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VIRGINIA
TOWN & CITY

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

VOL. 59 NO. 6 SEPT 2024

Inside:

2023 - 2024
Year In Review

Member Spotlight on the
Town of Farmville



VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MARRIOTT VIRGINIA BEACH OCEANFRONT
OCT. 13-15





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THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

VOL. 59 NO. 6 SEPT 2024

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BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



ABOUT THE COVER

That beautiful sunset is framing the three amazing venues that will all be part of the 2024 annual conference. From left to right are the Embassy Suites Oceanfront, Historic Cavalier, and Marriott Oceanfront. We can't wait to make all our members feel welcome at what is sure to be a fantastic few days of learning, networking, and celebrating!

DEPARTMENTS

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE 2
 PEOPLE 31
 NEWS & NOTES 34
 COMMUNITY BUSINESS MEMBERS 38

Invitation to Virginia Beach

City of Virginia Beach Mayor Robert M. “Bobby” Dyer wants you to know that his city is ready to welcome its fellow VML members with plenty to see and do 4

Virginia Beach: Enjoy your stay. Explore our shores and experience the coastal charm!

If you thought Virginia Beach was all sand, ocean, and boardwalk, then the City of Virginia Beach staff have some great news about the activities, arts, destinations, and history available in “Neptune City” 6

Virginia Municipal League: Annual Report

A review of the league’s advocacy, research, and education activities in 2023-2024.

A message from VML President Chuckie Reid 14
 Board of Directors 15
 2023-2024 Year in Review 16
 Affiliate updates
 VLGMA 22
 MEPAV 23
 VBCOA 23
 VEPGA 23
 VML staff listing 24
 VML local government members 25
 Committees 26
 Community Business Members 27

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Member spotlight: Town of Farmville

Dr. Michael Herndon explains how the historic Mary E. Branch school found a new life as a heritage center in the heart of Farmville’s historic downtown 28



See you at the beach!

MY MANTRA FOR the coming month: “Do not look at the National Hurricane Center website!” Many of you will recall some of the experiences that a hurricane provided the last time we met in Virginia Beach for the VML Annual Conference. The lack of electricity! The abundance of rain! And lots of fun!

While I am prepared to do it again – please know that VML has arranged for beautiful weather and is planning on a lot of outdoor fun so the hurricane lovers may be disappointed this year (fingers crossed).

Sunday afternoon will include short sessions on local budgeting, council-manager relations, onboarding new council members, and social media, all of which will be tied together by friendly (but still competitive) rounds of beach bingo. At the same time, the Department of Housing and Community Development will be holding a two-part “What is Main Street” session on how to obtain the Main Street designation. This designation helps localities bring community and economic development to their jurisdiction.

Regardless on which of the above sessions you choose to attend, it will be time well spent. And that’s just for starters!

Our Innovation Award winners will have top billing Sunday night for the Awards Banquet. Thanks to everyone who submitted entries! We had so many great ones this year and we are all looking forward to celebrating with the seven winning localities. One of those seven winners will take home the coveted President’s Award for Innovation which will be announced during the ceremony. This is always a fun “reveal” during the Annual Conference. Finally on Sunday, the Soul Expressions Band – President Reid’s favorite and a

big hit last year – will put the cap on what’s sure to be a great evening!

Monday is a full day of networking and learning – there are some great sessions on everything from the Supreme Court to data centers, from public safety issues to artificial intelligence, from PFAS to affordable housing...and so much more! There will also be roundtable sessions including a room devoted to grant opportunities from the Department of Housing and Community Development. The grant roundtables begin earlier than the afternoon sessions, so you will have time to sneak in to more than one offering.

Also on Monday, the VML Annual Business Meeting will take place at 3:00pm. The VML Legislative Committee met, and all the proposed policy statements and legislative positions are posted on the VML website. Please take the time to review them before the business meeting. After we take care of business, there will be a beautiful reception at the Virginia Cavalier hotel. Remember dinner is on your own Monday night so please make reservations and plan to enjoy some time with old friends you maybe haven’t seen in a while.

Tuesday we will close things out with Matt Lehrman’s interactive session “Futurecast Leadership” that will engagingly and entertainingly help us think about the future of our localities. This promises to be a fascinating session that I encourage everyone to attend.

Please keep an eye on the Annual Conference page on our website for more information including the final agenda with all the sessions: www.vml.org/Opportunities/Annual-Conference.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the beach and thank you for registering to attend the VML conference!



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MARRIOTT VIRGINIA BEACH OCEANFRONT
OCT. 13-15





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Greetings to the attendees of the Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference!

It is indeed a pleasure for me to extend a most cordial welcome on behalf of the City of Virginia Beach. Hosting the 2024 VML Annual Conference is a great opportunity for us to showcase all the exciting things our beloved city has to offer.



As one of the safest cities of its size in America, Virginia Beach offers an abundance of cultural and recreational opportunities and immediate access to quality Oceanfront establishments. The Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art has a marvelous collection of art of our time and offers exhibitions and outdoor art shows. And don't forget the many events down at the oceanfront.

Town Center is our downtown where you will find many wonderful restaurants, shops, and activities to fill your days and evenings.

We also have excellent parks, such as Red Wing Park, and recreational facilities. We are especially proud of the Virginia Aquarium, which combines hands-on exhibits with over 100,000 gallons of aquariums along with miles and miles of beautiful beaches and scenic waterways.

Our modern city also has a rich historical past. In Virginia Beach, you can sightsee at locations that date back to our nation's birth. All of this, together, makes this a truly great place in which to hold this year VML Annual Conference.

We are delighted that you have selected our community, and I encourage you to experience one of the finest cities in the nation during your visit.

On behalf of the Virginia Beach City Council, we welcome you and send our best wishes!

Sincerely,

Robert M. "Bobby" Dyer
Mayor, City of Virginia Beach

Enjoy Your Stay, Explore Our Shores and Experience the Coastal Charm of Virginia Beach

THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH is delighted to welcome the Virginia Municipal League to the 2024 Annual Conference hosted in the most populated city of Virginia. We hope you are able to explore our world-record 35 miles of beachfront, award-winning parks and varied history, arts and cultural attractions. Whether you decide to shop at Town Center or dive into the Atlantic Ocean, we hope you enjoy your stay here and learn a little more about this nationally ranked city.

The World's Largest Pleasure Beach

Virginia Beach holds a Guinness World Record as the “world’s longest stretch of pleasure beach.” The 35-mile coastline includes three beaches: the Oceanfront, Chesapeake Bay Beach and Sandbridge Beach.

The resort area of the Oceanfront is the hub of waterside hotels, dining and entertainment in Virginia Beach. First constructed in 1888 with a mere five blocks of wooden planks, our famous three-mile boardwalk offers a perfect flat area for rollerblading, jogging or cruising down the strip on a tandem bike. Whether you enjoy surfing, swimming or sunbathing, the sandy beaches and beautiful waves make for the perfect vacation destination.

Refuge can be found along the calm waters of the Chesapeake Bay for beachgoers looking for gentler waves. With the area affectionately known as Chic’s Beach by locals, the laid-back vibe provides the perfect setting for all the traditional beach pleasures such as swimming and building sandcastles. At the end of the day, nothing can beat

an evening stroll along the beach, as the sun sets over the renowned Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Located a short drive south of the Oceanfront, Sandbridge is a secluded beach hideaway of pristine sand dunes and dancing sea oats. A relaxing and peaceful community, it boasts a natural environment where you can truly slow down and unwind. For those craving even more of the great outdoors, the marshes and open waters of Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park make for great kayaking, hiking, biking and fishing in remote, unspoiled natural areas.





“Downtown” in Uptown Virginia Beach: Shopping and Entertainment at Town Center

Covering 17 city blocks and more than 800,000 square feet of office space and 832,500 square feet of commercial space, Virginia Beach Town Center features a unique mix of shopping, dining, entertainment and living options. Beginning with the construction of the Armada Hoffer Tower in 2003, around \$104.8 million in public investment has gone into building the various restaurants, commercial tenants and shops in the area. After six phases of development, the “downtown area” now generates more than \$8 million annually through business taxes. Visitors can dine at local or well-known restaurants, shop at popular brand retailers and upscale boutiques, or spend a night at the four-star Westin Hotel, the tallest building in Virginia.

For lovers of performing arts, many live show opportunities are hosted at Town Center. The Sandler Center for the Performing Arts is a 1,200-seat hall hosting acts from all over the world, including national recording artists, world-renowned symphonies and orchestras, and theatrical masterpieces. Through a public-private partnership between the City and the Virginia Beach Performing Arts Foundation, \$12 million was raised to build the beautiful performance hall to meet the growing demand for high-quality arts. Similarly, Zeiders American Dream Theater, a nonprofit theater, provides local writers, performers and artists a platform for inspiring art from the local community.



Art is All Around: ViBe Creative District

The cultural arts are alive in the ViBe Creative District, which was founded to promote, support, connect and inspire the arts and creative industries. Near the Oceanfront area, you can find the magic of local artists turning nearby roads, sidewalks, trees and local business walls into a miraculous neighborhood canvas. The vision for the ViBe District is to create and revive economic vibrancy in a neighborhood with a remarkable local vibe. The name even stands for Virginia Beach, with “Vi” being short for Virginia and “Be” being short for Beach.

Since 2015, the ViBe Creative District nonprofit has worked with over 350 artists to create more than 450 works of art in the public domain. These local artworks are free and accessible 24 hours a day to residents and visitors alike. Working with the City of Virginia Beach Cultural Affairs Department and local creative businesses, all artwork is cataloged on Google maps with images, artist information, supporting business information, funding information and more.



From Trash to Treasure: Mount Trashmore

The world-renowned Mount Trashmore Park encompasses 165 acres and is comprised of two man-made mountains, two lakes, two playgrounds and multi-use paths. Opening in 1974, Mount

Trashmore was created by compacting 640,000 tons of solid waste with layers of clean soil. Standing 60 feet tall and stretching 800 feet wide, it is the largest hill in Virginia Beach. The former landfill is now environmentally friendly, featuring a water-wise garden that uses xeriscaping for minimal water usage. Over one million people visit the park every year.



Honoring America's Aircrafts: Military Aviation Museum

The Military Aviation Museum houses notable aircrafts while telling the stories of the distinguished heroes who built, flew and maintained them. Its mission is to share and promote the country's history, science, service and sacrifice through exhibitions and events to inspire and educate visitors of all ages. The museum was first established as the private collection of Virginia Beach businessman Gerald Yagen, but over the years, these aircraft have been restored and shared with the public.

Since its opening in 2008, the Military Aviation Museum has grown to be one of the largest collections of historic military aircraft in the world. More than 85,000 people visit the museum a year to experience remnants of the historic time between World War I and World War II. Besides aircraft, the museum hosts historic World War II structures from around the world, including the Goxhill Watch Office and the Cottbus Hangar. With one of the largest concentrations of military servicemembers in the world, Virginia Beach honors the history and service of our military heroes.

Staying Active in Virginia Beach

Virginia Beach offers opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be physically active.

Mount Trashmore Park has many features that make it stand out from an ordinary park including a skatepark and vert ramp, the Kids Cove playground and 10 outdoor fitness stations. Six outdoor fitness stations make up LifeTrail, designed for older adults to help improve posture, balance and strength. Other Energi Prime stations are built to provide a full body workout by stretching and strengthening muscles. Children can also enjoy the Kids Cove playground that spans 26,000 square feet full of slides, elevated walkways, climbers, swings and fun. Opened in December 2010, the park underwent a recent \$1.6 million renovation that began in January 2023. New additions to the playground include hillside slides, climbers and nets with safety features. Even the hill itself allows children to roll down or fly kites. For adrenaline seekers, Mount Trashmore is home to a 24,000-square-foot skate park that includes a 7-foot-deep bowl and a 13.5-foot-tall and 40-foot-wide vert ramp.



Virginia Beach makes sure that parks can be enjoyed by everybody with Grommet Island Park, a 15,000-square-foot fully accessible beach park at 2nd Street, the first of its kind in America. Described as a park and playground for “everyBODY,” it includes wheelchair accessible entrances and many fun features for all children to enjoy, including raised sand tables to build sandcastles at an accessible height, a sensory table built for children who are visually impaired and autistic, and a sway boat.

Additionally, the Hillier Ignite Fitness Park, located on the beach at 36th Street, has an assortment of strength-training apparatuses and body weight-based exercise equipment to make working out at the beach available for everyone to enjoy. Established in 2016, the park is based on a similar fitness park in Santa Monica, California. Some of the amenities include parallel bars, climbing ropes, a balance beam and a level ring climber.

Make the Most of Your Time and Visit Virginia Beach!

We welcome those who are visiting Virginia Beach this year for the VML annual conference and encourage you to explore everything that the city has to offer. During your stay, dip your toes in the water from our sandy shores, enjoy dining, shopping and entertainment in Virginia Beach Town Center, or walk the trail around Mount Trashmore. There are many things to do in the fabulous city of Virginia Beach, so make sure to “seas” the day here!



The Best at the Beach: A Highlight of Virginia Beach’s Recent Achievements

Before becoming the tourist resort town full of restaurants, shops, and attractions, Virginia Beach was the site of history in the making. From the presence of the Chesepian tribe to the arrival of the English settlers in 1607, the city has come a long way from its first inhabitants. Now, Virginia Beach is the home to 450,000 residents and ranks as the 39th largest city in the United States. Virginia Beach has much to offer and has been recognized for many awards and accomplishments.

- **Virginia Beach ranked top 10 on list of best U.S. cities to live in:** In May 2024, *U.S. News & World Report* named Virginia Beach the eighth best U.S. city to live in as the only Virginia city to make the list. The ranking took into account the city’s combination of jobs, desirability, cost of living and quality of life.
- **VB Parks & Recreation awarded 2023 National Gold Medal Award for excellence in Parks and Recreation Management:** VB Parks & Recreation won Gold in the Class I category for cities with populations over 400,000, which was the largest category. VBPR was awarded by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association.
- **Region ranked 5 on the best cities for veterans to live:** According to Veterans United Home Loans in June 2024, Virginia Beach and the Hampton Roads metropolis scored No.2 on the Top 10 list in the community support category and No.1 for having the most significant veteran population growth on the list.
- **Virginia Beach ranked top 20 of safest cities in the U.S.:** In an extensive study on safety in the United States by Scholaroo in November 2023, Virginia Beach was ranked the 16th safest city in the U.S. Key factors such as crime rates, community engagement and law enforcement effectiveness were used to determine the rankings.



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A message from VML President A.D. "Chuckie" Reid



SERVING AS YOUR PRESIDENT this past year has been a wonderful experience! There were so many events that made it special, but I'm sure it will come as no surprise that my favorite was hosting the VML Board of Directors in my hometown of Farmville. We met at Longwood University and then toured the Moton Museum which tells the story of the students in Prince Edward County who protested inequality and demanded an equal education during the Civil Rights era. In the December issue of *Virginia Town & City* I spoke about my personal experience as a member of the "Lost Generation" of students who were denied an education for many years during that time. I'm always pleased to be able to shine on light on that history and being able to do so in VML's magazine as your President was especially rewarding.

I also had the pleasure of being able to attend the National League of Cities' Congressional City Conference in Washington D.C. where President Biden spoke as well as their City Summit in Atlanta which featured many sessions on local government and the importance of good leadership.

VML hosted Local Government Day and two other training events for elected officials in Richmond, all of which I was happy to attend and participate in. As the Vice Mayor of a small town, I was also pleased to attend VML's inaugural Virginia Small Towns Conference held in Abingdon. This event was well attended and proved to be very popular with attendees.

As I look back on this year, I am grateful to all the elected officials who supported VML and supported me. Thanks to the Town of Farmville, especially Mayor Vincent and my fellow councilmembers who were with me throughout the year, and of course my wonderful family who are always there to support me!

I look forward to continuing to be an active part of VML as your Immediate Past President. In the year to come I will be supporting Town of Ashland Mayor Trivette so that his presidency can be as successful, productive, and enjoyable as mine had been.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.D. 'Chuckie' Reid". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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OUR MEMBERS MAY RECALL that last year's Annual Report predicted a "storm" of change as we expected the relative stability of the General Assembly's membership to be swept by a surge of new members following the November election. And storm it did! As outlined in the Lobbying & Advocacy section of this report, the General Assembly welcomed dozens of new members, took up residence in its new building, and drafted scores of bills – many of which succumbed to a record number of gubernatorial vetoes.

But it wasn't all tempestuous. In 2024 VML was pleased to hold several successful events such as our long running Elected Officials Conference series and Local Government Day as well as the first ever (but certainly not the last) Virginia Small Towns Conference. Our policy staff served on numerous workgroups and studies and VML's communications and member services staff helped our local government members and affiliate groups adjust to our new database and online platform. We kept our members informed via issues of the *eNews* newsletter, *Virginia Town & City* magazine, and the VML Voice podcast. Moreover, we bid a fond farewell to Chief of Staff Sue Mellen who began her well deserved retirement and welcomed Brent Manuel, our new Chief Administrative Officer.

So, despite the best efforts of the General Assembly to rock our boat, the story of 2024 is one of growing stability and increased capabilities to further VML's mission of "Better Communities Through Sound Government".

Thanks for being part of VML!

Lobbying & Advocacy

2024 General Assembly Session



The 2024 General Assembly Session featured a brand-new General Assembly Building with ample modern and beautiful meeting rooms, public spaces, and office spaces. If you have not had the opportunity to tour the new building, plan to do so – it's a wonderful facility.

But the novelty didn't stop with the building as it was full of brand-new General Assembly members. The 2023 elections brought in a wave of new members: a total of 31 new House members, with a change in the majority party from the Republicans to the Democrats, and 18 new Senate members. The changes in the House and Senate membership

resulted in new leadership for most committees as well as several committee membership changes.

The General Assembly, as usual, had a cascade of bills to consider during the 2024 session with 3,595 bills and resolutions introduced this year. A total of 2,281 passed; 405 were continued to the 2025 Session, 909 failed, and Gov. Glenn Youngkin vetoed a record 201 bills.

There were also budget bills – changes to the current year budget (the caboose bill) and the proposed budget for the 2024-2026 biennium. Those bills were approved on time, along with the rest of the legislative agenda, but things got tricky when Governor Youngkin sent a record number of amendments to the budget bills back to the General Assembly.

During the reconvened session on April 17, the General Assembly dealt with all the gubernatorial amendments and vetoes to regular bills. The budgets, however, were another matter. The General Assembly punted on the budget bills, and the Administration and General Assembly backed into their respective corners for a breather and a plan to return in May.

On May 13, the General Assembly returned to Richmond for a special session and approved compromise budget bills for the current year and the new biennium. Governor Youngkin signed those bills immediately following that May 13 special session.

The VML team appreciates the assistance of all our local government partners who help us during General Assembly sessions by talking with legislators and educating them on how various bills will affect local governments. It's a never-ending process, and the local government input is so very helpful in keeping legislators and their staff members "in the know" on the many issues facing communities.

What follows is a summary of legislation and budget items of interest to local governments from the 2024 General Assembly session. VML's full recap can be found in the May/June 2024 issue of *Virginia Town & City* available online at www.vml.org/Publications/Magazine.

Budget

As has been the case for several years, debate surrounding the 2024-26 biennial budget revolved around tax policy when the General Assembly took up the Governor's proposed budget in January.

And the General Assembly once again tossed most of the Governor's tax initiatives – a combination of tax cuts and revenue hikes – on the funeral pyre, freeing up \$1.0 billion in revenues for House and Senate lawmakers to consider when making spending decisions.

Moreover, the final budget included another billion in general fund resources when lawmakers recognized growth from FY 2024 that was carried forward to the new biennium. When combined with other bud-



2024 Annual Review

getary maneuvers, the General Assembly allocated nearly \$2.0 billion more than the Governor for their budget priorities.

What were those priorities? As detailed in the table below, education, primarily K-12 education, behavioral health services, (included under health & human resources), and salary increases for state employees and state-supported local employees (reflected in the All other category), were the primary recipients of state general funds, compared to the Governor’s introduced budget.

Category	Governor HB 30	Final HB 6001	Difference
Education	\$ 25,899.6	\$ 27,127.6	\$ 1,227.99
Health & human resources	\$ 19,670.2	\$ 20,003.1	\$ 332.87
Public safety	\$ 5,303.7	\$ 5,268.1	\$ (35.52)
Finance	\$ 4,334.5	\$ 4,345.6	\$ 11.03
Administration	\$ 1,975.5	\$ 1,982.9	\$ 7.38
Judicial	\$ 1,277.2	\$ 1,313.1	\$ 35.83
Commerce & trade	\$ 1,209.6	\$ 1,001.1	\$ (208.53)
All other	\$ 2,342.7	\$ 2,707.5	\$ 364.90
TOTAL, GF Operating Budget	\$ 62,013.0	\$ 63,749.0	\$ 1,735.95

Funding included in the K-12 budget not only provided local school divisions with the resources to increase teacher’s salaries by 3 percent each year, but also added funding for the at-risk add-on program and English language learners. Significantly, the final budget also restored more than \$200 million to local school divisions, reversing a proposal to eliminate the hold harmless for school districts as proposed by the Governor.

In health and human resources, the budget provided funds to address community services boards’ (CSB) workforce needs, expand supportive housing, supplement STEP-VA funding, build community capacity for children’s mental health services, and assist CSBs with staffing crisis stabilization services.

Washington Metro Area Transit Association (WMATA) received critical funding and funding flexibility for WMATA member localities to provide operating revenue and avoid transit service reductions which had the potential to significantly affect impact the region’s economy.

Also, \$400 million was appropriated from bond proceeds to the water quality improvement fund for nutrient reduction projects at wastewater facilities across Virginia. Without this funding, utility rate payers and localities would still be required to meet statutorily directed

wastewater standards and shoulder 100 percent of the cost. With this appropriation, Virginia continued the Commonwealth’s decades long commitment to meeting clean water goals by supporting local wastewater capital projects.

And finally, state assistance to local law enforcement (HB 599 funding), received an increase of \$10 million each year, bringing total funding to nearly \$297 million per annum for localities with police departments.

Legislation of Interest that Passed

Fiscal Distress. The local fiscal distress bill – **SB645** (Aird) – applies to localities located in Planning District 19 found to be in fiscal distress by the Auditor of Public Accounts. It gave the state the authority to appoint an emergency fiscal manager for the locality. The emergency fiscal manager would have the authority to manage and remediate the locality’s finances notwithstanding the roles and responsibilities of the local government body. The Commission on Local Government is in the process of drafting emergency regulations for this legislation.

Utilities. Utility connections have been in the spotlight since COVID. **SB480** (Aird) / **HB906** (Shin) restricts when utility disconnections by localities can occur. For example, disconnections cannot occur when certain high and low temperatures are forecasted within 24 hours and they cannot occur on a day before the utility office will be closed (e.g., Friday, holiday, etc.). The bills also requires that several notices must be provided before a disconnection can be contemplated.

PFAS. The “forever chemicals” – per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances – known as “PFAS” were also the subject of legislation (and litigation). There are numerous lawsuits around the country regarding these chemicals. The Commonwealth is attempting to understand the prevalence of these chemicals. **SB243** (McPike) / **HB1085** (Rasoul) require publicly owned treatment works to monitor the levels and report them to the Department of Environmental Quality.

Speed Limits. After several years of trying, towns and counties that do not maintain their own roads were granted the authority by **HB1071** (Carr) to reduce the speed limit to below 25mph but not less than 15mph after an appropriate study.

Other legislation of note that passed the 2024 General Assembly allowed electronic meetings for advisory boards up to two (2) or 50 percent of the meetings per year if there is a policy in place, allowed persons with disabilities and their caregivers the ability to count as part of a quorum in a meeting if they attend virtually, and continued to streamline the public notice process.

Studies: Housing, FOIA, Artificial Intelligence, and the Fentanyl Crises

Every year, VML and its members participate in many studies and 2024 was no exception! Here is a summary of some of the studies that we have been involved in. While not listed here, VML is also involved in the toxic exposure workgroup, the fire/EMS funding assessment, an infrastructure workgroup, and many more!

Housing Bills to be considered by the Virginia Housing Commission Workgroups

There were a lot of bills related to housing this year and most were sent to the Housing Commission which created the three workgroups listed below. The bills to be considered by each group are listed for each.

The agendas and dates of the various meetings can be found at <https://vhc.virginia.gov/meetings.asp>.

Workgroup: Affordable Housing, Landlord and Tenant Law

- **HB1124** (Carr) / **SB233** (Hashmi) Faith in Housing for the Commonwealth Act.
- **HB863** (Hernandez) Virginia Residential Property Disclosure Act; flood-related disclosures.
- **SB354** (Locke) Establishment by localities of certain real estate contract disclosures prohibited.
- **SB555** (Williams Graves) First-time home buyer tax credit.
- **SB693** (Sturtevant) Prohibited acquisition of residential land; restrictions; civil penalty.
- **SB512** (Williams Graves) Income tax credit; adaptive repurposing of underutilized structures.
- **HB878** (Bulova) Purchase of development rights for affordable housing.
- **HB477** (Coyner) / **SB50** (Locke) Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act; Eviction Diversion Pilot Program; expiration.

Workgroup: Local Land Use and Community Living

- **HB528** (Krizek) Property Owners' Association Act; managed conservation landscaping; unreasonable restrictions prohibited.
- **HB1236** (Marshall) Local government actions related to comprehensive plans, local planning commissions, subdivision plats and site plans and zoning ordinances; approval process.
- **HB646** (Coyner) Zoning; certified recovery residence.
- **SB123** (VanValkenburg) Improvements, repairs, or maintenance of property; entering adjoining property; petition for entry.

Workgroup: Accessory Dwelling Units

- **HB900** (Srinivasan) Zoning; development and use of accessory dwelling units.
- **SB304** (Salim) Zoning; development and use of accessory dwelling units.

Study: Freedom of Information Act Fees

A significant study is Senator Danica Roem's Virginia Freedom of Information Act bill (**SB324**) dealing with charges for production of public records. Senator Roem, formerly a journalist, is very passionate about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the public's access to public records.

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act Advisory Council met on May 28 and created a workgroup that includes VML and VACO

to study this issue. Please take the time to follow this workgroup and provide comments and/or examples on this issue. Information on when and where the workgroup will meet will be posted on the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council website: <https://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/foiacouncil.htm>.

Study: Artificial Intelligence

SB487 (Aird) directed the Joint Commission on Technology and Science (JCOTS), along with stakeholders, to conduct an analysis of the use of artificial intelligence by public bodies in the Commonwealth and the creation of a commission on artificial intelligence. This bill initially banned public bodies from using artificial intelligence but was changed into a study.

Study: The Fentanyl Crisis

HJR41 (Srinivasan) directed the Joint Commission on Health Care (JCHC) to study policy solutions to the Commonwealth's fentanyl crisis. Issues to be examined include the causes and impact of prevalence and overdoses; insights into the crisis within the context of other drug crises and addiction trends in recent history; and the impact on Virginians and the Commonwealth's health care system. The JCHC shall make policy recommendations related to reducing the prevalence and the number of fentanyl overdoses in the Commonwealth. The study will take place in 2025 with recommendations forwarded to the General Assembly by Nov. 30, 2025.

Policy & Legislative Committees

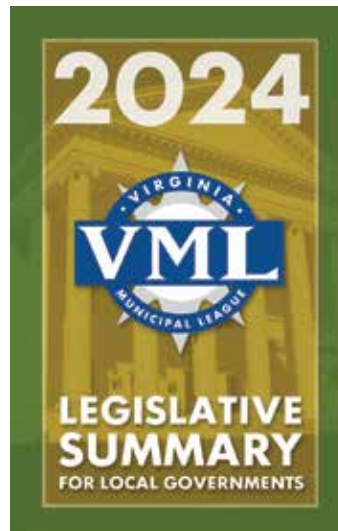
VML's 2024 Legislative Committee, led by Chair Terry Short, councilmember from the City of Waynesboro, and Vice Chair Jimmy Gray, vice mayor of the City of Hampton, began its work in late June with an update on the 2024 General Assembly Session, a presentation on the regional economy from Sonya Waddell, vice president and economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and a look into issues that may be in play during the 2025 General Assembly.

VML's five policy committees met during July to receive presentations and discuss a range of issues including tax policy, local authority with accessory dwelling units and land use, housing, Freedom of Information Act legislative studies and initiatives, education funding, photo speed enforcement, and water quality funding. Each committee voted on items to forward to the Legislative Committee for further consideration.

At its September 5 meeting, the Legislative Committee considered issues from the policy committees, including referendum authority for towns, state assistance to local law enforcement, local excise taxes, support for public education, support for the water quality improvement

fund and local land use, referendum, and revenue authority regarding cannabis retail sales. The Legislative Committee will meet for a third time on Sunday, October 13, at the VML Annual Conference in Virginia Beach. The proposed legislative program and the revised policy statements will be discussed and voted on during the VML Annual Business Meeting held during the conference.

Please review the proposed policy and legislative committee statements which can be found on each committee's page on our website under the Advocacy tab.



Events, Education & Training

2023 Mayors Institute & Annual Conference



The 2023 Mayors Institute & Annual Conference was held at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott Oct. 7-10. To kick things off for the conference, the City of Norfolk hosted an amazing evening reception. at the Chrysler Museum of Art. Educational offerings included sessions on EV charging infrastructure, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, building an effective emergency management program, how local governments are using artificial intelligence, and many more! Mobile workshop offerings included a tour of the Columbia Care medical marijuana grow facility, a guided bike tour of the Elizabeth River Trail, a bus tour of the St. Paul's Revitalization project, and boat tours of the Port of Virginia.

Two items from the 2023 Annual Conference proved so popular that we're bringing them back for 2024: Facilitator Matt Lehrman will lead the Mayors Institute and emcee the Closing Session while the Soul Expressions Band is booked to get us on the dance floor for the Sunday night Awards Banquet celebration.

Before, during and after the conference, VML members had opportunities to review VML's draft policy and legislative statements. During the Annual Business Meeting these statements as well as an updated VML slate of officers was voted on and approved. Town of Farmville Vice-Mayor A.D. "Chuckie" Reid became the new VML President after serving out the remainder of Town of Pennington Gap Councilmember Jill Carson's term after she passed on January 28, 2023.

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Local Government Day

On February 1, VML co-hosted the annual Local Government Day with the Virginia Association of Counties and the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions. Attendees spent the morning hearing staff reports on legislation that could affect local governments and listening to analysis by Bob Holsworth, one of the leading political analysts in Virginia. The afternoon was spent attending General Assembly committees and subcommittees and meeting with legislators. At the evening reception, attendees compared notes and had opportunities to chat with various state legislators and officials including Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears, Senators Danny Diggs, Barbara Favola, Tommy French, and Jeremy McPike, and Delegates Paul Milde, Chad Green and Shelly Simonds (to name a few).

Having local government leaders from across the Commonwealth make the trip to Richmond for this important day in the middle of the General Assembly session always makes a difference in VML's efforts appreciates. Thanks to everyone who came and spoke with their delegation members. The next Local Government Day will be hosted by VML and will be held Thursday, January 30, 2024, at the Richmond Downtown Hilton.



Virginia Local Elected Officials Conferences



VIRGINIA LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS CONFERENCE

VML held two Virginia Local Elected Officials conferences over the past year – one in the winter and one in the summer. These events – originally known as the “Newly Elected Officials” conferences – are relevant to both new and veteran elected officials. The winter offering was held January 5 at the Richmond Downtown Marriott and featured presentations on protecting localities lawsuits, municipal financing, state and local budget processes, local land use, local/state relations, council/manager relations, and the Freedom of Information Act.

The second offering took place on June 25 in the Frances Hayes Conference Room of McGuireWoods' downtown Richmond offices. Attendees heard presentations on cannabis challenges in human resources policies, local land use, strategies for successful youth recreation programming, economic development, the Freedom of Information Act, the Conflict of Interest Act, the ABCs of board/staff relationships, and photo speed enforcement.

The next Elected Officials Conference will take place January 8, 2025 in Richmond.

Broadband Together



On May 16-17 at the Hilton Short Pump outside of Richmond, VML was pleased to once again be co-host of this annual conference where industry experts and community leaders learn how to work together to bridge the digital divide and leverage broadband opportunities for all of Virginia. Among this year's offerings were presentations on the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, community partnerships, mental health and telehealth, workforce issues, and smart farming among others.

Small Towns Conference



On June 10 and 11 nearly 100 elected officials and staff from small towns across Virginia gathered at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon for the first ever Virginia Small Towns Conference. Presentations were tailored to the unique concerns and capabilities of Virginia's smaller localities and included topics such as good governance, legal issues in towns, housing in small and rural places, strategic planning in small communities, and financial strategies for small towns. VML staff provided a legislative update geared towards towns. This inaugural event, hosted by Virginia Tech and VML, was deemed a big success by those who participated. Be on the lookout for the next iteration of the Virginia Small Towns Conference in 2025!

Emerging Technology Conference



This summer, VML helped the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) and Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation organize and promote this event focused on the intersection of technology and public safety. On July 17 and 18 attendees at the Richmond Short Pump Hilton heard presentations on topics such as artificial intelli-

gence, geographic information systems, cybersecurity, and converged communications.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Timothy Ramsay, a global cybersecurity leader with Mandiant Strategic Advisor.

Website and Member Platform

In July of this year, VML marked the first anniversary of the launch of our new membership platform that brought many of our work processes – communications, finances, event registration, data tracking, and website (to name a few) – under one roof. Our members may have noticed that they now must enter their VML credentials to access certain members-only content like the newsletter and other resources. While this adds an extra step for members, VML staff are always happy to assist as needed to ensure that our members receive the full value of their membership.

The work to maintain and improve the new system continued in 2024 as VML staff incorporated the event registration and member renewal processes for our affiliate groups into our new platform. As part of this work, we have begun creating tutorial guides and videos which are posted to our website.

Communications

Magazine: *Virginia Town & City*

VML's magazine *Virginia Town & City* keeps our members apprised of the latest comings and goings in local government officials and staff, highlights the achievements and fun events of our members, and spotlight our member localities, officials, and member organizations. While each issue can have items on various topics, there is always a focus with a set of articles on a particular topic. Since the last Annual Report, these have been:

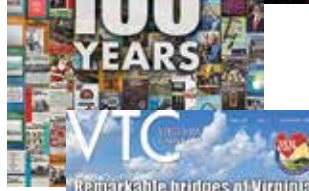
2023:

- September - Annual Conference Preview
- October/November - Conference Wrap-Up featuring the winner of the President's Award for Innovation
- December - Meet VML President and Town of Farmville Vice-Mayor A.D. "Chuckie" Reid

2024:

- January / February - Celebrating 100 Years of VML's Magazine
- March - Water Quality Considerations
- April - Affordable Housing
- May / June - VML Essay Contest Winners & General Assembly Review
- July / Aug - The Virginia You Love: Remarkable Bridges of Virginia

In 2024 VML will publish nine issues of our *Virginia Town & City* magazine. In 2025, to increase the efficiency of our production schedule and better align the timing of each issue, VML will publish on a bi-monthly (6 issues total) schedule.



Newsletter: *eNews*



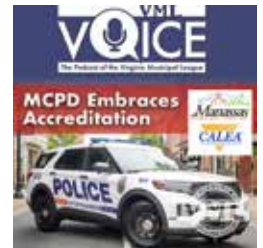
Beginning in August 2023, VML fully transitioned to providing *eNews* as a members-only publication. This further cemented *eNews* as the league's primary channel for distributing valuable information to our members on the issues, opportunities, and events that matter to Virginia's local governments. Published bi-weekly during most of the year, and much more often during General Assembly Sessions (sometimes several times a day!), *eNews* and the legislative "Action Alerts" distributed via the *eNews* channel during sessions are a critical component of VML's communications.

Podcast: The VML Voice

During 2024 we were pleased to provide these episodes (so far... more are in the works before 2024 comes to close):

MCPD Embraces Accreditation

(February 12) – In this episode, we heard from Manassas City Police Department (MCPD) Chief (and interim City Manager) Douglas Keen and Accreditation Manager Mason Riggs on how CALEA ensures that the department's policies and behaviors are fair, safe, and effective for its employees and residents.



LED Conversions and SMART Cities: A Conversation with Dominion Energy

(May 22) – Guests Jerri Northedge, Manager Outdoor Lighting & Smart Cities; Machesha Hasty, Electric Distribution Program Manager - Smart Cities; and, Leslie Downey, Outdoor Lighting Project Manager discussed Dominion Energy's outdoor LED conversion program with options that are perfect for municipal customers. Plus – we heard about Dominion Energy's partnership with several Virginia cities to pilot innovative smart city technologies.



Big ideas from the Small City: The VML Voice visits Falls Church

(July 11) – The VML Voice traveled from Richmond to Falls Church for a chat with Mayor Letty Hardi and Councilwoman Marybeth Connelly. The timing was fortuitous as our visit happened to be the day after the Falls Church council had not only honored the Region 5 winner of VML's "If I Were Mayor" essay contest, but also had also celebrated Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and passed a budget! All of which meant that there was plenty to talk about.



2024 Annual Conference Preview with Matt Lehrman

(July 29) – Among the highlights we are looking forward to for the 2024 Annual Conference is the return of ace facilitator Matt Lehrman. This time, Matt is coming back to emcee the Mayors Institute on Sunday and to close out the conference Tuesday morning with an interactive leadership exercise. In this episode, we caught up with Matt to find out more about what we can expect to experience at the 2024 VML Annual Conference.



Awards and acknowledgements

Innovation Awards

In September, the Virginia Municipal League was pleased to announce the winners of its annual awards for excellence in local government. The statewide competition recognizes innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, citizen participation, and improved services to citizens.

The judges selected one winner in each of the eight categories. VML President and Town of Farmville Vice Mayor A.D. “Chuckie” Reid selected the Town of Blacksburg’s entry in the Community Health category as the 2023 winner of the President’s Award.



The winners of the 2023 VML Innovation Awards were:

COMMUNITY HEALTH & PRESIDENT’S AWARD FOR INNOVATION

Town of Blacksburg - Growing a Community Garden program

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

City of Roanoke - Revitalization of the historic Fire Station One

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

County of York - Next generation wastewater treatment project

RISK MANAGEMENT

City of Chesapeake - Route 168 Bypass emergency bridge repairs

WORKING WITH YOUTH

City of Covington - Alleghany Highlands Public Schools school consolidation project

COMMUNICATIONS

City of Williamsburg - “Future Festivals” initiative to inform Two-Year Plan

PUBLIC SAFETY

City of Manassas - Parent E3 series



“If I Were Mayor” essay contest

Promoting good local government is important to VML, and our annual essay contest provides students the opportunity to reflect on the important role of elected officials in their locality. In years past, the contest was limited to seventh graders but for 2024 it was expanded to include eighth graders. As such, there was even more competition from a wider variety

of localities this year. The challenge to the students, however, remained the same: Identify an issue in their locality, talk to others about possible solutions, and then identify what solution would best address the issue.

Regional winners selected from around the state each received a \$150 prize and plaque. The statewide winner received a \$250 prize and plaque. The runner-up from the region that received the statewide award became that region’s winner. All winning essays were featured in the May issue of VML’s magazine.

VML staff were pleased to attend council meetings to present the awards to the 2024 winners.

2024 VML “If I Were Mayor” essay contest winners:

- Statewide winner: **Piper Dellinger** of Signal Knob Middle School in Strasburg
- Region 1: **Maya Morrison** of Marion Middle School in Marion

- Region 2: **Avery Gallimore** of Christian Heritage Academy in Rocky Mount
- Region 3: **Aiswarya Vinu** of Shelburne Middle School in Staunton
- Region 5: **Madeline Sherwood** of Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in Falls Church
- Region 6: **Leia Hatem** of J.L. Simpson Middle School in Leesburg
- Region 7: **Eli Henry Smith** of E.W. Wyatt Middle School in Emporia
- Region 8: **Jay Reese** of Grafton Middle School in Yorktown

***Note:** VML did not receive any entries from region 4 this year.

Staff Changes

Promoted: Keyara Johnson



Keyara joined VML’s team in the fall of 2022 prior to the retirement of longtime administrative assistant Joni Terry. Keyara ably stepped into Joni’s duties and soon expanded her responsibilities to become one of the leaders of VML’s transition to a new database and member services platform. She met those challenges with creativity and

dedication. Out of recognition for her expanded role, Keyara was promoted in 2024 and given the title of Membership Services Administrator.

Retired: Sue Mellen



At the end of September, VML bid farewell to Sue Mellen who retired after more than five years of service to the league. During that time, Sue not only kept VML’s finances straight and made sure the lights stayed on, but she also managed the strategic plan, served as the business manager of VML’s various affiliate groups, participated

in event planning and execution, and was instrumental in the design, implementation, and maintenance of VML’s new database and member platform. Suffice it to say she will be missed! Everyone at VML wishes Sue a happy and much deserved retirement!

Sue joined the VML staff after a 31-year career with James City County culminating in the position of Director of Financial and Management Services.

New: Brent Manuel



In July, VML welcomed its newest staff member, Brent Manuel, who filled the position of Chief Administrative Officer. Brent brings more than twenty-five years of local government experience, working in planning, operations and for the last nine years as a town manager in Virginia and Maryland. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Urban

Studies/Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Local Government Management Certificate from Shenandoah University.

Annual Briefings from VML's Affiliate Organizations



President: Deborah Kendall, Town Manager, Town of Gordonsville

Janet Areson, Executive Director

The **Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA)** is a statewide association of local government management professionals with more than 300 members. Our mission is to support professional local government managers and administrators who work to help build great communities in Virginia through inclusion, innovation, and leadership. Our priorities include providing professional information and networking, promoting principled leadership and ethical behavior in ourselves and our organizations, facilitating civic engagement in our communities, supporting members of the profession through professional development, and fostering the development of the next generation of local government managers and administrators.

VLGMA offers members opportunities for professional development through two statewide annual conferences and a monthly newsletter. The Association provides access to a statewide network of regional support coordinators and senior advisors, as well as a national coaching program through the International City-County Management Association (ICMA) that offers monthly topical articles and webinars and allows for professional mentoring and the ability for one-on-one meetings with seasoned members as requested.

VLGMA's commitment to developing the next generation of local government management professionals takes several forms. One is the Association's long-term support of the Local Government Certificate Program at Virginia Tech. Initiated by VLGMA in the early 2000's, the Certificate Program has become an established part of Virginia Tech's academic curriculum and is targeted to individuals already working in local government throughout Virginia, as well as full-time students who want to learn more about local government management. All courses are available through a virtual platform and are taught by current or retired Virginia local government management professionals. Several current managers and administrators in Virginia have completed the program.

VLGMA also actively supports the Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute, a program created in partnership with the Virginia Women Leading Government and the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center that provides women in local government with

the connections and tools to further develop their skills and build a pipeline for women to lead communities in Virginia. Additionally, VLGMA supports leadership development programming through the Virginia Institute of Government at the University of Virginia, including the Senior Executive Institute, and Leading, Educating and Developing (LEAD) programs.

The Association's "deputies, assistants and others", or DAO, group actively promotes professional development for individuals who are key non-Chief Administrative Officer leaders in our local governments. The group offers one-day meetings each fall and spring, hosted by DAO's in communities around the state. These sessions focus on a specific topic or issue and give participants an opportunity to meet and learn from colleagues from across Virginia.

Recognizing the importance and value of deputy and assistant management staff, each year VLGMA recognizes an outstanding assistant or deputy manager/administrator with its Marcia Mashaw Outstanding Assistant Award. This year's recipient was Monica Smith-Callahan, deputy county manager for community affairs with Henrico County. Smith-Callahan was recognized during the 2024 summer conference for her many accomplishments, including her work supporting youth mental health needs and helping to develop a model using data to identify communities in which public and community services are deployed to respond to, or to prevent trauma in the county.

VLGMA is led by a Board consisting of seven officers and 12 executive committee members and is a state affiliate of the International City-County Management Association (ICMA) and an affiliate association of VML.

If you are an elected leader, ask your chief administrative officer if they are a VLGMA member, and if they are not, please encourage them to get involved. Let them know that you actively support their membership in an organization that provides opportunities for professional growth and information-sharing that will not only benefit them and their staff, but your organization, and your community as a whole.

To learn more about VLGMA, visit the website at www.vlgma.org.



**President: Carey Saffelle, Director of Energy Services,
Town of Front Royal**

Sandra Harrington, Secretary/Treasurer

The **Municipal Electric Power Association of Virginia (MEPAV)** was founded in 1954 with the main purpose being to foster a continuing spirit of cooperation among the various Virginia municipalities operating their own electric utilities and the various privately owned and cooperatively owned utilities that supply most of the energy distributed by the municipalities.

MEPAV consists of 16 members including: Town of Bedford, Town of Blackstone, Bristol Virginia Utilities Authority, Town of Culpeper Light and Power, City of Danville Power and Light, Town of Elkton, City of Franklin Power and Light, Harrisonburg Electric Commission, City of Manassas, City of Martinsville, City of Radford, City of Richlands, City of Salem, Virginia Tech Electric Services, and the Town of Wakefield. Additionally, MEPAV is a member of the American Public Power Association (APPA), an organization that advocates for over 2,000 towns and cities nationwide.

MEPAV is also supported by Associate Members which consist of persons, firms, or corporations engaged in or closely aligned with

the generation, transmission, or distribution of electric energy; manufacturers and suppliers of utility equipment; or members of municipalities not engaged in operating electric systems.

MEPAV is governed by an elected Board of Directors and meets several times throughout the year. In addition, MEPAV annually hosts an Engineering and Operations Seminar and Annual Conference. These events provide training, information sharing, and networking opportunities for MEPAV members and Associate Members.

MEPAV is supported by its associate members which consist of persons, firms, or corporations engaged in or closely allied with the generation, transmission, or distribution of electric energy. Members of manufacturers and suppliers of utility equipment and members of municipalities not engaged in the operation of electric systems are among the list of associate members.

For more information about MEPAV please visit the website at www.mepav.org.



**President: John Broughton,
Franklin County Building Official**

Sandra Harrington, Executive Director

The **Virginia Building and Code Officials' Association (VBCOA)** is a statewide association of building safety professionals dedicated to the health, safety, and welfare of all persons who live, work, and visit the Commonwealth of Virginia. Since 1929, VBCOA has worked to foster partnerships among all groups associated with the construction industry. Membership includes over 1,000 members including building and safety professionals from across the Commonwealth dedicated to the protection of health, safety, and welfare.

VBCOA is governed by an elected and appointed Board of Directors that meets quarterly. Additionally, VBCOA provides educational opportunities at the Mid-Year and Annual Conference and provides educational opportunities all year long. VBCOA is also a member of the International Code Council (ICC) and has many members who have either served and/or are on the ICC Board.

For more information, please visit the VBCOA website www.vbcoa.org.



Chair: Stephen Burr, Arlington County

Sandra Harrington, Secretary/Treasurer

Dating back to the 1970s, local governments in the Dominion Energy service territory formed a Steering Committee to collectively negotiate electric power rates and terms and conditions of service. For more than two decades, the Steering Committee negotiated multi-year electric contracts with Dominion Energy that included rates based on cost of service as well as terms and conditions reflective of government needs. This joint effort ensured that localities could benefit from the ability to share legal, consulting, and administrative costs related to these activities.

In 2002, the Steering Committee formerly organized as a joint powers association and became what is now known as the

Virginia Energy Purchasing Governmental Association (VEPGA). VEPGA continue to negotiate contracts on behalf of its members, monitors state regulatory and legislative developments, and maintains several committees to advance its members interests.

VEPGA is governed by an elected Board of Directors which meets quarterly, provides educational opportunities throughout the year for its members in addition to an Annual Meeting. VEPGA membership includes over 170 Virginia local governments, public school systems, authorities, and other governmental entities.

Please visit www.vepga.org to learn more.

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BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH
SOUND GOVERNMENT



The VML Voice is the official podcast of the Virginia Municipal League. Each episode explores a different locality or issue but the focus is always on Virginia and the local governments that make the Commonwealth work for everyone.

Contact Rob Bullington, rbullington@vml.org to suggest topics, ask questions, or inquire about sponsorship opportunities.

Subscribe at www.vml.org or scan the QR to listen to all episodes.



2024 VML Local Government Members

Cities

City of Alexandria
 City of Bristol
 City of Buena Vista
 City of Charlottesville
 City of Chesapeake
 City of Colonial Heights
 City of Covington
 City of Danville
 City of Emporia
 City of Fairfax
 City of Falls Church
 City of Franklin
 City of Fredericksburg
 City of Galax
 City of Hampton
 City of Harrisonburg
 City of Hopewell
 City of Lexington
 City of Lynchburg
 City of Manassas
 City of Manassas Park
 City of Martinsville
 City of Newport News
 City of Norfolk
 City of Norton
 City of Petersburg
 City of Poquoson
 City of Portsmouth
 City of Radford
 City of Richmond
 City of Roanoke
 City of Salem
 City of Staunton
 City of Suffolk
 City of Virginia Beach
 City of Waynesboro
 City of Williamsburg
 City of Winchester

Towns

Town of Abingdon
 Town of Accomac
 Town of Alberta
 Town of Altavista
 Town of Amherst
 Town of Appomattox
 Town of Ashland
 Town of Bedford
 Town of Berryville
 Town of Big Stone Gap
 Town of Blacksburg
 Town of Blackstone
 Town of Bluefield
 Town of Boones Mill
 Town of Bowling Green
 Town of Boydton
 Town of Boykins

Town of Branchville
 Town of Bridgewater
 Town of Broadway
 Town of Brodnax
 Town of Brookneal
 Town of Buchanan
 Town of Burkeville
 Town of Cape Charles
 Town of Capron
 Town of Cedar Bluff
 Town of Charlotte Court
 House
 Town of Chase City
 Town of Chatham
 Town of Cheriton
 Town of Chilhowie
 Town of Chincoteague
 Town of Christiansburg
 Town of Claremont
 Town of Clarksville
 Town of Clifton
 Town of Clifton Forge
 Town of Clintwood
 Town of Coeburn
 Town of Colonial Beach
 Town of Courtland
 Town of Craigsville
 Town of Crewe
 Town of Culpeper
 Town of Damascus
 Town of Dayton
 Town of Dillwyn
 Town of Drakes Branch
 Town of Dublin
 Town of Duffield
 Town of Dumfries
 Town of Eastville
 Town of Edinburg
 Town of Elkton
 Town of Exmore
 Town of Farmville
 Town of Fincastle
 Town of Floyd
 Town of Fries
 Town of Front Royal
 Town of Gate City
 Town of Glade Spring
 Town of Glasgow
 Town of Gordonsville
 Town of Gretna
 Town of Grottoes
 Town of Grundy
 Town of Halifax
 Town of Hallwood
 Town of Hamilton
 Town of Haymarket
 Town of Haysi
 Town of Herndon
 Town of Hillsboro

Town of Hillsville
 Town of Hurt
 Town of Independence
 Town of Iron Gate
 Town of Irvington
 Town of Ivor
 Town of Jarratt
 Town of Jonesville
 Town of Keller
 Town of Kenbridge
 Town of Keysville
 Town of Kilmarnock
 Town of La Crosse
 Town of Lawrenceville
 Town of Lebanon
 Town of Leesburg
 Town of Louisa
 Town of Lovettsville
 Town of Luray
 Town of Madison
 Town of Marion
 Town of McKenney
 Town of Middleburg
 Town of Middletown
 Town of Monterey
 Town of Montross
 Town of Mount Crawford
 Town of Mount Jackson
 Town of Narrows
 Town of Nassawadox
 Town of New Castle
 Town of New Market
 Town of Newsoms
 Town of Occoquan
 Town of Onancock
 Town of Onley
 Town of Orange
 Town of Painter
 Town of Pamplin
 Town of Parksley
 Town of Pearisburg
 Town of Pembroke
 Town of Pennington Gap
 Town of Phenix
 Town of Port Royal
 Town of Pound
 Town of Pulaski
 Town of Purcellville
 Town of Quantico
 Town of Remington
 Town of Rich Creek
 Town of Richlands
 Town of Ridgeway
 Town of Rocky Mount
 Town of Round Hill
 Town of Rural Retreat
 Town of Saint Paul
 Town of Saltville
 Town of Scottsville

Town of Shenandoah
 Town of Smithfield
 Town of South Boston
 Town of South Hill
 Town of Stanardsville
 Town of Stanley
 Town of Stephens City
 Town of Stony Creek
 Town of Strasburg
 Town of Stuart
 Town of Surry
 Town of Tappahannock
 Town of Tazewell
 Town of The Plains
 Town of Timberville
 Town of Toms Brook
 Town of Troutville
 Town of Urbanna
 Town of Victoria
 Town of Vienna
 Town of Vinton
 Town of Virgilina
 Town of Wachapreague
 Town of Wakefield
 Town of Warrenton
 Town of Warsaw
 Town of Washington
 Town of Waverly
 Town of Weber City
 Town of West Point
 Town of White Stone
 Town of Windsor
 Town of Wise
 Town of Woodstock
 Town of Wytheville

Counties

County of Albemarle
 County of Alleghany
 County of Arlington
 County of James City
 County of Loudoun
 County of New Kent
 County of Prince George
 County of Roanoke
 County of York

Allied Member

Northern Virginia Regional
 Commission (NVRC)

If your locality is a full dues-paying VML member and is not on the list above, please contact VML at e-mail@vml.org or call 804-649-8471.

Legislative and Policy Committees

Local officials from diverse localities are appointed each year by the VML president to serve on VML's legislative committee. Committee members develop positions on legislation and urge the enactment, amendment, or opposition to a variety of legislative initiatives. Over 160 local officials work on the VML policy committees. They help to shape the broader policies and make specific legislative recommendations to the Legislative Committee.

All localities are encouraged to participate on policy committees. Nomination forms are sent to each locality in the spring. Let a VML staff member know of your interest or send an email to e-mail@vml.org and we will follow up with you.



Legislative Committee

Chair: Terry Short, Council Member, City of Waynesboro

Vice Chair: Jimmy Gray, Vice Mayor, City of Hampton

Andreas Addison, Council Member, City of Richmond

Sarah Bagley, Council Member, City of Alexandria

Curtis Bethany, Vice Mayor, City of Newport News

Marybeth Connelly, Council Member, City of Falls Church (HD&E Chair)

Zach Cummings, Council Member, Town of Leesburg (GL Chair)

E. Michelle Davis-Younger, Mayor, City of Manassas

Pat Dent, Vice Mayor, City of Williamsburg

Frank Friedman, Mayor, City of Lexington

Shannon Glover, Mayor, City of Portsmouth

Keith Harless, Town Manager, Town of Pennington Gap

Daniel Hoffman, City Manager, City of Winchester

Jake Holmes, Vice Mayor, City of Bristol

Alonzo Jones, Mayor, City of Danville

Bridge Littleton, Mayor, Town of Middleburg (Finance Chair)

Andria McClellan, Council Member, City of Norfolk (Infrastructure Chair)

Sara McGuffin, Town Manager, Town of Amherst (CED Chair)

Ed Owens, Mayor, Town of South Boston

Deanna Reed, Mayor, City of Harrisonburg

Stephanie Reed, Mayor, City of Lynchburg

Debbie Ritter, Council Member, City of Chesapeake

Jason Tyree, City Manager, City of Buena Vista

Brian Vincent, Mayor, Town of Farmville

Community & Economic Development Policy Committee

Chair: Sara McGuffin, Town Manager, Town of Amherst

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Sandra Allen, Councilmember, Town of Vienna

Yesy Amaya, Councilmember, City of Manassas Park

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Valerie Butler, Vice Mayor, Town of Smithfield

Todd Cimino-Johnson, Councilmember, Town of Leesburg

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W. H. Hobbs, Councilmember, City of Hampton

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Keven LeBlanc, Councilmember, Town of Herndon

Keith Liles, Councilmember, Town of Vinton

Lisa Lucas-Burke, Vice Mayor, City of Portsmouth

Susan Mattingly, Councilmember, Town of Blacksburg

Selonia Miles, Councilmember, Town of Dumfries

Stephanie Moon Reynolds, Councilmember, City of Roanoke

Mark Moore, Assistant Town Manager, Town of Rocky Mount

Amber Morris, Councilmember, Town of Front Royal

Benjamin Nicely, Councilmember, Town of Clifton Forge

Tammy Pearson, Councilmember, City of Martinsville

Richard Peters Jr, Town Manager, Town of Vinton

N. Janie Schmidt, Councilmember, Town of Culpeper

Brian Solis, Deputy City Manager, City of Chesapeake

Vernon Tillage, Councilmember, City of Portsmouth

Tina Vick, Councilmember, City of Newport News

Finance Policy Committee

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Vice Chair: Curtis Bethany, Vice Mayor, City of Newport News

De'Andre Barnes, Councilmember, City of Portsmouth

Dale Burdette, Vice Mayor, Town of Clifton Forge

Linda Jane Colbert, Mayor, Town of Vienna

Vincent Copenhagen, Finance Director, Town of Rocky Mount

Aretha Ferrell-Benavides, City Manager, City of Martinsville

Laura Fitzpatrick, Deputy City Manager, City of Chesapeake

Susan Goodwin, Finance Director, City of Newport News

Kevin Greenleaf, Assistant Director Finance/Revenue, City of Alexandria

Bradley Grose, Mayor, Town of Vinton

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Jessica Ramakis, Councilmember, Town of Vienna

Mark Robertson, Councilmember, City of Staunton

Cody Sexton, Deputy Town Manager, Town of Vinton

Michael Stallings, Town Manager, Town of Smithfield

Liam Watson, Town Council, Town of Blacksburg

Patricia White-Boyd, Councilmember, City of Roanoke

BJ Wilson, Finance Director, Town of Front Royal

Glenn Wood, Councilmember, Town of Front Royal

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Naila Alam, Councilmember, Town of Herndon

Chuck Anderson, Councilmember, Town of Vienna

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 Laurie Mullins, Councilmember, Town of Vinton
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 S. Z. (Debbie) Ritter, Councilmember, City of Chesapeake
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 George Sonnett, Town Attorney, Town of Front Royal
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Michele Edwards, Councilmember, City of Staunton
 Willie Greene, Mayor, City of Galax
 Marcellus Harris, Councilmember, City of Newport News
 LC Jones, Mayor, City of Martinsville
 Ann-Frances Lambert, Councilmember, City of Richmond
 Lizi Lewis, Director of Community Development/Tourism, Town of Front Royal
 Sabrina McCarty, Councilmember, Town of Vinton
 Monica Robinson, Councilmember, City of Harrisonburg
 Joseph Waltz, Town Manager, Town of Front Royal
 Ella Ward, Councilmember, City of Chesapeake
 Carl Wolfe, Councilmember, Town of Clifton Forge

Laura Dent, Vice Mayor, City of Harrisonburg
 Jerry Ford, Councilmember, Town of Blacksburg
 Robert Geis, Deputy City Manager, City of Chesapeake
 Hope Harper, Councilmember, City of Hampton
 William Herndon, Public Works Director, Town of Vinton
 John Hodges, Vice Mayor, Town of Ashland
 Katherine Jordan, Councilmember, City of Richmond
 Debbie Laudermilk, Councilmember, Town of Clifton Forge
 Kathy Lawson, City Councilmember, City of Martinsville
 Cleon Long, Councilmember, City of Newport News
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 Tarrance Moorer, Assistant Director, Dept. of Transportation and Environmental Services, City of Alexandria
 Sheila Olem, Mayor, Town of Herndon
 Bruce Rappaport, Councilmember, Town of Front Royal
 Howard Springsteen, Councilmember, Town of Vienna
 Neil Steinberg, Councilmember, Town of Leesburg
 Michael Stovall, Vice Mayor, Town of Vinton
 Michael Sutphin, Councilmember, Town of Blacksburg
 Peter Volosin, Councilmember, City of Roanoke
 Patricia Woodbury, Councilmember, City of Newport News

Human Development & Education Policy Committee

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 Chris Bowman, Councilmember, City of Hampton
 Steven Brown, Councilmember, City of Hampton
 Joseph Cobb, Vice Mayor, City of Roanoke
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 J. Kevin Daly, Councilmember, Town of Middleburg
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Chair: Andria McClellan, Councilmember, City of Norfolk
Vice Chair: Dany Fleming, Councilmember, City of Harrisonburg
 Christopher Blakeman, Environmental Manager, City of Roanoke
 Robbie Boyer, Director of Public Works, Town of Front Royal
 Adam Campbell, Councilmember, City of Staunton
 Pam Curran, Councilmember, Town of Middleburg
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Diamond

Dominion Energy
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 Virginia Housing

Gold

MissionSquare Retirement



Silver

Aetna
 American Public University System
 Blue Line Solutions
 Brightly Software
 Comcast
 Hartman Executive Advisors
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Historic schoolhouse has a new life as the Mary E. Branch Heritage Center

BETWEEN 1917 AND 1932, Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute and Julius Rosenwald, philanthropist and president of Sears Roebuck, helped create over 5,000 school buildings, shops, and teacher homes to serve black students across the South. Today only about 10 percent of the “Rosenwald Schools” survive thanks in large part to preservation and rehabilitation efforts by localities and groups of citizens.

One Rosenwald school, the Farmville Colored School, opened its doors to the black students of Prince Edward County in 1926. After grades 8-11 were added in 1931, the facility was renamed the Robert Russa Moton High School and served that purpose until a new high school was built in 1939 on Main Street. The original school became the Mary E. Branch Elementary School.

After the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was announced, the state of Virginia entered a season of Massive Resistance to thwart the integration of public schools. Consequently, Prince Edward County defied the United States Supreme Court’s decision to dismantle “separate but equal” educational facilities. This defiance led

to the closing of public education in Prince Edward from 1959-1964. It is interesting to note that one of the precursors to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* was *Davis v. the Prince Edward County School Board* in 1951. The Davis case, which sought improved learning conditions was eventually one of five separate cases folded into *Brown v. Board of Education*.

In the fall of 1963, the Mary E. Branch School was chosen to serve as a learning center by the Prince Edward Free School Association. This association was a community-based group, staffed by volunteers in the county and around the nation. Its chief purpose was to shore up gaps in education, due to the closure of schools. When public education was made available in the fall of 1964, Mary E. Branch Elementary School was one of the locations to reopen after a five-year hiatus.

In the late 1980s, a group of black women, most of whom were retired teachers, purchased the school from the county. The facility was renamed the Prince Edward County Recreation Center. The center’s name was changed to the Mary E. Branch Heritage Center in 2022. Today, the center’s mission is to serve as a central facility for new and expanded programs; to



Mary E. Branch School circa 1963

JUNE 15, 2024
10am-3pm

Mary E. Branch Heritage Center

JUNE TEENTH CELEBRATION

FISH FRY

Vendors Food
Bring your chairs and lets have fun!!!

FISH PLATES-\$10
\$5 SANDWICHES

Collecting canned goods and non-perishable items to be donated to F.A.C.E.S. Food Bank

Kid Zone
Activities for kids

Vendors-\$50 Fee
8am setup. Must Register by May 25, 2024
Must bring own setup
Call 434-414-1268 for more info.

632 S. Main St.
Farmville, VA 23901

5 October 2024

MARY E. BRANCH HERITAGE CENTER PRESENTS

8pm TILL 12am

Firemen's Sports Arena
Farmville, VA

SOULTOWN TO MOTOWN FUNDRAISER

Get your 70's wardrobe and dancing shoes out and let's re-live the sounds of Motown and Soul Train!!

Get your groove on in the Soul Train Line

Scramble Board

\$25 Donations Includes:
Admission, Food, and lots of Fun!!

Ages 21 & up
BYOB Allowed
DJ Dirty Red on the 1s & 2s

All proceeds benefit the MEBHC Renovations & Projects

enhance the quality of life of low- and moderate-income families in Prince Edward County; to partner with entities within and without the county to provide the widest range of services to youth and family support.

Members of the center continue to be involved in community engagement. Activities have included Black History Month programs, Juneteenth celebrations, college and career preparation and fundraising for building renovations. The Mary E. Branch Heritage Center and the building it occupies serve as a reminder of African-American perseverance throughout the United States.

MARY E. BRANCH HERITAGE CENTER

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

Sunday Dinner

Spaghetti, Salad, Bread
Drink and Dessert

Sunday
29
September

FREE
(while supplies last)

1 pm-3pm

632 S. Main St.
Farmville VA
23901

Three points of light in downtown Farmville

Mary E. Branch stands in a geographic-historical triangle in one of Farmville's downtown gateways. One tip of the triangle is the Robert Russa Moton Museum. This space originally served as the segregated high school for African American students. The Moton Museum is on the National Register of Historic Places. The second tip of the triangle is the Odd Fellows Cemetery which is the burial site for the town's African American population. Many of the families buried there were actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement in Virginia and directly affected by policies and practices of Jim Crow and Massive Resistance. Such a site is a reminder of the legacy of these freedom fighters. The Mary E. Branch center completes the triangle.



About Mary E. Branch

Mary Elizabeth Branch was born in Prince Edward County on May 20, 1881, to former enslaved parents, Tazwell and Harriett Branch. Her father was elected twice to the Virginia House of Delegates. After high school, she enrolled in Virginia State College (now University). After graduating from Virginia State with a degree in elementary education, she served as an English teacher at an elementary school in Blackstone.

Years later, Branch joined the faculty at Virginia State where she served for 20 years. During this time, she earned both a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in English from the University of Chicago. After her tenure at Virginia State, she became a dean at Vashon High School.

Branch ended her career as president of Tillotson College. Under her leadership, she renovated existing buildings and launched a capital campaign for the construction of new facilities. During her tenure, student enrollment at Tillotson more than tripled. Moreover, she was the first African American female to lead an accredited college in the state of Texas.

Branch was also instrumental in the development of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), which supports a select group of private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Throughout her career, Branch was honored with several awards including two honorary doctorate degrees. She received a Doctor of Pedagogy from her alma mater, Virginia State and was honored with a Doctor of Laws from Howard University. A residence hall is named in honor of Branch at Virginia State University. She was also recognized for her work at the national level. President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Branch to a national advisory board supporting youth.

Branch passed away in 1944 in Baltimore, MD.

About the authors: Dr. Michael Herndon is the director of the Office of Summer and Winter Sessions at Virginia Tech. Alma Spragues is the tech and design coordinator for the Mary E. Branch Heritage Center.

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—Thom Harnett, Former State Legislator and Mayor, Gardiner, Maine

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Virginia Housing’s Board names new leadership positions

Virginia Housing’s Board of Commissioners elected officers and welcomed new Board members at its August meeting. Sarah Barrie Stedfast of Virginia Beach has been named chair and William C. Shelton of Charlottesville has been named vice chair. New Board members include Dare Ruffin of Virginia Beach, Michael Olivieri of Virginia Beach, and Matthew Fields of Grundy.

“I am excited and honored to welcome our new members and to elect two existing members to these leadership positions,” said Virginia Housing’s CEO Tammy Neale in a press release. “We are looking forward to working with each of them to help further the mission of Virginia Housing.”



- Stedfast -

Sarah Barrie Stedfast is currently the venture president at RW Towne Mortgage in Norfolk (a joint venture between TowneBank Mortgage and Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices RW Towne Realty). She has over 30 years of experience in the mortgage industry, including tenures at NewTowne Mortgage, TowneBank Mortgage, Bank of America, Truist, and Wells Fargo. Stedfast served previously on the Virginia Housing Board in several roles, including chair and vice chair. She maintains active roles in the Virginia and Tidewater Mortgage Bankers associations and currently serves as a lay member on a Virginia State Bar Association’s District Committee. Stedfast holds a Virginia Real Estate Salesperson’s license and a Bachelor’s degree in Business Finance from Virginia Tech.



- Shelton -

William C. Shelton and his family own and operate Vintage Virginia Apples and Albemarle CiderWorks. He has been in the housing and community development field for over 40 years, having served as director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for 20 years, and on the Virginia Housing Board of Commissioners for 25 years. Shelton is a founding board member at Locus (formerly known as Virginia Community Capital), the first community development bank created in the Commonwealth.

Dare Ruffin currently serves as vice president of acquisition and development at



- Ruffin -

Robinson Development Group. Her background includes experience in commercial real estate roles with Morgan Stanley. Ruffin is an active member of the Hampton Roads community serving on the boards of Families of Autistic Children in Tidewater (FACT), riseVB and An Achievable Dream (AAD). She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Finance from the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia.



- Olivieri -

Michael Olivieri serves as the senior vice president at Associated Development Management Corp. His entrepreneurial career spans nearly 30 years during which he has remained active in real estate development and civic endeavors, including mentoring young people. Olivieri holds a Bachelor’s degree in Finance from George Mason University.



- Fields -

Matthew Fields currently serves as the director of economic development, tourism and marketing for Buchanan County, as well as the director of Buchanan County Industrial Development Authority. He currently serves on the board of directors for People Inc., the Buchanan County Chamber of Commerce and the Heart of Appalachia Regional Tourism Authority. Fields holds a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from University of Virginia’s College at Wise, as well as an MBA from King University.

Radford’s Ridpath announces retirement



- Ridpath -

Radford City Manager, David Ridpath, is retiring effective January 1, 2025. Ridpath rose throughout city administration over a course of 40 years of service, before becoming Radford’s Chief Executive Officer in January of 2010.

Ridpath’s fifteen years as manager have been marked by investment in public safety, commercial investment and revitalization, recreational tourism enhancements, and

public education and infrastructure improvements. Under his management, the fire department was expanded to include EMS service, a former box factory was renovated into a new public safety building, and recreational improvements – such as the addition of sports fields and outdoor special events – showcased the growth of leisure services in the city.

In a press release, Ridpath said “It has been an honor and privilege to serve my hometown for the past 40 years...Radford is a super community with so much opportunity, beauty, and assets, as well as a supportive and engaged city council and excellent staff.”

In the same press release, Radford Mayor David Horton observed, “Radford will forever be indebted to David Ridpath for his lifelong dedication to this community and our citizens. David has been the lynchpin in our success, building opportunities and serving as a steady hand to help guide us through uncharted and rough times. No one has given more time and personal energy to Radford, and it shows in every corner of the community.”

Ridpath has served the city in several roles over the years including assistant city manager for eight years, community assistance coordinator (Public Information), economic development director, as well as community development director. He has served on several city boards and regional agencies, as well as been a member of the International City Management Association and the Virginia Local Government Managers Association.

Oglesby is the City of Franklin’s new manager



- Oglesby -

In early August, the Franklin City Council unanimously approved Ms. Rosylen Oglesby as the new city manager.

Oglesby was most recently the assistant city manager of Yakima, WA. She previously served for fifteen years in the City of Portsmouth, in increasingly responsible management positions, culminating as an assistant city manager. Oglesby succeeds Amanda Jarratt, who left Franklin in March to serve as a interim director of economic development for Virginia Beach. The city council expressed their appreciation for the services of interim city manager, Darlene Burcham, as they completed the search for the new manager.

In a press release, Mayor Robert “Bobby” Cutchins said, “We are excited to welcome Ms. Oglesby back to Virginia and to the City of Franklin. Rosylen brings broad experience as a local government manager, and the council was impressed by her demeanor and approach to working with the city council and staff for the betterment of our community. We are certain that she will be an asset to the City of Franklin and the region, and we are looking forward to her assuming her duties.”

Oglesby started her career as a management analyst in the City of Portsmouth. She rose to the position of assistant city manager with responsibilities in budget and financial management, human services, and special projects. In Yakima, in addition to responsibilities for budgeting and implementing the priorities of the city council and the city manager, Oglesby provided strategic direction to the Economic Development, Neighborhood Development Services, Yakima Air Terminal-McAllister Field Airport, and Information Technology Services departments. She also served as acting chief financial officer, acting director of the Yakima Air Terminal-McAllister Field Airport, and acting city manager.

Oglesby earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Norfolk State University. She also holds a Master of Arts degree in Urban Affairs from Norfolk State University and has completed work toward a PhD in Public Policy and Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University. Oglesby completed the Senior Executive Institute at the University of Virginia, and the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management at Virginia Tech. Oglesby is a member of the International City/County Management Association and has been designated a credentialed manager by that organization. She is also a member of the National Forum of Black Public Administrators and the American Academy of Certified Public Managers. Oglesby has also served as an instructor at Norfolk State.

Lawrence begins as Buchanan’s new town manager



- Lawrence -

On August 30, **Angela Lawrence** assumed the duties of the Town of Buchanan’s new town manager. She will also serve as the town’s zoning administrator and subdivision agent. Lawrence succeeds George

Hayfield, who left Buchanan in February. Previously, Lawrence served as interim town manager for University Park, MD. Prior to that, she served as town manager for the Town of Dayton and the town of Chase City. In addition, Lawrence has considerable experience as a leader of several non-profit organizations and served ten years as a planning commissioner, council member, vice-mayor, and mayor for the Town of Ashland. Lawrence began her professional career in Virginia with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, serving as a grant administrator, recreation consultant, and a greenways and trails coordinator.

In her previous roles as town manager, Lawrence was successful securing and administering grants for community improvements and facilities, managing water and wastewater upgrades and stormwater improvements, and other infrastructure projects. She has built strong staff teams and successfully and responsibly helped develop and implement town budgets and capital improvement programs. Further, she has served roles in planning, zoning, recreation, tourism and economic development and has facilitated charter, code and policy revisions.

In a press release announcing the decision, Mayor Tristan Harris said, “We are excited to welcome Ms. Lawrence back to Virginia and to the Town of Buchanan. Angela brings broad experience as a local government manager and former local elected official, and the council was impressed by the depth of her knowledge, her demeanor and her approach to working with the town council and staff for the betterment of our community. We are certain that she will be a valuable asset to the Town of Buchanan and the region, and we are looking forward to her assuming her duties.”

The council expressed their appreciation for the services of Reese Peck and Earl Mathers who each provided valuable support as interim town managers since March.

Lawrence earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Kansas State University and also holds a Masters of Business Administration (Public Institution Management) from the University of Texas at Arlington. Lawrence is a member of the International City/County Management Association and the Virginia Local Government Management Association. She is also an active volunteer with several community organizations including the Southern Shenandoah Valley Chapter of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club.

Fairfax’s Pennet receives national sustainability award



- Pennett -

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) has honored **Melissa Pennett**, the City of Fairfax’s environmental sustainability specialist, with the 2024 Young Professional of the Year Award.

According to city officials, Pennett has significantly impacted how the city manages its solid waste, a catchall term for trash, recycling, litter, and compost. SWANA presents the award yearly to three exemplary young members who demonstrate outstanding performance and dedication to the solid waste management industry.

“I am incredibly honored to be recognized as a 2024 Young Professional of the Year,” said Pennett in a press release. “Solid waste too often goes unnoticed for the importance and impact it has on our environment and society, and I am incredibly proud to be part of an industry that is making a difference in our community every day.”

Pennett, who holds a Master of Arts in Sustainable Urban Planning from George Washington University, is known as the “recycling enforcer” within the Department of Public Works and as a maverick among industry peers for her use of data, best practices, and innovative tactics. She is tackling the challenges of improving solid waste management through policy implementation, project management, budgeting, community relations, governance, and operations.

In October, she will receive the award at WASTECON, a national conference in Grapevine, TX.

Albemarle County attorney Rosenberg retires; Herrick begins as interim attorney



- Rosenberg -

On September 1, Albemarle County Attorney **Steven Rosenberg** retired after two years in the position and capping 27 years in the public sector.

As county attorney, **Rosenberg** provided legal advice and counsel to the Board of Supervisors, the County Executive’s Office, and all county departments. He also served as a member of the county’s internal leadership team, working closely with the county executive and department heads in their

management and operation of the county government.

In a press release at the time when Rosenberg's retirement was announced, Board of Supervisors Chair Jim Andrews noted, "The Board of Supervisors is deeply grateful to Steve for his many contributions to Albemarle County. One example has been his pivotal role in the acquisition of 462 acres of land as part of the Rivanna Futures project. His expertise and insightful leadership on that project laid the groundwork for the county's Intelligence & National Security Innovation Acceleration Campus (INSIAC) which will provide a space for public sector organizations, private businesses, and academic institutions to address critical challenges. We wish him all the best in his well-deserved retirement and thank him for his exemplary service."

Rosenberg also played key roles in supporting the Board as they developed annual legislative priorities and advising the board on matters of governance to ensure the legal and effective functioning of county operations.



- Herrick -

Also on September 1, to coincide with Rosenberg's retirement, **Andy Herrick** began as interim county attorney.

In a press release, Board Chair Jim Andrews remarked, "We are pleased to appoint Andy Herrick as our Interim County Attorney. Mr. Herrick brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record through his years of dedicated service to Albemarle County. We are confident in his ability to take on this leadership role with continued integrity and excellence."

Herrick has over 29 years of experience, including 25 years in public service within local government. He previously served as the deputy county attorney for Albemarle County, where he has primarily worked with the Community Development, Finance, and Social Services departments. Prior to that, Herrick served as the assistant county attorney for James City County and worked in private practice with the Williamsburg City Attorney. He earned his undergraduate degree, law degree, and Master of Business Administration from the College of William & Mary. He holds the position of president of the Local Government Attorneys of Virginia.

Vandenberg is Harrisonburg's new assistant to the city manager



- Vandenberg -

On August 5, **Brian Vandenberg** began work as the new assistant to the city manager for the City of Harrisonburg. Vandenberg joins City Manager Ande Banks's leadership team to assist Banks and Deputy City Manager Amy Snider in planning, executing and evaluating organization-wide strategies that achieve important community needs and the vision and goals of Harrisonburg City Council's 2043 Vision Plan.

Prior to coming to Harrisonburg, Vandenberg worked as strategic innovation consultant in Tallahassee, FL where he engaged with community members on projects such as the creation of a five-year strategic plan and worked with staff on policy analysis.

In a press release, City Manager Banks noted, "Brian's combination of experience, drive, professionalism and innovation set him apart as the type of leader our community and organization can count on. I am thrilled we are able to bring him to Harrisonburg, and I know his commitment to community will invigorate our ability to deliver distinctive, reliable and high-quality services to all who call Harrisonburg home."

Vandenberg holds a Master's of Public Administration from Syracuse University. In addition to his work in local government, Vandenberg took part in the Teach for America program as a middle school teacher at a Title I school and served as director of the Conversations in Conflict Studies Series at the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration at the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs.

Goodwin is York County's new assistant county administrator

On September 9, **Susan Goodwin** began work as York County's new assistant county administrator. She fills the position left vacant upon Brian Fuller's promotion to deputy county administrator.



- Goodwin -

In this role, Goodwin will oversee the Finance department and work closely with Finance Director Theresa Owens to support and enhance the county's sound fiscal policies. The Finance department includes the divi-

sions of Budget, Fiscal Accounting Services, Central Purchasing, Accounting & Financial Reporting, and Payroll Administration.

Goodwin is the former director of finance with the City of Newport News. Prior to her directorship in Newport News, she served as the financial services administrator in the Department of Engineering and served as assistant director of finance for the City of Suffolk. Her career also includes experience at Goodman & Company, LLP, a regional public accounting firm.

"I'm pleased to welcome Susan to the York County staff," said County Administrator Mark Bellamy in a press release. "Susan's finance background is a welcome addition to York County and adds another layer of expertise to our exceptional Finance department. Upon the conclusion of the upcoming budget cycle, I anticipate Susan's role will expand to include additional responsibilities."

Goodwin is a graduate of Christopher Newport University and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). She is an active member of the Virginia Government Finance Officers Association (VGFOA) and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).

Petersburg welcomes D'Aiuto as new director of social services



- D'Aiuto -

On July 15, **William D'Aiuto** assumed the duties of director of social services for the City of Petersburg.

D'Aiuto brings with him a career spanning 27 years with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), where he held various roles, including chief innovation officer. Notably, he played a pivotal role in implementing the nation's largest Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program during the recovery efforts following Hurricane Irma, demonstrating his ability to lead in challenging situations.

Prior to joining Petersburg, D'Aiuto was the eastern regional director for the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) where he supported 23 local departments of social services. Before his tenure with VDSS, he served as the associate commissioner for operations for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission where he provided executive-level leadership to a team of over 7,000 professionals.

D'Aiuto holds a Master of Science in Public Administration and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Central Florida.

Christiansburg Neighbors celebrates one year with first family feature

THE AUGUST 2024 ISSUE of *Christiansburg Neighbors* marked the one-year anniversary of the homegrown magazine that shines a spotlight on the region’s local businesses, community resources, and remarkable families. Appropriately, the magazine chose to feature the “first family” of Christiansburg for its anniversary issue – Mayor Mike Barber and his wife Erlene. The article is titled “Blooming Where They’ve Planted: The Family Behind the Mayor’s Office” As noted in the article, both Mike and Erlene have strong ties to Christiansburg. Born and raised in Christiansburg, Mike has been the mayor for 11 years after serving on council for 14 years and aside from a six-month stint at Folk Polk during Army training, has lived there all his life. Erlene’s father was in the military so she has lived all over the United States but her mother’s family are Chris-

tiansburg natives and that’s where she spent much of her formative years. Both Mike and Erlene graduated from Christiansburg High School but did not meet until years later at a local flower and gift shop where Erlene was working, and Mike was a frequent customer.

Learn more about the Barbers, their passion for their community, and their family in the latest issue of *Christiansburg Neighbors*.



Waynesboro receives economic development awards

WAYNESBORO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT received two 2024 Excellence in Economic Development Awards, gold and bronze, from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). The gold award was earned specifically for the Grow Waynesboro Main & Wayne program in the Entrepreneurial & Small Business Development category. Additionally, the innovative “Mug Mailing” business attraction initiative received a bronze award in the Print Promotion category.

Every year IEDC looks specifically for economic development organizations, government entities, initiatives, and programs that have demonstrated consistent, exemplary performance in the economic development profession, leading the execution of projects that have a significant impact on revitalizing communities,

and playing a major role in shaping and improving the practice of economic development. Recognition is given in over 23 categories across four population ranges.

“We are incredibly honored to receive these prestigious awards from IEDC. Our team’s dedication to fostering economic growth and enhancing the quality of life in Waynesboro has been unwavering,” stated Greg Hitchin, director of Economic Development and Tourism in a press release. “This recognition underscores our commitment to innovative and impactful economic development initiatives that benefit our community and set a high standard for others to follow.”

Learn more about IEDC at www.iedconline.org.



NVRC explores opportunities to link district energy, residual heat and data centers

IN 2012, THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA Regional Commission (NVRC) commissioned a study about the feasibility of district energy systems under existing Virginia energy and commercial laws and regulations. The report concluded that the development of district energy systems is achievable in Virginia – especially for the movement of heat.

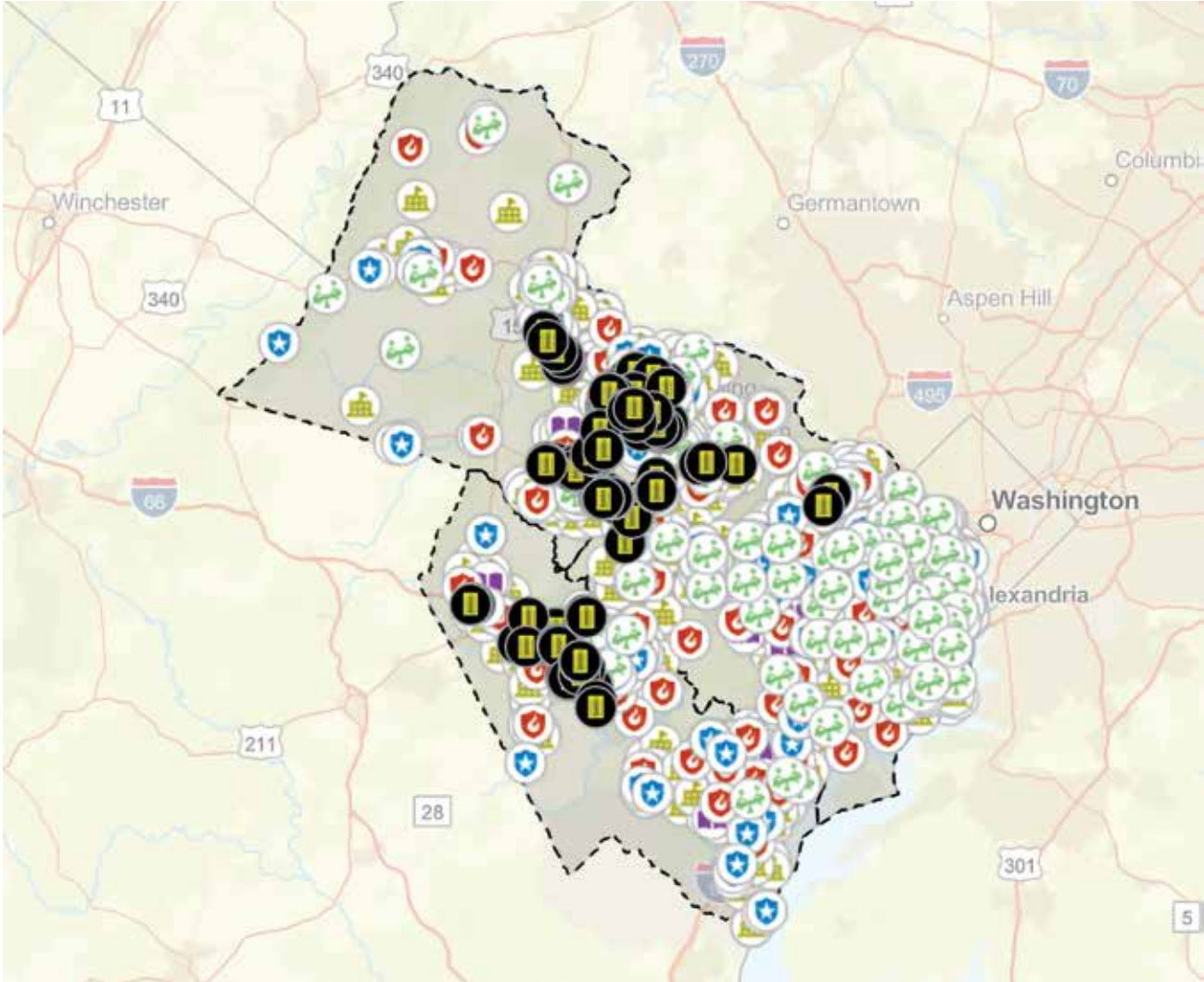
Sustaining reductions of greenhouse gases and supplying efficient and reliable energy to Northern Virginia’s data centers is a complex economic and environmental process. Roughly 70% of all global Internet traffic passes through Northern Virginia’s approximately 350 data centers - the highest concentration of data centers in the world. Collectively, data centers contribute over a billion dollars of tax revenue to the budgets of Northern Virginia’s local governments.

Among various technical and policy factors capable of balancing data centers’ vital economic contributions and their rapidly

escalating energy consumption is the movement of heat between sources and users via district energy systems. Generally speaking, district energy systems convey heat between suppliers and users (or buyers) between or among buildings.

In cities such as Paris, France and Frankfurt, Germany, data centers have out-sourced heat to purchasers of power such as public swimming pools, green houses and commercial buildings. These cities deploying district energy have combined integrated energy planning and zoning with the operation of public utilities to create markets for the sale, purchase and conveyance of heat.

In 2024, NVRC took further steps to advance the possible development of district energy systems for conveying heat among the region’s data centers. NVRC created a map that characterizes the co-location of the region’s data centers and public buildings and some potential fundamental commercial exchanges of residual heat among suppliers and users.





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Join VML

Set your organization apart in the local government marketplace of product, services, and ideas by joining the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) program. For more information contact Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org or check under the "Corporate Engagement" tab at www.vml.org.

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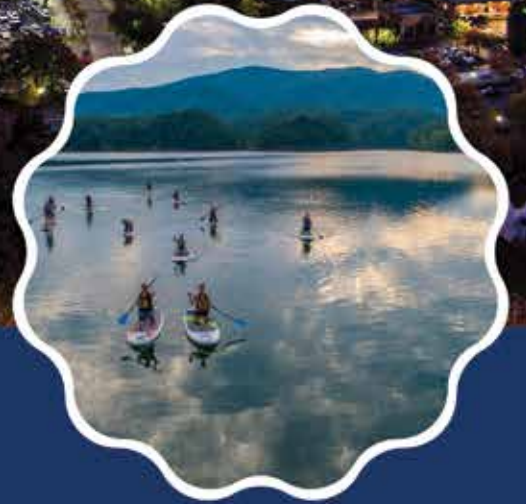
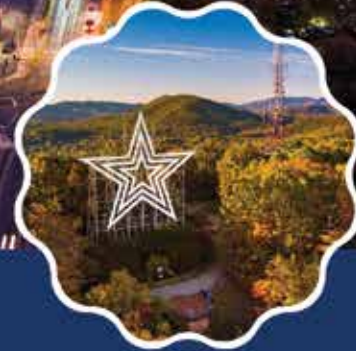


About the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) Program

As a CBM organization you hold a sustaining membership in VML and keep your firm or organization connected with the issues that are important to municipalities around you. Being a CBM places your organization at the forefront in the minds of VML members, ensuring you the visibility, access, and awareness that will help move your organization forward.

Please note that each level of membership includes both year-round benefits as well as benefits specific to VML's Annual Conference held in the fall.

Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference October 12-14, 2025



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