

Parents express concern about teacher shortage and retention



Teddy Martin (far left) and Ben Gravely (second from left) were reelected to serve as chairman and vice chairman of the board.

By Jessica Dillon
The Henry County School Board met on January 9 to reorganize and hear about the program of studies in middle and high schools. Teddy Martin, of the Reed Creek District, and Ben Gravely, of the Iriswood District, were elected as chairman and vice chairman, respectively; the meeting schedule for next year was finalized and the board adopted a Code of Conduct for members. During the meeting, several concerned parents and community members expressed their thoughts on teacher retention in the community. Willie Martin, a concerned resident, discussed teacher hiring and retention practices in the county. He said that several of his former students ended up leaving the coun-

ty to teach elsewhere after just a few years. “Turnover has been staggering, why is this?” said Martin, and added that he understands teachers are afraid to speak their minds in fear of retaliation. He said that several teachers left last year after a “shake-up” occurred at an unnamed county elementary school. “Changing principals in the middle of the school year is never good for our students,” said Martin, criticizing an unnamed principal for the amount of time they spend at their school. “One principal is the last to arrive and the first to leave,” he alleged. Martin also brought up the lack of exit interviews for teachers departing the county. “Why don’t you do exit interviews when these teachers

(See Teacher Shortage p. 2)



Council Members Julian Mei (far left), and Rayshaun Gravely (second from right) participated in their first regular meeting since being elected to the Martinsville City Council.

New refuse ordinance would streamline system

By Jessica Dillon
The Martinsville City Council convened on Jan. 14 to discuss the first reading of a proposed refuse ordinance and the appropriation of funds for a new water main on Commonwealth Boulevard. The meeting marked the first regular session for newly elected council members Rayshaun Gravely and Julian Mei, after the Jan. 2 reorganizational meeting. Greg Maggard, the city’s public works director, introduced the refuse ordinance, which aims to streamline trash collection in Uptown Martinsville by replacing curbside pickup with strategically placed centralized dumpsters. “This will add strategically located centralized dumpsters and will help with pick-up in Uptown,” said Maggard. “It also talks about some requirements for trash cans—the size, keeping them in good condition, and having lids.” The dumpsters will feature Bluetooth-enabled padlocks, ensuring

access is restricted to Uptown residents and business owners. “Those will be only given out to those in the Uptown area,” Maggard confirmed. While most residents and businesses already using dumpsters will not be affected, those relying on curbside trash pickup will be required to adapt to the new system. “They are all going to be in a public parking lot,” said Maggard. Council Member Kathy Lawson raised concerns from a business owner about the volume of trash generated, and inquired whether trash could be picked up earlier. Maggard noted that the new system would free up labor resources, which could be reallocated to other city needs. Under the current ordinance, violations of trash disposal rules carry a Class 1 misdemeanor charge, which can lead to jail time. The proposed changes would downgrade violations to a Class 4 misdemeanor, (See Refuse Ordinance p. 2)



Members of the Martinsville School Board heard the first reading of the FY 2026 budget.

City School Board hears first reading of proposed budget

By Jessica Dillon
The first draft of the proposed budget for the 2026 school year was presented to the Martinsville City School Board at its meeting last week. “Keep in mind it’s a working document. Nothing is final,” said Schools Superintendent Dr. Zebedee Talley, Jr. The working document also is in keeping with the school division’s annual goals, which include integrity/academic excellence, safe and supportive schools in which discipline is reduced by 10 percent, and family/community engagement, encouraged by several family nights in schools. “We have great support, and the people turnout” and attend various school functions, he said, and thanked parents and the community for the support. He also explained the goals feed into the division’s six-year plan. This year’s budget proposal is built on a projected enrollment of 1,675 students in K-12, 110 pre-school students, and 80 students in adult education, which is free, Talley said, adding that it is a total en-

rollment of about 1,865 students. The increase in students would provide the division with a revenue increase of about \$43,000, he said. The primary cost factors include a 3 percent raise - the second part of the state’s biennial budget, plus a step increase, which is estimated at \$636,172. Including a \$570,200 budgeted request from principals and central office staff, the total is \$1,206,372, Talley said. The anticipated revenue is \$28,093,421 with budgeted expenses totaling \$28,929,625, for a total variance of \$836,204, Travis Clemmons said. Several school improvements are also included in the list including HVAC upgrades and roofing repairs. “We still have some heavy needs for roof replacement,” he said. “If we had about three million dollars, we could catch up on some of this work,” said Talley, and added that he feels the state should invest more money for construction and repairs. “We don’t have a million dollars, and we don’t really feel good coming

(See School Board p. 2)

Community Helps Tenants Amid Winter Storm



Mayor LC Jones, Council Member Rashawn Gravely, and Chris Lawless distribute water and soup to tenants of Northview Gardens Apartments amid the water outage.



By Jessica Dillon
Residents of Northview Gardens Apartments once again faced challenging living conditions when a water main burst on Jan. 9, leaving tenants without running water during a winter storm. This latest incident follows similar issues last summer, when a pipe burst and prompted widespread condemnation of the apartment complex’s living conditions. During the summer crisis, Martinsville Mayor LC Jones and city officials intervened to expedite repairs and distribute bottled water to residents. This time, Jones, Council Member Rashawn Gravely, and Chris Lawless, president of Lawless Welding, stepped in to provide water and soup to affected tenants over the weekend. “Friday in the snowstorm we were unloading water and handing them out to tenants,” said Lawless, who has been actively involved with local charities, including the community’s warming shelter. Gravely worked with the Salva-

tion Army to secure a hotel room for a family with a special needs child and coordinated with Ann’s Kitchen to distribute soup. “We couldn’t fix the problem, but we did what we could,” said Gravely. Jones and Lawless partnered to address the immediate needs of the residents, visiting God’s Pit Crew in Danville to obtain additional water. “We basically just had a good community, we talked to one another. Those people don’t get a lot of attention, and they need it,” Lawless said. Residents of the complex that is partially situated in both the city and the Collinsville District of Henry County, have long expressed concerns about living conditions, citing issues such as heating problems, mold, leaks, and difficulty contacting management. Some tenants reported boiling snow to meet basic needs during the recent outage. “You can’t keep renting people places in Virginia and never doing anything for the people,” a resident (See Community Helps p. 2)

Reporter’s livestream assault prompts guilty plea

By Jessica Dillon
Star News reporter Charles Roark appeared in court on Jan. 9 in connection with an assault that occurred during a Facebook livestream outside Tequila’s Sports Bar and Grill on May 24, 2024. Andrea Keatts Branton, the alleged assailant, pleaded guilty to the charge of assault and battery. She was sentenced to one year in jail and fined \$250. All but one week of her jail time was suspended. Judge Stephanie Brinegar-Vipperman emphasized that the sentence was double her typical penalty for similar cases. Roark was also granted a protective order against Branton, barring her from approaching his residence or Hollywood Cinema.

The assault happened as Roark was livestreaming to document police presence in the area following a city council request for increased patrols at local hotspots after a shooting the prior weekend. Roark remained on the sidewalk, a public space where he was legally allowed to record. The livestream footage showed Branton, of Danville, initially arguing with another patron before approaching Roark. She placed her belongings on the ground, descended the steps, and began pushing him before escalating to punching. Roark, who fell to the ground at one point, bloodied and on his hands and knees, refrained from retaliating.

After the incident, Branton walked away, and Roark continued recording despite being visibly injured, with his nose bleeding and his shirt torn open. Brinegar-Vipperman estimated the attack lasted 30 to 40 seconds. The livestream footage, along with videos captured by witnesses, was presented in court by Martinsville Deputy Commonwealth’s Attorney Patrick Flinn. Several patrons jeered during the attack, with some reportedly posting their own recordings on social media. “There’s no excuse for it,” Branton said in court. She claimed she was not intoxicated during the incident and was visiting the bar’s owners.

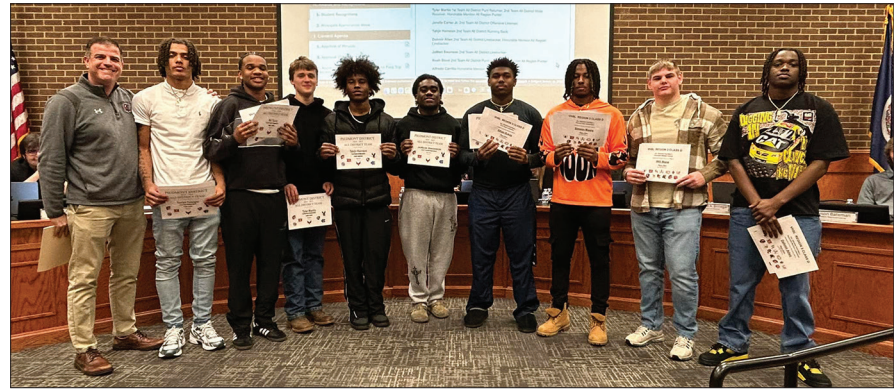
(See Reporter Assaulted p. 2)

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UPDATES



Teacher Shortage

(cont. from page 1)



The Henry County School Board recognized the Magna Vista High School Football Team and Bassett High School Band of Distinction, Virginia Marching Band Cooperative Class 5 State Champions.

are leaving?”

If the board asked, Martin said that he would give particulars. He also urged the board to do what’s necessary to get great results. “A good education can change anyone, a good teacher can change everything,” he said.

Jan Turner also discussed the topic and highlighted a talk she had with a former teacher who enjoyed her career.

The teacher felt that it “was impossible to have a safe learning environment,” said Turner who alluded to an internal safety issue within the school. The teacher wasn’t happy with the attendance policy and believed responsibility for attendance relied on the parents. “Students don’t have control over whether they get there or not.”

The Virginia Literacy Act was also a part of the teacher’s decision to leave as she felt that it took

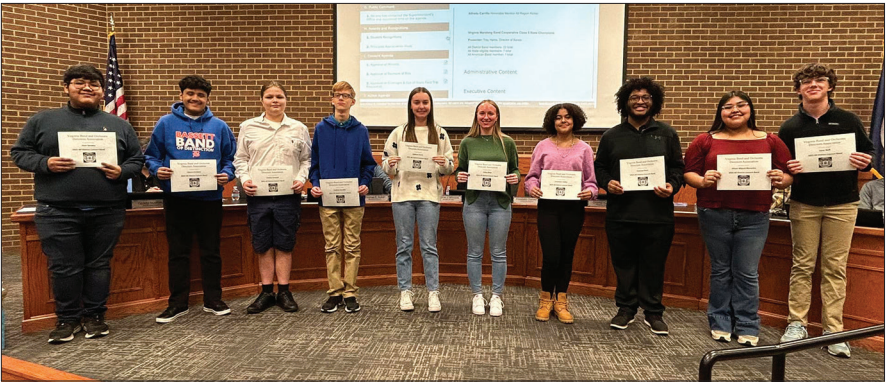
away creativity. “Teachers are not robots,” Turner said, and added that she would like to talk to the board and that the teacher would love to speak with every member of the board.

“Something must be done to fix the problem so that we stop losing so many teachers,” said Turner.

Mary Martin, a former member of the school board, also expressed concerns and called for changes at the state and federal levels. “I have great faith in” Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis (Schools Superintendent) and her “leadership for this board,” Mary Martin said, and noted that when morale is down, officials need to find out what is causing the issue.

In other matters, the board:

- * Heard a report from student school board member Bryson Bateman, who presented an update on how students are taking the bell-



to-bell cell phone policy. “At least to me it does seem quite a bit of over-reach,” said Bateman who added that “kids do not like it at all.” This question was asked after only two days of the new rule. “No one likes it, everyone hates it.”

- *The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning presented the middle school program of studies and high school program of studies.

- *John T. Morgan Roofing, of Roanoke, won the bid to replace the Laurel Park Middle School roof, including the base bid and adding alternatives.
- *A security equipment grant of \$244,000 was also approved.
- *Recognized Magna Vista High School football team.
- *Recognized Virginia Marching Band Cooperative Class 5 State Champions.

Community Helps

(cont. from page 1)



told Star News.

According to Jones, the city was informed of abnormal spikes in water usage at the complex, prompting officials to cut water service to investigate and expedite repairs. As of Jan. 14, work on the pipes was ongoing, but Jones assured residents that service would be restored by lunch the following day.

Jones also announced that rent for January would be prorated to compensate tenants for the disruption.



One of the buildings in the apartment complex, located within the city limits, has been boarded up following a fire. Jones stated that inspectors will assess the structure to determine if it can be repaired. If the property owner is unable to meet code requirements, the building may face demolition, Jones said.



He added that Del. Eric Phillips has become involved in the situation, as the apartments receive government subsidies.

Gravely pledged continued efforts to address residents’ ongoing concerns, noting that while immediate relief was provided, long-term solutions are necessary.

Refuse Ordinance

(cont. from page 1)

focusing instead on fines and fees. The revised ordinance also grants Public Works the authority to address violations directly.

To ensure a smooth transition, the city plans to launch a marketing campaign and hold informational meetings to educate residents and business owners about the changes. “We have the ability to modify or add additional sites as necessary,” said City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides.

In other matters:

- *A citizen raised concerns about the use of the city’s logo in connection with religious events. Council member Aaron Rawls echoed the concerns, saying, “We put the city logo next to some very sketchy things.” The city attorney, Sands Anderson, acknowledged the complexity of the issue and offered to collaborate with the council on a policy regarding logo usage.
- *The council also approved \$110,000 for Pub-

lic Works to install a new water main along Commonwealth Boulevard. This development aims to attract potential investors and make the area more appealing for future projects.

- *During the meeting, Council Member Julian Mei brought attention to a “rising coyote problem” in the city. Mei urged residents to refrain from discharging firearms, even if they encounter coyotes, and confirmed that the issue would be investigated further.

School Board

(cont. from page 1)

to city council and asking for a million,” Talley said.

The board also heard School Improvement Plans, as principals from each school presented their strategies to address attendance challenges, learning outcomes, and discipline. Principals also reviewed the former years’ ranking in each subject and absent students. City schools have been working to further incentivize students to attend class and focus on their studies.

Albert Harris Elementary School Principal Renee Brown emphasized the importance of giving full effort to prepare students for success. “If you put less than one hundred percent, then whose child are you preparing for failure,” Brown asked.

Martinsville Middle School Principal Ama

Waller outlined the school’s focus on reducing out-of-school suspensions by improving communication, assigning mentors to high-need students, and increasing participation in extracurricular activities. “They know, for example, if you get suspended, you’re off the team,” Waller said.

At Martinsville High School, Principal Ajamu Dixon highlighted accreditation’s reliance on the performance of the graduating class, noting challenges in biology pass rates. The school plans to use assessments to guide curriculum adjustments and improve results.

- *Patrick Henry Elementary School PTO members requested help with funding a new playground. They still need over \$100,000. It would take us about fourteen, fifteen years if

we continued to do this on our own,” said PTO president Chelsea Cruise.

The playground currently has cracked equipment, closed off areas, and no place for shade during the heat. The PTO has reached out for private grants but has been denied due to school funding being restricted to state or local government.

- *The board also recognized Sheilah Williams for her work with the Boys and Girls Club of the Blue Ridge and the BGC’s recognition as Principal of the Year.
- *The board invited community members to voice their opinions on the budget and school needs at a public hearing scheduled for Monday, Jan. 27, at 6 p.m. in the Martinsville Municipal Building Council Chambers.

Reporter Assaulted

(cont. from page 1)

Branton’s attorney, William Meyer, argued that Roark’s actions aggravated the situation, describing them as “creepy.” However, Roark repeatedly identified himself as a reporter for Star News during the livestream.

Branton alleged that she mistook Roark for someone else who had harassed her, claiming she believed he attempted to rip her bra. She admitted during the trial that she had never met Roark before the incident.

Bob Taylor, Branton’s boyfriend of 16 years, also testified. While acknowledging Branton’s history of assaulting him, Taylor claimed both parties contributed to the altercation. Branton’s mental health was noted — a bipolar disorder for which she is medicated.

Roark expressed disappointment in the lack of assistance from bystanders during the attack. “I know I’m controversial, I get that, but

that doesn’t give anybody the right” to assault him, he said, calling the community’s inaction “appalling.”

He criticized Branton’s sentence as too lenient, and expressed concern over the safety of covering stories at late-night establishments. “I just think some of these late-night spots are unsafe,” Roark said, adding that he would consider returning only with additional safety measures.

Roark also voiced frustration with the police response, alleging favoritism toward the bar, after the responding officer in the livestream appeared to interact with bystanders and bar employees, and failed to render assistance to Roark or summon medical aid.

“They take up for the club when they were beating on me, that’s the real shock,” Roark said.

Despite the incident, Roark remains commit-

ted to his reporting and hopes for stronger community engagement and police action. He emphasized the importance of civic participation, saying, “I call it a 100-plus—if a hundred people show up to something, things change.”

Roark acknowledged the leadership of Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis, contrasting the situation in Martinsville with what he described as better law enforcement control in the county.

Branton has since appealed her conviction.

Call 276-694-3101 or email submissions@theenterprise.net for more information.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Meetings

Monday January 20
Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Monday, January 27
Board of Supervisors Comprehensive Plan Joint Session, 1 p.m., Henry County Administration Building, Summerlin Room, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville.

PSA Board of Directors Organizational Meeting, 6 p.m., Henry County Administration Building, Fourth Floor Conference Room, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville.

Events

Sunday, January 19
Founders Day, 3 p.m., Historic Henry County Courthouse, 1 E Main St, Martinsville.

Tuesday, January 21
Southern Piedmont Technology Council Annual Awards Banquet, 5:30 p.m., The Institute of Advanced Learning and Research, 150 Slayton St., Danville.

Wednesday, January 22
American Red Cross Blood Drive, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Martinsville-Henry County Family YMCA, 3 Starling Ave.

Enterprise Zone “How to Qualify” Workshop, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., New College Institute, 191 Fayette Street, Martinsville.

Thursday, January 23
Business After Hours, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., Martinsville High School Stichify HQ, 351 Commonwealth Blvd E, Martinsville.

American Red Cross Blood Drive, Horsepasture Christian Church, 1146 Horsepasture Price Road, Ridgeway.

Friday, January 24
Opening Reception, 5:30-7:30 p.m., at Piedmont Arts for “Words Matter: Contemporary Native American Works on Paper,” “Bjørn Sterri: Family Photographs” and “Creating Memories Through Glass and Art” by Steve Eanes. Free and open to the public. Complimentary wine and light refreshments. RSVP attendance by Tuesday, Jan. 21, at PiedmontArts.org.

American Red Cross Blood Drive, from 12-5 p.m., Blackberry Baptist Church, 3241 Stones Dairy Road, Bassett.

Monday, January 27
American Red Cross Blood Drive, The Community Fellowship, 2674 Virginia Ave, Collinsville

ONGOING

The Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library are hosting a book sale in the basement of the main branch, 310 E. Church St., Martinsville. “Members Only,” Friday, Feb. 14, 1-5 p.m.; sale on Saturday, Feb. 15, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m., is open to the public. All proceeds go back into the library system.

A series of four classes on genealogical research will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Bassett Historical Center on each Tuesday in February (4, 11, 18, 25). There is no charge for the classes, but a reservation is needed. When you sign up for the first class, you will automatically be signed up for the other three classes. The classes are limited to 12. Call the center now (276) 629-9191 to reserve a spot.

Uptown Pub Run, every Monday at 6 p.m., meets at Renewal Brewing 32 Franklin St, Martinsville.

The Martinsville-Henry County Lions Club regularly meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Pacific Bay Restaurant, 530 Commonwealth Blvd, Martinsville.

The Bassett Ruritan Club hosts breakfast on the 2nd Saturday of each month from 6 - 10 a.m. The cost is \$8 for adults and \$4 for children under 12. All you can eat sausage, fried bologna, eggs, cooked apples, sausage gravy, made from scratch biscuits, made to order pancakes, coffee and juice. Dine in or carry out.

AWANA meets at Blackberry Baptist Church on Sundays, from 4-6 p.m.

The Bassett Ruritan Club hosts Rook Music & More on Fridays from 10 a.m. - noon. Play Rook, work puzzles, make a craft and listen to a mixture of bluegrass, country & gospel music by different bands each week. If you want, bring a snack to share. This event is free to the public. Any donations received will go to the Bassett Ruritan Club to pay for electricity etc.

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.

TOPS FIELDALE VA 0626 meets on Tuesdays at 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Bassett Public Library, 3969 Fairystone Hwy, Bassett. New members are welcome. For more information, please call Patti Farmer (276) 358-0489.

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.

Neighbors in the Know. Join staff and volunteers in the Hylton Library at the Spencer Penn Centre for activities and socializing on the first and third Monday of each month. A different presentation and activity weekly, followed by a way to get you moving. The program is an hour long and activities for children will be provided. Every third Monday, 10-11 a.m., a music program will be provided. This free program is perfect for all ages. Registration is not required.



Marian Anderson performing in Constitution Hall, 1943.

DAR Marian Anderson Legacy Scholarship Accepting Applications, Apply by Jan. 31

Undergraduate and graduate students studying music can apply for the DAR Marian Anderson Legacy Scholarship through January 31, 2025. Sponsored by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the scholarship provides a one-time \$5,000 award to one student annually who is pursuing undergraduate or graduate study in music.

Marian Anderson (1897-1993) was a groundbreaking African American contralto and an inspiration for civil rights. “This scholarship pays tribute to Marian Anderson’s life, and the Daughters of the American Revolution seeks to honor her legacy through today’s aspiring musicians. Her legacy lives on in others who aim for excellence in musical studies, are committed to their communities, and willing to stand up for what is right,” said Pamela Wright, DAR President General.

Applicants should be accepted or currently enrolled in an accredited university or college in the United States and have a concentration in music in their course of study. Music performance, composition, theory, or education are all areas that students may be specialized in to qualify for the scholarship. They should have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or the equivalent GPA on the

scale used by the institution.

Applications require references sent through the application system, so students need to request their references ahead of the Jan. 31st application deadline.

In honor of Ms. Anderson’s commitment to the community throughout her life and her willingness to share her incredible talent with the world, applicants are asked to write a personal statement describing their humanitarian or volunteer contributions on behalf of their community and/or country.

To recognize the city Marian Anderson called home, preference will be given to students from the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania metropolitan area, even if they are not pursuing music studies in the Philadelphia area.

This scholarship is not automatically renewed. However, recipients may reapply for consideration each year for up to four consecutive years.

The scholarship is supported by the Daughters of the American Revolution’s Marian Anderson Legacy Fund. Learn more about the relationship between Marian Anderson and the DAR, and the organization’s on-going efforts to honor her memory at www.dar.org/MarianAnderson.

Punturi and K9 Morty receive certificate



Henry County Sheriff’s Deputy Brian Punturi and K9 Morty (center) are pictured with Capt. Sandy Hines (left), and Michael Jarrett (right).

Henry County Sheriff’s Deputy Brian Punturi and K9 Morty are the recipients of the Certificate of Appreciation for January. The program is made possible by Jarrett

Marketing LLC, and Papa’s Pizzeria, Hollywood Cinema, and Livy’s ice cream shop, which provide free meals, movie passes, ice cream and the Certificate of Appreciation.

Williams Retires from DRBA

Brian Williams has been making a difference in the Dan River Basin for 16 years; longer than any other staff person in the Dan River Basin Association’s (DRBA’s) history. He officially retired from his position as the Virginia Program Manager on December 31, 2024. Although he will not be a member of the DRBA staff, Williams will remain part of the DRBA family.

“DRBA is more than an organization, it’s a family, and it has been a major part of my life for the past 16 years,” said Williams. “I will continue to be committed to DRBA’s mission and goals and will help to ensure a smooth transition with minimal disruption of service to the organization and our programs and projects. I appreciate the incredible people I have worked side by side over the years including the staff, board and vol-



Brian Williams (Courtesy DRBA)

unteers and hope to be a helpful resource and a positive influence for DRBA as I pursue my retirement goals.”

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

OPINION

Trump Nominations! Confirmation Process Begins

With President-elect Trump’s inauguration scheduled for January 20, his Administration will look to hit the ground running and work to lead the country towards prosperity and peace.

Trump’s cabinet will consist of policymakers, elected officials and thought leaders leading key departments, such as the Department of Defense and Department of Energy.

Those nominated to lead these departments must first pass the Constitutional requirements of the appointments process, which mandate U.S. Senate confirmation.

Article II, Section 2, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution states that the president “shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme court, and all Officers of the United States.”

While Trump can nominate whomever he wants for any department, the nominees must be confirmed by a majority of U.S. Senators.

As you will recall from civics-government class, the U.S. House of Representatives has no role to play in confirmations of presidential appointments.

That said, Trump’s nominees are making the rounds on Capitol Hill before their confirmation hearings, which are slated to begin as soon as January 14 for some nominees.

January 14 is expected to be the date when Secretary of Defense-nominee Pete Hegseth appears before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

I had the pleasure of meeting Hegseth last year at an event in Blacksburg sponsored by former Delegate Nick Rush.

Hegseth, a former U.S. Army lieutenant and combat infantry officer in Iraq and Af-



Morgan Griffith

Representative

ghanistan, would be tasked with leading the Pentagon and the 1.3 million active-duty men and women in uniform.

Trump considers Hegseth a “tough, smart and a true believer in America First” to help “make America’s military great again.”

In a world where burgeoning conflicts, such as in the Middle East, Ukraine and the South China Sea, threaten the security of our troops and our foreign policy objectives, Hegseth will fill an important job.

Further, U.S. foreign policy must navigate and prevent such conflicts from spiraling out of control, which is why Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) is an excellent choice for Secretary of State, and my friend Congresswoman Elise Stefanik (R-NY) will do great as United Nations Ambassador.

Rubio is an experienced lawmaker who understands the threat that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Iran, etc. pose to American interests.

Rubio was Vice Chairman of the Senate’s Select Committee on Intelligence and sat on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

In his role, improving our relationship with Israel will be critical.

Rep. Stefanik has been a great ally of the Jewish State. Stefanik showed profound leadership in denouncing antisemitism on colleges campuses in the US.

Stefanik also traveled to Israel and delivered an address to members of the Knes-

set, the Israeli parliament.

Among other attributes, her leadership will showcase America’s commitment to support our friend and ally Israel as it battles terrorism and fights the growing instability that consumes the Middle East.

Other Trump cabinet nominees I served with in Congress include:

* Rep. Sean Duffy (nominated to be Secretary of Transportation)

* Rep. John Ratcliffe (nominated to lead the Central Intelligence Agency)

* Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (nominated to lead Department of National Intelligence)

* Rep. Doug Collins (nominated to lead Department of Veterans’ Affairs)

* Rep. Lee Zeldin (nominated to be Administrator for Environmental Protection Agency)

I am excited by the prospects of these talented and seasoned officials.

For the 119th Congress, I will chair the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment. We will look closely at the actions of the EPA and evaluate how we can help Zeldin in reducing the agency’s overreaching authority and burdensome regulations.

Chris Wright, Trump’s nominee to be the Secretary of Energy, will be another key figure that our Energy and Commerce Committee looks forward to working with.

Lowering energy costs and increasing domestic energy production top our to-do list as we work to make America energy independent.

Trump’s pick to lead the Department of Health and Human Services is Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Kennedy’s belief in “Make America Healthy Again” will direct attention to the obesity and chronic illness issues in the country.

I look forward to making constructive suggestions to Kennedy on how the U.S. can reform the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in order to “make America healthy again.”

While I don’t have a vote in the confirmation process as a Member of the House, my hope is that the Senate can confirm these nominees swiftly so we can immediately get started on “making America great again.”

Call the Abingdon office at (276) 525-1405, the Christiansburg office at (540) 381-5671, or email by visiting www.morgangriffith.house.gov with questions or comments.

Cruising at 23: How Commonwealth Boulevard Became a \$100 Anxiety Zone

Commonwealth Boulevard now gives me a high state of anxiety.

I must not be the only one, because now the traffic flows along part of that road at 18 or 19 miles an hour.

I guess I’m not the only one who got some of those \$100 tickets, huh?

Round about Christmas time I got in the mail not one but two envelopes from the City of Martinsville.

Uh-oh, that can’t be good. Official mail from governments usually means bad news: taxes, or you’re in trouble some kind of way.

A heat went up over my shoulders and the back of my neck and then prickled my face, which flushed as I looked at the paper which said things such as “SUMMONS” and “\$100” and had a picture of the back of my car.

I opened the other envelop. For a few minutes I wondered why they’d send me a duplicate of the bill.

Then, to my horror, I realized it was not a duplicate of the other ticket. It was a whole new ticket that looked exactly the same except for the date. So that makes a total of \$200.

The City is taking pictures of cars, measuring their speeds and sending out tickets. I had no idea that such a ticket would fall on me, but I got not one but two. What a shock to get two at once. If a policeman had pulled me over and given me one ticket, I’d learn my lesson the first time and it certainly would not cost me double.

But here’s the worst part. Those tickets were dated a few weeks back. This means they must send them in batches, and who knows how many other tickets had been assigned to my car that didn’t make the last mailing period and would arrive in the next week or two. I drive that way to and from town



Holly Kozelsky

every day.

From then on, when I drive into town, I steel myself: “Go really slow. Go really slow.”

The catch is, by golly, that chant will be running through my head all the way down Chatham Heights Road on the way to Commonwealth Boulevard, but by the time I get to Commonwealth Boulevard something entirely new is in my mind and I entirely forget about the crawling slowness!

Ain’t no telling now how much money the City has collected by slapping people with \$100, \$100, \$100, one right after the other, those ticket bills piling up before people realize it and arriving all at once in the mail, with a whole other batch to arrive in the next week or two, when a person could have just figured it out from a first one \$100 warning issued at the time.

At first it just panicked me to drive along Commonwealth Boulevard, and I’d totally change my route to avoid it – if my mind could stay on that plan to remember to do it before it was too late, and I’d find myself on Commonwealth just out of habit, panicked.

Now, though, I handle it differently. I just set my cruise control at 23 real early in my commute. It’s really weird to go along at 23, but, whatever.

By the time I reach the danger zone, I slow down to 18 or 19 miles an hour to keep pace with all those other people who have enriched The City of Martinsville’s coffers with their piles of \$100 payments as well.

Letter To The Editor

A second DUI charge

On the most recent edition of “What Does the Bible Say?” former city councilman, Chad Martin, called into the broadcast and insinuated that I was a homosexual. Martin said, “I’ve heard talk about you around town, Caleb. People say, ‘Have you noticed that you never see him with a woman?’” I asked Chad, “Do you not realize I’ve been married to the same woman for the past ten years?” I dismissed it and moved on with the conversation.

Chad Martin has gotten another D.U.I. I’m not happy about it. I didn’t laugh like Muttley the dog or grin like the Cheshire cat. I just shook my head. I hate it for Chad and his two sons.

Thankfully nobody was hurt, but how different this story might’ve been. Let’s not have a moment where we just kick Chad, but instead reflect on the effect all the bars, breweries, and general liquor stores are having on our community. When’s the last time you heard a sermon against alcohol? When’s the last time you heard a sermon at all?

Look, everyone’s going to hear about Chad even if I didn’t write this. I’m writing to say that I have no ill will against Chad Martin. I had disagreements with him over ideas, and he turned it into a personal attack against me. Just because he made it personal does not mean I have to take it personally.

I also wanted to say that Chad can turn his life around. Chad has feigned religion in the past, but Chad is not a Christian. Sitting in a church building does not make

one a Christian anymore than sitting in a garage makes one a car. “Who is a Christian then?” You’ll need to get your Bible out for this one...

A Christian is someone who not only believes Jesus is the Christ, but is His student (Matthew 11:29; 16:24) and has obeyed His command to be immersed in water (Luke 7:29-30, John 3:5, Acts 2:38, 41, and 47). A Christian then lives a transformed life separate from the former life of sin (Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:5-10). A Christian is someone who regularly worships God (John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:24-25).

What we have in the community today is A LOT of people saying “Oh, I believe in Jesus, yes.” However, their lifestyles convey another message: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). What was said to Peter would be said to many in our community: “thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matthew 16:23).

There will be many who see the news of Martin and say, “Tsk, ts.” I did not write this to beat up on Chad. Quite the opposite. I wanted to say I don’t enjoy his self-induced misfortune, and say to fellow citizens that there’s plenty of repenting to go around.

Chad has an open invitation to visit the church of Christ that meets at 823 Starling Avenue. You do too.

Caleb Robertson,
Martinsville

See more at
www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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GIVE US YOUR VIEW:

The Henry County Enterprise encourages letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns.

Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Henry County Enterprise reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length, content and style.

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

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OPINION

On overreacting

On the first weekend of January, I performed wedding ceremonies for six LGBTQ+ couples.

This requires a bit of backstory. About two days after the 2024 Presidential election, I was sitting on the back porch when I had an idea. I mentioned it to my girlfriend Lauren, and she thought it was a great idea. I've been an ordained wedding officiant since 2015, so I made a post on Facebook offering to perform free wedding ceremonies for LGBTQ+ couples prior to the inauguration, adding that Lauren had offered to make little wedding cakes for each of the happy couples.

I figured maybe three couples would reach out to me, at which point I'd drive out to their homes, say a few words, sign the paperwork, and move on. The next day I saw that the post had been shared more than 1,800 times and I was getting Facebook messages faster than I could respond to them. For a moment, I strongly considered the merits of having a panic attack and throwing up in the middle of Wal-Mart. Thankfully, Lauren volunteered to take over the organizational side of things since she enjoys event planning while I'd rather eat a live tarantula than organize an event.

Over the following two months, we worked with a host of wonderful volunteers and made the event happen. It took place at Ursula's Cafe in downtown Roanoke, and thanks to help from volunteer decorators, photographers, bakers, and others, it was a huge success.

The six couples who ended up tying the knot that weekend couldn't have been kinder, lovelier, or more gracious. By the end of the weekend, I wasn't sure I'd be able to fit my head through the door.

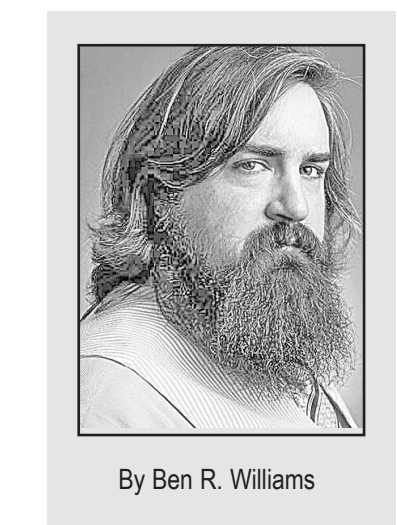
All of the couples had stories. One couple had been engaged for seven years and hadn't been able to afford an expensive traditional wedding, and they were worried they were going to miss their window; when they saw an offer of a free wedding before the Presidential inauguration, they knew it was the perfect opportunity.

Another woman told me that she and her fiancée had been completely unable to find a wedding officiant willing to perform a same-sex wedding. She even asked a friend of hers that she'd known for 11 years; he never replied.

But one thing that all couples seemed to share was a sense that they had to act fast. If they were going to get married, they needed to do it before President Donald Trump's second term entered full swing. More than a few resented that fact.

When my social media post offering the free weddings went viral, it attracted a slew of laugh reacts and a handful of negative comments. I expected that. What I didn't expect was the nature of the negative comments.

Every single one boiled down to the following point: Donald Trump



By Ben R. Williams

isn't coming after gay marriage, and you're overreacting if you think he is.

I'll give this argument partial credit. For his part, I genuinely don't think Donald Trump cares if same-sex couples get married.

However, a big chunk of his stacked Supreme Court just might.

In his concurring opinion written when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, Clarence Thomas wrote that "justices should reconsider all of this Court's substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*." *Obergefell v. Hodges* is the case that held that the 14th Amendment requires states to recognize same-sex marriages. Essentially, Thomas believes that if *Roe v. Wade* must be repealed because the 14th Amendment does not protect abortion rights, then the Court should reexamine every major case that hinges on the protections of the 14th Amendment.

On January 7th, just two days after the weddings took place, Rep. Heather Scott (R-Idaho) drafted legislation asking the Supreme Court to re-legalize bans on same-sex marriage in the U.S., putting the decision back in the hands of individual states.

That one probably won't go anywhere. But the next challenge might. Or the one after that. Or the one after that. And eventually, if the Supreme Court is tasked with deciding whether or not to overturn *Obergefell v. Hodges*, no one can say with certainty which direction the majority of justices will swing.

After all, it seemed impossible that *Roe v. Wade* would be repealed right up until the moment it happened.

There is a general sense shared by many that we are still operating under the old rules, that there are laws and codes and best practices that will never be overturned because they're somehow immutable. It's a pretty thought.

The only thing I know for certain is that the couples I married this month aren't overreacting because they're worried they had to act fast before their right to get married got revoked. That concern isn't crazy at all.

Crazy would be threatening to annex Canada.

Former city official charged Jan. 1

Chad Martin, a former vice mayor in Martinsville, was charged with driving while intoxicated in connection with a Jan. 1 incident, according to Henry General District Court records. That case is scheduled to be heard in March, records suggest.

A case for a similar charge in the City of Martinsville recently was heard, according to Martinsville General District Court records.

Martin, of Axton, was charged in

Martinsville with driving while intoxicated in connection with a May 20 incident. That case was finalized in Martinsville General District Court on Jan. 13, with a guilty finding.

Court records indicate the 60-day sentence was suspended; suspension of Operator's License for 12 months, an Ignition Interlock Restriction ordered for a restricted license, as well as fines and court costs totaling \$531, due by Sept. 17.

Judge delays ruling in Martinsville's lawsuit against Henry County PSA

After a three-day trial in Martinsville Circuit Court, Judge Carter Greer announced Wednesday that he would delay issuing a decision in the City of Martinsville's lawsuit against the Henry County Public Service Authority (PSA).

The lawsuit stems from a long-standing dispute over payments for the Smith River and Jones Creek interceptor lines, which became a point of contention following the

kickoff of the Smith River project in 2015. The case, filed in 2020, has been ongoing for several years.

The city is seeking approximately \$9 million in the suit. During the trial, 12 witnesses testified, with eight representing the city's case and four appearing on behalf of the PSA.

Judge Greer did not provide a timeline for his final ruling.

Congressional staff schedule local visits

Ninth District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith's staff will be available at locally on January 22:

- Henry County: 10 – 11:30 a.m., Henry County Administration Building, Summerlin Room - Board of Supervisors Meeting Chambers, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville.
- Patrick County: 12:30 – 2 p.m., Patrick County Administration Building, Conference Room, 106 Rucker Street, Stuart.

In the event of inclement weather (heavy snow, sleet, icy rain, etc.), traveling office hours may be rescheduled to avoid putting constituents at risk. If a county or city's schools are closed, then its office hours will be closed as well.

Call the Christiansburg Office at (540) 381-5671 or the Abingdon Office at (276) 525-1405 with any questions or to schedule an appointment time in the event of closure.

Student Briefs

Shenandoah University lists students who made the Fall 2024 Dean's List

Local students who earned a spot on the Dean's List at Shenandoah University include Jacob Gilbert, of Collinsville, and Fabiola Vazquez Becerra of Martinsville.

To qualify for the Dean's List, students must be enrolled full-time

Becerra makes Shenandoah University's President's List For Fall 2024

Fabiola Vazquez Becerra, of Martinsville, is one of 539 students named to the President's List at Shenandoah University for the Fall 2024 semester.

To qualify for this prestigious academic recognition, students must be enrolled full-time in baccalau-

reate degree programs and attain a semester GPA of 3.50 or higher. Dean's List students who achieve a semester GPA of 3.90 or higher also qualify for the university's President's List.

Hudler Named to Midway University's Fall 2024 Dean's List

Jessica Hudler, of Axton, has been named to the Dean's List for the 2024 Fall Semester at Midway University.

To be named to the list, a student

Reter Named to SNHU Dean's List

Jeremy Reter of Collinsville has been named to Southern New Hampshire University's Fall 2024 Dean's List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a mini-

Three named to SNHU's Fall 2024 President's List

Parthenia Hall, of Martinsville; Simone Skinkiss, of Bassett and Erika Deal, also of Bassett, were named to the Fall 2024 President's List at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). The fall terms run from September to December.

Full-time undergraduate stu-

dents must be classified full-time and obtain a 3.60 grade point average for the semester. There were 424 students who made the Dean's List.

mum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 for the reporting term are named to the Dean's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

dents who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the President's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

House named to new role as Vice President, Community Investments

The Harvest Foundation has promoted DeWitt House to the newly created position of Vice President, Community Investments.

Since joining The Harvest Foundation's staff in 2014 as a program officer and moving to senior program officer in 2019, House has demonstrated exceptional leadership, a commitment to community development, and a passion for creating opportunities that empower all residents of Martinsville and Henry County.

The creation of this new position marks a significant milestone in The Harvest Foundation's ongoing mission to serve as a catalyst, advocate, and investor in creating a welcoming community where everyone thrives. In his new role, House will continue to lead innovative initiatives and build strong partnerships, ensuring The Harvest Foundation's work remains impactful and aligned with community needs.

"DeWitt has been instrumental in bringing transformative programs to life," said Kate Keller, president of The Harvest Foundation. "His vision and dedication to upward mobility within our community have strengthened the foundation's commitment to equity in all that we do, working toward a community of positive change and sustainability for all Martinsville and Henry County residents."

House's accomplishments include spearheading the development of the Pass GO program, providing student loan forgiveness to support upward mobility for residents, and founding the Harvest Youth Board, a dynamic group of high school students dedicated to addressing youth needs in Martinsville and Henry



DeWitt House

County. House played a key role for local graduates in launching the SEED Fund, a program that offers 2.5 years of college at no cost to students and their families at Patrick & Henry Community College.

House also supported transformative community projects like the planned state-of-the-art YMCA and the creation of the Five Points Neighborhood in the Westend community, an area in Martinsville historically impacted by disinvestment. This housing development boasts 10 new construction homes, nearly fully occupied by owners.

"I'm deeply honored to step into this new role and continue working alongside our incredible team and community partners," said House. "Together, we will strive to ensure that everyone in Martinsville and Henry County has the resources and opportunities they need to reach their highest potential."

For more information about The Harvest Foundation and its programs, visit theharvestfoundation.org.

CLASSIFIED

PUBLISHER'S NOTICE

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

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100 Years Ago This Month: Historical events from January 1925

The month of January has been home to many historical events over the years. Here's a look at some that helped to shape the world in January 1925.

- Christiania, the capital city of Norway, is renamed "Oslo" on January 1.
- Violence plagues Italy on January 2 as part of the fallout of Benito Mussolini's crackdown on opposition newspapers. Though King Victor Emmanuel III refuses to grant Mussolini the dictatorial powers the latter requested, he grants the Prime Minister tacit permission to respond to the violence how he sees fit.
- Nellie Tayloe Ross is inaugurated as the Governor of Wyoming on January 5, becoming the first woman elected to a gubernatorial office in United States history.
- Bhanu-pratap Deo is proclaimed as the new Raja of the princely state of Kanker within British India on January 8. The 3-year-old would rule until 1947, when the princely states are abolished as India gains its independence.
- The British submarine HMS L24 sinks in the English channel on January 10. The submarine had collided with the Royal Navy battleship HMS Resolution, killing all 43 men aboard the L24.
- Al Capone survives an assassination attempt made by the North Side Gang on January 12 in Chicago. Capone was conducting business inside a State Street restaurant when the rival gang riddled his car with bullets, prompting the mobster to order a bulletproof Cadillac.
- Joseph Stalin fires Leon Trotsky as Commissar for Military and Navy Affairs on January 15. A prominent critic of Stalin, Trotsky is eventually murdered at his home in Mexico City by a Stalinist agent in 1940.
- Huddie Ledbetter, better known as "Lead Belly," is granted a full pardon by Texas governor Pat Morris Neff on January 16. The blues musician had served seven years of his prison sentence after being found guilty of killing a relative over a fight for a woman.
- "The Gentleman Bandit" Gerald Chapman is arrested in Muncie, Indiana on January 18. Chapman is apprehended thanks in part to informant Ben Hance, who is murdered in August in a killing that is believed to have been per-

formed as retaliation for Chapman's incarceration.

- Roy Olmstead, a lieutenant in the Seattle Police Department, is indicted by a federal grand jury on January 19. Olmstead is accused of smuggling alcohol into the country from Canada in violation of the Volstead Act.
- Curtis Welch, the only doctor in Nome, Alaska, sends an urgent message via radio telegram on January 22. The message alerts all major Alaskan towns of an impending outbreak of diphtheria, while a second message sent to the U.S. Public Health Service in Washington, D.C. highlights the desperate need for antitoxin. Roughly 300,000 units of antitoxin are discovered in Anchorage on January 26, temporarily containing the epidemic.
- Paul Newman is born in Shaker Heights, Ohio, on January 26. The son of Theresa Garth and sporting goods store owner Arthur Sigmund Newman, Sr., the younger Newman would grow up to become one of the world's most recognizable movie stars and a devoted philanthropist.
- A riot breaks out in Berlin on January 27. Numerous injuries are reported as monarchists, communists and republicans clash during demonstrations held on the birthday of ex-kaiser Wilhelm II.
- On January 28, nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court Harlan Fiske Stone testifies before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee. Stone is eventually confirmed by a vote of 71 to 6.
- After nearly a year of fighting and 14,000 deaths, the Khost rebellion against King Amanullah Khan is ended in Afghanistan on January 30. The rebellion is ultimately unsuccessful, but many of the king's reforms are delayed until 1928.



LEGAL

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE - COUNTY OF HENRY, VA PROPOSED TRANSFER OF REAL ESTATE

Notice is hereby given pursuant to §15.2-1800, Code of Virginia, that the Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct a public hearing during its regular meeting on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving comments on the proposed transfer of real property known as the old Henry County School Bus Garage, located at 119 Coffman Drive, Collinsville, VA.

LEGAL

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE COUNTY OF HENRY, VA

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO FY25 BUDGET

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 15.2-2507, Code of Virginia, that the Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct a public hearing during its regular meeting on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving comments on the proposed amendment to the Henry County FY2024-25 Budget as necessary to appropriate funds of \$2,660,000 received from the 1% sales tax fund designated for new construction and renovation of schools. The School Board has indicated the funds will be used to replace the roof at Laurel Park Middle School. The appropriation exceeds 1% of the total County budget for FY2024-25. For more information, contact the County Administrator's Office at 276-634-4601.

LEGAL

COUNTY OF HENRY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a public hearing has been scheduled for **January 29, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd., Collinsville, Virginia. The purpose of this public hearing is to receive citizen input into the possible issuance of a Special Use Permit for the following case:

Case S-25-01 Kelly K. Boyd

A request for a Special Use Permit has been received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the establishment of a campground facility to accommodate up to 3 sites. The property is approximately 3.2-acres, located between 772 Axton Rd and 780 Axton Rd in the Iriswood District, is zoned Agricultural District A-1, as shown on Tax Map 55.6/145C.

The application for this request may be viewed in the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.
Lee H. Clark, AICP
Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection

LEGAL

COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, the Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct a public hearing on the following application on **January 28, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia.

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

Case R-25-01 Robert Cessna

The property is located at 14748 A.L. Philpott Hwy, in the Housepasture District. The property is shown on Tax Map 51.1/18. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of 2.34-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant wishes to use the property for agricultural purposes.

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

Lee H. Clark, AICP
Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection



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Crossing the Lines

News snippets from outside the city/county lines ...

Walker, Harrell to lead school board



Shannon Harrell, of the Blue Ridge District (left), and Amy Walker, of the Mayo River District (right), will serve as the vice-chairman and chairman of the Patrick County School Board.

The Patrick County School Board selected its chairman and vice-chairman for the upcoming year during its Thursday, January 9 meeting.

Amy Walker, of the Mayo River District, was chosen to serve as chairman and Shannon Harrell, of the Blue Ridge District, was elected as vice-chairman.

Sara Leigh Collins was reelected to serve as board clerk, and Doree Reeves was appointed as the board's deputy clerk.

The board also approved its special committee assignments for the year. Walker will serve on the Employee Insurance, Parent Advi-

sory, and Budget committees, and Harrell will be on the Gifted and Building Committees. The pair will also serve on the liaison committee.

Rob Martin, of the Dan River District, will be on the School Health Advisory Committee and the Division Crisis Team. Walter Scott, of the Smith River District, will serve on the Career & Technical Education (CTE) Advisory and Building Committees.

Lester Harrell, of the Peters Creek District, will be on the Special Education (SPED) Advisory, Transportation, and Park and Recreation committees.

Recent Storm Brings Snow to the Area

A cold front that moved through the area early this week brought colder temperatures and gusty winds, setting the stage for another chance of precipitation this weekend, primarily rain.

Last week, the second winter storm of the year delivered sev-

eral inches of snow to the county. The snowfall created picturesque scenes, including the snow-covered beach at Fairystone State Park and the LOVE sign at the local library branch, photographed Friday afternoon as the flakes began to fall.

(Photos by Pat Delaney)



Power outage inspires resident-led food initiative

A desire to help neighbors during weather-related power outages inspired Brittany Thompson, a Critz-area resident, to create 'The Helping Hive of Patrick County VA' Facebook page. The initiative aims to provide meals to local residents struggling during outages.

When the entire county lost power early last week, Thompson said her neighborhood was among the last to have service restored.

"I know for us, we really weren't prepared for this because we really didn't think it was going to hit us," she said. "Then by the time we realized that it was, you know, we're not going to rush out and buy a generator and do this, that, and the third."

Instead, Thompson said she packed everything down in her deep freezer and covered it with ice to prevent thawing. She and her family hunkered down and did what they could. As her family weathered the outage, she began to think about her neighbors, many of whom are elderly.

"I just kind of got to thinking a lot of my neighbors and stuff - they weren't prepared for this either. I live in a neighborhood that has a lot of elderly people. So, I made a batch of soup, and I went and fed them.

"It was just one of those things where I was like, 'well even if they have power back,



The Helping Hive of Patrick County VA

people's groceries could have got ruined.' Even if they didn't, some people just want a hot meal. The power's been out, they don't feel like cooking, they've got to clean out their fridge, do whatever," she said.

Thompson said she then decided to make pots of taco soup and offered some to county residents on Facebook. Within an hour, Thompson said she had made three stockpots of soup. She estimates she gave soup to about a dozen households in her neighborhood, many of which had multiple residents.

"It's just one of those things—we don't have a lot ourselves, but it doesn't cost much to be kind. And I don't think that's something people do a lot nowadays," she said.

Before the second round of snow last week, Thompson received numerous messages offering donations of grocer-

ies, money, and time to help her make and deliver soup and other food to those in need.

"I'm not comfortable taking any money, so I'm not taking any monetary donations. I'm asking if people want to donate, that they buy items themselves and we arrange pick-up, drop-off, meet up. However they want to do it," Thompson said.

Within 24 hours, volunteers from across Patrick County, including Ararat, Stuart, Patrick Springs, and Critz, offered to cook and deliver meals. Some with four-wheel-drive vehicles volunteered to brave difficult conditions to deliver food.

Although the power remained on during the second round of snow last week, volunteers still distributed hot meals to those in need. Thompson herself delivered two six-quart pots of soup to four households with multiple residents.

Broadband, transparency among goals for new year

Members of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors shared their priorities for the coming year, outlining a vision focused on better budgeting, access to healthcare, and administrative operations.

Doug Perry, of the Smith River District, said he wants the county to continue to build on and improve its already existing organizations and operational side.

"I think that's the key to everything. We've come a long way, Mrs. Simms (County Administrator Beth) has done a great job building us operationally and developing organizationally, so we just need to continue to build and strengthen our operations," he said.

If there aren't adequate operations, Perry believes nothing will fall in place.

"From the administration piece to the department heads, the way things are ran, the way things are operated. Without that operational piece, things don't flow," Perry said.

As part of that operational piece, Perry said the county intends on looking at building a building for Station 8, its paid Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department.

"I've asked our Facilities Manager (Mike McGuinness) to see if he can get us some numbers as to what that's going to cost, just (to) have something put together," he said.

If the board doesn't have an estimated dollar figure for the project, Perry said it's not going to be put in the budget. "If it doesn't get put in the budget it's not going to happen. If we can get just an educated guess what it's going to cost us then we have something put into the budget and get that ball rolling," he said.

Based on his last conversation with McGuinness, "I think he's got a couple solid plans put together that he'll address that we can put into the budget or work into the budget. And again, that's part of that whole operations piece that's just on the EMS side," Perry said.

An upcoming board retreat will be when the board "put heads together and develop that operations piece" and determine its overall priorities for the year, he said.

The date for the board retreat had yet to be set as of the publication of this article.

To read more about these and other stories, check out The Enterprise, www.theenterprise.net.



MUFASA
THE LION KING
DECEMBER 19

1-3-5-7-9PM



2
MOANA

1-3-5-7-9PM



KRAVEN
THE HUNTER

1-4-7-9:15PM



KEANU REEVES
SONIC 3
THE MOVIE

1-3-5-7-9PM



RED ONE

1-4-7-9:15

\$5 tickets

HOLLYWOOD CINEMA beside WALMART
Martinsville 278-858-3458

Hodges is DRBA’s new Director of Environmental Education

The Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) has appointed Krista Hodges as the new Director of Environmental Education. Hodges served as the Education Outreach Manager for DRBA for the last nine years. Before that, she was the Education Outreach Coordinator for four years.

“We are thrilled to name Krista Hodges as DRBA’s first Director of Environmental Education. Krista has a deep understanding of environmental education and unparalleled determination and proven success in providing education programs to thousands of youth in the Dan River basin. Combine all of that with her dedication to the natural world and her commitment to our organization’s mission and she is the perfect choice for this new position,” said Tiffany Haworth, executive director of the Dan River Basin Association.

DRBA’s menu of environmental education programs and requests to provide them to schools have grown exponentially since Hodges started in 2011. The menu started with the award-winning Trout in the Classroom (TIC) in 2008 started by Dr. David Jones of Jones & DeShon Orthodontics. The TIC program now includes nearly a dozen other offerings including Green Schoolyards, Monarch Waystations, Streamside Trees in the Classroom, Forest School, Epic River Experiences, and many other classroom presentations and programs because of Hodges energy and hard work.

“I am incredibly honored to serve as the Director of Environmental Education, and to lead DRBA’s education programs into the future,” said Hodges. “The Dan River Basin has so many amazing watershed-based learning experiences to offer teachers, that compliment what the teachers are doing in the classroom, and I look forward to making them available to all youth in the basin.”

A project that was especially meaningful to Hodges was the development of the DRBA Volunteer Environmental Educators program in 2023. Through this project and the help of DRBA’s education staff, DRBA has expanded the reach of education programs, and plans to further those efforts



Krista Hodges standing alongside the Dan River in Danville. (Photo by DRBA)

to the far corners of the Dan River basin, that were not previously reached consistently. Because of Hodges, today DRBA has two dozen dedicated and knowledgeable trained volunteers that will provide the vehicle to help make that goal happen.

Hodges has a bachelor’s degree in environmental studies with a focus in Ecology and a minor in English/Literature from Averett University. She also has a certificate in Non-Profit Management from Duke University and a certificate in Natural Resources Leadership from Virginia Tech and University of Virginia. Hodges was awarded the RISE Award from the VA Association of Science Teachers in 2024 and the Thomas Jefferson Medal for Outstanding Contributions to Natural Science Education Award in 2022 from the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

The mission of the Dan River Basin Association is to promote and protect the natural and cultural resources of the Dan River Basin through education, recreation, and stewardship. DRBA works to fulfill that mission by building river accesses and trails, educating people of all ages about protecting our natural resources, and protecting our water resources through water quality monitoring, cleanups and master planning. The Dan River basin is 3,300 square miles including sixteen counties throughout Virginia and North Carolina.

Poetry talk, African American Read-in set to celebrate Black History Month



Piedmont Arts will host a talk by poet TJ Anderson III and an African American Read-in and Family Day in celebration of Black History Month in February.

Anderson, a poet and scholar from Roanoke, Va., will present “Now You See Me,” a talk about his journey as a writer, and share readings from his award-winning poetry, Thursday, Feb. 6 at Piedmont Arts. A reception will be held at 6:30 p.m. The talk will begin at 7 p.m.

Anderson is a professor of English at Hollins University. His research focuses on jazz poetry, African American literature, and the work of Aimé Césaire. He was a Fulbright Scholar at Cairo University where he conducted research on the influence of jazz on contemporary Egyptian music. He is the author of six books and the acclaimed spoken word album “Blood Octave.”

This event is free and open to the public. Donations are encouraged. Please RSVP attendance at (276) 632-3221 or PiedmontArts.org.

The African American Read-in and Family Day will take place from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 8 at Piedmont Arts. Lyrical artist Taye the Truth and story-



teller Fred Motley will perform. Visitors can also view books on loan from the collection of Joyce and Kenneth Staples. A craft for kids and snacks will be available. This event is admission free. All ages are welcome.

This event is held in conjunction with the National African American Read-in, a groundbreaking effort to encourage communities to read together, centering on African American books and authors. The initiative was established in 1990 by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English to make literacy a significant part of Black History Month. It has reached more than six million participants around the world.

The African American Read-in and Family Day is sponsored by Carter Bank, Kappa Delta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Martinsville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

For more information on exhibits and events, visit PiedmontArts.org.



Bestway Sandwiches Inc. Recalls Frozen Products Due To Possible Contamination

Bestway Sandwiches Inc., a Valencia, Calif. establishment, is recalling approximately 24,870 pounds of frozen chicken and cheese taquito products that may be contaminated with foreign material, specifically metal, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announced today.

The frozen chicken and cheese taquito items were produced on July 3, 2024, and September 25, 2024. The following product, shipped to select ALDI grocery stores nationwide, is subject to recall:

- 20-oz. carton packages containing “CASA MAMITA CHICKEN & CHEESE TAQUITOS,” with Best By Dates 07/03/25 and 09/25/25 on the bottom panel.

The product bears establishment number “EST. P-40327” on the carton package.

The problem was discovered after the firm notified FSIS that it received a consumer complaint reporting that a piece of metal was found in the frozen chicken and cheese taquito product. Another consumer reported to FSIS to have a dental injury from the product.

There have been no additional reports of injury or illness due to consumption of this product. Any-

one concerned about an injury or illness should contact a healthcare provider.

The FSIS is concerned that some product may be in consumers’ freezers. Consumers who have purchased these products are urged not to consume them. These products should be thrown away or returned to the place of purchase.

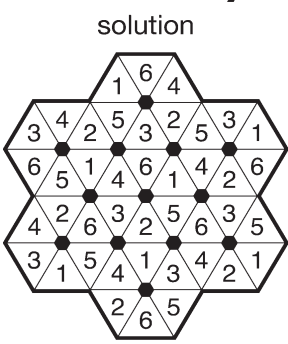
The FSIS routinely conducts recall effectiveness checks to verify recalling firms notify their customers of the recall and that steps are taken to make certain that the product is no longer available to consumers. When available, the retail distribution list(s) will be posted on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

Consumers with questions about the recall can contact Bestway Foods Co. QA Department at (818) 361-1800 EXT.110. Those with food safety questions can call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 888-MPHotline (888-674-6854) or send a question via email to MPHotline@usda.gov. For consumers that need to report a problem with a meat, poultry, or egg product, the online Electronic Consumer Complaint Monitoring System can be accessed 24 hours a day at <https://foodcomplaint.fsis.usda.gov/eCCF/>.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Puzzle Answers!

SNOWFLAKES



GENIES	OMEGA	DATABASE
ONETWO	CAMOS	EDONEILL
STUDENT	UNION	BEETROOT
OER	OLIN	AMO
ELMO		
FRATERNAL	ORGANIZATION	
TOLUCA	RARE	LADEN
TOIL	ACTING	GROUP
AWE	SMAUG	EER
LOOSE		
MERCHANT	GUILD	FREEZER
IDAHO	AGAR	VIA
ESP		
ETHICS	SCOMMITTEE	
TUB	INK	AEON
SLYER		
BROWSES	HUMANESOCIETY	
ADREP	MERLASIK	ACE
RUGBY	LEAGUE	PAIN
REIKI	DIEM	PRAVDA
HOMEOWNERS	ASSOCIATION	
ELON	SAT	ITTO
SUI		
EDITMENU	EIGHT	OFCLUBS
DIRECTOR	ETHEL	RESALE
SEARCHME	NOTRE	OODLES

SCRAMBLERS

solution
1. Sublime 2. Regard;
3. Pirate; 4. Thin

Today’s Word
BEDTIME

FEAR KN&T

answer

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Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

Sports Schedule				
The following are the dates and times of local high school teams and their games for the week of January 20-25:				
1/20	1pm Girls Basketball St. Margaret's at Carlisle		5:30p Wrestling Martinsville at George Washington	5pm Swim & Dive Magna Vista - Meet (at Martinsville YMCA)
	3pm Boys Basketball Martinsville vs Rockingham County (at Reidsville HS)	1/23	6pm Wrestling Magna Vista at Tunstall	7pm Girls Basketball Bassett at George Washington
1/21	5:30p Boys Basketball Blue Ridge at Carlisle		7pm Girls Basketball Dan River at Bassett	7pm Girls Basketball Mecklenburg County at Martinsville
	7pm Girls Basketball Halifax County at Magna Vista		7pm Boys Basketball Bassett at Dan River	7pm Boys Basketball George Washington at Bassett
	7pm Girls Basketball Tunstall at Martinsville		6pm Girls Basketball Virginia Episcopal at Carlisle	7pm Boys Basketball Floyd County at Magna Vista
	7pm Boys Basketball Magna Vista at Halifax County		7pm Girls Basketball Magna Vista at Chatham	3:30p Indoor Track Bassett - Meet at Roanoke College
	7pm Boys Basketball Martinsville at Tunstall	1/24	7pm Boys Basketball Chatham at Magna Vista	
1/22	5pm Wrestling Bassett at Tunstall		7pm Boys Basketball Martinsville at Mecklenburg County	
			7:30p Boys Basketball C.H Friend at Carlisle	
			5pm Swim & Dive Bassett - Meet (at Martinsville YMCA)	

Two local projects to receive commission funds



The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission held its first scheduled meeting of the year on January 7, and approved 27 funding requests, including two local projects, to support a variety of organizations and initiatives across Southern and Southwest Virginia.

Funded projects include investments in energy innovation, workforce training programs across Southern and Southwest Virginia, agriculture, tourism, site development and more. These awards are part of the commission's 25 years of work helping to rebuild the economies of Southern and Southwest Virginia.

Locally, the commission awarded funds to:

A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership d.b.a. GENEDGE Alliance E-3 Assessment for Industrial Training Assessment Center (ITAC) Implementation Grant Qualification Pilot Program - \$49,250 Grant.

The industrial sector consumes approximately 35% of U.S. energy, with manufacturing accounting for approximately 76% of that total. Rising energy costs and growing regulatory demands challenge small and medium-sized manufacturers (SMMs), particularly in Virginia's Tobacco Region.

GENEDGE, approved as an ITAC-equivalent by the U.S. Department of Energy, proposes a pilot project funded by the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (TRRC) to help three (3) SMMs reduce energy costs, improve efficiency, and achieve sustainability goals through capital projects and energy utilization investment. The project will provide each participating manufacturer E-3 assessments and grant application support for DOE's ITAC Implementation Program.

This initiative will enhance manufacturers' competitiveness and promote decarbonization by enabling access to applications for up to \$300,000 in match grant funding per identified energy efficiency project. Additionally, a market study is planned to identify high energy use manufacturing across the Southern portion of the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commissions service area for potential expansion of this pilot project and to identify potential participants in future TRRC Energy Ingenuity program proposals.

Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation P&HCC Building Trades Expansion: Electrician Training - \$129,527 Grant P&HCC has experienced great growth in both employer demand and enrollment in building trades programming in the last two years, and is working on planned expansions of multiple building trades training programs. P&HCC is seeking

funding to bring training to students with barriers that prevent or make it difficult to travel to the college's main campus. P&HCC requests funding for equipment needed to offer expanded electrician training. This equipment will be housed in an existing mobile trailer and will be used at P&HCC's Patrick County site, The Franklin Center, and to serve the Henry County Adult Detention Center, in conjunction with classroom space at each location. Students participating in training in the mobile lab can earn up to 11 industry recognized certifications.

The commission also elected new officers for the year. Del. Will Morefield will serve as chairman and Sen. Lashreese Aird will serve as vice-chairman.

"It is an honor to be named chairman of the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission," Morefield said. "I have served on the commission for a number of years and during that time I have seen the impact the commission has had on Southern and Southwest Virginia. From attracting new businesses and creating good paying jobs to supporting our farmers and helping to revitalize our downtowns, the commission has played a key role in the success we see across the footprint today. I am ready to get to work with all of my colleagues on the commission to ensure that success continues."

Aird said, "The commission's ability to be flexible and innovate to meet the needs of our communities is, in my opinion, one of its strongest assets. As vice-chair I want to ensure that the commission continues to innovate as it has over the last 25 years, and especially recently with our various new programs and partnerships. Southern and Southwest Virginia are growing and changing but are still facing challenges. The commission can help them meet those challenges and I look forward to doing my part to make that happen."

The commission also welcomed three new members:

H. Wayne Carter III of Mecklenburg County, Executive Director, Southside Regional Public Service Authority;

The Honorable Sandra Frederick of Abingdon, Associate Professor of Education, Emory & Henry University; member, Washington County School Board, Madison District;

Hampton Wilkins of Danville, Owner and President, Wilkins & Co. Realty, Inc.; Owner and President, Wilkins General Contractor.

Tobacco Commission Executive Director, Hon. James E. Campos congratulated Morefield, Aird and the new members. "I look forward to working with them over the course of the year ahead to continue getting results for Southern and Southwest Virginia."

Warner, Kaine among sponsors of bill to lower healthcare costs

U.S. Sens. Mark R. Warner, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, and Tim Kaine, a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee) joined a group of Senate colleagues in reintroducing the Health Care Affordability Act, legislation to lower health care costs for millions of Americans and make permanent the current enhanced premium tax credits (PTCs) for Health Insurance Marketplace coverage.

The PTCs were created in the Affordable Care Act and previously enhanced under the American Rescue Plan Act and the Inflation Reduction Act but are set to expire at the end of this year, increasing health insurance costs for over 20 million Americans. The Health Care Affordability Act would make the enhanced PTCs permanent, ensuring that these Americans don't face sud-

den cost increases or leave almost 3.8 million Americans each year without coverage at all. Without this extension, out-of-pocket premium payments across the Commonwealth are projected to increase as much as 33%, according to the Virginia State Corporation Commission.

"For years, the ACA premium tax credits have lowered health care costs and increased access to insurance for Virginians and their families," said Warner, D-Alexandria, and Kaine, D-Richmond. "And through the American Rescue Plan Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, we further lowered costs for American families. But without action, these enhanced tax credits will expire. We are proud to introduce this legislation that will ensure more than 20 million Americans don't face unfair cost increases at the end of the year."



Stacey Leon Moss



Zanthus Gerando Hairston

Two Arrested After Shooting Incident on Fellowship Drive

The Henry County Sheriff's Office responded to a report of shots fired into a vehicle on Fellowship Drive around 4 p.m. on Jan. 8. Deputies arriving at the scene discovered an individual with a non-life-threatening gunshot wound to the hand.

Investigators identified the alleged shooter as Stacey Leon Moss, 57, of 520 Fellowship Drive. According to authorities, Moss retreated into his residence following the incident and refused to exit when law enforcement arrived. After a period of negotiation, Moss surrendered peacefully and was taken into custody without incident.

While on the scene, deputies also apprehended a second person, Zanthus Gerando Hairston, 46, of 468 Fellowship Drive, who was wanted on unrelated charges.

After evidence related to the shooting was collected at the scene,

the following charges were issued:

Moss has been charged with two counts shooting into an occupied motor vehicle; one count each malicious wounding, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, reckless handling of a firearm, and discharge a firearm in a public place.

Hairston has been charged with probation violation.

Both are being held at the Henry County Adult Detention Center without bond.

The Henry County Sheriff's Office is asking anyone with additional information about this incident to contact them at 276-638-8751 or through the CrimeStoppers Program at 276-63-CRIME (276-632-7463). CrimeStoppers offers rewards of up to \$2,500 for information related to criminal activity.

Help sought in cold case investigation

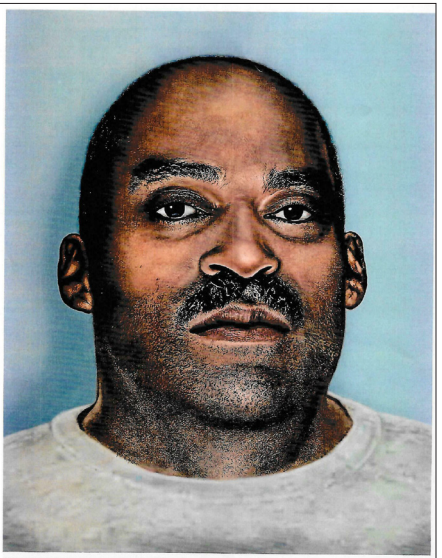
The Henry County Sheriff's Office is again turning to the public for help with a cold case.

On December 5, 2020, authorities found the remains of a deceased man on John Baker Road in the Fieldale community. The man suffered an apparent gunshot wound and his death is being investigated as a homicide.

At this time, the man's identity still is unknown, authorities said. There was no identifying information located on the man, and efforts by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, including DNA analysis and other identification methods, have been unsuccessful.

A nationwide inquiry, also an attempt to identify the man, did not produce any positive results, and now, authorities are reaching out to the community for assistance. Your assistance could prove critical in bringing clarity to this case and providing closure for the deceased individual's loved ones.

If you have any information that could help identify this individual or provide further details about this



case, please call the Henry County Sheriff's Office at 276-638-8751 or submit an anonymous tip through CrimeStoppers at 276-63-CRIME (276-632-7463). The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards of up to \$2,500 for information related to a crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information determine the amount of reward paid.

Social Media Advertisement Scams

Over one-third of U.S. adults who have bought something through an ad on their social media feed report being defrauded, according to a new AARP survey. Don't let scammers advertise their way into your wallet this new year; here are three tips to stay ahead of social media shopping scams.

Don't click on the ad. If the ad appears to be from a known retailer, type the address into your browser or use the retailer's app. Scammers can impersonate legitimate retailers, and clicking on the ad could bring you to a copycat site.

Read reviews and research. If the ad is from a retailer you're

unfamiliar with, verify the site's legitimacy. Research the company and check for complaints with organizations like the Better Business Bureau.

Check the product quality. Be wary of bait-and-switch scams where you receive a product inferior to what was advertised (or you receive nothing at all). If this happens, you can contact your credit card company to dispute the charge.

Report scams to local law enforcement. For help from AARP, call 877-908-3360 or visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork.

Donut World Brings Fresh, Sweet Treats to Collinsville



Donut World offers a delicious new menu of sweets and treats.



By Jessica Dillon
Donut World, a new shop offering coffee, donuts, and pastries, has quickly established itself as a local favorite. Located near the popular Cocoa Trails, the shop opened its doors on Jan. 3 and sold out of its entire stock of donuts before closing on its first day.
The idea for Donut World stemmed from the owners’ realization that the area lacked a dedicated donut shop. The shop’s

offerings are made fresh daily and sold at affordable prices, providing a mix of traditional favorites and indulgent treats.
In addition to donuts, the menu includes apple fritters, bear claws, and cinnamon rolls. Donuts are available individually or in half-dozen and dozen sizes. A cozy seating area is also available for customers who wish to enjoy their treats on-site.
Since opening, the shop has seen steady traffic, with many



items selling out quickly. Visitors have shared positive reviews on social media, praising the variety and quality of the offerings.

Donut World is open daily from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., or until sold out, and is located at 3412 Virginia Ave., Collinsville.

AARP Virginia Now Accepting Grant Applications

AARP Virginia invites local eligible non-profit organizations and governments across the country to apply for the 2025 AARP Community Challenge grant program, now through March 5, 2025, at 5 p.m. Eastern. AARP Community Challenge grants fund quick-action projects that help communities become more livable by improving public places, transportation, housing, digital connections, and more. Now in its ninth year, the program is part of AARP’s nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods and rural areas to become great places to live for all residents, especially those age 50 and older.
“The Community Challenge is a critical part of how AARP Virginia works with local residents, advocates and policymakers to make our communities better

places to live for people of all ages, especially Virginians 50 and older,” said AARP Virginia State Director Jim Dau.
This year, the AARP Community Challenge is accepting applications across three different grant opportunities. All projects must be consistent with AARP’s mission to serve the needs of people 50 and older along with other eligibility criteria.
Capacity-building micro-grants are paired with additional resources, such as one-on-one coaching from national nonprofit organizations, webinars, cohort learning opportunities and more for improving walkability, bikeability; implementing safe, accessible home modifications; and disaster preparedness training.
Demonstration grants fund projects that encourage replication of exemplary local efforts. This year’s focus is on improving pedestrian safety with fund-

ing support from Toyota Motor North America; expanding high-speed internet access and adoption with funding support from Microsoft; reconnecting communities divided by infrastructure; and implementing housing choice design competitions.
Flagship grants support projects that improve public places; transportation; housing; digital connections; and community resilience.
“AARP is committed to creating communities where people of all ages and abilities can thrive,” said Nancy LeaMond, AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer. “The Community Challenge helps cities, towns and counties get things started with small improvements that can kick-start meaningful changes that improve people’s lives and strengthens the places they call home.”
Since 2017, AARP has invested \$20.1 million toward 1,700 projects – including 36 in Virginia – nonprofit organizations, and government entities across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin

Islands through the Community Challenge. The program aims to provide support to all community types, including rural, suburban and urban communities with a special focus on the needs of those 50 and older.
AARP Virginia works in collaboration with communities across the state, bringing people together, and providing resources and expertise to help make Virginia’s counties, towns and cities great places to live for people of all ages.
The Community Challenge is open to eligible 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(6) nonprofit organizations and government entities. Other types of organizations are considered on a case-by-case basis. Grants can range from several hundred dollars for small, short-term activities to tens of thousands for larger projects.
The application deadline is 5 p.m. Eastern, March 5, 2025. All projects must be completed by December 15, 2025. To submit an application and view past grantees, visit www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge.

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RUTH D.
JAN. 8, 1929
AUG. 22, 2010

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Luna Moth Tattoo Studio, MHC Warming Center Join Forces to Raise Funds

By Jessica Dillon

Luna Moth Tattoo Studio teamed up with the MHC Warming Center for a fundraiser that brought together artistry and community support. On December 28, tattoo artists Tony Davis and James Anderson offered flash tattoos at a discounted rate of \$40, raising more than \$1,000 to benefit the Warming Center, which provides shelter for unhoused individuals in the community.

Ariel Johnson, director of the Warming Center, credited Davis for initiating the idea. “I have friends who do similar stuff in Richmond, so we came up with the idea where we could do a free tattoo day,” said Johnson. Davis decided to attach a modest price tag to the tattoos to ensure the effort would generate funds for the shelter.

The partnership was fueled by Davis and Johnson’s long-standing friendship. Anderson joined the initiative, donating his time and talent to the day-long event. Both Davis and Anderson are seasoned tattoo artists, known for their skill and deep ties to the community.

Davis, who has previously volunteered at the Warming Center, expressed his enthusiasm for the cause. “There’s a lot of displaced individuals in town that come by here from time to time just to say hey,” he said. Luna Moth Tattoo Studio, located above Virginia Harm Reduction—a group that also aids unhoused individuals—has become a hub for community-focused efforts.

Johnson shared that the Warming Center has already seen a significant increase in guests this winter. “We have paid staff this year, which is great—they’re helping us with overnight,” she said. “As of last night, we’ve had 85 guests.” Guests range from children as young as 3 years old to elders in their 80s.

Johnson attributed the rise in visitors to a lack of affordable housing in the area, which has displaced many individuals and families.

Davis described the event as “fantastic” and noted the kind spirit of those who participated.



Tony Davis (first photo) and James Anderson (second) help to raise more than \$1,000 for the MHC Warming Center. The fundraiser serves as a testament to the impact of creativity and collaboration in addressing local challenges.

“The reception was incredible,” he said, thanking the community for its strong support.

The collaboration doesn’t stop there. Davis and Anderson are now partnering with Black Sheep Clothing to create an exclusive t-shirt design, with all profits going to the Warming Center. Those interested in purchasing the shirts can check Luna Moth Tattoo Studio’s Facebook page or call the shop at 276-647-1699.

Davis, who has previously worked on charity campaigns with organizations like the SPCA, is

passionate about finding new ways to give back. He has also helped establish a men’s mental health group, which has welcomed participants from the homeless community.

Both Davis and Johnson emphasized the importance of community involvement. Davis said he’s encouraged to see more people stepping up to help. Johnson echoed the sentiment, encouraging others to find their own way to contribute. “Everybody has a unique skill or talent that they can use to help,” she said.

January’s Online Workshop Schedule Set

Virginians wanting to expand their horizons with lifelong learning opportunities, get grandparenting or decluttering tips, or improve their smartphone photography skills can do so without leaving home by taking advantage of AARP Virginia’s free online workshops throughout January.

All webinars are free and open to the public, but registration is required to receive the Zoom link to participate.

The schedule of January workshops includes:

January 21 – 3 p.m.: Lunar New Year – The Snake is Coming! - Celebrate the Lunar New Year with us as we welcome the Year of the Snake! Sign up: <https://events.aarp.org/TE0121>

January 23 – 1 p.m.: Intro to Photo Editing Tools - Blurry vacation photos? Random people in the background? Come learn about photo editing tools

and how they can enhance your photos! Sign up: <https://events.aarp.org/SP0123>

January 28 – 3 p.m.: Together We Give: The Power of Giving Circles - Discover the transformative power of Giving Circles! Sign up: <https://events.aarp.org/TE0128>

January 28 – 5:30 p.m.: Dynamic Grandparenting: Musical Connections - Music provides opportunities for intergenerational connection, gaining skills, expanding learning, and fun! Sign up: <https://events.aarp.org/event/DG0128>

January 30 – 1 p.m.: Smartphone Camera Uses Beyond Photography - Join us to learn about additional ways you can use your smartphone’s camera beyond photography! Sign up: <https://events.aarp.org/SP0130>

January 30 – 7 p.m.: From Cluttered to Clear:

Downsizing Made Easy - Unlock the freedom of a clutter-free home! Keep your new year’s resolution and start decluttering. Sign up: <https://events.aarp.org/event/DD0130>

AARP Virginia offers a variety of lifelong learning opportunities. The full list is available at <http://aarp.cvent.com/VALLL>. In-person and virtual events in your area can be found at <https://www.aarp.org/local>.

With 1 million members in Virginia, AARP is the largest organization working on behalf of people age 50-plus and their families in the Commonwealth.

To learn more about AARP Virginia, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/aarpvirginia and follow @AARPVa on Twitter at www.twitter.com/aarpva. Find AARP events in your community at aarp.org/nearme.



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