

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

In Service to Safety

Meet VML President and
Town of Amherst Mayor
Dwayne Tuggle

Inside:

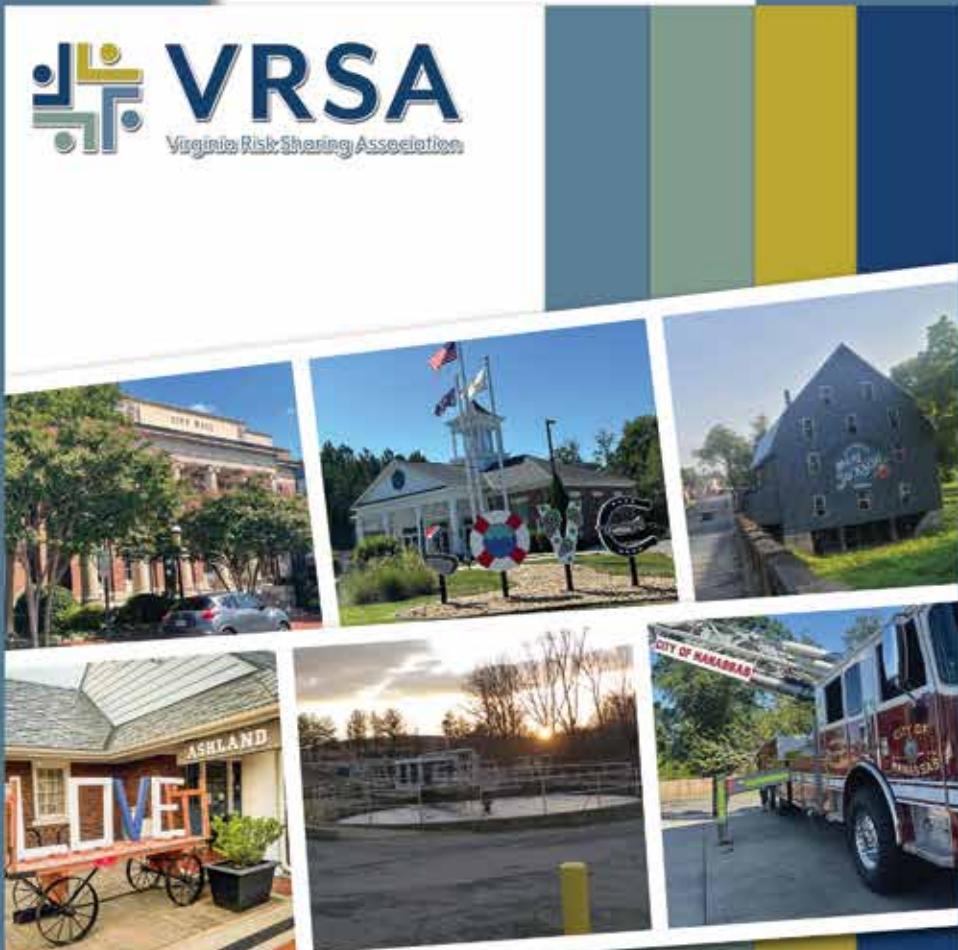
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Spotlight on the Town
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Clean Streets



The Story With The Numbers



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2025
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

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BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH
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ABOUT THE COVER

He's the Mayor of the Town of Amherst, a retired Virginia State Police Senior Special Agent, avid volleyball fan, the President of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions, former District Administrator and current Assistant Director for Security for Little League, caretaker for the local cemetery, and...he's VML's new President!

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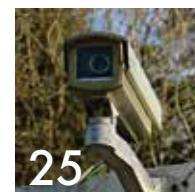
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TRUST EVERYONE HAD a great holiday season! First, I want to thank everyone who voted and congratulations to all our new elected officials. Whether you are newly elected or re-elected, thank you for your service! As I write this, registrations are ticking up for our Virginia Local Elected Officials Conference that will take place January 7-8 here in Richmond. We always look forward to this opportunity to meet many of the newly elected officials and see old friends.

Next up there will be an inauguration, a new governor, and the Democrats controlling both the Executive and Legislative branches of government in the Commonwealth. I don't have a crystal ball, but I would love to see what all this means for local governments before it happens! Unfortunately, we will all have to wait and find out together.

For those who are new or haven't been following VML's policy process over the summer, VML's five policy committees met, and each created 1-2 priorities to send to the Legislative Committee. Then, in late fall, the Legislative Committee used those priorities and long-standing local government positions to create the 2026 Legislative Program. Finally, VML's membership approved the program at the Annual Conference in Roanoke.

Some of our legislative priorities this year are:

Local Land Use – localities must maintain control of local land use decisions.

Local Revenue Sources – VML cannot support initiatives that phase out or eliminate sources of revenue to cities, counties, and towns without a firm commitment of ongoing general fund resources to offset local revenue losses.

Support for Public Education – VML supports solutions to address school construction and renovation needs (estimated at \$25B), including statewide local authority for a local one percent sales tax for school construction by referendum.



Use the QR Code to view/download the full *2026 Legislative Program* or find it under the Advocacy tab at www.vml.org.



Please take our program and your locality's priorities and discuss them with your state delegation before they come to Richmond on January 14 for the 2026 session.

Local leaders such as yourself play a crucial role in explaining to state legislators how the actions they take at the General Assembly affect Virginia's communities.

Tips on communicating with legislators:

- **Be brief** – short and to the point is always best.
- **Put the message in your own words** – group emails and form letters are less effective than your personal thoughts.
- **Always ask your legislators how best to communicate with them during session** – and make sure they have your contact information.

As we begin the session, please sign up for VML's newsletter *eNews*, which is our main channel for communicating with our members about good and bad legislation making its way through the session. Also, please register for Local Government Day happening February 5 at the Richmond Downtown Hilton. This annual event held about halfway through the session is an invaluable opportunity to hear from VML staff about legislation of concern and to meet with your delegations.

Happy New Year and cheers to 2026!

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

CALENDAR



Feb. 5

2026 Local Government Day - Richmond Downtown Hilton, Richmond, VA.
Registration and information at www.vml.org.

May 14-15

2026 Small Towns Conference - The Chincoteague Center, Chincoteague, VA

Oct. 11-13

2026 VML Annual Conference - Norfolk Waterside Marriott, Norfolk, VA

In Memoriam:



J. Hamilton Lambert, Northern Virginia civil servant

J. Hamilton Lambert, a Leesburg native who led Fairfax County through a period of rapid growth and went on to build one of the region's largest charitable foundations, died November 3 at age 84.

After graduating from Loudoun County High School, Lambert went to work for Fairfax County as a draftsman in 1959. He was quickly recognized as a fast-learning problem solver and was handed increasing responsibilities. He had 20 other job titles with the government before being named to its top post, county executive, in 1980.

Among his accomplishments were arranging financing for the Dulles Toll Road, securing a regional sewer treatment agreement that improved water quality and helped preserve the Upper Occoquan watershed, and maintaining a nationally recognized AAA financial rating for the county. His focus on ensuring human services were available to support the county's rapidly growing population continues to be a model for counties across the country.

Upon his retirement in 1990, he took on a new responsibility of helping Loudoun physician Claude Moore plan the future use of his estate, becoming executive director of Moore's charitable foundation. Under Lambert's leadership, the foundation went on to award more than \$110 million in grants to support nonprofits focused on workforce development, healthcare education, and critical human services in Loudoun County and across Virginia.

The foundation has funded the Claude Moore Scholars program in Loudoun County since 2005. It has grown the program to more than 56 school systems across Virginia and has invested more than \$20 million, supporting healthcare education programs for more than 21,000 Virginia students. In 2024, that work expanded with the creation of a new nonprofit, the Claude Moore Opportunities Foundation, that targets workforce development in industries facing worker shortages across the Commonwealth.

Lambert also expressed pride in transforming Moorefield Station, a transit-and-trail-oriented community with residential neighborhoods and commercial districts in Ashburn, into the dynamic area it is today.

Lambert was inducted as a Loudoun Laurel in 2015 and was named the Community Foundation of Loudoun and Northern Fauquier Counties' Changemaker of the Year in 2024.



Larry Michael Foster, former James City County employee

Larry Michael Foster, 74, died in Williamsburg on October 30.

A graduate of Appalachian State University, Foster began his career in public service as the assistant city manager of South Boston, which led to positions as town manager of Halifax and city manager of Buena Vista. In 1988 he began a 26-year career with James City County, first as the assistant county administrator and then as general manager of the James City Service Authority, which he led for 24 years.

Foster exemplified his love of community through his extensive volunteer work, serving on numerous boards including the Williamsburg United Way, Salvation Army, Williamsburg Landing, WATA, and Village Bank. After retiring in 2013, he expanded his service to include the House of Mercy, First Tee, volunteering as a tax preparer, and helping maintain the gardens at Hospice House. In recent years he served as a project manager, overseeing the construction of the new campus of Child Development Resources. He was a dedicated member of Williamsburg Presbyterian Church, where he served as a deacon and elder and assisted with the homeless shelter program.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions to honor Foster's life to The Arc of Greater Williamsburg.

Danville hires Adkins and Evans as assistant city managers

Following a nationwide search, Danville City Manager Ken Larking has named **Michael Adkins** and **Briana Evans** as assistant city managers.

Larking noted that Danville is experiencing new growth for the first time in decades thanks to strategic investments to rebuild the local economy, and said Adkins and Evans will strengthen the leadership team.

"I am excited to have Michael and Briana join our executive leadership team," Larking said. "Their experience and energy will help us make the most out of our positive trajectory."



- Adkins -
on November 1.

Adkins is a native of the Danville community and began his tenure with the City of Danville in 2005 as assistant finance director. In 2015, he was promoted to the position of finance director/chief financial officer, providing oversight to city operations in Accounting, Procurement, Real Estate Assessment, Budget, Customer Accounts, Grants, and Internal Audit.

He received a Bachelor's in Accounting from Virginia Tech and a Master's in Business Administration from Averett University. Adkins is also a Certified Public Accountant.

Effective December 1, Briana Evans began overseeing the Community Development Department, the Office of Economic Development and Tourism, and the Social Services Department.



- Evans -
an equity and inclusion officer. Evans holds a Bachelor's and Master's in Anthropology from Stanford University.

PEOPLE

Leesburg Town Manager Dentler announces retirement



Leesburg Town Manager **Kaj Dentler** has announced his retirement effective October 2026, following almost 30 years spent with the Town of Leesburg government, including 11 as town manager.

Dentler joined town staff in 1996 as director of the Parks & Recreation Department. During his 12 years leading Parks & Recreation, Dentler expanded the Ida Lee Park Recreation Center and opened the original Catoctin SkatePark, Ida Lee Park Tennis Center, and Freedom Park. During his tenure, the town acquired 86 acres in 2000 for future parkland along the Potomac River – Veterans Park, currently under construction. The department also completed a 20-year comprehensive master plan for parks, recreation, open space, greenways, and trails, and won numerous parks and recreation awards, including the prestigious National Gold Medal Award for Excellence.

In January 2008, Dentler was named

Leesburg deputy town manager under former Town Manager John Wells. While deputy town manager, he also served as acting director of the Planning and Zoning Department, Capital Projects Management Department, and the Leesburg Executive Airport at different times.

Dentler started as Leesburg's town manager in October 2014 following Wells' retirement. During his tenure, Leesburg enjoyed financial stability thanks to sound fiscal planning. The city achieved a Triple-A credit rating by all three rating agencies for the first time in its history in 2015, a rating that has been maintained for the last decade. The town has also enjoyed relative stability in the workforce thanks to Dentler's emphasis on hiring, training, retaining, and promoting top-performing staff.

Along with the town council and Leesburg Attorney's Office, Dentler was actively engaged in the town's annexation of Compass Creek. Approved by the Commission on Local Government and a special court appointed by the Virginia Supreme Court in 2024, this six-year effort brought 400 acres into the town's corporate limits for economic development purposes and, at full build-out, is expected to be the largest amount of tax

revenue brought into a jurisdiction via annexation or boundary line adjustment in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Prior to joining Leesburg, Dentler worked for the Town of Herndon and the City of Chesapeake, bringing his total years of public service to more than 40. Dentler holds a Bachelor's in Recreation and Leisure Services from Virginia Wesleyan College and a Master's in Urban Affairs/Public Administration from Norfolk State University.

"Kaj has led Leesburg during a time of tremendous growth and changes," Mayor Kelly Burk said in a statement. "He made sure the town government delivered services with very modest resources and staffing. His philosophy of meeting not just the needs of the residents but also the expectations is core to his success as a Leesburg's town manager for the last 11 years. His deep understanding of Leesburg helped in so many difficult situations. He valued each employee and brought out the best in his staff. I personally will miss his wit, humor, and guidance, which often led to interesting discussions. Leesburg was very lucky to have Kaj serve as town manager and his replacement will have big shoes to fill."



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Radford appoints Cox as CFO



The City of Radford has appointed **Trish Cox** as its new director of finance and chief financial officer (CFO). The addition of the CFO title reflects a recent restructuring of the Finance Department designed to

- Cox - strengthen the city's financial management, strategic planning, and fiscal transparency.

Cox brings more than 30 years of experience serving the residents of the New River Valley through her leadership in public finance and accounting. Most recently, she served as director of Finance for Pulaski County, where she oversaw a \$90 million annual budget and implemented sound financial practices to support the county's long-term goals. Her extensive career also includes roles with New River Valley Community Services, New River Community Action, and a prior tenure with the City of Radford from 2007 to 2018.

"We are thrilled to welcome Trish back to Radford," said City Manager Todd Meredith. "Her proven expertise, deep community roots, and commitment to excellence in public service will be invaluable as we continue to enhance our financial operations and serve our citizens with transparency and accountability."

Cox is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and holds a Bachelor's in Accounting from Clemson University. She began her new role on November 17.

Town of Christiansburg names Eagle town manager

The Town of Christiansburg has announced **Dr. Kim Eagle** as its new town manager, following an extensive search for a visionary and experienced leader to guide the community into its next chapter of growth and innovation.

Eagle brings nearly 30 years of distinguished experience in local government management, public administration, and strategic leadership. She most recently served as county manager for Gaston County, NC, where she oversaw a \$420 million annual budget, led major modernization efforts, and guided the county to its first AAA bond rating (the highest possible credit rating that a government can receive). Eagle also managed more than \$53 million

in federal funding to expand water and sewer infrastructure, helping to strengthen Gaston County's foundation for long-term development.

Prior to her tenure in Gaston County, Eagle served as assistant city manager and budget director for the City of Charlotte. In those roles, she provided leadership for departments with more than 5,000 employees and \$808 million in operating budgets, managed the city's \$2.2 billion operating budget, and developed the Strategic Energy Action Plan, an initiative aligning environmental sustainability with fiscal responsibility and operational performance.

Eagle's public service career also includes leadership roles with the City of Charlotte's Office of Strategy and Budget, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department. She earned her Doctorate in Public Administration from Virginia Tech in 2005 and has served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, teaching graduate courses in urban politics, budgeting, and performance management.

Christiansburg Mayor Mike Barber welcomed Eagle's appointment, stating, "Dr. Eagle brings a wealth of experience, professionalism, and a proven record of success in local government. Her leadership and commitment to innovation and efficiency will serve Christiansburg well as we continue building on our strong foundation."

Eagle officially assumed her duties as town manager in January 2026, following her retirement from North Carolina local government service.

Fairfax appoints Alexander as city manager



- Alexander -

At its November 18 meeting, the Fairfax City Council introduced **Daniel C. Alexander** as the new city manager. Alexander had been serving as a deputy county executive in Prince William County, where he oversaw a portfolio of 15 public safety and community services agencies since February 2022. His employment with Fairfax began January 5.

In his new role, Alexander will implement the policies of the mayor and city council and provide management and administrative support to all city departments, offices, and agencies, overseeing a staff of more than 600 employees.

"After a wide-ranging search and careful deliberations, the city council has selected a candidate that brings a great deal of experience in local government to our city," said Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read in a statement. "Mr. Alexander is a seasoned professional who understands the demands of running municipal operations and will be a steady leader for our very capable leadership team and employees. We look forward to working with him."

Alexander has three decades of public service experience with six local government organizations. In his role as deputy county executive, Alexander provided strategic leadership and administrative oversight for the Safe and Secure Community quadrant of Prince William County government, which encompasses five county departments and 10 liaison entities, representing more than 2,600 professionals and an annual funding base exceeding \$500 million. He helped establish the Office of Community Safety to lead prevention and intervention efforts grounded in engagement, data, and systems coordination.

Prior to joining Prince William County, Alexander spent more than 18 years as an agency chief in three different jurisdictions and also served as acting assistant city manager in Cape Coral, FL. He holds a Master's in Public Administration and a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice from the University of Florida and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

Melanie Zipp, who has served as acting city manager since November 1, resumed her regular responsibilities as assistant city manager upon Alexander's arrival.

So named director of Finance for Falls Church



- So -

The City of Falls Church has selected **David So** as its new director of Finance. He started the role on November 3.

"We are pleased to welcome David So to the City of Falls Church as our new director of Finance," said City Manager Wyatt Shields in a press release. "His extensive experience will be a tremendous asset to our city, and we are confident that David's leadership and strategic vision will ensure our continued fiscal strength and transparency."

So joins Falls Church from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), where he served as director

PEOPLE

of the Office of Management and Budget. So's accomplishments during his time at WMATA included leading the revamp of the budget book, budgeting and reporting process improvements, and driving innovation within his team. Prior to WMATA, So gained experience in the private sector working with Berkeley Research Group, Nestle, and Samsung.

So earned a Bachelor's in Finance from the University of Maryland and a Master's in Business Administration from the George Washington University School of Business.

Danville's Toufas and Saunders recognized as emerging leaders

Hannah Toufas, marketing and communications specialist with the Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism, and **Erika Saunders**, business and data analyst II with the Information Technology Department, have graduated from the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP).



(L-R) Toufas and Saunders

Hosted by the Sorenson Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia, the ELP is a prestigious program for early-career professionals dedicated to strengthening their communities through leadership, public policy, and civic engagement. Participants take part in expert-led sessions on topics such as housing, education, federal budgeting, and strategic communications, along with peer workshops and a capstone project.

Toufas and Saunders were among 24 young professionals selected for this year's cohort, representing a diverse group of emerging leaders from across the Commonwealth.

For more than two years, Toufas has served as marketing and communications specialist with the Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism. In this role, she manages media relations, prepares news releases and economic reports, develops digital content to promote regional growth,

and oversees the department's inventory of industrial and commercial properties.

"Hannah's graduation from the Emerging Leaders Program is a reflection of the drive, creativity, and strategic thinking she brings to our team every day," said Corrie Bobe, director of the Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism. "Her ability to craft compelling narratives and embrace innovation has elevated our communications efforts and strengthened our outreach to audiences well beyond the Danville region. I'm excited to see how she continues to grow as a leader and help shape the future of economic development and tourism in Danville."

As business and data analyst II, Saunders serves as a liaison between the Information Technology Department and other departments to ensure effective implementation of technology updates, software rollouts, and process improvements. She provides user support and training materials, manages IT financials, and prepares dashboard reports to assist with budgeting. Saunders has worked for the City of Danville for five years, including the past two with the Information Technology Department.

Inez Rodenburg, Danville chief information officer, said, "Erika's recognition as an emerging leader is a testament to her dedication to leveraging technology to improve city operations. Her forward-thinking mindset and commitment to continuous improvement in public service exemplify the next generation of public sector leadership."

Roanoke County announces promotions of Hanlon, Gearheart, Beemer

In November, Roanoke County Administrator Richard L. Caywood, P.E., announced several senior leadership promotions and related organizational restructuring, effective immediately. **Madeline Hanlon** assumed the role of assistant county administrator; **Laurie Gearheart** now serves as chief financial officer; and **Jessica Beemer** became the director of Finance and Management Services.

The promotions followed the retirement of Deputy County Administrator Rebecca E. Owens after more than 33 years of public service. Assistant County Administrator Doug Blount was previously named deputy county administrator to fill the vacancy created by her retirement.

Madeline Hanlon currently serves as Roanoke County director of community engagement/assistant to the county admin-



- Hanlon -

istrator, overseeing the county's public information functions, clerk to the Board of Supervisors, constituent services, and strategic planning. Hanlon began her career in local government as an intern with Franklin County while completing her Bachelor's in Business Administration at Roanoke College. After graduation, she came to Roanoke County serving in a dual role as deputy clerk to the Board of Supervisors and as a paralegal in the County Attorney's Office. Hanlon then became the clerk to the Board of Supervisors and public affairs manager for Franklin County. After three and a half years with Franklin County, Hanlon returned to Roanoke County as assistant to the county administrator in 2022.

Hanlon holds an MBA from Bowling Green State University, a Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management from Virginia Tech, and she is also a Certified Municipal Clerk. In 2024, Hanlon was selected to serve on the Executive Board of the Virginia Local Government Management Association, and she is also a member of the International City/County Management Association.

She was recognized in the Roanoke Valley's "40 Under 40" Class of 2022 and represents Roanoke County on regional boards, including Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare and the Local Office on Aging. She was recently appointed to serve on the Community Policy and Management Team, the Regional Community Corrections Board, and the Regional Drug Court Advisory Board.

This promotion represents an expansion of Hanlon's current duties, and her existing role will not be replaced.



- Gearheart -

Laurie Gearheart has served Roanoke County for more than 20 years. First hired in 1993 as the county's inaugural financial analyst, she later served 12 years as assistant director of Finance before becoming director

of Management Services in 2019.

Her career includes nine years in public accounting, a stint as director of business operations for First Baptist Church, and three years as controller for Hollins University before returning to the county in 2009. She is a member of the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), the Virginia

Movers and shakers

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

Albemarle County Community Development Director Filardo announces retirement

Albemarle County Director of Community Development **Jodie Filardo** has announced



her retirement, effective February 1. Her decision concludes a 47-year career that includes 24 years of public service in revenue management, economic development, sustainability, and community development, including six years with Albemarle County. Filardo also served over 20 years in the private sector, working in systems and process engineering and project management across the U.S. and around the world.

"Jodie has brought a wealth of experience and perspective to Albemarle County," said Deputy County Executive Ann Wall. "Over the last six years, she has not only led the Community Development team to improve services for our community but has also acted as a leader in the organization through her dedication to public service."

Under her direction, Community Development advanced several major initiatives, including the launch of Civic Access, a web-based portal that provides residents and businesses with easier access to community development services; the implementation of the Enterprise Permitting & Licensing System; the adoption of AC44, the county's Comprehensive Plan; and the department's participation in the attraction of AstraZeneca's \$4.5 billion investment in Albemarle County. Under her leadership, the county secured significant grants, such as the RAISE grant for the Three Notch'd Trail.

Filardo's efforts strengthened local and regional partnerships and collaboration through leadership of and participation in the Land Use and Environmental Planning Committee (LUPEC) and quarterly outreach to the Blue Ridge Home Builders Association while expanding Albemarle County's reach and reputation locally and throughout the Commonwealth.

Filardo also served as a member of the county's internal leadership team, working closely with the County Executive's Office and department heads to manage and operate the county government.

GFOA, the Virginia Society of CPAs, and the American Institute of CPAs.

Gearheart holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting from Roanoke College and became a Certified Public Accountant in 1993.



Jessica Beemer is a Virginia Tech graduate and Certified Public Accountant who has built her career in local government finance, serving as the county's assistant director of Finance and Management Services

since 2020. Previously, she served as finance manager for Roanoke County Public Schools, where she earned national recognition as a 2019 Emerging Leader from the International Association of School Business Officials. Her leadership and contributions within the Roanoke region were further recognized when she was named to *The Roanoker* magazine's Class of 2023 "40 Under 40."

Beemer works with regional entities including the Regional Center for Animal Care and Protection, the Western Virginia Regional Jail, the Roanoke Valley Greenways Commission, and the Roanoke Valley Resource Authority.

"In addition to these promotions reflecting the outstanding professionalism, dedication, and expertise that Madeline, Laurie, and Jessica bring to Roanoke County, they also demonstrate the strong internal talent pipeline that Roanoke County is so blessed to have," Caywood said in a statement. "Each of them has demonstrated a strong commitment to public service and to strengthening our organization's ability to serve the community with excellence. I am confident that their leadership and passion for continuous improvement will continue to move Roanoke County forward in meaningful and lasting ways. Finally, while the restructuring of our organization that is reflected in these changes is headcount and cost neutral in the short term, it sets the stage for future cost and personnel savings."

Newport News welcomes Cruz for Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellowship

The City of Newport News has welcomed **Michelle Cruz**, one of 15 recent Harvard University graduates selected for the prestigious Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellowship. Through this two-year, fully funded program, Cruz will work alongside City Manager Alan K. Archer and the city's lead-



ership team to strengthen local government capacity and support the city's ongoing efforts to revitalize downtown and enhance the quality of life for residents.

- Cruz - Cruz, a policy strategist, arts and veterans' advocate, and award-winning jazz vocalist, blends creativity with civic impact. At the Harvard Kennedy School, she served as co-chair of the Arts & Culture Policy Design Council and co-director of content and strategy for the Black Policy Conference. She was selected for the Harvard to Oval Office program, which prepares women for leadership in public service.

Prior to Harvard, Cruz helped implement the PACT Act, the largest expansion of veterans' health care and benefits in U.S. history, and served as director of community engagement at Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, RI, where she helped bring thousands of visitors to the city's downtown through innovative programming.

In Newport News, Cruz will help further develop and refine a pathway and actionable strategy to support downtown revitalization in close partnership with public, private, and community stakeholders.

"Michelle's selection as a Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellow is a tremendous opportunity for the City of Newport News," said Archer. "Her diverse background and innovative approach will help us strengthen partnerships, attract investment, and build upon our ongoing efforts to create a vibrant, thriving downtown for residents and visitors alike."

Now in its fourth year, the Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellowship places emerging leaders in selected city halls across the U.S. to help advance mayoral priorities and address pressing municipal challenges. Fellows bring expertise in fields such as public health, education, urban planning, policy development, and public administration, applying data-driven decision-making, human-centered design, and cross-sector collaboration to drive meaningful community outcomes.

The Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative – a program of the Bloomberg Center for Cities at Harvard University – is a collaboration between Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Business School, and Bloomberg Philanthropies. The initiative equips mayors and senior city officials with the leadership and management skills to tackle complex challenges and improve residents' lives.

Marion announces Keen as new town manager

Andrew Keen, a Marion native, has returned home as the new town manager.

A 2009 graduate of Marion Senior High School, Keen is currently serving as director of finance and treasurer

for the Town of Vinton, a position he's held since June 2022. Previously, Keen worked in nonprofit healthcare financial management and logistics.

"We are delighted to have Andrew coming home," said Marion Mayor Avery Cornett. "After an extensive search, the council chose Andrew for his local connection, his education, his service in local government, and his passion for his hometown. We're certain we've hit a home run, and looking forward to having him."

Keen's first day was January 5.

Keen graduated from Radford University in 2014 with a Bachelor's in History with a minor in Political Science, and earned his Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management from Virginia Tech in 2023.

Richmond Fire Department announces appointment of Fire Chief Segal

The City of Richmond has appointed Interim Fire Chief **Jeffrey Segal** as the permanent chief of Richmond Fire and Emergency Services. His appointment comes as the department

rolls out a series of new initiatives focused on strengthening operations, expanding leadership capacity, and reinforcing accountability for the department.

Segal takes the helm having served as the department's interim chief since January 2025. He joined the Richmond Fire and Emergency Services Department in 2020, overseeing the department's North Division and serving as a shift commander.

Segal has an extensive background in fire operations, special operations, emergency medical services (EMS), and incident management. Prior to his move to Richmond, Segal served with the Baltimore City Fire Department for over 30 years. He advanced through the ranks becoming a fire pump

operator, lieutenant, captain, battalion chief, battalion commander, division chief, deputy chief, and assistant chief. He also served as the city's interim chief, deputy incident commander on the Baltimore Regional Type III Incident Management Team, and oversaw the Baltimore City Fire Department's Type IV Incident Management Team.

"For the last quarter I have had an opportunity to partner with Chief Segal in setting the foundation for the future of Richmond Fire," said CAO Odie Donald II. "Chief Segal not only has the trust and respect of his department and the community, his commitment to ethical leadership and best-in-class service delivery fully aligns with Mayor Avula's vision for Richmond and the city's rich firefighting legacy."

Segal's appointment was effective November 29.

Hillsville's Yonce retiring after 40 years of service

- Yonce -

For four decades, few names have been as synonymous with the Town of Hillsville as **Vickie Yonce**. Her career began remarkably early. At just 17 years old and fresh out of high school, Yonce joined the town's

Utility Billing Department on August 16, 1984. Over the years, her responsibilities grew to include payroll clerk and clerk of council, along with numerous promotions and role expansions. Her steady presence at Town Hall meant that she didn't just know residents by name – she knew the details of their lives, their stories, and the history of their families. Her work was as personal as it was professional.

Over her 40 years, Yonce worked with approximately nine town managers, including Larry South's long tenure which were transformative years for Hillsville. She navigated changes in leadership with grace, dependability, and her trademark attention to detail.

Behind the scenes, Yonce handled a constant flow of change with remarkable steadiness. It was not unusual for her to receive calls at home, troubleshoot from her kitchen table, or stay late into the evening making sure payroll, billing, or council materials were perfect and on time.

She worked the annual Labor Day Flea Market, selling licenses for hours on end, supported community events, and showed up wherever the town needed her. She served the public during the uncertainty of

Correction – On page 34 of the November/December issue, the VBCOA Immediate Past President should have been identified as Cindy Davis. We regret the error.

the Y2K transition, the challenges of COVID-19, and the day-to-day demands that define small-town governance.

Her legacy is unmistakable. It lives in every system updated, every citizen helped, every project supported, and every colleague mentored. Hillsville grew, advanced, and modernized – and Yonce was there for every step of it.

Town Manager LeAnna Surratt said, "During the 10 years we worked together, Vickie liked to say, 'You can teach an old dog new tricks.' Change could be tough, but she stuck with it and stayed committed to her work and to the Town of Hillsville."

County Administrator Jeffrey Stoke Leaving Prince George County

Prince George County Administrator **Jeffrey D. Stoke** is resigning; his last day will be January 21. Kristen Pudlow, current deputy county administrator, will take on the role of interim county administrator upon his departure.

Stoke has over 28 years of local government experience. He is a Credentialed Manager (CM) with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and a Certified Economic Developer (C.Ec.D) with the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). Stoke graduated from LEAD Virginia in 2012 and from the ICMA Senior Executive Institute at UVA in 2016.

Stoke stated in a press release, "I want to thank the members of the Board of Supervisors who I have served over the years and a talented staff who assisted me with guiding so many important county projects. I look forward to succeeding in my next professional opportunity."

Board Chairman Floyd Brown Jr. said, "As chairman, I am saddened by his announcement, but I must support his independent decision to resign. Mr. Stoke had an extremely good hand on how to manage the county through some of the challenges during his time here. All of us here in Prince George County wish Mr. Stoke and his family the best moving forward, and thank them for the contributions he and his family have made to this county over the past 16+ years."

James City County named a winner in the 2025 CivicPlus Community Impact Awards

JAMES CITY COUNTY has been named one of the top three winners in the 2025 CivicPlus Community Impact Awards. The awards program celebrates CivicPlus customers that are driving meaningful change through innovation, service, and dedication to their communities.

James City County's winning initiative, the Housing Portal website, was designed to provide a 24-hour, one-stop shopping source for citizens searching for housing assistance through the county website and mobile app. The portal also offers greater citizen outreach and structural advantages in relation to Housing Office requests, therefore serving as both a resource and a tool for citizens.

Since its implementation, the project has delivered measurable results, including:

- Over 10,000 visits to the Housing Portal
- A 120% increase in visits to the Food Bank page
- A 50% increase in visits to the Voucher Programs page
- A 98% increase in visits to the Income-Based Rental Opportunities page

As a 2025 Community Impact Awards winner, James City County will receive a \$1,000 charitable contribution made in its name to an organization of its choice, a recognition trophy, and a video spotlight produced by CivicPlus to showcase the story and impact of the initiative.

"The Community Impact Awards honor the everyday work that leads to extraordinary outcomes. The most powerful changes often start at the local level, and we're proud to recognize our customers that are driving innovation and setting new standards in public service," said CivicPlus Chief Executive Officer Brian Rempe. "James City County's work is shaping the future of impact-led government and redefining the resident experience. We hope James City County's success inspires other communities to explore new ways to serve, engage, and lead."

For more information, check out the James City County Housing Portal website at www.jccvahousing.gov.



SailFest Cape Charles receives Virginia Tourism Corporation grant

SAILFEST CAPE CHARLES, a Cape Charles Main Street entity, received a \$9,750 grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation's VA250 Tourism Marketing Program for its SailFest Cape Charles event, bringing the tall ships back to Cape Charles to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The event is planned for June 19-21, 2026.

SailFest partnered with other local businesses to supply matching funds for the project. This historic event will bring three sailing vessels to Cape Charles Harbor in 2026. The event will be open to the public for free tours on June 20-21. In addition, this event will feature historians speaking on maritime history, fife & drum corps, period re-enactors, hands-on activities for kids,

vendors, food trucks, and a Saturday night concert complete with fireworks to end the evening. The historic magnitude of this event will attract visitors from near and far, allowing Cape Charles to provide access to the history and grandeur of the tall ships with an ease of participation you won't find at larger venues.

During this grant round, Virginia Tourism Corporation awarded \$627,877 in matching grant funds to 104 local tourism programs across the Commonwealth.

"SailFest Cape Charles is such a special way for our community to come together and celebrate our maritime heritage," said Rick Keurogian, Cape Charles town manager. "The tall ships returning to our harbor will remind us of the history that shaped this town and the spirit that continues to make Cape Charles so unique. We're excited to welcome visitors to experience the warmth, beauty, and pride that define our town and the people who call it home."

To learn more about the organization, visit www.capecharlesmainstreet.com. To learn more about SailFest, visit www.sailfestcapecharles.com.



LEGO breaks ground on new Prince George County facility

THE LEGO GROUP OFFICIALLY broke ground on its new regional distribution center in Prince George County on November 13. The ceremony, held at Crosspointe Business Centre, represents a major milestone in the county's growing business community.

The event was attended by Governor Glenn Youngkin and LEGO Vice President of Supply Chain Operations Cindy Sikora. Also present were Prince George County Board of Supervisors Chairman Floyd Brown Jr., board members Robert Cox Jr. and Philip Pugh, and representatives from the Prince George Economic Development Authority (EDA), including Sterling Hunt Sr., Judy Chalkley, James Clements, Brandon Massenburg, and Cejae Vtipilson. County Administrator Jeff Stoke and Deputy County Administrator Kristen Pudlow were also in attendance

for the groundbreaking ceremony.

"LEGO has always been more than a toy. It inspires creativity, teamwork, and problem solving," said Brown. "LEGO builds worlds in the minds of kids – and adults, too. Now, it will help shape the future here in Prince George County."

The \$366 million project boasts a two-million-square-foot facility and is anticipated to create more than 300 new jobs.



New Charlottesville historical marker to recognize James T. S. Taylor

ON NOVEMBER 21, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History unveiled a state historical marker recognizing James T. S. Taylor, a Black Civil War soldier and Charlottesville politician.

Taylor grew up in Charlottesville and served as a sergeant in the 2nd United States Colored Infantry. After the war, he became a leader in Charlottesville's Republican Party, and he was a delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867-68. He was buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

The new marker, which is located at the 1st Street South entrance to Oakwood Cemetery, was funded by the John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History. The approved text reads as follows:

James T. S. Taylor (1840-1918)

James T. S. Taylor, a free Black shoemaker, grew up in Charlottesville and served as a sergeant in the 2nd U.S. Colored Infantry during the Civil War. As a newspaper correspondent, he wrote wartime letters detailing Black soldiers' experiences and protesting racial injustice. He later became a leader in Charlottesville's Republican Party. He was a delegate to the

Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867-68, where he championed Black suffrage and civil rights. In 1881, he supported the Readjuster Party, a biracial reform coalition that abolished the poll tax and invested in public education. Taylor remained an active Republican into the 20th century and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.





City of Hopewell expands urban agriculture opportunities

IN OCTOBER, THE HOPEWELL City Council voted unanimously to approve an amendment to the city zoning ordinance to include a section on Urban Agriculture Uses and Performance Standards, paving the way for more sustainable food production and green space development within the community.

This amendment allows for a variety of urban gardening and farming activities, including:

- Yard garden (or residential garden)
- Community garden
- Market garden (or urban farm)
- Urban agriculture (indoors)

The ordinance defines urban agriculture as “the use of land for cultivating herbs, flowers, fruits, vegetables, or ornamental plants, primarily for growing food for sale or donation to public or nonprofit organizations.”

Market gardens – also known as urban farms – may include educational activities, on-site sales, and distribution of unprocessed agricultural products grown on site. Examples include urban gardens and community-supported agriculture programs. Livestock production or the sale of animal products, however, is not permitted.

Indoor urban agriculture will also be allowed, supporting innovative approaches such as hydroponics, horticulture, floriculture, vertical farming, and plant research or education. These uses are designed to encourage professional development and entrepreneurial growth while promoting local food systems.

“This is a great step forward for our community and improving the quality of life for our citizens,” Mayor Johnny Partin observed in a press release. “This will provide increased opportunities for citizens and businesses to participate in urban agriculture and have access to fresh produce.”

Fredericksburg begins Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade

FOLLOWING NEARLY A DECADE of exploration, discussion, and planning, the City of Fredericksburg has begun upgrading and expanding of the city's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). This is the largest municipal project in city's history.

In 2021, city council adopted a resolution authorizing the design, improvement, and expansion of the WWTP. Construction is expected to last approximately four years, with completion anticipated in 2029. The city has partnered with design-builder Ulliman Schutte to complete the estimated \$180 million project.

The expansion portion of the project will increase the WWTP's treatment capacity from 4.5 million gallons per day (mgd) to 6.0 mgd. This added capacity will support future residential, commercial, and industrial growth while ensuring reliable, sustainable wastewater service for decades to come.

In addition to expanding capacity, the project will modernize the treatment process by incorporating enhanced nutrient removal technology. This major upgrade is designed to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus discharged into the Rappahannock River and, ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay. By implementing this advanced system, Fredericksburg will meet all state-mandated requirements

for water quality while supporting the city's long-term environmental stewardship goals.

“We are deeply grateful for the Commonwealth of Virginia's partnership in making this historic project possible,” said Mayor Kerry Devine. “Through more than \$110 million in state appropriations and grants, supported by both Governor Northam's and Governor Youngkin's administrations, Fredericksburg has received vital funding for this project. This includes \$27 million from the Commonwealth's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Recovery Fund, \$29.2 million through the ARPA-Enhanced Nutrient Removal Certainty Program (ENRCP), and \$54.6 million from the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund. These investments reflect a shared commitment to safeguarding the Rappahannock River and the Chesapeake Bay for generations to come.”

The City of Fredericksburg held a ceremonial groundbreaking for the WWTP upgrade and expansion on October 14. Remarks were shared by Deputy City Manager David Brown, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Director Michael Rolband, Ulliman Schutte representative Al McCullough, and Mayor Kerry Devine. Members of city council joined Rolband in symbolically breaking ground, marking the official start of construction.

During the four-year construction period, the WWTP will remain fully operational, providing uninterrupted service to the community. The facility, located behind Dixon Park, will also use two athletic fields of the city's park for temporary material storage and equipment staging during construction.



Coffee Aquatics Center breaks ground in Chesapeake

THE CITY OF CHESAPEAKE officially broke ground on the new Coffee Aquatics Center on November 14, celebrating the start of a long-awaited project that will bring the city's first public indoor pool to the community. This major investment will provide year-round recreation, wellness, and learning opportunities for residents of all ages.



The 28,600-square-foot aquatic facility will be an expansion of the Dr. Clarence V. Coffee Community Center and is designed with accessibility, comfort, and community needs in mind. The building will feature an energy-efficient glazed enclosure; men's, women's, and family-friendly locker rooms; a therapy room; and additional spaces for programs ranging from swim lessons and senior activities to competitive swimming and therapeutic recreation.

The facility includes a natatorium with a partially retractable roof and an 8,600-square-foot pool deck, creating an open, light-filled space for leisure, exercise, and connection – even during the winter months.

This project is made possible by local, state, and federal funding and reflects the city's commitment to enhancing quality of life through spaces that encourage play, inclusion, and community pride. Chesapeake's Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department is looking forward to sharing this exciting space with citizens upon completion.

Project management is led by the Chesapeake Public Works Department in partnership with HBA Architecture and Interior Design and Balicore LLC.

The Ripple Effect: Improvements build flood resilience for Virginia Beach

A KEY FLOOD PROTECTION PROGRAM (FPP) project near Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana is underway at First Colonial Road and Oceana Boulevard that will improve drainage along the heavily traveled corridor connecting neighborhoods, Interstate 264, and the military base.

The project's key feature is a constructed wetland that, like natural wetlands, will:

- Collect rainwater from surrounding neighborhoods
- Store the water temporarily in the constructed wetland
- Release it slowly back into the stormwater system
- Help reduce flooding and remove pollutants

Additional improvements include the installation of a manufactured treatment device (MTD) that is designed to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff and provide additional water quality benefits.

The project will connect to the Oceana Boulevard stormwater system, allowing more efficient drainage and reducing roadway flooding during both 10-year and 100-year storm events. This keeps a key access point to NAS Oceana open and mission-ready during severe weather.

Because of its proximity to NAS Oceana, the project also includes waterfowl mitigation measures, such as fencing and managed meadows, to discourage geese and ducks from gathering near the site.

This undertaking is one of two projects within the Linkhorn Bay Drainage Basin Improvements. Construction is expected to be completed in March 2026.

About "The Ripple Effect" program

The Virginia Beach Flood Protection Program – The Ripple Effect – is a comprehensive 10-year plan to address recurrent flooding in Virginia Beach. In November 2021, Virginia Beach voters overwhelmingly supported a resiliency package for several key flood protection initiatives to include drainage improvements, tide gates, pump stations, and flood barriers throughout the city. The projects are led by Public Works with support from a community oversight board for transparency and accountability. Learn more at VirginiaBeach.gov/RippleEffect.



Arlington County completes transformation of Army Navy Drive

ARLINGTON COUNTY RECENTLY celebrated the completion of Army Navy Drive's three-year reconfiguration in the busy Pentagon City neighborhood.

Community representatives, regional transportation officials, and project staff held a ribbon-cutting on October 29 to mark the approximately \$11 million transformation of the .6-mile stretch between South Joyce Street and 12th Street South.

The Army Navy Drive Complete Street project changed the arterial road from a car-heavy thoroughfare to a holistic street designed for travel by users of any mode of transportation and also upgraded and replaced signals to coordinate the movement of traffic between the corridor, adjoining local streets, and Interstate 395.

"Army Navy Drive defines and connects one of Arlington's most vigorously growing neighborhoods, and at the same time, it is a gateway for our metropolitan region," said Takis Karantonis, chair of the Arlington County Board. "More than just a road, it is a critical asset to Arlington's role as a high-activity hub in the core of our greater region and in Northern Virginia in particular."

The reconfigured road features pedestrian upgrades with more uniform sidewalks and new crosswalks where there previously were none.

The southernmost vehicle lane was converted into a two-way protected bike lane, complete with signals, which will connect to the future Army Navy Drive Protected Bike Lane project west of South Joyce Street.

Bus stops were improved to provide passengers with smoother boarding and disembarking at stops that connect with the Pentagon City Transitway Extension project currently under

construction on 12th Street South, and with planned transit improvements to Columbia Pike.

"By reducing congestion, expanding transportation options, and enhancing safety, this project helps everyone traveling through Arlington and beyond enjoy a more reliable and connected regional transportation network," said Phyllis Randall, chair of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) and of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors.

Planning for the revitalized roadway began in 2017 in advance of projected growth and future improvement projects along the Route 1 corridor, including a second entrance to the Crystal City Metro Station, reconfigured intersections on 15th Street South, and CC2DCA – a neighborhood multimodal connector to Ronald Reagan National Airport.

The project was implemented through a partnership with the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and close coordination with Washington Headquarters Services and private buildings along the project site.



Town of Abingdon opens Wellspring Playground

THE TOWN OF ABINGDON announced the grand opening of the Wellspring Playground, a vibrant new recreational space made possible through the generous support of the Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia. A public ribbon-cutting on November 21 marked the milestone.



"Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia is thrilled to support such a wonderful project that impacts not only the Town of Abingdon but our region as a whole," said Marvin Gilliam, chair of the Wellspring Foundation Board of Directors. "We look forward to seeing the Wellspring Playground at the Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center be a place of fun and play for children and families for years to come."

Added Wellspring Foundation Executive Director Sean McMurray, "The original playground at the Coomes Center was a beloved part of our community for many years. Numerous families have fond memories of their time at the playground and now, with the newly upgraded Wellspring Playground, the next generation of children and families in our region will be able to enjoy this enhanced community asset far into the future."

Abingdon Mayor Dwyane Anderson shared, "The Wellspring Playground is a shining example of what our community can achieve when we come together. This inclusive space ensures every child has a safe place to play, explore, and grow, and it will be a cherished part of Abingdon for generations to come."

York County Fire and Life Safety launches Whole Blood Program

YORK COUNTY FIRE CHIEF Allen W. Baldwin has announced the addition of a Whole Blood Program to the department's EMS protocols. The program allows for the administration of whole blood to critical medical patients who require blood and to trauma victims at their location and during transport to a medical center, which can significantly improve patient outcomes.

The program was launched on November 18.

"The time that passes from our first responders' assessment of the patient to their arrival at a hospital is crucial," Baldwin explained. "The timely delivery of whole blood to the patient could be a determining factor in their survival."

Whole blood is blood that contains red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma – components desperately needed by people who have experienced significant blood loss. The replacement of these components delivers vital oxygen, nutrients, antibodies, and

proteins that the body needs to function properly.

This initiative is the result of a collaborative effort between York County, regional medical centers, and dedicated blood donors, supported by several years of planning by department staff. A comprehensive training program was developed and delivered by the EMS staff, ensuring that first responders across the county's fire stations are fully prepared to use this lifesaving capability.

Tidewater EMS Council has provided unending support of the Whole Blood Initiative throughout the region.

"From the beginning, this program has had the support of county leadership, and we appreciate that level of interest and dedication to this initiative," Baldwin said. "In addition, our community is greatly supportive of our efforts, and we are pleased to offer this service to our residents and visitors."



Colonial Beach Police Department achieves state accreditation

THIS FALL, THE COLONIAL BEACH Police Department received state accreditation from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).

This accreditation is a significant achievement that demonstrates the department's compliance with established professional standards for law enforcement agencies across the Commonwealth. The accreditation process includes a comprehensive review of department policies, procedures, operations, and practices, followed by an on-site assessment conducted by independent evaluators.

The DCJS accreditation program promotes the highest levels of professionalism, integrity, and accountability. By meeting these standards, the Colonial Beach Police Department affirms its ongoing commitment to quality service and continuous improvement in public safety.



Accreditation is a multi-year process that requires agencies to demonstrate compliance with rigorous standards across areas such as leadership, training, use of force, community engagement, and records management. To maintain accredited status, the department will continue to undergo periodic reviews and assessments.

This accomplishment reflects the hard work and dedication of the entire department and reinforces its mission to serve the Colonial Beach community with excellence.

Town of Middleburg to restore historic Asbury Church



THE TOWN OF MIDDLEBURG has engaged Glave & Holmes to provide architectural/engineering services for the Asbury Church Restoration Project. The goal of the project is to restore the church building so it can be used as an interpretative site and a small group meeting and gathering space.

Glave & Holmes (a VML Community Business Member organization) is an experienced and well-respected architecture firm, with a specific business practice focused on historic properties. Through a public procurement process, Glave & Holmes was selected by Middleburg and its town council to lead this design effort on the historic Asbury Church. Specifically, Glave & Holmes has an on-staff architectural historian and will engage with additional firms to explore the historic characteristics of the structure with the intent to preserve and promote its history.

Site investigation work began in late September 2025, with members of the investigative team present on site over a three-week period.

Falls Church's Mary Riley Styles Public Library launches digital archive

MARY RILEY STYLES Public Library (MRSPL) has announced the official launch of its digital archive of the Falls Church History Room at archive.mrspl.org.

Providing online access to a wide range of local history materials, this new archive features photographs, obituaries and death notices, Civil War letters, oral history recordings, city council minutes, city budgets, local newsletters, and other significant historical documents.

"Our new digital archive represents a significant leap forward in preserving and sharing the City of Falls Church's unique history," noted Library Director Megan Dotzler. "By making these materials easily accessible online, we are empowering our community to discover and connect with its past in meaningful ways and ensuring that these invaluable records are preserved for future generations."

The digital archive, which is funded by the Mary Riley Styles Public Library Foundation, is the result of years of dedicated effort by the MRSPL and city staff, local historians, and volunteers



who meticulously cataloged, scanned, and transcribed these historical materials. The archive will be a growing document collection with ongoing efforts to digitize and add more historical documents, books, and organizational reports.

Noteworthy collections in the digital archive include:

- Extensive photo collection: Over 8,000 digitized photographs capturing various aspects of Falls Church's history, from its early days to recent times.
- Civil War letters and diaries: Over 200 Civil War-era letters, diaries, and documents, many written from Falls Church locations like Upton's Hill and Munson's Hill.
- City council minutes: An archive of minutes from 1948-2011.
- Local newsletters: Newsletters reflecting community voices and chronicling local events and happenings, including the city's Focus on Falls Church and the Bulletin of the League of Women Voters of Falls Church.
- Obituaries and death notices: Nearly 16,000 Falls Church-area death notices and obituaries, a valuable resource for genealogical research and understanding the lives of past residents.
- Oral histories: Over 100 recordings collected by the local historian H.H. Douglas between 1965 and 1982.

The digital archive is open 24/7, accessible anytime from any device (phone, tablet, or computer). Users can browse or keyword-search across all collections, or limit searches by specific criteria, with the ability to create a personalized login to save searches. The archive also features links to other helpful resources for anyone researching Falls Church history.

Farmville receives first credit ratings

MOODY'S RATINGS AND S&P Global Ratings have assigned the Town of Farmville's first-ever credit ratings at Aa3 underlying and Aa1 enhanced and A+, respectively.

According to the report issued by Moody's, "The Aa3 issuer rating reflects Farmville's strong financial position and modest overall leverage. The town's local economy is stable and benefits from the institutional presence of Longwood University (around 4,500 students). The town's strong governance is a key driver of the rating and is demonstrated by its relatively robust reserves and track record of surplus operations. The Aa1 enhanced rating is based on the Virginia Localities Intercept Program (Aa1 stable), which is one notch below the Commonwealth of Virginia's issuer rating (Aaa stable). The town's Aa1 enhanced rating is on parity with the Aa1 programmatic rating given that its current state aid allocation is greater than 1.0x the maximum annual debt service payments due on all general obligation debt following the new issuance."

S&P reports, "The 'A+' GO rating on Farmville's debt is underpinned by the town's stable economic base, improving financial

performance, and our expectation of manageable debt and retirement liabilities in the coming years. As a regional hub in the Piedmont area of south-central Virginia, Farmville benefits from the stabilizing presence of Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College, which contribute to local economic activity. The stable outlook reflects our expectation that the town will maintain positive financial performance without reliance on utility revenue, and from fiscal 2026 develop a track record of increasing fund balance. We do not expect debt to materially increase in our two-year outlook period."

"The Town of Farmville is proud to receive recognition for its commitment to financial stability, financial policies, and a strong and vibrant economy," said Dr. Scott Davis, Farmville town manager. "This is a testament to the work that the mayor, town council, and staff have worked for over the last five years."



Virginia 250 Passport offers prizes and discounts to historic sites and museums

THE VIRGINIA 250 PASSPORT is a collaborative, statewide initiative – organized by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC), Colonial Williamsburg, George Washington's Mount Vernon, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF), and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello – that encourages Virginians and visitors to commemorate America's 250th birthday by engaging with the Commonwealth's foremost historic sites and museums. The project is supported by the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250) and the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC).

Passports are now available free of charge at signature sites (VMHC, Colonial Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Monticello, and the JYF's Jamestown Settlement and American Revolution Museum at Yorktown), as well as at the VA250 Mobile Museum, select VA250 events, and all 12 Virginia Welcome Centers, located at gateways along interstate highways. A total of 250,000 copies will be distributed.

"This statewide partnership between some of the finest history institutions in the nation is an example of how, when we work together, we can create engaging, meaningful experiences for our fellow Virginians," said Rita McClenney, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. "We encourage you to pick up your passport while supplies last and spend a year with us traveling around our great Commonwealth."

The Virginia 250 Passport serves as a travel guide, discount book, and keepsake. The 64-page commemorative booklet features descriptions of the 70 participating museums and historic sites across five regions of the Commonwealth: Central Virginia,

Northern Virginia, Shenandoah Valley, Southwestern Virginia, and Tidewater.

Travelers can collect unique stamps while visiting each passport site. Once they have secured a stamp in their passport, they can receive up to a 15% discount at future participating locations that charge admission. Collecting at least five stamps makes them eligible to enter the prize drawing. Prizes will be drawn in December 2026 and include yearlong museum memberships and cash awards up to \$2,500.

The Virginia Department of Education will be partnering with superintendents across the Commonwealth to ensure that schools and teachers are aware of the passport and are sharing it with students and families statewide.

"The Virginia 250 Passport is a wonderful tool that can be used both inside and outside the classroom to inspire curiosity, learning, and civic pride as it makes history come alive across the Commonwealth," said Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Virginia secretary of education. "By exploring the people and places that shaped our nation, young Virginians and their families can connect more deeply with our shared story and gain a greater appreciation for the ideals that continue to define the Commonwealth and our country."

The Virginia 250 Passport program runs through December 31, 2026. More information is available at VirginiaHistory.org/250Passport.



New art brings color and charm to Leesburg's Lassiter Way

A RIBBON-CUTTING on November 14 celebrated the completion of two new trompe l'oeil asphalt murals on Lassiter Way, a notable pedestrian corridor in historic downtown Leesburg.

In May, Leesburg Movement, in partnership with the town's Commission on Public Art, invited artists to submit designs for murals at both the entrance and exit of Lassiter Way. The theme, "Wonderfully Leesburg," encouraged artists to capture the town's distinctive charm, including its historic architecture, flourishing gardens, and surrounding landscapes.

Following a competitive selection process, artwork by Danielle Ferrin and Ennedi Shtanko was chosen for installation. Painted over the course of four days, the murals feature striking trompe l'oeil designs that create a 3D effect when photographed with people, inviting visitors to interact with the art. Serving as vibrant gateways to Lassiter Way, the murals also reflect the creativity and character of the Leesburg community.

"Leesburg Movement couldn't be more thrilled by the vibrancy and whimsical nature of each mural," said Leesburg Movement Executive Director Erin Westin. "Ferrin's work immerses you in the beauty of Leesburg's annual Flower and Garden Festival, while Shtanko's transports you to the rolling hills of Loudoun wine country."

Westin said one of the goals of this project was to bring more visibility to the businesses on Market and Loudoun streets. Now, the murals draw residents and visitors into the alley, making it a beautiful and engaging connector between both streets.

The murals are now open for the public to enjoy, contributing to Leesburg's ongoing efforts to support local artists and enhance the downtown experience.



Virginia Scenic Railway opens second location in Louisa

IN LATE 2025, THE VIRGINIA Scenic Railway (VSR) opened its second location in Louisa, a small town with a big rail legacy dating back to the 19th century.

As part of its expansion, VSR restored two historic train depots near downtown Louisa, reviving a landmark that once welcomed freight and passengers into the heart of the community. Louisa's historic passenger depot, located at 103 Church Avenue, was built in 1899 according to the C&O Railroad's design standard at the time. After it ceased to function as a railway depot, the adjacent freight depot served as a storage room for the Maddox Feed Store. In 2025, VSR rehabilitated the station, keeping the charm and ambience of the station intact.

The new location officially launched with the debut of the "Santa Express" on December 6. This holiday-themed train excursion, designed especially for children and families, is like the offering in Staunton that regularly sells out. The experience features:

- A 60-minute round-trip ride
- Onboard holiday music and festive décor
- A visit from Santa Claus, plus treats and surprises for young passengers
- An unforgettable family experience, perfect for starting a new holiday tradition

What's next for Louisa's Scenic Railway

Located just an hour from Richmond and two hours from Norfolk, Louisa is ideally situated to become VSR's Central Virginia hub. In 2026, the Louisa location will expand to offer additional excursions, including railroad history, murder mysteries, wine tasting trains, and more.

"We're thrilled to welcome Virginia Scenic Railway and train lovers to Louisa," said Tracy Hale Clark, executive director of the Louisa County Chamber of Commerce. "It's a fresh way to experience the charm, history, and hospitality of our Main Street and beyond. This is a big win for the town and county – boosting tourism, supporting small businesses, and strengthening our local economy."

"One of the neatest parts of our railroad is being able to offer these kinds of excursions," added Steve Powell, VSR president. "It's such a thrill for us to generate enthusiasm for the railroad by opening up new markets and being able to offer train rides and other rail experiences for both new and old generations of rail fans to enjoy."



Roanoke County to hold Public Safety Academy

THE ROANOKE COUNTY POLICE Department, in partnership with the Roanoke County Sheriff's Office, Roanoke County Fire and Rescue Department, and the Western Virginia Regional Jail, will hold a Public Safety Academy beginning February 3. The goal of the academy is to educate citizens so that they can formulate responsible conclusions on public safety activities.



Sessions will be held from 6-9 p.m. every Tuesday. Departments and topics that will be covered include:

Police: Patrol, budget, Community Service Officers (CSO), School Resource Officers (SRO), Emergency Vehicle Operation Course (EVOC), use of force, traffic unit, firearms, K9, S.W.A.T., VICE, Criminal Investigations Division (CID), evidence collection, academy tour, polygraph, and active shooter response.

Sheriff: Jail history, jail tour, jury selection, court security, civil process, criminal law, E.R.T., clerk of court, services, and A.V.O.I.D. self-defense.

Fire and Rescue: System overview, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), CPR and AED certification, fire marshal, investigations, inspections, public education, hazmat, EMS, CPAT, apparatus and hose streams, technical rescue, and haul back systems.

Regional Jail: Facilities tour.

The Roanoke County Emergency Communications Center and the Department of Wildlife Resources will also provide presentations.



Get to know VML's new President: Town of Amherst Mayor Dwayne Tuggle

IT'S A COLD BUT SUNNY Veterans Day and I'm riding shotgun in Town of Amherst Mayor Dwayne Tuggle's pickup truck. We are heading east out of town. In the back seat are VML's executive director and our staff photographer. Our mission: To learn more about Mayor Tuggle, VML's newly installed President. Our destination: A lake in the woods that Mayor Tuggle wants us to see because it's a special place for him. The upshot: If we want to understand him, we need to see the lake.

The high winds that swept Central Virginia the previous night knocked what remained of the fall foliage to the ground. So, the trees are mostly bare but after we turn off the paved road onto a gravel drive, we can see that their colorful leaves are now carpeting the forest floor. Mayor Tuggle slows to a crawl as we navigate a series of newly installed water bars abutting runoff ditches. As we bounce up and down, making slow but steady progress, we pass a nice house on the ridge above that belongs to the retired octogenarian neurosurgeon and his wife who own the land.

Mayor Tuggle, a retired Virginia State Police Senior Special Agent, explains his connection to the property. "I've been coming out here for years. I help look after the place and really like having a wilderness retreat so close to town. When the previous owner sold it, he told the buyer, 'It comes with a State Trooper!'"

It seems like a good arrangement for the elderly owners and for Mayor Tuggle, whose land stewardship also extends to a local cemetery where he serves as caretaker.

After we turn off the gravel road onto a dirt road – also covered in red, yellow, and brown leaves – Mayor Tuggle points out his deer stand among the trees and then his ATV parked under a shed. As we continue driving deeper into the woods, with a steadily diminishing sense of road and no sign of a lake, the conversation trails off and the cab of the truck falls silent.

"You know," I say to our host, "this is the part of the movie where you say something like, 'I took the last set of city slickers that came to bother me down this road and they haven't bothered me or anyone else since!'"

By way of response, Mayor Tuggle chuckles, but not in a completely reassuring manner.

Later we learn that sinkholes of unknown depths dot the property. In the early 1970s a local store owner closed shop and disposed of his appliances – including a large freezer – by dumping them down the holes. "Not the smartest thing," admits Mayor Tuggle, "but nobody's ever seen that freezer again."

Finally, through a break in the trees we see the lake! And, true to Mayor Tuggle's description, it is lovely. Surrounded by hills and abutting a stretch of grassy meadow, the small body of water seems like a hidden gem that only the initiated (or the lucky) can find. A boat house, solar panel, and short dock mark it as a cultivated spot.

"Back in the 50s this was a Boy Scout camp," explains Mayor Tuggle. In fact, we can see the wooden posts from the Boy Scouts' original dock sticking out of the water. "I've been bringing my granddaughter out here pretty much her whole life. Some evenings we'd have a picnic dinner and fish off the dock," he reminisces.

The surrounding meadow also holds its share of memories for Mayor Tuggle. He tells of two occasions when he discovered patches of tended marijuana plants nearby – an unfortunate situation for the growers who had likely not counted on their illegal farming operation occupying the same ground as a state narcotic agent's woodland retreat. Another time he and a friend encountered "the largest rattlesnake we'd ever seen" rattling away in the grass.

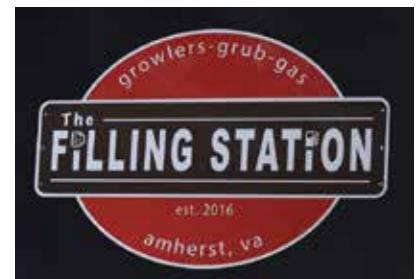
Soon the chilly wind coming across the water convinces us to make the trip back to Amherst. Before we go to Town Hall for the interview portion of our visit, we stop for lunch at The Filling Station. This charmingly renovated gas station sits on Amherst's well-known traffic circle and fountain (turned off during our visit due to the approaching winter temperatures). At The Filling Station locals and travelers can fuel up, grab a top-notch cheeseburger, and – if they are so inclined – choose from among dozens of beers available behind the counter or from the case lining the wall.

"Nobody knew if this place would work out," observes Mayor Tuggle as we wait for our cheeseburgers, chicken sandwiches, fried okra and chips. "But it's become a really great spot for the town. I have to avoid coming here too often or my doctor wouldn't like it."

Indeed, it's only a one-minute drive (or maybe a five-minute walk) from Town Hall to The Filling Station, so I can see why it would be important for a local official looking out for his health to exercise restraint. That said, I'm glad we gave the mayor an excuse to break his diet. He clearly enjoys the place. During our visit, he greets many of the people who come and go from the busy restaurant. But all good things (including cheeseburgers) must eventually come to an end, so we pile into the pickup one more time for the short drive to Town Hall.

They say that still waters run deep. In that spirit, interviewing Mayor Dwayne Tuggle is a bit like trying to judge the contents of his beloved lake by looking at its surface. He is an admitted "talker," and he ably reflects conversation that comes his way, but he doesn't engage in chit-chat. It's as though the years spent working as an undercover agent have taught him to not readily give up information. This can make interactions short. For example, when I ask him the story behind the mounted duck on his office wall, the beginning, middle, and end of the story is: "I shot it."

So, while we may never know why *that* particular duck is mounted to *that* particular wall, that afternoon in Amherst we settled into the council chambers, stirred the waters (so to speak), and wound up having a great, roving conversation that touched on many things that make Town of Amherst Mayor and VML President Dwayne Tuggle who he is...



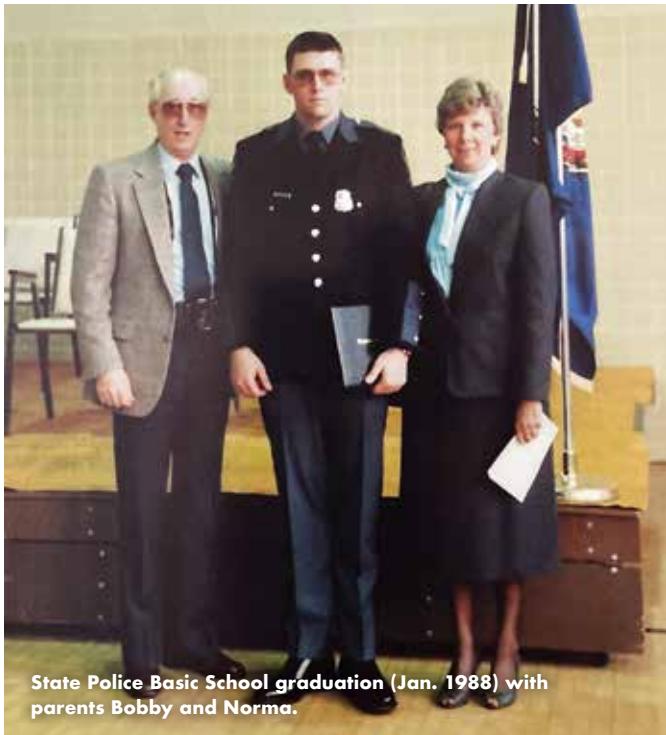
Background and sports

Where did you grow up? What brought you to Amherst?

I grew up in Campbell County, just across the other side of Lynchburg. I went to Brookville High School. I came to Amherst in January of 1988 because it was my first station with the Virginia State Police after I got hired. Before that, I was a deputy in Charlotte County for two years.

What did your parents do?

My mom was a business manager for a radiology consultant in Lynchburg. My dad worked at General Electric, and then when Erickson bought them out, he worked there for five years before he retired.



What was your first job?

Umpiring Little League baseball. I started scorekeeping Little League baseball when I was 13 and then I worked my way into umpiring. We got paid, even as young kids. I think it was about \$5 a game. But my first real job was at Strother Drug Company which was a big pharmaceutical distributor in Campbell County. I worked there for a short time. Drugstores would call in orders and we'd fill boxes and then send them on.

Did you like that job?

Not really.

You were a scorekeeper and umpire, I'm assuming you also played baseball?

I played Little League until I was 12. Then I played Pony League and finally some Colt League. I also played two years in high school. I just worked it out so I could make a little money umping when I wasn't playing.

Baseball has always been my favorite sport, but volleyball is running close to it now since my granddaughter is very dedicated to it. You would never think so if you just casually watch, but volleyball is just so intense! When we're watching a match, my wife will tell me that my face gets red. My blood pressure has got to be up after a tight game. The sport is just so busy and so fast and it's not just a single person! You've got six, in our case, ladies on that court, and they've got to play together to make things work.

What's your favorite volleyball team?

Even though I'm wearing a Penn State volleyball shirt now, we like Nebraska. We like some of Nebraska's players, but I follow all college volleyball. You can usually catch it on TV during the weekends.

What about baseball? Still got a favorite team?

I've changed allegiances. Cincinnati used to be my team straight up. Now I like players instead of dedicating everything to a team. Most people tell me I'm a Yankees fan because I like Aaron Judge. I liked Jeter when he played. So, I've become more of a player fan. Right now, I can't narrow it down to one favorite pro team.

I watch some football, but not a lot. I've been a Chicago Bears fan since 1969 because I watched them play in Houston, TX, in 1969 when we went there for a family vacation. We watched them play in the original Astrodome. I've been a Bears fan ever since.

Dwayne Tuggle's Little League experience

- Coached in Williamsport, PA, for two years
- Umpire-in-Chief for Lynchburg
- District Umpire Consultant
- Umpired at the Little League World Series in Williamsport, PA (1989)
- District Administrator since 2005 (My father had the position for 33 years prior. So basically, for the last 50-odd years, there's been a Tuggle as a District Administrator!)
- Served on the International Board of Directors for Little League
- Works security at the Little League World Series (since 1993) and now serves as one of the Assistant Directors for Security. In this role, he spends three weeks to a month in Williamsport during the summer.





Career in law enforcement

You retired from the State Police in 2015. How old were you when you joined the force?

Well, I started out at Charlotte County Sheriff's Office when I was 25 years old. I worked there for two years, and then I went to the Virginia State Police. Prior to that, I had been security at Lynchburg College. Then I left to try to go back to college, and then I went back for a while. In between I worked at General Electric. And then they laid us off. Once I got into college at the community college, it was like, yeah, this is where I want to go.

A funny anecdote: High school was not one of my strong points. But I had an English teacher named Ms. Spain. She told my mother that if I ever found my direction, I was going to excel. And when my mom heard people speaking at my State Police retirement party, saying nice things about me and what I'd done, she said, "Ms. Spain was right!"

You were with the State Police for 28 years. What brought you to Amherst?

Back then, when they started off, you did what you call probate. So, you would get hired and go to Richmond for two weeks, and then they would send you somewhere for a few months. Well, they sent me to Madison County. So, I was up there for over two months in Madison County. Then I went to basic school. I graduated from basic school on January 15, 1988, and my first duty station was Amherst.

In 1994 I got my first police dog. And during that time, I got promoted to senior trooper. Then in 2001, I went to what was called at that time the Special Operations Division. We worked a lot of interdictions on the highway, looking for guns, drugs, criminal violations, those sorts of things. And then after 9-11, they switched our focus some to counterterrorism. It was around that time that I went to New Mexico to learn about explosives, IEDs, and stuff like that. And we

did a lot of training. Two of the sessions were run by guys who had worked on the Oklahoma City bombing and the 9-11 attacks.

Then I got promoted to special agent in 2004. I had to give up my dog once I got promoted. I was assigned to narcotics. Truthfully, that's when I excelled. I was a very good dog handler, but when I got into the drug enforcement working undercover I just kind of blossomed. I had found my niche.

I designed the undercover school for the state police that they used for several years. I went to some undercover schools out of state to learn from some of the older guys.

You started the State Police undercover school?

There had been one many years before my time, and it just went away. So, I approached the higher-ups and I said, "We need to have a school." And some people got to looking at it. So, I designed it from scratch and that was the program that was instituted by the State Police. I taught it at the Central Virginia Training Law Enforcement Training Center in Lynchburg.

Why did you want a school for undercover agents?

My biggest issue with training new young guys is they don't know how to sit across the table from each other and talk. They don't have communication skills. So, I instituted things in the class to make them interact. For example, a lot of the students traveled back and forth every day and they'd stop at the same place every morning to get their cup of coffee. I told them to ask the clerk at their store something. And then they'd have to come in and tell the class what they learned from their convenience store clerk. They actually learned about the people because they had to engage them. And it taught them how to talk and how to listen.

You retired March 1, 2015. You miss it?

Not really. Sometimes I'll read something in the paper and I'll think, "Man, I would have loved to have been there!" And every now and then I'll get a phone call for some advice still, which is pretty cool.

Mayor of Amherst

So, in 2015 you retire from the State Police and in 2016 you were first elected as Mayor of Amherst. You didn't really sit around very long before you jumped into local government. What was the catalyst?

Ken Watts, who is now my vice mayor, was on council. He said there was going to be an opening for a councilmember and a mayor. And I said, "Well, I'm going to run for mayor." And he said, "You know, you don't get any votes when you're the mayor." But I thought that since the mayor sets the agenda for the meetings, I'd be in a better position to set the course for things. So, I ran for mayor.

And that was almost 10 years ago. So, you must enjoy being mayor, because you've come back, right?

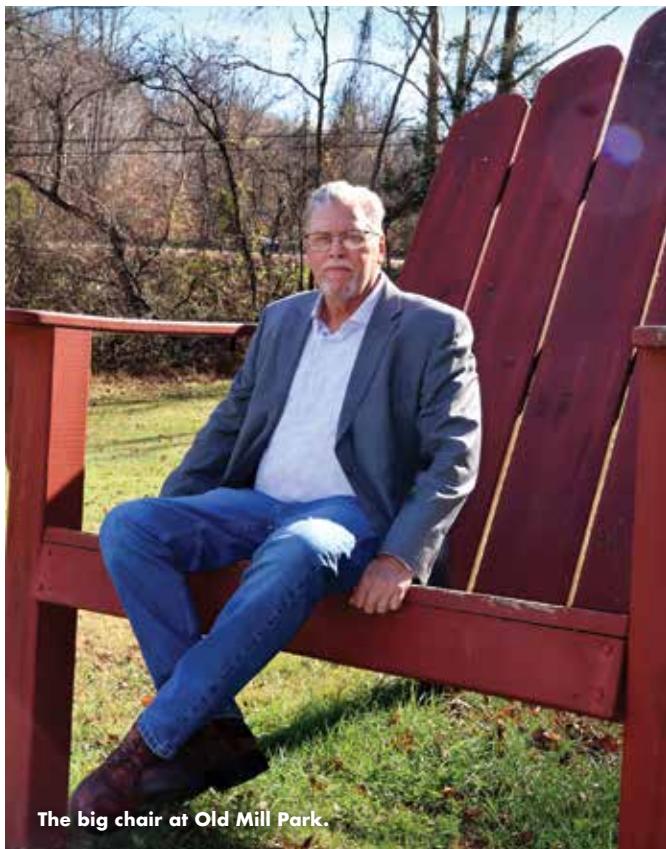
Twice. Because the first one was a two-year term and during that term, we changed it to staggered four-year terms which is better because there's a lot more continuity. Before my time, the town did an annexation and people got mad and the whole council changed in one fell swoop. If you bring in five new people, they have no idea what's going on.

Like you said, as mayor you don't cast a vote unless there's a tie. Has there ever been an important issue that needed your tie-breaking vote?

When we appointed Ventris Gibson to a vacant seat. That was a 2-2 tie that I had to break. In my mind, Ventris was definitely a great choice to be on council for lots of reasons including her experience. You know, she was director of the U.S. Mint and Director of Fort Knox. Also, her family's from here. She's had a house here for years.

I know that recreation is a big deal for you. Is that why you led the effort to create Old Mill Park?

Yeah, we found that property and I said, "Let's get it!" And council was gracious enough to give me the power to negotiate with the owner. They told me how much I could spend, so I negotiated on that.



The big chair at Old Mill Park.

And now we've got that great little park. I see people with their kids there all the time. The creek is perfect for learning how to fly fish, and as you saw, we now have a big chair!

It's hard to miss the big chair! How did it happen?

Our town manager, Sarah McGuffin, knew that I wanted one of those big Adirondack chairs as an attraction. When a Boy Scout came in looking to build something for his Eagle Scout project, we got him to build the big chair, and we put it in that park. People that drive by on the bypass call us all the time and want to know how to get to the big chair so they can get a picture.

What are some upcoming things for Amherst that you're excited about?

We've got a contract on a 13.5-acre property. Assuming everything looks good after the 60-day due diligence period, it's going to make a great park with wooded trails. Also, the Christmas parade's coming up. We're all over that! Several years ago, the superintendent of schools and I started emceeing the whole thing. We call the parade from a basket that they raise over Main Street.

VML and goals as President

How did you get involved with VML?

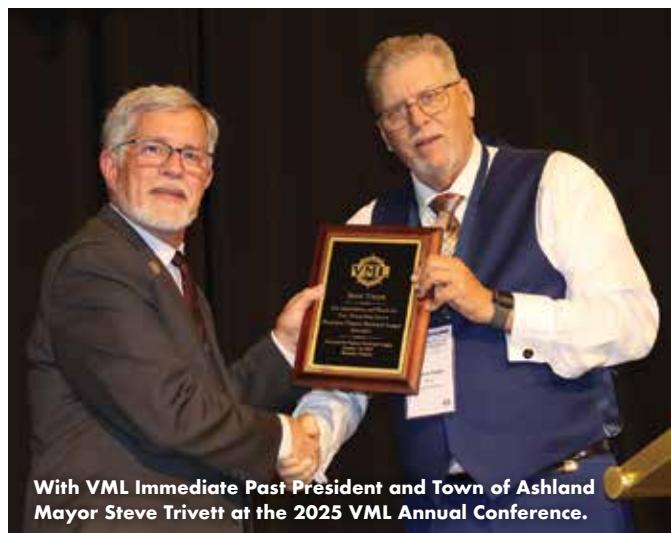
Back in 2018, my new Town Manager [Sara McGuffin] strongly suggested that I attend VML and emphasized the Mayor's Institute. I went at her behest and never stopped.

What does VML mean to you?

We are all in this together. VML gives us the opportunity to connect with each other and learn from each other. We take home great ideas to solve problems and improve our communities based upon what we learn from everyone else.

What are your goals for your year as VML's President?

My goal is to have elected officials and staff continue to engage and meet each other. We are better together! But a big barrier to participation can be not feeling safe when we gather. In my 30-year career in law enforcement, I was able to see how important safety is for community as well as for those that serve. We live in a changing world and a difficult political environment. I'd like to spend the year improving our awareness of safety, for ourselves and our communities, so that everyone can participate. We started this at the most recent Mayor's Institute and will continue to focus on safety and how to improve our personal safety throughout the year. As we work together on this goal and others, I challenge members to bring your other councilmembers with you. Come to the conferences, learn new things, and bring a friend!



With VML Immediate Past President and Town of Ashland Mayor Steve Trivett at the 2025 VML Annual Conference.



With Town Manager Sara McGuffin.

Giving credit where credit is due

Who were some people who influenced you throughout the course of your life?

For my career in policing, I had lots of people that influenced me. When I was in my teens, I had a friend that was much older than I was. He was one of my youth group instructors. He was a police officer, and he worked a lot of undercover that he told me about. We were good friends, and I looked up to him. I also had an uncle that was a police officer in Lynchburg. So, I always kind of looked up to him. And my father-in-law was a state police officer for 40-some years.

When I was in uniform, it was the older guys who guided me. One of them lives in Amherst, Stan Ogden. Another I looked up to starting out was Bobby Hubbard from Campbell County. As my career progressed, and I went into work in narcotics, a fellow named Larry Shorter was my first sergeant and supervisor, and he helped me a lot – especially to become a very good report writer. Larry is very meticulous in his reports and when you're working, you need to be a good report writer.

For baseball, my dad was a huge influence. He's a baseball fanatic. When I was on the International Board of Directors for Little League, I looked up to some fellow members that had been there for a while like Janice Christensen, who used to live in Utah and then moved to Idaho. We talked and kept in contact. She just came off the board because she aged out.

For local government, when I came to the town I would bump things off Ken Watts, who is now the vice mayor. He's been here a long time. He's a former police chief and we had worked together.

But the person with the town I really look up to now is our manager, Sarah McGuffin. She guides me. We keep each other in check, and she keeps me straight. If I've got a question, I know I can go to her.

Amherst leads the way!

In addition to being President of the Virginia Municipal League, Mayor Tuggle is also currently serving as President of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions, and Town Manager McGuffin is serving as President of the Virginia Local Government Management Association. That's a lot of leadership for a small town!

60 seconds with Mayor Tuggle

First car: 1965 Ford Falcon. My parents bought it new and kept it for me until I turned 16. It had a three-on-the-tree transmission and I loved it. It was a four-door until I made it a three-door when I hit a tree and one of the doors stopped working! It was a great car. To this day, I wish I could have it back.

Family: My wife and I have been married since 1984. My daughter lives just down the lane from our house. My son and his wife live in Charlotte, NC. I've got four grandchildren. My granddaughter, Madison, lives with us. We moved my parents from Campbell County to a house next to ours several years ago.

Favorite food: Country-style steak. We're talking cube steak cooked with gravy and onions, cooked all day in a crock pot, and then get some mashed potatoes and string beans and make some biscuits. My favorite dessert is banana pudding.

Least favorite food: Oysters.

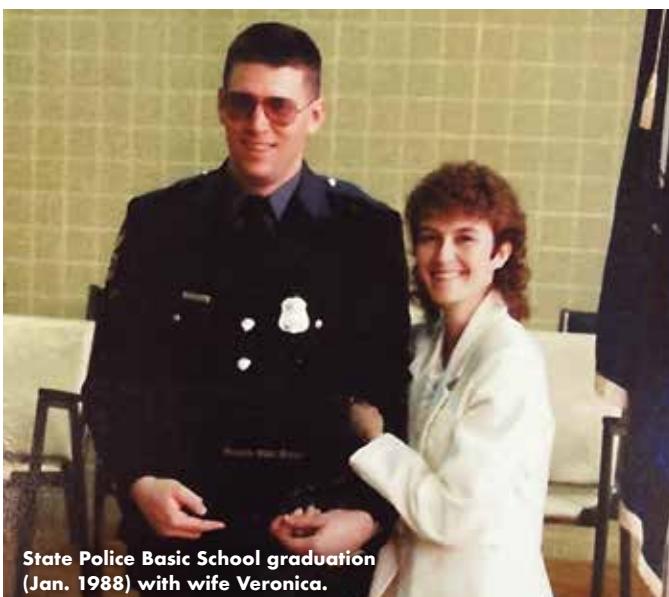
Favorite movie: I really like the movie *Tombstone*.

Favorite book: *Under and Alone* by Billy Queen. I have a copy he autographed for me. It's about him working undercover for the ATF with a motorcycle gang.

Dogs or cats? Dogs all day.



(L-R) Miles and Zoey Tuggle.



State Police Basic School graduation (Jan. 1988) with wife Veronica.

OBVIO

By Dhruv Maheshwari

Building safer streets with community-led traffic safety technology



Obvio installation in Colmar Manor, MD

FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS across Virginia, one truth has become unavoidable: unsafe driving is rising faster than traditional tools can keep up with. Chiefs of police, transportation planners, and city managers all report the same challenge: despite their best efforts, crashes – especially those involving pedestrians and children – remain concerningly high.

This isn't because communities are doing less. The reality is that the risk landscape has changed. Smartphones have made distraction constant. Police departments statewide are navigating staffing constraints that limit their ability to maintain consistent traffic enforcement. Meanwhile, older enforcement technologies still used in many cities were designed decades ago, often producing unclear results, low community trust, and limited impact on driving behavior – plus they take forever to get up and running.

Across Virginia, leaders are looking for tools that reflect modern conditions – not simply to issue citations, but to reinforce safer driving and reduce tragedies in the places where people walk, bike, and drive every day.

That is the context in which Obvio, a next-generation roadway safety technology company, has begun working with municipalities across the country and supporting conversations with local leaders here in Virginia.

Each year, more than 40,000 people die in U.S. roadway crashes, including hundreds in crosswalks, school zones, and neighborhoods where families should feel most protected. These tragedies are not random. They are the predictable outcome of outdated systems,

limited visibility into dangerous driving patterns, and enforcement methods that are too inconsistent to meaningfully change behavior.

My co-founder, Ali Rehan, and I have been working on traffic safety for years. Previously, we built large-scale computer vision technology that helped reduce crashes across more than 200,000 commercial fleet vehicles nationwide. Our work lowered collision rates for trucking companies, improving safety for professional drivers and the communities around them. But while meeting with local governments, we started encountering the same concern repeatedly: cities were struggling to keep their roadways safe with outdated enforcement technology that had barely changed in 25 years.

So, we started Obvio to reimagine automated enforcement to prioritize a modern, community-driven approach to roadway safety. Using advanced solar-powered and AI-enabled technology, Obvio provides clear, accurate evidence that changes behavior and ultimately leads to safer streets.

Why traditional enforcement can't keep pace

With distracted driving and speeding contributing to tens of thousands of roadway deaths, local governments know better than anyone how much dangerous driving has changed – and that they need new solutions for the problem.

Traditional enforcement alone cannot keep pace. Agencies across Virginia face recruitment and retention challenges that limit traffic

patrols – and even well-staffed departments can only be in so many places at once. When enforcement is intermittent, dangerous behavior rebounds quickly.

Additionally, legacy automated enforcement systems have done little to rebuild public trust. Many were designed long before the era of smartphones, cloud computing, or modern safety analytics. This lack of transparency created a perception that programs were focused on revenue rather than safety, undermining the very purpose of enforcement.

So, what would a truly safety-first, modern system look like? Across the country, the most successful programs share three core principles – best practices any community should expect from automated enforcement.

Three principles for safety-first technology

1. A community-first program model

The most effective programs begin with education, transparency, and visible communication. Communities that succeed typically:

- Launch with a public notice period and a 30-day warning phase to help drivers adjust.
- Post clear signage showing exactly where enforcement occurs and why.



- Engage residents through school partnerships, local artwork, safety campaigns, and other visible cues reinforcing the program's purpose.
- Focus enforcement on high-risk behaviors that lead directly to injuries and fatalities, not low-impact technical violations.

Cities that follow this model with tools like Obvio routinely report approval above 90 percent, because residents feel informed, treated fairly, and confident that the enforcement is meant to save lives rather than generate revenue.

2. Privacy by design

Automated traffic enforcement must be narrow in purpose and strictly limited to roadway safety. A responsible program:

- Activates only when predefined unsafe behaviors occur, such as a vehicle speeding through a school zone or running a stop sign.
- Does not use facial recognition or track individual movements, and blurs pedestrians before anything leaves the device.
- Retains only the footage necessary to review a potential violation and deletes all non-violation data automatically.
- Never sells or shares personal data and restricts information to legally authorized safety functions.

At a time when residents are increasingly wary of broad surveillance, privacy-by-design principles are essential for public confidence. Communities consistently show stronger support for programs that are transparently scoped and explicitly limited to safety, not general monitoring.

3. Human oversight at every step

Technology can help detect unsafe behavior, but humans must remain at the center of enforcement. Strong programs ensure that:

- No citation is ever issued automatically.
- Every potential violation is reviewed by a trained officer who retains full authority over approval or rejection.
- Local leaders – not vendors – control enforcement thresholds, warning periods, and adjudication rules.
- This hybrid model uses machines for detection and humans for judgment. It preserves due process, strengthens accuracy, and reflects the accountability residents say they want.



Real world results can come quickly

In municipalities using Obvio's modern automated enforcement – including towns across Prince George's County, MD – dangerous driving has fallen quickly and consistently. In school zones where vehicles once rolled through stop signs at high speeds, violations **dropped by 65 to 70 percent within four months.**

Police chiefs describe the technology as a “force multiplier,” identifying behaviors officers cannot consistently monitor. Communities report that enforcement feels fair because it targets only meaningful, high-risk violations.

Real-time reporting reinforces that trust. Municipal staff can access dashboards showing violation trends and how behavior changes week after week.

A better fit for Virginia's safety goals

Virginia communities deserve tools that match their priorities: protecting families, improving walkability, and preventing serious injury without overburdening police departments.

Obvio's model reflects those needs. Its solar-powered hardware installs quickly and its cloud-based portal for officers streamlines evidence review. Obvio's programs require no upfront spending; they fund themselves through verified citations, meaning safer roads without a cent out of the town's budget!

Obvio provides free, customized pilots (see QR code) so communities can directly measure unsafe traffic behaviors on their streets.

Get in touch!

Communities across the country are exploring modern approaches to traffic safety and considering how to implement the best practices outlined here. Obvio is available as a resource. Municipal leaders can reach us at contact@obvio.ai or visit www.obvio.ai to learn more or schedule a conversation.

Use the QR code to check out an Obvio pilot program in Berwyn Heights, MD



Obvio installation in Berwyn Heights, MD.

About the author: Dhruv Maheshwari is the co-founder and president of Obvio.



TOWN OF ROUND HILL

By Hooper McCann

Round Hill completes new Airmont water tank four months ahead of schedule

CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETED on the Town of Round Hill's new Airmont elevated water storage tank. The 500,000-gallon tank was filled gradually over several weeks in late November and early December when demand for the town's network of wells was low. This new tank is part of an overall \$5.6 million project that includes plans for rehabilitative maintenance on the town's other elevated water tower along Evening Star Drive, another critical water infrastructure project for the town.

Round Hill serves a customer base of over 4,600 residents and was one of the few communities in the Northern Virginia region with only one major water tank. The addition of a second tank was part of the original planning process for the town's utility system and was identified in the town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan. This critical piece of infrastructure was necessary for system redundancy, storage, and more importantly gravity pressure to the south side of the water system. It also strengthens the town's system reliability, increases fire flow capacity beyond the minimum standards for the service area, and enhances overall system operation and flexibility. The new tank was set at the same elevation as the town's existing Evening Star tank for water equalization and the ability to maintain proper levels by transferring water back and forth between tanks.

This project was made possible via two generous grants totaling \$5.2 million from Loudoun County. Town of Round Hill Mayor Scott Ramsey extended his appreciation for the county's partnership in this

project, stating, "The Town of Round Hill is so grateful that Loudoun County agreed to step in and help make this project a reality. I want to especially thank Supervisor Caleb Kershner. He personally fought hard and advocated for this project, and he quickly was able to find support from Chair Randall and the rest of the supervisors."

Loudoun County Board Supervisor Caleb Kershner noted, "My fellow members on the Board of Supervisors were tremendous. They understood this and saw it as a public health issue, as a quality-of-life issue, and something that we could definitely improve. It's one of the things that we can obviously do to help Western Loudoun."

Round Hill Project Manager Rob Lohr noted, "Over the last year, the town has had the pleasure of working with incredible project partners, including the engineering firm Peed & Bortz, LLC from Christiansburg, VA; Chicago Bridge & Iron, our water storage design and construction contractor from Woodlands, TX; our general contractor, Johnston Construction Company from Dover, PA; and town administration and Water and Maintenance Department staff. After being blessed with some wonderful weather and a great construction team, we are now ready to start the process of testing and putting the new tank in service. This is approximately four months ahead of our original construction schedule."

Describing the town's unique bidding process for this project, Lohr noted, "The town was able to take advantage of a creative process where instead of bidding one tank design, either composite or a metal spheroid, the town gave bidders the ability to submit a proposal for one or both options. This generated a good response from the nation's top tank builders."

Marty Workinger, vice president of Johnson Construction Company, observed, "I have been involved in constructing these types of projects for over 22 years and this was by far one of the best construction experiences I have had."

Following the testing process, and after obtaining final approval from the Virginia Department of Health, the town will run the new Airmont tank and existing Evening Star water tank together to complete test and pressure checks for a period of several months. The Evening Star water tank, which has been in operation for 20 years, will then be taken offline during the summer of 2026 to complete necessary routine maintenance. After this work is completed, the Evening Star water tank will be put back in service in the fall of 2026.

The new Airmont tank will benefit residents, organizations, and businesses in the Round Hill Service Area and will include a new cellular corral that will be offered to cell carriers to improve service in the area. The town is planning to hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Airmont tank in the spring of 2026.

About the author: Hooper McCann is the project/risk manager for the Town of Round Hill.



REALLY CLEAN STREETS

By Suzanne Abbot

How localities can leave the stress of leaf season behind!

The problem: Municipal leaf collection

Fall only comes once a year, but for the municipal departments tasked with cleaning up the leaves, the season can feel like it lasts forever! In fact, it's the seasonal nature of curbside leaf pickup service that puts a particular set of stressors on local government resources. These problems include:

Staff. Municipal staff who already have full-time responsibilities must devote significant amounts of time to providing leaf services. This means that critical services like road maintenance, sidewalk and pothole repairs, downed trees, and water main breaks can take longer to address. The cost of not being able to do those things for 3-4 months can be significant.

Equipment. The equipment used to vacuum leaves is expensive, specialized, and sits idle for most of the year. Then, every fall, the equipment takes a beating when it's used 10 hours a day. As a result, leaf vacuums often require extensive maintenance and repair at the most inopportune times.

Weather. Fall weather can change from sunny and warm to soggy and cold in a matter of hours. This means that those light, dry leaves that sat too long become heavy, wet masses that clog gutters to create even more problems!

Yet when municipalities explore eliminating loose-leaf removal as a service, the residents revolt! They're not happy with the program...but they're not willing to give it up. Residents expect the leaves to be removed no matter how many staff are available, what it costs to repair the equipment, or what the weather decides to do. In fact, it's not unusual for leaf removal programs to attract the greatest number of complaints from residents as shifting schedules and delays leave them frustrated and wondering if their leaf piles will ever get picked up.

Happy residents aside, there are plenty of other reasons that a municipality should want to keep the leaves off the streets and sidewalks. Leaves create public safety, traffic and fire hazards, especially in the more densely populated areas of a city or town. Piles of leaves can force residents to walk in the streets, make bike lanes impassable, clog storm basins, and contaminate waterways.

The answer: Outsourcing

Really Clean Streets was born in 2024 when its sister company, Really Good Equipment, was asked by the Henrico County Public Works Department to take over its loose-leaf collection program.





BEFORE



AFTER

What began as a unique partnership quickly evolved into an exciting business that can help any local government focus on essential services, while still providing the loose-leaf collection services that residents value so highly.

Last year, Really Clean Streets transformed Henrico County's vacuum leaf removal from its #1 complaint generator to a service their residents rated a 9.9 out of 10. We can do that for you. And the best part of outsourcing: **You'll NEVER have to think about your leaf program again!**

How it works: A turnkey approach to leaf collection

Really Clean Streets leverages the leaf vacuum manufacturing capabilities of Really Good Equipment to provide complete leaf collection services, including resident communication, customer service, labor, equipment, field supervision, and hauling. Our turnkey approach means that **we take on the full burden of leaf collection for our municipal partners** whose staff are freed up to focus on other essential services.

Residents love our program because it's on-demand. They simply tell us when they're ready to have their leaves removed and then we



pick them up. In fact, we guarantee leaf collection within a week of an order being placed, and it often happens within days. Unlike zone-based leaf programs, we work around residents' schedules instead of making them work around ours. Moreover, we've built a dedicated customer service team to address any questions or issues that residents might have. This means our customers can always get someone on the phone.

After we've completed an order, the resident receives a pickup notification with before and after pictures (they love this!). Residents also appreciate that our crews approach each job with a "white glove" mindset. We're often told, "Our street has never been this clean."

How we are able to do it: The luxury of focus

Really Clean Streets has the luxury of focus because leaf pickup is all we do! We also have exposure to municipal leaf programs across the country. We see how others are doing it – what works and what doesn't work – and then take the best practices and build them into our model.

One of the biggest reasons Really Clean Streets is uniquely positioned to run five-star leaf programs is our sister company, Really Good Equipment, which makes and services our leaf vacuum trucks and trailers. We never have outages because we manufacture and service our own equipment and make our own parts. This means that our equipment is never sidelined because if we need a part, we simply make it. We never have delays because if we need more trucks, we just build them.

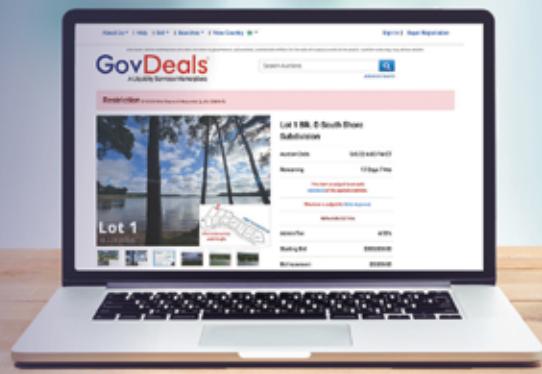
Let's talk!

We'd love the opportunity to learn about the challenges municipalities face running their own leaf programs. In most cases we can help! Give us a call at (804) 276-4147 or visit us online at www.reallycleanstreets.com to get started.

About the author: Suzanne Abbot is the chief customer officer for Really Clean Streets. She can be reached at suzanne@reallycleanstreets.com.

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in Alexandria



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in Chesterfield



\$30,477
in Fredericksburg



\$86,500
in Portsmouth



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Testimonial

"GovDeals has proven to be an invaluable service for our Real Estate Tax Sales that we conduct for the City of Portsmouth, VA. In the past 18 months, we have conducted 60 online real estate auctions using this service and have had outstanding results with over \$2.3M in sales." - Jason A. Dunn





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The logo for Virginia Housing features the word "Virginia" in a large, bold, dark green sans-serif font. To the right of "Virginia" is a graphic element consisting of a white square with a green 3D-style house roof on top. Below "Virginia" is the word "Housing" in a slightly smaller, bold, dark green sans-serif font. At the bottom of the logo is the website address www.virginiahousing.com.

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The logo for Virginia American Water features a blue five-pointed star with three wavy lines underneath it, representing water. Below the star, the word "VIRGINIA" is written in blue capital letters, and "AMERICAN WATER" is written in red capital letters. At the bottom is the website address www.amwater.com/vaw.

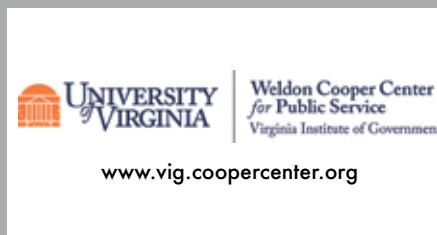
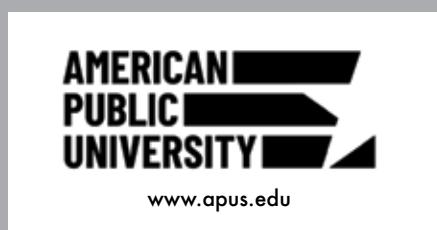
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