

Longtime fire chief doesn't see downside

"Junior" Lynch went to the Henry County Board of Supervisors meeting on Jan. 25 because the Bassett Fire Department was requesting items from the county.

But when other members of the fire department showed up, along with Jeb Bassett, of Bassett Furniture, and even Lynch's mother, Esther Waller, he suspected something was up.

Indeed it was. Lynch, the chief of the Bassett Fire Department for the past 19 years, was presented with the Jack Dalton Award, the "highest honor and most prestigious award" given by the board of supervisors to recognize "exemplary community service," according to its resolution honoring Lynch.

The resolution noted that Lynch "not only serves selflessly but enhances the public service of his peers through monthly training sessions that inspire the next generation of leaders to continuously 'think outside the box.'"

He "dedicates numerous unpaid man-hours on top of his volunteer time to see to the upkeep of his department's facilities and equipment, saving countless dollars that are used on gear and supplies to better serve the community," the resolution continued. His devotion has earned him "the admiration and respect of not only his crew but the fire safety community at large," it added.

"I was very surprised, very honored," Lynch said in a recent interview. "It's only given out to one person a year."

Bassett Fire Department President Manker Stone nominated Lynch for the honor.

In a separate interview, Stone echoed the resolution, noting that Lynch runs all but maybe 2 percent of the more than 300 calls the department gets each year and spends countless hours on a computer with reports and research, fixing equipment and establish-



Bassett Fire Department Chief "Junior" Lynch shows the Jack Dalton Award that he received from the Henry County Board of Supervisors on Jan. 25. It is the county's highest and most prestigious honor that recognizes exemplary community service.

ing a good relationship with others, among other things.

He nominated Lynch because "I thought the rest of the county ought to know the kind of dedication he puts into it."

"When somebody from our department is recognized with something like the Jack Dalton Award, it looks good not only on that person but the department as a whole. We have a lot of pride in the department," Stone added.

As captain, Lynch said he tries to be "fair with everybody. I try to treat everybody the same. There are a lot (of department members) who have been here longer than me that I respect a lot. The fire department is more like a family than

See **Fire Chief**, page 6

Reversion referendum bill passes subcommittee, committee

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

One of two bills in the General Assembly that would require a voter referendum of city residents on the issue of reversion has passed out of committee.

House Bill (HB) 173, by Del. Danny Marshall, R-Danville, was approved by a 6-3 vote in the Counties, Cities, and Towns (CCT) subcommittee #2 on Jan. 27, and by a 14-8 vote the following day by the full CCT committee.

The bill was read for the first time on the House floor, but was 'passed by' for the day on Wednesday.

State Sen. Bill Stanley, R-Moneta, has filed a companion bill in the Senate which, as of Wednesday, had not yet been scheduled to be heard by the Local Government Committee, to which it was assigned.

HB 173, Marshall told the subcommittee, addressed a matter of "simple transparency." He noted the issue of a 1 percent sales tax increase was not decided by a city council or a board of supervisors, but by residents. "A question this large, to me, should go before the voters," he said.

Martinsville's Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley appeared in person before the subcommittee, and virtually before the full committee.

She said she was speaking on behalf of city residents "who have expressed to me that they feel like they have not been afforded a voice in this process or full public vetting of the consequences of the reversion action."

See **Reversion Referendum**, page 6

Martinsville taps Emmy-winning journalist as Public Information Officer

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Kendall Davis is a storyteller at heart, a passion he hopes to bring to his position at Martinsville's public information officer (PIO). A former Southside Bureau reporter for news station WDBJ7, Davis stepped into his new role with the city on Jan. 14, where he will manage the city's social media accounts and handle all media and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

City Manager Leon Towarnicki said the city has been without a PIO for about 10 years. "We wanted to bring that position back for a number of reasons—to provide consistency and uniformity in how information is disseminated; to be much more proactive in our communications with the public" including social media, press releases, and general city information; "and to have a staff person dedicated solely to that purpose. Without the PIO, those responsibilities were being spread among several staff members and from time to time there were gaps in our communications."

"We're excited to add Kendall to our staff as the city's public information officer," Towarnicki said in a press release. "His familiarity with the area, knowledge of local government, and his technical abilities using various media platforms will greatly improve the city's ability to efficiently and effectively communicate important and relevant information to our citizens in a timely manner."

Davis said he applied for the job because he saw an opportunity to continue using his passion for storytelling



Kendall Davis, an Emmy-winning reporter, has joined the City of Martinsville as its new public information officer. Davis will be tasked with managing the city's social media accounts as well as handling all media and FOIA requests.

and sharing information, honed over the course of his career as a camera man and reporter for several television news outlets, to improve the lives of city residents.

See **Davis**, page 8

BZA approves Axton solar project

Callie Hietala
Staff writer



Warren Sakey, the project development manager for Rocky Ford Solar, LLC, gained approval from the Board of Zoning Appeals for a 90-megawatt solar facility in Axton. The BZA previously rejected a proposal by the same company at its Nov. meeting, but lauded Sakey and his team for responding to concerns voiced during the previous meeting

A special use permit for a new solar project has been approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals. The project was previously rejected after a marathon 4-hour meeting on Nov. 24, 2021, but the applicant refiled with some major changes to the proposal.

Warren Sakey, the project development manager for Rocky Ford Solar, LLC, said the company was seeking to construct a large-scale, 90-megawatt facility in

See **Solar Project**, page 4

Nursing agency filling the gaps in short-staffed hospitals

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

A new, fast-growing business is seeking more qualified nurses to join its ranks.

Tova Yellock is the founder and CEO of Elite Nurses Staffing Agency, LLC, a company that provides travel nurses to hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities which are short-handed.

Yellock said she has worked as a nurse since 2015, and as a travel nurse for the last three years. She decided that she wanted to become her own boss and, in December 2020, got a business license.

"It took me awhile to get everything in place," but by August,

Yellock had her first contract.

"I started advertising, I started hiring employees, and now I'm up to nine contracts and I have about 60 employees" on the roster, she said, adding she believes "I'm the only African American with this type of business in this area."

Yellock said travel nurses are assigned to work in different facilities that are short-staffed. The work is particularly needed now.

"Due to the pandemic, a lot of nurses have either quit their jobs or they need more staff because of the pandemic, so that's where my company comes in," she said. "I help their facilities make sure that their patients have 24/7 care with certified and qualified staff, even

when their staff can't cover it.

"I staff RNs (registered nurses), LPNs (licensed practical nurses), and CNAs (certified nursing assistants)," she said, adding that she's looking to take on even more.

Nurses working for her agency must be fully vaccinated, she said, adding "I do run into issues with nurses not wanting to be vaccinated, but it's a requirement."

Many of the facilities she assists also are short-staffed because some nurses are resisting vaccinations and therefore cannot work, she said.

"That's when my vaccinated nurses can come in and help with

See **Nursing Agency**, page 8

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

(Event information/calendar items must be received by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before the desired publication date. Email to news-reporter@theenterprise.net)

Saturday, Feb. 5

Join the Spencer-Penn Centre and Jessica Minter for Charcuterie for your Cutie! Create your own charcuterie board to take home to share with someone or enjoy by yourself. All supplies will be provided. The cost is \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. For information, call the Centre at (276) 957-5757.

The Dyer's Store Volunteer Fire Department (3230 Chatham Road, Martinsville) will host its Brunswick stew fundraiser. A quart of stew is \$9 and pickup is 11 a.m. Preorder your stew by calling the station at (276) 638-3184, contacting any of the department's members, or by sending a message to the Dyer's Store Vol. Fire Department Facebook page.

Wednesday, Feb. 9

The West Piedmont Health District will provide free, drive-through PCR testing for COVID-19 from 12:30-4 p.m. at the National Guard Armory parking lot (315 Commonwealth Boulevard, Martinsville.) The tests are limited to the first 100 participants. No registration is required and there is no age limit for testing. Participants must wear a mask and no pets are allowed in vehicles.

Friday, Feb. 11

It's Music Night at the Spencer-Penn Centre! Visit the Centre (475 Spencer-Penn Road, Spencer) for music by the Gap Civil old time band in Alumni Hall. Doors open at 5 p.m. and music begins at 6:20. Admission is a \$5 donation to the Centre and concessions will be sold. Come out and enjoy some great music.

Wednesday, Feb. 16

The West Piedmont Health District will provide free, drive-through PCR testing for COVID-19 from 12:30-4 p.m. at the National Guard Armory parking lot (315 Commonwealth Boulevard, Martinsville.) The tests are limited to the first 100 participants. No registration is required and there is no age limit for testing. Participants must wear a mask and no pets are allowed in vehicles.

Longwood University's Small

Business Development Center is offering an interactive Zoom workshop, CO.STARTERS Get Started, from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. This workshop will provide a jumpstart for anyone hoping to move toward an idea they've had, those stuck on a particular issue, or anyone just in need of a refresher. To register, visit clients.virginiasbdc.org/events.

Thursday, Feb. 17

The American Red Cross is hosting a blood drive at the Martinsville Elks Lodge (300 Fairy Street Ext., Martinsville) from 12-6 p.m. To schedule a donation appointment, visit redcrossblood.org.

Saturday, Feb. 19

In conjunction with the National African American Read-In, Piedmont Arts (215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) invites the community to take part in a celebration of African American artists, performers, and writers. Community members will read excerpts from books, stories, and poems by their favorite African American authors and a selection of books will be on display. All ages are welcome. The read-in takes place from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The Martinsville YMCA and Miles in Martinsville is bringing back its popular Nail the Rail 9-Miler and Run the Rail 5-Miler for 2022. Runners have the chance to run their choice of 9 or 5 miles beginning at milepost 0 of the Dick & Willie Trail. For more information or to register, visit milesinmartinsville.com.

Sunday, Feb. 20

The Spencer-Penn Centre (475 Spencer-Penn Road, Spencer) will host a barn quilt class from 12-4 p.m. All supplies are provided and pricing is based on size, ranging from \$75 to \$85. The registration deadline is Friday, Feb. 11. For more details or to register, call the Centre at (276) 957-5757.

Monday, Feb. 21

The American Red Cross is hosting a blood drive at the Collinsville Church of Christ (2115 Daniels Creek Road, Collinsville) from 1-6 p.m. To schedule an appointment, visit redcrossblood.org.

Wednesday, Feb. 23

The West Piedmont Health District will provide free, drive-through PCR testing for

COVID-19 from 12:30-4 p.m. at the National Guard Armory parking lot (315 Commonwealth Boulevard, Martinsville.) The tests are limited to the first 100 participants. No registration is required and there is no age limit for testing. Participants must wear a mask and no pets are allowed in vehicles.

Thursday, Feb. 24

Longwood University presents a Zoom workshop, Building the Foundation for Your New Business with business analyst Michael Scales. Participants will prepare to start a successful business by evaluating their entrepreneurial abilities, learning about marketing strategies and financial resources, and gaining tips on preparing a business plan. This virtual workshop will take place from 10-11:30 a.m. To register, visit clients.virginiasbdc.org/events.

Saturday, March 26

The Martinsville-Henry SPCA, the Martinsville City Police Department, and PetSense are partnering to host a microchip clinic from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. at PetSense (240 Commonwealth Blvd. W, Martinsville.) The cost of a microchip and registration is \$10. Dogs must be on leashes and cats must be in carriers for the safety of the animal.

ONGOING

The Louise R. Lester Spay/Neuter Clinic is hosting wellness clinics on Tuesdays. Clinics are by appointment only—no walk-ins will be accepted. February's clinics will be dedicated to families with public assistance only, but will open to everyone beginning in March. Call (276) 638-7297 to schedule your appointment.

The Warming Center of Martinsville and Henry County, located at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church (725 Beechnut Lane) is open to provide a warm place to sleep, a warm meal, and personal supplies at no cost to those in need. Anyone who needs transportation to the center can be picked up at 6:45 p.m. at the Martinsville library and 6:25 p.m. at the Collinsville library. Weekly schedules are posted at the Martinsville library, YMCA, and on the MHC Warming Center Facebook page every Saturday. For more information, call (276) 207-9660. Anyone who wishes to volunteer at the Warming Center or make a donation can find more information on Facebook or at www.foresthillspc.com/mhc-

warming-shelter.html.

Piedmont Arts hosts three exhibits: "Our Living Past: Platinum Portraits of Southern Music Makers," "Dear B.J.: Postcards from the Pandemic," and "Tara Compton." All exhibits run through March 12. Museum admission is free.

Henry County Parks & Recreation invites you to trek along the trail! Meet as a group and walk along a different trail each week. Explore the trails of Martinsville-Henry County make new friends, and get some fresh air and exercise. Call the HCPR Senior Services office at (276) 634-4644 to find out where the week's trek is happening! Trail Trekkers meet Thursday of each week (weather permitting) at 1 p.m. in the fall and winter and 9:15 a.m. in spring and summer.

The Blue Ridge Regional Library offers free one-day passes to the Virginia Museum of Natural History and the Henry County YMCA with your library card. The passes are good for one day and exclude special events. There is a wait period before you can check out the pass again. For more details and exclusions, visit brrl.lib.va.us.

The Fontaine Ruritan Club hosts Bingo every Tuesday at their headquarters (1903 Joseph Martin Highway, Martinsville.) Doors open at 5:30 and games begin at 7. Money from Bingo supports community service awards, scholarships, and other community efforts.

MHC Coalition for Health and Wellness offers no contact Medicaid application assistance for eligible Virginia residents from birth to 64 years of age. No sign-up fees, no premiums, no deductibles. Including Children's Medicaid/FAMIS, Pregnancy Medicaid and Adult Health Care -19 to 64 years old. Questions can be answered, and applications completed by phone. In-person application assistance is available from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursdays at The Community Storehouse.

Call or text Ann Walker 276 732-0509 to see if you qualify.

The Henry County Adult Learning Center offers free in-house and online classes to help prepare for college, career, or earn your high school equivalency or GED. Classes can help improve your digital literacy, job skills, English language skills, and earning potential. Contact the Center for Community Learning (15 Primary School Road, Collinsville) at (276) 647-9585.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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| 8. Surrenders | 38. Fathers | 2. Pass or go by | 34. Nausea |
| 13. Omission | 39. Learned skill | 3. Having a sharp taste | 35. Institution of Oceanography |
| 14. The white poplar | 40. Remove qualification | 4. Midway between east and southeast | 36. Of little value |
| 15. They become butterflies | 44. Covered with frost | 5. Cairo Regional Airport | 37. Hindu model of the ideal man |
| 19. Used to chop | 45. Speak up | 6. Peace officer | 38. Biblical exclamation |
| 20. Select | 46. Nowhere to be found | 7. Brings to life | 40. You throw it at a board |
| 21. Volcanic craters | 47. Part of surgery (abbr.) | 8. Automotive vehicles | 41. Be about to happen |
| 22. Consumer price index | 48. Type of wrap | 9. One point south of due east | 42. Brutal |
| 23. Utilize | 49. Church seating | 10. Football position | 43. Opened one's mouth widely |
| 24. "True Blood" actress Paquin | 50. Mathematical figure | 11. Goes by | 45. 19th letter of Greek alphabet |
| 25. Got up | 51. College football conference | 12. Most attractive | 48. Saturate |
| 26. Sank in | 55. Turkish officer title | 16. Road divisions | 51. The woman |
| 30. Retail | 57. Organized body of knowledge | 17. Not the sea | 52. Someone who is highly skilled |
| 31. Giants | 58. Smooth and glossy | 18. Small, faint constellation | 53. A way to launch an attack on |
| 32. Most bald | 59. Left | 22. Cabbage | 54. Where golfers begin |
| 33. Changes color | | 25. Least frequent | 56. Atomic number 58 |
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Applications for P&HCC, Commonwealth Legacy Scholars now open

The Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation is now accepting applications for the Patrick & Henry Scholars and Commonwealth Legacy scholarship. Each year, up to 10 local high school graduates are chosen to become Patrick & Henry Scholars. These scholars receive a scholarship to cover tuition, textbook, and fees for up to two academic years.

“These scholarships are highly competitive, and the guidelines are rigorous,” said Tiffani Underwood, director of the P&HCC Foundation. “We have set the bar high because becoming a Patrick & Henry Scholar is a distinguished honor that is both an experience and an opportu-

nity. It can open many doors, not only at P&HCC but also beyond at the students’ transfer institutions and in their careers.”

To be eligible for the scholarship, students must have a high school grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. They must be graduates from an area high school or have completed a homeschool program of study. Scholars are chosen for their superior academic achievement, civic involvement, and leadership potential. Graduates of homeschool programs must be seventeen years of age or older at the time of the application and must reside in the P&HCC service region.

Once accepted, Patrick & Henry

Scholars must maintain a 3.0 grade point average and be full-time students (enrolled in at least 12 credit hours) at P&HCC. They also will be expected to participate in two extracurricular activities per semester and accrue ten volunteer service hours each semester.

To apply, students can go to www.patrickhenry.edu/scholarships.

Students who apply for the Patrick & Henry Scholars award will automatically be considered for the Commonwealth Legacy Scholarship. One outstanding student from each community college in Virginia is selected to receive this award which was created by the Virginia

Community College System (VCCS) and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education. The funds from this scholarship can be used for tuition, textbooks, and fees. Eligible students are full time, associate degree-seeking students attending college for the first time. As a merit-based scholarship, it will be awarded to a student who has demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to develop leadership skills.

For additional information or questions, contact Letitia Pulliam in the Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation Office at (276) 656-0250 or lpulliam@patrickhenry.edu.

Investigation of fatal crash continues

The Virginia State Police are continuing the investigation of a two-vehicle crash involving a Henry County school bus that resulted in a fatality.

The crash occurred Jan. 28, at 6:53 a.m. on Preston Road, near Meadowood Trail in Henry County.

A 2011 Bluebird School Bus pulled out of a driveway making a left turn onto Preston Road and was struck by a 2018 Kia Optima.

There were no students on the bus that was driven by Thomas E. Dillon, Jr., 71, of Martinsville. Dillon was wearing his seatbelt and was not injured.

The driver of the Kia was identified as Michael Scott Dunkley, 51, also of Martinsville. Dunkley was not wearing his seatbelt and died at the scene.

Speed was a factor in the crash, according to a release from the state police.

The Virginia State Police Crash Reconstruction Team is assisting with the crash.

State, federal authorities investigate fatal plane crash

The Virginia State Police are investigating a plane crash, which resulted in a fatality.

The crash occurred Feb .1, at 2:04 p.m. near Cardwell Lane in Pittsylvania County.

The Cessna 310R departed from Danville Regional Airport and crashed shortly after take-off near Cardwell Lane in Ringgold, Va.

Only one person was on board the aircraft at the time of the crash.

The remains were transported the Western Office of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science for positive identification.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) also are investigating the incident.

QCV supports program at Clearview Early Learning Center

QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia, Inc. (QCV) received a grant from the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia to support Racquets for Reading for 70 of the 105 preschoolers at Clearview Early Learning Center in Martinsville.

This is the second year the Community Foundation has stepped up for Clearview with a grant from its Community Impact Fund.

Lynda Harrill, QCV Founder, said, “We are so grateful for the continued support from the Community Foundation and happy that Clearview’s enrollment is getting back to normal levels. Last year there were only 80 kids. This year we’ll get to reach 105. Principal Sheilah Williams and her staff have been doing a great job during COVID to keep their students on track. We’re pleased to be able to provide books and FUN giveaways for the latest

crop of preschoolers and future tennis players.”

Sheilah Williams, principal, said, “The gift of books was awesome. Students were able to enjoy them in class and keep them to add to their home libraries. It was so rewarding hearing the students pretend to read the stories, identify letters, colors, and they recognized several words from the text. The books are a continuous gift to our students, and we are so appreciative for the partnership with QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia.”

City Schools Superintendent Dr. Zeb Talley said, “We are pleased to work with the Foundation and its effort to support student learning. Reading is a life essential skill.”

QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia is an all-volunteer, grassroots Community Tennis Association established in 2009 as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization to promote, develop and grow QuickStart Tennis in the heart of Virginia

for all beginners, especially underserved youth, using the kid-sized QuickStart Tennis format. QCV’s service area includes, Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Campbell, Charlotte, Culpeper, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Fluvanna, Franklin, Greene, Greensville, Halifax, Henry, Louisa, Lunenburg, Madison, Mecklenburg, Nelson, Nottoway, Orange, Patrick Pittsylvania, Prince Edward, Powhatan and Rappahannock counties and the cities of Charlottesville, Danville, and Martinsville, plus under a special arrangement, King George County. We currently serve 213 schools with 99,000 kids, 15 parks & recreation departments, three Boys & Girls Clubs and two YMCAs, in 31 Virginia counties and independent cities. We have also gotten tennis into PE classes in 37 additional schools with 16,000 students in Virginia communities outside our service area.

Eastman announces Fourth-Quarter and Full-Year 2021 Financial Results

Eastman Chemical Company (NYSE:EMN) announced its fourth-quarter and full-year 2021 financial results.

The company confirms expected 8-12 percent adjusted EPS growth for 2022, building on strong growth in 2021: Strong specialty growth enabled by innovation-driven growth model

Accelerating leadership in circular economy, including recently announced world’s largest molecular recycling facility in France

Strong cash generation resulting in increased organic growth investments and higher return of cash to stockholders

“Eastman made tremendous progress in 2021, delivering record sales revenue and adjusted EPS for the year. We are continuing to leverage our innovation-driven growth model to grow faster than our end markets. We also made outstanding progress advancing our leadership in the circular economy, including plans to build multiple world-scale material-to-material molecular recycling facilities,”

said Mark Costa, Board Chair and CEO. “I’m incredibly proud and appreciative of all that our employees did to work through very challenging conditions, stay focused on delivering record results, and advance our growth programs. We also remain focused on driving strong cash flow going forward and on continued disciplined allocation of cash. We are very excited about delivering continued success in 2022 and in the coming years.”

The Kingsport, Tenn. Based company also has operations in Henry County.

Bills advance that would halt planned minimum wage increases

By Katharine DeRosa
Capital News Service

Two bills introduced by Republicans to halt future minimum wage increases have advanced to the House floor.

Minimum wage in Virginia increased to \$11 an hour on Jan. 1 and is set to increase to \$12 next January.

The House Commerce and Energy committee approved House Bill 320, introduced by Del. Nicholas J. Freitas, R-Culpeper, and HB 296, introduced by Del. Joseph P. McNamara, R-Roanoke. Both bills would eliminate scheduled future increases to the current minimum wage law.

McNamara’s bill was amended to include payment for health care benefits as long as the hourly minimum wage is not below \$11. Sen. Mark J. Peake, R-Lynchburg, introduced a similar bill in the Senate, which was subsequently shot down by Democrats.

Both House measures advanced out of committee on a 12-9 vote along party lines, with Republicans holding the majority.

“I know what it is to work for minimum wage,” Freitas said during the subcommittee meeting. “In fact, there’s probably a couple times I was working for a little bit less than it; I was actually happy to have that job.”

Increasing the minimum wage would take away people’s ability to bargain with employers for a wage they are willing to accept, according to Freitas.

Freitas said the state government should not “arbitrarily” increase the minimum wage. He told the panel, when asked, that he does not plan on rolling back the current minimum wage, due to recent inflation.

The state’s minimum wage was \$7.25 before May 1, 2021. This is in line with the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, which has not changed since 2009.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics released two consumer price index reports in late 2021 that included parts of Virginia. One included the Washington metropolitan area. The other report is for the South region, which includes Virginia.

Consumer price index is a measure of changes over time of the prices consumers pay for goods and services. Both reports show the index rising.

The index increased in a year by almost 5.8 percent in the Washington metropolitan area, according to the BLS report. The index in the South increased by 7.4 percent in a year.

“When inflation has actually moved a job past a particular level, at that point, you’ve negated the own minimum wage raise that you currently have,” Freitas said. “To keep it \$11 at this point, achieves the objec-

tive I’m having.”

Freitas said he questions the idea that a higher minimum wage fosters an environment where people and businesses can create the “maximum amount of jobs that you can get that people would actually want.”

A few House Democrats questioned Freitas as he presented the bill. Del. Jeion A. Ward, D-Hampton, said she believes it would be wrong to end the minimum wage increases. Ward also said she wants the public to have a chance to voice their opinion on the matter.

“When you talk about kitchen table issues, this is what people are talking about at their table,” Ward said. “It’s those small families, those families that work minimum wage, and I don’t think they’re saying, ‘this is too much.’”

The state’s current minimum wage law has a reenactment clause. Next January, the minimum wage automatically bumps up to \$12 an hour. However, the General Assembly must pass the measure again before July 1, 2024, for the pay increase to \$13.50 and then to \$15 to remain in effect. Lawmakers could make changes to the bill during the process. The commissioner of Labor and Industry would establish the adjusted state hourly minimum wage if lawmakers fail to pass the bill again.

Kim Bobo, executive director for the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, spoke against the bill at the subcommittee meeting. One of the main focuses of the center is eliminating poverty, Bobo said.

“The largest number of people and families in poverty have family members who are working, and they frankly just don’t earn enough to get themselves out of poverty,” Bobo said in an interview. “The best way really to tackle that is to raise the minimum wage.”

The Republican Party branded itself as pro-business during the gubernatorial election, Bobo said. However, she believes there’s a “disconnect” between the party and working-class families.

“I would think that the Republican Party and the new governor ought to look at these ‘bread and butter’ issues like minimum wage, like paid sick days,” Bobo said.

One percent of hourly workers over the age of 25 earned minimum wage in 2020, according to the latest available data from the BLS. Women were more likely to earn minimum wage than men in 2020.

“I thought Freitas’ main argument that ‘oh, this is really going to help teenage workers and people get into the workforce’ was really very deceptive in terms of who’s really on minimum wage,” Bobo said.

About 50 percent of hourly workers earning minimum wage in 2020 were under the age of 25, according to the BLS. Southern states had the highest percentages of people working minimum wage. About 3 percent of Virginia’s hourly workers earn minimum wage or less.

“A lot of young people are in college,” Bobo said. “If the minimum wage is \$15 versus \$7.25, there’s a huge difference in terms of their ability to make their ends meet.”

The House gave both bills a first reading on Jan. 27. If either bill passed in the House, Bobo said she is convinced the measure would die in the majority Democratic Senate.

“I’m not going through the full court effort on it,” Bobo said.

(Capital News Service is a program of Virginia Commonwealth University’s Robertson School of Media and Culture. Students in the program provide state government coverage for a variety of media outlets in Virginia.)



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OPINION

An open letter to the guy who keeps putting his trash in my trash cans

Dear guy who keeps putting his trash in my trash cans,

No, wait. That's too cumbersome. Let me try again.

Listen up, scum, For about two years now, I've been using Rural Services of Claudville, Va. for trash pickup. Rural Services is a wonderful company offering an affordable service, and I heartily recommend them to anyone within their service range. I'm not getting paid to say this, they just happen to be one of a handful of companies and products that I am willing to personally endorse, alongside Comet Pinball LED lighting and the Hakko FR-301 Portable Desoldering Gun.

Rural Services has just two rules: all trash must be in bags, and they only pick up eight bags per week (at least with the package I have). These rules seem fair to me. We need to have rules. Otherwise, society would descend into chaos.

I have two trash cans at the end of my long gravel driveway, and I use them not only for my trash, but also my grandma's trash. Between the two of us, keeping it under eight bags per week is no problem.

But you know when it does become a problem, you scum? When some jerk starts filling my trash cans with his trash.

How do I know it's someone else's trash, you might ask? Well, you sleaze, for starters, I don't use those tall white kitchen trash bags. I also don't have a cat, so I have no need to throw away trash bags filled with used kitty litter and toxoplasma gondii. Additionally, I don't just throw loose trash into the cans like some kind of

animal because I understand the simple rules laid out by Rural Services.

Now, if this had only happened once, I would just let it go. But it keeps happening, you human septic tank, and now I'm finding that I'm having to haul my trash to the

dump because you have filled my cans before the Monday morning pickup.

I had the perfect idea on how to remedy this situation. Unfortunately, the use of booby traps has been outlawed in the U.S. since 1825. Thanks for nothing, President John Quincy Adams.

You might be saying to yourself, "Jeez Ben, calm down. It's just trash."

But this isn't just about you putting your trash in my trash cans, thereby stealing a paid service from me. No, this is about the gradual moral degradation of American society. This is about a country where politicians no longer follow agreed upon rules if it limits their ability to line their pockets. This is about voters casting ballots not to help their fellow man, but to

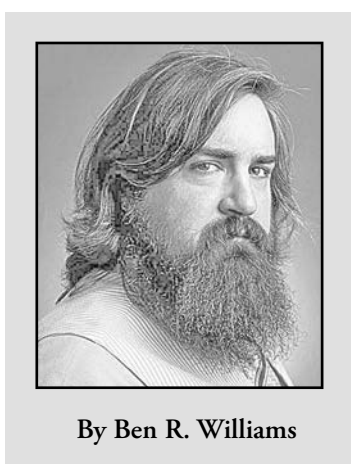
hurt him. This is about every man for himself. This is about "screw you, got mine." This is about the entropy afflicting the very ideals of the American Experiment, revealing a rotten, selfish core.

I can't fix our fractured nation, garbage thief. But I can fix your wagon. You have made the terrible mistake of crossing the pettiest man in southwest Virginia.

Already I have begun to assemble my surveillance network. I have eyes everywhere, neighbors ready to receive a cash reward in exchange for a plate number, make, and model. They know I'm square in my dealings, that I always pay my debts.

I will bring you to justice, you scum, but not for my own benefit.

I'm doing this for America.



By Ben R. Williams

the then liberal majority to limit public involvement to an unprecedented extent while they pressed a far-left agenda. This year, the traditional committee structure has been restored with in-person meetings and substantial constituent involvement to address the needs of the people we were elected to represent.

I was honored to receive appointments from the House Speaker that once again placed me on the two oldest committees in the House of Delegates: Privileges and Elections and Courts of Justice. With respect to the Courts of Justice Committee, I was also named as its Vice-Chairman and thereby assume a great deal more responsibility. This committee hears more bills than any other in the House by a substantial margin and some of the most consequential decisions directly affecting everyday life comprise its docket.

Included within Courts of Justice are four sub-committees, two of which I chair. One of these, the sub-committee responsible for overseeing judicial matters and appointments, is one I previously chaired when Republicans last held the majority. The other is the most prolific House sub-committee, handling nearly all bills touching on the criminal law. Indeed, this sub-committee alone has referred to it more bills

than any other full committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as its chairman on behalf of my constituents and for the opportunity to lead on the numerous policy questions it considers.

Likewise, I appreciate the occasion to again serve on the Privileges and Elections Committee where, among other important matters, security features of our voting laws are first debated. This is a crucial area of importance, and I am happy to write that we have started the fight to restore proper voter identification requirements. I am also a sub-committee chairman for this body and am eager to lead there also.

The third full committee to which I was appointed is a new one for me: Commerce and Energy. Although the assignment is new, many of the business issues are familiar and of particular importance to economic development. And as I do with each and every task in the General Assembly, I will resolve the issues there presented in a manner that reflects the will and best interests of the people I represent in Southside Virginia.

Mail me at P.O. Box K, Chatham, Virginia 24531, or call (434) 432-1600 in Chatham or (804) 698-1016 in Richmond.

Weekly Update

Del. Les R. Adams
16th House District

For the past several weeks, the new Republican majority in the Virginia House of Delegates has been diligently at work to craft legislation that will help restore the Commonwealth to sensible governance on a range of issues. With Governor Youngkin and Attorney General Miyares as partners, we are already experiencing the benefits of a shared conservative approach to statecraft, and are eager to fully realize what we can accomplish. Although there remains the looming challenge of a Senate that is under Democrat control, we are clearly charting a new course in the right direction.

This is quite the departure from last year's session when Democrats held power at every level. I reported to you then how a physical assembly was denied to us in the House, in probable violation of the Virginia Constitution, and we were instead relegated to arguing bills online via "Zoom" technology. This allowed

Solar Project

from page 1

the Axton community on approximately 378 acres in the northeast vicinity of Mountain Valley Road and Dees Road and along Summerset Drive and Rufus Road.

Sakey told the board that Invenergy, the developer behind Rocky Ford Solar, "is the largest developer of renewable energy projects in North America" and that the company began its Axton project in 2019.

He said the company worked to address many of the concerns brought up by Axton residents and by Henry County Director of Planning, Zoning, and Inspections Lee Clark during the November meeting, including the noise created by construction, view shed once construction is completed, and the county's density ordinance.

Sakey said his team completed a noise impact study, which shows where sound will affect neighboring properties. The study, he said, will allow the company to coordinate with residents and work with their schedules. He added the use of technology was explored, including mobile sound barriers, to deflect sound during construction.

In response to concerns about view shed, and particularly in response to previous concerns expressed by the owners and patrons of Axton-based brewery Mountain Valley Brewing which relies heavily on its views, Sakey told the board that engineers redesigned the project to encompass less than half of the initially requested acreage.

"This project is almost entirely screened from public view by existing forested areas," Sakey said. "Most people will never know this project exists." Additionally, the project redesign avoids placing a single panel on the fields behind the brewery.

In response to concerns about the density threshold, Sakey said that, in just a few months, the company has reduced the size of the project footprint by more than half that requested in the previously rejected permit, which was for the development of approximately 800 acres.

Sakey told the board that the company plans to plant native grasses and wildflowers to "turn this area into a pollinator habitat" with apiaries co-located with the project for honey production. Also, he said, the company has talked with landowners about the possibility of using solar grazing, which he described as the use of sheep for vegetation management. In short, the company is "to the maximum extent possible trying to do dual use to maximize agricultural value with this land, even though it's going to be in solar."

Sakey said the project is expected to bring in millions of dollars of tax revenue over its life, to create hundreds of jobs during construction and "a handful of lasting, good-paying jobs for operations during the life of the facility."

Several people, including Herb Atwell, co-owner of Mountain Valley Brewing who previously spoke in opposition to the project, expressed support of the special use permit. Only one person, James

Roberts, rose to speak in opposition, urging a delay in approval for an in-depth analysis of how the area would be economically impacted by the solar farm.

BZA chairman Manker Stone congratulated Sakey and Invenergy on the quality of the new proposal. He said "if we do vote to approve this, we are specifically dealing with the land use. Any nuts and bolts of the solar (aspects) that Henry County has laid out, all of that will have to be taken care of in the Zoning Administrator's office" which is under Clark's purview.

Clark, too, complimented Sakey.

"I've dealt with a lot of different solar companies ... I've heard what these folks (Invenergy) have said, and I've experienced first-hand from working with the company, I've been impressed. They do what they say. They have done everything that I asked of them, they went over and above in some regards."

"We can definitely see they've done their homework," said BZA member Sandra Adams.

Ultimately, Paul Setliff made a motion to approve the proposal with several conditions:

* The company must "substantially comply with the submitted conceptual layout ... including setbacks, conservation easements, areas not to be developed with panels, and vegetative buffer areas."

* "Additional screening shall be provided in substantial accordance with submitted materials" in locations that are not already shielded by naturally occurring forested areas.

* The final site plan must comply with the county's density requirements.

* "To help mitigate construction noise, a plan for the use of sound dampening curtains or some other method must be submitted and approved by the director prior to commencement of pile driving activities."

The motion passed 3-0 (two board members did not attend the meeting.)

The next steps for the project are engineering and planning for the final design, Clark said. The preparation aspect of preparing the necessary plans and completing surveys could take 1-2 years. "It's a long process," he said. "I don't expect to see poles going into the ground for potentially a couple of years."

"That density ordinance is still an issue, so there is still more work to be done by the company," he said. "That will be handled during the site plan review," he said. "The conceptual plan that was submitted to the BZA is a huge step in the right direction, but I can't say for sure until I get a final site plan as to whether they're within that threshold or not."

Clark said his office will be responsible for ensuring the company adheres to the promises they made to the board during their presentation. "I will make 100 percent certain that they do adhere to those conditions," he said.

Submit your
letters to the editor
to dhall@theenterprise.net



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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

Submit your community news and photos to newsreporter@theenterprise.net

OBITUARIES

Thomas Fielding DeJarnette IV

Thomas Fielding DeJarnette IV, 65 of South Boston, VA passed away Saturday, January 29, 2022, at The Brian Center, Fincastle, Va. He was born August 2, 1956, to Thomas F. DeJarnette III and Velvet Owen DeJarnette.

In addition to his parents, he is survived by his sister, Kathy L DeJarnette, of Martinsville; a special aunt and cousins. Fielding was a graduate of Martinsville High School. He was a sub-contractor for telecommunications throughout VA & NC. He loved Smith Mountain Lake, the mountains, his beloved dogs and riding his Harley. He's up in heaven now.



He took that final ride. He's with angels now flying by his side. He's riding like an eagle beyond where we can see. He took that final journey, forever riding free.

A private graveside service will be held at 1 p.m. on Sunday, February 6, 2022, at Oak Ridge Cemetery in South Boston, VA. Memorials may be made

to the SPCA or a charity of choice.

Arrangements are by McKee-Stone Funeral Home-Martinsville, VA

To express condolences online, visit www.collinsmckeestonemartinsville.com.

Hollis Edward Crowe

Hollis Edward Crowe peacefully expired on January 29, 2022, at his home in Martinsville, Virginia in the care of his wife, Grace. Hollis was born on February 22, 1933, in Westbrook, Maine, of parents Arthur and Louisa Oakey Crowe. He served in the United States Army and was a veteran of the Korean War.



Ed (Karen) of Phoenix AZ, Lynn Pritchett (Ashby) of Martinsville VA, DeeDee Hamby (Ron) of Collinsville VA and Angela Bourland of Bassett VA. He has eleven grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

Grandchildren David Herold, Laura Simon (Brock), John Herold (Nichole); Kelly Crowe

Hollis graduated from the University of Maine in Bangor with a degree in engineering. He was hired by DuPont, and sent to work at DuPont plants in New Jersey, Texas and South Carolina before moving to Martinsville with Rochelle and their six children. They became members of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and he was a member of the Knights of Columbus. He made some great friends at DuPont from around the world, and was close to his office mates. He worked there until he retired.

Actively engaged in community service throughout his lifetime, Hollis served as an Election Official for the City of Martinsville, a crisis counselor for Contact, and performed in a local barbershop quartet. After retirement from DuPont, he opened and operated Holly's Auto Sales. He set up the "Po Boys Flea Market" with his good friend Pat Goodnow and he invested in a few rental properties.

Shortly before Rochelle died, Hollis began studying to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He later married Terri Lisa Lake, who had two sons, Adam and Casey Holodick. She has remarried.

He converted to the Jehovah's Witness faith and served as a Pioneer in outreach ministry. Some of his best friends were Witnesses, among them Jimmy and Deborah Lovell, Dora and Mac Tarpley, Joy and Ernie Beggarly, Payton Walker and his family, and Jeff and Marie Corbett. He met Grace at a Jehovah's Witness convention and they were married in that faith. To help build new Kingdom Halls with his daughter Deedee, he went to night school to become certified as a brick mason.

Hollis is survived by his wife of twenty years, the former Grace Ordewald and her three sons Christian Ordewald (Dinah, deceased), their son David and his family; Robert Ordewald (Carol), their son Daniel and his family; Matthew Ordewald (Christine), their daughter Michaela and her family. Her sons live in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

Hollis was preceded in death by his first wife, Rochelle Jean Ricard and a son, Albert George Crowe. Hollis and Rochelle are survived by five children, Pam Herold (John) of Hendersonville TN,

Maser (Al), Hollis 'Ted' Edward Crowe III, David Allen Crowe and Katlynn Crowe; Brian Pritchett (Jessica) of Summerville SC, Mandy Muse (Arthur 'Buck') of Martinsville VA and Elizabeth Pritchett of Richmond VA; Charles 'Chaz' Moore of Columbia Falls, Montana, and Angela's stepsons, Matt and Bryce Bourland. Great grandchildren are Lauren Seedlock, Adelyn, Ayla and Brex Simon, and Henry Herold; Eden and Graham Pritchett; Kisean and Raven Adams and Gavin Muse; Kaven Adams is a great-great-grandson.

He was predeceased by his sister Shirley (Bill) Hein of California and his brothers Arthur Crowe of Sebago Lake ME; Robert Crowe of Burbank CA, and Albert Crowe of Maine; and Paul and Barbara Ricard of Darby MT. Other surviving family members are his sister-in-law Anita Crowe of Sebago Lake and her children, Allen Crowe (Diane), Kathy Davis, and Shirley Brown; Rochelle's two sisters, Lorette Ricard Grant of East Waterboro ME and her children (Shelly, Toni, Shane, Sean, and Mark) and Paulette (Gerald) Ricard of New York City. Several other nieces, nephews and relatives from the Crowe and Ricard families from Maine survive. Among them are Betty MacDonald Gregory of Ridgeway, VA and her children, Tim, Dawn, Lisa and Susan; Belinda, Stuart, Billy and Darrell Hein; and Teresa Crowe Palmer of Fort Collins CO, Robert B Crowe II and Daniel G Crowe.

The family is grateful for the loving professional nursing care provided by Margaret Barrett. She was a comfort to him, his wife, and children. Hospice care was provided by Promedica.

Arrangements are being made by Wright Funeral Service. A Jehovah Witness memorial service will be held via Zoom on Sunday, February 6, 2022, at 3 p.m. Brother Lynnwood Turner will officiate. All are welcome. Participants can log into Zoom and access Meeting ID: 565 415 673. Passcode:1914.

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

Agnes Irene Clark Turner

Agnes Irene Clark Turner, 84, of Bassett, VA passed away Thursday, January 27, 2022. She was born March 17, 1937, in Pulaski, VA to the late Henry Clark and Chloe Turner Clark. She was also preceded in death by her husband, Paul Day Turner; son, Steven Day Turner; and brother, Tommy Clark.



Pruitt (Matt), Joseph Paul Craiger, Ashley Wilson, Joshua Wilson; great-grandchildren, Samantha Newberry, CJ Kennedy, and Hunter Wilson. She is also survived by her brother, Jackie Clark and special friend, Linda Snead.

A graveside service was held on Feb. 1, 2022, at Franklin Memorial Park. Pastor Bobby Rakes officiated.

Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville, VA is serving the Turner family. Online condolences may be made at norrisfuneral.com.

Patricia Gail Norton White

Patricia Gail Norton White, 68, of Axton, VA passed away Monday, January 31, 2022, at her home. She was born April 7, 1953, in Kinston, N.C., to the late Paul Norton and Ruby Palmer Aguire. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her daughter, Stacey G. White.



White; grandson who she considered her son, Seth White; grandchildren, Jacob Hurd, Bradley, Abby, Brooklyn, Christian, Zachary, and Sarah Phillips; and sister, Diana Holt. Special thank you to Pastor Jody and Bonnie Pollard for their love and care for Pat.

A Celebration of Life was held on Thursday, February 3, 2022, at Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville Chapel with Pastor Jody Pollard and Pastor Dean White officiating.

Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville, VA is serving the White family. Online condolences may be made at norrisfuneral.com.

Pat was a member of Valley Chapel Pentecostal Holiness Church and retired from Sara Lee. She dearly loved her family and was a loving mother and mother figure to many.

She is survived by her husband of 50 years, Jimmy Lewis White; daughter, Christie Phillips (T.J.); son, Jason

David Allen Viers

David Allen Viers, Sr., 75, of Bassett, Virginia passed away Saturday, January 29, 2022, at his home. He was born September 4, 1946, in Panther, West Virginia to the late Andrew and Elizabeth Lockhart Johnson. He enjoyed digging Ginseng, horseshoes and family.



Chelsea Chandler (Corey), Justin Minter (Donna), Nicole Meeks (Chris), Ashley McMillon, April Duey (Brandon), Jason Viers, Kaitlyn Collins (Jacob) Andrew Kallam and Aaron Harmon; great-grandchildren, Abigail, Jessica, Hayden, Bubba, Kaylee, Allee, Joey, Emilee, Breanna, Haley, Brooklyn, Zoey, Jacob, Ashton and Remington.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Linda Coleman Viers; sister Lola Cline; and brother Ricky Johnson.

Mr. Viers is survived by his daughter, Annie Kelsey (Chris); sons, David Viers, Jr. (Kristine) and Jerry Viers (Kim); sister, Faye Looney (Wanus); sister-in-law, Rhonda Johnson; Brothers, Andrew Johnson (Eloise), Wayne Johnson (Leona), Anthony Johnson (Pixie) and Jeffery Johnson (Angela); grandchildren, Jeremy Viers (Ashlee),

The funeral will be at the home, 1639 Muddy Fork Road, Bassett, on Friday, February 4, 2022, at 1 p.m., with burial at Whitestone Baptist Church Cemetery, Bassett, Virginia. Pastor Ronald Coleman is officiating.

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

Christopher Ray Morris

Christopher Ray Morris, 59, of Martinsville, Virginia passed away on January 27, 2022, at SOVAH Health of Martinsville. He was born on November 22, 1962, in Portsmouth, Virginia to William Warren Morris, Jr. and Linda Joyce Rice Morris.



family and his pets.

In addition to his parents, he is survived by his wife, Angela Sanders Morris; daughter, Jessica Lane Morris; son, Justin Ray Morris; brother, Jeffrey Scott Morris, Sr. stepmother, Judy Hudson Morris; sister-in-law, Leslie Shiebob Morris; and nephew, Jeffrey Scott Morris, Jr.

Services will be held at a later date.

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

Chris was a proud graduate of Virginia Tech, who earned his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. He was a dedicated employee of the City of Martinsville for 27 years. He enjoyed spending his time fishing, golfing, cooking, and being outdoors. He loved his

Lura Mildred Kirby Boardwine

Lura Mildred Kirby Boardwine, 83, of Martinsville, VA passed away Monday, January 31, 2022. She was born February 23, 1938, to the late Robert Gleson Kirby and Lola Robinson Kirby. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Fletcher Glover Boardwine; brothers, Roy Kirby and Dean Kirby; sister-in-law, Oshea Kirby; and niece, Deana Kirby.



(Jaye); sisters-in-law, Sarah Kirby and Imogene Estridge; nieces and nephews, Betty Datommi, Roy Kirby, Jr., Douglas Blankenship, Kevin Boardwine (Sandra), Bradley Boardwine, Alex Boardwine, Abby Hensley (Shane), and Logan Hensley (Sydney).

Mrs. Boardwine was a member of Mercy Crossing. She loved her family and working in her yard. She had a passion for flowers.

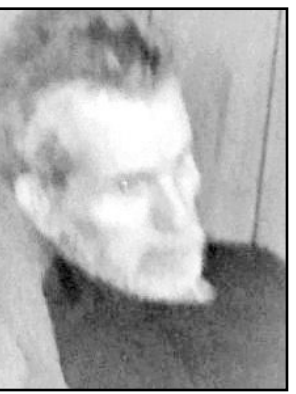
She is survived by her daughter, Sherry Turnage; brother, Danny Kirby

The funeral will be held at 2 p.m. on Friday, February 4, 2022, at Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville Chapel, with Minister William Bingham officiating. Burial will be at Roselawn Burial Park.

Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville, VA is serving the Boardwine family. Online condolences may be made at norrisfuneral.com.

Clovis Wayne Yates

Clovis Wayne Yates, 65, of Martinsville, Virginia, passed away Friday, January 28, 2022, at Stanleytown Health and Rehab. He was born September 14, 1956, in Baltimore, Maryland, to the late John Clovis Yates and Joyce "Royal" Rowena Yates. He worked as a Commercial Contractor for 40 years, a job which he loved. He enjoyed old cars and spending time with family and friends.



In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by his brother, Clyde Royal Yates.

Clovis is survived by his sisters, Ann Lawson and Janet Yates; nephews, Cody Mays, Chris Deatherage and James Otis Lawson Jr.; and a niece, Nasha Arnold.

No services are planned.

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

Fire Chief from page 1

a department,” he said, adding that members are close-knit and look after each other.

That is important for a department that responds to fires, accidents and other emergencies. The chief is in charge of all fire scenes where he is present and overall department operations.

“I guess the best part (of being chief) is probably knowing that you’re supervising 40 volunteers, looking after their safety, and making sure everyone comes home,” Lynch said.

Some volunteers have had minor injuries on his watch, but none have been killed, he said.

And the worst part of being chief? “I don’t know if there is a worst part,” he said. “If there was, I probably would have quit a long time ago.”

A FAMILY TRADITION

Charles Eugene “Junior” Lynch Jr., a native of Bassett, was raised around firefighting. His father, Charlie Eugene Lynch Sr., is a lifetime member of the Bassett Fire Department and was its chief from 1981 to 1984. When “Junior” Lynch was kindergartener at Mary Hunter Elementary School, he dressed as a fire chief for career day.

He graduated from Bassett High School and Patrick & Henry Community College before he joined the fire department in 1996 at age 20, about 25 years ago. He began as a probationary member and completed Firefighter 1 and 2 training to become a certified firefighter in his first year.

A certified firefighter “can do about anything as far as firefighting,” Lynch said. Today, he is a state instructor helping teach those classes.

He rose through the ranks, serving as engineer, second captain, first captain, deputy chief (three years) and then chief. At that time, his goal was to be like his father and serve as chief for four years.

Nineteen years later he still is chief, voted in by the department’s 40 members every year.

“I’ll keep doing it until someone else steps up to do it or I want to step away,” he said, “but every year it’s always my name on the ballot. ... I’ve just had an awesome bunch of officers and members. Everybody’s been good to work with. I never thought I didn’t want to be chief.”

Lynch estimated he spends an average of 100 hours a month on fire department duties in addition to his full-time job as maintenance director at Bassett Furniture Industries.

He joined Bassett Furniture about the same time he joined the fire department. He credits the company with always supporting his fire department service, letting him run calls and handling business as needed.

Serving in the fire department has been “everything I thought it would be,” Lynch said. That is, “the feeling that you’re helping others, getting an occasional pat on the back that you don’t normally get, a ‘thank you.’”

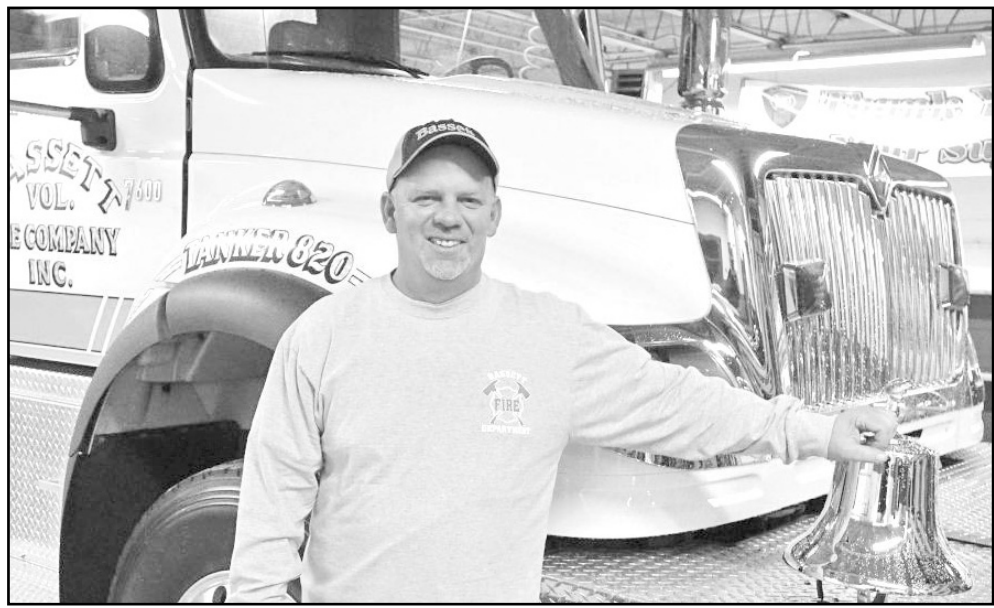
The Bassett Fire Department averages about 325 calls each year. About 20-25 percent of those calls are fires, one third are vehicle accidents and the rest are false alarms, Lynch said.

When a call comes in, firefighters do not know if it is a false alarm or a major industrial fire until someone gets on the scene and can assess the situation, Lynch said.

In the past seven years, he estimated that three factory fires in the Bassett area have required county-wide fire department responses. Those fires can be scarier to battle but firefighters put that aside as they start to work protecting the surrounding areas by keeping the fire from spreading, he said.

“Probably the largest first major industrial that I had was at the old J.D. Bassett plant,” Lynch said, in 2011. A 300,000-square-foot building burned, but a warehouse was spared in the blaze that was battled by crews from throughout Henry County as well as Patrick County and a ladder truck from Franklin County, he added.

The 69-year-old Bassett department covers most of the Bassett area and



“Junior” Lynch is shown in the Bassett fire station. He has served 19 years as chief of that department.

has a mutual aid agreement with other county departments as well as Patrick and Franklin counties. Also, an ambulance and career (paid) rescue crew are stationed at the department through Henry County Public Safety.

All the county’s fire departments are staffed with volunteers, but Lynch said that may change in the next five to 10 years if the ranks of volunteers continue to shrink. The Bassett Fire Department has had as many as 50 members but has held around 40 in recent years, he said.

“I’m on the wall about that,” Lynch said of paid firefighters. “You may lose some volunteers if you hire paid (staff) and put them in a volunteer station. Volunteers save the public a ton of money, but when you can’t recruit people, you have to cover some of that.”

Another major change Lynch has seen in firefighting is more advanced equipment at a much higher price. For instance, in 1986 the Bassett department bought a ladder truck for \$286,000, which area industries helped fund. Today, Henry County is helping the department buy a new ladder truck, due in July 2023, at a cost of \$1.2 million, Lynch said.

The department gets 50-60 percent of its budget from Henry County, he said. The rest comes from fundraising, a letter drive, donations and similar sources.

“It takes a lot of hot dogs to buy a fire truck,” Lynch said with a laugh.

He also helps recruit firefighters and suggests that anyone interested in volunteering come to the department’s meeting on the first Monday of



“Junior” Lynch talks about his 25 years of service with the Bassett Fire Department and the last 19 as chief of that department.

every month to apply. The recruits are issued a pager and run calls to see if they want to pursue membership, whether it is as a certified firefighter or cleaning the department’s five trucks or helping with office work.

“There’s always something to do,” Lynch added.

In addition, anyone interested in joining a county fire department or rescue squad can apply online through hc dps.com or call Henry County Public Safety at 634-4660.

Reversion Referendum from page 1

More citizen and stakeholder input has been accepted when reversion was broached by previous city councils, but “since 2006,” she testified, “Martinsville City Council has repeatedly opposed legislative attempts to allow local residents a voice through referendum in the reversion process.”

Easley repeated her concerns about lack of public involvement during her testimony before the full committee.

City Council member Tammy Pearson, who attended both meetings virtually, told the subcommittee that she was not on council when members initially voted to move forward with reversion and was the only dissenting vote on the Voluntary Settlement Agreement (VSA).

“I voted ‘no’ primarily due to the city’s process, its lack of transparency, and failure to seek input from a broad base of our citizens.”

“Please ask yourself not ‘why should I vote to move this bill forward’ but ‘why not?’ Why not vote for a bill allowing for a majority of our citizens voting in a city referendum to speak loud and clear in a transparent, fearless manner about the future of their own community,” she said.

County Administrator Tim Hall, who appeared virtually in the subcommittee session, echoed Pearson’s words. “The city residents deserve a say in their future,” he said. “There are approximately 14,000 residents of the City of Martinsville, and as things sit now, city council’s five members can vote to make a generational change. Once a city reverts to a town, there is no going back.”

City Attorney and Assistant City Manager Eric Monday attended both the subcommittee and committee hearings virtually. At the Jan. 27 meeting, Monday countered the idea that there has not been opportunity for public input, citing 12 public information sessions specifically dedicated to reversion, as well as four neighborhood meetings and more than 70 city council meetings - all with opportunity for the public to speak.

“Reversion has been discussed in Martinsville for about 40 years, which is about the same amount of time the current structure for reversion has been in place without a referendum requirement for a city of our size,” he told the subcommittee. “We hope that you will leave statutory structure in place as we are currently engaged in litigation that’s already been started with Henry County ... We certainly hope that you will not change the rules governing reversion in the fourth quarter of the game.”

Stephen Piepgrass, an attorney with Troutman Pepper who is representing the city in the reversion proceedings, attended the subcommittee session in person and participated in the full committee virtually.

He told the subcommittee that the city has acted thus far under the 40-year-old framework for reversion, and accused the county of trying to change the rules late in the game.

“We’d gotten to the 1-yard-line with reversion. We had a settlement agreement in place and then at the very last minute, Henry County reneged, thinking it could come to this body and change those rules at the very end of the game to favor Henry County.”

He said, “all of the parties”—Martinsville, Henry County, and the Commission on Local Government (CLG)—agreed that reversion was in the best interests of the city, county, and the Commonwealth “and now we’re having the rules changed.”

Michelle Gowdy, the executive director of the Virginia Municipal League, spoke before the subcommittee, and said “the Commission on Local Government really did hear this case and made a finding. We think we should support that finding, so for that reason, we opposed the bill.”

Several members of the House subcommittee expressed their concerns about sup-



Martinsville Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley (at podium) speaks in support of HB 173 during a meeting of the second subcommittee of the Cities, Counties, and Towns Committee on Jan. 27. The bill, sponsored by Del. Danny Marshall (right), calls for a voter referendum on reversion within Martinsville. The bill passed out of committee and will come before the full house for a vote.

porting the legislation.

Del. Irene Shin, D-Herndon said, “my concern would be that each city council member is duly elected and entrusted with the votes and voices of the people that they represent, and I would be concerned that we are overruling what seems to be a recently-elected body and their votes and their voices for the constituents they represent.”

Del. Michael Mullin, D-Newport News, expressed hesitation about the bill during both the subcommittee and full committee hearings because “there is ongoing litigation and ... we don’t usually intervene in those cases in which there is ongoing contested litigation.”

During the meeting of the full committee, he asked for clarification as to whether there was pending litigation or simply pending negotiation or mediation. Piepgrass confirmed that litigation is pending, and cited a case filed in Henry County Circuit Court by the county. He told the committee the city filed a motion the previous day to send the issue to the special court.

Easley told Mullin that she had spoken with Martinsville Circuit Court Clerk Ashby Pritchett the previous day. “It is my understanding that there are not petitions filed in either circuit court ... regarding reversion,” though a contract dispute for declaratory judgement was filed in Henry County on Jan. 5.”

Del. Angelia Williams Graves, D-Norfolk, said that she was struck by the finality of reversion. “It’s a situation that can’t be undone once it’s done,” she said. “What gives me heartburn about that are the future generations of folks who will come behind. This affects their tax base, it affects their education system, it affects so much of the everyday lives of the residents of Martinsville that they should have the opportunity to have a say. We know that there are people in our communities who tune in to elections and they may not tune in to anything else.”

When the bill came before the full committee, Del. Danica Roem, D-Manassas, recalled the issue came before the subcommittee she chaired in 2020. She asked Marshall where the county’s Board of Supervisors stood on the issue, to which he replied that the board had endorsed both his bill and the one introduced by Stanley.

Del. Suhas Subramanyam, D-Ashburn, asked if the public had been given the opportunity to engage or provide feedback throughout the process.

Marshall again deferred to Easley, who challenged Monday’s previous assertion that, in addition to reversion-specific meetings, the public had been given opportunity to speak during each city council meeting. Easley argued that many of the public comment portions of city council meetings had been closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so to have a comment heard, a resident needed to email or reach out to a member of council or the clerk which, she said, could have been difficult for the city’s elderly population who were not technologically savvy.

The initial vote of the full committee was 13-9 in favor of the bill, but Mullin asked that the bill be reconsidered to allow a member to change their vote. The final vote on the bill by the committee was 14-8, moving the bill on to a vote by the full House of Delegates.

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Collinsville woman wins second prize in New Year's Raffle

Heather Parsons was only joking when she said to her mother, "Let's see if I'm a millionaire," as she was about to check the winning numbers in Virginia's New Year's Millionaire Raffle.

As it turns out, she did not win the \$1 million top prize. Instead, she won the \$100,000 second prize.

"I freaked out and started screaming!" she later told Lottery officials.

The Collinsville woman had one of six \$100,000 winning ticket numbers announced on New Year's Day. She bought her winning ticket, #190757, at the Walmart on Commonwealth Boulevard in Martinsville.

The other five \$100,000 winning tickets were bought in Goode, Henrico, Hampton, Mattaponi



Heather Parsons, of Collinsville, won \$100,000 in New Year's Millionaire Raffle.

and Winchester. Four tickets won \$1 million each. They were bought in Alexandria, Chesapeake, Stuarts Draft and Virginia Beach. An additional 500 tickets each won \$500.

Parsons said she has no immediate plans for her winnings, except to pay bills.

Virginia's New Year's Millionaire Raffle is one of the Virginia Lottery's most eagerly anticipated games. A total of 500,000 tickets were available for this year's drawing, with the results announced on January 1

Faith-based leaders invited to participate in brief

FBI Richmond Special Agent in Charge Stanley M. Meador invites faith-based leaders, from all denominations throughout the Commonwealth, to a virtual "Interfaith Awareness Brief" on February 10, from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

This brief comes at a time when houses of worship across the country have experienced unfathomable disrespect, violence and loss. It is imperative that law enforcement and the community continue working together to mitigate these attacks.

FBI Richmond is proactively reaching out to our faith-based leaders, throughout the Commonwealth, to reiterate our commitment and responsibilities, and share information that will encourage awareness, dialogue, and preparedness.

This virtual event, hosted by FBI Richmond's leadership, will focus on International and Domestic Terrorism, Hate Crimes, and the FBI's Crisis Management Response to critical incidents.

Faith-based leaders may register for this free, Teams event at [https://vlns.org/\(X\(1\)S\(ca531zvtdfyfslff2vrtekog\)\)/EBForms.aspx?EBID=253&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1](https://vlns.org/(X(1)S(ca531zvtdfyfslff2vrtekog))/EBForms.aspx?EBID=253&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1).

Registration closes at 5 p.m. on February 8.

Questions may be directed to FBI Richmond's Community Outreach Team at RH_Outreach@fbi.gov.

Local students named to dean's, president's lists

James Madison University announced the following local students made the dean's list for the fall 2021 semester.

Students who earn dean's list honors must carry at least 12 graded credit hours and earn a GPA of between 3.5 and 3.899.

Brianna Kirks, of Axton, who is majoring in individualized study.

Colin Miner, of Collinsville, who is majoring in history.

Dylan Royal, of Martinsville, who is majoring in music.

Anna Lewis, of Ridgeway, who is majoring in international affairs.

The following students made the president's list for the fall 2021 semester.

Students who earn president's list honors must carry at least 12 graded credit hours and earn a GPA of 3.900 or above.

Rya Hall, of Fieldale, who is majoring in elementary education.

Caroline Cook, of Martinsville, who is majoring in communication sciences & disorders.

Guadalupe Rivera, of Martinsville, who is majoring in elementary education.

Olivia Cooper, of Martinsville, who is majoring in health services administration.

Mary Gilbert, of Martinsville, who is majoring in nursing.

Founded in 1908, James Madison University is a public university located in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. JMU is one of the nation's leading lights in higher education, where students enjoy engaging relationships with world-class faculty who drive education innovation and support advanced research. With state-of-the-art amenities and facilities, students have access to NCAA Division 1 athletics. JMU also has the highest post-graduation job levels of all Virginia colleges.

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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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Join the Panther Nation and experience a variety of learning opportunities for you and your family while working in a welcoming and serene setting at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Ferrum College has an immediate opening for the Manager of Auxiliary Services. This position provides oversight of (1) campus events for internal and external customers, (2) the Campus Store along with its in-person and online operations; and (3) the Ferrum College Mail Services. The Manager helps to ensure outstanding guest experiences for College-sponsored events and overall departmental excellence by supporting students, faculty, staff, and visitors in all areas under his/her supervision. Specific duties include supervising and training of staff, establishing and implementing short-term and long-term departmental goals, developing and monitoring department budgets, and ensuring compliance and risk management. A successful candidate will understand the need to be flexible to ensure customer satisfaction

and innovative to pursue new opportunities to introduce Ferrum College's educational and hospitality offerings to potential students and guests alike.

If you have a Bachelor's degree and at least three years of experience in coordination of activities and events, customer service and support, supervising and deploying staff as well as excellent collaborative communication skills, we would love to have you join our team. A Master's degree in business or communications as well as experience in retail and hospitality are a plus. This position requires evening, holiday, and weekend hours on occasion as well as the ability to lift, walk, stand, and reach for extended periods of time.

We offer a competitive compensation package including medical, dental, life, STD/LTD insurances; tuition waiver for employee and tuition exchange for eligible dependents of employee, paid holidays, personal and sick leave and vacation; and a 403 (b) retirement plan. Interested candidates should submit a resume and a Ferrum College application to resumes@ferrum.edu or forward to Human Resources, Ferrum College, P.O. Box 1000, Ferrum, VA 24088. Background checks are required.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

FERRUM COLLEGE IS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE FULL-TIME POSITION OF ADMISSIONS COUNSELOR to become part of a successful recruitment team. Regional travel and extensive follow-up with student applicants through multi-communication channel approach is required. This position reports to the Dean of Admissions.

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We offer a competitive compensation package including

medical, dental, life, STD/LTD insurances; tuition waiver for employee and tuition exchange for eligible dependents of employee, paid holidays, personal and sick leave and vacation; and a 403 (b) retirement plan. Interested candidates should submit a resume and a Ferrum College application to resumes@ferrum.edu or forward to Human Resources, Ferrum College, P.O. Box 1000, Ferrum, VA 24088. Background checks are required.

To apply for this position, please submit a cover letter of interest and resume with names, addresses and telephone numbers of three references to: resumes@ferrum.edu or Human Resources Department, Ferrum College, P.O. Box 1000, Ferrum, VA 24088. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

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HENRY COUNTRY HENRY COUNTRY, VIRGINIA DICK AND WILLIE PASSAGE - PHASE 6A BID # 22-03103-3089

Sealed Bids for the construction of Phase 6A of the **Dick and Willie Passage** will be received at the Henry County Administration Building, Purchasing Department, P.O. Box 7, Collinsville, VA 24078 (Postal), 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Room 210, Martinsville, VA 24112 (UPS & FedEx), until **3:00 PM** local prevailing time on **Thursday, March 10th, 2022** at which time the Bids received will be **publicly** opened and read aloud in the 1st floor Summerlin Board Room. The Project consists of constructing **2.0 miles of paved trail, 0.3 miles of concrete sidewalk, prefabricated pedestrian bridge, drainage improvements, retaining walls, and associated appurtenances with Bid Additives as shown in the plans.**

Bids will be received for a single prime Contract. Bids shall be on a lump sum and unit price basis. The Issuing Office for the Bidding Documents is Hurt & Proffitt, Inc., 1881 Pratt Drive, Suite 1100, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060, Attn. J. Michael Johnson, PE (mjohnson@handp.com), 540-552-5592. Prospective Bidders may examine the Bidding Documents at the Issuing Office on Mondays through Fridays between the hours of 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, and may obtain copies of the Bidding Documents from the Issuing Office as described below.

Bidding Documents also may be examined at:
Henry County Engineering, Room 208 or Purchasing, Room 210, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville, VA 24112
DODGE Data, 3315 Central Avenue, Hot Springs, AR 71913
Valley Construction News Plan Room, 426 Campbell Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24016

Copies of the CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be obtained at the Issuing Office upon nonrefundable payment of \$200 for each 22 x 34 set, \$100 for each 11 x 17 set, or downloaded free of charge at <http://www.handp.com/contact/bids>.

A pre-bid conference will be held at **10:00 AM** local time on **Tuesday, February 15th, 2022** at 3330 Kings Mountain Road, **Summerlin Board Room, Martinsville, VA 24112**. Attendance at the pre-bid conference is encouraged but is non-mandatory.

1. Bid security shall be furnished in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders.
2. The procedure for withdrawal of bids shall be in accordance with procedure (i) of Section 2.2 - 4330 of the Code of Virginia

It is the policy of the Virginia Department of Transportation that Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) as defined in 49 CFR Part 26 must have the maximum opportunity to participate in the performance of federally funded contracts. A list of DBE firms certified by the SBSB and MWAA is maintained on SBSB's website (SBSB.virginia.gov) under the DBE Directory of Certified Vendors. Contractors/consultants are encouraged to take all necessary and reasonable steps to ensure that DBE firms have the maximum opportunity to compete for and perform services on contract, including participation in any subsequent supplement contracts. If the contractor/consultant intends to subcontract a portion of the services on the project, the contractor/consultant is encouraged to seek out and consider DBEs as potential Sub-contractors/sub-consultants. The contractor/Sub-contractor is encouraged to contact DBEs to solicit their interest, capability and qualifications. Any agreement between a contractor/consultant and a DBE whereby the DBE promises not to provide services to other contractors/consultants is prohibited. The DBE contract goal for this procurement is 12%.

The successful bidder must comply with the Presidents Executive Order #11246, prohibiting discrimination in employment regarding race, creed, sex, or national origin; Executive Orders #12138 and 11625 regarding utilization of MBE/WBE subcontractors in the performance of this contract; provide certification that they 40 do not or will not maintain or provide for their employees facilities that are segregated on the basis of race, color, creed, or national origin; comply with the provisions of Civil Rights Act of 1964; and comply with the Davis-Bacon Act.

Consistent with Executive Order 13858, "Strengthening Buy-American Preferences for Infrastructure Projects," the Contractor is encouraged to use, to the greatest extent practicable, iron and aluminum as well as steel, cement, and other manufactured products produced in the United States in every contract, subcontract, purchase order, or sub-award that is chargeable under this Award.

Owner: **Henry County**
By: **Tim Hall**
Title: **County Administrator**
Date: **February 5th, 2022**

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Davis

from page 1

“A lot is going on in Martinsville, and even in my capacity as a news reporter, I looked more towards Martinsville stories than other reporters normally would have.” He said people still had “little idea of what was going on in Martinsville, what made Martinsville a good place to be living in, so being able to step into this role, spread accurate information about things that are going on” and being able to improve communication between the city and its residents attracted him to the position.

Davis grew up in Henry County’s Horsepasture District. A graduate of Magna Vista High School, Davis said his eventual career in news began with a dream of sports broadcasting. “I wanted to be on (ESPN’s) SportsCenter,” he said.

Davis studied communications at Old Dominion University (ODU) in Norfolk, the alma mater of ESPN anchor Jay Harris. During his time there, Davis recalled, “political stuff started happening and things started to be more than sports for me, so I started to want to get into the news field ... I found a passion in journalism that grew into storytelling.”

While in Norfolk, Davis said he began working as a cameraman with a local ABC affiliate. There, he said, “we did a story after all the Black Lives Matter stuff was going on,” which won an Emmy.

After working at the station for just more than 3 years, Davis moved on to Richmond where he worked as a reporter and a cameraman, then moved to Roanoke where he became a full-time reporter, “which was always the goal,” he said.

When he took the job, Davis said he hoped to work in Roanoke but ended up being assigned much closer to home in the Danville/Martinsville bureau, “and from there, I just ended up covering my hometown. It’s been fun.”

“I thought I’d never want to come back to Martinsville,” he said, “but being back has been so great, growth-wise and personally.” Davis said he has

enjoyed bringing his own family—he and his wife, Ebony, have two children—back to his home and raising his children near his family.

Some of the highlights in his news career have been working as a cameraman on an interview with Hillary Clinton and going to Washington, D.C. as a photo-journalist for former president Donald Trump’s inauguration. He was still in the city to cover the protests that followed the next day. “Those were great experiences to be a part of,” he said.

Davis also had a special love for weather-related stories. He said he has covered 5 or 6 hurricanes as well as several fatal tornadoes in the state.

“Those were impactful moments,” he said, “and the stories where you’re dealing with people who lose a loved one, sometimes it feels like you’re a part of the healing process when you’re talking with folks. Even though you’re a stranger, you meet these people on the worst day of their lives, it feels like you’re a part of their process moving forward. That was rewarding.”

Locally, Davis has enjoyed being able to cover issues including reversion.

“I take that dearly, covering that,” he said, “because that’s something that we talked about” even when he was growing up in the area.

When he accepted the job, Davis said he thought the reversion issue was all but settled. “The VSA (Voluntary Settlement Agreement) was already set in place, it was going to be smooth sailing from that point,” and he would just have to work to convey information about the transition from city to town status.

However, Davis is undaunted by the county’s rejection of the VSA and the subsequent legal challenges that have come from both the city and county. In fact, he said, it provided even more incentive for him to want to take on the role. “I’m somebody who loves a challenge,” he said, “someone who loves to be able to think and strategize about things.”

“A lot of misinformation gets spread around, and

this is one of the more important things in this area’s history that we’ve had happen in decades, so being able to put that information out from the city’s standpoint, to be able to have a part in guiding residents through that process, makes it worth stepping into whatever P.R. situation we’re stepping into.”

Davis noted that his role is not only dispensing information, but gathering information in as well, and listening to city residents.

“Moving forward, with me being in this role that was not there when this (reversion) process started, I do want to hear from residents, what their concerns are about reversion, what questions they have, and that’s something that we’re working on in the city and in my position to get out to folks,” he said.

Another issue Davis hopes to improve is communication between the city and its residents during events like power outages.

“One thing we’ve seen is that, when (the power goes out) in Martinsville, our Facebook goes crazy” and the city is inundated with calls. “Those type of things are things that I want to improve,” he said.

Though he couldn’t yet share details, Davis said to expect more social media pages in the future and Towarnick added that Davis brings some technical skills the city hopes to use with MGTV.

Davis emphasized that he also is in his position to listen, and called on the community to help him share information about Martinsville.

“Anything that’s going on in our community, whether it’s a business thing or an organization holding an event, anything that’s going on, let me know because that is one thing that I’m going to get out there and share—Martinsville is a good place for folks to live, there are things to do in Martinsville,” he said. “We’re not the same Martinsville that we were 5 or 6 years ago. If you want to be part of getting that message out, just let me know (your information) and I’ll share it out.”

Nursing Agency

from page 1

that situation,” adding that the majority of the facilities she staffs are local.

“I try not to go more than an hour and a half away from Martinsville because I know that a lot of nurses here don’t know a lot about travel nursing,” Yellock said, adding that she has contracts with facilities in Bassett, Danville, Roanoke, Salem, and even as far as Yanceyville, N.C.

“It’s growing pretty fast,” she said.

Working for a travel nurse agency allows flexibility that may be lacking in a more traditional workplace. “The nurses pick their own hours, and they make their own schedule,” she said.

Even nurses who already have full-time employment can sign on with Elite, and pick up shifts elsewhere to bring in extra money.

The pay also is preferable to a more traditional position, she said.

“You’ll have an LPN, for example, who will make \$22 to \$24 an hour. At my company, they’ll make \$38 an hour, which is hard to get as an LPN here locally,” Yellock said, noting the reason for the higher pay is because her company is staffing facilities that are in

dire need and are willing to pay a higher rate.

When she contracts a nurse out to a facility, Yellock said the work can last from a month to 13 weeks. However, her company mostly works so far on a per diem basis, in which the facility gives her its staffing needs and her nurses select the shifts they are available to work.

Currently, Yellock said her company does not offer benefits such as insurance, but it is something she hopes to add as the agency continues to grow.

In the short term, she is seeking to hire even more nurses to continue staffing the facilities she currently contracts with, and by 2023, she hopes to expand into other areas of Virginia, and even into other states.

Yellock said being the owner of a travel nurse agency rather than working for one is a different feeling. “It is a lot of work, it is challenging, it is something new every day,” she said, “but I’m growing as my business grows and I’m becoming more knowledgeable.”

To learn about employment opportunities or staffing availability with Elite Nurses Staffing Agency, LLC, visit www.elitenursesllc.com or call (276) 299-2676.



Tova Yellock, founder and CEO of Elite Nurses Staffing Agency LLC, is helping to ease staffing shortages with her travel nurse agency. Currently, she has 60 nurses on her roster and is hoping to hire more. (Contributed photo)

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SCC urges protection against severe winter weather

Winter weather can wreak havoc with homes, businesses, vehicles and other property, causing billions of dollars in insured and uninsured losses nationwide each year.

With several recent winter weather events in Virginia already, the time to prepare is now. The State Corporation Commission’s (SCC) Bureau of Insurance (Bureau) encourages Virginians to review their insurance coverage and prepare their homes and vehicles before harsh winter conditions return. It is important

to know the extent of your insurance coverage, as well as any deductibles you may have to pay in the event of a claim.

Accumulation of too much snow or ice can result in tree limbs breaking and falling on homes, vehicles and power lines. Falling limbs, melting snow and ice and sub-freezing temperatures can cause damage.

For more information, call the Bureau’s Property and Casualty Consumer Services Section toll-free at 1-877-310-6560.

Poll shows most parents support schools’ handling of COVID-19

By Jonah Chester Virginia News Connection

Virginia schools have become a political battleground over mask mandates in recent months, but a new poll indicates a majority of parents support the steps teachers and administrators are taking to keep COVID out of classrooms.

The American Federation of Teachers survey showed nearly 80 percent of parents are satisfied with how schools have handled the pandemic.

Thomas Calhoun, president of the Norfolk Federation of Teachers, said containing the coronavirus spread is one of the most pressing issues facing teachers this school year.

“Teachers have families, too,” Calhoun pointed out. “They’re extremely concerned about keeping their families safe and not carrying anything home to their families.”

Last week, Gov. Glenn Youngkin lifted blanket mask mandates in schools, allowing parents to opt their students out of those policies. Youngkin, and Republicans in the General Assembly,

argued participating in such public health measures is a matter of personal choice.

The poll found one of parents’ biggest concerns is a shortage of teachers, with 65 percent saying they were “fairly or very concerned” about it.

Calhoun emphasized he believes not enough is being done to address the underlying causes of teacher shortages, and predicts they may worsen for the 2022-2023 school year.

“I know it’s nationwide,” Calhoun noted. “I can tell you personally, from here in the city of Norfolk, if it’s a position that has anything to do with public education, there’s a shortage.”

A support staff shortage is another of the most pressing issues for parents, with 75 percent in the poll indicating concern over a lack of school nurses, guidance counselors and social workers. Hart Research Associates and Lake Research Partners surveyed more than 1,300 parents of public school children, with a margin of error of just over 3 percent.

Submit your community news and photos to newsreporter@theenterprise.net