local Main Street organizations and municipalities can encourage property owners to unlock millions of dollars in private investment.

Next steps

The Virginia Downtown Inventory and Real Estate Redevelopment Strategy pilot project equipped 10 communities in the ARC region with data-driven strategies to continue their downtown revitalization work. The next step is for the local governments and Main Street organizations to pair the data from this project with policies and incentives that encourage redevelopment and entrepreneurial support. So long as these communities continue to view their downtowns not as side projects but as central drivers of economic success, they will prosper and grow.

About the author: Amy Guzulaitis is a program administrator for Virginia Main Street and previously worked for a nonprofit advocating for sustainable development in the Richmond region.



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Why “recovery capital” is the key to truly overcoming the opioid crisis

THE RECENT NEWS on efforts to curb the abuse of synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl, has been trending positive. In fact, data from the Virginia Department of Health shows a preliminary 43% decline in overdose deaths from 2023 when Governor Youngkin issued Executive Order 26 to strengthen Virginia’s enforcement response to the fentanyl crisis.

But enforcement alone will not release Virginia nor the rest of the United States from the grip of this persistent and deadly drug crisis. Understanding the core of this epidemic means understanding the unique nature of substance use disorder: a chronic, relapsing disease with biological, psychological, and social dimensions. Studies show that up to 85% of individuals relapse within the first year after completing inpatient treatment, with the likelihood of relapsing decreasing as individuals remain in recovery. As such, Virginia must invest in post-treatment support systems that reduce the risk of relapse, with a particular focus on developing and improving long-term “recovery capital” for those with substance use disorder. One system already in place – recovery residences – might be improved to better position individuals for recovery and long-term growth.

The root of relapses

Though often misunderstood as a lack of willpower, relapses are actually rooted in long-term neurological changes. Brain imaging studies indicate that chronic drug exposure remodels at least four primary brain circuits – reward, motivation/drive, memory/learning, and control – through alterations in dopaminergic and glutamatergic signaling in key brain regions like the ventral striatum, prefrontal cortex, amygdala, hippocampus, and insula. These physical neuroadaptations and biochemical changes critically impair decision-making

and behavioral control, weakening an individual’s ability to resist cravings and halt drug use despite adverse consequences. Studies have identified three primary triggers for relapse: direct re-exposure to the drug, acute stressors, and environmental cues linked to past use.

Of these triggers, direct re-exposure to the drug is often the easiest to see. A person in recovery from alcohol

use who is handed a drink at a party is faced with a powerful, tangible temptation that can be especially difficult to resist in early stages of recovery. Less immediate, but also equally significant, are stressors like social adversity, trauma, and unpredictable life events. These can produce intense emotional distress and may prompt drug-seeking behavior, especially in the absence of a stable support system.

One of the most persistent and often underestimated risk factors, however, is environmental re-exposure. Repeated drug use creates strong emotional memories that link the drug’s effects to specific cues—behaviors, places, people, and objects. These associations are stored in brain regions like the amygdala, hippocampus, and insula and can be powerfully reactivated even after long periods of abstinence. As a result, returning to the same environment after treatment can induce intense cravings, even in individuals who have maintained sobriety for some time.



Understanding the recovery capital framework

Reducing relapse rates requires more than traditional rehabilitation treatment alone; it demands long-term investment in the many conditions that strengthen an individual’s *recovery capital*. This concept, first introduced in 2004 by researchers Robert Granfield and William Cloud, refers to the breadth and depth of internal and external resources individuals can draw on to sustain their recovery. Dr. David Best and American researcher Alexandre Laudet gave structure to this idea by developing a taxonomy of recovery capital that includes three main categories (outlined in the chart below).

Recovery Capital Category	Examples
Personal	Coping skills, self-esteem, and communication skills
Social	Supportive relationships and peer networks
Community	Access to housing, employment, healthcare, and recovery services

Researchers have also explored the concept of negative recovery capital, which includes barriers such as trauma, incarceration, or mental health challenges that actively hinder the recovery process.

Efforts to measure recovery capital have led to the development of several assessment tools, most notably the 50-item Assessment of Recovery Capital (ARC) Scale and the shorter 10-item Brief ARC, which both focus on evaluating personal and social recovery capital. However, both the ARC and Brief ARC have been criticized for overlooking structural predictors and the experiences of diverse populations. In response, a new instrument, the REC-CAP, was developed to provide a more holistic framework, to incorporate barriers to recovery (negative recovery capital), and to increase the focus on community aspects of recovery capital. REC-CAP was designed for use in a range of applied clinical and community settings and is tied directly to care planning and community engagement.

The role of recovery residences

Recovery residences – housing programs that aim to provide safe, substance-free environments for individuals transitioning out of treatment – are uniquely positioned to support all three categories of recovery capital. In these settings, REC-CAP results often inform personalized recovery plans that focus on resolving an individual’s unique barriers and increasing the strength of their recovery. Recovery residences can play a vital role in reducing relapse risk and promoting long-term stability.

The National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) sets the most widely adopted national standards for recovery housing, outlining four levels of support that offer progressively increasing degrees of structure, supervision, and intensity of programming. These range from fully democratic peer-run homes (Level I) to clinically staffed and supervised programs (Level IV). All four levels follow NARR’s social model of recovery, which emphasizes the power of group experience in fostering a culture of recovery based on shared lived experience, support, and structure.

Changes coming to recovery residences in Virginia

In 2025, Virginia lawmakers introduced Senate Bill 838 (SB838) to strengthen oversight of recovery residences across the state. This legislation was led by Senators Schuyler VanValkenburg (D-Henrico) and Barbara Favola (D-Arlington), with support from Delegates David Owen (R-Goochland) and Rodney Willett (D-Henrico). The bill amends § 37.2-431.1 of the Virginia Code, shifting recovery residence certification from a voluntary process to a mandatory requirement enforced by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS). SB838 directs DBHDS to create a conditional certification framework for new and existing homes and expands enforcement by changing the original civil liability violation to a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Furthermore, whereas current regulations define a credentialed house as one that has been certified by an Oxford House Charter or the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR), SB838 establishes DBHDS – not third-party groups – as the final certification authority. This means that DBHDS must now ensure public transparency around certification, inspections, and complaints.

The bill also creates a statewide workgroup composed of DBHDS officials, local governments, recovery housing groups, and community members to develop updated credentialing guidelines. The aim is to ensure that all Virginia recovery residences meet consistent and enforceable standards. These recommendations are due to the General Assembly by October 1, 2025.

Despite SB838's potential to reform the recovery residence landscape in Virginia, there remain some concerns about fragmented oversight and consistent protection of residents' rights. Among these concerns are resident exit procedures.

The Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA) governs landlord-tenant relationships in Virginia and outlines key tenant protections, including the right to prior notice before eviction, the right of redemption (which allows tenants to pay back overdue rent to avoid eviction), and the right to recover personal property (a 24-hour window after eviction). Landlords are also required to inform tenants of these rights.

However, following the passage of HB277 (Coyner) in 2022, **certified recovery housing providers are exempt from the provisions of the VRLTA**. As such, those living in recovery residences run the risk of eviction without formal notice, cause, or protection, leaving them vulnerable to homelessness and incarceration. In contrast, residents in non-certified recovery homes remain protected under the VRLTA. This creates a paradox in which certification may increase certain risks for residents even as it reduces risk in other areas like quality of service and oversight. SB838 attempts to mitigate this by establishing a statewide Residents' Bill of Rights and termination protocols. However, because SB838 mandates immediate certification for all recovery homes before revising the certification process, it may inadvertently extend the VRLTA exemption to all sober homes, leaving more residents vulnerable to eviction before appropriate safeguards are put in place.

The stakes for those on the path to recovery – especially those who have just completed clinical treatment – could not be higher. Eviction is an abrupt change that creates a high-risk window for relapse. Research shows that even short stays in homeless shelters are associated with a return to stimulant use among those who had previously stopped, suggesting that the uncertainty of temporary or unstable living situations can trigger relapse. Recently evicted individuals may also enter a previous residence that was associated with substance use, another risk factor for relapse. One study found that individuals who are “doubled up” with friends or family members are

at particularly high risk due to lack of institutional support and re-exposure to acquaintances also using substances. After losing housing, individuals are also more vulnerable to incarceration for drug-related crimes. Ultimately, those experiencing relapse-related eviction must face a cascade of challenges that rapidly erode the recovery capital they worked to build through treatment and their residence program, often within days of losing stable housing.

Building trust in recovery residences

Upholding resident rights also means carving out protected space for their voices. Recovery residences should be required to establish clear, accessible grievance procedures that allow residents to appeal unjust decisions or report mistreatment without fear of eviction or retaliation. Consistent accountability across operators is essential in preserving the trust required for residents to fully engage in the recovery process. To avoid conflict of interest concerns, systems could route complaints through third-party or unaffiliated entities rather than organizations responsible for certification or other internal staff. Equipping DBHDS with independent investigative authority and enforceable grievance protocols will be critical in this respect.

Navigating relapses in recovery residences

While relapse is a part of the recovery process, recovery residences have a responsibility to maintain a drug-free environment for the safety and progress of all residents. Instead of solely relying on rapid or punitive evictions, recovery residences can establish structured, trauma-informed exit policies that include re-engagement pathways, step-down care, and harm reduction programs. Protocols must also be in place to prevent unjust or discriminatory evictions such as those carried out without proper notice, without clear cause, or without due process comparable to evidentiary standards required under the VRLTA. Although full VRLTA coverage does not apply to certified recovery residences (as outlined above), key tenant protections should still be preserved. Without these safeguards, we risk punishing those experiencing a relapse instead of responding to the relapse as a manageable symptom of a mental health condition.

Final thoughts

As we implement the coming changes to the recovery residence system – and anticipate other future changes – REC-CAP should continue to be used to assess a program's effectiveness and each person's recovery progress. Beyond REC-CAP, however, we must keep in mind that policy surrounding addiction recovery must reflect an understanding of addiction as a complex, multi-faceted mental health condition to be truly impactful. Long-term recovery is not a one-time fix, but the product of continuous investment in the personal and structural support that make up an individual's recovery capital. When we design systems that meet individuals where they are and help them build skills to navigate adversity, we foster the kind of resilience that lasts long after treatment ends.



About the author: *Noyanika Vattathara was VML's 2025 summer intern. She is a fourth-year student at the University of Virginia completing an Echols Interdisciplinary Major in neuroscience, computer science, and public policy with a data science minor. After graduation, she hopes to work on making systems more equitable, with a particular interest in healthcare and technology.*

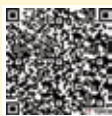
CITY OF HAMPTON

By Rebecca Trout

How Hampton earned All-America City recognition by turning its biggest challenge into a civic superpower

IN THE CITY of Hampton, water is everywhere. It surrounds the city on three sides, laps at shorelines, flows through creeks, and sometimes spills onto streets and into homes. Rising sea levels, intensifying storms, and recurrent flooding have become the city's defining resilience challenge. But Hampton's residents and local leaders have learned to work together to face this reality. That teamwork earned Hampton national recognition as one of just 10 communities named a 2025 All-America City by the National Civic League.

The All-America City honor is a big deal in civic circles — and one Hampton knows well. This year marks the city's fifth time receiving the designation, a testament to its long-standing culture of engagement and equity.



Scan the QR code to view the press release celebrating all the 2025 All-America City Award winners!

While the core criteria remain civic engagement and collaborative problem-solving, the award's annual theme spotlights timely national priorities. In 2025, the focus was advancing environmental sustainability through inclusive civic engagement. Hampton's application stood out, showcasing its long tradition of resident-led governance — known as The Hampton Way — and a bold, community-centered response to climate challenges.

Hampton knows it can't wall itself off from the water. Instead, it adapts with a resilience strategy guided by safety, equity, heritage, and innovation — integrating flood protection, environmental restoration, economic opportunity, and recreation.

A network of partners

Citizen bodies, as well as residents, businesses, and nonprofits, work together on environmental efforts. In Hampton, litter isn't just an eyesore; it pollutes waterways and harms ecosystems, so thousands join community cleanups, create pollinator gardens, and install rain barrels.

Schools are also in on the fun with teachers leading school-based recycling drives, oyster restoration projects, and hands-on science activities.

Centering the community's voice

The Phoebus Partnership, a joint business and civic association, recently set out to restore a damaged waterfront park in a flood-prone historic neighborhood. Staying true to The Hampton Way, the effort engaged residents through pop-up events, surveys, yard signs, Facebook updates, and even front yard potlucks. Their input shaped plans for a living shoreline and a welcoming, resilient space.

Volunteers and partners came together for two workdays, installing donated stones and planting native greenery. Today, Phoebus is a thriving district. As one representative shared at Hampton's All-America City presentation, "The city owns the land, but it's our park, and we maintain it!"



Scan the QR code to watch the video of Hampton's 2025 All-America City presentation.

Leading with heritage and heart

Aberdeen Gardens, built 90 years ago by and for African Americans, has long been a close-knit neighborhood. But increased flooding now threatens homes and its historic cemetery. Partnering with Wetlands Watch, residents co-created a resilience plan through door-to-door outreach, events, and meetings. It includes stormwater upgrades, creek restoration, tree planting, school programs, and a revived community garden.

The project initially secured a \$20 million EPA grant — later rescinded — but continues through alternative funding and city partnerships. For Margaret Wilson, president of the Historical Foundation of Aberdeen Gardens, the success of this effort is personal: "This project would save the place that I have lived in most of my life," she said.





The win (and what it means)

Hampton received the 2025 All-America City Award on June 29 in Denver, CO, alongside over 500 delegates from the 20 national finalists. When announced, cheers erupted as Hampton was celebrated for its model of civic engagement and environmental leadership.

As Doug Linkhart, president of the National Civic League, put it: “Hampton’s application and presentation showed that they are a national model for engaging residents, businesses, and government stakeholders in the pursuit of environmental goals. Their efforts are creating lasting impacts that reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change while bolstering residents’ well-being.”



Margaret Wilson

You’ve got to play to win!

Since 1949, the National Civic League’s All-America City Award has recognized the best in American civic innovation – honoring communities that excel in local innovation, inclusive engagement, and cross-sector collaboration. More than 500 have been honored for tackling pressing issues and strengthening civic life.

Virginia has a proud tradition of All-America City winners – 21 communities have earned the title since the award’s founding. The National Civic League is eager to see even more towns, cities, tribes, and counties from the Commonwealth participate in 2026.

The 2026 award will mark America at 250: Strengthening Civic Life and Building Trust, honoring communities that are engaging residents to solve local challenges, foster belonging, and bring America’s founding ideals to life.

Communities of all sizes are welcome to apply. The process itself often yields benefits – uncovering hidden success stories, building new partnerships, and boosting civic pride.



Scan the QR code for details on the 2026 application process.



In other NCL news, we are pleased to announce that VML Executive Director Michelle Gowdy has been recommended to the NCL Board and will be confirmed in November.

About the author: Rebecca Trout is the director of the All-America City Award and the D.C. Office for the National Civic League.



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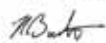
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PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 2 of 4)

In Memoriam:

Former Ashland Vice Mayor John H. Hodges



- Hodges -

With deep sorrow and enduring gratitude, the Town of Ashland announced the passing of former Vice Mayor **John H. Hodges**, who died at his home on August 1 surrounded by his beloved family and the love of a community he served faithfully for more than four decades.

The Town of Ashland staff shared the following statement: “We are grateful for John’s life, his service, and the countless ways he worked to strengthen Ashland. His legacy will continue to inspire our efforts to serve with the same care, thoughtfulness, and heart that he exemplified every day.”

Indeed, Hodges’ life was a remarkable tapestry of public service, personal kindness, and quiet strength. A devoted husband, father, grandfather, and friend, his legacy in Ashland is one of vision, humility, and connection. From his early days as Hanover County’s director of planning to his eight years on the Ashland Town Council – including seven as vice mayor – Hodges helped shape a community that reflects the values he held dear: balance, integrity, and care for others.

Over a 30-year career with Hanover County and later through his elected service in Ashland, Hodges championed smart growth, environmental stewardship, and respectful collaboration. His calm, steady leadership earned the admiration of peers across the region, including on the PlanRVA Board and the Central Virginia Transportation Authority, which honored him earlier this year for his lifetime contributions to public service.

Hodges was instrumental in key projects that improved the quality of life in Ashland while protecting its unique charm – among them the redevelopment of Carter Park Pool, the new Town Hall, and the Fall Line Trail. Whether walking the neighborhood with constituents or sharing a warm smile at the farmers market, Hodges embodied what it means to serve a community with heart.

A public celebration of Hodges’ life was held on August 9 at the Hanover Arts and Activities Center in Ashland. In lieu of flowers, the family encourages early cancer screenings and donations to the Prostate Cancer Foundation or the Hanover & King William Habitat for Humanity, both causes close to Hodges’ heart.

Former Covington Mayor William Carson



- Carson -

William Elantha “Lance” Carson Jr., 65, of Covington, passed away July 19 at the Brian Center-Alleghany in Low Moor following a courageous battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease).

He was born October 16, 1959, in Charlottesville, a son of the late William E. “Kitt” Carson Sr. and Virginia Cave Carson. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters-in-law, Peggy Gabbert Redmon and Virginia Smith Hogg.

Carson dedicated his life to serving the Alleghany Highlands community in numerous ways. He began his career as a social worker with Alleghany-Covington Social Services in Adult Protective Services, retiring in 2018 after many years of impactful service. Following retirement, he continued his commitment to public service by earning a seat on the Covington City Council and was elected mayor in January 2025. A proud 1983 Ferrum College graduate, Carson was an enthusiastic UVA supporter and avid sports fan.

A funeral service was held on July 23 at Good News Church. Memorial contributions in Carson’s name can be made to: Word of Life Ministries, P.O. Box 504, Covington, VA 24426. Friends may send condolences to the family at arrittfuneralhome.com.

Shelton appointed director of finance for Richmond



- Shelton -

The City of Richmond has appointed **Letitia Shelton** as its new director of finance. Her first day with the city was August 6.

Shelton has more than 30 years of experience in public sector finance, most recently serving as director of finance for the City of Virginia Beach, which holds a Triple-A bond rating from all three major credit rating agencies. In her role with Virginia Beach, Shelton oversaw core functions such as accounting, purchasing, risk management, debt management, payroll, and financial system services. An experienced leader, Shelton is known for her commitment to transparency, accountability, and fiscal management.

“Ms. Shelton is a powerhouse in municipal finance and operations, and we are incredibly blessed to have her return to Richmond for this critical leadership role,” said Chief Administrative Officer Odie Donald II. “She brings a much-needed combination of technical expertise, executive leadership, and deep roots in Richmond. Most importantly, she shares my people-first, people-always mindset and brings thoughtful, collaborative leadership that will truly benefit the entire organization.”

Born and raised in Richmond, Shelton began her career with the city where she served for 19 years in several key roles, including interim director of Public Works and deputy director of Finance and Administration. During her tenure she oversaw financial operations, implemented automation initiatives, managed the annual operating and Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) budgets, and collaborated with external consultants.

Shelton has also held senior positions in Charlottesville and DeSoto, TX, including deputy city manager and chief operating officer. In these roles she delivered audit opinions, maintained Triple-A bond ratings, and enhanced financial operations.

During Shelton’s tenure, Virginia Beach maintained its Triple-A rating from all three major credit rating agencies, a reflection of the city’s strong financial performance. In 2024, WalletHub ranked Virginia Beach ninth among the Best-Run Cities in America and second in Quality of City Services.

Prince George County Fire & EMS promotes Koren and Taflinger



- Koren -



- Taflinger -

The Prince George County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department has promoted two outstanding leaders within the organization: Lt. **Jason Koren** to captain of support services, effective July 1, and Lt. **Greg Taflinger** to training captain, effective August 1.

In his new role, Koren will ensure that all operational aspects of the department run efficiently. His leadership will continue to strengthen internal operations and logistical support critical to emergency response readiness.

"Captain Koren is an integral part of our department," said Pedro Caceres, Fire & EMS chief for Prince George County. "He is key to ensuring all aspects of our operations can move forward in pursuit of our mission to make a positive difference for our community."

Taflinger's appointment follows what was a rigorous and highly competitive selection process that evaluated technical proficiency, leadership ability, training experience, and a strong commitment to the department's mission of excellence in fire protection and emergency medical services.

"Captain Taflinger distinguished himself throughout this process," said Caceres. "He demonstrated exceptional knowledge, dedication, and a vision for the development of personnel. His ability to lead, instruct, and inspire will be invaluable in shaping the skills and readiness of the department."

As training captain, Taflinger will be responsible for the development, coordination, and implementation of training programs across the department. His leadership will directly support the professional growth of firefighters and EMTs while ensuring the department remains prepared to meet the evolving needs of Prince George County.

Hughes tapped as Suffolk interim city manager after Moor retires; Benton appointed director of Public Works

Kevin Hughes took over as Suffolk's interim city manager effective August 1, following **Albert Moor**'s retirement at the end of July.



- Hughes -



- Moor -



- Benton -

The city also appointed **Gregg Benton** as the new director of Public Works, effective August 22.

Moor served the city in various roles for nearly 30 years. He was the city's director of Public Utilities from 1995 until mid-2020, when he was elevated to interim deputy city manager. Later that year, following the resignation of Patrick Roberts, the Suffolk City Council unanimously appointed Moor as interim city manager. After several months in the interim role, Moor was officially named city manager in May 2021 by an 8-0 council vote.

Moor brought decades of experience to the city's top job, including 11 years with the City of Norfolk Utilities Department before joining Suffolk. He earned a Bachelor's in Engineering Technology from Old Dominion University and completed advanced executive leadership programs at the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech during his career.

Moor announced earlier this year that he would be retiring, prompting the city to launch a nationwide search for his successor. Hughes has served as deputy city manager since 2020 and previously served as the director of Economic Development from 2010 to 2020. He has worked for the City of Suffolk since 2005. Hughes received his Bachelor's from James Madison University and completed the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma.

Retired U.S. Navy Captain Gregg Benton is now serving as director of Public Works, bringing over 25 years of leadership and operational experience managing large-scale public infrastructure and facilities. Benton's focus will be on transparency, efficiency, and innovation in delivering high-quality infrastructure and services that support a thriving and resilient community.

has also led planning and design efforts for military bases across Hawaii, held key public works roles at the U.S. Naval Academy, and led various teams managing global facilities and fleet portfolios.

A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Benton holds a Bachelor's in Oceanography and a Master's in Civil Engineering from North Carolina State University. He furthered his executive education through the Executive Leadership Program – Corporate Strategy at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. He is a licensed Professional Engineer, Project Management Professional, Certified Healthcare Facilities Manager, and holds federal acquisition credentials.

Alexandria Mayor Gaskins selected for Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative



- Gaskins -

Alexandria Mayor **Alya Gaskins** was chosen for the ninth class of the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, joining 47 mayors total from 17 countries to participate in the professional management training program.

Established by Bloomberg Philanthropies, Harvard Kennedy School, and Harvard Business School as a first-of-its-kind program to help close the gap in executive development for the public sector, the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative equips mayors and senior municipal officials with the tools and expertise to solve pressing local challenges, strengthen their city halls, and improve outcomes for residents. Since its launch in 2017, the initiative has provided training to 359 mayors and over 635 senior municipal officials across 41 countries.

"I'm honored and excited to join the prestigious Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative," said Gaskins in a press release. "This program will strengthen our city's leadership and help us deliver results using the innovation and creativity of both our residents and city staff. Together, we can address our most pressing challenges and create new opportunities for our city."

Housed at the Bloomberg Center for Cities at Harvard University, the initiative brings together Harvard faculty, staff, and students, alongside experts from Bloomberg Philanthropies' global network, to work with the mayors and their senior officials over the course of nine months. Through intensive

classroom, virtual, and field-based learnings and offerings, the initiative helps these leaders bolster their teams' use of data and evidence, drive collaboration and innovation across sectors, and deliver results for communities.

In addition to the core coursework and convenings with peers, after completing the program, each municipality can access additional offerings. This includes education programs for their economic development, civic engagement, human resources, negotiation, and procurement leads; opportunities to host a Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellow for up to two years; and peer-reviewed research and instructional materials to help local governments improve key organizational practices.

Gaskins recently joined Harvard faculty and renowned management leaders in New York City for a four-day immersive classroom experience. Two senior leaders from each of the 47 cities, including the City of Alexandria, began their participation in the program in August.

City of Fairfax hires Pedroso to lead police department



- Pedroso -

The City of Fairfax has selected **Raul Pedroso** to serve as chief of the Fairfax Police Department. Pedroso's law enforcement career spans 32 years, including 19 years at the executive and senior command level, and he has served as the assistant police chief for the City of Alexandria since 2023. He began his new role on August 11.

The City of Fairfax conducted a national search for its next police chief, a key position that has been held in an acting capacity by Captain Natalie Hinesley since the former police chief retired in January. The city's low crime rate, strong relationship with residents, and its professional police force attracted many qualified candidates.

"The pool of applicants was very deep, and we conducted a very robust review and selection process. Raul rose to the top and was selected for his leadership qualities, his infectious energy, and his commitment to fairness and transparency," said City Manager Bryan Foster in a statement.

Pedroso began his career in law enforcement in Coral Gables, FL, where he worked his way up from patrol officer, serving and leading all major areas of policing including uniform patrol, criminal investigations,

and professional standards. As Alexandria's interim police chief in 2024, Pedroso led the department through a transformational period and strengthened relations among city leadership, police department personnel, and the community. Under his leadership, the department focused on crime reduction, improved investigations, and cultivating a culture of collaboration and accountability.

Pedroso holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration from the University of Florida, a Master's in Criminal Justice from Florida International University, and is an FBI National Academy graduate.

Keeler is new director of Loudoun Housing & Community Development



- Keeler -

His appointment was effective August 14.

Keeler is a senior-level housing and community development professional with three decades of experience in managing federal, state, and local housing programs for the City of Alexandria. He served most recently as deputy director of the Alexandria Office of Housing, where he has held various roles since 1995.

"We had a very competitive pool of applicants for this important position and Eric stood out as the top candidate due to his experience and knowledge in our region, especially in the area of affordable housing," said County Administrator Tim Hemstreet in a press release. "His expertise in affordable housing finance, development, program administration, and fiscal management will serve the county well as we continue to create more attainable, affordable housing opportunities, which is a key strategic initiative of the board of supervisors."

As director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, Keeler will oversee a department that supports the community in obtaining safe and affordable housing. The department provides rental and homeownership assistance programs to individuals and families, provides loans for affordable rental housing development, and partners with nonprofits and the county's incorporated towns on a variety of community development projects. More information

about the department is available at www.loudoun.gov/housing.

Keeler holds a Bachelor's in Urban Affairs from the University of Rhode Island and a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning from San Jose State University.

Danville's Bobe receives Virginia Business distinction

The Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism (DOEDT) has announced that its director, **Corrie Teague Bobe**, was



- Bobe -

named a 2025 Women in Leadership honoree by *Virginia Business*.

The Women in Leadership Awards celebrate top women executives for their overall professional accomplishments, civic engagements, and mentorship. Honorees are selected by a panel of judges, including *Virginia Business* editors, based on professional excellence as well as significant contributions in the community. In total, 45 women were recognized this year.

In a press release, City Manager Ken Larking praised Bobe for the work she has done to help revitalize the Danville community.

"For about the past 15 years, Corrie has played a key role in leading efforts to transform Danville's economy," Larking said. "The River District, workforce readiness, industrial recruitment, and small business development would not be where they are today without her creative, visionary, and innovative approach to economic development."

Bobe stated, "I am truly honored to be included among this year's Women in Leadership honorees by *Virginia Business*. It is a privilege to be recognized alongside so many accomplished and inspiring women who are making a meaningful impact across the Commonwealth. This recognition reflects the hard work and dedication of the entire Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism team and our shared commitment to creating lasting opportunities for our community."

The Women in Leadership Awards honorees will be recognized October 6 at a celebration in Richmond.

Founded in 1986, *Virginia Business* is a nationally recognized publication dedicated to covering economic activity and the business community in Virginia. View the complete list of honorees at www.virginiabusiness.com.

Newport News Mayor Phillip Jones named one of Ten Outstanding Young Americans for 2025



- Jones -

Mayor **Phillip Jones** has been selected as one of the United States Junior Chamber's Ten Outstanding Young Americans (TOYA) for 2025. This prestigious national honor recognizes 10 individuals under the age of 40 who exemplify exceptional leadership, service, and character in their communities and beyond.

"It is a tremendous honor to be recognized among this year's Ten Outstanding Young Americans," said Jones in a press release. "This award is a reflection of the hardworking people of Newport News and the shared belief that bold leadership and community engagement can drive real change. I am deeply grateful to the chamber and proud to represent Virginia on this national stage."

Sponsored by the United States Junior Chamber, the TOYA award is one of the most respected honors given to young leaders in the United States. Each recipient is selected for their achievements in personal improvement, professional development, and contributions to society. Since its inception in 1938, the TOYA program has honored more than 600 individuals, including U.S. presidents, Olympic athletes, and renowned advocates. Past honorees include John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, and Elvis Presley.

The 2025 TOYA honorees will be recognized at the official awards ceremony hosted by the United States Junior Chamber later this year.

Petersburg appoints Frenzley as Human Resources director



- Frenzley -

The City of Petersburg has announced the appointment of **Delvont'e Frenzley** as its new director of Human Resources. Frenzley had served in the role on an interim basis for the past year, earning praise for his leadership, professionalism, and dedication to staff development and organizational success.

"Mr. Frenzley demonstrated solid leadership, professionalism, and genuine dedication to recruitment, retention, and

teambuilding," said City Manager March Altman. "I'm confident he will continue to build a high-performing workforce aligned with city council's vision for excellent public service."

With over 15 years of experience in human resources and leadership, Frenzley is known for his strategic mindset, employee advocacy, and innovative approach to workplace culture. His background includes roles in workforce management, employee engagement, and compliance, most recently with Maximus Federal for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. A lifelong Petersburg resident and Virginia State University graduate, Frenzley brings both professional expertise and a personal commitment to the city.

Frenzley is also deeply involved in community service, including mentoring youth and working with the Salvation Army Men's Shelter to connect individuals with essential resources.

Salem Commonwealth's Attorney Bowers announces retirement



- Bowers -

City of Salem Commonwealth's Attorney **Tom Bowers** has announced he will not seek reelection in November and will retire from his post when his current term expires December 31, 2025.

"Being the commonwealth's attorney for the citizens and law enforcement officers of the City of Salem has been an incredible honor and I am grateful for the trust the citizens placed in me over the last 20 years," Bowers said.

When he was elected in 2006, Bowers made a promise to Salem residents that he would enforce Virginia's laws in a strong, fair, and balanced manner, giving due respect to all while protecting the citizens. He has taken great pride in building a strong relationship with Salem's law enforcement officers. During his tenure, he has worked with five different police chiefs, four sheriffs, and four city managers.

Bowers always held to the discipline, rules, and ethics learned from his 34 years as a United States Marine. The Roanoke native joined the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in 1981 and served four-and-a-half years with Bravo Company, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion in Roanoke. He attained the rank of sergeant while attending Virginia Western Community College and Radford

University, where he graduated with degrees in Criminal Justice.

In 1985, he attended Marine Corps Officer Candidate School, the Basic School, and Communications Officers School. He was assigned to Camp Lejeune and served four-and-a-half years on active duty with 3rd Battalion 2nd Marines and 1st Battalion 8th Marines/26 Marine Expeditionary Unit. He participated in cold weather operations in Bridgeport, CA, and Norway and a Mediterranean deployment to Northern Africa, Europe, and Israel. He left active duty for the reserve force in 1990, was promoted to captain, and was mobilized for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

Bowers graduated from Campbell University School of Law in 1994 and began his civilian prosecution career as an assistant commonwealth's attorney in Roanoke. He eventually became the regional drug prosecutor. In 2001, he left the Roanoke City Commonwealth's Attorney Office and went into private practice for four years before being elected Salem's top prosecutor.

In 2015, Bowers received the Directors Community Leadership Award from the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for his regional work during the height of the opioid crisis.

Prince George County hires Pastor as new assistant county attorney



- Pastor -

Prince George County has appointed **Charise Pastor** as its new assistant county attorney. She assumed the role on August 1.

"We're happy to welcome Charise Pastor as the first full-time assistant county attorney. Her experience and dedication to public service make her the most qualified candidate for this role," said County Administrator Jeff Stoke in a statement. "We look forward to the positive impact she will have in this role."

Pastor brings more than a decade of diverse legal experience to the office, which includes previous service as a magistrate, work in family law, immigration law, and legal clinics. Most recently, Pastor served as an assistant commonwealth's attorney in Prince George County. A proud citizen of the county, Pastor says she's looking forward to facilitating relationships and communication between other citizens and the county.

Loudoun County Supervisor Mike Turner to lead National Association of Counties committee

Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair and Ashburn District Supervisor



- Turner -

Mike Turner has been selected as chair of the National Association of Counties (NACo) Environment, Energy and Land Use Committee.

The committee is one of 10 NACo steering committees responsible for crafting NACo national policies. The appointment was effective this July, following the NACo annual conference held July 11-14 in Philadelphia, and continues through July 31, 2026.

"I'm very humbled and excited to have been selected to serve in this important NACo leadership position," said Turner in a press release. "Our nation – and indeed the world – is entering a new age where demand for data, and demand for power to process that data, are competing directly with decades of efforts to address and mitigate the harmful effects of global climate change. We need to address these extraordinary challenges in sustainable, carbon net-zero ways, and we need to do it at the local level where the solutions have the greatest impact."

The NACo Environment, Energy and Land Use Committee develops policies related to all matters pertaining to air, water, energy, and land use. NACo represents the interests of the nation's counties and advocates for counties on the national level. The organization's membership includes elected county officials and county government professionals from across the United States.

More information about NACo is online at www.naco.org.

Pearisburg picks Poser as new town manager



- Poser -

Adam Poser has been selected by the Pearisburg Town Council as the new town manager. He began his new role on September 1.

With more than a decade of public sector management experience, primarily in senior leadership roles, Poser brings a wealth of expertise to the position. He most recently served as deputy chief of staff for the Richmond City Council, lead-

ing strategic initiatives, community-focused projects, and cross-department coordination. Prior to that, Poser held multiple leadership roles at Texas Health and Human Services, helping to guide transformative agency-wide service improvement.

A press release stated that "Poser is passionate about making government work better for people and has extensive expertise in strategic planning, community engagement, and continuous improvement."

Tappahannock appoints Wright as town manager

The Tappahannock Town Council has selected **Steven R. Wright** as the next town



- Wright -

manager. At its meeting on August 11, the council unanimously approved an employment agreement with Wright, who previously served as a deputy county administrator for Gloucester County.

Prior to his tenure in Gloucester County, Wright served as the administrator for the Planning, Analytics and Customer Service Unit for Montgomery County (MD) Department of Health and Human Services; township administrator for Northfield Center Township, OH; and director of business intelligence and project management manager for the Cuyahoga County (OH) Office of Innovation and Performance. Earlier in his career, he worked for the City of Virginia Beach in both the Department of Public Libraries and the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Wright succeeds Eric Pollitt, who left earlier this year.

In a press release, Tappahannock Mayor Roy Gladding said, "We are excited to welcome Steve Wright to Tappahannock. Steve is a dynamic professional manager who is passionate about his commitment to serving others, and brings considerable knowledge, skills, and experience in local government to the town manager position. The council was particularly impressed with Steve's focus on building constructive relationships within the community, his highly collaborative style of working with the town staff, and his keen interest in working closely with the council to complete ongoing initiatives and identify future opportunities for improving the town. We are certain that Steve will be a valuable asset to the Town of Tappahannock, and we are looking forward to him assuming his duties."

The council conducted a national search for the new town manager, assisted by The Berkley Group of Bridgewater. The council also expressed sincere appreciation for the professional services of Doug Fawcett, who has provided valuable support as interim town manager for the past several months and will continue to serve in that role until Wright assumes his official duties on September 22.

Wright earned a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Akron and a Bachelor of Arts from Bowling Green State University. He completed the Public Leadership Credential through the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and the Senior Executive Institute at the Virginia Institute of Government/Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia.

Wright is a member of both the American Society for Public Administration and the International City/County Management Association. He also received the Julian F. Hirst Award for Distinguished Service from the Hampton Roads Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration in 2024.

NVRC appoints Fifer as executive director following Lazaro's retirement



- Fifer -

At a special meeting on August 12, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) unanimously appointed **Craig T. Fifer** as its next executive director. Fifer succeeds Robert W. Lazaro Jr., who retired

on August 31.

"We are thrilled that Craig will be joining NVRC in this critical regional role," said Chair Matt de Ferranti. "Craig brings more than 30 years of public service expertise, including extensive experience in local and state government and a deep understanding of what makes Northern Virginia unique. We are confident he will continue NVRC's success as a regional leader and facilitator."

Fifer's previous service includes director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the governor of Virginia, senior advisor to the commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services, and director of Communications and Public Information for the City of Alexandria, where he worked for 18 years. Fifer holds a Bachelor's in Political Science from Virginia Tech and a Master's in Public

Administration from George Mason University, where he is a longtime adjunct professor of ethics in public administration.

Lazaro first joined NVRC in 2014 as director of regional energy and sustainability policy and became executive director in 2017. His tenure is credited with stabilizing the organization's finances, creating its first rainy day fund, and investing in personnel and technology to improve operations. Prior to joining NVRC, Lazaro's decades of public service included four terms as mayor of Purcellville.

"Bob's tremendous leadership has been the foundation of NVRC's ability to provide outstanding value to the local governments and the people of Northern Virginia," said de Ferranti. "He is leaving us more effective, resilient, and respected than when he arrived, and we wish him all the best for a well-deserved retirement."

"It has been an honor and privilege to serve our localities and the dedicated staff and elected officials who lead them," said Lazaro. "Local government has been my passion since the beginning of my career, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve for so many years."

Former Alexandria Mayor Wilson named next executive director of NOVA Parks



- Wilson -

The NOVA Parks Board of Directors has selected **Justin Wilson** as its new executive director, effective October 6. Wilson will succeed current Executive Director Paul Gilbert, who announced in April that he would be retiring after 20 years in the position.

"Through a rigorous nationwide search, the NOVA Parks Board of Directors sought a candidate with the strengths and skills to lead this dynamic and innovative organization to continued success," said NOVA Parks Board Chair Sean Kumar. "Justin Wilson's more than 25 years of experience as a leader in enterprise business services, combined with more than a decade as a member of the Alexandria City Council, made him the ideal choice as NOVA Parks' next executive director. We look forward to Justin's leadership in strengthening NOVA Parks' regional partnerships to continue its legacy of conserving Northern Virginia's natural and cultural resources."

Wilson served on the Alexandria City Council for a total of 14 years, including

two terms as mayor and one term as vice mayor. During his tenure as mayor, Wilson translated community vision into strategic plans for 160,000 Alexandria residents and 2,600 city employees and steered the annual budget process for a more than \$900 million operating budget and a \$2 billion 10-year Capital Improvement Program.

His leadership resulted in significant enhancements across a broad range of service areas. A few highlights include substantial economic development partnerships, unprecedented city school construction, record investment in infrastructure, and expansion of African American history programs. Wilson contributed to the growth of Alexandria's natural resources and recreation amenities through conservation easements, wetland restoration, and the creation of two new parks, along with the addition of new trails, pocket parks, playing fields, and pools.

As mayor, Wilson represented Alexandria on the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Board of Directors. Wilson was also appointed by the Virginia governor to the Commonwealth's Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and its Board of Juvenile Justice. Prior to his election to city council, he served as the chair of the Alexandria Transit Company Board of Directors, was twice elected president of the Del Ray Citizens Association, and represented Alexandria as a member of NOVA Parks' Board of Directors.

For the past 19 years, Wilson has served in advancing roles at Amtrak, currently leading 75 employees as the senior director for business services. In this role, Wilson is responsible for supplier management, organizational change management, resource management, capital planning, and incident/problem/change support for a 1,000-person technology department serving America's national passenger rail corporation. He led cross-departmental teams to negotiate supplier contracts for complex enterprise technology initiatives, implement internal and external communications and engagement strategies, deploy cost-saving initiatives across critical infrastructure, and settle complex supplier disputes and claims.

Throughout his career, Wilson has focused on customer service and providing leadership that enables teams to serve customers, whether engaging residents as an elected official or assisting Amtrak passengers and the employees who serve them.

Wilson holds a Bachelor's in Information Systems from Virginia Commonwealth

University and is a fellow of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia.

Ashbrook is Bristol's new chief of police

Earlier this year, **Douglas Byron Ashbrook II** was named the new Bristol chief of police, bringing over 20 years of law enforcement experience to the position.

Ashbrook previously served as the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) coordinator and safety officer with Highlands Community Services. Before he was with Highlands, he worked his way through the ranks of the Washington County Sheriff's Office, starting as a deputy sheriff and ending his tenure as chief deputy/major.

The City of Bristol began the search for a new chief of police after previous Chief John Austin announced his retirement at the end of 2024. Ashbrook's experience as a solutions-oriented leader in law enforcement made him the top candidate for the position.

Under his leadership, the CIT program at Highlands received a Program of the Year award from the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2023. As CIT coordinator, Ashbrook was instrumental in the coordination and development of the first multi-jurisdictional (Washington County/City of Bristol) co-response team in Southwest Virginia, which pairs mental health clinicians and law enforcement officers to better serve those in crisis.

Ashbrook is a native of Southwest Virginia and is a graduate of Virginia Interment College. He is also a graduate of the FBI National Academy #248, the Southwest Law Enforcement Academy, the Professional Leadership Academy, and the Virginia Forensic Science Academy.

Leesburg Police Lieutenant Bob Thompson retires

The Leesburg Police Department has announced the retirement of Lieutenant **Bob Thompson**, after more than 25 years of exceptional service to the Town of Leesburg.



- Thompson -

Thompson's path to public service began long before his law enforcement career. He proudly served nine years in

the United States Army across active duty, National Guard, and reserve assignments. As a counterintelligence special agent, he deployed in support of Operation Just Cause in Panama and Operation Desert Storm in Saudi Arabia. His military career was recognized with the Meritorious Service Medal and two Army Commendation Medals.

After serving with the George Washington University Police Department for two years, Thompson joined the Leesburg Police Department in 1999. Throughout his tenure, he held a wide range of roles and leadership positions, including patrol officer, detective specializing in crimes against children, patrol sergeant, and hostage negotiation team leader. Following his promotion

to lieutenant in 2017, he served in several key command positions, including police planner, operational support services commander, information services commander, resource management division commander, and patrol platoon commander.

Thompson's commitment to victims – particularly vulnerable children – earned him two Victim Services Awards from the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney and an Allies in Prevention Award from Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of Northern Virginia.

"Lieutenant Thompson has been a pillar of leadership, dedication, and compassion throughout his career," said Chief Thea Pirnat in a press release. "His impact on this

department and the community, especially through his work protecting children, is immeasurable. We are grateful for his service and wish him nothing but success in his next chapter."

As he looks forward to a new chapter and a second career, Thompson expressed heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Leesburg community.

"It has been an incredibly rewarding experience, and I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside some of the most dedicated and talented professionals I've ever known," said Thompson. "I'll always take great pride in the work we've accomplished here."

NEWS & NOTES

Danville wins trio of state planning awards

THE VIRGINIA CHAPTER of the American Planning Association (APA Virginia) has recognized Danville with three statewide planning awards for their outstanding work on PLAN Danville, the city's recently adopted comprehensive plan.

Danville was honored with:

1. Virginia Plan of the Year Award – Population Under 100,000
2. Breaking Barriers in Planning Award – Inclusion
3. Sustainable Virginia Award – Resilient Community of the Year

"PLAN Danville sets a new standard for what planning in Virginia can be – equitable, data-driven, and community-led," said Meg Rupkey on behalf of the awards committee. "Danville's approach to comprehensive planning demonstrates how cities can directly respond to community needs while preparing for a more resilient and inclusive future."

PLAN Danville has also gained nationwide attention, winning the Community Award at the American Planning Association's (APA) Awards for Excellence in Sustainability that was presented at the APA's National Planning Conference in Denver.

An Inclusive and Transparent Planning Process

PLAN Danville engaged over 13,000 residents using a combination of digital campaigns, in-person pop-ups, and direct outreach. Six local community ambassadors were hired to serve as trusted messengers, staffing a downtown storefront, attending neighborhood events, and meeting people where they were. Special attention was given to engaging underrepresented communities that had been excluded from past planning efforts.

The team prioritized accessibility by using visuals, plain language, and video content to engage residents of all literacy levels and abilities.

Data-Driven and Built for Action

PLAN Danville was grounded in rigorous data, including custom GIS analysis to assess flood risk, neighborhood health indicators, and infrastructure access. This analysis shaped a bold but practical vision for the city's future. The plan also introduced a new capital improvement scorecard, allowing city departments to evaluate proposed projects based on equity, health, and resilience criteria. Implementation of PLAN Danville began before the plan was even adopted, including updates to the zoning ordinance and construction on public park enhancements.

A Blueprint for Resilience in Virginia

Danville's recognition with the Sustainable Virginia Award highlights the city's long-term commitment to addressing climate and infrastructure risks through responsible planning. PLAN Danville identified opportunities to create Resilient Hubs, improve connectivity, and invest in the neighborhoods most vulnerable to environmental and economic shocks.

"As an emerging leader in planning, I'm inspired by how Danville blended community input, technical analysis, and a sense of urgency," said Rupkey. "Their work is a model for cities across the Commonwealth."

Learn more about PLAN Danville at <https://plandanville.org>.



Roanoke awarded state grant to enhance Historic City Market

IMPROVEMENTS ARE COMING to the Historic Roanoke City Market, thanks to a \$50,000 infrastructure grant from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Awarded in late June and accepted by Roanoke City Council in early August, the funding will provide new awnings for the market – boosting vendor capacity, creating space for additional sellers, and ensuring the market operates at its full potential. Ritz Awning Co. has been selected to fabricate and install the new awnings, with installation anticipated this fall.

This grant is part of a statewide initiative to bolster local food production and agricultural facilities across Virginia. A total of 12 projects received grants totaling over \$497,000 under the governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID)



fund, administered by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).

The AFID infrastructure grant program is designed to provide reimbursable funds primarily for capital projects at new and existing food hubs, farmers markets, commercial kitchens, and other value-added facilities. These investments are crucial for strengthening a locality's capacity to attract and support small and mid-scale agricultural operations, fostering economic development, creating new jobs, and addressing food security within communities.

Fairfax City Hall opens lactation room for working mothers

By Chris Cohen

AS MORE WOMEN of child-rearing age join the workforce, family-supportive policies and facilities help attract and retain talented employees. The City of Fairfax opened a new lactation room at City Hall this summer to provide employees who are new mothers with a clean, safe, and secure dedicated space to express and store breast milk during their workday.

In a press release, Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read said, "It's important to support working families in every way we can, including making it easier for new parents to return to work after welcoming a new baby. Too many mothers stop nursing their babies earlier than pediatricians recommend because of the demands of their job and the lack of a private space to pump and store breast milk."

The lactation room, constructed in the space of a former uni-sex bathroom, is fully accessible and thoughtfully designed. It features two curtained areas that offer medical-grade tables and reclining chairs, durable vinyl walls and floors for easy sanitation, and multiple electrical outlets for equipment. Other amenities include a sink, paper towels, microbial wipes, and a small refrigerator. The room remains locked for security and is accessible only to registered participants.

"This is a welcoming space, a healthy space," said Kim Burgess, director of risk management and safety, who helped design the room. "We can take care of our people so they can take care of their families."

Megan DuBois, cultural arts manager and new mother, said, "I love the lactation room. It is so nice to have a place away from work to pump. The quiet space is appreciated. Blair, my daughter, is very grateful!"

She added, "The lactation room makes

you feel seen. I knew before that, legally, no one could tell me that I could not pump to provide food for my baby – but in practice, you don't always feel supported."

The room cost \$56,000, funded via savings realized in city capital improvement projects. With its high-quality design and materials, the space will serve employees for 20-25 years before renovations are needed.

"Municipal governments need to follow the lead of many private sector businesses in creating these clean, private, secure places for mothers to pump," said Read. "I'm delighted that Fairfax City Hall has created such a place for our employees and supports continued investments in healthy practices for our staff and their families."



KIM COWAN

Staunton Citizen University returns this fall

THE CITY OF STAUNTON'S highly successful Staunton Citizen University (SCU) recently returned for its second consecutive year, offering residents a unique behind-the-scenes look at how their local government operates.

Starting September 9, the city began hosting the 10-week interactive course designed to give participants streamlined (but comprehensive) exposure to key city departments and several regional agencies. A maximum of 25 participants can be accepted into the program, with Staunton residents receiving preference.

"Last year's return of Staunton Citizen University exceeded our expectations in every way. The enthusiasm and engagement from participants was incredible, and we're excited to build on that success," said City Manager Leslie Beauregard in a press release. "This program creates valuable two-way dialogue. Residents learn about their city government while we gain insights from their perspectives and experiences."

How It Works

Each Tuesday from September 9 through November 12 (Election Day & Veterans Day classes are held on Wednesday of those weeks), the city hosts a two-hour evening session on topics that include economic development, budget and taxes, public safety, parks and recreation, courts and corrections, public works, and much more. The program also includes tours of the city's water treatment plant, fire station, police department and the library, and a riding tour with Staunton Parks and Recreation.

SCU kicked off with a virtual orientation on September 2 and will conclude with a graduation ceremony on November 13. An overview of the program and complete listing of topics can be found at www.staunton.va.us/SCU.

The city plans to continue offering this program annually.



Bristol Virginia Police Department certifies first officers in BolaWrap technology



THE BRISTOL VIRGINIA POLICE Department (BVPD) has certified its first group of officers in the use of BolaWrap devices. This marks a new milestone for the department, providing officers with an innovative tool to enhance de-escalation efforts and safely resolve difficult situations.

The BolaWrap is a handheld remote restraint device that discharges a Kevlar cord to wrap around a subject's legs or arms, temporarily restricting their movement without causing pain or injury. This tool is specifically designed for situations where a subject is non-compliant, allowing officers to create a safe distance and de-escalate the encounter.

"The safety of our community and our officers is paramount," said Chief D. Byron Ashbrook in a press release. "By equipping our officers with BolaWrap, we're providing them with another effective option to handle challenging situations without resorting to higher levels of force. This technology aligns with our commitment to modern policing practices and de-escalation."

Officer Darrell Dickenson, the department's certified BolaWrap master instructor, added, "This is a tool that gives our officers a clear and effective way to gain compliance from a distance. It's all about providing officers with more options to de-escalate, ensuring a safer outcome for everyone involved. I'm proud to have been a part of training this new capability to our department."

The newly certified officers completed a comprehensive training program that included both classroom instruction and practical exercises. This process ensures officers are proficient in the device's proper use and understand the specific circumstances in which its deployment is appropriate.

The BVPD's adoption of the BolaWrap is part of a broader strategy to embrace advanced de-escalation techniques, improving the department's ability to achieve safer resolutions for all involved. The department plans to expand the training to more officers as funding becomes available to purchase additional devices.

Arlington's new transit facility receives sustainability accolade

ARLINGTON TRANSIT'S new bus Operations and Maintenance Facility (AOMF) has received the highest sustainability rating possible for a public service site: the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Platinum for Communities certification.

LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is the world's most widely used rating system for building design, waste generated, water and energy use, and related factors. LEED for Cities and Communities helps local governments measure and manage progress in their facilities portfolios, in pursuit of a more resilient and equitable future including becoming carbon neutral.

As a community, Arlington aims to end its greenhouse gas creation by 2050. In 2023 – two years ahead of schedule – the county achieved use of 100% renewable electricity at all its facilities. Since the launch of the LEED pilot program in 2017, Arlington has earned 23 LEED certifications, ranging from Silver to Platinum.

The much-needed AOMF, which consolidated multiple services at the location on Shirlington Road, became operational just six months ago and is already reaching milestones. With 835 solar panels, the facility holds the record for the most solar panels installed on any county-owned building.

The AOMF is also the new home to Arlington's first-ever battery electric buses, three of which were delivered this spring. They are part of the county's investment toward a reliable and resilient zero-emission transit fleet. The county expects the first three electric buses to enter regular service this summer.

The AOMF's charging infrastructure is built to accommodate as many as 47 electric buses. The facility and its many sustainable features were the subject of a recent in-depth feature article by *Buildings* magazine.



NVRC works to restore nature's water filters in Northern Virginia

THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA Regional Commission (NVRC) has secured a significant victory in watershed restoration, earning a \$75,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Chesapeake Watershed Investments in Landscape Defense (Chesapeake WILD) Program.

This funding, part of 25 grants awarded in the 2023 round, supports an innovative project to reintroduce native freshwater mussels into Prince William County's restored streams. In early August, about 150 young mussels were placed in baskets and deployed into four stream sites to kick off this restoration effort.

Nicknamed "nature's water filters," freshwater mussels are environmental superheroes. A single adult mussel can filter up to 10 gallons of water per day, removing various pollutants. This boosts water clarity, improves habitat for fish and other wildlife, and strengthens the entire aquatic ecosystem.

NVRC isn't tackling this ambitious project alone. The initiative brings together a team of environmental experts including the Prince William County Department of Public Works, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery, and George

Mason University's Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center (PEREC).

Three-Phase Plan for Success

- **Phase I, Site Assessment:** Mussel biologists scouted Prince William County's streams, analyzing water quality, substrate, flow patterns, and existing aquatic life to pinpoint the best homes for mussels.
- **Phase II, Controlled Release and Monitoring:** Where the program is now. About 150 one-year-old hatchery-reared and tagged mussels have been placed in specialized baskets at four sites. The team will monitor their growth, survival, and adjustment to their new homes before releasing them more broadly.
- **Phase III, Full Reintroduction and Monitoring:** If all goes well with the test group of mussels, more tagged hatchery-reared mussels will be released into the streams. Ongoing monitoring will track mussel population health and measurable improvements in water quality, providing valuable data for future restoration efforts across the Chesapeake watershed.

Looking Ahead

This isn't just a local win. As these natural water filters establish themselves in Prince William County streams, the downstream benefits will contribute to the region and the Chesapeake Bay. The success of this initiative will hopefully pave the way for similar mussel reintroduction programs across the region and state to improve local streams with an innovative approach.

JAVONNE POPE, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY



“Champions of Clifton Forge” initiative launched

THE TOWN OF CLIFTON FORGE has introduced its “Champions of Clifton Forge” initiative, honoring the dedicated volunteers who have given countless hours to support and enhance the community.

For many years, Clifton Forge has been fortunate to have a committed group of volunteers who have championed a wide range of events throughout town, including Main Street activities, the Christmas Parade, Easter Bonnet Parade, the Shortest St. Patrick’s Day Parade, Stars and Stripes Celebration, Fourth of July Parade, Veterans Commemorative Program, and many more community events that enrich the lives of local residents and visitors.

During the July 3 Stars and Stripes Celebration, the town honored Mott and Bill Atherholt as the inaugural “Champions of Clifton Forge.” For nearly two decades, Mott and Bill have devoted their time, energy, and passion to the betterment of Clifton Forge, embodying the true spirit of service and community. To honor their contributions, a commemorative banner has been unveiled and will soon be displayed along the Sensory Trail, accompanied by a plaque highlighting just a few of the many ways they have positively impacted the town.

The town plans to continue the “Champions of Clifton Forge” recognition as an annual tradition during the Stars and Stripes Celebration, ensuring that the volunteers who make Clifton Forge special are honored for their contributions for years to come.



Richmond installs harm reduction vending machines to support public health

THE CITY OF RICHMOND’S Office of Opioid and Substance Use Response (OOSUR) has launched a new harm reduction initiative aimed at preventing overdoses and supporting residents living with substance use disorders. As part of this effort, harm reduction vending machines are being installed at key locations across the city.

These machines will provide free, 24/7 access to life-saving resources such as naloxone (Narcan), fentanyl test strips, and per-

sonal hygiene items. The initiative is designed to reduce barriers to care, increase health equity, and ultimately save lives.

“This life-saving program is about meeting people where they are, with compassion and dignity,” said Mayor Danny Avula in a press release. “Harm reduction vending machines are a proven tool to prevent overdose deaths and connect individuals with the support they need. Richmond is proud to be among the cities leading with science, safety, and humanity.”

Key features of the vending machines include:

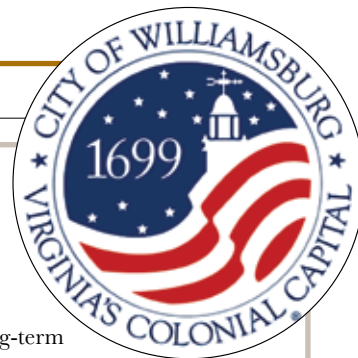
- Free, anonymous access to supplies
- Round-the-clock availability
- QR codes linking to treatment, recovery, and support services
- Strategic placement in neighborhoods that are most impacted by overdoses

Opioid Response Strategist Anna Jones of OOSUR emphasized the importance of reducing stigma and expanding access for residents.

“People deserve to be safe and supported, no matter where they are in their journey,” she said. “These vending machines are not just about supplies; they’re a bridge to care, to hope, and to healing.”

For more information and updates, visit www.rva.gov/human-services/opioid-response.





Williamsburg introduces HOPE Team Pilot Program to support unhoused individuals

IN RESPONSE TO THE increasing number of unhoused individuals, the City of Williamsburg has launched the HOPE Team Pilot Program (Houseless Outreach Partnership Engagement).

The HOPE Team is a street outreach unit that comprises an outreach coordinator from the city's Department of Human Services and a mental health clinician from Colonial Behavioral Health. A community engagement officer from the Williamsburg Police Department will provide support or consultation to the team as needed.

The team will conduct regular outreach to areas with high concentrations of unhoused individuals, focusing on building rapport and trust through consistent engagement and a multidisciplinary outreach approach. The initiative aims to help connect them to essential services and secure permanent housing.

The outreach team will focus its efforts on unhoused individuals in public spaces who are often not successful with navigating conventional service models and face challenges like severe mental illness, chronic health conditions, and substance use disorders.

"It has long been our practice to offer a guiding hand to any unhoused individual in the City of Williamsburg," said Roy Gerardi, the city's outreach coordinator in a statement. "The HOPE Team helps us further our vision to provide compassionate, accessible support where it's needed most. By meeting people where they are, and engaging with them consistently, we aim to create

pathways to services that lead to long-term stability."

Since its launch in May 2025, the HOPE Team has engaged 42 individuals who were unhoused. The team has assisted one individual with transportation to return to their home community and helped seven individuals obtain housing. In addition to receiving housing and employment services, individuals receive support enrolling in benefit programs, obtaining identification, and accessing mental health resources.

"Our goal is to engage with every unhoused individual in the city to help them navigate available resources and locate sustainable housing," said Human Services Director Wendy Evans. "The HOPE Team is another example of city programs designed to meet the goals set by our community values. We are confident that most, if not all, of our unhoused or precariously housed individuals and families have been offered, and are likely receiving, some form of assistance."

The pilot program is set to run through October to collect data and evaluate the effectiveness, structure, and resource needs of a dedicated street outreach effort.

To support the HOPE Team, members of the community are encouraged to contact the Department of Human Services at 757-220-6161 whenever they encounter an unhoused person in the city and provide their location.

Discover the secret life of pollinators at Purcellville's Chapman DeMary Trail

ON AUGUST 31, MEMBERS of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Virginia Master Naturalists led a guided nature walk about pollinators at the Chapman DeMary Trail in Purcellville. This event, jointly hosted by the Purcellville Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Tree and Environment Sustainability Committee, was free and open to the public.

Experts shared fun facts about the different kinds of pollinators, the native plants they need to thrive, and how humans can help them. Participants walked the trail to find native plants that had been planted to attract pollinators and those that are growing there on their own. While looking for those plants, participants also tracked pollinators spotted along the way. After the walk, participants each decorated a seed bag and filled it with purple coneflower seeds to plant in their garden.

Here are some interesting facts about pollinators. One out of every three bites of food you eat is there because of pollinators. More than 180,000 different plant species and more than 1,200 crops depend on pollinators. Pollinators support healthy ecosystems. Pollinators include birds, bats, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, small mammals, and - of course - bees.



The Chapman DeMary Trail is a 10-acre area considered to be the last stand of old-growth forest in the Town of Purcellville. The area is open to the public for environmental exploration, education, and recreation. Purcellville holds the conservation easement for this privately-owned property.

Learn more and register for future walks on the Monthly Nature Walks page in the Events and Activities section of the Town of Purcellville's website at www.PurcellvilleVa.gov.

West Point unveils Heritage Mural

THE TOWN OF WEST POINT has announced the completion of its first-ever mural and LOVEworks sign, a vibrant new addition to downtown that captures the local spirit through art, history, and community collaboration.

Created by world-renowned artist Michael Rosato, the striking mural located at 621 Main Street brings to life key moments and landmarks from West Point's past and present. From historic buildings to scenes of river life and local traditions like the Crab Carnival, the mural is rich with detail and layers of storytelling, a true tribute to the town's unique identity as one special place nestled between two bridges and three rivers.

Set against the backdrop of the West Point water tower and surrounded by a welcoming gazebo and benches, the site is designed as a gathering space where residents and visitors can relax and take in the mural's rich visuals. With each visit, viewers are sure to spot something new, a testament to the mural's depth, craftsmanship, and storytelling power.

This project represents a model of community partnership at its best – a private business (Integrity Food Group), the West Point Chamber of Commerce, and the Town of West Point working together to spark tourism and celebrate hometown pride. It also marks the debut of West Point's first LOVEworks sign, part of the statewide "Virginia is for Lovers" campaign that encourages exploration and community connection across the Commonwealth.

"We are incredibly thankful to Michael Rosato for taking our vision and bringing it to life in the most beautiful way," said the mural committee in a statement. "This mural honors our heritage and energizes our future, all while reminding us why West Point is such a special place to call home."

To explore the stories behind the artwork, visit www.west-point.va.us/heritage, a companion webpage that offers insights into each scene featured in the mural.



City of Newport News to join Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance

THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS has been selected to join the Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance, a prestigious coalition of local governments across the Americas committed to using data and technology to better serve residents.

As artificial intelligence and digital tools transform how cities deliver services and solve complex challenges, Newport News will receive expert support to strengthen its data capabilities and apply next-generation technologies to advance the city's priorities. These include reducing housing instability, improving public safety, expanding youth and family services, and ensuring neighborhoods have access to green space and resilient infrastructure.

"This recognition is a testament to the work Newport News has already done to embrace innovation and improve outcomes for our residents," said Mayor Phillip Jones in press release. "By joining the Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance, we're doubling down on our commitment to being a forward-thinking, data-driven city. We're building smarter systems to connect people to the services they need, when they need them – faster, more efficiently, and more equitably."

Through participation in the Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance, Newport News will receive:

- Technical support to upskill staff and strengthen data infrastructure
- Expert guidance to design resident-centered digital services

- Access to a global network of innovative cities to share best practices and strategies

"City halls aren't waiting for the future – they're building it," said James Anderson, who leads the Government Innovation program at Bloomberg Philanthropies. "The Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance is backing localities to lead in the age of AI. These municipalities will show the world how government can be faster, smarter, and fair, using data and technology to meet real needs, deliver efficiently, and make measurable progress people feel."

Newport News joins 14 other cities in the latest City Data Alliance cohort, including Austin, TX; Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Bogotá, Colombia; Boston, MA; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Kansas City, MO; Lo Barnechea, Chile; Medellín, Colombia; Porto Alegre, Brazil; Santiago, Chile; São Paulo, Brazil; Toronto, Canada; and Vicente López, Argentina.

The Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance is delivered in partnership with the Bloomberg Center for Government Excellence (GovEx) at Johns Hopkins University and builds on the What Works Cities Certification, a national standard for data-driven, well-managed government led by Results for America. The alliance now includes 80 cities from 12 countries, representing over 78 million people.



Town of Grottoes dedicates stage in honor of former Chief of Police Davies

THE TOWN OF GROTTOES dedicated the stage at John E. Painter Park in memory of Chief William "Bill" Davies during a special ceremony on July 11.

Davies served Grottoes as chief of police for 13 years. On July 21, 1988, he tragically lost his life in the line of duty while responding to a call. His legacy as a dedicated public servant, a loving family man, and a respected leader in the community continues to live on.

During the ceremony, Chief Davies' daughter, Kathleen Stump, accepted the resolution of dedication on behalf of the Davies family. The stage, now officially named the Chief William "Bill" Davies Stage, stands as a lasting tribute to his service, sacrifice, and the profound impact he had on the town.

This renovation and renaming were made possible with the support and efforts of many individuals, including Roger Randall and Caleb Bailey.

The town extends its deepest gratitude to all who attended this meaningful event and to the service members and their families whose dedication continues to inspire. Chief Davies' memory will be honored for generations through the music, celebrations, and community gatherings held at this stage. Let all remember his legacy – and the example he set – each time there is a gathering at the Chief William "Bill" Davies Stage.



(L-R) Kathleen Stump, daughter of Bill Davies, is pictured with Chief Jason Sullivan and Mayor Jo Plaster.

Hampton cuts ribbon for new Wythe Fire Station #3

ON JULY 10, HAMPTON city officials, community members, and first responders gathered to celebrate the ribbon-cutting of the new Wythe Fire Station #3 – a modern, resilient facility that reflects decades of planning, collaboration, and community investment.

Located in the heart of the Wythe district, the new 17,000-square-foot station is built to meet the evolving demands of fire and EMS operations while honoring the district's proud legacy.

"This is more than a building; it's a symbol of commitment to public safety, community pride, and future readiness," said Mayor

Jimmy Gray. "We're proud to deliver a facility that not only meets today's needs but is built to serve generations to come."

The one-story facility includes four pull-through apparatus bays, enhanced safety features, private climate-controlled bunkrooms, and themed spaces that reflect the neighborhood's unique history, including Indigenous heritage, Hampton's oyster industry, and the legacy of War Memorial Stadium.

"This facility represents more than bricks and mortar," said Fire Chief Jason Monk during his remarks. "It symbolizes progress, resilience, and our city's ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of our residents. For the men and women of the

Hampton Division of Fire and Rescue, it stands as a promise – an investment in their ability to respond quickly, safely, and effectively."

Chief Monk also praised the teamwork and personal pride behind the project, including the restored antique fire engine, custom street signs, artwork from local museums, and a hall of fame space honoring departmental excellence. He gave special thanks to Captain Curtis Ward, the project team, and the volunteers who helped bring the vision to life.

The ceremony also featured a dedication from Wythe Volunteer Fire Company President David Nichols, who honored two local fire service pioneers whose memory will live on in the new station: Battalion Chief Lee Webb and Volunteer Chief Lee Moore.

"These two gentlemen were instrumental in many things that we as a division expand on each and every day," said Nichols. "Chief Webb helped usher in EMS and hazmat response in Hampton, while Chief Moore mentored generations of volunteers and set a standard for professionalism and service. It is my honor to dedicate this station to their memory."

A public open house is expected once the station is fully operational.



(L-R) Vice Mayor Steven Brown, Mayor Jimmy Gray, Council Members Martha Mugler and Michelle Ferebee.



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

68-10. **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; 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.) Vacancy in the office of President shall be filled by the President-Elect.

(ii.) 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 Directorsman 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~~ ~~e-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.

5. 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

9. 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~~ the Virginia Municipal League Adopted October 13th 8, 2025~~0~~ Effective date of prior versions: October 21, 2008, October 8, 1991 and October 3, 2017, ~~October 8, 2020~~



Scan the QR code to download the Summary and Proposed Constitution changes.

COMMUNITY BUSINESS MEMBERS

Join VML

Set your organization apart in the local government marketplace of product, services, and ideas by joining the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) program. For more information contact Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org or check under the "Corporate Engagement" tab at www.vml.org.



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COMMUNITY BUSINESS MEMBERS

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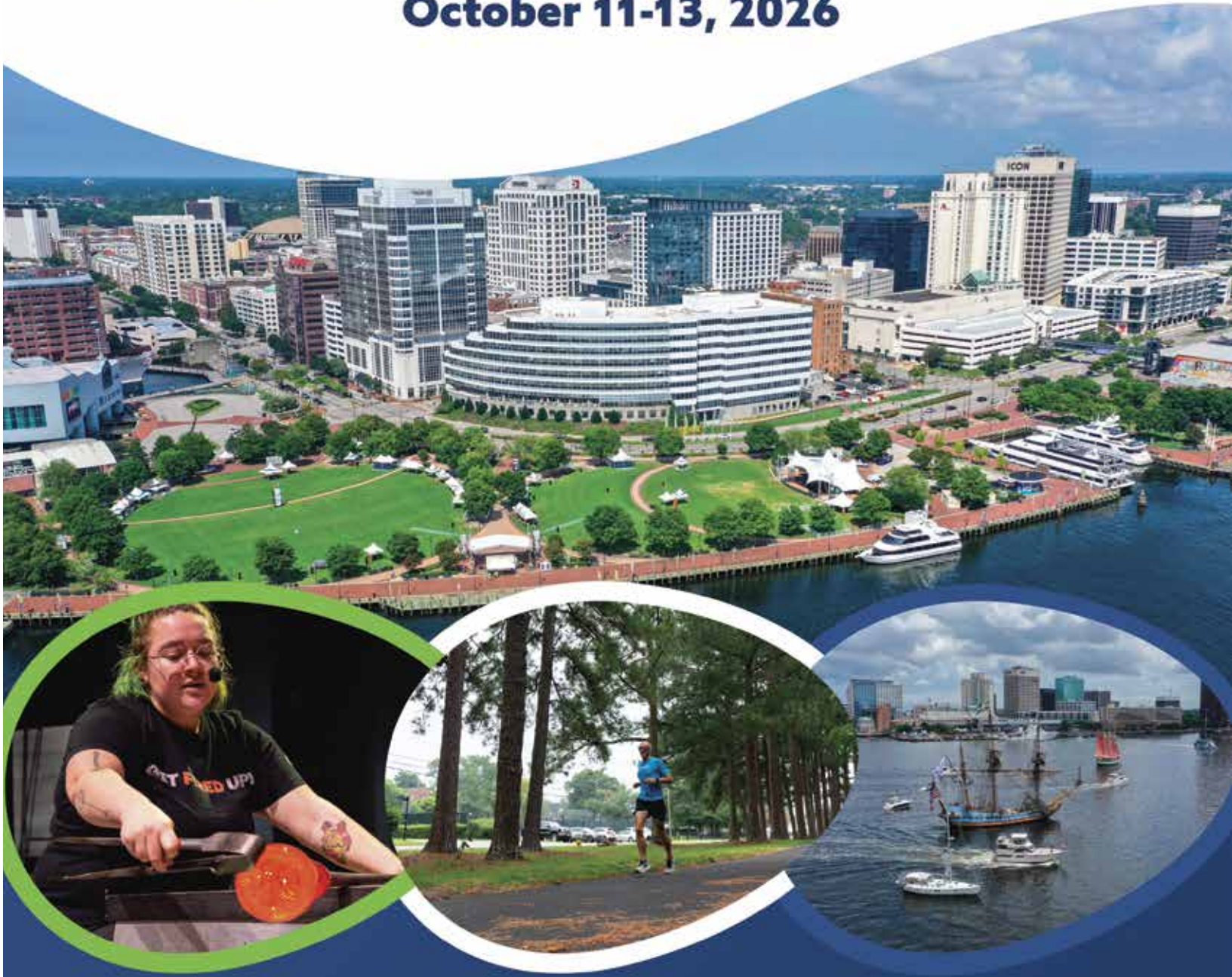
About the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) Program

As a CBM organization you hold a sustaining membership in VML and keep your firm or organization connected with the issues that are important to municipalities around you. Being a CBM places your organization at the forefront in the minds of VML members, ensuring you the visibility, access, and awareness that will help move your organization forward.



Scan QR code to view CBM program benefits.

2026 Virginia Municipal League's Annual Conference October 11-13, 2026



Norfolk

Experience the charm of Norfolk, where the stunning waterfront views and rich maritime history meet thriving city life. Come explore the Elizabeth River Trail, world-class attractions like the Chrysler Museum of Art and Perry Glass Studio, Nauticus and the Battleship Wisconsin, as well as our vibrant culinary and performing arts destination! We hope to see you at next year's conference in Norfolk — The Mermaid City!

Let's
solve
this.



Virginia's Best Future is Powered by *Home*

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