

Martinsville takes steps towards township

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

The City of Martinsville unanimously voted to move forward with the process of reversion during a public hearing on Dec. 10.

The decision came after the city's legal firm, Troutman Sanders, presented studies on the financial impact of reversion and the consolidation of school divisions. The studies revealed a pressing need for the city to relieve financial burdens through the process of reversion.

"A reversion would result in a \$31.7 million reduction in operational expenses that the city is currently having to fund," said Stephen Piepgrass, the Troutman Sanders attorney who gave the presentation. "Once you're a town, those operational expenses are the county's responsibility rather than the city's."

While the fiscal report proposes that the city or town resident's taxes remain at the same level, the county would need to increase taxes.

According to the report, the county's revenues would increase by approximately \$28.7 million but their expenditures would also increase by approximately \$30.6 million. The proposal to solve this \$1.9 million difference would be an increase of the current county real estate tax of \$0.555 by five cents.

"There is a reduction in the current city tax rate of 1.0621 to 0.4571, but then the difference is made up by the five cent increase in county taxes," Piepgrass explained. "Because town residents would also pay county taxes, the end result is a net wash."

Piepgrass reiterated that this tax plan is just a proposal and, after negotiations, the numbers could change.

The county would absorb revenues such as those from state or constitutional offices, use of property, charges for service and recovered costs. It would also take on revenues from property taxes, local sales and use taxes, taxes on recordation/wills, grantor

taxes, and court fines and forfeitures. Revenues from state recordation tax sources, state and federal victim witness aid, and state jail per diem aid would also be taken by the county, along with revenue from federal, state, and local school operational funds and school cafeteria funds.

On the other side of the equation, the county would also take on city expenditures such as expenditures for general government administration, judicial administration, public safety and community planning. Additionally, the county would onboard expenditures for school board, school cafeteria fund and social services.

The city's legal counsel on reversion did note that there were some costs and savings not covered in the study, such as redundancies such as the courthouse and office space.

"There is a much larger package that gets submitted to the Commission on Local Government and some of those costs and savings might



PHOTOS BY BRANDON MARTIN

Stephen Piepgrass, legal counsel for the City of Martinsville on reversion, gives a presentation to City Council on Dec. 10.

be included later, depending on how much of a difference it makes," he explained.

After discussing the financial impact, Piepgrass covered the role school consolidation would play in the reversion process.

"What's really driving the reversion consideration is schools," he said. "There's a significant decline in enrollment, and that decline in

enrollment for city schools is projected to continue. More pupils means more state funding and with less pupils, means less state funding."

He noted the Local Composite Index (LCI) is a measurement that is used by the state in order to determine how much funding local schools are awarded.

"The LCI was never really intended for the purpose that

it is being used," he continued. "It's something, frankly, that the legislature needs to address. It's thrown off to a large degree for localities like ours by the success of northern Virginia. Nearly all direct state aid, including State Basic Aid, is distributed to local school divisions through use of the LCI."

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Wastewater issues should be excluded from reversion talks

Debbie Hall & Brandon Martin
Staff Writers

At least one member of Martinsville City Council is calling for Martinsville's wastewater agreement with the Henry County PSA and related issues to be excluded from reversion discussions.

"The sewer agreement should not be part of this" reversion discussion, said Danny Turner said. "It was an error to put this into the reversion negotiations."

The city's contention that the PSA should help cover repairs to a sewer line, and concerns about losing \$1 million annually when the Lower Smith Wastewater Treatment plant reopens also should not be debated during reversion discussions, Turner said.

The PSA currently contracts with the city to treat

wastewater - not Henry County. Reversion discussions should be with the county, according to Dale Wagoner, Assistant County Administrator and Assistant General Manager of the PSA.

"We agree with Danny. This is a PSA issue and not a county issue. The county does not have an agreement with the city for sewer and water services," Wagoner said, and added that county officials have determined water and sewer issues "are PSA issues that will not be addressed as part of the reversion."

Assistant City Manager and City Attorney Eric Monday said the PSA issues are included in reversion

See Wastewater, page 4



Martinsville residents gather for a City Council meeting. Many urged the council to reaffirm support for the Second Amendment.

Support affirmed for second amendment

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

Martinsville City Council adopted a resolution to reaffirm the city's commitment to respect, preserve and enforce the Second Amendment during a Dec. 10 meeting at the Municipal Building.

Martinsville was the latest of 57 other localities to approve similar resolutions that reaffirm their stance "to oppose unconstitutional and unlawful legislation and proposed restrictions that infringe upon the right of its citizens to keep and bear arms." Such localities have adopted the name of "Second Amendment Sanctuaries."

The resolution passed with a 3-1 vote, with Council Member Danny Turner voting against the resolution and Council Member Jennifer Bowles abstaining.

Some council members noted residents' concerns that impending unconstitutional legislation will be introduced by the newly-elected, Democratic-controlled General Assembly to curtail gun

rights for citizens.

"Gun control isn't about guns, it's about control," said Charles Cousins, a Martinsville resident at the meeting.

The first defense in protection of our property is ourselves. We have a right granted by God and protected by the Constitution to arm and protect ourselves."

Council stopped short of saying it would withhold public funds to enforce any such legislation, as was included in resolutions passed by counties like Patrick and Henry.

"Put simply, local governments are to follow state laws," City Attorney and Assistant City Manager Eric Monday said. "Unless there is a specific court hearing stating why a particular state law should or cannot be followed, it is the responsibility of localities to follow the laws outlined by the states."

The resolution outlines this sentiment by stating that "...nothing in this resolution is intended to declare any intent or effectuate any act, present or prospective, by the Council or any city officer or employee in contravention of

law..."

Unlike other resolutions that have been passed, Martinsville's never officially declared that the city is a Second Amendment Sanctuary. Instead, after an amendment by Danny Turner, the city voted to affirm its support for the "sanctuary city movement" rather than take on the moniker of a Second Amendment Sanctuary.

The council did, however, express a commitment to oppose unconstitutional and unlawful legislation and proposed restrictions that infringe upon the rights of its citizens to keep and bear arms through any and all legal means.

"Now, I'm voting in favor of this measured resolution on philosophical grounds," said Council Member James Woods, before officially casting his vote. "I'm not a 'hash tag gun nut' nor am I beholden to the National Rifle Association. I don't even own a firearm anymore. It is incumbent upon us to hold state legislators to account

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Resolutions may run into legal disputes

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

Following the results of the last election cycle which led to a current Democrat-led Virginia state government, 23 counties have passed resolutions declaring themselves Second Amendment Sanctuaries.

The designation comes with the pledge to not use public resources to enforce any deemed unconstitutional federal or state gun laws.

Much debate has been had over the foreseeable legality of the resolutions.

During a Nov. 18 Patrick County Board of Supervisors meeting, County Attorney Alan Black raised opposition to a phrase in the resolution that stated the county's refusal to use public county funds to restrict Second Amendment rights or to aid in the unnecessary and unconstitutional restriction of those rights.

"You can't pass a resolution like this unless such resolution is autho-

rized by the statute. The resolution, as written, is prohibited by this (15.2-915) statute," Black said.

Similarly, Henry County Board of Supervisor Tommy Slaughter, representative of the Reed Creek District, voiced potential legal issues before the board's 6-0 unanimous decision to become a Second Amendment Sanctuary during a Nov. 26 meeting.

"We need to look more into this," Slaughter said. "I am a supporter of the 2nd Amendment but the thing is, I don't know if this resolution is exactly legal. I don't know if we can tell our law enforcement officers to not enforce laws handed down by the state."

The term 'preemption' applies when law at a higher level of government is used to overrule authority at a lower level. State law can be used to preempt local ordinances, and federal law can be used to preempt state law,

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City passes 2020 Legislative Agenda

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

Martinsville City Council approved their 2020 Legislative Agenda during a Dec. 10 meeting at the Municipal Building.

The agenda outlines a list of priorities voted upon by the city council for legislators at the Virginia General Assembly and United States Congress to undertake in the upcoming year.

First of items proposed to the General Assembly is an upgrade to portions of U.S. 220 overlaying I-73 to interstate standards. The City of Martinsville also looks to make improvements to the U.S. 58 section between Stuart and



PHOTO BY BRANDON MARTIN

City Manager Leon Towarnicki speaks at a City Council meeting on Dec. 10.

Hillsville. Overall the city council looks to increase funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation for road

construction and repaving.

"It's a primary north/

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Harvest Foundation to fund summer internship program

A grant totaling \$176,140 from The Harvest Foundation will support the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. as it develops a summer internship program starting in 2020. “Building and growing a strong workforce pipeline is necessary to keep Martinsville and Henry County moving forward,” said DeWitt House, senior program officer. “We’re focusing on attracting young professionals for competitive internships and giving them an advance look at our community. It gives us an opportunity to put our best foot forward and showcase our first-class amenities. At the same time, we’re able to provide a potential pool of employees for local businesses to access for future open positions.” The summer internship program is a one-year pilot that aims to recruit at least 15 companies to employ interns. The companies will provide \$1,000 with a \$3,000 match provided by the grant. Interns will

be sought from area colleges and universities with recruiters visiting campus job fairs. Available internship positions also will be heavily promoted on social media. An internship coordinator will work with employers to develop job descriptions and conduct regular site visits to monitor progress. All applications will be reviewed by employers who can provide input on the selection process. An evaluation component of the grant will gauge its success for both interns and employers with a primary goal of employers eventually hiring those interns for open positions. Through the grant funding, interns also will have the opportunity to participate in Disney’s Approach to Leadership Excellence Capstone Program, a world-class training course provided by Disney Institute. Outside of work, interns will be encouraged to participate in community service projects and civic engagement opportunities. Through a partnership with Carlisle School, the



Sarah Hodges (right), director of tourism and talent development at the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp., is pictured with DeWitt House, senior program officer at The Harvest Foundation.

program will include a summer housing component for interns not local to the region. Eligible interns will be required to sign a housing agreement including rules and

regulations for their stay. “The Martinsville-Henry County EDC is grateful to The Harvest Foundation for its continued support of the community’s comprehensive economic

development efforts,” said Mark Heath, president and CEO of the Martinsville-Henry County EDC. “Now more than ever, there is competition for labor on a global ba-

sis. While the Internship initiative is but one effort to help identify and bring future talent to our region, it is a critical component we believe will pay huge dividends.”



John E. “Jeb” Bassett was elected 2020 chairman of the American Home Furnishings Alliance Board of Directors.

Bassett to lead AHFA in 2020

John E. “Jeb” Bassett, Chief Operating Officer/Senior Vice President, Bassett Furniture Industries, Bassett, Va., was elected 2020 Chair of the American Home Furnishings Alliance Board of Directors during the organization’s 2019 Annual Meeting in Miami, Fla., on Oct. 31.

Joining Bassett on the 2020 AHFA Executive Committee are Roger Bland, President and CEO of Southern Motion, Pontotoc, Mississippi, as first vice chair, and Joe Johnston, CEO of Johnston Casuals, North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, as second vice chair. AHFA’s 2019 chair, Gat Caperton, CEO of Gat Creek Furniture, Berkeley Springs, W.V., remains on the executive committee as immediate past-chair.

All new officers assume their posts on January 1.

Executives newly elected to

three-year terms on the AHFA Board of Directors include: Andy Bray, Vanguard Furniture; Eric Graham, Johnathan Charles; Caroline Hipple, Norwalk Furniture; Jeremy Hoff, Hooker Furniture; Allan Palecek, Palecek; and Todd Wanek, Ashley Furniture Industries.

Continuing on the board with terms expiring year-end 2021 are Edward Audi, Stickley; Roy Calcagne, Craftmaster; Nathan Cressman, Magnussen Home Furnishings; Kurt Darrow, La-Z-Boy Inc.; Luke Simpson, Durham Furniture; Henry Vanderminden IV, Telescope Casual Furniture; and Ron Wanek, Ashley Furniture Inds.

Board members with terms expiring year-end 2020 include Doug Bassett, Vaughan-Bassett Furniture; Bruce Birnbach, American Leather; Steve Lehman, Smith Brothers of Berne; Gary McCray, Klausner

Outdoor; and Jeff Scheffer, Universal Furniture.

Heather Corrigan, Lectra, Smyrna, Ga., and Richard Weeks, Leggett & Platt, High Point, N.C., are the 2020 supplier representatives on the board from AHFA’s Solution Partners division.

AHFA is based in High Point and represents more than 230 leading furniture manufacturers and distributors, along with about 150 suppliers to the furniture industry worldwide. AHFA serves as the residential furniture industry’s advocate in Washington, D.C., on all legislative and regulatory matters and leads the development of voluntary environmental, product safety and construction standards for home furnishings. Membership is open to all manufacturers and distributors of home furnishings for the U.S. market.

Coats for Kids 2019 drive a success

The Matthew Wayne Wade Foundation donated fifty-five coats to contribute to the 2019 “Coats for Kids” drive, led by Debra Buchanan and in association with Avery Mills of One Hour Martinizing.

The MWW Foundation initially set up several drop off sites within the

Martinsville Henry County area to collect coats.

Megan and Jason Harbour, of Harbour Towing & Recovery, and McCabe Memorial Baptist Church, aided with the mission and donated a substantial amount of the coats collected.

Through other donations, the MWW Foun-

dation purchased additional coats for the drive. The MWW Foundation would like to thank everyone that donated and supported the Coats for Kids Drive this year. “We are so grateful that we are able to continue contributing to the drive each year in order to provide children in need coats to

stay warm,” they said.

The MWW Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in the memory of Matthew Wayne Wade, has par-

ticipated in the Coats for Kids drive since 2013. For more information or how to donate or become a supporter visit <https://www.winebyriver.com/>

[mww-foundation/](https://www.mww-foundation.com/) or on Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008562576755>.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12		
13								14					15		
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56					57		58				59				
60				61		62				63				64	
65			66							67			68		
	69									70					

CLUES ACROSS

1. Rope used as a lasso

7. Lomb's partner

13. North African nation

14. Rounds up cattle

16. Densest naturally occurring element

17. Home of the Brewers

19. Atomic #44

20. Vetches

22. Moved earth with a tool

23. Cavalry sword

25. Supplements with difficulty

26. Encouraged

28. Speech defect

29. Periodical (abbr.)

30. Very cold

31. ____ Paulo, city

33. Former OSS

34. Approves food

36. Cars need them

38. Sweden's dominant phone

company

40. Long lock of a woman's hair

41. North American natives

43. Fly high

44. One type is fire

45. Nocturnal bird

47. More than one male

48. LOTR actor McKellen

51. Employee stock ownership plan

53. Tony-winning actress Daisy

55. Tennis star Kournikova

56. Pulitzer-winning composer

58. The opposite to pro

59. Safecrackers

60. Denotes past

61. Parrots

64. One quintillion bytes (abbr.)

65. Reduce the importance of

67. Stiffly

69. In a sensible way

70. Signs

CLUES DOWN

1. Capital of Zambia

2. Article

3. Country star LeAnn

4. Egyptian goddess

5. Afflict in mind or body

6. Showy but cheap

7. Belgian urban center

8. Short-winged diving seabird

9. Deploys

10. Ballplayers can legally do it

11. Centiliter

12. Contrary beliefs

13. Type of pole

15. Distinguish oneself

18. 8th month of the year (abbr.)

21. One who monitors

24. Petty quarreling

26. Fiddler crabs

27. Touch lightly

30. American state

32. Pro wrestler Randy

35. Indicates spelling mistake

37. Macaws

38. Gradually narrowed

39. Installments

42. Female sheep

43. Politician

46. Servant

47. Said to facilitate concentration

49. California ballplayers

50. Once Toledo's tallest building

52. A type of pie

54. State of southwestern India

55. Principal member of Norse religion

57. Counterspy

59. Wellness practice

62. ____-de-sac: dead end street

63. Used to cook

66. Type of hospital

68. Direct message



(Left to right): Debra Buchanan, vice chairman, Henry County Board of Supervisors, Horsepasture District; MC Thornton of One Hour Martinizing; Brad Hughes of the Matthew Wayne Wade Foundation and Doogie & Debra Wad, also of the Matthew Wayne Wade Foundation, show some of the coats collected during the Coats for Kids Drive.

Crash results in death of Axton man

An Axton man died in a single vehicle crash on Monday, according to a release from the Virginia State Police.

James Alexander Tiller, 62, of Axton, on Monday, Dec. 9 was operating a 2008 Toyota Corolla around 8:06 p.m.

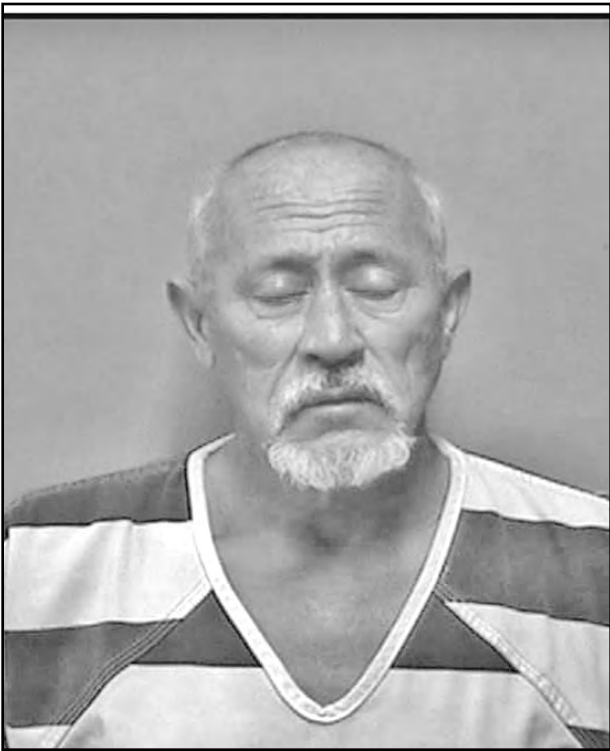
The vehicle was traveling west on Virginia 703, one tenth of a mile west of Virginia 750 in Pittsylvania County, the release stated.

The vehicle ran off the right side of the roadway, overcorrected, crossed the road and struck a utility pole, according to the release.

Tiller died at the scene.

He was not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the incident, the release stated.

Virginia State Police Senior Trooper K.M. Isom is continuing his investigation of the incident.



William Harvey Holt

Claudville man held without bond

A Claudville man is being held with no bond following an alleged incident that occurred around 10:30 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 2.

William Harvey Holt, 63, of Pedigo Ridge Road, was arrested Dec. 3 and charged with abduction and assault and battery, according to a release from Patrick County Sheriff Dan Smith.

Smith said that a wom-

an was allegedly physically detained in the parking lot of Circle K in Stuart on Dec. 2.

The female victim did not know her attacker, and alleged that she was walking into the store when approached, Smith said.

Holt was convicted in December, 2018 of assaulting an 18 year old female in the same parking lot, according to the sheriff.



Warrants executed in connection with undercover investigation

The Henry County Sheriff's Office concluded an undercover drug investigation into the distribution of cocaine.

Investigators with the Henry County Sheriff's Office, along with agents from the Virginia State Police and Department of Motor Vehicles, on Dec. 5, executed search warrants at A&E Auto Sales, 4000 Virginia Ave., Collinsville, and 359 Paul St., Collinsville.

The searches yielded in excess of one pound of cocaine, a small quantity of marijuana, three firearms and \$10,179 in U.S. currency. The approximate street value of the narcotics is in excess of \$20,000. The suspected narcotics will be submitted to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science for analysis.

In addition, seven vehicles, one boat, one ATV and one trailer were seized during

the course of this operation.

Tamon Dorell Witcher, 31, of 359 Paul St., Collinsville, was charged with a felony count of possession of a Schedule II controlled substance with intent to distribute (felony). Witcher was released on a \$7,500 unsecured bond.

The investigation is continuing, according to the release, and additional charges are anticipated.

Anyone with information pertaining to narcotic trafficking operations is asked to contact the Henry County Sheriff's Office at (276) 638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63- CRIME (632-7463).

The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards up to \$2,500 for information related to crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information determine the amount of reward paid.

VMNH to offer winter break science adventure

The Virginia Museum of Natural History is kicking-off the new year by offering a special winter break adventure for children ages 6 to 11 this January.

On Jan. 2 and 3, Winter Break Science Camp will offer young learners the chance to spend each day at the museum participating in winter and holiday themed science activities, such as making snow and conducting science experiments with candy. Campers will even enjoy popcorn and a movie each day.

"Winter Break Science Camp is designed to give children a fun, unique learning experience as they begin the transition from a long holiday break back to school," said Debbi Bryant, camp coordinator. "All that campers need to bring with them is a bagged lunch, a bottle of water, and their sense of adventure."

Since each day will offer different activities, parents can enroll their children for one day or both.

"The camp is designed to be flexible for parents," said Bryant. "Each day will bring new adventures and the camp is designed to allow parents to pick just one day or both days depending on what works best with their schedules."

Winter Break Science Camp takes place on Thursday, Jan. 2 and Friday, Jan. 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day, with a registration deadline of Thursday, Dec. 26.

The cost of the camp is \$30 per camper per day, with special rates available for museum members.

To register, contact the museum at discover@vmnh.virginia.gov or call 276-634-4185.

For more information about the museum, visit www.vmnh.net.

Budget proposals announced to combat maternal and infant mortality

Recently, Gov. Ralph Northam announced his proposed budget will include approximately \$22 million to combat maternal and infant mortality and reduce the racial disparity in Virginia's maternal mortality rate. Proposed funding will dramatically expand Medicaid coverage for new moms, increase home visiting, and explore Medicaid reimbursement for Doula support services.

"It is unacceptable that black women in Virginia continue to die from pregnancy-related causes at more than twice the rate of white women," said Northam. "As a Commonwealth, we can and must do better. These historic investments will make a real difference for families across Virginia, and will ensure all moms and children have access to the high-quality, culturally-competent care they deserve."

In June, Northam announced a goal to eliminate the racial disparity in Virginia's maternal mortality rate by 2025. As part of this directive, Secretary of Health and Human Resources Daniel Carey convened a diverse group of stakeholders and embarked on a 10-stop listening tour across all regions of the Commonwealth. The budget proposals reflect months of input from mothers, medical professionals, doctors, and community advocates consulted as a result of this process.

"As a mother who has experienced the tragedy of losing a newborn child, I'm proud and grate-

ful for the Governor's leadership on this issue," said Dr. Aaliyah Samuel, a mom who shared her testimony during the listening tour. "Ten years ago, I made a career change because I believe that policy is what changes people's lives. Governor Northam made it clear he not only listened to my voice and the voices of other mothers, advocates, and community members across the Commonwealth—he heard us loud and clear. Make no mistake, this funding won't just change lives, it will save lives."

Data from the Virginia Maternal Mortality Review Team show the majority of pregnancy-associated deaths occur more than 43 days after pregnancy. However, the current FAMIS MOMs program only provides Medicaid coverage for women during pregnancy and 60-days postpartum. The Governor's budget includes nearly \$4 million over the biennium to extend this coverage up to one year post-pregnancy and include medically necessary treatment for addiction and substance use disorder.

"This significant investment is a critical step towards eliminating the racial disparity in Virginia's maternal mortality rate," said Senator Louise Lucas. "I look forward to working with the Governor as he continues to champion these measures during the upcoming General Assembly session."

The Governor's proposed bud-

get also includes \$4 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding to increase access to affordable, reliable contraception through the Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) program. Increasing access to LARCs allows families to better plan and space pregnancies and has been shown to decrease rates of preterm and low birthweight births.

"It is great to see serious steps being taken to address the crisis of maternal and infant mortality," said Delegate Lashrecce Aird. "These proposed investments will increase access to high-quality, patient-centered care for women and families across the Commonwealth."

Additionally, Northam's budget makes significant investments in community-driven and wrap-around treatment models. The budget includes \$12.8 million to make home visiting services—shown to be incredibly effective at helping new mothers navigate the complex health care system—eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. The budget also includes language to study the development of a Medicaid reimbursement model for community-based doula services, which have proven effective at reducing maternal mortality, particularly among women of color.

Northam will address the Joint Money Committees on December 17 to share the full details of his budget plan.

Ribbon cutting held at Chicken in the Basket

Several local officials and business owners attended a ribbon cutting to mark the opening of Chicken in the Basket. A revamp of the historic Fieldale restaurant, Chicken in the Basket is dedicated to serving clas-

sic southern favorites and a clucking good time. After the restaurant closed, the operators were determined to keep the traditions of the former Garfield's alive by offering many of their menu favorites and

a few new additions at an affordable price. Hours of operation are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.



From left, Debra Buchanan, vice chairman of the Henry County Board of Supervisors; Hunter Dowell, Tori Barnhardt, Susie Boyd, Alex Crowder (owner), Melissa Hairston, Diane Reeves, Jeaneen Humphrey, and others, along with Joe Bryant, of the Henry County Board of Supervisors and Sharon Shepherd, of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce



From left, Betty Ford, Marian Zeleya, Alex Crowder, Diane Reeves, Tori Barnhardt celebrate the official opening of Chicken in the Basket.



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OPINION

The Labors of Nerdcules

As I’ve mentioned in this space before, my hobby is collecting, playing, and repairing pinball machines. It is a wonderful hobby that brings me a great deal of joy, even when I’ve burned a hole in my thumb with a soldering iron and dropped a tiny irreplaceable diode into my shag carpet, never to be seen again.

I got a project pinball machine (a Williams “Sorcerer” from 1985, if you’re a pin-head) as part of a trade back in February, and I had hoped to fix it up and get it running again. However, this was about a 100 hour project, and I’m not sure if I’ll have 100 hours of free time between now and the time I retire at the age of 113. I decided to sell it.

I listed the machine on my favorite pinball forum and I started getting messages within minutes. After a couple of days, it became clear that a gentleman named Mike was a serious buyer. Mike said he would drive down from Maryland and pick it up at my house. There was only one day that would work for him: Halloween.

I told Mike I would meet him at 6 p.m. at a gas station near my house. I left work at 5 that day, giving me just enough time to swing by my

house and get some parts together for Mike before meeting him.

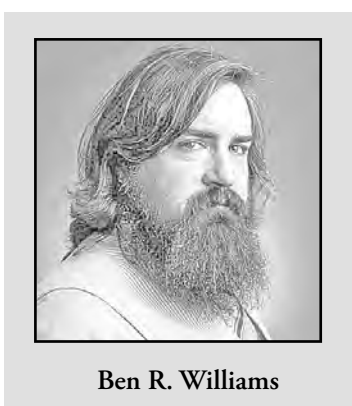
As you may recall, this past Halloween was a nasty day, with gray skies, hard rains and heavy winds. The rain was pouring and the wind was blowing as I drove down the half-mile gravel driveway to my house. About a quarter mile from my house, I stopped.

A pine tree had blown across the road.

This particular pine tree was about 8-10 inches in diameter; not enormous, but too big for me to push off the road. To make matters worse, the top of the tree had wedged itself tight between two trees on the opposite side of the road, so I couldn’t even push it aside if I wanted to.

If I could cut it in half, I wagered, I could push the two halves off the road. The problem was cutting it in half.

Under normal circumstances, I would have just parked my car, walked to my house, and called up my chainsaw-owning friend and neighbor – who, coincidentally, is also named Mike – to ask if he could help me cut the tree up the next day. However, I didn’t have that kind of time; I had to meet Maryland Mike in just 20 minutes, and



Ben R. Williams

he needed to be able to get his truck to my house. I had to find some way to move the pine tree.

I parked my car and walked a quarter mile to my house in the driving rain, trying to figure out what I would do. In my favorite movie – William Friedkin’s 1977 film “Sorcerer” – there’s a scene where the protagonists blow up a fallen tree with a box of dynamite. Alas, I had no dynamite. I also didn’t have tow straps. Or a chain saw. Or even a hand saw.

I did, however, have a splitting maul. If you’re not familiar, a splitting maul has an axe on one side of its head, a sledgehammer on the other side of its head, and is generally used for splitting wood along its grain, not chopping a tree in half. But needs must when the

devil drives, so I grabbed my maul and hiked back to the tree in the driving rain.

I’m not a weightlifter or anything, but I consider myself a decently strong guy. I can lift heavy things. I can open at least 95 percent of all jars I encounter. I do all right for myself.

However, I am here to tell you that cutting a pine tree in half with a splitting maul is on par with the 12 Labors of Hercules. It is a miserable experience I do not wish on anyone.

I had managed to hack a four-inch-deep gouge into the tree when it was time to go meet Mike from Maryland, so I got in my car and drove to the gas station. I spotted a white truck with Maryland plates and pulled up beside it.

Mike, as it turned out, was an old Navy guy, the sort of guy who was born tough and just gets tougher with each passing year. He was probably in his late 60s or early 70s, and his left bicep was marked with the kind of tattoos you can only get when you’re stationed in the Polynesias in the 1960s and you agree to let a beautiful woman tap them into your flesh with a little knife and a bottle of squid ink. Mike was a tough customer. I shook his big tough hand and told him about the tree, and he

told me he would follow me.

As I was driving back to my house, it occurred to me that I still had to hack through at least half of the pine tree, only now I had to do it while a guy who looked like Charles Bronson’s Vietnam veteran brother watched me.

It only took a couple of swings before I could feel the fatigue settling in. I was beginning to feel lightheaded. I took a break every five or six swings, but only for a few seconds; I didn’t want Mike to think I was a weakling or anything.

After about ten more minutes of beating on it with my maul, the pine tree cracked in half, and Mike helped me push the two halves off the road. He followed me back to my house, loaded up the pinball machine and left.

Once Mike was back on his way to Maryland, I threw a pizza in the oven and took a hot shower. I felt much better after the shower, and I was proud of myself for knocking that tree in half. I had no doubt that Mike was impressed by my raw strength.

When my pizza was ready, I discovered that I couldn’t cut it because I no longer had the ability to close my hand around a knife handle.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sunday, December 15

Henry County Bike Club: The Henry County Bike Club will ride at the Mountain Laurel Trails in Ridgeway every Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. Occasionally the Mountain Bike Ride may be held at Cedar Ridge Trails. In those instances, the Henry County Bike Club will post an update on the website as well as the Facebook page. For more information on the weekly Mountain Bike Ride, please call Bob Norris at 276-340-9144 or Tommy at 276-618-0343.

Piedmont Arts: Artspiration Senior Studio at 215 Starling Ave., Martinsville, VA 24112. During Artspiration Senior Studio, seniors are invited to paint together in the Piedmont Arts classroom. Sessions are self-guided and provide a space for seniors to socialize while creating artwork. Bring your own supplies. Non-members pay at the door. Members-free; Non-members-\$5.

Bring your own supplies. Non-members pay at the door. Members-free; Non-members-\$5.

Monday, December 16

Piedmont Arts: Artspiration Senior Studio at 215 Starling Ave., Martinsville, VA 24112. During Artspiration Senior Studio, seniors are invited to paint together in the Piedmont Arts classroom. Sessions are self-guided and provide a space for seniors to socialize while creating artwork. Bring your own supplies. Non-members pay at the door. Members-free; Non-members-\$5.

Tuesday, December 17

Blue Ridge Regional Library (Ridgeway Branch): Holiday Open House, Noon-8 p.m. Holiday

cookies, punch and children’s crafts.

Piedmont Arts: Artspiration Senior Studio at 215 Starling Ave., Martinsville, VA 24112. During Artspiration Senior Studio, seniors are invited to paint together in the Piedmont Arts classroom. Sessions are self-guided and provide a space for seniors to socialize while creating artwork. Bring your own supplies. Non-members pay at the door. Members-free; Non-members-\$5.

People’s Church of the Living God: Welcome to Bethlehem presented by the Music Ministry of the People’s Church of the Living God; nativity play; children’s and adult choir. Start time: 7 p.m., admission is free. 8136 Fairystone Park Hwy, Bassett, 24055; Contact: (276) 627-0208

Thursday, December 19

Ten Pin Café: Located inside Sportlanes Bowling Alley, offers karaoke every Thursday evening. Hit the

stage solo, or with a group and rock all night. Gather your friends and make new ones, who enjoy the sounds and performances as much as you do. Ten Pin Café offers delicious food and finger items such as jerk chick’n, southern fried pork chop samiches, fried shrooms and cheez sticks. So come hungry! Starts at 9 p.m.

Thursday Trail Trekkers: Chatmoss Cedar Ridge Trail, 1 p.m. This group, co-sponsored by Henry County Parks & Recreation and the Dan River Basin Association, will meet on Thursdays to explore a different trail every week. Weather permitting, we will meet at designated locations throughout the county, and sometimes in nearby parts of neighboring counties for hikes. All the trails selected will be moderate in length and difficulty and senior-friendly, but there is no minimum age requirement. Please contact Paul Johnson at kpj24112@gmail.com with any questions. Seniors interested in this program must pre-register

with Henry County Parks & Recreation Senior Services at 276-634-4644.

Spencer Penn Centre: Join Sifu Kristian Gordon for a series of Martial Arts classes at Spencer-Penn. Class occurs every Thursday, from 6-7 p.m. Cost for the entire month is \$40 for members of the Centre or \$65 for non-members. All ages, fitness and experience levels are welcome. Call the Centre at (276) 957-5757 to sign up.

Mountain Valley Artisan Barn: Creative Corral, weekly beginning at 6 p.m. All ages welcome. You are invited out to Mountain Valley Artisan barn each Thursday for our Creative Corral. Each week we will create a different project which will be announced on our Facebook page. Past favorites include barn wood signs and wind chimes. Have a suggestion? Share it with us! We love collaboration and expression. Musicians are welcome to bring their instruments and play.

Friday, December 20

HJDB Event Center: Mark Templeton Band Christmas Concert at the HJDB Event Center, at 7 p.m. Door prizes and prizes for Best Christmas sweater/outfit. Jam Session at 6 p.m. Admission \$5 donation. Concessions available. Dancers welcome; One Day at a Time, live music from 10-12 p.m., at the HJDB Event Center cafeteria. Admission is free for members, \$2 for non-members. Breakfast \$5 from 8:30-11 a.m., lunch \$6 from 12-1 p.m. For information call Randy Farmer at 276-629-8296.

Sportlanes: Rock-it Bowling, 9 p.m. until 1 a.m. Every Friday and Saturday. Lights will flash and the music will fill the alley while you play. Enjoy a variety of music and dance along if you want! Ten Pen Cafe will be open serving your favorite foods and beers

Wastewater Issues

from page 1

discussions for a number of reasons.

For instance, the sewer line repairs are to “a large sewer pipe that runs along the Smith River where the old Bassett-Walker plant is located. It serves a massive amount of waste water that comes from Henry County. Our interpretation of our waste water contract with the PSA is that you are responsible for your percentage of a particular asset when it comes times to replace it. The PSA contends that they owe us nothing for the cost to replace the pipe. So that is currently a bone of contention between the PSA and the city,” Monday said.

“In addition, the PSA has indicated and received loan underwriting for \$24 million to reopen their sewer plants. It is our understanding that they no longer wish to be our waste water plant customer. On the average, that would cost us \$1 million a year. We do not agree with the rationale for reopening the Henry County plant. If they were to do so, they would be operating at near capacity on the day they open. They are located on the other side of the state scenic trout-stocked river,” he said of the Lower Smith

Wastewater Treatment plant.

The PSA received the necessary permits for that facility in April, 2017, according to PSA officials.

However, Monday alleged “it violates state environmental policy and lastly, our plant is capable of handling the entire waste water needs of Martinsville-Henry County combined. With the remaining capacity of 50 percent, we wonder why the PSA would wish to incur, not \$24 million, but somewhere in the high \$30s, mid-\$40s to reopen a sewer plant that is not needed and would bracket a state scenic river, and would completely max out the day it opens.

“It is a violation of Virginia State Environmental Policy which mandates that the most efficient treatment of regional waste water needs is what the Commonwealth pursues,” he added.

But Turner said adding those issues into the mix only further complicates the complex reversion discussion.

“This should have been settled long ago,” Turner said, adding he believes the PSA “is still in a sewage agreement with us.”

Turner recalled that before a 2005 amendment to

the city’s wastewater agreement with the PSA, the city was guaranteed to treat the county’s wastewater.

The amendment came about after “another bad decision. ... Adelphia Cable filed bankruptcy. Comcast/Time Warner were going to buy the assets. Martinsville decided to be a fly in the ointment, and not sell,” Turner said.

At the time, city officials decided to try to leverage the city’s interests, purchase and operate a regional cable company to replace revenue lost when the landfill closed, records showed. Both the city and the county held a right of first refusal to match any purchase offer by a third party interested in buying the cable TV system, according to several documents and court records.

As a result, the city contacted Henry County officials, and learned the PSA “wanted out of a sewer (wastewater) agreement with the city,” Turner said. “Martinsville said, ‘sell us your cable rights.’”

In exchange an amendment to the city’s Nov. 8, 2002 wastewater contract with the PSA was approved. The amendment stated, in part, that the PSA could re-

scind its wastewater contract by providing 90 days written notice. Henry County reassigned their rights to the cable TV system to the city in exchange.

The issue led to a federal court case between Martinsville Cable Inc., a nonprofit Virginia corporation, versus Time Warner NY Cable, LLC, a Delaware limited liability corporation, and others.

Judge Michael F. Urbanski heard the case in Danville, and in 2006 issued a Memorandum Opinion which stated, in part, that “the city and county have acted brazenly to asset ‘leverage’ in their own interest, without so much as even paying lip service to the calculus required by their own ordinances.”

Urbanski ultimately denied Martinsville Cable Inc.’s motion for partial summary judgement and entered summary judgement in favor of Time Warner.

“A federal judge struck down this case. I maintain that Henry County is still in a sewage agreement with us, and has got to guarantee us a certain amount of” service per year, Turner said. “This issue should have been fixed long ago.”

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HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

henrycountyenterprise.com

Weekly Publication

Published Each Saturday

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Henry County received a two-year grant from The Harvest Foundation totaling \$320,600 to expand the Dick & Willie Trail. Pictured from left to right are Tim Pace, director of engineering for Henry County, Allyson Rothrock, president of The Harvest Foundation, and Roger Adams, director of Henry County Parks and Recreation.

Harvest grant award to fund Dick & Willie Trail expansion

The Dick & Willie Passage Rail Trail is close to completion with support from The Harvest Foundation to finalize “6A,” a 2.96-mile section located from the Spruce Street Trailhead to the end of the existing trail at Mulberry Creek.

Henry County will receive a Harvest grant award of \$320,600 over two years, encompassing 20 percent of the total budget for the capital project. Allyson Rothrock, president of The Harvest Foundation, said trails provide considerable economic growth for communities in which they reside.

“The trail system is not only a community gem but an economic driver,” Rothrock said. “Trails bring job growth in construction and maintenance as well as tourism-related opportunities, like rafting on the Smith River, bike purchases, food and lodging purchases and more. Trails provide the tools to turn geographic resources into community trademarks that become focal points of civic pride and key attractors of new residents and businesses. This asset truly is one of the key pieces of our community’s economic rebuilding efforts.”

Henry County Administrator Tim Hall added, “the Dick & Willie Trail is one of the best amenities we have, and we are particularly excited about the 6A project.

When it’s finished we will have more than 10 contiguous miles of trail through this community, and that opens up a lot of possibilities moving forward.”

According to statistics from the Virginia Creeper Trail, tourists spend around \$1.2 million annually in the two-county community surrounding the trail. Sarah Hodges, director of tourism and talent development at the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp., said with this expansion and the possibility of future additions, it is likely that the Dick & Willie can have a similar impact on Martinsville and Henry County.

“It’s wonderful when local residents take advantage of the beautiful asset that is the Dick & Willie Trail,” she said. “We’re also thrilled when visitors come to our community for the sole purpose of enjoying the trail. Many visitors decide to plan trips around it making their stay an experience, enjoying other area walking trails and amenities in Martinsville-Henry County. In turn, we’re seeing increases in sales and meals tax collections, as well as lodging tax that supports our entire community.”

Having 20 miles of available trail round-trip opens up the doors for additional sporting and recreational events like bike rides and foot races, according to the grant appli-

cation. The trail already hosts a variety of events throughout the year including the Turkey Day 5K and Family Run, the Martinsville Half Marathon & 5K and others, organized by Miles in Martinsville.

In addition to support from Henry County and Harvest, the Virginia Department of Transportation TAP (Transportation Alternatives Programs) grants program and the Virginia Department of Transportation’s Revenue Sharing Program will support the project. Funding from Harvest primarily will be used for trail construction, and a portion of that funding is earmarked to purchase a trail counter system that will provide reliable usage data needed for future grants or funding opportunities.

The trail is part of the former Danville and Western Railroad. Phases one through five of the trail were completed in 2010 bringing 4.5 miles one way. In November, phase 6B of the trail officially opened to much fanfare, adding an additional 2.5-mile section stretching from the Smith River Sports Complex to the Spruce Street Trailhead.

Design work for 6A already is underway. Officials hope to open this portion of the trail by the summer of 2021. Find out more about the Dick & Willie by following “Dick and Willie Trail” on Facebook or visitmartinsville.com.

Hooker Field to receive major upgrades with Harvest grant award



The Harvest Foundation presented members of the Martinsville Community Recreation Association (MCRA) with a grant award to support renovations at Hooker Field. Pictured from left are DeWitt House, senior program officer at The Harvest Foundation, Dean Hennis, MCRA member, Treasurer and Martinsville City Manager Leon Towarnicki, and Barron Frith, MCRA president.

The Martinsville Community Recreation Association (MCRA) will undertake a significant project to renovate and upgrade Hooker Field in Martinsville with support from The Harvest Foundation.

Funding of \$407,770 over three years will be provided to the association with half of that amount, \$203,885, available in the form of a program-related investment (PRI) which will be paid back to the foundation over time. The grant represents 20 percent of the total capital project supported by MCRA, Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC), Barry Nelson and Nelson Automotive Group, the City of Martinsville and the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp.

“This is a great opportunity to partner with local organizations to improve amenities in Martinsville and Henry County,” said DeWitt House, senior program officer at The Harvest Foundation. “Improving the facilities at Hooker Field gives our community an edge when it comes to recruiting big tournaments to the area. Large events like that have the potential to grow local revenues from lodging, shopping and meals tax. The Martinsville Community Recreation Association has built strong partnerships throughout the years that make Hooker Field an important asset for our area.”

Planned renovations include new construction for bathroom facilities

and a concession stand to keep the field in good working order to potentially attract new fans and new events. PHCC, Barry Nelson of Nelson Automotive Group and the City of Martinsville are among several community partners that have supported numerous improvements to the facility including upgraded dugouts, a new scoreboard, and an updated artificial turf field to improve the spectator experience.

Barron Frith, president of the recreation association, said he is pleased for the opportunity to partner with The Harvest Foundation to upgrade facilities at Hooker Field.

“Hooker Field has served as the primary baseball facility for this community for many years, and getting an opportunity to now upgrade the concession and restroom facilities is wonderful,” said Frith. “A lot of work has been done on the playing field and to be able to now focus on projects to make the spectator experience more enjoyable is important. Hooker Field is a true community facility and the planned upgrades will provide a much-needed facelift for this historic ballpark.”

Following the concession and restroom upgrade projects, Frith said he hopes the recreation association can begin to explore adding covered seating to Hooker Field. According to the grant application, MCRA aims to award contracts in early 2020 with a grand opening event at the ballpark in the summer.

Post-Election, Virginia Dodges Medicaid Work Requirements

Rodney Robinson
Capital News Service

Virginia residents with Medicaid will not be required to work in order to keep their policies since Gov. Ralph Northam halted the work requirements he previously agreed to implement nearly two years ago as a bipartisan agreement.

House Republicans said in a statement that the previous agreement was made in “good faith” and Northam gave his “personal assurance” to implement Medicaid expansion with a work requirement, where most Medicaid recipients would have to work a certain amount of hours each month to keep their policy.

“Broken promises like this are the reason so many people hate politics,” Del Todd Gilbert, R-Shenandoah, said in the statement.

In 2019, Virginia expanded eligibility for health coverage to 400,000 people. So far, 342,000 Virginians have signed up for health insurance coverage through Medicaid expansion. Work requirements for Medicaid could lead to between 26,800 and 74,000 people losing their health insurance coverage, according to The Commonwealth Institute.

The work requirements previously agreed on would apply to able-bodied Medicaid recipients who would need to work and pay premiums. For the first three months, enrollees would start with a work requirement of 20 hours per month. The workload would increase to

80 hours per month after a person was enrolled for 12 months, according to the amended budget.

“In order to work, you have to be healthy, so work requirements for Medicaid expansion make no sense at all,” said Anna Scholl, executive director of Progress Virginia, in a press release. “We’re thrilled that Democrats are taking steps to halt the implementation of punitive work requirements to qualify for Medicaid Expansion and we hope that it means even more people will be able to benefit from the program.”

Arkansas was the first state to implement a work reporting requirement for Medicaid. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities concluded that 18,164

people lost coverage within the first seven months of the program and approximately 23% of all people subject to work requirements lost coverage. There is no evidence that work reporting requirements led to any major increase in work participation or hours worked, the study found. The policy is no longer being enforced in Arkansas, due to a recent court decision.

Ashleigh Crocker, communications director for Progress Virginia, thinks it doesn’t make sense to implement the plan.

“The vast majority of people who get insurance coverage through Medicaid are already working,” Crocker said.

Stephen Farnsworth, professor of political science and director of the University of

Mary Washington’s Center for Leadership and Media Studies, said that moving forward, Republicans have “little ability” to retain the previous agreement from a

couple years ago.

“This is an example of how elections have consequences,” Farnsworth said. “The new Democratic majorities taking office next

month have little interest in the work requirement as a condition for Medicaid expansion and seem very likely to abandon that provision in the next session.”




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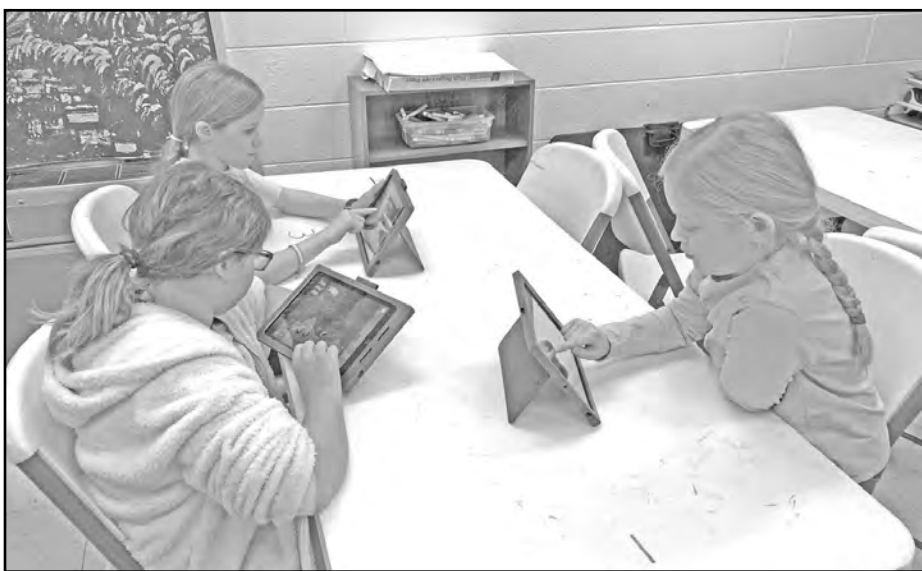
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Computer Science Education Week celebrated at Carlisle School

December 9-15 is Computer Science Education Week, and students at Carlisle School are celebrating by taking part in the Hour of Code, a global effort to celebrate computer science. More than 100 industry partners have joined together to support the Hour of Code movement, which aims to improve diversity in computer science and inspire students to learn about coding.

Computers are everywhere, changing every industry on the planet. But according to Code.org, only 45% of all high schools teach computer science. That is why Carlisle School is joining in on the largest learning event in history: the Hour of Code. Throughout the week, students at Carlisle will have the opportunity to create code. Sherry Moschler, Carlisle School's STEAM Coordinator, explained that coding is what makes it possible for us to create computer software, apps, and websites. She added that codes are also used in many objects we use daily, including our cell phones, washing machines, and vehicles.

Students in Carlisle's STEAM classes are using apps on iPads to write code. The various apps guide students through a series of fun problem-solving activities to help them write code, a series of computer instructions for each specific task. Coding is an integral part of the year-long STEAM curriculum, but this week students also have access to hundreds of additional interactive games available to schools for free by



Caselyn Alderman, Eleanor Favero, and Charlotte Burdine practice coding skills on an iPad app during the Hour of Code at Carlisle.

Code.org.

Fifth-grader Caselyn Alderman enjoys coding because "I want to work for Apple when I am older and try to make phones, so my favorite part [of coding] is learning about the electrical part. You have to simplify instructions down to code because it's not like humans; they [computers] cannot understand unless you give the instructions step-by-step."

In addition to hands-on coding lessons, students will also interact with guest speakers to discuss real-world applications of coding this week. Paul Moschler, a Carlisle parent and employee of Duke Energy, visited 5th-grade classes on Tuesday to explain how binary code is used in the production of clean energy. Paul Moschler, who works at one of Duke's Natural Gas Turbine plants, showed students a series of digital control panels he looks at each day on his laptop to monitor the plant. The panels show him and other employees which pumps are running, allow them to ensure that water levels are correct, and show that valves to fill and empty the tanks are opening and closing at the appropriate times.

Paul Moschler explained the process of automation and how he uses logical coding or a series of "if-then state-

ments" paired with data from the control panels to help the plant run smoothly. Students viewed a map of "Logic gates" or "and/or gates" he created using binary code to control whether a pump is on or off, or if a valve is open or closed, among other actions. Through the codes he writes, plant employees are instantly alerted to problematic conditions such as a failed valve or water levels in tanks being too high or low. He explained that employees can take manual control of the processes whenever a change is needed but that the creation of the algorithms to automate the plant ensures consistency and safety.

Fifth-grade student Anderson Haymore said, "I liked how he (Moschler) showed us examples of his job and the system and how it works." Classmate Layton Thomas added, "I thought his control panel was very cool, especially how someone was able to code 'this' and 'that' in order to control the entire power plant." Thomas also aspires to attain a career in coding. He said, "ever since I started playing video games and watching videos on YouTube about game creation, I've often been fascinated by how they are made, so when coding came to our school, I was really excited to participate."

In addition to learning

about coding in STEAM Lab, students in the middle school at Carlisle enjoy playing games on an arcade machine during their breaks between classes. The vintage games of Space Invaders, Pac-Man, and Centipede featured in the multi-game machine were all created with basic coding by students from our region. Head of School Gracie Agnew commented, "students gravitate to the arcade machine each day, it fascinates them and brings awareness to coding." Jake Coles, an eighth-grade student who enjoys coding computer programs, said that coding is fun because "you get to control what is going on and there are not any limits to what you can code; you get to make it your own."

Carlisle freshman Webb Garrett has not decided on his career path yet but is interested in the option of working in Information Technology. He said, "recently Carlisle has been introducing more and more coding programs. In the seventh and eighth grade, we had the opportunity to do coding whenever we want and now there's also an exploratory in high school."

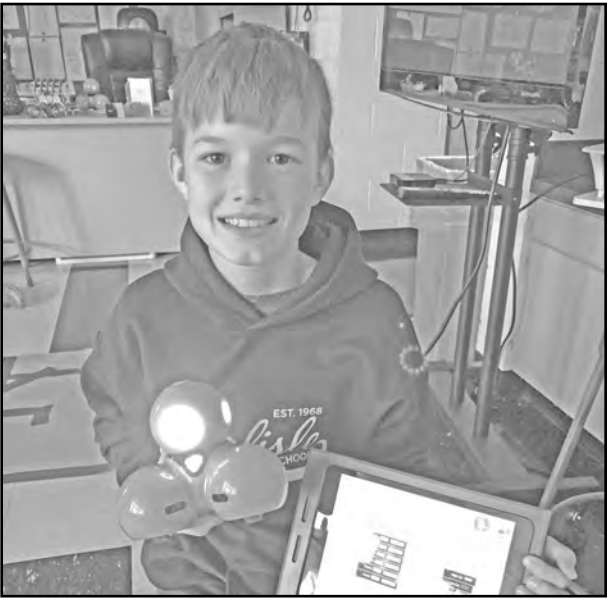
Students in the Upper School recently completed an introductory Python 3 course under the direction of Christy Richardson and will begin learning C++ next semester. They are also working with Arduino, an open-source electronic prototyping platform that enables users to create interactive electronic objects. One of the students who completed the course is Jon Burkhardt, a senior at Carlisle. He said, "I plan to continue to study Computer Sciences in college in order to pursue a career in video game Development and Visual Design."

Chloe Taylor, a freshman, is a member of NSBE, the National Association of Black Engineers, and she enjoys coding in her spare time. Taylor uses a building system at home called LittleBits to create code, and she is looking forward to taking the coding classes at Carlisle to learn more.

Recently named among the top 5,000 STEM High Schools in the nation by Newsweek, Carlisle School is dedicated to ensuring that students are prepared with the foundational skills for 21st-century success. STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics, and all students in Pre-K through 12th Grade have the opportunity to participate in STEAM classes. Carlisle School is currently enrolling students for the spring semester, and additional information on applying can be found online at CarlisleSchool.org or by calling Sandy Bailey at 276-632-7288 ext. 242.



Paul Moschler of Duke Energy shows students a control panel for the plant and explains how he uses coding each day to help Duke produce clean energy.



Hunter Doss shows coding that he wrote on an iPad to direct a Dash robot through an obstacle course.



Gabriel Gonzalez plays a video game created with code in the middle school lobby while Will Kirby watches.



Ayden Butler provides simple coded instructions to a Code-a-pillar robot to direct it around obstacles.



Cole Abercrombie, Andrew Crews, Walker Davis, and Jake Coles (l-r) practice coding on iPads in the middle school STEAM Lab.



Jon Burkhardt, Khaiya Howard-Hamilton, and Andrew Truong show certificates they earned after completing a course on Python 3. Not pictured is McKenzie Hauser and Mitchell Smith.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS														
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Agenda

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south transportation link and when you look at what has been in Carolina where they are basically updating 220 to interstate standards up until the state line," explained City Manager Leon Towarnicki. "If that can be continued through the Martinsville-Henry County area and up north, then that's going to have a significant impact in terms of economic development just due to the development that normally occurs along an interstate route. Extending it from north to south is critical to this area in terms of transportation and ability to move product and goods."

Another of the items on the legislative agenda is a section that allows for local authority to make decisions on where to make cuts regarding education. The city also looks to support the New College Institute by minimizing funding reductions to the college and propping up all partnership initiatives with other institutions of higher learning.

"You have people that may have initially gone and gotten a two-year degree and have settled down and found jobs, started families and careers," Towarnicki said. "They don't want to leave the area but yet, moving from a two-year to a four-year degree could be critical in their advancement within whatever company they may work with. For us to continue to promote and support New College is critical because it lifts up the whole educational element of our community."

The city also looks to increase current levels of financial support for Patrick Henry Community College and to request that the state provide incentives for consolidation of school systems. The latter may affect talks of reversion which would include consolidating county and city school systems.

Under economic development, Council hopes to enhance the authority granted to localities to address and eliminate blighted properties. The move also seeks to form interstate compacts which allows for expedited re-

course against out-of-state property owners. Virginia Museum of Natural History is also slated to receive an increase in funding.

Martinsville seeks to increase state and federal financial assistance for localities that have exceeded the average state unemployment rate by 150 percent over a period of five consecutive years. In a related move, the city looks to expand grants and resources that encourage the development of small entrepreneurial businesses and expand the amount of grocery stores where none currently exist.

"Statistically, I think if you look locally, small business is where jobs are created and it's where a tax base is created," Towarnicki expressed. "We have a lot of businesses in our community that are small, in terms of 2, 3, 4, or 5 employees. When you start factoring in 10, 20, 30 or 40 businesses and each one of them is employing that amount of employees, that's significant. That's substantial. It also creates a tremendous web of diversity in terms of the types of shops and specialty shops that better enable a community to ride through downturns in the economy."

Council seeks to oppose efforts by Henry County PSA to reopen the Lower Smith River Wastewater Treatment Plant without a regional study concluding that the move is in the best interest of the city and county residents. This legislative priority has also been a point of contention between the city and surrounding county in reversion talks.

The city also seeks to pass a few other items which could relate to recent reversion talks such as the adoption of recommendations by the Virginia Commission on Local Government in its 2018 Annexation Moratorium study. Council seeks to amend Code of Virginia 51.1-155.2 in order to allow constitutional offices, that are abolished in the process of reversion, to take early retirement free of penalty through the Virginia Retirement System. Another item on the list is the prop-

osition to preserve local authority intact to regulate zoning, land use and regulation of the installation of wireless communication equipment. They also seek to require the state to fund 100 percent of the per-diem costs related to housing state inmates in local jails, a reason brought up by the city during their Nov. 19 council meeting.

"If the city reverts and the constitutional functions combine, there could be situations where the city combines with the county and due to economies of scale, all those positions might not be eliminated," Towarnicki explained. "If the city does go through with reversion and the constitutional offices combine and then due to economies of scale, it may be necessary to eliminate positions. What we are trying to do with that is just have something to protect the employees that have been in those offices for 10 or 20 years but aren't quite at retirement yet are afforded some type of protection."

City Council requested many items from the United States Congress as well. Some items were repeats of requests made to the General Assembly such as funding for upgrades to roadways and economic development in blighted areas. The city did add in a proposal to oppose any effort to impose additional taxation or regulation of electrical power generated by coal or natural gas.

Finally, the city is requesting Congress fund certain items that would help the citizens directly. Chiefly among them is a request to provide special federal incentives to fund education and workforce retraining programs. This would apply to regions that have experienced losses in excess of five percent of the total workforce and decline in median incomes since the adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement, World Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Extending of high speed broadband service throughout southern Virginia is also included in these items.

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Patrick County EDA donates \$10,000 to support PHCC expansion

At its December meeting, the Patrick County Education Foundation (PCEF) accepted a \$10,000 check from the Patrick County Economic Development Authority (EDA). The funds will supplement the foundation's financial support of Patrick Henry Community College's recent expansion in Patrick County.

Early in 2018, foundation pledged \$150,000 to help PHCC open a new facility near downtown Stuart. In August 2019, the college opened the new 5,000 square foot, \$170,000 facility in the former Food Lion building to provide the specialized training required for many of the county's most in-demand careers – electrical and mechanical engineers and technicians for example. The facility is equipped with more than \$300,000 of specialized equipment for the students to learn the skills required for these highly technical careers.

“The EDA's investment demonstrates its commitment to the economic viability of Patrick County.

PHCC is looking forward to continuing to offer high quality academic and workforce programs that lead to middle class sustaining wages for the people of Patrick,” Dr. Greg Hodges, Director of the Patrick County Education Foundation and PHCC's Vice President of Academic & Student Success Services, said.

The new facility was made possible by a four-way partnership between PHCC, the Town of Stuart, the PHCC Foundation, and the Patrick County Education Foundation. Much of the funding for the facility came from state grants and local support. With the \$10,000 from the Patrick County's Economic Development Authority, both PCEF and PHCC will be able to investigate more educational and career pathways for the citizens of Patrick County. Dr. Stewart

Patrick County Education Foundation has a history of helping the residents of Patrick County. During the early years of the 21st century, the PCEF dedicated its time,



(From left) Dr. Greg Hodges, Director of the Patrick County Education Foundation and PHCC's Vice President of Academic & Student Success Services; Dale Puckett, chairman of the Patrick County Economic Development Authority Board; Dr. Stewart Roberson, chairman of the Patrick County Education Foundation Board; Dr. Angeline Godwin, President of Patrick Henry Community College; Bryce Simmons, director of the Patrick County Economic Development Authority.

energy, and resources to raising the local high school and GED attainments rates. A 10-year goal of bringing Patrick County from the bottom to the top of the 50 rural counties in Virginia was accomplished in five years. The county's high

school graduation rate continues to rank higher than the state average.

In recent years, the PCEF dedicated itself to raising the post-high school credentials rates which remain quite low when compared to surrounding regions.

As former Gov. Gerald Baliles noted at his last public appearance (the grand opening of the Stuart building), “It is clear that some form of post-secondary education credentials will be required for those who want to qualify for jobs

now and in the future. We hope that the citizens of the town and county will fill the classrooms, for the Patrick County Education Foundation believes that as education goes here, so goes the future of this place many call home.”

Art at Happy Hour Offers Last Chance to View Exhibits



Hands, Head, Heart

Enjoy a free self-guided tour of Piedmont Arts' current exhibits during Art at Happy Hour on Thursday, Dec. 19, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the museum.

“Art at Happy Hour is a fun way to experience Piedmont Arts exhibits,” said Director of Exhibitions and Marketing Bernadette Moore. “The event is low-key and casual, encouraging guests to view the artwork up close, ask questions and learn

more about the exhibits.”

Hands, Head, Heart features bold and powerful quilts by Jill Jensen. Living in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Jensen uses the region's beautiful vistas, striking sunsets and ever changing flora and fauna as inspiration for her work. Jensen also uses drawings or photographs taken on her travels as the basis for many of her pieces. The written word, mythology,

works of literature and prayers have all found their way into her quilts.

The Wild and Colorful World of Barbara Kobylinska approaches art with both a studied sense of design and an unapologetic intuition. Kobylinska's large sculptures are adventurous and inventive. With humor and a sophisticated, playful intelligence, she invites the viewer to share her delight in the unex-

pected.

Working Men, featuring photographs by Barry Koplen, captures workers on-site at jobs around the city of Danville, Virginia. Koplen's full-color photographs are printed on metal, creating a vivid display of color and depth.

Art at Happy Hour is free and open to the public. Complimentary refreshments provided by the Piedmont Arts Guild.



The Wild and Colorful World of Barbara Kobylinska

Guests may RSVP attendance by calling 276.632.3221 or online at PiedmontArts.org.

Exhibits will be on display through January 4, 2020. Exhibit admission is always free.

Piedmont Arts is located at 215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville. Museum hours are Tuesday – Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is free. Learn more at www.PiedmontArts.org.

Resolutions

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according to the National League of Cities.

One case of preemption that may shed light on the legality of sanctuary cities and counties involves the recent dispute of immigration between federal and local governments.

More than 300 jurisdictions across the U.S. are considered immigration sanctuaries. Hundreds of either states, cities or counties declined to tell federal immigration authorities about possible illegal immigrants in their custody and refuse to comply with detainer orders.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), “sanctuary policies and laws restrict when and how local law enforcement can engage with the federal government in immigration enforcement, in order to maintain local law enforcement's ability to work with and in the immigrant community. These cities cannot actually shield anyone from deportation, however, or prevent the federal government from enforcing immigration law within their city limits.”

The SPLC went on to say that “sanctuary” is a political term and not a legal one, and that cities and counties are not required to enforce federal immigration law in any way.

“The only federal law on this issue is 8 U.S.C. § 1373, and all it says is that cities and counties

cannot prohibit communication with the federal government regarding a person's citizenship or immigration status. That's it—there is no requirement that cities or counties actually do anything,” the SPLC website said.

Last year, the executive branch moved to withhold federal money from cities, counties and states that it considers “sanctuaries” for undocumented immigrants.

During the same year, U.S. District Court judge in San Francisco ruled that President Donald Trump exceeded his presidential authority when he signed an executive order Jan. 25 directing his administration to withhold all federal funding from local jurisdictions deemed to be immigration sanctuaries.

The first of the two main legal arguments against the executive branch was that Congress has spending authority under the U.S. Constitution, so it's illegal for the president to try to withhold money from jurisdictions without lawmakers' approval. The second was that the 10th Amendment protected state's rights.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, because of civil lawsuits claiming unreasonable search and seizure, courts have ruled that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainers vio-

late the Fourth and Fifth Amendments. The Fourth Amendment is violated because ICE fails to demonstrate probable cause before issuing detainer forms. Fourth and Fifth Amendments are also violated because ICE fails to provide a notice of the detainer before it is issued.

While the courts have ruled in the favor of state and local governments for immigration, the question of 2nd Amendment Sanctuaries may be different. This issue involves cities and counties versus the state instead of local governments against the federal government.

The National Law Review states that because the Constitution specifies areas that the federal government has jurisdiction over, the states are powerless to act in those areas. Conversely, because those areas are specified and defined, the federal government cannot go outside those boundaries. Immigration law falls within those boundaries in which the federal government may exercise power, but that power does not include the commandeering of state entities without the approval of those states.

In the 1842 U.S. Supreme Court ruling of Prigg v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, majority opinion by Associate Justice Joseph Story held that without state approval, no

state agency can be made to act on behalf of federal officers, which includes law enforcement agencies.

This notion upheld the concept of federalism but since 2nd Amendment Sanctuaries are primarily aimed at state laws, the same concept may not apply.

Martinsville City Attorney and Assistant City Manager Eric Monday says that the resolution may be solved in the courts.

“Put simply, local governments are to follow state laws,” he said. “Unless there is a specific court hearing stating why a particular state law should or cannot be followed, it is the responsibility of localities to follow the laws outlined by the states.”

Other experts say that the question over the dynamic between state and local governments has already been solved.

“It's not a new thing that Virginia's doing. It's kind of just fitting into the trend,” said Dr. Ben Melusky, an assistant professor of political science with Old Dominion University. “Ultimately the state has control of the localities and can step in pretty heavy handed if the locality refuses to implement the law.”

Melusky also stated that Democrats may run into a case of hypocrisy over sanctuary policies.

“You had (Gov. Ralph

Northam, who vetoed a bill banning sanctuary cities,” he said. Melusky also went on to note that Democrats have overlooked many commonwealth's attorneys who have dropped small marijuana possession charges.

“You have the same people saying for the longest time that ‘we are effectively going to do this’ as it relates to other policy areas, now telling the other side ‘you can't do these things’ related to the Second Amendment,” Melusky said. “It's kind of awkward.”

Delegate Jay Jones (D-Norfolk) on Dec. 2, sent a letter to Attorney General Mark Hearing asking for an opinion on the “Second Amendment Sanctuaries.”

“The legal precedent we would set by allowing communities to selectively ignore those laws at will is alarming and indicative of the same mindset that nearly one hundred and fifty years ago led this county to dissolve into a civil war,” Jones wrote.

While Herring has not given an official ruling yet, he did release a statement hinting that localities will comply with laws passed down by the state government.

“The resolutions that are being passed are being ginned up by the gun lobby to try to scare people. What we're talking about here are laws that

will make our communities and our streets safer. We're talking about universal background checks, finally, maybe, Virginia will pass universal background checks to make sure that people who are dangerous, who are criminals and who aren't permitted to buy guns, won't be able to buy guns,” said Herring. “So, when Virginia passes these gun safety laws that they will be followed, they will be enforced.”

Supporters of the resolutions agree that the movement is more symbolic than legally binding. “This is the localities making a show of force to the legislators in Richmond that the gun laws they are proposing are not what we want,” said Ashley Chriscoe, Chair of the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors.

During a Dec. 5 conversation with 10 On Your Side, Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) urged patience by local residents before voicing opposition.

“I think you will see rational, legitimate gun safety legislation taken up as appropriate in the Virginia General Assembly,” Warner said. “My hope would be that some of these communities would watch and see, you know, what the General Assembly actually passes and what Gov. Northam might sign before they assume the worst.”

Hundreds gathered for Bassett Christmas Parade



Submit your community
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PHOTOS BY BRANDON MARTIN

The weather was perfect for Bassett's Christmas Parade on Saturday, as floats, dancers, vintage vehicles, and of course, Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus strutted down Main Street. "I don't think it gets any better than coming out this time of year. You get to see some of your old friends and just enjoy the Christmas cheer," said Billy Isdale, of Henry County. "As far as parades go, I think Bassett has one of the best around." Enjoy some of the parade highlights.

