

Mountain messenger

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The Weekend Newspaper for the Greenbrier Valley - Lewisburg, West Virginia

Alderson passes one percent B&O tax

By Bobby Bordelon

The first reading of a business and occupation tax (B&O) expansion in Alderson was approved by Town Council during their Thursday, Mar. 11 meeting. The council also discussed other potential ordinances on ATV's and next year's budget.

Mayor Travis Copenhaver explained that due to legislative rule changes last year serious budget revisions had to be considered before the 2022 budget could be balanced.

"It is a 1 percent [B&O tax] across the board for every business that is not a nonprofit, ... like the other municipalities have," said Copenhaver. "This is the way to offset what I've been harping about for the last several months."

The proposed B&O tax would not affect either Greenbrier or Monroe counties' hotel/motel tax, any utility tax, or previously established contractor's fees. If passed, the ordinance would be effective July 1, 2021.

"When we [last] changed this, I said we had the most backward B&O tax there was because we were trying to hold off taxing the locals," Copenhaver said. "This doesn't change rents, the property owners still pay the one percent, the only thing that it's doing is putting the one percent on all convenience stores, restaurants, cafes, all of the brick and mortar businesses. ... [The language of the ordinance] had it so they were only taxed

See "Alderson" _____ Page 2

Vaccine transportation program seeks volunteers

By Bobby Bordelon

The vaccine rollout in Greenbrier County is pushing forward with help for those with extra needs.

Several issues with the rollout have emerged as the COVID-19 pandemic begins to get under control. This has prevented some West Virginians who want to be vaccinated from getting it.

"If we're aware of the people around us and try to help everybody, we'll all be better off together," explained local organizer Jennifer Mason. "Part of that is being able to sign up for the vaccine and part of that is just being aware of your neighbors and helping when they need help."

This includes lack of knowledge of the vaccine clinics, unfamiliarity with the Registration Process, inability to get registered (even though it is just a phone call), and lack of transportation to the fairgrounds to get the vaccine.

In order to combat this, Feeding Seniors and Mason have devised a new system for reaching out to people needing help.

"Greenbrier and Monroe County residents may call the United Way by dialing 211 to obtain assistance with registration for COVID Vaccines," said Mason. "The United Way worker will ask if they need transportation and we will endeavor to provide the same through individual volunteers and volunteers from the Sheppard's Center."

Phone calls and emails are not the only way for those that like to get business done in person.

"If the individual prefers to register in person, but doesn't have a computer or needs help to use one, they can go to the Greenbrier County Public Service office at 9035 Seneca Trail S, Fairlea, the location of the old Kentucky Fried Chicken," Mason said. "They will be allowed to use the computers Commission has and/or one of the employees will help them to register on Everbridge."

Currently, Meadow River Valley residents unable to come to a clinic can be assisted by Rainelle Medical Center. Mason is looking for a similar arraignment on the eastern side of the county.

"There are some Greenbrier County residents on the Greenbrier Valley side ... need help with either transporting people to the fairgrounds or there are some

people who are home-bound [that need help]," Mason explained. "We're working on a solution on how to get the vaccines to them."

Those looking to volunteer as drivers must meet a few requirements.

"They have to have a valid driver's license, they have to have insurance, and they have to go through training on how to transport elderly individuals," Mason said. "There are some precautions they have to take."

Feeding Seniors, a local group working with businesses to provide meals during the pandemic, has also helped the vaccine clinics.

"Feeding Seniors is

See "Volunteers" _____ Page 2



Lewisburg Mayor Beverly White (right) is interviewed by Showell and Rowan

Stage on a Stage podcast features interviews with teachers, Mayor White

By Bobby Bordelon

The Greenbrier Valley and Mountain Media News now have their own podcast! The Stage on a Stage podcast features local and casual interviews with students, teachers, representatives from the perspective of Greenbrier Valley youth.

Hosted by two Greenbrier East High School students, the show looks at education during COVID, casual conversations with West Virginians, and more. Of the first couple of episodes, guests have included GEHS band drum major, and now cohost, Reece Rowan, GEHS band director Jim Alder, GEHS engineering teacher Kevin Warfield, and Lewisburg Mayor Beverly White. Each spoke about their life, early career, thoughts on the state of West Virginia and the Greenbrier Valley, and what the future could hold.

The show has a guiding vision, interviewing locals about their lives in the Greenbrier Valley, but the spark of inspiration was even more straightforward.

"Me and my dad were listening to a Joe Rogan podcast one day and I was like 'wouldn't it be cool to do

that for a job, at least it could be fun to do a podcast or something,'" said Showell with a laugh. "He was like 'okay let's do it' and I thought he was joking."

The show's hosts are Showell and Reece Rowan, local students at Greenbrier East High School. When planning the first episode, Showell asked Rowan to be a guest, but the easy friendship and a misunderstanding lead to cohosting.

Rowan explained Showell asked him to be on the show and "I assumed he meant together, like we were going to cohost. [I] asked who we were going to have on" the first episode "and he goes 'You!' ... So I invited myself as a cohost."

After recording the first episode, mostly reflecting on remote learning and their understanding of politics, Rowan stayed on, interviewing each guest alongside Showell.

Both Alder and Warfield offered some insight into their experience teaching remotely over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, while White spoke on Lewis-

See "Podcast" _____ Page 2

City hears proposal from Secretary of State; approves 2022 budget

By Sarah Richardson

After holding a multi-day long finance committee meeting last week to hash out details of the 2022 budget, this week's city council meeting for Lewisburg was streamlined as the council approved the first reading of said budget. Poll workers and election officials for this year's municipal election were also approved.

The council also heard a presentation from representatives with the Secretary of State's Office regarding e-voting, held a secondary first reading of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning ordinance, and discussed ongoing parks improvements.

The council heard from Deak Kersey with the WV Secretary of State's office, who proposed a pilot program to implement a "portal" for voters to see their ballot after it's been cast and is being stored in the voting server.

While West Virginia was commended after the 2020 election for election security, representatives noted an increased desire from voters to ensure their ballots are secure after they are cast. They are bringing a proposal for this pilot program to all municipalities in the state.

"We are looking to make sure that the technology we are using is as good as it can be," said Kersey.

"The reason this would be a pilot program is because it's a little bit different than what we've ever done in West Virginia before," he explained. "The system is the same, the process is the same, but what we add to this is an additional requirement for voter confidence in the process. Specifically, there are systems available now and more features available through vendors that we have used in the past, and others, that allow the voter at any time after they have cast their ballot to go in and see their ballot through a portal. The ballot will have a unique ID on it, nobody will know whose name is attached to it as it will just be a jumble of letters and numbers, and the voter can go into this website, type in their unique ID, and see their ballot that is currently being stored in the vendor's server."

While councilmembers supported the idea, with the next municipal election fast approaching on April 23, time constraints proved to be an issue.

"I feel there is not enough time to implement this program, it's not that we won't look at it later, but the time frame is just too tight. I really don't feel comfortable implementing this in an election this close, and I hope they understand that," said Lewisburg Mayor Beverly White.

Councilmember Josh Edwards agreed, "I concur. I just don't think we have enough time to implement it."

Kersey will provide the council with more background on the program for review.

In other news, the council approved the first reading

of the PUD ordinance once again after making changes to the allowed uses and densities. Planned Unit Developments are when land uses can be mixed at the same site, rather than being separated into residential and commercial uses. Multi-use subdivisions take advantage of zoning such as this to increase walkability and provide greater housing variety and density. A second reading is now scheduled.

The city closed on the purchase of the Barnette property located off of Grand Avenue near Lewisburg Cinema 8 last Friday. The site will be the location of the new fire station, which will replace the outdated Fire Station No. 1 downtown.

City Hall will open again to the public starting on Apr. 5. City Manager Misty Hill noted that the public bathrooms outside of City Hall, as well as those at local parks, are also now open for public use.

Public Works Director Roger Pence provided positive feedback on the city's decision to purchase a Ventrac for public works. The Ventrac equipment is multi-func-

See "City Council" _____ Page 3

Bruce-sponsored bills pass House

By Bobby Bordelon

As the Legislative session continues, more bills sponsored by Greenbrier County Republican representatives are passing through the supermajority in both houses.

Two new bills sponsored by Delegate Barry Bruce were passed by the House of Delegates with yeas from Bruce and Longanacre:

- House Bill 3078, clarifies the powers and responsibilities of parole boards, specifying that "an inmate may not be paroled under the special terms of this subdivision if the Parole Board finds that he or she has not completed the majority of his or her rehabilitative and educational programming and that the amount of rehabilitative and educational programming which must still be completed would interfere with his or her successful reintegration into society."

- House Bill 3128 adjusts the language and requirements around 911 fee reporting on the county level.

Although Delegate Todd Longanacre sponsored bills have not passed since last week, one of his bills drew attention. House Bill 2264, creating hospital exemptions from certificates of need, would allow someone to provide "hospital services performed at a hospital" without applying for a certificate of need. This would include

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Briefly

American Heritage Music Hall, Inc.

Open to the public, all welcome, handicap accessible. Admission \$7 Tuesday nights, \$10 Saturday - Audience provides food. Door opens at 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Located at 496 Island Park, Ronceverte. Jam & Dance every Tuesday from 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday Mar. 27 - Ivan Combs & The Outlaws. Call the Music Hall at 304-645-4667; Bill Evans at 304-392-6079; Grace Poe at 304-992-5852.

Gbr. Co. Democratic Women's Club

will meet Tuesday, Mar. 23 at 5:30 p.m. On the agenda: Old Business - Minutes Review - 2/23/2021; Treasurer's Report; Proposed By-laws; Legislative Advocacy for 2021 Session; New Business - Activities Committee Update; Communications Committee Update; Membership Committee - Reaching out to new members; Position Paper for Club; Tee shirts for club. Next meeting Tuesday, Apr. 27, at 5:30 p.m.

WVSOM Board of Governors

will meet Friday, Mar. 26, via teleconference. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. To attend by phone, dial 844-621-3956 toll free and use access code 1386616010. No committee meetings are scheduled. A copy of the agendas for all meetings are posted on the WVSOM website at www.wvsom.edu/About/BOG prior to the meetings and are available in the president's office. WVSOM board meetings are open to all who are interested, including the general public.

AA meetings

are held Saturdays at 10 a.m. via Zoom meeting. (Contact 304-647-0677 for Zoom details.) Find listings for other meetings in West Virginia at aawv.org.

Great American Outdoors Act funds nine projects on Monongahela National Forest

Monongahela National Forest is pleased to announce that as part of the Great American Outdoors Act nine local projects have been selected for fiscal year 2021. The selected projects will be the first round of improvements to address deferred maintenance on the Forest while improving visitors' experience. Many of these projects have multiple phases and will not necessarily be completed this year.

These projects are part of the \$285 million investment made possible by the newly created National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund, established in 2020 by the Great American Outdoors Act. These funds will allow the USDA Forest Service to implement more than 500 infrastructure improvement projects essential to the continued use and enjoyment of national forests and grasslands. These funds are critical in helping to reduce the Forest Service's \$5.2 billion deferred maintenance backlog and an important step in restoring what visitors love about national forests in the Eastern Region.

Several of the selected projects for Monongahela National Forest are:

- Lake Sherwood Campground Rehabilitation. Lake Sherwood Campground will be renovated by replacing some toilet/shower wooden buildings with new accessible concrete structures, demolishing old vault toilets, repairing utility lines, replacing sewer infrastructure, reconstructing

Legislative Bills

"in-patient services, out-patient services, emergency room services, surgical services, diagnostic and imaging services, and laboratory services provided on the hospital's campus."

The bill brought significant criticism and concern for regional healthcare providers from Senator Stephen Baldwin in his column, *The Back Pew*.

"I cannot overemphasize how deadly this policy change would be," wrote Baldwin. "None of our local hospitals would be able to stay open if this bill were to pass. They all strongly oppose the bill. Hospitals are often one of the largest employers in the county they serve."

Longanacre explained he sponsored the bill in order to introduce more business competition for local medical care.

"Historically, when a local business knows that there is likely to be no competition in their community for their product or service, they tend to charge consumers what they want," Longanacre wrote. "With regards to healthcare, if such providers jack up their price for a unique service that they know is not being offered anywhere else in the community, the patient's insurance company may initially absorb the brunt of the charges but could raise client premiums over time. This is not fair to the patients. ... Let the free market decide who may stay or go and who may expand services or roll them back."

Comprehensive healthcare is often not possible in smaller clinics, lacking the resources to perform major, life-saving procedures. Baldwin pointed to the need for these large facilities to provide these "smaller" services in order to keep the more difficult and rare services available.

"The idea is to keep rural hospitals open and operating efficiently," Baldwin wrote. "If a certificate of need wasn't required in rural areas, you'd see rural hospitals close and small medical offices pop up all over the place offering various small medical services."

In addition to the 13 other Senator Jack Woodrum-sponsored bills that have passed the Senate, Senate Bill 396 was approved in a 34-0 yeas vote on February 25. If passed, this bill would limit the types of "nuisance claims" against fire departments or emergency medical services for use of "fixed sirens." The bill is still currently in a House committee.

Three bills introduced by Governor Jim Justice have also passed through both chambers of the legislature, having been sponsored by Baldwin and the Senate President. This includes:

- Senate Bill 295 deals with broadband investment loans made through the Broadband Loan Insurance Program, including a limit on the amount of loan insurance that can be awarded in a single year to a single broadband provider to \$20 million. The bill passed through the Senate (yea Baldwin, Woodrum) and the House (Longanacre yea, not voting Bruce).

• Senate Bill 277 is the COVID-19 Jobs Protection Act, which would "eliminate the liability of the citizens of West Virginia [from] all suits and claims against any persons for loss, damages, personal injuries, or death arising from COVID-19." The bill passed through the Senate (yea Woodrum, absent Baldwin) and the House (nays Bruce, Longanacre).

• Senate Bill 272 seeks to address the "gig" economy of workers, "distinguishing independent contractors from employees; applying classification provisions to workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, wage payment and collection, and Human Rights Act matters; establishing classification criteria; setting forth limitations to applicability of the act; and providing for severability." The bill has been passed by both the House and the Sen-

the amphitheater, and installing new traffic signs.

• Marlinton-White Sulphur Ranger District Stream Crossing Structures for Trout Fisheries. This project will include the design and replacement of three undersized and deteriorating culverts on Forest Roads 296 and 298 (Laurel Run) and Forest Road 999 (Williams River), resulting in ecological uplift and improved trout fishing.

• Williams River at Tea Creek Bridge Replacement at Cranberry Wilderness. Design and construct a replacement bridge on Forest Road 404 over the Williams River for access into Tea Creek Campground.

The Great American Outdoors Act authorizes funding under the Legacy Restoration Fund annually through fiscal year 2025. Forest Service economists estimate that projects funded with these dollars will support roughly 4,400 jobs and contribute \$420 million to the gross domestic product. Forest Service infrastructure supports more than 300 million recreationists, first responders such as wildland firefighters, and other users of Forest Service roads. Each year, visitors to the national forests contribute almost \$11 billion to the U.S. economy, which sustains more than 148,000 jobs.

For more information on these nine projects contact Public Affairs Officer Kelly Bridges at kelly.bridges@usda.gov or 304-642-2864.

Continued from Front Page

ate, with yeas from Bruce, Longanacre, and Woodrum, and no vote from Baldwin (absent).

The following bills were covered in previous legislative round-ups by the Mountain Messenger. This coverage can be found online at mountainmessenger.com.

- Longanacre - H.B. 2093, H.B. 2260, H.B. 2791
- Woodrum - S.B. 339, S.B. 359, S.B. 1, S.B. 7, S.B. 9, S.B. 10, S.B. 66, S.B. 69, S.B. 263, S.B. 501, S.B. 381, S.B. 421, S.B. 429
- Baldwin - S.B. 344, S.B. 359, S.B. 392, S.B. 368, S.B. 1, S.B. 16, S.B. 39, S.B. 102, S.B. 272, S.B. 275
- Bruce - H.B. 2003

Public Meetings

Gbr. Co. Farmland Protection Board

meets on the third Thursday of each month at 10:30 a.m. at 804 Industrial Drive, Suite 5, in Maxwelton. The public is invited to attend. Call 304-520-3221 for more information.

Rainelle Town Council

meetings are held every second and fourth Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at Rainelle City Hall. The public is invited to attend.

Lewisburg City Council

will meet in special session Tuesday, Mar. 23, at 7:30 p.m. via teleconference. For information on how to participate, contact Lewisburg City Hall at 304-645-2080 by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Mar. 23. On the agenda:

- Conditional use permit, Civitas Hospitality Group DBA Briergarten, 121 Stratton Alley, Suite #9. Application to serve food and alcohol on the outdoor fenced in patio, public hearing

City Council

Continued from Front Page

tional, it can clean sidewalks, suck up leaves, mow steep edges, clear snow, and more. Pence noted this equipment is important to help maintain sidewalks around the city, including the new walkways along Route 219. He also noted that the "finishing touches" are underway at the new Dorie Miller shelter, and they are currently accepting reservations for use.

Katie Killcollin was nominated to serve on the Parks Commission.

Mountain Messenger

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Tax Tips

- Remember:
*Deadline to file
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OPINION

Commentary

Objection to HJR1

By W. Clayton Burch, State Superintendent of Schools and Miller L. Hall, President, WV Board of Education

The West Virginia Board of Education and State Superintendent W. Clayton Burch object to the proposed amendment to the Constitution of West Virginia as set forth in House Joint Resolution 1 (HJR1).

In 1958, the voters of West Virginia amended our state constitution to give general supervisory authority over the schools of our state to the State Board of Education. This amendment was undertaken in response to a legislatively commissioned study of West Virginia's system of public education and was recognized as a necessary step to provide our state's schools with a governance model that is thoughtful, managed by a diverse group of experts, and immune from the ebb and flow of politics. HJR1 seeks to subject the State Board's rule-making authority to the fluctuations of the legislative process. In doing so, the State Board would lose its ability to respond swiftly to the needs of teachers and students throughout the year. Decisions affecting daily classroom life would be placed in the hands of a partisan Legislature that changes every two years. This amendment would give a large and ever-changing body the authority to alter the shape of our classrooms with each new election.

The West Virginia Board of Education is comprised of experts from diverse backgrounds and educational expertise who are appointed by the governor for overlapping terms. This ensures continuity and a balance of political and geographic representation and creates stability for decision-making. Because members are appointed for nine-year terms and meet every month, they have the time to fully study and solicit broad stakeholder input on issues impacting our schools before issuing or amending policies. They also maintain a close daily connection to educators, allowing members to respond to student and personnel needs as they arise without unnecessary delay. This past year alone, the State Board was able to respond to numerous requests for waivers of its rules each month to help schools navigate the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In past years, waivers have been granted on an as-needed basis to respond to emerging local needs in instructional matters, building concerns, and a myriad of other issues identified by county and school personnel. But even more important than the quick turnaround needed in the consideration of waivers, the Board has been able to ensure the stability of content standards - the essence of

Commentary

State Auditor vows transparency for federal stimulus money

By John B. McCuskey
State Auditor

On Tuesday, Feb. 10, President Biden signed into law the most recent round of "stimulus dollars" designed to combat the societal and fiscal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether you agree with the passage of this bill or not, the money is coming and this 1.9 trillion-dollar package is as far reaching as it is large. Importantly, it differs from previous packages in several important ways. From the auditor's office standpoint, the biggest difference is that it allocates funding to city and county governments without direction from the state government.

From the beginning, of the lengthy debate on this bill, our office has monitored progress, maintained communication with our stakeholders, and planned to ensure maximum effect will be felt by the citizens of West Virginia. This internal process has produced several tangible results.


First, we have created a small division within our office to maintain expertise on the fluctuating regulations that go along with this money. We have learned from the first rounds of stimulus money the ways in which this money can be used changes sometimes daily, and we endeavor to ensure our local governments will have the most up to date and accurate guidance as to how this money is spent and accounted for.

Further, and more importantly, this new division will be tasked with implementing a novel program that will allow cities and counties to pool these funds in a way that will enable them to tackle large scale infrastructure projects. It is our vision this money will be used to upgrade crumbling water and sewer systems, repair roads, and provide needed 5G and other broadband programs to underserved areas.

Lastly, as with the initial round of stimulus money, we will use state of the art accounting technology to ensure this money is spent transparently. We know from years of experience the key to accountability and efficacy is transparency. Each citizen of our state deserves to know how their hard-earned tax money is being spent.


According to our state's constitution, West Virginia is not allowed to maintain indebtedness without a vote of the people. This important fact to understand is our state does owe a debt, a debt created by years of neglect for maintenance of the mandatory infrastructure that both maintains livability and enables economic growth. We believe our plan will enable our local governments to satisfy this debt to our citizens and use this one-time money in a way that will benefit our citizens for generations to come. It is our greatest fear history will repeat itself, and we will be 10 years down the road asking, "Where did all that money go?" We will do everything in our power to avoid this pitfall and have amazing local government partners committed to success.

This week we will be taking our initial steps implementing this plan, and it is my plea to the people of West Virginia to stay informed, use the information we provide and hold your elected officials accountable for the spending of your money. This is a generational opportunity. We can maximize it together.



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classroom learning - shielding them from shifting partisan politics. This preserves classroom consistency, sustains the work of West Virginia teachers who developed and wrote our standards, and allows schools to focus on equal access to a quality education for all West Virginia children.

The Constitution of West Virginia is our state government's charter of principles and organization crafted toward the ends of justice and liberty for our state's citizenry. It should be amended only in the interests of making our system of government more fair and efficient in promoting the welfare of all West Virginia residents. HJR1 will have the opposite effect, making our system of education less efficient, more chaotic, and subject to partisan politics. For these reasons, we must object.

Letter to the Editor

Public education: Can we improve? Part 2

Dear Editor:

Part one outlined the low grades of our public school's 4th and 8th graders in math and reading. The SAT scores, were equally low in comparison to the nation's students. Of local students registering at New River campus in Lewisburg, 68% were required to take remedial courses to qualify for admission.

During week two of legislative session in Charleston, Fred Albert, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) West Virginia, stated "In less than a week, the 2021 legislative session has been nothing but a barrage of attacks against public education and those who work in it." Mr. Albert appears to be endorsing the quality of remote education being received by our students, while Senator Baldwin states, "Despite near unanimous agreement from students, parents, and teachers that virtual education has not worked during COVID ..." However, remote education must be working very well as 43% of Greenbrier County high schoolers made the Honor Roll. I believe that Mr. Albert also recognizes that Charter Schools will demonstrate Greenbrier County Students have the capacity to demonstrate their ability and desire to learn far more than the current tests and SATs reveal.

Senator Baldwin further states "Pay attention, folks. The long-term ramifications of these bills are colossal. They will affect our families for years to come." Senator Baldwin's statement can be interpreted two ways; less learning by our students or greater learning by our students. The history of Charter Schools is the later, greater learning with greater acceptance into college, with concurrent improvement of public education. Senator Baldwin also infers that

Charter Schools will cost the Public School system \$200 million/\$100 million, depending on date of "The Back Pew". This is both true and false; as the millions will come from currently budgeted public education funds and be transferred to Charter School at approximately \$4,600 per student, leaving approximately \$8,000 per student with the public school system. The resulting reduction in students per class, which is a demand of the AFT and Mr. Albert, will also result from Charter Schools. However, Senator Baldwin misquoted the Delegate, "the \$8000 would remain in the public school district", not "county" as stated by the Senator in March 3 Daily News. Further, the Delegate stated that his information about the \$8,000 was confirmed by the Capitol Legal Department.

I have two granddaughters who were lucky enough to have their names drawn to attend charter schools in Delaware and South Carolina. My research into these schools revealed, that in Delaware, available seats were over scribed by multiplies and there was no difference in learning skill by race or gender. In South Carolina, the desire to enroll children, in Charter Schools was just as great. The success of these Charter Schools did not take away from public schools, and the competition seems to improve public education. It must be remembered that Elementary Schools in Greenbrier County have

The Back Pew

By Stephen Baldwin



A friend recently commented that my last two columns have been "depressing."

My response was, "I can't help it if the facts are depressing."

It has been a difficult session, because the priorities in Charleston are all backwards. But I wanted to switch things up this week and focus on some good news! Below are a number of issues I've been working on which I hope can help our people.

OFFICE OF RECOVERY. The drug crisis is out of control in West Virginia, costing our economy \$8.8 billion annually and costing our families even more in terms of lives lost. Recovery programs do work, and we have seen success in several areas. The problem is that no one is coordinating our recovery efforts. I worked with the governor's office and across the aisle in the Senate to develop an Office of Recovery. It will ensure that one person will be totally focused on coordinating our response to the substance abuse crisis across the state. This is a giant step forward in helping to instill hope and healing across the mountains. I thank everyone who worked together to make it happen.

VETERAN'S NURSING HOME. As I announced last month, we finally gathered enough financial resources to build a veteran's nursing home in southern West Virginia! It's in the governor's budget, and we expect that to be done. Once we pass the budget, the Department of Veterans Affairs will begin work on site preparation and construction. It will take some time, but we are on the march!

VETERAN'S BENEFITS. A group of veterans began meeting in the church I serve last year. Great group of guys and gals! They offered several suggestions for how the state could thank those who served this country. I then offered those ideas as bills - granting property tax exemptions to disabled veterans, giving active and retired veterans a discount at all state parks, and more. This week the bill to grant a discount at state parks passed the Veterans Committee and heads to the floor of the Senate for a vote. It's a win-win-win as it allows us to thank our veterans with a benefit, showcase our beautiful state parks, and increase tourism in the state!

AMERICORPS. Along with my friend Sen. Bill Hamilton, (Republican, Upshur County), I introduced a bill granting students with Americorps volunteer experience a scholarship to attend college in West Virginia. Again, it's a win-win situation as it incentivizes volunteerism and rewards young people for furthering their education and work in our state.

GUN SAFETY BILLS. West Virginians are avid supporters of the Second Amendment. In today's day and age, it's more important than ever to ensure gun safety. So a few years ago, I introduced a package of bills to provide tax credits for responsible gun owners. For example, you could get a tax credit for completing a firearm safety course. Or, if you buy any safety equipment such as a safe, then you would not pay any sales tax. Stay tuned to see if these common sense bills gain enough traction to be voted upon.

VACCINES. My focus in terms of COVID response continues to be securing more vaccines. If we can continue to vaccinate citizens at a high rate, then we can get back to doing the things we love which have been unsafe for the past year. Do your part by signing up for a vaccine at www.vaccinate.wv.gov or 833-734-0965. All essential workers and those with pre-existing medical conditions can all now get a vaccine!

That's the view from the back pew, where it is my privilege to serve you!

(Senator Stephen Baldwin is the Minority Leader and a local pastor. Reach him at 304-357-7959 or stephen.baldwin@wvsenate.gov. Follow him on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @BaldwinForWV)

**e-mail
 news stories and letters to the editor to
news@mountainmessenger.com
 Deadline for Letters to the Editor
 is noon Wednesday**

OPED piece submission guidelines:

To submit an OPED piece to the *Mountain Messenger* it must comply with the following rules:

- 1) OPED pieces may contain constructive criticisms, thoughts, or observations, which we publish on an individually approved basis.
- 2) No name-calling, hate speech, or other derogatory language is permitted. We do not publish letters containing "bashing," personal attacks, and the like. However, we do appreciate mindful concerns, assessments, and thoughts.
- 3) All letters must be signed by the author and include the city in which they reside.

Please note all submissions are subject to individual editorial approval. Please do not mail or hand-deliver letters, email news@mountainmessenger.com.

been open five days a week with few exceptions. High Schools have not; and according to Senator Baldwin remote education has been a total failure; even though the two high schools reported an average of 43% of students made the Honor Roll.

Next week I will ask for support of students and parents on providing copies of tests and volunteers to assist in evaluating the degree of difficulty and success of student's retention of subject taught. Names will not be released but copies will be available to the County Board of Education if or when requested. Mailing address will be a Post Office Box.

Frank W. Tuckwiller
Lewisburg

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SCRABLERS

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 page!

Shooter
RIPENS

Shall
FREE

Fall
MISTEY

Bare
UNTIDY

TODAY'S WORD

"Daddy cooked dinner, and then the _____ came!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Hat is different. 2. Socks are higher. 3. Button is missing removed. 4. Hair is shorter. 5. Pants are different. 6. Mailbox is missing.

Super Crossword

ACROSS

1 Item in a place setting
6 Duffels, e.g.
10 Grand tales
15 Hence
19 Boundary
20 "— Three Ships"
21 — Park (Edison's home)
22 Took off
23 Really big tree?
25 Fundamental tree?
27 Longs for
28 Franz who composed "The Merry Widow"
30 Early settler
31 "Erin Burnett OutFront" channel
32 Passes on, as a story
34 French brandy
35 Chinese ideology centered around a tree?
39 Actor Mahershala
41 "Family Guy" creator MacFarlane

DOWN

42 Soon
43 Two of Henry VIII's wives
44 Coagulates
46 "Gunga Din" studio
47 Recorded digitally, in a way
49 LAX datum
51 Wharf locale
56 Tree-dwelling hooded snake?
60 Tree whose trunk curves?
62 Cut of pork
63 Dutch Renaissance scholar
65 Rake part
66 Nuances
69 Item in a place setting
70 Of delicate beauty
72 A shot
73 Love-struck
74 Farm vehicle
75 Tree sold at a low price?
78 Cantaloupe growing on a tree?
83 More flavorful
84 Indy circuit
86 Auction site
87 Union promise
88 Slant

90 Millionaire-making game
93 Menial type
94 Provoke
98 Corp. wheel
99 Charm exuding from a tree?
102 Nancy of the House
104 Like sown seeds
106 "Ally McBeal" co-star Lucy
107 In total
109 — Gay (WWII B-29)
110 Tea-scenting blossom
114 Tree that makes people think like a French novelist?
116 Window sections through which trees are visible?
118 Richard of "Wicked Woman"
119 "Für —" (piano piece)
120 Romances
121 Florida bird
122 Mail in
123 Steven of Aerosmith
124 Fit of pique

125 Plow inventor John
37 "Park" a ship
38 Central Georgia city
40 Gets bested
44 Vivid crimson
45 Egg pouch
47 Slender woodwind
48 CBS military law show
50 Fez dangler
52 Small and 70-Across
53 Chief Norse god
54 Talk wildly
55 Deuce taker
57 Hackneyed
58 Grid of fine lines in an eyepiece
59 Franklin of soul
61 — -de-sac
64 See 71-Down
66 Splinter group
67 Laugh sound
68 Golf coups
69 Thurman of Hollywood
70 Funny Carvey
71 With 64-Down, hostile swarming insect
73 Suit fabric

74 Old computer language
76 Entertainer Zadora
77 Gift for a drawer, perhaps
79 Dealt (out)
80 In — of (replacing)
81 Gas leak giveaway
82 Zilch
85 Suburb of Dallas
89 Hack (off)
91 Prohibits
92 High crime
93 Bird feathers
94 Gaps
95 Mammal's fur
96 Comic Tracey
97 Roly-poly
99 Cavalry soldier
100 Actor Ruck
101 Talked like Cindy Brady
103 Alert at sea
105 Car contract
108 As is fitting
110 Joke
111 About
112 — -do-well (idler)
113 Punta del — 115 1,000 G's
117 Luau bowful

Greenbrier Valley Restaurant Week set for April 19-24

The Greater Greenbrier Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce the 1st Annual Greenbrier Valley Restaurant Week that will take place Apr. 19 to 24. This six-day event will feature the Greenbrier Valley's greatest restaurants and the area's diverse culinary scene. The restaurants will be offering special fixed menus for a discounted price for dine-in or

take-out. The Chamber will also be selling chances to win dinner for two at the participating restaurants: The Humble Tomato, Briergarten, Stardust Café, The General Lewis Inn, The Livery Tavern, The French Goat, The Asylum, Hill and Holler, Fruits of Labor, Del Sol Cantina and Road Hog's BBQ. To purchase tickets for "The

Chamber Dining Experience" go to www.greenbriervwchamber.org/events or use the QR code at the restaurant's participating in restaurant week. Participating restaurants and menus can be found at www.greenbriervwchamber.org/events. For more information email director@greenbriervwchamber.org or call 304-645-2818.

A Look Back

By William "Skip" Deegans

Of all the celebratory events during West Virginia's centennial in 1963, the most memorable may be the West Virginia Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture. The exhibition was judged by James J. Sweeney, the former director of New York's Guggenheim Museum. He was awarded first prize and a cash award of \$1,963 to state native and West Virginia University professor Joe Moss for his painting "West Virginia Moon." As shown in this week's photo, Moss' entry was made from weathered boards, an old screen door, and painted with some leftover paint.

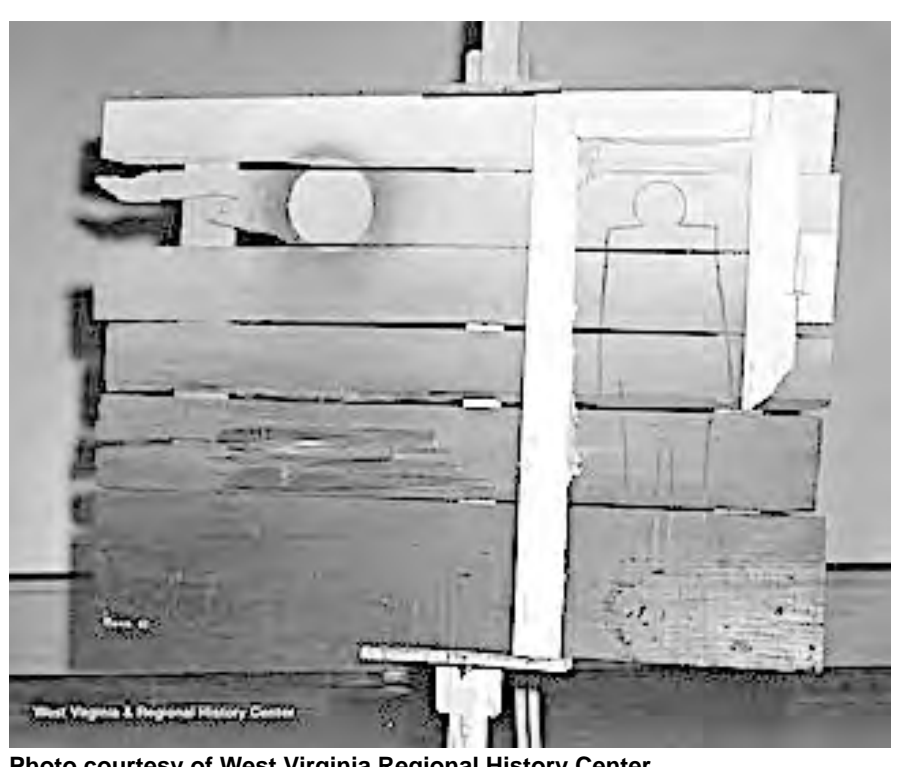


Photo courtesy of West Virginia Regional History Center.

The award was met with a hue and cry heard all over West Virginia. Charleston's mayor John Shanklin called the painting "atrocious" and "sickening." Editorials in the Beckley Post-Herald and Raleigh Register described it as a "monstrosity," recommended it be burned, and the publisher wrote that he was "disgusted" about the

painting. There was concern it would tarnish West Virginia's image. Even Dwight D. Eisenhower weighed in by remarking "...freedom of the arts is a basic freedom - that the artist must be free." When the exhibition opened to the public at Huntington Galleries following the initial commotion, 3,000 people came to see "West Virginia Moon" on the first day. Joe Moss left West Virginia to become a professor at the Univer-

sity of Delaware where he taught for 29 years. He died in 2018, and testimonials indicate he was a gifted and well-beloved teacher. The state bought "West Virginia Moon," and it is exhibited at the State Museum in Charleston.

Sources: *Huntington Herald Dispatch, Beckley Post-Herald, Raleigh Register, West Virginia Public Broadcasting, Congressional Record.*

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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Openings still available for Carnegie Hall homeschool and virtual school spring class

Openings for Carnegie Hall's Tuesday afternoon class for homeschool and virtual school students have become available for age 8-16 years old. The classes, aimed at providing hands-on arts and sciences educational opportunities, include basket weaving, acrylic painting, making slime, and more. There are four classes remaining in the first session, which continue on Tuesday, Mar. 23, Mar. 30, Apr. 6, and Apr. 13 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. A second session starts April 20. Cost is only \$25 thanks to a grant from United Way of the Greenbrier Valley. These are small, socially distanced, in-person classes and all participants are required to wear masks while in Carnegie Hall. To register, visit www.carnegiehallwv.org or call 304-645-7917.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT



Greetings to New and Existing Patients.

At Greenbrier Audiology, we work with our patients to improve patients' quality of life by addressing individual hearing losses. That process involves understanding each patient's hearing needs and goals, prescribing hearing aids, and counseling on how to get the most out of hearing aid capabilities. **We truly appreciate the trust our patients put in us to help them hear their best.**

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We would like to extend an invitation to new and existing patients to our Widex Open House Event on: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021.

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FOOD Brings Everyone to the Table

March 23, 2021



CELEBRATE AG WEEK MARCH 21-27, 2021



Though few may recognize the role of technology in modern farming, there's no denying the impact that various technologies have already had on the agricultural industry. And that impact figures to become even more profound in the decades to come.

The role of technology in agriculture

When asked to think of industries that utilize technology in unique ways, few people may immediately think of agriculture. But technology has left a significant footprint in every industry, and the agricultural sector is no exception.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture notes that modern farms operate a lot differently than the farms of yesteryear. Dramatic changes have taken place within the agricultural industry over the last few decades, helping farming operations become more efficient and profitable as well as safer and more eco-friendly.

Robots, temperature and moisture sensors, aerial images, and GPS technologies are now routinely employed within the agricultural industry. The NIFA notes that the value of such technologies cannot be understated. Thanks to the technolo-

gies at their disposals, farmers no longer have to uniformly apply water, fertilizer and pesticides to their farms. Technology now allows them to use only the minimum amounts required as they zero in on individual plants and target specific areas of their farms. The NIFA notes that the utilization of these technologies produces some very real benefits, including:

- Higher crop productivity
- Reduced impact on natural ecosystems
- Less runoff of chemicals into rivers and groundwater
- Increased worker safety

Safer, more efficient and more eco-friendly operations can only make the agricultural industry more successful in the decades to come. That's especially notable as the world continues to confront climate change and how it might affect the food supply.

Food Brings Everyone to the Table— Celebrate Ag Day on March 23, 2021

Join the virtual event from wherever you are to hear updates from government leaders and honor the contributions of American agriculture.

Food brings everyone to the table. And this year, our virtual Ag Day celebration will bring everyone together to recognize the importance of American agriculture.

The program will include both live and pre-recorded segments with remarks from government leaders on the agriculture industry's economic growth opportunities and how the future will be shaped by lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A representative from the collegiate Ag Day student program will share their experiences and participants will get to hear the winning Ag Day essay as well as view the winning Ag Day video essay. 2021's Outstanding Young Farmers will also be recognized during the event.

The program begins on March 23,

2021, at 8:30 a.m. CST. You can register to attend now.

"Hosting a virtual Ag Day event has led to some creative ways to celebrate American ag," said Jenny Pickett, President. "The program will include informal thank you videos to farmers from individuals and companies in the industry so even though we can't gather in person, it will still have a personal feel and energy to it."

National Ag Day is organized by the Agriculture Council of America (ACA). ACA is a not-for-profit organization composed of leaders in the agricultural, food and fiber community, dedicating its efforts to increasing the public's awareness of agriculture's role in modern society.

Find more information on Ag Day and helpful tools for spreading the word about the importance of American agriculture at www.agday.org.

Greenbrier 4-H Foundation hosts geranium sale

For yet another year, the 4-H Foundation will be selling Blue Ridge Farms geraniums. Colors available are red, American White Splash, pink, coral, and crimson flame (violet). The pick-up date is May 6 at the WV State Fairgrounds from 3 to 5 p.m. at the picnic pavilion near Fair Street.

Profits from the sales are used to

support many 4-H camp scholarships and the visual presentation contest. You may contact any foundation board member: Noel DeHaven, Molly Hileman, Todd Ramboldt, Debbie McClung, Tammy Shiflett-Tincher, Kim Walker Estep, or Jamie Tuckwiller for more information, or call or text 304-667-9288 or email jolong53@gmail.com.

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FFA officers hold meeting



FFA officers had their first meeting of the year on Nov. 7, 2020. They spent the day planning their goals and activities, and learning to be a team. Participants also enjoyed some FFA ham and tenderloin just like they normally have in the Ham Stand at the West Virginia State Fair. It was such a great day, and from an advisors perspective, listening to our kids laugh and enjoy some of our normal activities was such a blessing.

AG learning never stops with entrepreneurial SAE's



Learning doesn't stop for agriculture students if they are out of the classroom, or even over the summer. GEHS FFA member Mason, along with every agriculture student, must have a Supervised Experience Program which is a job related to agriculture, a business they own, or agriculture research projects. Mason has several: swine produc-

tion, beef production, sheep production, and his newest venture is hemp production. Along with these entrepreneurial SAE's, he also held a full time job over the summer with Bobby's Lawn Care Service. The skills he and all our members are learning through these enterprises will last them a lifetime, no matter what their future holds.

Hands-on dissection lab benefits Animal Production students



Animal Production students began the largest unit they will do all year-anatomy and physiology. They dissect a fetal pig, learning each part and system, and how everything works together to make the body work. These students have been so excited to start this learning activity. They are even videoing it in class and loaded this and the lab manual onto their Google classroom so students who are remote can also experience this learning lab.



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Common sustainable agriculture practices

The concept of sustainability varies by industry. Within the agricultural industry, sustainability is a multifaceted concept that has become increasingly popular in recent decades.

According to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, sustainable agriculture seeks to increase profitable farm income, promote environmental stewardship, enhance quality of life for farm families and communities, and increase production for human food and fiber needs. In an attempt to reach those goals, farmers who embrace sustainable agriculture may look to various practices.

- **Cover crops:** The Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit organization that aims to employ independent science to address the planet's most pressing problems, notes that cover crops are planted during the offseason when soils have traditionally been left bare. Cover crops can help prevent soil erosion and replenish the nutrients in the soil. Cover crops also can limit weed growth, reducing the need for herbicides that can prove harmful to the environment.
- **Reduce or eliminate tillage:** According to the UCS, traditional plowing, or tillage, can cause a significant amount of soil loss, even as it prepares fields for planting and reduces the likelihood of

weed problems. Eliminating or reducing tillage involves inserting seeds directly into undisturbed soil, which can reduce erosion and improve the health of the soil.

- **Integrated pest management:** Integrated pest management techniques aim to minimize the use of chemical pesticides that can prove harmful to the environment and local wildlife. According to the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program, IPM strategies like habitat manipulation and the planting of disease-resistant plants are designed to promote long-term prevention of pests and the damage such pests can cause.
- **Agroforestry:** The Association for Temperate Agroforestry defines agroforestry as an intensive land management system that incorporates trees and/or shrubs to optimize the benefits they provide when deliberately combined with crops and/or livestock. The shade and shelter provided by trees and shrubs can protect plants, animals and water resources.
- **Crop/livestock integration:** The UCS notes that there is growing evidence to suggest that the careful integration of crop and animal production can help farmers make their farms more efficient and profitable.



Sustainable agriculture is a complex concept that can benefit farmers, their local communities and the environment in myriad ways.

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Saturday 8 AM - Noon Sunday 5 AM - 6:30 PM



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