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Backyard hens step forward | The Suffolk News-Herald

By Tracy Agnew email

Published 10:23 pm Tuesday, November 15, 2016

The full Planning Commission voted Tuesday to move forward with the process of considering backyard hens in Suffolk.

Proponents, who have been to multiple meetings on the subject, praised the move.

“I think it’s great,” Rebecca Franklin said. “It’s a positive step forward.”

Tuesday’s vote came after several months of meetings by the commission’s committee on ordinances to study the issue.

Currently, residents are allowed to keep chickens in certain zoning districts only — agricultural, rural estate and rural residential — which make up nearly 68 percent of the city’s land area.

Supporters want the zoning districts where chickens are allowed to be expanded. The commission seems to be leaning toward residential districts of low and low-medium density only.

Five of the seven Hampton Roads cities currently allow backyard hens, Franklin noted in remarks during Tuesday’s meeting.

“This is obviously a trend, and it’s not a trend you shouldn’t jump on board with,” she said.

Franklin has kept chickens in the past, when she lived in a zoning district where they were allowed. She now lives in the Kilby Shores neighborhood, where they are not currently permitted.

She was able to share some of her past experience when commissioner John Rector asked about chickens attracting predators. He said he was particularly concerned about foxes, as they can carry rabies.

“These predators naturally occur in every area of the city, whether you see them or not,” said Franklin, who is an animal control officer in another Hampton Roads locality. “Chickens are not going to attract any more predators than what are already there.”

Franklin said she did not have any foxes prey on her hens at her former house, because she kept her coop secure.

“I was properly prepared,” she said.

Other proponents who spoke Tuesday rebuffed other concerns.

“If there is a smell, it’s because somebody is not doing what they are supposed to do,” said Rick Sowards, who noted that even New York City allows backyard hens.

Speaking about some commissioners' concerns about diseases that can be transferred from chickens to humans, and potential noise, Millicent Dove said these are also concerns with cats and dogs. She referred to barking dogs and the cat-borne parasite that causes toxoplasmosis, a concern for pregnant women. Pregnant women are not supposed to scoop litter boxes for that very reason, she noted.

"I don't see a reason not to have chickens in Suffolk," Dove said. "We're a farming culture.

"It is more than a trend. It is sort of a movement."

If eventually approved, the ordinance would hold chicken owners to certain standards. Any ordinance drafted likely would prevent owners from having roosters, limit them to a certain number (six seems to be the standard in nearby cities), and place restrictions on things such as the size of the coop, setbacks from the property line and the minimum lot size.

The City Council now will consider the recommendation from the Planning Commission and take the next steps, which will eventually include drafting an ordinance.

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Turkey Trot returns to Riverfront

By Sterling Giles email

Published 10:25 pm Tuesday, November 15, 2016

A community favorite will be returning to the Riverfront community this weekend.

The Riverfront Swim Club, located at 5301 Sports Club Run, will host its 13th annual Turkey Trot 5K Run and Walk on Nov. 19. The event will begin at 9 a.m., rain or shine.

"It started out as a small neighborhood thing, and it has grown," said Susan Turner, office administrator at the Suffolk Humane Society.

Unlike most races, the event welcomes furry friends to join in on the fun.

"People love bringing their pets out," Turner said.

Turner expects between 200 and 250 runners to participate.

"Every year they want to come back and do it again," she said.

The course will wind through the Riverfront community, and the race will have seven age divisions, including a 1K Gobbler Run for children eight and under. The Chic-fil-A cow from the Harbour View location is expected to set the runners off.

However, Riverfront Swim Club manager Pam Sweet said the 5K run is non-sanctioned.

In its first years, the race benefited organizations such as the American Cancer Society and local food banks. For the last several years, the event has raised funds for the Suffolk Humane Society.

Riverfront Swim Club manager Pam Sweet said last year's race raised more than \$4,500, and she hopes to reach \$6,000 this year.

"It gets our name out for those who don't know what our goals are," Turner said.

Turner added the event has attracted new volunteers to the society.

The cost for adults prior to race day is \$18 and \$20 on race day. There are discounts for children 8 and under. Dogs are allowed to accompany participants, but they must remain leashed. There is no additional fee for pets.

At the conclusion of the race, there will be food, awards and prizes given out by event sponsors.

Sponsors include Nansemond-Suffolk Academy, Fireflies on Bennett's Creek and TowneBank, among others.

For those unable to participate, the Suffolk Humane Society encourages monetary donations to SuffolkHumaneSociety.com.

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Marina making progress | The Suffolk News-Herald

By Sterling Giles email

The Bennett's Creek Marina and Restaurant was treasured by many. However, over the years, persistent flooding, age of the building and the economy took their toll.

But Brian and Teresa Mullins have taken over and hope to revive the beloved landmark.

"It's been the gateway to Suffolk all of our lives," Brian said.

"We are going to bring it back to the glory it was."

The two currently own two successful North Suffolk restaurants, River Stone Chophouse and Vintage Tavern.

The couple has had their eyes on the property for more than 15 years. However, they originally shied away from undertaking it due the condition of the property.

The couple purchased the property last November. In August of this year, City Council approved a rezoning and conditional use permit for the site.

The site, spanning more than eight acres, will include not only a new restaurant building and marina but also 22 detached, condo-style homes.

The homes will range between 2,300 to 2,800 square feet with two-car garages, according to Brian Mullins. However, the homes will be restricted to buyers 55 and older.

Water and sewer service will be extended to the site, and Ferry Road will be widened to 20 feet.

The restaurant will be rebuilt above the floodplain, and the homes will be built further inland, according to Brian Mullins.

To date, trees have been cleared from the site and are being converted into lumber to use in the new restaurant, Decoys, and the Blind Duck tiki bar. Bricks salvaged from the site will also be reused.

Decoys will be able to seat 160 patrons on the first floor and 50 on the second floor. There will also be a deck area with fire pits and seating, Brian said.

"It is a family-friendly seafood restaurant," Brian said.

The restaurant will serve lunch and dinner seven days a week and an occasional brunch. Brian Mullins predicts food prices will range from \$15 to \$22 a plate.

This week, the Mullinses received their first order of deck pieces and are expecting more in coming weeks.

On site, there will also be an outdoor pool, equipped with a bar, and bathhouse for marina guests and pass holders.

The passes will serve as “running tabs,” said Ken Dodd, operations partner with the Mullinses.

During their time at the marina, patrons can swipe the passes and then pay the balance when they depart. Additionally, Brian Mullins plans to allow the passes to be used at his two other restaurants and at various stores, golf courses and movie theaters in the North Suffolk area.

“We want to have continuity between all three restaurants,” Dodd said.

Brian Mullins said he knows the project has been on the minds of many, but he said he and his team are hard at work.

“In 34 years, none of our projects has received this much attention and fanfare,” Brian Mullins said. “This is a community piece. This place has a lot of memories for a lot of people.”

The entire project is expected to be complete in by next fall.

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Holmeses raising support for Spain

By Tracy Agnew email

More than four years after they first left for the mission field, Kyle and Frances Holmes are back temporarily to raise support before they return to Spain.

“We went to Spain with one plan in mind, but God kind of redirected and changed the work we’re doing,” Kyle Holmes said this week.

Originally, Kyle Holmes — a retired Suffolk Police Department lieutenant — had hoped to work with the Christian Police Officers Association in Spain in a fledgling program called “Street Pastors.” He would have done ride-alongs with officers and acted as an intermediary with people in need of help.

But as it turned out, that program never got off the ground. So he and Frances Holmes turned their attention to a faith-based social program called METAS, an acronym for the Spanish translation of marriage, education, work and social assistance.

Often, people will not come to the church for assistance, Kyle Holmes said, but they will come to METAS, even though the organization does not hide its Christian worldview from the community.

The organization offers a variety of programs, including counseling for married couples, a clothes closet and food pantry, workshops and more.

One of the most needed programs right now is teaching English as a second language, Frances Holmes said. Spain has lagged behind other European countries in teaching English, she said, and a high unemployment rate means people are eager to learn any kind of new skill to make themselves more marketable.

“They’re trying to catch up,” Frances Holmes said. “English is a real help to people trying to find work or people trying to keep their jobs.” Many are also interested in moving to England for work.

Kyle Holmes, whose father was a silversmith and taught him the trade, has had the chance to share that skill with others. He holds workshops where people can buy materials, make the jewelry and sell it. Many re-invest the proceeds into more materials so they can grow their business.

Kyle Holmes even helped a 16-year-old named Marcelo learn the trade so he could re-open his deceased father’s shop in Peru.

This spring, the Holmeses also started “little talks about values,” which they hold in a public space. Holding it in a public building encourages more people to come who would not come to a church, Kyle Holmes said.

The Holmeses gave God the glory for opening up the public space in Guadalajara, where they live, so they could have the talks. After the mayor gave approval, another city official tried to delay the program, but the Holmeses returned the next day. After many delays on the journey, they finally arrived and spoke to somebody different, who would not have been there if the Holmeses had arrived on time.

"I felt like God allowed us to be delayed," Frances Holmes said. "It's that kind of thing where we have seen God moving."

Their relationship with the Christian Police Officers Association, where they initially hoped to serve, still has borne some fruit. The association was contacted by the U.S. military based in Madrid, near Guadalajara, about distributing toys the military had collected. The association contacted the Holmeses, and they were able to distribute the toys through their ministry.

While Spain is not often thought of as a prime destination for missionaries, the country is largely unreached by the evangelical church. Less than 1 percent of the population considers itself evangelical Christian, and more than 13 million live in municipalities where there is no evangelical church.

The Holmeses, who have lived in the Suffolk and Franklin areas since their childhood, are in the area through April 1 to raise support. They will return to Spain with more goals, such as moving the "little talks about values" to a more central location in order to get better attendance.

Frances Holmes said she would also like to start a community garden program and start teaching Spanish as a second language to the high number of immigrants and refugees in the city.

She would also like to start a program helping people find work, for example by offering scholarships for training courses.

Through all of their big plans, God has been faithful, the Holmeses said.

"Learning to rely on Him has been a process," Kyle Holmes said. "I've watched God work and get us there."

To support the Holmeses, visit www.send.org/holmes.

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Welcome to the force | The Suffolk News-Herald

By Staff Reports email

Editorial

Published 10:18 pm Tuesday, November 15, 2016

Col. W. Steven Flaherty, superintendent of the Virginia State Police, gave a grim description to a legislative committee this week of the problems his agency faces.

Salaries that have not kept up with the rising cost of living — nor with the salaries officers could receive working elsewhere — are a major problem for VSP. According to an article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Flaherty told the legislative committee that \$100 million worth of budget cuts since 2006 has contributed to a huge problem of attrition. The agency, Flaherty is reported as saying, loses about a dozen officers a month to other police departments within and outside of Virginia.

Virginia state troopers start with a salary of just \$36,207, a figure that's lower than the average starting salary of 30 state police agencies surveyed by the Virginia department, the *Times-Dispatch* reported.

Clearly something needs to be done, and we hope state legislators will heed Flaherty's desperate call for a plan to begin aiming for parity in those salaries.

But it's good to know that there are men and women who continue to do this important work, even though they know in advance that the financial rewards are so meager.

Two local examples are Nigel A.J. Guishard and Michael D. Harville, who were among 44 new state troopers to have been commissioned this month.

Guishard, a Smithfield native, will serve the Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Suffolk areas. He wants to be a prosecutor eventually, and he believes his law enforcement experience will be helpful toward that end.

Harville, whose roots are deep in Suffolk and in law enforcement, will serve Southampton County. Harville's father is a Suffolk Sheriff's deputy, and his grandfather retired from the Suffolk Sheriff's Office.

Congratulations to both new troopers. We wish them well, and we thank them for their choice to serve in an occupation that is far less financially rewarding than it should be.

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Hampton Roads just saw its largest expansion of locally recyclable items in more than a decade

Dave Mayfield

CHESAPEAKE

A couple of workers in hard hats stood along a conveyor at the TFC Recycling facility Monday and with darting eyes sorted through a nonstop barrage of scraps coming their way. Every few seconds, one of the men plucked a carton from the stream with his gloved hand and tossed it onto another fast-moving belt.

Not long ago, these milk, juice and soup cartons were a nuisance, among the items that TFC's owner, Michael Benedetto, wished people would stop throwing in with their recyclables.

Effective Tuesday, though, Hampton Roads' largest trash-recycling company began encouraging people to put the cartons into their blue bins. It's the largest expansion in items that can be recycled locally in more than a decade.

Benedetto said the difference was a grant from a trade group called the Carton Council of North America. It helped his company install equipment to more efficiently sort out the cartons. Now, it's more economical for TFC to sell them rather than trash them.

The change affects curbside recycling in every city in South Hampton Roads, as well as Hampton and Duck, N.C., all of which are either served directly or through a subcontract by TFC. Benedetto said that recycling drop-off centers in Accomack and Northampton counties on the Eastern Shore and Chowan, Gates and Perquimans counties in northeastern North Carolina, which also are served by TFC, will now accept the cartons as well.

The company quietly began sorting out and baling paper cartons at its Chesapeake facility last month. Enough people already were mistakenly throwing the items into their blue bins to allow TFC to work out any bugs in its new equipment.

Benedetto said more and more companies across the U.S. and as far as China are willing to buy bales of the recycled cartons. The Carton Council says the going price is about \$85 per ton. The buyers reprocess the cartons into everything from food containers to building materials.

It's estimated that paper cartons make up only about 1 percent of the total household waste stream, but recycling of them has grown. The Carton Council says nearly 60 percent of U.S. households now have the ability to do so, compared with about 18 percent in 2009.

The change has come as retailers, food processors and cartonmakers increased their commitments to greener practices.

Benedetto said the addition of the cartons will help TFC simplify its message that "paper, bottles and cans are what you can recycle."

He said the Carton Council contributed more than \$500,000 to help TFC install new equipment at its facilities in Chesapeake and the Richmond area. The biggest addition in Chesapeake was a conveyor system with optical sensors that recognize

cartons and trigger their ejection onto a line with [some other recyclable items](#).

Benedetto said TFC has no preference on whether consumers should remove the plastic caps from the cartons but asks that any container be emptied of its liquid contents before being put into a recycling bin.

TFC also announced Tuesday that it launched a program called Green Streets to honor neighborhoods with recycling rates of 80 percent or more.

Information is available at GreenStreetsVA.com.

columnist

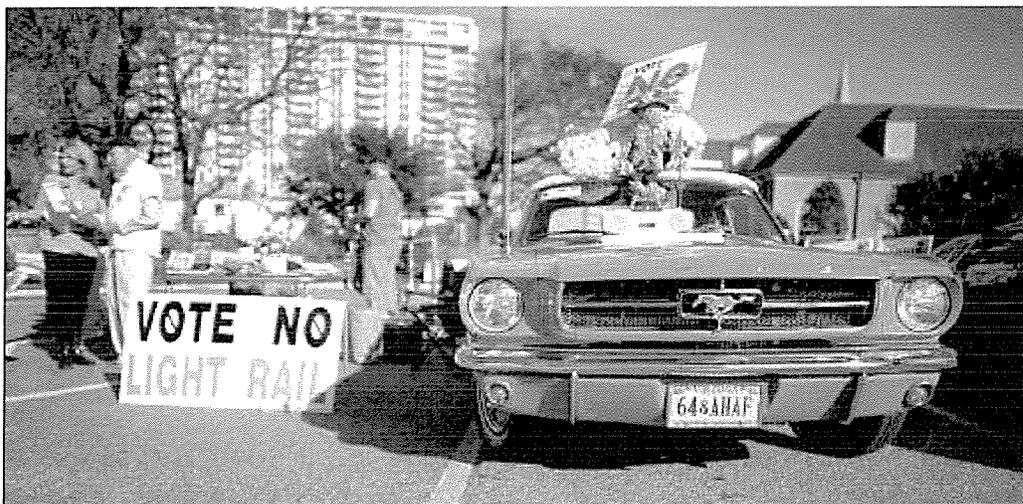
Time to undo the light-rail tax hike

KERRY DOUGHERTY



EVER NOTICED how eager some politicians are to hike taxes? And how reluctant they are to roll 'em back?

It's one of the reasons folks fight so hard against increases. Like herpes, taxes never seem to go away.



Well, it's been a week since voters put the brakes on plans to extend

L. TODD SPENCER | VIRGINIAN-PILOT FILE PHOTO

John Maragon's vintage Ford Mustang sat outside the North Beach precinct on Election Day last week. Beach citizens voted against expanding light rail, but the tax rate had already been raised 1.8 cents in 2015 for the extension.

Norfolk's failing light-rail line into Virginia Beach. Nothing left to do now but to repeal the taxes and fees that the Resort City's pro-rail eager beavers prematurely instituted to pay for the project.

The state's taken back its money. Time for Beach taxpayers to take back theirs.

City Councilman John Moss told me Monday that he planned to raise the issue at this week's council meeting. But the penny-pinching politician was pessimistic that he'd have much support from his colleagues.

Not surprising.

For those who have forgotten, an over-confident Beach City Council – not counting on another referendum – increased the real estate tax rate by 1.8 cents on July 1, 2015, to fund the proposed light-rail extension to Town Center.

That money and funds from several other sources have been accumulating in something called the city's multimodal fund.

When I contacted officials Tuesday, I learned that as of June 30, the fund held a whopping \$14,976,969. It's estimated that if revenue sources are left in place, the sum will grow by \$15,710,723 this fiscal year, according to the city.

So by the end of June 2017 it should balloon to \$30,687,692. (Less about \$3.4 million that's already been spent.)

City Hall needs to repeal the tax increase. Soon. After all, the reason for it has left the station.

Far be it from me to assume that public servants wouldn't be eager to halt the collections, but those of us who have been watching this developer-friendly bunch for years wouldn't be surprised to see them do a little two-step and try to direct the loot to other pet projects.

That said, the Beach has many unfunded needs.

Storm drains come to mind. So does improved bus service.

But even those projects shouldn't automatically get money that was appropriated for light rail. That dough ought to go back to the people who provided it and a new tax levy – if needed – should be instituted for other worthy endeavors. Once the public has a chance to weigh in.

One caveat: The city may be forced to repay a \$20 million state grant that the Beach used to help purchase the 10.6-mile strip of land along the old Norfolk

Southern rail line in 2010. That right of way was critical to the light-rail project and cost about \$40 million.

A convincing argument can be made that the multimodal money ought to be used to reimburse Richmond.

If so, the Beach should stop collecting light-rail taxes the minute the fund balance hits \$20 million.

We all know that once a revenue stream is in place, there's a temptation to keep it flowing. But if it's earmarked for one project, it shouldn't be redirected for another.

We've seen that sort of bait and switch before. It cost one popular politician his career.

In the mid-1990s, state Sen. Clancy Holland lost the seat he held in Richmond for 12 years after he fought to keep tolls on what was then called the Virginia Beach-Norfolk Expressway, now Interstate 264.

When that section of road was built in 1968, politicians promised that the toll booths would come down as soon as the bills for the road were paid. When that time came, Holland and others argued that the tolls were needed for other transportation projects.

Eventually, in 1995, the tolls were lifted. Holland lost his seat that November.

There's a lesson there. Even for Virginia Beach City Council members who are feeling invincible after all but one incumbent was returned to office last week.

Virginian-Pilot researcher Maureen Watts contributed to this column.

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Councilman Paul Riddick says developer told him years ago Anthony Burfoot was soliciting bribes

Scott Daugherty

NORFOLK

Councilman Paul Riddick testified Tuesday that a developer told him in the lead-up to a controversial vote in 2011 that the city's vice mayor was asking for bribes.

Specifically, Riddick said Dwight Etheridge told him Councilman-turned-Norfolk Treasurer Anthony Burfoot was "asking for money to support the project."

Riddick added that he told the then-president of Tivest Development and Construction "not to pay Mr. Burfoot a red cent" but took no other action.

"I thought it was over," he said, explaining he did not believe at the time any money had changed hands.

Burfoot, 50, stands charged with eight felonies relating to public corruption and perjury. He faces the possibility of 100 years in prison if convicted but would probably receive far less.

Prosecutors allege that Etheridge, Tommy Arney, Ronnie Boone Sr., and others paid Burfoot more than \$400,000 in kickbacks and bribes between 2005 and early 2011. In exchange, prosecutors say, Burfoot helped or promised to help their various projects.

Riddick's testimony bolsters the government's case, which the defense has derided as being based on "professional fraudsters." Many of the prosecution's star witnesses are felons. Etheridge is still incarcerated and Boone is awaiting sentencing.

On cross-examination, Burfoot's attorney Andrew Sacks questioned whether Etheridge might have been referring to a request for a political contribution. He noted that some developers donate money to candidates in the hopes of gaining an audience with them later.

Riddick – who called Burfoot a friend – dismissed any such argument. He said Etheridge specified it had to do with contracts and "to do business in Norfolk."

Sacks also brought up previous testimony Riddick gave a federal grand jury regarding Burfoot, during which the veteran councilman said he didn't do anything following the conversation with Etheridge because he thought the bribe request was "really no big deal."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Uzo Asonye asked additional questions of Riddick before letting him leave the stand. Riddick clarified he did not like the idea of Burfoot soliciting bribes from developers.

"It's a big deal to do that because it is inappropriate," Riddick said.

In the end, Burfoot and Riddick voted in favor of Tivest's Midtown Office Tower. The building would have been in Riddick's ward.

Later on Tuesday, a former Tivest employee testified to watching Etheridge hand Burfoot a "bulging" envelope outside a Chesapeake credit union. Gary Ellick also recalled Etheridge handing Burfoot money on at least one other occasion and said he personally relayed another envelope of money.

Ellick added that after Etheridge was convicted on charges related to the collapse of the Bank of the Commonwealth, Burfoot gave him a card to be delivered to Etheridge's wife. It contained \$300 in cash.

A former partner in Tivest also testified Monday about a meeting the company's leadership had in 2005 in Norfolk. Recardo Lewis said Burfoot – who he claimed was a silent partner in the company – asked during the meeting to be bought out for \$250,000.

Similar testimony regarding that meeting was offered by Etheridge and his brother, Curtis. The brothers were also partners in Tivest.

While questioning Riddick, Asonye asked about an unusual lunch he shared with Burfoot a few years ago at Havana in downtown. Riddick said he expected Burfoot to pay since he invited him out.

Afterwards, however, no one paid.

"We just got up and left," Riddick said.

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Developer of American Cigar Co. building has until April to start building apartments

Eric Hartley

NORFOLK

If a developer doesn't begin construction on a long-delayed apartment complex by mid-April, the city will demolish the remains of a historic building on the site.

That's the agreement approved Tuesday by the City Council.

The deal will bring a close to a prolonged controversy over the shell of the former American Cigar Co. building on East Princess Anne Road.

The city's latest dispute with developer Andy McCullough started after Hurricane Matthew caused a partial collapse of a wall on the site in early October.

The city argued that other portions of the building were in danger of collapse and needed to come down. But McCullough got a Circuit Court judge to temporarily block the city from doing any demolition as McCullough tried to shore up the building.

After bracing work, engineers hired by both the city and the developer testified Nov. 2 the building was in no danger of immediate collapse.

City Attorney Bernard Pishko said the agreement with McCullough, which was unanimously approved by the council, was negotiated over the past 10 days. In order to prevent the city from demolishing the building, McCullough has to obtain financing by March 15, begin construction by April 14 and "substantially complete" the project by May 2018.

City Council members and staff said they'd like to see the apartments built – but that the issue needs to finally be resolved.

"This gives us some benchmarks that have to be met, and if they're not met, we get to tear it down. That's the big thing," said James Rogers, Norfolk's director of neighborhood development. "We want him to succeed, though."

McCullough, who didn't return a call Tuesday, wants to turn the remains of the 113-year-old building into a 155-unit apartment complex called American Cigar Factory. Financing problems and other snags have delayed construction. McCullough has said he needs historic tax credits to make the deal work, and investors can't get those credits if historic structures are demolished.

Parts of Princess Anne Road have been closed for more than two years as equipment props up the front wall of the building. After Matthew, the stretch of road was closed entirely for almost a month. All but one lane reopened Nov. 3.

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Chesapeake council passes trio of plans that shape Dominion Boulevard corridor

Katherine Hafner

CHESAPEAKE

The newly completed Veterans Bridge may soon lead to a rapidly developing landscape south along U.S. 17.

The City Council on Tuesday finally approved the long-anticipated Dominion Boulevard Corridor Study, which researched potential land use on 10,000 acres surrounding Dominion Boulevard South. The council voted on it as a change to the city's 2035 Comprehensive Plan, which serves as a blueprint for future land use.

City officials hope the corridor will draw in a "regional employment center" as well as developments with a mix of homes and businesses.

At a recent work session, Planning Director Jaleh Shea said more than 2,000 new residential units near Dominion Boulevard are already under review. A flood of applications is expected to come in after the study's approval.

Councilman Roland Davis said at the work session that having a plan gives economic development officials a tool to market the area as potential for commercial development, which he sees as an essential catalyst.

"If we don't get the commercial in this corridor, all of the costs ... go out the window," Davis said. But if it happens, "we might have a shot at offsetting the costs for the infrastructure."

The estimated fiscal impact of the plan – including on schools, roads and parks – is a little more than \$1 billion. The city has floated the idea of a special taxing district, though if they want to use it for schools, they will need to request expanded authority from the General Assembly.

Councilwoman Debbie Ritter was the sole vote against the plan. She said she is concerned there is no way to pay for the needed infrastructure improvements.

"I hate to be the cup half empty, but unfortunately I don't think it's that full," she said.

The 300-plus-page Dominion corridor plan also advises conserving large swaths of land around the future Pleasant Grove Parkway for agriculture and open space.

Council members voted Tuesday to embark on a similar land-use study on the rest of U.S. 17 south from Dominion Boulevard to the North Carolina line. Voting against that proposal last month, Planning Commissioner Adam Perry said the corridor extension was being used "as a political tool, not as a planning tool."

The third piece of the puzzle is the 4,000-acre Frank T. Williams Farm in southern Chesapeake, which council members voted to designate a "unique economic development opportunity" that could house an industrial "mega-site" with warehouses, data centers and manufacturing facilities.

Also on Tuesday, the council gave the green light to Big Ugly Brewing Company for its new microbrewery in the 800 block of S. Battlefield Blvd. A rezoning request for The Woodlands at Western Branch, which will add up to 136 condominiums next to the Russell Memorial Library, was also approved.

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Virginia Sports Hall of Fame eyeing move to Virginia Beach

Harry Minium, Stacy Parker

After years of dwindling attendance and struggling to sustain itself, the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame – a fixture on High Street in downtown Portsmouth – is eyeing a possible move to Virginia Beach.

The Virginia Beach City Council will hear a proposal Tuesday to move the institution to a yet-to-be-built field house or arena near the Oceanfront.

“Either of those facilities, if they were built, would be a great place to house the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame,” said Councilman John Uhrin, who represents the resort area.

After years of wrangling with Portsmouth and state officials over subsidies for the hall of fame, its Board of Directors authorized Chairman Joel Rubin and Eddie Webb, the museum’s executive director, to negotiate with other cities.

Nearly 400 of the state’s most prominent athletes, from Bruce Smith to Ace Parker to Sam Snead, are enshrined in the hall of fame. Webb said that even though it is a nonprofit that is not affiliated with the state, it is recognized as Virginia’s hall of fame.

Mayor Will Sessoms said he called Portsmouth Mayor Kenny Wright to let him know the city was in talks with the hall of fame. He said he would love to welcome the institution to Virginia Beach but said “we have a long way to go.”

“If there’s a way to work it out, I’d like to make it happen,” Sessoms said, adding that with the right marketing efforts, “Virginia Beach is a better fit than where it currently is.”

Earlier this month, Webb mentioned the relocation idea to Tiffany Russell of the Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau. The results of a \$60,000, third-party study to determine where to build a new field house will be released next week. The old Dome site and land near the Convention Center are being considered for a new indoor recreational facility. The hall of fame could be an added benefit to the project.

“We are excited about any opportunity to develop our attraction portfolio,” Russell said.

She added that the bureau often partners with local museums by promoting events to out-of-town visitors and would be interested in similar opportunities with the hall of fame.

“We offer a lot of exposure through marketing,” Russell said.

It could be just the boost the hall of fame needs to survive.

“We’re in a very challenging situation right now,” Rubin said. “We have to do something.”

Webb said he is encouraged by the resources Virginia Beach has to offer but cautioned: “These discussions are in the

preliminary stages. It's too early to make the determination on what's going to happen."

The hall of fame started in downtown Portsmouth in 1972. In 2004, thanks in large part to a promise of state and city subsidies, it opened a new, \$12.4 million, 32,000-square-foot facility.

Rubin said the current building has a \$3 million mortgage. The city of Portsmouth donated the land, built a nearby parking deck and gave \$2 million in cash to persuade museum officials to build a permanent home there.

Attendance never met expectations and has declined since tolls were placed on the two tunnels between Norfolk and Portsmouth.

When the facility opened, the city and state split \$1 million a year in subsidies. But the money has dried up, forcing hall of fame officials to dip into reserves the past two fiscal years.

The city provided \$100,000 this fiscal year, but that will end in July. The city has told museum officials that taxpayers can no longer subsidize the hall of fame.

Portsmouth City Councilman Danny Meeks said he hopes that three newly elected council members will tip the scales and give museum backers enough votes to keep the institution in that city.

"It's a major attraction for the city of Portsmouth," said Meeks, who didn't seek re-election and will finish his term next month. "It'd be a shame if we lose it."

But Councilman Bill Moody doubts the city can get the museum to stay. Still, he thinks the museum ought to find a way to pay for itself. He also doesn't think Portsmouth will find a new tenant to take over the space if the museum leaves.

"I'd hate to see that building empty on High Street," Moody said. "If they've got Virginia Beach or somebody that's got deeper pockets than we do, it looks like they may have cut a better deal."

The state could also help keep paying for the hall of fame, but it's waiting on a report from Webb, due in December, that shows it can be self-sustaining. If so, the state could kick in \$750,000 over the next two years.

If the museum does move to Virginia Beach, it would be smaller and feature fewer exhibits.

Uhrin toured the building in Portsmouth two weeks ago and took notice of unused space.

"They don't need to be as grand as they are," he said.

The Virginia Beach City Council has yet to discuss whether it would provide financial support for the hall of fame, Uhrin said.

But he's encouraged by what the organization could bring to the table.

"They have a pretty extensive Rolodex," Uhrin said. "They've got contacts with athletes literally all over the country."

He envisions amateur sports leagues choosing Virginia Beach for an opportunity to participate in a training camp with "first-class athletes."

“We’re just talking about what the potential benefits could be,” Uhrin said. “To have the opportunity to house the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame could have some merit.”

pilotonline.com

Virginia Beach headed back to drawing board on future of transportation in the city

Alissa Skelton

VIRGINIA BEACH

After voters rejected light rail, the City Council is heading back to the drawing board to figure out future public transportation.

One thing is clear: Finding a solution will take some time.

During an informal council meeting on Tuesday, council members reflected on the results of an advisory referendum in which 57 percent of voters said the city should not spend local money on extending light rail from Norfolk to Virginia Beach.

A day after the election, Transportation Secretary Aubrey Layne and Beach City Manager Dave Hansen directed state and local staff to stop work on a light-rail extension, which the city has been working toward for years.

The council is now faced with the question of what to do with the Norfolk Southern right of way, a more than 10-mile stretch of land the city purchased for light rail. If it doesn't use the land for a transit project, the city will have to repay \$20 million to the state.

The City Council plans to schedule a workshop to figure out what to do next, Mayor Will Sessoms said Tuesday.

"I don't know if you all know this, I was a big supporter of light rail," Sessoms said, and the council members laughed. "The truth of the matter is, it didn't win and I accept that. We all need to look for ways to make sure our city continues to grow."

The majority of the members who spoke up Tuesday agreed the city needs to improve its public transportation.

"The fact that light rail didn't past muster doesn't alleviate the fact that these folks still need transportation," Councilwoman Shannon Kane said.

Councilman Jim Wood said the body shouldn't hastily decide how to spend the tax dollars – at least \$27 million – set aside for light rail.

"Good grief, we spent 10 years working on light rail; I don't think we should spend 20 minutes determining what the future is," he said.

In 2015, the council adopted a real-estate tax increase, of which 1.8 cents would go toward light rail.

Councilman John Moss, who has been opposed to light rail, said he agrees the council should take the time to listen to the public. He added that taxes collected for light rail need to be deauthorized and that new taxes should be proposed down the road, when the council knows what it wants to do about public transportation.

"I know like the national election, the light rail issue was hard for a lot of people to accept, but I do think we have to listen to what people say," he said.

Councilman Bobby Dyer said the city failed to listen and engage the public on the issue.

"A lot of people against light rail are for a transportation solution," Dyer said. "Going forward, we've just got to be open-minded that there are new technologies on the horizon. I think that the public will find a better fit that is financially feasible, affordable and practical."

Wilson said she would like to discuss other forms of public transportation that could use that land.

"We have a woefully underserved mass transportation system in this city," Wilson said. "Not everybody can drive, not everybody can afford Uber ... we have a right of way through our city we still need to take advantage of."

pilotonline.com

Midtown, Downtown tunnel tolls set for their largest rate increase next year

Jordan Pascale

PORTSMOUTH

Tolls at the Midtown and Downtown tunnels are set for their biggest increases, 32 percent, since tolling was reintroduced in 2014.

The cheapest toll, for passenger vehicles with an E-ZPass, will increase to \$1.65 from \$1.25 during off-peak hours and to \$1.95 from \$1.50 during peak periods.

Larger vehicles with three axles or more, including cars with trailers, will pay \$4.94 in off-peak hours and \$7.79 in peak hours.

+2



2017 Toll Rates

Passenger Vehicles (Two-axles, includes motorcycles)			
		Registered/Pre-paid*	Unregistered**
		Pay BY PLATE	Pay BY PLATE
Monday - Friday			
12:00 a.m. to 5:30a.m.	\$1.65	\$3.30	\$4.95
5:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. (PEAK)	\$1.95	\$3.60	\$5.25
9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.	\$1.65	\$3.30	\$4.95
2:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (PEAK)	\$1.95	\$3.60	\$5.25
7:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.	\$1.65	\$3.30	\$4.95

Heavy Vehicles (Three or more axles, includes cars with trailers)			
		Registered/Pre-paid*	Unregistered**
		Pay BY PLATE	Pay BY PLATE
Monday - Friday			
12:00 a.m. to 5:30a.m.	\$4.94	\$6.59	\$8.24
5:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. (PEAK)	\$7.79	\$9.44	\$11.09
9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.	\$4.94	\$6.59	\$8.24
2:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (PEAK)	\$7.79	\$9.44	\$11.09
7:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.	\$4.94	\$6.59	\$8.24

Off-peak rates apply on weekends and holidays.

*Registered/Pre-paid Pay by Plate rates include a \$1.65 processing fee.
 **Unregistered or Post-paid Pay by Plate rates include a \$3.30 processing fee.

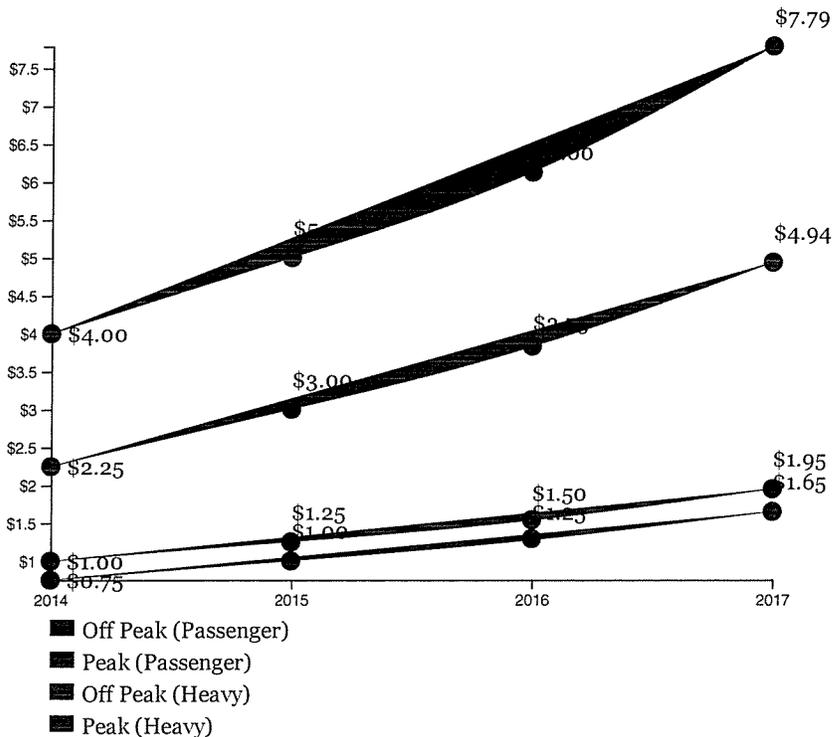
The new rates begin Jan. 1 and are part of Elizabeth River Crossings' annual toll increases. The larger increase is due to the state's toll "buy down" deal expiring this year.

In 2014, the state paid ERC about \$83 million to help decrease the toll burden on residents through 2016. Tolls started at 75 cents in 2014 because of the deal and increased 25 cents each year in 2015 and 2016.

Now, with the deal at its end, rates return to near the original figures in the tolling contract: \$1.59 and \$1.84, with a 3.5 percent inflation rate attached.

In the future, off-peak tolls can continue to increase 3.5 percent each year for the next 50-plus years. Peak tolls will rise 4 cents a year for the next 10 years in addition to a 3.5 percent increase.

Midtown, Downtown tunnel toll rates with E-ZPass



The 2017, pay-by-plate, off-peak rate for unregistered passenger vehicles is set to rise to \$4.95 from \$3.75, including a processing fee.

The largest toll, for unregistered, pay-by-plate heavy vehicles during peak hours, comes in at \$11.09.

ERC officials encourage drivers to get an E-ZPass to pay the lowest possible rate with the least hassle.

Peak hours are from 5:30 to 9 a.m. and 2:30 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

E-ZPass commuters driving during rush hour will pay about \$975 in tolls next year. That's a \$225 increase over 2016.

Last month, the state and ERC announced a [toll relief program](#) for low-income commuters making \$30,000 or less who use the tunnels at least eight times a month.

Eligible commuters will get 75 cents off per toll, which effectively would bring the peak-hour commuter rate down to \$1.20 a toll. For more information visit tinyurl.com/tollrelief.

Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel to undergo \$756M expansion



The 17.6-mile Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel opened on April 15, 1964 after a 42-month-long construction process that resulted in what the American Society of Civil Engineers acclaimed as one of the "engineering wonders of the modern world." Built across the mouth of the bay on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, the \$200 million crossing incorporated two 1-mile-long tunnels, four artificial islands and 12 miles of elevated trestle as well as two high-level steel bridges. It still ranks among the longest bridge-tunnel complexes in the world. [Click here to find more Hampton Roads History photo galleries.](#) -- Mark St. John Erickson



By **Theresa Clift**

NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 2:47 PM

Funding is now in place for a new \$756 million two-lane tunnel that will be built under the Thimble Shoal Channel, west of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Gov. Terry McAuliffe announced Tuesday.

The new tunnel will expand capacity and be safer for drivers, as well as improve the region's quality of life and ability to compete for economic projects, McAuliffe said in the release.

"The CBBT is the only direct link between Hampton Roads and Virginia's Eastern Shore, making this facility a vital and convenient connection, supporting commerce in the region," McAuliffe said in the release.

Construction is planned to start in October 2017.

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel Commission in July awarded the design-build contract for the project, called the Parallel Thimble Shoal Tunnel, to Chesapeake Tunnel Joint Venture, the release said. The joint venture is comprised of Dragados USA and Schiavone Construction LLC.

The majority of the financing comes from two sources: \$338.5 million from a federal bond program -- the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, and \$321.5 million from the issuance of a revenue bond, the release said.

The rest of the funding comes from a state bond and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel District's general fund.

"The Commonwealth's infrastructure bank issues low-interest loans to help fund high priority projects that will improve transportation and benefit the economy," Transportation Secretary Aubrey Layne said in the release. "The Parallel Thimble Shoal Tunnel is a regional transportation priority, included in the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization's long-range planning and improvement program."

The CBBT is tolled 20-mile long, four-lane bridge-tunnel that connects Virginia Beach to the Eastern Shore. It is operated by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel District and governed by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel Commission, the release said.

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This article is related to: Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Terry McAuliffe

Task force groups meet to discuss how to improve Marshall-Ridley Choice Neighborhood



Ernest Thompson, local resident, talks about ideas for neighborhood improvements around Ridley Place at a kickoff task force meeting Tuesday night at Jim's Local Market. (Reema Amin/Daily Press)



By **Reema Amin**
ramin@dailypress.com

NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 8:55 PM

If there's one thing that the area surrounding Ridley Place needs more of, it's lighting. At least that's what a group of people tasked with brainstorming ideas to improve the neighborhood said Tuesday at Jim's Local Market.

The roughly 15-person group — comprised of residents, law enforcement, library employees and others — made up one of three task forces formed to help develop questions and ideas on how to improve the area from 39th Street south to the harbor between Interstate 664 and Marshall Avenue. The groups stem from a Department of Housing and Urban Development grant of \$500,000 to start the improvement planning process.

"This is very much a plan for you," said Stacey Blankin, a planner with consulting group WRT, hired by city officials to help create the master plan for the idea.

The group that met at Jim's will focus on how to improve specific elements of the neighborhood, such as safety and transit. A separate group met at the same time at the Family Improvement Center to discuss how to improve housing and transition to a mixed-income community.

On Tuesday night, group members talked about safety, particularly what specifically needs to be addressed, if data exist to

illustrate the issue and what programs are already in place that could help.

Christina Myers, who helps run some after-school programs in the area, was one of several residents who said the area needs more lighting. These concerns were echoed by a couple police officers who also attended.

Myers also said kids need better bus stops that are closer to home so that they can get back safely, even if they're alone, especially as it starts to get dark outside sooner.

"Children are getting off the bus ... and there's no parents out there waiting for them," Myers said.

The group also talked about improving roadways so it's easier for people to cross streets and cracking down on speed limits. Myers said she feels like the cars drive through the area at "75 mph." Officers talked about their "block the box" initiative, where they cited several drivers on a Friday for blocking intersections.

The whole point of the first meeting wasn't to jump on any of these ideas but to get people talking about what is important to them, said Sheila McAllister, the city's director of planning. It was also to get them familiar with each other — they'll be seeing each other at bi-monthly meetings from January 2017 likely through spring of 2018, when the city hopes to have a master plan ready, which would include plans for financing.

The third task force meeting, focused on people, will be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Family Investment Center.

On Saturday, officials will host an interactive workshop to explain how the planning process will work and how people can get involved. Child care will be available. Those who want to attend this meeting, which goes from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Marshall Early Learning Center, should call 757-926-3834 or email gmorgan@nnva.gov.

Amin can be reached by phone at 757-247-4890.

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Hampton gets high marks on citizen satisfaction survey

By **Ryan Murphy**

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NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 8:24 PM

Hampton received mostly glowing reviews during the biennial citizen satisfaction tracking survey, though residents did have a couple of notes.

The upshot: life is generally good in Hampton and people are largely satisfied with local government services, but schools, roads and crime all need to be addressed.

The survey asked 375 randomly selected households, 62 percent of which were contacted on landlines and the rest by cellphone, what they thought about Hampton and claims to hit the full spectrum of Hampton residents.

The margin of error is plus or minus about 5 percentage points.

In the survey, 86.4 percent of respondents said they were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the overall quality of life in Hampton.

As for satisfaction with specific city departments, 17 of 18 were rated satisfactory by 80 percent or more of the respondents.

The city's Fire and Rescue, the History Museum, libraries, arts programs and 311 call center all rated above 90 percent satisfaction.

The only division to land lower than 80 percent satisfaction? Hampton City Schools, which 71.2 percent of respondents said was satisfactory.

The only division that had a meaningful change in satisfaction compared to the 2014 survey results was the Hampton History Museum, which more people said was satisfactory than in the past.

81.6 percent of citizens were satisfied with the safety in their neighborhoods, but only 62.7 percent were happy with the condition of Hampton's streets. Nanci Glassman from Continental Research Associates, which conducted the survey, told the Hampton City Council last week that road quality is a common complaint in just about every locality they've done surveys in.

City employees got kudos for their work performance and courtesy, scoring above 90 percent satisfaction in both categories.

83.5 percent of respondents agreed that their neighborhoods get the city services they need, but just 65.9 percent said city management considers opinions of citizens when making important decisions.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they wanted from the city. One in five residents answered that reducing crime should be the city's focus. The next most common answer was improving the schools.

Hampton museum hosts talk on Jamestown graves

Could a religious coup have been brewing at Jamestown?

Mark Summers, Historic Jamestowne's manager of education and public programs, will run down what was revealed with the 2013 discovery of four church graves that included evidence of a potential plot against one of the settlement's most famous leaders.

Digs at Jamestown's Anglican Church in recent years have provided archeologists with a new window into how much

influence England's social structure and religious politics had in the new world and just how they played out at the first English settlement in America.

The four unearthed bodies and the relics the men were buried with have laid bare the divisions between class and religion that was evident in England and was imported to Virginia.

The graves also hold evidence of a possible "gunpowder plot against one of Jamestown's most famous leaders," according to material from the museum.

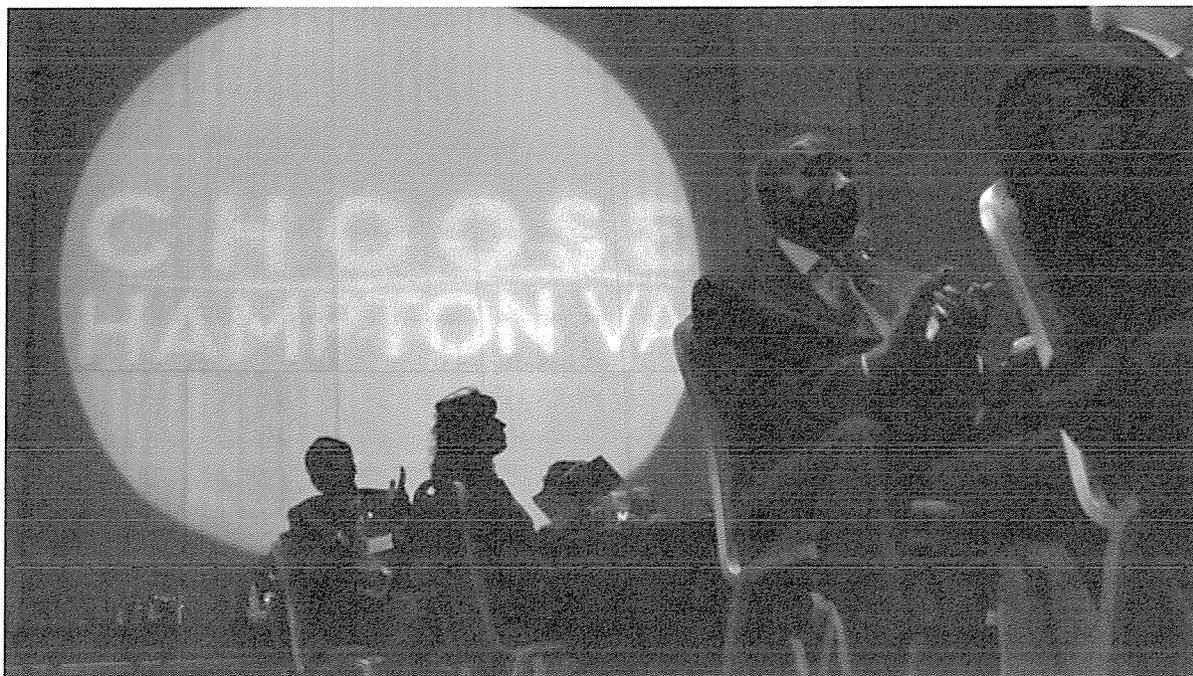
The hourlong program starts at noon Wednesday at the Hampton History Museum and is free to the public.

Murphy can be reached by phone at 757-247-4760.

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This article is related to: Museums

At state of the city speech, a call to secure Hampton's future



Mayor Donnie Tuck gave the "State of the City" address at the Hampton Roads Convention Center on Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2016.

By **Ryan Murphy**
Rmurphy@dailypress.com

NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 8:22 PM | HAMPTON

Mayor Donnie Tuck's state of the city address Tuesday was a call to action. Innovate, push forward and encourage tech-based entrepreneurship or Hampton may be left behind, he told a crowd of about 450 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center.

"As we move this city forward, we must be willing to collectively step outside our comfort zone," Tuck said. "We cannot be afraid to take risks. But those risks have to be calculated risks."

While Tuck highlighted several of the city's recent successes, as is typical for this series of Chamber of Commerce-sponsored addresses, he didn't shy away from the fact that the city will need to tackle a slate of issues to ensure Hampton stays economically competitive.

For instance, school performance is on the upswing with declining dropout rates and improvements for the district's accreditation numbers. However, Tuck said, the city can do better.

"Too many of our neighborhood schools are in neighborhoods that are challenged," Tuck said.

Issues with crime and public perception are also stumbling blocks for Hampton's potential.

"We can't sit around and wait. The world is 'full speed ahead' and that's what we must be here in Hampton," he said.

The emphasis Tuesday was not on what Hampton had done, but on potential. Tuck held up the study from WVS Companies and Saunders-Crouse Architects looking at the complete picture of developing Hampton's downtown as a possible avenue to revitalization for that area. He talked about the proposed aquatics center and how much money it could inject into the city — estimates he'd previously questioned.

Several attendees said they appreciated the speech and thought Tuck's call to arms was right on the money by saying technology and innovation are the paths of Hampton's rise.

"It's important that we prepare our children, and even ourselves, because we can fall behind very easily," said Kat Lassiter, a tax supervisor at Beth W. Moore, CPA in Newport News.

Raymond Tripp, the director of the Coliseum Central Business Improvement District, said he sees educational improvement as a critical part of the vision for the city's economy. In particular, Tripp pointed to the Ford Next Generation Learning initiative with its career-oriented education pathways as a big way to bridge the gap between employers and people who need jobs.

"This program includes all, not just a select group of kids, so we can find a match for them and where they can fit into the work society of the future," Tripp said.

Billy Hobbs, the Hampton City Council's resident businessman, said the kind of forward progress the council has its eyes set on is going to take a lot of work.

"We've got to push ahead and that's going to be the barrier that we've got because a lot of people don't want to push ahead. We're scaring them right now but we've got to get to where we're going," Hobbs said. "We're tired of being the 'almost guys.' We're going to be the guys. The city of Hampton's going to be it."

Tuesday's was Tuck's first state of the city speech since being elected mayor last May and the third such address in the city's history. The first two were given by then-Mayor George Wallace.

For those who weren't able to see the speech live, the city will rebroadcast the address in full on FIOS channel 22 and Cox channel 47 daily at 11 a.m. and 9 p.m. between Nov. 18 and 25.

Murphy can be reached by phone at 757-247-4760.

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Some skeptical, others supportive of \$31.5 million Hampton aquatics center plan

Illustration of a proposed Hampton aquatic center from a feasibility study. - Original Credit: handout - Original Source: Daily Press (handout/HANDOUT)

By **Ryan Murphy**
rmurphy@dailypress.com

NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 10:21 PM | HAMPTON

The response to the city's recent aquatics proposal was mixed Tuesday night, when around 35 Hampton residents and a dozen or so city officials met to discuss the project at Kecoughtan High School.

The current proposal: a \$31.5 million, 100,000 square-foot facility next to the Hampton Coliseum that would include an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a smaller lap pool, a recreational swimming area outside and seating for 1,500 spectators.

The city's aiming both to provide a community replacement for the now-shuttered Olde Hampton Community Center pool and to build on the sports tourism garnered by the Boo Williams Sportsplex, which attracts thousands from across the country through basketball tournaments. The boost in sports tourism, the thinking goes, would necessitate more, better hotels and invigorate the Coliseum Drive corridor.

Under the proposal, the city would subsidize the facility for somewhere between \$2.2 and \$3.2 million each year. In exchange, city staff project the overall economic impact in the area to be in the realm of \$10 million annually.

Some local residents were clearly skeptical, asking probing questions about revenue projections, the ability of the city to secure partnerships and the true costs of the project.

Jill Davis pointed to the executive summary of the city of Christansburg's annual budget from last year, which noted that the money that city is pouring into its aquatics center has eclipsed other parts of the budget.

"The operational and debt costs of the aquatic center have effectively absorbed the funds that were previously used for expansion of other programs and capital acquisitions," Davis said, quoting the Christiansburg budget.

"And they're raising taxes," she noted.

Hampton's Community Development director, Terry O'Neill, acknowledged that while that was true, Christiansburg is a much smaller city in a much different situation than Hampton. For instance, the hotels in that area are all located outside of the city, in nearby Montgomery County, so Christiansburg isn't reaping the full benefits of attracting those people.

City manager Mary Bunting said Tuesday night that early stage discussions were in the works with officials at both Hampton University and Langley Air Force Base about partnerships to help fund the facility.

"Col. Miller at Langley Air Force Base is a big proponent for Langley to work with Hampton on this," but the military would want to wait and see that the city was serious about moving forward before taking any more concrete steps, Bunting said.

Other Hampton residents expressed support for the facility both as a way to provide recreation to local kids and also as an economic driver for the city and region.

Kelly Handley said she worked at The Mariners' Museum marketing for group tourism and said this would be in the sweet spot of what groups with lots of middle and high school-age kids are often looking for.

"Hampton has been a little behind in years past and cities around us have benefited from sports," Handley said.

She said her son swam in a state-level competition in Christiansburg where her family spent almost \$800 in a weekend, "and I wouldn't trade it for the world," speaking to a point Bunting has often made about how lucrative and resilient the growing market of sports tourism can be.

Bunting also said that if the proposal were to come to fruition, the city would "find a way to provide free swim lessons for our children."

Tuesday's meeting was the first of two public input sessions for the aquatics center concept. The next will be at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 1 at the Hampton Performing Arts Center at 300 Butler Farm Road.

Murphy can be reached by phone at 757-247-4760.

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suffolknewsherald.com

Man missing from IW | The Suffolk News-Herald

By Staff Reports email

Investigators with the Isle of Wight County Sheriff's Office is asking for the public's help in locating a missing man.

According to investigators, 28-year-old Douglas Kent Martin was last seen at 10:30 a.m. on Oct. 22, leaving his home in the 1600 block of Whispering Pines Tail.

According to family members, Martin said that he was going to a local laundromat in Windsor to wash some clothes. No one in the family has heard from Martin since then. He left the home driving a white 2008 Hyundai Sonata with Virginia tags WTP-2683.

Douglas Kent Martin is described as a white male, 6 feet, 2 inches tall and weighing 280 pounds. He has brown hair and blue eyes and facial hair.

Anyone who has seen Martin or has information on his whereabouts is asked to call the Isle of Wight Sheriff's Office at 757-357-2151 or the Crime Line at 1-888-LOCK-U-UP. Callers who call the Crime Line are never asked to give their name or testify in court. If their information leads to an arrest, the recovery of drugs or stolen property, they could be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$1000.

pilotonline.com

Virginian-Pilot editorial: Keep an eye on economic development spending

A legislative report this week found that the economic improvement powers of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to be near zippo.

Oversight? Accountability? Performance?

All wanting, according to a scathing report by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission.

“VEDP lacks many of the fundamental components of organizational management needed to operate efficiently and effectively and to coordinate well with external entities. Key elements missing from VEDP’s operations include a deliberate strategy to meet its statutory responsibilities, adequate operational guidance for staff to carry out their job responsibilities, effective accountability mechanisms, useful performance measures, reliable data upon which to evaluate performance, and effective coordination with external partners. Without these elements, VEDP risks wasting limited resources and failing to meet its statutory requirements.”

Risks wasting resources? If any of the foregoing is actually true, then this state agency has been burning bucks for years and for no good reason.

No sooner did this report hit the street than GOP legislators were grabbing at pieces and hurling them in the direction of Virginia’s Democratic governor, Terry McAuliffe.

House Majority Leader M. Kirkland Cox, R-Colonial Heights, immediately turned this damning report into a partisan tirade, saying that McAuliffe’s “globe-trotting, ribbon-cutting” ways (the governor happens to be in the Far East on a trade mission at this moment) do not deliver the goods.

Fine. So perhaps the honorable delegate or his colleagues care to extol the details of former Gov. Bob McDonnell’s overseas trots – there were many – and the results thereof?

Right. Nobody knows, because nobody asked. Such has been the way of these things for decades. Gov. Mills Godwin opened Virginia’s first trade office abroad in Brussels 47 years ago and no governor since has failed to run hither and yon to open doors and close deals, though each embraced the duty with various levels of enthusiasm.

It must be conceded that doors do not always open and deals do not always close. That is the nature of the beast.

However, this report merits serious attention for a number of reasons.

First, VEDP is but the latest manifestation of the state’s lead development agency. The mindset changes periodically, and reorganizations follow. The one common feature, at least among governors: inadequacy, insufficiency and ineptitude.

Governors believe in their own pixie dust, that when they sprinkle it far and wide, beneficent results will flow to the commonwealth’s people and their economy. When that does not happen and conversations ensue between state executives

and legislators, guess who gets the blame?

Second point: If this report accurately describes the potential for fraud, especially when it comes to the provision of incentive grants to new and expanding businesses, then legislators are duty-bound to fix it and fix it fast.

Likewise, when public money gets handed out under specific conditions, with fixed expectations, then Virginia must have a mechanism in place to ensure that happens. The legal equivalent of a baseball bat would be nice.

The governor issued a statement saying, "We have a responsibility to strengthen the management and accountability structure at VEDP so that it can meet its full potential as a driver for economic growth."

Yes, accountability. A sound concept, if observed too often in the breach wherever big money goes (see Virginia's Tobacco Commission).

If companies make promises in order to receive incentives from the state, then someone has to mind the outcome. There has to be an enforcer.

We must start with the free-wheeling habits of the Commonwealth Opportunity Fund or, as it was once known, the Governor's Opportunity Fund.

There was a time, not so long ago, when Virginia got along very well without this insidious business of handing out of money in the form of grants and incentives. The state marketed its able workforce, excellent universities and blessed-by-heaven harbor at the dead center of America's East Coast.

While we might long for a return to that approach, in the meantime, state officials must not be allowed to recklessly gamble with the people's money. Promises made and bargains struck must include metrics to determine value and protections that effectively insulate the commonwealth from undue risk.

That is the path illuminated by the JLARC report, marching orders Richmond must heed.

pilotonline.com

It's for real. Expansion of the Port of Virginia has moved to the execution phase.

Robert McCabe

NORFOLK

It's for real.

The expansion of the port's terminals began to unfold Tuesday with the approval of a series of resolutions that moved the build-out of the Virginia International Gateway container terminal in Portsmouth into the execution phase.

In less than six minutes, the Virginia Port Authority board approved three resolutions authorizing contracts that will extend the facility's wharf and expand the rail yard and stack yard.

John Milliken, the board chairman, described them as "critically important contracts relating to the initial steps being taken for the new expansion projects which we've talked so much about and are so excited about actually having under way."

Together, they're worth roughly \$80 million, he said.

The contract winners weren't identified because notification of all of those involved in the process had not yet been completed.

"Now we turn to the actual execution," Milliken said. "It's the beginning of a new and important phase of our effort."

The actions taken at the board's last meeting of the year came a little less than two months after Gov. Terry McAuliffe and other top state and port officials signed a nearly 50-year lease of the Portsmouth terminal, replacing an earlier agreement signed six years ago.

The new deal provides for a roughly \$320 million expansion that will nearly double the facility's capacity. The buildout is expected to take about three years.

Also on Tuesday, McAuliffe announced the finalization of a \$217 million contract with Finland-based Konecranes that will bring 86 rail-mounted, automatic stacking cranes to the port. The delivery of the cranes – 60 of which will go to Norfolk International Terminals and 26 to VIG – will begin in 2018 and last until 2020.

Early this year, the General Assembly approved a \$350 million state-backed bond package that will finance improvements at NIT, enabling it to boost capacity by 46 percent.

In other business, the authority board on Tuesday adopted a new real-estate procedures manual that will enable the port to process real-estate deals worth up to \$20 million in-house, without having to get the OK of the state's Department of General Services.

In 2015, the General Assembly amended state code to grant the authority the power to manage its own real-estate deals, up to

the \$20 million limit, as long as its new procedures track with General Services policies.

The board's action Tuesday also gives John Reinhart, the authority's CEO and executive director, the power to handle real-estate deals worth up to \$2.5 million on his own, provided that the board is notified.

pilotonline.com

Former Gov. McDonnell will become a professor at Regent University

Alissa Skelton

VIRGINIA BEACH

Former Gov. Bob McDonnell will become a government professor at his alma mater, Regent University, in January.

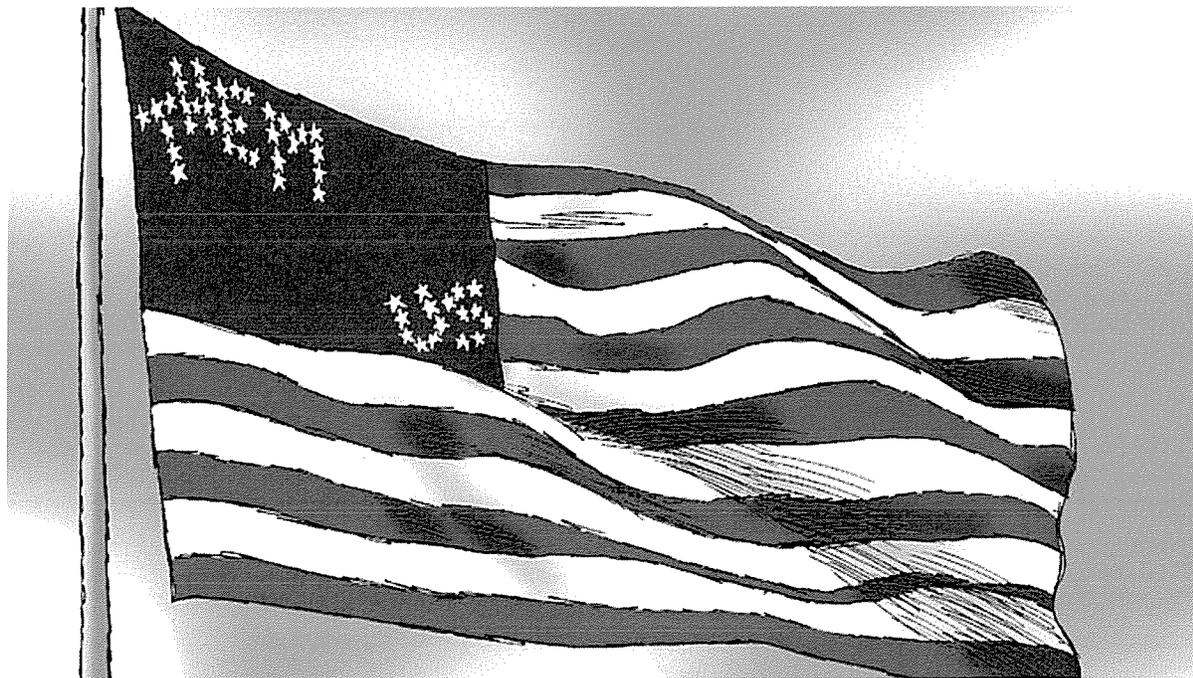
McDonnell will help create the Governor's Center for Federalism and Civility, which will help state government understand its place in a federal society.

In September 2014, McDonnell and his wife, Maureen, were convicted of public corruption, but the U.S. Supreme Court in June unanimously overturned the conviction.

McDonnell, who earned a law degree from Regent, said he had long considered becoming a teacher.

"During my painful journey through the justice system after I left the governor's office, I came to the realization that politics and polls are much less important than people and policies," McDonnell said in a statement.

Editorial: Homeless for the holidays



NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 9:13 PM

Here is the good news: A year after Gov. Terry McAuliffe announced a statewide mission to eliminate homelessness among military veterans, Virginia reportedly has succeeded to the extent of having the lowest rate in the nation.

Here is why that good news is tempered: There are still hundreds of thousands of veterans across the state who are homeless at some point during the year, and homelessness among the general population remains a major issue. In our region alone, while the numbers are moving downward, the Greater Virginia Peninsula Homelessness Consortium reports that hundreds of local residents are out of doors at any given time.

Here is why you need to understand this right now: We are entering the time of year when this issue, which is important all year long, reaches its most critical point. When the temperature drops, homelessness literally becomes a matter of life and death, especially for those who are older or who are sick.

These are our most vulnerable residents. Their numbers include elderly citizens in failing health, and school kids who hide their dire circumstances from classmates and teachers. They include men and women who suffer from mental illness or deal with substance abuse issues, and ordinary folks whose debt has mushroomed out of control. And, yes, they still include men and women who served our nation in one of the branches of our military.

They are dependent upon the generosity of others. And while there has been an increased focus on helping the homeless, there are also many ways in which our society has become less sensitive to their situations.

The best example, at least locally, is municipal legislation setting limits for how long a person or a family can stay in a hotel. For many years, a weekly room rate was all that kept some families from sleeping on the street. A local organization, Hotel Kids, is specifically aimed at providing everything from nourishment to Christmas presents for children whose families live out

of hotel rooms across Hampton Roads.

But in recent years, many cities, including Newport News and Hampton, have enacted laws preventing people from living in hotels long-term. The stated goal was to maintain property values, but the clear effect was to deprive struggling families of a last-ditch option. Each municipality that passes such a law just figures, and perhaps hopes, that the homeless population will move on and become someone else's problem.

Various programs around the region, such as LINK on the Peninsula and the Gloucester United Emergency Shelter Team, provide a rotation of churches that offer care and shelter to the homeless throughout the winter months. Those programs tend to operate on shoestring budgets and charitable sentiments; our annual Holiday Fund, in partnership with Ferguson Enterprises, always supports local programs that address homelessness such as LINK, Hampton-based HELP, and local Salvation Army branches.

You can support them in many ways, too, and we encourage you to do so.

LINK of Hampton Roads accepts both monetary donations and offers to volunteer through its website at linkhr.org. There are also ways to donate through the United Way, through local grocery stores, and by other means.

Homeless programs, like food banks, have year-round needs but seasonal donation trends. In short, they do vital work in the community 12 months of the year, but they tend to get the bulk of their attention and the great majority of their contributions during the holiday season. They will try to stretch the money and the goods they receive in the next couple of months as far as possible.

Consider donating time or money to these organizations, both during the cold months and at other times of the year.

It is said that if you want to make the world a better place, you need to "think globally and act locally." There is no better way to make a difference in your community than by helping to provide shelter and nutrition to those in need.

This is a rarity in our hyper-partisan times: a social issue that knows no political party, that is neither liberal nor conservative. It is simply a matter of fundamental human compassion and basic survival.

One way to judge a society is to examine how it treats its most vulnerable members. Helping programs such as LINK on the Peninsula or GUEST in Gloucester is one way to make our community a better place to live.

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This article is related to: Homelessness, United Way

Virginia ABC sales, profits up again



It's official -- Jack Daniel's 7 Black Tennessee whiskey continues to reign supreme in Virginia, at least where ABC sales in the state are concerned. Seeing \$27.5 million in sales, it again topped the list of Virginian's faves for the third straight year. But it wasn't tops in Hampton Roads. Did your favorites make the list?

Purchase [pictures by Daily Press photographers](#).



By **Tara Bozick**
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NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 8:02 AM

The Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control again reported record-breaking sales in fiscal year 2016, which ended June 30.

Gross sales increased by \$49.4 million, or 5.8 percent, to \$898 million while profits rose by \$13 million, or 8.6 percent, to \$165 million from the previous year, according to an agency news release. The agency said 2016 marked the 18th consecutive year of record sales growth.

Hampton Roads liquor sales saw a similar growth trend, increasing by 5.1 percent to \$210 million in fiscal year 2016, according to ABC data.

Statewide profits and taxes, including beer and wine taxes, resulted in a contribution of \$433 million to the state's general fund, the agency said. That's an increase of \$24 million, or 5.9 percent, from the previous year.

The agency attributed state sales growth to increasing sales on Sundays, the opening of eight new stores, including two in Hampton Roads, in addition to eight store remodels and 10 store relocations. The state currently has 363 ABC stores.

Statewide, store sales grew 5.4 percent while licensee sales to restaurants increased 7.4 percent. That tells ABC's chief

communications and research officer Eddie Wirt that increased home consumption isn't taking away from businesses. In fact, he said customers often try liquor drinks in restaurants before buying from the store.

ABC Chairman Jeffrey Painter said Virginia ABC is making strides with its website, marketing campaigns and store designs as it adapts to a modern marketplace.

The state's liquor monopoly puts the agency in a unique position to collect and analyze data regarding sales. To that end, the agency launched its Business Intelligence Project in late 2014, giving Virginia ABC a database tool that not only saves money by improving operational efficiency, but helps the agency serve customers better, Wirt said.

This means more information is in the hands of store managers who would like to know which products to add or remove from shelves, Wirt said. For instance, the agency found 80 percent of its holiday product sales came from just 20 percent of the holiday products, he said. That allowed the agency to pare down the product assortment while reducing the amount of product for sale after the holidays.

"It's important for any retailer to have the right products in the right stores on the shelves at the right price points," Wirt said.

Online ordering and even website visitation data helps the agency gauge demand for particular products, said ABC spokeswoman Jennifer Guild. The agency can look into what key words folks are searching to identify any trends, she said.

The sharing of data matters even more as Virginia grows its own distilleries and locally made products, including mixes, that are limited in quantity and can't be in every store, Guild said. That data also enhances the website, as customers can see which products are available in particular stores, Guild said. Customers can order products for pick-up at their designated store.

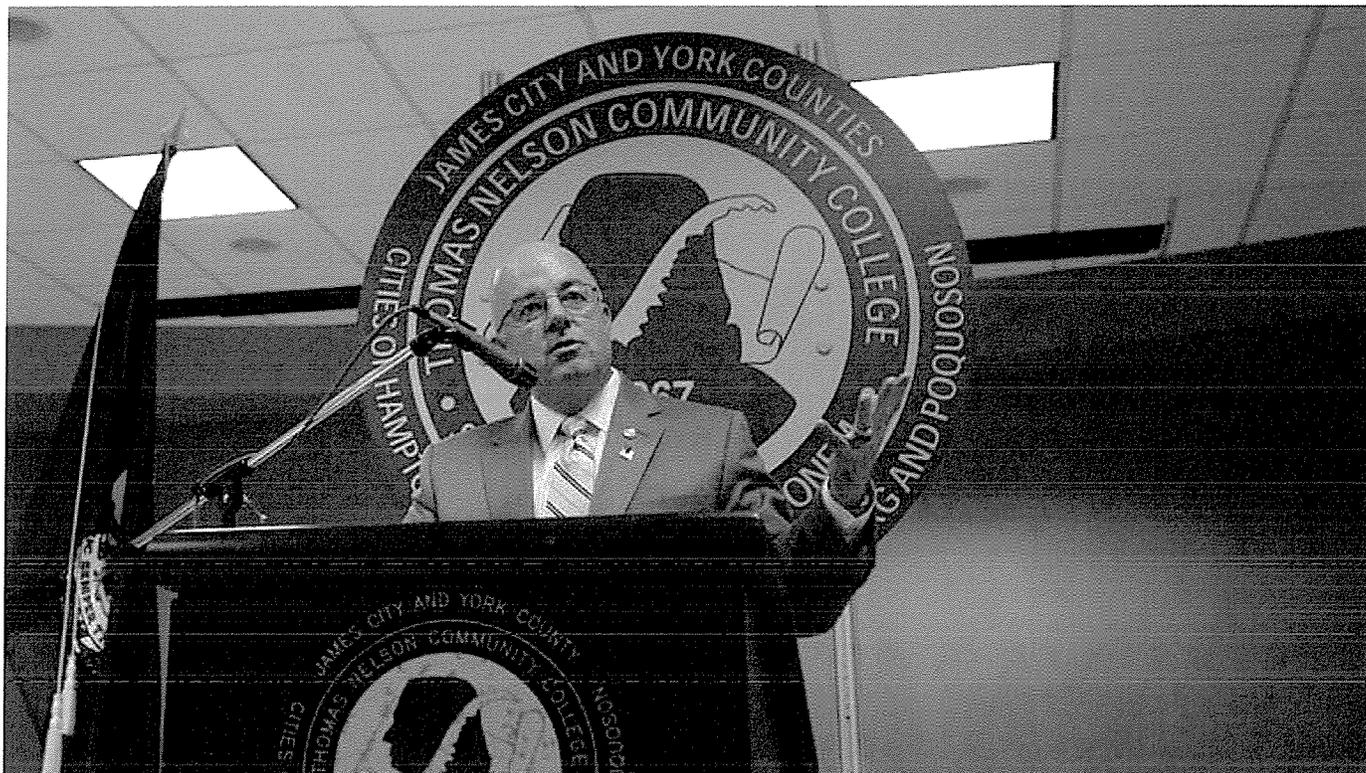
Real-time, up-to-date information is becoming more important online, especially as two-thirds of visitors to the ABC website are using their mobile devices, Wirt added.

"We're constantly learning better ways to analyze the data and make decisions that benefit us and improve the customers' experience," Wirt said.

Bozick can be reached by phone at 757-247-4741. Sign up for a free weekday business news email at TidewaterBiz.com.

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State officials want to refocus veterans program



Daily Press file John C. Harvey Jr., Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, speaks at a forum regarding the expansion of services to veterans and service members at Thomas Nelson Community College on Tuesday. (Kaitlin McKeown/Daily Press)



By **Hugh Lessig**
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NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 8:55 PM

A state program for wounded veterans criticized for its lack of focus and ineffectiveness would get a makeover under recommendations presented this week in Richmond.

At issue is the Virginia Veteran and Family Support program, which the state created in 2008 as the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program. It exists under the framework of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

A December 2015 report from the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission cited the program for a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of staff. In some cases, staff members managed cases of mentally ill veterans even though staff members might have lacked qualifications, the report said.

JLARC recommended the formation of a working group to address the shortcomings. The group reported its findings this week to the state lawmakers who make up the JLARC board

John Harvey, a retired Navy admiral and state Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, outlined a plan to refocus and streamline the program. Instead of providing or managing care, it would refer veterans to the right caregiver, monitor their progress and follow through when needed.

"There had been mission creep, if you will, poorly defined roles and missions," Harvey said.

The December 2015 JLARC cited examples where staff members performed "out of scope" activities that included fundraising, helping clients apply for jobs, providing basic financial counseling, stocking shelves at a food pantry and driving veterans to appointments.

Harvey didn't fault the basic intent of the staff, but he said it was important to remain focused on the right goal.

"Too many of our folks, out of the goodness of their heart, they (took on) additional responsibilities that they really weren't qualified to give," he said. ""That's obviously a big concern."

Under the recommended plan, the program would concentrate on four areas: promoting awareness, identifying veterans who need care, developing a plan and steering them to the right spot in a complex network of providers and monitoring their progress.

"It's more of a coordination function, taking advantage of the resources that already exist," Harvey said.

It will require the program staff to coordinate with that veteran's caregiver. That might be a federal VA medical center, a regional community services board, a private provider or another state agency.

Another recommended change focuses on how the program is structured.

The current setup relies on 11 state workers and 34 contracted employees at regional community services boards.

The working group recommends the entire staff be employed by state government. The 34 contracted CSB positions would be converted to full-time state jobs, for a total of 45 positions.

Having the entire staff under one roof would allow the program to standardize its approach and better measure its effectiveness, Harvey said.

The new setup would also allow the program to serve slightly more veterans, from 2,800 to 3,000 per year. The state-CSB hybrid serves about 2,500 to 3,000 per year.

The recommended plan would require an additional \$500,000 from the General Assembly. Harvey said he has already talked with the McAuliffe administration about tackling that in the 2017 legislative session.

Veteran issues traditionally enjoy bipartisan support in the Virginia General Assembly. Because of financial pressures, Harvey said there are ways to gradually enact the recommendations.

"I'm very confident," he said, "that we will get to the right end-state with this."

Lessig can be reached by phone at 757-247-7821.

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This article is related to: Virginia General Assembly

Virginia Port Authority floats ambitious plan for future

The chairman and CEO of the Virginia Port Authority both spoke to the Daily Press editorial board about future plans for the port facilities they run.



By **Mike Holtzclaw**
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NOVEMBER 15, 2016, 8:52 PM

As recently as two years ago, the Virginia Port Authority was losing millions of dollars annually. Now that the port's administration has gotten back to a break-even point, the board of directors is charting an ambitious course that projects to create hundreds of thousands of jobs around the state in the next half-century.

Chief Executive Officer John Reinhart and Chairman of the Board John Milliken, who both took their positions with VPA in early 2014, met with the Daily Press Editorial Board on Tuesday afternoon to discuss long-range plans for major state-funded improvements at VPA's Norfolk International Terminal and a \$320 million investment to be funded by the private owner of Virginia International Gateway.

That investment is part of a recent extension of VPA's current lease through 2065, with an option to buy at the conclusion.

"We've reached the stage of development in our commitment where, we were previously losing money hand over fist, but now we are stable and sustainable," Milliken said. "We developed a plan from last year and we are in the early stages of implementing it."

Milliken stressed that the port's mission is not to turn a profit, but to "foster economic development and create jobs" in the Hampton Roads region and around the state.

Toward that end, the port recently began construction of new facilities to expand its capacity, and while those buildings are

not scheduled for completion until mid-2019, that additional space is already being marketed.

The Virginia Port Authority's primary facilities are the Newport News Marine Terminal, the Norfolk International Terminals, and two in Portsmouth — the Virginia International Gateway and the Portsmouth Marine Terminal. A study earlier this year by economists at the College of William and Mary estimated that the port created more than 20,000 jobs, ranging from harbor operations, warehouse personnel and support staff, and truck drivers who move cargo and containers to and from the port.

Reinhart said companies are establishing warehouse space on the Peninsula and in South Hampton Roads and effectively "betting that they're going to have a tenant." He said warehouse availability costs half as much on the East Coast than on the West Coast, and that the Peninsula's easy access to rail traffic makes the Newport News port a vital hub to move cargo and containers not just through the state, but across the South and to the Midwest.

"Our growth area is really in the Midwest," Milliken said. "The rail hubs in Ohio and even to Memphis and Chicago and St. Louis — we've got the rail access to service that market."

Reinhart described a 650,000-pound piece of equipment, for use in a power plant, that recently shipped through the Peninsula because the region's rail access was convenient for the specialized cars used to move the piece to its ultimate destination in Emporia.

As construction gets underway on the expanded facilities, Milliken said the port is working with local economic development agencies to market the region. Cathie Vick, the port's chief public affairs officer, said VPA representatives attend trade shows across the country to learn as much as possible about the needs of shipping companies and of the businesses that use them.

Reinhart and Milliken stressed the many advantages that Virginia's ports offer to shipping companies — including some of the deepest waters along the East Coast, which can accommodate larger ships, and a near even balance between imports and exports, which makes for quicker turnarounds on incoming ships.

"We are actively marketing that new space," Milliken said. "You have to get it across to these companies that right now our capacity is X-Y-Z, but pretty soon it will be X-squared, Y-plus-2 and Z-increased. We're working now to market what we will have available three years from now."

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