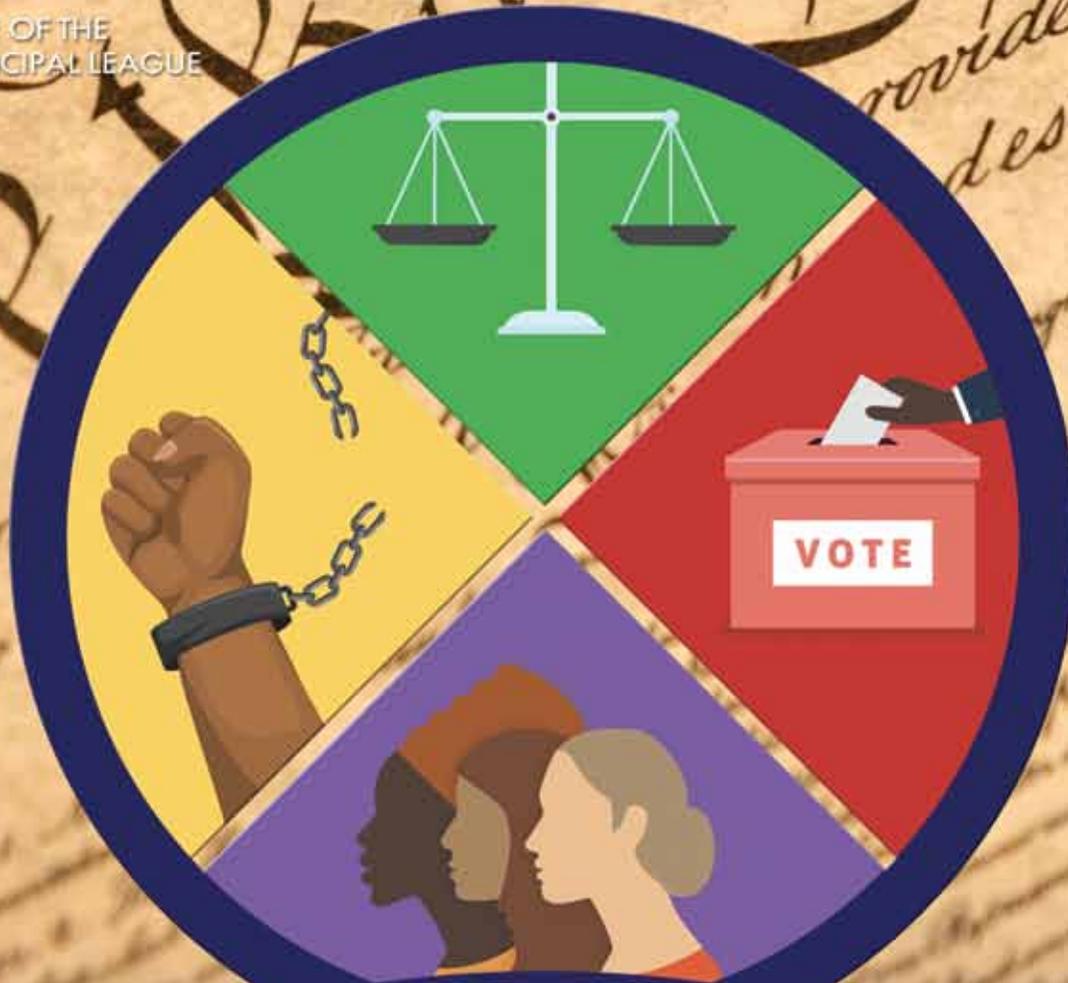


THE MAGAZINE OF THE
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE



Liberty Amendments Month

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Inside:

Innovation Award winners
Annual Conference highlights
... and more!

Vienna takes top honors with Local Champion winner



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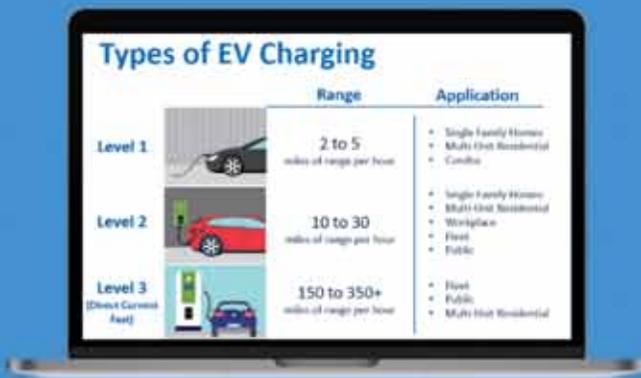
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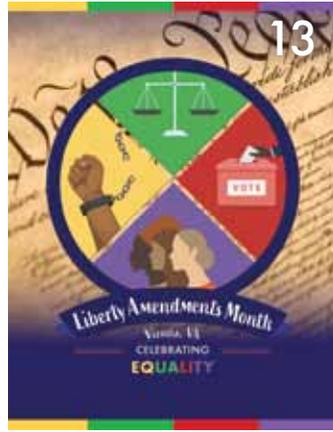
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ABOUT THE COVER

Plato wrote that “Our need will be the real creator.” This usually gets rephrased as “Necessity is the mother of invention.” Allow us to propose an additional translation: “Adversity is the engine of innovation.” Because despite (or maybe because of) the adversities of the past year, our local governments proved to be engines of innovation. Read all about the winners of this year’s Innovation Awards, including this year’s President’s Award winner!

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2021 Annual Conference Photo Spread

Lots of great people, looking great together! Photographs by VML staff. 23-27

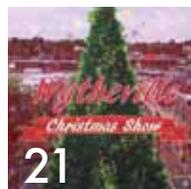
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

VBCOA Conference Highlights

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Member Spotlight: Town of Middletown

In observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Mayor Harbaugh tells us about his town’s new accessibility enhanced website 31



The conference is over, but this is just the start for our 2022 priorities

THANKS TO EVERYONE who attended the VML annual conference in Leesburg! Such great fun to see colleagues, share stories and enjoy some beautiful weather. Leesburg really rolled out the red carpet with their Host Night and did a great job showcasing all the Towns of Loudoun. Their skit was creative, fun, and raised the bar for next year's host (we're looking at you City of Richmond).

Another highlight was being part of President Greene's wife's birthday. It was a priceless experience that I think she will remember for a long time! We hope that you enjoy all the memories presented in this issue of the magazine – our staff photographer Manuel Timbreza does excellent work and seemed to be everywhere with his camera!

Looking ahead to the coming session of the General Assembly, Virginia is about to be faced with another gigantic surplus of money and VML is working to prioritize local government needs by clearly communicating our priorities to the General Assembly and Governor. Our legislative program – as voted on at the Annual Business Meeting – reflects VML's long standing commitment to preserve local authority when it is threatened and to expand local authority when it is possible to do so.

Here is a quick summary* of some of VML's 2022 top legislative priorities (with talking points to share with your delegation):

**The full VML 2022 Legislative Program is available at www.vml.org/advocacy/general-assembly/legislative-program.*

Funding the real cost of education

- The State must be a reliable funding partner.
- Education is essential to economic development & prosperity.
- The local governments' match is more than is required for basic state education dollars and pays for most public-school capital costs. This means that local governments must struggle to find scarce local tax dollars to keep up with demands for meeting additional and expanding state requirements for creating 21st century learning environments for our children to master the challenges of tomorrow's workplace.

State assistance to local police departments (HB599)

- Roughly 70 percent of Virginians live in communities served by police departments.
- More than 30 years ago the state created a financial assistance program when it imposed an annexation moratorium on cities – the state has increasingly de-emphasized the

funding but has never compromised on the annexation moratorium.

- The state should honor its commitment to local governments and public safety by providing appropriate funding.

Funding of Community Services Boards and Behavioral Health Authorities

- Sufficient and sustained state funding and technical assistance for community services boards/behavioral health authorities is necessary to implement STEP-VA requirements and to support the planning and implementation of Marcus Alert protocols.
- Federal ARPA funds and robust state revenues offer an opportunity for the state to make new investments in the community and in the state hospitals.
- Investments must go to both build the network of community-based services and to assist state hospitals with their vital mission. This cannot be a zero-sum funding situation where one part of the system benefits at the expense of the other.

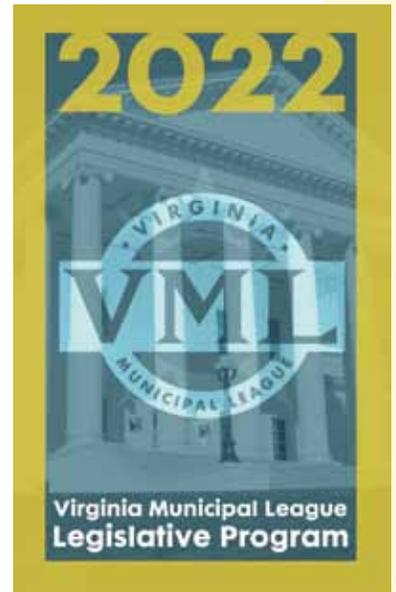
Who will win the elections?

Because we can predict the future, VML staff gets asked daily who is going to win all the elections in the Virginia House, Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General. So, for those of you who haven't asked yet, our official prediction is that at the end of it all we will have a General Assembly, Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General.

Since you may be reading this after the elections are decided, feel free to contact us if we were wrong!

At the time of writing, however, we are all tired of the ads and the signs, and it's anybody's guess who will win. I encourage each of you to make sure your voice is heard and vote!!

After the election, please introduce yourself to the winners and share with them our funding priorities along with yours. Remember, this is just the start!





- Nov. 16, 2021** **MEPAV Board Meeting** - Charlottesville, VA
- Nov. 18, 2021** **VEPGA Board Meeting & Annual Meeting** - Henrico, VA
- Jan. 7, 2022** **VML/VACO/APCo Steering Committee Member Meeting** -
A virtual event.
- Jan. 27-28, 2022** **VBCOA Board Orientation and Meeting** - Charlottesville, VA
- Feb. 3, 2022** **VACo/VML/VAPDC Local Government Day** - Richmond, VA

PEOPLE

VACo/VML Virginia Investment Pool (VIP) announces new board members

At the Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Meeting of participants in the VACo/VML Virginia Investment Pool, four representatives of the participants were elected to the Board of Trustees. The Board has oversight responsibilities and establishes policies for the VACo/VML Virginia Investment Pool.

The following were elected to the Board of Trustees for three-year terms:

Jody Acosta, MGT, is the elected treasurer of the City of Falls Church. She



- Acosta -

was first elected in 2014 and is currently seeking her third term in office. Jody has over 25 years of professional experience in the fields of finance, banking and accounting. One of Jody's first initiatives after her election as Falls Church's treasurer in 2014 was to petition her city council for passage of an ordinance to allow her locality's participation in VIP. The ordinance was passed unanimously, and the City of Falls Church has been a participant in the VIP since May 2015.

Jay Bernas, P.E. serves as Hampton Roads Sanitation District's (HRSD) chief



- Bernas -

financial officer and treasurer and is responsible for financing HRSD's \$3 billion ten-year capital program. He recently closed on over \$700 million in WIFIA loans at a weighted average rate of 1.78% for 34 years, which combined with clean water revolving loans, will save Hampton Roads ratepayers over \$500 million compared to market rates. In 2020, he was elected to serve on the board of the National Association of Clean Water

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Agencies (NACWA) and was appointed by the Governor to the Virginia Board of Accountancy.

Clark Case has been the director of finance and administrative services of the Town of Leesburg since September 2014. He is responsible for a cash management portfolio of \$112 million, of which \$48.3 million is invested in the Virginia Investment Pool. Previously, Clark was the assistant finance officer/treasurer of the City of Winston-Salem, North Carolina from 2004 to September 2014. He served 31 years in Winston-Salem in a variety of financial roles.



- Case -

Patricia Richie-Folks, MGT, is the elected treasurer of the City of Manassas. Patricia was elected in a special election in November of 2016 and won reelection in 2017. As treasurer, Patricia oversees and manages cash and investments of approximately \$250 million.



- Richie-Folks -

Christine Jacobs is the new executive director of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

In September, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) announced the selection of



- Jacobs -

Christine E.B. Jacobs as its executive director. Jacobs has been serving as interim executive director since February and was selected following a hiring and interview process that began during the summer. She previously served as chief operating officer, director of housing, and housing coordinator for the TJPDC.

In the interim role, Jacobs has led the TJPDC's transportation, environmental and community planning, and affordable housing programs, while also overseeing the financial and administrative functions of the agency.

Jacobs holds two Master's degrees from the University of Virginia. She received a Master of Public Policy from the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy and a Master of Teaching from the Curry School of Education. She also holds a Bach-

elor of Arts degree from Virginia Tech.

She currently serves on the Board of Directors and Governance Committee for the Center for Nonprofit Excellence and is a past member of the Batten Alumni Advisory Board.

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission serves the member governments of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson Counties, and the City of Charlottesville, by providing regional vision, collaborative leadership and professional service to develop effective solutions.

City of Norfolk welcomes LaVoris Pace as new deputy city manager

On September 7, **LaVoris Pace** returned to



- Pace -

Norfolk. He brings more than 30 years of private-sector, municipal government, and academic experience. As deputy city manager, Pace oversees a portfolio that includes youth initiatives, arts, culture, and community



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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 Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

PEOPLE

partnerships.

Previously, Mr. Pace served the City of Portsmouth in a dual role as interim city manager until April 2021 as well as deputy city manager/director of marketing and communications. In these roles, Pace oversaw a portfolio that included Behavioral Healthcare Services, Marketing & Communications, Libraries, Museums, Parks, Recreation & Tourism and Social Services.

Prior to joining the City of Portsmouth, Pace served as associate director and director of marketing at Norfolk State University. He started his public service career with City of Norfolk in the early 90s.

Pace is the recipient of multiple professional awards for various communications and marketing campaigns. He holds professional memberships with the International City/County Manager's Association (ICMA) and 3CMA.

Pace is a 1987 cum laude graduate from Norfolk State University. He received a graduate certificate in local government management from Virginia Tech in 2012.

Waldron is City of Roanoke's new community engagement manager

Effective August 30, **Lauren H. Waldron** is the community engagement manager for the City of Roanoke. In this role, she will manage the function of the Office of Com-



- Waldron -

munity Engagement, which includes citizen engagement, public communications, neighborhood services, social media management, website management, research, data tracking, special community projects, media relations, FOIA requests, and public outreach.

Waldron comes to the Roanoke from the Society for Marketing Professional Services in Washington D.C., where she served as the director of marketing since 2019. She has held similar positions with an AmLaw100 firm in D.C. and the National Association of Social Workers. In addition to these positions, Waldron served on the D.C. Mayor's Commission for National and Community Service as an appointed commissioner, and in roles with the U.S. Department of State and various Congressional offices. In 2021, she was honored by the Alexandria Virginia Chamber of Commerce as one of their "40 under 40" honorees. Waldron holds a B.S. in communications and government from George Mason University and a certificate in digital media and marketing from Duke University.

City of Alexandria appoints Bishop as purchasing agent

On October 4, **Wynndell Bishop** began as the new purchasing agent for the City of Alexandria. In this position, Bishop is the lead representative for the city in directing



- Bishop -

and managing the acquisition of goods and services and enforcing the contract and competitive purchasing procedures and policies of the city.

In a press release, City Manager Mark Jinks noted that "Wynndell's solid experience in procurement and supply chain management, coupled with his work in supporting small, women-owned and Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC)-owned businesses make him an excellent choice for this position."

A Boston native, Bishop has spent more than 20 years working in supply chain roles of increasing responsibility for Fortune 150 companies across various industries, including consumer-packaged goods, defense/aerospace and retail. He has also served as the procurement manager at the Boston Health Commission, one of the City of Boston's largest departments, and has overseen procurement and contract management as deputy chief financial officer for the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services.

Bishop's most recent role was as director of procurement services for operations at Emerson College where he worked to increase opportunities for small, women- and minority-owned businesses (SWaMs). He also established Emerson College's Supplier Diversity Task Force, a cross-functional group, whose mission was to ensure greater opportunities for SWaM businesses to earn contracts with the college.

Bishop holds a Bachelor's degree in communications and a Master's degree in business administration, with a concentration in operations management, from Boston College. He actively serves his alma mater on the Alumni Board of Directors, as well as several other councils and committees.

Loudoun County appointments: Romanchyk, Gupta, and Street



- Romanchyk -

Janet Romanchyk has been appointed chief financial officer (CFO) for Loudoun County and director of the Department of Finance and Budget. Romanchyk has recently been serving as acting CFO and acting director of the Department of Finance and Budget, having previously served as deputy

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CFO and deputy director of the department since 2019.

As Loudoun County CFO, Romanchyk will oversee the county's financial strategy and operations under the direction of the county administrator and guidance of the Board of Supervisors. In addition, she will oversee the planning, directing, coordinating and supervising of the county's budgeting, capital improvement planning, long-term financial planning, accounting, auditing, cash flow, capital financing, payroll and procurement.

Romanchyk received a Bachelor's degree in accounting from Empire State College in New York; a Bachelor's degree in public justice from the State University of New York at Oswego, New York; and a Master's in public administration from George Mason University. Romanchyk is also treasurer of the Virginia Government Finance Officers Association and an active member of the Government Finance Officers Association.

As of October 1, **David Street** is the new chief of staff in the Office of the County Administrator. Street has served as a project manager in the Office of the County Administrator since 2017 and has also served as the staff liaison to the Board of Supervisors' Transportation and Land Use Committee.



- Street -

Street's duties include serving as the liaison to the Board of Supervisors' offices, supervising the Clerks Division within the Office of the County Administrator and serving as the point of contact for the Board's agenda management process for the Board's business meetings, committee meetings, public hearings and special meetings.

Street earned Bachelor's degrees in history and political science from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Master's in public administration from the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Ramia Gupta has been appointed medical director for Loudoun's Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse & Developmental Services (MHSADS). As medical director for MHSADS, Dr. Gupta will plan, organize and manage the medical component of the department's services.

Dr. Gupta is board-certified in psychiatry and forensic psychiatry and has extensive

experience in public sector psychiatry, treating the severely mentally ill and those who are especially vulnerable.

Dr. Gupta holds faculty positions at Saint Elizabeths Hospital Psychiatry Residency and Forensic Psychiatry Fellowship Program, Department of Behavioral Health, Washington, D.C. She has also worked as an attending psychiatrist in both the Pre-Trial and Post Trial units, and the Forensic Outpatient Department. Dr. Gupta was also president of the medical staff at the hospital.

After completing her undergraduate studies in India, Dr. Gupta furthered her studies in the U.S. She completed a forensic psychiatry fellowship at Georgetown University and a psychiatry residency at Saint Elizabeths Hospital. Dr. Gupta later served as chief resident and supervising and teaching faculty member in the hospital's forensic and civil division. She also completed a forensic psychiatry fellowship at Georgetown University Hospital and a psychoanalytic fellowship at the Baltimore Washington Center for psychoanalysis. She holds medical licenses in Washington, D.C. and Virginia. Dr. Gupta has served in various leadership capacities for the Washington Psychiatric Society and achieved the distinction of Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.



- Gupta -

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In Memoriam: Former Mayor of Danville Linwood Wright

Linwood Wright, a former mayor and city councilman who played a key role in the City of Danville's economic development revival, died September 29. He was 85. Wright served on the city council from 1986 to 1998 and as mayor from 1996 to 1998. He also served one term as vice mayor. He was one of the city's leaders during the annexation battle of the late 1980s.

For the past 14 years, Wright was a senior consultant with the Danville Office of Economic Development. He played key roles in several major industrial development announcements and led the department twice as an interim director.

His last public appearance was in August as he helped cut the ribbon on the new Sterling Lighting facility in north Danville.

Wright worked as a chemist at Dan River mills, serving as vice president of research and development until his retirement in 2008. He also chaired the Future of the Piedmont Foundation, which

founded the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research.

In a press release, Deputy City Manager Early Reynolds observed of Wright: "He knew the area like the back of his hand, and of course knew all of the folks in the area from a political standpoint as well as a community leadership standpoint. That institutional knowledge goes a long way and I'm thankful that Linwood would always share that information with people. He didn't hoard it."

He was an active member of Mount Vernon United Methodist Church, where he taught the Landis Sunday School class for decades. The family requests memorials be made to Mount Vernon UMC or to the Linwood & Peggy Wright Downtown Revitalization Fund of the Community Foundation of the Dan River Region, 541 Loyal Street, Danville, VA 24541 or www.cfdr.org.

Albemarle County Police Department Chief Ron Lantz announces retirement

Chief **Ron Lantz** announced his retirement as Chief of the Albemarle County Police Department, effective March 1, 2022. Lantz will have worked for Albemarle County for nine years at his retirement, capping a career

of more than 33 years in law enforcement in Virginia.

"Chief Lantz has been a tremendous asset to the Police Department and to all within the community by virtue of his leadership and through his commitment to applying the principles of community-based policing throughout Albemarle County. His focus on constructive community partner-



- Lantz -

ships, attracting and retaining well-trained and high-quality staff, and increasing departmental diversity will be lasting legacies of his tenure. The department is better and the County is better because of his service,"

said Deputy County Executive Doug Walker in a press release.

Lantz began his career in Albemarle in 2012, as the deputy chief, and was promoted to chief in 2016. Under his leadership, ACPD implemented the Geographic Based Policing initiative, established a state-of-the-art cyber forensic lab, instituted a public safety pay plan, and, this winter, will launch a body worn camera program. Chief Lantz has also served on regional and professional boards, including the Central Shenandoah Regional Academy Executive Board, the Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County Emergency Communications Center Management Board, Virginia Professional Law Enforcement Standards Commission, Alcohol Safety Action Program (ASAP) Executive Board, and the Piedmont Region 8 Special Olympics Torch Run.

"I could not be prouder of the work the men and women of the Albemarle County Police Department do every day. It truly has been my honor and privilege to lead this team. Albemarle County is a special place to live and work, and I am so thankful I was blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of this community," shared Chief Lantz.



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

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

Subscribe now at www.vml.org and listen to our newest episode.

St. Paul hosts Appalachian leaders at new hotel

THE TOWN OF ST. PAUL VIRGINIA recently hosted the Appalachian Regional Commission annual conference at the new Western Front Hotel. With a population of less than 900 people and an area of less than two square miles, the occasion was a noteworthy event for the town. At the conference, Federal Co-Chair Gayle Manchin provided a preview of ARC's new 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. The strategic plan, *Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity*, is expected to be formally approved by the Commission in the coming weeks.



During the plenary conversation with ARC States' Co-Chair Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, and Moderator Chancellor Donna Price Henry of University of Virginia's College at Wise, Federal Co-Chair Manchin emphasized that the new strategic plan reaffirms ARC's commitment to its primary investment goals.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is an economic development agency of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 420 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

Learn more at www.arc.gov.

Town of Elkton holds annual 9/11 ceremony

TO HONOR THE 9/11 VICTIMS and first responders, the Town of Elkton holds an annual memorial in one of its parks. The ceremony features guest speakers with firsthand experience of the events of 9/11 and special music to honor lives lost and affected. A memorial was constructed in 2010 which includes an I-beam that came from the World Trade Center. The beam is supported by two metal cylinders that pay tribute to the Twin Towers that fell that day. The entire structure is surrounded by an octagon shape, which, while not a pentagon, evokes the appearance of the Department of Defense building of the same name. This year the ceremony included a flyover by Dynamic Aviation located in Bridgewater.



Roanoke celebrates the fourth annual Welcoming Week

THE CITY OF ROANOKE HOSTED its fourth annual Welcoming Week September 10-19 in conjunction with various local partners. This year's Welcoming Week theme was "Belonging

Begins With US." The special week, which started in 2012, serves as the annual celebration for growing communities led by Welcoming America a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that strives to build inclu-

sive communities. Activities included a 5k run, a scavenger hunt, salsa lessons, the "Roanoke World Tour of Food," and more.

About Welcoming Week

Since 2012, Welcoming Week has served as the annual campaign and celebration led by Welcoming America to showcase the growing movement of communities striving to be more welcoming places for all, including immigrants. By fostering mutual respect and cooperation between new and long-time residents, Welcoming Week brings together people across lines of difference toward greater prosperity for all. Learn more at welcomingweek.org.



Virginia Housing wins national affordable housing awards



A 58-YEAR-OLD WOMAN is now enjoying life as a first-time home buyer in a modular home in Richmond's Swansboro neighborhood thanks to a Virginia Housing partnership that recently won a national award.

It was one of two awards Virginia Housing garnered on Sept. 27 for outstanding achievement in affordable housing by The National Council of State Housing Agencies.

NCSHA's annual awards honor state housing finance agencies for their outstanding public-private programs and practices as well as innovation, industry best practices and information sharing.

Virginia Housing won in the Special Achievement category for its partnership on an economic development initiative with indieDwell modular solutions that led to the Richmond home. It also brought home top honors in the Communications: Integrated Campaign category for its rebranding campaign.

"It's always an honor when we are recognized by the NCSHA," said Virginia Housing CEO Susan Dewey in a press release. "I'm extremely proud of our teams. Their hard work and dedication are representative of Virginia Housing's mission, and I'm so proud of all the work we are doing to help make Virginia an even better place to live and raise a family. We are truly grateful for the recognition."

The indieDwell Modular Housing and Economic Development Initiative's goal was to bring an indieDwell modular hous-

ing manufacturing facility to Virginia. The initiative included the purchase

of modular units for display at industry conferences in 2019 in Richmond and Hampton as well as Washington, D.C. The Richmond modular home was moved and is now occupied by a first-time homeowner. The other two units will soon be relocated to Newport News and sold to low- to moderate-income homeowners.

With this initiative, Virginia Housing realized its goal of bringing a modular housing facility to Virginia, which will create new jobs and provide safe, affordable housing alternatives to homeowners.

In its 2020 rebranding, Virginia Housing unveiled a new logo and a new name, but more importantly, it focused on raising awareness about its mission and programs and how affordable housing helps everyone, not just people who live in affordable housing.

The rebranding also sought to make the public aware of Virginia Housing's educational resources and financing options, as well as to encourage collaboration with new and existing partners.

Learn more about the awards at www.ncsha.org/ncsha-news/ncsha-recognizes-state-housing-finance-agencies-for-affordable-housing-innovation.

Learn more about Virginia Housing at www.virginiahousing.com.

City of Franklin working to overcome food insecurity with innovative project



IN MANY COMMUNITIES, a significant number of residents suffer from food insecurity or live in "food deserts" where it's difficult to obtain fresh, healthy food. The City of Franklin is in the process of doing something about that for their region. Thanks to a partnership with Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, the city broke ground earlier this year on a Western Tidewater Branch and Community Produce Hub Foodbank which will have a permanent home at 618 South St. in Franklin. The new branch and hub will serve those experiencing food insecurity in Franklin, Isle of Wight County, Southampton County, Suffolk and Sussex. However, the new facility will be more than just a place to get food. It will offer a commercial kitchen, marketplace, and cafe where visitors can obtain healthy food at low or no cost. Moreover, people will be able to use the flexible spaces on the second floor to connect with partner organizations offering education and career programs. The project is made possible, in part, through a \$300,000 grant from Obici Healthcare Foundation. Temporarily, the foodbank is operating out of a smaller space in the City of Franklin. The new facility is expected to be operational by March of 2022.

City of Fredericksburg partners with University of Mary Washington on Freedom Rides historical marker

ON SEPTEMBER 22, The University of Mary Washington and the City of Fredericksburg unveiled a historical marker commemorating the city as the first stop of the Freedom Rides on May 4, 1961. Dion Diamond, a Freedom Rider, spoke at the event held adjacent to the Fredericksburg Fire Station #1 in the 600 block of Princess Anne Street, which is the site of the former Fredericksburg bus depot.



Mr. Diamond participated in the Freedom Rides in Jackson, Mississippi in 1961. He was arrested with many others and spent 30 days as a cellmate to Dr. James Farmer in Parchman Prison in Mississippi.

The event was organized by City of Fredericksburg staff with the assistance of Christopher Williams, assistant director of UMW's James Farmer Multicultural Center. UMW professors provided background information on the Freedom Rides and the historical marker program. Fredericksburg Mayor Mary Katherine Greenlaw and Vice Mayor Charlie "Chuck" Frye, Jr. participated on behalf of the city. The names of the 13 original Freedom Riders were read during the unveiling commemoration.

The Freedom Rides, organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) with Dr. Farmer as the co-founder and director, challenged states throughout the south to recognize the 1946 and 1960 Supreme Court rulings banning segregated interstate travel. Because of the Freedom Riders' actions, new regulations prohibiting segregation in interstate travel became effective November 1, 1961.

Dr. Farmer would later become a distinguished professor of History and American Studies at Mary Washington College, now the University of Mary Washington, for 13 years, educating students about Civil Rights and his role in the movement.

Additional information on the Freedom Rides is available online at the James Farmer Multicultural Center by visiting www.students.umw.edu/multicultural.

Markers will honor immigrants from U.S. wars abroad

OF THE FIVE NEW MARKERS the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) selected at its September meeting from topics students proposed during Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, two address the influx of immigrants that resulted from U.S. wars abroad.

In Virginia Beach, a forthcoming marker "Filipinos in the U.S. Navy" explains that Filipinos served in the Navy as early as the Civil War, but they enlisted in greater numbers when the U.S. took possession of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War. Following World War II, when the Philippines gained independence in 1946, the U.S. Navy began recruiting Filipinos, resulting in about 35,000 Filipinos serving in the Navy during the next four decades. Hampton Roads emerged as one of the nation's largest Filipino communities.

A Falls Church marker, "Vietnamese Immigrants in Northern Virginia," will explain that thousands of Vietnamese refugees arrived in the U.S. after the fall of South Vietnam's capital, Saigon, in April 1975. Many settled in Northern Virginia, where a vibrant enclave of businesses, known as "Little Saigon," arose in Clarendon. By the 1980s, much of that activity relocated to Eden Center, a market hub modeled on similar districts in Vietnam and the East Coast's largest source of Vietnamese goods.

DHR creates markers not to "honor" their subjects but rather

to educate and inform the public about a person, place, or event of regional, state, or national importance. In this regard, erected markers are not memorials.

More information available at www.dhr.virginia.gov/press_releases/18-new-state-historical-highway-markers-approved.

FILIPINO AMERICAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SOCIETY



A 1923 photograph shows Filipino sailors in U.S. Navy. Location unknown.

City of Waynesboro's Economic Development and Tourism department wins industry award

RECENTLY THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT and Tourism department with the City of Waynesboro was honored to receive a Silver rank in the category of "Print Brochure" from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) for its Key Industry brochure series. The award was presented at the IEDC Annual Conference.

"It is truly an honor to have our work recognized by our peers," says Greg Hitchin, Director of Economic Development and Tourism in a press release. "This brochure series was created in-house with design collaboration from Queen City Creative."

The brochures, which are listed in the Site Selection region of the city's website, highlight several areas of economic development interest, and are used to market Waynesboro to site location consultants, corporate real estate executives, and the local real estate community. Featured topics include Information Technology, Manufacturing, Food and Beverage Processing, and Logistics. Within each brochure, prospective business can find information on Background, Location, Talent Pipeline, Transportation and Infrastructure, Operating Costs, Amenities, and more.

IEDC's Excellence in Economic Development Awards "recognize the world's best economic development programs and partnerships, marketing materials, and the year's most influential leaders. 25 award categories honor organizations and individuals for their efforts in creating positive change in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Awards are judged by a diverse panel of

economic and community developers, following a nomination process held earlier this year. IEDC received over 500 submissions from 4 countries."

The brochures are available at www.waynesborobusiness.com/site-selection/key-industries.



Blacksburg wins a spot in the Mayors Innovative Design Cohort

IN AUGUST, THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG learned it was one of three cities to win a spot in the Mayors Innovative Design Cohort. The Cohort is a national partnership between the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Mayors Innovation Project (MIP) to help build zero carbon, resilient, healthy, and equitable cities. Blacksburg's leaders will have the opportunity to address the climate crisis while creating equitable, inclusive public spaces.

The town began working in 2019 on a retail incubator concept in partnership with Downtown Blacksburg Inc., the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, and the Small Business Assistance Center. The envisioned retail-focused incubator has three primary goals: (1) to preserve and enhance the dynamic atmosphere of Blacksburg's historic downtown, (2) to provide quality products and experiences to the surrounding community, and (3) to give entrepreneurs an opportunity to create and expand their businesses in a low-risk setting.

TOWN OF
Blacksburg
VIRGINIA

The property chosen for these design efforts is in an area that has seen an influx of redevelopment in recent years with restaurants, breweries, high tech companies, and the Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech.

"Mayors and their cities are on the front lines of many of today's most pressing challenges," said Katya Spear, Managing Director, MIP, in a press release. "We're delighted for this opportunity to support these cities around green design. Every city has vacant and underused spaces like the ones being featured in this project, and this effort will offer models that cities across the country can use."

The Town of Blacksburg will receive technical assistance with final written recommendations from an architect, and up to \$5,000 to cover necessary city staff time, inclusive engagement tools, and supplies. The project kicked off in September will last approximately six months.

Learn more about AIA at www.aia.org.

Learn more about MIP at www.mayorsinnovation.org.

Announcing the winners of the 2021 VML Innovation Awards

THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL League (VML) is pleased to announce the winners of its annual awards for excellence in local government. The statewide competition recognizes innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, citizen participation, and improved services to citizens.

VML received nearly 70 entries, from which judges selected one winner in each of eight categories. One of the category winners was chosen by 2020-2021 VML President and City of Galax Mayor Willie Greene to receive the President's Award. The winners were presented with their awards at VML's 2021 Annual Conference on October 3rd at the Lansdowne Resort in Leesburg.

Thanks to everyone who submitted and congratulations to all the winners!

The 2021 winners are:

Local Champion & President's Award

Town of Vienna – Town Manager Mercury T. Payton

Community Health Award – City of Galax

Economic Development Award – Town of Hillsboro

Environmental Quality Award – Town of Purcellville

Public Safety Award – City of Chesapeake

Working with Youth Award – City of Roanoke

Communications Award – Town of Wytheville

Risk Management Award – City of Williamsburg



INNOVATION AWARD



Visit www.vml.org to view videos submitted by the winners.

VIENNA

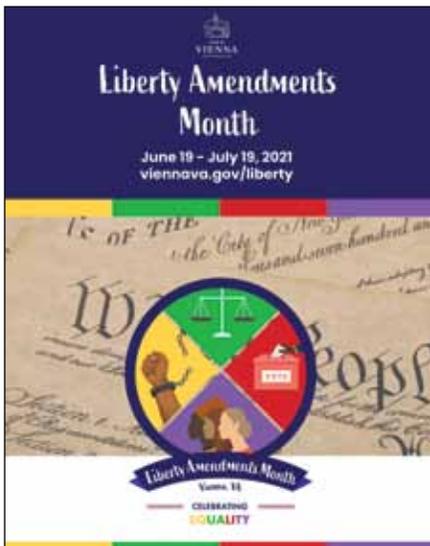
LOCAL CHAMPION & PRESIDENT'S AWARD

TOWN MANAGER MERCURY T. PAYTON



DURING THE HEIGHT OF UNREST following the murder of George Floyd, Town of Vienna Manager Mercury Payton felt that he had to take some action to help bring his community together. He came up with the idea of creating a celebration of the four “Liberty”

amendments to the constitution. Originally conceived as a one day commemoration, Mercury pivoted to a month long celebration after the state declared Juneteenth a state-wide holiday, with one week devoted to each of the four liberty extending amendments – the 13th, which abolished slavery*, the 14th, which granted due process and equal protection under the law to all citizens, the 15th, which granted black males with the right to vote, and the 19th which guaranteed women the right to vote.



Vienna’s celebration which spanned June and July was a tremendous success. Working through the local representatives and the Black Caucus, Mercury was successful in getting Liberty Amendments Month declared a state-wide commemoration.

Editor’s Note – It’s important to remember that many communities in Southwest Virginia and the surrounding region celebrate August 8th as “Emancipation Day” since it is considered the date on which news of the 13th Amendment reached those remote areas.



What the judges said:

“Wow! Town Manager Payton really hit a home run with this idea. This is an excellent example of a community leader recognizing a need, finding a fantastic solution, and then giving 110% to make it happen. A big success for Vienna and for all Virginians!”



(L-R) Council Member Ray Brill, Council Member Howard Springsteen, Town Clerk Melanie Clark, Mayor Linda Colbert, and Town Manager Mercury T. Payton.

GALAX

COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARD

2021
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
INNOVATION
AWARD
WINNER

PROJECT LIGHT IS A PARTNERSHIP between the Galax government and God's Storehouse and Soup Kitchen. The program has expanded to provide adult and child education support, addiction recovery counseling, and education programs. And coming soon: kitchen space for startup businesses, nutrition and food budgeting classes, small business development with shared office and workspace.

What the judges said:

"A need in the community is being met through community action by providing meals, tutoring programs and helping those in need! And the success continues in the partnership's ongoing building fund!"



(L-R) Council Member Sharon Ritchie, Outreach Coordinators Annette Brown, and Christy Mendoza, Operations Director Delina Parks, Executive Director Kisha Johnson, and Volunteer Coordinator William Parks. (Back Row L-R) Council Members Travis Haynes, Martin Warr, and Michael Larowe.

HILLSBORO

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARD



(L-R) Vice Mayor Amy Marasco, Mayor Roger Vance, and Project Coordinator Alison Badger.

RETHINK9 HAS TRANSFORMED one of Virginia’s smallest towns whose government overcame many challenges over many years to fundamentally improve their community. The success is thanks to local volunteer civic leadership, community engagement, and extraordinary collaboration among engineers, designers, tradesmen, and construction workers.

What the judges said:

“Tiny Town, Giant Accomplishment! A triumph of civic leadership and managerial excellence. This one has it all. I’ve done and seen many, many utility/streetscape projects, but none that comes close to what little Hillsboro has done!”

Page 64 • April 21, 2021 • www.constructionequipmentguide.com • CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Hillsboro Shows Unique Way to Revitalize Infrastructure



Through a unique collaboration with several Virginia agencies, the smallest incorporated town in the state will soon finish remaking its only main road, VA Route 9, in much less time and at a fraction of the cost than would be expected.

HILLSBORO from page 1
soon finish remaking its only main road, VA Route 9, in much less time and at a fraction of the cost than would be expected.

Hillsboro’s “ReThink9” project is an innovative method designed to calm (or slow) its traffic, reduce congestion and improve pedestrian safety on Route 9 through the town. Additionally, ReThink9 includes burying overhead utilities, providing updated stormwater management and drinking water, and making wastewater improvements. The beauty of the



Hillsboro may be a tiny northern Virginia community of only 120 residents, but it began a big revitalization effort in March 2020 that could be a model for how

Within the tight corridor lined by historic homes and walls, deep excavation and installation of miles of buried electric and communications conduit, storm sewer structures and drainage pipes, drinking water and sanitary sewer mains and laterals could only be accomplished during road closures.

was not all easy.

“The plans that had initially been approved by VDOT called for maintaining traffic flow throughout the whole project in an incremental approach,” he said. “I’m not an engineer. I didn’t know any better, but after the plans went out for bids, they came back extremely high, well above what we had anticipated, so we had to reject them. It’s a town project using local



VRSA

Virginia Risk Sharing Association



VRSA is committed to protecting our members so they may effectively serve their communities. We

Service

100 percent of VRSA staff time and effort is singularly devoted to providing outstanding service to our members.

Financial Strength

VRSA's financial strength provides the ability to make measured decisions - rather than reacting to current market conditions. View **VRSA's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report** online.



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**members and their employees so they
We are positioned to deliver on this promise.**

Coverage

VRSA's philosophy is to provide comprehensive coverage tailored to our members' needs.



**re is
covered,
ere is being
care of.**

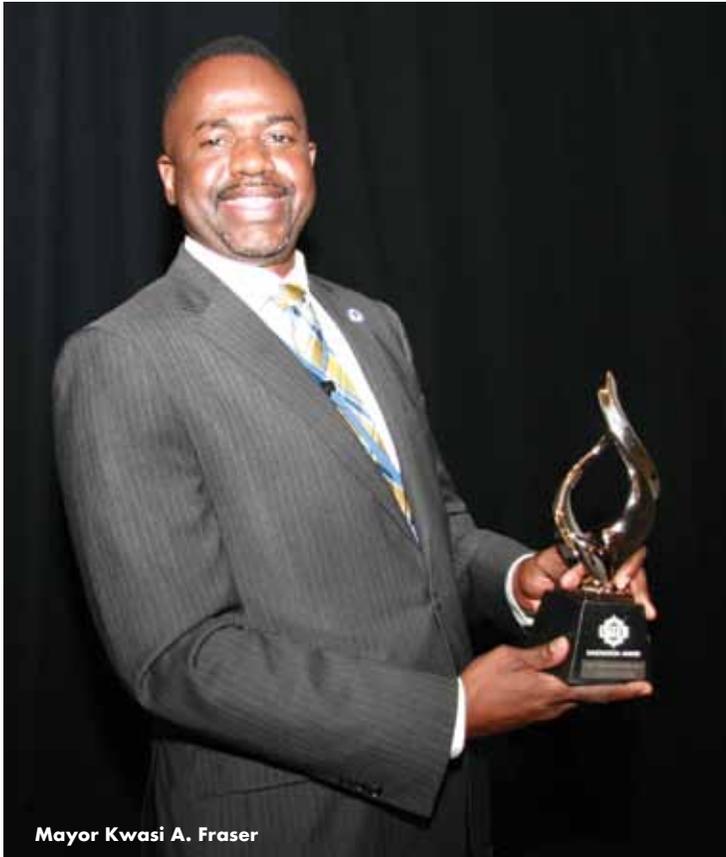


Transparency

VRSA's annual report is posted online, in addition to our Target Equity Study. This calculation allows VRSA to determine the total funding need.

PURCELLVILLE

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AWARD



Mayor Kwasi A. Fraser

IN 2020, THE TOWN COUNCIL of Purcellville decided to transform over 90 acres of land owned by the town into the largest municipality owned carbon sequestration and nutrient credit bank project in Northern Virginia. In May 2021, the town planted 111,000 trees on the property. The Nutrient Bank project is estimated to obtain over \$1 million of net revenue for the town. This project will enhance air quality, provide habitat for wildlife and open opportunities for recreation.

What the judges said:

“This was a great project that took minimal local resources to create an environmentally and financially successful project for the town. To generate a source of revenue from open land, and then use those funds to assist in your other utility needs is a great idea. With the continued impacts of stormwater regulations, this is also an economic development asset for the town. Great idea and definitely something that can be duplicated elsewhere.”



CHESAPEAKE

PUBLIC SAFETY AWARD

2021
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
INNOVATION
AWARD
WINNER



THE CHESAPEAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT started a program that uses a team approach for cardiac care in the community. As part of the program, the Fire Department seeks opportunities for continuous improvement through innovation, training, and connecting with citizens. Now firefighters and paramedics are part of recognizing and handling cardiac events.

What the judges said:

“Chesapeake Fire Department has submitted a technically detailed entry of their highly professional and comprehensive emergency Cardiac Care program. The program has won a national award from the International Fire Chief’s Association. The program contains a number of innovative features...[and] demonstrates deep use of local resources.”



(L-R) Legislative Affairs Liason David C. Westcott, Jr., Mayor Rick West, Council Member Robert C. Ike, Jr., and City Clerk Sandra Madison.

ROANOKE

WORKING WITH YOUTH AWARD

2021

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

INNOVATION
AWARD

WINNER

THE “STAR CITY READS” PROGRAM works to expand literacy by making sure that all of Roanoke’s children have access to books beginning at birth. With community partnerships, “Star City Reads” increased its presence in the community to distribute a record number of books to children in need this past year. From July 2020 until June 2021, the program placed nearly 20,000 books into the hands of at-risk children. This was a nearly 40 percent increase from the previous year and an especially noteworthy achievement during the pandemic.

What the judges said:

“I think this was a great example of a collaborative solution by using so many partners to create the program and continue its success. They have seen a huge impact in graduation rates since inception. The fact that they have gathered so many community partners that are beyond local government shows the impact and success it has created. I think this is program can be scaled up or down to a community size.”



Council Member Joseph L. Cobb
and Council Member Stephanie
Moon Reynolds.



WYTHEVILLE

COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

2021
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
INNOVATION
AWARD
WINNER



(L-R) Council Member Mark J. Bloomfield, Mayor Beth A. Taylor, and City of Fairfax Council Member and VML President Jon Stehle.

LAST DECEMBER, WITH GATHERINGS restricted, the Town of Wytheville produced the *Wytheville Christmas Show* – a 40-minute video celebration with performances and contributions from some of the most talented people in the community. It was a little taste of the festivities the town would normally have been experienced in person during the holiday season. The show brought the community together as friends and relatives near and far took time away from the stress of 2020 to smile.

What the judges said:

“The entire town of Wytheville is commended for sharing it’s creative and innovative message during the awful year of Covid! What a great way to involve so many – the citizens, Wytheville town departments, schools, and businesses – in spreading Christmas joy in a safe yet beautiful venue. And the video reached so many even beyond the town limits!”



WILLIAMSBURG

RISK MANAGEMENT AWARD



TO MAKE SURE ALL ITS CITIZENS could feel comfortable going out to vote, the City of Williamsburg's Voter Registrar organized two drive-thru elections by consolidating the city's two physical voting locations into a single drive-thru system at the Williamsburg Fire Department. Each bay of the fire station was designated for a different fire precinct. Voters stayed in their cars and city employees made up the majority of the roughly 40 volunteer election officers.

What the judges said:

"What an ingenious and effective use of existing resources to manage the health risks associated with an essential civic event! After a year of not feeling safe doing ordinary things, the citizens of Williamsburg were given the option to exercise their right to vote and to feel safe doing it. The measurable results shown in the number of citizens who used the drive-thru option show that this innovative approach not only worked for Williamsburg but also could be easily replicated elsewhere."



City Manager Andrew O. Trivette





2021
VML ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
LEESBURG

FEATURING THE TOWNS OF LOUDOUN

Conference Highlights

AFTER LAST YEAR'S VIRTUAL CONFERENCE, we had to use screenshots of the event in the October issue of the magazine. Thankfully this year was very different! So, for October 2021, we're happy to share these *real* photos of *real* people really enjoying being back together at the 2021 VML Annual Conference. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then here's the equivalent of a 43,000 word article about people learning together, trading stories, and having a bit of fun to make the 2021 Annual Conference the best it could be. Thanks for being there!

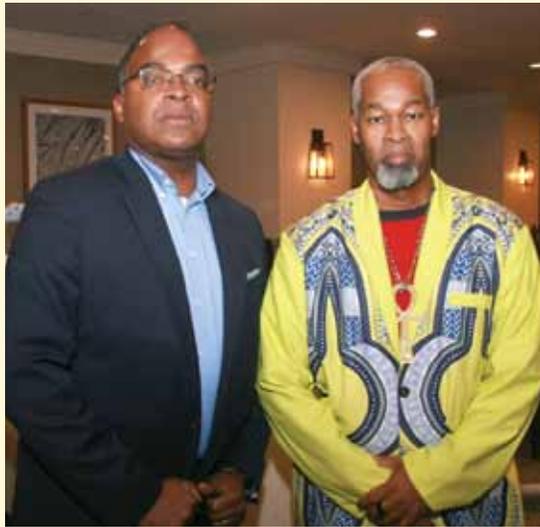


Conference Highlights





Conference Highlights





Thanks to our Host Locality Night contributors

- King Street Oyster Bar, Middleburg, Leesburg - www.kingstreetoysterbar.com
- Magnolias at the Mill, Purcellville - www.magnoliasmill.com
- The Wine Kitchen, Leesburg - www.thewinekitchen.com
- Mama Luccis, Leesburg - www.mamaluccis.com
- Red Bar Sushi, Middleburg, Leesburg - www.redbarsushi.net
- The Polished Foxx, Leesburg - www.thepolishedfoxx.com
- Root & Marrow, Lovettsville - www.rootandmarrowfarm.com
- Mom's Apple Pie, Round Hill, Leesburg - www.momsapplepieco.com
- Sweet Rose Bake Shop, Purcellville - www.sweetrosebakeshop.com

VBCOA holds annual conference; members also honored with ICC awards

IN SEPTEMBER, THE VIRGINIA Building and Code Officials Association (VBCOA) held its first in-person event in two years at the new Virginia Beach Oceanfront Marriott. The conference drew over 250 attendees as well as a sold-out exhibitor expo. Matt Westheimer was sworn in as the new VBCOA president by Cindy Davis, International Code Council (ICC) president during the Annual Banquet on September 13, 2021. Westheimer serves as the chief building official in the City of Williamsburg and has over twenty years' experience in building code enforcement.

Westheimer delivered a passionate speech to the membership during the Annual Banquet, stating that last year, when he was preparing for what everyone hoped would be an in-person annual conference, he had prepared a speech on teamwork. A lifelong baseball player, he felt this was a great theme to stress the importance of VBCOA's work with other agencies that play a critical role in code development and enforcement. Earlier this year, however, he began working on a speech with a theme of "togetherness" since a return to a pre-pandemic lifestyle seemed eminent. Then, July happened, and it became apparent that the pandemic was not going to disappear overnight. So, Matt threw away that speech he'd started and wrote something simply titled "COVID." [see sidebar below for full speech]

Welcome to 1929!

The first meeting of the VBCOA was held in 1929. Coincidentally, the Virginia Beach Marriott is part of the Cavalier Resort group which owns the Historic Cavalier hotel which opened in 1929. Photos from that year are displayed prominently throughout the space.



New officers

Also at the Annual Conference, Michael Eutsey (Hanover County) was elected as the association's first vice president; John Broughton (Franklin County) second vice president; and Michelle Coward (City of Richmond) to the position of sergeant at arms – marking the first time in the VBCOA ninety-two-year history that an African American female has served as a VBCOA officer. Coward has served as the VBCOA membership chair and worked tirelessly during the pandemic to ensure members continued to be engaged.

Speech delivered by President Matt Westheimer

Circumstances: *Over the last year and a half, life has been full of unusual circumstances. I dare say that no one in this room was prepared for the pandemic we all faced and continue to face. We found new ways to do business whether it be conducting inspections, attending meetings, issuing permits, grocery shopping, going to church, life was turned upside-down for many of us. But the unusual circumstances we faced taught us that no matter what challenges are thrown at us we can preserve, adapt and still be successful.*

Obstacles: *I have always viewed obstacles as something that I needed to accomplish in order to avoid failure. But as I have grown older, I have realized that life doesn't always go as planned. I have always been so focused and determined on succeeding; forgetting the fact that success also comes with failure. Obstacles shouldn't be something that we avoid in order to escape from the cruelty of failure, hindering us from the numerous opportunities that we could've had if we weren't too reluctant. They aren't meant to obstruct us in achieving our goals but are meant to make us keener and tenacious to face the harsh reality of life. In life we get the chance to choose whether or not we seize our limits and discover our potentials. Obstacles should only enhance our strengths and never deepen our weaknesses.*

Victorious: *fly past no matter what we do, and if we always look to the future, the present slips past – and the present is life itself. You must live as if today were your first day and your last. A life of victorious days is far better than a life of well-intended tomorrows and is a victorious life indeed.*

Importance: *Each of you are important. Important to this organization, to your families, to your localities, to your friends and many other groups.*

Weather you realize it or not you play a critical role in the lives of a very large group of people. You are an important addition to humanity, offering what only you can, YOU. Who you are, your character and personal qualities are the value you contain? And who you are is the best and most incredible thing you offer to all those around you.

Determined: *Webster's dictionary says it best. Determined is defined as: not willing to let anything prevent you from doing what you have decided to do. A determined person can accomplish great things; a determined team of people can accomplish things once seemed out of reach. Keeping the "I can" attitude will empower you to press on when things get tough. In life, there is no difficulty, which we cannot overcome when we are really determined. Determination is key because it enables us to persist in the face of difficulties. ... It makes us march fearlessly ahead with faith until we achieve our goal.*

In closing. When many of us here the word COVID we cringe. After all it has taken so much from us but, it has also taught us a few things. It has taught us to appreciate what we have and to cherish the things we oftentimes take for grant. It has taught us to be resilient no matter what our circumstance. It has taught us those obstacles are placed in our way to make us stronger and to learn from challenges that are placed in our way. It has taught us to be victorious not only in future endeavors but also in our day to day lives. It has taught us that each one of us is important to someone else and that each of us offers something special. And it has taught us to be determined. Determined not to let anything alter your path for success or stand in your way of accomplishing something you have decided to do.



(L-R) James Moss, Matt Westheimer, John Broughton, Michelle Coward, and Mike Eutsey.

In fact, VBCOA increased its membership by over 10 percent during 2021 proving that the strength of VBCOA continues to be in the membership. As Coward put it, as an organization “we are only able to accomplish the many things that we do by the members volunteering their time, talent, and skills.”

Immediate Past President Moss, elected in 2019, served the VBCOA for two years during the pandemic and helped the association pivot to online platforms to conduct its business. Membership Chair Michelle Coward put it best during the Annual Membership meeting, “through an unprecedented time – full of uncertainties, unknowns, fears and losses – President Moss’s commitment to VBCOA and consistent leadership ensured that VBCOA remained strong in the midst of adversity, connected in the midst of social distancing, and relevant through the shut-downs.”

Moss ensured that members had networking opportunities through his monthly Final Friday Chat Series, virtual training opportunities, and the 2021 Virtual Mid-Year Conference, all of which were very well attended. The quarterly newsletter kept members informed about their organization’s accomplishments, VBCOA sister organizations, happenings throughout the Commonwealth, and upcoming events. As Coward observed during her remarks, President Moss embodied “leadership by example” and she thanked him for leading the association during a time when there was no road map yet remaining faithful to VBCOA’s purpose, strategic vision, and values.

Honorary members

Three members were voted in as Honorary Members.

Randy Pearce, who retired from the City of Emporia, was honored as a valuable member not only to VBCOA but to VPMIA and VFPA as well. Pearce made sure that VBCOA was kept abreast of what was happening with its sister organizations and was always a willing participant. He was a huge supporter of both Building Safety

Month and the High School Technical Training Program as well as a dedicated Code Official and mentor.

Michael Redifer served the VBCOA and the Commonwealth of Virginia in various roles over his career and retired from the City of Newport News in February 2021. Redifer served on the State Building Code Technical Review Board, Virginia Board for Contractors, State Corporation Commission Underground Utility Damage Prevention Advisory Committee, several ICC Committees and was a member of the VBCOA since 1987 and VBCOA Board member, serving in many roles including region chair.

Steve Shapiro, who retired as the building official for the City of Hampton in July, served the code development community for decades and has been a VBCOA member since 1983; served as president in 1992; served on the ICC Board of Directors from 2003-2009; and was ICC president 2007-2008 (the first ICC president from Virginia).

Only fifty-five other VBCOA members have achieved Honorary Membership in the ninety-two-year history of the organization. Honorary Membership is given to individuals of distinction who have rendered outstanding service in the furtherance of the purposes and objectives of the association. Active members may recommend an individual for honorary membership by applying to the president, and upon recommendation from the Board of Directors. The nominees are then presented to the membership for a vote.

Awards

Cindy Davis, deputy director, Division of Building and Fire Regulations, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development received the Jack A. Proctor Meritorious Service Award in special recognition and appreciation for her extraordinary efforts, including facilitating the first state level version of code development access, cdpVa, providing a digital database that includes all the legacy

codes and overseeing the shift to virtual training sessions during the pandemic.

Mike Hamilton was awarded the Jack A Proctor Meritorious Service Award for Technical Assistants, for developing the commercial energy code plan review and inspection process in Arlington County.

Michael Redifer, City of Newport News building official, was awarded the Jack A Proctor Meritorious Service Award for Building Official, in special recognition and appreciation for over 35 years ensuring public safety as an inspector, building official, and serving on the Department of Professional Occupational Regulation Board of Contractors.

International Code Council

After the VBCOA Conference, many members travelled to Pittsburgh for the ICC Annual Conference, also the first to be held in person in two years. **Cindy Davis** was elected ICC President and **Kris Bridges**, City of Martinsville building official, was also re-elected as the Section E Director.

At the ICC conference, VBCOA immediate past president **James Moss** was awarded the 2021 Gerald H. Hones Code Of-

ficial of the Year for leadership, professionalism, and dedication. The Gerald H. Jones Code Official of the Year Award is awarded to an individual whose contributions advance the code enforcement profession and the Code Council's mission. The award is presented in honor of the founders of the three model code organizations: Albert H. Baum, M.L. Clement and Phil Roberts. Moss received the award for his lifelong contribution to the building safety and code industry.

William Dupler was presented the 2021 Bobby J. Fowler Award, which honors the memory of the first chairman of the Code Council Board of Directors who led the charge to consolidate three regional model code organizations into one association. This award is presented to a leader who demonstrates integrity, professionalism, and compassion. Dupler has served the code industry for more than 40 years, most recently as Chesterfield's deputy county administrator of community development.

For more information about the VBCOA, please visit the Association's website www.vbcoa.org.

About the author: *Sandra Harrington is VML's affiliate relations manager and events coordinator.*

Photos by Angela Hilderbrand



TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

By Charles Harbaugh

Leading the way with a website accessible to all

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL Disability Employment Awareness Month and I'd like to use this opportunity to tell you how the Town of Middletown became the first town in Virginia to include an interactive toolbar on its website.

We use the Recite Me toolbar, which makes it easier than ever to connect with different populations. Recite Me is a cloud-based web accessibility assistive toolbar that allows website visitors to customize a site in a way that works best for them. This innovative, assistive technology makes websites accessible and inclusive through a wide range of features including a translation tool with over 100 languages, 35 text to speech voices, and many other options.

I became aware of the folks at Recite Me after I became the executive director of our local center for independent living, Access Independence, Inc., which serves people with disabilities in Frederick, Clarke, Shenandoah, Page and Warren counties.

Since we started using Recite Me at Access Independence, Inc. our organization has served over 400 clients through October of 2021. We were the first nonprofit in the state of Virginia to incorporate this new technology. Soon thereafter, we began using it for the Town of Middletown.

Town Clerk Christina Smith noticed the advantages right away. "Recite Me literally had me hooked 3 minutes into their product introduction," she recently told me. Christina also loves the automated monthly reports that detail the number of launches, features used, and people assisted from the Recite Me toolbar.

For me, as mayor, it was a no brainer. As times evolve, I want Middletown to be on top of the needs of all of those in the community and those that visit our website.

The smart thing to do (and the right thing to do)

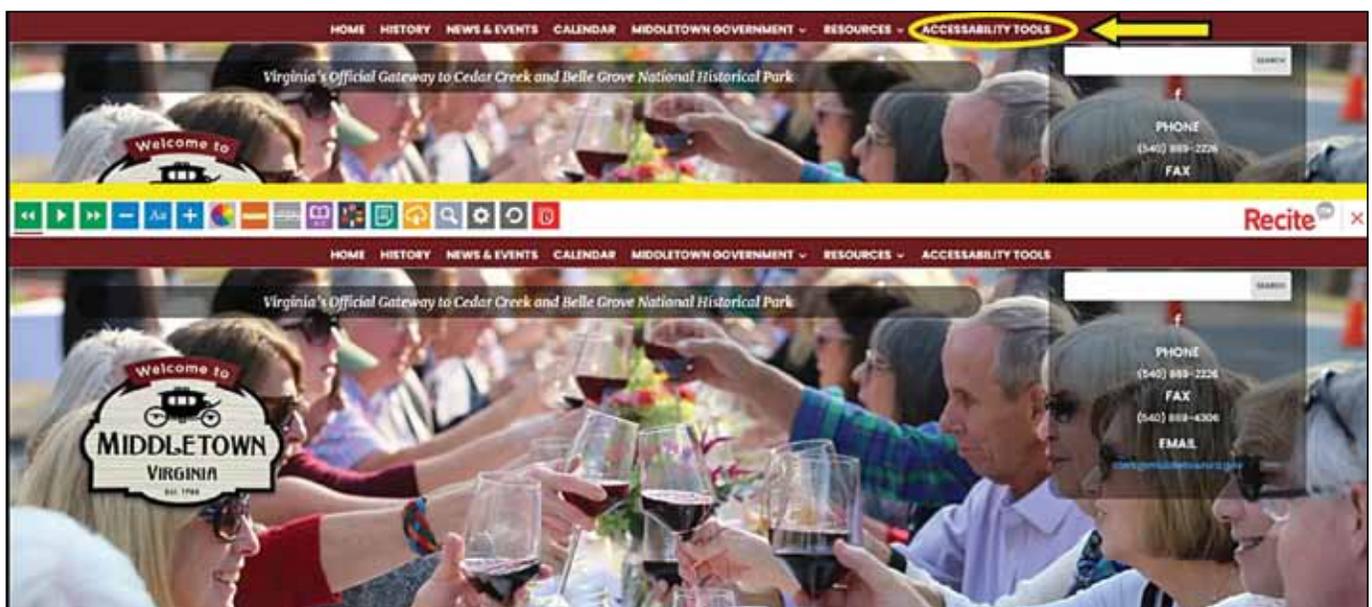
In Middletown, we believe that everyone in our service area should have the opportunity to be able to access online content. This includes our large Spanish speaking population as well as individuals who are often overlooked with hearing or visual impairment issues.

Moreover, new laws being put into place make it not only the ethical and right thing to do but an organizational requirement. The American with Disabilities Act states that websites must give reasonable accessibility and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. In 2019, there were 11,053 cases of federal lawsuits in the United States of web accessibility cases. Dominos, Target and Ford are a few examples of organizations that have been compelled to expand the accessibility of their online content.

In the United States alone, 61 million Americans (24%) of the population, live with some form of a disability. 10.8% have a cognition disability, 4.6% a vision disability, and upwards of 22% of U.S. residents don't speak English as their first language. In addition to accommodating different languages, the toolbar also offers styling customization which allows users to format font, text and color options. Reading aids, such as a ruler, screen mask, dictionary, text only mode and magnifying glass provide further assistance.

I encourage my fellow local leaders to look into the advantages of accessibility toolbars for their organization's website. Those interested in learning more about Recite Me can do so at www.reciteme.com.

About the author: *Charles Harbaugh is the mayor of the Town of Middletown and Executive Director of Access Independence, Inc.*



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. 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.

For more information contact Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org or visit: www.vml.org/corporate-engagement/community-business-membership.



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