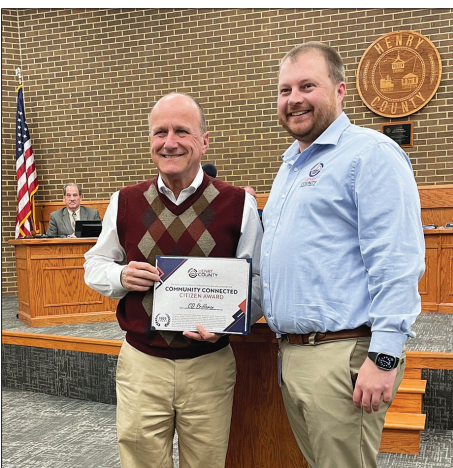


# Supervisors discuss, set public hearing on tax collection changes

The Henry County Board of Supervisors capped off American Heart Month by buying six new LifePak 35 Heart Monitors for the Public Safety Operations Division. The new equipment is both an electrocardiogram (ECG) monitor and a defibrillator, which allows emergency responders to not only monitor a patient's heart activity but also to deliver life-saving shocks if needed. This dual capability is crucial for treating life-threatening arrhythmias like ventricular fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia.

"We are incredibly grateful for the addition of these six new cutting-edge heart monitors to our fleet," said Matt Tatum, Director of Public Safety. "This purchase is a game-changer for our team, allowing us to quickly assess and diagnose cardiac emergencies on the spot. With these devices, our staff will be able to make faster, more informed decisions, ultimately saving valuable time when seconds matter most."



The Henry County Board of Supervisors awarded CD Prillaman the Community Connected Citizen Award.

The county is purchasing the LifePak 35 Heart Monitors through a \$355,752 contract with Stryker Corporation. Half of the amount will be paid through a Rescue Squad Assistance Fund grant. The remaining \$177,876 was taken from the county's general fund to provide (See Supervisors p. 2)

# New leads in 1998 cold case point investigators to Henry County again

**By Debbie Hall**

Authorities in Nelson County are once again turning their focus to Henry County as they investigate the disappearance and presumed homicide of Jeffrey Lee Quick, a Nelson County man missing for nearly 30 years.

Quick, a resident of Tyro, Virginia, was reported missing on May 23, 1998, according to Nelson County Sheriff's Investigator Chip Woody. The initial investigation produced few leads, and Quick's remains have never been found.

Sheriff Mark Embrey recently reopened the case after new details emerged in recent months, following a series of re-interviews with individuals connected to



Jeffrey Lee Quick, circa 1998 (Courtesy of The Charley Project)

Quick, Woody said. "The details suggest that Quick was the victim of a homicide, which authorities believe occurred on or about May 22, 1998," Woody said. In a statement, the sheriff's office said investigators now have "high confidence" that Quick's remains are in the Bassett area. Authorities

are asking for assistance from anyone — particularly in Henry County — who may know about his disappearance.

Woody said the connection to Henry County comes from "friendships and acquaintances" that linked some individuals in Nelson County to people in the Bassett and Martinsville areas of Henry County.

After discussing the case Tuesday with Embrey, Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis said his office has no substantive evidence to indicate Quick's remains are in Henry County.

"There is no area to even begin a search for his remains," Davis said. Woody acknowledged the uncertainty, noting that the latest inter-

(See Cold Case p. 6)

# Fieldale invests in economic development, community revitalization

**By Jessica Dillon**

The community of Fieldale is making major strides in economic development and revitalization, with ongoing projects aimed at preserving historic sites, improving public spaces, and attracting new businesses.

Among the latest efforts is a \$325,000 to \$350,000 renovation of the pools at the Fieldale Community Center, which are undergoing extensive repairs to ensure they remain a recreational hub for residents. Additional projects include the redevelopment of the center and potential renovations of the former primary school building, all part of a larger vision to stimulate growth in the area.

The pools, built in the 1950s, have served as a central gathering place for generations.



Construction to restore the Fieldale Pools is underway ahead of the 2025 season.

Now, they are being modernized with essential structural repairs, including new skimmers, pipe replacements, and fresh plaster to restore the pools' integrity.

"They are concrete pools with plaster walls. Over the years, the plaster chips off and flakes off. We had to patch it every year," said Andrew Kahle, board member of Fieldale Heritage, Inc.

The leak-prone plumbing system is also being addressed to prevent future water loss. Additionally, one of the kiddie pools will be removed to accommodate swim meets, with modifications ensuring the facility is competition-ready.

"We are going to prepare for things you hold for backstrokes, and the platforms you dive off of for (See Fieldale p. 9)



Martinsville City Council discussed rising electricity costs during its Feb. 25 meeting.

# Concerns raised over rising electric bills in the city

**By Maddy Oliver**

City residents shared their concerns about the rising cost of electricity during the February 25 Martinsville City Council meeting, calling on officials to address the financial strain caused by increasing rates.

Several residents shared their experiences with the rising utility bills, including Ms. Carter, who said her electric bill has continued to climb despite no changes in energy usage.

"I had a December electric bill of \$415... January was four-something, and now March is \$615," she said.

Carter, who described herself as a middle-class working resident, emphasized that these rate hikes impact people across all income levels.

"If you guys continue to allow the city to hike these bills up, I don't understand how you expect the average working person to afford it, let alone a person that's on a fixed monthly income ... I don't understand how we can agree to raise these bills like this for these residents, whether they're regular middle class working people like myself, or whether it's my grandmother, or my disabled sister in law that has a \$300 electric bill that lives in a base-

(See Electric Bills p. 3)



Ashley and Mike Sigmon pose with a customer waiting on his vehicle.

# Lee's Tire & Wheel rebounds after devastating fire

**By Jessica Dillon**

Lee's Tire & Wheel, a family-owned auto shop that has served the community since 1966, is back in business after a catastrophic fire last November. The shop, owned by Mike and Ashley Sigmon, reopened its doors on February 3, marking a new chapter for the business after months of hardship and uncertainty.

On November 8, 2024, consentment tires at the shop's Collinsville location caught fire, causing extensive damage to the building and tens of thousands of dollars in lost merchandise and equipment.

Mike Sigmon received a frantic call from a friend while helping his younger children onto the school bus.

Ashley Sigmon used the cameras inside the business to check the damage.

"When she got on the camera, we saw black smoke. I dialed 911 then," Mike Sigmon recalled.

"The telephone calls coming in were just insane," Mike Sigmon said of the calls to alert him of the blaze.

Racing to the shop, Mike Sigmon initially believed he could contain the fire himself, but when he topped the hill from Collinsville, saw the rising smoke and fire trucks already on the scene, "I knew it was too late," he said.

Mike Sigmon immediately began assisting the fire crews, unlocking doors to the building.

In the days following the fire, the couple found themselves in

uncharted territory as they dealt with insurance claims and financial setbacks.

"We didn't know what to do, and in a matter of three or four days, the adjuster showed up," Mike Sigmon said, adding that they didn't feel well-guided through the process.

Ashley Sigmon described the experience as emotionally overwhelming, with months of uncertainty and no income.

"We did a lot of crying. We didn't know what was going to happen," she said. "Mike wasn't able to sit still, and began helping to take out the windows and get the shop ready for repair."

"It caught us at such a bad time of the year," Mike Sigmon said. The couple went through

(See Lee's p. 10)

# Fast Track gets underway Tuesday

The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce Fast Track Trade Show gets underway Tuesday, March 4, and runs through Wednesday, March 5 at the Clock Tower at Commonwealth Centre on Franklin Street.

The two-day event includes business-to-business networking on VIP Business

Night, set from 4-8 p.m. on March 4. Exhibitors will receive tickets to invite board members, customers, or guests.

The event opens to the public on March 5 from 4-7 p.m., with \$2 admission or a donation of two nonperishable food items benefiting Patrick & Henry Community College's student food pantry.

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# Supervisors

(cont. from page 1)

a match for the grant.

Along with its advantages in terms of portability and ease of use, the LifePak 35 is capable of transmitting patient data directly to the hospital, which enables medical staff to prepare in advance for the patient’s arrival. This seamless data transfer can significantly reduce response times and improve patient outcomes, as hospital teams are already aware of the patient’s condition before they even arrive.

Also at its February 25 meeting, the board heard from County Treasurer Scott Grindstaff about a proposal of maintaining the current tax schedule but adding a due date of Feb. 6.

“I’d like to see the due dates and the late dates changed,” Grindstaff said.

The proposed change would also adjust the real estate tax due date to October each year. Currently, late payments incur a 10 percent penalty immediately, but under the proposed change, citizens would have a 15-day grace period before penalties apply. A public hearing on the proposed changes



One of the LifePak 35 Heart Monitors is pictured. Henry County purchased the new equipment for the Public Safety Operations Division.

is scheduled for March 25.

Garrett Dillard, of the Iriswood District, asked if the county could allow residents to pay taxes with a credit card without charging a convenience fee. He was told that state law requires the county to collect 100 percent of the tax. Absorbing the fee could cost the county a significant amount.

For instance, if the county collected \$100,000 and took on the cost of the convenience fee, it would lose \$3,000, according to the discussion.

Grindstaff said the county had no way around the requirement. “Do you want to collect full tax,



Mark Heath, president and CEO of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp., presented an update on the Commonwealth Crossing Project.

or do you not want to collect full tax?”

Pam Cobbler, of the Reed Creek District, suggested allowing residents to make payments in installments.

“I will tell you right now, 90 percent of those people paid cash,” Grindstaff said.

County Administrator and PSA Manager Dale Wagoner said that General Assembly bills that would have removed local control over solar farm approvals were not passed. However, he expects the issue to return next year.

Lisa Hughes, Resident Engineer for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), updated the board on local roadwork. Work will begin in early March near Speedway Convenience Store at Dyer Street. VDOT agreed to review the speed limit on Reed Creek Drive and evaluate road markings in the area.

In other matters, the board:

- Approved an additional appropriation of \$257,251 received from the fiscal year 2025 Virginia Fire Programs “Aid-to-Localities” fund to purchase a fire truck for the Collinsville Volunteer Fire Department.
- Approved an additional appropriation of \$20,000 from miscellaneous refunds and revenues to cover the salary expenses for a part-time position in the Circuit Court Clerk of Court’s office.
- Approved an additional appropriation of \$551,164 received from the Virginia Department of Education due to the recalculation of the average daily membership for all school divisions and the increase in funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative. The county contributed an additional \$32,204 for the local match to those funds.
- Presented the Community Connected Citizen Award to CD Prillaman.
- Held a public hearing and approved the rezoning of 0.53 acres in the Blackberry District, from Suburban Residential to Rural Residential. The applicant wishes to place a single-family dwelling on the property.
- Reappointed Barry Nelson to the Industrial Development Authority for a 4-year term, scheduled to expire on March 31, 2029.
- Reappointed Stuart Bowman, Glenwood Vaughn, and Hal Dee West to the Planning Commission for 4-year terms, scheduled to expire on March 31, 2029.
- Appointed Joseph Pigg, Jr., to the Public Safety Authority for an unexpired term, scheduled to expire on January 5, 2028.
- Reappointed Tierra Dillard to the Dan River Alcohol Safety Action Program Board for a 3-year term, scheduled to expire on March 31, 2028.

## Coalition aims to expand opportunities for local youth

A coalition of youth-focused organizations in Martinsville and Henry County is working to empower young people and provide them with the resources needed to reach their full potential.

Piedmont Community Services received a \$260,609 grant to support the Helping Youth Thrive (HYT) Collaborative, an initiative that aligns with the Harvest Foundation’s goal of fostering a thriving youth culture and offering first-class opportunities from birth through college and beyond.

The collaborative brings together key community partners, including schools, law enforcement, after-school programs, and family service organizations, to create a comprehensive support system for local youth.

“It’s evident how much our community partners care about creating an environment that supports families so that youth can create paths to success,” said Tobie Panos, lead community organizer and HYT coordinator for Piedmont Community Services. “The Helping Youth Thrive Collaborative was created on that very foundation.”

Key objectives for the grant include offering a variety of enrichment opportunities for youth that could include cooking, dance, music, drama, outdoor education, and sports while addressing barriers to participation like funding and transportation. A comprehensive inventory of existing youth services will be completed to prevent redundancy and identify gaps along with finding creative ways to promote these activities.

The group will also research successful youth programs in other regions and gather feedback from local youth and adults on new program ideas. The collaborative will also explore research-based practices to strengthen local youth programming and expand protective factors that promote resilience.

“We’re excited to learn about other research-based practices and how we can implement them locally to support youth to be successful,” Regina Clark, director of prevention services for Piedmont Community Services, said. “Our goal in prevention is to increase protective factors for students that will ultimately build resiliency and help them to go after their goals, despite any challenges they may face.”

The collaborative meets monthly to identify funding opportunities and implement a continuum of youth services in the community. All groups and individuals interested in supporting area youngsters are encouraged to participate.

For more information, call (276) 201-2382 or email tpanos@piedmontcsb.org.

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# 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](mailto:dhall@theenterprise.net).)

### Meetings

**Monday, March 3**  
Economic Development Authority Meeting, 4 p.m., Gardner Board Room, New College Institute Floor 3, 191 Fayette St, Martinsville.

**Thursday, March 6**  
Henry County School Board meets at 5:30 p.m., Fieldale Collinsville Middle School, 645 Miles Road, Collinsville.

Interest meeting for Spencer Penn Centre’s Farmers’ Market, 5 p.m. Review rules, regulations and answer questions to potential vendors.

**Tuesday, March 11**  
Ridgeway Town Council’s regular meeting, 6:30 p.m., Mayor’s Office, Ridgeway.

**Thursday, March 13**  
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Municipal Building Council Chambers, 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville.

### Events

**Saturday, March 1**  
Wild Game Supper, 5 p.m., Stone Memorial Christian Church, variety of food options available, including chicken and vegetables. Donations appreciated; earmarked for hurricane victims in N.C. and Tenn.

Storytime at Spencer-Penn, 10 a.m., program includes special readers, crafts, and other fun activities. Registration is not needed.

**Monday, March 3**  
Vendor meeting for the 2025 season of Monday Market at Fairy Stone, 1 p.m., at Fayerdale Hall in Fairy Stone State Park. All interested vendors are invited to attend.

**Tuesday, March 4**  
Fast Track V.I.P. Business Night, 4-8 p.m., at the Clocktower, 300 Franklin St., #240, Martinsville.

**Wednesday, March 5**  
Fast Track, Public Night, 4-7 p.m., Clock-

tower, 300 Franklin St., #240, Martinsville.

**Friday, March 7**  
Under The Big Top, 7 p.m., Piedmont Arts, 215 Starling Ave, Martinsville.

**Tuesday, March 11**  
Debbie Youngman presents a program about her new book, “The True Story of The Christian Cat and the Distillery Dog,” 10:30 a.m., Susan L. Adkins Memorial Meeting Room.

Ameresco, a solar developer, is holding a community meeting at 6 p.m., at the Galilean House of Worship, 5078 A L Philpott Hwy, Martinsville, to discuss their plans to construct a 5 MW solar facility on Jones Ridge Road. Any members of the community are welcome to learn about the project and have their thoughts and opinions be part of the planning process

### ONGOING

**Through Friday, March 14**  
Piedmont Arts is accepting nominations for local businesses and individuals that are involved in and support Piedmont Arts and other arts and cultural organizations. Recipients of the Clyde Hooker Award will be honored at a special reception Nominations due by 5 p.m. at [PiedmontArts.org/info/clyde-hooker-awards.cfm](http://PiedmontArts.org/info/clyde-hooker-awards.cfm).

**Through April 7**  
Strickland Brothers 10 Minute Oil Change (formerly known as Kwik Lube) locations at 700 Liberty St., Martinsville, and 6518 Greensboro Road, Ridgeway, are accepting monetary donations to support local school teachers in need of supplies, technology, snacks, etc. The goal is to raise \$50,000 that will be evenly distributed between school divisions in Henry County and Martinsville.

Uptown Pub Run, Mondays 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, 277 Philpott Dam

Road, Bassett, hosts breakfast on the 2nd Saturday of each month, \$9 for adults, and \$4 for children under 12. All you can eat, sausage, fried bologna, eggs, cooked apples, sausage gravy, 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.

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

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](http://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

## Electric Bills

(cont. from page 1)

ment apartment,” she said.  
Carter criticized the increased rates and added that they contradict the city’s motto.  
“You say it’s a ‘city without limits,’ but there are limits when you have three electric bills that combine to be \$1,500,” she said.

Carter also said the electric bills seem to go up despite a lack of change in how energy is being used within the residence “There’s no change in washing clothes, there’s no change in heat, there’s no change in any of that, and the bills just continue to go up and up and up,” she said.

Carter, who is originally from New York, shared some of the differences she saw between New York City and Martinsville and questioned where the money from the high bills is going.

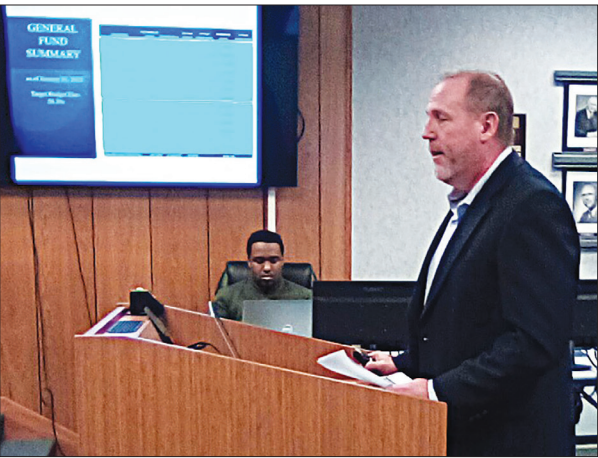
“Where is the money going? I’m not trying to be funny, but I look at one thing that hasn’t gone up in my bill over the 15 years I’ve been in my house is the garbage, and that’s because the trash is being picked up by the people who are incarcerated. You go someplace like New York City, picking up the trash is a government job, people making \$50 an hour for that. Here, even with that, it’s just neglecting the inmates. The average inmate probably doesn’t have somebody to give them this or give them that, so the \$19 or \$20 that they’ve been picking up trash for 20 years, and now these price increases on water and sewer and electric, but no price increase for them?” Carter said.

Mr. Mayham, another resident, said he was shocked by his first electricity bill after moving into a one-bedroom apartment.

“I’m not home 60 percent of the time. The first 19 days in this residence... I got a bill for \$413.55,” he said.

Mayham also noted discrepancies in billing.  
“What bothers me the most is, I can go two streets over on either side, and the people with bigger houses than I have, and they have a cheaper light bill,” Mayham said, adding that this has been an ongoing issue.

“I know that the city council has been dealing with this issue for over 10 years, and all we, as



Chief Financial Officer Richard Stenfield provided a financial update at the meeting.

citizens, have been seeing is increase, increase, increase,” he said.

Mayham also shared the struggles from the perspective of someone on a fixed income. “I live on a fixed income. If I pay this electric bill and my rent, I don’t have anything left out of my check.”

He called on city officials to take action. “As a citizen, and as you all being our representatives, we have got to do something. Citizens cannot make it. We cannot make it with the income that we get, especially on a fixed income,” Mayham said.

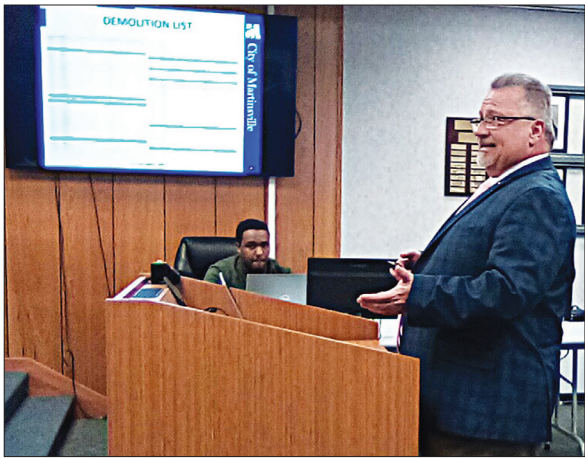
He warned that higher utility costs could contribute to increased crime rates in the city.

“People are going to do what they’ve got to do to try and survive,” he said. “It’s going to just increase crime in the city of Martinsville.”

City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides acknowledged residents’ concerns, emphasizing that raising rates was not an easy decision for council members. “When you talk about the electric bill, the council hears you,” she said. “This was a very, very tough decision for them.”

Ferrell-Benavides explained that Martinsville is one of the few cities that provides electricity to its residents, and as a reseller, the city faces rising wholesale energy costs.

“The issues that we had as a reseller (face), prices are rising while incomes are not, and we



Building Official and Zoning Administrator Kris Bridges shared an update on the city’s demolition list.

recognize that—as all of us actually live here in the city,” she said.

She assured residents that the city is looking for solutions.

“We are committed as a team,” she said. “Mr. (Aaron) Rawls has been working on some grant projects and other things, looking at what we can do to assist our residents.”

Ferrell-Benavides also noted that the issue extends beyond Martinsville.

“This is a problem not just in Martinsville,” she said. “This is a problem all over the country as we are buying electrical services from someone else.”

She encouraged residents to explore assistance programs available for utility relief.

“We’re going to work with our staff to make sure that we are reaching out to citizens because we see this and we hear this over and over,” she said. “But we’re going to try and do everything that we can to assist our citizens.”

In other matters, the council:

\*Heard an update on the demolition list and process by Building Official and Zoning Administrator Kris Bridges.

\*Heard a financial update from Chief Financial Officer Richard Steinfeld. The report is available on the city website.

\*Approved the February 18 meeting minutes.

## Applications open for 77th annual Camp Woods & Wildlife

Applications are now open for the 77th annual Camp Woods & Wildlife, which will take place June 16-20 at the Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center near Appomattox. Hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF), the camp provides an action-packed week for approximately 60 youth campers. The deadline to apply is April 11.

Camp Woods & Wildlife offers an immersive experience made possible through the support of partner conservation agencies, organizations, and businesses. Classes led by natural resource professionals cover a variety of topics, including wildlife habitat, tree identification, forest ecology, invasive species, careers in natural resources,

and environmental protection. Campers participate in both classroom learning and outdoor activities in Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest, Virginia’s largest state forest.

The camp concludes with the popular “lumberjack contest,” which features individual and team competitions such as crosscut sawing, bow sawing, and the log toss. Financial sponsorship from natural resource partners ensures that every camper selected receives a scholarship, reducing the cost of the weeklong residential camp to \$95.

“Camp courses are taught by natural resource professionals from DOF and several of our partners, with a mix of classroom and outdoor exploratory activities to ensure a balance of learning

and skill building,” said Conservation Education Coordinator and Camp Coordinator Ellen Powell. “Our goal is to expose campers to the wide range of careers in natural resources and inspire tomorrow’s foresters, wildlife biologists, and ecologists.”

Applicants must be Virginia residents between the ages of 13 and 16, in good academic standing, and have an interest in natural resources. Previous attendees are not eligible. A non-relative adult familiar with the student’s interests must complete the nominator section and submit the application by April 11.

For more information, visit the Camp Woods & Wildlife page on the DOF website.



# OPINION

## Zeldin’s Five Pillars

As I have discussed in a previous column, my Congressional calendar is going to be filled with new assignments.

I still serve on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, but I was recently appointed as chair of the Committee’s Subcommittee on Environment.

The Trump Administration will be pursuing a number of environmental reforms to unleash American energy dominance and lower the costs of energy consumption.

One of Trump’s first Executive Orders declared a national energy emergency to facilitate domestic energy production.

Another Order rescinded President Biden’s executive actions that restricted Alaskan energy development.

Alaska will now be free of regulations that hindered its ability to explore and develop liquified natural gas in the region.

A key asset to carrying out Trump’s environmental agenda is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The agency is now headed by my former colleague in the U.S. House, Administrator Lee Zeldin.

After Zeldin’s confirmation in January, he went right to work.

Zeldin visited disaster-impacted communities in North Carolina, Los Angeles and East Palestine.

As it pertains to the wildfire recovery efforts in Los Angeles, the EPA is engaged in the agency’s largest wildfire cleanup ever.

These visits come on the heels of Vice President JD Vance’s visit to Southwest Virginia, where he met with Governor Youngkin in Damascus to update the region on Hurricane Helene recovery efforts.

The Trump Administration has signaled its commitment to helping these communities respond, rebuild and recover.

Further, Zeldin is heading a new initiative at the EPA.

“Powering the Great American Comeback” consists of five pillars



Morgan Griffith

Representative

to promote environmental stewardship without restricting economic growth.

Pillar One is entitled “Clean Air, Land and Water for Every American.”

President Trump was committed in his first term to conservation efforts, cleanup of hazardous waste sites and reduction of emissions in the air while fostering economic growth. Pillar One reaffirms those practices.

Pillar Two is “Restore American Energy Dominance.”

During President Biden’s Administration, domestic energy production was hampered by “green new deal” policies.

Biden imposed a pause on approving terminal applications for exporting liquified natural gas.

Biden’s actions also shut down the Keystone XL Pipeline, which could have helped the United States prevent draining our Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

And the Keystone XL Pipeline would have kept gas prices lower.

By unleashing American energy, Trump will bolster American energy security and over time help lower the fuel costs we saw rise sharply under Biden.

Pillar Three focuses on permitting reform.

In line with the above, too many burdensome regulations undercut our ability to attract investments from able and innovative companies.

Zeldin makes it a goal of his EPA to work with state and federal authorities to ensure projects are not unreasonably harassed by radical left environmentalist policies, but instead welcomed with appropriate environmental oversight.

By streamlining this process, companies can invest millions in our nation and promote job

growth.

Pillar Four sets a goal of making the United States the world’s artificial intelligence (AI) capital.

AI data centers take a lot of energy in order to operate. We need energy at a cost that is competitive, or we will lose the race to lead on AI.

Recently, Vice President Vance visited France for the global AI Action Summit.

Needless to say, AI is an emerging phenomenon with implications for economic growth, security and governance. It is critical for the U.S. to not fall behind, and I am glad that Zeldin recognizes this.

The fifth and final pillar emphasizes American manufacturing of cars and vehicles.

The auto industry faced considerable concerns under the Biden Administration. Biden’s “green new deal” policies promoted the use of electric vehicles and discouraged consumers from purchasing American-made gas-powered cars.

In many parts of the United States, including large segments of the Ninth District, electric vehicles are just not practical at this time.

Further, such policies threaten American auto manufacturing jobs and an industry that so many American families rely upon.

Protecting and bringing back these auto jobs to the U.S. is a step in the right direction for the EPA.

These five pillars will take into careful account environmental stewardship while inheriting the energy demands of the country.

As chair of the Environment Subcommittee, I will explore ways to support Administrator Zeldin in Powering the Great American Comeback.

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

## AARP Came for Me First. Now the Funeral Home Is Calling.

At a certain point, I started being courted by the AARP.

“AARP” stands for American Association of Retired Persons.

I was well below their age minimum, which is 50, though really 50 is just the age for receiving benefits; they take anyone aged 18 and up. However, I figured their early start at wooing potential new members was well planned out.

They no doubt instinctively knew, or certainly had learned from experience, that we are all delusional on everlasting youth; no one wants to face up being on the downhill side of over-the-hill.

They clearly already had figured out that the first mailing they sent out would be thrown away immediately, the receiver in shock and denial and insulted over being thought ‘to be getting old.’

They figured it would take a few years to face up to it. They were getting me



Holly Kozelsky

used to the idea so that by the time I really was their threshold age of 50, I would have stopped throwing away their mailings and perhaps be more likely to open them.

When I first got a mailing from the AARP, I sent a picture of it to the family in our group text, hoping for and getting some sympathy along with some chuckles, and I was not disappointed.

I’ve never been one to use car trunk organizers. It seemed like an oxymoron: Why put something else in the back of your car in your quest to keep the car cleaner?

Yet for some odd reason, when Aldi had car trunk organizers for sale, I bought one.

A week later, lo and behold, in the mailbox was an offer from the AARP: if I joined right now, I’d get a free car trunk organizer.

I took a picture of it and sent the picture on the family group text explaining that this came a mere week after I had bought one.

I was expecting them to laugh with me, not at me, but my brother replied, “Well, you fit the demographic.”

Touché.

Now, though, things have escalated a level to something that had never occurred to me before.

I just got my first solicitation from a local funeral home, inviting me to go ahead and pay in advance for my funeral.

## Area man not racist

MARTINSVILLE, VA — For one night, Rob Timmins thought he was in deep trouble. He was facing the loss of his job. He was afraid he would be ostracized by his peers and loved ones.

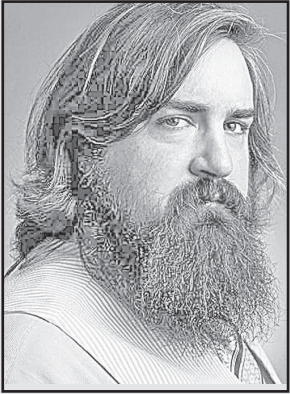
“It was a simple misunderstanding,” Timmins said. “It may seem unbelievable, but for one deeply uncomfortable evening, people mistakenly thought I was a racist.”

The trouble began, Timmins said, when he made a post on Facebook.

“I had ventured to the parlor for the evening where I planned to enjoy a small snifter of Louis XIII and a reread of Alexander Pope’s ‘An Essay on Criticism,’” Timmins said. “Suddenly, I was taken by the impulse to share a few of my thoughts on social media, specifically regarding The Woke Mind Virus and those lying liberals.”

Timmins shared the post and immediately retired to his bedchamber. The next morning, he awakened to chaos. “My post had gone viral and my page was flooded with hateful rhetoric,” Timmins said. “All this, just because I had referred to Congressman Hakeem Jeffries as a ‘monkey.’”

While many would



By Ben R. Williams

consider describing a black man as a monkey to be not just racist, but old-school Ku Klux Klan-style racist, there was just one problem:

Rob Timmins isn’t racist.

“It’s true,” Timmins said. “I’m not racist. In fact, I don’t have a racist bone in my body. The doctors say they’ve never seen anything like it.”

Timmins’ friends were relieved to hear the news.

“I’ve known Rob for more than 20 years now,” said Kevin Dupree, a former classmate of Timmins. “Our kids play soccer together. When I saw that he had said a whole bunch of really racist things, I was horrified. I thought, ‘Is this how he thinks of me and my family? Has he ever made any racist comments to

my son?” So you can just imagine my relief to get personal assurance from Rob that he isn’t actually a racist.”

“In fact,” added Dupree, “Rob said that he’s ‘colorblind’ and he doesn’t care if someone is black, white, or purple. Now, I’m pretty open-minded, but I’d probably do a double-take if I saw a purple guy walking down the street. I guess I have a lot to learn from Rob.”

Local activist Breanna Shaw said that she felt she owed Timmins an apology.

“I’ll admit, when I saw his post on Facebook, I shared it,” Shaw said. “I pointed out that I had more than 100 mutual friends with this guy who was obviously screamingly racist, many of whom had liked his post. But then Rob Timmins said he wasn’t racist at all. In fact, he said that he was probably the LEAST racist person on Earth!”

“It’s just remarkable,” Shaw added. “A few years back at a book signing, I met Ibram X. Kendi, author of the 2019 non-fiction work ‘How to Be an Antiracist.’ I always assumed that he would be the least racist person I’d ever meet, but time makes fools of us all.”

For Timmins’ part, he just hopes that in future, people will be more careful before making assumptions about him based solely on the things that he says or does.

“Really, I think that calling me a racist is a perfect example of ‘reverse racism,’” Timmins said. “We shouldn’t just automatically assume the worst about people. After all, ALL lives matter.”

Of course, Timmins said, some online commenters still weren’t satisfied, even after he assured them that he wasn’t a racist. To silence these critics, Timmins hauled out his trump card.

“One of my best friends is black,” he said. “He’s very articulate. He’s definitely one of the good ones.”

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# P&HCC releases list of student honors

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) released the names of students on the Honors and President's Lists for the Fall of 2024.

## Honors List

**Axton:** Dawson Leslie Allen, Kolby Lynn Davis, Jonah A. Fitzgerald, Luis Garcia Zuniga, Ambar Guadalupe Garcia-Alvarez, Jade McKenzie Gravely, Nia Nekohl Green, Brooklyn Augusta Faith Griggs, Deamber Lynn Harris, Lydia Grace Hinsen, Emily Suellen Holder, Jane Vaisalina Lavea, Katherine Marie Lawson, Taylor Michelle Lovette, Latara J. Martin, Abbie Grace Moxley, Hannah Noelle Moxley, Chandler Bryson Norman, Ramon Julian Rodriguez, Catlin Jade Rogers, Donna Paola Ruiz Tiznado, C'Azia Smith-Mitchell, Jesus Alejandro Soto Raygoza, Mackenzie Leigh Taylor, Alexis Altamirano Tiznado

**Bassett:** Kristen Reed Alderman, Logan Ryan Allen, Tyler Andrew Belcher, Cole Phillip Byrd, Aleksandra Nicole Campbell, Dakota Wayne Clark, Michael Lee Clark, Salvador Coca-Lobo, Marjorie Seleny Davis, Lane Garrett Deatherage, Benjamin Yitzak Flores, Meleny Garcia Nolzaco, Sandra Gail George, Emily G Gilley, Edward Walter Gravely, Christina Hairston, Xzavyanna Sincere Hairston, Mari Grace Haynes, Hailey Stacia Helms, Paulo Ernesto Hernandez, Megan Justina Joseph, Gavin Dwayne Kendrick, Allison Dawn Kitzmiller, Darius Tramaine Lane, Elijah Cole Lavinder, Yureidy Crystal Lopez-Lopez, David Andrew Marshall, Lauren Elise Victoria Marshall, Alexa Xitlai Martell-Rios, Morgan Elizabeth McCrary, Ryan James Miller, Isaiah Malaki Mitchell, Shannon Elise Mitchell, Dakota Eugene Moore, Laken Faith Porter, Courtney Jovon Price, Koda Harlan Rainer, Faith Alexandria Reyell, Hayden Michael Robertson, Amber Nicole Rorer, Makayla Nicole Rumley, Vanessa Marie Sanchez, Ian J. Stiehler, Alison Danielle Stokes, Logan Marie Surber, Kaylee Michelle Towler, Aaron Michael Tucker, Seth Lee Turner, Shanesia Turner, Zuleima Vasquez-Zuniga, Chloe Jean-Ellen Wood.

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**Fieldale:** Katlyn Hope Barbour, Brianna Yolanda Blake, Sommer Nicole Carter, Holden Draper, William Kolbey Mitchell, Rickyah Mitchell-Hairston, William Lawrence Shilling IV, William Randall Smith, Ronnie Marshall Turpin, Emily Diane Williams.

**Martinsville:** Jonathan Adams Jr., Madison Grace Adkins, Elvin Ariel Amaya Turcios, Naun Isai Andrade Paredes, Carina Fiona Aquilo, Ja'Onna Nicole Baker, Jakayle Shanelle Ballard, Juliana Rose Bishop, Aubrey Blankenbaker, Brianna Ke-Chell Board, Adreiana Nicole Bowers, Sarah Lynn Campbell, Cadence Lynn Carter, Ne'Airra Brielle Chisholm, Johnny Owen Clerc, Kirsten Haley Compton, Christopher Logan Copening, J'Muri Craig, Mayra Yesenia De La Ro Cruz, Caroline Elizabeth Davis, Nathan Spencer Davis, Christopher Nicholas Dejesus, Kaitlyn Deann Denny, Kamori Dillard, Blake Lee Dillon, Isaac Matthew Dillon, Gabriel Andieris Dodson, Livan Sebastian Dodson, Jaylen J. Eggleston, Madison Faith Emmerson, Azlyn Alexandra Espana-Becerra, Riley Mathew Evans, Tracey Danielle Fitzgerald, Isac Armando Flores, Ruby Jacqueline Flores, Chekiya Galloway, Christopher Adrian Garcia-Rosales, DaiZhawn Khalil Giggetts, Kendra Gill, Matthew Lonnie Gilley, Alley Jordan Gongloff, Rachael Gooch, Alyson Brooke Gravely, Breona Chariee Gravely, Aleisha Danielle Hagwood, Gauge Anthony Hairston, LaVontae Delyah Hairston, London Mylan Hairston, Marquis Antonio Hairston, Paul Rahone Hairston, Rachel E. Hairston, Tayshaun Jeffery Hairston, Dawood Ahmad Haji, Ian Riley Hale, Joseph Luke Haynes, Holden Lane Hendricks, Abigail Hernandez, Kimberly Hernandez, Betzaida Hernandez-Mata, De'Nyiran Tyjuahn Hodge, Ny'Kerion Vashaun Hodge, Jonathan Micheal Holt Sr., Aidan Hood, Andrew T. Hopkins, Makenzie Kamori Hylton, Jesus Arturo Jimenez Chavez, Jonathan Axel Jimenez-Chavez, Shakina Ariel Johnson, Casey Michael Jones, Jahrine

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**Stanleytown:** Elijah Alexander Chandler, Madeline Jade Cooley, Tiasia Mashe' Dillard, John Izaak Flanagan, Austin Wayne Spear.

## OBITUARIES

### Bruce Lynwood Carter



Bruce Lynwood Carter, beloved son, husband, father, brother, and grandfather, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at the age of 68.

Born to George and Ruby Carter, Bruce was a dedicated and loving family man who cherished all his roles. He is survived by his wife of 39 years, Lynda Lou Carter; his daughters, Helen Marie Carter-Shupe (Christopher) and Annette Carter-Mabry (Jed); and his grandchildren, Tabbetha Marie Shupe, Evelyn Grace Mabry, and his unborn grandchild, Nathaniel Jude Mabry. He was preceded in death by his twin grandsons, Andrew Marshall Mabry and Thomas Lynwood Mabry.

Bruce was also the brother of George Dean Carter, who survives him, and the late Thomas William Carter.

A devoted member of Fort Trial Baptist Church, Bruce shared his faith with others,

and his contributions were felt by all who knew him. He was a kind and hardworking man who loved gardening, sharing his passion for nature with his family. He found joy in riding his grandchildren on the tractor, a memory they will cherish forever. Bruce also enjoyed playing his guitar and singing hymns with his family. He served the church for many years by driving the van, showing his commitment to both his faith and community.

Bruce worked for Technical Machining in Martinsville for many years. He was particular in his work and took great pride in it. Many customers specifically

requested him because they knew the job would be completed with the utmost quality. A hardworking machinist, Bruce truly worked by the sweat of his brow.

Bruce's legacy of love, service, and faith will live on in the hearts of all who knew him. He will be deeply missed, but his memory will be forever treasured by his family, church, and friends.

The family will receive friends on Sunday, March 2, 2025, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Fort Trial Baptist Church. A Homecoming Service will be held on Monday, March 3, 2025, at 1:00 PM at Fort Trial Baptist Church with Rev. George Dean Carter, Rev. Daniel Reed, and Rev. Tony Beach officiating. Burial will follow at Henry Memorial Park.

Online condolences may be made by visiting [www.bassettfuneralservice.com](http://www.bassettfuneralservice.com). Bassett Funeral Service is serving the Carter family.



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### SERVICES

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## Cold Case

(cont. from page 1)

views have again pointed authorities toward Henry County, but without definitive evidence.

"The interviews that we have conducted here lately lead us in that direction again," Woody said. "I do not have a definite reason. All I have is word of mouth. I have no concrete reason why" Quick would have ended up more than two hours away from his home or why he may have been killed.

This is not the first time investigators have searched Henry County for Quick's remains.

In June 2001, authorities scoured the waters of Philpott Lake beneath Union Bridge, acting on information that Quick's body may have been placed in a barrel and dropped into the lake. While searching, divers from Henry and Franklin counties recovered a barrel containing the remains of Ether Smith, a 38-year-old Martinsville woman who had been missing since 1989. Smith had suffered two gunshot wounds to the head, authorities said at the time. Her murder remains unsolved, as does Quick's disappearance.

According to Woody and The Charley Project, a website that compiles missing persons cases, Quick was last seen in the front yard of his home on Campbell Mountain Road near State Route 56.

His wife was leaving to go grocery shopping when she saw a black car turning into their driveway. A friend visiting Quick was inside the house at the time, preparing to play horseshoes. At one point, the friend went outside to retrieve something from his car and saw no one. He reported hearing gunshots but did not find it unusual, as neighbors regularly fired guns. About 15 minutes later, he saw the black car drive away. Quick was never seen again.

A Nelson County grand jury investigating Quick's disappearance concluded in January 2003 that Frank Farinacci, an acquaintance of Quick, had murdered him at his home and then disposed of his body, Woody said. Farinacci had been a suspect in

## LEGAL

"Ameresco, a solar developer, is holding a community meeting on Tuesday, March 11, at 6 p.m. at the Galilean House of Worship (5078 A L Philpott Hwy, Martinsville) to discuss their plans to construct a 5 MW solar facility on Jones Ridge Road. Any members of the community are welcome to learn about the project and have their thoughts and opinions be part of the planning process."

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<b>Chicken Alfredo Fettuccine</b> <b>\$14.99</b>	<b>Lobster Ravioli</b> <i>with grilled chicken</i> <b>\$16.99</b>	<b>Lunch Prices</b> <b>\$8.99 to \$12.99</b>

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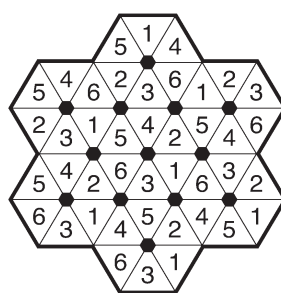
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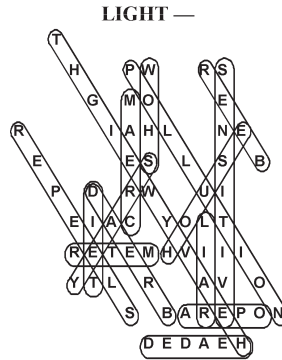
## Puzzle Answers!

### SNOWFLAKES

solution



S	A	B	R	I	N	A		S	E	A	W	A	L	L		M	A	R	I	O
A	S	E	P	T	I	C		E	L	L	A	M	A	I		E	R	E	C	T
G	O	D	M	O	T	H	E	R	O	F	P	U	N	K		S	T	A	L	E
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O	S	S				P	S	A				N	Y	E			G	O	O	D
			H	U	B				K	I	N	G	O	F	C	O	U	N	T	R
L	I	M	A	P	E	R	U		N	A	M		I	K	E	D	A	V	I	S
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F	A	T	H	E	R	O	F		R	O	C	K	A	N	D	R	O	L	L	
I	L	S	A			I	R	A	E				F	A	O				O	D
E	K	I	N	G		Q	U	E	E	N	O	F	B	R	O	A	D	W	A	Y
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D	E	N	S	E		E	S	S	E	N	E	S		S	M	E	A	R	E	D



### SCRAMBLERS

solution

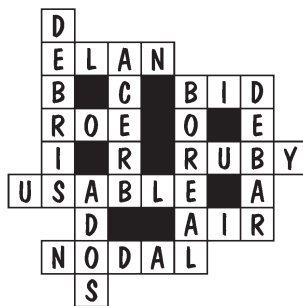
1. Gloom 2. Please; 3. Dimple; 4. Wrath

Today's Word

**LIGHTS**



answer



### Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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



Crossing the Lines

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

Hospital renovations advance, Braden Health prepares for regulatory review

Braden Health continues to make progress on reopening the former Patrick County Community Hospital, after purchasing the facility at auction. The company is actively working on renovations and regulatory requirements to bring the hospital back into operation.

Kyle Kopec, co-founder and COO, said the opening date remains internal – for now.

“The reason why we do that is with construction and with certifications, timelines shift forwards

and backwards,” Kopec said. “We don’t want to say, ‘Here’s a date,’ and then move the date, or open early and have EMS (Emergency Medical Services) not be ready.”

As construction nears completion, Braden Health will provide more specific updates on the timeline.

“It’s just still early on with construction and certification ... we’re not within a margin of error or comfortable enough to say this date or that date,” Kopec said. “In a few months, a



Kyle Kopec, co-founder and COO of Braden Health (foreground), and Revenue Cycle Director Larry Henson (background), said the curb blocking EMS vehicles has been removed.

few weeks, that may change, but we’re not announcing anything

ments, Kopec said Braden Health prefers to focus on delivering results.

“We’d just rather work and then pleasantly surprise everybody with it being ahead of schedule—or if we need a little bit more time, doing it the right way,” he said.

Braden Health’s decision to reopen Patrick County’s hospital came after the facility had been on the company’s watchlist for rural hospitals in need of assistance.

“An opportunity presented itself for us

to be able to provide the services,” Kopec said. “We monitor all of the rural hospitals in the United States, and when an opportunity presents itself, we’re able to act on it.”

Compared to other hospital revitalization projects, this one is relatively straightforward, Kopec said.

“A lot of rural hospitals are in much worse shape than this one,” he said, adding much of the credit for that is due to uninterrupted electrical service and that the building was winterized.

Frustrations aired as company seeks support for grant

A local telephone and internet company addressed concerns about service issues affecting some Patrick County residents and received a letter of support to pursue Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program funding.

Brightspeed Government Affairs and Public Policy Director Chris Dil-

lon said the company, a two-and-a-half-year-old startup, purchased CenturyLink’s assets and now serves localities in 20 southeastern states.

Brightspeed has built fiber infrastructure to reach 1.8 million residents in 2024, making it the third-largest fiber builder in the United States, Dil-

lon said.

“So that puts us behind giants like AT&T, Verizon, and above people like Google and other huge providers,” he said.

Dillon acknowledged that aging copper lines are a problem in Patrick County. He said the industry is transitioning away from copper, which will no longer exist within five years.

“That is a great thing for you and your residents and businesses,” he said.

Brightspeed has also increased fiber installation efforts. Since acquiring CenturyLink’s infrastructure, the company has seen a 49 percent increase in 48-hour repairs, a 38 percent increase in 96-hour repairs, and a decrease to fewer than three trouble tickets per 100 customers within a year of ownership.

However, Hurricane Helene im-



Brightspeed Government Affairs and Public Policy Director Chris Dillon discusses the company’s BEAD application.

Board donates cell tower lease funds to Promise program

The Patrick County School Board approved using funds it receives from the cell tower at Patrick County High School (PCHS) to help further local education.

Schools Superintendent Jason Wood said Milestone Towers, a Virginia-based telecommunication provider, recently completed all the necessary permits, and the school system deposited the \$25,000 lease agreement.

“We’re thankful for that revenue and that is for the board’s determination on how we want to utilize that fund. It is not earmarked for any project in our budget yet, it was additional revenue,” he said at the board’s meeting on February 13.

In a motion made by Walter Scott, of the Smith River District, the board approved contributing \$25,000 from the cell tower to the Patrick County



Schools Superintendent Jason Wood presented Board Clerk Sara Leigh Collins with a certificate for School Board Clerk Appreciation Month.

Promise, and any funds from the monthly lease not used for current students dual-enrolled at Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) also be sent to the Promise in June of each fiscal year.

Pittis tapped to fill vacancy on council

The Stuart Town Council recently appointed Robert “Bob” Pittis as an interim council member, during a meeting earlier this month.

Pittis, 65, will serve in the position until the end of the year, with a special election scheduled for November to determine who will complete the remainder of the seat’s term. He has already announced his intention to run for the position in the election.

Pittis said his decision to seek the interim role



Bob Pittis will serve as an interim member of Stuart Town Council.

stemmed from a long-standing interest in politics and a desire to contribute to the town.

“I thought it would be nice to be on council and just maybe be part of making the town

even better,” he said. “I know we’re doing fantastic now, the council’s doing an excellent job and everybody, and I’m so proud to live here. I just want to get on there and maybe see if I can’t add a little bit more to it too.”

Pittis emphasized that while the town council governs, its focus remains on serving the residents of Stuart.

“We have so many great people within our town here, and that’s who we work for is the people of the town,” he said.



Candy Elliott, LeeAnn Seeley, Dana Jones, Debbie Sayre, Lynn Chipkin, Amber Rakes at the Patrick County Public Animal Shelter for the holiday food treat for cats and dogs.

Animal Welfare League Expands Efforts to Support Animals

A coalition of experienced animal welfare volunteers is working to support the animals of Patrick County through adoptions, pet food assistance, and spay/neuter programs.

The Blue Ridge Animal Welfare League (BRAWL), founded last year, aims to provide resources to pet owners while helping reduce overcrowding at the Patrick County Animal Shelter. The organization assists in finding homes for animals, ensuring they are spayed/neutered and healthy, and offering other services as needed.

Dana Jones, BRAWL’s president, has decades of experience in animal welfare, including managing an SPCA in Norfolk for seven years.

“There, I opened a low-cost spay/neuter clinic and transitioned the shelter to no-kill during that time,” Jones said. “I have about 30 years of non-profit management experience.”

Vice President Lynn Chipkin, a licensed veterinary technician, has volunteered in animal rescue for many years, including 25 years with the Floyd County Humane Society. She also worked at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital at Virginia Tech.

Jones said, “Out of the need to really establish an organization, we created this non-profit. There’s just so many opportunities we feel that we have to offer this community — not just the pet food pantry and the spay/neuter program, but a real partnership with Animal Control and the Patrick County Animal Shelter.”

Jones noted that the Patrick County Animal Shelter’s euthanasia rate is nearly twice the state average.

For more information, visit [www.blueridgeawl.org](http://www.blueridgeawl.org) or [Facebook.com/BlueRidgeAnimalWelfareLeague](https://www.facebook.com/BlueRidgeAnimalWelfareLeague).

To donate online: Click the “Donate” button on the website. By mail: Send checks to P.O. Box 184, Woolwine, VA 24185. Pet food donations can be dropped off at Pet Provisions in Downtown Stuart.

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-3-7PM

1-3-5-7-9PM

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# Puzzle Time



## FEAR KNOT

By: rj johnson

DOUBT? ...OR DARE!

IRA  
AROBLE  
♥ CREBA  
♥ DASO  
♥ BESULA  
♥ BDI  
♥ ENLA  
♥ ERBDA  
♥ ERO  
♥ DISBER  
OLDNA  
♥ YURB

Unscramble these twelve letter strings to form each into an ordinary word (ex. **HAGNEC** becomes **CHANGE**). Prepare to use only **ONE** word from any marked (♥) letter string as each unscrambles into more than one word (ex. ♥**RATHE** becomes **HATER** or **EARTH** or **HEART**). Fit each string's word either across or down to knot all twelve strings together.

## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Sign is lower. 2. Log is moved. 3. Thumb is moved. 4. Cap is water. 5. Elbow patch is different. 6. Jacket is longer.

## MAGIC MAZE • LIGHT

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: LIGHTS UP A ROOM

Beer	Headed	Opera	Show
Bread	Heavyweight	Pollution	Sleeper
Cream	House	Rail	Years
Diet	Meter	Sensitive	

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## Super Crossword

**ACROSS**

1 Teenage witch played by Melissa Joan Hart

8 Breakwater embankment

15 Nintendo title plumber

20 Germ-free

21 Singer with the 2018 hit "Boo'd Up"

22 Put up, as a building

23 Patti Smith

25 Flat, as cola

26 One of the two Pro Bowl gps.

27 Frackle

28 Notices

30 Hero type

31 Nina Simone

39 Napoli's nation

41 Alien-seeking proj.

42 City near Disney World

43 Manicure tool

46 Oxidizes

49 Put the kibosh on

50 Missy Elliott

53 Dir. from Miss. to Mich.

56 Pre-CIA gp.

57 Ad featuring Smokey Bear, e.g.

58 "Science Guy" with multiple Emmys

59 Honorable

60 Busy airport

63 George Strait

69 World capital in the Andes

74 '60s war zone

75 2010-14 Mets member

76 Britney Spears

79 Plane ticket detail

80 Large musical disk

81 Encyc. unit

82 Tosses out of the game, for short

85 "Law & Order" spinoff, in brief

88 Busy insect

89 Bessie Smith

97 Plane ticket detail, for short

98 Matioso John

99 Narrates

100 Running rather quickly

104 "This Is Life" journalist Lisa

106 Totally in favor of

107 Chuck Berry

112 "Casablanca" woman

113 "Dies —" (Latin hymn)

114 — Schwarz

115 Peculiar

118 Just making, with "out"

120 Liza Minnelli

127 Roaring cat crossbreed

128 Remove loose coverings from

129 "Tartuffe" playwright

130 Thick

131 Ancient Jewish ascetics

132 Slung mud at

**DOWN**

1 Very long tale

2 Dating from

3 Furniture pieces for lying or sitting

4 Tach abbr.

5 Judge Lance

6 Petty peeve

7 Have — on one's shoulder

8 "Black Panther" actor Andy

9 "Xanadu" gp.

10 Sitcom ET

11 "679" rapper

12 Make laugh

13 Thin streets

14 "In this way"

15 Spanish for "month"

16 Skilled crafter

17 Go further in the book, say

18 Apple digital storage service

19 Verdi opera

24 Mess up

29 Hercules player Kevin

32 Afflictions

33 Natural talent

34 Greet loudly

35 Architect

36 Double — (Oreo option)

37 Wife on "The Addams Family," casually

38 Big to-do

39 Lowdown

40 Mai — (rum drinks)

44 Track circuit

45 Mag staffers

47 Ex-Yankee

48 James Bond genre, in brief

51 Ox of Tibet

52 "Doggone it!"

53 Punishment for a tube watcher

54 "Me neither"

55 Rival of Ben & Jerry's

59 Nibble (on)

60 Suspend

61 Scanned market ID

62 Busy insect

64 With one flat, musically

65 Brief snooze

66 Biotech-created food

67 Atop, in verse

68 Japanese salad green

69 Links gp. for women

70 Club for a 69-Down member

71 Small fortune

72 Letters of invitation?

73 American assn.

77 Margarine, quaintly

78 Adobe Acrobat suffix

83 Fourth of a yr.

84 That girl

85 Large yellow bloom

86 Put the kibosh on

87 KGB's land

89 Paree "to be"

90 Native New Zealander

91 WWII battle town in France

92 Glue — (brand of adhesive in a tube)

93 Hog sound

94 Tesla auto, e.g.

95 String necktie

96 Quiet stretch

97 Fuel gases

100 Off-track

101 New film type in the 1920s

102 What "@" is

103 Rotational force

105 Big blunders

108 Man-goat deities

109 Marsh plants

110 Capture

111 Campus buildings

116 Have the guts

117 Made blond, maybe

119 Test for college srs.

121 Prior to, in sonnets

122 Indian flatbread

123 Not closed, in verse

124 — pah band

125 Heady brew

126 Day, to Diego

## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- The Climbing Gourami is a fish that can climb out of water, breathe oxygen and even walk for short distances.
- India has 454 living languages and 16 official ones.
- During her 1982 restoration, the Statue of Liberty's head was accidentally installed 2 feet off-center.
- General George S. Patton believed he was reincarnated from either a military leader from Napoleon's army or a Roman legionary, claiming to have seen combat multiple times in previous lives, and also believed that after he died he would return to again lead armies onto the battlefield.
- Only deceased people can appear on American currency.
- When put under a microscope, tears produced by grief, hope or onions were unique in form from each other.
- Viking names included such gems as "desirous of beer," "able to fill a bay with fish by magic," "lust-hoastage" and "the man who mixes his drinks."
- North Korea accidentally hit one of its own cities during a 2017 failed missile test.
- In 1916, a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution would have put all acts of war to a national vote. Any-one voting "yes" would have to register as a volunteer for army service.
- Dynamite was originally going to be called "Nobel's Safety Powder."
- Singer James Brown was such a strict bandleader that he had signals arranged with his manager to let him know if a musician made a mistake during concerts. After a performance, band members' errors were deducted from their paychecks.
- Ostriches are the only birds with a bladder.
- In 1872, sitting president Ulysses S. Grant was pulled over and fined \$20 for exceeding the Washington speed limit ... on a horse.
- Aristotle believed that plants had souls.

\*\*\*

**Thought for the Day:** "Life is painting a picture, not doing a sum." — Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

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## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

SOMEONE ONCE ASKED ME HOW I BREATHED DURING THE GOLF SWING.

IT ISN'T SOMETHING I'VE EVER CONCERNED MYSELF WITH — OR WANT TO.

HOWEVER, KEEPING THE BODY VERY STILL IS CRITICAL WHEN PUTTING, AND I'VE FOUND THAT HOLDING MY BREATH JUST PRIOR TO AND DURING THE STROKE HELPS A LOT IN DOING THAT.

TRY IT IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH "HEAD UP."

## SCRAMBLERS

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

Despair	MOGOL				
Amuse	ASLEEP				
Dent	LIMPED				
Anger	HAWRT				

**TODAY'S WORD**

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# Fieldale

(cont. from page 1)



Fieldale’s economic development plans extend beyond the pools, with a focus on revitalizing the community center and attracting new businesses.

freestyle are ready for competitive use too,” said board president John Garland.

Surrounding areas are also being enhanced, with improvements including:

- A new entry gazebo
- A Snack Shack inside the gate
- Renovated bathhouses with handicap-accessible restrooms
- A new fence around the facility

Kahle emphasized that the need for renovations was evident from the moment the pools reopened in 2015. Initial upgrades included filter replacements, painting, and other repairs, but the long-term goal was always a full-scale renovation.

“They’ve been there since the ’50s. We knew we were looking at about a 10-year window in 2015,” Kahle said.

The extensive repairs were initially planned to be completed in phases, but officials ultimately decided to complete everything at once to ensure the long-term sustainability of the pools.

“We decided to do everything that needed to be done in one phase,” Garland said.

One of the biggest improvements is the addition of skimmers around the entire pool to improve water circulation, replacing the outdated gutter-based treatment system.

Other planned upgrades include a prefabricated ‘Snack Shack,’ set to arrive on March 6, and the restoration of bathhouses, which have been partially used for storage in recent years.

“It will have showers, new toilets, new sinks. There are two handicapped bathrooms now that we are restoring and sprucing up a



Construction to restore the Fieldale Pools is underway ahead of the 2025 season.

little bit,” Garland said.

Despite delays caused by winter weather, Garland said there are only three months left before the project needs to be completed for the 2025 season.

“It’s the last pool in the county that’s an outdoor pool,” Garland said, emphasizing the importance of keeping it open for the community.

The redevelopment of the Fieldale Community Center is also in its preliminary planning phase, with Garland working alongside an architect to prepare applications for the Department of Historic Resources in Richmond.

The design phase is expected to last six months, with the full renovation projected to take about a year. Once completed, the community center will feature 14 rental spaces aimed at boosting local economic growth.

“The actual renovation will take about a year, with probably six months of planning, so about a year and a half from this summer is when we hope to have a building renovation,” Garland said.

Interest in renting the new commercial spaces is already growing. Among potential tenants are:

- A barbershop
- A commercial office
- A brewery

Garland hopes to also provide space for nonprofit organizations that serve local youth, describing the potential impact of the project as transformational for Fieldale.

The revitalization efforts extend beyond the pools and community center, with interest in renovating the former primary school



Renovations include structural repairs, updated bathhouses, and improved water circulation systems.

building as well.

“That would be huge for the community too. The worst thing that can happen is all of the buildings stay empty,” Garland said.

Kahle added that concerns about the recreation center deteriorating were a major factor in moving forward with these projects.

“I think it’s a win-win all the way around. You don’t want to see these empty. You can see that firsthand with the primary school around the corner,” Kahle said.

The Fieldale board has taken several steps to enhance the area, including converting old tennis courts into basketball courts and adding an outdoor stage for community events. Garland emphasized that economic development thrives on momentum, and once one project is completed, it often sparks further improvements.

“Economic development is kind of a progression. Once you start and do one building, it serves as a catalyst for other things. Once you have businesses start to move in, people see that and are attracted to that. It builds on itself, just as decay builds on itself,” Garland said.

The board expressed gratitude for volunteers and supporters who have helped with the pools and fundraising efforts over the years, including Mac Gordon, Jane Eggleston, Sharon Gilbert, Jay Gilbert, Mike Gilley, Vivian Slaughter, Susan Harbour, and Nancy Arnold.

With the renovations nearing completion, the Fieldale pools soon will welcome daily guests, marking another milestone in the community’s revitalization.

See more at  
www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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2025

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Our ballot is super simple! Don't know much about the accounting firm in your region? Feel free to skip it and move on. Fill out the entire ballot if you're feeling ambitious, or pick and choose among our categories. Select from our drop down list, or if your favorite coffee shop or spa isn't listed, write in your own winner. And, take your time. Our voting platform saves your votes, so you don't have to feel rushed. That means you can return to the ballot to continue choosing your favorites without worrying about any of your votes being lost.

Winner's will be published in  
The Enterprise on April 30, 2025  
& The Henry County Enterprise on May 3, 2025.

# YOUTH BICYCLE RACE

the Y

MCA

## About the Race

This cross-country mountain bike race will be an entry-level event suitable for all skill levels. No prior experience is needed, there will be a limited amount of loaner bikes available.

Through this event, we are seeking interest in starting a NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) team for our community, that will be a part of the Virginia High School Cycling League.

Founded in 2009, the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) develops mountain biking programs nationwide. The Virginia High School Cycling League, a nonprofit NICA Project League, promotes races for grades 6-12 in Virginia and offers training for coaches, riders, and school officials.

## WAYS TO REGISTER

1. Scan the QR Code
2. In person
3. By phone
4. Online at [www.martinsvilleymca.com](http://www.martinsvilleymca.com)  
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Bicycle



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WWW.MARTINSVILLEYMCA.COM



## DETAILS

 **MARCH 1ST**

 **10:00am-2:00pm**

 **Smith River Sports Complex**  
1000 Irisburg Rd, Axton, VA

 **FOR MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

### CONTACT INFORMATION

 [brad@martinsvilleymca.com](mailto:brad@martinsvilleymca.com)

 **276-632-6427**

 [brad@martinsvilleymca.com](mailto:brad@martinsvilleymca.com)

# Beginner-level cycling race offered for area youth

Mountain biking is a growing sport worldwide, and area cyclists aim to bring the excitement and fun of youth cycling to Southern Virginia. On Saturday, March 1, at 10 a.m., a beginner-level youth cycling race will be held at the Smith River Sports Complex in Axton.

The free co-ed event is open to all rising middle and high school students in Martinsville-Henry County and the counties of Patrick and Franklin. No prior experience is needed, and a limited number of loaner bikes and helmets will be provided for those who do not own a bicycle.

Before the race, participants will be taught bike safety and racing etiquette to ensure everyone has a fun and safe experience on the 1.4-mile loop course. There is plenty of space for spectators to watch, and adult volunteers will be stationed throughout the course to guide, support, and encourage new riders.

Information about the Youth Cycling Race is available at [Facebook.com/SOVAcycling](https://facebook.com/SOVAcycling) or by contacting Brad Kinkema at [brad@martinsvilleymca.com](mailto:brad@martinsvilleymca.com).

Youth Cyclist Hunter Doss is organizing the race in partnership with the Martinsville-Henry County Family YMCA and a group of area cycling enthusiasts who want to see this sport grow locally. Doss is a student at Carlisle School, and the event is part of his Sophomore Community Project.

Event organizers are using the race to generate interest in forming a Southern Virginia Composite Cycling Team. The co-ed team will train together and participate in events throughout the state hosted by the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) and Virginia High School Cycling League.



# City officials address crime, public services at West End Community Meeting

By Jessica Dillon

City officials and public agencies gathered at First Pilgrim Baptist Church to restart community meetings, providing residents with updates on local issues, crime statistics, and new initiatives, including an electronic reporting platform for non-emergency complaints.

Police Chief Rob Fincher presented crime statistics for the West End area, noting that while some slides showed multiple incidents, overall crime remains low.

“We took this church as the focal point and went out a mile from this church,” Fincher said. He explained that the inclusion of Memorial Boulevard, a major thoroughfare where officers frequently apprehend suspects in transit, made the crime numbers appear higher than they actually are.

“In 2023, we had 37 incidents in this community. In 2024, we had 21,” Fincher said.

Citywide, crime has been on a downward trend, with incidents dropping from 176 in 2022 to 161 in 2023 and 111 in 2024.

“We will continue to strive for those lower and lower numbers,” Fincher said, emphasizing that the West End remains a low-crime area. He attributed this to the strong sense of community and the older population living in the neighborhood.

Fincher believes communication among neighbors plays a key role in maintaining safety. To further these efforts, the police department will host a neighborhood watch discussion at 6:30 p.m. on March 20 at Albert Harris Elementary School.

Fincher also provided an update on speed enforcement in school zones, acknowledging that several city officials, including police officers and council members Julian Mei and Rayshaun Gravely, have received tickets.

“It really is working well. If you drive through, you’ll see that traffic is going slow now,” Fincher said.

Speeding violations in these zones do not affect driving records but must be paid by the due date. The tickets are issued to the vehicle owner, meaning they must notify officers if someone else was driving or request that person to pay the fine. The citation can be challenged in court but will still not impact the driver’s record.

Residents inquired about the effectiveness of the city’s gunshot detection sensors. Fincher said the sensors are operational and recently detected a single, non-threatening gunshot in the area. However, he noted that some calibration is still needed, as the



Martinsville Police Chief Rob Fincher provided information about crimes in the West End Community.

sensors sometimes register other loud noises, such as trains.

A resident suggested increasing police presence in the area to deter potential crimes.

“At least it’s going to get the officer there faster in the area. Don’t stop calling 911,” Fincher said, urging residents not to rely solely on the detection system if they hear gunfire.

Public Works Director Greg Maggard addressed concerns about the new refuse ordinance and park maintenance.

One resident raised concerns about West End Park’s gate being left open at night and unauthorized vehicles using the service roads. Littering in the park was also mentioned.

Littering in the community in general was another concern. A resident suggested placing public trash cans in key areas.

“This is a walking community,” the resident noted.

Maggard also discussed upcoming changes to the traffic flow uptown, including which traffic lights will be retired, where new stop signs will be installed, and the reasoning behind the placement of new dumpsters.

The city’s new refuse ordinance aims to address improper trash disposal. Residents asked if new community members could be notified about garbage pickup times to prevent trash from sitting on streets for days.

Under the ordinance, all trash must be placed in cans, and penalties for violations have been reduced from a Class 1 misdemeanor to a Class 4, allowing Public Works to enforce the rules with fines instead of potential jail time or large financial burdens.

A resident raised an issue about snowplows sweeping piles of snow and blocking driveways while clearing streets. Maggard was asked if there was a way to



Kaylin Hernández introduced the new digital reporting platform, SeeClickFix.

move snow between driveways instead.

“It would turn a one-day project into four or five,” Maggard said, explaining that stopping to clear each driveway individually would significantly delay the overall snow removal process.

Zoning Director Kris Bridges provided an update on property maintenance enforcement, and noted that “36 out of 37 cases have been resolved.”

Residents asked if the city could address trash issues behind homes.

“If an issue can’t be seen from the street, then the office is not able to enforce it,” Bridges said, citing Fourth Amendment restrictions.

“We have to be able to see it from the right-of-way. Now, we try to be as creative as we can—going to other streets behind it, trying to see in between other houses,” Bridges said.

Only violations visible from the street can be enforced. Current ordinances prohibit using indoor furniture, such as couches, outdoors and require inoperable vehicles to be covered with a proper car cover if they cannot be moved.

Management Analyst Kaylin Hernández introduced SeeClickFix, a new digital platform for reporting non-emergency issues. The system can be accessed via a mobile app or website.

City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides reassured residents that digital reporting is not the only option for submitting complaints.

“I don’t want anyone to think that will limit your ability to let your city know what’s needed,” she said.

A resident inquired about rising energy rates. City officials explained that recent rate increases were due to multiple cold snaps over the past few months. Residents are encouraged to contact the energy department for more information on their bills and energy usage.

## Lee’s

(cont. from page 1)

Thanksgiving and Christmas with no income coming in but made sure their kids were taken care of.

“It may be easier to lose a home, even if your family goes to an apartment or hotel room, you can still go to work and there is income coming in,” he said.

At home, the couple put on a strong face in front of their younger children, but two of the older boys also felt the pull from the closure because they also work at the shop.

Despite financial hardships, the couple prioritized their employees, ensuring 90 percent of their workforce remained on the payroll.

“We can’t open this business back up if we don’t have everybody,” Ashley Sigmon said.

Insurance covered just enough to pay their employees — but not themselves. To keep the business afloat, the couple dipped into their savings.

“We did what we thought was fair, it wasn’t easy. It was a bad experience,” he said.

Mike Sigmon now stresses the importance of understanding business insurance policies, noting that their coverage fell short in some areas.

“Always sit down and understand your policy, ask questions about your policy, and make sure if it was a catastrophic event, you have coverage or enough coverage. We found out that we only had \$5,000 worth of consignment coverage,” he said, leaving them responsible for hundreds of dollars to cover the consignment wheels that originally started the fire.

While the months of rebuilding were tough, the couple was deeply moved by the outpouring of community support. Mike Sigmon said he didn’t realize how popular his shop was until the tragedy occurred.



Lee’s Tire & Wheel after repairs from a fire last year.

“Everyone wanted to help,” he said, adding that customers, friends, and neighbors brought food, gift cards, and words of encouragement.

Even as they celebrated their first week back, they faced unexpected challenges, with several employees out due to illnesses including the flu, stomach bug, and pneumonia.

“We had to deal with that too. We can laugh about it now, but I’m still sore from that first week of opening,” Mike Sigmon said.

Lee’s Tire & Wheel has always been more than just a business — it’s a family legacy.

Mike Sigmon’s son recently started working at the shop after school, and the proud father hopes to one day have six locations — one for each of his children.

But the couple are convinced that family extends beyond blood.

“Even the employees that work here are family to us. That was why the fire was so hard — here is where we spend most of our time,” Ashley Sigmon said.



Ashley and Mike Sigmon, grateful for the community’s support, reflect on their journey to rebuild.

Her husband echoed the sentiment, describing the tight-knit bond shared among the staff.

“We all meet in the mornings and have a group huddle. We start our mornings encouraging one another, we start our mornings in prayer. Whether we are blood or not, it’s a family business,” he said.

Lee’s Tire & Wheel is located at 1780 Virginia Ave., Martinsville. The shop is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, call (276) 638-3240.

## Community Chronicles

By Jarred Marlowe

The corner lot at Church and Moss Streets in Uptown Martinsville, where the Farmer’s Market now stands, has a rich history. Once part of the renowned Beaver Creek plantation, the lot was sold to the Episcopal Church by Marshall and Ann Hairston in 1847 for \$50 (equivalent to about \$2,000 in 2025). Before this, the congregation met in parishioners’ homes. A small brick church was built on the lot, marking the church’s first permanent location in Martinsville.

This half-acre lot was across from the home of Dr. James Moss Smith, which once stood where Martinsville City Hall is today. The lot included a cemetery along the church’s eastern wall. Today, the church’s former location corresponds to the Farmer’s Market

parking lot, with the cemetery once located where the Jessup & Associates CPA firm now stands.

By the 1890s, the Episcopal Church had outgrown the site and relocated to a new location further east on Church Street, deeded to them by the Hairston family. The original church building sat vacant until Senator Thomas G. Burch purchased it in 1898. In 1899, Burch transferred the building to the trustees of the Martinsville Primitive Baptist Church, which occupied it until 1965.

The western half of the lot was sold in 1927 to A.J. Tuggle, who opened the Piedmont Creamery there. This later became the Coca-Cola Bottling plant. In 1965, the law firm of Young, Kiser, and Frith purchased the church and cemetery. The building was demol-

ished, and while it’s believed the graves were moved to Oakwood Cemetery, records confirming this have not been found. The Farmer’s Market opened in the 1970s and is still in operation today.

In April 1865, Martinsville witnessed one of the final skirmishes of the American Civil War in Virginia, near the intersection of Liberty Street and Clearview Drive. Six soldiers (five Union, one Confederate) were killed. With a main field hospital located across the street at Dr. Smith’s home, it’s likely the fallen soldiers were buried in the Episcopal Church cemetery. The Union soldiers were later moved to Danville National Cemetery upon its creation in 1867,



while the Confederate soldier was reinterred at Oakwood Cemetery.

The former Episcopal and Primitive Baptist Church, seen in the center from a 1960’s aerial photo of Martinsville. The home of Dr. James Moss Smith, now city hall, is seen across the street. (Photo courtesy of the Martinsville-Henry

County Historical Society)

Jarred Marlowe is a local resident and historian. He is a member of the Col. George Waller Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Blue & Gray Education Society, and the committee chair for the Martinsville-Henry County 250 Committee. He may be reached at marloweja15@gmail.com.



# Budget discussions begin between county, school officials at joint meeting



The Henry County School Board and Board of Supervisors discuss budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

**By Jessica Dillon**

The Henry County School Board and Board of Supervisors held a joint meeting on Feb. 25 to begin discussions about the fiscal year 2025-26 (FY26) budget. The meeting allowed the school board to outline its projected budget needs and priorities for the upcoming school year.

The school system does not have an estimate for total funding, as the budget is still pending. But the current proposal is a total budget of \$115 million, including total projected salaries plus benefits at \$73,336,893, with projected salary increases of \$1,983,037, or three percent, according to Assistant Superintendent Dr. Benjamin Boone, who reviewed revenue projections and the school budget.

State legislators

recently approved \$83,471,413 in state funding, which in Henry County represents a local share of \$20,798,096—an increase of \$3,333,102 over the previous year. Most staff would receive a 3 percent pay raise under the proposal, a nearly \$2 million increase over last year. The administrative salary scale will increase by 2 to 2.5 percent, with one step added.

“We’re very competitive,” Boone said, noting that the county’s pay scale is attractive to teachers.

He pointed out that 60 teachers are at the highest step of the pay scale, which he said is an indication of employee satisfaction.

The district’s capital improvement plan includes \$13 million in proposed upgrades for FY26, depending

on available funds. A five-year capital project snapshot outlines over \$50 million in planned projects, excluding potential Career Academy expansions and athletic facility improvements.

The district is also requesting additional funding for:

- English Learner (EL) teaching positions
- Full-time substitute teachers
- Increased substitute pay

Superintendent Amy Blake-Lewis emphasized the district’s commitment to student safety and academic achievement.

“We put students first,” Blake-Lewis said, and highlighted several accomplishments from the past year, including career and technical education (CTE) industry certifications that help students transition into

the workforce.

Among the district’s recent achievements:

- 13 percent of seniors are graduating with an associate degree.
- 30 percent of students are enrolled in dual-enrollment courses.
- Chronic absenteeism has decreased by 20 percent this year.
- The Harvest Foundation SEED program continues to provide students with access to free college education.

The district has also made facility improvements, including new bleachers at middle schools, as well as HVAC, lighting, and ceiling upgrades at Bassett High School. Additional safety measures are planned for elementary schools.

“Visitors that come during the day can be screened,” Blake-Lewis said adding that similar security measures will be implemented at middle school events.

In the upcoming fiscal year, the district aims to invest in new initiatives, including a program for Safe and Civil Schools to help teachers with classroom management.

The Career Academy will continue to expand, with an emergency medical technician (EMT) program launching in 2025-26 and an automotive technology program

the following year. These programs are designed to help students find employment in Henry County.

Iriswood District Supervisor Garrett Dillard inquired about upgrading the county’s track facilities to better support student-athletes competing at the state level.

“If we wanted to try to chip away at that, we would need to look at that and divide it over five years, possibly 10,” Blake-Lewis said.

Cherie Whitlow, the At-Large school board member, praised the district’s athletes but acknowledged that facility upgrades require planning.

“We are impressed with how our athletes are doing. There are just a couple of steps before we can get to the tracks,” she said.

Ben Gravely, vice chairman of the school board, urged the Board of Supervisors to consider long-term funding commitments.

“As you see, we are willing to offer those programs. However, as stated, there may be some renovations we have to do with our schools,” Gravely said. He also warned that losing grant funding would lead to teacher layoffs and larger class sizes, making classroom management

more difficult.

Dillard stressed the importance of prioritizing student success.

“What do we want the end result to be? Students going out and being successful,” he said, adding that investing in education could help reduce crime.

Collinsville District Supervisor Joe Bryant defended the Board of Supervisors’ efforts to balance funding across various county agencies.

“We are not the bad guys,” Bryant said. “We budget as best we can to support the different agencies in the county.”

Dillard suggested the county could support schools without a major financial strain.

“I don’t want to say we can’t afford it,” he said.

However, Supervisor Chairman Jim Adams encouraged the board to gauge public opinion on potential tax increases to support education.

“Ask yourself how you feel about a tax increase. Are you willing to go on record saying that you will support it?” Adams asked, recommending that officials discuss the issue with constituents.

## One charged in city stabbing incident



Roberto Gomez-Telles

Martinsville police responded to a reported stabbing around 6 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 26, in the 700 block of Fayette Street.

Officers found a 48-year-old Martinsville man suffering from a stab wound to the torso. He was transported to Sovah Health Martinsville, where he is receiving treatment. An update on his condition has not been released.

Near the scene, officers detained a man they allegedly believe to be involved in the incident. Roberto Gomez-Telles was later arrested and charged with malicious wounding in connection with the incident. He is being held without bond at the Martinsville City Jail.

The investigation is ongoing, and police will provide updates as more information becomes available.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Lt. Richard Barrow at 276-403-5458 or Crime Stoppers at 276-63CRIME (276-632-7463). Crime Stoppers is an anonymous tip line, and callers may be eligible for a reward of up to \$2,500.

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We are exploring the connection between childhood experiences and caregiver satisfaction with public schools. Your input will aid schools in enhancing family support, improving communication, and fostering an inclusive environment.

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### Requirements:

If you are a parent or guardian of an elementary student in Henry County Public Schools, please participate in this important survey.

### About the study:

- Responses are confidential and for research only.
- No personal information will be shared.
- Your input aids in understanding parental challenges and enhancing school support.
- The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.

### Access the survey:

Scan this QR code or visit <https://forms.office.com/r/ULVrwSQVX4>



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# DRBA launches plastic recycling challenge to earn free Trex bench

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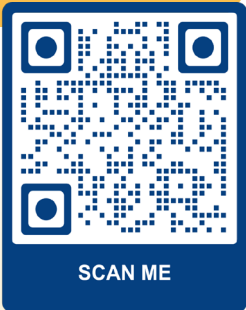


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### What can be recycled?

*All plastic must be clean, dry and free of food residue.*



The Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) is inviting the community to participate in a plastic recycling challenge to earn a free Trex bench by collecting 1,000 pounds of qualifying plastics by January 6, 2026.

#### How to Participate

\*Only certain plastic materials count toward the challenge, including:

- \*Plastic grocery, bread, cereal, and produce bags
- \*Mulch, soil, and salt bags (must be clean and dry)
- \*Plastic wrap from bottled water, paper towels, and toilet paper
- \*Bubble wrap
- \*Ziploc-style food storage bags (clean and dry)

Participants should collect and weigh their plastics, take a photo of the weight, and drop them off at locations with plastic bag recycling bins, such as Target, Walmart, or Food Lion.

After dropping off plastics, participants must log the collection at my.trex.com using:

Username: DanRiverBasin  
Password: Cleanrivers

Submissions should include the drop-off location, city, state, and total weight, along with the photo of the weighed plastics.

By recycling plastic waste, the initiative aims to protect the Dan River Basin's ecosystems while working toward earning a free Trex bench for a local park or trail in the region. Participants can submit multiple entries until the challenge deadline on January 6, 2026.

See more at  
[www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com)

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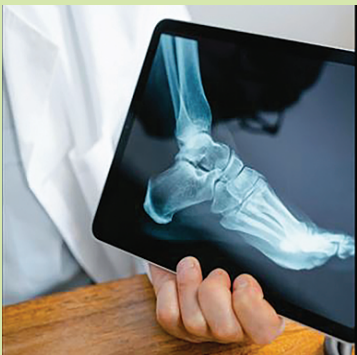
Eugene "Gene" F. Jackson, MPAS, PA-C has been NCCPA Board Certified Physician Assistant since 1979 after having graduated from Alderson Broaddus University with a Bachelor's Degree in Physician Assistant Studies. Prior to his degree, Gene was a Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force, completing his service in 1975. Gene then entered the U.S. Army National Guard from 1980 to 2005 as the Chief Physician Assistant and honorably discharged as a Colonel in 2005. During his service, Gene also completed his Masters of Physician Assisted Studies with a specialty in orthopedic surgery from the University of Nebraska in 2001. Recently, Gene re-joined our practice as a seasoned provider maintaining his passion of orthopedics and assisting our orthopedic doctors primarily in the clinic. Gene has lived locally in the Danville area for over 25 years and enjoys time outside the office with his wife and two children.

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