

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, May 27, 2023

(USPS-6)

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Budget discussions continue in city

Tara Lucas

City Manager Leon Towarnicki presented a summary of the proposed \$109,892,325 budget at a Tuesday meeting of Martinsville City Council.

Key points of the spending plan would keep the current real estate tax of \$1.04/\$100 of assessed value; a proposed 8 percent electric rate increase, as well as another rate increase that likely would be necessary in January.

The spending plan would reduce the requested \$6,167,637 in school funding by \$750,000, for a total of \$5,417,637; and includes a 5 percent reduction for most city departments. School funding is still \$339,854 more than the average audited actual local contribution for the most recent

See **Budget**, page 3



William Wall reads his "If I Were Mayor" essay, as Martinsville Mayor LC Jones and Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls look on.



County Attorney George Lyle (right) explains the process of amending Henry County's ordinance on solar farms to the Board of Supervisors during its May 23 meeting.

Board asks commission to amend solar ordinance

Taylor Boyd
Staff writer

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will ask the Planning Commission to start the process of amending its solar ordinance to limit the amount of land that can be used for solar operations.

The cap would be in addition to existing restrictions such as the 2.5 percent density requirement.

County Attorney George Lyle said the move would essentially keep the solar ordinance as it is, but limit the total number of projects and acreage.

"So, after staff looked at how other localities are doing it, the staff recommendation is that there be a one percent cap, if the board desires to have a cap, based on the one percent total land mass of Henry County," he said.

In Henry County, not counting water surfaces there is approximately 244,000 acres. Lyle said one percent of that is about 2,400 acres.

"Currently in Henry County, we have 1,200 acres of solar panels either constructed or under

See **Board**, page 6

Annual music and arts festival underway



The Main Stage at Rooster Walk



PHOTOS BY ROGER GUPTA

Lake Stage at last year's annual Rooster Walk Music & Arts Festival. The festival runs through May 28. For more information, visit www.roosterwalk.com or [Facebook.com/RoosterWalk](https://www.facebook.com/RoosterWalk).

Taylor Boyd
Staff writer

The 13th annual Rooster Walk Music & Arts Festival kicked off Thursday and will run through May 28, at Pop's Farm in Axton.

"The first Rooster Walk started in 2009. The event started in memory of two of my closest childhood friends who passed away in their mid-20s," said Johnny Buck, who co-founded the annual event in memory of Edwin Penn, nicknamed 'The Rooster,' and Walker Shank.

Buck said the festival took Penn's nickname and Shank's first name to create the moniker "Rooster Walk."

"So, it's four days and nights of music, art, camping, outdoor activities," he said.

The festival is also the largest event in Martinsville-Henry County

that isn't put on by the Martinsville Speedway.

"It's the largest event outside of a NASCAR race every year," Buck said of the family-friendly event.

"We have a robust kid's area with kid's programming, educational activities, art activities, and kid bands. All weekend long, kids 12 and younger are admitted free with an adult," he said.

Buck said about 50 bands are set to perform at Rooster Walk.

"Some of them play more than once over the course of the weekend, so about 90 sets of music," he said.

Notable bands include The Stews, TC Carter Band, Erin & The Wildfire, Empire Strikes Brass, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, Yarn, Rooster Walk House Band, The Judy Chops, Sol Driven Train,

Dangermuffin, Blue Cactus, and other groups.

Buck said there has not been one band that has played at all 13 festivals.

"We have a lot of bands who have played more than once, and every year we have some bands who are new to the event," he said.

Buck said festival tickets are still available. There are full weekend tickets and single day tickets "and everything in between."

A portion of the festival's proceeds are used to support an endowment scholarship fund for Martinsville High School students, and a Band Instrument program for Martinsville and Henry County school systems.

To purchase tickets, or for more information, go to www.roosterwalk.com or [Facebook.com/RoosterWalk](https://www.facebook.com/RoosterWalk).

Roark still makes the rounds at farmers' markets

Taylor Boyd
Staff writer

Retirement does not agree with Grover Roark.

The 95-year-old farmer devotes much of his time to selling his homemade fried apple pies, honey, and other fresh produce at weekly farmers' markets.

"I was raised on a farm, and when I retired after just a few months I had done everything around the house I wanted to do. I had to do something; I couldn't be still," said Roark, who decided to start selling his produce after retiring from General Mills.

"I went and bought the equipment for produce, and started raising produce, and I've been doing it ever since," said Roark, who also sets up at the Farmers' Market - Uptown Martinsville every Saturday morning.

He also is a regular at the Stuart Farmers' Market, where he has the distinction as the vendor with the

longest record. In addition to honey and fried apple pies, Roark also sells potatoes, beets, corn, tomatoes, beans, fried apples, greens, onions, and a variety of other fresh products.

Roark has been returning to markets in the area for 32 years, a practice he continues for his health.

"That's what keeps me going. I work every day where the weather's so I can. In the summertime, I work anywhere from 12 to 14 hours a day. I can't sit down and be still like some people can, I have to be on the go," he said.

Despite his advanced age, Roark said he has no plans to slow down.

"My son says, 'Dad, slow down.' I can't slow down. He wants me to come and live with him, but I wouldn't last six months. I got to be on my go," he said.

To tend his crops, Roark drives his golf cart down to the field. Then, he splits his time - working for a while and sitting to rest a while.



Grover Roark, 95, sets up at weekly farmers' markets to sell his goods.

"I don't like TV, so the only entertainment I do anymore is read. I used to play golf all the time, but now I read," he said, chuckling.

While he doesn't enjoy cleaning his house and has someone do it for him, Roark said he enjoys working.

"I love a pretty yard and I love a good garden. That's the two things I do continuously all the time, and

that's where I spend all of my days. I don't like the inside, I'll stay very little inside," he said.

Roark said he likes setting up at the market because he considers it and other vendors to be his family.

"I live by myself, so this is my family. It gives me a chance to get out and be with people, and I do enjoy talking to people," he added.

Debbie Hall
Staff writer

From transportation, renewable energy, and ticks to virtually everything in between, legislators discussed some of the challenges of the recent session of the General Assembly while highlighting some of their achievements at the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce's annual Post Legislative Update Tuesday.

Dels. Les Adams and Danny Marshall were among the speakers, as well as Addison Merryman, who represented Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, and Josh Hess, representing Ninth District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Salem.

Adams, R-Chatham, said one of his pieces of legislation will make it easier to investigate suspected cases of unemployment fraud and prosecute the offenders.

The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) "was overwhelmed during the pandemic" with

the "sheer number of cases during the lockdown," Adams said. During this time, "our local offices fielded calls from scores" of people, and Gov. Glenn Youngkin "has been concentrated on that backlog" and combatting fraud during that period.

Adams' legislation, HB2010, allows the VEC Commissioner to authorize any attorney employed by the commission to issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of books, papers, correspondence, memoranda, and other records deemed necessary as evidence in connection

See **Legislators**, page 5

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FOR MORE UPDATES



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Meetings

Thursday, June 1

Henry County School Board's Monthly Meeting - 9 a.m., 1st Floor, Summerlin Room, Henry County Administration Building, Collinsville.

Events

Friday, June 2

Expressions Opening Reception, 5:30 p.m. at Piedmont Arts. Free and open to the public. Complimentary wine and light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, June 3

Patrick Volunteer Fire Department's Hamburger Steak Fundraiser, 4 to 7 p.m. at 3125 County Line Road, Patrick Springs. Plates include hamburger steak, slaw, baked beans, French fries, dessert and drink for \$10. Eat in or take out, call (276) 629-7677.

Storytime - Spencer-Penn Centre at 10 a.m. This monthly program will include special readers, crafts, and other fun activities related to Father's Day. Free program, fit for all ages. No registration needed.

Friday, June 9

Music Night at Spencer-Penn, with The Country Boys playing in Alumni Hall. Gate opens at 5 p.m. with the band starting at 6:15 p.m. Admission is a \$5 donation. Concessions will be sold.

Saturday, June 10

Alcohol Ink Painting Workshop with Melani Helms, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., \$40, with all supplies provided at Imagination Lavender Farm, 3590 Green Hill Drive, Martinsville. Call or text (276) 734-2828 to register.

Music from 5 to 8 p.m. at Imagination Lavender Farm with Dr. Jamie Woodall, David Oaks and Amy Stuart, no cover charge, donation appreciated.

Sunday June 11

Music in the Garden featuring the Alma Ensemble, 2 p.m. at the Gravely-Lester Art Garden. Free admission. The Alma Ensemble was founded by flutist Sarah Wardle Jones, clarinetist Michelle Smith Johnson and pianist Erica Sipes. Alma also means "nourishment" or "soul" which is something the ensemble endeavors to bring to every performance.

Floral Arranging with Sandi Hite at the Spencer Penn Centre. \$40 members; \$45 non-members.

Friday, June 16

Free Workshop, 10 a.m. to noon at Imagination Lavender Farm. Right Plant, Right Place led by VA Tech Extension Agent, Melanie Barrow, Learn how to make gardening life easier by simply choosing the right plant for each spot in your garden. Call or text (276) 734-2828 to register.

Friday, June 23

Double down for the arts at this fun casino night fundraiser that begins at 7 p.m. Live music, games, heavy hors d'oeuvres, open bar, photo booth and more. Black tie optional. Tickets are \$75 and are available on the Piedmont Arts website.

Saturday, June 24

Painting Workshop led by award-winning artist Lisa Garrett, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., \$40, with all supplies provided at Imagination Lavender Farm. Participants will create their own 11 x 14 painting to take home. Call or text (276) 734-2828 to register.

ONGOING

Saturdays, April 29-November 18

Martinsville Uptown Farmers' Market is open from 7 a.m. to noon, with the freshest fruits and veggies, homemade snacks, locally raised beef, and more. July 5-September 27, the market is open Wednesdays from 7 a.m. to noon.

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.

brrl.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.

Book Bingo on the 4th Tuesday of the month at the Martinsville Branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, 11 a.m. to noon. Call (276) 403-5430 to register.

The Disability Rights and Resource Center (DRRC) will be represented at the Henry-Martinsville Health Department in Martinsville every third Wednesday afternoon to provide information to health department visitors about DRRC and its services.

MHC Coalition for Health and Wellness (MHCCHW) offers "no-touch" Medicaid/FAMIS application assistance for Virginia residents from birth to 64 years of age. No sign-up fees, no premiums, no deductibles. MHCCHW's specially trained Medicaid/FAMIS Outreach Advocate can answer questions, and help you apply by phone Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. In-person assistance is available on Wednesdays 10 am to 1:30 at Community Storehouse 128 E. Church St. (lower level of the old Leggett Building) Martinsville. Call or text Ann Walker at (276) 732-0509.

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. Call (276) 647-9585.

Trail Trekkers meet as a group on Thursdays (1 p.m. Fall & Winter; 9:15 a.m. Spring & Summer) 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 Henry County Parks & Recreation (HCPR) Senior Services to find out more at (276) 634-4644.

Ride and Dine Friday afternoons with members of the Henry County Bike Club. Fellow cyclists meet at the Liberty Street access point of the Dick & Willie Trail to put in some miles and refuel with lunch at a different eatery each week. For more information, call Marti at 276-358-1312. Rides are year-round but are canceled if it's raining or if the temperature is below 50 degrees.

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47th District - Republican Primary?

Stop by your local Registrar's office anytime during their regular business hours and cast **YOUR VOTE**. Early Voting helps ensure Only You cast your vote. It helps reduce annoying political calls & junk mail, because campaigns take you off their urgent contact list once you vote. (No, they don't know how you voted, just that you did.)

Still deciding HOW to vote? Maybe these endorsements will help:



"House speaker endorses Williams in highly contested nomination battle for the 47th House District. [Republican] Speaker of the House Todd Gilbert [Shenandoah] snubbed Republican firebrand Marie March." (May 2, 2023)

"Delegate Williams is the type of effective leader we need in Richmond," Gilbert said in a statement. "Leaders like Wren don't just talk, they get things done." **



RICHMOND, VA (May 5, 2023) - This week, **Republican Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears** announced that she is endorsing **Delegate Wren Williams** for re-election in the newly-drawn Virginia House District 47. "I am honored to offer my full support and endorsement..." *

Still confused about Primary Voting? Just ask for the Ballot with Delegate Wren Williams' name on it.

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For more information or to find out how you can help PatCoVA PAC continue to deliver timely, factual information to local voters, please visit our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/PatrickCountyPAC>.

Information sources: * <https://www.facebook.com/WinsomeESears> ** <https://cardinalnews.org/2023/05/02/house-speaker-endorses-williams-in-highly-contested-nomination-battle-for-the-47th-house-district/>

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Griffith Introduces Bill to Streamline Deployment of Broadband Infrastructure

Ninth District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Salem, has introduced the Barriers and Regulatory Obstacles Avoids Deployment of Broadband Access and Needs Deregulatory (BROADBAND) Leadership Act, legislation aiming to streamline deployment of broadband infrastructure.

"Bridging the digital divide requires the rapid deployment of more broadband infrastructure. The BROADBAND Leadership Act will facilitate this goal by removing regulatory obstacles and requiring more timely decisions by government entities overseeing the permitting of broadband projects," said Griffith. "This approach will contribute to building out broadband faster, connecting more Americans, including many in rural communities."

The BROADBAND Leadership Act would streamline permitting processes for telecommunications service providers by preserving state and local zoning authority subject to reasonable limitations, such as shot clocks and cost-based fees, to ensure providers receive an answer on their application in a timely manner.

Budget from page 1



Resident Ural Harris expresses displeasure at the city's proposed spending plan.

4-year period of fiscal years 2019 – 22. The actual audited school contribution in fiscal 2022 was \$4,940,076.

The proposal includes level funding for outside agencies, except for certain agencies such as 911 and the Department of Social Services.

The city also plans a personnel addition of a law clerk for Circuit Court (confirmed to be a one year position), while implementing a temporary hiring freeze in other areas.

City employees and constitutional officers would receive a 7 percent cost of living adjustment to match the state's adjustment and help employees cover the increase in health insurance costs and allow the city to remain competitive in salaries.

The initial proposal included a revenue

increase of \$4,047,643 from the original Fiscal Year 2023 budget, with a proposed general fund budget of \$37,828,870 compared to \$37,062,878 for the current fiscal year. Around \$1.5 million of ARPA funding would be used to fill the budget's funding deficit.

A budget work session was held on May 10 with city schools to review capital, followed by a second session on May 16 that included outside agencies such as 911, social services, and the library, followed by a review of city constitutional and departmental budgets. It was noted between the time of the initial budget presentation on April 25 and May 26, it was concluded both a water and sewer rate increase were needed, and a recommended \$3 increase for each was discussed.

A third work session was held on May 17 to discuss the previous sessions and answer questions, with alternative budget recommendations by Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls. A fourth work session was held May 22, and staff were instructed to develop an alternative plan that reduced the real estate tax by \$0.05/\$100, and eliminated the use of ARPA funds.

Rawls stated that the council would like to restore at least two police officer positions, as well as restore some funding to schools.

The council will decide what to leave in the budget, remove, change, modify, etc., with final adoption and second reading of the budget scheduled for the June 13 meeting.

City resident Ural Harris presented comments on the budget at the meeting.

Drowning death reported at Smith Mountain Lake

Around 9:54 a.m. on May 15, the Franklin County Communications Center received a 911 call for a possible drowning near the 400 block of Channelview Drive in Moneta. The Franklin County Sheriff's Office, along with members from Franklin County Public Safety and Smith Mountain Lake Marine Fire Rescue, responded to the area and located an unconscious man in the water near a dock. Despite extensive life saving measures, the man was pro-

nounced deceased.

The body was transported to the Medical Examiner's Office in Roanoke. The preliminary cause of death was determined to be drowning. There does not appear to be any suspicious circumstances at this time.

John Charles Lewis, 51, of Portland, Oregon, was identified as the victim.

The Sheriff's Office expressed deepest sympathies to Lewis' family and friends during this tragic time.

Spencer Inducted into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi

Layla Spencer, of Axton, was recently initiated into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society. Spencer was initiated at Old Dominion University.

Spencer is 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 distinction.



William Wall is pictured with members of the Martinsville City Council.

"This budget is totally unfair to the citizens of the city, the poor, and the seniors," said Harris. "You put all these raises in, it's going to hit some people over \$100 a month. It's going to hit me around \$50. What are the seniors and those on social security going to do?"

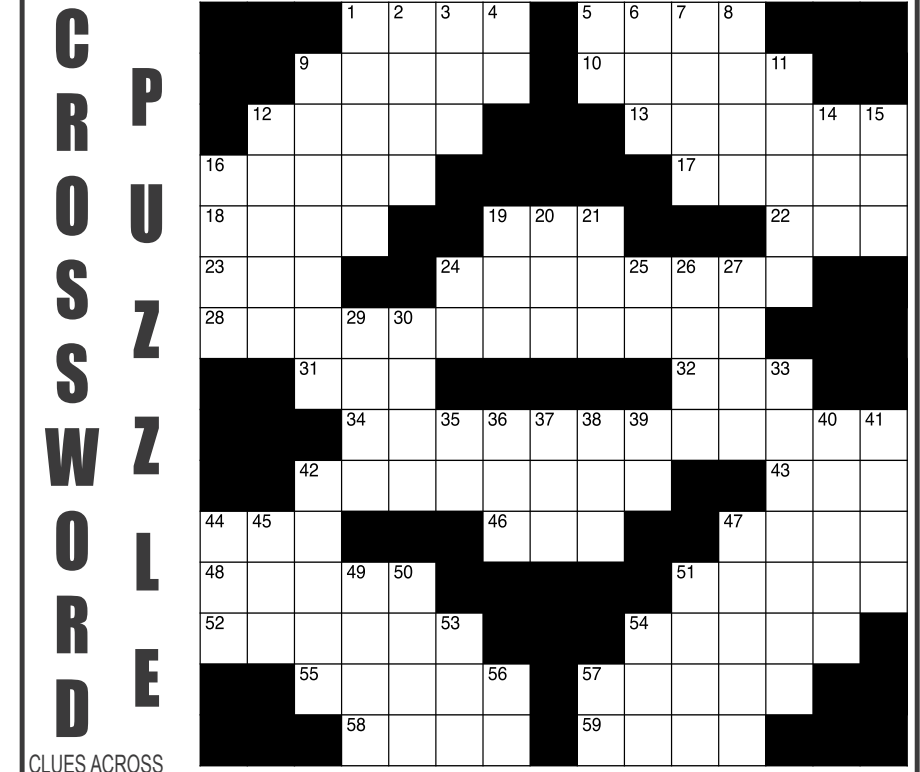
In other matters, the council:

*Recognized William Wall, a 7th grade student at Martinsville Middle School. Wall won the Virginia Municipal League Region 2 winner of the 2023 "If I Were Mayor" essay contest. Wall was presented with a certificate and a gift card from a VML representative, and his essay will be featured in

the Virginia Municipal League magazine.

*Set a public hearing for June 13 to receive names of those interested in appointment to the Martinsville City School Board. There are two 3-year terms, ending June 30, 2026, and one unexpired 3-year term ending on June 30, 2024.

(Crossword Answers on page 6)



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. 007 Connery
- 5. Presides over meetings (abbr.)
- 9. Trefoil
- 10. Father of Paris
- 12. Asian nut for chewing
- 13. Machine gun from the air
- 16. The communion table
- 17. His razor
- 18. Father
- 19. Doctor of philosophy
- 22. Cologne
- 23. Black tropical Am. cuckoo
- 24. Diversifies
- 28. Razor author 14th C
- 31. Maple sugar fluid
- 32. A corp.'s first stock offer to the public
- 34. The premier bike race

- 42. References
- 43. Extremely high frequency
- 44. Actress Farrow
- 46. Not good
- 47. State of annoyance
- 48. S. China seaport
- 51. Bengal quince
- 52. Provide the means
- 54. A large and imposing house
- 55. Excessively fat
- 57. Spars
- 58. Former wives
- 59. Repeat
- CLUES DOWN
- 1. Podetiums
- 2. Frankenberg river
- 3. Feel ill
- 4. 12th state
- 5. "Anything Goes"

- 6. Daily time units (abbr.)
- 7. Cagiva __; motorcycle
- 8. Drug agent (slang)
- 9. Study of poetic meter
- 11. Ceremonial staffs
- 12. Russian pancake served with caviar
- 14. Supervises flying
- 15. Large Australian flightless bird
- 16. As fast as can be done (abbr.)
- 19. Before
- 20. Hall of Fame (abbr.)
- 21. Constitution Hall org.
- 24. Atomic #35
- 25. Ducktail hairstyle
- 26. Independent ruler
- 27. Oval water scorpion
- 29. Modern London Gallery

- 30. On top
- 33. Identicalness
- 35. 2002 Olympic state
- 36. Tease or ridicule
- 37. Arrived extinct
- 38. Opposite of begin
- 39. Ol' Blue Eye's initials
- 40. South Am. nation
- 41. Type of salamander
- 42. S. China seaport
- 44. Woman (French)
- 45. 007's Fleming
- 47. __ Domingo
- 49. A French abbot
- 50. Gorse genus
- 51. An uproarious party
- 53. Point midway between E and SE
- 54. A waterproof raincoat
- 56. Spanish be
- 57. Of I

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OPINION

A dangerous mind

I was thinking the other day about an old acquaintance of mine named Jared.

From 2006 to 2010, I spent almost every Friday night at No Shame Theater in Roanoke. Invented by my friend Todd Ristau, No Shame Theater exists in venues all over the country; the concept is that you have a performance space with up to 15 five-minute slots. Anyone can take a slot and perform a five-minute piece for the audience. The piece can be literally anything, as long as it's only five minutes long, is your own original work, and doesn't break anything (including the law and members of the audience).

Discovering No Shame was a watershed moment in my life; I would show up weekly to read monologues, perform comedy skits I'd written, and sometimes do stand-up comedy. Along the way, I made many wonderful friends, not to mention some of the most important connections of my life.

Jared was one of the people I met through No Shame, although it would be a stretch to call him a friend; I don't know that Jared really had friends in the traditional sense.

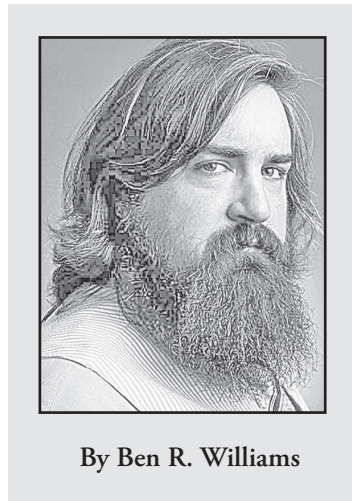
Jared was in his 60s, an enormously tall and stoop-shouldered man with a high-pitched voice. Every Friday night at 11 p.m., he would show up to No Shame with

his notebook and take the first slot of the night. When his turn came, he would sit on stage and read to the audience from his notebook.

What made these performances quite interesting was that Jared had paranoid schizophrenia.

Jared's writings usually focused on the massive government conspiracy that he believed was targeting him. For example, he once told a story about getting on a bus in Washington D.C. at the same time as a bunch of kitchen staff from the White House. He talked about how they all looked at him oddly because they clearly knew who he was, having overheard conversations about him amongst high-ranking White House staff. It never occurred to Jared that perhaps the reason they were looking at him oddly was because he was — and I say this with love — a very odd guy who didn't do a great job of concealing the fact.

Over the years, I was able to piece together a bit of Jared's story. Apparently when he was in college in the mid-1960s, he wrote a pro-Communist letter for his campus newspaper. Around this same time, his schizophrenia was beginning to manifest, as often happens when people are in their early 20s. One of his professors complained about Jared to the school administration — whether



By Ben R. Williams

the complaints were about the letter or his deteriorating mental health, I cannot say — and Jared was reprimanded in some fashion.

This was the flash point for Jared, the point of no return; to his mind, he possessed dangerous ideas that had made him an enemy of not just the college administration, but the entire U.S. government. I don't know if he ever made an effort to seek help for his schizophrenia, but it doesn't seem likely; from his perspective, there wasn't a thing wrong with him.

After Jared would read from his notebook, he would return to his seat and quietly watch the rest of the show. After No Shame ended, a group of No Shame regulars would always retire to Macado's in downtown Roanoke for a late dinner, and Jared would usually join us.

Jared would never sit with us, though; he would always sit by himself at a booth nearby. On a number

of occasions, I wandered over to his booth to make small talk.

The great tragedy of Jared was that it was impossible to be his friend; if you showed him any kindness or expressed interest in his life, he took that to mean that you were an FBI agent investigating him. That didn't stop a lot of us No Shame folks from trying, and he would always talk to us, but he would never let anyone get too close.

Ironically, out of all the folks who attended No Shame back then, one of the few people that Jared did not accuse of being an FBI agent was, in fact, an employee of the FBI.

Jared could be funny, albeit unintentionally, and I won't deny that a lot of us cracked inside jokes about Jared and his rambling, paranoid missives. However, there was a silent understanding that while WE were allowed to crack those jokes, we had to fiercely protect Jared from outsiders who didn't understand. On a handful of occasions, a new person attending No Shame would get up on stage and make a crack about the weird dude who had opened the show; this newcomer would immediately get booed into oblivion. Jared may have been a weirdo, but he was OUR weirdo.

What always struck me as so fascinating about Jared was the fact that he felt comfortable sharing his notebooks with us. No Shame would occasionally be packed, a hundred or so people in attendance, yet he

would still go up on stage and share his thoughts about the secret government conspiracy against him. I was told that he wouldn't even read his notebooks aloud in his own apartment because he believed his oven was bugged, but he WOULD read them on stage in front of an audience comprised of complete strangers and people he believed were FBI agents. Perhaps at a certain point, the need to make a connection overrides the need to play it safe.

Jared eventually moved back to New York, and as far as I can tell from a cursory internet search, he lives there still. A couple of years before he left, his nephew came down from New York to Roanoke, presumably to check on Jared. During his stay, he accompanied Uncle Jared to No Shame one night.

At the end of the evening, Jared's nephew seemed stunned. He had watched all the No Shame regulars greet Jared when he walked into the theater, watched everyone applaud Jared's piece. He had, I suppose, watched an entire audience of people treat Jared not like a mentally ill kook, but like a cherished (if eccentric) member of the family.

I didn't realize it at the time, but looking back, I increasingly think Jared was the heart of No Shame. Every week, so many of us would show up to perform, everybody trying to do something funnier, something weirder, something that pushed the envelope a little bit further. Jared had us all beat from the jump, and he didn't even know it.

P&HCC Makes Post-Covid Strides

By Dr. Greg Hodges

President P&HCC

As president of Patrick & Henry Community College, I am delighted to provide our community with a year-end report highlighting a very successful academic year for our institution.

We are so pleased to see a post-Covid enrollment boost this year with a 4% increase in academic enrollment over the previous year and a 40% increase (as of May 15, 2023) in workforce/short-term credential training enrollment. We were also thrilled to enroll our largest SEED cohort, which is 26% higher than the previous year. We remain extremely grateful to the Harvest Foundation for their investment into the economic future of our region and for partnering with P&HCC to ensure students obtain the skills they need to become employed in our community.

The college also had a strong year bringing on new

programs and initiatives. These include a new "Fab Lab" at our Patrick County site, a new CDL program, a new powerline program, and a new C.N.A. pathway for dual enrollment students in Martinsville and Henry County. Additionally, the college opened the second building of our Manufacturing, Engineering, and Technology (the MET) Complex, a 103,000 square foot facility that is dedicated to good paying jobs in our service region. The new building triples our welding capacity, and a grand opening is slated for early fall.

The success of the college has been noticed across the community, Commonwealth of Virginia, and country. P&HCC's Advanced Manufacturing program won the first Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA) Innovation and Access Award for its partnership with Festo Didactic and the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3). Additionally, Patrick & Henry was heavily featured in the Aspen Institute publication entitled Rural Community College Excellence: A Guide to Delivering Strong Opportunity for Students and Communities. It was also recently announced that P&HCC has the highest dual enrollment conversion rate in the state, which reflects the percentage of dual enrollment students who enroll at the college after high school.

We are also extremely proud of the accomplishments of our student athletes. P&HCC boasts the NJCAA Region 10 soccer champions as well as the number one cross-country runner in the region. P&HCC's outdoor track and field teams had many athletes qualify for nationals, which is a first for our program. Additionally, in only the second year of existence, our wrestling team sent seven students to the national tournament, and in its first year of existence, our women's tennis team sent



three students to nationals. More than half of our 205 student-athletes posted GPAs greater than 3.0, and the entire student-athlete roster turned in an average GPA of 3.1, which exceeds the average GPA of the rest of the student body. Impressively, 33 of our athletes had perfect 4.0 GPAs.

As always, the highlight of the year is celebrating the accomplishments of our students at our annual graduation ceremony. For many, they are not simply graduating; they are walking into a world of financial stability for themselves and their families. To that end, we are thrilled to announce that 488 students earned 586 academic credentials this year with 206 of these students participating in our graduation ceremony on Saturday, May 13. These numbers mean that more students are getting the education, skills, and training they need to acquire good paying jobs in the communities served by P&HCC.

The economic renaissance in our region is very real, and for 61 years, P&HCC has been dedicated to providing our students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful employees and employers. We are more committed now than ever and look forward to serving you as you make your own dreams a reality.

It is indeed the honor of my lifetime to serve as the president of Patrick & Henry Community College.

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Weekly Publication
Published Each Saturday

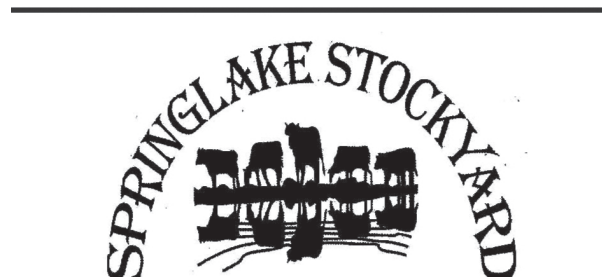
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Legislators

from page 1

with the investigation or adjudication of any disputed claim or the administration of the Virginia Unemployment Compensation Act.

It will help identify and provide for the prosecution of fraud, both by local Commonwealth's Attorneys and the Attorney General's office, Adams said of the bill that is now awaiting Gov. Glenn Youngkin's signature.

Another was priority legislation for Youngkin, Adams said of HB 2302, which allows the governor to direct funds from the Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for transportation projects deemed necessary for major economic development initiatives or to enhance the economic development opportunities.

Currently, if a major employer is ready to locate to a locality, but needs transportation-related changes before the move, Adams said they would be told there is a process in place that would likely take several years to navigate.

The new bill "allows the governor to take action," Adams said, adding that funds will include grant opportunities, and may also be directed to existing projects.

The bill will offer flexibility, and be useful if funds are needed for projects in Virginia's Business Ready sites, Adams said, noting that two of the Top 10 sites identified by the state include Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre (CCBC) in Henry County and the Southern Virginia Megasite at Berry Hill, located in Pittsylvania County.

"One more bill I'll bring up relates to the" Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Adams said of the bill directing health officials to convene a work group to study and make recommendations for reducing the occurrence and impact of tick-borne diseases, with findings and recommendations to be made to Youngkin and the General Assembly by November 1.

"All across the rural district, I hear

people talk about tick bites" both causing problems with cattle and people," Adams said. Tick bites have driven an increase in what he called a "red meat allergy" and other illnesses because ticks transmit bacterial and viral infections to people and cattle.

Because there is a lack of resources to treat those illnesses, Adams said the report is to include ways to increase public awareness of tick-borne diseases and prevention strategies as well as educate healthcare providers and the public about the importance of early diagnosis and treatment and implementing strategies to reduce tick populations, thereby reducing the risks.

Adams said 100 percent of the bills he proposed passed in the House of Delegates, and about half passed muster in the Senate.

"For the most part, work is almost finished," aside from nailing down the budget, Adams said. "There will hopefully be agreement by those conferees soon."

Marshall, R- Danville, said legislators approved a budget last year that will go through June 30, 2024. This year, "we take up budget amendments. We have to have a balanced budget in Virginia. New revenue is really strong.

Youngkin "wants to send that overpayment back to Virginia taxpayers, but you have to be a taxpayer for that to happen," Marshall said.

Although teachers are not considered state employees, state funding is provided to school divisions based on their ability to pay, Marshall said, noting that localities in northern Virginia, such as Fairfax and Loudoun County, receive fewer state funds for education than their rural counterparts.

The funding formula "changes every year, so (it's) one of the things we have to keep looking at," he said.

Virginia's Rainy Day Fund "is completely full. In fact, we started another (fund) that is getting close to the limit" of being full, Marshall said. Virginia is

"one of few" states that continue to have a Triple A (AAA) Bond Rating, which means it "can borrow money and get a lower rate."

Among Marshall's concerns is "something called Virginia's Clean Economy Act, which passed in 2020. It moves Virginia to" producing carbon-free electricity by 2045, he said. That means solar or offshore wind systems would be used.

"As you can see, we have a lot of solar. I'm not sure how many acres Henry County has, but Pittsylvania County has about 6,000 acres," Marshall said. The energy produced by the solar farms "is not going to us. It's going to northern Virginia."

The 2020 legislation also calls for electric vehicles by 2035, he said, adding that he recently asked an official how much land would be needed for solar facilities to produce the amount of energy that would be needed.

Marshall said he was told that 20 percent of all the land in Virginia "would have to be solar. What's going to happen is we're going to have to import electricity from West Virginia, which uses coal and natural gas" in the production process.

The act also requires Virginia to follow California's Clean Air Act by adopting that state's regulations on vehicles, Marshall said.

"We do not have a vote on that," Marshall said, adding that California banned new diesel trucks, in a new mandate that went into effect on January 1, 2023, according to online reports.

California's switch to zero-emissions will affect about 1.8 million trucks, including those operated by the U.S. Postal Service, FedEx, UPS, and Amazon, according to online reports.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) typically sets standards for tailpipe emissions from passenger cars, trucks, and other vehicles, but California has historically been granted waivers to impose its own, stricter standards, the NPR report in March. At the

time, eight other states planned to adopt California's truck standards.

One of the bills Marshall introduced was to further the development and production of small, modular nuclear reactors to produce energy.

"It would be a large expense to start with, but once purchased, they produce energy for decades," and "help bring flat electric rates," Marshall said, adding that while that proposal did not pass, he will resubmit it next year. Even if it passes, he said the reactors likely wouldn't be available to purchase for decades.

"We've got to set some sanity back" in government, Marshall said, urging voters to participate in the General Election in November. "That's why the election is so important."

Due to redistricting, Marshall will no longer be serving the area as of Dec. 31, but noting the more we work together, the stronger we are, he said he plans to stay involved.

Merryman said Williams was unable to attend the update due to a client's emergency legal situation. However, a "Racketeering Bill" that will provide stiffer penalties for catalytic converter theft rings was among the highlights of Williams' accomplishments, Merryman said.

Another was due to Williams' desire to "bring our criminal justice system into the light," Merryman said of HB 2168, which requires the Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission to include the name of any judge who the commission concluded breached the Canons of Judicial Conduct and took disciplinary action against in its annual report.

Hess said that due to redistricting, Griffith's district is expanded to include all of Martinsville and Henry County. The two are among the 23 counties and 5 independent cities in the district, he added.

Spencer Thomas- vice chairman of the chamber's Government Affairs Committee, emceed the update that was sponsored by Appalachian Power.

Martinsville City Schools celebrate with "Big M" Ceremony



Seniors at Martinsville High School and their trophies are pictured Principal Aji Dixon (right).

Tara Lucas

Martinsville High School recently held its "Big M" Awards ceremony. Twenty-two high school seniors received the Big M trophy. Only seniors with a cumulative scholastic average of 3.7 and above are eligible for the trophy. Eligible students must be enrolled in three or more academic subjects, one of which must be an honors course. Students who receive the Big M certificate must have a 3.7 grade point average for the academic year.

Big M trophy recipients: Marcaisa Jenee Becker, Demetri Keyvon Blackwell, Hayden Elise Calfee, Nije'l Malik Cook, Christian Alexander Scott Eames, James Demetrius Farris Jr., Nadia Jazmin Flores, Zane Mills Gardner, Matthew Gabriel Gilbert, Trenati Cherkara Hairston, Katherine Marie Hall, Natalia Janae Martin, Eyad Abdelnaser Mohamed, Amanda Marie Mosser, Faith Elena Munoz, Joseph Hunter Nguyen, RG Vincent Olea, Ashlynn McKenzie Patten, Myia Shante Pettie, Ciara Monique Ramey, Papion Jolie Ritenour Shelton and Kayla Marie Solomon.

Patrick Henry Elementary School

Fifth Grade: Zariyah A'neese Bouldin, Henry N. Byram, James Andrew Hall, Jairo Samuel Mata, Arielle Elizabeth Mitchell, Daniya Sue Penn, Maya Elizabeth Williams.

Albert Harris Elementary School

Fifth Grade: Alyce Lucille Arrington, Kevin Gabriel Avila-Santiago, Janette Guadalupe-Carrilo-Llamas, Jeffrey Alan Cousins, Hope Cherish Belle Hairston, Luis Balcazar Hernandez, Taimir Ja'kaylen Manns, Freddy Munoz, Quandel Fitzroy Richards.

Martinsville Middle School

Sixth Grade: Ziyad Abdelnaser Khalaf, Mohamed Bayoumy, Bridgette Alise Brent, Olivia Grace Campbell, Christopher Rolando Carpio Yanez, Nadia Yazmin Dominguez Gonzalez, Marisol Garcia-Macias, Zoey Elise Hannans, Zackary Randall Harter, Renisha Jacqueline Millner, KaVaughn Michael Muse, Josiah David Porter, Samson Elijah Ray, Addison Ann Soper, Arianna Marie Y'barra.

Seventh Grade: William Dardan-Scott Bela, Abigail Savannah Campbell, Brennan Chase Coleman, Kira Lynn Compton, Cordell Elijah Daniels, Keyara Renee Dillard, McKenna Nicole Mahan, Aileen Yuritza Nolasco, Kaden Alexander Paitsel, Zion Faith Perkins, Colby Bryson Robertson, Xavier Alonso Rodriguez, Erzart Shahini, Veronica Lorraine Smith, Symphony Chynah Necoal Talley, Zaina Denise Talley, Ja'Corian Drakar Turner, Lilly Grace Wall, Paris Noel Waller, Noah Drew Wright.

Eighth Grade: Jaden Alexander Ayoub, Serenity Hope Bradshaw, Kayra Shawn

Carr, Sherman Chase Dillard, Fernanda Guadalupe Dominguez-Machuca, Angeliah Monae Eccles, Carrie Lynn Hudson, Sariah Shaniece Little, Caden Amir Martin, Aniyah Brenae Millner, Julie Anna Nguyen, Ariyana Re Nae Nowlin, Jaden Anthony Porter, Jayce Edward Prillaman, Amyah Sheronne Richardson, Tyrese Lamar Smith, Gillian Katherine Soper, JaVonna Marjae Stubblefield, NaSir Antwaine Turner, Caleb Tyree Valentine.

Martinsville High School

Ninth Grade: Mykala Akins, Aubrey Blankenbaker, Gabriel Shalom Davis, Kamori Re Yanna Dillard, Shatavia Danielle Dillard, Zaniah Arianna Dillard, Chekiya Kailyn Galloway, Kaleeya DaJanae Hairston, Abigail Hernandez, Ny'Asia Chenelle Hood, Aerran Elysia Kellam, Jun Hermes Olea, Michael Jeremy Parker, Joeii Lei-Ann Putney, Jailyon Omarion Reynolds, Lillian Marie Rorrer, Rilynne Addison Williams, Kaira Merci Womack.

Tenth Grade: Anne Frances Agee, Adam Luis Aguilar, Elvin Ariel Amaya Turcios, Naun Isai Andrade Paredes, Evelyn Ruby Ayers, Yadira Carrillo Tamayo, Keara Lanette Carter, Esmeralda Castillo-Ocampo, Dale Allen Cochran, Ana Marie Compton, Sontrell Maciah Daniels, Tyanah O'Chelle Dickerson, Cassidy Micahel Dodson, Xavier Patrick Dunham, Ruby Jacqueline Flores, Ava Brooke Grant, Aliyah Bailey Hairston, Abigail Fae Haskew, Deniyah Shanice Hightower, Aidan Michael Hood, Isabella Juliann Hood, Kasey Dawn Inman, Ny' Qeriyah Brenee Kellam, Gavin Luke Luther, Alondra Machuca Tiznado, Skyla Daniele Martin, Rickyah Charlee Mitchell-Hairston, Steven Daniel Morales, John Riley Nguyen, Jacey Claire Pamintuan, Terriah D'Nae Roberts, Destiny Layanie Salda, Jariyah Yanise Smith, Mary Elizabeth Smith, Ayona Day Marie Stultz, Brooke Allison Turner, Isabella Haze Vega, Jayden Tyrion Aki Williams, Kaya Renee Yates, Noah Alexander Young.

Eleventh Grade: Damian Christopher Amada, Kirsten Alise Blankenbaker, Tyler Wayne Carr, Johnny Owen Clerc, Ryan Connor DiMingo, Paris Rose Fulp, Aleeyah Marie Calloway, Briana Garcia-Macias, Gabriel Lucas Haley, Makenzie Zamori Hylton, Arlette Jaramillo Mata, Caleb Parke Joyce, LynAsshia Neveah King, Natalie Marie LaPrade, Natalie Dominguez Loreda, Mallorie Sherrill Lowe, Adam Idris Mounkaila, Nayti Bhavesh Patel, Elijah Kenley Pickett, Ray McKinley Preston, Cortay Jovon Price, John David Ratliff II, Kaylee Angel Rea, Mason Crenshaw Rorrer, Skyler Lee Spence, Christopher Bryant Talley II, Emarius La'Ease Tinsley, Aniya Elise Torrence, Martiniano Torres Orozco, Tyra Makelle Valentine, Jordan Patrick Vaughn, Leslie Gorety Vasquez Espejo, Monica Elise Watkins, Whitney Ashton Williams, Destiny Jonet Witcher, Reagan Bailey Wright.

Twelfth Grade: Taynasia Jane Blackstock, Mikiyah Kimoria Carter, Hannah Divine Hairston, Camryn Savannah James, Usman Amer Khan, Allannah Monique Milton, Deonna Nichelle Street, Samantha Reese Wall, Dreshawn Darrell Young.

Rooster Walk, Infinity Acres Ranch to receive funding boost

Organizations in Henry and Patrick counties will receive matching grant and sponsorship funds as part of the Virginia Tourism Corporation's Regional Marketing, Marketing Leverage, and VA250 Marketing Leverage programs.

Ine Henry County, Rooster Walk Inc. 13th annual Rooster Walk Music & Arts Festival Sponsorship was awarded \$10,000; Infinity Acres Ranch Let's Go! Alpaca My Bags! received \$20,000 and Rooster Walk, Inc. Walk This Way Marketing is slated to receive \$15,000

Program benefactors in Patrick County are One Family Productions Front Porch Fest 14 \$10,000; Patrick Dominion Valley Events Memorial Weekend Gospel Event \$10,000; Patrick County Tourism Moonshine Heritage Trail, Phase I \$5,500; Patrick SRC (Stuart Rotary Club) Productions Stuart Beach Music Festival (also known as Hot Fun in the Summertime) \$10,000.

The matching funds and grants awarded in Virginia total more than \$3.2 million, with 236 programs and 1,100 grant recipients, Gov. Glenn Youngkin said during the announcement that coincided with the kickoff of National Travel & Tourism Week.

The funding programs are designed to leverage local marketing dollars with matching state funds to increase visitation and traveler spending through 2024. This funding cycle, local partners will commit more than \$15.5 million to match the VTC funding, providing more than \$18.5 million in new marketing and event production activity focused on increasing overnight visitation to Virginia. The funding will be awarded to 236 marketing programs, ultimately impacting 1,161 combined partners.

The VTC will have a VA250 Tourism Marketing Program grant round and a Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program grant round opening in Summer and Fall 2023. Organizations and businesses that are interested in applying may visit vatc.org/grants for more information.

Hazlewood's planned retirement stalls petition

Taylor Boyd
Staff writer

The announced retirement of Patrick County Circuit Court Clerk Sherri Hazlewood has stalled a petition to remove her from office.

Pulaski County Commonwealth's Attorney Justin Griffith, who was named special prosecutor in the removal process, said Hazlewood is submitting her retirement papers, which will be effective July 1.

"Therefore, upon that being done, I am no longer asking that the Patrick County Registrar certify the signatures on the petition, and there will not be a show cause filed," he said.

According to previous reports, there were 545 signatures on the petition. It alleged Hazlewood "presented an unwell mental state during the 2022 year, directly affecting the office and county," and "has neglected numerous duties pertaining to the job of Clerk over the 2022 years resulting in copious orders not being filed and/or filed correctly."

Griffith said the petition's goal of removing Hazlewood from office was met by her retirement.

"There's nothing to dismiss or remove from the docket because the petition was going through the certification of the signatures process," he said.

Once that was done, there would have been a show cause filed. However, that did not happen.

"So, there's nothing to dismiss because no official show cause was filed. The necessity for the show cause is no longer there with her resignation through retirement," he said.

Griffith said he was pleased with being appointed on May 9, and then being officially informed in writing on May 17 that Hazlewood would be vacating the office.

"I was proud to represent Patrick County's interests in this matter," he added.

Hazlewood, 54, of Claudville, has charges pending in Patrick, Franklin, and Bland counties.

Hazlewood has not been convicted of any of the charges.

Patrick County Circuit Court Judge Marcus Brinks appointed Morgan Boothe to serve in the position in Hazlewood's absence.

Hazlewood currently remains in her elected position as clerk. She is being paid \$116,831, or a monthly salary of about \$9,700, according to previous reports.

Citing personnel issues, Donna Shough, the county's Human Resources Director, declined to provide information about retirement benefits.

Enjoy classical music and summer sunshine at The Alma Ensemble's free concert

Piedmont Arts is inviting the community to spend an afternoon in the Lester-Gravelly Art Garden soaking in early summer sunshine and beautiful classical music. On Sunday, June 11, the Alma Ensemble will perform in the Lester-Gravelly Art Garden at 2 p.m. This free concert is open to the public and is sure to be a wonderful event. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and enjoy refreshments provided by the museum. This event will also feature the official ribbon cutting for the Piedmont Arts' Pollinator Path. In case of rain or inclement weather, the event will be held indoors at Piedmont Arts.

The Alma Ensemble was founded

by flutist Sarah Wardle Jones, clarinetist Michelle Smith Johnson and pianist Erica Sipes. It was birthed from a desire to create music that is empowering and resonant. The group places a high priority on playing music by other women composers, and is named in recognition of Alma Mahler, a composer who never received the opportunities afforded to the male composers with whom she was romantically linked. Alma also means "nourishment" or "soul" which is something the ensemble endeavors to bring to every performance.

Piedmont Arts is a nonprofit art museum in Martinsville. Learn more at PiedmontArts.org.

Board from page 1

construction. As you know, we have projects pending and you never know until they submit their final site plan of how they're going to use their land, but it's estimated that there's approximately 600 acres of panels under proposal being considered," he said.

The cap would be in addition to the preexisting restrictions in the ordinance, including the 2.5 percent density requirement.

The board approved the proposal in a 5-1 vote. Garrett Dillard, of the Iriswood District, was the lone member who voted against the measure.

Dillard said in his mind, this is putting a cap on top of a cap.

"Because that one percent reduces it, then you really don't have a 2.5 percent ordinance," Dillard said. "You have a 2.5 percent ordinance until you get to one percent of your land use, and you may have hundreds of miles of acreage, but you can't use it because the one percent has come into effect."

Tommy Slaughter, of the Reed Creek District, said the board is doing what all the other counties have done.

"Franklin County kept theirs a lot less than that. We're just saying 'this is all we want. We don't want any more of our land covered up,'" Slaughter said.

Joe Bryant, of the Collinsville District, said he thinks a cap would add safety to the

locality. "I don't want us to be considered the solar capital of the country in the south part," Bryant said. "I'm not not for having solar companies here, but in moderation."

Dillard said the board has talked with a lot of departments and organizations about how it wishes it could give them more money.

"I see solar as those opportunities to take care of some of those things. We want to better reward folk and people who are coming in and offering us \$1.25 million upfront, \$900,000 upfront, plus the tax money, and those are ways that we can really pat folk on the back and give them a little something to go with it versus just the conversation," he said.

In other matters, the board:

*Approved allowing Lyle to petition the Henry County Circuit Court to forgo a special election to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry on July 1.

*Approved the proposed Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) six-year road plan.

*Appropriated the fiscal year 2023-2024 county budget.

*Awarded a \$103,211 contract to Smith Turf & Irrigation for ground maintenance equipment to be used primarily at the Smith River Sports Complex.

*Approved a transfer appropriation of \$130,138 to the Fieldale Heritage project from the Smith River Small Towns project and the Small Grants cost center. The funds will be used to complete the project's architectural and engineering services.

*Approved \$250,000 categorical transfers in the Henry County Public Schools budget, including \$177,075 from the Administration/Attendance and Health (AAH) category to the

Facilities category, and \$72,925 from the AAH category to the Operation and Maintenance category. The funds will be used for paving the parking lot at the Center for Community Learning and painting at schools.

*Awarded a \$207,503 contract to Excel Truck Group for the purchase of a knuckle boom-style truck for the Refuse Department.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$10,868 in Asset Forfeiture Funds to pay for training for the Sheriff's Office.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$18,875,216 from the state's reimbursements towards the construction of the Adult Detention Center, and \$639,784 of unexpected construction funds to pay the Series 2019B Bonds.

*Approved an application to rezone 1.62-acres of the Ridgeway District from Suburban Residential District to Agricultural District.

*Appointed Felita Claybrooks and Greg Peitz to the Blue Ridge Regional Library Board.

*Appointed Scott Prillaman and Melvin Brown Jr. to the Henry County Parks & Recreation Board.

*Appointed Darrell Jones to the Community Policy and Management Team.

*Appointed Gracie Agnew to the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp.

*Appointed Willie Scales and Andrea Robertson to the Henry-Martinsville Social Services Board.

*Appointed Robert Haley to the Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) Board.

*Appointed Eric Hairston to the Piedmont Community Services (PCS) Board.

*Appointed Alisha Hill to the Southside Community Action Board.

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Bassett Furniture partners with Network-as-a-Service provider Acuative

Bassett Furniture Industries, Inc. has signed a contract with Acuative to support its growing need for efficient, state-of-the-art networking communications and security technology. Bassett is a 121-year old manufacturer of home furnishings with 60 corporately-owned retail stores across the U.S.

This relationship supports Bassett's focus on providing a best-in-class customer experience at its retail locations. Acuative will update all Bassett stores with an array of networking equipment and communications tools. To support this new technology, Acuative will provide real-time technical support and simultaneously upgrade the backup wireless network connectivity at each location.

"With Acuative, we have a partner that can enhance the customer experience with core technologies needed to run the retail locations," Brian Claspell CIO/VP of IT at Bassett explained. "This allows our Bassett IT team to focus on other initiatives and emerging technologies that will provide value for our customers."

Acuative provides networking and communications as a service via a sub-

scription model to a number of major retail and manufacturing customers and sees the Bassett relationship as a collaborative fit. This partnership will ensure every store provides fast, wall-to-wall wireless network coverage for both employees and customers.

"People don't typically think much about the core networking and communications technologies behind a retail business, but they drive the customer's experience from the ground up. Since we deliver technology as a subscription service, we afford brands like Bassett the flexibility to innovate in a way they wouldn't have with a traditional internal approach," said Acuative's SVP of Enterprise Sales, Rob Peterson. "By establishing a collaborative relationship, Acuative enables Bassett's IT resources to align with the Company's direction, goals and growth. It also frees up resources to pursue ideas for improving the customer experience while Acuative manages networking at an enterprise level. Refocusing IT resources is crucial in today's environment. We look forward to working together with Bassett to provide an exceptional retail experience in home furnishings."

Commission supports workforce development programs at P&HCC

A request from the Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation was among 11 approved by the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission during its May 18 meeting in Abingdon.

P&HCC will receive a \$240,000 grant for Workforce Financial Aid to support workforce development efforts and dual enrollment programs in Precision Machining (CSC), Welding (CSC) and Mechatronics (CSC) as well as a General Studies Specialization in Teacher Education Preparation (AA&S).

With its 2021-2022 Workforce Financial Aid awards, the commission supported programs that helped 1,268 students gain valuable education and credentials in high demand fields. The awards approved at its recent meeting are a continuation of the commission's long-term support of these programs. The commission also approved extensions and modifications for a variety of projects and adopted a new budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

"As always, I am proud of the work the Commission has done here in Abingdon," Tobacco Commission Chairman, Sen. Frank Ruff said. "The Commission has been a supporter of education, and in particular our community college system, for its entire existence. That support has continued here with the approval of a number of grant awards that will ensure students in Southern and Southwest Virginia have access to top quality programs. A well educated workforce, with the skills and credentials employers are looking for, is critical to the Commission's job creation efforts. The Commission's investment in education is an investment in the future of our region. By ensuring that our students have access to the education and training they need, we are creating a more skilled workforce that is better prepared to compete in the global economy."

The commission is a 28-member body created by the 1999 General Assembly. Its mission is the promotion of economic growth and development in tobacco-dependent communities, using proceeds of the national tobacco settlement.

Watts named Distinguished Teacher

Dr. Stephanie Watts was named the 2023 Lula White Johnson Distinguished Teacher by the MHC Academic Foundation. Dr. Watts is the Assistant Professor, in the early childhood education program at Longwood University.

Each year the foundation provides a monetary gift and plaque to a distinguished educator in one of NCI's affiliated degree programs. Last year's award went to Dr. Challen Mabry, Assistant Professor at Bluefield University.

In referring to Dr. Watts, one student said she is, "selfless, giving, encouraging, professional, and an extraordinary human being, goes above and beyond to make sure she gives diligent detail and preparation to instruction, while providing information in more than one way to reach the understanding of every student."

Another student said, "She has been the light at the end of the tunnel. Her passion in Early Childhood Education shines through and fuels us to keep on



Dr. Stephanie Watts

going!" This award is made possible by an endowment established through the Foundation in 2010 in memory of Johnson who taught for several decades

at the former Albert Harris High School and Martinsville High School. It is awarded to a faculty member selected among nominations from students, alumni, and staff at NCI.

PSA Board approves FY24 budget

The Henry County Public Service Authority (PSA) Board of Directors approved its fiscal year 2023-2024 budget during its regular meeting on May 22.

The budget is approximately \$15 million and includes no changes to rates for the tenth year in a row.

Overall, the FY24 budget increased \$3,051,429 from the current fiscal year and it includes approximately \$5 million for capital improvements and debt service.

PSA employees will receive a five percent pay increase on July 1 and the organization will continue working with Henry County to implement the results of a pay and classification study conducted

within the last year.

Included in the approximately \$15 million budget is a recommendation to finance the annual debt service and operating costs to guarantee water rights for three million gallons per day (MGD) from Philpott Lake as part of a study conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The projected cost to guarantee rights for 3MGD is \$873,000 which can be financed with USACE. Annual operating costs associated with the project would amount to \$85,000.

Other funds in the budget would address a number of capital items, including water system rehabilitation, a track

loader for infrastructure maintenance, sewer inflow and infiltration, and a preliminary engineering report to consider extending water lines along Old Liberty Drive, Spruce Street and Mt. Olivet Road.

In other matters, the board:

- Approved a resolution authorizing the submission of funding applications for the Stoney Mountain Road and Horsepasture Price Road water line extensions.
- Received monthly updates on finances, engineering, safety, construction and maintenance, and treatment and regulatory compliance.

Longwood at NCI Celebrates Students in Partner Program

Longwood University and New College Institute recently recognized those students who participated in the May 20 graduation ceremonies at Longwood University. The celebration took place at NCI's Baldwin Building and recognized the hard work and dedication of students who are pursuing degrees in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education and Liberal Studies with a minor in Early Childhood.

Audrey Church, chairman for the Department of Education and Counseling at Longwood, gave greetings at the graduation ceremony, and praised the graduates' dedication to the education profession and assured them of Longwood's support throughout their teaching careers.

She shared two quotes with the graduates, one by Eleanor Roosevelt and the other by Minor Meyers Jr. The first quote highlighted the graduates' perseverance and hard work in completing their programs despite challenges. The second quote emphasized the importance of doing good in the communities they serve. Church expressed her confidence in the graduates' ability to make a positive impact on children's lives and communities. She encouraged the graduates to acknowledge and applaud the support they received from their families, professors, and classmates.

Jasmine Altamirano, a first-generation student, who will graduate from Longwood University with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and early childhood special education, as well as a Virginia teaching license, encouraged her audience to take action.

"Change happens when we take action, and action requires us to get out of our comfort zones and take risks,"

Altamirano said, and credited her family for their unwavering support. She noted that quitting was never an option. Through hard work and dedication, she learned a great deal in the program and gained experience in internships and student teaching.

Altamirano emphasized the importance of recognizing and confronting one's fears.

"Our fears are just thoughts that we've given too much power to," she said. "We can overcome them by taking action in spite of them." Finally, she concluded her speech with a powerful message, "If we want to see change in the world, we must be the change. It starts with us."

2023 Longwood Graduates and Completers include:

Elementary Education, Licensure: Casey Elkins, Vivian Fria-Alvarez, Hailey Harbour, Sarah Krauss, Ashley Lawson, Cara Oakes, Karina Altamirano Rodriguez, Lindsay Tate, Faith Young

Early Childhood Education, Licensure: Jasmine Altamirano

Early Childhood Education, Non-Licensure: Angelique Hairston, Rachel Hodge, Melissa Kellam, Felisha Mellott, Amanda Pagans

Liberal Studies – Minor in Early Childhood Education, Non-Licensure: Jenna Adams, Sharika Adams

"The Early Childhood Education Program at NCI was the best decision I ever made! The atmosphere, the faculty and staff were amazing," ECE Graduate Melissa Kellam said.

"We are tremendously proud of the 17 students who have completed their



educational journey through our partnership with NCI and Longwood. This event is a testament to the power of strong, collaborative partnerships and what they can achieve. Through these partnerships, citizens of South Virginia have the opportunity to start, continue, and complete their educational journey right here at home," NCI's Executive Director Joe Sumner said.

"We are grateful for our partnerships with Longwood and Patrick and Henry, which make these opportunities possible, and we are proud of the pipeline of educators that we are working to establish. Speaking with the students recognized, I am excited to see the positive impact they will have on their local communities as they join the workforce as educators and child care

experts. Their hard work and dedication to completing their educational journey ensures the success of the next generation of students. Congratulations to each and every student who was recognized. We are proud of you and honored to be a part of your journey," he added.

The Longwood at NCI partner program offers students the opportunity to complete their degree at NCI while receiving the same high-quality education as Longwood University students. The program has helped many students achieve their academic and professional goals.

For more information on Longwood at NCI and its partner programs, visit <http://www.longwood.edu/education/about/longwoodnci/>.

Students sign with P&HCC for Track and Field

Three students signed with Patrick & Henry Community College's (P&HCC's) Track and Field program.



Dion Easley, second from left, flanked by father Neil Easley (left), mother Tammy Easley (right); back row Athletic Director James Gilbert, Track Coach Kevin Underwood, and P&HCC Coach Andre Kidd.



Girl's Track Coach Brandy Arnold, Benjamin Flores, Track Coach Kevin Underwood; (back row) James Gilbert Athletic Director, Patrick & Henry Coach Andre Kidd, and Bassett High School Principal Tiffany Gravelly.



Nikkii Ratcliff, Gracie Ratcliff, Ryan Ratcliff (brother), Autumn Ratcliff, sister; (back row) Athletic Director James Gilbert, Arnold, Assistant Track Coach Kendall Ware, Track Coach Kevin Underwood, P&HCC Coach Andre Kidd.

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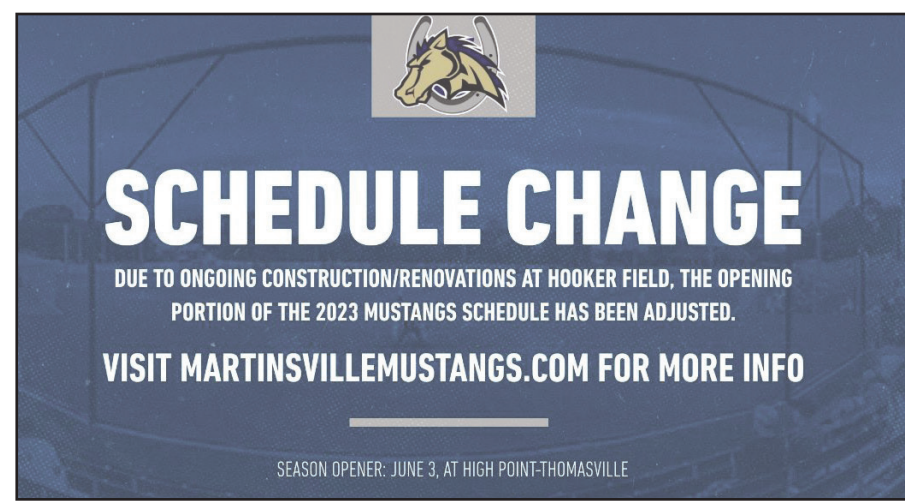
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Construction, improvements to Hooker Field prompt slight delay



Tara Lucas
Staff writer

Next P.L.A.N. Athletics and the Martinsville Mustangs announced that Opening Day for the 2023 season at Hooker Field has been pushed back to Friday, June 9. It was originally scheduled for Thursday, June 1.

The slight delay was needed due to ongoing construction and improvements at Hooker Field.

While the delay is regrettable, the much-needed renovations will enhance the fan experience and provide an even better baseball environment for fans and players alike.

Despite the delayed start, the Mustangs will still play all 26 home games and a revised schedule will be released soon.

Martinsville will now open the 2023 regular season on the road at High Point-Thomasville on Saturday, June 3, and will play all road contests as scheduled.

Upgrades to Hooker Field include

a renovated concession stand, restrooms, press box and broadcast booth, office, two suites, and a covered reserved seating area. The new additions are expected to increase fan comfort, accessibility, and overall enjoyment of the game.

“We understand that fans are eager to see their Mustangs back in action, but we want to assure everyone that the delay is worth the wait,” said Mustangs President, Jason Davis. “The new additions will be transformational, and we can’t wait to share it with the community.”

The Mustangs have a long and proud history in Martinsville, and the team is committed to delivering a top-quality baseball experience for fans of all ages.

For more information on the Martinsville Mustangs and the upcoming 2023 season, please visit the team’s website at www.martinsvillemustangs.com. The team can also be contacted via email at info@martinsvillemustangs.com

Active Shooter Response Training Program is open to first responders, civilians

The Criminal Justice Services Board awarded \$2.4 million for statewide Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERT) as a component of the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Active Attack Program, which educates first responders and civilians on responding to active shooter emergencies.

ALEERT embraces a community approach by providing consistent, evidence-based training to all law enforcement agencies and civilians to neutralize and survive attacks. All law enforcement agencies, private and public learning institutions, and faith-based organizations are eligible to register for in-person trainings that are hosted statewide, or virtual course offerings.

The comprehensive approach to emergency response and recovery reinforces the fact that public safety responders are one part of the nation’s emergency management team and civilians can support response efforts when properly equipped with knowledge on what to do in active attack scenarios. The ALERT program was named the National Standard in Active Shooter Response Training by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The approved funding will provide DCJS \$1.55 million for one-time equipment acquisitions and three years of annual funding at \$288,000 per year. This funding supports 16 law enforcement courses and 48 civilian courses annually.

The “announcement demonstrates the Commonwealth’s renewed commitment to ensuring Virginians and first responders are able to enroll in best-in-class courses that equip them with the skills they need to best respond to active attack events,” said Gov. Glenn Youngkin. “This program will build a culture of preparedness by increasing consistent and coordinated first responder training and civilian education.”

DCJS plans to offer a number of different law enforcement active attack courses to law enforcement agencies across the Commonwealth, civilian courses and webinars, as well as develop an age-appropriate eLearning series for K-12 students on personal safety. More information on the ALERT program including upcoming courses offered is available at <https://www.dcsj.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/active-attack-program>.

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