

VIRGINIA

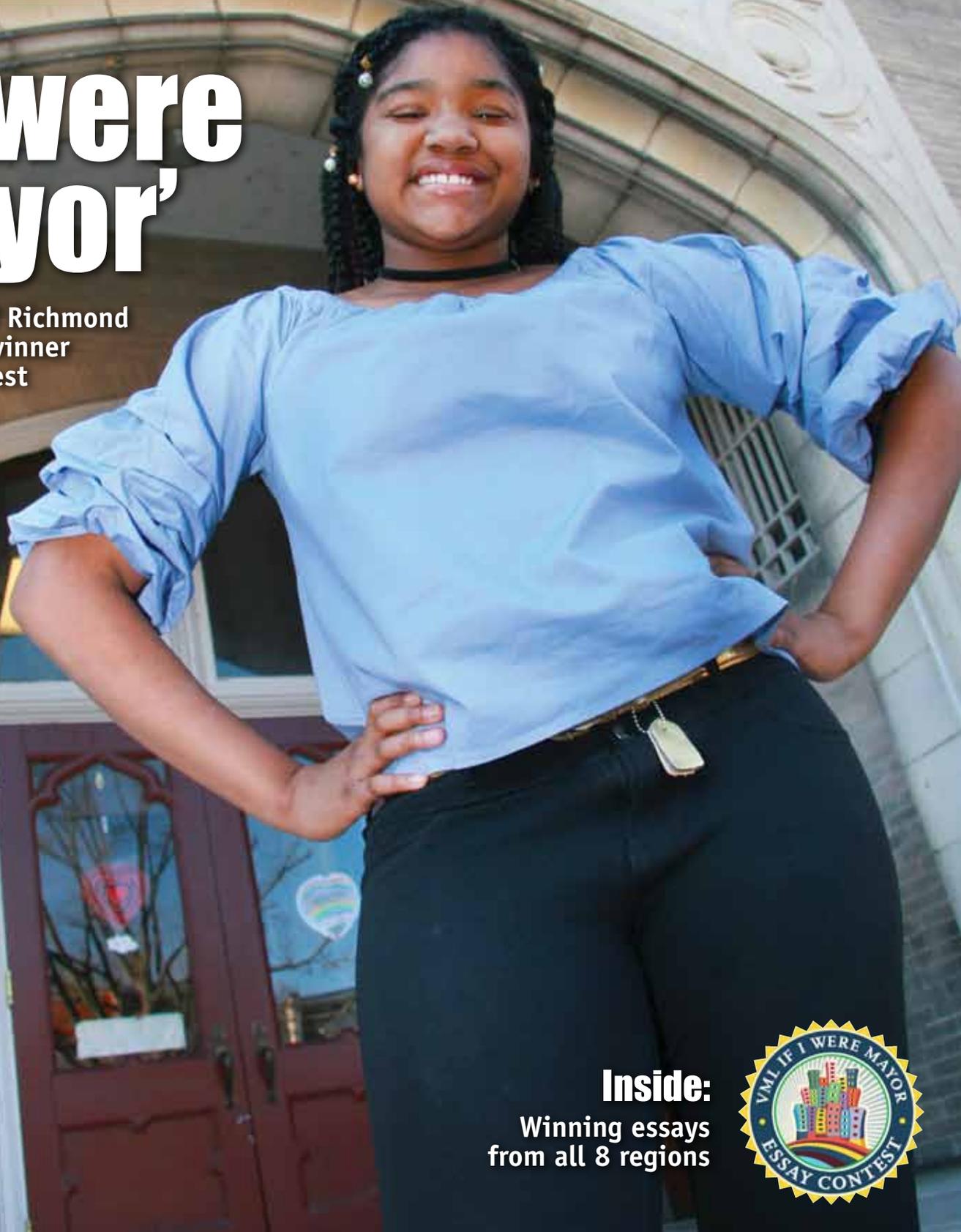
TOWN & CITY

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League

VOL. 53 NO. 2
MARCH 2018

'If I were mayor'

Jalia Hardy of Richmond
is statewide winner
of essay contest



Inside:
Winning essays
from all 8 regions





VMLIP provides Policing Demonstrations, Protests, and Civil Unrest training

VML Insurance Programs (VMLIP) recently hosted six training sessions featuring Jack Ryan with the Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute designed to provide best practices for managing demonstrations, protests and civil unrest.

The training included a review of: the legal standards of the First Amendment; response to resistance policies; media relations best practices, and more.

This is just one of the value-added resources we offer to members. Law Enforcement Services include:

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On the cover

Jalia Hardy of Binford Middle School in Richmond was the statewide winner of the 2017-2018 "If I were a Mayor" essay contest. Read about the contest, the statewide winning essay and the essays of the seven other regional winners inside. The story starts on page 13.

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Features

FiveThirtyEight's new gerrymandering project

FiveThirtyEight's project on gerrymandering includes maps that show the results of redistricting based on compactness and respect of local political boundaries, as well as redistricting that approximate partisan voting.

By Brian Cannon



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A shine of the times in Northern Virginia

The cities of Alexandria and Fairfax join Richmond, Charlottesville, Roanoke and Albemarle County as SolSmart designees in Virginia.

By the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission and the SolSmart Program



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Virginia will grow. Its infrastructure must, too. And that means big costs

Virginia is an attractive state whose population will continue to grow. With that growth comes a greater need for costly infrastructure. The big question is where does the money come from to pay the bills?

By L. Preston Bryant, Jr.



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Falls Church focuses on preservation

The end result of the renovation of the historic Cloverdale House is the transformation of a deteriorating structure into a valuable community asset.

By Akida Rouzi, Brian Normile and Keith Stricker



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Boutique hotel opens in St. Paul

An historic building in St. Paul is converted into a boutique hotel, filling a major lodging void and bringing jobs and tax base to this town of 1000 located in Russell and Wise counties.



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Our thanks for all you did this session

AS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY Session winds down, we are grateful to all of the people in our localities who read our eNews and assisted by making calls and sending emails to help local governments fight some very tough battles. Thank you, without your input we are not effective! We will continue to need your help with a special session beginning April 11.

One of the most frustrating things this session was the fact that there were five bills aimed at specific localities – four of which were crafted to affect all localities. This is not a new idea but one that is becoming more prevalent and often now includes cases in which litigation is pending. In addition, at the 11th hour this year, one of the bills targeting a specific locality was amended to add a second locality because of action the council had taken.

While bills of this type are frowned upon by the General Assembly as a general rule, they also give the General Assembly the perfect way to exercise the Dillon rule and condone localities for their alleged “bad” behavior. I think that more networking among our localities may be helpful so that we can try and avoid these situations. One of the

things that VML is doing is taking the Annual Conference back to the old schedule in hopes that attendees will have more time for networking. Please save the dates of Sept. 30 - Oct. 2 for this meeting! Further, we are also going to hold all of the policy committees on the same day this summer so that we can spend more time together.

If you anticipate a situation in which some member of the General Assembly may introduce legislation that would overturn a local action, I would suggest that you consider taking the issue to our policy committees so that VML can take a position on the issue. We don't want to sit on the sidelines when legislation arises, but as a member-driven organization, we have to make sure that our members have authorized us to take a position on particular bills. As we end this session, if you have any issues that VML's policy committees should consider, please let us know.

VML will work on an end of session General Assembly report and will provide it in the next few weeks. Staff worked tirelessly over the last 60 days and they deserve a big thank you and a long nap! Again, your input is so important, and we appreciate all that you have done! 

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH EDUCATION

VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 2, 2018 • HAMPTON

Terry celebrates 40th anniversary with VML



- Terry -

Joni S. Terry celebrated her 40th anniversary with the Virginia Municipal League on March 6. Ms. Terry began her career with VML in 1978, coming on board through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. Richard DeCair was the executive director of VML at the time. She has been a stable influence and center of knowledge at VML since she began and has worked for four executive directors during those 40 years.

During her tenure, Ms. Terry has processed thousands of annual conference registrations and assembled thousands of registration packets, kept track of the large data base of people involved with VML and its affiliate organizations, served as executive director of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association, supervised staff and managed the office through the multitude of changes that have affected all organizations. At one time, prior to the advent of computers, she typed the legislative bulletins that were mailed several times a week during the General Assembly session. The advent of desktop computers took away most of that work, but database management quickly stepped in to take its place!

VML thanks Joni Terry for her dedication, hard work, and cheerfulness. We are indeed fortunate to have her as an employee. As VML Executive Director Michelle Gowdy said, "Having Joni on the VML staff is invaluable because she is dedicated to the League and always willing to help. She comes to work with a smile on her face and is always happy to visit with our members."

Manassas selects Bergeron as director of finance

Diane Bergeron has been appointed director of finance for the City of Manassas beginning February 26. She has been acting finance director since June 2017. This was her second time filling in as the acting finance director.



- Bergeron -

Bergeron has been with the City of Manassas for more ten years serving primarily as the budget manager.

Bergeron has a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Connecticut. She currently serves as President of the Virginia Government Finance Officers Association (VGFOA).

Prior to coming to the City of Manassas, she served as senior management and budget analyst for Leon County in Tallahassee, Florida.

Wingfield tapped as Christiansburg manager

The Christiansburg Town Council at its February 27 meeting appointed **Randy Wingfield** as its town manager. Wingfield had been serving as interim town manager since April 2017, and his appointment as manager is effective March 12. He began his career in the town almost two decades ago, when he was hired as a planner. Wingfield also has served as planning director and assistant town manager.



- Wingfield -

According to the town's media release, Wingfield has an undergraduate degree in business management and a master's degree in urban and regional planning, with a concentration in economic and community development, both from Virginia Tech. He also has a graduate certificate in local government management from Virginia Tech. Prior to joining the Town of Christiansburg, Wingfield worked as a transportation planner for the West Piedmont Planning

District Commission in Martinsville, as a private consultant for Richmond County, and as an environmental planner and computer systems specialist for the Northern Neck Planning District Commission in Callao.

The media release is posted at <http://bit.ly/2FevaR7>.

Brown named Loudoun GIS director

Loudoun County Administrator Tim Hemstreet announced the appointment



- Brown -

of **Kristin Brown** as the new director of the Office of Mapping and Geographic Information (OMAGI) on January 11. Brown had been the acting director since October, according to a Jan. 30 civic alert posted by the county.

Brown started her career with the county in 1998 as a cartographer and manager of the yearly contract to update the county's base map. She played a key role in the development of Loudoun's use of its geographic information services.

In addition to being responsible for the core components of the county's GIS, OMAGI provides data, mapping, application development, and analytical services to county agencies, as well as providing mapping services to the public. OMAGI also is responsible for the county's Conservation Easement Stewardship Program.

Brown received a master's degree in geography from Murray State University in Kentucky. She has earned the GIS Professional certification from the GIS Certification Institute.

The full civic alert is posted here: <https://www.loudoun.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=4167>

Steele appointed Gloucester assistant county administrator

Carol Steele moved up to the position of assistant county administrator for community services on Feb. 1. Steele, who has worked for the county since 1986, had been the director of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department.

Steele also is an adjunct faculty

member at Old Dominion University in Norfolk. She has a bachelor's degree in recreational administration from Radford University, and a master's degree in leisure service administration from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Steele will oversee the following departments: Animal Control, Library, Community Engagement, Emergency Management, and Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Among the first programs or projects that Steele will assume will be the county's broadband initiative.

McCarthy named Fairfax communications director



Michael McCarthy is the new communications director for the City of Fairfax. He has more than 20 years of experience in traditional and digital media, including stints at Manifest (previously McMurry/TMG), Active Interest Media and Modern Luxury Media.

McCarthy also has overseen TV and video production, and he has extensive radio experience on Washington, D.C.'s WTOP, where he has had a guest spot each week for the past 12 years. The new director will reorganize the city's marketing and communications programs, and will have oversight of social media, public relations, branding and the municipality's TV station.

McCarthy earned a bachelor's degree from George Mason University and a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University.

Smithfield town manager to retire

Peter Stevenson, town manager in Smithfield for 22 years, recently announced his retirement, which will be effective June 30, 2018. Stephenson began his career with local government in 1986 while in graduate school at the University of Virginia, serving as a planner intern with the city of Charlottesville. He then went on to work as a planner in James City County before



- Stevenson -

going to Leesburg in 1998. Stephenson served as the deputy town manager and principal planner in Leesburg until December 1995, before taking on the manager's job in Smithfield in January 1996.

Stephenson has served on the board of the VML Insurance Programs (VMLIP) Members' Supervisory Board from 2007 to the present, including serving as two years as chair. He was a board member of the Virginia Local Government Management Association and served as president from 2010-2011. He is a member of the International City/County Management Association and the American Institute of Certified Planners.

Stephenson has a bachelor's degree from Iowa State University and master's degree in planning from the University of Virginia.

Vienna hires new planning director

Cindy Petkac, a planning professional with more than 20 years of community development and long-range planning experience, joined the Town of Vienna as planning and zoning director on January 29.



- Petkac -

According to a town media release, Petkac most recently was the planning division chief in the City of Fairfax. She also has worked as principal planner with the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation, planning manager for the City of Duluth, Minnesota, neighborhood planning coordinator for the District of Columbia, and transportation planner with the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission.

A certified planner with the American Planning Association (APA), Petkac has a bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University and a master's degree in urban planning, design, and development from Cleveland State University.

Petkac replaces Patrick Mulhern, who retired from the Town in January 2018.

The media release is available at <https://www.viennava.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=514>.

Williamsburg appoints new finance director

Barbara A. Dameron assumed the office of director of finance in the City of Williamsburg effective March 1, 2018. The appointment by City Manager Marvin E. Collins, III was announced in a January 30 media release.

Prior to the move to Williamsburg, Dameron was the interim chief financial officer for the City of Portsmouth. She has over 25 years of accounting experience with 18 years of experience in government accounting and finance, having served previously for the cities of Roanoke and Danville. Her experience includes budget, enterprise resource planning systems and implementation, grant management, purchasing, utility accounting, collections, real estate assessment, risk management and debt management.

She is a certified public accountant and past president of the Virginia Government Finance Officers Association. She is also a past president of the Association of Municipal Retirement Systems.

Dameron holds a bachelor's degree in business administration/accounting from Averett College and a graduate certificate in Local Government Management Program from Virginia Tech.

Dameron succeeds Phil Serra who retired at the end of December.

Stoney announces Richmond appointments

Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney announced three appointments in the city.

Korita Brown Jones has been appointed as the director of human resources. She has worked for the City of Richmond since January 2008. She began her career with the city as a human resources (HR) consultant and worked on a variety of joint personnel-related projects through the former Richmond-Works initiative. Jones was previously promoted to council policy analyst by the Richmond City Council, and again as council's first HR liaison. In 2015, she was promoted to serve as the Division Chief of Compensation and Benefits in the Department of Human Resources. Over the last year, Korita has served as interim HR Director. Previously, she was employed with Springsted Incorpo-

Movers and Shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to [Manuel Timbreza at mtimbrea@vml.org](mailto:Manuel.Timbrea@vml.org).

rated, Genworth Financial and Chesterfield County, Virginia. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in public administration from Virginia State University.

Charles G. Todd has been named director of information technology. He has worked for the city since 2013, when he was appointed manager of the department's applications bureau. This followed a 2012 contract appointment from Modis, where he led an application development and management team supporting nine city agencies. In

2015, he was promoted to deputy director overseeing the applications, infrastructure and end user services bureaus. Since then, he has served as interim director for the department. Prior to his employment with the city, Todd worked for 17 years as an officer, vice president and senior vice president for Bank of America. He received his Bachelor of Arts in political science from Virginia Tech.

Betty J. Burrell has been hired to serve as Richmond's new director of procurement services. Burrell has served in local government for over 35 years, including a decade in procurement leadership during her tenure as chief financial officer for the city of Portsmouth. She most recently held

the position of finance director for Albemarle County, where she led the local government and schools purchasing divisions, real estate and local tax assessments and collections, payroll, accounts payable and financial reporting. She also led the county's team that implemented purchasing cards, which resulted in operational cost savings, rebate revenue generation and improved accountability, reporting and data analytics. Burrell holds a Master of Science in Administration with a concentration in public administration degree from Central Michigan University and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Averett University.

People

News & notes

Fairfax launches new annual report

THE CITY OF FAIRFAX has released the Citizen Centric Report (CCR), a new annual report on city accomplishments during the previous fiscal year. The report was included in the March 2018 Cityscene newsletter and is available on the city's website at <http://bit.ly/2Fc04JL>.

The CCR is intended to contribute to the city's transparency, communicating fiscal and performance details to city stakeholders in an easily digestible format.

This annual report summarizes accomplishments, operating outcomes, and planned investments supported by five strategic goals adopted by the council in June 2016. The city was chosen by the Association of Government Accountants to be the city case study for the 2017 Government Finance Case Challenge. Under this challenge, student teams analyze data for a specific jurisdiction and develop a Citizen Centric Report. Fairfax's website thanks the AGA for being selected as the city case study, and notes that the work done by all the students competing in the challenge, in particular by the winning team from North Carolina State University, positively influenced the development of the city's report.

Norfolk enters into partnership with Waze

THE CITY OF NORFOLK announced in February a data-sharing partnership, called the Connected Citizens Program, with Waze, the free, real-time crowdsourced traffic and navigation app powered by drivers. According to the city news release, the partnership is designed as a free, two-way data share of publicly available traffic information that will promote greater efficiency, deeper insights and safer roads for citizens of Norfolk.

The news release notes that the Waze Connected Citizens Program has nearly 500 partners around the world and gives municipal leaders a look at real-time road activity, with the goal of improving and making better informed planning decisions. Established as a two-way data share, Waze provides partners with real-time, anonymous, Waze-generated incident and slow-down information directly from drivers. In exchange, Norfolk provides real-time government-reported construction, crash and road closure data to Waze to return one of the most succinct, thorough overviews of current road conditions today.

The Waze map is constantly updated with information from drivers, promoting safer roads and sharing more knowledge about potential delays to their commutes. The Connected Citizens Program yields even more data, giving local citizens a greater ability to circumvent road closures and traffic jams within the app. Norfolk can also provide Wazers with advanced notice of major traffic events such as parades and dignitary visits that will affect their daily routes.

Information about the Connected Citizens is available at <https://www.waze.com/ccp>. The city news release is posted at <http://bit.ly/2C85rsh>.



Williamsburg celebrates 100th luncheon

WILLIAM & MARY PRESIDENT Taylor Reveley was the featured speaker at the Williamsburg Economic Development Authority's 100th Business Roundtable in February. According to the city's website, the lunch events have the purpose of increasing communication with existing businesses. Topics vary each month, with various speakers invited and issues discussed. The lunches are hosted at city restaurants, with each attendee paying for his lunch—except that the city picks up the tab for first-time attendees.

A February 14 article in the *Williamsburg Yorktown Daily* noted that former mayor Jeanne Zeidler was the speaker at the roundtables' first luncheon in 2009. Attendance has grown from 30 to 40 attendees to 70 or more.

Williamsburg City Manager Marvin Collins spoke at the Jan. 9 roundtable, giving an overview of city activities during 2017. He also talked about "little known municipal facts," including the city's recognition as a bicycle friendly community and an information technology recognition as a top 10 digital city.

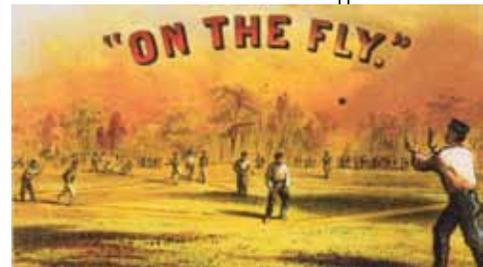
Wytheville starts vintage baseball league

EXPECT TO SEE some vintage base ball games in the town of Wytheville this summer! Enough people for two teams have signed up so far as a result of a meeting held by the Wytheville Department of Museums. The meeting was an opportunity to learn the rules and terms of base ball – as of 1869, and to spark interest in joining a team. One difference is apparent: base ball was considered two words back in the day.

The effort to form the vintage league is led by Michael Gillman with the museum. Gillman said that as the news of the league spreads, he has heard from people in surrounding communities expressing an interest in forming their own teams. Further, the Wythe County Historical Society is outfitting one of the teams in vintage uniforms.

According to a February 16 article in *SWVA Today*, Gillman said that the rules for base ball from the mid to late 1800s are similar to the rules for today's game, with some differences. The ball is softer, players do not wear gloves, and the pitchers pitch underhanded and slowly.

The Vintage Base Ball Association says that there are more than 400 vintage base ball clubs. The website for the association says that vintage base ball began in 1979, and shows links to teams set up in 24 states.



Inlet Art to raise water quality awareness

IN JANUARY, THE STORMWATER utility for the city of Roanoke and the Roanoke Arts Commission chose five artists to enhance six stormdrains as part of Inlet Art, a city environmental education program. Inlet Art will draw attention to the reality that litter, trash, and other pollution sources (such as sediment, bacteria, oils, and yard waste

left on city streets) wash, untreated, into the nearest creek, stream, or the Roanoke River.

Raising awareness of the importance of water quality through visual expression has been successfully implemented in other communities and the city believes it will be an effective next step in preventing stormwater pollution from entering Roanoke's waterways.

Last fall, the city decided to celebrate Roanoke's 10th year of public art by inviting artists to submit ideas for the Inlet Art program. The selected artists will receive a \$400 honorarium per stormdrain, as well as all art materials necessary for the art works. The goal is to have all the inlet art works completed by Earth Day, Sunday, April 22.

Contacts for more information are Susan Jennings, arts and culture coordinator, at 540-853-5652 susan.jennings@roanokeva.gov; or Dwayne D'Ardenne, stormwater manager, dwayne.d'ardenne@roanokeva.gov or 540-853-5900. Also, information on the Inlet Art project is posted at <http://bit.ly/2FB2H5F>.



Chesapeake opens natural gas filling station

CHESAPEAKE UNVEILED its first public access fast-fill compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station at a special “First Fueling” event last November, according to a city news release dated Nov. 29, 2017.

Mayor Rick West, Clean Energy’s Gary Parker, Virginia Clean Cities Executive Director Allyen Harned, and Michael Bisogno with the state Office of Fleet Manage-

ment Services spoke at the event and participated in the ribbon cutting. Chesapeake City Manager James Baker and Fleet Manager George Hrichak participated as well.

More than 30 percent of the city’s fleet of vehicles is made up of alternative fueled vehicles, including 46 trucks that rely on compressed natural gas. The city also has vehicles that operate on electricity, propane, and several kinds of hybrid fuels. According to a February 16 article in *The Virginian-Pilot*, the city plans to have all its 53 solid waste trucks powered by compressed natural gas within the next year.

The station is open to use by private individuals/businesses with a fleet of vehicles (but not to single car owners). According to the article, the station is already used by several businesses in the area. Further, a second station is planned in the city. The article said that the Chesapeake station is Hampton Roads’ first public-access station.

Residents wishing to use the station can contact a city staff member to set up a Clean Energy account, or can simply use a credit card to pay for the purchase.

The Virginian-Pilot article is posted at <http://bit.ly/2Hw8BoW>. The city news release is posted at <http://bit.ly/2oeti0P>.

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT



The CNG station at 305 Executive Blvd. in the Greenbrier area near City Park is the first in Hampton Roads.



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Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 9; Rodeo set for May

UTILITY LINEWORKERS have dangerous – and vital – jobs, working near high-voltage lines and often climbing 40 or more feet in the air during challenging conditions, in addition to the day-to-day responsibility for keeping miles of electrical lines in working order. On April 9, people can take advantage of National Lineworker Appreciation Day by thanking the men and women who keep the electric power on.

The skills and safety practices of equipment operators, groundworkers, and lineworkers will be on display at the 2018 Gaff-n-Go Annual Lineman’s and Equipment Operator’s Rodeo, to be held May 11 and May 12 at the Meadow Event Park in Doswell. This event is hosted by the member-owned electric cooperatives of Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. More than 150 electric utility lineworkers will compete in the rodeo, which will include apprentices and three-person journeyman teams. For more information, go to www.gaff-n-go.com.

The Southside Virginia Community College in Blackstone began offering an 11-week power lineworker program in 2016 in response to the demand for power lineworkers throughout Virginia and the nation.



Tourism marketing grants announced

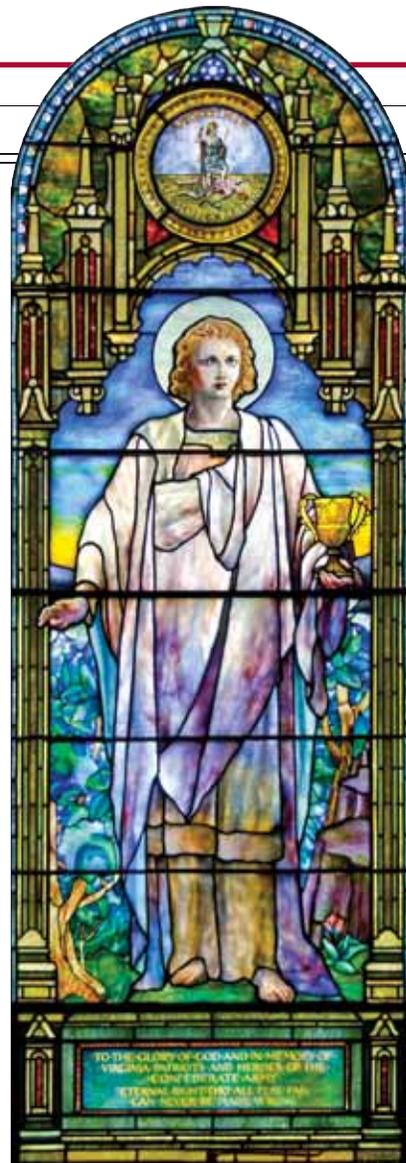
GOVERNOR RALPH NORTHAM on March 6 announced more than \$840,000 in matching grant funds to be awarded to 56 local tourism initiatives as part of the Virginia Tourism Corporation's Marketing Leverage Program. Here's some information on just three of those initiatives.

The Petersburg Preservation Task Force was granted \$50,000, which will be used to update a website with drone coverage showing some of the main attractions in Petersburg; radio and television advertising; and a digital campaign. The focus will begin with Historic Blandford Church's Tiffany Windows, which were created and installed by L.C. Tiffany Studios from New York beginning in 1904. The campaign, which is entitled "Living Color: The Treasures of Petersburg," also will highlight funeral art in Blandford Cemetery and African-American history, in addition to other artistic resources in the area.

The \$9,000 grant for the "Boat to the Beach" project in Colonial Beach will include development of a new website with a "Boat to the Beach" theme as well as digital and print advertising. The initiative will target boaters in the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, Central Virginia, and Southern Maryland areas.

The \$25,000 grant for the Tom Tom Founders Festival in Charlottesville will be used to market the week-long festival held annually in the city. This year's event includes 70 bands, 400 speakers and 400 community organizations that will meet in the area in April.

The purpose of the Marketing Leverage Program is to stimulate new tourism marketing programs through the creation of tourism partnerships and to extend the "Virginia is for Lovers" campaign. The next round of grants under the program will open on April 10, 2018 and will be due back on June 26, 2018. Information is available at <http://bit.ly/2Hhu4Bk>.



The focus of Petersburg's grant will begin with Historic Blandford Church's Tiffany Windows.

Petersburg launches digital divide initiative

THE PETERSBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY announced on March 7 a city-wide initiative focused on bridging the digital divide in the city.

Petersburg Public Library cardholders can check out portable WiFi hotspots, called a MiFi, for one week at a time. The MiFi brings wireless internet connectivity to the home and on-the-go. Checking out a MiFi requires a valid library card and photo identification, and the potential user must be at least 18 years of age.

In addition, Petersburg Transit bus riders will have unlimited access to T-Mobile's 4G



LTE network for connection by cell phone, tablet, laptop computer or any other compatible device. Wifi is available now on the Walnut Hill and Crater Road routes and will gradually be introduced to remaining routes over time.

The media release announcing the initiative notes that Petersburg is one of the first cities in the state to provide WiFi access on public transportation.

For more information about this service or any programs at the Petersburg Public Library, call (804) 733-2387 or visit www.ppls.org.

Innovative Financing to Support Vibrant and Healthy Communities

Project Areas Include



VRA Application Deadlines
Summer Pool: May 1, 2018
Fall Pool: August 3, 2018

FiveThirtyEight's new gerrymandering project

FEW WEBSITES DO DATA and visualizations of political data better than FiveThirtyEight.com. Its gerrymandering project particularly lends itself to visualization.

Everyone should hate gerrymandering. It's bad for our country, artificially polarizes us, and leads to further dysfunction in government – a fire onto which we don't need to throw any more logs! But fixing gerrymandering isn't exactly easy – and the process can quickly become partisan. It's important to be aware of the trade-offs that various solutions may require.

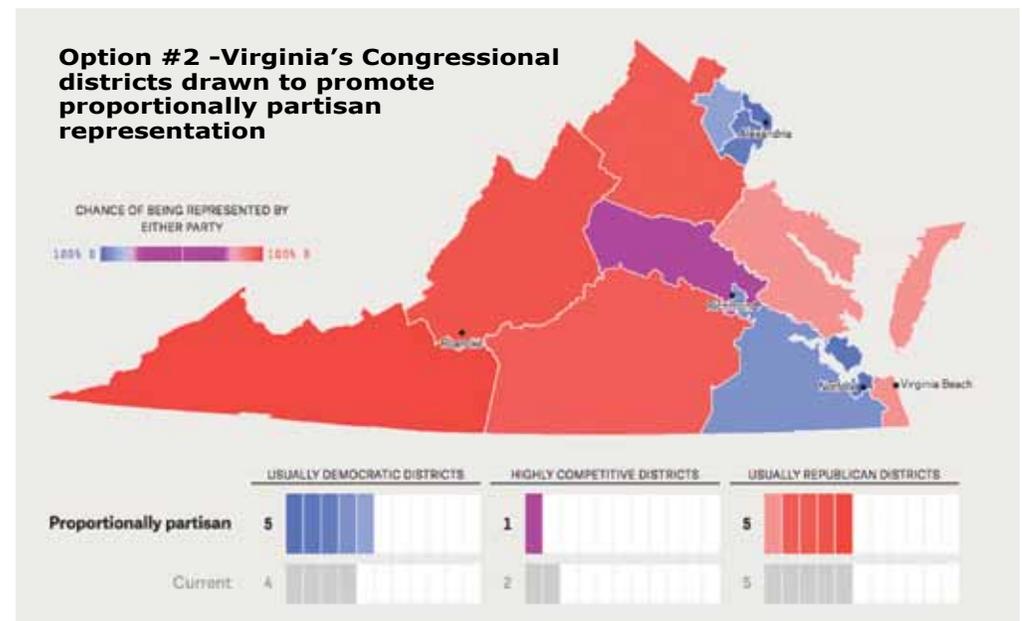
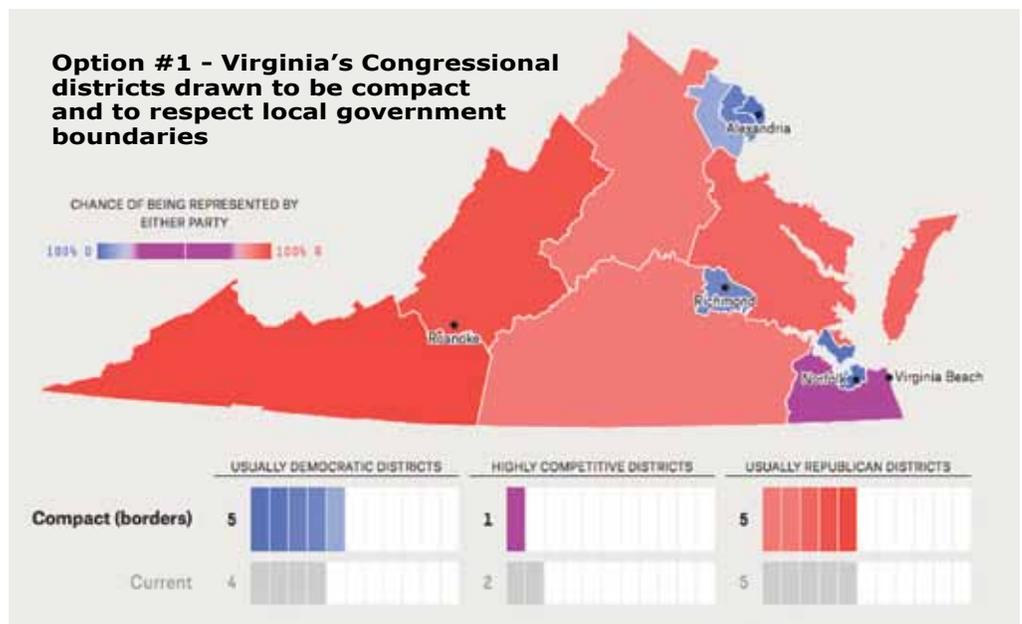
It's equally important to know that the current, hyper-political system most states have today is not serving us well at all. We can do better, mostly because we can't do much worse.

OneVirginia2021 is a non-partisan group of people from across the political spectrum who believe voting districts belong to Virginians – not to any politician or party. So naturally our association latched onto FiveThirtyEight's gerrymandering project, which uses data and beautiful maps to illuminate dramatically the issues surrounding gerrymandering.

The FiveThirtyEight project helps shine a light on two important good-government criteria we push for in Virginia: compactness and respect for city, county and town boundary lines. While the local boundary lines are self-explanatory, the compactness part is more obscure. Technically compactness means a perfect circle. But since we can't have perfect circle districts (they'd leave out little diamond-shaped holes), compactness is generally taken in its less than perfect form. Those snake-like districts you've seen are not compact.

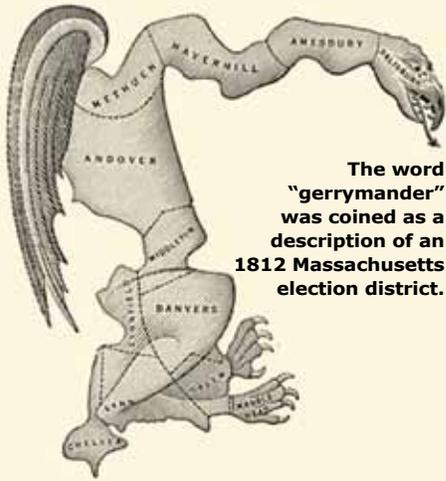
These criteria can be controversial waters to wade into because it makes some on the left of OneVirginia2021's coalition nervous. Here's the nutshell version of their concerns:

Democrats cluster in cities and Republicans spread out in the suburbs and ruby red rural areas. This leads to an inefficient distribution of Democratic voters relative to Republicans such that following fair criteria like compactness and respecting municipal boundary lines will pack Democrats into a few urban districts. The result is that Democrats will win a handful of districts with 80 percent of the vote and Republicans will win many more suburban districts with 55 percent of the vote, even if the statewide total approaches something more like a



Background on gerrymandering

GERRYMANDERING is the deliberate manipulation of legislative district boundaries to give an advantage or benefit to a particular party or group, or to cause disadvantage or harm to an opposing party or group. It distorts the electoral process, undermines democracy, and renders legislative elections a meaningless exercise. It's a conflict of interest for the legislature to draw its own district lines.



The word "gerrymander" was coined as a description of an 1812 Massachusetts election district.

History of gerrymandering

The word "gerrymander" came into being when Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry signed a law that approved a redistricting plan that just happened to benefit his political party. An 1812 newspaper account said that the district in one county looked like a salamander and coined the word "gerrymander."

While Gerry may get the dubious credit for being

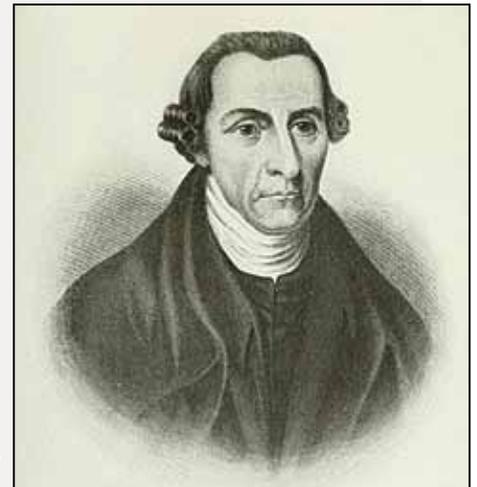
the first to use political maps as a tool to influence elections, gerrymandering is believed to have originated in Virginia a good thirty years earlier. Scholars point to Gov. Patrick Henry as the author of the first example of political redistricting in the United States. In the 1780s he attempted to affect the outcome of an election by creating a district to force Federalist James Madison to face Anti-Federalist James Monroe. The practice of gerrymandering has not changed much in the past 228 years...what has changed is the technology used to draw the lines more ruthlessly and effectively, and the large amounts of money behind this subtle practice.

How does the process work in Virginia?

In Virginia, state legislators redraw district lines for the U.S. Congress, the Virginia House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia after every 10-year census. Under the current system, the party in power in the House and the party in power in the Senate can draw the lines to serve their own interests, not those of our communities.

Virginia is ranked as one of the most gerrymandered states in the country both on the congressional and state levels based on lack of compactness and contiguity of its districts, according to information published by *Governing* magazine. Throughout the Commonwealth, counties, cities and towns are being broken in half or into multiple pieces to create heavily partisan districts.

Forty-six localities are split in the Virginia Senate district maps and 59 localities divided in the House of Delegates' maps, according to the Virginia Public Access Project. Even more telling, more than 200 precincts are split, leading to additional expense to administer elections, confusion for both election officials and the voters, and, significantly, mistakes made where voters are given the wrong ballot.



Patrick Henry, first Governor of Virginia, who also is reputed to be the first to draw election districts for political advantage.

50/50 split. Such results are possible in states like Illinois and Georgia where one major city dominates the geography, but significantly less so in Virginia where voters are more evenly spread out around the Commonwealth.

The notion of "wasted" Democratic votes is often completely oversold. It can happen, but it is usually a fraction of the impact that some suggest. Respecting local boundaries and a genuine adherence to the Voting Rights Act balance this issue out to a much smaller problem.

What's remarkable about FiveThirtyEight's new Gerrymandering Project is the work that went into crunching out maps for all 50 states. The maps show political results from multiple angles: for maps as they are today, as they would be if drawn for maximum Democratic advantage, and for maximum Republican advantage. But then the analysts at FiveThirtyEight did something even more helpful: they drew maps respecting local municipal boundaries and compactness together.

So, would the Democrats lose their political power under compact maps that respected local city, county and town lines? Not in Virginia.

In the Virginia Congressional map shown on the left, the total number of Democratic seats would increase to five seats, from the four that are currently held. There is no Democratic wipe out if local municipal and county boundaries are respected and compact districts are drawn. In fact, the result from respecting local boundaries and relying on compact districts matches the overall vote total for the entire state.

The takeaway that, in Virginia, compact maps that respect local boundaries also reflect the will of the voting population as a whole is a significant rebuttal to The Big Sort. The Big Sort is an argument made by author Bill Bishop that suggests we are becoming increasingly crowded with people near us who think, act, and vote alike, thereby diminishing diversity we once saw.

Basically there are two options, both shown on the left. Which is better? #1 - The map that respects local boundaries and is compact or #2 - The map that seeks to make the statewide total of votes for each party proportional to the number of seats won by each party.

Both maps embody noble priorities in good-government redistricting. But the first option goes a step further and keeps communities together to a greater degree. Simply look at the

dot that shows Richmond and the one that shows Norfolk in the second map (option 2). They're right on the edge because the map-makers did not need to respect the local municipal boundaries. Richmond and Norfolk would be carved up—and maybe that's not necessary.

Why care about these old municipal lines between cities and counties? The original story of many of these lines do not hark back to the most noble moments in Virginia's history. The impact of racist redlining and the more malign forms of annexation have now morphed into today's de facto segrega-

No district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring any political party, incumbent legislator or member of Congress, or potential candidate.

tion. But the residual effects become smaller and smaller as more minorities move into the suburbs and whites move back into the city. While our individual neighborhoods are still segregated, cities and counties are becoming less so.

Regardless, there is value to these municipal boundary lines. Let me speak just for myself here because this is a subjective argument about how each of us defines our community. When my wife and I moved back to the Richmond area it was important for us to live in the city, not the county. We wanted to invest our time in Richmond and its public schools. We wanted to be active citizens in a city government. We pay Richmond taxes, vote for Richmond's mayor and city council, and plan to send our son to the local RPS elementary school. We cherish our city.

That's a lot of identification to an invisible line around acres of land around the falls of the James River that make up the boundaries for the city of Richmond, but the numerous ties to our local government matter to my family a great deal. We are Richmonders. On the other hand, there is certainly value in communities of interest that might cross local boundary lines. The western part the greater Richmond area, which would include western Henrico County, is a community of interest. The same would be true for the eastern part of the Greater Richmond area.

There's an additional value to adhering to local boundaries for good-government redistricting: it minimizes the drawing of new squiggly lines through our communities. We should all be a little wary of redistricting map makers, because of a potential conflict or political agenda behind any person willing to spend the amount of time and work it takes to draw the maps. Having good guardrails up in the form of respecting political boundaries would give any map-maker less leeway with new lines and should be considered a plus.

As with so many thing, the criteria for mapmaking should be used in moderation, as the multiple criteria can appropriately balance each other out, as in a delicious recipe. Too much of any one ingredient can ruin the result.

What could make this recipe for redistricting even better? Making partisan gerrymandering illegal. None of these criteria fully work as long as one side can manipulate it for their advantage – and there are creative gerrymanderers of both major parties who know how to minimally follow the rules

while exploiting them for their partisan gain.

OneVirginia2021 has researched and carefully crafted language that would make it explicitly illegal to draw maps for a partisan advantage:

“No district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring any political party, incumbent legislator or member of Congress, or potential candidate.”

While our group is not so naïve as to think that there is any one tactic that has a 100 percent guarantee of ridding our republic of gerrymandering, we do believe this type of language would go a long way to ensure a better process.

The other way to enhance the good-government criteria is to take the map-drawing power away from the people who are too closely tied to the outcome to draw it fairly: the legislators themselves. Other states are experimenting with redistricting commissions in all shapes and sizes. Some structures are better than others. Most forms of a commission are a significant improvement on the hyper-political system of gerrymandering that many states, including Virginia, have today.

The formula for better redistricting is clear from a survey of other states' approaches (both their successes and short comings):

Transparency

+

good-government rules protecting communities instead of politicians

+

Getting the map-drawing out of the hands of the politicians

=

Better voting districts that reflect the will of the people instead of the political needs of incumbent politicians.

Virginia is in the middle of an important discussion on redistricting reform. Criteria such as compactness and respect for municipal boundary lines (and others, including the Voting Rights Act) are a critical part of the discussion, as is the structure of a commission, and public input into map-making. This issue is worthy of the close attention of all citizens. Thanks to FiveThirtyEight's Gerrymandering Project team for the great work that helps pay this issue the attention it deserves! Go to <http://fivethirtyeight.com/tag/the-gerrymandering-project/> for more information. This article originally was a blog posting about a project by FiveThirtyEight on gerrymandering. 

About the author: *Brian Cannon and OneVirginia2021. Cannon is the executive director of OneVirginia2021, which advocates for fair redistricting. OneVirginia2021 partners with individuals and organizations to raise awareness, provide information, and work with legislators to implement meaningful reform. Learn more at <https://www.onevirginia2021.org/>.*



'If I Were Mayor' essay winners announced

JALIA HARDY OF BINFORD Middle School in Richmond has been named the statewide winner of the 2017 -2018 "If I Were Mayor" essay contest.

The essay contest, hosted by the Virginia Municipal League, drew more than 1,000 entries from seventh graders throughout the state. The challenge to the students was to describe what they would do if they were mayor of their hometown. The winners are:

Statewide winner: Jalia Hardy of Binford Middle School in Richmond (also Region 7 winner)

Region 1: Bryleigh Middleton of Pennington Middle School in Pennington Gap

Region 2: Kaydence Addison of Dalton Intermediate School in Radford

Region 3: Will Schwantes of Daniel Morgan Middle School in Winchester

Region 4: Catherine Selfridge of Buckingham Middle School in Buckingham

Region 5: Gideon DeMarco of Lanier Middle School in Fairfax

Region 6: Maeve Myers of Louisa County Middle School in Mineral

Region 8: Tina Li of the Academy for Discovery at Lakewood in Norfolk

As one of the judges for the contest said: "All of the regional winners demonstrated a remarkable level of maturity in their essays! I was very impressed with their concerns for their communities and how thoughtful they are in developing well organized, considerate solutions."

Of the winning entry from Jalia Hardy, a judge said: "Her concern for her community came through her essay with her focus on youth empowerment, education and care for the homeless. I was also impressed with her intention to listen to others and her reference to helping 'our city'.

"The regional winners and statewide winner make up a very impressive group of young people - our teachers and parents should be proud! Our state is in good hands with our young people!"

Each regional winner will receive a plaque and a cash prize of \$150. The statewide winner will receive a plaque and a cash prize of \$250.

The contest was open to all Virginia students enrolled in the seventh grade during the 2017-2018 school year. The essays had to be from 200-500 words and were judged based on originality; persuasiveness; understanding of city, town and county services; and proper use of composition and written expression. This was the third year VML sponsored the contest, which has the purpose of teaching schoolchildren how local government works and how they can become involved in making their communities better places in which to live, work and play.



Region 7 & Statewide Winner

Jalia Hardy

**Binford Middle School
Richmond, VA**



If I Were Mayor ...

A mayor's job is one of the most important jobs in the city. The mayor oversees a city's essential departments, such as police, fire, education, housing, and transportation. If I were mayor, I would focus on Richmond's economy. I would make sure we continue to have good economic growth. I would put funds towards things the city needs, such as fixing roads, renovating old damaged buildings, gentrifying our neighborhoods, and creating more enjoyable things to attract tourism. When new people from different places and all walks of life come to Richmond, they will want to stay.

I would listen to the ideas and suggestions of the citizens of Richmond. I would work with them and do my best to meet their needs. It would not be my city, but our city. Whitney Houston said it best, "I believe the children are our future, teach them well and let them lead the way." If I were mayor, I would focus on our city's youth and educational programs. I would make school more interactive and fun by bringing arts integration into more schools. Binford Middle School is a very good example of this. It has dance, choir, art, drama, P.E., etc., and it incorporates these activities into everyday learning. I would bring those ideas and activities or something like them to other schools.

I would create more after school programs. With these activities kids would have something to do that they actually like to do. Kids will be able to do homework, play games, meet new people and acquire new friendships, get tutoring, have a snack, and be able to be themselves and not worry if people will be mean or talk about them. Instead of just sitting at home doing nothing, or out somewhere doing something that is wrong that could either hurt them or other people, they will be helping themselves by being more productive.

If I were mayor I would create a non-profit organization that rides the streets of Richmond with care packages. These care packages would include food, water, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, and other necessities. The care packages would be for the homeless, or people with little or no money. I would also extend the project to volunteers. It would let people of all ages do community service and help out in the community. If I were mayor I would start an annual Kindness Week. During Kindness Week, people just give compliments and help each other, even if they don't know the person they are helping. Kindness Week is a way to spread love. We all have a heart so why not use it? There is way too much hate in the world and if other cities and states see what Richmond is doing they might try something like it.

Being mayor is a big responsibility that comes with many challenges, and obstacles. It requires cooperation from all its citizens, including youth. Everyone can leave a mark on the world.



If I were mayor I would start an annual Kindness Week. During Kindness Week, people just give compliments and help each other, even if they don't know the person they are helping.

Jalia Hardy

Region 1 Winner

Bryleigh Middleton

Pennington Middle School
Pennington Gap, VA



If I Were Mayor ...

I live in Pennington Gap, a small, beautiful town in Lee County, Virginia. I truly love Pennington Gap with all my heart, but it could use some changes in a few places.

If I were mayor I would definitely want to open our local hospital again. We do not currently have a nearby hospital we can get to in less than ten minutes. I feel it is important to have a nearby hospital, because if someone has a sudden heart attack, we would have to drive thirty minutes or more to ARH, a hospital in Harlan, Kentucky. People could die in the time it takes to get to Harlan. This would benefit by saving transit time.

I feel another issue we could decrease is, people and families in poverty that are in need of clothing, hygiene products, food and more. Many families and people in general do not have the essentials they need to have healthier and happier lives. We could easily open shelters to help people and families in need of basic necessities. I feel it would be easy to get churches and the community involved in helping the people and families in poverty. This plan could easily help people in need, and the community see a major benefit.

Last but not least, we could definitely open more family friendly places to have fun. In Pennington Gap, we only have places such as McDonalds, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell. We could use more family friendly places that are fun for the whole family, such as a Virginia Historical Hands On Museum. Around Pennington Gap, all we do at these local places are eat, talk, and leave; we need more places where families and their children can be more physically active, and have fun together. My idea would benefit families by introducing them to more physical yet fun activities.

In conclusion, these simple ideas could make a major difference. I'm hoping to make as much of a difference as I can; with a little help I fully believe it is possible. Families, and people in general, hopefully benefit from these small adjustments. My ideas are very beneficial, and could help not only me and you, but the citizens of Pennington Gap.



We could easily open shelters to help people and families in need of basic necessities.

Bryleigh Middleton

Region 2 Winner

Kaydence Addison

Dalton Intermediate School
Radford, VA



If I Were Mayor ...

Radford is a beautiful city with many loving individuals. It's a small city, and it is very calm and peaceful here. When I moved to Radford, I instantly fell in love, but did notice some things I would like to improve. If I became mayor of Radford City, I would build a mall in West End, make free internet available throughout the city, and hold a food drive each month.

West End is fairly empty business wise. If were I the mayor of Radford, I would propose we put a mall there. In West End, there is a vacant parking lot, an old concrete factory, and an old Wades building. Any of these would be good places for our mall. I would do this by talking with construction companies and seeing how it could be built. Then, have a survey to find stores citizens would like there. At last, I would see which companies would be willing to come. I believe it would be a success and bring jobs to Radford. More jobs would boost our economy, and Radford would get more tax money. If there was more there, West End would start becoming a nicer place to live.

People need internet for school and work; some use it daily. Internet can be expensive, so few people have it. Because of this some children have to come to school early, and don't get all of their work done. Adults have to stay late at work for hours they aren't getting paid for. If I were mayor of Radford, I would propose we make free internet connection available throughout the city. I would get with a local internet company to see if it would be willing to provide the connections for a cheaper price. Then, I would talk to the electric companies and find out how much it would cost to install. We could hold a fundraiser through the schools for the cause, and have an event at the library. The city could hold bake sales, car washes etc. to get the funds. I think this would help our city by increasing the learning of our children, and the satisfaction of our workers.

Some families don't have enough food, and because of this they suffer. If I became mayor of Radford, I would make sure everyone had enough food. I would propose a food drive to be held all over the city every month. Families shouldn't just have food for the holidays. They should have food everyday. I would do this by setting up places to drop off food at public places throughout Radford. The families with food stamps and low pay would receive the donations. This would help Radford by making everyone involved happier and healthier.

Being the mayor is an important job, and you have to do things that are in best interest for the community. It's not an easy task in any way, shape, or form. As mayor of Radford, I would make our city a wonderful place to live, and grow up.



If I were mayor of Radford, I would propose we make free internet connection available throughout the city.

Kaydence Addison

Region 3 Winner

Will Schwantes

**Daniel Morgan Middle School
Winchester, VA**



If I Were Mayor ...

“Congratulations, mayor.” Many people patted my back as I walked towards the former mayor. “Congratulations on winning the election, Will,” the now-former mayor said to me. The more people congratulated me, the more my smile brightened. I was now mayor of Winchester, Virginia.

DAY ONE AS MAYOR: I started my day like any other. I smacked my alarm clock, and jumped out of bed. I got my clothes on, and went out the door. I would start my day by establishing some new objectives during my time as mayor. The objectives I set for myself were as follows: I would try to reduce pollution throughout the city, along with the endeavor to reduce pollution caused by transportation. I would attempt to decrease the amount of discrimination and bullying in schools towards race, religion, age, gender, ability, and sexual orientation.

I would put my investments towards cleaner energy, trying to preserve fossil fuels in the process. I'd also invest in shelter for the homeless, and try to be able to provide more food and water for them.

DAY FOURTEEN AS MAYOR: Today I'm proposing ideas to the city council on ways to improve health throughout the city, and raise money for those less fortunate. We settled on a five-kilometer charity walk to fundraise for less fortunate people ... and on that walk, people could also present me with ideas they had benefitting the health and environment of the city.

DAY FIFTY-SIX AS MAYOR: I just finished talking at a school about preventing bullying. The assembly went really well, and many kids told me about their experiences. It was motivating to see kids with the courage to speak up about past problems.

DAY ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO: The five-kilometer charity walk was a week ago. Many people talked to me about their ideas they had for the town. Some were really good, which I took into account and proposed to the city council; only a few of their ideas got through, but I was happy with the selections.

ONE YEAR AS MAYOR: I walked up to the microphone. “So far, my term is going great. As a mayor, I've gotten to participate in many hands on activities to help the community grow, and prosper. I've met so many people, and made so many new friends. It's been great to be able to have my voice be heard, and help people speak up for themselves. Some of my old friends said I would never become mayor, but look where I'm standing now!” The crowd gave a chuckle. “I'd like to thank you all for a successful year, and to hope that we can make the year ahead even better.” The audience applauded as I stepped away from the podium.



I would attempt to decrease the amount of discrimination and bullying in schools towards race, religion, age, gender, ability, and sexual orientation.

Will Schwantes

Region 4 Winner

Catherine Selfridge

Buckingham Middle School
Buckingham, VA



If I Were Mayor ...

Very clearly at the top of my paper, it said “If I were Mayor essay,” and that was the only thing written on my paper. I tapped my pencil on my desk, frowning in frustration, trying-to come up with even the tiniest idea on what to write. “Well, what does a mayor do?” I thought. “A mayor tries to make life better for their town, obviously.” I stared at the lined paper, brewing something up in my head. “So then, what would you do?”

If I were mayor, I would try to enact ordinances in places that help prevent traffic accidents. There have been a lot of accidents on the roads, mainly on the highway, and while we can’t stop them completely, it is something important we should try to prevent. Lowering the speeds and monitoring the speed with radar will help prevent accidents. We can also put in a special red light, which flashes white around the edge to catch your attention. During winter, we will put warning signs up to watch out for ice and snow on the roads.

Then, in the town, I would promote people to come and make businesses in our town. We have a mass of empty buildings in our town, sitting there looking sad and empty, waiting for someone to come shop in them again. When people get off the train, or get out of their car, there is nothing to do here. I want to change that by promoting local businesses and making more local events in our town to influence people to come to our town. Specifically, events like parades and big seasonal events (like a Christmas tree lighting ceremony) can bring us all together as a community and attract more people to our town.

I would also direct my attention to the schools. I see a lot of bullying happening every day in my school. I would try to fix this by starting programs against bullying, something like if a kid reports three incidents of actual bullying, they get a small prize, like a little toy or even school cash they can collect to trade it in for school items. Bullying like death threats, being pushed into lockers, or even being talked about in a negative way repeatedly need to be stopped. They prevent kids from wanting to come to school due to being emotionally and physically hurt on a daily basis, and even the bullies themselves suffer from this, being at a risk of substance abuse, violence and education problems. Both bullied and bullies are at an increased risk of depression, too.

I had been staring at the distance between reality and an idea. An idea that will take lots of hard work and dedication. An idea that could change everything about this town for the better. I picked up my paper and stared at my lined paper, only having “If I were Mayor essay” at the top. I know exactly what to write about.



If I were mayor, I would try to enact ordinances in places that help prevent traffic accidents.

Catherine Selfridge

Region 5 Winner

Gideon DeMarco

Lanier Middle School
Fairfax, VA



If I Were Mayor ...

Being a mayor is strenuous. The role of mayor has helped Fairfax city function properly since 1805 (formerly known as the Town of Providence). If I were mayor, I would lead by example. Working hard to keep my community working together is my goal. I would respect everyone, and hear everyone. One of my first acts as mayor would be to hold a city council meeting to discuss goals and challenges related to making our community a better place and how to raise funds for the city's needs. I would act with care for citizens, acting with honesty and responsibility and working to make every citizen feel welcome, happy and safe. If I were elected, I would make sure every branch of service is doing its job in our community. These branches include the fire and police departments and city maintenance. I would go to the stations and centers of each of these branches to see if each had the necessary resources to function well. If one of these branches was not adequately prepared for its role in the community, I would make it a priority to attend to its needs.

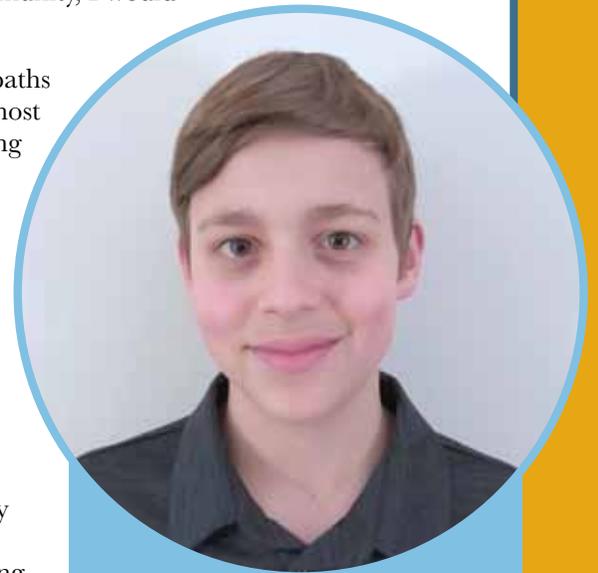
To make sure every community member is happy, trails and bike paths would be added for entertainment, including installing bike lanes to most roads, promoting biking, and walking to help the environment. Starting a campaign to get volunteers to assist with cleaning up our city would be a goal.

Endorsing the establishment of jobs in our community would be one of my main goals. If a business moved in, I would make sure they have everything needed to thrive in our city to promote industry and small businesses to help our community grow.

If I get elected, I would address crime and bullying. I want all citizens to feel safe here. I especially want students to feel safe at school, inviting presenters to go to public schools to provide healthy presentations to discourage bullying. To make sure we live in a healthy community with extremely low crime rates, I would strengthen our police force. I would talk to each station to meet equipment and staffing requirements. As part of meeting these requirements, a city council meeting would be executed to discuss funding methods. To help the fire department I would build local fire stations not more than one mile from each other.

The survival of our city depends on having good education, and thriving economics. If we are lacking resources, I will invite businesses who provide those resources to our community. I would support the education system the most, though, because without an educated future generation, our hard work to keep this community healthy and prospering will dissolve. To further help education, libraries will be built to give students enhanced studying opportunities.

If I were mayor, promoting the wellbeing of each individual citizen in our city will be my biggest goal. I would make this city a pleasant environment for everyone.



If I were mayor, I would lead by example. Working hard to keep my community working together is my goal. I would respect everyone, and hear everyone.

Gideon DeMarco

Region 6 Winner

Maeve Myers

Louisa County Middle School
Mineral, VA



If I Were Mayor ...

The mayor of a city has the difficult job of balancing the budget, local needs, and available resources. I would work to make all of these things happen. I would help create a community green space, enhance the educational experience, and establish a mentorship program.

Enhancing the educational and classroom experience would be beneficial for everyone. It would make school more enjoyable, and help make lessons useful in real-world situations. This would include having classes outside, making volunteer and hands-on opportunities available to everyone, and using technology to enrich lessons. Students could volunteer in community cleanups, or be able to access labs or computers after school to create new things and experiment. The better your education is, the brighter your future.

Establishing a mentorship program in local schools could really make a difference. Older students could work with younger ones to build confidence and a sense of self-worth. Mentors could help with homework and studying, or just support their mentees through rough patches in their lives. Students who didn't have someone at home to help them would have someone to assist them in reaching their goals in school. It would encourage responsibility in the mentors as well, because they'd know that someone was looking up to and counting on them. Mentors could be critical in helping students reach their potential. No one should be at a disadvantage in the classroom because of a lack of support or encouragement.

The creation of a local green space could greatly improve my county. A community garden or park could provide a beautiful location for families and recreation, an expansion of the classroom, and the provision of fresh vegetables to those who would not be able to afford them. Students could work in the garden and learn about plants, how to grow them, how the ecosystem works, etcetera. Fresh vegetables would be an extremely beneficial addition to the county food bank. Low-income residents who might not otherwise get fresh produce would have easy access to locally grown, organic food. Also, a park would provide a nice place for families to unwind and for kids to play. A community green space could bring nutrition to those who need it, hands-on education for local kids, and beauty for all.

I believe that if you have been elected by the people of your community to a government position, it is your responsibility to cause change for the better. If I were mayor in my community, I would do my best to represent my fellow residents as best as possible. I would encourage the creation of a local garden or park, work to establish a mentoring program in local schools, and assist in efforts to enhance the educational experience for all students.



Establishing a mentorship program in local schools could really make a difference. Older students could work with younger ones to build confidence and a sense of self-worth.

Maeve Myers

Region 8 Winner

Tina Li

Academy for Discovery at Lakewood
Norfolk, VA



If I Were Mayor ...

A mayor is very limited as to what they can or cannot do for a city, but if I were mayor, I would ensure Norfolk is safe and secure by preventing problems from increasing.

As sea levels are rising, Norfolk is sinking, and floods are occurring more often. It may not affect us now, but stopping this epidemic could provide a stable coastline for our descendants. I will fund the construction of seawalls and levees around the city, and begin to implement beach nourishment, which is adding sand onto beaches to repair coastal erosion. I would also work to pass a law for construction of homes and buildings to be elevated, and encourage floatable buildings along the waterside.

Another challenge in Norfolk is the pollution of land and water, which can harm animals and also cause long term detrimental effects to humans. If I were mayor, I would build more trash and recycle bins throughout the city, so people will be more likely to dispose of their garbage properly. Also, I would support the Senate's bill to place a tax on plastic bags, because plastic bags can damage soil and harm aquatic life.

Norfolk Public Schools are ranked among the state's worst performing school districts. As mayor, I would advocate for better education, because a good education lays a solid foundation for the rest of life. I will organize meetings with the teachers in Norfolk so that they can discuss lesson plans and improve their teaching strategies. I will also discourage ability grouping in schools, because placing students of different skill levels in the same classes improves cooperation and team building, and everyone will get an equal education.

Norfolk has one of the highest crime rates in the nation, so if I were mayor, I would help decrease criminal activity like gang violence and assaults. I will increase public surveillance, so the city can investigate criminal acts. Also, I will help ensure that ex-offenders receive stable housing and employment, because they may be less likely to commit crimes if they are content with their lives. Early intervention can be very beneficial to crime prevention, so as mayor, I would improve family environments to ensure healthy child development. Also, I will set up support groups for children and teens.

Homelessness and extreme poverty is a challenge for adults and children in Norfolk, so if I were mayor, I would build more shelters for families and individuals. Also, I would encourage families to adopt homeless children or become foster parents.

Not only that, but I will also create a program from which homeless people can receive loans and pay them back when they get back onto their feet.

Being mayor is a difficult task, but with the right mindset and innovative ideas, I can help ensure equity and peacefulness in Norfolk.



As mayor, I would advocate for better education, because a good education lays a solid foundation for the rest of life.

Tina Li

A shine of the times in Northern Virginia

IT'S SOLAR ENERGY'S TIME TO SHINE in Virginia. The Commonwealth has witnessed rapid growth in solar installations in recent years and now cities, towns and counties across the state are being recognized as solar leaders for their efforts to encourage the development of local solar markets. In November, the cities of Alexandria and Fairfax announced their respective national designations as SolSmart Bronze, an achievement that recognizes them for adopting practices that make it faster, easier and more affordable for businesses and tens of thousands of residents in the Northern Virginia (NOVA) region to install solar.

SolSmart designation signals that communities are "open for solar business," which is exactly the message the cities of Alexandria and Fairfax want for attracting solar industry investment in their communities, generating local jobs, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Encouraged by the 2017 session of the Virginia General Assembly's level of attention to solar power, both cities took actions to boost solar development by cutting red tape and removing barriers. Both Alexandria and Fairfax have run Solarize NOVA campaigns for the past several years. These campaigns, which use concepts such as bulk purchasing and free solar site assessments, make choosing solar easier and more affordable. So far, the NOVA region has more than doubled the number of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems installed since 2013, according to the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC).

"Earning the SolSmart designation sends the message to the solar industry that this is a place they want to do business. We are pleased to be able to work with our local government partners and National League of Cities to bring the SolSmart Program to our region. It fully compliments our work in increasing the amount of renewable energy in Northern Virginia. We congratulate the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and SolSmart on this outstanding achievement," said Robert Lazaro, Jr., executive director, NVRC.

Alexandria and Fairfax examined permitting and inspection processes, planning and zoning regulations, and communication practices among solar stakeholders. The findings yielded improvements that make the processes more efficient, saving local government staff time and money. More accessible information for solar installers and potential customers allows these communities to more easily and quickly grow their solar markets. For instance, Alexandria created and posted on its website a "Solar Checklist" of all solar permitting and project plan requirements, an action which helps minimize the costs associated with submitting incomplete applications.

"If a home or business in Alexandria wants to install solar panels, what would they need to do? Do we have clear permit processes, zoning regulations, and building codes to follow? Is that information accessible? Providing the solar installer with regulatory certainty and transparency can lead to great invest-

ment in our community and more local jobs," said Bill Eger, the city of Alexandria's energy manager.

Actions the City of Fairfax has taken to encourage its solar market include streamlining the city's solar permit application process, training staff on the latest innovations in solar permitting and inspection, and identifying zoning ordinance amendments and policy changes in key planning documents. All



(L - R) Megan Day, National Renewable Energy Laboratory; City of Fairfax Mayor David Meyer, City of Fairfax Council Member Jon Stehle at National League of Cities City Summit, Charlotte, NC.

these actions advance investment in solar PV energy systems and position Northern Virginia to benefit from the state-wide surging clean energy industry. According to the Solar Energy Industries Association, more than 3,200 people and 200+ solar companies work throughout the industry statewide. Alexandria and Fairfax join the cities of Richmond, Charlottesville, Roanoke, as well as Albemarle County, as SolSmart designees in Virginia.

For both Alexandria and Fairfax, the next step is Silver, then ultimately, Gold designation.

"But we can – and will – do more," said Mayor David Meyer. "This year, the city is reviewing how solar can be included in the Zoning Ordinance, and in 2018 we plan to integrate solar into our Comprehensive Plan." These actions help more local homes and businesses to obtain affordable, clean, and reliable electricity through solar, noted City Councilmember Jon Stehle. "By encouraging solar companies to do business in Fairfax City, we help drive economic development and create local jobs." 

SolSmart is led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association and is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Energy Technologies Office. The NVRC partnered with Alexandria, Fairfax, and Arlington County to host a SolSmart Advisor. Since July 2017, the Advisor has been providing expertise and dedicated support to achieve SolSmart designation and encourage solar energy growth locally. The City of Falls Church joined the partnership in November.

Virginia will grow. Its infrastructure must, too. And that means big costs.

IN 1960, VIRGINIA'S population was about four million. More than a half century later, it's more than double that. And by 2040, according to the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Virginia will have more than 10 million people and be the 10th largest state.

Virginia's population growth has accelerated in certain areas over the past 25 years, especially in Northern Virginia, metro Richmond, and Hampton Roads. But there also has been surprising growth in the northern Shenandoah Valley, the Northern Neck, and in central and western pockets, such as Lynchburg, Roanoke, Blacksburg, and Abingdon.

Accompanying this past and future growth is an extraordinary infrastructure demand. Transportation. Water, wastewater, stormwater. Schools.

Meeting these infrastructure needs, though, is likely to fall increasingly to states and localities. Recent federal tax reform, decreasing federal assistance to states, and constraints on localities' revenue-raising options will create cash crunches.

First, a look at infrastructure trends.

Transportation

Northern Virginia has the most congested roads in the nation. New work is coming to Interstates 95, 66, and 395; the Route 1, Route 7, Route 28, and Route 50 corridors; and to the Fairfax County Parkway. Virginia Railway Express is at capacity. And Metro is burdened by operational and major upgrade needs. Billions of dollars are identified for road projects from targeted state and local taxes and fees. Funds for rail improvements are less certain.

Hampton Roads needs more bridges and tunnels, such as an expanded Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel and a new connection between I-564 and I-664, and

I-64 needs additional new lanes. Billions of dollars are needed, with most coming from local sales and fuels taxes.

Along Virginia's western spine, I-81 requires major expansions and safety improvements. Billions of dollars are needed, with few special funds identified.

Virginia's FY18 road-building budget is \$1.87 billion. The road maintenance and operations budget (including payments to cities and counties) is \$2.13 billion. Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads get \$492.5 million in dedicated funding for regional projects.

In cities across Virginia, transit systems are at best adequately funded for current operations, but little exists for new routes or new buses. In 2018, the state will invest \$236 million in Virginia's 44 public transit agencies. In 2019, however, a significant reduction is expected to begin as a 10-year-old bond program closes. Local transit programs will see a major annual gap between transit revenues and capital needs.

Virginia's last major transportation funding initiative was in 2013, when then-Gov. Bob McDonnell and the General Assembly agreed to \$6 billion in additional dedicated revenues.

Water, Wastewater, Stormwater

Water supply is a challenge in eastern Virginia. Groundwater for Hampton Roads, the Peninsula, the Northern Neck, and parts of Northern Virginia is provided by a single source, the Potomac Aquifer, which is being withdrawn at an unus-



tainable rate. The Department of Environmental Quality recently concluded a two-year stakeholder study of options to stabilize it. The group's major infrastructure recommendation is to support a \$1 billion project to recharge the aquifer with wastewater treated to drinking-water standards. It will be paid for by local fees over many years.

Water planning is imperative in the rest of Virginia, too. Growth demands it. Many jurisdictions may begin considering regional water planning options.

Wastewater and stormwater expenses continue to rise, largely due to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mandates to improve local water quality, especially of streams and rivers that flow to the Chesapeake Bay. Locally-owned sewage treatment plants have made big investments over the past 20 years – but EPA is now pushing new ammonia-reduction levels that may cost more than \$500 million to plants across the state. And stormwater reductions also are mandated – new best management practices (BMPs) and urban retrofits will cost hundreds of millions.

Schools

Localities feel population growth pressures in schools as acutely as in any other infrastructure. Add to this the high costs of deferred maintenance from aging buildings and the capital needs are daunting.

From 2012 to 2017, localities constructed 59 new elementary, middle, and high schools for a combined cost of \$1.9 billion. Another 268 schools were added on to or renovated for an additional \$1.45 billion.

In the 2018 academic year, there are five new elementary



schools under construction for a total of \$116.6 million and 22 elementary, middle, and high schools are being expanded or renovated for a combined \$224.6 million.

Unsurprisingly, the new, expanded, and renovated schools over recent decades are mostly in high-growth localities. That trend will continue. Older cities face daunting challenges as well in terms of renovating, replacing and maintaining school facilities that are decades old. And, this financial burden is carried primarily by cities, counties and the two towns that operate their own school systems. The state's role is small.

What's the funding future look like?

States and localities build and maintain the vast majority of U.S. infrastructure through taxes, fees, and borrowing. Federal assistance is sparse and unpredictable, and it's likely to continue dwindling. There will be continued pressure for states – and especially localities – to shoulder more of the infrastructure burden.

The federal Highway Trust Fund – funded by federal gas taxes to support roads and mass transit through grants to states and localities – continues its 10-year trend toward insolvency. Congress remains unlikely to raise the federal gas tax for a long-term fix. The fund has been bolstered by federal general fund transfers through 2020, but its ability to meet obligations



after that remains uncertain. While Virginia has authorized major new road-building investments, there's still the trend to rely more on local and regionally-raised dollars.

Recently passed federal tax reform cut top marginal individual and corporate tax rates, making investors less interested in tax-free municipal bonds. This will result in higher interest rates, making municipalities' infrastructure borrowing costlier.

The Trump Administration has plans for a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure package for roads, bridges and tunnels, airports, water and wastewater, broadband, and more. But it's reportedly exceedingly light on actual federal investment – instead, leveraging most from states, localities, and the private sector. Additionally, cuts to domestic spending are to offset the federal infrastructure investment, and those cuts, which are targeted at environmental and social safety-net programs, may affect localities.

Bottom line: Virginia remains an attractive state, with population growth for decades to come. That's good. With it comes major infrastructure demands, with fewer federal dollars, tighter state dollars, higher borrowing costs, and continued General Assembly constraints on localities' ability to raise revenue. That's not good. 

About the author: *L. Preston Bryant, Jr., is senior vice president at McGuireWoods Consulting. He served on Lynchburg City Council for two years and represented Lynchburg and Amherst County in the House of Delegates from 1996 to 2006, and he served as Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources from 2006 to 2010. He is a VML consultant on environmental and energy issues.*

Falls Church project focuses on preservation

THE “CLOVERDALE HOUSE” at 205 Park Avenue presented Falls Church with a unique opportunity to restore an existing historic structure within the city’s boundaries. The top priority in the design and layout of the project was to restore the building and create an addition that respected the history of the old house.

Dating back to the late 1700s, the “Cloverdale House” is one of the oldest historic structures in the City of Falls Church and is celebrated by the community as part of the city’s historic and cultural fabric. There were multiple parts to the existing structure, beginning with a main two-story Greek Revival style house and an attached cabin that reportedly dates to 1797. At some point in the mid-1900’s, this portion of the building was relocated to its current setting, on a new masonry foundation at the western corner of Park and Maple Avenues. Over the years, multiple owners constructed several additions at the rear, added vinyl siding, replaced windows and doors, built a new chimney, and made numerous interior renovations. By the time the building was acquired by Brian Normile of Park Avenue Ventures, LLC, it had fallen into great disrepair: evidence of termites was found throughout, water damage and rotten wood was plentiful, and many structural elements – beams, columns, joists, etc. – were cracked or sagging. The exploratory deconstruction undertaken at the beginning of the project

showed that what remained was generally unsafe, damaged, and would not pass current building codes. A full restoration was needed to save this dilapidated structure.

The guiding concept of the historic revival was to accommodate its new use as a coffee shop and wine bar. The building would be a hub for a connected, walkable community, bringing in local foot traffic at all hours of the day. Its location just a block off the main thoroughfare of the city would enhance its ability to act as a link between the residential and commercial sectors of the neighborhood. As a corner lot at a busy intersection, its high visibility from all directions meant that multiple facades would be vital to the appearance of the building.



The Cloverdale House showed evidence of great disrepair prior to the renovation project.



Architect’s rendering of a renovated Cloverdale House, which will be used as a coffee shop and wine bar.



With input from the city's Architectural Advisory Board and Historic Architectural Review Board, a design was developed whereby the building could become a community landmark for years to come.

The inspiration of the overall design is to create a modern addition that clearly separates it from the historic Cloverdale House, thus letting it stand on its own. This is achieved by differentiating between the old and the new parts of the building, carefully defined pedestrian circulation, and architectural detailing inside and out. The two-story addition provides additional space for the building to house an indoor casual dining area, a full commercial kitchen, an upstairs bar, a multitude of outdoor seating areas, and a generous prep kitchen in the basement. Guests can seamlessly pass between the new and old construction, but not without appreciating the distinguishing differences.

While the existing shell of the building needed to be heavily modified for proper structural stability, water proofing, and insulation, the form of the original building was to remain intact. Several features were added to the building to more accurately reflect the original, as interpreted from a rendering provided by the Historic Board. This included adding a front porch, shutters, metal roofing, and windows with a more historically accurate grille pattern. The wood siding that was able to be recovered was reinstalled in the areas that would receive the most direct visual and physical contact from guests. Cornice and trim details were carefully measured before deconstruction, and reproduced to accurately reflect what had been originally installed. Inside, the detailing resembles the original wall construction of the building using raw wood from the original

building, to help tell the story of what the building once was.

The addition is visually separated by a transparent metal and glass architectural element that steps back, creating the main entrance. The roof of the addition slopes away from the existing building to avoid overshadowing it. Exterior details and finishes of the new addition were selected to differentiate between the two, while still achieving a cohesive design. Colors, materials, and scales are repeated, sometimes subtly, to bring that unified feel.

The restoration of the Cloverdale House is also a great example of private and public collaboration in preserving a historically valuable structure. The property and the existing structure came with many site constraints that the project design needed to address. The BCN Enterprises, LLC development team worked in collaboration with staff, the Planning Commission, the Historical Commission, the Historical Architectural Review Board and the Architectural Advisory Board of the City of Falls Church to overcome challenging issues. Because of this teamwork, a once deteriorating historic structure will be meaningfully restored to become a valuable community asset.

The project is slated to be completed in March 2018 for occupancy by Northside Social Falls Church. For more information about this project, representatives from Park Avenue Ventures, LLC can be reached at (703) 465-0801. 

About the authors: *Akida Rouzi is the senior planner and deputy zoning administrator for the City of Falls Church. Brian Normile is the principal and Keith Stricker is the project architect for BCN Enterprises, LLC.*

Boutique hotel opens in St. Paul

THE WESTERN FRONT Hotel, a 30-room hotel inside a historic building in downtown St. Paul, had its formal opening on Feb. 12 in a ceremony attended by U.S. Representative Morgan Griffith, St. Paul Mayor Kyle Fletcher, other local elected officials from St. Paul, Russell County and Wise County, as well as people associated with the two-year project.

The project to transform the three-story Willis Building into a boutique hotel was the first recipient of the Virginia Tourism Growth Fund (VTGF). The VTGF is a Virginia Tourism Corporation program established to promote tourism projects across the state.

Creative Boutique Hotels (CBH) is the developer and owner of the project. CBH is a partnership that includes MB

Contractors (which handled construction); Hal Craddock and Architectural Partners (who designed the plan); and Cornerstone Hospitality (which managed the interior design and will operate the facility).

The Western Front Hotel project fills a major lodging void in St. Paul. In addition to the hotel rooms, the project includes a restaurant, gift shop, recreation space, outdoor terraces, bar and music hall.

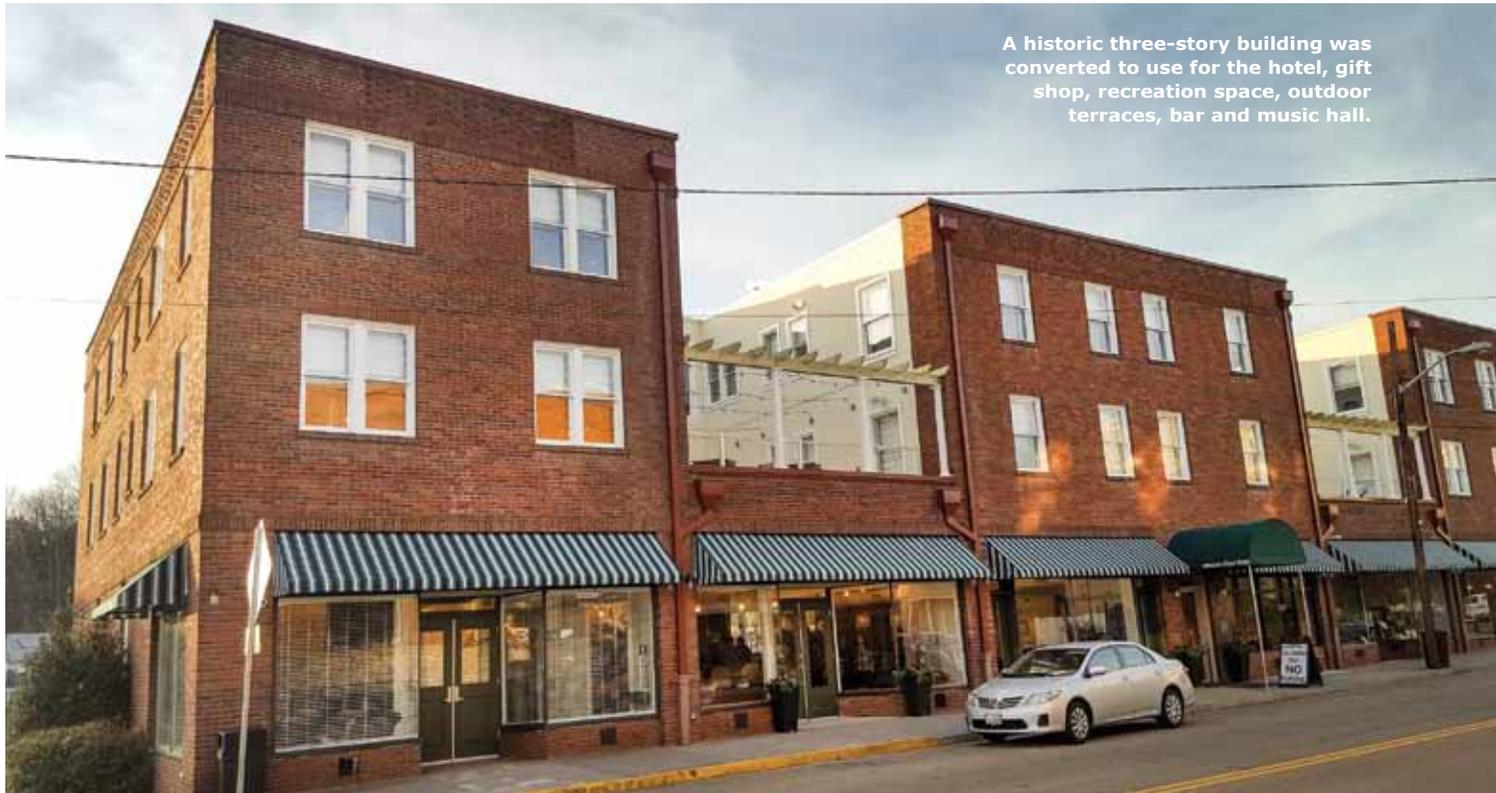
According to an article in the *Bristol Herald-Courier*, the project cost \$7.8 million. Materials from the Willis Building – including tin ceiling, wood, and window glass – were used in the renovation. All the original doors of the Willis Building were refinished and used as headboards in the guest room, and the cell bars from the old St. Paul jail were used in “Off the Rails,” the restaurant and bar area. The article says that the name of the hotel takes its name from a once-rambunctious part of town that had saloons, dance halls and bordellos as local businesses.

In addition to state and federal historic tax credits and the funding from the Virginia Tourism Growth Fund, the project received grants from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and the Appalachian Regional Commission grants. Further, low-interest loans were provided from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority and the Virginia Community Development Corp.

More information can be found at <http://bit.ly/2oPbRnG>, <http://bit.ly/2oLzuOi>, and at <http://bit.ly/21tZf0P>. 



Local and state officials gather for the ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of the Western Front Hotel.



A historic three-story building was converted to use for the hotel, gift shop, recreation space, outdoor terraces, bar and music hall.



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