

VTC

VIRGINIA
TOWN & CITY

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A Norfolk state of mind

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE



2020 VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



Inside:

The 2020 year in review
VA's Economy vs. the Pandemic
Member Spotlights
...and more!





Organizations make decisions every day.

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insight

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ABOUT THE COVER

A virtual conference this year means missing out on everything this fantastic city has to offer; it also means having a lot to look forward to when we return in 2023.

DEPARTMENTS:

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE 2
PEOPLE 38
PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY 40



VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

Welcome to a Norfolk State of Mind

The VisitNorfolk staff explain all the reasons their city is a great place for your next trip and give us all something to look forward to in 2023 4

2021 Conference: Invitation to Leesburg (and the towns of Loudoun County)

The VisitLoudoun staff take us on a tour of Loudoun's seven towns that will play a role in next year's conference 8

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT:

A Message from VML President Thomas R. Smigiel 10
VML Executive Committee 11
2019-2020 Annual Report 12
Annual Briefings from VML's Affiliate Organizations 16
2020 Legislative and Policy Committees 20

FEATURES:

Virginia's Economy vs. the Pandemic

Tristan Baird looks at what happens when a healthy economy gets sick 22

Spotlights on our members:

Town of Chilhowie: A revitalized downtown nears completion 26

Town of Elkton: Mural project promotes downtown and preserves history 27

City of Manassas: PPE distributed to residents in need 28

City of Petersburg: Finances back on track and running full steam ahead 29

Town of Hillsboro: Safe drinking water project ends two-decade boil water notice 30

City of Roanoke: A new era for emergency communications 32

Town of Pulaski: Small town revitalization has big impact 34

VRSA's Insight application

VRSA staff explain how Insight bridges the gap between your locality's strategic plan and everyday decisions 36

Making the best of it: Special sessions and virtual conferences

AS I WRITE THIS MONTH'S ARTICLE, I am hopeful that by the time it is published the 2020 General Assembly Special Session will be over. The original purpose of this session was to amend the state budget in response to the recession and to make other adjustments in response to COVID-19. Sounds like a straightforward proposition to focus lawmaker's efforts and bring about a timely conclusion, right?

Instead, 409 pieces of legislation were introduced as of September 8th, with 197 still pending! For perspective, during the Special Session in 2019 there were 160 pieces of legislation introduced and in 2015 only 96 (Source: Legislative Services website). And neither of those sessions were hampered by social distancing, virtual meetings, and all the other necessary inconveniences of the 2020 Special Session.

VML's priority during this session has been to ensure that the maximum amount of CARES

Act money flows to localities with as much flexibility allowed by the U.S. Treasury. We have also maintained our positions on protecting current local revenues and opposing unfunded mandates. Other issues that we are watching include election costs, qualified immunity, evictions and other housing issues, broadband, police reform and utility repayments. As the Special Session continues, VML will advocate for our localities and we will provide information on those efforts via *eNews* and in our

FAQs: Analysis of CARES Act Funding Questions Raised by Local Governments about Eligible Spending Purposes (currently in its 9th version).

How (and when) this session will end remains to be seen. We encourage our members to talk with their Delegations. This is more important than ever since it is awfully hard to look a person in the eye when everyone is meeting virtually! We have already seen that our members can make a difference as was the case with the utility debt repayment legislation introduced by Senator McClellan. By the time that bill left the Senate it was much improved from what was originally introduced. Thank you for your help!

But enough about the Special Session...

Before I go any further, I want to take a moment to acknowledge Laurie DiRocco (former Mayor of Vienna), Lisa Merkel (Mayor of Herndon) and John Rowe (Mayor of Portsmouth) for their service on VML's Executive Committee. Laurie resigned

earlier this year after her term ended and Lisa and John will be resigning soon. During their terms, each of these amazing public servants has shown a true dedication to local government and have demonstrated a continued commitment to improved local government even after their official service ended. I have very much appreciated their work on VML's behalf.



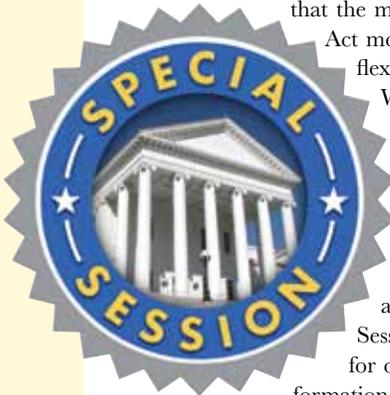
Lisa Merkel



Laurie DiRocco



John Rowe



Over the last two years, I have had the pleasure of presenting several awards at City of Norfolk Council meetings and we would talk about the 2020 conference, Host City night and all of the positive growth and activity in the City that we would be able to showcase. As disappointed as we all are not to be going to Norfolk this year, I am grateful to the City and VisitNorfolk for their understanding and support in shifting to an all-virtual conference. VML will go to Norfolk in 2023 (after 2021 in Leesburg and 2022 in Richmond as planned). So, while we look forward to being in Norfolk in a few years, for the time being we will hold our conference remotely but with a "Norfolk State of Mind!"

The VML staff has worked hard to shift to a virtual conference. I ask that you bear with us as we become adept at something that we never expected to do. Prior to the pandemic, who would have chosen to gather hundreds of people virtually instead of in person? Yet, that is what we must do so we are working to ensure that you have an enjoyable and educational experience. Although I wouldn't choose to do it this way every year, I admit I am excited about the virtual exhibit hall and want to thank our exhibitors for adapting with us. The exhibit hall will be open for several days and allow for a personalized experience; please take the time to visit and thank our exhibitors.

Finally, as you may have seen in recent editions of *eNews*, those registered for the annual conference should keep an eye on their mailbox for a box of goodies. I don't want to divulge the contents of the conference boxes, but among the items included is a recipe from Norfolk for a cocktail called "Mermaid Water." I urge you to collect the ingredients ahead of time so you can follow along with our guest mixologist at the end of the first day as he demonstrates the proper way to keep a mermaid hydrated.

Thank you for registering, and let's try to have some virtual fun! See you soon!!

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Welcome to a Norfolk State of Mind

THE VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE is just around the corner. If this were a normal year, we'd be getting ready to roll out the red carpet for our fellow members. But this year is anything but normal. While we wish you could all be here with us in Norfolk, we couldn't be more thrilled to host you virtually in 2020 and welcome you back in-person in 2023. To help you get into a Norfolk state of mind, and whet your appetite for awaits, here's a preview of what you can expect in 2023.

Never far from inspiration

A vibrant, urban city on the water, Norfolk is a unique destination that provides the best of both worlds for convention and meeting attendees. Housing the world's largest naval base, NATO's North American headquarters and an expansive seaport, the city is a melting pot of cultures and ideas that shine through in its diverse people, cuisines, attractions, shopping and entertainment venues. With an abundance of Black and Minority-owned businesses, Norfolk's tight-knit community supports, uplifts, and celebrates our small business owners. You can feel the Southern hospitality and creative grit while exploring Norfolk's walkable downtown, two historic districts and 144 miles of shoreline.

Getting there and getting around

Located in the middle of the Eastern seaboard, just off Interstate 64, Norfolk is only a day's drive from two-thirds of the US population, making for a convenient destination for both business and leisure. The Norfolk International Airport offers 150 nonstop flights to major airports on six different airlines, and the downtown Amtrak station will bring you straight into the heart of the city. Once here, downtown Norfolk and its surrounding neighborhoods are highly walkable, with designated pedestrian trails and bike lanes. A public light rail train is also available to transport you outside of the downtown area.

Being there

The 2023 VML annual conference will be held at the Virginia Green Certified Norfolk Waterside Marriott, which completed an extensive renovation in July of 2020. This hotel offers stylish comfort with stunning water views of the Elizabeth River and is in walking distance to everything Downtown Norfolk has to offer. Conveniently connected to the three-story Waterside Convention Center, the hotel offers 405 guestrooms and over 68,000 square feet of total event space, with 26 event



Waterside District in Downtown Norfolk, VA.

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Fun Fact: The Norfolk Waterside Marriott rounds out its technology-forward aesthetic with Marribot, an autonomous robot with the ability to deliver items to guest rooms. Perfect for staying socially distanced!

rooms and 36 maximum breakout rooms. On the first floor, hotel guests will find the M Club, a lounge where Platinum and Gold Marriott Reward members enjoy premium Wi-Fi, meals and hors d'oeuvres.

Bring your appetite

With more independently owned restaurants per capita than almost any city in the US, Norfolk has blossomed into one of the South's most dynamic foodie destinations. With the convergence of cultures, Norfolk brings chefs, farmers, brewers and bakers to your table, giving attendees the chance to try something new without big city hassle. Dine on the water and taste local, fresh seafood at Stripers Waterside or experiment with sake cocktails at the new Big WISKY Porch at Nauticus.

Just steps away from the Norfolk Waterside Marriott is Granby Street, Norfolk's historic Restaurant Row which boasts over 80 chef-owned restaurants, bars and clubs for attendees to enjoy in the evenings. Along this street, attendees will find a savory mix of dining options including the French restaurant at the new Glass Light Hotel and Gallery with a Michelin-starred chef, delicate pastries by Black-owned business Hummingbird Macarons & Desserts, or a casual open-air rooftop beer garden that brings the outdoors inside at Grain.

Groups wishing to dine together will love the private room at the upscale Todd Jurich's Bistro, where they'll receive a personalized experience from Chef Todd himself, or can find delight in over 100 craft beer options with private access to the entire second floor of the historic venue that is The Brick Anchor Brew-House. For a more intimate setting guests can enjoy live piano music with a cocktail in the speakeasy-esque

Gershwin's, indulge in hand-made pasta and soulful Sicilian sauces at Luce or made-from-scratch European cuisine at Chartreuse Bistro – all located along Norfolk's historic Restaurant Row.

Never a dull moment

Just a few blocks from their hotel, attendees can enjoy the Elizabeth River Trail, a 10.5-mile pedestrian and biking trail on the waterfront, sail the Elizabeth River on a tall ship with Rover Cruises or tour the Battleship Wisconsin, one of the largest and last battleships ever built by the US Navy. The Pagoda and Oriental Garden is nearby, a gift from the Taiwan Provincial Government, and

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Granby Street (historic restaurant row) in downtown Norfolk.

VISITNORFOLK



Nauticus and the Battleship Wisconsin.

history buffs can stroll the cobblestone streets in West Freemason where Victorian homes tower over the sidewalks and roses curl along garden fences. Narrative plaques wind through this area marking The Cannonball Trail, a self-guided tour of 400 years of history, showcasing buildings and sites from the turn-of-the-century. You'll even find a Civil War-era cannonball still lodged in the wall of St. Paul's Episcopal Church!

For art lovers, Norfolk's NEON Arts District boasts streets lined with art in the form of colorful murals, statues, pop-up galleries and sidewalk installations. Here attendees can explore The Chrysler Museum of Art, a free world-class museum with 50 galleries and over 30,000 objects ranging from Tiffany Glass to ancient Egyptian artifacts. The museum offers regular, free glass-blowing demonstrations on select days of the week.

But the fun isn't just downtown! Attendees can tour Naval Station Norfolk from land or sea in guided or specialized custom tours, where they'll see aircraft carriers and destroyers, and learn about regional naval history. Not far away either, but worth the trip, is the Virginia Zoo, Norfolk Botanical Garden and, of course, Norfolk's beaches.

All of this and so much more awaits you in Norfolk, VA.

Don't want to wait? Visit now!

With COVID-19 being a national concern, our city is more dedicated than ever to visitor safety. On top of increased sanitation measures, the city has implemented OpenNorfolk, a boots-on-the-ground program that helps local businesses maintain safety protocols under state and federal guidelines. Moreover, new pedestrian rights-of-way and a multitude of outdoor restaurant patios for distancing have resulted in a distinctly European vibe. Visitors will find take-out/pickup zones and safety messaging along public sidewalks.

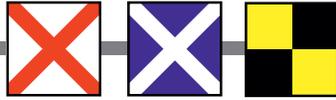
About VisitNorfolk: *The Norfolk Convention and Visitors Bureau (DBA VisitNorfolk) is the official tourism promotion agency for the city of Norfolk, Virginia and a travel and visitor resource for information on hotels, packages, attractions, events and things to do.*



VISITNORFOLK



VISITNORFOLK



2020 VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



October 7-8



Although we will miss seeing everyone in person, VML is pulling out all the stops to make this year's event the best it (virtually) can be! To accomplish this, VML is working with an experienced virtual event production company using the EventMobi platform. Attendees joining by smartphone, tablet or computer can look forward to a seamless, enjoyable, and productive event. Sponsors and exhibitors can expect opportunities to engage attendees to demonstrate the value of their services.

The 2-day event will cover the afternoon of October 7th and the morning of October 8th. Topics to be addressed during the conference include (but are not limited to):

- VML's annual business meeting
- Financial good governance for localities
- Equity and diversity
- Risk Management
- Emergency and crisis management
- New transportation legislation
- The Virginia Clean Energy Act
- Housing
- FOIA / COIA
- Some positive predictions from forward looking futurists
- Local Champion awards
- ... and more!

Register now at www.vml.org

2021 Conference: Invitation to Leesburg (and the towns of Loudoun County)

LEESBURG, THE LARGEST TOWN in Virginia, is both picturesque and vibrant, with a captivating downtown where brick-lined streets are bustling with restaurants, cafes, breweries, boutiques, and chic home décor stores.

Established in 1758, Leesburg was named for Francis Lightfoot Lee, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence. The town has a storied past and has been home to such dignitaries as former Virginia Governor Westmoreland Davis and George C. Marshall, the legendary statesman-general who drafted the Marshall Plan that rebuilt Europe after World War II.

Leesburg is not just about history. The town has a booming craft beverage scene – with more than half-a-dozen breweries plus a cidery all within walking distance – and an Arts & Cultural District that connects visitors with galleries, studios, live music and public art installations like the inspiring LOVE sculpture fabricated from recycled bicycle parts at the junction of Harrison Street and the Washington & Old Dominion Trail.

Outside of the historic main street, the Town of Leesburg also includes the lifestyle and residential precinct, the Village at Leesburg, featuring everything from bowling and a movie theater to a chocolate-themed restaurant and a trendy coffee bar. Shopping fans can visit Leesburg Premium Outlets, featuring bargain deals from more than 100 brands.

Minutes from the outlets and historic downtown Leesburg is Lansdowne Resort & Spa – a luxury escape on the banks of the Potomac River. Known for its 45 holes of championship golf, culinary program and spa offerings, Lansdowne serves as a gateway to Loudoun County's historic towns and countryside.

Welcome VML!

With a variety of attractions, rich history and dynamic dining scene, Leesburg is poised to shine at the 2021 Virginia Municipal League Conference.

“The Leesburg Town Council is honored and excited to host the 2021 Virginia Municipal League conference and looks forward to welcoming you,” Leesburg Mayor Kelly Burk said. “We are working hard to plan opportunities for you to experience all that Leesburg and Loudoun County has to offer. We hope that you will use your free time to explore not only Leesburg but all of Loudoun's historic towns, restaurants, wineries, breweries, shops and more that make Loudoun County such a special place to visit.”

Leesburg is the county seat for Loudoun, which is one of the most unique destinations in the Commonwealth with seven incorporated towns within its borders. These historic towns pop up like gateways to another age along Loudoun's winding country roads.

“Every town offers something different for visitors and we encourage you to take the time and explore while here,” VisitLoudoun President and CEO Beth Erickson said. “I guarantee you will experience a warm welcome, phenomenal restaurants, spectacular countryside views and an unmatched craft beverage scene throughout this one-of-a-kind destination.”



A flock of Loudoun mayors! (L-R) Roger Vance (Hillsboro), Bridge Littleton (Middleburg), Kwasi Fraser (Purcellville), Kelly Burk (Leesburg), Scott Ramsey (Round Hill), David Simpson (Hamilton), and Nate Fontaine (Lovettsville).

A Taste of the Towns

The 2021 conference will include a "Taste of the Towns" event, where attendees can experience culinary offerings from all seven historic destinations.

Middleburg

Known as the nation's horse and hunt country capital, Middleburg is Loudoun's second largest town, dating back to 1728, when a fieldstone tavern was established by a cousin of George Washington. That tavern became the Red Fox Inn, which is still going strong today. The historic downtown is lined with chic boutiques, raffish men's stores and superb cafés and restaurants, while wineries greet visitors both entering and leaving the main historic district. The town is also home to the nationally recognized, 5-star Salamander Resort & Spa, which is set on 340 acres and offers everything from horseback riding and ziplining to fine dining and unique spa experiences. Jackie Kennedy spent countless hours riding horses in Middleburg and visitors can learn more about the region's rich equestrian history at the National Sporting Library & Museum in town.

Purcellville

Settled in 1764, this bustling Blue Ridge foothills settlement still has something of a frontier feel to it. The low-slung buildings of downtown, including a renovated grain mill turned restaurant, are reminiscent of a western film set. Recent years have seen a spurt of development with new restaurants, BBQ joints, ice cream parlors, coffee bars, boutiques, breweries, and thrift stores. The town is an excellent departure point for the wineries, breweries and farms in western Loudoun and is also the last stop (or first) on the popular W&OD



Shops along King Street in historic downtown Leesburg.

Trail. While here, don't miss tasting the internationally recognized spirits from Catocin Creek Distillery.

Hamilton

Settled by Quakers in the 1700s, Hamilton, established in 1835, is quintessential small-town America with attractive Victorian homes on shady tree-lined streets and kids playing in the park. A weekend retreat from the heat of Washington, D.C. in the late 1800s (the W&OD railway line stopped just south of town), today's Hamilton is more residential, but visitors come on weekends for the surrounding wineries and breweries. A must-visit stop includes The Barns at Hamilton Station, which features tastings of its award-winning Virginia wine in a gorgeous, rustic, 106-year-old stone and wood bank barn.

Hillsboro

Nestled in a gap in Short Hill Mountain in northwest Loudoun, Hillsboro, established in 1802, is one of the best-preserved rural towns in the country with historic fieldstone buildings hugging Route 9 that impart the aesthetic of a traditional European village. The surrounding vine-covered slopes are home to some of the finest wineries and a slate of new farm breweries. Extend your stay in Loudoun with a night at Fieldstone Farm B&B in the heart of Hillsboro, then pick

up baked goods, sandwiches and fresh produce (some of which is grown on the farm in town) at Stoneybrook Farm Market.

Lovettsville

Founded in 1732 by Pennsylvania Germans who first called it "The German Settlement," Loudoun's northern-most town honors its roots with a boisterous Oktoberfest every fall that draws thousands of beer lovers. Recent years have seen a slate of superb new restaurants opening in the once sleepy historic downtown, and wineries springing up in surrounding farms and countryside. The town square is also home to a new Virginia LOVE sign. Designed by a local artist, the 12-by-6-foot sign provides the perfect backdrop for a photo before exploring the town. Venture just north of the downtown area for fresh cheese and baby goat sightings at Georges Mill Farm. The owners produce everything from chevre, and feta to Eula Blue at this historic farm dating back to 1750.

Round Hill

A genteel town of tree-shaded streets lined with handsome late Victorian homes as well as former lodges and boarding houses dating back to the 1880s through 1920s, Round Hill was once a popular summer vacation spot on the W&OD line. The train has long gone but an active, outdoorsy atmosphere endures. Hikers are drawn to the Appalachian Trail that runs along the spine of the Blue Ridge just west of town, and locals and visitors enjoy the artisanal products and fresh produce of the surrounding farming community. Just south of town, visit Hill High Marketplace, a popular roadside stop, to pick up everything from baked goods from Mom's Apple Pie to one-of-a-kind art at Gateway Gallery, which houses an array of work from local artisans.

For more information on Loudoun, visit www.visitloudoun.org.



A long view in the evening of the shopping center Village at Leesburg.

A message from VML President Thomas R. Smigiel Jr.

IT WOULD BE A BIG UNDERSTATEMENT to say that my year as VML's president didn't go the way I imagined. Of course, it's fair to say that this year didn't go the way any of us of imagined!

Topping my list of disappointments: I still have not made it to the Town of Pennington Gap. I had very much hoped to visit Southwest Virginia this summer, but that trip will have to wait. Closer to home, I was so looking forward to presiding over the annual conference in my hometown of Norfolk and showing off all the great things we are doing. Instead, I will see you all virtually this year (but look forward to welcoming you all in person to Norfolk in 2023).

Disappointments aside, there has never a more critical time to be an advocate for our localities and I was proud to be VML's president during this eventful year. Almost overnight it seemed, there were challenges that none of us could have anticipated, but together we have met many, and together we will continue to meet many more.

During phone calls with the Governor and his staff, I made it my responsibility to remind them that localities had to be part of discussions and decisions regarding closures and restrictions, including making sure localities received their fair share of Cares Act funding. I was glad to participate in a small VML taskforce that produced a resource that addresses frequently asked questions regarding the use and tracking of CARES Act funds by localities. This document, which continues to be updated and posted to VML's website, informs localities how they can creatively use CARES Act funds to meet their needs within the confines of the law. When the Administration proposed moving the May elections to November, possibly violating some of our local charters, and going against a longstanding VML position, I networked with colleagues around the state to help defeat the proposal.

Amid all these uncertainties, however, there were a few things that I was certain I wanted to accomplish this year, and, despite the pandemic, I am happy to have made some progress. First up: More support for towns. Even though I grew up and live in a city, I have always wanted to see how VML could continue to support our towns and expand our services to include more of the concerns specific to our smaller localities. Towns play such an important role in the success of Virginia but often lack the resources of larger localities when it comes to parlaying with the state. To this end, I was pleased to create a Small

Town Committee that will advise VML staff on better ways to serve our towns. This committee's work has just begun, but it has begun!

Next up: Your VML board continued the work of YOU. We completed the strategic plan for our organization which will guide us for the next five years. The strategic plan was developed using the responses from hundreds of surveys and conversations with our members. By participating in this plan, you have truly helped shape our organization for the future. I was proud to have helped shepherd the plan into existence and look forward to working with incoming VML President Willie Greene, board members and staff to see it through the coming year.

In addition to completing the strategic plan, our board made recommendations for you to consider that would modernize our constitution including language that reflects the future of the organization. And don't forget my announcement in Roanoke last October about the new VML membership class – VML Emeritus. If you retire or have otherwise left your role in a VML member locality, but still want the advantages that come with VML membership, you can stay a member.

As an educator and school principal, I have availed myself of several opportunities this year to share my perspectives on educating during COVID in the pages of *Virginia Town & City*. I know that school closures have affected all

of us and I want to thank everyone who is doing their best to keep schools, educators and kids supported during this incredibly difficult time.

Finally, I want to thank the VML Board, as well as the staff, especially Michelle Gowdy, who has worked to maintain our organization through a challenging time while continuing to fight for our members. Like all of us, Michelle and the staff have adjusted to the changes and have done a stellar job.

I hope to see all of you again soon (and not through a camera!)



Thomas R. Smigiel Jr.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Smigiel, Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive.

Thomas R. Smigiel, Jr.
Council Member, City of Norfolk

VML Executive Committee



Willie Green.
President-Elect
Mayor, City of Galax



Jon Stehle
Vice President
Council Member, City of Fairfax



Jill Carson
At-large member
Vice Mayor, Town of Pennington Gap



Kelly Burk
At-large member
Mayor, Town of Leesburg



Sean Polster
At-large member
*Council Member,
Town of Warrenton*



A.D. "Chuckie" Reid
At-large member
Vice Mayor, Town of Farmville



Bill Rush
At-large member
Town Manager, Town of Marion



Derrick Wood
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Mayor, Town of Dumfries



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John Rowe
Urban Section Chair
Mayor, City of Portsmouth



Anita James Price
Immediate Past President
Council Member, City of Roanoke



2019-2020

ANNUAL REPORT

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES! As 2019 ended, VML, fresh off a wonderful conference in Roanoke, moved forward with the development of our 5-year strategic plan. The process had begun in early 2019 when the Executive Committee formed a strategic plan subcommittee and began to pick up steam as the year progressed. In September, the board hired Richmond-based Spark Mill to facilitate the process and representatives from that firm were in Roanoke in October gathering input directly from VML members. This effort was followed by a survey sent out to all members after the conference.

In late December, VML staff participated in a day-long workshop with Spark Mill; a subsequent Executive Committee retreat gathered additional input.

Meanwhile, 2020 kicked off with a robust session of the General Assembly. Our policy team was busy walking the halls of the Pocahontas Building, bending the ears of lawmakers, and weighing in on the needs and issues facing localities during countless committee meetings. It was a long session that felt even longer due to all the transformative legislation coming down the chute. We didn't win every battle, but we won enough to know that we had made a difference for our members.

And then...well, then everything changed.

Since March, when the full weight of the COVID-19 pandemic became part of our daily lives, VML has found new ways to serve its central role of advocating for local government interests at the state and federal level, offering educational programs to local officials, communicating news on topics and programs of greatest interest to local officials and providing information of vital importance to local officials on their roles as members of a council or board.

That work continues today. The final 5-year strategic plan was adopted by the board in May and has already begun to be implemented (the most visible evidence thus far being VML's new logo and slogan: "Better Communities Through Sound Government"). Committee meetings and training opportunities like the Newly Elected Officials conference shifted to virtual platforms. During the Special Session of the General Assembly, VML has continued to work in new and creative ways. We will continue to do so until we are again able to walk the halls of the Pocahontas Building, gather together, and visit our members in person which, despite the marvels of technology, is still the best way to work.

So, while this report is dedicated to looking at the year that has passed, rest assured VML is ready to help our members meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Lobbying and advocacy

The 2020 General Assembly regular session is now a mostly fond memory of a vastly different – and more financially secure – world. With state revenues strong in late 2019 and early 2020, the General Assembly approved a number of budget-related measures to help K-12 education, behavioral health and health care providers, public safety and natural resources. When the economy took a hit with COVID-19, the General Assembly agreed with Governor Ralph Northam's recommendation to "unallot" all the funding increases during the reconvened session; these unallotted funds remain in limbo as the General Assembly revisits items during a late summer/fall special session.

Outside of the budget, cities and counties garnered a large victory with new authority to impose by ordinance a 5-cent tax on disposable plastic bags for local environmental cleanup and education programs to reduce environmental waste. Other victories included legislation passed to establish recordkeeping, insurance, disclosure and safety requirements for individuals and companies engaged in "peer-to-peer" vehicle rentals; the successful efforts of localities working with builders and realtors to get additional tools for affordable housing; and localities walking back efforts to require collective bargaining to a local option.

Local officials' communications with their legislators throughout the session made these successes possible, and VML is grateful for the tireless efforts of its member communities.

Local Government Legislative Day

More than 400 local government leaders from across the Commonwealth gathered at the Omni Hotel in downtown Richmond on February 6th to learn about legislation and issues before the 2020 General Assembly. VML President and City of Norfolk Council Member Tommy Smigiel kicked off the event by noting that Local Government Legislative Day is "the day for all of us learn how the decisions being made by the General Assembly might affect us; and it's a day to make our voices heard."

Attendees heard from Governor Ralph Northam on his hopes for the session as well as Jim Regimbal from Fiscal Analytics on why localities should be excited about the possibilities for the new budget. VML staff provided updates on legislation of interest to localities before attendees left to navigate the corridors of the venerable Pocahontas Building where legislative offices and meetings (continue to be) temporarily located.

Local Government Legislative Day concluded with a reception for the members of the General Assembly and the administration that allowed local officials to network and exchange information with each other and with state officials.

It's worth noting, this was the last in-person event for VML, and for many of the attendees, in 2020.

Policy Committees and Legislative Committee

VML's policy and legislative committees did not miss a beat in moving from in-person meetings to on-line meetings this year. The six policy committees met over the course of a week in late July on Zoom. The attendance was excellent – no travel issues this year! The committees heard presentations and tackled a number of issues, including state budget concerns, utilities, FOIA, transportation funding, funding for mental health services in local and regional jails.

The Legislative Committee delayed its first meeting until July to allow time to better assess the pandemic's impact on the state budget and address other potential issues for the General Assembly's special session in August. The committee met again in early September to develop preliminary legislative positions and will hold its next meeting before the VML annual conference to finalize its legislative program for adoption during the conference.

Education and training

Annual Conference and Virginia Mayors Institute

With the beautiful Blue Ridge mountains as a backdrop, the 2019 VML annual conference in Roanoke provided workshops and presentations on a wide variety of pressing topics ranging from FCC changes to cable franchising to craft industry opportunities for localities; from race, equity and leadership to e-scooters; from a discussion on the opioid crisis to a look at the future of broadband in Virginia. The conference also proved to be a fantastic opportunity for members to network at breaks and social events including a fantastic host city night in Roanoke's amazing Center in the Square.

The Mayors Institute focused on leadership and included sessions on good governance basics, citizen engagement, "Clerks Tell All - A Mayor's Survival Guide," and (somewhat presciently) local emergency preparedness, and community leadership during a crisis.

Finance Forum

The 2020 Finance Forum was held January 6 at the Delta Hotel in Richmond and included sessions on the governor's proposed budget, new retirement rates, broadband issues, and elections security. Once again, the session, which is sponsored jointly with the Virginia Association of Counties, offered the perfect opportunity to learn more about pertinent topics before the General Assembly took them up in session.



Newly Elected Officials Conference

VML held two conferences aimed at helping newly elected officials and those looking for a refresher on topics essential to the work of elected officials and their staff. The first was held in Charlottesville on January 11. The second was held virtually July 9-10. The Newly Elected Officials conferences cover topics such as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), good governance and citizen engagement, Conflict of Interests Act (COIA), council-manager relations and liability for public officials.

Communications

VML communications ensure that our members learn about the issues, events and stories that affect them most. The 2020 editorial calendar for our magazine *Virginia Town & City* outlined a series of themes that included topics such as information technology for local governments, youth services, transportation, and economic development. Our May issue featured the winners of our "If I Were Mayor" essay contest and also included essays by more than a dozen educators across the Commonwealth as they reflected on the challenges of shifting to virtual learning almost overnight. Look for more themes and features coming in 2021.

VML's email newsletter *eNews*, has typically been published every other week when the legislature is not in session and more frequently during session. However, as the 2020 General Assembly session rolled into the mounting crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, *eNews* has maintained a weekly schedule to keep our members abreast of the most recent resources and developments. This weekly publication schedule will continue for the foreseeable future.

A new COVID-19 Resources page was added to VML's website in April. This continually updated page features local actions, state and federal announcements,



CARES Act funding resources, and a host of pertinent information. Foremost among these resources is the *FAQs: Analysis of CARES Act Funding Questions Raised by Local Governments about Eligible Spending Purposes* (currently in its 9th version). This regularly updated, clickable resource addresses questions frequently asked of VML regarding the use and tracking of CARES Act funds by localities. Answers represent the reasonable judgement of a special VML Task Force and VML policy staff.

As part of our July Newly Elected Officials conference, VML made available an updated, abbreviated version of our *Handbook for Virginia Mayors and Council Members*. The updated full version will be available in the coming year.

Further, VML annually publishes annually a guide to the Freedom of Information Act, Conflict of Interests Act and Public Records Act that is a valuable resource for local officials who are charged with reading and understanding those laws.

For 2021 – keep an eye out for a VML podcast series and members-only forums on our website!

Awards and acknowledgements

Innovation Awards

The annual VML Innovation Awards recognize outstanding achievements in local governments across Virginia. The program – which began under the name "Achievement Awards" 44 years ago – is recognized as Virginia's highest honor in local government creativity.

In 2019, the City of Danville won in the category of Youth Services and took home the coveted President's award for "Project Imagine" to help at-risk youths imagine a life outside of gangs by working for their community. The City of Fredericksburg won in Environmental Quality for efforts to expand sustainability and prevent littering. The City of Richmond won in Communications for the Richmond Animal Care and Control's "Casual Friday" program which put dogs seeking adoption in area businesses for a day. The Town of Warsaw won in Economic Development for taking bold measures to reverse the tide of vacancies in their downtown. James City County won in Public Safety for CONECT which allows Fire/EMS personnel to refer at-risk seniors directly to the Department of Social Services. The City of Falls Church won in Community Health for repurposing an abandoned, historic home as a group home for adults with disabilities.



Note: *the Innovation Awards are on hold for 2020 but will be back in 2021. Instead, VML will be honoring localities in 2020 with Local Champion awards for outstanding work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.*



HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign

The HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign provides free technical assistance to local government leaders to help them adopt healthy eating and active living policies and practices.

New members included the City of Lexington and Surry County. The Town of Ashland and the Town of Scottsville earned Bronze Level designation. Platinum Level went to the Town of Dumfries and the Town of Wytheville.

“If I Were Mayor” essay contest

Promoting good local government is important to VML, and our annual essay contest provides students the opportunity to reflect on the important role of elected officials in their locality. This year, students were asked to identify a problem in their locality, gather opinions on the best way to solve the problem and then offer their suggestion on what should be done. Eight regional winners selected from around the state each received a \$150 cash prize and plaque. The statewide winner received a \$250 cash prize.

The statewide winner received a \$250 cash prize, the runner-up from the region that received the statewide award became that region's winner.

Typically, the winners would receive their checks and plaques in-person at council meetings, but this year those items were mailed to the students.



The 2020 winners were:

Statewide Winner: Preston Lieu of Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in Falls Church

Region 1: Josiah Krumtum of Virginia Middle School in Bristol

Region 2: Ava Grant of Martinsville Middle School in Martinsville

Region 3: Caity Campbell of Shelburne Middle School in Staunton

Region 4: Katelyn Prue of Central Middle School in Charlotte Court House

Region 5: Samantha Grooms of Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in Falls Church

Region 6: Elle Crosley of Culpeper Middle School in Culpeper

Region 7: Amya Seaborne of Saint Joseph Catholic School in Petersburg

Region 8: David Davenport of John Yeates Middle School in Suffolk

Staff updates

In 2020 VML was both happy and sad when longtime staff member Mary Jo Fields officially retired at the end of June.

Fields started working for VML as a legislative associate in 1984. In 2017 she transitioned to a part-time role until retiring in June 2020. While working full-time for the league, she lobbied on education, elections, and retirement issues. She also coordinated several of the league's conferences, including the Annual Conference, Mayors Institute and Newly Elected Officials conference. Fields served as executive director of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association and as the executive secretary for the Southern Municipal Conference. As a part-time employee, her primary duties were related to VML communications including *Virginia Town & City* and *eNews*.

Prior to working for VML, Fields was a research associate at the University of Virginia's Institute of Government, the predecessor organization to the current Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, for eight years.

Fields has a master's degree in public administration from the University of Alabama and an undergraduate degree in political science from Auburn University. Her introduction to municipal government was working as a CETA employee for the utilities department in her hometown of Brewton, AL, an experience that gave her a life-long appreciation for the role of municipal employees.

[Editor's note: Any typos you find in *VTC* are a direct result of Mary Jo's absence.]



Mary Jo Fields

Wallerstein interns today, local government leaders tomorrow?

ONE OF THE HIDDEN jewels of the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service is its summer Wallerstein Scholarship.

Since 2003, the Cooper Center, in conjunction with the Virginia Municipal League, has awarded more than \$130,000 to 44 UVA student interns who are interested in working in local government.

The internship program has provided the type of experiential learning that UVA prides itself on,

By Whitelaw Reid

This article originally appeared in UVAToday. Reprinted here with permission.

with several scholarship recipients going on to hold policymaking and management positions in the state.

“Such significant work is done in the public interest at the local level, and students have a tangible sense of how on-the-ground solutions to our common challenges come to life in communities across the commonwealth,” said Meredith Gunter, the director of strategy and public engagement at the Cooper Center. “We're grateful to the Wallerstein family for the resources to support building the next generation of public leaders.”

Here's a snapshot at what this year's four Wallerstein Scholars – working for eight weeks this summer through the UVA Internship Placement Program – did.



Tristan Baird

The rising third-year student from Gainesville, who is majoring in statistics, interned at the Virginia Municipal League. With the organization's guidance, Baird wrote an extensive report* – it included more than 100 sources – on the economic impact of COVID-19 at both the state and local level, and the steps required for recovery.

During the course of his eight-week project, Baird said his research skills improved by leaps and bounds.

“While I had done research projects for University classes before, this project was unique in the fact that the data and relevant information coming out was changing week-to-week, day-to-day,” he said. “As such, I really had to keep up my reading daily on the governor's announcements, any federal legislation passed, published research, recent analysis from think tanks and looking over data from The Bureau of Labor Statistics/Census Bureau. It was a lot, but it taught me consistency and allowed me to really be immersed in the field I was studying.”

One of the most rewarding aspects of Baird's experience was getting to listen in on a phone call with Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam and local leaders who were discussing funding pertaining to the next federal stimulus bill.

"Honestly, I think it's been the best experience I've [had] through UVA," Baird said. "It's just been really great to see the way that our government is run and how the groundwork and foundation is laid at the local level."

*See page ?? for Baird's completed report.



Henry Gaston

The rising fourth-year history major from Williamsburg interned at the Cooper Center under the supervision of Gunter and Associate Director Michael Phillips.

Gaston worked on several research projects simultaneously, but the one he said stood out most centered on career and technical education for the Virginia Department of Education.

The project initially focused on researching the best practices for career and technical education (or CTE) in Virginia, but quickly evolved into work that culminated in the creation of a webinar for teachers and administrators on the best practices for teaching career and technical education in remote environments.

Working with Department of Education leaders, Gaston produced a report that detailed the lessons learned about remote learning from this past semester, the benefits and challenges of remote learning, and a comprehensive list of best practices/resources.

Gaston then incorporated the findings into a script for the webinar. "Going into the CTE project, I had little to no prior knowledge of how CTE in our commonwealth was administered, let alone how I – as an undergrad – could provide trusted advice to seasoned educators," Gaston said. "It was a pretty daunting task. But, with the help of Mrs. Gunter and some of my colleagues – especially [researcher] Spencer Shanholtz – I was able to provide solid guidance in my webinar that, I hope, will effect positive change this upcoming school year."



Danielle Cormier

The rising fourth-year student from Bland County who is double-majoring in studio art and women, gender and sexuality, worked on the Cooper Center's media team under the guidance of digital media manager Claire Downey

The two major projects Cormier worked on were an animation for the demographics department and a podcast on the Center for Economic and Policy Studies' work with the Virginia Clean Energy Act.

"I had only worked on one podcast prior to this one, and had not actually had much experience working with topics related to government or policy," Cormier said. "I feel I was able to improve my skills in research, interviewing, and also scriptwriting. I also learned an entirely new program, Adobe Audition, for editing audio projects, which

was an incredibly valuable skill to be able to take with me.

"Beyond all of these new skills, I was able to learn about the Virginia Clean Energy Act, a new government change that I likely would not have researched on my own without this project."



Molly Nealon

The rising third-year student from Alexandria spent her eight weeks working for the City of Charlottesville's energy and water management team.

"I was definitely excited when I was looking at internship possibilities, to get an office experience," Nealon said. "Although I've been completely online, I still feel as though I've been able to foster the same type of network. The team that I worked on was

so helpful and supportive."

Nealon, who is majoring in urban and environmental planning in UVA's School of Architecture, worked on "We at Work," a city-wide effort to reduce water and energy waste in public facilities.

Nealon helped create documents for the program, honing some of her technical skills, such as Adobe Photoshop and InDesign, in the process.

"Through my internship, I was reminded of the simple ways that we can all reduce our carbon footprints and wasteful water usage," Nealon said. "I really enjoyed being a part of the team and working on this program that will soon come to fruition. Throughout the next year, the materials I helped create will be distributed throughout Charlottesville, and I really look forward to seeing the impact they will have in Charlottesville's effort to be a green city."

Overall, the four students said their internships opened their eyes to the value of public service.

"I really think that locally based public service is just the most effective form of governance. Towns, cities, municipalities, counties – that's where the groundwork really goes," Baird said.

Added Cormier: "So much change happens at a grassroots level, and it's so important to get involved so that you can create the change that you want to see in your everyday life."

About the author: *Whitelaw Reid is the University News Senior Associate for the Office of University Communications at the University of Virginia*

About the Wallerstein Program

RUTH C. AND MORTON F. WALLERSTEIN established the Morton F. Scholarship Fund at the University of Virginia in 1973 to foster interest and research in Virginia local government. Approaching its 50th year of operations, the scholarship fund, through its internship program, annually engages UVA students in policy research and analysis as well as in organizational management and operations within the context of local governing and community service organizations. Advancing the capacities of these organizations to be data-driven, innovative, and impactful is central to the mission of the Weldon Cooper Center and to the Virginia Municipal League.

The program also offers opportunities for graduate students and leaders already employed in governance to conduct research to advance their professional practice while contributing to the policy and research priorities of the Weldon Cooper Center. Visit <https://vig.coopercenter.org/wallerstein>.

Annual Briefings from VML's Affiliate Organizations



**Chair: Susan Hafeli,
Utility Analyst, Fairfax County**

**Secretary/Treasurer: Sandra Harrington,
VML Government Relations Associate**

THE VIRGINIA ENERGY PURCHASING Governmental Association (VEPGA) is a joint powers association created in 2002 pursuant to authority provided in the Virginia Code. VEPGA negotiates multi-year electricity contracts with Dominion Energy on behalf of its members. VEPGA also keeps its members informed of energy developments in Virginia and offers opportunities for members across the Dominion service area to collectively promote their interests and learn from each other. VEPGA's membership includes over 170 Virginia local governments, public school systems, authorities, and other governmental entities. VEPGA is governed by a Board of Directors elected by its members.

VEPGA's Joint Action Committee meets quarterly with Dominion to identify and resolve operational issues, including those involving construction and streetlighting. Meetings of VEPGA's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Committee include presentations on topics including best practices

and emerging technologies, while VEPGA's Innovative Supply Side Initiatives Committee explores alternative energy options of interest to VEPGA members.

VEPGA's annual spring meeting offers sessions that address educational, technical, and policy topics, as well as opportunities to meet and network with energy professionals from across the Dominion Energy service area.

The VEPGA contract includes rate schedules designed to offer electrical service options for facilities that range from a small, house-sized office building to large school campuses. Schedules address small, medium, and large accounts according to energy usage, all-electric buildings, pumping stations, and traffic control, street, and roadway lighting. The contract also provides a low-cost option for the purchase of renewable energy credits.

Learn more at www.vepga.org.



**President: Mike Stover, Director, Light and
Power, Town of Culpeper**

**Secretary/Treasurer: Sandra Harrington,
VML Government Relations Associate**



THE MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC Power Association of Virginia (MEPAV), founded in 1954, is made up of 16 localities that operate their own electric systems across the Commonwealth. As an association, MEPAV equips its members with the information and support needed to provide reliable and low-cost energy to their customers.

MEPAV members include Bedford, Blackstone, Bristol, Culpeper, Danville, Elkton, Franklin, Front Royal, Harrisonburg, Manassas, Martinsville, Radford, Richlands, Salem, Virginia Tech, and Wakefield. MEPAV and its members are all affiliates of the American Public Power Association (APPA) which advocates for over 2000 municipal utilities from across the United States.

One of MEPAV's main purposes is to foster a continuing spirit of cooperation among Virginia municipalities operating their own electric utilities. All utilities within the mem-

bership benefit from the knowledge and experiences of others, whether the subject matter is technical or non-technical in nature.

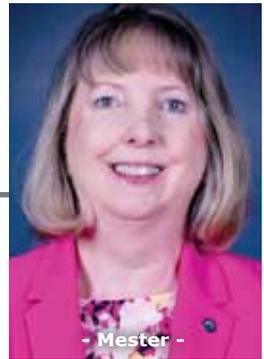
In addition to regular quarterly business meetings, MEPAV also hosts engineering and operations workshops for members to learn and share information. The annual business meeting, held in Virginia Beach, focuses on trends within the industry on a broader scale as well as offers a great opportunity for networking among the attendees.

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

Learn more at www.mepav.org.

President: Cindy Mester,
Deputy City Manager, City of Falls Church

Executive Secretary: Janet Areson,
VML Director of Policy Development



THERE IS NO DOUBT that the COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges to Virginia's local government management professionals and the communities we serve.

Fortunately, many members of Virginia's management profession participate in a ready-built network for sharing information, ideas, and providing professional support through the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA). Members are represented in small towns to large counties and cities throughout the Commonwealth. VLGMA is a state affiliate of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

When it became clear this spring that the pandemic would make gathering in person an impossibility, VLGMA's annual conference chairs quickly shifted the plans for the annual summer conference to a virtual format. This successful conference offered in-depth sessions on ethical issues for local governments during COVID-19 and responding to its aftermath as well as state budget issues. It also featured an uplifting keynote session featuring John Jacobs, co-founder of the company Life is Good, on expanding upon the power of optimism. Members also honed their quickly developing Zoom skills by participating in smaller group discussions focused on topics such as lessons learned from COVID-19 and Virginia women leading government.

As conferences and other meetings will continue in a virtual format for the near term due to public health issues and reduced travel budgets, VLGMA plans even more robust sessions including the October meeting of the Deputies, Assistants, and Others (DAO) group and the 2021 winter conference.

VLGMA has also put greater focus on its monthly newsletter as another way to keep members in touch during social distancing and constrained travel budgets. Along with continued insights into the work of individual DAOs in their communities, the monthly newsletter also now includes three new columns focused on: 1) specific goals and components of the strategic plan which guides the major work of the association's board and committees; 2) professional development including ethics; and 3) community conversations addressing topics such as equity, racism, police reform and health pandemics.

VLGMA has been actively involved in a statewide COVID-19 Finance Network, in conjunction with Virginia Tech, VML, VACO, and GFOA, which has regularly met since early spring to address local budget impacts from COVID-19 and facilitate local implementation of the federal Coronavirus Relief (CARES) Funds.

Finally, VLGMA continues its support of scholarships for the Local Government Management Certificate Program at Virginia Tech. Created by VLGMA in 2008, in cooperation with Virginia Tech, the Certificate Program gives local government staff across the state as well as Virginia Tech students the opportunity to take up to four graduate-level courses focused specifically on Virginia local government management issues. This program promotes one of VLGMA's chief goals - promoting and supporting the future of the local government management profession in Virginia.

Learn more at <https://icma.org/vlgma>.



President: James S. Moss, CBO, CBMO,
Project Manager, City of Galax

Executive Director: Sandra Harrington,
VML Government Relations Associate



THE VIRGINIA BUILDING and Code Officials Association (VBCOA) is a statewide network of more than 1,000 building safety professionals dedicated to the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of all persons who live, work, or visit the Commonwealth of Virginia. Since 1929, VBCOA has worked to foster relationships with groups dedicated to promoting safety and the uniform interpretation and enforcement of regulations.

VBCOA maintains a strong partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and other organizations involved in the codes industry such as the Virginia Fire Prevention Association (VFPA), Virginia Plumbing and Mechanical Inspectors Association (VPMIA), and Women in Code Enforcement (WICED).

President Moss has worked very closely with the VBCOA Board of Directors to ensure the goals of the Association's

strategic plan are met and ensure continued service to the communities served by VBCOA members. Faced with working through operational limitations due to the pandemic, VBCOA has adjusted to utilizing virtual communication tools to conduct the business of the Association, participate in the code development process, provide educational opportunities to the members, and serve as a resource for members to share new work place processes for running day to day operations.

VBCOA typically holds two large conferences a year focusing on leadership development and technical training, in addition to monthly training opportunities at one of the eight regions around the state.

Learn more at www.vbcoa.org.

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Share your local pride and holiday spirit with a handmade ornament!



Locally crafted ornaments at the Executive Mansion are back by popular demand. Please join us in celebrating what makes each Virginia city, town and county special.

Previously nearly 200 localities contributed stunning handmade ornaments to adorn the holiday trees at the Executive Mansion. Thousands of visitors from across the world toured the mansion and viewed the ornaments, learning about the diverse heritage of the Commonwealth's cities, towns, and counties.

The tree was so popular that the Governor and First Lady have asked VML to again collect local heritage ornaments from Virginia cities and towns. (Our friends at the Virginia Association of Counties will be collecting ornaments from counties.)

Each locality may submit one hand-crafted ornament that uniquely represents their community. You also may reuse an ornament sent previously if the ornament is still in displayable condition.

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT IS NOV. 17, 2020

For guidelines visit www.vml.org/education/holiday-tree-ornaments.

VML Member Local Governments

Cities

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

Towns

Abingdon
Accomac
Alberta
Altavista
Amherst
Appomattox
Ashland
Bedford
Berryville
Big Stone Gap
Blacksburg
Blackstone
Bluefield

Boones Mill
Bowling Green
Boydton
Boykins
Branchville
Bridgewater
Broadway
Brookneal
Buchanan
Burkeville
Cape Charles
Capron
Cedar Bluff
Charlotte
Court House
Chase City
Chatham
Cheriton
Chilhowie
Chincoteague
Christiansburg
Claremont
Clarksville
Clifton
Clifton Forge
Clintwood
Coeburn
Colonial Beach
Courtland
Craigsville
Crewe
Culpeper
Damascus
Dayton
Dillwyn
Drakes Branch
Dublin
Duffield
Dumfries
Eastville
Edinburg
Elkton
Exmore
Farmville
Fincastle
Floyd
Fries
Front Royal
Gate City
Glade Spring
Glasgow
Gordonsville
Gretna
Grottoes
Grundy

Halifax
Hamilton
Haymarket
Haysi
Herndon
Hillsboro
Hillsville
Hurt
Independence
Iron Gate
Irvington
Ivor
Jarratt
Jonesville
Kenbridge
Keysville
Kilmarnock
La Crosse
Lawrenceville
Lebanon
Leesburg
Louisa
Lovettsville
Luray
Madison
Marion
McKenney
Middleburg
Middletown
Mineral
Monterey
Montross
Mount Crawford
Mount Jackson
Narrows
Nassawadox
New Market
Newsoms
Occoquan
Onancock
Onley
Orange
Painter
Pamplin
Parksley
Pearisburg
Pembroke
Pennington Gap
Phenix
Port Royal
Pound
Pulaski
Purcellville
Quantico

Remington
Rich Creek
Richlands
Ridgeway
Rocky Mount
Round Hill
Rural Retreat
Saint Paul
Saltville
Scottsville
Shenandoah
Smithfield
South Boston
South Hill
Stanardsville
Stanley
Stephens City
Stony Creek
Strasburg
Stuart
Tappahannock
Tazewell
The Plains
Timberville
Toms Brook
Troutville
Urbanna
Victoria
Vienna
Vinton
Wachapreague
Wakefield
Warrenton
Warsaw
Washington
Waverly
Weber City
West Point
White Stone
Windsor
Wise
Woodstock
Wytheville

Counties

Albemarle
Alleghany
Arlington
James City
Loudoun
Prince George
Roanoke
York



2020 Legislative and Policy Committees

Twenty local officials from diverse localities are appointed each year by the VML president to serve on VML's legislative committee. Committee members develop positions on legislation and urge the enactment, amendment, or opposition to a variety of legislative initiatives. Another 169 local officials work on the VML policy committees. They help to shape the broader policies and make specific legislative recommendations to the Legislative Committee.

All localities are encouraged to participate on policy committees. Nomination forms are sent to each locality in the spring. Let a VML staff member know of your interest or send an email to e-mail@vml.org and we will follow up with you.

Legislative Committee

Chair: Roger Fawcett, Council Member, City of Suffolk

Vice Chair: Christine Snead, Council Member, City of Hampton

City Section

Hector Cendejas, Council Member, City of Manassas Park

Frank Friedman, Mayor, City of Lexington

Mary Person, Mayor, City of Emporia

David Smith, Mayor, City of Winchester

Jon Stehle, Jr., Council Member, City of Fairfax

William Withers, Jr., Vice Mayor, City of Fredericksburg

Town Section

Nancy Bailey, Vice Mayor, Town of Big Stone Gap

Jennifer Baker, Council Member, Town of Herndon

Michael Barber, Mayor, Town of Christiansburg

Kelly Burk, Mayor, Town of Leesburg

Keith Harless, Town Manager, Town of Pennington Gap

Ed Owens, Mayor, Town of South Boston

Urban Section

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Vice Mayor, City of Alexandria

Katie Cristol, Board Member, County of Arlington

Roger Fawcett, Council Member, City of Suffolk

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Alonzo Jones, Mayor, City of Danville

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Virginia's economy vs. the pandemic

What happens when a healthy economy gets sick?

BEFORE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC disrupted the global economy, the United States was by most measures robustly healthy having experienced the longest continual expansion in recent history. In February 2020, The United States' unemployment rate was 3.5 percent, among the lowest ever recorded, with Virginia clocking in an equally impressive rate of only 2.6 percent. Six months and one pandemic later, over 30 million Americans are out of work due in part to strict social distancing measures which have forced thousands of businesses across the country and Commonwealth to either temporarily or permanently shut their doors to the public. However, government-imposed restrictions are not the only factors hampering business activity; McKinsey and Company, an American management consulting firm, has shown that most business leaders cite a lack of consumer demand as the driving force depressing revenue inflows.



The struggle to stay in business

With the steep drop in consumer demand, businesses will struggle in the short term to have enough liquidity to meet fixed financial obligations such as rent, utility payments, and interest payments on loans. This has the potential to spiral into an insolvency problem, forcing wide swaths of small businesses and firms to file for bankruptcy and exit their respective markets. Moody's Analytics recently published a report documenting over 55,000 businesses that have already filed for bankruptcy in this year alone, the highest rate since the 2008-2009 financial crisis.

To provide succor to struggling businesses, the federal government enacted the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a critical offshoot of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which was signed into law on March 27 of this year. Through July 6, the PPP dispersed over \$520 billion in federal funds to over 4.9 million businesses. While these federal loans were aimed at keeping businesses afloat by providing funds meant to cover mortgage interest, rent, and utility payments over the eight week provision of the loan, the PPP's main goal was to reduce unemployment by allowing businesses to use such loans to keep their employees on payroll. Recipient businesses that maintain employee counts and compensation throughout the eight-week duration of the loan, are not due for any repayments, effectively turning the loan into a federal grant. Overall, 70 percent of small businesses nationwide took part in the federal program to receive PPP loans; Virginia's small businesses were on the lower end of this spectrum, with 65-70 percent of the Commonwealth's small businesses receiving PPP support according the Washington, D.C. based Brookings Institution think-tank.

Unfortunately, analysis of PPP uptake does not show that the program has had any significant effect on labor market or employment outcomes. Intuitively, PPP uptake should have been higher in regions with exasperated economic distress. However, a recent study

published by the University of Chicago found that the PPP did not have any effect on various economic outcomes, including hours worked by employees, business shutdowns, and initial unemployment insurance claims. On the other hand, these authors assert that businesses overwhelmingly used such loans to build up savings and

meet loan commitments, leading many to hypothesize that, although the PPP may not have had a significant effect on short-term economic outcomes, it may have promoted financial stability to firms which would have otherwise faced major liquidation issues, thus preventing an unprecedented wave of small business bankruptcies. Only time will illuminate the effectiveness of the program.

While the Senate has not yet put forth a finalized version of their bill regarding a prospective fifth major federal stimulus package, it has been proposed that the bill will contain yet another round of PPP funds on the magnitude of \$100 billion; this would be in addition to the undistributed roughly \$130 billion in PPP funds allocated via the CARES Act which were not dispersed as of the program's expiration on August 8. It is unclear whether the upcoming stimulus

bill, if passed, would re-allocate these funds. While the efficacy of the PPP is not yet fully understood, there is general consensus that small businesses have borne the brunt of the economic impact of COVID-19 and are still in dire need of federal stimulus.

Many economists have insisted that this next tranche of federal stimulus, rather than provide loans to small businesses as was the case with the PPP, should instead utilize employee retention programs, perhaps through an employee retention tax credit. The benefits of such employee retention programs, as opposed to federal loans which businesses must apply to through financial intermediaries such as banks, is that they are able to work within the framework of existing payroll systems to provide much needed uninterrupted financial support to workers. Furthermore, it has been noted that a portion of small businesses were unable to access support from the PPP, as many did not have extensive relationships with banks. Employee retention programs, which do not require that recipients go through a bank to access funding, would avail such businesses. Lastly, as banks would tend to view firms receiving funding from employee retention programs as less of a risk compared to those who applied to for PPP funding, these programs could potentially bolster the Federal Reserve's underutilized Main Street Lending Program, which is meant to support medium sized businesses by giving them access to much needed liquidity.

How fares Virginia's labor market?

The Virginia Employment Commission issued a press release on August 21 noting that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell 0.1 percentage points in July to 8 percent unemployment rate down from 9 percent in May and 8.4 percent in June, with seasonally adjusted nonfarm employment increasing by 9,300 jobs between June 2020

and July 2020. The leisure and hospitality sector notched the largest gains in employment with an increase of 23,800 jobs to 317,800. These numbers serve to highlight the fact that Virginia's economy has begun to recover the worst of its losses since the month of April, in which the unemployment rate in the Commonwealth topped 11 percent (see chart 1).

However, the Commonwealth still faces a long way forward to enjoying its pre-pandemic levels of economic prosperity. As recently as August 7, the state of Virginia had a daily increase in COVID-19 infections of 2,015 new cases, exceeding the state's previous peak in-

fection rate of 1,615 cases set on May 26. Although the state had entered Phase 3 re-opening on July 1 with lessened restrictions, Governor Northam responded to ongoing increases in positive COVID-19 cases over the summer with increased restrictions in the Hamptons Roads area. These restrictions limited capacity for indoor dining to 50 percent, barred restaurants from serving alcohol past 10 PM, and prohibited gatherings of more than 50 people.

As such restrictions are implemented, Virginia's economy is sure to feel renewed economic hardship in the short term, even if slowing the spread of the virus will promote economic growth in the long term.

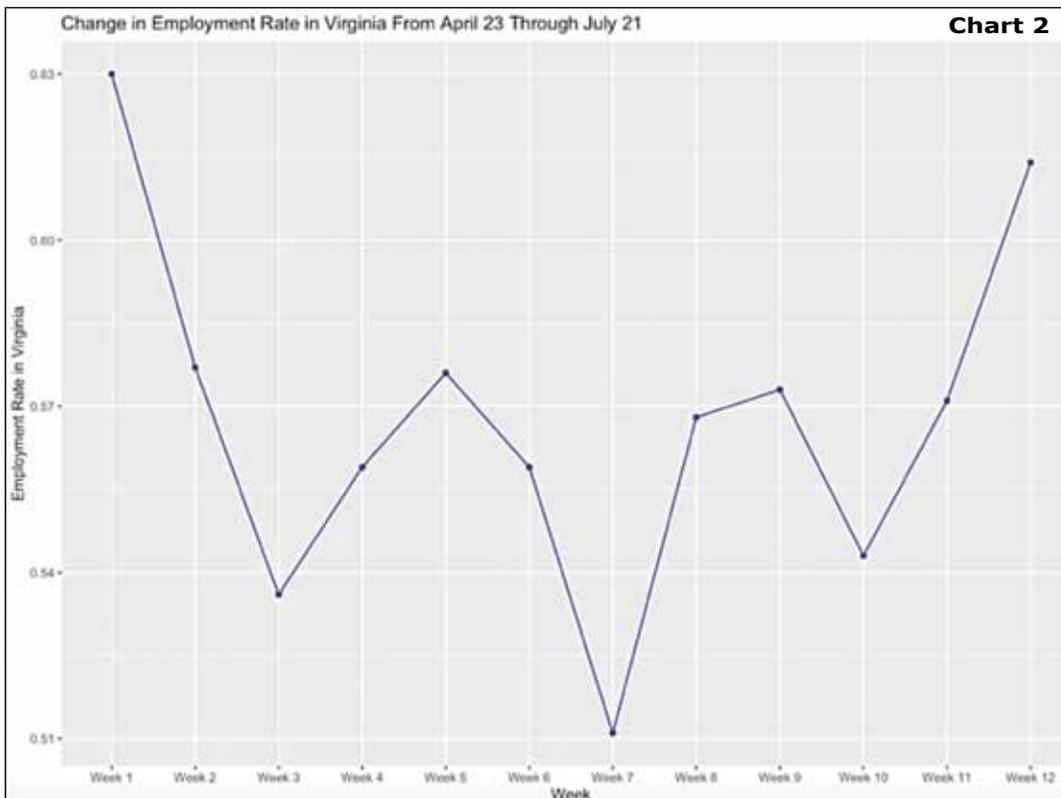
Chart 1 Nonfarm Employment in Virginia*
Seasonally Adjusted

Industry	Employment			June 2020 to July 2020		July 2019 to July 2020	
	July 2020	June 2020	July 2019	Change	% Change	Change	% Change
Total Nonfarm	3,775,600	3,765,700	4,059,100	9,300	0.2%	-284,100	-7.0%
Total Private Sector	3,192,500	3,084,200	3,327,500	18,300	0.6%	-225,000	-6.8%
Goods-Producing	443,200	448,900	454,200	-5,700	-1.3%	-11,000	-2.4%
Mining	7,100	7,200	7,700	-100	-1.4%	-600	-7.8%
Construction	208,100	207,000	203,500	1,100	0.5%	4,600	2.3%
Manufacturing	228,000	234,700	243,000	-6,700	-2.9%	-15,000	-6.2%
Service-Providing	3,331,800	3,316,800	3,604,900	15,000	0.5%	-273,100	-7.6%
Private Service-Providing	2,639,300	2,635,300	2,873,900	24,000	0.9%	-214,000	-7.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	632,500	628,600	658,200	3,900	0.6%	-25,700	-3.9%
Information	65,000	66,500	68,200	-1,500	-2.3%	-3,200	-4.7%
Finance	206,700	209,200	212,300	-2,500	-1.2%	-5,600	-2.6%
Professional and Business Services	731,500	737,900	768,400	-4,400	-0.9%	-36,900	-4.8%
Education and Health Services	516,600	513,700	554,700	2,900	0.6%	-38,100	-6.9%
Leisure and Hospitality Services	317,800	294,000	409,100	23,800	8.1%	-91,300	-22.3%
Miscellaneous Services	189,200	185,400	202,400	3,800	2.0%	-13,200	-6.5%
Government	672,500	681,500	731,600	-9,000	-1.3%	-59,100	-8.1%
Federal Government	183,800	182,000	181,500	1,800	1.0%	2,300	1.3%
State Government	145,500	146,500	160,800	-1,000	-0.7%	-15,300	-9.5%
Local Government	343,200	353,000	389,300	-8,800	-2.8%	-46,100	-11.8%

*Current month's estimates are preliminary.

In fact, any restriction on business activity in Virginia has been followed by decreased levels of employment in the state. This relationship is seen clearly when analyzing The Census Bureau's House Pulse Survey data, an ongoing weekly experimental survey conducted by The Census Bureau which aims to provide more frequent data collection on employment across the country and in all 50 states. This useful source of up-to-date economic data began being published on April 23rd, with the most recent release documenting employment across the nation for the week ending July 21st, for a total of 12 weeks (see chart 2).

When aligning employment rates in Virginia with the various phase re-openings in the Commonwealth, the pattern becomes apparent: each time the state entered into a new phase of re-opening, the employment rate within the state increased. For example, Virginia entered Phase 1 re-opening on May 15, which coincides with week 3 of the Pulse Survey data. From week 1 to week 3, employment in Virginia plummeted from 63 percent to below 54 percent, reflecting the continued strain on the labor market as the economic fallout from the month of April began to materialize in the data.



However, following week 3, employment shot up to above 57 percent by week 5, likely due to loosening business restrictions as the state entered its Phase 1 re-opening scheme. This same pattern is replicated for Phase 2 re-opening which occurred during week 7 of the Pulse Survey data, and again with Phase 3 re-opening occurring during week 10.

The takeaway here is that Virginia's economic outlook is inextricably linked, at least in part, to the burden the state imposed upon its businesses. Given that the government has an obligation to limit business activity if such activity poses a public health risk to its citizenry, the

VA Economy vs. the Pandemic

first step to reignite Virginia's economy is to slow the virus' rate of the infection.

A similar trend is observed when analyzing the number of Virginians who used unemployment insurance (UI) benefits within the past seven days to make essential payments (see chart 3).

This data was also collected from the Census Bureau's Pulse Household Survey. However, the survey did not start collecting data on UI claims until the 7th iteration of the survey; thus, week 1 aligns to week 7 in the previous chart, with week 6 aligning to week 12. As such, we cannot discern the impact of Phase 1 re-opening on UI benefit payments, as this happened prior to data collection. However, as Phase 2 re-opening aligns with week 1 of the above graph, one can see that the number of Virginians using UI benefit payments to meet spending needs dropped from 720,000 to below 580,000 during the week it was implemented. Likewise, when Virginia entered Phase 3 re-opening during week 4 of the above graph, the same statistic dropped from 660,000 to just below 600,000.

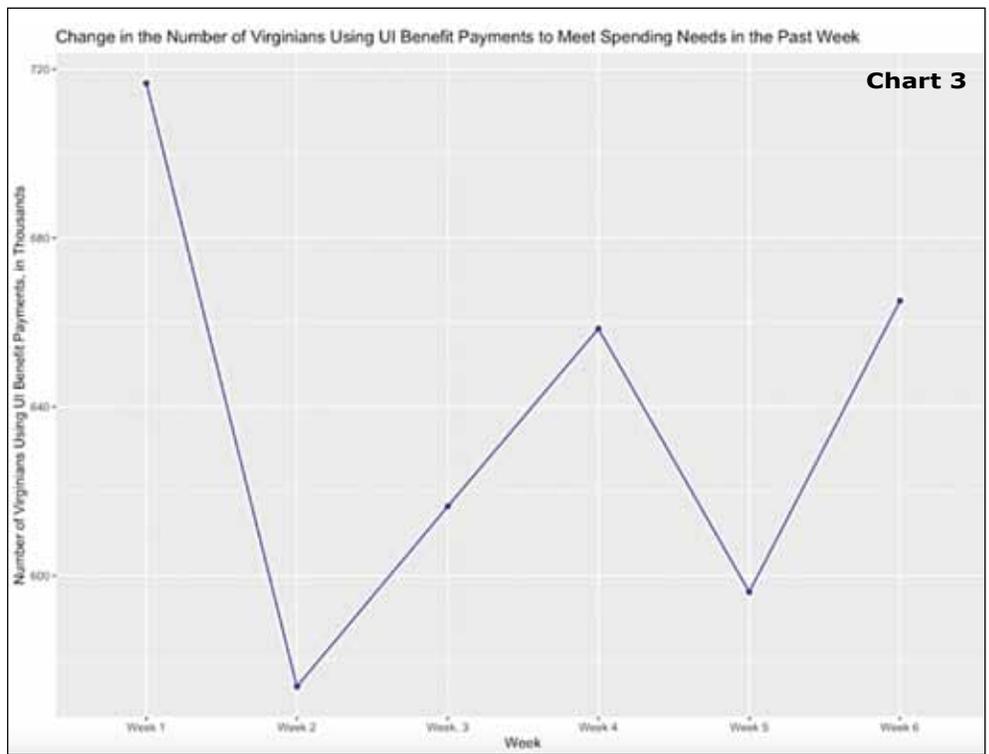
While the phased re-openings certainly appear to aid the labor market in terms of both employment and the number of Virginians collecting UI benefits, it should still be noted that re-openings did not fully solve the underlying issues facing the current labor market. While these statistics tend to improve directly after the re-openings go into effect, likely as businesses begin to re-hire temporarily laid off or furloughed workers, the numbers tend to trend in the opposite direction only a few weeks later, suggesting a confluence of factors at play – likely including continued depressed consumer demand preventing businesses from remaining open.

Despite the combination of a recovering employment rate and less Virginians filing for unemployment insurance, Virginia is still experiencing its worst labor market in years. To mitigate the negative economic impacts of record numbers of Americans filing for unemployment across the nation, the CARES Act established the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) provisions. These dual programs were designed to both extend unemployment eligibility to those who would not normally qualify under state UI programs, namely part-time and self-employed workers, while also increasing UI benefits granted through the federal government by \$600 per week. The compensation provided by the federal government through the FPUC notwithstanding, by mid-summer the Virginia Employment Commission had received over 970,000 unemployment claims since March; this is a dramatic increase from the average of 11,000 per month rate of UI filings the VEC typically experiences.

As a result of the expanded benefits allotted to the unemployed, most UI recipients are receiving wages larger than they had been receiving when they were employed (see chart 4).

Unfortunately, the additional \$600 weekly UI benefits allotted under the FPUC expired the week ending July 31. This "cliff," in which additional benefits expire for the first time since late March, came at a time when the Department of Labor reported its second straight week of increases in unemployment filings in nearly four months.

Unless Congress passes additional unemployment insurance measures in its much-awaited fifth stimulus bill, Virginia, and every other state across the nation, stands to suffer greatly as a result. While

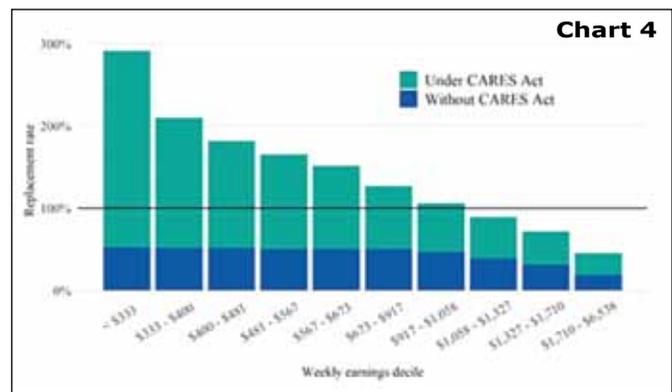


some have argued that such generous UI benefits should be curbed as they disincentivize laid-off employees from re-entering the labor market, a paper coming out of Yale University has found no statistically significant association between an individual's wage replacement rate and their likelihood to re-enter the workforce. Furthermore, research released by JPMorgan Chase found that aggregate spending of unemployed workers receiving UI benefits increased 10 percent year-over-year since the inception of the FPUC.

Together, these results suggest that UI benefits have acted as a net benefit to the economy, acting as a bulwark against declining consumer demand and providing a necessary life-line to workers who find themselves without a job, all without decreasing employment incentives. It's reasonable to infer that unless Congress is able to swiftly pass a bill which includes revamping UI benefits, both the individual and overall economies stand to suffer as a result.

State and local government ills

State and local governments are not immune to such harsh reductions in economic activity. The National League of Cities estimates that municipalities across the nation will experience a \$360 billion budget shortfall through the 2022 fiscal year. This is the result of a synthesis of two factors: 1) that local governments have continued to receive less funding from their respective state governments since the Great Recession, and 2) that local government revenues disproportionately rely on taxes which have been hardest hit as a result of the current recession. These include income taxes, corporate taxes, sales and use taxes, lodging taxes, and meals taxes. In fact, local govern-



ments across Virginia have noticed their revenues coming from state sources declining from 50 percent in 2009 to 44 percent in the most recent fiscal year, according to James Regimbal of Fiscal Analytics in Richmond. Moreover, localities are further constrained financially by the proliferation of tax and expenditure limits (TELEs), which disallow localities from raising taxes during times of financial hardship to make up for lost revenue.

According to a July 9 press release from the Northam administration, Virginia experienced a \$236.5 million deficit in its general fund revenue collections for FY 2020. While this was 1.1 percent below the Commonwealth's projected 3.1 percent revenue increase from FY 2019, the damage was less than had been previously forecasted in the weeks prior to the State's official release. As such, the General Assembly's Special Session meeting in August was conceived, in part, to adopt a final budget and decide how to spend the remaining \$2.2 billion in unallotted spending.

Furthermore, James Regimbal predicts that the State's budget should be reasonably resilient to the COVID-19 economic impact. He notes that the Commonwealth has either directly or indirectly received over \$7.1 billion in federal grants through various programs such as The CARES Act, increased federal government matching rates for Medicare and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and over \$300 million to institutions of higher learning.

Despite the optimistic view of the State's budget and future revenues, localities are likely to be more adversely affected. This phenomenon results from local government's overreliance on tax bases most negatively affected by business shutdowns and social distancing guidelines. However, on July 28, Governor Northam officially released to local governments the second half of the Coronavirus Relief Funds that the Commonwealth had received through the CARES Act. The Governor had released the first half, totaling \$644.6 million, earlier in the year, but had held back the second half to gauge the State's financial viability. This second tranche of aid to local governments will certainly assist local governments as they try to cover the costs associated with direct COVID-19 expenditures such as testing, PPE purchases, and to pay for workers directly involved in virus-related mitigation efforts. The amount of funding allocated to localities from the Commonwealth totals \$1.3 billion of the \$3.1 billion granted to the State from the U.S. Treasury.

While Democrats on Capitol Hill have proposed \$1 trillion in additional federal spending to state and local governments through the HEROES Act (a move ardently supported by the National League of Cities), Republicans have been hesitant to include any funding in their draft of a fiscal response bill. Negotiations between the two major parties have ground nearly to a halt, with numerous points of contention including the expansion of UI benefits and the continuance of a federal eviction moratorium. It is unclear whether a bilateral agreement, if one is even possible, will include direct funding to state and localities. However, the fact remains that local governments are slated to be hit hardest by the recent economic fallout and need all the fiscal stimulus the federal government can provide.

Virginia is making plans to "Get Well Soon"

While Virginia has used federal funding to supplement its response efforts, it has not predicated its entire recovery strategy on an overt reliance on such funds. In response to the declining economic climate in Virginia, the State has set up several programs targeted at both individuals and businesses.

To aid small businesses suffering from the rapid decline in consumer demand, the Commonwealth has enacted a \$70 million "Rebuild VA" recovery fund, targeted at small businesses and nonprofits. This fund will provide grants of up to \$10,000 to approximately 7,000

small businesses within the state; funds will be distributed to businesses through the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity. In order to qualify for Rebuild VA fund money, businesses must have total annual gross revenues of less than \$1.5 million, have no more than 25 employees, and certify they did not receive any federal funding through the PPP, Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), or any other CARES Act related program. If deemed eligible, businesses may use such funds to provide payroll support, pay employee salaries, pay rent and utility payments, and provide any PPE or working capital necessary for them to adequately address the COVID-19 response.

In a similar vein, Governor Northam approved \$14.66 million in additional funding early in the summer to create a new Economic Resilience and Recovery Program. This program was created by restructuring Growth and Opportunity (GO) for Virginia funding. Each of the nine GO Virginia Councils will receive \$1 million of the \$14.66 million in funding to address economic challenges faced in their respective communities. According to Brian Ball, Virginia's Secretary of Commerce and Trade, the program aims to "develop and create strategies that address Virginia's economic recovery." The remaining \$5.66 million not directly allocated to the various GO Virginia Councils will be set aside for statewide projects, for which individual Councils may apply on an ongoing basis for access to funding.

Housing remains a pertinent issue in the Commonwealth due to the economic fallout from the pandemic. It has been reported by the US Census Bureau that over 20 percent of households in Virginia are housing insecure, indicating that they have either missed their most recent rent payment or do not expect to be able to make their next month's payment. In response to this crisis, Governor Northam launched the \$70 million Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) on June 29. The RMRP will be administered by The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and funding for the program will come through a portion of the \$3.1 billion allocated to the Commonwealth through the Coronavirus Relief Fund. In order to qualify for RMRP funding, households must prove their inability to pay their rent or mortgage payment was a direct result of COVID-19, have a monthly rent or mortgage rate at or below 150 percent of Fair Market Rent (FMR), and have a gross annual income at or below 80 percent of area median income. However, Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement estimates that upwards of \$250 million will be needed in housing assistance throughout the summer. Discussions regarding eviction moratoriums continue to be contentious and it remains uncertain what will happen.

Though uncertainty continues to pervade government decision making because of the unpredictable nature of COVID-19 spread, the Commonwealth has taken extraordinary measures to protect individuals, households, and businesses from the worst of the possible consequences. While our economic status remains in a state of flux, it appears that, at least for now, Virginia is headed in the right direction. However, recovery is anything but certain – it is contingent on mitigating the spread of the virus, maintaining adequate government programs, and responding decisively to both science and data.

Virginia continues to remain one of the best states in this nation for business, and we should be guardedly optimistic that will we come out of this pandemic recession as strong, or stronger, than before.



About the author: *Tristan Baird is a rising third-year student at the University of Virginia. He recently completed a summer internship with VML.*

TOWN OF CHILHOWIE

Contributed by Town Manager John E. B. Clark, Jr.

A regional effort revitalizes a downtown

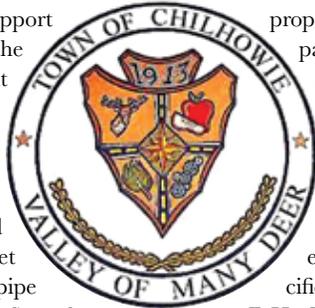
A PROJECT BEGUN IN 2018 to revitalize Chilhowie’s historic 1913 Downtown District is almost finished. The \$1,400,000 project was made possible by the support and coordination of several organizations including the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), downtown property owners, and the Town of Chilhowie.

The streetscape portion of the project entailed roughly 10,000 square feet of sidewalk, 800 linear feet of curb and gutter, 1,200 linear feet of drainage pipe (including a portion under a Norfolk Southern railroad), and five decorative streetlights. VDOT paved the entire Main Street area within downtown’s borders.

To create room for future growth, an abandoned and dilapidated

two-story 40,000 square foot textile plant was removed, and the site was subsequently made environmentally safe and cleared. All property owners in the designated Downtown District are participating in the facades portion of the project currently underway.

The project has truly been a regional effort with the design, inspection and contract administration services being provided by the engineering firm of Hurt and Proffitt of Blacksburg; Grant and project administration services have been provided by the Mt. Rogers Planning District Commission in Marion; and specific services provided by Boring Contractors of Abingdon, D.H. Griffin Wrecking of Bristol, and Walberg Construction of Glade Spring. The Smyth County Chamber of Commerce will be assisting the Town in related Downtown activities and designations in the future.



Mayor Heninger (holding scissors) is joined by citizens, store owners and local officials at the official ribbon cutting ceremony last Fall prior to the facades project.

TOWN OF ELKTON

Contributed by Mayor Joshua Gooden

Mural project promotes downtown and preserves history

IN JUNE, THE ELKTON Downtown Revitalization Corporation in partnership with East Rockingham High School Art Teacher and town resident Christopher Michael began a project to bring murals to Downtown Elkton. The first mural pays homage to the town's proximity to the Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive and features a large bear and two cubs with the Blue Ridge Mountains in the background. The mural, which is on the side of the Appalachian Trail Outfitters building, spans approximately 50 feet and is about 12 feet tall. The "Blue Ridge Bears" are a welcoming site when travelers enter the Downtown District to shop, dine or visit. The Elkton Downtown Revitalization Corporation funded the mural that was painted by Michael with help from East Rockingham High School graduates Kaylee Dinkel, Erika Hess, and Natalie Morris.

In July, the partnership continued with the restoration of the 1940s-era "Fresh up with 7up" mural that was originally painted as an advertisement for the 7up Bottling Company of Elkton. The two 7up murals located on Spotswood Trail are vibrant reminders of Downtown Elkton's stature as a powerhouse of the mid-20th



Town of Elkton Mayor Joshua Gooden works on the final touches of the Elkton Milling Company mural along Gibbons Avenue.

"Blue Ridge Bears" on the side of Appalachian Trail Outfitters in Downtown Elkton.



Elkton resident Lexi Campbell and East Rockingham High School Art Teacher Christopher Michael with the completed 7up mural in downtown Elkton. The mural was originally painted in the 1940s.

century beverage industry. The "Freshen up with 7up" murals were completed by Christopher Michael and

Lexi Campbell of Elkton.

Later in July, Mayor Joshua Gooden began work on restoring the "Elkton Milling Co" mural along Gibbons Avenue in downtown Elkton. The mural depicts lettering on the building for the former "Elkton Milling Co. – Home of White Fawn Four" which was one of four downtown buildings occupied by the company throughout its history. Currently, the mill buildings are home to several businesses including Blue Oval Industries, a distributor for late model Ford parts and Elkton Brewing Company which houses its brewery operations and tasting room on the site.

"The project wouldn't be possible without the willingness to participate in the project from our downtown business owners and property owners" said Mayor Gooden. He added that once the first mural was complete, over six other property owners downtown offered their walls for future murals. The town also anticipates becoming a member of the Appalachian Mural Trail to assist in promoting tourism and to support local businesses.



CITY OF MANASSAS

Contributed by Communications Manager Patty Prince

Health equity program helps those most in need

THE CITY OF MANASSAS has been working with local volunteers and City staff to pack more than 5,000 bags full of masks (4 per bag) and hand sanitizers for families in the community who most need it. These supplies were donated as part of the Commonwealth's Health Equity Task Force Program's Pilot Program to increase equitable access to essential supplies in underserved and historically disadvantaged communities, many of which have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Also, in the bags are culturally appropriate public health materials to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

"The City of Manassas is happy to be working with the Commonwealth and the Health Equity Task Force on this endeavor," said Mayor Harry J. Parrish II. "Anything we can do to help our neighbors during this pandemic is a win for our community."

The Health Equity Task Force Program uses a data-driven approach to select areas in the Commonwealth that are most in need and where residents are at risk of contracting COVID-19. Communities were identified using indicators such as chronic diseases, household income, age, disability status and other pertinent health factors. More than 40 localities were identified and selected to receive these materials during this pilot program.

"The Equity Leadership Task Force is excited to partner with the City of Manassas for our health equity reform and PPE distribution program," said Dr. Janice Underwood, Chief Diversity Officer to Governor Northam. "COVID-19 cases are still increasing throughout the Commonwealth; therefore, it will take all of us wearing a mask, using appropriate hygiene practices, and staying home when we can to protect each other. Under-resourced communities have disproportionately carried the burden of COVID-19, but collaboration with

localities like the City of Manassas highlight Virginia's commitment to local-state partnerships that promote an equitable response and recovery from this deadly disease."

As of mid-summer, the Commonwealth had partnered with 35 localities. City officials in 19 localities had completed health equity and public safety training and begun distributing much needed resources within their communities, while the others were in the planning phase of the pilot program. Over 500,000 cloth masks and 420,000 bottles of hand sanitizer had been delivered to localities across the state.

"I am proud that VDEM can work collaboratively with the City of Manassas to implement the Health Equity Pilot Program," said VDEM State Coordinator Curtis Brown. "This program supports the city's efforts to equitably distribute lifesaving PPE to communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. It is more important than ever to embed equity into every mitigation and recovery effort as we continue to see the devastating impact of this pandemic."

The Health Equity Leadership Taskforce provides leadership to the Unified Command Health Equity Work Group, which was formed at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Virginia. This working group is the first ever in Virginia's history. It works to ensure that a health equity lens is applied during an emergency response. Dr. Janice Underwood, the Commonwealth's first Chief Diversity Officer, leads the Unified Command Health Equity Work Group.



CITY OF PETERSBURG

Contributed by Economic Development Manager Clay Hamner

Back on track and building up steam

THE CITY OF PETERSBURG was once home to flourishing industrial and agricultural industries. In fact, so many goods were transported into and out of the city that at one time five different gauges of railroad track ran through it! But the times changed, and Petersburg did not keep up. In 2016 the city was on the brink of bankruptcy.



What took decades to undo, however, took a group of dedicated individuals only a few years to correct. The fruit of their efforts arrived in July of this year when City Manager Aretha R. Ferrell-Benavides delivered a positive fund balance of \$8 million and reported that the City of Petersburg's finances were back on a healthy track.

How did the City of Petersburg keep from running off the rails?

Short story: A willingness to make bold changes.

Long story: Read on...

With the Petersburg's financial future at stake, the city council,

led by Mayor Sam Parham, named the city manager as the chief tax collector, a position formerly held by the constitutional office of the treasurer. Moving this responsibility into the city government's finance department allowed the city to effectively execute this complex function without reliance on an elected official who may not have sufficient experience.

As a result, the city's tax collection rate rose from 60 percent to 85 percent within a three-year period. According to David Rose of Davenport and Company, the city's financial advisor, "This turnaround is as great as any that I have seen or witnessed firsthand in my 40 years."

Other significant changes to the budgeting process contributed to the city's eventual success. Budget Director Robert Floyd, hired by the city manager in 2017, observes: "We eliminated positions that had been budgeted for, but not filled. Removing jobs that would never be filled narrowed yearly expenses which resulted in a decrease in expenses." He concludes, "We worked both sides of the equation by reducing expenditures and simultaneously increasing revenue."

As the city's financial train picked up speed, the benefits of having more funds in the city's coffers became readily apparent. A new Economic Development and Tourism team brought more revenue to the city through increased commercial and residential activity. Prior to 2017, the city had not utilized tourism grants but the Economic Development and Tourism team worked with City Manager Ferrell-Benavides to secure multiple tourism grants which were used to increase activity in the city's museums, restaurants, and shops – particularly in Old Towne Petersburg. During a single month in 2019, the city's meals tax collections increased by almost \$600,000.

Recently the City of Petersburg did something that many would have thought impossible just a few years ago: It welcomed a major manufacturer, AMPAC Fine Chemicals (AFC), back to the city. Patrick Park, AFC spokesperson, observes that "the COVID-19 crisis has clearly demonstrated that the U.S. is highly dependent on foreign countries for its drug supplies. The U.S. government is determined

to change this and has started numerous government-funded initiatives that will bring production of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and Drug Products back to the U.S."

Park notes that among the reasons for his firm choosing to invest in their Petersburg facility were its "qualified work force and the willingness of City of Petersburg to work with AFC."

Will the city need five different rail gauges to handle all the new activity? Most likely not, because the times have changed and so has Petersburg!

TOWN OF HILLSBORO

Contributed by Communications Specialist Christi Maple

Safe drinking water project ends two-decade boil water notice

AFTER TWO DECADES of living under a state-mandated Boil Water Notice, in July the residents of one of the Commonwealth's smallest Towns were able to once again confidently take a drink straight from their taps. The completion of the Town of Hillsboro's Safe Drinking Project allowed the Town to disconnect its municipal water system from a venerable mountainside spring that had supplied the Town with water for more than 200 years. The achievement was made possible through the diligence and perseverance of the Town's volunteer leadership and the financial support of the Virginia Department of Health and Loudoun County.



What unfolds below is a saga of studies, analysis, bids and contracts all requiring the leadership and focus of the volunteer Mayor and Town Council and a small army of dedicated and civic minded citizens of this tiny town of some 120.

More than 200 years ago, in the settlement in the gap in Short Hill Mountain in Northwest Loudoun established in 1752, first began receiving water from Hill Tom Spring, named for the free African American man who generously shared his spring water with the town below. A tannery owner led the effort, fashioning a conduit system of hollowed pine logs to carry the water nearly a quarter mile down the steep Short Hill slope, making it the first gravity water distribution system in Loudoun. In 1858, the Hillsboro Water Company was formed, and the logs were replaced with iron pipe, serving public pumps along Hillsboro's main street, Charles Town Pike.

With the advent of indoor plumbing, a water main was installed in the early 20th century and a majority of the homes along Charles Town Pike were connected. The Hillsboro Water Company was dissolved in 1953 and the system became an official public waterworks in 1953.

The spring continued to serve as the system's sole source throughout the 20th century but was deemed as being under the influence of ground water in the 1990s, beginning the Town's quest to either filter the water or find a new source. The Town has operated its waterworks under a series of Virginia Department of Health Consent Orders since then that ultimately required the spring's disconnection from the municipal system. Meanwhile, the Town worked to develop a well source with adequate capacity.

Through grants from VDH, an initial exploratory well effort came up dry. A second effort was successful, but that well's production was not enough to allow the Town to disconnect from its spring. In 2007 a new water treatment plant was built, and the exploratory well was brought into production, with the intent for a second well to be drilled. The effort to drill for a second well near the new treatment plant again proved unsuccessful, leaving the Town no alternative but to keep the spring online and remain under the Boil Water Notice and under the Consent Order.

Abandoning hope to site another well near its existing facilities, the Town, with support from Loudoun County and VDH, commissioned a broader hydrogeological study to locate the most likely drinking water sources within the Town limits regardless of proximity to existing facilities. The study conducted by Emery & Garrett Groundwater Inc. identified several potential sites, with the best situated along the North Fork Catoctin Creek far from the Town's water plant. Again, with a VDH grant an exploratory well was dug in 2011, this time producing a volume that would allow the disconnection of the Hill Tom Spring. The results of the yield and water quality testing were approved by VDH in January 2012. Working with support of Loudoun's municipal water authority, Loudoun Water and engineering firm Hazen and Sawyer an infrastructure study was completed and then utilized to prepare a preliminary engineering report (PER) that was approved by VDH in early 2012, making possible Hillsboro's subsequent request to the VDH Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program.

In 2014 the Town requested and was also granted financial assistance from the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors to move forward with planning, design and construction of the

new well and water system improvements. Meanwhile the Town had a major road improvement project in design, and within that project, the complete replacement of the drinking water main was anticipated and funded. Full funding for the Hillsboro Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Project was secured in mid-2018, and coordination of the water project construction and road construction began, with the first phase of the water project beginning in early 2019 to be followed by road construction, which would complete the new main, beginning in early 2020.

Shirley Construction won the water project contract, beginning the completion of the new well and upgrading the storage and treatment facility in July of 2019. As that phase of the project was nearing its completion, it encountered a significant setback in spring of 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the 60-year-old main collapsed as it was connected to the new water source. This necessitated an emergency above-ground main to restore water to the town. This fix would only work as a temporary solution. But the Hillsboro Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Project was already under way and the Town then requested the road project contractor, Archer Western Construction, to re-sequence its work to move installation of the Town's new distribution system months ahead of its original plan. The new water main was completed in only three months and in July 2020, the final permanent connections to the Town's new waterworks were completed, severing the connection to Hill Tom Spring.

The Town had earned the right to celebrate a bit, which it did at a ceremony on July 20 officially dedicating the new well. Moments before the ceremony began, Hillsboro Mayor Roger

L. Vance received an email from Kyle McCammon, District Engineer, Virginia Department of Health which stated "It is my great pleasure to tell you that you may lift the boil water notice that the Town has been under due to the disconnection of the GUDI spring from the Town's water system. The progress the Town has made over the past couple years has been wonderful, and we are all looking forward to continued progress over the coming years. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication."

Mayor Vance recognized the "extraordinary cooperation" of all involved to help solve Hillsboro's safe drinking water problem. "In addition to the many state and county government officials who supported us and the professionals who designed and built this new system, it would have never happened without the dedication and thousands of hours of work on the part of a cadre of volunteers and Town officials over many years," Vance said. "Our Vice Mayor, and deputy project manager Amy Marasco was instrumental in securing grants and shepherding us through the regulatory process, and our current Water Commissioner Claudia Forbes has performed heroically to keep the old waterworks running and transitioning into the new system. In the past two decades, dozens of residents have played critical roles in maintaining our water system and planning for this day."

"The Town does not give up, as daunting as the challenges ahead of it appears," said Vance. "Today, one of the most historic towns in the Commonwealth, against many technical, physical and financial hurdles, has delivered plentiful, clean, potable water to its citizens, and continues – while guarding its historic integrity – to bring Hillsboro into the 21st century."



Mayor Vance at the dedication ceremony.

A new era for emergency communications

EARLIER THIS SUMMER, the City of Roanoke and Virginia 811 (VA811) held a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new Communications Center that houses the city’s E-911 Center and the VA811 Contact Center. Located at 1830 Blue Hills Circle (in the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology), the facility creates a culture that promotes innovative thinking, information sharing, and an increased awareness and interaction with the community.

The event also recognized the installation of a new work of public art, “Guidance Tower,” by artist David Sheldon, which was commissioned for the Center to recognize both the important work of our E-911 staff and the Virginia 811 team that occurs in the facility, and the partnership between E911 and Virginia 811.

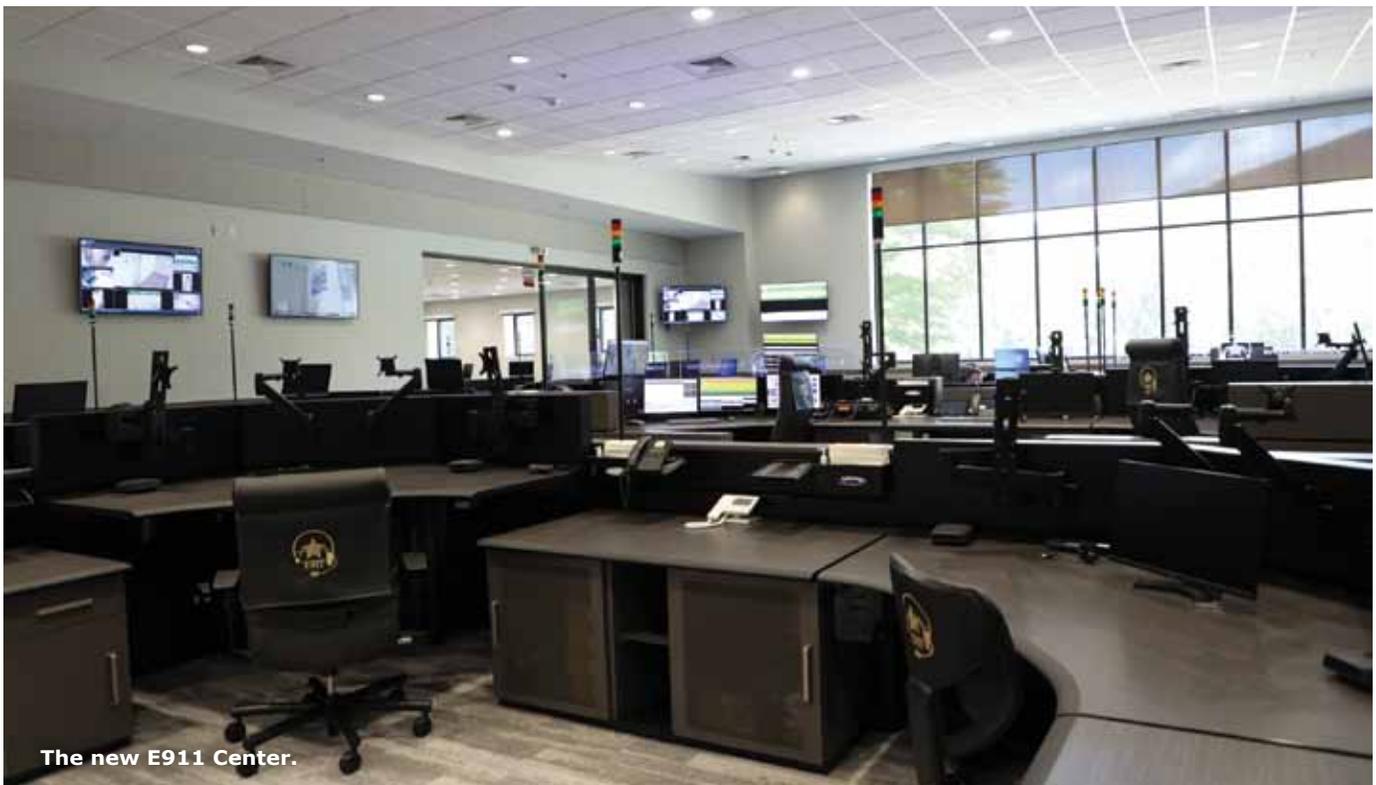
“How exciting it is to celebrate the beginning of a new era in emergency communications, and this special public/private partnership to provide those communications,” said Mayor Sherman Lea. “This new facility will set the stage for continued growth in technology and development of the Center for decades to come.”

A partnership that makes sense

The city’s E-911 Center receives more than 250,000 calls each year; Virginia 811 receives more than one-and-a-quarter-million utility locate requests (“tickets”) each year. To accommodate both agencies’ volume of calls or contacts, the new building is divided into three areas – a contact center for each agency and common spaces.

“VA811 has had the unique opportunity to create a public/private partnership with Roanoke City,” said Virginia 811’s Former CEO and Founder, Rick Pevarski. “This partnership provided the ability to build a “state-of-the-art” data center, allowing VA811 to be well positioned to utilize technology enhancements for many years into the future.”

The total budget for the project was \$15.7 million, which included upgrades to computer and radio systems. The City’s share of the Project budget was \$9.4 million, while the portion attributable to Virginia Utility Protection Service was \$6.3 million dollars.



The new E911 Center.

The Blue Hills Communications Center ribbon cutting ceremony.



©RVTV3



"Guidance Tower" by David Sheldon.

TOWN OF PULASKI

Contributed by Virginia Housing staff

Small town revitalization has big impact

LIKE MANY SMALL, RURAL TOWNS, Pulaski – located 35 miles southwest of Blacksburg – has had its share of economic struggles.

The construction of Interstate 81 in the late 1950s, the decline of passenger rail service in the 1960s and the offshoring trends of the 1980s and 1990s all took a toll on the town. Tourism slowed, businesses moved out and the population declined.

Recently, however, the mountain town has seen an uptick in its residential and commercial sector thanks to strategic partnerships, diligent local government, and key investors. The latest effort is the rekindling of Pulaski’s Central Business District, which involves transforming the town’s blight-riddled West Main Street into a vibrant mixed-use development ideal for business owners and renters.

Spearheaded by local developer Steve Critchfield of West Main Development, LLC and a team of enthusiastic millennials (affectionately dubbed ‘the tribe’), two key buildings at 89 and 94 West Main Street – which had been empty for 20 years – are now home to four premier apartments and three modern commercial/retail spaces.

Challenges (and passion) galore

If revitalizing a downtown or a neighborhood was easy, everyone would do it.

“The projects in rural Virginia are usually so small (less than \$2 million) that national syndications and developers aren’t interested because there isn’t any money in it,” explained Critchfield. It became clear that in order to create a revitalization project that would set the standard for future progress in Pulaski, there needed to be more than just private investors.

Making the project viable would be complicated but fortunately, the Pulaski project had plenty of passion to bring all the pieces of the puzzle together.

As part of its mission to provide affordable housing, Virginia Housing contributes a large portion of its net revenue to a program called REACH Virginia (Resources Enabling Affordable Community Housing). This money is dedicated to help the organization meet critical housing needs, such as the revitalization of communities.

“Steve and I brainstormed and worked out a strategy to move his project forward,” said Mike Hawkins, Virginia Housing’s Managing Director of Community Outreach. “The rising cost of living in



AGGREGATE CAPITAL, LLC

Two key buildings that sat empty for many years are now home to multiple apartments and businesses.



New apartments in the revitalized downtown feature hardwood floors and updated appliances.

Blacksburg and surrounding communities makes this an ideal time for Pulaski to revitalize its downtown. The market is there for affordable workforce housing and new commercial businesses.”

The biggest initial hurdle initially was to accumulate enough capital to make the project feasible. 89 and 94 West Main Street had severe interior damage due to failed roofs and needed quite a bit of work.

Along with Hawkins, Virginia Housing’s Director of Strategic Housing Chris Thompson worked with Critchfield to identify buildings available for rehabilitation on West Main Street that didn’t have any conditions or unique aspects attached to them that would hold up development; and Wally Robinson, a Strategic Lending Officer with Virginia Housing, worked with Critchfield and team on financing and loan options.

In addition to initial construction loans provided by The Town of Pulaski, the Pulaski County Economic Development Authority and National Bank of Blacksburg, Virginia Housing provided \$525,000 in special financing through its REACH Virginia program.

“They [Virginia Housing] decided to take a chance on us because they wanted to see revitalization in rural Virginia,” said Critchfield. “If they hadn’t, this never would have happened.”

A new way of doing business

With funding to revitalize the buildings secured, the next step was to put viable businesses in them. For this, the Town worked with Austin Stromme and Luke Allison of Aggregate Capital, LLC. Thinking outside of the box, Allison and Stromme reached out to nearby Virginia Tech to enlist the help of business students interested in working with Pulaski business owners on their plans and pitches.

“That part was crucial,” said Critchfield. “Not only is the revitalization of the building important, but you have to figure out what type of businesses the community wants and would support – and that’s where Virginia Tech stepped in.”

For Critchfield, the most important takeaway from this whole experience is that small, rural towns in Virginia, and likely across the United States, need help with every facet of a revitalization project if they are to succeed.

For Critchfield and company, it has been rewarding to see the pilot project in Pulaski come to fruition. From this experience, he plans to put together a template – based on Pulaski’s revitalization efforts – that other communities can use as a guide.

“We hope other rural towns in Virginia will follow this lead as a template,” said Critchfield.

Hawkins thinks a template based on Pulaski’s success is a wonderful idea.

“It would be great if this could be a model or inspiration for other communities, because often times what happens is a town has gone through so much, they get demoralized and feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to figure out how to move forward,” he said. “That’s why spark plugs, like the team in Pulaski, are so important.”



(L-R) Austin Stromme and Luke Allison, played a vital role in transforming Pulaski’s downtown. Through their company Aggregate Capital, LLC, they help developers fund and complete projects in rural America.



Steve Critchfield



Mike Hawkins

VRSA's Insight application: Bridging the gap between your strategic plan and everyday decisions

PUBLIC BODIES MAKE IMPORTANT decisions each day as they serve their communities. Decisions may involve daily operations – utilities, public safety, refuse parks – or may be responses to new challenges and uncertainties – like COVID-19. Often these decisions not only impact the lives of citizens, but staff as well.

How do public bodies ensure they make optimal decisions that support their communities and strategic objectives?

The Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA), in partnership with City/County Insurance Services (CIS), an insurance pool for Oregon cities and counties, created and designed Insight: A Strategic Decision Support Application.

The application is designed to bridge the gap between the strategic objectives of an organization and its significant decisions. The application can help organizations set priorities based on financial impacts, as well as meet increasing expectations for transparency by providing point-in-time documentation of the considerations taken leading up to significant decisions.

Let's walk through a scenario:

A city's recreation center remains closed in response to COVID-19. It's now September, and the city is contemplating whether to reopen the city for community gatherings.

Before beginning their decision-making process, city staff complete an organizational profile in Insight. This one-time step involves entering the organization's annual operating budget, financial thresholds for enlisting management and governing board approval, and the organization's strategic objectives. This information is used throughout the Insight application and the reports generated.

As the city staff start working through this decision, they first identify which strategic objectives are supported by reopening the recreation center.

Through a sequence of steps, the staff have conversations among themselves and various interested parties in order to identify and document considerations, including:

- Team members involved in the decision process;
- Issues that may require input by the governing body and top management;
- Internal and external stakeholders who may influence or be influenced by the decision;
- Potential advantages or opportunities arising from the decision, as well as financial impacts; and
- Potential threats or downsides of the decision, including financial impacts and how they may be mitigated.

The city staff enters information at each step and provides supporting documentation where available. This provides the staff with a point-in-time perspective as it relates to the decision being made.

Finally, the staff document their outcome or recommendation.

Ultimately, a thoughtful and documented decision adds value by considering the resources of the local government at the decision-



making level, rather than exhausting resources on a poor decision made in the hopes of a good outcome. Documenting the city staff's recommendation provides an area to capture resulting impacts, lessons learned, and/or other pertinent feedback.

At the end of the process, Insight generates reports which provide high-level decision summaries, including cost implications. This helps the city avoid unanticipated consequences relating to financial implications with its operating budget. As more decisions are added, the staff are able to identify which have the highest potential impact on the organization.

In our example, using Insight the city decided to reopen the community center. The decision was supported because it furthered the city's strategic objectives to strengthen neighborhood communities – and those involved felt that the benefits outweighed the exposure. The city involved both internal and external stakeholders in the decision-making process, so the outcome was overwhelmingly supported. Response plans were in place in the event of adverse impacts, and the city had documentation as to why the decision was made, if needed, to defend its decision.

Calls for transparent operations are becoming more prominent. As public bodies adapt and adjust to this new normal, VRSA is here to ease what worries our members – so that you can focus on what matters most – serving your community. Call VRSA to learn how Insight can help you be more thoughtful, inclusive and transparent in your decision-making when your governing body and leadership team hold a conversation on the challenging issues facing your community.

About the authors: *The Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA) is the first and most financially sound self-insurance pool in the Commonwealth of Virginia. VRSA provides auto, property, liability, and workers' compensation coverage to Virginia's local political subdivisions.*



MOSELEYARCHITECTS

Designing solutions. Building trust. Enriching lives.

Pictured: Pohick Regional Library, Fairfax County, Virginia

Spera hired as new Leesburg town attorney

Christopher Spera has been appointed to the position of town attorney by a unanimous vote of the Town of Leesburg council. He was selected after a nationwide search coordinated by Novak Consulting Group.



- Spera -

Spera served as deputy city attorney and assistant city attorney in Alexandria from 2005 to 2016. He is currently vice president and general counsel for the Old Dominion Transportation Group in Alexandria.

He will take the reins from Martin Crim, who has served as interim town attorney.

Mr. Spera holds a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia School of Law and a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia.

Judge named Prince George County director of social services



- Judge -

As of August 17, **Bertha Judge** is the Director of Social Services for Prince George County. Previously she was the Director of Social Services in Sussex County.

This is something of a homecoming for Judge who worked for Prince George County from 2011-18 as administrative manager in the Social Services Department.

Judge inherits a department that has been extremely busy the last few months serving citizens amidst the coronavirus pandemic. With higher unemployment in Prince George that is three times above the norm, many citizens are seeking benefits for the first time.

Judge received her bachelor's degree from Saint Paul's College, and her master's in administration and resource management from Central Michigan University.

Danville dedicates building to Saunders



- Saunders -

At a September 3rd dedication ceremony, the Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority's (DRHA) Board of Commissioners named a 10-unit apartment complex for housing military veterans and persons

with disabilities in honor of Danville City Council member and former mayor Sherman M. Saunders.

The complex at 608 Upper St. is called "Sherman M. Saunders Court" and features one- and two-bedroom, handicap-accessible apartments in a beautifully restored historic building that formerly served as the site of Sledd Memorial Church and the Community Improvement Council Head Start Building.

Mayor Alonzo Jones, who also serves on the DRHA Board of Commissioners, said Saunders is a pillar of the community. After hearing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak at High Street Baptist Church in Danville, Saunders, at the age of 15, dedicated his life to helping others.

Saunders went on to serve in the U.S. Army and work 42 years with Pittsylvania County Community Action, which is an agency dedicated to lifting people out of poverty. He served as the agency's executive director for 33 years. Under his leadership, the agency grew from 20 employees to 160 and expanded services to the counties of Campbell, Patrick and Franklin, and the cities of Martinsville and Danville.

Saunders has served on City Council for 22 years and was mayor from Jan. 1, 2008, to June 30, 2016. He has served on numerous local, state and national boards and commissions, including appointments to board and commissions by three former governors of Virginia: Charles Robb, Gerald Baliles, and John Dalton.

Garrett selected as Manassas fire and rescue chief

As of August 31, **William A. Garrett** is the new City of Manassas chief of fire and rescue services. Garret comes to the City with more than 32 years of experience in public safety. He has experience managing a combined fire and rescue system with both paid and volunteer staff and volunteer staff.



- Garrett -

Prior to coming to Manassas, Garrett served as fire chief for the City of Winchester and deputy fire chief for Fairfax County. In 2009 he was recognized as the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Firefighter of the Year. He has received Chief Fire Officer and Chief Emergency Medical Services Officer designation thru the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

Garrett began his career as a volunteer in 1988. He became an EMS provider/para-

medic in 1990 and has served in this capacity during his entire career.

Penn named acting Arlington County police chief

On September 5, **Charles "Andy" Penn** became the acting chief of the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD), taking over from Police Chief Murray "Jay" Farr, who retired after 30 years of service to the ACPD.



- Penn -

Penn has served as Deputy Chief of Police since July 2015. He is a 28-year veteran of the Arlington County Police Department, beginning his career as a patrol officer in 1992. Prior to becoming the active chief, Penn served as the commander of the Operations Division.

Penn holds a bachelor's degree from Radford University in criminal justice and a master's degree in security studies (Homeland Security) from the Naval Postgraduate School. He has completed several other courses of study including the Police Executive Research Forum's Senior Management Institute for Police (SMIP), as well as the FBI's National Academy. He is an adjunct professor at Marymount University's forensic and legal psychology graduate program.

Pollitt selected as new town manager for Tappahannock

Eric Pollitt has been hired as the town manager for the Town of Tappahannock.



- Pollitt -

Mr. Pollitt, a native of Richmond, VA comes to Tappahannock after serving as town manager for Glasgow where he developed an events facility that lead to the Rockbridge County Fair coming to Glasgow, the town's charter being updated, and secured the CDBG Planning Grant for the town's business district. Other accomplishments during Pollitt's time as Glasgow's town manager included the creation of a new town website, implementing organizational and administrative structure through committees and staff, hosting the first annual council retreat for goal setting, construction of a VDOT Multi-Purpose Trail, creating the town's first summer concert series, and implementing the town's first delinquent tax program.

Mr. Pollitt has also been active in the community, serving as a member of the Lex-

ington-Rockbridge Jaycees, as an ex-officio member of Lexington Main Street, and on the Rockbridge Area Outdoor Partnership.

Before his tenure in Glasgow, Mr. Pollitt worked as a management analyst for Fluvanna County, as an International City/County Manager Association (ICMA) Management Fellow in Templeton, MA, and was the chief financial officer for Shelbyville, KY.

Mr. Pollitt has a bachelor's in political science from Virginia Commonwealth University and a master's in public administration with a concentration in public financial management from the University of Kentucky's Martin School of Public Policy and Administration.

Hoffman appointed Winchester city manager



- Hoffman -

At its August 25th regular meeting, the Winchester city council officially appointed **Daniel "Dan" C. Hoffman** of Gainesville, FL as the city's new manager. He will begin his duties on September 26th.

Currently Hoffman is the assistant city manager for Gainesville, a position he has held since July 2017. In that role, Hoffman directly oversees more than 550 of the City's 2,200 employees across five departments and two programs including Capital Projects, Planning and Development, Public Works, Transportation and Mobility, and Technology.

Previously, Hoffman served as the chief innovation officer for Montgomery County, MD. Other work experience includes roles with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commis-

sion, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and the District of Columbia.

Mr. Hoffman holds a bachelor's degree from George Washington University and a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. He is also a certified project manager through the Project Management Institute.

Onancock welcomes Spuck as new town manager

On July 1st, former town council member **Matthew Spuck** began his new role as



- Spuck -

Onancock's town manager. After accepting the position earlier in the year, Spuck resigned from his position on council. Previously Spuck, who is also a local business owner, was seeking another term on the council.

Spuck and his wife, Kim Moore, moved to Onancock from Boston in November 2016. They own and operate The Inn at Onancock. Spuck succeeds Bill Kerbin, who resigned as town manager after more than three years to take up a new post as a municipal manager in Vermont.

Spuck's 30-year professional career includes leadership positions in local and regional to national nonprofit organizations with operating budgets ranging from \$2 million to \$20 million. He also served on the board of a large suburban school system of over 6,000 students. His expertise lies in collaboratively developing short- and long-term strategic plans and executing them according to governing priorities and available resources.

Spuck holds a BS in accounting from Quinnipiac University.

Light named assistant city manager of Salem

As of September 21, **Rob Light** is the City of Salem's new assistant city manager after being selected by council from a pool of nearly 40 candidates.



- Light -

Light, a 1989 Salem High School graduate, returns to the city with a wealth of experience in both local government and private business having filled a number managerial and leadership roles for Double Envelope in Roanoke and Louisville, KY and Church Hill Homes in Charlottesville.

In 2008, Light began his career in public service as Roanoke County's purchasing manager. He served in that role until 2015 when he became the director of the county's General Services department, In that capacity, he has led the county's logistical operations, related to the COVID-19 pandemic since March.

Light holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from William and Mary in Government. While in Williamsburg he played as an offensive lineman for the Tribe from 1989-1993.

City of Norfolk welcomes Chalk as new director of economic development

In August, Norfolk City Manager Dr. Chip Filer announced that he had named **Jared Chalk** as the director of the Department of Economic Development.



- Chalk -

Chalk comes to the position with a wealth of relevant experience with the city having served as the interim director of economic development and the executive director of the Norfolk Economic Development Authority since November 2018. Prior to this role he was the special assistant to the city manager and assistant director of development in the Department of Development and served as the assistant executive director and secretary-treasurer of the Norfolk Economic Development Authority.

Chalk holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Bridgewater College and a certificate in real estate finance and development from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



- Glass -

In memoriam: Mary Jane Glass

We were sad to learn that former Culpeper Town Council Member **Mary Jane Glass** passed away this past May at the age of 94. Ms. Glass served eleven years on the Culpeper Town Council where she was the first woman vice mayor, chairman of the planning and finance committees and a member of VML's Legislative Committee. She was a member and past chair of the town planning commission. In addition to numerous civic endeavors, Ms. Glass was a guidance counselor for Culpeper County Public Schools.

Her true passion was the Culpeper Hospital and she was instrumental in initiating the discussion leading to the building of the hospital. She served on the Foundation Board, Board of Trustees and was president of the Culpeper Hospital Auxiliary.

Ms. Glass earned an undergraduate degree in business and public administration from Temple University and a master's degree in education from the University of Virginia.

A full obituary is posted at <https://bit.ly/2Rtldn8>.

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