

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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No bond for Texas man in alleged abduction case

Debbie Hall and Brandon Martin
Staff Writers

A Texas man is being held without bond in the Vance County Detention Center in Henderson, N.C., while awaiting extradition.

Kaleb Christopher Merritt, 21, of Spring, Tx., is being held on initial charges of abduction and lascivious content over an electronic device in connection with the alleged abduction of a Bassett girl, Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry said.

Merritt was taken into custody on Feb. 13, after an Amber Alert was issued for Allie Michelle Broadway, 12, of Reed Creek, Bassett, who was initially reported missing from her home on Feb. 12 at 1:45 p.m.

Perry has said she is believed to have left willingly.

Broadway was treated for minor injuries when she was found at a restaurant in Henderson, N.C. but Perry did not comment about the specifics of the injuries. She was returned safely to her family from Henderson by the Henry County Sheriff's Department.

Perry alleged that Merritt met Broadway in December 2020 on Instagram. The two allegedly communicated via social media until Merritt traveled to Virginia in early February 2021.

Authorities allege that after arriving in Henry County, Merritt set up a camp in a wooded area behind Broadway's home and met with her on several occasions.

"He was in a wooded area near the residence," Perry said. "I would just say within walking distance. I wouldn't say that I have an actual distance. It wasn't within sight" of

the home.

Even after authorities seized Merritt's electronic devices, the two allegedly used a messaging app to communicate, according to Perry.

Authorities allege Broadway was coerced to leave her home.

Perry said authorities are still investigating the extent of time Merritt was in Henry County and other communications Merritt allegedly had while in the area.

"By his own admission, he had been in the area about four days. We think that it may have been a little bit longer," Perry said. "There were multiple police contacts about finding him in parking lots. We think we was here a little bit longer."

Additionally, "we are looking into all of his communications, period. Once you get an electronic device, you are usually able to see everything like where it took place," Perry said. "We do think there were other communications that took place in this area."

Perry said discussions about jurisdiction are ongoing.

"There are conversations going on and we are trying to find out the extent of what happened where," he said. "There are conversations to see if the case can be prosecuted federally. Those final decisions have not been made. We are coordinating with anyone that has a case, putting all the information together, seeing what state codes are there and what federal codes are there to make sure we are dealing with the same things. Then we will try to see who would have the most effective sentencing for the crimes."



Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry

Perry declined to rule out the possibility of additional charges.

"There haven't been any additional charges yet," Perry said. "It was a massive and intensive case with a lot of work going on very quickly. There were a lot of search warrants issued on cell phones for information and various other things. Now, we have to sit down and go through chats, folders, and electronic devices. Is there the potential for other things to be coming? Yes, there is, but at this point, we don't have anything that we can say."

The incident remains under investigation by the Henry County Sheriff's Office, FBI, and Virginia State Police.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Henry County Sheriff's Office at 276-638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63-CRIME (632-7463). Rewards of up to \$2,500 are available through the Crimestoppers Program for information related to crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information determine the amount of reward paid.

Supervisors, school board to take up several issues Tuesday

Debbie Hall
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The Henry County Board of Supervisors and the Henry County School Board will hold a joint meeting at 5 p.m., on Tuesday, Feb. 23 in the Summerlin Room, located on the first floor of the Henry County Administration Building.

The school board is scheduled to consider meeting in closed session before the two boards consider resolutions related to refinancing school debt.

Henry County Administrator Tim Hall is scheduled to discuss the opportunity to restructure certain school debt to reduce future costs.

Recommendations include refinancing a loan of approximately \$1,125,000 as part of a multi-jurisdictional issuance known as the Public Facilities Refunding Bonds.

If approved, the county agrees to repay Carter Bank & Trust the principal amount on or before February 15, 2030, together with interest on the outstanding principal amount of this bond at a rate of 1.75 percent per year, calculated on the basis of a 360-day year of twelve 30-day months.

County and school staff also will discuss the opportunity to issue not more than \$19 million in Virginia Public School Authority (VSPA) General Obligation bonds to refund the existing \$10 million lease revenue bonds issued by the Industrial Development Authority to finance Meadow View Elementary School.

The school board is expected to adjourn before the Board of Supervisors' 6 p.m. meeting.

Supervisors also are scheduled to hold a public hearing on a proposed amendment to the budget.

As part of the ongoing development of Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre (CCBC), the county will work with Southwestern Virginia Gas Company (SVG) and the Henry County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to install natural gas to the park.

The county received a grant of \$1.5 million from the Appalachian Regional Commission to help with the project.

The board will consider appropriating an additional \$4.5 million from the general fund, approve the performance

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FILE PHOTO

The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce's annual trade show - Fast Track - will not be held this year due to the pandemic.

Fast Track 2021 canceled but will return next year

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

For the first time in 27 years, the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce's annual trade show — Fast Track — will not be held due to ongoing concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

"We're not going to be able to have it this year," said Sharon Shepherd, deputy director of the chamber. "There's no way with social distancing and everything that we would be able to keep everybody safe."

Shepherd said the chamber initially began to discuss the feasibility of hosting Fast Track 2021 during budget work sessions in June.

"Then in October, we still did not have the vaccine, and our numbers here were rising. That is when we decided there was no way that we were going to be able to do it," she said.

The decision to not have the trade show this year was disheartening for members of the chamber, according to Shepherd.

"Fast Track is a lot of hard work but it's also so very re-

warding because we are able to show off our members and what Martinsville-Henry County does have to offer," she said. "It was sad to think that we are going to have to skip a year because of COVID. Of course, we understand. We would never have done anything to put our vendors, exhibitors or the community in harm's way."

The annual event is always held the first Tuesday and Wednesday of March and it requires a lot of coordination to be successful, Shepherd said.

"We always start off with (selecting) the location, and once we have that we have to get it approved by either the city or the county's building inspector and fire marshal," she said. "Once that's done, we get Holland's Exhibition to get everything set up for us."

If the trade show has a different venue for the year, the set up requires new measurements and floor plan ideas, according to Shepherd.

"They do a couple of different diagrams so we can see which one we like the

See Fast Track, page 5

City school seeks new band members

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

Martinsville High School is currently inviting students to pick up an instrument and join one of

their many award-winning music programs.

Band Director Brian Joyce said classes are available to all high school students who wish to join either Band 9, Band 10, Jazz

Band, Marching Band or Concert Band.

While Band 9 and Band 10 are exclusively for ninth and tenth graders, Joyce said marching band and concert band are mostly geared for upperclassmen.

"New students can join these classes without the worry of falling behind," he said. "Instruction is geared to help them 'catch up' to students with 4-5 years of band experience."

Beginner students are welcome to join any of the classes except Jazz Band, Joyce said, adding that auditions are required to obtain those spots.

"The Jazz Band class performs the most outside of school for community events," Joyce said. "Being involved in the band can lead to opportunities in college

See Band Members, page 2



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Martinsville High School Band Director Brian Joyce leads students in band practice last year before the coronavirus pandemic.

Community-minded residents encouraged to apply for open city positions

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

The City of Martinsville currently has several vacancies for volunteer appointments to boards and commissions that assist the City Council on matters concerning local governance.

As of a Dec. 14, 2020 report, the city had 41 vacancies spanning across 13 different boards or commissions.

"Each board/commission has different roles within the flow of our local governance," said Vice-Mayor Jennifer Bowles. "For example, the planning commission sends recommendations to the city council for items. Therefore, even if you do not have the final decision on an item, you have re-

viewed the information before and provided valuable information for the City Council to review."

Bowles said members are also typically the first people seen by citizens in

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Home visits needed to pinpoint water loss issues

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

Staff from the Henry County Public Service Authority (PSA) will soon be conducting door-to-door audits to address ongoing issues with non-revenue water loss, according to Mike Ward, director of regulatory compliance.

"The non-revenue water for the month was 29 percent. It was actually down 10.5 million gallons from the previous month and about 34 percent for the annual running average," Ward said at a Feb. 16 meeting.

Even though the number is down, Ward said it coincides with difficulties the PSA is having with finished water metering issues which are currently being evaluated by a contractor.

"It's still up in the air. We've gone back and forward" to address the issue, Ward said. "We've come up with a couple of ideas, but we've got to test it. Even though those numbers are there, there is still that caveat of some uncertainty."

The amount of water loss is likely a conservative estimate, Ward said of the 10.5-million-gallon decrease.

"It is probably on the low side. We are seeing numbers from the meter as being too high. The percentage should be lower than normal," he said, and added the standard non-revenue water loss across the state typically falls between 15-20 percent.

"We were running for a while what we thought was 12 or 15 percent. It was really good," Ward said. "Washington County Service Authority is down to 45 percent. There are some newer utilities that have newer systems. They may be around 10 percent. Everybody is going to have some loss but if you can get around 15 percent, you're doing good."

Ward said the water loss occurs between the discharge of the water plant and the customer meters.

"Age of the system is the biggest thing. It's usually not going to be one silver bullet," Ward said. "It's going to be half a gallon a minute

here, half a gallon a minute there. We have found some fairly large ones."

Ward said he isn't aware of any customers getting excess water without paying for it.

"We are going to be doing some water door-to-door type audits like we did back in the 90s," Ward said. "That is going to take our staff getting familiar with what was done before and basically go door to door to look at 'does somebody have a garden hose hooked from one house to the other.'"

Darrell Jones, finance director, said about 10 years, the PSA found that some meters were using water without it being read.

"At the time, we had a lot of unhappy customers show up and we had to look at the statute of limitations because we went back and billed them," Jones said. "I think we established three years was as far as we could go back. We identified hundreds of meters at the time that were using water, but they were not in our system to be read."

Ward said his team is consider-

ing storm drains.

"You could be having a leak right there at a storm drain, going right into that line and you'll never see it," Ward said. "You could be losing 100 gallons a minute."

It will take a lot of time and manpower to address all points where water loss could be occurring, he said.

Jones said water sales in the month of January were down 2.17 percent, with sewer sales running about even with the year before.

"We are in a very good position," Jones said of the overall financial position of the PSA. "I've been here over 17 years now. When I first came here, I'm not even sure we had \$1 million in the bank account. Now" the PSA has "over \$20 million in the bank so we've come a long way."

Tim Pace, director of engineering, asked for the board's approval on the final portion of funding for a \$195,000 aerial photography upgrade of the county's mapping.

"Every five years or so, the county does an aerial mapping

upgrade," Pace said. "We hire a consultant to fly over the county to capture aerial photography and update our mapping."

Pace said the project was in the fiscal year 2020 budget, but it was pulled given the uncertainty of the last year.

"The Board of Supervisors approved their portion at the last board meeting and the PSA's portion of that project is \$65,000," Pace said. "It was in the capital budget and we pulled it out right as COVID hit."

The PSA Board of Directors approved the project. The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) also approved \$30,000 for the project. Those funds will be added to the \$100,000 from the county.

The aerial shots are used "for designing projects," Pace said, adding that water line design is an example of such a project. "If we do two design projects in that five-year period, it pays for itself."

Pace said the imagery also will be available to the public upon request.

Eviction, foreclosure initiative extended

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced an extension of eviction and foreclosure moratoriums on USDA Single Family Housing Direct and Guaranteed loans through June 30, 2021 to provide relief to residents in rural America who have housing loans through USDA.

The "USDA recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an almost unprecedented housing affordability crisis in the United States. That's why USDA is taking this important action today to extend relief to the hundreds-of-thousands of individuals and families holding USDA Single Family Housing loans," USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Justin Maxson said. "The Biden Administration is working closely with Congress to pass the American Rescue Plan to take more robust and aggressive actions to bring additional relief to American families

and individuals impacted by the pandemic."

A recent Census Bureau survey showed that 8.2 million homeowners are currently behind on mortgage payments, and of that 8.2 million, 3 million homeowners behind on payments were Black or Hispanic.

The effort underscores a commitment by USDA to bring relief and assistance to farmers, families and communities across the country who are in financial distress due to the coronavirus pandemic. In January, USDA took action to bring relief to more than 12,000 distressed borrowers of USDA farm loans by temporarily suspending past-due debt collections, foreclosures, non-judicial foreclosures, debt offsets or wage garnishments, and more. Learn more at the following link: USDA Temporarily Suspends Debt Collections,

Foreclosures and Other Activities on Farm Loans for Several Thousand Distressed Borrowers Due to Coronavirus.

Visit www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus for additional information on USDA's Rural Development COVID-19 relief efforts, application deadline extensions and more. USDA Rural Development will keep our customers, partners and stakeholders continuously updated as additional actions are taken to bring relief and development to rural America.

Homeowners and renters also may visit www.consumerfinance.gov/housing for information about relief options, protections, and key deadlines from USDA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Burn ban in effect through April 30

A statewide burn ban went into effect on February 15, according to the Martinsville Fire & EMS Department.

This law that bans open air burning before 4 p.m. will remain in effect through April 30.

It applies to all open air burning that occurs within 300 feet of woodland, city fire officials said.

In addition, a city ordinance requires all open-air burning be completed by 8 p.m.

The dangers of fires spreading during this timeframe are due to higher winds, lower relative humidity, and extremely dry

fuels on the forest floor.

Fire officials urge the use of extreme caution to remove all combustibles around the area to be burned, and to make sure all outdoor fires are attended at all times.

As always, the only materials allowed to be burned are paper, cardboard, leaves, and tree, yard and garden trimmings located on the premises.

For more information on fire safety, please visit our website at martinsville-va.gov, the Virginia Department of Forestry's website, or call the Martinsville Fire & EMS Department at 276-403-5325.

Supervisors

from page 1

agreement with the gas company, and award a sole-source contract to the company to install the service.

This appropriation would be a "not to exceed" number, with the project's total cost potentially being less than the amount appropriated.

A public hearing is required because the amount exceeds one percent of the current budget.

The IDA is expected to consider the proposal at a noon meeting on Feb. 24.

In other matters during the 6 p.m. meeting, supervisors are:

Scheduled to hear a report on general highway matters.

Receive public comment.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors is scheduled to meet at 3 p.m. in the Summerlin Room of the Henry County Administration Building.

The board is scheduled to consider performance agreements related to economic development deals that include the LamTech expansion, announced on Jan. 15, and the Crown Holdings facility, announced on Jan.

28.

The traditional method of approving Performance Agreements for economic development deals before the deals are made public changed due to the onset of COVID-19 and associated protocols.

In other matters at its 3 p.m. meeting, the board will:

* Hear a report from Mark Heath, president and CEO of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp.

*Hear a report from County Treasurer Scott Grindstaff on delinquent tax collection efforts. According to the agenda packet a total of 87.56 percent was collected as of January 29, 2021. The amount collected in the same time frame last year was 86.93 percent.

As of January 29, 2021, 91.07 percent of 2020 Real Estate taxes had been collected, compared to January 2020, with 89.60 percent collected.

Anyone attending the meetings will be expected to wear a facemask and practice social distancing. Attendance may be limited.

Funds available to help landlords, tenants

Gov. Ralph Northam announced \$524 million in new federal funding is available to help keep Virginia families in their homes amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Virginia Rent Relief Program (RRP) is funded through the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program included in the recent federal stimulus package and will assist households and landlords with rent payments to avoid eviction.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have prioritized efforts to keep Virginians safely in their homes," said Northam. "There continues to be an overwhelming need for additional relief to help those struggling to make ends meet. This new federal funding will provide an important lifeline to individuals and families and bolster our ongoing work to address housing affordability in the Commonwealth. I urge eligible households to act quickly and work

with their landlords to seek rental assistance through this program."

Virginia is immediately putting \$160 million into the RRP to increase housing stability, with additional funding available based upon need. The program will be administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

In June 2020, Virginia was one of the first states in the nation to create a statewide rent and mortgage relief program with federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds.

The new ERA funding does not include mortgage relief, so the RMRP that has been operating since June will become the RRP and will no longer accept applications for assistance with mortgage payments.


The Biden Administration also has announced an expansion and extension of federal forbearance and fore-

closure relief programs.

To submit a landlord-initiated application, visit virginiahousing.com/rentrelief. Virginia law requires landlords to work with their tenant to apply for this assistance.

Tenants interested in applying should check their eligibility by completing the self-assessment at dhcd.virginia.gov/eligibility or by dialing 2-1-1 from their phones. Tenants may be eligible for rent arrears payments back to April 1, 2020 and up to three months of payments into the future. The total payments may not exceed 15 months of rental assistance per household.

Current state and federal eviction protections through the courts do not prevent rent payments from accumulating. Additional information on RRP is available at dhcd.virginia.gov/RRP. For additional housing resources, visit StayHomeVirginia.com.



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Thank You!

The family of Ellis Nelson, who passed away on January 12th, 2021, wish to thank everyone who called, sent cards, or made memorial donations to the Moorefield Store Vol. Fire Dept.

We also wish to thank Mr. Pete Campbell and the staff of Moody Funeral Services for the caring and respectful way they treated the family and for the service they performed.

Everything was greatly appreciated.



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OPINION

Gina Carano and cancel culture

Last week, Gina Carano, one of the stars of the Disney+ series "The Mandalorian," made headlines for losing her job in a remarkably stupid way.

For those unfamiliar, Carano played the role of Cara Dune, a rough and tumble intergalactic warrior on the most popular series on Disney's wildly popular streaming service. "The Mandalorian" is set in the world of Star Wars, and Carano's character was so beloved by fans that Disney was apparently planning to give her her own spin-off show.

Unfortunately for Carano, she orchestrated her own downfall. For months on Twitter, she had shared baseless accusations that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump, criticized mask mandates, mocked trans people, and most recently, posted an image comparing being a conservative in today's America to being a Jew during the Holocaust.

Carano had been warned by Disney about her controversial tweets, and that last one was apparently the tweet that broke the camel's back. Disney wasted no time firing her from "The Mandalorian" and cancelled her spin-off show.

Before we get into the weeds of "cancel culture," let me say this: if

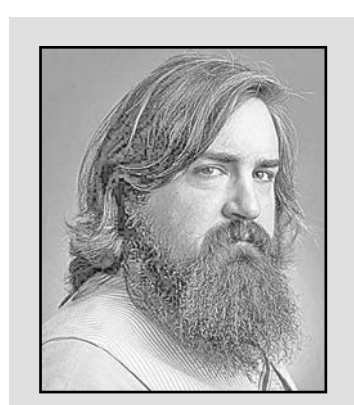
Disney cast me on the most popular and well-reviewed Star Wars-related thing since 1983 and also offered me my own spin-off, but the one caveat was that every day I had to stand on a street corner for an hour holding up a sign that said "I'm a stupid diaper baby," I would not consider that an overly burdensome trade-off. A person could live like a king just off the residuals alone! Not to mention merchandising and convention appearances! How hard is it to not tweet comparisons to the Holocaust? I've never tweeted about the Holocaust at all, and I don't even have millions of dollars at stake.

Having said that, Carano has plenty of supporters and they're up in arms about her dismissal from the show. I've mainly seen two complaints:

1. Carano being fired from "The Mandalorian" was a violation of her First Amendment rights.

2. Carano being fired for her views is an example of Disney catering to the whims of a small but vocal minority who are attempting to silence conservative voices.

The first point is the most straightforward one to address, so let's begin there: Carano's dismissal from the show is in no way a violation of her First Amendment



By Ben R. Williams

rights. The First Amendment prevents the government from abridging the freedom of speech. Disney is not the government (at least, not yet), so her Constitutional rights were not violated.

The second point, however, is the one that I find more interesting.

I will begin by saying this: I have my issues with the concept of "cancel culture," particularly when people are boycotted for statements they made years earlier. People grow and evolve over time (hopefully, anyway), and I can say with certainty that I cracked jokes years ago that I would never make now. If someone says something offen-

sive and genuinely apologizes for their actions, I believe we should accept their apology; otherwise, we send the message that once you screw up in life one single time, you're a write-off. That's not helpful to anyone.

I'm reminded of a great line from a recent documentary about the hip hop group The Beastie Boys. In one section, Beastie Boys member Ad-Rock is asked if he's a hypocrite because he now advocates for women while some of the group's 1980s songs had misogynistic lyrics. Ad-Rock replies, "I'd rather be a hypocrite than the same person forever."

Carano has not apologized for her words, of course; if anything, she's doubled down over the last week or so. But the point is still worth making.

But getting back to the original argument: did Disney fire Gina Carano because they're catering to the deranged whims of a small but vocal minority?

I'm going to say no, and I'll add that I find this argument consistently hilarious.

I heard this same argument when Quaker Oats announced they were rebranding Aunt Jemima syrup. I heard it when Cheerios debuted a commercial with a

mixed-race family. I heard it when Netflix cancelled comedian Louis CK's special after it came out that he had done untoward things to women.

The fact is, major corporations do not cater to vocal minorities. Major corporations don't do things out of a sense of altruism. Major corporations exist to do one thing and one thing alone:

Make as much money as fast as is humanly possible.

When Disney decided to fire Gina Carano, that meant exactly one thing: Disney's fleet of accountants ran the numbers, and the determined that firing her would cause them to lose less money than if they kept her.

That's it. That was the extent of the conversation. Maybe somebody in marketing threw out the word "optics" a couple of times, but ultimately, it all came down to money.

And if Disney decided that Carano was a bigger liability than an asset, that means they weren't catering to the whims of a vocal minority. It means the vocal minority are the ones complaining about her being fired.

However, don't feel too bad for Gina Carano. The day after she was fired, it was announced that she had signed on to make a movie with conservative website The Daily Wire.

Will this movie be as big of a hit as Star Wars? I suppose only time will tell.

Get Students Back in School

Morgan Griffith
9th District U.S. Rep.

Barbara Mandrell once sang, "I was country, when country wasn't cool." I understood what she meant recently on a different topic: resuming in-person learning at schools.

I have been calling for schools to reopen since last summer. Now, the Biden Administration indicates it is moving in that direction. Further, on February 5 Governor Northam issued a statement urging the same outcome, calling on Virginia's K-12 schools to plan for in-person learning options by March 15.

I am glad to see the governor join this effort. Reopening schools is in the best interest of students and their families. It is supported by scientific data and expert opinion.

For example, in a June

23, 2020 hearing of the Energy and Commerce Committee on responding to the coronavirus pandemic, then-Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Dr. Robert Redfield said reopening schools would be a "jurisdiction to jurisdiction decision" and that the CDC would roll out guidelines for doing so safely.

Also, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said much the same.

Having participated in this hearing and listening to these comments, I introduced a resolution a few days later urging that schools be allowed to decide whether to return in person at the local level. I knew this was an important issue for Virginia's Ninth Congressional District, which had remote learning imposed on it by

the Commonwealth even though its COVID infection rates at the time were much lower than in other parts of Virginia.

More than six months later, President Biden's new Director of the CDC, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, told reporters at a White House briefing, "There is increasing data to suggest that schools can safely reopen and that safe reopening does not suggest that teachers need to be vaccinated."

These voices support calls from the American Academy of Pediatrics from last summer strongly urging the resumption of in-person learning for the health and well-being of children. It has noted the lower rates of virus transmission among young people and the importance being in school has on childhood development. Among the benefits provided by being in school: "social and

emotional skills; safety; reliable nutrition; physical/occupational/speech therapy; mental health services; health services; and opportunities for physical activity."

Remote learning options — when they are feasible, which is questionable for areas lacking broadband access — simply do not provide the full range of benefits for the well-being of children, including their mental health.

A recent article from the news outlet Axios puts numbers on some of the harm caused by the lack of in-person learning. American students from kindergarten to fifth grade have lost an average of 20 percent of reading skills and 33 percent of math skills compared to what they would have normally learned. An economic analysis puts the long-term damage to the U.S. economy at \$14 trillion to \$28 trillion.

These numbers astound but still cannot fully convey the damage that lack of in-person learning inflicts on children. Some things can-

not be quantified, like the impact on mental health or the socialization that comes when students are around their peers.

Worst of all, indicators such as a doubled suicide rate among teens and children in Clark County, Nevada, during nine months of the pandemic compared to the entire previous year show still more tragic consequence.

Reopening schools does not mean returning exactly as they operated before. Each school district of course must adjust appropriate to its circumstances regarding social distancing, allowances for teachers, staff, and students who may be in a high-risk category for contracting the virus, and other necessities imposed by the pandemic.

One approach could be to have the students in the classroom supervised in person by a teacher's aide who is not in a high-risk category and does not have comorbidities, while a teacher with a higher risk status could be

"Zoomed" into the classroom.

President Biden said after the presidential election that he wanted the majority of schools open by the end of his first 100 days in office. His press secretary on February 9, unfortunately, lowered the bar, saying that this pledge merely meant "teaching at least one day a week in the majority of schools by day 100."

That's not good enough. The science has been clear since last summer.

Returning to in-person learning will have difficulties, but the far greater costs of not doing so have been clear. Also clear is the relatively lower rate of transmitting the coronavirus among young people. This should not be a close call.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, call my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405, my Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671 or via email at [www.morgan-griffith.house.gov](mailto:morgan-griffith.house.gov).

Carlisle to host annual charity auction

Carlisle School is hosting its 51st annual charity auction on February 22-27 in an online event that will culminate with a LIVE virtual event on Saturday, February 27.

The Pre-Show begins at 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 22, followed by the kickoff of the Live Auction at 7 p.m.

The auction is one of the school's most historic traditions and its biggest fundraiser event.

"Since we cannot gather in person this year, we are keeping the tradition alive through a virtual, online celebra-

tion! We have vacation packages, jewelry, home decor, student keepsakes, and much more," school officials said.

More than 200 items are available, and all proceeds support the programs at Carlisle School, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Everyone is invited to participate. The online event may be accessed at charityauction.bid/carlisle2021.

A tutorial on how to register and bid online is available at <https://youtu.be/KaM3xYm2eM0>.

This year, Meredith Vaughn (Mar-

tinsville), Molly Wright (Eden, N.C.), and Mary Lewis Johnston (Martinsville) are spearheading the event. They are assisted by a planning committee comprised of Jessica Zagol (Danville), Kim Banerjee (Martinsville), Anna McClain (Martinsville), and school administrators.

Hosts for the broadcasts include Ainsley Johnston (Greensboro, N.C.), Carrington Kernodle (Ashburn), Jennifer Thomas (Danville), Dean Johnston (Martinsville), Phil Garrett (Martinsville), and school administrators.

Unpaid leave through the FMLA is inaccessible for many

An analysis of demographic data in Virginia released today by the National Partnership for Women & Families demonstrates the urgent need for a national paid family and medical leave plan. A comprehensive and inclusive paid leave plan must allow every American worker to take time off work to address an illness or to take care of a loved one, without missing a paycheck.

The new Virginia analysis sheds light on the gaps in access to paid family and medical leave.

- Lack of Access to Paid and Unpaid Family and Medical Leave: Unpaid leave through the FMLA is inaccessible to 55 percent of workers in Virginia because they either are not covered by the law or cannot afford to take the unpaid leave provided;

- Without Access to Paid Leave, Women and People Of Color Are Leaving the Workforce: Women, especially Black, Latinx, AAPI and Native American mothers, have been hit the hardest by pandemic closures. Women of color work in many of the most-affected industries and are bearing the brunt of increased caregiving without the support of in-person schooling or child care. In Virginia, nearly eight times as many women were unemployed at the end of

2020 as one year earlier.

- Paid Leave is Good for the Economy: A national paid leave plan would reduce the number of working families in Virginia facing significant economic insecurity when they need to take family and medical leave by 83 percent.

- Paid Leave is Good for Public Health: More than 418,000 Virginians, contracted COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic. Moreover, an estimated 10 to 15 percent — 41,800 to 62,700 — will experience long-term symptoms including difficulty breathing, chest pain or fatigue that may require care from a loved one or interfere with work. Paid leave allows people to take time off work to care for themselves and their family members during the pandemic and beyond.

"Even as COVID-19 cases continue to surge, millions of Americans across the country risk missing a paycheck if they need to take time off work to care for themselves or a loved one," said Debra L. Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women & Families. "The pandemic has exacerbated the inequities across our economy that disproportionately impact women and people of color, who are least likely to have access to paid family and medi-

cal leave. As Americans continue to struggle with the impact of the pandemic, Congress must prioritize enacting emergency paid family and medical leave in the short term, as a down payment for a national program in the future."

The state-by-state analysis comes after the emergency paid leave provisions that were enacted as part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and amended by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act expired at the end of last year.

Momentum is growing in support of enacting paid family and medical leave with President Biden including expanded emergency paid family and medical leave in the American Rescue Plan. In addition to the federal emergency paid family and medical leave policy that was enacted in 2020, Colorado voters supported a ballot initiative that provides paid family and medical leave of up to 12 weeks for all workers in the state-bringing the total number of states with paid family and medical leave to 10, including Washington, D.C. Importantly, paid leave is supported by voters across the political spectrum as well as the majority of small businesses.

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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

Barker named extraordinary nurse

Hope Barker of Sovah Health – Martinsville was honored Friday with The DAISY Award® For Extraordinary Nurses. The award is part of the DAISY Foundation's programs to recognize the super-human efforts nurses perform every day.

The nomination submitted read "Hope is a true inspiration to the entire team on a daily basis. She brings a contagious, positive attitude that spreads to others and she will always brighten the day for patients, families, and coworkers.

Hope is one of the most compassionate nurses I know. Her compassion for her patients is recognized and expressed while rounding with patients and their families very frequently. Her dedication is also displayed by commitment to serving on multiple committees driving quality patient care such as ethics committee, falls, quality, and precepting. She is a role model for our team, loves to teach others, and always goes out of her way to involve new nurses in the delivery of care.

She most recently touched the life of a patient's wife whom she was caring for with COVID-19. The wife called to say that nurse Hope was an angel, and she would like to nominate her for an award. She expressed in detail how Hope touched her life, impacted her, and even made a difference as to how she would also practice as a nurse. She said in all her years of nursing and watching other nurses she could not think of anyone more deserving of the DAISY Award than Hope."

The not-for-profit DAISY Foundation is based in Glen Ellen, CA, and was established by family members in memory of J. Patrick Barnes. Patrick died at the age of 33 in late 1999 from complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP), a little known but not uncommon autoimmune disease. The care Patrick and his family received from nurses while he was ill inspired this unique means of thanking nurses for making a profound difference in the lives of their patients and patient families.

"When Patrick was critically ill, our family experienced first-hand the remarkable skill and care nurses provide patients every day and night," said Bonnie Barnes, FAAN, CEO and Co-Founder of The DAISY Foundation. "Yet these unsung heroes are seldom recognized for the super-human work they do. The kind of work the nurses at Sovah Health are called on to do every day epitomizes the purpose of The DAISY Award."

"Hope is the perfect candidate to receive our first DAISY Award and I was honored to help present it to her," said Barbara Seymour, Chief Nursing Officer at Sovah Health – Martinsville. "Her positive attitude and willingness to help others is what defines an extraordinary nurse to receive the DAISY Award. She touches the lives of so many patients and their families every single day and she deserves to be honored."

To nominate a Sovah Health nurse for the DAISY Award, visit www.sovahhealth.com/community/sovah-health-daisy-award.

Fast Track from page 1

best. Once we settle on the layout, we have to get all our forms printed and everything mailed out to our chamber members," she added.

The work of contacting past exhibitors to gauge their interest in participating again also gets underway, and the chamber then focuses on other aspects, such as printing tickets and name badges.

"We also have to recruit the restaurants that cater on the first night and apply for our ABC license so we can have beer and wine," Shepherd said.

The chamber also holds a committee meeting after each trade show to "find out what did or didn't work for our exhibitors" so it can be addressed in the following year, she said.

"Every year, we are improving on the show because we want this to be as great as we can for the exhibitors," she said. "We do that (meeting) right after so it's still fresh on everyone's mind. Probably around September, we like to have a location in place, and then start on the other things."

Ideally, she said organizers have 7-8 months to pull it all together.

Although Fast Track is on the back burner until 2022, Shepherd said that in the interim, the chamber continues to showcase new local businesses and industries.

"For the folks that have

come to the area and joined the chamber, we are still doing an abbreviated ribbon cutting, where we don't have a lot of people there," Shepherd said, adding that the chamber also features the businesses on their social media account. "It's so we can still show folks that they are here, they are a new business and what they have to offer."

Additionally, Shepherd said the chamber features select businesses in their magazine "Discover MHC."

"Our cover story is three different businesses in Martinsville-Henry County that have actually expanded during the pandemic," she said. "Then, inside is our business brief section. That has some of our other businesses that have grown and expanded. That was the focus of our magazine because we wanted it to be positive because this past year has been so hard on everyone."

She noted that eight new businesses have expanded in Uptown Martinsville alone during the pandemic.

"As much negativity there has been this last year because of COVID, it's nice to see these positive things happening and the workforce is expanding," Shepherd said. "It's very exciting."

To find out more about the chamber, visit: <https://www.martinsville.com/index.cfm>.

Second report announced on Systemic Bias in Virginia Law

Gov. Ralph Northam recommitted to addressing the legacy of structural racism in Virginia's laws, as his Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in the Law issued its second report outlining policy recommendations to confront the impacts of discriminatory laws.

Many of these recommendations are reflected in Northam's current legislative priorities, including measures to restore voting rights, invest in education, and expand expungements of prior convictions.

"Our Commonwealth remains focused on acknowledging and righting the wrongs of our past," said Northam. "This latest report makes clear that there is still work to do to shed the ugly remnants of Virginia's history. The Commission is already having a significant impact on our shared legislative priorities and I look forward to continuing our partnership to build a more honest, equitable, and inclusive future for all."

The Commission's recommendations played a key role in the formation of Northam's current legislative agenda, which includes proposals to automatically restore the voting rights of people with felony convictions, legalize adult-use marijuana, abolish the death penalty, invest in education infrastructure and early childhood education, expand expungement of previous convictions, and protect the ownership rights of "heirs property." The Commission's work also informed many of Northam's legislative proposals for the August 2020 special session that centered on meaningful police reform and

COVID-19 relief.

Northam established the Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law in June 2019 and appointed its members in September 2019. The Commission was initially tasked with reviewing the Acts of Assembly, Code of Virginia, and administrative regulations to identify racially discriminatory language still on Virginia's books and making recommendations to address laws that were intended to or could have the effect of promoting or enabling racial discrimination or inequity. The Commission's interim report, published in December 2019, cited nearly 100 instances of overtly discriminatory language. Working closely with the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, Northam proposed and secured the unanimous passage of fourteen bills that repealed racist language related to education, housing, transportation, health care, voting, and more. While many of these Acts of Assembly are longer enforced or have been invalidated by subsequent federal and state legislation and court decisions, they had remained enshrined in law.

In June 2020, Northam extended the term and scope of the Commission with the goals of identifying existing state laws and regulations that create or perpetuate racial disparities and developing policies that increase protections for minority and marginalized Virginians. The Commission's expanded charge underscores the Northam Administration's ongoing work to remedy historical inequities in areas like education, health care, housing, and criminal justice.

"We were honored to support the Governor and his effort to right historic wrongs and create a more just and equitable Virginia," said Chair of the Commission and former Chief Deputy Attorney General of Virginia Cynthia Hudson. "This summer's events demonstrated that the relevance of the Commission's work could not be more clear, nor the research and recommendations we made more timely."

"In addition to informing ongoing policy change, our hope is that this report educates more Virginians about the history of structural racism in Virginia, and the negative impact that this history continues to inflict on so many people, and across so many areas of life, in the Commonwealth today," said vice chairman of the Commission and University of Virginia School of Law Professor Andy Block. "Students in the State and Local Government Policy Clinic played a vital role in all aspects of our work, from putting together data on racial disparities, to researching policy recommendations to address these disparities, to helping draft the final report."

The commission's work is slated to continue after the 2021 legislative session, when members will focus their attention on laws and regulations that directly contribute to inequity in economic achievement and stability. The commission will also use this report as a tool to engage with people across the Commonwealth and gain a deeper understanding of the effects of and solutions to centuries of state-sanctioned racial bias and discrimination in Virginia.

Former Patrick GOP chairman to challenge incumbent in primary

Attorney and former Patrick County GOP Chairman Wren Williams announced Wednesday that he will challenge incumbent Del. Charles Poindexter, R-Glade Hill, in the June primary.

Williams said he decided to throw his hat in the ring because "I'm tired of is losing jobs, opportunities, financing and even our retirees" who move out of the district to be closer to their children.

"People are frustrated" and many in the district encouraged Williams to seek the post, starting with the previous election cycle.

At the time, Williams said he decided to wait until he gained additional experience – something that he has accomplished in a number of ways, including serving as GOP chairman in Patrick County and also traveling to Wisconsin to work on alleged election fraud.

With those experiences and more, "I feel like I have gotten the experience I need. I am capable, willing and able" to "jump into the pit and fight for us," Williams said, and added that he is willing to learn anything that he doesn't know.

Williams, 32, is from Stuart, "but I will represent the entire 9th District, not only" Patrick County, he said, and noted the district also includes Henry and Franklin counties.

"I am running to represent the 9th district because for too long, career politicians have forgotten about our com-

munity and we continue to lose. Liberals in Richmond have trampled on our God-given, Constitutional rights, and in the Legislature, I will bring a new energy and fresh perspective to fighting for Southwest, Southside, and our conservative values," he said.

Williams is an Eagle Scout and the owner of Schneider & Williams Law Firm, along with his wife, Britt. Williams' family has deep roots in Patrick County and the community. He and his family have run several successful businesses, including Ten Oaks Flooring, and have employed thousands of people in Southwest and Southside.

A graduate of Patrick County High School, Williams attended Hampden-Sydney College as a Patrick Henry Scholar, and later attended Samford University's Cumberland School of Law where he met his wife. He returned to his hometown to practice law and serve his community.

Williams has been active in conservative politics from a young age and served as the Republican Chairman of Patrick County from 2018 to 2021, increasing membership, helping flip the board of supervisors to Republican control, and raising money to make Patrick County one of the most active Republican Committees in the Commonwealth earning the Republican Party of Virginia's "Unit of the Year" award.

See Challenge, page 7

PET OF THE WEEK



Biggie Cheese is a 4-year-old male domestic shorthair cat available for adoption at the SPCA of Martinsville-Henry County. He is shy but loving and best suited for a quiet home. Cats and kittens are \$20 to adopt. Call (276) 638-7297 for more information.

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OBITUARIES

Richard Lewis Walls

Richard Lewis Walls, 82, of Collinsville, passed away Monday, February 8, 2021, at SOVAH Health of Martinsville. He was born March 13, 1938, in Martinsville, to the late Roy Gordon Walls and Lelia Hodges Walls. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a son, Dwayne Callaway and brother, Robert Alexander Walls.



helped on the farm, and loved his three cats.

He is survived by his wife, Linda Young Walls; daughters, Tracy Hamilton (Shawn), Regina Nunn (Robert) and Jennifer Joyce (Kevin); sister, Sally Ann Blonigan; sister-in-law, Aso Walls; and three grandchildren, Ashley Nunn, Spencer Joyce and Colton Joyce.

A graveside service was held Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at Henry Memorial Park.

Wright Funeral Service and Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservices.net.

James Edward Wells

James Edward Wells, 42, of Collinsville, Virginia passed away Sunday, February 14, 2021, at Roanoke Memorial Hospital. He was born November 3, 1978, in Martinsville, Virginia to James Robert Wells Sr. and Lisa Smith Wells. He was a member of The Upper Room Worship Center and was a 1997 graduate of Martinsville High School. He enjoyed golf, the Duke Basketball team, Virginia Cavaliers football and his dog, Maggie.



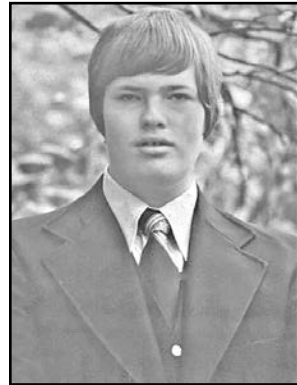
In addition to his parents, he is survived by his brother, James Robert Wells "Digger" (Kim); grandmother, Sallie Wells, of which he was her caretaker; nephew, Gage; great-nephew, Eli; several aunts, uncles, cousins and numerous special friends.

All services will be at a later date.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservices.net.

Joseph Darryl Whitlow

Joseph Darryl Whitlow, 60, of Henry, Virginia passed away Sunday, February 14, 2021, at Martinsville Health and Rehab. He was born March 20, 1960, in Martinsville, Virginia to the late Clarence and Mary Martin Whitlow. He attended Providence Church. He loved to write, eat, bowl and play tennis.



Bryan Heath; four great nephews; and one great niece.

A graveside service was held on Friday, February 19, 2021, at Mill Creek Missionary Baptist Church.

The family requests no visitation at their home due to COVID 19.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at <http://www.wrightfuneralservices.net>.

Danny Lee Holladsworth

Mr. Danny Lee Holladsworth, age 59 of Collinsville Virginia passed away at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital on Wednesday, February 9, 2021. He was born in Martinsville on November 8, 1961 to the late Robert Lee Holladsworth and Myrtle Dillon Holladsworth. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two brothers, Bill Holladsworth and Kenny Holladsworth; and one sister, Linda H. Edwards.



He is survived by four grandchildren, Carter Foley, Callie Zook, Ethan Foley, and Colton Foley; five siblings, Carolyn Miller of Martinsville, Glenn Conner of Fieldale, Cecil "Clinton" Conner of Bassett, Jewel L. Conner of Fieldale, and Barbara Holladsworth of Coconut Creek, Florida; and numerous nieces and nephews.

All services for Mr. Holladsworth will be private. Moody Funeral Home in Stuart has been entrusted with the arrangements. Online condolences may be made by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

Richard Donald "Tripp" Haynes III

Richard Donald "Tripp" Haynes III, 35, of Axton, passed away Friday, February 12, 2021 at Smith Mountain Lake, Franklin County, and Virginia. He was born May 29, 1985 in Martinsville, Virginia, to the late Richard Donald Haynes, Jr., and Nancy Minter Haynes.



In addition to his mother, Mr. Haynes is survived by his son, Cayden Cochran, and sister Jennifer Hankins (Harden); three nieces Savannah, Piper and Paisley Hankins; and numerous aunts and uncles.

The visitation for Mr. Haynes was on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at Wright Funeral Service. Services and burial will be at a later date.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservices.net.

Mr. Haynes was of the Baptist faith, and enjoyed fishing, hunting and four wheeling with his family and friends. He also loved spending time with his son which he loved dearly.

Marcus Myers, 32, of Martinsville, Virginia passed away Monday, February 15, 2021, at his home. He was born October 18, 1988 in Roanoke, Virginia to Cary Myers and Charlotte Woody Myers. He attended New Light Baptist Church. He enjoyed playing games, joking, fishing, music, electronics, and the Washington Football team.



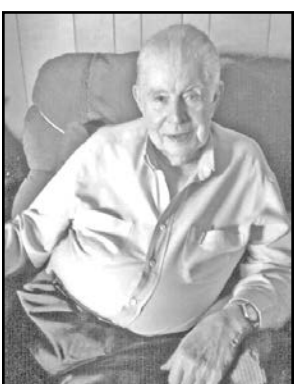
Fletcher Myers, Jr. and Lillie Christine Myers; and a host of other family and friends.

The funeral will be Sunday, February 21, 2021, at 1 p.m. at Wright Funeral Service Chapel, with Elder Mark Norman officiating. Burial is in Carver Memorial Gardens. Visitation will be Saturday, February 20, 2021, from 4 to 7 p.m. at Wright Funeral Service Chapel.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservices.net.

Carl Lee Rea

Carl Lee Rea, 87, of Martinsville, Virginia passed away February 10, 2021 at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. He was born January 31, 1934 in Martinsville to the late George Robert and Elizabeth Rea. He had been self-employed for over 50 years as a carpenter.



son, Robert Lee Rea and a sister, Shirley Plaster.

He is survived by his step-son, Thomas George; and a sister, Marie Baldwin.

A graveside service will be private at the Pleasant Grove Christian Church Cemetery.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at <http://www.wrightfuneralservices.net>.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at <http://www.wrightfuneralservices.net>.

Gary Curtis Armstrong

Gary Curtis Armstrong, 53, of Roanoke, Virginia passed away Monday, February 15, 2021, at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. He was born April 20, 1967, in Martinsville, Virginia to Curtis Armstrong and the late Barbara Murphy Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong loved being with his family.



stepmother, Shirley Armstrong; step sisters, Cynthia Anderson, Dana Dodson, Christina Denton; and stepbrother, Lee Bowles, Jr.

A memorial service will be held Monday, February 22, 2021, at 2 p.m. at First Assembly of God, with Reverend Joe Nunley officiating. Visitation will be one hour prior to the service.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservices.net.

Free summer meals available to all youngsters

Henry County School Nutrition is a sponsor of the USDA Summer Food Service Program.

Groups hosting students/children during the summer months for any type of activities, (day camps, Vacation Bible Schools, tutoring, etc.), can receive free meals or snacks to give to the children who come to their site. To get more information or to set up a site to receive food, call 276-638-1159 and ask about the Summer Food Service Program.

Sites that would like to start serving meals/

snacks at the beginning of June or by June 10 need to register their sites with School Nutrition by April 15 to get timely approval. Sites with later dates of service may be added throughout the summer; but at least two-weeks notice is needed before the site begins service to ensure enough food and supplies can be ordered and the site can be approved by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

Meals will be provided to all children age 18 and under, without charge and will be the same for all children regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability, and there will be no discrimination in the course of the meal service.

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027), found online at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-program-discrimination-complaint-form.pdf> and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed letter to USDA by: (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Challenge from page 5

He recently stepped down from that post to concentrate his efforts on the campaign.

During the 2020 election, Williams traveled the country to help the Republican National Committee (RNC) and President Trump fight

for voter integrity in the courtroom in Wisconsin.

Williams and his wife live in Stuart, with their chocolate lab, Mousse, and Golden Retriever, Skip.

For more information, visit <https://wrenwilliamsva.com/>.



Positions from page 1

matters of local government.

By representing the community on the boards and commissions, members have the ability to serve as the voice of the area in which they live, Bowles added.

"It is important we have a diverse group of people on these boards/commissions, so a plethora of ideas and thoughts are heard," she said.

Bowles said there are plenty of other benefits that come with the positions.

"An individual would be providing input and insight in decisions that affect our citizens," she said. "It is important to have people who are in touch with our citizens and who care about the community as a whole. Another benefit for our younger generations would be for experience and it could be added to a resume."

Each board or commission has different rules for appointment or qualifications with members typically meeting once a month or on an as-needed basis, according to Bowles.

Most of the positions are appointed directly by the city council.

"Personally, I am looking for people who genuinely care and who are interested in the board/commission," Bowles said. Applying to the positions doesn't take much time either, Bowles said.

"An individual would complete a form on the city's website. It asks your name, address, phone number, etc., and why you would like to serve and your qualifications. This is generally a paragraph," she said.

"You can also submit your resume if you would like to the city manager, but it is not required. It is an easy process and does not take much time."

Of the available appointments, the Arts and Cultural Committee and the Industrial Development Authority have the most vacancies, at seven.

The Arts and Cultural Committee consists of 11 members in total: two citizens, a city business owner, and one representative each from the Piedmont Arts Association/Studio 107, the Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH), the Southern Virginia Artisan Center, the MHC Historical Society, the Architectural Review Board (ARB), the MHC Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association (MURA), and TheatreWorks.

Bernadette Moore, director of exhibitions and marketing for Piedmont Arts, represents the organization on the committee and she discussed their role in the local government.

"The Arts and Cultural Committee, since I started on it, has been in charge of finding opportunities for artists to relocate into the physical area of the arts and cultural community which includes Uptown and down Starling Avenue towards Piedmont Arts," Moore said.

"We find opportunities for them to relocate there and provide incentives for them to start their own businesses."

Moore said the committee shows the city's support for arts and culture.

"It really lets the artists know that the city wants

to help them, and that the city is behind them," she said. "We are really looking for more ways that we can be of service."

On a personal level, Moore said she enjoys being part of the committee as a way of extending her work of promoting artists in her capacity at Piedmont Arts.

"And I love being able to promote Martinsville as a place that is welcoming to artists and a place they can really grow," Moore said. "Arts are integral to the health of a community. It's not just entertainment. It also improves our everyday lives. Supporting our local artists really helps our economy which is really needed in these hard times."

The committee still has open positions for a city business owner and representatives from VMNH, the Southern Virginia Artisan Center, the historical society, ARB, MURA, and Theaterworks.

The following provides a brief overview of other boards and commissions with major vacancies:

Industrial Development Authority (7 vacancies)

Established under Chapter 33 of Title 15.1, of the Code of Virginia, the Industrial Development Authority is involved in certain economic development projects. The IDA consists of seven members serving four-year terms which are appointed by the City Council. The IDA meets on an as-needed basis.

Transportation Safety Commission (6 vacancies)

The Transportation Safety Commission was created by action of the City Council pursuant to powers granted in Chapter 2, Section 5, of the Code of the Transportation and Safety in the City.

Regular members may serve three consecutive four-year terms. The Commission meets on the second Monday of each month.

Tree Board (5 vacancies)

The Tree Board was established for the purposes of administering the provisions of the city tree ordinance. This board, in collaboration with the City Manager and Superintendent of Schools or their designees, shall consider, investigate, make findings, reports and recommendations regarding

any special matter coming within the scope of its work. It shall be the responsibility of the board to study, investigate, and develop recommendations for the care, preservation, pruning, planting, replanting, removal or disposition of trees and shrubs in the parks, along streets and in other publicly owned areas.

Board of Appeals (4 vacancies)

Originally established to review and decide appeals to the requirements of the Uniform Statewide Building Code as enforced by the City, the Board of Appeals consists of five members who serve five-year terms, all of whom are appointed by City Council. At present, the Board also has the authority to decide matters relating to the City's Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance, Flood Plain Ordinances, and Fire Prevention Code. Decisions and actions made by the Board are by resolution. The Board meets on an as-needed basis to consider specific administrative decisions and interpretations of the ordinances under its authority.

Board of Zoning Appeals (4 vacancies)

The Board of Zoning Appeals hears appeals on the city's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. Five members are appointed by the Circuit Court Judge to serve five-year terms. The Board meets on an as-needed basis, usually during the daytime. Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals may hold no other public office in the city except the Planning Commission. Members must be residents of the city and be requested by the city attorney to the judge in order to serve.

Other vacancies include the Comprehensive Services Act Community Policy and Management Team, the Henry County-Martinsville Joint Social Services Board, the Pittsylvania County Community Action Agency Board, the Planning Commission, the Southern Area Agency on Aging, the Southern Virginia Recreation Facilities, and the West Piedmont Planning Technical Advisory Committee.

For more information on vacancies or to complete an application, visit: <https://www.martinsville-va.gov/government/boards-and-commissions>.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTICE

All real estate advertised in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitations or discrimination based on race, color, sex or national origin," or an intention to make any such preferences, limitation or discrimination. Our readers are informed that all dwellings advertised in this paper are available on an equal opportunity basis. This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate or employment which is in violation of the law.

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Patrick Henry Community College

in Martinsville, VA has the following job openings: Assistant Coordinator, Nursing Retention Specialist, MHC After 3 After School Director, REV (Reemploying Virginians) Coach, Building and Grounds Technician, MHC After 3 Instructor, MHC After 3 Program Leader, and Adjunct Faculty in Certified Professional Coder, Construction Trades, Nursing, NCCER Plumbing, and Nurse Aide Primary Instructor. For details and application information please visit <http://patrickhenry.edu/>, scroll to the bottom of the page,

HELP WANTED

and click on Employment Opportunities. Patrick Henry Community College is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or veteran's status. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.

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Ferrum College Director of Student Accounts

Ferrum College is accepting applications for a Director of Student Accounts. The Director of Student Accounts is responsible for the student billing, successful collection of student accounts receivable, reporting and participation in various college committees. The Director of Student Accounts reports to the Controller.

Primary responsibilities include: Provides excellent customer service while assisting and advising students, parents and the Ferrum College community with questions regarding student accounts.

Maintains functional expertise on the accounts receivable module to insure timely and accurate billing.

Coordinates billing schedule and processes with appropriate offices on campus. Manages billing policies and procedures for different academic levels and constituencies.

Analyzes and resolves billing errors and discrepancies while evaluating existing practices in an effort to continuously improve operational effectiveness.

Assures compliance with Federal and State laws regarding privacy

HELP WANTED

(FERPA), Title IV regulations and Fair Debt and Collections Act.

Responsible for 1098-T reporting.

Maintains Student Accounts documentation of all policies and procedures and monitors accuracy of Student Accounts information on Portal.

Assists as required with external audit processes.

Required Minimum Qualifications:

Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, Accounting, Finance, or related field from an accredited college or university.

Three or more years of full-time work experience in accounts receivable.

Proficient in the use of MS Word, Excel, Power Point and Access.

Excellent oral and written communication skills.

Problem solving, decision making and leadership ability.

Supervisory experience required.

Preferred Qualifications
Previous experience working in higher education environment.

Knowledge and understanding of Federal and State regulations related to Financial Aid.

Previous experience using Ellucian Colleague Accounts Receivable.

We offer a competitive compensation package including medical, dental, life, STD/LTD insurances; paid holidays, personal and sick leave and vacation; and a 403(b) retirement plan. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter of interest, resume, and 3 references with the names and contact information to Human Resources, Ferrum College, P.O. Box 1000, Ferrum, VA 24088 or email to resumes@ferrum.edu. Background check required.

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DCR is EOE. Call (276) 930-2424 or Apply at Park Office, 967 Fairystone Lake Drive, Stuart, VA 24171

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 **March 10, 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 **March 23, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd., Collinsville, Virginia.

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-21-04 Scott Frye / Stimmel Associates

The property is located at 3446 Virginia Ave., in the Collinsville District. The Tax Map number is 29.4(17)/52A. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 0.59-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Commercial District B-1. The applicant intends to use the subject property for an adjacent parking lot in conjunction with the planned restaurant to be developed on Virginia Ave.

Case R-21-05 Donna T. Mellott

The property is located at 3090 Mt Olivet Road, in the Iriswood District. The Tax Map number is 43.5/56. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 12-acres from Suburban Residential District SR to Rural Residential District R-R. The applicant intends to remove the old house from the property and replace it with a manufactured home.

Case R-21-06 Christina N. Porter

The property is located at 263 George Hairston Road, in the Blackberry District. The Tax Map number is 27.8/92. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 5.6-acres from Rural Residential District S-R to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant wishes to keep chickens, which is only allowed on agricultural zoned 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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LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Les R. Adams Delegate

During his 2017 campaign for governor of Virginia, Republican nominee Ed Gillespie would regularly warn audiences of how critically significant the political choices made in that election, and those immediately following, would be to our Commonwealth. Either Virginia would, with Republican leadership, remain the “northernmost southern state” or, with Democrats in charge, Gillespie explained, become the “southernmost northern state.” The quip has proven to be remarkably prescient.

Of course, Gillespie suffered defeat to Democrat Ralph Northam, who, initially restrained by a Republican legislature, would sparingly exercise the veto and began his term with examples of negotiated compromise. As witnessed, that approach dramatically shifted following the advent of new Democrat majorities in the state House and Senate that coincided with backlash from the governor’s scandalous comments supporting infanticide and the revelation of his racially offensive past conduct. Surviving an array of calls to resign from members of his own party, the governor continued in his post, but has yielded to the most “progressive” agenda yet witnessed in our state.

And now, the Virginia House of Delegates has passed legislation, currently pending in the Senate, that would make this Commonwealth the first “southern” state to, among many other significant changes, eliminate the death penalty and legalize marijuana, respectively. These sizable policy shifts are each considerable in their own right, but that both bills may become law in the same year following a “short session” (the shortest and “virtual” – with another special session attached), is nothing short of remarkable. Moreover, as

I touched upon in my column for last week, these consequential measures follow a cascade of other proposals more culturally aligned with those in “northern” states.

In the 2020 regular session, this remaking of Virginia customs began with unprecedented attacks on the second amendment right to keep and bear arms as exercised by law abiding citizens. Although to a lesser extent this year, that effort has continued in the House of Delegates, where bills were passed to criminalize the lawful possession of firearms on public grounds in proximity to the Capital and at any polling place, without regard to holders of concealed weapon permits or circumstances where guns are kept in a vehicle.

Likewise, Virginia has long protected religious liberty and the right of conscience. As a matter of public policy, that is rapidly changing. Continuing with last year’s model to punish people of faith under the guise of “fighting discrimination,” Democrats in the House passed a bill that would repeal conscience protections for religiously affiliated child placement agencies. Another bill seeks to punish employers and employees with new “workplace harassment” descriptions that would encourage complaints based on “sexual orientation” or “gender identity.”

The current Democrat majority has also passed legislation to allow coverage for abortion in health insurance plans under Virginia’s Obamacare health exchange, managed by taxpayer dollars. Our efforts to deny taxpayer funded abortions with budget language used in years past under Republican majorities were denied. With many serious practical challenges facing our communities, it is regrettable that governance with such ideological divisiveness continues.

The Poindexter Report: Week #5 February 8-13, 2021

Charles Poindexter Delegate

This week ended with the U.S. Census Bureau announcing they will not deliver the census data to the states until September 30, 2021. This makes it nearly impossible for the new Virginia Redistricting Commission to redraw and receive approval of new Delegate District lines in time for our November 2, 2021. This means I will run for re-election this year in the 9th House District I currently represent and as it is currently configured: Patrick, western Henry, and most of Franklin counties.

In Session this week the House processed some Senate bills and the House Budget Bill. The proposed House budget contained some good items in terms of basic services, such as in education, public safety, health (COVID related), and raises for teachers and state-supported local employees. On the other hand, the House budget contains a) little of substance to help get kids back into school (the vast majority of education money goes to teacher raises and to schools that have lost population), b) funding for policies I strongly reject, such as repealing the death penalty, restoring lenient parole, gutting minimum sentencing requirements, expunging criminal records, legalization of marijuana, and more social and environmental justice programs. The budget even contains taxpayer funding for electric car rebates, I suppose so wealthy people from NOVA can buy Teslas.

My Republican Caucus offered objections and amendments to the budget on the Floor on these and other

spending proposals. House Democrats passed them by or voted the objections down, with the exception of when they agreed to more dollars for farmers for BMPs.

If one analyzes other budget spending items, it is clear the intent of House Democrats is to move all Virginians to a Universal health care system, as they funded a study to identify options for funding a Virginia-run health care system. Another spending item allows illegal aliens to receive in-state tuition rates and financial aid. These policies will reduce seats available to Virginia citizens.

Due to the above issues and the sweeping scope of state spending increases, I voted against the budget.

Related to the revenue side of the budget, the annual “conformity to federal tax rules” bill was passed and the budget in a key respect was not based on the federal stimulus and intent. The issue there was will Virginia allow small businesses to deduct certain operating expenses, as in the December Stimulus Bill, or not allow these expenses to be deducted and, thus, have to pay additional state taxes, which was not the stated intent of the December federal stimulus bill. The Governor and his folks are trying to not conform to this intent, meaning Virginia would not agree to this and thus receive tax money to spend from mostly very small businesses. Nonsense! Follow the stated intent of federal taxpayer-friendly intent and not increase the tax burden on small businesses.

Many of the Senate bills were responsible and, thus, passed the House on a bipartisan basis. Others were not so. For example, the proposal for

Dominion Energy—the APCO for 4/5th of Virginia—to provide electric school buses for schools east and north of here. The bill provides for Dominion to provide electric school buses at \$325,000 per bus (diesel/gas buses cost around \$105,000) to school divisions in Dominion’s coverage area and charge their meter ratepayers for them in their electric rates. Whoa! The power company providing buses instead of the school divisions buying less costly buses?

Even more insidious, the bill treats the bus and related devices as pollution control devices, meaning the buses would be exempt from any state and local taxes, which is not normal tax treatment for utility company assets. The point here is “anything goes” to electrify transportation vehicles, be darned the cost. This reminds me of forcing coal out of the energy mix in the U.S. while China has under construction enough new coal plants to produce enough power to supply Germany’s entire electricity needs, plus China has numerous coal plants under construction in Africa and Asian countries as part of its “Belt and Road” initiative, which is nothing but influence/dominion of poor countries.

Next week the House will process more Senate bills, more controversial bills, of course, while conferees begin to sort out the differences between the House and Senate proposed budgets in time to adjourn around March 1.

The House continues to meet virtually, despite the shortcomings of doing so, instead of in Richmond. I can be contacted by calling my 9th District office at (540)576-2600 or DelCPoindexter@house.virginia.gov

Bill Stanley State Senator

This past week in Richmond, the Senate of Virginia finally completed its work on all bills filed by senators. As a result, we were finally able to adjourn for the evening of “cross-over” on Friday, February 5th at around 11 p.m., after a 13-hour marathon of debate on the remaining bills before us. While legislation to abolish the death penalty grabbed an outsized share of media coverage, several significant measures approved by the Senate are now headed to the House of Delegates for their consideration.

The liberal Democrats are determined to fundamentally change the Commonwealth of Virginia that will make us less safe, and also will make it much harder for businesses to operate successfully in Virgin-

ia. I have never seen anything like this in the years I have had the honor and privilege to serve as your Senator. The Democrat majority Senate has voted to: pack the state appeals court with their liberal judges by increasing their numbers from 11 to 17; change our Constitution not just to remove the marriage amendment, but also to propose an amendment to enshrine Gay marriage in our Constitution; legalize recreational marijuana; reinstate parole; provide for automatic restoration of civil rights to violent felons; create the institution of a newly-coined phrase of “environmental justice” programs in and across all levels of state government; expand job-killing regulations on all small businesses; eliminate mandatory minimums prison sentence for persons convicted of the most heinous crimes; deny

our military, OGA, and expats the ability to vote overseas-electronically; and further weaken the integrity of our state and local elections.

There is even more unwise and radically liberal legislation passed by the House that we will now be considering now in the Senate. It is clear the wishes of the liberal lawmakers of Northern Virginia have dominated this session so far, and they are ignoring the needs of the rest of Virginia. I will keep you updated on these bills as they progress through committee.

Republicans were able to find victories for Virginia in spite of the Democrats’ push to make Virginia more like California. The Senate approved legislation to bring some transparency to the deliberations and decisions of the Virginia Parole Board by a bipartisan vote of 33 to 6. The legislation, sponsored by Sen. David Suetterlein (R) of Roanoke County, would require the Parole Board to adhere to the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Last year, the Parole Board was subjected to investigations by the State Inspector General after the Board granted parole to a convicted murderer without first consulting with the victim’s family as required by law. Things got worse after it was learned the Inspector General was investigating several cases of malfeasance related to the Parole Board. Exacerbating the situation, the Northam Administration worked to quash public information about the investigations and the Parole Board asserted its exemption from the provisions of FOIA.

Senator Suetterlein first offered this reform legislation during last year’s special session, when it passed the Senate by a vote of 29 to 10. House Democrats killed the legislation on a party-line vote in committee.

Election integrity is a long-standing priority for Senate Republicans. Sen. Jen Kiggans (R) of Virginia Beach won bipartisan support for her common-sense bill to ensure deceased Virginians don’t remain on the voter rolls. Her legislation requiring the State Registrar of Vital Records provide a list of Virginians who have died to the Department of Elections on a weekly basis was approved by a vote of 34 to 5.

Last year, in a study of 42 states, the Public Interest Legal Foundation found over 350,000 dead people on voter rolls. Maintaining accurate and up-to-date voter

rolls is critical to ensuring the integrity of elections and preventing fraud. Sen. Kiggans’s legislation will increase the accuracy of our voter rolls and help to prevent invalid votes from being cast.

Additionally, Democrats in charge of both the House and Senate want to tax the payments of PPP given by the government to our small Virginia businesses, even though the receipt of those loans by business owners staved off massive layoffs of people from their employment during the pandemic that could have bankrupted Virginia’s unemployment compensation fund. Unfortunately, the Democrats’ proposals only partially conformed with the federal PPP tax laws which means those VA businesses that took the loans to keep their employees working under COVID will now pay taxes on the PPP.

Whenever there are changes to the federal tax code, Virginia adjusts its taxation policies. When the federal government passed the CARES Act to respond to the pandemic, it included measures so businesses receiving proceeds from the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) to keep their employees on the job wouldn’t have added taxes for utilizing the program.

You might think it would be obvious that Virginia wouldn’t tax PPP funding, either. But Democrats have a lot of liberal spending priorities to fund. And, they have never been known to favor less taxes and less government spending. As a result, their bill conforming the state’s tax code to the federal government’s does not exempt PPP funds received.

The Senate defeated a Republican-offered amendment to the conformity legislation that would have ensured these funds weren’t taxed, with every Democrat voting against this fairness measure. Then, as a compromise, Senate Democrats agreed to approve exemptions that would lower the potential tax burden on a portion of these funds. While not ideal, it does mean struggling small businesses won’t be unfairly taxed for keeping people employed by utilizing a federal program they were encouraged to use.

If there’s an issue or bill about which you’d like to share your views, call the Senate Message Center toll-free at (833) 617-1821; the Richmond branch of my law office at (804) 225-0528 or email at district20@senate.virginia.gov.



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