



Blacksburg Town Council schedules FY2024-25 proposed budget hearing

Projected increases in water, sewer, and meter fees

Lori Graham
Contributing writer

BLACKSBURG – Blacksburg Town Council has set the public hearing date for the FY2024-25 Proposed Budget, along with two other public hearings, for April 9, 2024.

Town council is scheduled to vote April 23 on the budget. The budget year begins July 1, 2024, and ends June 30, 2025.

Blacksburg Town Manager Marc Verniel introduced the proposed budget during the March 12 town council meeting.

“We introduce it in the beginning of

March and council holds work sessions throughout March and April, holds a public hearing in April, and then we’ll vote at the end of April,” Verniel said. “And really, if I was to sum things up on the budget this year, you know, we’ve come out of the pandemic recession that we faced here in Blacksburg and our revenues are recovering but we are also facing inflation like people are in their personal lives; things are costing more, the same story for the town.”

Verniel said the proposed budget would be just over \$105 million dollars for next year, with approximately half going to the General Fund, funded primarily with tax revenues. Approximately \$22.5

million will go to Utility Funds, \$0.5 million dollars to General Capital Funds, \$3.3 million to unspecified Other Funds, and \$25.2 million to Transit Funds, which operates the Blacksburg Transit System, which is primarily funded by state and federal grants and local money from student and contract fees, Verniel said.

“It is about a 4% increase overall,” Verniel said. “We are giving staff pay increases this year, we are also adding some new positions, so that is adding to that percentage as well.”

Property tax rates are proposed to remain at \$0.26 per \$100 of assessed value, following an increase last year.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG

“We typically stick with that tax rate for the next four years,” Verniel said.

However, sewer, water, and the average utility bill will all see increases this year while solid waste and recycling, and stormwater fees will remain the same.

A public hearing is also set for April

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NRVHBA

From landscaping to building materials, the 2024 Home Expo has a lot of ideas for home projects.

Kick off your home projects this weekend at the 2024 NRV Home Expo

CHRISTIANSBURG — The New River Valley Home Builders Association’s (NRVHBA) annual Home Expo takes place this weekend, Mar. 23-24, at the Christiansburg Rec Center, 1600 N. Franklin St.

Looking for inspiration to kick off your home projects? The NRVHBA has put all your home care needs

into one convenient location. This is the place to be if you are looking to build a new home, remodel your current home, find your mortgage lender or real estate agent, or meet service providers to help you with your current project list. This year’s expo promises to be one of our best yet.” Said Ian Friend, President of the NRVHBA, “We hope the

NRV will come out in force to take advantage of all the contractors and vendors who will be set up at the Christiansburg Recreation Center. With warmer weather coming, this is a perfect time to get project ideas, schedule estimates, and kick off your spring season.”

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Citizens request Blacksburg Town Council draft an immediate ceasefire resolution for Gaza

Speakers cite impacts of local weapon manufacturing and genocide in Palestine

Lori Graham
Contributing writer

BLACKSBURG – A stream of citizens waited their turn, many wearing a keffiyeh, the scarf synonymous to Palestinians and their supporters, to address their grievances and heartbreak over the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict in what they are calling a genocide.

Citizens present at the Mar. 12 Blacksburg Town Council meeting called for solidarity from the town in the form of a ceasefire resolution in Palestine.

Andy Steger of Blacksburg was the first at the podium to address the council members during the citizen comments session of the meeting. Steger called for a public resolution by the Town of Blacksburg for a ceasefire in Gaza, reading a poem to council preluded by a trigger warning due to sensitive imagery that the words may reflect.

“This is part of the anger and grief that I can’t hold inside any longer about what is happening in Gaza. The poem is called ‘In our Global Theater,’” Steger said.

Steger’s call to action asked that Blacksburg join many other cities in drafting a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Palestine. Other community members also spoke in support to draft a resolution in support of Palestine and an immediate ceasefire.

According to a Reuters article titled “US city councils increasingly call for Israel-Gaza ceasefire, analysis shows” on Feb. 2, 2024, by Aurora Ellis, “Some 70 U.S. cities, including Chicago and Seattle, have passed resolutions on the Israel-Gaza war with most calling for a ceasefire, a Reuters analysis of city data shows, placing more pressure on President Joe Biden ahead of a November general election to help end the fighting.”

“I grieve for actions that I’m told haven’t happened,” said Blacksburg resident Zachary Weiss. “You will continue to hear us holler until justice prevails. We all know what free Palestine entails. Support the free Palestine resolution.”

Megan Peterson lives in Christiansburg and works in Blacksburg, and also has family ties to the community, responded to the question why a small town like Blacksburg should support Palestine and a ceasefire resolution. Peterson spoke of the weapons being manufactured nearby at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant and the longstanding connection Virginia Tech has had to the military with the Corps of Cadet program.

“Our legacy can be, that we do not have manufactured weapons in our community to, I guess, commit this unfolding genocide in Palestine. We can also pass a, you know, ceasefire Palestine resolution and that be our legacy instead,” Peterson said.

Gwyneth Homer, local childcare worker, and lifelong resident of Blacksburg spoke of the loss of youthful life in Palestine.

“Recently, the U.S. airdropped enough food for 37,000 meals, which sounds so generous but is nowhere near enough to fill 2.3 million hungry bellies and it becomes insulting when the same ‘benefactor’ is also providing machinery to slaughter those who are seeking aid,” Homer said. “Childbirth is stressful in any country...women in Gaza can expect no such relief. There’s no medicine to ease their labor, nor a safe, clean space to deliver. The mothers are too malnourished to nurse their own babies, so they rely on formula, but the water that they mix their formula with is contaminated because Israel has bombed their water infrastructure, and

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Rock Icons series begins at Radford



Guitarist Anthony Del Grosso and bassist Maddy Nase.

Sean Kotz
Radford University

RADFORD - On Friday, March 22, the first of the “Rock Icons” concerts will take place on Radford University’s main campus with the music of Sting and the Police.

This free, public concert will cover some of the band’s most iconic and best loved songs as well as highlights from Sting’s solo career.

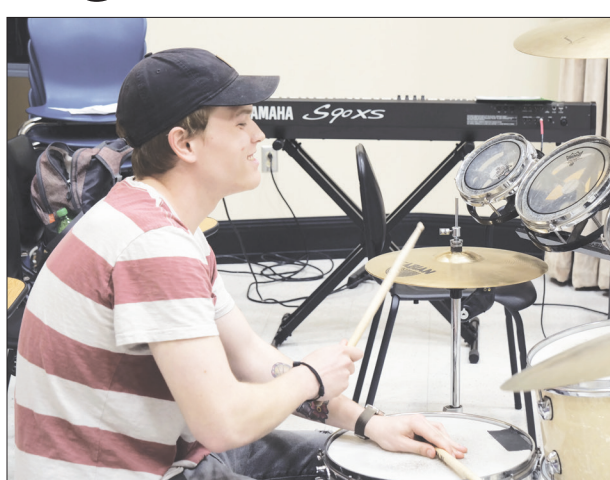
The ensemble is directed by Dave Rivers, a professor in the Music Business program. Rivers, who also teaches a Beatles class, brought last year’s performance of Pink Floyd’s “Dark Side of the Moon” album to Radford as part of the “Rock 50” series.

Where the “Rock 50” series performs a complete album from start to finish, the “Rock Icons” performances feature music from across the careers of prolific and influential rock artists, often exploring alternate versions of classic songs.

“Sting and the Police were chosen as the first in this concert series because of the wide range of styles that could be explored from New Wave and punk to rock, pop and jazz,” Rivers explained.

The music is performed by the Commercial Music Ensemble, a student band with a unique role on campus.

Established in 2019, the group plays rock and pop music concerts on Radford’s campus. The CME is the house band for the annual “Radford Idol” talent



Drummer Sam Slaughter



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Professor Dave Rivers and keyboardist Gabe Armstead share a laugh at rehearsals.

competition and regularly collaborates with the Dance department and the Radford band and choirs.

Many of the students intend to have a career in the music business and Rivers says these kinds of performances add depth and understanding to their educations.

“The student musicians and singers get a deeper

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, Mar. 20:

Hahn Horticulture Garden talk

Tim Shively - Tree of Heaven: Picking up from Scott Salom's talk from last month, Tim will talk about his research and sustainable IPM tools and strategies for use on tree of heaven. The talk is at the Hahn Horticulture Garden, 200 Garden Lane, Blacksburg, at noon. You do not need to register for these talks, just show up and attend. Parking passes for these educational events will be provided by the HHG thanks to supplementary funding provided by the School of Plant and Environmental Design.

Thursday, Mar. 21:

Radford Photo Club meeting

The Radford Photo Club will meet at 6 p.m. at the Radford Public Library. Members will show slides of photos taken at stations during the February meeting. Also, Michele Borgarelli will show works by Luigi Ghirri, an Italian internationally recognized photographer, and Borgarelli will show his own work taken in Ghirri's style. Food and/or cooking is the theme for the print photo competition. There is also an open competition. The Radford Photo Club is made up of professional and amateur photographers from throughout the New River Valley. Meetings, events, and outings are open to the public. If you have questions about the club, email Lucy Gilmore at lucyg.gilmore@gmail.com or Michele Borgarelli at mborgarelli@gmail.com.

Sons of Confederate Veterans meeting

The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Stuart Horse Artillery Camp 1784 will meet at 7 p.m. at American Pie Restaurant, 1041 Floyd Highway North. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) are also invited to attend. Member Dana Jackson will speak on the "History of the Confederate Veterans Home in Richmond." If Floyd and Montgomery County Public Schools are closed on Thursday or Friday of this week due to weather, the meeting will be cancelled. For further information, please call 540-320-4315 or 540-

239-9864.

Friday, Mar. 22:

Hahn Horticulture Garden talk

Hydroponics with the Innovative Agriculture Club: Expand your knowledge of hydroponic gardening systems at Innovative Agriculture Club's hydroponics workshop. This student-led event will consist of an introductory presentation about the basics of hydroponics (by club members), a tour of the greenhouse systems with Dr. Kardos, and constructing Kratky systems to take home. There will also be a fundraising raffle for an Aerogarden system. This program is planned and coordinated by the IAC. The talk is at the Hahn Horticulture Garden, 200 Garden Lane, Blacksburg, at 2 p.m. You do not need to register for these talks, just show up and attend. Parking passes for these educational events will be provided by the HHG thanks to supplementary funding provided by the School of Plant and Environmental Design.

Monday, Mar. 25:

Radford City Council meeting

The Radford City Council will hold its regularly scheduled meeting at 7 p.m. in council chambers at the Radford Municipal Building, 10 Robertson St., Radford. See the agenda at www.radfordva.gov.

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting

Public meetings are the second and fourth Monday of each month at the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St. in Christiansburg. Closed sessions begin at 6 p.m. if needed. Open sessions begin at 7:15 p.m. Citizens are invited to attend and allowed to speak at each meeting. All regular meetings of the Board of Supervisors are rebroadcast on Montgomery County Comcast and Shentel Channels 190 daily.

Tuesday, Mar. 26:

College Avenue tree removal scheduled in advance of sewer project

This summer, the Town of Blacksburg will begin Phase One of the Harding Avenue Sewer Replacement Project.

This project will replace existing 60-year-old sewer lines that have reached capacity and are near the end of their useful life.

Prior to construction, the Bartlett Tree company will remove a Pin Oak tree adjacent to the Bottom of the Stairs restaurant on College Avenue, an area that will benefit from the sewer replacement project. Four additional trees located in the landscape median of the Squires parking lot will also be removed.

The base of the Pin Oak is approximately five feet from a manhole that will be replaced during the sewer replacement project. Town staff, in collaboration with the Virginia Tech Arborist, determined that the tree roots would need to be cut on one side, rendering

it hazardous and vulnerable to strong winds. Due to numerous underground utilities in the area, there are no practical alternatives but to remove the tree and replace it with another shade tree in a nearby location. The replacement shade tree will be selected in consultation with the Virginia Tech Arborist to complement the surrounding landscape and restore natural shade to the area.

Removal of the Pin Oak will take place between 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Mar. 19. The four trees in the Squires Parking lot will be removed on March 20 between 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

For additional information, please contact: Engineering Field Supervisor, Doug Shaver at 540.443.1359 or Town Engineer, Shawn Veltman at 540.443.1352.

Town of Blacksburg

Expo

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The Expo will have a floor full of local, trusted professionals who are available to answer your home care questions, provide you with reliable resources and quick quotes, as well as show you samples of their skills and services. Exhibitors include builders, remodelers, landscape designers, flooring specialists, home product and service providers and more. A full list of exhibitors can be viewed online at www.nrvhomeexpo.com.

In addition to meeting exhibitors, attendees can also vote for their favorite LEGO home in the LEGO Home Building Contest and bid on items in the Silent Auction, featuring items such as home fixtures, tools, service gift certificates, sports experiences and more. Online bidding is available. Activities for the kids will also be available on Saturday March 23, including a building station and a construction themed Storytime with Joelle.

The 2024 event will also highlight building trades education and a job center, sponsored by Green Valley Builders. There will be informational

materials about potential construction career paths and from local trades education programs available onsite. In the Job Center booth, available jobs from NRVHBA member companies, along with event exhibitors, will be posted.

The event hours are Saturday, Mar. 23, 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. and Sunday, Mar. 24 12 – 5 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults on the day of the event. Children under 18 are free when accompanied by a paying adult. Be sure to look for \$2 off coupons online, in stores, and in your mailboxes. Tickets can be purchased online at www.nrvhomeexpo.com. Anyone who purchases their tickets online ahead of the event are automatically entered to win one of many door prizes throughout the weekend.

For more information and updates on the NRV Home Expo, follow us on Facebook, @nrvhomeexpo, or Instagram, @nrvhba, or visit www.nrvhomeexpo.com.

New River Valley Home Builders Association's (NRVHBA)

Gaza

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their children end up with hepatitis." One immigrant from the Middle East, now a Blacksburg resident, also addressed council.

"I moved to Blacksburg from the Middle East." Lena Zubi of Blacksburg and a Virginia Tech student said. "I moved by choice. My grandfather is from Hebron, and he had to flee his home a while back, not by choice. I moved here because I believed in what this country stood for. I believed in freedom, pursuit of happiness, and liberty."

Helena Hubert, a college student of William and Mary and Blacksburg resident who immigrated here from Germany at a young age, spoke through tears of her friend from Cambodia who had great loss of family due to what is historically referred to as a U.S. involved Cambodian genocide. The impact of the attack continues to deeply affect him and his remaining family members, Hubert said.

"You guys have the power to do something about it," Hubert said. "I'm just a college student. You guys have been elected to do something and it and if you don't, you're going to kill people. We're gonna kill

people."

"Israel was attacked by Hamas, this is undisputed," Virginia Tech student William Kirschbaum said. "Thousands of Israelis were killed in an unprovoked attack by their neighbors. This is just the truth and I believe, I believe, there was a military response, as many other states would respond to their citizens being killed, and that response carries with a devastating consequence as our, the protesters here have mentioned. They are absolutely correct in the sense that Palestinian lives matter, this is true; however, Israeli lives also matter."

Kirschbaum said that both sides of the conflict should be considered and that he does also stand with American military soldiers. He went on to say that he will respect the decision of the Blacksburg Town Council.

Mayor Leslie Hager-Smith commended everyone for attending the meeting and speaking out.

"It's difficult to speak in public. Most of us don't feel polished about it and it takes an extra measure of bravery to talk on a topic that is fraught like this," Hager-Smith said.

PETS OF THE WEEK

These pets and many others are available for adoption at the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center, 480 Cinnabar Rd., Christiansburg. Phone: (540) 382-5795.

Marble is a happy, energetic pup who is ready to head home. This boy knows commands, including "sit" and "shake." He aims to please when delicious treats are on the line. Marble also enjoys playing with a variety of toys.



Tim Bob (pictured) and his twin brother Jim Bob are hoping to go to the same home. These kittens love to play and romp with each other. Hide and Seek is a favorite activity. Stop by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to meet this dynamic duo.

Council

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9 to discuss Ordinance 2049, an "Ordinance Amending Blacksburg Town Code Sections 18-201, 18-400, 24-301, 24-306, 24-314, and 24-602 to Increase Fees for Water and Sewer Services and Meter Fees," according to the Town's agenda.

Virginia Tech student William Kirschbaum spoke during the citizen's comment session of the meeting and believes that increasing rising costs that are laid out in Ordinance 2049, Water and Sewer Fees and Meter Fees, should be decided upon with the consideration that some community members will struggle to pay.

Ordinance 2047: An Ordinance of the Town Council of the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Authorizing the Issuance of its General Obligation Capital Improvement and Refunding Bonds, Series 2024, will also invite a public hearing on April 9, 2024.

Kirschbaum also spoke concerning the use of bonds to promote the capital budget.

Kirschbaum said, "This is a vital tool used by this council to ensure the timely access to us as citizens that we need for our services and I'm tremendously grateful for this body of movement; however, I do believe there are some important considerations that must be addressed."

Kirschbaum serves as a member of the New River Valley Literacy program and a volunteer and believes that the capital gains budget must be distributed in a way that "promotes educational opportunity in this community."

In other public concerns during the citizens' address, James McKinley, former Advocacy Chair for the Students

for Sensible Drug Policy Club, spoke to council on ways that the town "can reduce the impact the opioid crisis has had on Blacksburg."

McKinley cited the Virginia Department of Health and said, "In 2022, 79% of drug overdose stats involved fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and tramadol. There are 2,490 drug overdose stats among Virginians. We conducted Naloxone trainings, also known as Narcan, with Hokie Wellness and Mike Wade from New River Valley Community Services to help prevent overdoses. As a Clinical Research Assistant with Carilion Clinics Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine in Roanoke, I read stories of addiction and overdose in Roanoke and Southwest Virginia every day."

McKinley's call to action for the town is to reduce the impact of overdosing to those who visit the area and live within the region by passing ordinances to install locksmith boxes in public buildings, partner with local organizations, install safe dosing sharp boxes, post flyers with overdosing statistics, and directions on how to administer Naloxone.

In council announcements, it is National Women's History Month, and many events are scheduled in Blacksburg at Virginia Tech University, Council member Susan Anderson said.

"You can go to the Women's Center at Virginia Tech website and see the full calendar listing, again, lots of wonderful programs and please do check out the website and attend some events," Anderson said.

The website for Women's Month events is womenscenter.vt.edu.

OBITUARIES

Agnew, Bennie Leon

Bennie "Ben" Leon Agnew passed away Mar. 11, 2024.

Bennie leaves behind his wife, Carolyn; daughter Sarah Agnew Cochrane, son-in-law John, and a beautiful granddaughter Hannah Cochrane; brother Joe and his wife Teresa; two very special aunts, Madge Agnew Neel (Kenneth) and Ruth Johnston; and many cousins and friends.

He is the son of Henry Lynwood and Eunice Johnston Agnew of Blacksburg. Bennie lived in the Lusters Gate area until he was drafted and



served in the Army. He was in Vietnam between 1968-69 where he served with the Americal (23rd Infantry) Division. Ben's motto was "Proud to have served and Proud

to be an American." Ben was also a life member of VFW Post No. 5311. Ben worked 44 years as a Light Machinist for the company now known as MOOG. After he retired, Ben and his brother Joe started a registered Angus herd on the family farm known as Indian Run Farm in the Lusters Gate area of Blacksburg. Ben's blood ran John Deere yellow and green. Ben was a good man who will be missed by all who knew him. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date.

Reynolds, Robin Elizabeth

Robin Elizabeth Reynolds, 59, of Blacksburg, passed away peacefully in her home surrounded by her family on Monday, Mar. 11, 2024.

She was born on July 2, 1964, to the late William Osborne Reynolds and Grace Keister Reynolds. She was also preceded in death by her twin sister Aubin Margaret Reynolds and brother-in-law Timothy Wayne Graham.

She was a loving daughter, sister, aunt, great-aunt, and cousin. She enjoyed spending time with her family. She was a very kind, generous, and nurturing person and thought of her niece and nephews as if they were her own children. She was known to all the children as RaRa. She enjoyed gardening, everything Disney, and was always seen wearing her favorite color purple. Robin was a graduate of



Blacksburg High School and worked for Virginia Tech in the Division of Information Technology for over 30 years. She was a lifelong member of Luther Memorial Lutheran Church.

She is survived by her two sisters, Tammy Reynolds Graham of Newport, Va., Jan Reynolds Gilbertson (Phil) of Blacksburg; niece Whitney Akers (Justin) of Christiansburg; nephews Dalton Graham, Dillon Graham (Alyssa), and Drew Graham (Lynnsey) of Newport;

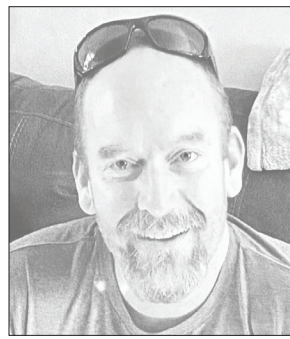
and great-nephews Connor Akers, Sawyer Akers, and Kayne Graham. She is also survived by her aunt, Polly McFarlane of Roanoke; special cousin Beth W. Fife of Myrtle Beach, S.C.; and numerous other cousins. Special thanks to Carilion Hospice for all their care and support.

A funeral service was conducted Friday Mar. 15, 2024, at the Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, Blacksburg, with Bill King officiating. Interment followed the service at Roselawn Memorial Gardens. The family received friends Thursday, Mar. 14, 2024 at McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg. In lieu of flowers, Memorial Contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society or to the Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, 600 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Mullens Jr., Benny Carl

Benny Carl Mullens Jr., 47, of Christiansburg, died Thursday, Mar. 14, 2024 at Carilion NRV Medical Center.

He was preceded in death by a sister, Karen L. Quesenberry. He is survived by parents, Benny and Sandra Mullens; sister and brother-in-law Theresa and Joe Hagy; brother-in-law Randy Quesenberry; niece Amelia Bainbridge; nephew Shaun Hagy; and



fiancé Cortney Atkins and family. Special

thanks to Donna Epperly, Shenandoah Brown, Allen Gibson, the CCU Unit at CRNV Medical Center and many friends.

Graveside services were held at 11:15 a.m., Monday, Mar. 18, 2024 at the Westview Cemetery, Blacksburg. The family received friends Monday morning prior to the service at McCoy Funeral Home, 150 Country Club Dr. SW, Blacksburg.

Woolwine, Joseph Leroy

Joseph Leroy Woolwine, 86, of Shawsville, went to his heavenly home Wednesday, Mar. 13, 2024.

He was born at home in Christiansburg on Mar. 3, 1938, to the late Rev. Charlie and Kathleen Woolwine. He was preceded in death by his brothers, Donald and Mike Woolwine, and grandson Bryan Woolwine. He was married to Patricia (Patty) Wells Woolwine for 65 years before she passed in 2021.

He was remarried to Maxine Dudley Woolwine from Christiansburg, and they lived in Shawsville. Leroy was a graduate of Christiansburg High School class of 1955. He loved his family and enjoyed taking them on vacations. He was a member of the Elliston Church of God for many years and helped build the



current church in Elliston. He was also a Superintendent, Sunday school teacher, and served on the building committee. He was also blessed by Pastors Ronnie Duncan and Eddie Booth in Elliston.

He is survived by his brother Luther Woolwine and his wife Blondene; his daughter, Cynthia (Cindy) Crockett, her husband Russell; two sons, Charles (Chuck) Woolwine and his wife Karen, and Timothy (Tim) Woolwine. Grandchildren include

Angela Dawn, Cody, Andrew and Ryleigh Woolwine and one great-grandchild Lane Dehaven Woolwine. He had many nieces, nephews, brothers and sisters-in-law that he loved dearly.

Leroy worked for Noland Company for 45 years until he retired. He was a kind, gentle, and personable man to everyone he met. He was also known for his generosity and caring in the community and his business contacts. He was always helping others in any way that he could.

Visitation was held at McCoy Funeral Home in Blacksburg Monday, Mar. 18. Funeral services were held Tuesday, Mar. 19 at McCoy Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Ronnie Duncan officiating. Graveside service followed at Roselawn Cemetery in Christiansburg.

Simpkins, Cora Kathleen (Ballard)

Cora Kathleen (Ballard) Simpkins, of Blacksburg, passed away Mar. 14, 2024 at the age of 96.

She was born to Roland Ballard and Mabel (Copeland) Ballard on Nov. 26, 1927 in Monroe County, West Virginia. Cora was preceded in death by her husband, Ralph Simpkins; infant son, Charles Simpkins; her grandson, Michael Perry; and her six brothers Paul, Thomas, Dewey, John, an infant brother, and Homer Ballard. She is survived by her daughter, Hilda (Simpkins) Roberts of Blacksburg; her son-in-law Tal Roberts of Christiansburg; her grandsons David Perry, his wife, Kelly, their two sons, Kevin and Seth Perry of Roanoke; and Jonathan Roberts and his fiancé Kristin McCord of Christiansburg; her sister Elizabeth (Ballard) Hall of Union, West

Virginia; and her sister-in-law Madilyn Ballard of Greenville, West Virginia. She also leaves behind many cherished nieces, nephews, and their children.

She was known as Cora to those she worked with for many years at Poly-Scientific in Blacksburg. Her grandsons and great-grandsons called her "Granny", or simply "G", and others knew her as Kathleen. She graduated from Union High School in West Virginia and then married Ralph Simpkins in 1947, after his service in the Navy during World War II.

She was a longtime member of Rock Camp Missionary Baptist Church and attended services for many years at Northside Presbyterian Church in Blacksburg. Kathleen enjoyed visiting with her many friends and family in West Virginia and at her home in Blacksburg.

She enjoyed tending her flowers, feeding her birds, and loved cooking for anyone and everyone—especially around the holidays. She spent her time learning about West Virginia history and geography, scarcely forgot a birthday or anniversary, and had an encyclopedic knowledge of the genealogy of both her and Ralph's families. She kept everything, except what she didn't.

Kathleen was laid to rest beside her husband Ralph at the Ellison Cemetery in Rock Camp, West Virginia on Monday, Mar. 18, 2024. The graveside service was officiated by Pastor Paul Broyles, Sr., of the Rock Camp Missionary Baptist Church. Fellowship followed at the church—21 Old School Rd., Lindside, WV 24951. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the church's building fund.

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appreciation of some very important music that was a radio staple from the 1970s through the 1990s and beyond," he said.

While popular music will no doubt continue to change and evolve, having that understanding gives them a competitive framework and since of value for music produced before they were born.

One of those students is senior Anthony Del Grosso from Washington, Va. An accomplished guitarist, Del Grosso is also a member of Radford's Guitar Ensemble and a Music Performance major. Del Grosso says that playing the part of Andy Summers, the Police's six-stringer, requires an appreciation for the uniqueness of the artist.

"Andy Summers is tasteful in his playing," Del Grosso said. "He knows when to stand out and when to stand back as he carefully navigates the Police's classic songs."

Del Grosso says that playing in Summers' style requires specialized practice exercises.

"Much of the guitar work of Andy Summers requires large stretches with the left hand as well as continuous barring, which is typically avoided as much as possible in guitar repertoire. This created the need for me to strengthen my left hand."

Remarkably, Del Grosso's study of classical guitar led him to just the source for this.

"The perfect place to find this strength training?" he asked rhetorically. "The technical exercises written by Francisco Tarrega in the late 19th century."

The bass player is Maddy Nase, a junior Anthropological Sciences major and Music Business minor from Harleysville, Pa. The music ensembles at Radford are open to all students and she's found the CME to be a way to maintain a lifelong love for music and performance.

"I grew up listening to the Police but hadn't familiarized myself with a lot of their songs on bass guitar, so it was a great experience to learn all of the music as a group," she said.

"It has given me a new appreciation for all the detail and complexity that went into the compositions."

Nase says Sting's bass style is demanding, but fun to play.

"I think it's interesting the different techniques and tones that he plays with," Nase said. "I especially enjoy the tone on 'Message in a Bottle' because it adds to the anguished feel of the entire song."

Sam Slaughter, a sophomore from Christiansburg in Business Management, has the job of filling Stewart

Copeland's shoes. Copeland, whose unique style blends rock and reggae with Middle Eastern and African rhythms, is typically ranked in the top 10 rock drummers of all time.

Slaughter has found Copeland's creativity and variation from song-to-song inspiring.

"Stewart Copeland has a very spontaneous style of drumming, and he never does things the same way twice," Slaughter explained. "He is so all over the place."

Slaughter says he was a Police fan before, but like Nase, he has a new appreciation for the music as a performer.

"Spending this much time on it has kind of re-wired my own drumming to be more free or wild."

In addition to the music, the Rock Icons: Sting and the Police concert will feature trivia and flashback video before the show and between sets and Professor Rivers promises a moving and timely performance of Sting's Cold War plea for international sanity, "Russians."

The show will take place in Davis Performance Hall located in the Covington Center at the corner of East Main and Jefferson Street on Radford's main campus.

The show will begin at 7:30 p.m. with seating opening up at 7:15. The concert is free and open to the public. Tickets will be distributed at the door.

Youth art featured at Fine Arts Center

More than 150 pieces of art from students from K-12 student artists from Montgomery and Pulaski County and Radford City Public Schools are on display at the Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley (facnr.org).

"March is Youth Art Month, so we are featuring these wonderful works with the theme 'Dream in Art,'" explains John Ross, president of the center's board of directors.

The Fine Arts Center is located at 21 West Main Street in the Historic Commercial District in Pulaski. The center is open 10-5 on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and 10-3 on Saturdays. For more information about the Fine Arts Center, exhibits, classes, or local, handmade gifts, visit the center's website at facnr.org, email at info@FACNRV.org, or call 540-980-7363.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FINE ARTS CENTER

Colin Castleberry, John N Dalton Intermediate School seventh grader's, "Tortoise Town," which won a silver key from the Virginia Art Education Association.

Submitted by Susan Trulove



JOB VACANCY

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OPINION

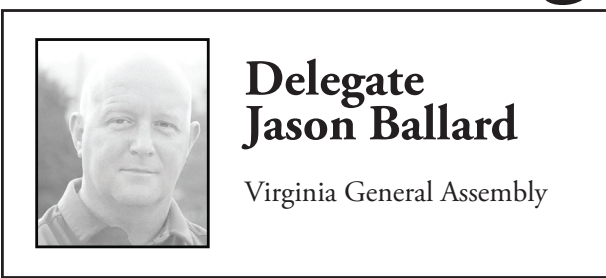
State budget heads to the governor's desk

Last week, the Virginia General Assembly gaveled out of the 2024 legislative session, officially adjourning on Saturday, Mar. 9 after much debate on the Commonwealth's budget put forth by House and Senate Democrats.

Governor Glenn Youngkin provided the General Assembly a responsible budget that was supposed to be the framework by which the Democratic-controlled Appropriations Committees worked toward the shared priorities of all Virginians. Instead, the product presented by Democrats to the General Assembly was stripped of tax breaks and meaningful public safety spending, and it substituted those items for others on the left's wish list. It was a disappointing development, and it's why I joined the majority of my Republican colleagues in voting against the budget.

First, the budget contains a tax hike of more than \$2 billion over the course of two years – with no offsetting tax breaks – in the form of new sales taxes on digital goods and services. This means that the online subscriptions most of us have come to enjoy and rely on, such as video-streaming, downloads, cloud storage, and other services may soon be getting more expensive. This is particularly tone-deaf when the cost of living continues to rise with inflation.

The budget also reintroduces Virginia to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which is a multistate compact of mostly northeastern states that seeks to limit – and eventually eliminate – all electricity generation that is not produced by so-called renewable



Delegate Jason Ballard

Virginia General Assembly

energy sources. While solar and wind power certainly have a place in production of electricity, it is baffling that Democrats continue to believe that Virginia's energy needs can be met by these sources alone while making our current energy sources less available and more expensive. All the while, our household energy bills continue to rise due in part to these arbitrary limitations.

Alarming, the Commonwealth's budget makes harmful cuts to public safety by eliminating funding to recruit law enforcement and cutting funding for school security, and it also allows for the early release of violent criminals. The Youngkin administration has worked for the last two years on Operation Bold Blue Line to recruit law enforcement officers back to the job. The budget passed by General Assembly Democrats cuts \$18 million in funding to recruit law enforcement officers. This is in addition to \$10 million in cuts in funding for critical school resources officers that keep our students safe in school. Perhaps most mind-boggling is budget

language that would allow over 8,000 inmates to have their sentences reduced, 99% of which have been convicted of a violent felony (to include murder, rape, and sex offenders). I could not in good conscience vote for a budget that makes Virginia less safe.

The Commonwealth's budget is the preeminent barometer of the state's priorities, both philosophically and pragmatically. Not all is bad; the budget contains – and I do support – raises for teachers and law enforcement. These are items that I will fight hard to keep in the final budget product. But when taken as a whole, Virginians don't want to return to an era of increased tax burden, reduced public safety, and higher energy costs. The passed-budget will now be considered by Governor Youngkin, who will offer line item amendments or vetoes to any portion of it. The General Assembly will reconvene in mid-April to vote on the Governor's recommendations, and it is my sincere hope that House and Senate Democrats seriously consider tax relief for Virginians while responsibly investing in the core functions of government.

As the Delegate representing the 42nd House District in the Virginia General Assembly, your concerns are my greatest priority. If ever I may be of assistance to you and your family, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at DelJBallard@House.Virginia.Gov. You can also follow me on Twitter @JasonBallardVA or like my Facebook page, Jason Ballard for Delegate, to keep up to date with what I am doing in Richmond and in our community on your behalf.

Virginia gas prices 15 cents higher per gallon than last year

Average gasoline prices in Virginia have risen 13.6 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.37/g today, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,081 stations in Virginia.

Prices in Virginia are 14.0 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 15.5 cents per gallon higher than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has declined 2.2 cents in the last week and stands at \$4.00 per gallon.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Virginia was priced at \$2.85/g yesterday while

the most expensive was \$4.49/g, a difference of \$1.64/g. The lowest price in the state yesterday was \$2.85/g while the highest was \$4.49/g, a difference of \$1.64/g.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 4.4 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.44/g today. The national average is up 18.7 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 1.6 cents per gallon higher than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country.

Historical gasoline prices in Virginia and the national average going back ten years:

- March 18, 2023: \$3.22/g (U.S. Average: \$3.43/g)
- March 18, 2022: \$4.13/g (U.S. Average: \$4.27/g)
- March 18, 2021: \$2.77/g (U.S. Average: \$2.87/g)
- March 18, 2020: \$2.05/g (U.S. Average: \$2.16/g)
- March 18, 2019: \$2.38/g (U.S. Average: \$2.56/g)
- March 18, 2018: \$2.37/g (U.S. Average: \$2.54/g)
- March 18, 2017: \$2.09/g (U.S. Average: \$2.29/g)
- March 18, 2016: \$1.82/g (U.S. Average: \$1.98/g)
- March 18, 2015: \$2.25/g (U.S. Average: \$2.42/g)
- March 18, 2014: \$3.32/g (U.S. Average: \$3.52/g)

Neighboring areas and their current gas prices:
Roanoke- \$3.32/g, up 15.2 cents per gallon from last week's \$3.17/g.

Richmond- \$3.37/g, up 14.0 cents per gallon from last week's \$3.23/g.

West Virginia- \$3.27/g, up 0.9 cents per gallon from last week's \$3.26/g.

"Most Americans continued to see average gasoline prices march higher last week. The reason is the season: gasoline demand is rising as more Americans are getting out, combined with the summer gasoline switchover, which is well underway, and continued refinery maintenance," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "The madness should slow down in the next few weeks as we've seen positive data that refinery output is starting to increase, a sign that the peak of maintenance season could be behind us. In some positive news for Midwest motorists, the bp refinery in Whiting, Indiana that can process 440,000 barrels of oil per day is finally back to normal operations for the first time since an electrical failure happened in early February. For now, gas prices will likely continue to trend higher, but the fever may break soon. When it comes to diesel, the news has been good - above average temperatures have lowered heating oil demand, and average diesel prices are on the cusp of falling back below \$4 per gallon."

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AARP Virginia fraud alert: Fraud in 2023 by the numbers

The numbers are in and last year was yet another historic year for fraud.

The Federal Trade Commission released its annual compendium of fraud reports from 2023, and the news is shocking. For the first time ever reported theft through fraud topped \$10 billion. The total is 14% higher than what was reported in 2022 and five times greater than the reported losses in 2019. Key takeaways from the report include:

More money, \$4.6 billion, was stolen through investment

scams than any other type of fraud. Many investment scams were tied to cryptocurrency where consumers reported \$1.4 billion stolen. The most frequently reported scams were impostor scams, where the criminal pretends to be a person, company or government agency you trust. The average victim of an impostor scam had a staggering \$7,000 stolen from them, according to the report. Lastly, the most popular method for criminals to reach their victims in 2023 was email, surpassing text messages and

phone calls which led in previous years.

While all these numbers are eye-opening the sad reality is that we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg because the vast majority of fraud goes unreported.

Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.

Report scams to local law enforcement. For help from AARP, call 1-877-908-3360 or visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork.

AARP Virginia

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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CLUES ACROSS

1. One who regrets
5. Time zone
8. Subway dweller
11. Bend in a river
13. Alias
14. Isodor __, American Nobel physicist
15. Very (music)
16. Zero
17. Phil __, former CIA
18. Competitions
20. Unwell
21. Puts in place
22. Gets rid of
25. Allows light to pass through
30. Climbed quickly
31. We all have it
32. There's a North & South
33. Emaciation
38. Supervises flying

CLUES DOWN

1. Computer memory
2. "Et __"; "And wife" (Latin)
3. Ancient Syrian city
4. College army
43. Unwanted
45. Grants
48. Three visited Jesus
49. Wife of Amun
50. Broadway actress Daisy
55. A Spanish river
56. I (German)
57. French opera composer
59. Six (Spanish)
60. Last letter
61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
62. A curved shape
63. Make a mistake
64. Tall plant

CLUES ACROSS

5. Cassava
6. Talented
7. Capital of Estonia
8. Finger millet
9. In a way, assists
10. Men's fashion accessories
12. Misery
14. Skin disorder
19. Selling at specially reduced prices
23. Good friend
24. Stationary portion of a generator
25. Expression of disappointment
26. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet
27. Where birds fly
28. Midway between north and northeast
29. Chaotic states
34. Comedic actress Gasteyer
35. Kids' dining accessory
36. Snakelike fish
37. Midway between south and southeast
39. Assign lifelike qualities to
40. One who cites
41. Midway between east and southeast
42. North wind
44. One or the other
45. Cavalry sword
46. Of the Hungarian language
47. Life stories
48. Flat tableland with steep edges
51. Swiss river
52. Plant that makes gum
53. French cleric
54. One point east of northeast
58. Free from

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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Hokie ladies to host Big Dance opener

Marty Gordon

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Virginia Tech's women's basketball team is back in the Big Dance and will be the number four seed in the Portland bracket.

Despite the western bracket finals, Tech will host two first round games if they win. In the first game, the Hokies face Marshall. From there, they could face Baylor in Round two also in Blacksburg.

A total of eight teams from the ACC were named to the tournament.

In Regional Three (Portland), Virginia Tech, a No. 4 seed, will play host to No. 13-seeded Marshall, while the other matchup in Blacksburg will be No. 5-seeded Baylor versus No. 12-seeded Vanderbilt/Columbia.

Coach Kenny Brooks is glad to be playing at home for the first contest and maybe the second.

"I thought our body was work was worth a Fourth Seed and it's great to be back in the Cassell," he said during a video chat, following the tournament announcement.

Brooks admitted he was nervous, but he is so glad to play in front of the home crowd once again.

The Lady Hokies have the fourth longest home win streak in the nation. Hosting first and second round games in Blacksburg would be the second straight year and third time in program history.

Because Cassell Coliseum is designated as a neutral site by the NCAA, ticketing guidelines must follow NCAA processes and protocols.

Tickets will be available for purchase beginning on Monday, March 18, and will be available per session or for all sessions at once. All session adult tickets will be \$50, and all session youth tickets will be \$20. Individual session tickets will be \$25 for adults and \$10 for youth (under 18). All seating (excluding the student section) will be reserved.

The question remains is whether Tech will have its three-time ACC player of the year, Liz Kitley, back in the lineup. The head of the women's selection committee told national reporters, injuries like Kitley's did come into play for the final seeding.

Tech has kept information on her injury close to the vest and has not said

anything in the past two weeks.

Typically, the university holds a watch party for the tournament seeding announcement. Not this year. Instead, the team held its own gathering without fans nor the media.

There had been some speculation that was because of Kitley's questionable availability and the silence on her injury.

Brooks said her availability is still up in the air.

"This week will definitely determine that (if she will play)."

He said his senior's long-term health is the most important thing at this point.

The exact injury is still not known.

Brooks would not rule out her appearance this week as the first game will be on Friday.

Marshall earned the Sun Belt Conference Championship with a thrilling 95-92 overtime win over James Madison.

With the win, Marshall will make its first trip to the NCAA Tournament since 1997 after earning the Sun Belt Conference's automatic bid.

It continues a record-setting year for Marshall, who is now 26-6 in the first season under head coach Kim Caldwell.

"I can't really even describe it!" Caldwell said. "They worked their tails off. The ball was not going in and they found a way to get it done. That sums up what this team has been about from the very beginning. It's been heart, it's been heart, it's been heart. We've been thrown some tough breaks, but they've always found a way to get it done."

The Herd got huge efforts out of several different players to lead to the victory. Meredith Maier notched team-highs of 20 points and seven rebounds while Aislynn Hayes added 19 points. Breanna Campbell added 15 points while Abby Beeman notched a double-double with 10 points and 11 assists and Mahogany Matthews added 10 points and five blocks.

Marshall forced James Madison into 39 turnovers, which led to 48 of the Herd's 95 points in the contest. The Herd also grabbed 33 offensive rebounds against the nation's top defensive rebounding team, which also led to 25 second-chance points that helped offset a tough shooting performance.

Baylor (24-7) will face the winner of



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

Vanderbilt (22-9) and Columbia (23-6), who have the play-in game for the No. 12 seed, in Blacksburg.

Baylor is making its 20th-straight NCAA Tournament appearance and 22nd appearance overall. The Bears are 55-18 all-time in the Big Dance and have made 15 trips to the Sweet 16. Baylor's 20th-consecutive appearance is the fourth-longest active streak in the country behind Tennessee (42), Stanford (36) and UConn (35).

For most of the season, Baylor was in the Top 20 but lost in their conference quarters to Iowa State.

Baylor women's basketball had four individuals recognized with postseason honors on Tuesday, highlighted by Sarah Andrews' selection to the All-Big 12 Second Team.

Alongside Andrews, Aijha Blackwell, Dre'Una Edwards and Darianna Littlepage-Buggs each earned an all-conference honorable mention.

For the third time in her career, Andrews received an all-conference nod with a selection to the All-Big 12 Second Team. The senior guard is averaging 9.8 points per game in league play while averaging a team-high 30 minutes per game. Andrews was one of 10 finalists for the Nancy Lieberman Award Watch List, and she eclipsed 1,000 career points earlier this season. The Irving, Texas, native turned in her second-career double-double in a win over UCF, and she has reached double-figure scoring in nine conference contests this year.

Blackwell earned her first career Big 12 postseason honor after missing a majority of last season due to injury. She has made 22 starts in 27 appearances, starting all but four conference games. With her fourth rebound at Houston, she reached 1,000 rebounds in her career, and she has turned in a team-best 11 double-figure rebounding performances this season.

Earlier in the week, the Charlotte Sports Foundation (CSF) and Ally Financial Inc. announced the lineup for the 2024 Ally Tipoff. This year's event is scheduled for Sunday, November 10, 2024, at the Spectrum Center in Charlotte and will be a doubleheader, featuring #1 South Carolina taking on #11 NC State and a rematch of last year's game with #2 Iowa and #13 Virginia Tech.

Last year's meeting of Iowa and Virginia Tech was unforgettable with Iowa winning 80-76. The game featured superstar Caitlin Clark leading the Hawkeyes with 44 points and Georgia Amoore pacing the Hokies with 31 points, including a half court buzzer beater.

As much of a success the game was on the court, it equaled that success off the court as well. The game set a record with an attendance of 15,196, which is the largest regular season women's basketball game in North Carolina history. Also, last year's game averaged 548,000 viewers, which at the time was the most-viewed regular season women's college basketball game on ESPN2 since 2017.

Hokie men face Richmond in NIT

Marty Gordon

NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Virginia Tech will be the number three seed in this week's National Invitational Tournament (NIT), and they face 23-9 Richmond team.

The contest is slated for 9 p.m., and results will not be available until after press time.

Things have changed with the selection of teams for the tournament. No longer does a regular season champion from conferences receive automatic bids. Now, the top two non-NCAA tournament teams in the Power Six conferences were given an automatic bid.

Several schools like St. John's and Coach Rick Pitino said no to the NIT bid. Pitt and Indiana also said no.

The Hokies (18-14) will face the Spiders (23-9) for the 109th time in program history. Tech leads the all-time series, 69-39. Richmond won the Atlantic 10 Conference regular-season championship and will be making its first trip to Blacksburg for a regular-season matchup against Tech since Jan. 14, 2009. The winner between VT and Richmond will advance to play the Ohio State-Cornell winner on March 23 or 24 at the site of the higher seed.

Tech has compiled a 25-12 record in the tournament, which it has won twice (1973 and 1995). This week will mark the 15th

time the Hokies competes in the NIT.

After leading Richmond men's basketball to a regular season title and No. 1 seed in last week's A-10 Championship, Coach Chris Mooney, Jordan King, Dji Bailey, and Neal Quinn have all received end-of-season Atlantic 10 awards, the conference announced Tuesday. Mooney is the A-10 Coach of the Year, while King is the A-10 Co-Player of the Year, a First Team All-Conference selection, and an All-Academic selection. Bailey shared the A-10's Most Improved Player Award, and Quinn was named Second Team All-Conference.

Mooney's A-10 Coach of the Year award is his first in his 19 seasons at Richmond. Faced with as many newcomers (eight) and as few returning starters (one) as in any of his previous 18 seasons at UR, Mooney led his revamped roster to a 15-3 record in conference play and the program's first regular season title since joining the A-10 in 2001.

King shared the A-10 Player of the Year Award after scoring 18.5 points per game during the regular season, while shooting 42.6 percent from three-point range.

Richmond Spiders fell to St. Joseph 66-61 in the A-10 tournament quarterfinals.

A total of 32 men's teams were invited to the NIT tourney with the two rounds being played on-campus locations. The championship round will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana.



Dayspring's Kerabeth Long helped lead a second-half comeback for the NRV girls all-star team in a 58-55 win over the Mountain Empire team. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes benefit all-star basketball games were played at Christiansburg High School on Saturday night with several senior players from schools in the NRV.

Fellowship of Christian Athletes holds all-stars games



Radford's Claire Fender scores a fast break layup for the NRV all-stars during the second half. Blacksburg's Kailyn Brawley was the halftime 3-point shooting contest winner.



PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

Blacksburg's Chanler Montgomery goes up for a dunk during the NRV vs. Mountain Empire all-star game Saturday night. In the FCA boys' all-star game, the NRV team won 86-70 over the Mountain Empire team. Isaac Cowan from Appalachian Christian was the boys' halftime dunk contest winner.

Christiansburg softball downs Byrd



PHOTO BY KYMN DAVIDSON-HAMLEY

Makaylee Hughes (left) outs William Byrd's Addison Clark at first base. Christiansburg took this past week's home opener by a 3-0 score.

See **Softball**, page 8

See **Fellowship**, page 8

Softball from page 7

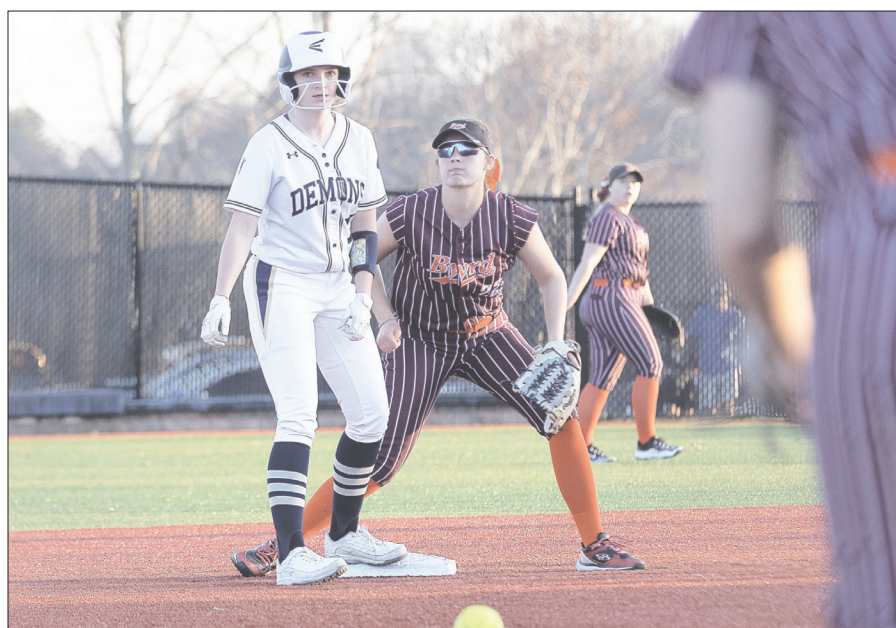


PHOTO BY KYMN DAVIDSON-HAMLEY

Christiansburg's Brooklyn Manieri (center) watches the ball from second base as she waits for her opportunity to steal third.

Fellowship from page 7



PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

Christiansburg's Jeremiah Mills scores on a drive to the basket against Isaac Cowen in the NRV vs. Mountain Empire all-star game.

Christiansburg boys fall to Patrick Henry



Goalie Joseph Baines (left) faces an onslaught of players up close as he saves a goal in the second half against Patrick Henry this past week. PH would take the 3-0 win.



PHOTOS BY KYMN DAVIDSON-HAMLEY

Luca Pickeral (center) manages double coverage from Patrick Henry as he moves the ball for Christiansburg.

Bruin Lax prevails over Byrd

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Michael Mullins (right) and Sam Purcell (left) congratulate teammate Ryan Klopfer after a Bruin goal against William Byrd. On Thursday night, Blacksburg withstood a William Byrd rally to come away with a 12-11 win.



After scoring two early goals on Thursday night, Blacksburg's Michael Mullins draws the attention of the William Byrd defense.



Blacksburg's Sam Purcell gains possession for the Bruins at midfield against William Byrd.



PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

Blacksburg senior defenseman Eric Metrey slows down William Byrd's Benjamin Waid during the first half of a 12-11 Bruin win

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SEIS	ZEE	RABBI
ARC	ERR	REED



Route 114 (Peppers Ferry Road) and Route 685 (Prices Fork Road) Intersection Improvement Project Montgomery County

Find out about a project to reduce delays and improve safety at the intersection of Route 114 (Peppers Ferry Road) and Route 685 (Prices Fork Road) in Montgomery County. A new right turn lane would be added from westbound Route 114 onto northbound Prices Fork Road and a new right lane would be added from southbound Prices Fork Road onto westbound Route 114. The existing left turn lane from eastbound Route 114 onto Prices Fork Road will be extended approximately 200 feet.

In addition, an upgraded traffic signal with pedestrian accommodations, approximately 800 feet of sidewalk along the westbound lanes of Route 114, and a crosswalk on Prices Fork Road are also included in the project.

Review the project information and National Environmental Policy Act document in the form of a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion at VDOT's Salem District Office located at 731 Harrison Avenue in Salem, 540-387-5353, 1-800-FOR-ROAD, or TTY/TDD 711. Please call ahead to ensure the availability of appropriate personnel to answer your questions.

If your concerns cannot be satisfied, VDOT is willing to hold a public hearing. You may request that a public hearing be held by sending a written request to Hayden Hill, Virginia Department of Transportation, 731 Harrison Avenue, Salem, VA 24153, on or prior to **April 4, 2024**. If a request for a public hearing is received, notice of date, time and place of the hearing will be posted.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you have questions or concerns about your civil rights in regards to this project or need special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Hayden Hill at the phone numbers listed above.

State Project: 0114-060-873, C501, P101, R201 Federal Project: STP-5150(213) UPC: 120697
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