

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, May 7, 2022

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Martinsville Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley told city council that the city's taxpayers would once again see a "historic increase" in the assessed values of personal property. She provided council a number of options to help mitigate the increased cost to taxpayers, though any such action would result in decreased revenues for the city.

City mulls personal property tax relief

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Last year, personal property tax values in the City of Martinsville climbed to unprecedented heights, and this year, values may climb even higher.

However, during Tuesday's budget work session, Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley offered city council members some options to help ease the financial burden on residents.

Easley said vehicle valuations continue to rise, partly due to a chip shortage (needed for certain vehicle components), and a short supply of used vehicles in the market.

That scenario has caused the value of used vehicles to appreciate rather than depreciate.

Last year, "you all recognized a windfall in

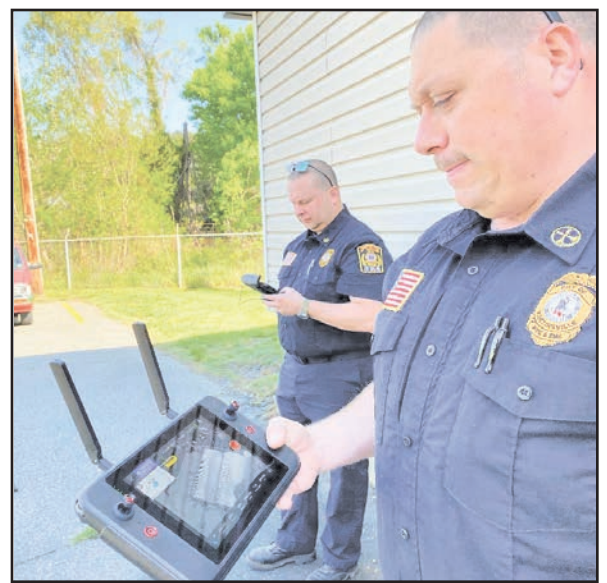
your FY22 (fiscal year 2022) budget based on the increased values from last year" in the amount of \$179,056.88 as of March 3, Easley told council members.

This year, she said, she sent the city's fleet file earlier than usual to J.D. Power, the firm which provides vehicle value assessments, "so I could get my head around where we were going and give you all and your finance staff a heads up on what they needed to do to build a budget."

The value of this year's fleet of more than 13,000 vehicles increased by 26.14 percent over last year, which was already a significant increase over 2020 values, and the value increase may continue even into next year, she said.

The highest increase was 62 percent over last year's

See **Personal Property Tax Relief** page 4



Martinsville Fire Marshall Andy Powers (foreground) and Deputy Fire Chief Kris Shrader watch their screens as a drone hovering overhead sends back live footage of the Martinsville Water Treatment Plant, which was the site of a test run for new technology which allows viewers at remote locations to view drone footage in real time.

Fire department drone program soars to new heights

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Since 2018, Martinsville's fire department has been using some unexpected technology to help in their emergency response—drones. Now, the department has taken that program to the next level with the ability to send live drone feed to command units and other organizations, allowing more sets of eyes to assist in potentially life-saving operations.

Fire Marshall Andy Powers and Deputy Fire Chief Kris Shrader tested

the new technology at the city's water treatment plant on Monday. Shrader launched a drone into the air and watched the footage it sent back on a small screen held in his hand. The feed also was broadcast to a television screen set up in the back of a truck.

Fire Chief Ted Anderson, who also viewed the footage from another location, communicated with Shrader through the Microsoft Teams app, which allowed Shrader to share his screen.

"The implications for

See **Drone Program**, page 3

Landmark finds new life: ribbon cutting celebrates new Chief Tassel apartments

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

One of Martinsville's most historic structures, the 1929 Chief Tassel building at 51 East Church Street, has found a new life. The structure now holds 21 single-bedroom apartments, two commercial office spaces, and it is nearly ready to welcome tenants.

Waukeshaw Development, which spearheaded the project, celebrated the nearly completed renovations on the building with a grand opening and ribbon cutting last week.

"This kind of project serves as a vehicle for revitalizing Uptown and spurring economic development," said Uptown Partnership's director, Kathy Deacon. "Some of the project's benefits include historic revitalization, enhancing Uptown's unique identity

and vitality, and providing additional, much needed housing."

"This is really an exciting day for Martinsville and Henry County," said Mark Heath, president and CEO of the Economic Development Corp. (EDC). "Housing is a critical component in the EDC's effort to recruit not only new companies, but to help work with our existing companies. As we speak, several of our major employers are in the marketplace trying to find temporary and long-term housing for their employees."

City Council member Danny Turner recalled his experience with the building. When he was 6-years-old, Turner said "I lost a filling," and visited a dentist who had an office in the building.

The dentist "didn't like small kids, and he didn't have the latest in Novocain, so I had a bad

See **Chief Tassel Apartments** page 8



Officials from the city, Uptown Partnership, the Economic Development Corporation, Rives Brown Real Estate, and Waukeshaw Development gather to cut the ribbon for the newly-renovated Chief Tassel Building in Martinsville.

Outside agencies lobby city for increased staff pay

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Martinsville City Council heard from a number of outside agencies Tuesday during the second of three budget work sessions. Several agency heads noted struggles with staffing shortages - which most attributed to low pay. All requested raises for staff who are underpaid and increasingly overworked as vacancies remained unfilled.

According to those who addressed council, the local 911 center has lost 32 percent of its staff, while the Henry-Martinsville Social Services Department has carried a 45 percent vacancy rate for many months and Blue Ridge Regional Library staff have not received a cost-of-living salary adjustment in at least a decade.

Martinsville-Henry County 911 Center

"Just like many of the other public safety professions and departments here in the city and the county and abroad, we're dealing with the same staffing issues that many others are," Martinsville-Henry County 911 Center Director J.R. Powell said, and attributed the challenges to several reasons, primarily the center's inability to compete with salaries in neighboring jurisdictions.

Powell said he has been at the center for 27 of the 33 years it has been open, and "our center has always been known in the region as having very little turnover." However, in the past 16-months, the center has lost 32 percent of its staff, or seven of its 22 dispatchers. While one retired, six others left for other opportunities that offered better pay, including one recently hired by the city.

"The staff that we have are dedicated," Powell said of those who remained, "We're continuing to function. We've all had to pitch in."

Of the 120 centers in Virginia, the local center ranked 25th in the number of calls processed in 2021, Powell



Martinsville-Henry County 911 Center Director J.R. Powell said that he lost 32 percent of his staff in the last 16 months, and requested pay raises to assist with retention and recruitment. He said his staff were not included in raises given to law enforcement and public safety staff in the city or county.

said. "In other words, we answer more calls than 95 of those 120 911 centers in Virginia. That's a large number."

In the region, the center answers more calls than the counties of Franklin, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Rockingham, and Roanoke and the City of Danville he said. Only Roanoke City processes more calls in the region.

He added that when Henry County made a salary adjustment for law enforcement and public safety late last year, and "the city was able to offer the same for some of the law enforcement this year, we were not included in any of those salary increases.

"Our dispatchers are considered essential personnel,"

See **Increased Staff Pay**, page 6

State, federal lawmakers divided following leaked SCOTUS opinion

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, was among several lawmakers on Monday to release a statement following the leak of a draft majority opinion by the U.S. Supreme Court which seems to indicate the court is set to strike down the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, protecting a woman's right to an abortion.

Williams said the draft opinion "could be the biggest win for life, liberty, and limited government that we may see in a lifetime. For the past 49 years, under the Supreme Court's unilateral orders, the murder of 62 million unborn children was legalized and sanctioned—against the will of the American people.

In contrast, U.S. Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine expressed outrage and disapproval.

Warner, D-Alexandria, took to Twitter after the draft opinion became public, writing "I'm outraged by the reported leaked SCOTUS decision overturning Roe. I believe abortion care is health care, and I'll keep fighting for that in the Senate."

In another Tweet posted Tuesday, he wrote, "If the Supreme Court overturns Roe, it won't stop abortions. It will just cause unsafe abortions."

Kaine, D-Richmond, also expressed his disapproval of the opinion on Twitter. In one post on Tuesday he wrote, "The draft opinion shows why the Senate

See **SCOTUS Opinion**, page 3

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UPDATES



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Friday, May 9

The Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library will hold its monthly meeting at 10:30 a.m. at the Martinsville Branch Library, 310 East Church Street. Interested in joining? Everyone is welcome. Please bring your mask.

The Patrick & Henry Community College Board will meet at 12:30 p.m. in the Hooker Exhibit Hall, Frith Economic Development Center. The meeting is public, but the board will not receive public comment.

The Martinsville City School Board will hold its regular meeting at 6 p.m. in the CLC at the Martinsville City Public Schools Central Office (746 Indian Trail, Martinsville.)

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing on the school and total county budgets beginning at 7 p.m. in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the Henry County Administration building.

Tuesday, May 10

Join the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society for a book discussion on "Justified by Her Children" beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the courtroom of the Historic Henry County Courthouse (1 East Main Street, Martinsville). Admission is free. The building is fully handicap accessible. Joyce Staples will lead a thought-provoking and stimulating discussion on the book written by Pastor Roy Pollina.

Come join the Bassett Historical Center (3964 Fairystone Park Highway) at 10:30 a.m. as Native American speaker, storyteller, and recently published author of the book titled, "The Poems and Stories That Fulfill the Promise," Renae

"Spring Morning" Wagoner, presents a "catch-all" program consisting of legends and stories while attempting to dispel some misconceptions surrounding Native People. The program is free and open to the public. It will be held in the Susan L. Adkins Memorial Meeting Room. Masks are optional.

Martinsville City Council will hold its regular meeting beginning at 7 p.m. in council chambers of the City Municipal Building.

Wednesday, May 11

The Virginia Museum of Natural History offers children ages 3-5 the opportunity to experience science first-hand with its annual "Doodle Bugs!" program. The hour-long programs include imaginative stories, fun activities, games and crafts that spark creativity and curiosity. They are the perfect opportunity for adults and grandparents to learn and have fun with their children! The cost is \$7 per child and all children must be accompanied by an adult.

Uptown Partnership will host its third community engagement conversation on Uptown Martinsville's revitalization efforts. The discussion will take place from 6-7:30 p.m., location to be determined. For up-to-date information, visit Martinsville UP on Facebook.

Saturday, May 14

Join the P&HCC Fab Lab for its monthly Family Day, featuring a fun, hands-on activity for the entire family. This month, participants will use the vinyl cutter to create unique, custom designed stickers. Family Day is held from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. The cost is \$15.

Sunday, May 15

Join in the fun at the Spencer-Penn Centre (475 Spencer-Penn Road, Spencer) for a sock hop from 2-5 p.m. DJ What? will

provide the music and refreshments will be served. Games will be on hand for non-dancers who prefer to socialize. Admission is a \$5 donation at the door.

Monday, May 16 and 23

The P&HCC Fab Lab hosts a two-part drip painting class. Participants will use the vinyl cutter and paint pouring to create a custom drip painting. Each class will be held from 6:30-8 p.m. The cost is \$25.

Wednesday, May 18

The P&HCC Fab Lab continues its paper crafting series with rubber stamps. In this workshop, students will learn unexpected and creative uses for rubber stamps. Techniques like mirror stamping, stamping off, and wax paper resist will be introduced. The class is held from 6:30-7:30 p.m. and the cost is \$15.

Thursday, May 19

Uptown Partnership presents Third Thursdays in Uptown in collaboration with the Virginia Museum of Natural History. The events will be held in the Franklin Street/Depot Street parking lot in Martinsville. Palumbo's Hoagie House, Daddy Q's BBQ, and Tammy's Grill will be on site from 11 a.m. until 9 p.m. with entertainment from DJ What and beer sales from Mountain Valley Brewing from 5-9 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

Saturday, May 21

The Martinsville-Henry County SPCA will be at Petsense in Martinsville (240 West Commonwealth Blvd) from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. for an adoption event. Come meet some of the furry friends available for adoption from the shelter.

The Bassett Cruise In returns for 2022. Join the fun at Bassett Furniture World Headquarters on Fairystone Park Highway from 3-7 p.m. All makes and models welcome. Be sure to grab a snack from the food court!

Join Young Life MHC for a day in the community with friends and family for a great cause at the Cornhole Classic beginning at 12 p.m. at the Smith River Sports Complex. Participants can compete in two brackets, a competitive bracket and a family fun bracket. Lunch is included in registration or can be purchased if you choose to spectate. For more information on the event and how to register, visit Young Life Martinsville-Henry County on Facebook.

Sunday, May 22

Support the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society with Afternoon Tea at One Starling from 3-5 p.m. Attendees will enjoy tea, sherry, mimosas, music, and traditional English refreshments. Reservations are \$20 per person and must be made in advance by calling or visiting the Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center and Museum or One Starling.

Tuesday, May 24

Support the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society with Afternoon Tea at One Starling from 3-5 p.m. Attendees will enjoy tea, sherry, mimosas, music, and traditional English refreshments. Reservations are \$20 per person and must be made in advance by calling or visiting the Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center and Museum or One Starling.

ONGOING

The Magna Vista Horticulture Spring Plant Sale is open. Weekday hours are 9-3 p.m. For complete information, sales, and additional hours, visit the Magna Vista Horticulture

Facebook page.

The Martinsville Farmers' Market is open Saturdays 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. through November 20, and Wednesdays from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. through September 29. Shop with SNAP/EBT and receive up to \$20 in free fruits and vegetables each week. To shop market vendors online, visit martinsvilleuptown.com.

The Louise R. Lester Spay/Neuter Clinic is hosting wellness clinics every Tuesday. Clinics are by appointment only—no walk-ins will be accepted. Call (276) 638-7297 to schedule your appointment. Beginning in April, the clinics will be held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, rather than weekly.

Henry County Parks & Recreation invites you out for a 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 brll.lib.va.us.

The Fontaine Ruritan Club hosts Bingo every Tuesday at 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.

Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi inducts new members

The following people recently were initiated into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines.

Wendy Hollandsworth, of Bassett, at Marymount University

Rachel Hodge, of Axton, at Longwood University

Amanda King, of Bassett, at Radford University

Charlie Koger, of Bassett, at Radford University

April Peters, of Bassett, at Radford University

Taylor Hill, of Martinsville, at Radford University

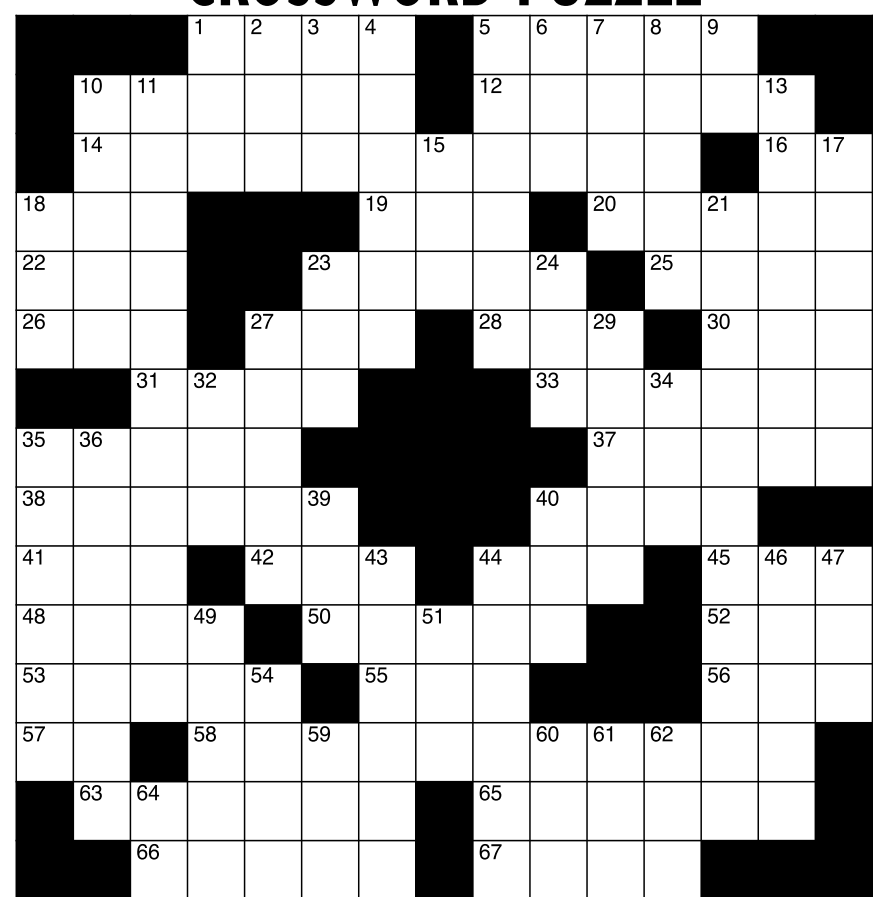
Naomi Manns, of Spencer, at Radford University

They are among approximately 25,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi each year. Membership is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10 percent of seniors and 7.5 percent of juniors are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10 percent of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly dis-

tingtion.

Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 under the leadership of undergraduate student Marcus L. Urann who had a desire to create a different kind of honor society: one that recognized excellence in all academic disciplines. Today, the Society has chapters on more than 325 campuses in the United States, its territories and the Philippines. Its mission is "To recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education and to engage the community of scholars in service to others."

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Hot meal
 - 5. Razor clams
 - 10. Blood-sucking African fly
 - 12. Chauvinists
 - 14. Windy City football player
 - 16. An alternative
 - 18. Federal Housing Administration
 - 19. Styles hair
 - 20. Arabic female name
 - 22. Paddle
 - 23. Area once separated from Germany
 - 25. Marketplace
 - 26. Gode Airport
 - 27. Upset
 - 28. Where wrestlers sweat
 - 30. Garland
 - 31. Robert ___, poet
 - 33. An iPad is one
 - 35. Fruit of the oak tree
 - 37. Della ___, singer
 - 38. Women's clothing retailer
 - 40. Mailed
 - 41. Largest English dictionary
 - 42. Pouch
 - 44. Radioactivity unit
 - 45. Month
 - 48. Nanosecond
 - 50. Domestic
 - 52. What a boy becomes
 - 53. Breezes (anc. Greek)
 - 55. Jogged
 - 56. At the stern
 - 57. Lawrencium
 - 58. Destructive to both sides
 - 63. Arterias
 - 65. Removes
 - 66. Pretentious people
 - 67. Tropical Asian plant
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Type of whale
 - 2. Type of medication
 - 3. Land of the free
 - 4. Formed an opinion of
 - 5. Logo
 - 6. No (Scottish)
 - 7. Leaves tissue
 - 8. Sacred state to Muslims
 - 9. Thus
 - 10. African nation
 - 11. Someone who has a stake in
 - 13. Parties
 - 15. Subsystem producers
 - 17. Large, flightless birds
 - 18. Compromises visibility
 - 21. A ballet enthusiast
 - 23. More (Spanish)
 - 24. Skeletal muscle
 - 27. Hands (Span.)
 - 29. Weighed
 - 32. Businessman
 - 34. Famous clock Big __
 - 35. Unkeyed
 - 36. Break between words
 - 39. Ink (slang)
 - 40. Disappointed
 - 43. Stroke
 - 44. Curdled milk
 - 46. Restaurants
 - 47. Explosive
 - 49. Type of terrier
 - 51. Disfigure
 - 54. Innermost cell layers
 - 59. Bar bill
 - 60. Distinct period of history
 - 61. Mode of transportation
 - 62. Equal (prefix)
 - 64. Operating system

Community Storehouse, county schools among grant recipients

No Kid Hungry recently distributed \$839,552 in grants to help 33 Virginia school districts and community organizations enhance child nutrition and emergency food programs during the school year and summer months. Since March 2020, the nonprofit has invested more than \$5 million to ensure Virginia's children stay nourished and ready to learn.

The latest round of funding will help organizations and schools adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of students and families. Among the recent grant recipients are:

- The Community Storehouse (Henry County) – \$5,000
- Henry County Public Schools – \$15,110

Food insecurity remains a pressing issue in the commonwealth. According to No Kid Hungry, one in eight children in Virginia may face hunger this year.

School districts and community organizations play an essential role in ensuring kids have access to the nutritious meals they need to learn and grow. However, right now they face both logistical challenges and added costs, making it more difficult to provide meals for the kids who need them.

Currently, 92 percent of school districts nationwide cite trouble sourcing the food they need due to ongoing supply chain disruptions and nearly 75 percent report staffing challenges.

"Local school and community nutrition teams continue to go above and beyond to connect kids and families with meals during the pandemic, and this latest round of funding will help strengthen their work," said No Kid Hungry Virginia Director Sarah Steely. "The grants will help teams leverage a variety of strategies to increase food access, such as purchasing meal service supplies and equipment, while supporting staffing and food costs."

To learn about local meal programs, visit your school district's website for details. Go to state.nokidhungry.org/virginia for more information.

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Drone Program

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us now are, where we didn't have a really good way to transmit it (drone footage) back to our command post or our emergency operations center, now we can put a drone in the air, set up a meeting through Teams," and allow everyone in that meeting to see the drone footage in real time, Shrader said.

During large-scale events, crews set up an emergency operations center (EOC), and personnel develop strategies for handling the situation, he said.

"But during that time," he explained, "we have to rely on folks in the field to give us clue on what's going on, visually describe everything for us. In this case, I can put somebody out there, they can put this up in the air, and I can see what's going on for the most part. It improves situational awareness for everybody involved."

Powers showcased the abilities of one of the department's two drones which was relaying thermal images to a handheld screen.

"It's all based on thermal and it's all relative," Powers said, and explained if an object is hotter than its surroundings, it will show up on the screen as such.

"If I'm looking for a person in a field, that field's been in the sun all day, so it could be one temperature," he said, adding that "the person could be relatively hotter or colder than that field, making them stand out on the screen against their environment."

Now that they have the ability to transmit the footage offsite, Powers said, "the police department can look at it in their office, we can look at it back at the fire station on a bigger screen. The bigger you can look at this, the better you can pick out what your objects are."

One of the drones was programmed to use the water treatment building as a central point and consistently orbited around it. Such a program, he said, could be used in the case of a large structure fire. Emergency personnel could use the drone without having to constantly manipulate the controls, "and we could have live, real-time information of what's happening in that fire. Because it's thermal (imagery), you can look through smoke and see things that you wouldn't be able to see normally."

The drone program was Shrader's brainchild, and he, along with Powers, are currently the city's only certified pilots, though they are hoping more will complete the necessary training.

Operators must be Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certified drone pilots "because we're using it for emergency services, there are tons of rules that keep changing daily that we're trying to keep up with and the easiest way to do that was to get certified," Powers said.

The drone program itself is still in its infancy and comes with "tons of training and tons of trial and error," he said, and added that in addition to being used in the city, the drones have been used to help other localities.

"We've had multiple requests for missing persons in Patrick County, and we've assisted them," he said, adding that the drones were used last year when a hiker went missing from Primland, and on another occasion when someone had wandered into the woods. "Luckily, they were not in any danger," he said of the latter instance, "the parents just didn't know where they were."

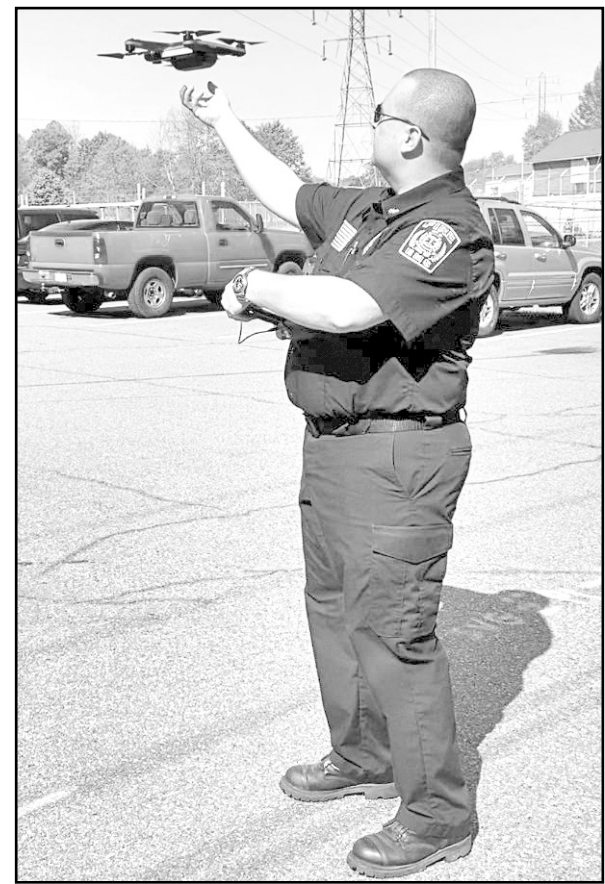
In both cases, while the drone did not actually locate the missing person, it was able to eliminate vast swaths of area and reduce the areas ground teams needed to search.

"We've been out several times after tornados for the National Weather Service," Shrader said, flying over damaged areas, allowing the organization to analyze the footage and images to determine what weather event occurred, whether it was a tornado, straight line winds, or something else entirely.

Powers said it usually takes a team of three to handle a drone procedure safely and correctly. Besides the drone operator, staff also help with flight plans, monitoring the area, and vigilantly observing the operation.

While the drone can travel 4- to 5-miles away from its operator, Powers said current FAA regulations require that it remain in sight of the team, which is about 16-18,000 feet. Some rule changes expected from the FAA may alter that requirement, he added.

However, even if the current rules remain in place, the new technology now being implemented to transmit drone footage to remote locations in real-time will help local emergency personnel to operate and communicate more effectively when needed.



Martinsville's Deputy Fire Chief Kris Shrader extends his hand as one of the drones comes in for a landing. Fire Marshall Andy Powers credited Shrader for introducing the drone program to the city's fire department in 2018.

SCOTUS Opinion

from page 1

GOP denied Merrick Garland a hearing and rushed Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation. 2 stolen seats = Taking away women's rights. It's been the goal all along.

In another post, he wrote, "In the United States, everyone should have the freedom to make their own reproductive health decisions. It shouldn't depend on your zip code."

The draft opinion, written by Associate Justice Samuel Alito, was originally published by Politico, which called the document "a full-throated, unflinching repudiation of the 1973 decision which guaranteed federal constitutional protections of abortion rights and a subsequent 1992 decision—Planned Parenthood v. Casey—that largely maintained that right."

In the opinion, Alito writes that "Roe was egregiously wrong from the start. Its reasoning was exceptionally weak, and the decision has had damaging consequences. And far from bringing about a national settlement of the abortion issue, Roe and Casey (Planned Parenthood v. Casey, a 5-4 decision that reaffirmed Roe in 1992) have enflamed debate and deepened division."

"It is time to heed the Constitution," Alito continues, "and return the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives ... That is what the Constitution and the rule of law demand."

The court confirmed the authenticity of the draft Tuesday in a statement: "A news organization published a copy of a draft opinion in a pending case. Justices circulate draft opinions internally as a routine and essential part of the Court's confidential deliberative work. Although the document described in yesterday's reports is authentic, it does not represent a decision by the Court or the final position of any member on the issues in the case."

Should Roe be overturned, an analysis by the Guttmacher Institute, a research and policy organization that, according to its mission statement is "committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) worldwide," concluded that 26 states are

"certain or likely" to ban abortion, though Virginia is not listed among those states.

It notes that a number of states have trigger bans—laws designed to take effect automatically or by quick action should Roe be overturned.

Chief Justice John Roberts in a statement, said in part that he has directed the Marshal of the Court to launch an investigation into the source of the leak. He added "to the extent this betrayal of the confidences of the Court was intended to undermine the integrity of our operations, it will not succeed. The work of the Court will not be affected in any way."

"We at the Court are blessed to have a workforce—permanent employees and law clerks alike—intensely loyal to the institution and dedicated to the rule of law. Court employees have an exemplary and important tradition of respecting the confidentiality of the judicial process and upholding the trust of the Court. This was a singular and egregious breach of trust that is an affront to the Court and the community of public servants who work here."

"The iron curtain is cracking," Williams wrote. "The Supreme Court recognizes the evident truth—that Roe vs. Wade was terribly decided, that abortion was never a 'constitutional right,' and that the American people and their representatives should have the power to protect the right to life of unborn children."

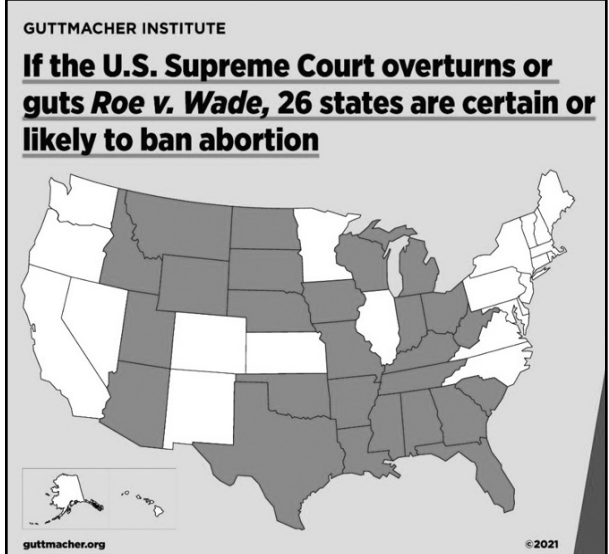
"When this decision is passed down, I will work with my colleagues and fight to protect the unborn here in Virginia on behalf of my constituents. I will never stop fighting for the rights of the most vulnerable among us who have no voice. And I will always stand and vote for Life."

In a statement released on Tuesday, President Joe Biden said, "I believe that a woman's right to choose is fundamental, Roe has been the law of the land for almost fifty years, and basic fairness and the stability of our law demand that it not be overturned."

He noted that after the enactment of Texas law

SB 8, "and other laws restricting women's reproductive rights, I directed my Gender Policy Council and White House Counsel's Office to prepare options for an Administration response to the continued attack on abortion and reproductive rights, under a variety of possible outcomes in the cases pending before the Supreme Court. We will be ready when any ruling is issued."

The statement concluded, "if the Court does overturn Roe, it will fall on our nation's elected officials at all levels of government to protect a woman's right to choose. And it will fall on all voters to elect pro-choice officials this November. At the federal level, we will need more pro-choice Senators and a pro-choice majority in the House to adopt legislation that codifies Roe, which will work to pass and sign into law."



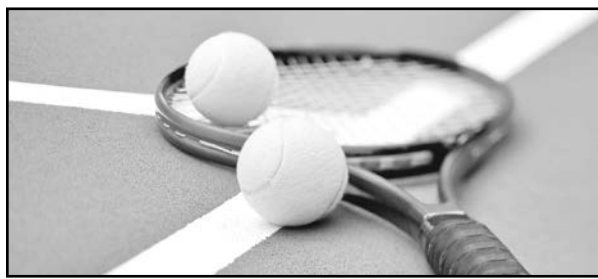
A map created by the Guttmacher Institute highlights the states likely or certain to ban abortion should the Supreme Court overturn Roe v. Wade.

P&HCC Athletics to add tennis teams

Patrick & Henry Community College officials announced today that the college will soon be adding a new sport: tennis. The college plans to offer both men's and women's intercollegiate tennis teams. Recruitment for the teams will begin soon, and play is slated to begin during the 2022-23 academic year. Both teams will compete in Division III of the National Junior College Athletic Association.

"Tennis and Patrick & Henry Community College are a perfect fit. We are excited to welcome a new group of student-athletes, fans, and supporters to our PHamily," said Brian Henderson, Assistant Vice President for Student Engagement and Inclusion and Athletic Director. "Adding a popular participation sport for our student-athletes is in line with our ongoing effort to provide the best opportunities for all."

The college already has two tennis courts on campus



for its future teams. However, to accommodate the anticipated number of players, P&HCC has partnered with Henry County Parks and Recreation department to utilize additional courts in the community. College officials say they have seen an increased interest in tennis programs among local high school students, so they are preparing for a similar level of interest among

collegiate participants.

A search for a Head Coach is underway. College officials say that there are many more steps to complete before the tennis program will be ready to debut. However, they anticipate recruitment will begin in a few months. To stay up-to-date on the progress as these new teams develop, follow the Patrick & Henry C. C. Athletics page on Facebook.

For direct questions, contact Brian Henderson at bhenderson@patrickhenry.edu.

Hundreds attend ride to honor fallen Marine

The annual Cpl. Jonathan W. Bowling Memorial Bike Ride attracted hundreds of participants, despite rainy weather and chilly conditions.

Darrell Bowling, Jonathan Bowling's father, estimated 300 people attended the event that began at the Patrick County High School. Participants, that included 80 bike riders and dozens of vehicles, departed Stuart, headed to Martinsville and Henry County, where they stopped briefly in Bassett before continuing to Jonathan Bowling's grave in the Woolwine area.

Bowling said \$11,851 for the scholarship, which was created to honor Jonathan Bowling's legacy and provide a Patrick County student with funding to attend Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC).

"It's been 18 years, and to have the kind of support that we have, I'm completely pleased," the elder Bowling said.



Stuart Volunteer Fire Department set up a flag display to honor Marine Cpl. Jonathan Bowling during a ride Saturday to raise funds for a scholarship in his memory.

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OPINION

On Roe v. Wade and the gathering darkness

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is having a great week, and that means this is going to be an unusually bleak and depressing column.

I'm writing this column on Tuesday, May 3, the day after a draft majority opinion leaked from the Supreme Court. The draft opinion, written by Justice Samuel Alito, is nothing less than a fiery repudiation and overruling of Roe v. Wade.

This development should not come as a surprise. It's the entire reason the Supreme Court is currently stacked with archconservatives. It's the reason then-Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said that President Barack Obama could not appoint a Supreme Court Justice during the last year of his term, then hypocritically spun on his heels and rammed Amy Coney Barrett into the Supreme Court during President Donald Trump's last year before Ruth Bader Ginsburg's body was even cold. The overruling of Roe v. Wade is not a bug of McConnell's farce of a Supreme Court, it's the selling point.

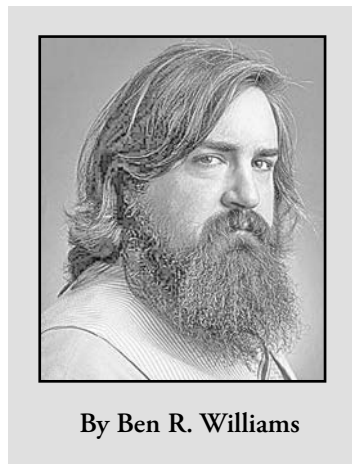
I'm not going to write a column arguing about abortion. There's no point in it. Instead, this is a column about what overturning Roe v. Wade is going to do immediately, and what it's going to do over the coming weeks and months.

First off, here's what Roe v. Wade actually is: in 1973, the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment provides a "right to privacy" that protects a pregnant woman's right to choose whether to have an abortion. We're going to come back to this point shortly.

But first, what happens immediately when Roe v. Wade is overturned?

At that point, the legality of abortion is up to each state. There are 18 states that have so-called "trigger laws" to ban abortion if Roe v. Wade is overturned, and these states contain 58 percent of all U.S. women of reproductive age. They are Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Utah, Arkansas, Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, Idaho, Wyoming, Wisconsin, Michigan, and North and South Dakota.

Realistically, this means that women from those states can still receive abortions, as long as they have the money and means to visit clinics in neighboring states (for however long those remain open). For example, when Texas instituted an abortion ban that lasted about six weeks last year, Planned Parenthood clinics in neighboring states saw an 800 percent increase in abortion patients. Those too poor or



By Ben R. Williams

disadvantaged to leave their state will be stuck, however.

And here's a fact: a lot of women are going to die. Some will die from receiving abortions in illegal back alley clinics, but plenty of women will die in childbirth. Did you know that the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any developed country? Worse still, the rate is rising every day. There are only two other countries where the maternal mortality rate is rising: Afghanistan and Sudan.

And of course, many women will die because their pregnancies were dangerous and non-viable, but they either won't have access to medical care that would determine that outcome or they'll be stuck in a state with draconian laws that prevent abortion even if childbirth will kill both mother and child. Think that sounds crazy? Just this past March, a Missouri legislator introduced a bill that would make it illegal to abort an ectopic pregnancy, which is by definition non-viable.

Sure, the wave of death will be bad, but that's just the beginning. Let's go back to the 14th Amendment.

Adopted in 1868, the 14th Amendment contains the Due Process Clause, which prohibits the arbitrary deprivation of "life, liberty, or property" by the government except as authorized by law.

The 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling absolutely hinges on the Due Process Clause, but in his leaked opinion, Alito states that the 14th Amendment only guarantees rights that are "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition."

So, what are some other Supreme Court rulings that could now be struck down based on this interpretation of the 14th Amendment? How about Griswold v. Connecticut from 1965, in which the Supreme Court ruled that married couples have the liberty to buy and use contraceptives without government restriction? This ruling was extended by further Supreme Court decisions, such as Eisenstadt v. Baird, which gave the right to birth control to unmarried couples. Based on Alito's new opinion, the Supreme Court could literally decide that you can't buy contraceptives without a prescription from your doctor. When combined with an overturned Roe v. Wade, we can safely expect an absolute explosion in teen pregnancies and other unwanted pregnancies.

Here's another past Supreme Court ruling that Alito just threw into question: Obergefell

v. Hodges, which guaranteed same-sex couples the right to marry. Personally, I expect this one to go fast, so if there are any same-sex couples reading this who are considering marriage, I recommend pulling the trigger this month while you still can.

I am neither joking nor exaggerating.

And here's another past Supreme Court decision that hinged on the 14th Amendment: Loving v. Virginia, which ruled that laws banning interracial marriage are unconstitutional. Obergefell v. Hodges cited Loving v. Virginia as precedent, so if one topples, there's absolutely no reason the other couldn't go the same way.

It's tempting to say that I'm alarmist, that I'm exaggerating the threat of this impending Supreme Court decision. I wish that were the case. I'd love to be wrong. But as Maya Angelou famously said, "When people show you who they are, believe them the first time."

I've seen enough of Mitch McConnell and his ilk to know them well. They're dead-set on steering this country not merely decades into the past, but centuries, and about 30 percent of the country will cheer them on while the rest of the developed world watches in horror and confusion as the American experiment ends with a pathetic whimper and the shining lights of the "city on a hill" wink out one by one.

Again, I hope I'm wrong. But I guess we'll all find out soon enough.

Personal Property Tax Relief

from page 1

values for a 2019 Dodge Grand Caravan, while an average increase was 26 percent for a 2013 Honda Accord, which jumped from \$9,500 to \$11,950.

According to materials Easley provided, passenger cars increased an average of 28 percent, truck values averaged a 22 percent increase, motorcycle values increased by an average of 11 percent, and RVs and campers increased by an average of 29.29 percent.

"This is a historic value increase," Easley said.

Along with those increases, Easley said the tax reimbursement rate likely would decrease due to the rising value of the city's total fleet. Last year, she said, the reimbursement rate was 42.28 percent. "Based on what I'm seeing right now, if nothing is done, that rate is probably going to drop to 32.23 percent."

She presented five potential courses of action from which council members could choose, including the first, which is to take no action at all.

"You already advertised your general personal property tax rate for this year at \$2.30 (per \$100 of assessed value), and the city manager has built his budget based on doing nothing" to mitigate the increase, Easley said.

Should council members decide to take no action, "you'll probably recognize a windfall of \$230,372.73," she said, adding that some localities elected that route, but earmarked the revenues for specific projects such as paving or school construction.

During a conversation, Easley said City Manager Leon Towarnicki "indicated that (council) had plugged in \$200,000" for the upcoming year's personal property revenues, which "is anticipated to be the windfall over what was budgeted for last year."

Another option Easley presented was lowering the tax rate, which she did not recommend "because it's (the valuation) eventually going to come back down. It's really popular to lower the tax rate, however you will have to increase it again once we get back to a more normal depreciation."

Easley also did not recommend increasing the annual percentage of the Personal Property Tax Relief Act (PPTRA).

In the materials she provided, Easley explained that the city's annual allocation from the state is \$626,428, which must be allocated by the city for tax relief or forfeited. Last year, the city's PPTRA relief percentage was 42.28 percent, and this year is expected to fall to 32.32 percent due to the increased values of the city's taxable vehicles.

Easley noted that business vehicles, RVs, campers, boats, and trailers do not qualify for PPTRA relief, regardless of the unprecedented value increases over the last two years. Additionally, 1,086 vehicles in this year's fleet are assessed at \$1,000 or less, and will receive 100 percent tax relief.

The final option, and the one that Easley recommended, was applying an assessment ratio—reducing the fair market value of vehicles by a certain percentage that is mutually agreed upon by council members and Easley, whose agreement is required for the action.

While she declined to recommend a particular ratio, Easley provided a financial breakdown of what a 5, 10, 15, or 20 percent assessment ratios would mean for the

city's finances.

By her calculations, Easley said she believes there is "enough wiggle room to do up to the 20" percent, but "this is your call. This is your budget."

According to a chart she created, the total value assessment of passenger cars, trucks, and motorcycles for 2022 currently is \$74,490,990, an average 42.37 percent change from 2021. This would result in an average \$219.81 personal property tax, and a revenue impact of \$1,713,292.77.

A 5 percent assessment ratio would lower the total assessed value of \$70,766,441, resulting in an average \$209.26 tax bill and reducing that original revenue impact by \$85,664.63.

A 10 percent ratio would lower valuations to \$67,041,891, meaning an average tax bill of \$198.25 and a decrease of \$171,329.28 in revenues for the city.

At a 15 percent assessment ratio, taxpayers would see an average bill of \$187.23 while the city's revenues would decrease by \$256,993.90 and at 20 percent, the average personal property bill would be \$176.22 with a decrease in city revenues of \$342,658.55 from the original estimated amount.

"You have the opportunity to mitigate the unprecedented increase, so it's your call," Easley said.

Towarnicki said that the budget team put an additional \$200,000 in personal property revues over last year's budget, which could still nearly be met should council opt for the 10 percent assessment ratio.

"Even at 20 percent, that's still more revenue than what we had last year," Mayor Kathy Lawson noted.

"If you opt for 20 percent, just so everybody understands, then we'll have to back out \$342,000 in revenues which means, most likely, fund balance," Towarnicki said. "At this point, there's not much else we can pull from."

While an immediate decision was not needed, Easley said should the council choose to pursue the tax assessment ratio option, it could be accomplished by adopting a resolution.

Free college prep, leadership camp to return for area high school students

This summer, the Summer Discovery Institute (SDI) will return to Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC).

The free college prep and leadership camp is for area high school students rising ninth through twelfth grades. The camp will run Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The camp starts June 21 and will end July 22.

An information and registration session for those interested in learning more about the camp or signing up will be held on Saturday, May 7 at 9 or 10:30 a.m. in the Frith Exhibit Hall on P&HCC's main campus.

The Summer Discovery Institute is an intensive College and Readiness and Leadership camp designed specifically to increase high school success and college admissions. The institute combines hands-on leadership, career, and college prep courses Monday through Thursday. On Friday, students can attend field trips to visit college campuses and participate in volunteer and cultural enrichment experiences.

All camp activities and trips are offered at no cost to families. Transportation to and from camp will be provided throughout the city and county. Breakfast and lunch will be provided daily to students.

"This program just keeps getting better. Each year at SDI, students learn new passions, skills, and talents in areas that pique their interests – things like BioMed, Dance, Graphic Design, or Sports Management to

name a few," says Shanna Francisco-King, Project Director of Pre-College Programs. "Our mission is to make connections and to cultivate students' success in high school, college, and life."

Rising seniors may also take classes on completing college applications, admissions and scholarship essays, resumes, and SAT/ACT preparation. Through these courses, seniors will craft a personalized plan to navigate the admission process for the college of their choice.

Applications and additional information for course registrations will be available at the information session. Interested individuals may also call MHC After 3 at 276.656.5489 or email mhcafter3-P&HCC@patrickhenry.edu or call Upward Bound at 276.656.5488 or email upwardbound@patrickhenry.edu.

The camp is made possible through a partnership between Patrick & Henry Community College, MHC After 3, Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math & Science programs. The Summer Discovery Institute is provided through a partnership of programs that are generously funded by 21st Century Community Learning Centers in the amount of \$692,143 for MHC After 3 and the United States Department of Education in the amounts of \$277,375 for Talent Search, \$312,480 for Upward Bound and \$312,480 for Upward Bound Math and Science.

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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

OBITUARIES

Dennis Edward Napier

Dennis Edward Napier, 68, of 320 Janice Dr., Bassett, VA passed away on Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at his residence. He was born on May 4, 1953 in Virginia to the late Richard Edward "Dickie" Napier and Virginia Dare "PeeWee" Merriman Napier. In addition to his parents, he is preceded by an infant daughter, Nevaeh Faith Napier.

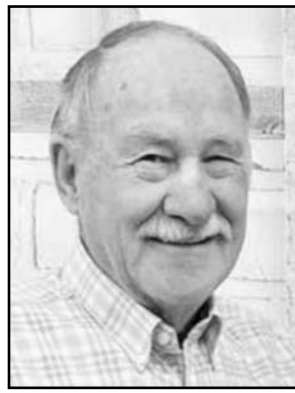


Mr. Napier was a graduate of Fieldale Collinsville and worked for the City of Martinsville as a mechanic. He is survived by his wife, Laura Turner Napier of the residence; stepdaughter, Megan Elizabeth Pruitt (Taylor) of Bassett, VA; son, Joshua Edward Napier (Lauren) of Mooresville, NC; sisters, Teresa Davis of Bassett, VA, and Tina Younger (Tim) of Martinsville, VA; brothers, George Napier (Kelly) of Bassett, VA and Richard Napier (Donna) of Collinsville, VA. Also surviving are his grandchildren, Tabitha Grace Pruitt, Isaac Taylor Pruitt and Cannon Graham Napier; his significant pet, Tutz of the residence; and his best buddy, "Fat Boy" Wayne Napier.

The memorial service was held Sunday, May 1, 2022 at Trinity Baptist Church, with Revs. Glen Stinnet and Michael Harrison officiating. Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville, VA is serving the Napier family. Online condolences may be made at www.norrisfuneral.com.

Sherwood Lee Philpott

Sherwood Lee Philpott, 74, of Axton, VA passed away Monday, May 2, 2022 at Forsyth Medical Center in Winston-Salem, NC. He was born November 22, 1947 in Bassett, VA to the late Rudolph Philpott and Delsie Marie Lewis Philpott. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his sister, Vickie Gibson.



Mr. Philpott was in the United States Army during the Vietnam war and received a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. He was a member of Abundant Life Fellowship and met every week at the Veteran's Association. He worked at Goodyear in Danville for 22 years. He is survived by his wife, Judy W. Philpott; daughters, Deitra Philpott Cassell (Tim) and Chasity Denton (Jody); grandchildren, Sarah Cassell (Bryan), Timothy Cassell (Shayna Gann), Christian Cassell, and Caleb Denton; and great-granddaughter, Elivia Cassell. Also surviving are his niece, Tammy Stone; great-niece, Jenna Clark; and great-nephew, Jacob Martin.

The funeral was Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville Chapel. Pastor Teddy Britton and Rev. Dale Wilson officiated.

Memorial donations may be made to Abundant Life Fellowship, 231 Ford St., Collinsville, VA 24078.

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

Mary Lou Williamson

Mary Lou Williamson, 84, departed this life on Monday, April 25, 2022, at Stanleytown Health and Rehab Center. She was born in Franklin County on November 22, 1937, the daughter of the late Johnnie C. Williamson and Mollie B. Hunt Williamson.



Mary was a faithful member of Snow Creek Baptist Church. She sung in the mass choir, served on the usher board and the women's ministry. She was a graduate of George Washington Carver High School, and was employed by Pannill Knitting Company for 25 years. She loved sewing, quilting, and flowers.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a son, James C. Williamson; brothers, Charlie F. Williamson and John A. Williamson; and sisters, Cassie M. Morgan, Julia C. Williamson, Annie W. Lockett, Alice W. Penn, Ada B. Witcher, Margaret W. Hairston and Nancy L. Martin.

Mary leaves to cherish her memory her grandson, Jovan Williamson (Kendra) of Greensboro, NC; daughter-in-law, Selina D. Williamson of Martinsville; best friend, Mrs. Lena Warren; and many nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

The funeral was Saturday, April 30, 2022, at Snow Creek Missionary Baptist Church. Burial was at Carver Memorial Gardens. Wright Funeral Service and Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservices.net.

Logan Lee Smith

Logan Lee Smith, 18, of Martinsville, passed away Monday, April 25, 2022, at SOVAH Health of Martinsville. He was born January 9, 2004 in Martinsville, to William Richard Smith and April Marie Northcutt Smith. He was a senior at Magna Vista High School, and was employed by Food Lion. He was a member of True Gospel Baptist Church.



In addition to his parents, he is survived by his sister, Abigail Lynn Smith; grandparents, Garry Haley, Ramona Smith Haley, and J. R. and Lois Haley Shelton.

The funeral was Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at True Gospel Baptist Church, 7403 Salem Highway, Stuart, Virginia 24171. Burial was at True Gospel Baptist Church Cemetery.

Memorials in memory of Logan may be made to True Gospel Baptist Church at the above address.

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

Margaret Elizabeth "Betsy" Witt Morris

Margaret Elizabeth "Betsy" Witt Morris, 81, of Martinsville, VA passed away on Sunday, May 1, 2022. She was born on June 27, 1940, in Roanoke, VA to the late Price Witt and Odessa Goode Witt. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her son, Michael Keith Morris.



Betsy was a member of Hillcrest Baptist Church, where she was choir director for almost 40 years, until her retirement in 2009. She attended The Victory in Jesus Sunday School Class. She dearly loved her family, friends, and church. She also loved watching New York Yankees baseball and vacationing at Oak Island, N.C.

She is survived by husband of 60 years, Ralph E. Morris of the home; daughter, Kimberly Belcher (Ronny) of Martinsville, VA; granddaughter, Kristen Belcher; grandson, Drew Belcher; great-grandchild, Riley; sister, Donna Engle (Kenneth); and nieces, Tammy Rorer (Philip), and Andrea Wrightenberry (Joey).

A Celebration of Life service was held on Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at Hillcrest Baptist Church. Pastors Doug Ramsey and Randy Aldridge officiated.

Memorial donations may be made to Hillcrest Baptist Church, 18075 AL Philpott Hwy, Ridgeway, VA 24148, (276) 957-2449, and Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer Penn Rd., Spencer, VA, 24165, (276) 957-5757.

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

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Historical Society to commemorate *Justified By Her Children*

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will commemorate *Justified by Her Children*, written by Pastor/Author Roy Pollina on Tuesday, May 10, at 5:30 p.m.

Joyce Staples will lead a thought-provoking and stimulating discussion of the book in the Courtroom of the Historic Henry County Courthouse. Staples is a retired English professor of Patrick & Henry Community College and Longwood University and currently serves as Historical Society Board Secretary and Fayette Area Historical Initiative Chair. She is a member of the Martinsville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and a past president of Piedmont Arts. The book is available for purchase in the Gift Shop of the Martinsville Henry County Heritage Center & Museum, 1 East Main Street, Martinsville, Virginia, Tuesday-Friday, 1-4 p.m.

On Sunday, May 15, at 3 p.m., the Historical Society will conduct its Annual Meeting in the Courtroom of the Historic Henry County Courthouse, with Pastor Pollina serving as distinguished speaker. President John Phillips will provide a brief review of the 2021-2022 year and introduce the 2022-2023 officers and board of

directors. Following the meeting, refreshments will be served, and Pastor Pollina will be available for book signings and photographs. Admission is free for both events. The building is fully handicap accessible.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/events/991839431748229/ for the Book Discussion and www.facebook.com/events/692730278769031/ for the Annual Meeting.

In May 1958, Virginia newspapers were reporting that the Christ Church, Martinsville, Virginia congregational leadership had declared that their bishop's plan to integrate the summer youth camp "is both illegal and ill-advised" and that they would oppose any "intermingling of the races." Amid this controversy, a quiet revolution stirred among that congregation's young people, uplifted by their youthful, energetic priest, The Reverend Philip Gresham. When these brave young people stood with their bishop in favor of an integrated youth camp their opinion was derided as youthful naiveté. It was suggested that they focus on their studies and leave such problems to the adults. Rather than discouraging them, their church leadership's humiliating dismissal inspired them to

devise a more tangible expression of their position. They would acquire and present a gift, a "peace offering," as a token of their solidarity with their bishop.

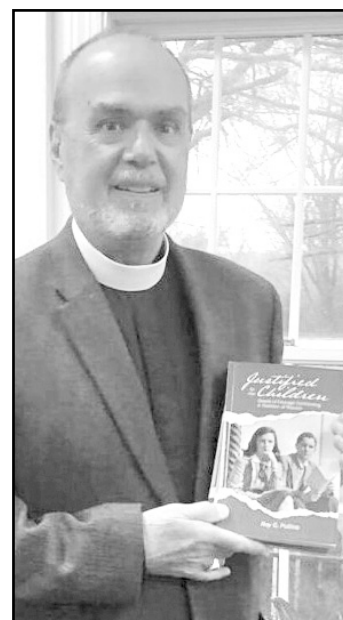
Justified by Her Children navigates the tradition of racism from the Virginia colonial enslavers to the Massive Resistance of Virginia segregationist of the 1950s. It is ultimately a story of grace and forgiveness, but not before it wends its way through the trial and execution of the African American "Martinsville Seven," past the whispers about the sexual orientation of the young, single priest, and a congregation in conflict over letting its white children eat a box supper with black children at a church mission event to benefit hungry brown children. *Justified by Her Children* is written in the hope that readers will gain a better understanding of "how it was," and from that understanding, know better how to deal with "how it is" today.

John Phillips, Historical Society President, said, "We are not always proud of our past but must acknowledge and embrace it to learn from it and not repeat it. Our area is fortunate that Pastor Pollina wrote this book which allows us the opportunity to explore

the events further and to grow as a community." Pastor Pollina graduated from the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas, in 1985. He was ordained that year in the Diocese of Louisiana where he served for 26 years. He retired as Rector of Christ Episcopal Church, Martinsville, Virginia, in 2015. He is the author of *To Bless a Child*. He recently received the 2022 Silver Illumination Book Award for *Justified by Her Children*. The purpose of the Illumination Book Awards is to bring award recipients the credibility and publicity they need to further their book marketing and sales success. The awards are designed to "shine a light" on the best new titles written and published with a Christian worldview.



Joyce Staples



Pastor and author Roy Pollina

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Chief Tassel Apartments from page 1

experience here, but after that, this has been a great building,” Turner said, to laughter from the crowd.

City Manager Leon Towarnicki shared a similar memory.

When he was a teenager, his dentist also operated in the building. “And I remember vividly sitting in the chair and looking out the window while pain was being inflicted,” he joked.

“There are a handful of buildings around the uptown area that you recognize by name,” he said, naming the Henry Hotel, the old Henry County Courthouse, and the Globman building as examples. “The Chief Tassel Building is certainly one of those buildings.”

Five to 10 years ago, the building began to fall into disrepair, Towarnicki said. The Frith family donated the building to the city, and “that put us in the position to be able to move forward with redevelopment.”

The city ultimately enlisted Waukeshaw, which also renovated the Henry Hotel several years ago.

Towarnicki said Dave McCormack, president of Waukeshaw, “was a prudent developer with a good track record, a lot of experience dealing with older buildings like this, and this was right up his alley.”

The city obtained a brownfield grant to help clean up some of the asbestos and other environmental issues of the building. Then, the pandemic hit, which slowed the project down. Eventually, it made it to the finish line, he said.

“We’re tickled to death, because this is just another step in what we’re all trying to do to revitalize Uptown Martinsville,” Towarnicki said, adding other projects are in the works. “This is just another step and another piece in the journey, and we’re gonna get there.”

McCormack recalled looking across the street at the building while his company was renovating the Henry Hotel, now The Henry, and realizing how much potential it had.

The project, he said, would not have worked without the help of the city.

“I think about all the help Leon has given us, it’s been really thoughtful and progressive.” He also thanked Martinsville-Henry County Housing and Revitalization Director Jeff Sadler, the EDC, and Building and Zoning Administrator Kris Bridges for “making the project so easy” and helping it come together successfully. “It really is a team effort,” he said.

While working on The Henry, McCormack said the leasing agent doubted they could get what he was hoping for in rent.

“Now we have a full building over here. It’s really thriving, and we actually had an unsolicited offer to buy it the other day,” he said. Though there are no plans to sell, “that was an incredible vote of confidence in Martinsville to have outside investors looking at this as a

viable place to invest.”

Those attending the ceremony explored the 4-story building, wandering in and out of apartments, admiring the views from the top floors and the homages to the building’s history. Realtors from Rives Brown Real Estate, which is tasked with handling rentals, were positioned on each level to answer questions.

Gina Ashbrook, an agent with the firm, said of the 21 single-bedroom units in the building, 10 will be furnished. Rental rates for the property range from \$975 per month for an unfurnished first floor apartment to \$1,450 per month for a furnished fourth-floor space. Pricing varies between floors, and furnished spaces cost \$400 more than their unfurnished counterparts. She said water, sewer, trash, and internet all are included in the cost.

One company has rented a furnished unit already, and another is looking to place four or five of their employees there, she said.

In addition to a more traditional long-term lease, short-term rentals also are available, she said, adding those opportunities currently are difficult to find.

Standing in the first-floor lobby of the building, next to a window that looked out onto East Church Street, McCormack elaborated on his company and the project.

“Our company does a lot of work in small towns and cities like Martinsville, so we’re in lots of places like this across the state, particularly in Southside and Southwest Virginia,” he said. The reason for that is because there is “a niche in going into unproven markets, and also working with municipalities to solve problems.”

While a typical developer might try to buy a building from a private resident, “invest a bunch of money and move on, we are trying to set the market, which is a very different thing.” To do that, “we do need the help of a municipality, and they enjoy the help of a seasoned developer to create that environment. If we can do that successfully,” others will invest in the area as well, McCormack said.

“Every time we come to a building, we try really hard to retain all the historic fabric” of the structure, he said. Evidence of that is littered throughout the building, from the arched entryways in the first floor commercial spaces, the aged wooden stalls that still stand in the otherwise-modernized public restroom, and even some apartment spaces that retained the original fold-out tables tucked into the walls, now encased in glass. The tubs, now refurbished, are the historic steel tubs original to the building, he said.

McCormack said the company took advantage of historic tax credits which made the \$3 million project work, bringing the cost “back down to where it’s actually financeable, because that’s more money that it’s really worth or that the rents justify. What we do

is we make that investment, spend more money than is justifiable, and then sell the credits to bring it back down to reality. You cannot overstate the importance of the tax credit program in this state and at the federal level. To small cities like Martinsville, it’s really, really critical.

“Doing real estate development on old historic buildings in small towns like this, it’s an unusual thing,” he said. “We’re in business to make money, but what drives us here is the history and the community and all those things. When a project really comes together like this at the end, it’s really an emotional thing, and we all share in that together as a community. It means a lot to us. That’s really why we do what we do, and I feel that very strongly here in Martinsville.”

Those interested in renting an apartment in the Chief Tassel Building may call Rives Brown Rentals at (276) 635-5225.



A bedroom on one of the upper levels still houses fold-out tables that were original to the building. The tables themselves are not sturdy and have been sealed behind their glass doorways, but pay homage to the building’s history.





One of the larger kitchen spaces in one of the upper level apartments. The layout of the apartments varies, with some kitchens about half the size of this one.

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P&HCC chapter of national honors society celebrates 50 years, inducts new members



The Psi Phi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the national honors society for community college students, hosted at Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) celebrated its 50th anniversary on April 26 with a special induction ceremony for its newest members. Coincidentally, the chapter welcomed 50 new members for its 50th year.

Students receive an invitation to join PTK if they have a 3.5 grade point average and have completed at least 12 hours of course work.

P&HCC’s President Dr. Greg Hodges was the keynote speaker for the induction ceremony.

The chapter also recognized current members Dan Zhou, Faith Sprinkle, and Audrey Witt for being named to the PTK All-Virginia Academic Team.

Current member Bhavna Sheth was recognized for becoming a semi-finalist for the position of Division 1 International Vice President for all Phi Theta Kappa. After the special recognitions, the following new members were inducted:

- Ararat: Makayla Hall.
- Axton: Alexis Tiznado.
- Bassett: Sydney Clark, Sally Davis, Makayla Loudermilk, Bryan Martell-Rios, and Sydney Martin.
- Chesapeake: Aidan Cunningham.
- Collinsville: Maggie Arnold, Gabriel Baird, Eva Brill, Jelani Chandler, Cameron Easley, Lucas Epiphany, Dominique Lyons, Christopher Secret, Guilherme Sitton de Carvalho, Osman Torres, Zane Winborne, Nathalia Nascimento, Kaua Procknow Ferreira, Carlos Darci Trott Neto, Enrico Zorzini Onzi, Georges Soares.
- Danville: Joshua Lovelace.
- Henry: Jocelyn Correa and Jennifer Correa.
- Martinsville: Macy Deal, Alexis Garten, Scott Harmon, Abigail Jimenez, Sarah Loftin, Ayden Pickett, Melinda Roberts, Julie Smith, Ralene Gray.
- North Dinwiddie: Michael Johnson.
- Patrick Springs: Michael Elliott and Haley Underwood.
- Ringgold: Cammie Hoskins.
- Rocky Mount: Samantha Morrison and Xavier Winston.
- Stuart: Charli Jones.
- Stuart: Joseph Carmady, Madison Denny, Hailey Goins, and Summer Merriman.
- Trafford, PA: Robert Lane.
- Wirtz: Karson McKee.
- Woolwine: Jasmine Taylor.