

# HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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## Health district prepares to move into next vaccine phase

**Brandon Martin**  
Staff writer

The West Piedmont Health District (WPHD) hopes to greenlight phase 1b of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution “very soon,” according to local health officials.

“We have requested permission to go to 1b. That should happen any day,” said Nancy Bell, public information officer for the district.

Bell and Dale Alward, chief executive officer of Sovah Health-Martinsville, said at a Jan. 12 Martinsville City Council meeting that state health officials now are considering the request.

“In Virginia, we need to vaccinate four million people before we ever get to the general population,” Bell said. “Still, we think that by late spring, we will be there. We have to wait from the Department of Health in Richmond, the mothership, on when to go from one tier to another.”

Rollout of the vaccine was divided into three stages -- 1a, 1b and 1c. Once those stages are completed, it will be available to the public.

Currently, the district is under

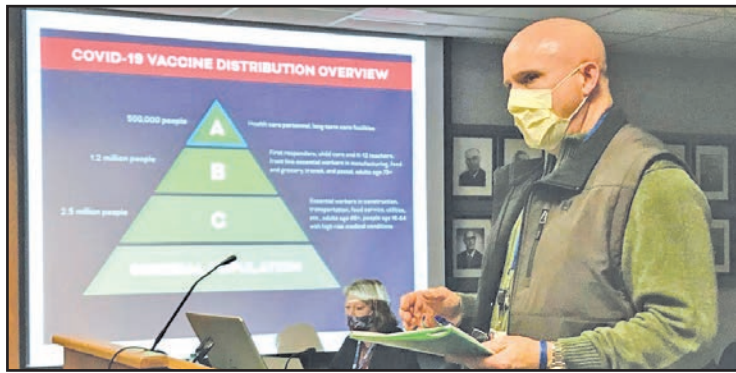


PHOTO BY BRANDON MARTIN

**Dale Alward, chief executive officer of Sovah Health-Martinsville, discusses the hospital's role in distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Jan. 12 meeting of Martinsville City Council.**

1a criteria, which only provides for vaccination of healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities.

Phase 1b will widen the net to include frontline essential workers, people 75-years-old or older, and people living in correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and migrant labor camps.

“We’ve progressed to a point now where we are working with the Department of Health to help vaccinate anybody that is within the 1a category,” Alward said. “Initially, the Department of Health was managing the other

folks that were outside of the hospital. As we progress into 1b and 1c, which we think will be coming here in the very near future, we’re going to work with the Department of Health to set up clinics and vaccinate as we can.”

Bell referred to the partnership with the hospital as a “community program,” calling on the community to do their part of keeping up to date with relevant information.

She said the department would use social media, the WPHD website, and a hotline to provide

See **Vaccine**, page 6

## County schools postpone return to hybrid instruction

**Brandon Martin**  
Staff writer

The Henry County school division halted plans to return to hybrid instruction on Jan. 19 due to ongoing staffing concerns related to positive coronavirus cases in the area.

During the division’s most recent school board meeting, Schools Superintendent Sandy Strayer said a survey would be administered to staff members to gauge the ability to safely return.

“I hope that we can keep our schools open the entire time; however, I do realize that we may have to close some classrooms in our schools,” she said at the Jan 7 meeting. “We will follow the same communication plan” to notify parents “of any closures we have to make.”

In the social media post, the division said it would not return to hybrid instruction “until COVID cases in our community and among our students and staff have improved significantly.”

There are 23 new cases listed under the division’s COVID-19

dashboard, from Dec. 18, 2020 until Jan. 8, 2021. According to the data, the highest number of cases during the period occurred at Meadow View Elementary School, with six cases. George Washington Carver Elementary showed four new cases.

The initial recommendation to return to full virtual instruction came after a month of intermittent school shutdowns combined with shortfalls in personnel.

“When we opened in-person learning, we knew we were going to have to shut some classrooms in schools when we had positive cases of COVID-19 and we know that every time there is a positive case, many people are taken out because of contact tracing and they are put on quarantine,” Strayer said in November.

She added that the constant shutdowns have been the division’s biggest impediment to providing in-person instruction.

“The widespread community transmission of the virus is causing

See **Schools**, page 2

## CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION

### Groundwork laid to address instructional gaps in county

**Brandon Martin**  
Staff writer

Approximately a third of Henry County Public Schools students are failing at least one course, Lisa Millner, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning, said at a meeting Thursday, Jan. 7.

“We have had some students that have done very well virtually. Unfortunately, during the first semester, some of our students have fallen behind in their coursework,” Millner said. “Some students are to the point that they are



PHOTO BY BRANDON MARTIN

**Lisa Millner, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning for Henry County Public Schools, updates the school board on plans to address instructional gaps for students.**

failing various courses.”

School officials plan to make up ground during the first week of the spring semester.

Based on a Jan. 4 report by the division, approximately 2,400 students of the 6,821 total were failing at least one course. Additionally, 1,759 students were failing two or more courses. In contrast, only 933 students were failing at this point in 2019.

Millner said of the students failing a course, about 1,394 primarily received instruction through the hybrid option, which includes in class and virtual learning options. The remaining 1,038 participated in completely virtual instruction.

The courses most failed were in core curriculum courses such as math, English, science, and social studies, according to officials.

“We have already met with principals and school counselors about student achievement data and various other instructional topics,” Millner said. “We discussed the spring semester we discussed the summer and we have also discussed the steps we are going to take for next year.”

When students return, Millner said the division would work in small groups for those who need additional assistance.

“Those small groups will be intentional,” she said. “They will be data driven and

See **Groundwork**, page 7

### City schools prepare budget as unfunded mandates pile up

**Brandon Martin**  
Staff writer

As Martinsville City Public Schools notches academic successes, Schools Superintendent Dr. Zebedee Talley Jr. is calling for more state assistance on unfunded mandates that forced the division to make staffing concessions in this year’s budget.

“We are going to get mandates. We already know they are coming from the VDOE (Virginia Department of Education) on special education,” Talley said. “I’m not saying that they might not put the money in. I’m hoping we get a percentage of it, if not all of the salary for counselors.”

In deliberations over the budget, Talley said the division couldn’t fill teaching vacancies due to financial considerations of items potentially required by the state.

“We had to go back, look and say, ‘what is it that we really need,’” Talley said. “We know that we have some mandated things but what



PHOTO BY BRANDON MARTIN

**Dr. Tamra Vaughan gives a presentation on a VTTSPBIS grant the school division received. Behind her is an example, “Data-Informed Decision-Making Tool” to help guide behavioral expectations of students.**

are some of the things that we can really adjust? We want to adjust the raise. We want to request that step increase to make sure that teachers get money into their pockets. We cut it down to two special education teachers and then one regular teacher. Counselors, they are going to be, we think, mandated. The nurse is going to be mandated.”

Cost vs Cash

The division’s proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2022 amounts to \$22,980,447 which is an increase of about \$1.1 million from the previous year. The estimated expenditures are balanced, with projected revenues of \$15.7 million anticipated from state entitlements, \$6.5 million in local funds, and approximately \$600,000 in other funds.

See **Budget**, page 8

## Authority selects officers, renews financing

The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) of Henry County voted on Jan. 12 to retain Len Dillon as chairman and Barry Helmstutler as vice chairman for 2021.

The two received unanimous votes from the present board members. In addition to Dillon and Helmstutler, other members attending the meeting were Steve Isley, Wesley Caviness and Barry Nelson. Marshall Stone joined via teleconference. Rodney Thacker did not attend.

The authority also voted to renew financing on the Patriot Centre Shell Building.

Henry County currently provides loan financing to the IDA for the building. The

agreement requires annual approval by both the Board of Supervisors and the IDA. The Board of Supervisors had previously approved the item at its Jan. 4 organizational meeting.

“This is a renewal of a promissory note that we’ve had over the last several years,” said Darrell Jones, director of finance. “It’s for the same amount. The county has loaned the IDA \$3.4 million as part of the Shell building financing. This is just a one-year renewal of that note.”

Deputy County Administrator Dale Wagoner said this marks the seventh year of financing on the building.

County Administrator Tim Hall said he is hopeful this will

be the final year of financing but, he added, there are no guarantees of selling the building as yet.

“This could happen again next year,” Dillon asked of continued payments.

Hall responded it could.

According to Jones, the financing must accrue interest because “it’s a legal promissory note” and is one of the county’s revenue sharing projects with the City of Martinsville.

“When we settle up with the revenue sharing part, does the (IDA) recoup any of that interest as an expense born by the city,” Dillon asked.

Jones explained the city “is responsible for one third of the interest.”

## First baby of new year welcomed

The Wiseman family and Sovah Health rang in 2021 with the year’s first bundle of joy. Weighing 9 pounds and 1 ounce and measuring 21 inches, Easton Wiseman was born to Mekaylia and Christopher Wiseman, on Thursday, Jan. 7, at 9:36 a.m.

“We are so excited to meet the newest member of our family,” Mekaylia Wiseman said. “We are so grateful to the physicians, nurses and staff at Sovah Health for taking such good care of us and making this experience special for our family.”

Sovah Health’s Women’s Center is located at 320 Hospital Drive in Martinsville, Virginia. To learn more or to schedule an appointment, please call 844-GO-SOVAH, or visit SovahHealth.com.





# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## Wednesday, January 20

GO Region 3 Council will meet virtually at 1 p.m. The council will receive reports from specific committees, staff, and invited guests, including review and amendment of the FY 21 Capacity-Building budget as needed, and may review and act on proposed or submitted project applications. Interested parties should use the following link to access the meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/3390115898?pwd=YURxZDBPK0pkUUhUV3BmUWFuV0c0QT09>. The password is 202011. Phone access is available by dialing 1(929) 205-6099; the meeting ID is 339 011 5898; and the password is 202011. A time for public comments will be included in the meeting; and written public comments may be sent before 8 a.m., on January 20 to [bryan.david@virginia.edu](mailto:bryan.david@virginia.edu).

## Thursday, January 21

Piedmont Arts is hosting Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' VMFA on the Road: An Art Mobile for the 21st Century on Jan. 21-23. The state-the-art mobile museum and education studio's inaugural exhibition will include photography, paintings, printmaking, as well as other mediums. Call (276) 632-3221.

PHCC will hold a training session on microaggressions with Bryan Price, an Outreach and Engagement Specialist at the UVA Cancer Center. The session is free from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. and will be streamed over PHCC Live Online. Pre-registration required through [ph.augusoft.net](http://ph.augusoft.net) or by calling 276-656-0260.

## Schools

from page 1

ing us to lack our staff members," she said, adding that 62 staff members were under quarantine at the time. "The number of school community members in quarantine continues to rise as our COVID-19 cases in the community continue to rise and they have not leveled off as we anticipated. Additionally, we find it increasingly difficult to continue our high-quality instruction with that number of staff members that need to be put on quarantine."

Compared to the new cases between Dec. 18 and Jan. 8, the division also quar-

antined a total of 60 staff members. Since Oct. 12, 2020, the division has had 1,148 quarantines between staff and students. There are 1,191 employees in the division.

In addition to instruction, all winter activities and competitions also are postponed "until hybrid instruction resumes."

According to core indicators by the Virginia Department of Health, 21.5 percent of RT-PCR tests in Henry County were positive over the last 14 days. Schools were listed as posing the highest risk for transmission.

## Monday, January 25

The Martinsville City School Board will hold a public hearing regarding the FY22 School Budget at 6 p.m., at the Municipal Building. A copy of the agenda can be found at <https://go.boarddocs.com/va/martinsville/Board.nsf/Public>.

## Tuesday, January 26

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will hold its regularly scheduled meeting in the Summerlin Meeting Room at the Henry County Administration Building beginning at 3 p.m.

## ONGOING

MHC Coalition for Health and Wellness offers no contact application assistance for Virginia's free or low-cost Medicaid plans (Children's Medicaid/FAMIS,

pregnancy Medicaid and Adult Health Care (birth to 64-years-old). Applications completed by phone (no contact). Call or text Ann Walker (276) 732-0509 to see if you qualify.

Danville Community College: The TRiO EOC (Educational Opportunity Centers) is a federally funded grant program to assist high school seniors and adults attending college. Free assistance ranges from selecting a career path and potential college to applying for financial aid and scholarships. Contact your local TRiO EOC today for your confidential appointment at (276) 694-8778 or [eoc@danville.edu](mailto:eoc@danville.edu).

Southern Area Agency on Aging: SAAA is offering a series of "Fearless Caregiver Guides" from the publisher of "Today's Caregiver Magazine" free to caregivers. Call or email SAAA at (276) 632-6442, 1-800-468-4571 or [info@southernaaa.org](mailto:info@southernaaa.org)

# HOROSCOPES

## For the third week of January

### ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, you will get great satisfaction from various activities this week. Therefore, fill your schedule with plenty of things. Take initiative and invite friends along for an adventure.

### TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Take care of yourself this week, Taurus. Practicing self-care may mean booking a spa treatment or simply catching up on a little rest and recuperation.

### GEMINI - May 22/June 21

A few different scenarios may play out in the days to come. They may be greatly influenced by how you interact with other people, Gemini. You are the catalyst for action.

### CANCER - June 22/July 22

Cancer be careful with the way you behave and present yourself this week. You just don't know who may be watching what you do. Keep a low profile.

### LEO - July 23/Aug 23

Receiving mixed messages, Leo? Enlist a trusted advisor to help you sort through the hazy level of communication that is coming your way. Another perspective is handy.

### VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, this week the stars may be playing tricks on you. You may stumble though a few things, but it won't take long to get

back on the right path.

### LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, as soon as things get serious this week, you may be ready to make a fast exit. It's better if you stick around and lend your opinion to the situation at hand.

### SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

A lot of unknown factors have been slowing you down over the last few weeks, Scorpio. Now that you are no longer impeded, you can put a plan in motion.

### SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

You may get caught up in some conflicts that you're either not ready for or have no interest to deal with, Sagittarius. Take it all in quietly for now.

### CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Don't try to rationalize the feelings that are moving through you this week, Capricorn. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Acknowledge the emotions as they come.

### AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, do not hide your feelings in a particularly moving situation. Others will empathize with you and appreciate your emotional honesty.

### PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

This week you may want to get away from it all to have a different perspective on your life, Pisces. You may travel even further than first imagined.

# FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

January 17  
Jim Carrey, Actor (59)

January 18  
Dave Bautista, Actor/Wrestler (52)

January 19  
Dolly Parton, Singer (75)

January 20

Rainn Wilson, Actor (55)

January 21  
Geena Davis, Actress (65)

January 22  
Steve Perry, Singer (72)

January 23  
Doutzen Kroes, Model (36)

# SUDOKU

		8			1			
						3	5	
	9		3	7				
				5				7
6			4		8			
1						5	8	
		9				2		3
2				8				
	7	3						9

### Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Advanced

### Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

9	8	1	4	2	6	3	5	7
5	7	9	3	8	6	1	4	2
8	6	9	7	1	5	2	4	3
6	8	5	7	9	4	2	1	3
2	1	6	9	8	3	4	7	5
7	4	3	7	5	6	2	1	8
4	9	5	3	7	2	1	6	8
7	1	6	8	4	9	3	5	2
3	2	8	5	6	1	7	9	4

ANSWER:

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12	
13								14						15
16			17					18					19	
20		21				22				23		24		
25					26				27		28			
29				30				31		32		33		
	34	35							36		37			
38	39									40				
41					42				43					
44				45		46			47			48	49	50
51			52		53			54			55			
56				57		58				59				
60			61		62				63				64	
65		66							67				68	
	69													

- CLUES ACROSS  
1. Recurring TV show  
7. Throws out  
13. Iberian Peninsula  
microstate  
14. Gossip  
16. Atomic #20  
17. Ivy League institution  
19. Of I  
20. "He Is \_\_\_!": Scripture excerpt  
22. Musical genre  
23. Heavy cavalry sword  
25. Ancient Olympic Site  
26. Satisfies  
28. Popular flower  
29. Shared services center  
30. Drain  
31. A way to attack  
33. Urban Transit Authority  
34. Spiritual leader  
36. Postponed  
38. N. American plant with

- edible purple-black berries  
40. Gazes unpleasantly  
41. Gets up  
43. Capital of Ukraine  
44. Returned material authorization (abbr.)  
45. Golf score  
47. Superhigh frequency  
48. Swiss river  
51. Felons  
53. Succulent plants  
55. Soluble ribonucleic acid  
56. Deliberately setting fire to  
58. Infamously singer Zadora  
59. Anwar \_\_\_\_, Egyptian statesman  
60. Influential sports mag  
61. Aromatic Mediterranean plant  
64. Sixth note of a major scale  
65. Unit of explosive power  
67. Large watertight chamber  
69. Popular street  
70. A way of watering

- CLUES DOWN  
1. Mollusks  
2. \_\_\_, denotes past  
3. Anchor ropes  
4. Large Middle Eastern country  
5. To make a mistake  
6. Ancient governor  
7. Extents  
8. Chinese surname  
9. NYC subway "residents"  
10. Essential oil used as perfume  
11. A way to treat injuries (abbr.)  
12. Session  
13. Units of land areas  
15. Goes over once more  
18. Where wrestlers work  
21. Italian islanders  
24. Avenue  
26. \_\_ Adams, U.S. President  
27. Rest with legs bent  
30. Type of flour  
32. The Golden State (abbr.)  
35. More (Spanish)

37. Stinging, winged insect  
38. The use of irony to mock  
39. Arsenals  
42. Pouch  
43. 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet  
46. Violent seizure of property  
47. Restrict  
49. Something comparable to another  
50. Punishment device made from stems  
52. Soul and calypso songs  
54. Formerly OSS  
55. Athabaskan language  
57. \_\_\_ bene: observe carefully  
59. Six (Spanish)  
62. Read-only memory  
63. Chinese philosophical principle  
66. American conglomerate  
68. Tin

# SHOW YOUR

love

Tell the world you care with a special Valentine's Day wish for the one you

Valentine's Greetings start at \$25 and include:  
your name, the name of your loved one, and a date that is meaningful to you -- your anniversary, first date, or first meeting

All wrapped in a classic Valentine's Day design.

All greetings are automatically entered into a drawing for a gift card to one of several local businesses!

Deadline February 8



# Scholarship established in response to community need

Patrick Henry Community College and the PHCC Foundation are creating a scholarship opportunity to meet local employers' training needs. This new workforce scholarship funding will come from the PHCC Foundation and will assist employers with the cost of professional development classes.

Recently, the college created several new professional development classes to directly address the needs of local employers. These training courses were developed in response to several community roundtable

discussions where employers provided the college with specific feedback regarding their training needs. However, the college is finding that, because of the pandemic, many employers are cutting training budgets and cannot afford the training they requested.

"It's a catch 22. They want training to better handle the issues the pandemic has brought to light, but in many cases, the pandemic is also limiting funding for training," said Rhonda Hodges, PHCC Vice President of Workforce Economic and Community

Development.

In response, the PHCC Foundation created a Workforce Scholarship fund that essentially will give employers a "buy one seat, get one seat free" option.

This offer applies to the following courses and is good for this semester only.

- Leadership Series
- Living & Working in a Virtual World
- Leadership Series
- Marketing/Social Media
- Business & Professional Development
- Computers & Technology

Food Service Safety  
Tradesman & Basic Contractor Licensing

Innovation & Design  
"This financial support could really help our local employers who were looking forward to these opportunities, but have had to cut back budgets," Tiffani Underwood, director of the PHCC Foundation, said. "During a pandemic, things like recertifications, marketing, customer service, and technology are more critical than ever – yet are often some of the first things to get cut when budgets are

tight. We're hoping that this scholarship can help alleviate this catch 22 so local employees don't have to sacrifice the training they need while budgets are tight."

The "buy one: get one" assistance will not apply to Fast Forward programs or personal enrichment classes, such as motorcycle rider, Fab Lab Family Days, photography, or paper crafting. To take advantage of this offer, employers may contact the Workforce Development office at email [wecd@patrickhenry.edu](mailto:wecd@patrickhenry.edu), or call (276) 656-0260.

# Preparations underway for mutation as state continues to battle COVID-19

**Taylor Boyd**  
Staff writer

With news of the COVID-19 virus mutating around the world, Virginia is preparing to deal with the mutations.

"While we have not seen it yet in Virginia, it will surely make its way here if not already so," Gov. Ralph Northam said during a recent update.

Nancy Bell, public information officer for the West Piedmont Health District (WPHD), said the health district is currently referring all questions regarding the mutation to the Virginia State Public Health Lab in Richmond.

"There's a team" preparing for the mutations, Bell said, and added the mutations are more contagious than the regular COVID-19 virus, partly because "they spread more easily."

She said mutations can still be diagnosed by the standard COVID-19 tests, but she did not know if the tests show whether the virus has mutated.

Bell added there is no reason or evidence to suggest the vaccine won't work on the mutation COVID-19 virus.

Information from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website stated there is no evidence at this time to suggest "that these variants cause more severe illness or increased risk of death."

"Vaccination is the way to stop this virus. It's our path forward to recovery, and it's the clearest way we're going to get back to something that feels like normal," Northam said, adding that getting the vaccine "is the right thing to protect your own health and also to protect other people."

Northam noted the county is currently three weeks into the most extensive public vaccination campaign in modern history. To fully vaccinate Virginia, 8.5 million people need to receive two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

"When you multiple those numbers, you get 17 million. That's how many shots it will take to vaccinate everyone in our Commonwealth," he said.

Currently, Virginia is receiving about 110,000 vaccines each week. That works out to about 14,000 doses a day. Northam said the state recently added another 12,000 doses to that list and Virginia will move to a clear goal of distributing 25,000 shots a day.

"Hitting it will depend on manufacturing ramping up and supplies being distributed to states over time. We don't have everything we need yet. No state does because it's being manufactured literally in real time," he said, adding the plan is consistent with the short-term goal that President-elect Biden has laid out. However, Northam said the number of doses distributed will have to double to get all Virginians two shots later this year.

He said health departments, healthcare providers, hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies should distribute COVID-19 vaccines with a "you use it, or you lose it" mindset. "I want you to empty those freezers and get shots in arms. When you have vials, give out shots until they're gone. No one wants to see any supplies sitting unused."

"The companies are manufacturing more. They're working around the clock, and you're going to get more, so don't save everything. You're going to get every dose you need because more is coming. But if you're not using

what you receive, you must be getting too much. So, in the next shipment we're going to allocate more doses to other places that need them," Northam said.

He explained the use it or lose it directive does not mean providers should give shots to everyone that shows up to receive one.

"There's a clear prioritization of who should get shots first and who should get them in what order. People most at risk go first," Northam said, adding healthcare workers are first in line people.

"People who care for who are sick are most at risk, and if they get sick then no one is left to care for everyone else. Nurses, EMTs, doctors are in group 1A. The next group of people who are at risk are people who live in our long-term care facilities, places like nursing homes and assisted living," he said.

More than 300,000 people in the United States have died from COVID-19, and more than 40 percent of those deaths are people who lived in nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

"These are our parents, our grandparents, and people we love. People who just need a little extra help. That's why they are at the top of the list," Northam said, adding the two groups account for more than 500,000 people.

He said Tier 1B is comprised of essential workers, "these are the people who work in jobs that keep our society functioning. People who are at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19, and people who cannot work remotely."

Tier 1B workers include firefighters, police officers, hazmat workers, grocery store workers, and people who work in plants processing food, bus drivers, and transit workers, corrections, mail

carriers, and teachers.

Northam said teachers, childcare workers, and anyone who works in K-12 schools make up the largest group of front-line, essential workers, with about 285,000 people.

"They're high on the list of essential workers because teachers are critical to getting schools back open, and that's critical to getting people back to work and getting back to normal," he said, adding vaccinating teachers should make opening schools easier.

Northam said Tier 1B will also include people aged 75 and older.

"Together this is about 2 million people. That's a lot of Virginians. It will take well into the springtime to get all of these folks the two doses that they require," he said.

The next group of essential workers – those who work in food services, transportation, construction, energy, and more, those ages 65 and older, and people ages 16 to 64 with high-risk medical conditions – make up Tier 1C. "That's about another 2.5 million people," Northam said.

Together, the groups make up the state vaccination program's first phase.

"Remember we prioritized it this way. People who are most at risk first, then move quickly to essential workers whose jobs can help everyone get back to work and back to normal again. This is more than half of Virginia," he said.

Northam said vaccine providers should use their judgement during distribution because "there aren't always clear lines between different sub-groups of essential workers and it really gets complex between groups A, B, and C. We need to get as many people vaccinated as

quickly as possible."

Bell said Southwest Virginia could potentially vaccinate all Tier 1 residents "by the end of March, or by early spring."

Northam said the vaccination numbers are going to be available to the public "so that everyone can see what supply is out there, where the doses are being deployed, and how quickly. Virginians deserve this transparency."

Information on what vaccination phase Virginia is in and eligibility can be found by visiting [www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/).

As of Wednesday, Jan. 13 data from the Virginia Department of Health suggested there are 3,176 cases, with 236 hospitalizations, and 64 deaths in Henry County. In Patrick County, 901 cases with 74 hospitalizations, and 28 dead from the COVID-19 virus were reported. In the City of Martinsville, 1,164 cases were reported with 106 hospitalized and 28 dead.

The data also suggests there are 412,545 cases in the state, with 19,470 hospitalized, and 5,552 dead from the COVID-19 virus. Information from the CDC suggested there are 22,740,142 cases in the United States and 379,255 dead from the coronavirus.

Data also suggests that as of Jan. 11 22,985 Virginians have been fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. For more tips on how to stay safe, visit [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) or [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov).

The West Piedmont Health District and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests creating a social bubble increase social needs and reduce the possibility of contacting COVID-19.

# Agriculture groups urge COVID-19 vaccine prioritization for farm and food workers

As COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed to essential healthcare workers

and long-term care facility residents, agriculture groups are requesting that frontline

food and farm workers be prioritized next.

The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices agrees. On Dec. 20, it recommended approximately 49 million frontline workers be prioritized in the next phase of vaccinations, including food and agricultural laborers and grocery store employees.

Vaccine distribution is orchestrated on the state level. Gov. Ralph Northam announced Jan. 6 that the Virginia Department of Health is expected to begin vaccinating Phase 1b frontline workers, including food and farm workers, by the end of January.

"We commend the CDC for recognizing America's

food and agricultural workers as essential workers who are critical to preserving a functioning society," said Ben Rowe, national affairs coordinator for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. "We encourage VDH to put these workers at the top of the prioritization queue under Phase 1b, and work to ensure they are given ample, fair and easy access to vaccinations."


"Rural Virginians have long struggled with access to health care and health equity. Now is a crucial moment for the commonwealth to ensure the vaccine is distributed to all areas of the state, so when you get the vaccine depends

on whether you are identified as high-risk, rather than where you live and work."

A letter to President-elect Biden's transition team signed by American Farm Bureau Federation and other organizations in an agriculture coalition group, requested vaccine prioritization. The letter was submitted by the Ag CEO Council of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, a nonpartisan, non-profit association representing elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of agricultural organizations in all 50 states.

"We fully appreciate and support that our nation's heroic first responders, medical professionals, elderly and caretakers, along with other vulnerable individuals, clearly have the highest priority for vaccination," the letter said. "However, as you move beyond these highest priority groups, the undersigned organizations ask that frontline food and agriculture employees be included in the next-highest priority for the vaccine within any federal COVID-19 Vaccination Plans."

The letter said the agricultural labor force continues to fluctuate as employees face restrictions, risk exposure and are affected by quarantines. With unfilled positions, limited existing employees and processing facility closures, "this situation could very easily create disruptions and shortages in the food supply chain."



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## OPINION

## On the defilement of the Capitol

My grandfather, James A. Mize, joined the Army when he was just 16 years old. He fought the Nazis on the European front, ultimately losing his right leg to a mortar shell during the Battle of the Bulge.

My grandfather loved America and he hated the Nazis.

As a child, I remember that he always had an American flag flying off the side of the house. He had a license plate with his Purple Heart on it. He watched every World War II movie and TV show ever made and graded them on their accuracy ("Band of Brothers" was the most accurate, he said). He supported the troops. He supported America. And boy oh boy, did he ever hate the Nazis.

My grandfather died in 2008. I'm glad he didn't live to see 2021. It would have broken him.

1/6/21 is a day that will live in infamy as surely as 12/7/41 or 9/11/01. Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were terrorist attacks from without; the attack on our nation's Capitol was a terrorist attack from within.

I will confess, as I grew older, the patriotism my grandpa instilled in me had begun to wick away. At age 36, I've experienced two "once-in-a-lifetime" economic disasters just since I joined the workforce. I watched our nation enter a quixotic and endless war in Iraq founded on a lie. I opened my eyes to the hard truth that our nation is beholden to the corporate donors that line the pockets of our politicians. I've watched, time and again, as our politicians put taxpayer dollars in the coffers of billionaires while fighting tooth and nail to prevent regular citizens from getting the baseline help they need to put food on the table or survive a medical

emergency without having to consider bankruptcy.

But on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, I realized that I'm still nurturing a flame of patriotism somewhere inside me. Because watching our home-grown domestic terrorists storm our nation's Capitol, the very seat of our democracy, broke my heart. I was up until 5 a.m. scrolling through news articles and experiencing a cocktail of horrible emotions I hadn't felt since September of 2001.

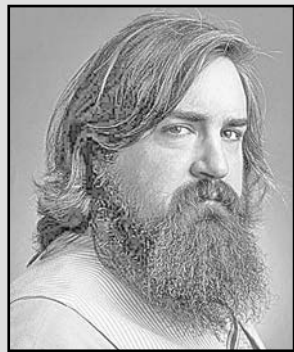
Defiled. That was the word that kept running through my mind. When something is made foul, dirty, or unclean. Polluted, tainted, and debased. Desecrated.

These terrorists defiled our nation that day. And make no mistake, they are terrorists. They certainly aren't protesters; they switched from protesters to terrorists the moment they busted down the doors and windows of the Capitol and slithered inside. They also aren't ANTIFA plants or any other such nonsense.

They certainly were not brave or noble or patriotic. I watched the video of Ashli Babbitt, one of five casualties that day, shot in the neck by Capitol police as she crawled through a window. She died in a pool of her own blood, wrapped in a Trump flag. For all their big talk and tactical gear, not one of her compatriots thought to apply pressure to the wound. Instead, they simply milled about in shock, as though they never expected their little game to have real-world consequences.

I also watched the video of Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick getting dragged into the angry mob. He was beaten to death with a fire

extinguisher. On Saturday, my own Congressman Morgan Griffith, who has spent the last two months



By Ben R. Williams

doing his level best to stoke the fires of conspiracy and paranoia that directly led to this attack, shared that we should honor Sicknick's memory on National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. Griffith's feckless hypocrisy would be laughable if it weren't so stomach-turning.

The closest thing to a positive emotion that I feel toward these insurrectionists is pity, because at heart, they are a pitiable lot. For whatever reasons, they bought all the whackjob conspiracy theories hook, line, and sinker. For this, most of the blame goes toward the Republican politicians (looking at you again, Morgan Griffith) who refused to speak out against those theories until after the blood was already on their hands. These people truly believed that once inside the Capitol, some magical switch would flip, Trump would win the election, and his enemies would be hanged in a kangaroo court while they watched. When that didn't happen, they had nothing left to do but wander around, take some selfies, break into a few offices, and steal whatever wasn't nailed down.

One wonders what would have happened if our elected officials hadn't been hustled into a safe

room. Given the fact that several of the terrorists were spotted carrying weapons and zip tie handcuffs, I doubt the end result would have been a stern lecture.

In the end, of course, these folks did accomplish a few things. They slightly delayed the certification of the Electoral College votes. They caused five people to die. And they permanently damaged our nation's standing in the eyes of the world.

Perhaps that last sentence sounds hyperbolic, but the damage has already been done. How can America ever again condemn insurrection abroad when video exists of a man carrying a Confederate flag through our nation's Capitol (something, by the way, that never once was allowed to happen between 1860 and 1865)? How can we brag of our military might when we failed to prevent a couple thousand untrained domestic terrorists with no concrete plan from hammering their way into the seat of our democracy? How can we ever again boast about American Exceptionalism, that concept that our nation is somehow unique and special, when we displayed to the world an absolute clown show of a coup attempt that made us look like a third-rate banana republic?

The terrorists who stormed the Capitol firmly believed that they were patriots restoring America to glory. In reality, they were traitors who diminished America's standing so profoundly that it may never be fully restored. At the very least, it will take decades if not generations to rebuild.

I can already hear the complaints about this column. "Stick to funny stuff." "Fake news." And of course, "They're patriots, not terrorists or Nazis or traitors."

In rebuttal, I can say that I look forward to the day that I can just stick to funny stuff, but right now, a certain moral obligation keeps getting in the way. For the "fake news" crowd, there's no sense in arguing

against them; they don't live in reality and it's a pointless effort.

But for those who say that these folks aren't terrorists or Nazis or traitors ... I have some bad news.

There's a problem with the way we've always approached the Nazis. We treat them as though they were somehow different, that the people who joined the Nazi party were born with a kernel of evil in their hearts. In reality, the vast majority of Nazis and Nazi supporters were middle-class folks who maybe didn't like what Hitler had to say, but liked his promise to lift Germany out of its post-war economic devastation. Others were people who latched onto his simple answers to complex problems, blaming minorities and immigrants as the reason for their own struggles. Others were simply happy to find a place where they felt, for the first time in their lives, like they truly belonged.

No, they weren't born evil. They were painfully human, and so were the insurrectionists who rose up against our democracy on Jan. 6 for eerily similar reasons.

Over the coming weeks, I have a sinking feeling that we're going to be subjected to calls for unity, admonitions that we should move on and keep our eyes on a brighter future.

But I'll tell you what needs to happen. What needs to happen is that every man and woman who trespassed inside and defiled the Capitol on Jan. 6 should be charged with treason, and every fire-stoking politician who supported Trump's baseless lies that led to that dark day should be charged with sedition.

If these people cannot be considered guilty of these crimes, then who possibly could be?

People must be held accountable for their actions. If we don't show these terrorists and their enablers that an attempted coup has consequences, we'll wish we had when they try it again.

God help us all on Jan. 20.

## Priorities for the New Congress

**Morgan Griffith**  
9th District U.S. Rep.

On January 20, Joe Biden will be sworn in as president of the United States. I will attend his inauguration, which I consider one of my duties as a Member of Congress.

I also consider it my duty to conduct rigorous oversight of any Administration to ensure it upholds the Constitution and carries out the laws we enact.

Earlier this year, I was sworn in for a new term. I am honored to represent you for another term in the U.S.

House of Representatives.

The new Congress presents a chance to renew my work on priorities for the constituents of Virginia's Ninth Congressional District.

Improving access to and lowering costs of health care remain among the topmost items on my agenda. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic obviously poses the most significant challenge in the health care space. Monitoring the rollout of new vaccines and therapeutics are a task for this phase of the pandemic, but this same

task also points forward to a health care agenda beyond the pandemic.

The development of multiple safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in Operation Warp Speed was a landmark accomplishment. It came about through a partnership between the Federal Government, private sector, and scientific institutions. Likewise, policies of the Federal Government must be geared toward promoting the development of new cures and treatments for other diseases and medical conditions through cooperation of these various sectors.

At the same time, the high cost of prescription drugs has long been a problem borne by Ninth District residents and a top concern. I have worked throughout my time in the House of Representatives on commonsense measures with bipartisan backing to address this problem.

In the last Congress,

the bill passed by House Democrats pursued a different path, purporting to make drug prices affordable but only by a socialistic-style price control scheme that would have stifled innovation and new cures. That bill went nowhere. In this Congress, we have the chance to return to the bipartisan path that addresses costs without sacrificing development of new drugs and treatments.

Before the pandemic, I championed telehealth as a way to provide access to health care to more people, especially in rural and isolated areas such as those found in the Ninth District. The pandemic has increased the use of telehealth and shown just how valuable it can be. I will continue to advocate policies that encourage the use of telehealth to care for patients.

For telehealth to work at its best, communities need reliable internet access. Such access also enables economic

growth, educational opportunities, and higher quality of life for residents.

I have supported legislative and regulatory measures that encourage the building out of broadband networks and promote other creative solutions, such as use of TV white spaces and satellite technology, to bring better service to more people. The work of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) under outgoing Chairman Ajit Pai has been very beneficial in this effort. I will encourage the FCC to continue its efforts to close the digital divide as well as work on legislation in the halls of Congress.

Job creation and economic growth are essential so constituents of the Ninth District can support themselves and their families, communities can attract new residents, and local jurisdictions can fund their services. In Congress, support for this effort means calling for the right tax and regulatory policies that lead to investment, hiring, and wage growth.

I have introduced legisla-

tion on a regulatory change that I believe would support efficiency and productivity in manufacturing. The current New Source Review (NSR) program, meant to prevent pollution emissions from industrial facilities, actually discourages these facilities from making upgrades that would ultimately lead to lower emissions. My bill would reform these counterproductive rules so manufacturers and others can make pollution-reducing upgrades to their facilities without running afoul of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The new Congress and Administration may look different, but my objective in the House of Representatives remains the same: to be a voice for the liberties, priorities, and needs of the people of Virginia's Ninth Congressional District.

For questions, concerns, or comments, contact my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405, Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671, or via email at www.morgangriffith.house.gov.

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If you have news about or an upcoming event for your organization, company or church, email dhall@theenterprise.net and/or call (276) 694-3101

## Sense of community found in Martinsville

Today (January 11) closes the door (literally) on our time in Martinsville VA, sometime this afternoon the deed will be filed and our legal ties will be ended. I loved small town living. We had within an easy jaunt, Walmart and Lowes, (what else do you need) virtually no traffic to deal with, the natural beauty of nature, flora and fauna, ever present deer to marvel at and some of the nicest, friendliest people to ever meet. There were the guys at Market Square Deli's Breakfast Club, The first Owner Samir Chaudhari, and then the new owner, Gary from Upstate NY and his lovely late wife. We talked Sox/Yankees, Patriots/Bills year round and shared a disdain for Hillary Clinton and Democrat policies.

The Breakfast Club was Danny Turner, Mayor then, and now City Councilman, a true public servant, devoted to the salvation of the taxpayer and the honor of the area's veterans. There was Ural Harris, veteran and common man, always willing to write a letter to the editor, call in to the local community TV show and even run for office to keep the bastards honest. There was Ron Wilson, the wise man among the group, both in fiscal policy, income taxes and wise cracks. He's a rock and roller even today playing with his band into his 60's, a Harley rider, and the one guy who insists that Danny tells the truth, the whole

truth (the Hole Truth on the Fairways) and nothing but the truth. There was Big Mike, who mentors troubled youth, and John from the Auto detail shop, an eternal optimist and gentleman of the highest order.

In Martinsville, I met Brian McConnell, GM of the Martinsville Mustangs, who invited me to work in the press box as official scorer for 3 seasons. Baseball 2-3 nights a week, heaven. In the box I met Earl Shelton, announcer and local broadcaster, I marveled at his ability to connect with all kinds of people, and was thrilled to appear on his radio show a couple of times. Martinsville is loaded with people like this, and the town was once thriving with industry that paid living wages with civic minded business leaders who formed committees to improve the welfare of the people and built a community owned hospital.

We purchased our house from the estate of Jack Hankins, a WW2 veteran, lawyer, and Furniture Manufacturing Executive, his portrait hangs in the local airport as one of the founders. These are the people of Martinsville. They're Black and White, and they all pull together for their families, schools, and churches. They conduct business with handshakes and provide charity when it's needed. They are the moms and dads who stay married and pass their values down to

their kids. They organize, coach, and support the schools, and the athletes that represent them. They are the real America. Not the divided docudrama you see on TV and the internet, they're just too busy for that kind of nonsense.

Among all of these fine people, my two neighbors George Doc Scouras and his wife Celia were the best of the best. They started with a genuine friendly welcome to the neighborhood, and always greeted us with a smile outside when we would see them, but when Celia asked out of concern whether Doc's guitar playing bothered us at night or not, I immediately asked if he might be willing to teach me to play. We started by getting together one day per week, and I didn't know anything about guitars, except that they had strings. Slowly we worked on chords until I could play Kansas City. We played Little Sister, Margaritaville, Jambalaya, and Poke Salad Annie. We covered Folsom Prison, Country Road, and Hank Williams Jr. The music we played was pure music, not technically right, but the type of music played with joy and love, real music.

Not owning that house and having to do renovations and driving 500 miles a week anymore has made my life easier, yet in many ways, not better.

Mark Emery,  
Martinsville



# General Fund revenue collections up 15.1 percent from previous year

Virginia's total General Fund revenues rose 15.1 percent in December, driven by solid growth in payroll withholding, corporate income tax, sales and use taxes, and recordation tax collections, according to Gov. Ralph Northam. On a fiscal year-to-date basis, total revenue collections rose 7.8 percent through December, well ahead of the annual forecast of 1.2 percent growth.

"Our diligence in following our long-term financial plan has put Virginia in a stronger position to weather this health crisis and en-

sure a sustainable recovery," said Northam. "As we look ahead to a post-pandemic world, this continued solid revenue performance gives us confidence that we can meet our budget priorities, enhance our cash reserves, and provide relief to Virginians who need it."

With an additional deposit day compared to the previous year, collections of payroll withholding taxes rose 10.6 percent in December. Collections of sales and use taxes, reflecting November sales, rose 5.2 percent in December. November

represents the beginning of the holiday shopping season, which had fewer shopping days after Thanksgiving than the prior year.

"A clearer assessment of the season will be possible after receiving December sales tax payments due in January," said Secretary of Finance Aubrey Layne. "January nonwithholding payments will also give us a better indication of taxpayer behavior for calendar 2020 tax returns."

Collections of wills, suits, deeds, and contracts—mainly recordation tax collections—were \$63.6

million in December, compared with \$40.4 million in December of the prior year.

December is a significant month for corporate income tax collections as quarterly estimated payments are due for most corporations and refunds from extension returns are processed. With the main refunding season completed and the first two estimated payments received, collections of corporate income taxes grew 37.7 percent on a year-to-date basis, compared with the forecast of 19.9 percent growth.

Fiscal year-to-date, payroll withholding collections have grown 2.9 percent, slightly ahead of the annual estimate of 2.7 percent growth. Collections of sales and use taxes have risen 6.7 percent, well ahead of the annual estimate of a 2.6 percent decline. Recordation tax collections are up 38.9 percent, far ahead of the annual forecast of 13.6 percent growth. On a fiscal year-to-date basis, total revenue collections rose 7.8 percent through December, ahead of the annual forecast of 1.2 percent growth.

## OBITUARIES

### Betty Jean Draper

Betty Jean Draper Shires departed her earthly home on January 6, 2021 to reside for eternity with her loving heavenly Father. "Betty Jean" as many called her was born on April 29, 1942 in Roanoke, VA to the late John William Draper and the late Lottie Harris Draper.



She graduated from William Byrd High School and soon afterwards married the love of her life, Benjamin Shires, on December 24, 1960 and they enjoyed 60 wonderful years together.

Betty worked at Lloyd's Jewelers, later Henebry's, in Martinsville, VA for 24 years and loved to make her loyal customers happy with beautiful jewelry. So many remember her sweet smile when they would come into the jewelry store.

Those left to cherish her memory are her loving husband, Benny; her daughter Linda Penta (Brett Ratliff); two grandsons, Samuel

Penta and Joshua Penta; sister-in-law Mary Ann Gwyn (Roy) and her aunt Betty Minter. Betty also leaves behind her faithful companion, Cookie, who was always by her side.

She was a member of First Baptist Church of Martinsville.

A floating visitation was held at McKee-Stone Funeral Home in Martinsville on Wednesday, January 13, 2021. A graveside service was held at Roselawn Burial Park that day, officiated by the Reverend Dr. Libby Grammer, Senior Pastor First Baptist Church of Martinsville.

Memorials may be made to First Baptist Church of Martinsville, 23 Starling Avenue, Martinsville, VA. 24112.

Collins-McKee-Stone Funeral Home in Martinsville is handling the arrangements. To express condolences online please visit [www.collinsmckeeestonemartinsville.com](http://www.collinsmckeeestonemartinsville.com).

### Kitty Sue Hooker

Kitty Sue Hooker, 94, of Plantation Road, Martinsville, died Saturday, January 2, 2021 from COVID-19. She was born March 25, 1926 in Kenbridge, Virginia to Austin Seay Bridgforth Jr. and Katherine Allen Bridgforth. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband John Clyde Hooker Jr.



She graduated from Kenbridge High School and State Teacher's College (now Longwood University). As a new teacher, she moved to Martinsville, Virginia. She met Clyde Hooker and they married in 1950.

She had been an active member of the First United Methodist Church, serving in the Wesley Guild. She enjoyed arranging flowers and helped with the sanctuary flowers for many years.

Her main passion was playing golf with friends. She started each spring striving to be the club champion. She won the Forest Park Championship in 1963, the Chatmoos Country Club Championship in 1961 and 1971. She was the Henry County Women's Golf Champion in 1964. Her golf friendships were a big part of her life.

She loved fashion and considered personal presentation a must. She had regular weekly appointments with her hair stylist and many friendships blossomed over the

years.

Surviving is her daughter Katherine Boaz (Allen) of Montvale, Virginia. She also leaves behind her grandchildren Phil (Karen) Garrett, Katie Garrett and Pres (Olivia) Garrett all of Martinsville, a step grandson Jamison Boaz of California; three great grandchildren Webb, Maxine and Katherine Nell Garrett; and a brother Austin Seay

Bridgforth III of Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The family would like to thank dear friends Elizabeth Millner, Lorrie Teegen, Jim Warren, Carolyn Holland and her niece Jane Thomasson for their love and support. The family could not have done without the true love and comfort that Carol Belcher provided for Kitty Sue. Carol brightened Kitty Sue's final years.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a private graveside service will be held at Oakwood Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers the family requests memorials be made to the First United Methodist Church, 146 East Main St., Martinsville, Virginia 24112 or to a charity of the donor's choice.

McKee-Stone Funeral Home in Martinsville is handling the arrangements. To express condolences online please visit [www.collinsmckeeestonemartinsville.com](http://www.collinsmckeeestonemartinsville.com)

### Wilma A. Hodges

Wilma A. Hodges of Martinsville, VA, passed away on January 6, 2021.

She was born October 16, 1928, a daughter of John Robert Adams and Carrie Gilley Adams. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband James C. Hodges, Jr.; sisters, Edith "Kitty" Adams, Sandra "Sandy" Hunt and her brother, John Wayne Adams.



She retired from DuPont in 1985 and was a member of Villa Heights Baptist Church.

Surviving is her daughter, Judith Parady; granddaughters Regan Curry (Christian) and Stephanie Parady (Mat-

thew); three great grandchildren; Kathryn, McKenna, and Stone Curry. Also, her sisters, Mary ("Trixie") VanHook, Barbara A. Blake and brother, Robert L. Adams.

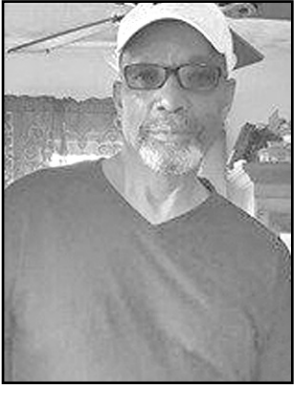
Due to Covid-19 restrictions, a private graveside service will be held at Roselawn Burial Park with the Reverends Keith and Susan Spangenberg officiating.

Memorials may be made to ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

Collins-McKee-Stone Funeral Home in Martinsville is handling the arrangements. To express condolences online please visit [www.collinsmckeeestonemartinsville.com](http://www.collinsmckeeestonemartinsville.com).

### Demetere "Bouchet" Johnson

Demetere "Bouchet" Johnson, 64, of Danville, Virginia passed away Friday, January 8, 2021. He was born December 27, 1956, in Martinsville, Virginia to the late Howard John Johnson, Sr. and Alzene Penn Johnson. He loved to cook, was the comedian of the family and enjoyed spending time with family and friends. He was a hard worker and worked various jobs. Most importantly, "Bou" liked to have fun.



Mr. Johnson is survived by his daughters, April Millner, Sherell Johnson, and Robin Johnson; sisters, Valerie "Chip" Johnson,

and Alzene "Kita" Norman; brothers, Howard Johnson and James Johnson; grandchildren, Kion "Flo-Jo" Johnson, Jahnae, Jahslyn, and Jankiya Valentine; one aunt, Mary Moyer; life-long friend, Trig; one special sister, Cornelia Preston; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and other family and friends.

The funeral was Thursday, January 14, 2021, at Wright Funeral Service Chapel. Burial was private.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at [www.wrightfuneralservices.net](http://www.wrightfuneralservices.net).

### Unemployment claims increased in the final week of 2020

Local unemployment rates rose in the first report of the new year, according to data released by the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) for the filing week ending Jan. 2.

For the week, Henry County's initial unemployment claims rose to 101, which was an increase of 63 from the previous week's 38 claims.

The City of Martinsville experienced a dramatic increase, from 53 new claims compared to only five the week before.

Patrick County also followed that trend, with an increase of 10 claims, for a total of 28 initial claims during the week.

Data from the VEC showed the number of initial claims filed during the January 2 filing week was the highest since early August.

The figure for seasonally unadjusted initial claims in Virginia was 19,530. The latest claims total represented an increase of 7,640 claimants from the previous week, which could in part reflect seasonal spikes in layoffs often seen after the holidays.

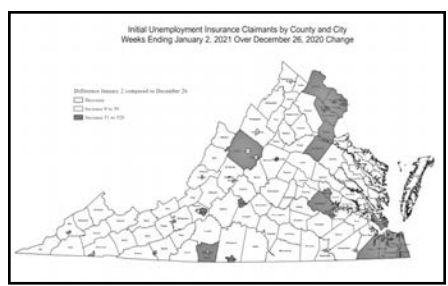
The number of continued claims also rose during the week.

Henry County had 483 continued claims for the week ending Jan. 2, for an increase of 35 claims.

Martinsville and Patrick County also had increases in continued claims, but to smaller degrees. The number of claims in the city increased by nine claims, for a total of 104 in the week.


Patrick County's increase of 14 claims gave the county 94 in total.

Statewide, continued weeks claimed totaled 63,588, which was a 0.2 percent increase from the previous week, but 41,417 higher than the 22,171 continued claims from the comparable week last year. More



than half of claims were in the accommodation/food service, health care, administrative and waste services, and retail trade industries. The continued claims total is mainly comprised of those recent initial claimants who continued to file for unemployment insurance benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nationwide, in the week ending January 2, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 787,000, a decrease of 3,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 3,000 from 787,000 to 790,000. The advance number of actual initial claims under state programs, unadjusted, totaled 922,072 in the week ending January 2, an increase of 77,400 (or 9.2 percent) from the previous week. There were 335,480 initial claims in the comparable week in 2020. Looking at preliminary data, most states reported increases on a seasonally unadjusted basis. Colorado's preliminary weekly change (+18,777) was the largest increase among states. Kansas's preliminary weekly change (+15,863) was the second largest increase. Louisiana's preliminary weekly change (+14,226) was the third largest increase. Virginia's preliminary weekly change (+13,280) was the fourth largest increase. Illinois reported a weekly decrease of 62,765 claimants.



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# Consider Mediterranean fare for healthy living

The start of the new year often begins with resolutions made to fix bad habits and/or adopt new, healthier ones. Resolutions designed around healthy eating are popular.

If you need inspiration, the Mediterranean Diet has long been touted as an informed and balanced way of eating. While not a true diet, the method is an approach to eating that includes foods indigenous to the Mediterranean region. It is marked by large portions of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, olive oil, as well as fish and other seafood. Poultry, eggs, and cheeses

are enjoyed in moderation, and fattier meats and sweet are allowed but should be limited. The guidelines also include plenty of water and a moderate amount of wine.

A transition to the Mediterranean diet doesn't need to involve drastic changes. In fact, one can start slowly with a tasty side dish or appetizer. This recipe for "Dolmades" from "The Mediterranean Diet Cookbook" (Rockridge Press) by the editors of Rockridge University Press is a popular dish in Greece.

Dolmades  
Makes 20

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
  - 3 shallots, chopped
  - 2 cloves garlic, minced
  - 3/4 cup short-grain rice
  - 1/4 cup gold raisins
  - 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
  - Juice of 1 lemon
  - Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
  - 2/3 cup water
  - 4 green onions, chopped
  - 1 small bunch mint leaves, finely chopped
  - 1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley, chopped
  - 20 preserved grape leaves
- Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the shallots and garlic, and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the rice, golden raisins, pine nuts, and lemon juice. Season with sea salt and freshly ground pepper.

lots and garlic, and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the rice, golden raisins, pine nuts, and lemon juice. Season with sea salt and freshly ground pepper.

Add 2/3 cup water, bring to a boil, and cover. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Turn off heat and allow rice to cool. Add the green onions and herbs to the rice filling and mix well.

Rinse the grape leaves in water and stuff each leaf with about 1 tablespoon of the filling. Roll tightly and place each in a steamer, seam side down. Steam for about 10 minutes, until leaves are tender. Serve warm.



**Grape leaves are an ingredient in the popular Greek dish of Dolmades. Similar recipes also occur in regional cuisines of nearby countries.**

## Vaccine

from page 1

updates to the community.

"We will post it's time to register and make an appointment for your vaccine," Bell said. Those seeking the vaccines "can do that online and they can do that by coming to the health department and filling out the paperwork. We don't have the registration forms on any of our websites at present because we don't want to get drowned with applications."

Bell said the health department will first focus on those 75 years of age or older.

"If you are 75 or older, we are going to take applications until we have 400 people and then we will open up those applications again," Bell added. "Everyone is going to have to be really patient and pay attention to the media and our social networks because we are going to be updating that as soon as new information is available."

Sovah Health on Wednesday, Jan. 13, reported "a significant rise in patients who have tested positive and are being treated for COVID-19 in our hospitals." Since the last update on January 6, when there were 51 COVID-19 positive patients, "we have fluctuated between 71 and

76 patients."

At the council meeting, Alward and Dr. Sheranda Gunn-Nolan, a hospitalist at Sovah Health, discussed their personal experience with the vaccinations to prepare the public for what to expect.

"We do have both Pfizer and Moderna in the hospital," Alward said. "We both received our first and second dose. I did not have any reaction to it. I had a sore arm both times. By and large, for the most part, people receiving doses were not giving a lot of feedback on negative side effects."

Gunn-Nolan said it's common for a stronger reaction to the second dose of the vaccine.

"The second time you meet corona(virus), you are going to have a stronger response," she said. "If you have had COVID and you get that first shot, that would be the second time that you have met corona(virus). It can give you that same response."

Common examples of side effects listed by Gunn-Nolan are fever, chills, body aches, headaches, and gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

"That lasts for 24-48 hours and goes away. The

same with the arm soreness," she added.

Gunn-Nolan said side effects were relatively minimal.

"This vaccine, not having those preservatives and not having those chemicals, is less likely to cause any of those other side effects -- the scary things that we hear about," She said.

Messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) "vaccines cannot alter your DNA. I've heard from many that there is a microchip implant, but there is not. Those are common fears that people actually have," she added.

Gunn-Nolan said both vaccines work the same, with each injecting mRNA. It "makes a viral protein piece. It cannot give you COVID. That little viral protein piece is what your immune system responds to. As soon as that mRNA does that one job, it gets destroyed."

Even after vaccination, health officials recommend wearing facemasks and practicing other social distancing guidelines.

"After two doses of either one of those vaccines, you have a 94-95 percent protection against COVID-19," Gunn-Nolan said. "Our reason for continuing to wear masks is for

your safety. I would not get infected, but I could still spread it.

"Some vaccines will decrease your risk of spreading. These vaccines don't act that way," she said. "This vaccine will prevent me from forming an acute reaction. It'll keep me from forming the infection. I can still spread it and carry it with me throughout the day to others, so that's the importance of having all of those around you vaccinated. If those around you are vaccinated, then they could not develop the infection either."

Health officials also said vaccines would be used wisely.

"We waste not, want not," Gunn-Nolan said. "Not a single vaccine is being destroyed. We are finding people on a waitlist that are in that 1a category to get vaccinated so that we do not waste any of those vaccines. This is a vaccine the world wants. We know how precious that is. We are not wanting to throw any drop of that away."

For updates, visit: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/west-piedmont/> or <https://www.facebook.com/West-PiedmontHealthDistrict>.

In other matters presented, the council:



PHOTO BY BRANDON MARTIN

**Lisa Watkins (left, at podium), president of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, provided updates about economic growth to Martinsville City Council members, Tammy Pearson (seated from left); Jennifer Bowles, vice mayor; Kathy Lawson, mayor; Danny Turner and Chad Martin. City Manager Leon Towarnicki and other city staff are facing council members.**

Heard from Lisa Watkins, president of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, who provided an update on the Chamber's Partnership for Economic Growth (CEPG).

The Farmers' Market had 74 online orders and \$1,783 in online sales. More than 10,000 customers attended the market in 2020. A total of 236 EBT (electronic bank transfer) customers were served, distributing \$8,344 in EBT funds.

"The EBT program allows SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program) recipients, those who get supplemental food assistance through social services, to match dollar for dollar on fresh produce," she said.

Small Business Funding Assistance provided outreach to 425 businesses by phone, she said and added individual assistance was provided to 320 businesses.

Set public hearings for council's Jan. 26 and March 9 meetings on a Community Development Block Grant application for the Pine Hall Road area.

# Average timelines for popular renovation projects

With more emphasis on home because of the pandemic, many people are considering renovation projects, which are significant undertakings. Whether up to the do-it-yourself challenge or working with skilled and experienced contractors, timing is a big consideration.

The home improvement experts at HomeAdvisor note that the following are some general timelines for popular renovation projects when working with a contractor.

**Home addition:** Short of a full-scale demolition and rebuild, home additions are the most time-consuming projects homeowners can undertake. HomeAdvisor notes that its survey of customers who recently completed home addition projects reported that the average time from start to finish was between three and four months. Certain variables, including the scale of the project and the local permits process, can extend the time it takes to complete a home addition.

**Kitchen remodel:** Scale is a big factor to consider when estimating the time needed to complete various home improvement projects, and kitchen remodels are no exception. Some HomeAdvisor users reported projects taking as long as four months, though the average time reported was roughly six weeks. Projects that require major overhauls like rearranging the plumbing and moving walls will likely take longer than more cosmetic projects that are limited

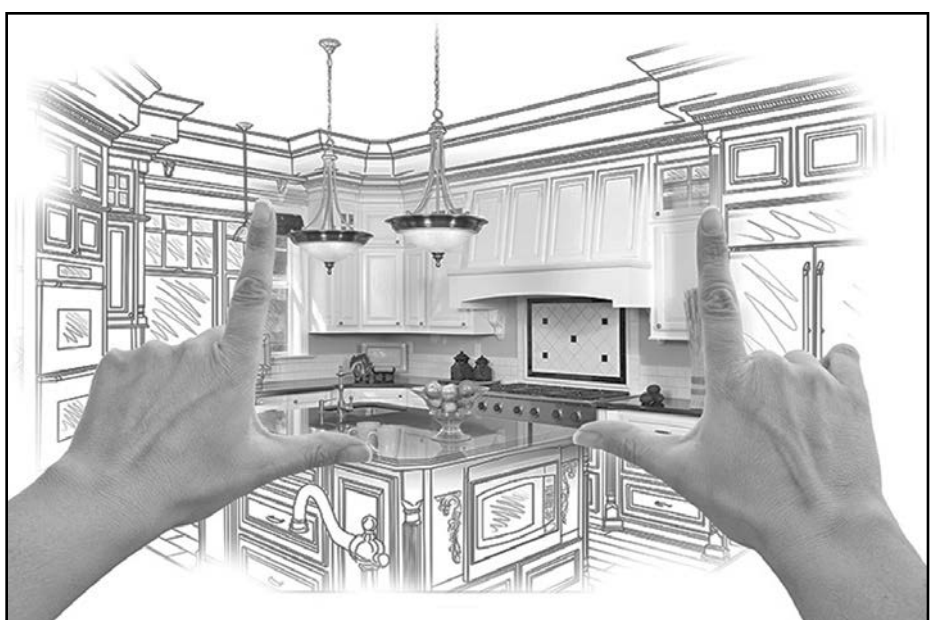
to replacing cabinets and countertops.

**Bathroom remodel:** More than 1,000 homeowners surveyed by HomeAdvisor reported that bathroom remodels took about 4.5 weeks from start to finish. Small-scale remodels that focus on painting the walls a fresh color and replacing existing tiles can be completed in less than two weeks. But like with kitchen remodels, bathroom remodels that involve replacing plumbing fixtures and removing walls figure to take much longer than that.

**Siding installation:** HomeAdvisor users report that new siding projects take roughly two weeks from start to

finish. That estimate is the same regardless of which materials homeowners are replacing and installing.

**Replacement windows:** Homeowners who want to replace all the windows in their home can expect such a project to take roughly three weeks. HomeAdvisor notes that such a timeline need not concern homeowners worried that they will be forced to brave the elements during the length of the project. Much of a contractor's time during a window replacement project will be spent on upfront measuring and then ensuring a tight fit once the windows have been installed.



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# DMV to close for 2021 state holidays, observances

All Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) full-service customer service centers will be closed on the following days for state holidays and observances:

January 18: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
February 15: George Wash-

ington Day  
May 31: Memorial Day  
June 18: Juneteenth  
July 5: Independence Day  
September 6: Labor Day  
October 11: Columbus Day and Yorktown Victory Day  
November 2: Election Day  
November 11: Veterans

Day  
The holiday schedule for Thanksgiving and Christmas will be announced later.

DMV customers are encouraged to save time by taking advantage of more than 40 transactions available online at dmvNOW.com. Appoint-

ments are required for in-person transactions.

Also, some DMV Select locations, run mostly by local governments, may operate outside of the state holiday closing schedule. DMV Select offices process mostly vehicle-related transactions including

registration renewals, titles, and license plates; driver's licenses and ID card services are not available. To find out if a DMV Select in your area is open on a state holiday and whether an appointment is required, visit [dmvNOW.com/DMVSelect](http://dmvNOW.com/DMVSelect).

## Groundwork from page 1

they will be flexible. The students will continue to be assessed and we will gather data for those students. In other words, they won't go into one group and stay there. We will

meet the needs for those students."

Along with the small group instruction, Millner said that after-school tutoring groups will also begin in

January, with "MHC After 3" currently offering virtual tutoring opportunities for secondary students. Some schools will offer a Saturday tutoring academy while others will implement 'Home-work Help Clubs.'

The division is also eyeing more summer school options, Millner said and added that summer school for elementary and middle school will be up to six weeks, with students attending Monday-Thursday, from 8 a.m. until noon. Transportation will be offered for those students.

Two sessions of recovery also are being planned for high school students.

"The thing that will be different is we are looking to provide transportation for those students as well," she said. "This all depends on participation. We have to have student participation as well as teacher participation."

Schools Superintendent Sandy Strayer said that the division historically has difficulty recruiting teachers to stay on for summer school and recovery programs.

"Our teachers work very, very hard all year long and many of them have commitments," Strayer said.

"They commit to us during the school year because they have a contract, but during the summer, they may have another job, or they may be taking classes. They have families, they don't live here, and they make plans to travel. Over the years, we have found that a lot of the time our teachers cannot teach summer school."

After conducting a survey of teachers at all levels, Millner said 48 teachers in elementary school have indicated interest in teaching over the summer, along with 26 teachers in middle school and 25 for high school.

As students return, the division will also work to gauge the social and emotional well-being of those in need.

"After some reflection, we decided to take a more grassroots approach and have our amazing group of school counselors generate those social and emotional questions," said Matthew Woods, director of student support services. "We developed a large inventory of questions that can be used at all levels to make it more universal and applicable to our students. From there, we had several of the counselors volunteer

to be a part of the Social and Emotional Task Force."

So far, the task course has developed a "screener" to be used for identifying student needs.

"We've also developed the process for which that survey will go out, how it will be distributed and collected, but most importantly how that guidance will be provided to our schools to meet the needs of our students," Woods said.

Monica Hatchett, director of communication, said that students will have support away from the schools as well.

"We are also collaborating with the United Way to create a community-based hotline for students who need to talk with someone about the stressors that the pandemic has brought to them," Hatchett said. "This will be a supplement to what our counselors do during the day, but as we know, stress doesn't stop for any of us. This community-based hotline will, in essence, take over for our counselors at night. This will be helping both students in our county and the city as well."

Also, at the meeting, David Scott, assistant superintendent for operations and administrative services, provided an update on the school budget that incorporates Gov. Ralph Northam's amendments.

"The no-loss funding is designed to offset any loss in average daily membership (enrollment)," Scott said. "As ADM goes down, that reduces our basic aid."

Northam is currently proposing no-loss funding of \$1,668,024 for fiscal year (FY) 2021.

"In the second year, it is about \$1.4 million," Scott said. "This is money that does not require local effort so that's more or less equalized funding."

Along with no-loss funding, Scott said another \$715,508 will be available for at-risk students.

"This does require local effort to go with that and it also increases the amount of money per student in our preschool initiative by (\$253,770)," he said. "That one is based on the number of students we get in there so there's a potential for an increase."

Scott said the most attention-grabbing portion of the budgetary amendments is the proposed two percent bonus.

"This is a lump sum

set aside for (Standard of Quality)-funded positions," he said. "The state does not require a local match on this per se. But that \$601,052 that is sitting there, the way that is worded will basically require a substantially similar increase for all instructional and non-instructional positions to be paid out of local funds. It does commit us to cutting additional funds."

As discussions among the budget committee continue, more decisions will be made on how to distribute the bonus.

"What will that two percent look like? Will that be added to annual compensation or paid as a one-time amount? As we continue to get our teachers and classified employees on step, we are going to incorporate that into a larger stepwise increase or percentage increase," Scott added.

A public hearing on budget priorities will be held on Jan. 21 in the Summerlin Room of the Henry County Administration Building. The board is slated to approve the budget on March 4.

In other matters, the board:

\*Elected Thomas Auken, of the Blackberry District, as chairman for 2021 and Francis Zehr, of the Ridgeway District, as vice chairman.

\*Adopted the Virginia School Boards Association Code of Conduct for School Board Members.

\*Approved Scott as the designee of the superintendent to attend meetings of the school board in case of the superintendent's absence or inability to attend.

\*Approved the 2021 meeting schedule. Regularly held meetings will take place on Feb. 4, March 4, April 8, May 6, June 3, July 1, July 22, Aug. 5, Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 4, and Jan. 6, 2022.

\*Recognized Principal Appreciation Week.

\*Approved the 2021-2022 school calendar with a start date of Aug. 16.

\*Approved the high school and middle school program studies.

\*Appropriated \$500,000 of unexpended school funds from the FY 2020 budget to cover the Transportation Garage Machinery Road project, renovations to the cafeteria at George Washington Carver Elementary School and other items listed in the capital improvement plan.

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### COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings has been scheduled for **January 13, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia. Following these public hearings, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation on each application to the Board of Supervisors.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct public hearings on the following applications on **January 26, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia.

Citizens wishing to submit public comments on these cases should email [publichearing@co.henry.va.us](mailto:publichearing@co.henry.va.us) or call 276-634-4699 no later than January 13, 2021 at 9 a.m. to enter comments intended for the Planning Commission meeting. Comments intended for the Board of Supervisors meeting must be received by January 26, 2021 at 9 a.m. All comments received will be read during the public hearing on each date at 6:00 p.m. Because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, **NO public comments will be taken during the meetings and attendance will be limited to 25. Participants for specific cases may be asked to leave the meeting after their specific case is heard.** For more information, contact the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection at 276-634-4620.

The purpose of these public hearings is to receive input into the possible rezoning of property. Following are the specifics of the public hearings.

#### Case R-21-01 Pugazhenthil Selvaraj

The property is located at 20 Water Plant Rd in the Ridgeway District. The Tax Map number is 62.4/151. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 2.65-acres from Government and Special Use District G-S to Limited Industrial District 1-2. The applicant intends to use the existing building for research, development, and assembly operations in the renewable energy industry.

#### Case R-21-02 West Leasing, LLC

The property is located on the east side of Gallagher Rd in the Iriswood District. The Tax Map number is 43.9/99A. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 10-acres from Commercial District B-1 to Limited Industrial District 1-2. The applicant intends to construct a new warehouse on the property to be used for food distribution.

#### Case R-21-03 Howard D. Tate

The property is located at 3660 Old Leaksville Rd, in the north east corner of the intersection of Morehead Ave. and Old Leaksville Rd, in the Ridgeway District. The Tax Map number is 73.7(3A)/1,2. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 3-acres from Agricultural District A-1 to Commercial District B-1. The applicant intends to construct a new convenience store on the property.

The applications for these requests may be viewed in the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Lee H. Clark, AICP

Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection

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# PET OF THE WEEK



Freddie Mercury



Tina Turner

Freddie Mercury and Tina Turner are two rock star strays looking for a way to cuddle right into your heart! They were picked up together by animal control and definitely prefer spending their time together instead of with other dogs. At 2-years-old and only about 30-35 pounds each, these two would be great curled

up next to you on the couch during quarantine, watching some movies and sharing some love. Both dogs love being around people and are great about sharing with each other. Call the SPCA of Martinsville-Henry County at (276) 638-7297 for more information about adopting this duo.

# State prison officer attacked

A Sussex I State Prison inmate allegedly seriously injured a sergeant at the Waverly, Virginia facility in an incident around 6 p.m. Saturday. The sergeant, a man with more than 20 years of service with the Department of Corrections, sustained six non-life-threatening stab wounds to the hand, arm, and side of the body. The officer was admitted, treated, and released from a local hospital. When the sergeant called for assistance with six inmates, a K9 officer and her K9 responded. The K9 was stabbed and required emergency surgery. The K9 is expected

to live. Nine inmates were identified as suspected of having been involved in the alleged assault on the sergeant. A number of other inmates allegedly engaged in disruptive behavior, including refusing to return to their cells, lighting fires, and breaking sprinkler heads. A strike team was deployed to the prison and the incident was contained, with inmates sequestered, shortly after 11 p.m. Saturday. An investigation is underway and the VADOC expects to seek criminal charges against those responsible for the assault, according to a release.

# Budget

from page 1

Overall, the school division is requesting \$537,014 in additional funds, primarily to support instructional technology and instruction.

This year's budget calls for \$17.5 million to cover instruction costs, an increase of \$924,998 from last year. Another \$1.5 million would go towards administrative and health costs. This is also an \$86,240 increase from last year. Increases in transportation and maintenance accounted for the rest of the overall \$1.1 million differential.

Approximately 70 percent of the expenses are for instruction, with maintenance and operations the second largest category.

The largest amount of revenue will come from the state, which is responsible for 56 percent of funds reflected in the budget. The proposed budget includes \$12.8 million in state funds, an increase of \$477,247 from last year. Local funds comprise another 29 percent of revenues, with the schools preparing for a \$537,014 boost from the previous year.

Based on numbers from the General Assembly's special session, the division originally forecast a decrease of \$71,662 for state sales tax.

Talley said the division more recently learned that sales tax had increased this year.

"Sales tax and tax revenue are actually up," he said. "It was nowhere near as devastating as we thought it would be. Gov. (Ralph) Northam and the General Assembly, supposedly, have to go revisit that so there will not be deep cuts. The more money we get from that, the less we have to rely on local funds."

### The Balancing Act

The largest primary cost for the school division would be a two percent raise for employees.

"We actually had this in before it was ever proposed. We were going to propose it. Why? Because we feel like our teachers do an excellent job," Talley said.

When the salaries of teachers from Northern Virginia are discounted, Talley said the Commonwealth "is in the lowest five states in the nation in pay."

"I was astounded with that," he said. "I had no idea if you just took Fairfax County out, the largest county out, that we rank in the lowest five. Gov. (Ralph) Northam is thinking about making that (the raise) permanent."

The division is requesting \$298,898 to cover the raise. Other requests are \$64,304 for a step increase for all employees; \$132,752 for two special education teachers; \$35,100 for eRate; \$132,752 for two counselors; \$49,458 for a nurse; and \$75,053 for other salary and benefit adjustments.

Some requests weren't reflected in the final proposal, with individual schools

calling for two additional teachers and another special education teacher.

Among the requests from the schools were a school counselor at Patrick Henry Elementary School (\$66,376); a special education teacher, paraprofessionals, and school counselor at Albert Harris Elementary School (\$159,923); a special education and English teacher at Martinsville Middle School (\$132,752); and teachers for special education, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and drama at the high school (\$199,128).

"The state was audited for special (education) and Virginia has been challenged by the federal government to upgrade its special (education) standards. You see special education teachers there (the budget) several times. One of the things we are hoping the governor will put back in the budget is some money for school counselors. We are trying to get ahead of the curve and put those things in place."

The overall division-level requests amounted to \$199,458. At this level, transportation is requesting the replacement of two school buses which would cost \$150,000 to maintain an up-to-date fleet.

Talley said Northam has proposed that every school in Virginia have a nurse to respond to the pandemic. In preparation, the division has requested \$49,458 to accompany state expectations.

"They (the state) are requesting these things but at this point we don't know how much money they are going to pay," Talley said. "Every school is going to be asked to have at least one nurse on call."

Travis Clemmons, executive director of administrative services, discussed capital improvement projects.

Items deemed necessary are a roof repair (\$51,150), handicap elevator repair (\$35,746), and chiller replacement (\$184,366) at Albert Harris Elementary School; pipe rehabilitation and lot repair (\$51,040) and culvert repair (\$51,040) at Druid Hills; and bus replacements (\$160,000).

Clemmons said the largest item – the chiller replacement – could be tabled based on the cost value of addressing smaller items on the overall list.

### Rewarding Successes

In contrast to available funds from the state, Talley noted the division's recent successes in the face of adversity.

"Being here 43 years, I remember when it wasn't successful, but we've done all we can to keep all of our schools accredited," Talley said. "We are having our schools continue to be recognized by the Virginia Board of Education as Exemplar Schools. We had three schools in one year



Sheliah Williams, director of school nutrition, gives the school board an update on the "No Kid Hungry" grant.



PHOTOS BY BRANDON MARTIN

Travis Clemmons, executive director of administrative services at Martinsville City Public Schools, directs a slide show presentation on the upcoming budget during a Jan. 11 meeting.

to do that, which is unheard of in this region. This is our long walk from now being accredited, after not being accredited for the past five. Accreditation has been waived at this time, but we will still measure accreditation. We will still be giving SOLs. We will still hold ourselves to that standard. We are not going to lower our bar."

Talley also noted other accomplishments, such as the middle school robotics team "Absolute Zero" finishing top five in the world competition, interviewing on national radio for "Equity and Schools in Poverty," and presenting statewide and nationally through webinars.

"People are very curious. We've been remote ever since the school year started and looking at our assessments, we are having success," Talley said. "We don't have a third of our students failing like they do across the nation. I attribute that to outstanding teachers, parent support and student support."

Talley praised the division's ability to retain staff members, adding that the division only lost "one or two" during the pandemic and teacher shortage.

"Teachers love to teach here," he said. "They expect enrollment that we had is up, at one time up to 100 more students. Parents love to send their students here. We just want to keep moving forward."

The division currently projects that total enrollment for next year will be 1,905 students, including K-12, preschool and adult education.

"I remember we were losing 100 students per year at one time but that stopped," Talley said. "We appreciate the fact that our parents entrust us. We are above what was projected, and we look to steadily increase that."

In other matters, the school board:

\*Received an update from Sheliah Williams, director of school nutrition, on the "No Kid Hungry" grant. She said the division received a \$21,000 grant this year. The funds will support the ongoing nutrition program by purchasing "additional equipment for meal service and storage," according to Williams.

The items consist of a beverage-holding refrigerator, food carriers, dollies, food tents for curbside service, and banquet tables.

Williams said the division continues to serve more than 800 students per delivery for an average of 3,200 meals each delivery day on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The meals cover breakfasts, lunches, snacks, and a Saturday meal.

"A huge shout out to the Transportation Department because none of this would be possible without them," Williams said, and added the Clearview Early Learning Center also received a \$960 grant for books through the

Community Impact Fund.

\*Received an update from Dr. Tamra Vaughan on the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)/Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) grant for \$25,000 to be used for training, any necessary travel, registration, and materials such as signs, notebooks, studies, and incentives.

"We began with this five years ago and the reason that we introduced it to the division is to help reduce the number of office referrals and suspensions, especially with our SPED (special education) students," Vaughan said. "Albert Harris started as our pilot school and now it is branching off to all the other schools."

She said there are PBIS teams in every school that help guide decision making based on data.

"We have created a data dashboard that looks at things like attendance for the division, referrals, suspensions, and placements of students. We are monitoring that monthly," she said. "We started with attendance specifically because we wanted to make sure we were within state guidelines for accreditation. We found areas of need so once we have decided those, we walk through a decision-making process that helps us identify what the data is telling us, what our current situation is, what we would like it to look like, and what action plan steps we need to make it there."

Vaughan said that "school specific expectations" will be developed to guide students on acceptable behaviors on the bus and in the cafeteria and hallways. Lesson plans will also be used to teach those expectations. A task force also was created to develop social and emotional learning (SEL) for students, a "virtual check-up for students so we know where they are now and see how they are handling the virtual learning," Vaughan said. "We have been able to connect several students, through this survey, with counselors that we may not have known needed that connection before now."

Data is reviewed monthly and "even bi-monthly lately," to monitor changes in trends from check-ups.

"We are in the process of developing a plan to support staff. We have found that the staff has needs right now also," Vaughan added. "It's been a very traumatic time for them, and we want to make sure they are taken care of."

Assessments will be developed to help staff create "self-care" plans.

"We all know if you don't take care of yourself first then you can't take care of others," she said, comparing it to airline procedures for donning oxygen masks.

\*Approved the 2021-2022 Academic Calendar. The next school year is slated to begin on Aug. 9 and end on May 20, 2022.

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