

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

## Inside:

City of Fredericksburg:  
Vice-Mayor Charlie Frye  
lives local and dreams big

City of Harrisonburg:  
Councilmember Laura Dent  
thinks local and acts global  
(literally)

City of Petersburg:  
The "Cockade City"  
makes its own luck

Town of Pearisburg:  
A little mountain town  
attracts a new manager  
from far away

# Thinking outside the 'burg



**Also inside:**  
Innovation Awards  
call for entries





# VRSA

Virginia Risk Sharing Association

## As a governing official, are you covered?

Our public officials liability coverage includes **professional liability, employment practices liability, land use**, and more to help protect local entities every step of the way.



[www.vrsa.us](http://www.vrsa.us)

800-963-6800



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Michelle Gowdy

**EDITOR & ADVERTISING/ CIRCULATION MANAGER**

Rob Bullington

**CONTRIBUTING EDITOR & GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Manuel Timbreza

**CONTRIBUTING COPYWRITER**

Brian Ahnmark

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- D. Dwayne Tuggle (President), Town of Amherst
- Kelly Burk (President-Elect), Town of Leesburg
- Curtis Bethany (Vice President), City of Newport News
- Steven Trivett (Past President), Town of Ashland
- Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond, City of Virginia Beach
- Anthony Schienschang, Town of Gordonsville
- Robert Wood, Town of Rocky Mount
- Michelle Davis-Younger, City of Manassas
- McKinley Cardwell, Town of Appomattox
- Letty Hardi, City of Falls Church
- Dany Fleming, City of Harrisonburg
- Renée Turk, City of Salem
- Michael Stovall, Town of Vinton

*Virginia Town & City* (ISSN0042-6784) is the official magazine of the Virginia Municipal League. Published 10 times a year at 13 E. Franklin St., P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, VA 23241; 804/649-8471. E-mail: e-mail@vml.org. Reproduction or use of contents requires prior approval of the Virginia Municipal League and if granted must be accompanied by credit to *Virginia Town & City* and the Virginia Municipal League. Periodicals Postage paid at Richmond, VA. (USPS 661040) Subscription rates: members - \$16 per year, non-members - \$32 per year. Single copies - \$4 each.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Virginia Town & City*, P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, VA 23241-0164.

*Statements or expressions of opinions appearing within this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Virginia Municipal League. Publication of any advertisement should not be considered an endorsement of the product or service involved. Material from this publication may not be reprinted without permission.*



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



## ABOUT THE COVER

With all due respect to our member ‘villes (23) and ‘tons (19), we are featuring four of our 11 ‘burg members in this issue. But don’t worry – we’re not going out of print anytime soon (we hope), so there will be plenty of chances to cover everyone! In this issue, we highlight the ways in which Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, Petersburg, and Pearisburg are making a difference outside their localities or creating reasons for outsiders to take an interest. Learn more inside.

## DEPARTMENTS

**DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE** ..... 2

**PEOPLE** ..... 3

**NEWS & NOTES** ..... 12

**COMMUNITY BUSINESS MEMBERS** ..... 43

## FEATURES: THINKING OUTSIDE THE ‘BURG

### City of Fredericksburg: Vice-Mayor Charlie Frye lives local and dreams big

Thanks to a bill passed by the 2026 General Assembly, Fredericksburg’s Gun Give-Back Program created by Frye is poised to go statewide. Learn what motivated him to persevere ..... 19

### City of Harrisonburg: Councilmember Laura Dent thinks local and acts global (literally)

When a chance encounter at a VML conference gave Dent a great reason to go to COP30 in Brazil, the lifelong climate activist seized the moment and made the most of the opportunity ..... 23

### City of Petersburg: The “Cockade City” makes its own luck

VTC traveled to Petersburg in January for the opening of its new casino and learned why so many more people are likely to start making plans to visit, and maybe stay, in the Cockade City ..... 27

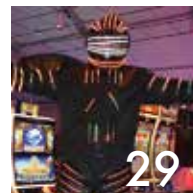
### Town of Pearisburg: A little mountain town attracts a new manager from far away

A small town needed a new manager. A young man from Texas with some unique job experience needed a career that would allow him to help communities. Learn how they found each other ..... 31

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

### Recent event highlights

Photos from January’s Elected Officials Conference and February’s Local Government Day ..... 36-40



# Biding our time for a budget

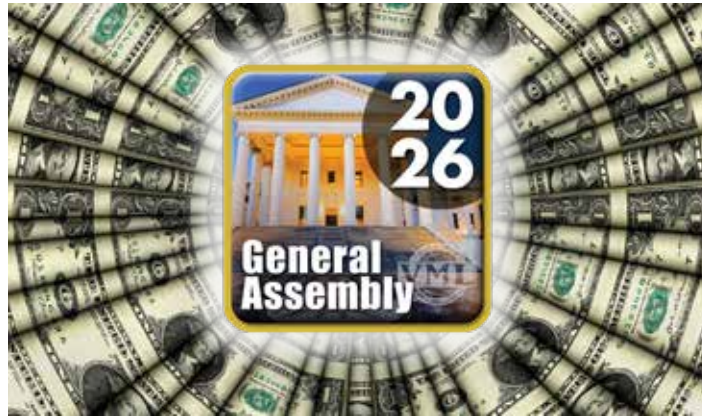
**A**NOTHER GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION has come and gone. Well, almost gone. There is, of course, still the small matter of the budget.

It is always interesting when one party has all the “things” – a majority in both chambers and the governor’s mansion. Inevitably infighting occurs and, as you have read in *eNews* for weeks, this is why we have no budget. Of course, this is terribly frustrating for all! VML will continue to push for a budget sooner rather than later, but it is likely that we will be in late April before there is any news. VML staff will provide a full 2026 Session wrap-up feature in the next issue of *Virginia Town & City*, and please look for announcements about our session wrap-up webinars. Those dates will be announced shortly in *eNews* and posted to our website.

This issue of the magazine is about some of our members with people or projects that are reaching outside their locality. And it just so happens they are all ‘burgs! Please don’t think we forgot about all the other ‘burgs – Williamsburg, Christiansburg, Strasburg...there are so many (11 in all), and we only have so much space in each issue. But we are always looking for opportunities to feature members – including all those other ‘burgs – in issues of the magazine. For example, the City of Williamsburg’s African American Heritage Trail will open this fall and *Virginia Town & City* has plans to be there!

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the Small Towns Conference which is coming up in May in Chincoteague. It is very exciting to be holding this conference on the Eastern Shore, and we will be joined by some of our Maryland

friends! On May 13, the day before the Small Towns Conference officially starts, Timmons Group in conjunction with VML is hosting a workshop titled “The Local Workshop – Tools and Materials for Building Communities.” This will be an



interactive and engaging afternoon exploring the various elements of community building. There is no additional cost to attend this pre-conference workshop. Both evenings – May 13 and May 14 – will have receptions at local restaurants, including one by the water. As in years past, the conference itself will be a great opportunity for small town staff and elected officials to network

and learn from peers. I look forward to seeing you there.

In the meantime, when you see your state officials, please emphasize the need for a budget ASAP!

**SMALL TOWNS CONFERENCE**  
2026  
**May 14-15\***  
The Chincoteague Center - Chincoteague  
\*Pre-conference event May 13.  
See page 11 for details and to register.

## CALENDAR

To learn more about these events and additional opportunities scan QR code below.

**May 14-15** 2026 Small Towns Conference - The Chincoteague Center, Chincoteague, VA

**Aug. 24** 2026 Innovation Award Submission Deadline - See page 41.

**Oct. 11-13** 2026 VML Annual Conference - Norfolk Waterside Marriott, Norfolk, VA



## In Memoriam:



## Former Franklin Mayor James Paul Council III

Born in Stockton, CA, during World War II while his father, former Virginia Delegate J. Paul Council Jr., was flying air-sea rescue missions in the Pacific, **James Paul Council III** graduated from Franklin High School in 1963. He went on to earn a degree in History and Political Science from Hampden-Sydney College in 1967. Following graduation, Council served 10 years in the United States Air Force in Charleston, SC. In 1978, Council and his wife returned to Franklin, where he began a 50-year career in the financial services field as a Chartered Life Underwriter and Chartered Financial Consultant.

A faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Council served eight years as bishop of the Franklin congregation and 10 years as a counselor in the Chesapeake Stake Presidency, overseeing 11 congregations across Virginia and North Carolina.

He served as president of the Franklin Rotary Club, co-founded the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Eastern Virginia, served on the Virginia State YMCA Board, and co-founded the Boys & Girls Club with Jerry Friga.

In 1996, Council was elected mayor of Franklin; he served in that role for 16 years. Alongside City Manager Bucky Taylor and a dedicated group of citizens, he led Franklin through the devastating floods of Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and Hurricane Isabel in 2006. Council and Taylor created the Smart Beginnings Program to strengthen early childhood education in Franklin. The program expanded to include Southampton and Isle of Wight Counties and was eventually adopted across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Council served nine years on the Virginia Municipal League Board, culminating his tenure as president of the organization.



## Warsaw Councilmember Rebecca Coggin Hubert

**Rebecca Coggin Hubert** passed away on Saturday, December 6. Hubert was born on January 18, 1961, in

Warsaw, where her family helped shape the town's history and development for generations. She was a graduate of St. Margaret's School and Sweet Briar College. Before entering banking, she worked as a travel agent, which nurtured her lifelong love of travel. A longtime employee of C&F Bank, her exceptional integrity, service excellence, and outstanding performance earned her the company's President's Award, its most prestigious honor.

Hubert was also a respected and influential leader in the Town of Warsaw. She served on the Planning Commission and was elected to two terms on the town council, where she chaired the Finance Committee and served on the Personnel, Economic Development, and Small Business Loan Committees. Her steady judgment and exceptional understanding of business and finance allowed her to play a critical role in one of the most significant revitalization periods in Warsaw's history.

## VML's Flores appointed to Treasury Board



- Flores -

The General Assembly has confirmed the governor's appointment of VML Director of Fiscal Policy **Joe Flores** to the Treasury Board. Flores will serve for a term of four years beginning April 20, 2026, and ending April 19, 2030. He succeeds Jim Carney in the position. The Treasury Board exercises general supervision over all investments of state funds, administers the Security for Public Deposits Act and the State Non-Arbitrage Program, makes recommendations to the governor on proposed financing arrangements, approves the terms and structure of certain bonds or other financing arrangements paid from state appropriations, establishes guidelines for bonds or financing arrangements, and approves the financial terms of lease purchases for state agencies.

## Orange promotes Nelson to chief of police, hires Snider as town manager



- Nelson -

The Town of Orange has promoted Deputy Chief **Rebecca Davis Nelson** to the position of chief of police. In October 2002, Nelson was hired as a part-time police officer/community service officer and has worked herself through the ranks as a police officer, corporal, sergeant, and lieutenant. In January 2024, she was promoted to deputy chief and has been responsible for supervising investigations and conducting all internal affairs.

"Congratulations to Deputy Chief Nelson on her promotion to chief of police," Interim Town Manager Chris Snider said in a press release. "She is the longest-serving officer in the department with over 23 years of service to the Town of Orange. She has worked her way up through the ranks serving in numerous leadership positions. Her years of experience and her strong administrative

skills give me the confidence to believe that she will be an excellent chief for the Orange Police Department."



- Snider -

At its January 12 meeting, the Orange Town Council voted 4-0 to appoint **Christopher H. Snider** as town manager. Snider had served as interim town manager/director of Economic Development for the town since September 2025, following the retirement of Town Manager Greg Woods.

"In his brief time as interim town manager, Chris has solidified relationships with all of the departments as well as many of our town residents and business owners," said Mayor Harrison Cluff in a statement. "His commitment to public service and collaborative approach will be invaluable as we work together to support residents, strengthen town operations, and plan for a vibrant and successful future. We are excited to begin this new chapter and wish him every success in his role."

## PEOPLE

Snider began working for the Town of Orange as Economic Development manager in August 2025 and became interim town manager/Economic Development director in September 2025. He has over two decades of federal, state, and local government experience.

Snider holds an Associate's in Business Administration from Germanna Community College and a Bachelor's in Leadership and Management from the University of Mary Washington.

### Staunton hires Leavitt as economic mobility specialist



The City of Staunton has hired **Anna Leavitt** as its new economic mobility and opportunity special assistant. This position is funded by a competitive private grant managed by the International City/County

Management Association (ICMA), bringing significant resources into Staunton at no cost to local taxpayers. Support for ICMA's program was made possible through a grant from the Gates Foundation. Staunton was se-

- Leavitt -

lected as one of only 16 communities nationwide for this program, bringing these private dollars back to the Shenandoah Valley.

Leavitt joins the city after serving as executive director of CAPSAW (Community Action Partnership of Staunton, Augusta, & Waynesboro). In that role, she managed local, state, and federal funding and led efforts directly aligned with Staunton's new goals: coordinating housing and workforce initiatives and strengthening partnerships between government and nonprofits. Her extensive background in program design and grant compliance makes her uniquely qualified to hit the ground running.

City Manager Leslie Beauregard emphasized that this grant provides high-level capacity without impacting the city budget. "We are a lean organization. This grant allows us to bring a dedicated specialist onto our team using external funding," said Beauregard. "This is a direct investment in our residents' financial stability."

Leavitt holds a Bachelor's in Communications from James Madison University.

### Stone chosen for Warsaw Town Council



- Stone -

**Patrick Stone** was chosen by vote of the Warsaw Town Council to serve the remainder of Councilmember Rebecca C. Hubert's term. Virginia State Code requires all localities to fill a vacancy on an elected governing body within 45 days.

Stone is a community-minded small business owner and civic leader who has called the Town of Warsaw home since 2018. He was born and raised in Louisa County, where he developed a deep appreciation for small-town values, civic responsibility, and the importance of being involved in the community. He spent nearly a decade in Blacksburg, where he continued to build his professional experience and further developed his belief in the strength of close-knit communities. Stone relocated to the Northern Neck about 10 years ago, drawn by the region's character, natural beauty, and strong sense of community.

Stone currently serves as chairman of the Warsaw-Richmond County Main Street

*New from VML/VACo Finance  
and the Virginia Investment Pool:*

# VIP FIXED TERM PORTFOLIOS

- ✓ **Lock in interest rates**—avoid volatility and uncertainty.
- ✓ Invest in professionally managed, AAAf rated portfolios with maturities of **3, 6, 9, or 12 months**.
- ✓ **Diversify your investments** to protect against declining interest rates.
- ✓ **Easily transfer** between your other VIP accounts.

**VML VACo FINANCE** | 804.648.0635 | [info@valocalfinance.org](mailto:info@valocalfinance.org) | [virginiainvestmentpool.org](http://virginiainvestmentpool.org)

**VIP**  
Virginia Investment Pool  
A Service of VML/VACo Finance

Not investment advice. Please refer to the VIP Informational Statement for risks and complete details.

Program and as a board member of the Warsaw-Richmond County Chamber of Commerce. In these roles, he works alongside volunteers, business owners, and local stakeholders to support downtown revitalization, community engagement, and long-term planning initiatives.

Mayor Randall Phelps stated in a press release, “On behalf of the Warsaw Town Council and as mayor of Warsaw, I welcome Patrick to the town council. His shared views of continuing Warsaw’s growth and revitalization, paired with his business acumen and commitment to our community, make him a great addition to our governing body.”

Stone is a graduate of New River Community College, where he earned an Associate’s in Marketing.

### Migliaccio promoted to captain by Richmond Fire Department



- Migliaccio -

**Betty “Betsy” Jane Migliaccio** has been promoted to the rank of fire captain by the Richmond Fire Department. Migliaccio has served with the department for nearly 13 years. She began her career as a firefighter with assignments including Engine 1A and Engine 18A and later served as a fire lieutenant in the Emergency Services Unit, where she spent four years supporting EMS and firefighter health and wellness.

Migliaccio holds Bachelor’s degrees from Virginia Commonwealth University in Psychology and Substance Abuse Rehabilitation, as well as a Master’s degree in Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. She serves as co-leader of the RFD Peer Support Team, is an EMT instructor, and is a member of RVAIMT and CVAIMT. Her additional training includes large animal rescue and Tactical Casualty Combat Care, among other areas of focus.

Outside of work, Migliaccio co-founded a free creative writing program for public safety members and serves on the Board of Friends of the Mounted Police.

### Harris sworn in as Hampton commissioner of the revenue

On January 10, the City of Hampton swore in **Michael A. Harris** as its new commissioner of the revenue. Harris makes history as the first Black American to serve in this role for Hampton.

Harris brings a strong record of ser-



- Harris -

vice and leadership to the office. A U.S. Navy veteran, he served during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom before earning his Juris Doctor and establishing his own law practice, guided by principles of fairness and justice. His commitment to public service extends into the community through leadership roles with local civic organizations, including serving as chair of the Hampton Planning Commission and contributing to community foundations and boards. His work and impact have been recognized through numerous honors, including being named an *Inside Business* “Top 40 Under 40” honoree and receiving multiple awards for leadership and community engagement.

During the swearing-in ceremony, Harris reflected on both Hampton’s historic legacy and its continued evolution. He noted that while the city has been “the first of many things,” its true strength lies in how it embraces growth and transformation.

He shared his personal journey – from growing up in a household shared with four siblings to standing before the community as an elected official – as a testament to perseverance, sacrifice, and excellence.

Harris holds a Bachelor’s in Criminal Justice/Police Science from Saint Leo University and a Juris Doctor from Regent University School of Law.

### Richmond appoints Martin as director of Human Resources, Paul as first transformation manager



- Martin -

The City of Richmond has appointed **Trinija Martin** as its new director of Human Resources, bringing more than 20 years of human resources leadership experience, a strong commitment to public service, and a core focus on workforce excellence. Martin started the role on January 12.

In a statement, Chief Administrative Officer Odie Donald II said, “Ms. Martin’s record illuminates her passion for people and dedication to the communities she’s served. I’m excited to have her people-centered approach to government managing our city’s workforce needs.”

Martin is an accomplished executive

HR leader and military veteran whose career spans Fortune 500 organizations, like E\*trade Financial, and municipal and county governments. Most recently, she served as deputy director of Human Resources for Wake County Government, the largest county in North Carolina, where she led enterprise-wide people strategies within one of the state’s most complex governmental environments. Prior to Wake County, she served in an HR director role within the City of Waycross, GA, leading comprehensive municipal HR operations and workforce transformation initiatives.

Martin holds an MBA in Human Resources Management/Personnel Administration from Keller Graduate School of Management of DeVry University and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Human Resources Management/Personnel Administration from Middle Tennessee State University.



- Paul -

The City of Richmond also recently named **Shannon Paul** as its first-ever transformation manager. In this role, Paul is charged with driving the implementation of the Mayoral Action Plan (MAP) and using it as a framework to identify ongoing challenges to improve customer service, efficiency, and performance across city government. Her first day was March 9.

Paul previously served as deputy director of Financial and Administrative Services for the city’s Department of Justice Services (DJS). In that role, she spent 11 months on part-time assignment to the Mayor’s Office to lead and support the development and initial implementation of the MAP. In addition to her role with DJS, Paul has served in a variety of strategic and management roles with the City of Richmond since 2000, including in the Office of Budget & Strategic Planning.

“Shannon Paul is the right person at the right time at this critical juncture for Richmond,” said Mayor Danny Avula. “She understands the organization’s strengths and weaknesses from both strategic and operational perspectives, and she knows that effective city government can not only deliver services, it can also change lives. Shannon played a crucial role in developing the Mayoral Action Plan and will now help ensure that a great plan translates into impactful action.”

Paul will lead these efforts in concert with contracted strategic support and internal staff, with specific service area expertise

ranging from data, process improvement, and organizational problem-solving deployed to address issues as they are identified. The transformation manager will coordinate with executive leaders including deputy chief administrative officers and department directors to report findings, issue recommendations, and provide progress reports on a regular basis to the mayor and chief administrative officer.

Paul is a graduate of Richmond Public Schools and Howard University.

**Roanoke County Board of Supervisors selects Shepherd as chair, Radford as vice chair**



- Shepherd -

During its January 13 organizational meeting, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors selected **Tammy E. Shepherd** as chair for 2026. Shepherd has served as the Vinton District representative since 2024. This is her first year serving as board chair.



- Radford -

In addition, **David F. Radford** was selected to serve as vice chair for 2026. Radford has served as the Windsor Hills District representative since 2018. He previously served as board chair in 2020 and 2025, and as vice chair in 2021.

**Bristol City Manager Eads joins Attorney General Jones' staff**



- Eads -

In January, Bristol City Manager and Attorney **Randy Eads** was named to Virginia Attorney General-elect Jay Jones' staff, where he will serve as general counsel. His last day with the city was January 14.

Eads is an accomplished attorney and executive leader with extensive experience in public service, government law, criminal law, and complex legal and policy matters. He had served as city manager and city attorney for Bristol since 2017, where he advised elected officials, managed multidisciplinary teams, and provided strategic counsel on issues affecting local government with statewide impact.

Throughout his career, Eads has been recognized for his leadership within the legal community. In 2025, he was honored as a Leader in the Law by *Virginia Lawyers Weekly*, an award that celebrates attorneys whose accomplishments include outstanding contributions to the practice of law and leadership within Virginia's legal community.

Eads formerly served on the Virginia Municipal League Board of Directors. He earned his Juris Doctor from Mississippi College School of Law and holds Bachelor's degrees in History from the Virginia Military Institute and in Economics from the University of Tennessee. He is admitted to practice law in Virginia, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

**Arlington County Board elects de Ferranti as chair, Coffey as vice-chair**



- de Ferranti -

The Arlington County Board held its annual organizational meeting on January 5, electing **Matt de Ferranti** as board chair and **Maureen Coffey** as vice-chair.



- Coffey -

Chair de Ferranti was first elected to the Arlington County Board in November 2018 and previously served as its chair in 2021. His career in public service began as a teacher in a low-income community in Houston, TX, and later as an attorney who worked on land use and economic development issues for local governments. He subsequently served as an advocate for economic and educational equity at Feeding America, Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together, the Education Trust, and the National Indian Education Association.

De Ferranti holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy and History from Duke University, a Master of Public Affairs in Public Policy from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Texas School of Law.

Vice-Chair Coffey was first elected in November 2023. She is the youngest person to serve on the Arlington County Board, and the youngest to hold the position of vice-chair. Previously, Coffey worked on the Early Childhood Policy team at the Center for American Progress (CAP) and at the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR).

In 2021, she was appointed by Governor Ralph Northam to serve on Virginia's Family and Children's Trust, a group focused on prevention and treatment of family violence.

Coffey holds a Bachelor's in Economics and Politics from Oberlin College and an MPP in Leadership and Public Policy from the University of Virginia's Frank Batten School of Leadership.

**Petersburg names Stoke deputy city manager for community development**



- Stoke -

The City of Petersburg has appointed **Jeff Stoke** as deputy city manager for community development. Stoke brings over 20 years of experience and a proven track record in local government management, economic development, and community engagement to Petersburg.

Stoke most recently served as county administrator of Prince George County since April 2022. Over his 14-year tenure with Prince George, he held several key roles, including deputy county administrator and director of Economic Development. His leadership was instrumental in developing two industrial parks, including the LEGO manufacturing facility and the Amazon distribution center.

In his new role with Petersburg, Stoke will oversee initiatives to drive the city's economic growth. His extensive background in managing multimillion-dollar budgets, developing public-private partnerships, and implementing community development initiatives positions him to make an immediate impact.

"Jeff's proven track record of success in economic development and his commitment to community-focused results make him the right choice for this role," said Petersburg City Manager March Altman. "Petersburg is growing, and as we concentrate on the new economic development projects underway, we must also prioritize attracting diverse businesses and industries while revitalizing our downtown."

Stoke has spent more than 20 years in leadership roles in economic development across Virginia and New York. He led broadband expansion and prepared industrial sites for future growth in Prince George. As county administrator, he managed a \$170 million budget and oversaw a team of more than 300 employees. He also established

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](mailto:vtc@vml.org).

community-focused programs, including the Prince George Citizens Academy and a regional opioid mobile outreach initiative.

In addition to his professional achievements, Stoke has been involved in community service, serving on boards and councils for organizations such as the United Way, Rotary Club, and the Prince George Parks and Recreation Foundation.

Stoke holds a Master's in Public Administration from James Madison University and a Bachelor's in Urban & Public Policy Studies from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is a Certified Economic Developer (C.Ec.D.) and an ICMA Credentialed Manager (ICMA-CM).

### Rhoads appointed as Martinsville chief of police



On January 1, **Chad Rhoads** began as the City of Martinsville's new chief of police.

Rhoads brings over 25 years of service to the Martinsville Police Department, where he had been serving as acting chief of police. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated a strong commitment to professional excellence, officer development, and community-focused policing.

As acting chief, Rhoads led key initiatives including the formation of the department's Peer Support Team and the modernization of departmental policies. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Averett University and a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who honorably served as a cryptologic linguist.

"Chief Rhoads has earned the respect of his colleagues and the trust of the community through his integrity, professionalism, and dedication to public service," said Interim City Manager Rob Fincher. "We are confident he will continue to lead the department with excellence and vision."

Rhoads is a VACP Certified Law Enforcement Command Executive and graduate of nationally recognized leadership programs, including the Police Executive Research Forum's Senior Management Institute for Police and the VACP and University of Richmond's Professional Executive Leadership School. He holds a Master of Science in Criminal Justice and Administrative Leadership from Averett University.

### Shipe named Strasburg town manager



- Shipe -

**Mellanie Shipe** was appointed Strasburg town manager on January 13 after serving as assistant town manager since 2023. She replaces Waverly Coggsdale, who retired at the end of 2025.

Shipe said her first months in the new role would be focused on continuity by supporting staff, keeping town council informed, and maintaining momentum on existing projects, such as the conversion of the former BB&T building into a new police headquarters. Construction is expected to begin in March and run through March 2027.

A Strasburg High School graduate, Shipe earned her Bachelor's from California Coast University before returning to Strasburg to work in emergency communications. She rose from dispatcher to supervisor and later earned a Master's in Public Administration from Liberty University. She eventually led Shenandoah County's Department of Emergency Communications, where she worked on initiatives including the move into a new Emergency Communications Center, upgrades to public safety radio systems, and implementation of Next Generation 911.

### Newport News appoints Janjua as chief information officer, White as director of finance



- Janjua -

The City of Newport News has appointed **Hassan Janjua**, CISSP, AIGP, PMP, ITIL, as chief information officer, and **Sheila White**, CPA, as director of finance, strengthening the city's executive leadership team with two seasoned professionals who bring decades of experience in public-sector innovation, fiscal stewardship, and organizational excellence.

"Hassan Janjua and Sheila White each bring exceptional expertise, proven leadership, and a deep understanding of public-sector operations," said City Manager Alan K. Archer. "Their combined experience will help advance Newport News' strategic priorities, improve internal operations, and ensure the city remains well positioned to serve residents now and in the future."

Janjua joins Newport News with more

than 24 years of experience leading large-scale information technology systems, enterprise modernization initiatives, and cybersecurity programs in complex public-sector environments.

As chief information officer, Janjua will lead the city's technology strategy and operations, overseeing enterprise systems, cybersecurity, data and analytics, and digital transformation initiatives. He will play a key role in developing and implementing the city's Technology Infrastructure Readiness Plan, ensuring Newport News is prepared to meet evolving technology demands while enhancing service delivery for residents and employees.

Janjua most recently served as senior IT division manager for the Internal Services Department of Los Angeles County, where he directed multiple enterprise technology portfolios supporting more than 100,000 users across county departments. In this role, he led major modernization and operations initiatives spanning enterprise resource planning (ERP), application development, robotic process automation (RPA), and data and analytics. His leadership resulted in significant operational improvements and cost savings.

His work has been recognized through numerous national and regional honors, including multiple National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Awards and Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Awards for innovation and quality in government.

Janjua holds a Bachelor's in Mathematical Sciences from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and is pursuing an Executive Master's in Business Administration at the Quantic School of Business and Technology, with expected graduation in 2026.



- White -

Sheila White brings more than 25 years of progressive leadership experience across municipal government, public housing authorities, financial services, and corporate accounting to her role as director of finance for the City of Newport News.

As director, White will provide strategic leadership and oversight of the city's Finance Department, including accounting, payroll, purchasing, risk management, pension administration, and related financial operations. Reporting to the senior deputy city manager, she will guide budgeting, financial reporting, internal controls, investment and

pension oversight, and long-term financial planning, while ensuring compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements.

White most recently served as chief financial officer for the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, where she led financial strategy, compliance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and programmatic funding requirements, budgeting, cash flow management, procurement oversight, and strengthening internal financial controls. Prior to that role, she spent five years with the City of Richmond, serving as senior director of finance and previously as deputy director of finance, overseeing all municipal financial operations.

White holds a Master's in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a Bachelor's in Accounting from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University.

**Smith named Albemarle County Parks and Recreation director**



- Smith -

Following the recommendation of the county executive, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors has appointed **Amy Smith** as the director of Parks and Recreation, effective January 22. Smith has more than 30 years of service with Albemarle County Parks and Recreation and has served as deputy director since 2023. She succeeds Bob Crickenberger, who retired in December 2025.

Smith brings experience in parks and recreation administration, program development, facility management, and team leadership. During her tenure with the county, she has led or co-led several key initiatives that shape the department's work today. These include the 2018 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment, the development and implementation of Parks and Recreation's Strategic Plan, and the launch of the county's first online registration system to improve access to programs and services. She also oversees the department's Capital Improvement Program, guiding the planning, renovation, and construction of parks, facilities, and trails across the county.

"Amy's leadership and professionalism have been demonstrated over more than three decades of service to our county," said Chair of the Board of Supervisors Ned Gallaway. "Her deep commitment to our com-

munity positions her well to lead Parks and Recreation into its next chapter."

As deputy director, Smith led a multidisciplinary team across park planning, maintenance, recreation, trails, and community programs. She managed the department's operating and capital budgets, supported staff development and training, and represented the department in collaboration with community partners, stakeholders, and county leadership.

Smith holds a Master's in Recreation Administration from Georgia Southern University and a Bachelor's in Sports Studies from Towson University. Her career with Albemarle County began in 1993, with roles spanning recreation programming, youth and teen services, and department leadership.

**Piper selected as Winchester city manager**



- Piper -

The Winchester City Council has appointed **John Piper** as city manager, effective January 26.

In a shared statement, Mayor Les Veach and Council President Corey Sullivan said, "After interviewing some very highly qualified candidates, we are excited to name John Piper as our city manager. John stood out for his strong leadership, dedication to public service, and deep community knowledge. We congratulate John and look forward to working with him to serve our residents."

Piper had been serving as Winchester's interim city manager and previously served as deputy city manager from 2022 to 2025, during which time he oversaw the city's public health and safety operations, including the Police Department, Fire and Rescue, Emergency Management, and Social Services. Prior to his appointment as deputy city manager, he served as Winchester's chief of police from 2017 to 2022.

Before joining the City of Winchester, Piper spent 24 years with the Fairfax County Police Department, where he served in a variety of executive-level leadership positions. Throughout his career, he has been responsible for managing complex organizations, overseeing large budgets, leading diverse teams, and working closely with elected officials, community partners, and regional stakeholders.

Piper holds a Bachelor of Science degree from George Mason University and a Key Executive Leadership Graduate Certifi-

cate from American University. He is also a graduate of the Senior Management Institute for Policing through the Police Executive Research Forum.

**Charlottesville appoints Roman and Pilachowski as assistant city managers, Hendrick as chief strategy officer**

The City of Charlottesville has appointed **Samuel Roman** and **Evan Pilachowski** as assistant city managers and **Jennifer**



- Roman -

**Hendrick** as its chief strategy officer.

Roman brings decades of leadership experience in public safety, municipal operations, and community-centered governance. He will oversee the city's public safety and human services portfolio, including Police, Fire, Emergency Management, and Human Services. He will work closely with department leadership to strengthen service delivery, support organizational performance, and ensure that community engagement remains a foundational element of city operations. Roman joins Charlottesville from the City of Roanoke, where he had served as deputy city manager since 2023.

"Roman brings a deep understanding of public safety operations along with a collaborative, community-focused leadership style," said City Manager Sam Sanders. "His experience leading complex portfolios, managing major capital projects, and embedding community engagement into operational decision-making will be a strong asset to our executive leadership team."



- Pilachowski -

Evan Pilachowski has also been appointed as one of Charlottesville's new assistant city managers, bringing more than 22 years of experience in public service and local government leadership to the role.

Pilachowski will oversee Public Works, Utilities, Information Technology, and Parks & Recreation. He is particularly focused on strengthening public engagement around capital projects and improving transparency in government operations and performance.

Pilachowski most recently served as deputy county administrator for Manatee County, FL.

"Evan brings a strong track record of

leadership, operational experience, and a deep commitment to public service,” said Sanders. “His experience managing complex capital programs and large teams, paired with his focus on transparency and public engagement, will be a valuable addition to our executive leadership team.”

Pilachowski holds a Master’s in Civil Engineering from Norwich University and a Bachelor’s in Civil Engineering from the University of Vermont.

Jennifer Hendrick, the new chief strategy officer, has more than 20 years of experience leading enterprise strategy, data operations, and organizational transformation in complex, high-performing organizations.



- Hendrick -

In this role, Hendrick will be responsible for strengthening how the city uses data, planning, and performance management to support effective decision-making, improve internal operations, and better serve the community. Her work will focus on ensuring staff across departments have the information, tools, and analytical support they need to do their jobs successfully, while bringing greater coordination, transparency, and strategic oversight to citywide initiatives.

“Jennifer brings a combination of strategic leadership, operational rigor, and a deep commitment to transparency,” said Sanders. “Her experience improving complex systems and helping teams navigate challenging processes will be invaluable as we continue to strengthen how the city plans, measures performance, and delivers services to our community.”

Hendrick most recently served as head of data operations for a global data and analytics firm, where she led large, cross-functional teams and overhauled enterprise data systems to significantly improve efficiency, productivity, and decision-making.

Hendrick holds a Bachelor’s in Government from the University of Virginia and a Graduate Certificate in Human Resources Leadership.

## 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](mailto:vtc@vml.org).

### Edwards to retire as West Point town manager



- Edwards -

After more than 30 years of public service, including almost 15 years of dedicated leadership as town manager of the Town of West Point, **John Edwards** has announced his retirement, effective July 1.

Edwards assumed the role of West Point town manager in August 2011. Prior to joining West Point, Edwards held several local government positions including assistant county administrator and emergency services coordinator in Surry County, as well as senior planner, senior development project coordinator, and manager of development plan review for the City of Newport News. Originally from Smithfield, Edwards began his career in local government as a part-time Public Works employee for the Town of Smithfield before becoming a planner for Isle of Wight County.

In addition to his duties as town manager, Edwards has served in various regional capacities including chairman of the Middle Peninsula Regional Airport, chairman of the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority, member of the Pamunkey Regional Library Board of Trustees, and member of the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission. He served his community as a volunteer firefighter for over 15 years.

Edwards earned his Bachelor’s in Governmental Administration from Christopher Newport University and his Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University.

### Prince George County appoints Kingsberry as county attorney



- Kingsberry -

On February 10, the Prince George County Board of Supervisors appointed **Hassan T. Kingsberry** as the new county attorney. His appointment marks a historic milestone as Prince George County’s first African American county attorney. A native of North Carolina, Kingsberry brings nearly a decade of experience in local government law to the position.

“Mr. Kingsberry’s record of service and dedication to communities like ours will be a tremendous asset to Prince George County,”

said Robert “Bobby” Cox Jr., chairman of the Board of Supervisors. “His extensive background in local government and commitment to public service make him an outstanding choice for county attorney.”

Kingsberry’s public service career includes roles as city manager and city attorney for Henderson, NC, town attorney for Wake Forest, NC, and county attorney for Warren County, NC. A recipient of the John T. Motley Morehead Scholarship, Kingsberry earned a Bachelor’s in Public Policy Analysis from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Juris Doctor from North Carolina Central University School of Law. Beyond his legal and administrative work, Kingsberry has also been an educator deeply committed to youth development and leadership. Kingsberry later earned a Master’s in Divinity from Regent University. He is licensed to practice law in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia.

### Longtime South Boston employee Barker retires

At its February 16 meeting, the South Boston Town Council formally recognized the contributions of **Dennis Barker**, who has announced his retirement.



- Barker -

Barker offered nearly three decades of service to the Town of South Boston, starting his career in 1996 as a patrol officer with the South Boston Police Department. He was ultimately promoted to deputy chief of police, a position he held until his retirement from law enforcement in 2020.

At that time, Barker continued working for the town as assistant town manager and IT manager. He oversaw capital improvement projects, managed timelines and budgets, and ensured projects were completed efficiently. He also played a key role in identifying, securing, and administering state and federal grants that supported infrastructure upgrades, community development initiatives, and public service improvements.

Barker holds a Bachelor of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Government Public Administration from Liberty University and an Associate’s in Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration from Southside Virginia Community College.

**Suffolk selects Okai as IT assistant director**

In January, City of Suffolk Director of Information Technology Rob Salak announced the appointment of **Watson Okai** as assistant director of Information Technology.



- Okai -

Okai has more than 16 years of experience across enterprise IT systems and operations. Originally from Ghana, West Africa, he began his career there as an IT support professional before moving to the United States to further his education.

Okai has contributed to the development and modernization of IT systems and operations for organizations such as Sentara, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and Lipton Teas, where he received an employee excellence award in 2023 for his work improving technology infrastructure for the organization’s North America division.

Prior to his promotion, Okai served as service support manager with the Suffolk Department of Information Technology, focusing on service reliability and operational effectiveness. In his new role, he will help advance the city’s technology strategy, strengthen IT operations, and support secure, efficient services for employees and residents.

Okai holds a Bachelor’s in Information Technology from Old Dominion University and an Associate’s in Computer Science from Tidewater Community College. His professional credentials include CompTIA Security+, and an International Diploma in Computer Science.

**Emporia welcomes Park as planning and zoning director**



- Park -

In early March, the City of Emporia announced the appointment of **Tyler J. Park** as the city’s new planning and zoning director. Park brings experience in municipal planning, economic development, and public administration to the community.

Previously, Park served as the director of planning and economic development for the City of Ogdensburg, NY. In that role, he oversaw municipal planning initiatives, zoning administration, development review processes, and long-range strategic planning

efforts. He worked closely with city leadership, regional partners, and community stakeholders to advance economic development initiatives, infrastructure coordination, and community revitalization efforts.

“Tyler brings an impressive combination of municipal experience,” said City Manager Mr. William E. Johnson III. “His background in planning, economic development, and community engagement will be a tremendous asset to the city. We are excited to welcome him to the team.”

Park has more than a decade of experience supporting executive leadership in both public and private organizations. He holds a Master of Public Administration from the State University of New York at Brockport and is currently pursuing both a Doctor of Business Administration and a Ph.D. in Systems Science, with a focus on public-sector leadership, complex municipal systems, and organizational management.

**Hughes is Suffolk’s new city manager**



- Hughes -

In early March, the Suffolk City Council voted unanimously to make **Kevin Hughes** the new city manager. Hughes had been serving as interim manager following the retirement of Al Moor in the summer of 2025. Prior to that, Hughes served as the city’s deputy city manager since 2020. He began with the city in 2005 in the Economic Development Department, rising to the position of director in 2010.

Hughes’ professional experience also includes roles in project management in the field of direct marketing, and research and marketing roles with the Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance.

In his new role, Hughes will provide direct supervision of the departments of Human Resources, Police, Finance and Budget, Fire and Rescue, and Planning and Community Development. He will also participate on several boards, including the Southeastern Public Service Authority (SPSA), Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC), and the Suffolk Public Safety Committee.

Hughes attended Tidewater Community College, is a graduate of James Madison University, and has completed the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma.

**City of Fairfax names Kardasz director of Economic Development**

At its March 10 meeting, the Fairfax City Council introduced **Colleen Kardasz** as



- Kardasz -

the new director of Fairfax City Economic Development. Kardasz, who has served as the assistant director of Economic Development for Loudoun County since 2017, was selected following an extensive national search and rigorous interview process. She began her new position on March 30.

“We are excited for Colleen to lead our Economic Development team,” said Fairfax City Manager Dan Alexander. “Fairfax is uniquely positioned in the heart of Northern Virginia’s innovation and technology economy, and we look forward to her leadership in strengthening our business community and expanding opportunities in the city.”

In addition to serving as director of Fairfax City Economic Development, Kardasz will also serve as chief executive officer of the Fairfax City Economic Development Authority, overseeing the city’s economic development strategy and development portfolio. She will lead a team of 12 staff and consultants to strengthen the city’s economy, support its existing business community, and position Fairfax as a regional and international destination for investment, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

In Loudoun County, Kardasz helped implement a strategic economic development plan and launch new programs to attract and retain businesses. She also served as the staff liaison to the county’s Economic Development Authority and supported the creation of the Northern Virginia Economic Alliance by developing its procurement policy, establishing its first banking relationship, managing a foundational GO Virginia grant, and coordinating legal and organizational matters.

Prior to her role in Loudoun County, Kardasz served as director of the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Export Assistance Network, where she supported small and mid-sized manufacturers with international business development.

Kardasz holds a Juris Doctor from the University of Toledo College of Law and earned a Bachelor’s in Communications and Spanish (magna cum laude) from Hiram College. She is a member of the International City/County Management Association and is a Certified Economic Developer through the International Economic Development Council.



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



Scan for more information and to register.

# SMALL TOWNS CONFERENCE

2026

## May 14-15\*

The Chincoteague Center - Chincoteague

Join us in beautiful Chincoteague this May to learn, network, and share resources and ideas geared to the issues and opportunities unique to Virginia’s towns. Local leaders, including councilmembers, mayors, managers, and staff, are encouraged to attend.

\*For those arriving early, on May 13 beginning at 1:00pm there will be a **Local Workshop: Tools & Materials for Building Communities.**

This interactive workshop will be followed by a reception that evening.

Please join us if you are able!



# National League of Cities awards grants to fund economic mobility programs in 14 southern communities



## Charlottesville and Harrisonburg included

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES has advanced 14 southern U.S. cities to a new phase of its Southern Cities Economic Initiative (SCEI), which is a concerted effort to boost economic opportunity and resilience at the local level. During the first phase of the SCEI program, cities worked with NLC to identify specific opportunities to boost economic resilience tailored to their communities, with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta providing data and subject matter experts.

To kick off the second phase, NLC is awarding more than \$700,000 in grant funding to selected cities to support on-the-ground implementation of locally driven economic mobility strategies and programs. Cities will use their grant funds to support initiatives that back local workforce development, expand child-care solutions, increase access to housing and homeownership, incubate nascent local businesses, and create new pathways for entrepreneurship. This phase runs through December 2027.

“The South is a region of remarkable strength, innovation, and resilience, and cities across the region are primed to overcome the barriers of limited job growth, access to capital, and

affordable housing,” said NLC CEO and Executive Director Clarence E. Anthony. “We are pleased to see this select group of 14 cities work with us and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta to build stronger, more resilient economies and create opportunities for all residents to thrive.”

Cities advancing to the implementation phase are Atlanta, GA; Center Point, AL; Charlottesville, VA; Fayetteville, AR; Greenville, MS; Harrisonburg, VA; Jackson, MS; Jonesboro, GA; Lauderdale, FL; Little Rock, AR; Monroe, LA; Natchitoches, LA; New Orleans, LA; and Thomasville, NC.

This initiative is made possible through the support of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta does not provide funding and did not participate in the selection process or grant funding decisions.

Visit the SCEI page to learn more by scanning the QR code.



# Newport News releases Comprehensive Community Safety Plan



THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS has released its first-ever Comprehensive Community Safety Plan, *Momentum for Peace*, marking a significant milestone in the city’s coordinated, community-driven efforts to reduce gun violence and strengthen public safety.

The plan captures the momentum Newport News has built through aligned leadership, prevention-focused strategies, and strong partnerships with residents, community organizations, law enforcement, and public safety agencies. Guided by a public health approach and the city’s Seven Pillars of Violence Prevention, the plan outlines shared goals, coordinated actions, and a clear path forward to sustain and expand recent progress.

Under the leadership of Mayor Phillip Jones, Newport News set an ambitious goal during the 2024 State of the City address to reduce gun violence by 15% within 18 months. That goal was exceeded. By the end of 2025, the city achieved a 47% reduction in homicides and non-fatal shootings, demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating enforcement with prevention-focused, community-driven strategies.

“Together, we are building a safer, stronger, and more united Newport News – where every resident can thrive, and every neighborhood is a place of peace and promise,” said Jones. “This

plan reflects what is possible when leadership, strategy, and community partnership align.”

Newport News’ progress has also earned national recognition. The city was selected by Cities United as a stop on its 2026 Leading the Way Tour. Newport News was one of only 20 cities nationwide – and the only city in Virginia – chosen to participate. The tour brought national leaders, practitioners, and community partners to Newport News February 10-12 to highlight the city’s approach to violence prevention and public safety.

The plan also highlights the city’s investment of more than \$3.1 million in community-based violence prevention organizations since fiscal year 2023 and outlines priorities for the next phase of work, including strengthening coordination among partners, enhancing early intervention, expanding evaluation and accountability, and implementing proven strategies with fidelity.

The Comprehensive Community Safety Plan serves as both a record of achievement and a roadmap for sustaining momentum, ensuring that Newport News continues to build a safer, healthier, and more connected community for all residents.

Use the QR code to see the full plan.





## Ashland awarded Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant to launch community tree initiative

THE TOWN OF ASHLAND has been awarded funding through the Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant program, an initiative of the Virginia Department of Forestry designed to improve water quality and enhance green infrastructure through strategic tree planting.

The award will support the launch of the Ashland TREE Project (Teaching Responsible Earth Education), a continuous effort to plant 100 trees on residential and commercial properties throughout town – at no cost to participants. The project prioritizes canopy restoration, public education, and community engagement while promoting long-term environmental resilience.

“We’re incredibly excited about the TREE Project and the opportunity to invest in a healthier, greener Ashland,” said Hope Becker, community development specialist for the Town of Ashland. “This grant helps us expand our tree canopy and deepen

our commitment to sustainability in a way that benefits the entire community.”

Thanks to a \$10,000 investment from the town and additional in-kind contributions, eligible property owners will receive trees along with guidance on maintenance and care – including mulching techniques, proper watering, and hands-on education from planting crews.

The town has also partnered with Tree City USA and Randolph-Macon College’s SERVE student program to support planting and education efforts. Community engagement will include bilingual outreach materials and QR-coded educational content based on the Virginia Department of Forestry’s tree care manuals and resources.

To learn more about the grant, visit [ashlandva.gov/569/Neighborhood-Investment](http://ashlandva.gov/569/Neighborhood-Investment).

## James City County unveils new formal seal

JAMES CITY COUNTY now sports a refreshed county seal for formal purposes.

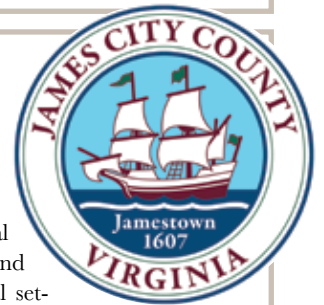
The James City County Board of Supervisors initially approved a resolution in October 2025 to reintroduce an official county seal as part of the county’s brand identity. The county seal is a modified version of a previous seal that was retired in 2012.

Like the previous one, the new seal depicts the Susan Constant, the largest of the three ships to arrive in Jamestown carrying the first English colonists, inside a circle with the words “Jamestown 1607” beneath the water line. Other modifications improve legibility, particularly in digital applications, and can be integrated seamlessly into existing county branding.

The new county seal will not replace the county logo; the two designs will be used together as part of the county’s brand identity. Generally, the county seal is primarily used on formal documents and proclamations. It also appears in formal settings, such as the Board of Supervisors chambers.

The county logo will remain in most of the places where it is currently used, such as exterior signs, brochures, flyers, the county website, social media, most apparel, and nametags.

The updated seal was created by Meg Phinney, graphic designer.



## NVRC releases guidebook for stormwater best management practices

THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA Regional Commission developed the Stormwater Best Management Practice (BMP) Maintenance Guidebook for Private Owners and Operators in Northern Virginia in December 2025. This guidebook is a resource for many, including private property owners, business operators, homeowners’ associations, residents, property managers, and more.

As outlined in the guidebook, Northern Virginians can do their part to reduce stormwater pollution by implementing BMPs around their properties and communities. When properly maintained, BMPs reduce stormwater runoff, improve water quality, protect property, reduce flooding, and support healthier streams for everyone.

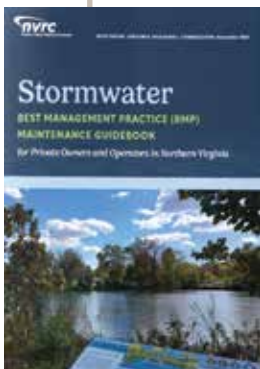
To keep BMPs fully functional and aesthetically pleasing, some regular maintenance activi-

ties are required, but maintaining a stormwater facility does not have to be overwhelming. With some planning, routine inspections, and a clear understanding of the responsibilities, residents can keep the system working properly, prevent expensive repairs, and protect local waterways.

The guidebook includes stormwater BMP maintenance tips, 14 BMP fact sheets, inspection information, planning for BMP maintenance costs, frequently asked questions, and local government contact information.

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement CB – 95336101 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Use the QR Code to view the full guidebook.



## Parry McCluer Middle School in Buena Vista added to National Register of Historic Places

FOLLOWING ITS INCLUSION on the Virginia Landmarks Register in September 2025, Parry McCluer Middle School in Buena Vista has officially been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, recognizing the building’s historical and architectural significance at both state and national levels.

Originally constructed between 1923 and 1924 as Parry McCluer High School, the building served for decades as the principal public school facility for the City of Buena Vista. The campus was intentionally planned to support both education and recreation, with the city acquiring surrounding land beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to allow for expansion and outdoor activities. The high school relocated from the building in 2001. Since that time, the facility has continued to serve the community as Parry McCluer Middle School and as home to school board offices, maintaining its longstanding educational role.

“Parry McCluer has been central to generations of students and families in our community,” said Dr. Heather Ault, superintendent of Buena Vista City Public Schools. “This recognition acknowledges not only the building’s historic significance, but also its continued role in serving our students and community.”

Athletics and community gatherings became an important part of the school’s history early on. Organized sports programs were established in the early 1920s, and the athletic field behind the school developed over time into a central feature of the campus. In 1939, a concrete block wall enclosing the athletic grounds was constructed with assistance from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), an initiative by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression to combat unemployment through

public works projects. This feature reflects a significant period in both local and national history.

The school building evolved as educational needs changed. A new library and classroom wing was completed in 1948 and also served as the Buena Vista Public Library for more than two decades, welcoming both students and the general public. Additional classrooms, a gymnasium, and instructional spaces were added in the mid-1950s, expanding the school’s capacity and reflecting mid-century educational priorities.

As needs and plans for the middle school evolve and the city and school board work toward a plan for the future of the school system, this serves as a proactive step to recognize the building’s historic significance and preserve future opportunities.

“This is a meaningful and exciting accomplishment for the city,” said Tom Roberts, director of community development for Buena Vista. “Parry McCluer is the heart of so many of our community’s stories and memories. The National Register listing honors the history of Parry McCluer while also helping us be prepared for what comes next. It allows the city and school board to plan responsibly and ensures that important funding and preservation tools are available if and when future proposals are considered.”



## Roanoke awarded \$2.5 million to support affordable housing development at former Walker Foundry

THE CITY OF ROANOKE’S ECONOMIC Development Authority (EDA) has received a \$2.5-million award to support affordable housing development of the former Walker Foundry site in Norwich on behalf of developer Greg Kaknes and The Foundry Realty, LLC.

The \$2.5-million award comes on behalf of the Virginia Housing Workforce Housing Investment Program, which aims to increase the workforce housing supply in areas that have new or expanding businesses with \$75 million in total funding across five award cycles. As part of the phased development, the foundry project plans to deliver over 200 new housing units with an emphasis on new homeownership opportunities for “missing middle” households earning between 80% and 120% of the Area Median Income.

The application and award were a collaborative effort between the Roanoke Economic Development Authority, Foundry Realty, and Total Action for Progress, a local community development financial institution. The funding will support the creation of a revolving down payment assistance loan fund managed by

TAP to provide up to \$50,000 in down payment assistance for income-eligible households toward the purchase of new homes in the development.

The City of Roanoke’s EDA served as the formal applicant on behalf of Foundry Realty, as required by the program’s guidelines. Strong local support drove the city’s success in receiving funding. Formal letters of support from Carilion Clinic, Virginia Western Community College, and Roanoke City Public Schools all voiced the need for “middle income” housing to support workforce development.



## Suffolk opens first city-run homeless shelter

THE WESTERN TIDEWATER SHELTER opened its doors in January as the first city-run facility in Suffolk for people experiencing homelessness. The shelter's mission is to offer temporary housing, person-centered services, stability, and hope to transform lives and strengthen the Western Tidewater communities.

The City of Suffolk owns the shelter, which is managed by the Rest Assured Foundation of Virginia, a Chesterfield-based non-profit. Carson Dean Consulting, which runs emergency shelters in North Carolina, assisted with training and policy development, while groups such as the Suffolk Coalition Against Poverty are providing aid by delivering meals.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 appropriated \$5 billion to provide housing, services, and shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable populations. The Western Tidewater Region, of which Suffolk serves as the lead agency, was awarded over \$1.4 million for planning and administering homelessness support and programs. The City of Suffolk identified the need for a physical shelter with a consistent location and services within the Western Tidewater region.

After an extensive site search, the Regal Inn property was identified as an ideal location to establish a permanent homeless shelter and base of operations for additional support and services. The city purchased the property in 2024 with federal and state funds and began extensive renovations, including rebuilding the second-floor deck and replacing all plumbing, electrical, heating, and cooling systems.

The completed shelter offers 17 double-occupancy rooms and one triple-occupancy room for a total of 37 beds. Several of the ground-floor rooms are ADA-accessible, with adjustable bed heights for those in wheelchairs. The former hotel manager's apartment has been renovated into a laundry room and common area.

Moving forward, the shelter plans to offer additional support services through collaborations with groups such as ForKids, the Western Tidewater Free Clinic, and the Western Tidewater Community Services Board.

## City of Fairfax earns national emergency management accreditation

THE CITY OF FAIRFAX OFFICE of Emergency Management has achieved accreditation through the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, the nation's highest and most respected standard for emergency management programs. This accomplishment makes Fairfax the first locality in Virginia to earn EMAP accreditation, underscoring the city's unwavering commitment to public safety, preparedness, and community resilience.

EMAP accreditation is a rigorous, comprehensive process that evaluates an emergency management program's policies, plans, training, operations, and capabilities against 66 national standards. The accreditation team conducts an in-depth review

and on-site assessment to verify compliance. Achieving this milestone demonstrates that the Office of Emergency Management meets – and in many cases exceeds – national best practices for managing disasters and supporting the community before, during, and after emergencies.

“This recognition reflects the dedication of our entire emergency management team and the strong partnerships we have across all city departments,” said Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator Captain Walter English. “It reinforces that our planning, preparedness, and response efforts are among the best in the nation, and it positions Fairfax as a leader in public safety across Virginia and beyond.”

The achievement also highlights the city's broader commitment to excellence. Fairfax is now the first locality in Virginia where all three public safety agencies – police, fire, and emergency management – are nationally accredited. This collective accomplishment reflects the city's focus on professionalism, accountability, and continuous improvement.

City leaders credit the accreditation to years of hard work, collaboration, and innovation. From developing robust emergency operations plans and strengthening training programs, to enhancing community outreach and refining incident management processes, the Office of Emergency Management's efforts have helped elevate preparedness citywide.

For more information about the city's emergency preparedness initiatives, visit [fairfaxva.gov/OEM](https://fairfaxva.gov/OEM).



(L-R) City of Fairfax Fire Department Chief John O'Neal; Captain Walter English, emergency management coordinator; Marcia Deppen, director of consequence management, Maryland Department of Emergency Management; and Mayor Catherine Read.

## City of Fredericksburg announces completion of Renwick bell tower restoration

THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG has completed restoration work on the historic Renwick Complex, a significant milestone in the preservation of one of the city's most important civic landmarks.

Located at 815 Princess Anne Street, the Renwick Courthouse was designed by noted architect James Renwick Jr. in the French Gothic style and completed in 1852. Renwick later designed the Smithsonian Institution Building ("The Castle") in Washington, D.C., and St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. The structure's bell tower houses a 600-pound bronze bell cast at the Paul Revere Foundry in Boston. One of only 134 surviving Revere Foundry bells, it is the only known Paul Revere bell in Virginia. The building formerly served as Fredericksburg's courthouse and is currently being evaluated for future uses.

The Renwick Complex Working Group was established by Fredericksburg City Council in June 2023 to provide recommendations for the future of the property. As the city continues to explore adaptive reuse options, staff have advanced critical maintenance and repair work to protect and stabilize the building.

Restoration work on the Renwick bell tower began in May 2025. WxTite, LLC of Greensboro, NC, was selected through a competitive solicitation process to complete the work, which included interior structural framing repairs, masonry repointing, and stucco and architectural stone repairs. Throughout the project

the contractor took special care to match historic brick, mortar, and stucco materials and to protect the historic Paul Revere bell housed within the tower.

Repair work on the bell tower is now 100% complete. Emergency repairs on the southwest chimney extended the work into November after it was discovered that it was at risk of collapse. The chimney is once again stable, and plaster that had to be removed to accommodate the repair has now been fully restored. The materials used for repair are historically appropriate and colors are expected to blend as the materials begin to weather over time. The project was completed within the agreed timeline and allocated budget.

The completion of this work reflects the City of Fredericksburg's continued commitment to preserving its historic assets while planning thoughtfully for their future use.

For more information, visit <https://www.fredericksburg-va.gov/1930/Historic-Renwick-Complex>.



## State historical marker unveiled in Norfolk for Attucks Theatre

THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT of Historic Resources (DHR) has dedicated a state historical marker for Norfolk's Attucks Theatre, which was funded, built, and operated in the early 20th century by the city's African American community for Black audiences.

The marker unveiling was held January 19 at the theatre's location, 1010 Church Street in Norfolk. Mayor Kenneth Cooper Alexander, Ph.D., began the dedication program with greetings followed by remarks from speakers including Charles Johnson, former vice chair of the Attucks Theatre Centennial Commission, and LaToya Gray-Sparks, DHR community outreach coordinator. Alexander and members of the city council then unveiled the marker outside the theatre. A separate ceremony highlighting the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was held inside the Attucks Theatre after the marker unveiling. Guests were invited to attend the ceremony, titled A Celebration of Unity & Freedom in Song, and participate in a unity march.

Nicknamed the "Apollo of the South," the Attucks Theatre was built in 1919 in the City of Norfolk's thriving Black business district. Designed by Black architect Harvey Johnson, the Attucks Theatre was financed, constructed, and operated by African Americans. It was named for Crispus Attucks, who was regarded as the first casualty of the American Revolution. Known as the Booker T. from 1934 until it closed in 1955, the theatre was a venue for concerts, movies, plays, and community events. It was

listed in the Green Book, a 20th-century guide for Black travelers. Artists who performed at the theatre included Ruth Brown, Ella Fitzgerald, and Dizzy Gillespie. The theatre's upstairs rooms served as offices for Black professionals. Attucks Theatre reopened in 2004 after renovations.

The Virginia Board of Historic Resources, which is authorized to designate new state historical markers, approved the manufacture and installation of the Attucks Theatre historical marker in March 2025. The manufacturing cost of the marker was covered by its sponsor, the City of Norfolk.

Virginia's historical highway marker program began in 1927 with installation of the first markers along U.S. Route 1. It is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,600 state markers, mostly maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, except in those localities outside of VDOT's authority.





## New Juvenile & Domestic Relations Courthouse opens in Staunton

CITY OF STAUNTON LEADERSHIP, members of the local judiciary, and project partners gathered in December to cut the ribbon on the new Staunton Juvenile & Domestic Relations (J&DR) District Courthouse. Located at 2020 West Beverley Street, the new facility represents a significant civic investment in the city's West End and meets the Commonwealth's mandate for a modern, secure court facility.

The ceremony offered attendees and members of the media their first look inside the 34,330-square-foot facility, which sits on the site of the former Chestnut Hills Shopping Center.

"Today marks an exciting day for the West End," said Mayor Michele Edwards. "This is a tangible commitment to the revitalization of our West End neighborhoods. We are thrilled to open these doors and see this area continue to thrive around it."

The two-story brick building was designed by Moseley Architects and constructed by Howard Shockey & Sons, Inc. The \$24.7 million project was completed on an aggressive timeline, having only broken ground in April 2024.

"Our goal was to provide a safe, modern space that respects the dignity of everyone who walks through these doors," said City Manager Leslie Beauregard. "Seeing the finished product today, I am proud to say we have achieved that. This is a facility that will serve our community and our judicial system well for generations."

The new facility features two modern courtrooms and secure program areas for the City Sheriff's Office, Clerk's Office, and Court Service Unit.

"We will do important work here. Founded on the rule of law, this court is charged with protecting the welfare of children and families, ensuring the safety of the community and the protection of the rights of victims – both children and family members," said Judge Susan Read of the Staunton J&DR District Court. "This courthouse supports this work by providing a safe and accessible space and, in its design, reflects the importance, authority, and stability of our justice system."

The completion of the courthouse solves a critical infrastructure challenge. Following a 2022 referendum where Augusta County voters opted to move their courts to Verona, the City of Staunton was required to establish its own separate J&DR facility.

While the courthouse is now open, the city is continuing planning efforts for the remainder of the site. Work is currently underway with a consultant to develop a conceptual design for the future use of the surrounding property, supporting the long-term vision for revitalizing the West Beverley Street corridor.

More information about the project history is available at [www.staunton.va.us/courthouse](http://www.staunton.va.us/courthouse).

## Loudoun County develops Bull Run watershed management plan

LOUDOUN COUNTY IS DEVELOPING a watershed management plan (WMP) for the Bull Run watershed in Southern Loudoun. A watershed is all the land area that drains water to a specific point such as a lake, bay, or stream. Watershed areas are defined by topography and vary in size from small local drainage areas to large river basins. Large watersheds are composed of multiple smaller watersheds.

The drainage area of the Bull Run watershed is 28.6 square miles and feeds the Occoquan Reservoir watershed, a major regional drinking water supply source. The Bull Run watershed extends into Prince William and Fairfax Counties, although those areas are not included in this plan.

A WMP is a strategic guide for protecting and improving local water resources. It identifies existing conditions and challenges, analyzes land use and water quality data, and outlines specific goals and actions to enhance the watershed's health for both people and the environment.



The Bull Run watershed was selected as a priority area for a new WMP because of its importance in meeting the county's obligations under the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and the Local Bull Run Sediment TMDL. A TMDL establishes the maximum amount of a pollutant that can enter a water body without violating water quality standards.

This watershed is also experiencing active development, with significant increases in population and housing units expected. Developing a plan now will help the county proactively manage flooding, protect water quality, and preserve ecological health as development continues.

During a public information meeting held on January 28, members of the Loudoun County community learned about the development of the WMP. Residents were invited to comment about flooding concerns, existing stormwater infrastructure that may need maintenance, and any interest in collaborating on possible projects, such as stream restoration or constructed wetlands, that may be evaluated as part of the plan.

Loudoun County received a \$250,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Community Flood Preparedness Fund to support this project. The plan is expected to be completed in the summer of 2026.

# Thinking outside the 'burg

THE ARTICLES FEATURED in the following pages showcase examples of people in Virginia's cities working to either attract people or ideas from outside their community or, conversely, disperse ideas from their community into the larger world. As we are now firmly in the season of spring, it's appropriate to turn to nature for inspiration in setting up the work of attraction and dispersal...

## Attraction

In nature, plants use a variety of methods called "pollinator syndromes" to attract beneficial fauna. For example, plants that want to attract birds to their flowers will offer bright colors like scarlet, orange, red, or white. Those flowers will have large, funnel-like openings and be in proximity to strong perch support. To attract bats, however, a plant will want to have dull white, green, or purple colors with bowl-shaped flowers that are closed during the daylight hours. These characteristics take a long, long time to evolve but serve the plants well.

Local governments wanting to attract visitors may do as the City of Petersburg has done and build a casino. Again, not a short process (though somewhat quicker than evolution) but as you will find out, the casino – like a large brightly colored flower on a plant – promises to attract many visitors. On the other hand, a town looking to attract one specific type of visitor – an enthusiastic and talented new manager – may do as Pearisburg has done and offer up a history of stability and a council with a reputation for working well with managers. Of course, it doesn't hurt to be in a beautiful location...but, really, are there any unsightly locations in Virginia?

## Dispersal

While many plants count on gravity and wind to transport their seeds, others have evolved very clever methods that make use of animals to disperse their seeds across a greater distance. The names for these methods all end in "chory" but run a wide gambit. Epizoochory is familiar to anyone who has picked burred seeds from their clothing or shoes after a walk in the woods. Endozoochory involves tempting animals with a tasty edible outside so that the seed is ingested and, uhm, dispersed elsewhere. Myrmecochory refers to seed dispersal using ants as a vector. (Fun fact: It's estimated that as much as 9% of all flowering plant species use ants to disperse their seeds!)

Like plants dispersing seeds, local government officials hoping to spread ideas beyond their localities may need a bit of luck and a little help (though presumably not from ants). For City of Harrisonburg Councilmember Laura Dent, that luck came in the form of an interaction at the VML Annual Conference that took her to the COP30 climate conference in Brazil, where a little help from national organizations and some Ukrainians made her time there even more valuable. Or as Vice-Mayor Charlie Frye in Fredericksburg learned, the years of patience and hard work he'd put into building a local program benefited from some help when the time was ripe to carry it further. That helper proved to be Delegate Joshua Cole, who carried Frye's idea to Richmond, where some more hard work (and a bit of luck) has it poised to become a statewide initiative.

We hope you enjoy these stories of attraction and dispersal!





## THINKING OUTSIDE THE 'BURG THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG

# Vice-Mayor Charlie Frye lives local and dreams big



**S**TATE AND FEDERAL elected officials often like to say that “All government is local government.” They talk about how mayors and councilmembers are on the front lines of government, the closest to the constituents, and the best source of ideas for legislation.

They particularly like to say all these things when they are addressing a room full of local government people!

So, it’s important to take note of those instances that prove what they say is true.

This is the story of how one local elected official – Vice-Mayor Charlie L. Frye Jr. of the City of Fredericksburg – defied some long odds though perseverance, planning, and a bit of luck to take an idea borne of childhood trauma, turn it into a local program, and champion it to become what looks likely to be a statewide initiative.

Because it’s true: All government is local government!

### Part I – Witness to murder

It doesn’t get much more local than some kids playing outside their grandmother’s house. That’s exactly what eight-year-old Charlie Frye and his cousins were doing when they saw two men arguing on the corner. Frye recalls vividly what happened next:

“One guy walked across the street, came back, and shot the other guy right in front of us. We were frozen. We didn’t know what to do. We were just kind of stuck. I remember all the first responders coming and the guy was dead right there in front of us.”

Fast forward to 2013 when Frye was 35 years old and living with his family in Fredericksburg’s historically Black neighborhood Mayfield, the same neighborhood where he grew up and where he still lives today. That year there was a particular house in the neighborhood that was shot up several times over the course of six months. Frye’s son was going to a school bus stop near the house, and the shootings were a source of deep worry for Frye and the rest of the family.

“I just had this breakdown – like, hey, this can’t be real,” he recalls. “One morning, after another shooting, I said, ‘I’m running for council.’”

In 2014, Frye was elected to represent Fredericksburg’s Ward 4. Since then, he has been reelected three times. He began serving as the city’s vice-mayor in 2020, when he was unanimously elected to the role by the mayor and members of the city council.



Councilmembers (L-R) Will B. Mackintosh, Susanna R. Finn, Matt D. Rowe, Kerry P. Devine (mayor), Charlie L. Frye (vice-mayor), Joy Y. Crump, and Jannan W. Holmes.

## Part II – Delivering for Fredericksburg (and beyond)

To say that Frye is a busy man would be putting it lightly. He has worked jobs since he was in the ninth grade – retail clerk, certified natural gas pipe fitter, custodian, and shipping clerk (to name a few). Since 2001 he has been employed by UPS as a delivery driver and is a proud member of the Local 322 Teamsters Union.

While Frye has worked for UPS for a quarter century, he doesn't typically do deliveries in his council ward, "Unless it's Christmas time when we split routes up," he notes. "But not being in my ward gives me a whole other perspective of what I need to be doing in my ward. I've been in both Stafford and Spotsylvania, very close to my ward, and I see what's going on right outside of my ward. I get to see all the nooks and crannies of everything, which gives me a different perspective of what I need to do in the city."

As an example, he points to the city's transit bus stops. "I was looking around and saw that nobody has benches at the bus stops; so, I got benches in my ward."

### Thinking outside the box (trucks)

**VTC:** I've always wondered, when you're a UPS driver out there making deliveries and you see a FedEx truck, are you guys like pirates on the high seas? Do you raise your fists at each other and yell 'Aaarrgh!?'

**Frye:** Ha! No. I just had lunch with a FedEx dude who actually delivers to my house. I see him on my Ring camera now, so I know him.

Working in areas adjacent to the city also inspires him to think regionally. "We have school buses in the counties that pick up kids from hotels on Route 1. I'm eager to start something to address that because those kids are standing right there by the highway each morning."

The time Frye spends observing those whom he serves professionally can also inform his work as an elected official. "Everybody focuses on recreational parks and those sorts of things," he notes, "but I also deliver to the *trailer* parks that surround my city. Sometimes the discussions at city council don't match up with what's really happening. And I get to bring that perspective."

As a member of council, Frye has been instrumental in many community initiatives, including the city's first tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a name for a bridge over I-95 and a campaign to remove the city's slave block, which led to an active and engaged discussion on how the story of the Fredericksburg's African American history is to be told.

Over the years, Frye has been appointed to several boards. He is a member of the Community Advisory Committee of the Gladys P. Todd Scholars Program at Germanna Community College, the Sunshine Baseball League Board, and the city's Teen Violence Task Force. A lifelong basketball enthusiast and supporter of projects for young people, Frye has also served as a Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation coach and a Lafayette Elementary School Breakfast Buddy.

Frye is a member of the Fredericksburg Housing Advisory Committee, and he served as a member of the Virginia Municipal League's Board of Directors and one of its policy committees.

Oh, and he's married with three children.

But through it all, he has maintained a laser focus on what first led him to run for elected office: a sincere desire to curb gun violence in his city.

## Part III – The Fredericksburg Gun Give-Back Program

Soon after he was elected to council in 2014, Frye worked with the Fredericksburg Police Department and local staff to create the Gun Give-Back Program. "I had the actual formula before I came on city council," he clarifies, "I just wanted to use my platform on city council to actually do it."

The Fredericksburg Gun Give-Back program is still going strong today. "The enthusiasm from the police department and the sheriff's office has been great," Frye says.

The way the program works is that on a designated Saturday every October, people can bring unwanted guns to the city's police department and turn them in. Participants do not need to be city residents; the process takes no more than 30 seconds. "It takes you longer to order at a drive-through window," quips Frye. "It's like, 'Hey, I have a weapon and I want to turn it in.' It's that simple. Our officers come out, no questions asked, and they take the weapon."

The intended audience is people who come into possession of a firearm that do not want it. So long as the surrendered weapon is not connected to any crimes, the gun is sent to the State Forensic Lab where it is used for training purposes or destroyed.

Frye has no shortage of examples of people who can benefit from the program.

"Maybe it belonged to your husband, and he's passed and you don't want it in the house. Or let's say your neighbor gave you a gun and said, 'Please turn this in for me.' You have nothing to do with that weapon other than the fact you're turning it in. It keeps you in the clear."

"Or, if you look at juveniles who have a weapon," Frye continues, "if somebody gave them a weapon, there's probably something wrong with it. And now they can use this gun to settle a dispute. What do



Frye with retired Chief of Police Brian Layton.

*“I’ve received phone calls from people who said, ‘Councilman Frye, I’ve got a gun. And we don’t need it around.’ I’ve been on record in the city council minutes saying, ‘Last night, I turned in a weapon.’ Going on record like that tells the public that this is a 24-7 program. Also, folks that might be skeptical about the program know that they can reach out to me. I’ve put myself in the middle as a go-to person for the program. I’ve collected guns at midnight.”*

you do as a family member or a neighbor who knows this person has a weapon that *shouldn’t* have this weapon? You can get this person arrested, but maybe they found it at a park. They could have gotten it from a buddy at school, or a bully and now they’re in trouble.”

Frye contends that the program is like those that allow people to safely dispose of prescription medications. “If you have drugs in your house that shouldn’t be in your house – maybe somebody’s deceased and that’s their old medicine – it’s the same scenario for the guns.”

Frye remembers that when the program was first created, people told him that nobody would participate. “Then we got sued by a pro-gun organization,” he recalls. “We won in court on Wednesday, and on Saturday we collected 64 guns in four hours!”

While the event is still held each October, the program itself now operates all year so weapons can be taken to the police department anytime.

“After 12 years and 242 weapons collected, it’s obviously an option that works,” observes Frye. “One of the most convincing turn-ins that we had was about four or five years ago. We had canceled the scheduled Gun Give-Back date due to snow. But I thought, ‘What about the folks that were holding a weapon for that date?’ So, I went to the station and one of the local media folks came along to see what would happen. We collected nine guns that day – on a cancellation date!”

## Part IV – Murder-Free Fredericksburg

Frye has adopted an aspirational mantra: Murder-Free Fredericksburg.

“It’s a call to disarm,” says Frye. “I go on record quarterly at the city council meetings with ‘Murder-Free Fredericksburg’ as my agenda item. And I say: ‘Up to this date, we’ve had this many murders.’ I will also talk about the gun program. It’s kind of like a pitch; I do it so folks can walk away and talk about it.”

Frye doesn’t mince words or hide his frustration when discussing the apathy and resistance he’s experienced in promoting the program.

“I’ve tried to get localities surrounding us to join in something like a regional effort. I’ve reached out to the state. I’ve reached out to governors. I’ve reached out to more than one President of the United States. When they had the shooting in Virginia Beach and I saw the governor do a press conference but not take any action, I got really mad because I thought, ‘I’ve been talking to you about this! Why do a press conference if we’re not going to talk about programming? What are you doing during the time between murders?’”

Frye concludes, “After about seven years of doing that, I gave up on that part for a while because I was getting frustrated. I decided I’m just going to keep doing what I’m doing in Fredericksburg. That’s when I created this conversation about Murder-Free Fredericksburg.”

“‘Murder’ is a hard word to say as an elected official,” Frye acknowledges, “and it’s scary to some folks if you’re making it part of a catchphrase. But I did that on purpose. I wanted people to say, ‘What

the hell is that guy thinking about? Why is he saying that?’ I wanted to spark the question of ‘Why?’.”

Since Frye joined council, there have been two murder-free years in Fredericksburg. The first was 2023. Then in early 2026, Frye was pleased to announce at a council meeting that 2025 had been a murder-free year.

City of Fredericksburg Mayor Kerry Devine recalls the moment: “That’s always a good feeling when we can announce something like that. That’s the goal every year. Unfortunately, there have been some years where that hasn’t been the case. So that was a good feeling.”

For his part, Frye is quick to acknowledge that a murder-free 2025 can’t be solely because of his efforts, but he’s glad to be doing something – anything – to make a difference.

Even with these successes, Frye says there are still people who doubt the program’s worth. “Some folks out there might wonder if somebody’s going to bring a gun,” he concedes. “Every year, even I wonder if somebody’s going to bring a gun. But then when the guns come in, it just changes the moment. Once you’re a part of it, it’s just ‘Wow.’”

But Frye is quick to say, “If we ever did a Gun Give-Back Day and zero guns were collected, I’d still look at it as a victory. The conversation is worth more than a weapon.”

## Anti-Murder, NOT Anti-Gun

*“I’m not anti-gun. I’m anti-gun violence. It’s not Gun-Free Fredericksburg. It’s Murder-Free Fredericksburg. The Gun Give-Back Program is voluntary. I look at our program as just an option. This is about somebody who has a gun they don’t want.”*

## Part V – Getting the feel of Fredericksburg

Vice-Mayor Frye’s work to improve safety in his community doesn’t exist in a vacuum. In fact, the City of Fredericksburg has been working on multiple fronts to improve everything from safety to economic development and making great strides in improving the overall quality of life for residents.

Wanting to take the pulse of the city, I spoke with Mayor Devine and City Manager Timothy Baroody in early March. Baroody recalled that when he came to the city in 2016, “one of the attractive features was the fact that they take these kinds of community concerns very seriously.”

As an example of how the city is taking the long view and making investments to reduce teen violence, Baroody notes, “Last year we had one net new position offered in the budget, many dozens of positions were requested, but we could only move forward on one position. It happened to be a teen program position in Parks and Recreation and that individual has now been hired and that program is being stood up. We are trying to tackle this with the limited resources we have because we believe it’s important to keep young people engaged.”

For her part, Mayor Devine was able to quickly cite examples of how the city is acting both globally and locally. “I just came from a sister city celebration where we’re celebrating the Fredericksburg-Ghana sister city relationship that we’ve had for a while now,” she notes. “And tonight, we are recognizing our female business entrepreneurs in our downtown area. We have the Women of Main Street exhibit and kickoff event this evening which is one of the many ways we promote the hard work and resilience of the different pillars of our community.”

## Five faves in Fredericksburg

With over a thousand new housing units being planned, it seems that there are lots of people interested in checking out the 22401. Here are some of the things that Mayor Devine and City Manager Baroody credit for all the excitement:

1. A historic downtown that's gorgeous and teeming with activity all year round with a brand-new \$5 million riverfront park.
2. First Fridays when the downtown restaurants, shops, and art galleries stay open late.
3. The Publisher, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel that recently earned AAA Four Diamond Hotels status.
4. The FredNats, the city's new minor league baseball team ("I could spend days talking about the FredNats," says Devine).
5. The Memorial Day weekend luminaries at the National Cemetery. ("It's a very moving event," says Devine)



The bill was amended to make it more fiscally palatable. It was further revised to allow more local flexibility and to include buy-back programs as an option. To address specific concerns, it was amended to address how to handle antique guns so they could be preserved, and to ensure that any donated weapons had not been used in a crime.

To further buttress the effort, HB702 came with a letter of support signed by the members of the Fredericksburg City Council and Frye himself traveled to Richmond to speak on behalf of the bill in a House committee.

"I was happy to do it," he says. "So many people that were in that room talked to me afterwards. I sat in between two people whose kids were shot during the Virginia Tech shooting. They were talking to me on both sides. They said, 'You're Chuck Frye from Fredericksburg? We've been trying to do your program!'"

I spoke with Frye in February as HB702 was headed for the House floor and its fate was still hanging by a thread. "I bet I'm the only UPS driver with a live audio feed of the Virginia General Assembly playing in his truck," he exclaimed.

Of course, the politics around any program or legislation that includes guns can become heated and siloed very quickly. However, Frye believes HB702 should be different.

"I think it takes the weight off the elected officials and the law enforcement," Frye contends. "This program is not political. This provides an option where they don't have to debate if the program is pro-gun or anti-gun, because it's not. It's a gun give-back, not a gun take-back."

Above all else, Frye sees the success of HB702 as a spark for other people to start having these conversations. Frye certainly intends to keep having conversations. "Our city can run this program without me," he notes, "but even if I lost an election, I'd still be involved."

"Look," he concludes, "if HB702 takes this conversation and catches somewhere else...I could drop the mic on that. But I won't!"

## Part VI – Beyond the 'burg

During the 2026 General Assembly Session, Delegate Joshua G. Cole sponsored HB702 which would implement programs like Fredericksburg's Gun Give Back program across the Commonwealth.

Cole, a full time minister, says he first met Frye around 2016 when he was pastoring in the area and attended an event in downtown Fredericksburg. "Then, when I ran for office in 2017," remembers Cole, "one of the volunteers on my team had also volunteered on his city council run. So, she connected us. We would chat and have some fun."

As it turns out, the two men were related. "It wasn't until I got elected as a Delegate in 2019 that I found out that his wife is my cousin," laughs Cole.

In 2019 Cole became youngest person and the first Black person elected from the Fredericksburg region to the General Assembly. At that time, Cole and Frye talked about trying to take the Fredericksburg Gun Give-Back program statewide. But the effort fizzled when "the lawyers in Richmond couldn't get the language together," recalls Cole, "and I lost reelection in 2021 before we could tighten it up."

But in 2023, Cole won reelection and reconnected with Frye on the idea of Gun Give-Back legislation. After HB702 was introduced this session, the first hurdle arrived in the form of a fiscal analysis that was laid on top of the legislation and could have easily killed it.

Cole, who admits to occasionally making up words when emphasizing a point, remembers that moment. "So here I am 'franticking' [frantic + panicking], because as I told my chief of staff, 'We sold this big dream to Chuck Frye, and I don't want it to become a pipe dream!'"

*"We know that what's happening right now is guns used in crimes are tossed out. They're thrown into the river, they're thrown into the lake, they're thrown into bushes on the side of the road. People are finding these guns. They should be able to turn them in. Maybe we'll catch some perpetrators. Maybe we'll get some of these dangerous guns out of the hands of some of our kids who shouldn't have them. It's about making our streets safer."*

- Delegate Joshua G. Cole

## Frye's advice for implementing a Gun Give-Back Program

- Designate the hours and date of the program early on.
- Market it as similar to a prescription drug turn-in.
- Keep in mind that receiving zero guns is still 100% a victory. Don't look at the numbers – look at the conversations you're encouraging and the option that you're providing for your community.
- Once people see that it's real, then it catches on.



## THINKING OUTSIDE THE 'BURG THE CITY OF HARRISONBURG

# Councilmember Laura Dent thinks local and acts global (literally)

**F**OR ANYONE WHO doubts that magic can happen at VML’s annual conferences, consider the case of City of Harrisonburg Councilmember Laura Dent, who attended the 2025 Annual Conference in Roanoke this past October. As a member of the National League of Cities’ (NLC) Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources Committee, she was pleased to chat with NLC President Steve Patterson (mayor of Athens, OH) who had also made time to attend the conference.

During their conversation in Roanoke, Dent learned that Patterson would be going to the World Mayors Summit in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. However, as he would be in Salt Lake City for NLC’s conference afterward, Patterson would not be able to stay to represent NLC at the COP30 event happening in Belém, Brazil.

Dent had already opted out of NLC’s Salt Lake City event and was free to go to Belém.

**COP30 was the 30th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).**

“So, Steve Patterson appointed me to go to COP30 as the unofficial ambassador of the NLC,” remembers Dent. “I took that as a very powerful mandate, to carry the message that lots of Americans on the local and state level care about the climate, and local is where the action is happening.”

Thus, thanks to a bit of regional networking (courtesy VML!), one person’s local passion led to some international magic.

### Talking the talk (before walking the walk)



It’s a long way – both physically and temperamentally – from Dent’s hometown of Montgomery, AL, to Cambridge, MA, but that’s the journey Dent embraced when she attended Harvard to study Russian Literature. “I was a language geek from way back,” she admits.

As part of her studies, Dent spent a summer in the Soviet Union where she was one of the very few Americans around. “It was 1980,” she recalls, “the year the U.S. was boycotting the Soviet Olympics because they had invaded Afghanistan.”

After graduating Harvard, Dent found herself increasingly drawn to technical writing and spent several decades in that profession. In 2006, she and her soon-to-be husband were considering a move to Virginia and Dent immediately set her sights on Rosetta Stone, the language-learning software company headquartered in Harrisonburg.

“It was my dream techie job as a language person,” she says. “That’s what brought me specifically to Harrisonburg. And I loved it. I fell in love with the city, too.”

Of course, as with many things in the technology realm, Rosetta Stone soon found itself facing obsolescence.

“What really happened with Rosetta Stone is they were used to being the premium product with the big yellow box in the airport



Bird’s-eye view of Belém, Brazil before COP30.

kiosk,” explains Dent, “and they got blindsided by free apps. It’s hard to compete with free! It took them a few years to reconfigure and retool to an app-based subscription model.”

Dent’s job was eliminated during the company’s first round of layoffs in 2012. But by 2020, Dent was again working for Rosetta Stone part-time, plus teaching adjunct at James Madison University in the Computer Science Department. Much of her free time, however, was spent volunteering as a canvasser for Democratic Party candidates. So, when people asked her to run for city council her immediate response was “unprintable” according to Dent. But the more she thought about it, the more she decided that she did have the time.

Dent recalls that one of her favorite sayings at the time was, “To get a man to run, you just have to ask him once. To get a woman to run, you have to ask her six times. I thought, ‘Gosh, I’ve got six people asking me to do this. Maybe they’re trying to tell me something.’ So, I was kind of reluctant, but I totally dove into it once I was really convinced.”

Dent’s bid for council was a success and, as it turned out, she was the only new person elected that year. The pandemic meant that Dent’s first six months of council meetings were all online. Dent admits it was a bit disorienting.

“I started out sitting in my slippers, talking on Zoom during meetings,” she remembers. “Then, when we started to go back in person with the plexiglass between us and masks, I turned to the mayor, Deanna Reed, and said, ‘Whoa, this feels real!’”

Mayor Reed replied, “Oh, it’s real, all right!”

## From the ‘burg to Brazil

A longtime climate activist, Dent was thrilled for the opportunity to attend the COP30 Conference in Belém. Of course, first she had to get ready.

“I made a very big point that this trip was not on taxpayer dollars. I paid for it, the plane ticket and all. And lo and behold, afterward I got some offers of funding to contribute to it because I was upfront about that. And that was sort of a revelation: If people really love what you’re doing, they’ll contribute even if you don’t ask!”

To prepare for the trip, Dent was determined to learn as much Portuguese as she could in the six weeks before she left. Her lifetime membership in Rosetta Stone proved useful, as did listening to Brazilian music. “I came up with this one classic star that I just love named Djavan Caetano Viana. He had a video and that helped me learn the lyrics.”

In the end, Dent became fluent enough to explore on her own. She even took a side trip to Iguazu Falls, the largest waterfall system in the world, while in Brazil. “I love it when I’m that immersed and can just get around on my own in a culture,” she says.

However, just getting to Belém proved to be a challenge.

“It was during the government shutdown when they were canceling flights,” Dent recalls. “I had



this elaborate two-day trip where I had a flight from D.C. to New York, stay overnight in New York in the TWA Hotel and then get on the plane to Brazil the next day.”

*“I’m already hoping to go to Turkey next year for COP31 with the EOPA group again. I better start learning Turkish!”*

“Of course, my flight from D.C. to New York was canceled,” she continues, “and they tried to reroute me in the wrong direction and kept delaying, until I said, ‘The heck with the planes. I’m getting on a train!’ So, I stayed overnight in Washington and took the train the next day to New York, then got on the plane to Brazil.”

“There were other people who did not get there because their flight was canceled,” Dent notes. “People were really impressed how determined I was to get there.”



Boat trip next to Iguazu Falls. “We all got drenched!”

## From Rock City resident to honorary Ukrainian

Belém is not a tourist city. “It’s more of an out-of-the-way industrial port city in the Amazon,” says Dent. “They really were not prepared for the influx of 70,000 people coming to the COP; they tried, and they did the best they could. They had the dignitaries staying in cruise ships.”

The COP30 event itself took place in a city park under an “absolutely humongous white tent” with connections to other buildings. Under the tent there were pavilions for each country represented. “Dozens and dozens of them,” recalls Dent. “Like there’s Saudi Arabia on the right, and China across the aisle, Finland down there, and Germany over here, and the United Nations over there.”

When pressed to name the most impressive pavilion, Dent admits it was China. “Their pavilion was amazing. They were always packed; people were in line because they were giving away little stuffed pandas. China is becoming a clean energy leader, even as they’re still one of the highest emitters. Indonesia was also very impressive. They did native dances in their costumes. In fact, the native costumes from all over the world were just dazzling to see. African, Middle Eastern, Asian, of various flavors.”

Although Dent was at COP30 at the behest of the NLC, her status as an “unofficial” representative meant that she was not credentialed by NLC. “Underneath the main COP30 tent was what they called the Blue Zone where you had to have an official country or organization badge,” she says.

Without a country or organization badge, Dent would not be permitted in the Blue Zone where all the action was happening. However, her connections with other organizations proved to be immensely helpful.

“The Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) had sponsored me to go to Washington for the Elected Officials to Protect America (EOPA) Leadership Certificate program in conjunction with San Francisco University. And ICLEI is one of the organizations under the umbrella of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA), which represents cities and regions in the negotiation process during events like the COP,” explains Dent. “In fact, I had been going to the LGMA’s ‘Towards COP30’ webinars for months preparing for conference.”

“So, I was making these connections at the top level,” she continues, “and I was primarily sponsored at COP30 by the EOPA, which is a coalition of military veterans, state and local elected officials – some of whom are retired military veterans – climate activists, and Ukrainians...because EOPA has a project in Ukraine for the Ukraine Energy Security Marshall Plan.”

“So, I wound up having a Ukrainian badge!” enthuses Dent. “I had a blue and yellow Ukrainian outfit, so I became kind of an honorary Ukrainian and I shuttled between the Ukrainian and the LGMA areas a lot.”

“The Ukrainians had a booth that was all about their resilience under attack and how they’re pursuing renewable energy under difficult circumstances. I went to one of their sessions on the education needed to rebuild a green economy after – and during – the war. It was powerful.”

“Part of their problem is the brain drain – people are either being killed or leaving Ukraine,” Dent continues. “They need to have a workforce that is highly skilled in renewable energy, so they’re setting up these programs even now. I’m inspired by both the resilience and the innovation of Ukraine. They’re innovating under impossible



With Alex Cornell du Houx, executive director of Elected Officials to Protect America (EOPA).



With a fellow city councilmember from Brazil! Herbert Santo de Lima, of Sao Lourenço.



In the Ukraine pavilion.

circumstances. I met one American who's been living and working in Ukraine for about six months doing a bioenergy project. There are courageous people on the ground and in the universities helping, trying to keep Ukraine alive and innovating."

With the U.S. government essentially boycotting the conference, Dent and her fellow local and state participants from the U.S. found creative, productive ways to assert the strength of sub-national groups during their time at COP30. To that end, she found that many of the representatives from other countries were supportive of her presence.

"They were tremendously grateful," she notes. "The Brazilians and Mexicans that I talked with, and a German observer, said I had more agency there as essentially a freelance diplomat. The distinction I made was, even though the U.S. federal government wasn't there, I was representing Americans who care."

The absence of a U.S. delegation also meant that Dent had opportunities to participate in higher level discussions. For example, 17 members of the Sustainability Energy and Environment Caucus – a group of congressional House representatives who are pro-climate in various ways – were supposed to attend a Brazil/U.S. meeting at COP30 but were unable to be there due to the government shutdown. Instead, they sent staffers. With federal U.S. representatives in short supply, Dent was able to be in the U.S. group for that discussion.



Group shot taken after the Brazil/U.S. meeting.

The states also made their presence felt at COP30. "Governor Newsom from California was there telling folks to do business with the states," observes Dent. "I know that Virginia has a very powerful workforce, many of whom have just been laid off from climate-friendly positions at the Department of Energy. I thought, 'All the more reason to make friends for Virginia!'"

"I made the connection for the National League of Cities to sign on to sponsor the position paper of the LGMA," says Dent. "Their big statement at COP30 was that they wanted official language in the UN agreements calling out the importance of sub-national governments – local, state, and regional – in climate action, because we're where the climate action actually happens."

On the next to last day of the conference, Dent was all fired up and about to give a presentation in the LGMA pavilion on local, town hall style COPs, when an actual fire broke out!

"It was pretty dramatic," recalls Dent. "I saw hordes of people stampeding down the huge hall, and I froze. I had the American reaction of, 'Is there an active shooter?' Somebody said, 'There's a fire. We have to evacuate.' As I was running, I could see down the hallway where there was a huge conflagration. It was distant, but it was scary because so many people were trying to get out at once."

In all the pandemonium, Dent noticed that the Ukrainians were unphased. "When the fire broke out, they kind of went, 'Eh, so what?' They're used to getting bombed."

Fortunately, nobody was hurt, but the fire melted the section of tent above it.

"They put it out with extinguishers," notes Dent. "We found out later it was caused by a coffee pot."

## Back to the 'burg: All climate is local

*"When I was first running for city council. One of my mentors said, 'Council is a thankless job. You do all this work, and nobody thanks you.' But I haven't found that at all to be true. People are still telling me they're so glad I'm on council. People really appreciate that I've been very focused on climate advocacy."*

Dent is unabashedly proud of Harrisonburg's work in the climate realm. "We're an incredibly progressive and diverse community for our size and location in the rural Shenandoah Valley," she enthuses. "Even before I got on to the city council, they already had an Environmental Protection Standards Advisory Committee that worked to create an environmental action plan. We have a solar implementation plan and our new Public Works building has solar on the roof. We have this wonderful grant from our senators to do a bike path that will be the whole length of downtown."

Among Dent's passion projects are things like a carve-out that would allow the Harrisonburg Electric Commission (HEC) to buy clean energy wherever it's available, including from residents. While HEC has worked out a shared community solar-through-subscription model, "they have a 100% procurement contract with Dominion," notes Dent. "We're forbidden from generating our own. That's got to change"

On the other hand, she is encouraged that Renew Rock Town "has just renewed itself" and merged with the Climate Action Alliance of the Valley. "We have a really robust climate activist community here," Dent observes.

Another project she'd like to see reach fruition is transforming a retired landfill in the city limits into a solar field. "That's a classic brownfields use," she says. "You can't build anything on top of a landfill because you can't dig into it, but the solar panels can sit on top of it. And HEC has also launched a project to do battery energy storage at a substation right by that landfill. So, when the solar goes in it could be hooked up to the battery storage!"

*"At COP30 I promoted Harrisonburg as a diverse city. We're an immigrant and refugee resettlement community. Our newest council member is an Iraqi refugee. That's a very powerful presence here."*

Dent's passion for the environment dovetails with her other priorities for the city, including housing.

"There's a big apartment complex proposed for downtown that a lot of the people in the neighborhood are objecting to. And I'm saying, 'We need housing downtown!' That's part of our Downtown 2040 master plan. The county is literally building circles around us. Harrisonburg is a city; we have to grow inward, and to some degree upward, or we'll keep losing the people and revenues to the county."

Dent sums up the situation like this: "Downtown density is far better for the environment than suburban sprawl, and Harrisonburg is a very walkable locality. The housing density connection to the environment is how I make that link. I mean, humans are not that good for the environment, but given that we're here, let's have the urban density and leave the farm fields alone."



## THINKING OUTSIDE THE 'BURG THE CITY OF PETERSBURG

# The “Cockade City” makes its own luck If you build it, they will come...

**T**HE AFTERNOON OF Thursday, January 22, I departed from VML’s offices in Richmond with *Virginia Town & City* photographer Manuel Timbreza in tow.

Our destination: The City of Petersburg.

Our mission: To bear witness to the soft opening of the *Live! Casino Virginia*.

Our understanding of what we were getting ourselves into: Incomplete.

There was a fair amount of buzz surrounding the opening of the new casino, so I was a bit worried about traffic as we approached our destination. Luckily, while we did encounter a bit more traffic than usual at the I-95 Wagner Road exit, it was not enough to slow our progress. I had been in Petersburg the prior fall with VML’s executive director to tour some of

the exciting projects the city was pursuing, so I was familiar with the site where the permanent casino buildings would be constructed. Since my last visit, however, a large, football-field-sized structure tent to house the temporary casino had risen on the edge of the property.

Our VIP invitations were for a pre-opening event with doors at 3:00 pm and speakers to commence at 4:00 pm. It was immediately apparent that we were not alone. A small throng of excited VIPs were navigating their way across the parking area to the main entrance where a DJ blasted celebratory music, streamers flapped in the wind, and friendly greeters smiled and waved to arrivals. Without much fuss, we were given credentials and made to feel very important.

The forecast for the weekend was for ice and snow. In fact, the region would be buried under a blanket of snow and a sheet of ice that would persist for weeks. But that Thursday afternoon, the day





was mild though overcast. In true casino fashion, however, as soon as we were inside both weather and time ceased to exist.

According to the city's press release, the "75,000-square-foot Vegas-style gaming floor features more than 900 slot machines and 30+ live-action table games." Indeed, we soon discovered that the vast interior of the structure was filled with row upon row of blinking machines, blackjack tables, servers with trays of libations and snacks, and an impressive amount of activity. We mingled with our fellow VIPs and took in the sights before planting ourselves next to a small stage with a large decorative roulette wheel that had been set up for the opening speeches.

While we waited for the event to commence, we spotted several people we knew either professionally or by reputation. Petersburg Mayor Sam Parham was sighted, as were Councilmember Arnold Westbrook, City Manager March Altman, and Clerk of Council Tangi Hill. Former Governor of Virginia Douglas Wilder and City of Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander were also in attendance. The Petersburg sheriff, chief of police, and fire chief were circulating on the periphery. Everyone was chatty and smiling. You could sense that something long awaited had finally arrived.

At 4:00 pm our emcee for the day was revealed to be none other than NFL great Joe Theismann. Our emcee ably introduced the first speaker of the day, Penny Parayo, the senior vice president and general manager of *Live!* Casinos and Hotel. Parayo noted that it had been only 10 months since the project broke ground. She expressed pride that everyone involved had been able to get the casino operational so quickly. She was also pleased to announce that the casino, which had been approved by a record 82% of voters during the required referendum process, had already created over 500 jobs in the region.

Theismann then thanked his friend – and fellow NFL alum – Bruce Smith, whose company had played a key role in the development of the project, before introducing Jon Cordish, principal of the Cordish Companies, which had also played a primary development role. Cordish, whose family ownership of their namesake company goes back four generations, projected \$2.8 billion in economic impact for the first two years of the casino's operation alone and noted that when completed in 2027, the permanent 445,000-sq.-ft. facility would bring an additional 800 jobs to the region.



Later in the program we heard from Cordish President of Gaming Rob Norton, who presented a big check (both literally and figuratively) in the amount of \$15 million to the City of Petersburg and announced the creation of a community advisory board to oversee the funds. We also heard from Zed Smith, the chief operating officer, who made it a point to thank all the folks who knocked on doors prior to the successful referendum vote. He brought his own big donation checks representing proceeds from the first day of operations, made out for \$25,000 each to the John Paul Randolph Foundation and FeedMore charities.

Then it was the city's turn to take the stage in the person of Mayor Sam Parham, who began his remarks by enthusiastically thanking all the members of Petersburg's council and the members of the General Assembly who carried the legislation making the casino possible. "This is truly a turning point for Petersburg's economy!" he exclaimed. "With revenues generated by the casino poised to support



the city's parks, schools, and first responders," Mayor Parham proudly announced that "the future of Petersburg is brighter than ever!"

Appropriately the final official speaker was Executive Director of the Virginia State Lottery Khalid Jones, who quipped that he was the last person standing between the audience and playing games. He observed that VA Lottery had been working behind the scenes to make sure what the General Assembly started in 2020 came to fruition "with integrity, on time, and as intended."

Jones then ceremoniously presented the licensing documentation to the Cordish representatives and announced the casino was cleared to start operations.

Before the presentations concluded, Theismann introduced another NFL luminary in the audience, Petersburg native Bruce Smith. His 18-year career in the league resulted in 200 sacks – a painfully familiar situation for Theismann! Smith thanked everyone involved with special shoutouts to Senator Lucas, House Leader Scott, and Senator Aird and gave full credit to the mayor, council, and City Manager Altman for making it all happen.

"The city has never seen an economic engine like this," Smith crowed. "No longer will people be driving *by* Petersburg; they will be driving *to* Petersburg!"

Before the doors were opened to the public, the luminaries on stage spun the ceremonial roulette wheel and Theismann announced he would be making the first official wager of the day.

While Theismann's wager may have been the first, it was certainly not the last. As we exited the casino into the disorienting light of day, we were surprised to see that a long line of excited people had formed around the tent for the official opening at 5:00 pm. As we made our way back across the parking lot, a steady stream of people passed us going the opposite direction.

One enthusiastic fellow seemed a bit worried when he saw us leaving. "Did they run out of money already?" he asked. We assured him that the money had just begun to flow.

However, as we merged on to I-95 we could see what wasn't flowing...a line of cars waited on the interstate to get to the exit ramp for the casino. It seemed that Bruce Smith's prediction had already come true: the opening of Petersburg's new casino meant that people – lots of them – weren't driving by Petersburg anymore!

## ...and if you make it better, they will want to stay here!

By City of Petersburg staff

While Petersburg's new casino is an impressive achievement that will undoubtedly attract visitors from all over the Mid-Atlantic region, the city is creating plenty of reasons for those visitors to do more than gamble, while at the same time increasing the quality of life for current and future residents. Here are just a few of the projects that are sure to make the decision to visit or reside in Petersburg easier for lots of folks.

### Come for the casino, stay for the city

The City of Petersburg has been actively engaging with local businesses to **maximize the opportunities created by the new casino**. Through a series of business roundtables and an open house specifically for hospitality businesses, the city has been fostering collaboration and preparing local establishments to benefit from the influx of casino visitors.

In partnership with *Live!* Casino Virginia, the city is taking a proactive approach to marketing. Inside the casino, targeted campaigns are promoting Petersburg as more than just a gaming destination, encouraging visitors to extend their stay and explore the city's many attractions. From specialty dining to boutique shopping, the city is showcasing everything that makes Petersburg an exciting getaway.

*Live!* Casino Virginia is also strengthening ties with local businesses through its *Live!* Reward Classic Card program. This initiative provides casino visitors with exclusive discounts at participating local businesses, creating a win-win scenario that drives traffic to local establishments and enhances the visitor experience. Together, the city and *Live!* Casino Virginia are ensuring that the casino's success translates into broader economic benefits for the entire community.



## A prescription for economic development

Petersburg is rapidly emerging as a hub for pharmaceutical innovation, driven by the growth of its **Pharmaceutical Campus**. The campus, home to Novo Nordisk, CivicaRx, and Phlow, has become a cornerstone of the city's economic development, with leading companies in advanced manufacturing and life sciences. With significant city investments in infrastructure, the campus is expanding to support the production and distribution of essential medicines. Its expansion has not only created high-paying jobs for residents but also positioned Petersburg as a key player in the reshoring of essential ingredients for medicine.



## Making tracks for tourism and local flavor

Petersburg's historic **South Side Depot** has officially opened as the city's new Visitor Center, marking an exciting step in the ongoing revitalization of Downtown/Old Towne. This restored landmark serves as a welcoming hub for tourists, offering information about the city's rich history, attractions, and events. Beyond its role as a Visitor Center, South Side Depot hosts monthly art shows, special exhibitions, and a variety of community functions. Looking ahead, plans are underway to transform the east and west wings of the depot to support a grower's market, retail shops, and entertainment options. These future developments will create a gathering place that celebrates local culture, supports small businesses, and grows Petersburg's appeal as a must-visit destination.

Additionally, the ongoing renovations of Petersburg's iconic Union Station are vital to preserving its legacy and ensuring it remains an active landmark that reflects the city's rich transportation network and architectural heritage. Union Station remains a sought-after venue, hosting weddings, celebrations, and special events nearly every weekend.



## Grants for green space and reduced flooding

Petersburg has received grants from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to improve its green spaces and address critical infrastructure needs. One grant is funding the conversion of the former Roper Brothers Lumber Company site on **Pocahontas Island** into green space featuring walking trails and recreational areas, providing residents and visitors with a new place to connect with nature and enjoy outdoor activities. Additionally, grant funding has been secured to begin much-needed upgrades to the former **Petersburg Harbor**, which will reduce flooding from streams throughout the city. After the upgrades, water will be able to flow freely into the harbor and then into the Appomattox River. Petersburg has also re-engaged with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to discuss dredging the harbor and a portion of the Appomattox River – an effort that hasn't been undertaken since 1949! This dredging project would not only mitigate flooding risks but also restore economic vitality to the once-thriving harbor and Downtown/Old Towne areas, opening the door to new opportunities for commerce and recreation.



## Let it flow!

Petersburg is making **significant water and wastewater infrastructure investments** to support the city's rapid growth, particularly in the southeastern section known as the Poor Creek area. A new \$9 million water tank is now online, providing essential capacity to meet the demands of this expanding area. This project is part of a larger \$60 million+ initiative to upgrade water and wastewater lines and pump stations, ensuring reliable service for key developments such as the Pharmaceutical Campus and the *Live!* Destination Resort and Casino, the regional hospital, and ongoing business and residential growth. Additionally, the city secured a \$20 million grant to cover its upfront share of major upgrades to the South Central Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Other projects in the Poor Creek 2 initiative include the construction of a new Mt. Vernon Water Tank and pump station, as well as a \$4 million grant-funded effort to begin replacing the city's main water line. These critical improvements are laying the foundation for Petersburg's continued economic and community development.





## THINKING OUTSIDE THE 'BURG THE TOWN OF PEARISBURG

# A little mountain town attracts a new manager from far away

IN THE SUMMER of 2025, Adam Poser, a Texas native recently transplanted to Richmond, VA, wasn't feeling great about the path his professional life had taken. After finishing graduate school at Indiana University, he moved to Austin and was tapped to be part of an effort to consolidate and transform the Texas Health and Human Services Commission – a massive entity handling over \$90 billion on a biennium basis with 50,000 employees across the state.

He spent two years working for the Office of Transformation, Policy and Performance and then six years working in the Office of Chief Counsel – first overseeing their transformation as senior advisor and then stepping into a brand-new role of director of strategic operations.

"I was working with an amazing group of people," recalls Poser. "I had the most amazing boss I'd ever had...but I wasn't feeling challenged anymore. I felt like the work that I did was too far removed from the people that I wanted to serve."

Poser's desire to help people solve problems led him to seek a path in local government. He took a job with the City of Richmond as the deputy chief of staff for the city council. He and his wife sold their house in Austin, virtually purchased a home in Richmond's Church Hill neighborhood, and moved across the country.

But it didn't take long until Poser again found that he wasn't doing the thing he wanted to be doing – helping people solve real problems. "I started thinking 'Local government's clearly not for me,'" he remembers.

While he was trying to decide what to do next, he met Steve King, who is now the assistant to the city manager in Charlottesville. King suggested he talk to VML Executive Director Michelle Gowdy. They met for coffee and, after listening to what Poser had to say, Gowdy suggested he consider becoming a town manager.

"She said that the skill set I brought and the background I have just doesn't exist as much in local government," Poser recalls. "And I was like, well, okay!"

So, he started looking at openings for town managers in Virginia, and Pearisburg popped up. But it wasn't just timing that led him to apply for the job. "The more I learned about Pearisburg, I could see hallmarks of a town on the verge of something great."

Among the things he learned was that the town's prior manager, Todd Meredith, had taken a job as the city manager in Radford. "So, I reached out to him," says Poser, "and we had a really great conversation. He had been working on a long-term plan to step Pearisburg forward and modernize how its government meets the residents' needs. We both felt that I was really poised to take my background in organizational transformation and management to launch Pearisburg forward from the platform he had built."



Evening panoramic view of downtown Pearisburg.

Poser was also impressed by the stability exhibited by the town. “Prior to Todd, the previous town manager, Ken Vittum, had been there for 28 years. So, you look at 28 years, then you look at eight years...and that stability was very attractive.”

The third piece fell into place over time as Poser came to appreciate that the council is incredibly supportive in the work that gets done. “I think they have a firm understanding of the roles of the council/manager form of government,” Poser asserts. “It’s been a real pleasure working with them as I’m trying to learn a whole bunch of new things that I’ve never done before.”

Stable managers and supportive councilmembers aside, Poser admits he was also attracted to the location. “It’s a beautiful part of our country, deeply rooted with a lot of history,” he notes.

“I mean, it’s a town that was established in 1808!”

[Editor’s note: *Being established in 1808 might mean a lot in Texas, but in Virginia, it just means it took 200 years after Jamestown to get your town organized.*]

## An alarming interview ends well

Of course, before Poser could embark on his new career as town manager of Pearisburg, he had to get the job.

Poser did a remote interview before he had even been to the town. Soon after that first interview, however, he and his wife were on the way to a family reunion in Tennessee and they decided to veer off to visit Pearisburg.

“We spent about an hour and a half in town. We got lunch and I confirmed that the Dairy Queen here serves gravy with their chicken tenders...and as a native of Texas, where tenders always come with gravy, I was like, ‘Sign me up!’”

Poser and his wife were at the final day of the Tennessee reunion when he got a call about a second (and final) in-person interview in Pearisburg. “I did not expect it to be that quick of a turnaround,” he says. “I didn’t have any interview stuff with me!”

The couple drove all the way back to Richmond; Poser threw what he needed in the car and drove to Blacksburg to stay at a hotel. He interviewed in Pearisburg the next day.

“It was like being in front of a Senate panel committee,” he remembers. “They opened the door and the council were all sitting on the dais and there was one chair and one table with a single water bottle sitting out on it.”

Poser, a habitual researcher, had thoroughly prepped for the interview.

“They were incredibly shocked at the level of preparation I had done, including the fact that I pronounced the region correctly, Appa-LATCH-uh. At the end of the interview, one of the councilmembers asked if I had a photographic memory. And I said, ‘No, I just do a lot of preparation.’”

One thing Poser was not prepared for, however, happened halfway through the interview. “In Pearisburg, we still use a fire siren for emergencies and to summon volunteer firefighters. On Mondays, which is when my interview took place, they have their training. So, in the middle of my interview, the siren went off. And I’m thinking, ‘What’s about to happen!?!?’”

What happened, in lieu of an actual emergency, was that Poser started work as Pearisburg’s new town manager in September 2025 and, so far, it seems that he has found his true local government calling.

“In the council chambers,” he explains, “we have lists of all the past mayors and councilmembers on the wall, but we also have the town managers. And it’s amazing to see my name listed under these individuals going back 200 years.”

Which is not to say Poser feels like his learning is complete. “I hate to say this because I like to research and plan strategically, but the lived experience is unavoidable,” he admits. “Managers in small towns have an enormous portfolio of responsibilities that force you to learn and do things you’ve never done. Instead of being a mile wide and an inch deep, you have to be a mile wide *and* a mile deep. Every day I’m dealing with things that I’ve never done before like zoning and code enforcement. For example, at the moment, we’re looking into major wastewater plant infrastructure upgrades.”

But he thoroughly enjoys the challenges and variety that comes with the job. “It’s fascinating to me,” he says. “I’ll be working on a large, potentially regional, agreement. And then five minutes later, I’ve got a call about someone complaining because a neighbor’s fence is too close to their driveway!”

## Putting the Poser in Pearisburg (and the Pearisburg in Poser)

Six months into his new job, Poser is enthusiastic about Pearisburg’s prospects given the strong growth on the I-81 corridor and the concurrent development occurring west of I-81 along Route 460 – from Christiansburg to Blacksburg, and now starting to be felt in Pearisburg.



Pearisburg Town Clerk Regina H. Harless celebrating 35 years of service to the community.

“We want to be authentic in how we grow, but authenticity changes,” observes Poser. “We’re trying to find that right balance; that’s why we’re kicking off our comprehensive plan update this year. We see a growth in economic development in the area. There’s a lot of things happening that I think are important and make Pearisburg so attractive overall at the moment, which is what brought me here.”

Given the strengths his professional background brings to the role of town manager, Poser sees a three-step process to help his new home develop in way that feels right to everyone involved.

### #1 – Set a vision

“For me, it all starts with the comprehensive plan update,” Poser affirms. “Although there’s a required component, comprehensive plans really have become more of an opportunity for towns to establish a long-term strategic plan. The potential for how that sets us forward for the next 10 years is immense. Without sort of a vision of

who you are and who you want to be, it’s hard to kind of move the ball forward. Both as a community in general, but also especially as an administration.”

### #2 – Engage the community

Of course, a well-executed comprehensive plan means getting resources and citizen input, something that Poser has already considered.

“We’re working with the New River Valley Regional Commission on a two-year process and I’m getting a chance to weigh in what that process looks like,” says Poser. The town is starting with questions such as “What does stakeholder engagement look like? What are the things we’re interested in learning about?”

In fact, the first steps of the engagement process in Pearisburg are already underway.

“We did a kickoff where we brought in the Planning Commission and council and senior staff and did a land use game. That was a lot of fun,” recalls Poser. “We’re doing a ‘Pitch in for Pearisburg Spring Community Cleanup’ in April. We’re going to have a lot of civic projects and then a party, and the regional commission will be here talking with people to get some feedback.”

### #3 – Use data to make informed decisions

“I’m a big data person,” say Poser. “So, getting the data coming in from the comprehensive plan process is going to help us make informed decisions. We’re already trying to work on this by establishing some performance indicators and things along those lines.”



Poser posing with several Public Works Department technicians out on a cold day. From left to right: Dale Boone, Adam Poser, Danny Pyles Jr., Curtis Williams.

Winter storm Facebook video.

**PEARISBURG**  
VIRGINIA

**Winter Weather Update**  
**Saturday, January 31**

Town of Pearisburg Follow

Join Town Manager Adam Poser and Public Works Director Brent Atwood in this two minute video update as they provide information on the Towns continued efforts to keep the roads safe during this ongoing winter weather event.

## Building a brand to be ready for opportunities

When I was preparing for my interview with Poser, I was consistently impressed by the town's website and social media presence. Everything on the site looked up to date, easy to find, and intuitively put together. The social media posts featured consistent language and branding with the occasional short clip that combined useful information with a personal touch. For example, during a winter snowstorm, Poser posted a short clip of riding with Public Works Director Brent Atwood. The town manager used the opportunity not only to show the conditions of the streets, but to talk to Atwood about the challenges faced by his crew and to give them props for working long hours. Any resident who saw it must have felt that the very real people who comprise their local government had their collective backs.

Poser takes some, but certainly not all, of the credit for the town's success online.

"There really wasn't much of a social media presence here when I came. But our town clerk, Regina Harless – an amazing individual who's been here 35 years – was working on the migration to the new website. So, I've mostly kind of been hands-off on that."

As for the town's new branding, Poser enthuses, "It's a fantastic jump forward! I've worked in brand management and I know you need to control your narrative, or someone controls it for you. We didn't have a consolidated brand. We didn't have vector files. We were mostly starting from scratch."

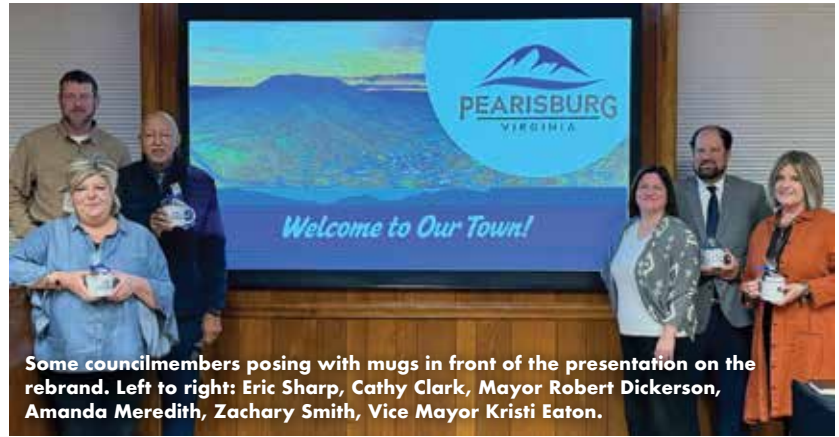
What the town did have, however, were new welcome signs at the town limits. Poser told his staff, "All right, we're going to get the vector files for the signs. Council has already approved this concept, so we're going to run with it."

Poser presented on the new brand in November. The town gave out mugs, keychains, and gift cards to local small businesses.

"Now we try to incorporate that branding into everything we do. I'm teaching staff how to use Canva [video editing software]. I've been doing all the video editing, but now I see the buy-in starting to happen with people because staff will come and say, 'I got this idea for a post!'"

Poser is aware, however, that the town needs to be mindful of how it presents itself to the public and the outside world.

"Community engagement is a double-edged sword," he observes. "On the one hand, you need a community to be involved because you want them to help make decisions. On the other hand, you also know that one wrong step can cause a backlash. So, we celebrate our



Some councilmembers posing with mugs in front of the presentation on the rebrand. Left to right: Eric Sharp, Cathy Clark, Mayor Robert Dickerson, Amanda Meredith, Zachary Smith, Vice Mayor Kristi Eaton.



achievements, we acknowledge things, but we're also trying to set the community up to understand some of the work we do."

As with the comprehensive plan, the work on the brand is being done with an eye to the future.

"We hope that these soft forms of engagement like social media and the website will really pay off when bigger decisions need to be made," Poser concludes.

Indeed, the work being done for the town's image online dovetails nicely with Poser's understanding of why council chose to give him the job in the first place.

"I think they wanted someone who could come in and represent the town well to other stakeholders. I put a lot of effort into effectively representing my community, both for myself and for the individuals in it."

Town managers are made, not born – and it seems that Pearisburg is making a great manager out of Adam Poser.





REALLY  
CLEAN  
STREETS



Focus On What Matters

Outsource your Seasonal Leaf Pickup and  
Focus on **Higher Priority** Initiatives

[www.reallycleanstreets.com](http://www.reallycleanstreets.com)



VML ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
NORFOLK WATERSIDE MARRIOTT  
October 11-13, 2026

SAVE THE DATE!



RECENT EVENT HIGHLIGHTS





RECENT EVENT HIGHLIGHTS





## RECENT EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



# 2026

## VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE INNOVATION AWARDS

**CALL FOR ENTRIES - ENTRY DEADLINE: MONDAY AUG. 24**



Scan code for  
complete rules.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN VIRGINIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

# Selling Surplus With GovDeals

The leading online marketplace to sell your surplus assets virtually – anytime, anywhere.








If you've found yourself with a backlog of surplus assets, we are here to help with options and solutions for all your needs!

## The GovDeals Solution

- "AS IS" auctions from anywhere
- Complete control over auction times
- Fast and straight-forward bidding process
- Comprehensive marketing
- Over 4.8 million qualified buyers
- Personal service to meet your unique needs

## The GovDeals' Process

-  Surplus item is declared ready for auction
-  Surplus item is then listed on GovDeals
-  GovDeals markets your items across targeted sites
-  Surplus item is sold on GovDeals
-  Buyer makes payment and picks up item

## Call on me today:

Chris Lassiter  
Business Development Manager | Mid-Atlantic Region  
828-527-7705 | classiter@govdeals.com



## The Numbers

Sellers in Virginia have held over **150,000** auctions resulting in over **\$150 million** in sales partnering with GovDeals.

## Virginia Assets Sold on GovDeals



**\$58,600**  
in Fairfax



**\$104,556**  
in Portsmouth



**\$112,000**  
in Alexandria



**\$43,500**  
in Roanoke



**\$28,500**  
in Alexandria



**\$4,075**  
in Chesterfield



**\$30,477**  
in Fredericksburg



**\$86,500**  
in Portsmouth



**\$22,600**  
in Yorktown

## 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

Scan For More Information





## Join VML

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



**Virginia Housing**  
www.virginiahousing.com

DIAMOND MEMBER



**Dominion Energy**<sup>®</sup>  
www.dominionenergy.com/virginia



**VIRGINIA AMERICAN WATER**  
www.amwater.com/vaaw

PLATINUM MEMBERS



**VIRGINIA DHCD**  
www.dhcd.virginia.gov

GOLD MEMBER

2026 COMMUNITY BUSINESS MEMBERS

SILVER MEMBERS



[www.airbnb.com](http://www.airbnb.com)



[www.apus.edu](http://www.apus.edu)



[www.bluelinesolutions.org](http://www.bluelinesolutions.org)



[www.capresults.net](http://www.capresults.net)



[www.cavalrycre.com](http://www.cavalrycre.com)



[www.matternandcraig.com](http://www.matternandcraig.com)



[www.moseleyarchitects.com](http://www.moseleyarchitects.com)



[www.obvio.ai](http://www.obvio.ai)



[www.opengov.com](http://www.opengov.com)



[www.pmaarchitecture.com](http://www.pmaarchitecture.com)



[www.Polimorphic.com](http://www.Polimorphic.com)



[www.getsdll.com](http://www.getsdll.com)



[www.sparksatplay.com](http://www.sparksatplay.com)



[www.bgllc.net](http://www.bgllc.net)



[www.timmons.com](http://www.timmons.com)



[www.vacorp.org](http://www.vacorp.org)



[www.vig.coopercenter.org](http://www.vig.coopercenter.org)



[www.vt.edu](http://www.vt.edu)

BRONZE MEMBERS



**ALLIANCE**  
for the Chesapeake Bay  
[www.allianceforthebay.org](http://www.allianceforthebay.org)



**COMCAST**  
[www.corporate.comcast.com/company](http://www.corporate.comcast.com/company)



**DDA**  
DEPORTER, DOMINICK  
& ASSOCIATES  
[www.ddallc.com](http://www.ddallc.com)



**GLAVÉ & HOLMES**  
ARCHITECTURE  
[www.glaveandholmes.com](http://www.glaveandholmes.com)



**Kimley»Horn**  
Expect More. Experience Better.  
[www.kimley-horn.com](http://www.kimley-horn.com)



**McGuireWoods**  
CONSULTING  
[www.mwcllc.com](http://www.mwcllc.com)



**REALLY CLEAN STREETS**  
[www.reallycleanstreets.com](http://www.reallycleanstreets.com)



**THOMPSON & LITTON**  
[www.t-l.com](http://www.t-l.com)



**SPECTRUM DESIGN**  
architects | engineers  
[www.spectrumpc.com](http://www.spectrumpc.com)



**VRA** VIRGINIA  
RESOURCES  
AUTHORITY  
CELEBRATING 40 YEARS  
[www.virginiareources.gov](http://www.virginiareources.gov)



### About the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) Program

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

Scan QR code to view new 2026 CBM program benefits >





**You've got vision.  
We've got resources.  
Let's solve this.**

Virginia Housing offers a variety of grant and loan programs to help local governments, nonprofits and developers revitalize neighborhoods and solve workforce housing needs.

To learn more about partnering with us, contact us at [Resources@VirginiaHousing.com](mailto:Resources@VirginiaHousing.com).

