

VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY

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Destinations abound

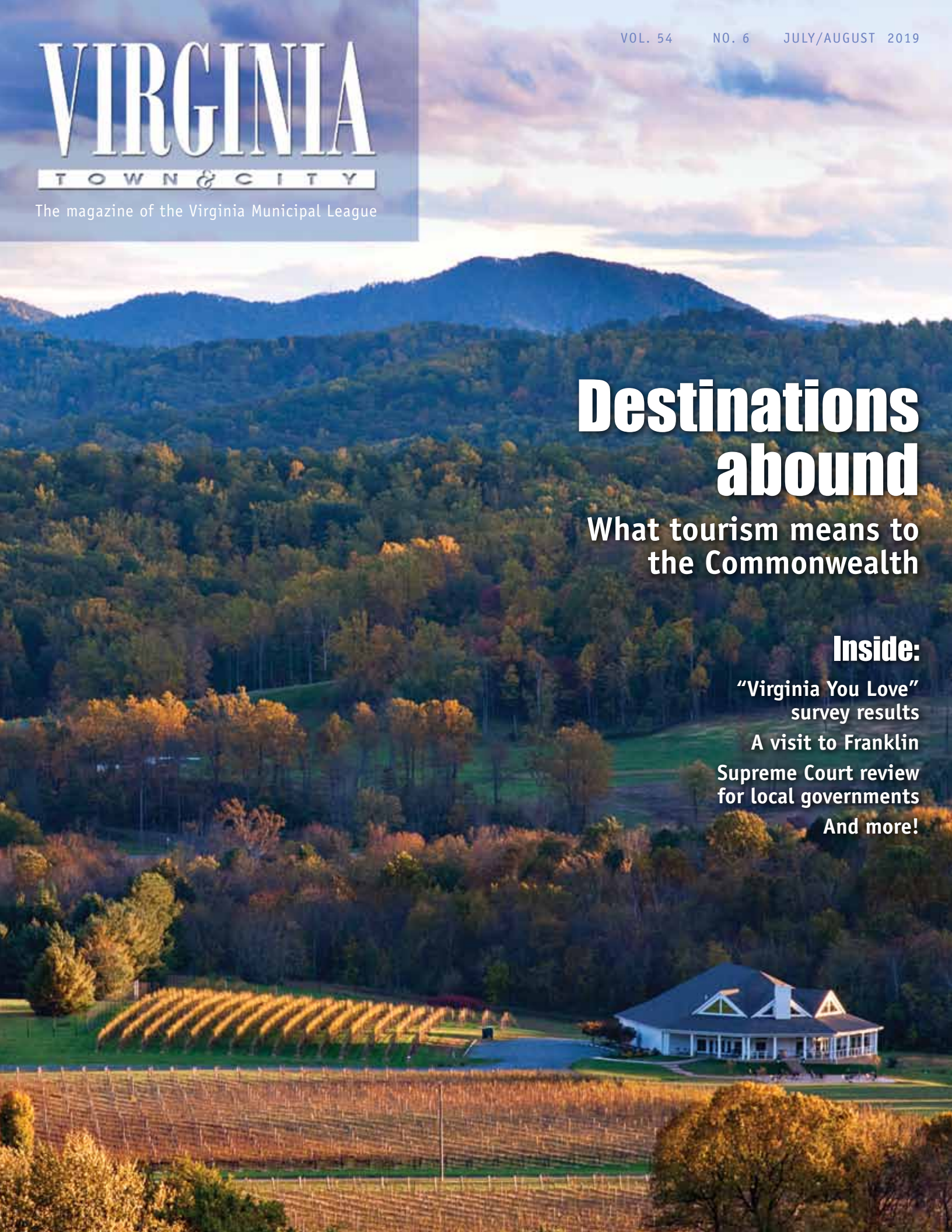
What tourism means to
the Commonwealth

Inside:

"Virginia You Love"
survey results

A visit to Franklin
Supreme Court review
for local governments

And more!





VRSA

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Celebrating 25 Years!

This summer Deborah Briggs, Cat Cunningham, Robin Duvall, Peggy Griffin, Mary Kay Marchetti, Connie Myers, Lora Robinson, Tina Wetsch, Robin Wiley and Beth Willoughby celebrate **25 years of outstanding service** to the Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA).

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It's summer! Time to get out and about. But, where to go? We can help with this issue dedicated to the business of tourism and lesser known destinations around Virginia.

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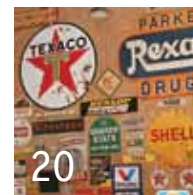
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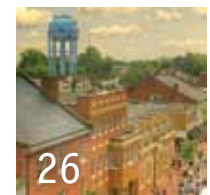
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A little summer fun (and lots of important work to do)

THIS TOURISM ISSUE has been in the works for a long time. Since we launched our “Virginia You Love” survey contest, our staff meetings have been a lot of fun. We have reminisced about the cake pops in Gate City, sushi in Middleburg, Friday music in Winchester, the new hotel in St. Paul, and (of course) my favorite shoe store in South Boston. Thanks to everyone who participated in the survey!


Somewhat less fun (but much more important) were our preparations ahead of the General Assembly’s special session. While the special session didn’t amount to much, the preparations served as a reminder of how vital it is for VML to take into consideration the diverse needs and preferences of the people we are proud to represent. These considerations are also central to the work of our policy committees which, by the time you read this, will have met and reviewed the various statements that VML uses to support our lobbying efforts at the General Assembly. I urge you to take the time to read the policy statements and provide comments. We have six policy committees: General Laws, Community and Economic Development, Finance, Transportation, Human Development & Education and Environmental Quality. Aside from working to establish our legislative priorities, participants also hear from speakers on a variety of relevant and timely topics. For example, General Laws heard about distracted driving and Transportation learned more about peer-to-peer rentals; then the two committees met jointly with Finance to discuss Airbnb and scooters.

Each policy committee will recommend legislative priorities for the 2020 session to the legislative committee which will review and prepare them to be voted on at the VML Annual Conference in Roanoke (October 6-8) during the annual business meeting. Please plan to attend the annual business meeting

which will be held on the Tuesday morning of the conference.

Our legislative committee has met once this summer and will meet again on September 6 to further the work of the policy committees and to learn more about issues affecting localities. For example, at the last meeting, legislative committee members benefited from presentations on broadband mapping, school and E911 funding and government facility security.

The General Assembly punted the special session to November 18 (because legislators are all up for election this year) and sent more than 60 bills to the Crime Commission for consideration. The first meeting of this commission will consist of a series of speakers on August 19 at 10am in the House Committee Room of the Pocahontas Building (900 East Main Street, Richmond, VA). The second meeting, scheduled for August 20 at noon in the same location, will include 3 hours of public comment followed by a presentation of the bills. Details about how to sign up for public comment are forthcoming and legislators have until July 19 to submit legislation. Of course, VML will be there to provide you with updates!

In closing, I would be remiss if I let a tourism issue of *Virginia Town & City* go by without mentioning a couple of my personal favorite destinations in Virginia – the beautiful golf course at the Holston Hills Country Club in Marion and my go-to-store for gifts in West Point – “Divin’ off the Dock” where the ladies provide lovely help and the Christmas decorations are wonderful! Enjoy our tourism issue and please start thinking of your favorite places so we can do it again next year. 



Holston Hills Country Club in Marion



Aug. 8 **Virginia Energy Purchasing Group Association (VEPGA) – Board Meeting**

Henrico County Administration Building, Henrico, VA

Aug. 15 **Municipal Electric Power Association of Virginia (MEPAV) – Board Meeting**

Charlottesville, VA



Sept. 5 **2019 Broadband Summit**

Downtown Richmond Marriott, 500 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA

Sept. 21 – 24 **Virginia Building and Code Officials Association (VBCOA) – Annual Conference and School**

Hilton Oceanfront, 3001 Atlantic Ave., Virginia Beach, VA

Oct. 5 - 8 **Virginia Mayors Institute & Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference**

Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, 110 Shenandoah Ave. NW, Roanoke, VA

Oct. 23 - 24 **Municipal Electric Power Association of Virginia (MEPAV), Engineering and Operations Workshop**

The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center

Nov. 7 **Virginia Energy Purchasing Group Association (VEPGA) Board Meeting**

Henrico County Administration Building, Henrico, VA

VML connects you with a variety of networking and professional development events. Learn about these opportunities at vml.org/events.



Registration now open for attendees and exhibitors at www.vml.org.



Smiley added to VML's Policy staff



Mitchell Smiley joined the league staff in July. Mitchell has worked in policy roles starting in 2008 at the U.S. House of Representatives for the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. In 2009 he moved to the Committee on Energy and Commerce where he worked as Deputy Clerk. In 2011 he began working as a lobbyist for the Virginia Transit Association in Richmond representing Virginia's transit community. He then worked as a Data Analyst with the Virginia Department of Corrections developing re-entry programming grant proposals and incarcerated veteran programming before pursuing full-time graduate studies. While earning his Master of Public Administration (2018) from Virginia Commonwealth University his research focused on the economic development impacts of craft businesses in the U.S. South, local park management, and 911 dispatcher turnover rates. Mitchell also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (2008) from VCU. He will be working with the VML Policy team on Transportation and Environment/Natural Resource issues.

Rosenberg tapped as Staunton manager

Steven Rosenberg became the 16th city manager in Staunton effective July 1, following the retirement of Stephen Owens. Rosenberg has served as the deputy manager for the last six years and has 29 years of experience in the public and private sectors. Before beginning his career in Staunton, Rosenberg was an associate general counsel and special assistant attorney general at the University of Virginia. Prior to that, he was a senior assistant city attorney for the City of Alexandria, the county attorney in Augusta County and an attorney in a private law firm.

Rosenberg has a juris doctor degree from Emory University School of Law and a bachelor's degree with concentrations in history and government from The College of William and Mary.

Onaitis comes on board as new Covington manager

Krystal M. Onaitis has been appointed the city manager in Covington, effective August 1. Onaitis worked for the City of Richmond in the development of the public-private partnership that resulted in RVA311, an online, cloud-based interface that manages citizen, business and



- Onaitis -

visitor requests. She also served as a senior advisor to former Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones and managed special projects, policy, communications and performance initiatives in the city's public works and public utilities departments as well.

Onaitis holds a B.A. in political science and a master's degree in public administration from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Retired garrison commander named assistant city manager for Newport News

Retired Ft. Eustis Garrison Commander **Ralph L. "Bo" Clayton** has been named an assistant city manager in the City of Newport News. Clayton will be responsible for operational departments such as Public Works, Engineering, Parks, Recreation & Tourism and Vehicle & Equipment Services.



- Clayton -

Clayton retired from the United States Army in 2019 as a Colonel after a 30-year military career. In his last assignment as garrison commander of Fort Eustis, his role essentially made him the city manager of the military installation.

Clayton has a bachelor's degree in biology from Appalachian State University, a master's degree in public administration from Central Michigan University and is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College.

Evans takes helm as Williamsburg human services director

In June, **Wendy M. Evans** was appointed director of human services in the City of Williamsburg. She had served as the interim director since May following the retirement of Peter Walentisch. Evans began working for the city in 2005 as a social work supervisor and in 2018 was named the deputy director of social work and community services. She previously had held positions in Durham, NH.

Evans holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Old Dominion University and a master's degree in social work from the University of New Hampshire.

Adams appointed as Petersburg assistant to the city manager



- Adams -

India Adams was appointed as the assistant to the city manager in the City of Petersburg in May. She came to Petersburg after serving as an assistant city manager in Delray, FL. She also held junior positions in community, economic development, and ICMA Fellowship positions with the City of Tacoma, WA and Albemarle County, VA.

Adams has a bachelor's degree in policy and government from George Mason University and a master's degree in public administration from Virginia Tech. She also holds a graduate certificate in Local Government Management.

Moore named Fredericksburg human resources director



- Moore -

Lesley Moore has been named the human resources director in the City of Fredericksburg. Her previous experience includes serving as the interim director of human resources and a human resources generalist for Spotsylvania County and as the human resources manager for Caroline County.

Moore has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Radford University.

Richmond economic development director, police chief appointed



- Sledge -

Leonard Sledge has been appointed the director of economic development for the City of Richmond. His previous experience includes serving as the executive director of the Henry County Development Authority and the director of economic de-

velopment for the City of Hampton and the College of William and Mary.

Sledge earned a bachelor's degree from Morehouse College, a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from Georgia Tech and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix.



- Smith -

William C. Smith, who has been serving as Richmond's interim po-

lice chief, has been appointed the chief. Smith began his law enforcement career in Richmond in 1995 and has advanced through the police department over his 24-year career. Chief Smith has served the department in virtually every capacity: emergency communications, precinct commander, special operations division, business services division, chief of staff and deputy chief. He is the first chief to be appointed from within the department's ranks since 1967.

Smith earned a bachelor's degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and is a graduate of the University of Richmond's Police Executive Leadership School and the Police Executive Research Forum's Senior Management Institute for Police in Boston.

Greene appointed as Portsmouth police chief



- Greene -

Angela M. Greene, who had been serving as the acting chief, was named the chief of police in the City of Portsmouth in June. Greene was named the assistant police chief in Portsmouth in 2016;

prior to that she had worked in the City of Richmond's police department.

Greene has a bachelor's degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University in prelaw and political science. She also holds several certifications in the Commonwealth of Virginia with the Department of Criminal Justice Services as a law enforcement officer.

Monk named as Hampton fire chief



- Monk -

Jason H. Monk has been appointed as the fire chief in the City of Hampton. Monk had been serving as the interim chief since 2017 and had been the deputy chief prior to that. Chief

Monk joined the fire and EMS service as a student volunteer with the Virginia Tech Rescue Squad while attending college. In 1997, Chief Monk became a member of the Hampton Division of Fire and Rescue as a medic/firefighter. He has served in field operations and administrative capacities, in both suppression and emergency medical services.

Monk has a bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from Virginia Tech and a master's degree in management with an

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emphasis on leadership and organizational effectiveness from Troy University. He received the Chief EMS Officer and Chief Fire Officer designations from the Center for Public Safety Excellence and is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program.

Robinson appointed Herndon director of public works



- Robinson -

Effective July 22, **Scott Robinson** began serving as the director of Public Works in the Town of Herndon. Robinson has decades of experience managing major construction projects and operations. Most recently, he served as director of facilities

and real estate for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a role in which he managed NASA's 5,300 facilities at 14 major sites in 10 states. Prior to his NASA tenure, he held positions of increasing responsibility at the Naval Sea Systems Command and at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Robinson has a bachelor's degree in engineering, naval architecture and marine engineering from the University of Michigan and is a registered professional engineer.

Horan made new public works director for Manassas

On July 22, **Scott Horan** became the new public works director for the City of Manassas. Prior to his current role, Scott had more than 15 years of service with Stafford County Public Schools and more than 20 years of

service as an Air Force Engineering Officer. As public works director, Horan will oversee buildings & grounds, maintenance, cemeteries, streets, traffic controls, solid waste and vehicle maintenance.



- Horan -

City Manager W. Patrick Pete cites Scott's experience in building and maintaining facilities for Stafford County and for the Air Force as making him well-suited to meet the challenges of the city's Capital Improvement Program.

Horan has a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from Virginia Military Institute and a master's in public administration from Troy State University.

News & notes

Virginia Scenic Rivers Program celebrates 50 years

SINCE IT WAS ESTABLISHED in 1970 by the General Assembly with the passage of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Act, the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program has recognized rivers for "outstanding scenic, recreational, historic and natural characteristics of statewide significance." The Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is asking local governments and others to participate in the program's 50th anniversary in 2020 by signing on to the list of supporters, hosting an event or informational meeting about the anniversary, including the anniversary in a local river event or conference, and/or supporting local efforts for new scenic river designations.

Localities interested in signing on as a supporter can do so at www.dcr.virginia.gov/sr50. Additionally, DCR can supply a toolkit on how to work with local media to promote existing designations.

Lynn Crump, coordinator of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program and the DCR contact for the program, may be reached at 804-786-5054 or lynn.crump@dcr.virginia.gov.

If your locality plans to sponsor an event related to the anniversary of the scenic rivers program, please let us know by contacting Rob Bullington, rbullington@vml.org so we can help get the word out.



Norfolk aims for purrfect inner peace

THE CITY OF NORFOLK teamed up with a yoga instructor to encourage contributions to the Norfolk Animal Care Center by sponsoring a Kitten Yoga class in July. The city's media release notes that the yoga instructor, who also fosters kittens, "will demonstrate how to hold a tree pose even while a sweet little kitty cat scampers up your limbs." Furthermore, the fee – a \$5 donation to the Friends of the Norfolk Animal Care Center – will bring "the tranquility of knowing animals in Norfolk will continue to receive support from FNACC for spaying and neutering, medical care and adoption."

The media release concludes: "Inhale. Exhale. Focus on the furballs."

Roanoke named All-America City Hall of Fame winner



THE CITY OF ROANOKE has been named by the National Civic League as the first ever All-America City Hall of Fame winner. The Hall of Fame Award recognizes Roanoke’s continued work to advance its Star City Reads (SCR) initiative, and the impact of Roanoke Public Libraries’ “Feed and Read” program. Roanoke has a long history with the All-America City Award, having received this recognition seven times.

The SCR initiative works to ensure that all children can read proficiently by the end of third grade. The community’s progress

includes a more than 10 percent increase in reading proficiency rates for low-income third graders.

In the summer of 2014, Roanoke Public Libraries and its partners – Roanoke City Public Schools, YMCA – piloted the first Feed and Read program. In October 2018, Feeding America Southwest VA joined as a partner and the Feed and Read program expanded to offer meals Monday through Friday, and on Saturdays.

The program allows any child, up to 18 years of age, to receive a free, USDA-approved meal and participate in literacy enrichment activities. Since Feed and Read launched, more than 50,000 meals have been served to children at Roanoke Public Library branches. Feed and Read is made possible by federal funding. Visit www.nationalcivicleague.org/hall-of-fame-winner-city-of-roanoke-va.



Tourism revenue in Virginia reached \$26 billion in 2018

GOVERNOR RALPH NORTHAM announced in June that Virginia’s tourism industry generated \$26 billion in visitor spending across all communities in 2018, a 4.4 percent increase over 2017. Further, the press release said that in 2018, tourism in

Virginia supported 234,000 jobs for Virginia communities, a one percent increase from 2017. The tourism industry also provided \$1.8 billion in state and local revenue – an increase of 2.9 percent compared to 2017.

The tourism industry, which has continued to grow each year over the past 50 years, is the fifth largest employer in Virginia. In 2018, domestic travelers spent \$71 million a day in Virginia and domestic travel-supported employees in the state earned \$6.1 billion in payroll income during 2018.

According to Governor Northam’s press release, destinations across the Commonwealth are commemorating “50 Years of LOVE” by celebrating the benefits that tourism brings to Virginia during this semi-centennial anniversary year of the “Virginia is for Lovers” slogan. Developed in 1969 by the Richmond-based advertising firm Martin & Woltz (now the Martin Agency), “Virginia is for Lovers” is the longest-running state tourism slogan in the country.





Vienna certified as Bee City

THE TOWN OF VIENNA has joined the Town of Scottsville as one of two new Virginia certified Bee City USA affiliates. In Vienna, the effort was led by the Town's Conservation and Sustainability Commission.

Bee City USA is an initiative of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, a national nonprofit organization. Bee City USA's mission is to encourage communities to sustain pollinators by providing them with healthy habitats rich in a variety of native plants and free of insecticides. Pollinators like bumble bees, sweat bees, mason bees, honeybees, butterflies,

moths, beetles, flies, hummingbirds and many others are responsible for reproduction of almost 90 percent of the world's flowering plant species and one in every three bites of food consumed by people.

Nationwide, 88 localities have been certified as Bee City USA affiliates. Additional information about the program is available at www.beecityusa.org.

Fredericksburg philanthropic program takes off

BACK IN MAY, the City of Fredericksburg partnered with businesses and individuals to launch a philanthropic program to make a positive impact on the community through financial contributions. The "Fredanthropist" (Fred's Philanthropists) program was seeking twelve "Fredanthropists" to join the program and assist the City Council's priority to build their community through cultural vibrancy. In only a couple months, twelve businesses and individuals committed to be Fredanthropists,

including Hilldrup, Rappahannock Development Group, Lidl, Coldwell Banker Elite, Mrs. Mary Jane O'Neill, Mary Washington Healthcare, LifeCare Medical Transports, ILM Corporation, Team Pohanka (Honda, Hyundai, Nissan), The GeMROI Company, Mayor Mary Katherine Greenlaw and one anonymous participant.

The goal this year is for the city to construct a new roller-hockey rink in partnership with the Washington Capitals. Future money from the program could help the City develop more events such as last year's SlideFXBG, improve park facilities and attract annual festivals.

Additional information on the program is posted at www.fredanthropist.org.



Blacksburg Transit named 2019 Outstanding Transit System

BLACKSBURG TRANSIT has earned the American Public Transportation Association's 2019 Outstanding Transit System award for North America. This annual award is given to a system that excels in overall performance and benefit to the community. Blacksburg Transit earned the award in the small urban system category (annual ridership of four million or less).

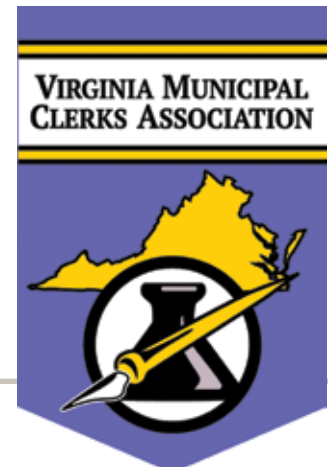
Blacksburg Transit was singled out for their successful delivery of service to Virginia Tech, Blacksburg and Christiansburg based on performance in 24 quantitative and qualitative criteria.

The award will be presented at the APTA Annual Meeting in October.



Virginia Municipal Clerks Association schedules annual institute

THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL Clerks Association will hold its Annual Institute and Academy October 9-11 in Virginia Beach. A Pre-Institute and Academy Workshop, ("The Power of Yes and Improving Communication Through Improv Comedy," facilitated by David Webster) will be held October 8, 2019. In addition to the Pre-Institute and Academy, clerks may also participate in an Athenian Leadership Society Dialogue on Saturday, October 12, 2019 facilitated by Dr. Jane Long, education director of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks and Libby Hume, MMC, clerk for the Town of Cape Charles. Additional information is posted at www.vmca.com.



Hopewell and Prince George turn to nature to increase tourism

TOURISM BOOMED IN VIRGINIA during the Civil War Sesquicentennial in 2015. Unfortunately, when that celebration ended, so did the influx of people who traveled to Hopewell and Prince George.

This was a reminder that historical attractions have a ready audience in schools and history buffs but more needs to be done to expand their appeal to a consistent, broader audience. To this end, the City of Hopewell and Prince George County have undertaken initiatives aimed at attracting younger people (between the ages 20-40) to historical sites through a combination of outdoor activities and educational opportunities.

The city and county worked with the Hopewell/Prince George Chamber of Commerce to fund the existing certified Virginia Visitor Center to be managed by the Chamber. This is the only Visitor Center in the region between Petersburg and Richmond that is certified by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC). Part of this agreement included the use of resources from the VTC.

VTC helped bring out the extra creativity that Hopewell and Prince George needed to thrive. They showed the two localities how corn fields, forests, riverfronts, parks, and trails could be highlighted in a way to benefit the community while increasing

tourism. Participation in VTC's Drive Tourism Workshops resulted in six focus areas:

- Trails and parks
- Eco-tours promoting flat water kayaking
- Performances in the historic Beacon Theatre
- Improvements to Route 36, from the Hopewell/Prince George Visitor Center to Petersburg
- Revitalization of downtown Hopewell
- Riverside development

Hopewell sprang into action in each of these six areas. In April, the city opened the Riverwalk, a handicapped-accessible, 1,700-foot-long wooden boardwalk along the Appomattox River that culminates at the confluence of the James and Appomattox rivers.

Continuing the push for innovation, Prince George reached an agreement earlier this year to use county-owned land to develop an adventure park. The park held a soft opening on July 1 with a grand opening to be scheduled at a future date.

Tree Time Adventures includes tree-top zip lines, an obstacle course that moves between trees and swinging bridges. The agreement between the park owner and the county includes free admission to nature and fitness trails, a requirement that the park owner build an outbuilding, access road and parking lot to serve the facility and the sharing of gross receipts with the county. Tree Time Adventures compliments the regional Appomattox River Trail found in the County's Appomattox Regional Park, a 60-acre park that includes walking trails, a pier, an overlook, a pavilion, and a kayak/canoe launch.

Outdoor enthusiasts of all ages are coming to enjoy the new outdoor activities. In addition to the Riverwalk and Tree Time Adventure, visitors can also enjoy a restaurant as well as lectures, concerts, and other events that incorporate local natural resources. This partnership between Hopewell, Prince George County, and the Hopewell/Prince George Chamber of Commerce is creating momentum resulting in much needed progress.

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ACROSS OUR GREAT VA

A three-way blind interview series conducted via email that seeks to remind our readers that wherever you go in the Commonwealth, you find connections that make us all Virginians.



Melissa Hopper is the Associate Director of Tour and Travel for VisitNorfolk. She loves to create itineraries for senior, student, veteran and international groups. She is totally fine using a Port-A-John (when necessary).



Ray Kohl is the Tourism Director for the City of Galax. He's happy to help visitors get excited about the city's outdoor recreation, music, arts and shops. Just don't ask him to jump out of an airplane.

VTC: Melissa, have you ever had the opportunity to use an outhouse?

Melissa: I have used a Port-A-John many times during outdoor festivals. Norfolk has over 130 outdoor festivals, so I might be considered a professional user.

VTC: Ray, have you ever jumped out of a plane?

Ray: I was in the U.S. Army for 25 years and had 2 jumps. I do not desire to do it again.

VTC: What is your favorite thing about working in tourism?

Melissa: I love assisting groups that are coming to Norfolk with their itineraries, seeing it all come together and then receiving feedback on how they loved their trip and wish they could have stayed longer!

Ray: Meeting and talking with people from around the world. Telling them about the beauty and wonder of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

VTC: Melissa, what's your favorite natural feature in the Norfolk area?

Melissa: The water. We are in the heart of the Virginia waterfront, where the Chesapeake Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean.

VTC: Ray, do you assist tour groups with their itineraries or do groups typically choose their own adventures?

Ray: I have worked with various motor coach companies and receptive operators to plan tours for their guests for Galax and the surrounding area. We can plan itineraries that include various attractions, dining, musical events and taking a flatfooting class.

VTC: If a foreign dignitary wanted to visit your area but only had time to make one stop, where should they go and why?

Melissa: They would need to go to Doumar's Barbeque, home to the original waffle cone! Visitors can learn how the Doumar family invented the waffle cone while enjoying one from the original waffle cone machine (built in 1904) which is still used to make fresh cones daily!

Ray: I would have them visit the Chestnut Creek School of the Arts to see the marvelous crafts that our local artisans have produced and to learn how we are working to keep these traditions alive by getting young people involved.

VTC: Melissa, what's the best place to experience local crafts in Norfolk?

Melissa: The d'ART Center, located in NEON, Norfolk's Arts District, is a unique venue, providing an environment where more than forty working artists are a part of an interactive community displaying and selling original works of art on-site. Additionally, Selden Market in downtown Norfolk is a collaborative space with a rotation of local artisan shops and food.

VTC: Ray, what dishes are strongly associated with Galax?

Ray: Most of the food associated with Galax is traditional, down home, Southern cooking. In our locally owned restaurants, you will find biscuits and gravy, pinto beans and cornbread, pork chops with potatoes and gravy as well as pulled pork barbecue fresh from the smoker.

VTC: What's the best event you've ever been part of in your region?

Melissa: The Virginia International Tattoo is an annual event in Norfolk that brings performers from across the globe together to celebrate music and patriotism. It's amazing to see performers uniting from eight different countries within our city.

Ray: The Old Fiddlers Convention. 84 years and going strong.

VTC: Melissa, is there a musical event or performance venue strongly associated with Norfolk?

Melissa: The NorVa is an intimate concert venue with state-of-the-art technology located in downtown Norfolk. Built in 1922, the NorVa is one of the best venues in the United States because of its high-grade equipment and many backstage perks such as a hot tub, recreation room, sauna and indoor basketball court.

VTC: Ray, do people from different countries come to the Old Fiddlers Convention?

Ray: I have met people from England, Scotland, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Norway, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Argentina, Korea and Japan at the Fiddlers Convention. In 2017 the first place Dobro player went to a competitor from Australia and 6th place bluegrass fiddle went to a competitor from Argentina. In 2018 the 1st place youth old time banjo went to a competitor from Canada and 2nd place old time fiddle went to a competitor from Norway.

VTC: What is the most unusual thing someone has asked you to do in your role?

Melissa: I once had a group ask if they could parachute hundreds of G.I. Joe action figures from helicopters onto the Sheraton Norfolk Waterside hotel. We had to have the Norfolk Fire Department on standby to rescue any action figures who were stuck in trees, roof tops and other places. The action figures who were "wounded" during their landing were treated for missing arms and broken parts.

Ray: I was asked once by a visiting family if I knew of anywhere there was an operating outhouse. The father wanted his children to see what it was like to have to go to the "privy" instead of having a bathroom next to your bedroom. I knew of a family that had a cabin without running water that had a working outhouse. I loaded the family up and took them to use the outhouse.



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Destinations abound

What tourism means to the Commonwealth

WHETHER YOU TRAVEL across the world, across the nation, or across the state, when you leave home to seek relaxation, new experiences and/or fresh challenges in a new place, you are a tourist. And as anyone who has ever been a tourist knows, it's easy to spend money while you're away from home. So, when you take that step out your door with suitcase in hand don't forget to bring your wallet and remember, you're not alone. According to the U.S. Travel Association, travelers in the United States in 2018 spent \$1.1 trillion, generating \$2.5 trillion in economic output and supporting 15.7 million American jobs.

It's no surprise then that states and localities are increasingly looking for ways to capitalize on this booming market. Virginia has several advantages in this arena – not only are we a good-looking state (C'mon, you know it's true!), we are rich in history, home to diverse natural features and boast an ever-increasing array of culinary, beverage, entertainment and cultural offerings.

To learn more about what's going on with tourism in Virginia these days, we've pulled together some great articles, had fun running our own "Virginia You Love" survey contest and done a bit of traveling of our own. Read all about it:

- Want a quick overview of what tourism means to Virginia's economy? We've got President & CEO of VA Tourism Corporation **Rita McClenny**'s "Tourism in Virginia: A growing, sustainable industry" for you.
- Can tourism save a city? **Leslie Strickler** and **Clay Hamner** of St. Peter's Group, LLC certainly think so. Find out how in "Destination: Petersburg, VA."
- Read **Josette Bulova**'s "Regional news programs help keep tourists close to home" for a look at three news shows doing their part to bring tourists to their area.
- This month's "Ask an expert" column features an interview with City of Alexandria archeologist **Eleanor Breen** about historic ship excavations happening on the Old Town waterfront.
- Tag along with **VML staff** on a day trip to Franklin, VA to find out if this small city deserved a recent "honor" from a national publication in "This Virginia Life: Franklin, VA vs. *USA Today*."
- The results are in! Discover the best spots in Virginia according to **participants** in our inaugural "Virginia You Love" survey contest.



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Tourism in Virginia: A growing, sustainable industry

EACH YEAR, TOURISM INJECTS BILLIONS of dollars into Virginia's economy and provides jobs for hundreds of thousands of Virginians. Tourism is a growing industry that increasingly plays an important role in the overall economic development of the state.

Virginia's tourism industry just keeps getting better

In 2018, the Virginia tourism industry generated \$26 billion in domestic visitor spending. This included transportation, lodging, food, amusement and recreation, as well as retail shopping in Virginia. That's \$2 billion more than in 2016.

Domestic travel expenditures directly supported 234,000 work opportunities within Virginia and directly generated more than \$1.8 billion in tax revenue for state and local governments. The comparable figures for 2016 were 230,000 jobs and \$1.6 billion in tax revenue.

More visitors mean more dollars spent by visitors, which supports

enhancements and growth in our communities to help make Virginia the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Tourism creates jobs in all sectors of the population. The travel industry is the fifth largest private employer in Virginia. Increased traveler visits and greater traveler spending in local businesses result in faster job creation and higher tax revenues that far surpass the initial investment.

A vibrant tourism industry can be especially important for small towns or rural areas in Virginia that are hard-hit by the declining manufacturing and mining sectors. Interest in rural sightseeing in these communities can bring a much-needed economic stimulus to the area. Localities such as Pennington Gap, St. Paul, Big Stone Gap and Norton are focusing on how to capture the benefits of their abundant natural features, to the benefit of not just visitors from out-of-town but their residents as well. It's a win-win situation.

Beyond its many economic benefits, tourism is an industry that closely affects all citizens. Development of tourism assets not only helps communities thrive, but also has the additional benefit of improving the overall quality of life for the traveler.



VTC grant opportunity helps localities

COMMUNITIES AND DESTINATIONS across the Commonwealth understand the importance of creating innovative marketing initiatives to attract tourists. The Virginia Tourism Corporation offers grant programs including the Marketing Leverage Program, which is designed to stimulate new tourism marketing programs through the creation of tourism partnerships. The grant funding helps local and regional tourism entities attract more visitors by leveraging limited local marketing dollars through a local match of state grants funds. This grant enables localities to broaden their marketing scope and stimulate new tourism marketing programs that otherwise may not have been possible.



Mountains, beaches, lakes, historical sites, museums, restaurants: Virginia has it all

Tourists flock to Virginia for a variety of reasons, but they are always looking for authenticity. Today’s tourists desire the one-of-a-kind, local experiences readily available in Virginia.

Culinary delights – In the opinion of leading food and drink media outlets, Virginia’s surging restaurant and bar scene has pro-

pelled the state to new heights. Today’s traveler can still enjoy traditional fare, but many towns and cities now have restaurants with award-winning chefs renowned for their takes on the advancing wave of New Southern cuisine. Craft brewers, distillers, cidemakers and winemakers in Virginia have collected numerous top ribbons in national and international competitions, elevating the state’s long-standing reputation for providing good things in a bottle.

An abundance of history – Virginia is an American history icon with hundreds of sites across the state that date back to the



50 Years of Love!

“VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS” is one of the most beloved and well-known tourism slogans in the world. Created in 1969 by the Richmond-based firm Martin & Woltz (now the Martin Agency), the slogan still resonates today. Learn more about the anniversary celebrations at www.virginia.org/50yearsoflove.

**VIRGINIA
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Tourism in Virginia

historic parks. Shenandoah National Park maintains more than 500 miles of trails along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains with spectacular vistas, picturesque streams, and plenty of chances to observe wildlife in its natural habitat.

Three seasons for beach fun – Virginia’s moderate climate makes for a long beach season so visitors can enjoy warm, sunny beaches from early spring into fall. Visitors can explore Virginia Beach’s famed boardwalk and take in the ocean views or head to Virginia’s Eastern Shore to see some of the most serene natural views to be found anywhere. Many are fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the wild ponies on Chincoteague Island.

first permanent English settlement at Jamestown and cover every important period of American history. Many people are familiar with places like Colonial Williamsburg, the Civil War battlefields, and the Birthplace of Country Music, located in Bristol on the Virginia/Tennessee line. But fewer are aware that Virginia also played an important role in the Civil Rights movement and is home to two sites on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. Travelers can visit the Moton Museum in Farmville and the Virginia Civil Rights Memorial in Richmond to learn more about this important time in American history.

Diverse natural beauty – Virginia is home to 37 state parks and two national parks, including national wildlife refuges, national scenic trails, a national seashore, national park units, and national

However – and wherever – tourists decide to spend their time in Virginia, they find plenty of things to love and to discover for themselves why “Virginia is for Lovers.” 

Virginia has 544 of the Appalachian Trail’s 2,175 miles – more than any other state.



About the author: *Rita McClenny is the President & CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation.*



Destination: Petersburg, VA

The role of tourism in revitalizing a city in distress

JUST THREE YEARS AGO, the City of Petersburg (pop. 32,000) faced insolvency: city employees were concerned about collecting paychecks, the outdated water system was bursting from its 100-year-old pipes, and the city's museums were closed. With all the tourism-related employees laid off, Petersburg experienced a sharp decline in visitors. This compounded the city's financial woes since it counts on its important place in Civil War history to generate tourism revenue.

Something had to be done. An emergency management team led by the Robert Bobb Group (RBG) – which has helped rejuvenate cities and government entities in places such as Detroit, Oakland, and Richmond – were brought in to turn things around.

Robert Bobb's group of leaders in Petersburg included Tom Tyrrell, a retired Marine Colonel; Nelsie Birch, a municipal financial consultant; Jack Berry, former executive of Venture Richmond; and Dileep Rajun, a municipal information technology consultant. Individuals from Etre Communications, Inc. were added to coordinate news being reported about the city and to redirect media stories which were mostly focused on crime.

Etre principals Leslie Strickler and Clay Hamner met with city officials, directors, employees, civic leaders and citizens to start crafting messages and information to put the city in a positive light. As a result, street crime became less of a media focus after Etre was able to bring context about the citizens of Petersburg and their communities.

Meanwhile, the Robert Bobb Group worked quickly. In a nine-month period they uncovered millions of dollars of uncollected revenue, balanced the budget, and initiated a forensic financial audit of the Office of the Treasurer. All of which helped to get Petersburg back on a solid footing.

Petersburg calling

With Petersburg in better shape, Strickler and Hamner returned to Richmond to service their East Coast clients. However, they found themselves missing Petersburg and its residents.

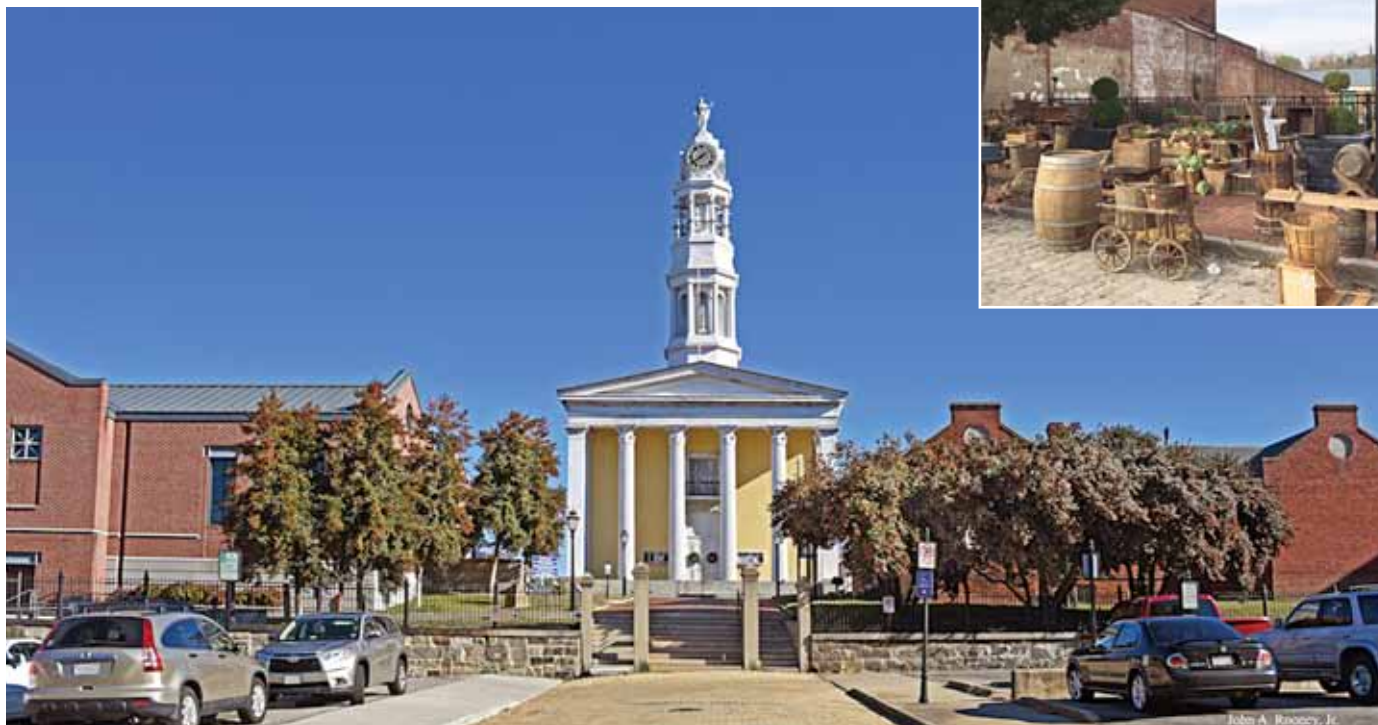
“What first struck us when we started working in Petersburg was the sense of community pride,” observes Strickler. She continues, “Petersburg is still recovering from the exit of the tobacco industry which at one time employed two-thirds of the city's workers; to fully recover it only needs the outside to believe in it.”

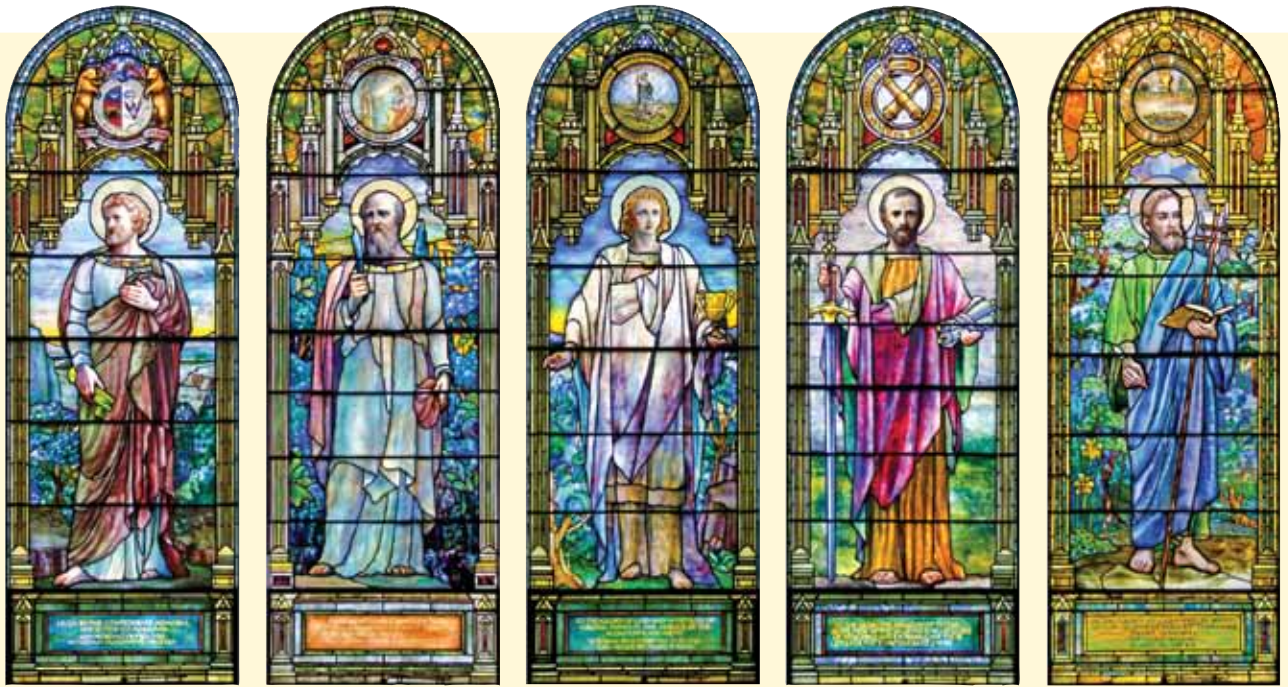
Strickler and Hamner knew they would have to create opportunities if they wanted to continue to help Petersburg. “We decided to start our own company and we named it St. Peter's Group to commemorate the city,” says Hamner.

Tourism to the rescue

For starters, Strickler and Hamner decided to take on tourism and promote attractions for visitors because they knew it was one of Petersburg's best opportunities to create a funding base that could sustain the city. Hamner had been involved with the museums before they closed in 2016 due to lack of funding. From that experience, he knew that the newly minted St. Peter's Group would need to deploy creative strategies to find private and public funding. “We had to create memorable marketing campaigns to draw attention to the city's assets,” he notes.

Chief among those assets is the city's rich history which began in the early 1600s with the Peter Jones Trading Station and unfolded in





Breakfast with Tiffany

ST. PETER'S GROUP is promoting 'Breakfast with Tiffany' events for visitors to get an up-close look at the Tiffany windows at Blandford Church. These events teach about the perseverance

of church women to secure funding for the windows," says Hamner. Additionally, attendees learn fascinating details about Tiffany's unique process for creating the stained glass.


a mix of war, industrialization, cultural triumphs and struggles. It's no coincidence that today the city serves as one of Hollywood's favorite historical backdrops.

After looking for private-public support, Hamner, Strickler and museum representatives explored conversations with the Virginia

Tourism Corporation (VTC). They were awarded three VTC grants totaling \$85,000. The first two were marketing leverage grants which require marketing partners. In this case, St. Peter's turned to the city of Petersburg, Petersburg Area Regional Tourism, Trapezium Brewing, the Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and the Petersburg Preservation Task Force. The third grant will drive visitors to a variety of Old Towne Petersburg attractions to increase awareness of the "American Evolution 2019" VTC campaign to help municipalities and localities tell stories of African American participation in the founding of America.

Results from the first VTC leverage grant in 2018 showed a 76% increase in visitation to the three Petersburg museums from 2017. The increase gave impetus to an additional 2019 marketing leverage grant award of \$25,000 and an additional \$10,000 award for the American Evolution 2019 project.

Strickler thinks other cities and towns should be inspired by what's happened in Petersburg. "It's

a matter of figuring out what your tourism assets are and then telling everyone," Strickler observes. "That is what the St. Peter's Group is doing in Petersburg and it's a model that can succeed elsewhere." 

International tourism has brought over 40,000 travelers from outside the US to Petersburg in the past 10 years.

Leslie Strickler and Clay Hamner are partners in St. Peter's Group, LLC.



Segway away!

ST. PETER'S GROUP has begun promoting of Segway museum tours of Petersburg guided by both Segway tour guides and the Petersburg director of museums. Additional Segway tours are being added that highlight African American history and Hollywood tours of the many locations where movies and TV shows have been filmed in Petersburg.

Regional news programs help keep tourists close to home

TYPE “TOURIST” INTO a Google image search and you will be rewarded with lots of smiling people in perfect weather posing in front of world landmarks, looking at maps, disembarking cruise ships, carrying suitcases, holding cameras and generally doing all the things stereotypically associated with being a “tourist.” But, like much of what happens on the internet, these images don’t give the full picture. In fact, you don’t have to get a fancy camera, get lost, buy tickets or even leave your state (especially when that state is Virginia) to find great things to do. For that matter, you don’t even have to leave your region of your state.

However, many people still think they must spend a bunch of money, travel long distances and generally inconvenience themselves to experience fun places and novel activities. In Virginia, several regional news shows are helping to change that perspective with segments dedicated to tourism activities in their viewing area.

Northern Virginia: “Fox 5 Zip Trips”

Promoting tourism is all about getting people to visit your desired location by showcasing what unique programs you have to offer. To instill a sense of pride within the community, the members of the community must be aware of the events or other activities taking place. This is where Fox 5 comes in.

Every Friday during the summer the Fox 5 news anchors travel from the confines of their studio to different localities across the region to produce a show live in front of an audience on location. These Friday outings – called “Fox 5 Zip Trips” – include different organizations active in the area, a “5 Must Stops” segment highlighting the best places to visit in that area, and segments during the show in which groups showcase their organizations. For example, a segment filmed in Woodbridge last year included a cooking demonstration from a regional BBQ business.

With their Zip Trips, Fox 5 promotes community pride in each area they visit. Shooting the show live on location not only promotes that area, it entices people watching at home to come out and see what’s happening on set.

Tidewater: “Funny Bones”

WAVY News 10 covers the tidewater region. A regular segment on the newscast called “Funny Bones” has two of the news anchors sit and chat with comedic guests. The producers of Funny Bones have filled the set with couches, chairs, a fireplace, and a coffee table in order to create a conversational tone and casual atmosphere for the anchors and their guests. The relaxed setting also differentiates the segment from regular news coverage. Each guest has their own humorous experiences and stories about the region to share. In this way, viewers may learn about places in their own areas they didn’t know about or think about familiar locations in a new way. The localities the comedians are from get some attention as well. Not only does Funny Bone get televised, it is also housed on the WAVY website – further expanding the broadcast’s reach.

Southwest: “Hometown Adventures”


WDBJ, a television network in southwest Virginia, has a segment called “Hometown Adventures” that highlight the best places to visit in southwest Virginia from a local’s perspective. For each show, one news anchor travels to locations in the area being spotlighted. Hometown Adventures covers a wide range of locations – from ice cream stores to alpaca farms! By visiting these places, WDBJ is spotlighting locations that are not as well-known as the major tourist attractions in the region. The show encourages residents to discover these “hidden gems” for themselves. While WDBJ has a relatively small viewing population, the network spans multiple counties. So, if someone from the Town of Wise sees a program about Smith Mountain Lake and chooses to make that their vacation destination, then the Hometown Adventure segment has done its job.



Media matters more (and more)

While television networks are great at promoting their region, the localities in those regions also work hard to promote their area. Many localities have offices of tourism dedicated to showing off their corner of the Commonwealth. These offices are responsible for promoting events through social media, sending out press pitches and releases, creating advertisements and campaigns, bringing events to their area, and so much more. For all these reasons, the office of tourism is a necessary operation within each jurisdiction.

Whether they create it, or simply use various platforms to promote their locality, media is a crucial part of how an office of tourism’s staff get their job done. While travel agencies and visitor centers still have an important role to play, visitors increasingly rely upon online resources to find “the best places to visit.” As such, it’s crucial that those wishing to promote tourism in their area use various media platforms to get the word out.

Media and tourism go hand and hand. Regardless of where you are from in Virginia there is a platform for you to use to help discover Virginia. So whether you find your new favorite spot from a picture on Pinterest, a commercial on television, a clip from the news or an event posted on Facebook...Happy exploring! 

About the author: *Josette Bulova is a communications intern with VML and a student at Christopher Newport University.*

Ask an expert

Historic ship excavations



IN KEEPING WITH this issue's tourism theme, we talked with the City of Alexandria's archeologist Eleanor E. Breen about her city's historic ship excavations which began in 2015 and continue today.

Where did you find the ships and how many were there?

Archaeologists discovered four ship hull fragments at two waterfront development sites at Duke Street in Old Town. These were not wrecked ships that met some catastrophic end. Instead, they were likely derelict vessels used to create more useable land along Alexandria's shoreline and to reach the deeper channel of the Potomac River.

OK, so no sunken treasure except the ships themselves. What efforts are being made to preserve the ships?

In the field, the fragile, waterlogged wooden timbers had to be kept continually wet to prevent drying and degradation. Additionally, the archaeologists carefully recorded and photographed the features to preserve that information for future study. Then the hull remnants were dismantled and kept submerged in water to allow for additional study and preservation. The first ship to emerge from the depths at the river's edge is now being conserved at Texas A&M University's Conservation Research Lab (CRL). The timbers of the other three ships discovered in March of 2018 are stable in tanks of water at a warehouse in the city awaiting additional documentation.

That sounds like a long process. Can members of the public see the ships?

To learn more about the ships, stop by the Alexandria Archaeology Museum at the Torpedo Factory in Old Town. We currently have a 3D conjectural scale model of the first ship made by the maritime archaeology experts at the CRL. Alexandria Archaeology is offering "Summer of Ships" programming beginning in June. The programs for families and adults offer an opportunity to tour where the timbers are being preserved and participate in hands-on, educational activities.

The first ship is temporarily in Texas and the other three are currently in Alexandria. These timbers and the other artifacts excavated from these two sites offer a tangible connection to Alexandria's maritime heritage.

Have you been able to determine when the ships were in use and where they were going?

The four ships likely date to the 18th century, possibly the early 19th century. The first ship found in 2015 has undergone additional study including dendrochronology, the science of tree ring dating. This study reported that the timbers used to build the ship were felled sometime after 1741 and we know from map evidence that the block was filled in sometime before 1798, so this is likely a Revolutionary War-era ship.

So, a bit of science and a bit of historical record make it possible to date the timbers. How did you find out that there were ships buried at the waterfront in the first place?

Archaeologists working on urban sites like these often use heavy machinery to peel away the modern fill that accumulates over years.

You can imagine the excitement when removing one of those scoops of dirt revealed a ship's timber!

Who would've guessed a scoop of dirt could bring so much history to life! How did you determine where each ship was located?

Previous excavations in other areas of the waterfront indicated that derelict vessels were used to create new land in Alexandria, but no known historical records show when or where these ships were used in that process.

It's amazing to think of ships being used to create new land. How long did it take to excavate the ships?

It took about 1-3 weeks to excavate each ship, but the overall archaeological project took months. Archaeologists excavated foundations of dwellings, warehouses, and other features including backyard privies! One site yielded evidence of Alexandria's first public works project, John Carlyle's 1755 warehouse that later became the site of the town's first brewery.

Privies, warehouses and breweries ... sounds like an 18th century hipster district! Do other waterfronts have ship graveyards and/or large archeological finds such as this?

Interestingly, the practice of using derelict ship hulls to make land is not unique to Alexandria and is seen in different places and in different time periods. For example, archaeologists have found evidence of this practice in places like Boston, New York, San Francisco and other port cities worldwide.


Sounds like Alexandria is in good company. Has the excavation of ships affected tourism at the waterfront?

As Alexandria's waterfront is redeveloped, we have already seen the city's early seaport history incorporated into new development and we look forward to more historic interpretation in the future. Discoveries like the ships draw visitors in search of authentic experiences.

As the expert, what part of this process has been the most exciting for you?

Being part of an archaeological project that revealed a virtually intact block representing Alexandria's seafaring days! While we may never know the names of these four ships or their exact routes or ports of call, these ships formed the foundations of the burgeoning seaport.

What aspect of this process do you believe the average citizen would find most interesting?

Hundreds of school children in Alexandria and northern Virginia area have experienced our newly developed "Ship Science" lesson where students use scientific methods to uncover the past. 



About the Expert: Eleanor E. Breen is the City Archaeologist of the Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology.

To find more information about this project – and other exciting projects Alexandria is working on – visit the Alexandria Archeology Museum's website at www.alexandriava.gov/Archaeology.

Franklin, VA vs. USA Today

A good town gets some undeserved bad press and give us a chance to find out why it's a great place.

ON MAY 14 OF THIS YEAR, *USA Today* published its 2019 list of “the worst cities to live in, state by state.” It was a slow news day, so WAVY News in Virginia Beach decided to send a reporter to the “winner” from Virginia to see how they felt about it.

“I hadn’t even seen the article when the reporter called to say he was outside,” said City of Franklin manager Amanda Jarratt. “That was a tough afternoon. Sure, we have our problems like everywhere else, but we are not the city we were portrayed to be by that article.”

Indeed, it seems that the “article” (just a handful of statistics and a few sentences of commentary about those statistics) really did fail to accurately portray Franklin. In the “methodology” section at the end of the article, the company that compiled the list for *USA Today*, 24/7 Wall Street, claims to have “used five-year average unemployment” as part of their calculations. In the listing for Franklin, however, they state that “An estimated 9.3% of workers in Franklin, Virginia, are out of a job,” giving the impression to those who don’t read the methodology section (i.e. everybody) that Franklin’s current unemployment rate is close to 10 percent.

This is not true.

As Franklin Mayor Frank Rabil – a native of the city – points out: “Nobody called to verify or validate any of those numbers. They gave a 9.3 percent unemployment rate. After the [International Paper] mill closed in 2009, we were up over 12 percent. Now it’s down to a little over 4 percent. So sure, at some point we were at 9.3 percent, but we’ve been trending down.”

Acknowledging that these types of articles are created for bored internet surfers, he continued, “You read those articles more for entertainment than anything else, until you become one of them!”

Attempts by city staff to get some clarification met with silence from *USA Today* and a cursory “We do not discuss our methodology” statement from 24/7 Wall Street [**Editor’s note** – VTC also attempted to contact 24/7 Wall Street but did not get a reply].

Like their mayor, the citizens of Franklin were not entertained by the *USA Today* article. A subsequent (previously scheduled) town hall meeting, normally attended by a handful of residents, was packed with more than 100 citizens that, according to Jarratt, “wound up engaging in some amazing dialogue.” In fact, Jarratt and several other community leaders believe that although the *USA Today* ranking was a shock, it was also a wake-up call to start fighting harder for their city and finding ways to make sure people outside Franklin had a true picture of what it offers.

So it was, on a recent afternoon in Richmond that my phone at

the editor’s desk of *Virginia Town & City* rang. It was Amanda Jarratt. I listened to what was going on in her city. “We’ve invited *USA Today* and 24/7 Wall Street to visit but they haven’t responded,” she concluded. I said I’d like to come learn about the real Franklin. “Sure,” she said, “we’d love to have you.”

PART 1 – in which we depart RVA and get coffee in Franklin

Tuesday, June 18 began as a warm but not-too-warm day in Richmond as VML staff photographer Manuel Timbreza, summer communications intern, Josette Bulova, and I roared out of town. Well, we didn’t actually “roar” since the car was an electric hybrid – but we made good time nonetheless as the relatively grim features of I-95 gave way to the beautiful countryside along Route 58. The drive was just long enough to get us out of our city mind-set by the time we coasted into Franklin at 10:30am sharp (Josette had made a detailed itinerary). With 30 minutes to spare before our meeting with City Manager Jarratt and Mayor Rabil, our first stop was the Daily Dose – a new coffee shop situated inside the equally new Hometown Pharmacy.



Daily Dose’s Coffee Bar Manager Sophronia Reid.

While Coffee Bar Manager Sophronia Reid prepared our caffeinated beverages, we took in the Daily Dose’s pleasant interior comprising a dozen or so tables, several counters, local craft items for sale and, in the rear, the Hometown Pharmacy itself. With free wi-fi and a cool, peaceful atmosphere it seemed like a good place to get some work done or just idly pass the time. We later learned that until recently the founders of the Hometown Pharmacy had worked in the Farm



City manager Amanda Jarratt and Mayor Frank Rabil

Fresh pharmacy. When that grocery store closed, they opened their own business and brought along the baristas who had worked in the defunct grocery's Starbucks kiosk to staff the Daily Dose.

Which is all well and good when it comes to community can-do spirit, but what about the coffee? Would my Americano hold up? Should I be concerned about getting a cup of coffee in the “worst city” in Virginia? I took a hesitant sip...nothing to fear. It was perfect! (In fact, I've had the world's worst cup of coffee, but that was many years ago in a truck stop far, far away from Franklin).

PART 2 – in which Mayor Rabil misses his chance to kiss a pig

With Josette insisting that we stay on schedule (so much for the lazy Generation Y stereotype), we did not tarry at the Daily Dose but quickly made our way to City Hall where we found City Manager Jarratt and Mayor Rabil waiting in a small conference room. City Manager Jarratt was engaging and personable with evident enthusiasm for her city and her job. Despite having a challenging position, three young children with full schedules and an electrician husband, she radiated energy. Perhaps she also appreciates the coffee at the Daily Dose? Or maybe, as she later told us while listing Franklin's assets, it's because Franklin (a member of MEPAV) owns and operates its own power company that serves Franklin, Isle of Wight and Southampton. Whatever the source of her energy, it was contagious.

Mayor Rabil was all genial earnestness as he talked about his deep ties to Franklin. “My father emigrated to the United States and when he got to Franklin, he opened a restaurant – Fred's Restaurant. It's still in the family. My brother runs it and my uncle (who just turned 100) works at the cash register. I grew up in the apartment above the restaurant. I was something of a street urchin, I had the run of the town.” Fittingly, he uses a food metaphor to describe what he likes about being mayor: “I love the opportunity to have a healthy discourse and inform people how we do what we do. I didn't know how the sausage was made either, but now that I know I like to share the recipe.”

While civic pride is not lacking in Mayor Rabil, he speaks like a realist when addressing what he considers the city's biggest problem (“We don't currently have a job-ready work force”) and strength (“Route 58 is the second most traveled road to the Port of Virginia; we are the gateway to Hampton Roads and North Carolina. That's something we need to leverage”). But he comes across as an unwavering optimist when describing a recent development that promises to address that problem by using that strength: “We just had a wonderful celebration with the Port of VA and Paul D. Camp community college about putting together a logistics program that can give our people the skills needed to get jobs at the Port or warehouses within a 50-mile radius of the Port, which we are.”

What are some of Franklin's other strengths according to Mayor Rabil?

“Positive things one can't find in surrounding localities. We are close to cities but we're still country. We've got a great library, hospital, country club, and retirement village. During the summer, every Wednesday we close off the downtown for a free classic car show and farmer's market. On Thursday's there's a free live music concert series at Barrett's Landing by the river...”

At this point, I was beginning to feel I'd made a wrong turn somewhere in my life to have not wound up in Franklin sooner.

I wrapped up our time with Mayor Rabil with a question I like to ask many of the local officials I meet: “What's the most unusual request you've received?”

Mayor Rabil thought for a quick minute: “[My job] is pretty routine. I get to kiss the babies and write the letters congratulating people. I just had the opportunity to issue a proclamation honoring my uncle's 100th birthday.”

Here I thought he was finished, but then he remembered a close encounter of the swine kind:

“I was asked to be in the running to kiss a pig as part of a fundraiser. I came in second. Nobody demanded a recount,” he joked. “I did not have the opportunity to kiss the pig.”



Bobby Cutchins

PART 3 – in which we discover a trove of vintage awesomeness at a car repair shop

Next on our list, Bobby's Tire & Auto Car. Owner Bobby Cutchins has been a member of the Franklin city council for three years, is a member of various boards, and sponsors the Wednesday evening "Franklin Cruise-In" classic car shows downtown. Suffice it to say, Bobby loves Franklin. Bobby and his son own two repair shops in Franklin with his son focused on the "modern" looking shop on the edge of town and Bobby on the downtown location. From the outside, the downtown shop looks like you'd expect, but walk inside and it is a collector's paradise; antiques and vintage memorabilia are artfully displayed throughout.

The large sunny waiting area has lots of amenities for children as part of Smart Beginnings' "Kid Friendly Activities" push. In one corner is a life-size replica of the front of the house in which Bobby grew up (his parents were sharecroppers) so young visitors can see what it was like to grow up near Franklin in the 1950s and 1960s. In the middle of the spacious floor, a vintage metal fire engine is ready to be ridden by the next kid waiting for Mom or Dad's car to be ready.

But that was just for starters. We were soon to learn that Bobby's shop, like Franklin, is full of hidden gems.

As we rounded the corner of his shop, we found ourselves surrounded by a full 1950's style diner set complete with red booths, vintage toy trucks, a real phone booth (no, the rotary phone inside didn't work; yes, I know how to use a rotary phone), an old gas pump, a Pepsi delivery man's uniform, and more. After showing us his office, which looked suitably old-school, Bobby then took us further into the back of his shop where we found a large garage meticulously decorated with scores of collectibles: from three fully resorted vintage cars and a juke box, to neon signs and period bric-a-brac; it was like stepping into the past. As we gazed in wonder at the array and considered the time and effort it must have taken to assemble it, Bobby confessed "I've been picking for a long time."

PART 4 – Lunch: in which we inadvertently choose sides in a local rivalry

Having accompanied us to Bobby's, City Manager Jarratt offered to join us for lunch at El Ranchero Mexican Grill and Bar (as indicated on our itinerary). We were happy to have her company but as we took seats in the restaurant's wonderfully cool dining area (it was getting pretty hot outside with rising humidity) she gave us a warning: "You know, there's quite a local rivalry between fans of El Ranchero and Don Pancho's Cantina."

Leaning in closer, she practically whispered: "It's all about the white sauce."

I looked around the busy restaurant and I became concerned. "By coming here today," I asked, "have we chosen a side?" I knew that Josette had done rigorous research in putting together our itinerary, but no amount of internet searching could have prepared us for the possibility of a white sauce controversy. Moreover, as VML staff it was crucial that we not appear to take sides on this issue. Indeed, the VML position is that Virginia localities maintain the local option to determine the best white sauce in town without interference from Richmond.

Jarratt's answer, though light-hearted, was not reassuring: "It's possible you have," she quipped. "I make sure to alternate my visits between the two so as to remain neutral."

For the record, the VML staff endorses neither the white sauce at El Ranchero nor Don Pancho's and will make every effort to dine at the latter establishment soon. And, in case you are wondering, the white sauce at El Ranchero was quite good.



PART 5 – in which we find more than a garden center, Manuel purchases a hat and a chicken eludes me

It's worth noting that although its population does not exceed 9,000 souls, Franklin is able to maintain a Lowe's as well as locally owned True Value and Ace Hardware locations. Earlier, Mayor Rabil had explained to me that when Lowe's moved in, the local stores found ways to diversify their services and offerings (i.e. free deliveries and equipment rental) to stay competitive.



Mary Ann and Brad Turner with one of their daughters in their Southern Garden Charm store.

The next stop on our itinerary proved to be a similarly innovative local business – Southern Garden Charm which turned out to be exactly what it sounded like...charming! As we walked around the shop admiring the various plants and gardening materials, we were a little surprised to find a large variety of jewelry, hats, flags, shirts, cups, cards, fountains, statues, beach house décor and the like. Besides those items, Southern Garden Charm also maintains a custom embroidered t-shirt business with the tools and skills needed to reproduce pretty much any design their customers can imagine. We learned that this side of the business has increased to the point where they had to purchase a ten-needle sewing machine! The shop's co-owner Brad Turner (who also works as a firefighter in Chesapeake) gave full credit for the expansive, eclectic selection of goods to the store's other co-owner, his wife Mary Ann. "It was her idea to start offering more than just the garden stuff," he explained. "And it's really taken off."

Before we left, Manuel purchased a hat, but I resisted the urge to purchase an enormous metal chicken for my garden. I wasn't sure how I'd get it home.

PART 6 – in which we are shown a pretty cool apartment by a former race car driver

Our next destination took us to the heart of downtown where Main Event has an all-purpose space created and owned by the father and son team of Ray and Mike Smith along with Mike's wife Lauren. The historic brick building that houses Main Event began life in the 1880s as Steinhart Hardware but was inundated by the flood of 1999 which affected most of downtown. The Smith's gutted the interior of the original building to create a new, brightly lit space with exposed brick walls, period touches (like a vintage design ceiling) and a magnificent wood floor. Equipped with tables, lights, sound, multiple



A Main Event Lofts apartment.

wall-mounted large screen monitors, and a bar, the space is perfect for conferences, wedding receptions, graduation parties, and...well, pretty much anything. During the colder months, the Main Event is also home to a comedy club which recently began pulling in national acts.

Before gutting the entire building, Ray, Mike and Lauren restored the original elevator and had it enclosed in glass, so a part of the building's original history is still on display. The second floor is home to "Main Event Lofts" – several refinished apartments that combine the modern flavor of open floor plans and technological amenities with a splash of history courtesy the original brick walls and detailed molding. With the four available apartments rented, the Smiths plan to open six more units soon.

Besides Main Event and Main Event Lofts, Ray and Mike share a passion for vintage cars (Mike has raced on every major speedway in the U.S.) and were among the community's business leaders who helped to get the weekly Franklin Cruise-In up and running. Though they are quick to give credit to the city's leaders for making it possible: "They supported our need to close off the downtown streets, provided an umbrella of insurance and public works staff to assist," notes Mike. Although the event now draws about 100 cars each week, with more than 400 entrants at the season closer, Ray wryly observed that the first time they held the event they only had 3 entries. "And 2 of those were our cars!" he concedes.

After the damage caused by the flood of 1999, only one building in downtown Franklin retains its original wood floor which survived because the location was originally a paint store and decades of spilled paint protected it.



Ray and Mike Smith

PART 7 – in which we shelter from a storm and learn more about Franklin

The humidity that had been steadily increasing all day finally resulted in a downpour as we walked around the corner to visit Lavender Lace and Resale – just a couple of the boutique thrifts in downtown Franklin.

At this point in my accounting of our visit to Franklin, it would be remiss of me not to thank the merchants of downtown Franklin who have wisely and mercifully placed large awnings above each of their businesses. Running under these made it possible for us to return to our car more-or-less dry. However, we quickly realized that we still did not have a picture of the fabled Fred's Restaurant so, after passing our car and walking under awnings for another block Manuel was able to snap some photos. From this vantage point, we noticed the Downtown Franklin Association Visitor Center across an open parking lot. We decided to make a dash for it.

It was at this moment that the storm fully arrived. Torrential rain, thunder, lightning. The works.


We burst through the doors of the old train depot that houses the visitor center soaked but also amused by our predicament: We were visitors trapped in the visitor's center! Inside we were confronted by a smiling man who said, "You must be the folks from the Virginia Municipal League." I wasn't sure if he had advance knowledge of our visit or if only VML staff were known to run through storms to get to the visitor center.

While the storm raged outside the little depot, Dan Howe (aka "Downtown Dan") the director the Downtown Franklin Association regaled us with tales of Franklin's history. He knew the story behind every building downtown and referred to long gone residents and families from the past as if they were still eating at Fred's and shopping on Main Street. He took us from the devastating fire of 1881 that burned down much of the city, to the arrival of the International Paper company in 1999. Dan chronicled the scope and causes of the devastating flood that same year and the closure of International Paper in 2009, which put half the city's population temporarily out of work. He spoke of the mill's reopening in 2014 and the number of businesses that had moved downtown recently. We came to appreci-



ate how much Franklin has overcome and what that says about the people who have worked (and are continuing to work) to make it better every year.

When the rain finally slackened, we thanked Dan for his hospitality and returned to our car.

With a steady drizzle still falling and the occasional bolt of lightning flashing on the horizon, our visit to Barrett's Landing Riverfront Park would have to wait for another day. But we were able to check off the last item on our Franklin itinerary by driving around downtown and snapping photos of the beautiful murals (one by Richmond's own Happy the Artist) that adorn several of the brick sided buildings. After that, the pastoral byway of Route 58 beckoned and we were homeward bound. 

About the author: *Rob Bullington is editor of Virginia Town & City and is VML's Director of Communications.*

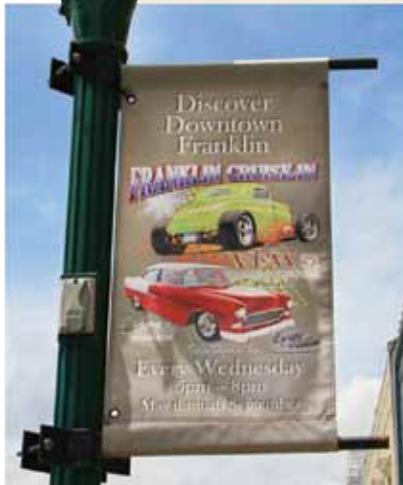




Editor's note: I'd like to thank the publishers of *USA Today* and 24/7 Wall Street for giving us a reason to go to Franklin where we had a great time and met a bunch of fantastic people. I encourage them to accept the city's invitation to visit so they can find out why Franklin is one of the best places in the Commonwealth.

Some local events I encourage them to check out:

- **The Franklin Cruise-In** – a family friendly event that is free to participants and spectators. Those entering vehicles get a chance to win one of three \$1,000 prizes and free hot dogs at Fred's Restaurant. The Franklin Cruise-In occurs every Wednesday from 5 p.m. - 8 p.m. from May through September.
- **We Be Jammin'** – free summer concert series at Barrett's Landing Riverfront Park 6 p.m. - 10 p.m. every Thursday from late May through August.
- **Fourth of July Fireworks** – live music, car show, 2,000 free hot dogs and fireworks! This is what the holiday is all about. If you come, bring lawn chairs.
- **Fishing, Boating and Floating** – before they join up to become the Chowan River, the Nottoway and Blackwater rivers flow past Franklin. Don't forget your VA freshwater license because according to the Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries "Angling for bowfin provides a great opportunity to catch many hard-fighting fish in a short amount of time. The possibility also exists to land a trophy bowfin and blue catfish."



2019 VML 'Virginia You Love' survey contest winners

FOR THIS YEAR'S TOURISM ISSUE, we wanted to find out what Virginians thought were the best places to visit – both in their locality and elsewhere in the Commonwealth. VML's "Virginia You Love" survey contest asked three main questions: What is your favorite hidden tourist gem in your locality? What is the best spot for a tourist to experience your locality? And, what is your favorite place to visit in Virginia NOT in your locality?

Popular winner: Historic downtown Warrenton

Warrenton is a small-town with a big heart and an even bigger sense of community. Undoubtedly, this spirit and pride are why Warrenton won the popular vote for the 2019 VML "Virginia You Love" online survey contest.

Positioned on the outer ring of fast paced, Northern Virginia communities, Warrenton has been described as a "bustling county seat with great walkability." Historic downtown Warrenton includes a



"beautiful and picturesque [view] of the courthouse" as well as "lots of eating choices, fun retail options, microbreweries, and cideries." Moreover, "local history, local businesses, and a walkable small-town atmosphere" abound in downtown Warrenton. Those interested in learning more about local history can visit the Old Town Jail Museum with interactive lessons and actual prison cells. This museum is a great place for kids to learn about Warrenton while having a fun day of adventures.

Besides the rich history surrounding Warrenton, the town of Warrenton also has a large outdoor farmers market with fresh produce, locally made items, food trucks, and more. If you want to feel the love and sense of community – the farmers market is the place to be! Warrenton hosts a series of annual events that draw large groups of people. For example, the Gold Cup horse race brings the community together and brings in visitors from all over the region. Warrenton has been characterized as a place where "everyone is treated like a neighbor." So, no matter if you live in Warrenton or are just passing through you are sure to find a warm welcome.





With views like these, it's no surprise that Skyline Drive is a favorite destination.

Honorable mention: Skyline Drive


After our survey results were tabulated, we noticed that Skyline Drive was ranked in the top three of each category. We thought this made it worthy of a shout-out as a tourist location favored by folks from all over Virginia.

Skyline Drive is a 105-mile-long road running the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains and spanning multiple counties. This road is the only public access road to Shenandoah National Park. Beginning at mile marker 0 in Front Royal, near route 66 and 340, the winding road's markers indicate interesting places to stop including nearly 70 breathtaking overlooks. The largest developed area along this scenic drive is Big Meadows near mile marker 51 which is surrounded by overlooks and hiking trails.

So, whether your thing is sunsets or sunrises, picnics or bird watching, hiking or biking, or looking for native wildlife such as deer, bears and wild turkeys (or all the above) – Skyline Drive is a great place to be.

Staff pick: Bisset Park

After carefully considering all the submissions (including the respondent who enthusiastically voted for his backyard as the best spot in his locality), we have chosen Bisset Park as this year's staff pick! Bisset Park, located in Radford along the New River, is full of life, wonder, and adventure. Moreover, Bisset Park earned numerous votes within each category, making it apparent that we are not alone in loving this location.

Bisset Park – the largest city park in Radford – is located along a 57 acre stretch of riverfront with easy access to canoeing, kayaking, and tubing. Besides water activities, Bisset Park also has a gazebo, picnic areas, a football field, soccer fields, and tennis courts. Visitors also enjoy hiking or biking the 3.5-mile long riverway trail with beautiful views of the New River and opportunities to observe wildlife such as birds and dragon flies. Those who enjoy a bit of history in their outdoor adventures visit the Civil War trail at the far end of the park. A marker on this trail indicates where the original foundation of a bridge was burned during the Battle of New River Bridge. This historic bridge is still visible today from the riverbank. 



Bisset Park is full of vibrant colors, life, laughter, trails, history, and fun.



About the author:

Josette Bulova is a communications intern with VML and a student at Christopher Newport University.

Supreme Court Review for Local Governments 2019

By Lisa Soronen

State & Local Legal Center



THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE is pleased to reprint this helpful and insightful look at recent Supreme Court activity of interest to local governments. The original article was published by the State and Local Legal Center (SLLC) in July 2019. The next issue of *Virginia Town & City* will include a reprint of the SLLC's Supreme Court Preview of upcoming cases.

**Indicates a case where the SLLC has filed or will file an amicus brief.*

The going theory on the Supreme Court's docket for the 2018-2019 term was that the Court tried to stay out of controversial cases after Justice Kavanaugh's contentious confirmation process. If that was in fact the Court's goal it was mostly able to accomplish it except for the census and partisan gerrymandering cases. As always, the Su-

preme Court decided numerous cases affecting local governments – big and small. This article summarizes the four most significant cases for local governments. At the time of publication, it remains unclear whether the 2020 census will contain the citizenship question.

In *Department of Commerce v. New York* five Justices held that the reasons Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross gave for adding the citizenship question to the 2020 census were pretextual in violation of the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).

Since 1950 the decennial census has not asked all households a question about citizenship. In a March 2018 memo Secretary Ross announced he would reinstate the question at the request of the Department of Justice (DOJ), "which sought improved data about citizen voting-age population for purposes of enforcing the Voting Rights Act (VRA)."

According to the Court additional discovery revealed the following:

“that the Secretary was determined to reinstate a citizenship question from the time he entered office; instructed his staff to make it happen; waited while Commerce officials explored whether another agency would request census-based citizenship data; subsequently contacted the Attorney General himself to ask if DOJ would make the request; and adopted the Voting Rights Act rationale late in the process.”

The Court agreed “to a point” with the federal government that there was “nothing objectionable or even surprising in this.” But the APA requires that federal agencies don’t act arbitrarily and capriciously. Here, “viewing the evidence as a whole,” Ross’s decision to include the citizenship question “cannot be adequately explained in terms of DOJ’s request for improved citizenship data to better enforce the VRA.”

The Bladensburg Peace Cross may stay the Supreme Court ruled in a 7-2 decision in *American Legion v. American Humanist Association*.*

In 1918, residents of Prince George’s County, Maryland, decided to erect a memorial to honor soldiers from the county who died in World War I. The monument, completed in 1925, is a 32-foot tall Latin cross that sits on a large pedestal. Among other things, it contains a plaque listing the names of 49 local men who died in the war. Over the years, memorials honoring the veterans of other conflicts have been added to the surrounding area. In 1961, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission acquired the cross and the land it is on in order to preserve it and address traffic-safety concerns.

The American Humanist Association sued the Commission claiming the cross’s presence on public land and the Commission’s maintenance of it violates the Establishment Clause.

The Supreme Court disagreed. Significantly, the Court stated that “retaining established, religiously expressive monuments, symbols, and practices is quite different from erecting or adopting new ones. The passage of time gives rise to a strong presumption of constitutionality.”

According to the Court, the Bladensburg Cross doesn’t violate the constitution first because it “carries special significance in commemorating World War I.” Second, “with the passage of time” the cross “has acquired historical importance.” Third, the monument didn’t “deliberately disrespect” area soldiers who perished in World War I” as no evidence indicates Jewish soldiers were excluded. Finally, according to the majority, “it is surely relevant that the monument commemorates the death of particular individuals.”

While the Court acknowledged that the cross “is undoubtedly a Christian symbol,” it opined “that fact should not blind us to everything else that the Bladensburg Cross has come to represent.”

In *Nieves v. Bartlett** the Supreme Court held 6-3 that the existence of probable cause generally defeats a First Amendment retaliatory arrest case.

While police officer Luis Nieves and Russell Bartlett have different versions of what happened at Artic Man, a weeklong winter sports festival in Alaska, even the Ninth Circuit agreed that Sergeant Nieves had probable cause to arrest Bartlett. Sergeant Nieves knew Bartlett had been drinking and talking loudly when he saw Bartlett stand close to another officer and the officer push Bartlett away. But Bartlett claimed Sergeant Nieves really arrested him in violation of his First Amendment free speech rights because he had refused to speak to Sergeant Nieves previously, which Bartlett reminded Sergeant Nieves of when he was being arrested.

The Supreme Court held that probable cause generally defeats a retaliatory arrest claim. The Court relied primarily on *Hartman v. Moore* (2006), where it held that probable cause defeats retaliatory prosecution claims.

In *Hartman*, the Court noted that proving causation is difficult in retaliatory prosecution cases because “the official with the malicious motive does not carry out the retaliatory action himself – the decision to bring charges is instead made by a prosecutor, who is generally immune from suit and whose decisions receive a presumption of regularity.” Similarly, it is difficult to determine if protected speech is the cause of an arrest because “protected speech is often a ‘wholly legitimate consideration’ for officers when deciding whether to make an arrest.”

The Court’s caveat is the “no-probable cause requirement should not apply when a plaintiff presents objective evidence that he was arrested when otherwise similarly situated individuals not engaged in the same sort of protected speech had not been.”

In a 5-4 opinion in *Knick v. Township of Scott** the Supreme Court held that a property owner may proceed directly to federal court with a takings claim.

In *Knick* the Court overturned *Williamson County Regional Planning Commission v. Hamilton Bank of Johnson City* (1985), which held that before a takings claim may be brought in federal court, a property owner must first seek just compensation under state law in state court.

The Township of Scott adopted an ordinance requiring cemeteries, whether located on public or private land, to be open and accessible to the public during the day. Code enforcement could enter any property to determine the “existence and location” of a cemetery. The Constitution’s Takings Clause states that “private property [shall not] be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

Rose Mary Knick sued the county in federal (rather than state) court claiming the ordinance was invalid per the Takings Clause after code enforcement went onto her property without a warrant looking for (and finding) a cemetery not open to the public during the day.

The Court overruled the state-litigation requirement of *Williamson County* reasoning the Takings Clause doesn’t say: “Nor shall private property be taken for public use, *without an available procedure that will result in compensation.*”

Conclusion

Perhaps the most interesting fact about the 2018-2019 term is that Justice Kavanaugh was the Justice most in the majority. Whether this is a sign that he will join Chief Justice Roberts to form a center right coalition on the Court is unclear. Notably, Justice Kavanaugh joined his more conservative colleagues in both of the big cases of the term (census and partisan gerrymandering) while Chief Justice Roberts joined his more liberal colleagues in the portion of the census opinion ruling Ross’s reasons for adding the citizenship question were pretextual. Only time will tell how the addition of Justice Kavanaugh will impact local governments in big and small cases.

About the author: *Lisa Soronen is the Executive Director of the State and Local Legal Center (Washington, D.C.). The SLLC files Supreme Court amicus curiae briefs on behalf of the Big Seven national organizations representing state and local governments and is a resource to states and local governments on the Supreme Court.*



Update on the Virginia Local Government Management Association

VLGMA IS A NON-PROFIT, non-partisan professional association composed primarily of city, town, and county managers and administrators as well as members of local government management teams. The Association exists to support and strengthen the local government management profession and to promote the next generation of local government management professionals through training, networking, and resource sharing. VLGMA is a state affiliate of the International City-County Management Association (ICMA) and is an affiliate group of the Virginia Municipal League.

Elections

During the VLGMA's recent summer conference in Virginia Beach, several officers and executive committee members were elected to the association's leadership for the 2019-2020 term.

Rocky Mount Town Manager, James Ervin was elected as president. Ervin has served as an officer of the Association since 2015 and before that, as a member of the Association's executive committee. Falls Church Deputy City Manager Cindy Mester was elected as the Association's president-elect.

Other officers elected during the Association's annual conference were Montgomery County Administrator Craig Meadows as first vice president, Vienna Town Manager Mercury Payton as second vice president, Augusta County Administrator Timothy Fitzgerald as third vice president, and Winchester City Manager Eden Freeman as secretary. Chesterfield County Administrator Joseph Casey is immediate past president.

The Association also elected members to serve on its executive committee. Six members were elected for a two-year term. These are Goochland County Administrator John Budesky, Harrisonburg City Manager Eric Campbell, Amherst Town Manager Sara Carter, Louisa County Administrator Christian Goodwin, Williamsburg City Manager Andrew Trivette, and Loudoun Assistant County Administrator Valmarie Turner. Five members starting the second year of a two-year term are York Deputy County Administrator Vivian Calkins-McGettigan, Roanoke Assistant County Administrator Richard Caywood, Scottsville Town Administrator Matt Lawless, Manassas City Manager Patrick Pate, and King George County Administrator Neiman Young. Prince George Deputy County Administrator Jeffrey Stoke was elected to fill an open slot on the executive committee for 2019-2020.

Marcia Mashaw Outstanding Assistant award

During the VLGMA conference, Goochland Deputy County Administrator for Operations Derek Stamey was presented with the 2019 Marcia Mashaw Outstanding Assistant award.

Stamey has served in Goochland County since 2009 where he oversees general services, animal protection, and parks and recreation for the county. According to County Administrator John Budesky, he has been instrumental in spearheading countless capital and special projects including the development of the county's 25-year Capital Improvement Plan – the first of its kind in the Commonwealth. Under his leadership, Goochland has been recognized with two Governor's

Awards for Environmental Excellence and seven Virginia Recreation and Parks Society Awards.

Most recently, Stamey and his county team, along with community members, were honored by the VCU Wilder School of Government and Public Administration as the recipient of the 2019 Excellence in Virginia Government Award for Community Enhancement. The county was recognized for its renovation of the former Central High School into a community facility featuring space for programs and activities as well as a museum and conference space.

VLGMA created the Marcia Mashaw Outstanding Assistant Award to honor the memory of Marcia Mashaw, an active member of VLGMA and its board, who was serving as Blacksburg Assistant Town Manager at the time of her death in 1986.

About the author: *Janet Areson is the Virginia Municipal League's director of policy development and serves as VLGMA's executive secretary.*



FOCUS ON OUR MEMBERS

Local officials are a fascinating bunch of people who have careers all over the board and a range of backgrounds and interests. Over the next several months VML will include a brief focus on various members so that we can all gain an appreciation of what a diverse group occupies the seats in council and board chambers. Do you know someone who could be featured? Email Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

By Mary Jo Fields

John L. Rowe, Jr., Mayor, City of Portsmouth

JOHN ROWE WAS ELECTED to a four-year term as mayor of Portsmouth in 2016. It was his first try at elective office although he is certainly no stranger to local government or to Portsmouth – his hometown.

Following graduation from the Virginia Military Institute, John served five years in the United States Army as a commissioned officer in the infantry. While in the military, John served as a platoon leader and company commander in Germany, a combat advisor to an infantry battalion of the Regular Army of the Republic of South Vietnam and an instructor of military science at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. While teaching he earned a Master of Public Administration degree from Middle Tennessee and subsequently embarked upon a new career in local government administration.



John spent the next four and a half decades in public administration in Virginia, including more than three decades in local government management and nearly a decade in public higher education as a vice president for finance and administration at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). He helped create several regional authorities in Hampton Roads, including the predecessors to Hampton Roads Transit and the Southeastern Virginia Public Service Authority.

His work in local government began in 1971 working for Bob House, who was then the city manager in Norfolk. He became the assistant city manager in Suffolk when House took on the city manager's job in 1974 and later served as the city manager in Poquoson, Suffolk, Clifton Forge, Emporia, and Portsmouth. He also was an interim town manager in Windsor and the business executive for VMI. After he left VMI, he returned to his hometown hoping for a bit of peace and quiet.

But then his life took a different direction. People kept asking him to run for mayor; he found he couldn't go shopping, go to church, or go to a restaurant without someone coming up to him and asking him to run for mayor. He finally said "yes," and went on to win the election.

During his years as a city manager, John had come to respect many of the elected officials with whom he worked because he grew to appreciate the courage it takes to run for office and put oneself "out there" on the public stage. Now, after spending a career on the side of the stage, pushing other people into the spotlight, he is the one at center stage! These days he takes extra care to not overstep his role as mayor so that his city manager and Portsmouth's "fantastic staff" can do their best for the city.

What has he learned from his experience? Most importantly, be a good listener because people want to be heard and to know their concerns are being taken seriously. The other lesson is one that any politician in a competitive situation knows all too well: When running for office, be willing to knock on a lot of doors and remember to wear comfortable shoes!

About the author: *Mary Jo Fields is an adjunct VML staff member and a contributing editor to Virginia Town & City.*

Charles Harbaugh, IV, Mayor, Town of Middletown

A COMMON THREAD among local officials is a passion for their communities and that passion is clearly seen in Charles Harbaugh, IV. In 2010 he was elected to the town council in his hometown of Middletown while attending Shenandoah University. He became mayor in 2012 at the ripe old age of 24.



As it is for many towns in Virginia, the job of mayor in Middletown is technically part-time. Charles' "real" job is director of business services at NW Works, a non-profit organization in Winchester that trains and employs adults with significant barriers to employment. The organization works with people who have long-term disabilities (such as mental health issues, physical challenges, traumatic brain injury, intellectual disabilities, and hearing and vision impairments); those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); veterans with disabilities; and others who have barriers to employment. The goal is for people to get the training to secure and sustain meaningful employment.

Charles is also an adjunct professor at Lord Fairfax Community College where he teaches business classes, he broadcasts college football and basketball games, participates in Revolutionary War and Civil War reenactments, serves as a mentor to young students, co-authored a book on Middletown and has been the announcer at Winchester's Apple Blossom Festival. Additionally, he serves on the boards of the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, Our Health and City National Bank Regional.

So yeah, he stays busy. But so is his town.

Middletown, located in Frederick County about 14 miles from Winchester, is 45 miles west of Dulles Airport and is experiencing the overflow growth from the DC metropolitan area. Charles has been the driving force behind several new town projects, including an Easter egg hunt, an antique car show, a Christmas parade, and a farm-to-table dinner in the middle of Main Street. An avid Washington Redskins fan, he has brought in multiple players from the team to serve as grand marshals of the town's Fourth of July parade. And, he's focused on traditional municipal endeavors, such as new playground equipment and the construction of a baseball diamond.

His love for history is seen in one of his hobbies – collecting local license plates. These were metal plates attached to the top of the Virginia state plate on the front of cars. The plates were the predecessor to window stickers and were phased out for the most part during the 1970s. The tags had data such as the date, tag number, name of the locality and registration number, but some also included slogans and logos. An interesting fact about the plates: in 1943 and 1944, they were made of soy because of the need for metal during World War II. Middletown and Wachapreague are currently the only two towns in Virginia that still use the plates.

Charles may have started his career as an elected official at a young age, but he knows the importance of keeping an eye on the past while focusing on the future.



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Find out more. Contact VHDA's Director of Strategic Housing, Chris Thompson, at 804-343-5692 or Chris.Thompson@vhda.com.

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