

VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League

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Step up your game

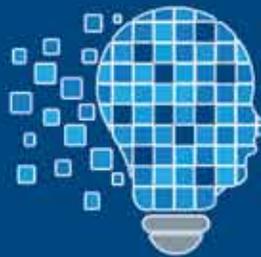
Increasing playability
leads to healthy
outcomes for all



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About the cover

Increasing playability leads to healthy outcomes for all. Eleven Virginia localities have been recognized for making play part of a community-wide agenda.

Page 14

Departments

Director's message 2
Calendar 3
People 3
News & notes 5
Professional directory 28

Features

Rail safety is no accident

Railroad education programs and technology investments make 2016 safest year on record.

By Emily Traiforos

Page 11

VML executive committee, staff visit localities

VML has been on the road in October and November, meeting with councils across the state to share VML's 2018 legislative program and hear concerns facing local leaders.

Page 22



New report finds water and wastewater rate increases across Virginia

Over the past 10 years, the combined average monthly water rate and wastewater rate increased by 60.3 percent.

By Sheryl Stephens

Page 12

Code enforcement association rewards service

The Virginia Building and Code Officials Association recently recognized three individuals for their contributions to the code compliance/enforcement industry.

By Paula Eubank

Page 24

Retrofit project in Waynesboro brings nature to the city



An unassuming detention basin underwent a transformation into a bustling wildlife habitat and community refuge while maintaining its flood control abilities.

By Mike Claud, PE, CFM

Page 21



Understanding leadership's direction

Building and code officials association holds 88th conference.

By Sandra Harrington

Page 26

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Good Governance

AS GENERAL COUNSEL, I get a lot of calls on good governance and how to deal with difficult situations amongst council members. Often council members are frustrated with each other and lose sight of the common goal - doing what is in the best interest of your citizens in a transparent manner.

Competing views on a council can be extremely healthy because they challenge all to think harder and consider options that may not include the outcome expected. The problem emerges when those issues become barriers to doing what is in the best interest of your citizens.

Stepping back when that occurs and looking at the process of decision-making may help to reach consensus or professional disagreement. There are times when inaction because of a disagreement is the hardest, but best, decision of all. Deciding that there is no good resolution is okay.

Reviewing the roles of the mayor, council and the manager can be beneficial and remind us that council members don't function without each other. No one member has any real authority unless the governing body has authorized an action. When looking at how various local roles are defined, and the authority given various players, generally several documents have to be consulted, including the charter, local ordinances and state law. It is also important to think about how these roles work in real life interactions. For example; how is an item added to the agenda: does the mayor decide, the manager or can any council member add an item? What happens when the council doesn't agree to add an item? Or what happens when a council member demands information from the clerk that the entire council is not privy to?

This is when I will put in a plug for a code of ethics, a manual of rules for governance and a professional understanding of respecting the roles of each person in your local government. A code of ethics is a document that really should be reviewed and signed yearly by the council members and that morally obligates them to behave in a professional and polite manner so that there is no question about their integrity. This document reminds council members about that moral obligation.

In addition to addressing the roles of council members, codes of ethics often will have rules on when and how long public comment occurs and how to make a proper motion; these rules should be documented and provided to each council member, as well as reviewed yearly.

The other yearly activity for councils is to set out goals for the council, mayor and the manager so that everyone understands the direction of the locality and can work towards those goals. They can be extremely specific such as:



Bridge Littleton (right), Middleburg council member, and VML Acting Director Michelle Gowdy (center) visited Mayor Robert Zoldos and the council of the Town of Lovettsville in early November.

our town hall will be renovated this year or broader – the council will work to improve relations with the county. By setting goals each year, progress can be measured, and the citizens have a clear understanding of the council's direction.

This column on governance was triggered in part by a recent trip to Lovettsville. VML has two new Executive Committee members: Bridge Littleton from the Town of Middleburg and Shannon Kane from the City of Virginia Beach. We are very pleased to have them on our Executive Committee.

Mr. Littleton was kind enough to accompany me to the Town of Lovettsville in early November to talk about good governance (and I snuck some Freedom of Information/Conflict of Information (FOIA/COIA) stuff in too!). It was a good interactive discussion with a lot of questions and sharing of experiences. We reviewed their roles as outlined in their charter and the state/local codes and then discussed practically how to work with each other. Mr. Littleton shared his experience as a previous member of the planning commission and current council, which offered prospective from a nearby town. Lovettsville officials shared stories of programs that worked for them as well and we all took ideas back to share with others.

The FOIA/COIA reminder is two-fold. First, remember that the transaction of public business should take place in the public eye unless there is a specific reason in the Virginia Code to act in closed session. Second, when you believe that you have a conflict, it is best to consult your local attorney and heed their advice!!

I was excited and energized by the discussion that took place and enjoyed the sharing of various programs and ideas that we had as well as the willingness on everyone's part to try new things. Thanks to Mr. Littleton and the Town of Lovettsville for this experience! 

VML connects you with a variety of networking and professional development events. Learn about these opportunities at vml.org/events.

- Dec. 13** Leadership Academy transportation webinar
- Dec. 22** Deadline for “If I Were Mayor” essay contest
- Jan. 3, 2018** Finance Forum, Richmond
- Jan. 31, 2018** VML Legislative Day, Richmond

People

Dublin hires manager

The Town of Dublin has appointed **Tyler “Tye” Franklin Kirkner** as



- Kirkner -

town manager, building inspector, and zoning administrator effective Oct. 1. Prior to that, he was a building inspector, erosion and sediment control administrator, and contracts construction manager for Pulaski County. Kirkner has a Bachelor of Science in building construction.

Turner is new assistant county admin in Loudoun



- Turner -

Valmarie Turner is Loudoun’s newest assistant county administrator. She oversees the county’s departments of Community Corrections; Family Services; Health Services; Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services; and the Juvenile Court Services Unit. She comes to Loudoun from Seminole County, FL, where she was most recently director of the Community Services Department. She also held local government posts in Hillsborough County, FL, the city of Daytona Beach, FL, and Fulton County, GA. Turner has a bachelor’s degree in business economics from Florida A&M University and a master’s degree in public administration from Walden University.

Herndon appoints director of information technology

The Town of Herndon has named **Pre-drag (Page) Kalapasev** as director of information technology (IT). Kalapasev replaces William H. Ashton II who was recently promoted to town manager. Kalapasev was program director of IT innovation and digital transformation for the City of Washington, D.C. Previously, he was employed at private sector companies. He holds a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in geosystems and hydrogeology from the University of Novi Sad, Yugoslavia.

New economic development director in Leesburg

Russell Seymour is the Town of Leesburg’s new director of economic development. Seymour started work Nov. 6. He was most recently the assistant director of general services for James City County. He also has served as the economic development director for James City County and Spotsylvania County and as the vice president of the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance. He holds a Master of Arts in urban planning from the University of Akron and a Bachelor of Science in business administration from Christopher Newport University. In addition, he has completed the LEAD (Leading, Educating and Developing) program at the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. Seymour is replacing Marantha Edwards, who will retire in January 2018.



- Seymour -

Finchum is new zoning administrator in Williamsburg

The City of Williamsburg has named **Allyson Finchum** as zoning administrator in the City’s Planning and Codes Compliance Department, effective Oct. 4. Finchum holds a bachelor’s degree in communications from American University and a master’s degree in urban and regional planning from Virginia Commonwealth University. She has 18 years of experience in zoning and planning and has worked for the counties of Louisa, Fluvanna, and Charles City as well as the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission.



- Finchum -

Petersburg hires new human resources director

Ava Greene Bedden has been named human resources director for the City of Petersburg. Bedden brings twenty-five years of experience in labor and employment law. Prior to her appointment, she established Fair Frank Final Professional Services, LLC, providing legal and human resources consulting services to clients in the public and private sector. Bedden earned a law degree from the Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C. and an undergraduate degree in psychology and criminal justice from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She also has completed courses in labor relations and human resource management at



- Bedden -

the Harvard University Kogod School of Business and the American University in Washington, D.C. She obtained her Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) in 1997, and is licensed to practice law in Virginia, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Texas.

South Hill hires first business development manager

The Town of South Hill has hired **Brentley Morris** as the town's first



- Morris -

business development manager. Morris's role is to expand existing business and to target new business opportunities and encourage them to relocate to South Hill. In addition to his extensive background in marketing, Morris serves on the boards of local organizations, including the Lake Country Young Professionals and South Hill Chamber of Commerce.

Long-time Christiansburg employee now manager in New Market



- Walters -

New Market's new town manager is **Todd Walters**. Walters comes to New Market from the Town of Christiansburg, where he was employed for nearly 30 years, most recently as assistant director of engineering.

Stafford County appoints new deputy administrator



- Presley -

Stafford County has appointed **Fred Presley** as deputy county administrator. Presley is the former town manager of West Warwick, RI, and has over 18 years of public and private experience.

Presley has a master's degree in public administration from Norwich University and a Bachelor of Science in re-

source development from the University of Rhode Island. He also is a veteran of the United States Army.

MELINDA WILLIAMS



- Parker -

Retirements

William H. Parker retired from the Town of Dublin on Sept. 30 after 19 years with the town. He had served as town manager, clerk of council, building

inspector, and zoning administrator.

Mike Ritchie also retired on Sept. 30, after 28 years with the Town of New Market. He was employed in various roles, most recently as town manager and, prior to that, public works director.

Harrisonburg's **Kurt Hodgen** retired Oct. 31. He had been city manager since 2007 and assistant city manager from 2001 to 2007.

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Martinsville fire and rescue gives boot donations to Texas department



MARTINSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE and EMS donated \$8,500 to a Texas fire department that serves a community devastated by Hurricane Harvey. The donation was 100 percent of the proceeds of its fall fill-the-boot donation drive held Saturday, Sept. 9.

A Martinsville volunteer member who hails from Texas and a representative of the American Red Cross helped to identify the drive's eventual beneficiary, Plum Grove Volunteer Fire Department in Liberty County, Texas.

Describing why the department chose unanimously to donate the funds, Fire Chief Ted Anderson said, "The fire and EMS service is a brotherhood and our family in Texas needs our help."

The hurricane hit Liberty County Aug. 27. Nearly two months later, the devastation left behind is still visible throughout the community.

Thanks to a donation of airfare from Martin Travel, Chief Anderson and Volunteer Secretary Renee Anderson visited Texas on Oct. 15 to personally deliver the gift. While in Texas, both assisted with clean up and rebuilding efforts at the Plum Grove station and in Liberty County.

Plum Grove (Texas) Fire Chief Joe Johnson (left) accepts a check for \$8,500 from Chief Ted Anderson and Volunteer Secretary Renee Anderson of Martinsville.

Tech company expanding in City of Roanoke

CALIFORNIA-BASED EDUCATION technology company PowerSchool will expand its operations in the City of Roanoke beginning in 2018. A win for the area, the news means 85 positions downtown are retained and 96 will be added.

City Manager Bob Cowell said, "This is a great example of the value of nurturing local start-up companies."

PowerSchool gained its presence in Roanoke by acquiring in 2016 a tech company founded in the city ten years earlier.

Jobs at the company pay higher than the prevailing wage, with \$68,000 the average excluding benefits.



"These are exceptional new economy jobs," said Beth Doughty, executive director of the Roanoke Regional Partnership. "The company's confidence in our region is further proof that we are competitive for technology jobs, talent, and investment."

The City of Roanoke, Roanoke Economic Development Authority, Roanoke Regional Partnership, and Virginia Economic Development Partnership worked to secure the project for Virginia. Governor McAuliffe approved a \$250,000 grant from the

Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund to assist the city with the project.

Town of Vienna re-opens community center

IN SEPTEMBER, the Town of Vienna Community Center officially re-opened after a two-year renovation.

The project transformed and enlarged the 1960s-era facility into an energy-efficient, LEED-certified community gathering place that will serve Vienna residents and others for many years to come. The public was invited to the grand re-opening and many Vienna area residents were on hand to take part in the ribbon-cutting and celebration.

Pointing out a plaque hanging by the entrance, Mayor Laurie DiRocco emphasized the importance of the center.

“It says Uniting the Community,” she shared, “and that is what this building has done for over 50 years.”

When the Vienna Community Center first opened its doors in 1966, the modest facility included a general-purpose room (now the auxiliary gym), kitchen, office, and bathrooms. It was hailed as the first of its kind in northern Virginia and soon became an inspiration for similar centers in nearby communities.

The updated facility, with nearly 15,000 additional square feet, is expected to be silver-level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified through a U.S. Green Building Council program that recognizes energy- and resource-efficient buildings.

The update represents work that was envisioned and started by the late Mayor Jane Seeman and her council colleagues in 2011. Mayor DiRocco and the current council and town staff saw it through to completion.

While the town financed a majority of the renovation, several organizations, individuals, and businesses provided support as well. Vienna Youth Inc., an organization dedicated to providing athletic programs for Vienna-area youth gave \$1 million.

“The Vienna Community Center really is the epicenter of a lot that goes on in town,” says Community Center Manager Leon Evans, “and we can’t wait to get back home.”

BRIAN TROMPETER



(L - R) Council member Carey Sienicki, Council member Linda Colbert, Mayor Laurie DiRocco, Director of Parks and Recreation Leslie Herman, Town Manager Mercury Payton, Council member Douglas Noble, and Council member Pasha Majdi mark the opening of the Vienna Community Center.

Fall fun in Marion

DOZENS OF SCARECROWS line Main Street in the town of Marion each October, but the town isn't warding off unruly birds. In this case, it's the opposite: the figures are attracting people.

The annual Scarecrow Lane initiative is sponsored by Marion Downtown, an economic revitalization association, to inspire foot traffic to businesses and pride in the community.

Businesses and organizations throughout the town compete to display the most creative design to win honors, including a people's choice award.

The event was started in 2012 by Girl Scout Troop 396, according to Olivia McDonald, director of Marion Downtown.

Find a link to all the designs and the 2017 winners at vml.org/vtc-resources.



1. Helping Hands Community Thrift Store channeled Forrest Gump for their "Life is like a box of chocolates" creation. **2. "Kris. P. Bacon"** is the name of the porcine-themed entry by Highlands Union Bank. **3. Smyth County 4-H** created a gardener tending to her sunflowers. **4. Envision Eye Care's** scarecrow re-imagined the Legend of Sleepy Hollow.



Local ornaments adorn tree at Executive Mansion

FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR, ornaments representing Virginia localities will embellish the Christmas tree at the Executive Mansion in December. Governor Terry McAuliffe’s staff coordinated the initiative with VML and the Virginia Association of Counties, who served as collection points for the decorations.

The ornaments celebrate the diverse heritage of Virginia’s cities, towns, and counties. The materials used to construct them are just as varied. Some, like those from the towns of Glasgow, Orange, and Rocky Mount, are glass or plastic balls. Others are wood and metal.

The Town of Timberville’s ornament was a joint effort of Beverly Garber and Alica Overton. The two local artists worked together to create a wooden bucket filled with apples to highlight the significance of the apple industry to the town’s history. Overton came up with the concept and assembled it using a bucket Garber crafted on a lathe from a piece of Mulberry wood.

The ornament from the Town of Wachapreague also resulted from a collaboration. Tomeka Watkinson and Bob Williams connected circles of metal into chainmail in the shape of a tree. The metal links, wood base, colored connectors, and nautical charms hanging from the bottom represent many elements found in the coastal community.

Tours of the mansion featuring holiday décor begin Wednesday, Nov. 29, the evening of the Capitol Tree Lighting, and continue on select dates through Dec. 15. For specific event dates and tour times, visit www.executivemansion.virginia.gov/ and select “Visiting the Mansion” and “Special Events.”



1. Christiansburg’s ornament by Vanessa Tegenkamp features town landmarks. 2. Carolyn Rogers of Hot Taffy Glass created a sphere with mountain peaks to represent Rocky Mount. 3. Tomeka Watkinson and Bob Williams collaborated on Wachapreague’s mixed media ornament. 4. Timberville’s apple bucket was a joint effort of Beverly Garber and Alica Overton.

Farmville receives donation from Kiwanis for new playground

THE FARMVILLE AREA Kiwanis Club recently donated \$12,000 to the Town of Farmville for playground enhancements.

Farmville plans to use the gift to install a new playground structure for Grove Street Park, which was established in 1925 according to the Farmville Herald. The new structure will update the facility and accommodate more children than the current equipment.

Town manager Gerald Spates is thankful for the donation from the Kiwanis.

“The new playground equipment will be an excellent addition to the park and the community as a whole,” he said.

“It will greatly enhance children’s play experience,” added Chris Bolt, director of parks and recreation. “We are thrilled to be able to offer this to the community thanks to the generosity of the Kiwanis.”

The club has been raising funds for the playground since 2016. The mission of the international organization is to help children and create opportunities for them to be curious, safe, and healthy.

MORGAN WHITE - THE FARMVILLE HERALD



Gerald Spates and Chris Bolt accept a check from the Farmville Area Kiwanis Club.

Revitalization on the rise in Suffolk

A MIX OF BUSINESSES has opened in the historic downtown of the City of Suffolk. Metropolitan Church Federal Credit Union, a lender to small African-American-owned businesses in Suffolk since 1949, has expanded. The credit union has a membership of more than 1,700 with \$8 million in operating assets. Other new businesses include Cecilia’s Boutique & Gifts and art studio collaborative OnePast7.

According to Suffolk Mayor Linda Johnson, momen-

tum is growing in Downtown Suffolk.

“I believe the revitalization that the city has been actively focused on, combined with an influx of new residents of all ages, has really piqued the interest for new businesses,” Johnson commented. “This is a continuation of the forward-thinking Downtown progress we have been aiming for.”

A downtown initiatives study is currently underway by the City of Suffolk and Benchmark Planning.



Virginia Municipal League

If I Were Mayor

ESSAY CONTEST

THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE (VML) invites all Virginia seventh graders to join its essay contest, "If I Were Mayor," to tell others what they would do as mayor to make their cities, towns, and counties great places to live.

Promoting good local government is important to VML, and this essay contest provides students the opportunity to reflect on the important role of elected officials in their own city or town.

Regional winners from around the state will be selected. Winners will receive a \$150 cash prize and plaque. One statewide winner will also be selected and will receive a \$250 cash prize and plaque. VML will present the awards at each winner's local council meeting.

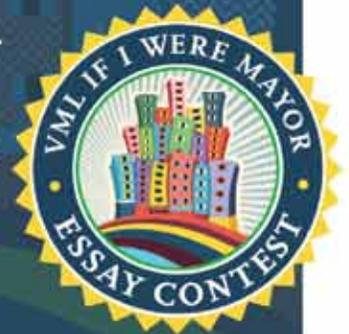
For more information, contact Sherall Dementi at sdementi@vml.org or visit www.vml.org/education/essay-contest.

Trey Mitchell of Lawrenceville, Va., was the 2016-17 statewide winner of the League's annual "If I Were Mayor" Essay Contest.



Contest Rules

- The contest is open to all Virginia students enrolled in the seventh grade during the 2017-2018 school year.
- Each entry must include a completed entry form stapled at the top of the essay. (Visit www.vml.org)
- Essays should be typed or clearly handwritten.
- Essays must be 200 – 500 words.
- Essays must address the subject of what the student would do if they were elected mayor.
- Only one essay may be submitted per student.
- Essays will be judged based on the following: originality, persuasiveness, understanding of city, town and county services, and proper use of composition and written expression.
- Essays must be received at the VML office by Friday, Dec. 22. Winners will be notified in February 2018.
- Essays will not be returned.
- VML retains the right to publish essays along with the names of each student.
- Submit entries to: VML, Attn: 7th Grade Essay Contest, P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, VA 23241.



Rail safety is no accident

Railroad education programs and technology investments make 2016 safest year on record



A PERSON OR VEHICLE in the U.S. is hit by a train about every three hours.

Raising awareness, encouraging rail safety education, and empowering the public to make smart decisions near railroad crossings were the goals of the first-ever national Rail Safety Week, observed September 24-30, 2017. The campaign was a joint effort by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the national rail safety education nonprofit Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI).

Safety is an all-year, round-the-clock priority for railroads. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) statistics show that 2016 was the safest year on record for freight railroads. Last year not only marked the lowest train accident rate on record, but likewise the lowest derailment rate, which declined 10 percent from 2015. These gains are not anomalies, but examples of how steady rail investment pays safety dividends. Since railroads were economically deregulated in 1980, they have spent over \$630 billion and the train accident rate has decreased 79 percent.

Trains have come a long way since the days of the Iron Horse. State-of-the-art technologies like big data, drones, and ultrasound technology are just a few of the innovations railroads use to advance rail safety. Today's inspection technology currently makes it possible for railroads to identify 90 percent of track defects before they lead to an incident. Multidimensional ultrasonic technology, currently in testing, aims to identify the remaining 10 percent of track imperfections.

In Pueblo, Colo., railroads jointly support the world's leading rail research and testing facility Transportation Technology Center, Inc. or TTCI. Many of rail's new technologies — like the world's first laser-based rail inspection system or on-board computer systems that analyze track geometry — are developed and tested at TTCI.

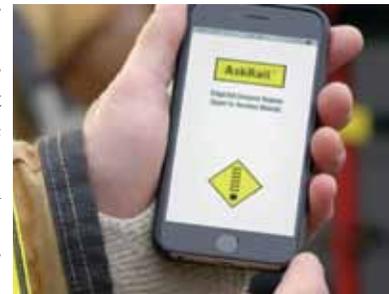
Rail safety for first responders

Also housed at TTCI is the Security and Emergency Response Training Center (SERTC), which trains thousands of first responders every year. SERTC is a collaboration between railroads and the FRA, where responders get hands-on experience with simulated hazmat incidents. The center also offers free, web-based training for those who cannot attend in person.

Additionally, thousands of first responders around the country have signed up for one of freight rail's latest innovations: a mobile app called AskRail. Launched in 2014, the app is designed to prepare responders for a rail emergency by providing immediate access to accurate, timely data about what type of hazardous materials a railcar is carrying. AskRail can only be downloaded by qualified emergency responders who have completed rail emergency training. Railroads can also offer the app to known emergency responders along their routes.

Railroads also provide their own local field trainings. "Safety trains" have been traveling to various cities around the country to hold trainings for first responders. In August, local officials attended half-day training exercises in Bristol and Roanoke. Altogether, America's freight railroads have trained thousands of first responders through these mobile classrooms.

For more information on AskRail and how to apply, visit www.askrail.us. For SERTC's training opportunities, visit sertc.org. 



About the author: *Emily Traiforos is a state director at GoRail, a national non-profit promoting the public benefits of freight railroads. Visit www.gorail.org*



New report finds water and wastewater rate increases across Virginia

By Sheryl Stephens

WATER AND WASTEWATER are critical services that local governments provide to residents and businesses. Citizens expect clean water to flow from faucets and expect for wastewater to be disposed of properly. These complex systems are often overlooked by customers unless there is an interruption in the service or a rate increase.

With more than 250 providers of water and wastewater services across Virginia, including cities, counties, towns, and authorities, it is difficult to analyze broad statewide trends concerning water and wastewater rates. Yet, understanding these

Over the past 10 years, the combined average monthly water rate and wastewater rate increased by 60.3 percent.

trends is critical when utilities are comparing their rates to others across the state and can be essential when considering rate increases.

It was out of this necessity that Draper Aden Associates began collecting data on water and wastewater rates and fees almost 30 years ago. The firm just released the 2017 edition of the Virginia Water and Wastewater Rate Report. Draper Aden collaborated with Virginia Municipal League to conduct the survey and distribute the results in the report.

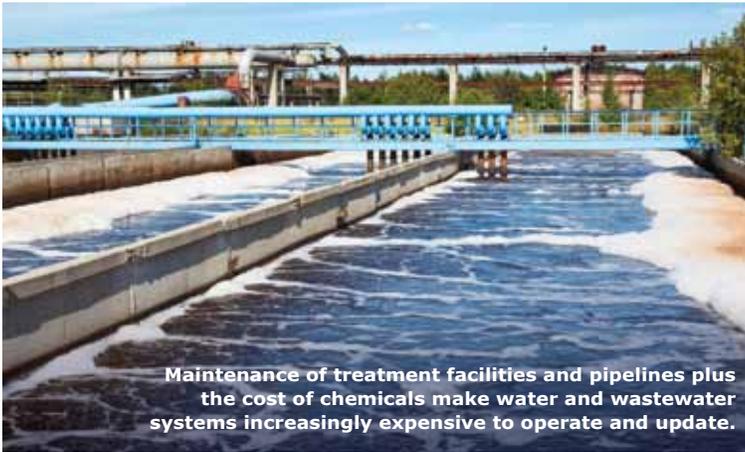
Key findings

The two most significant findings from the 2017 survey are about increasing rates – rates are continuing to increase and utilities are increasing rates on a frequent basis. According to the results of this year’s survey, the combined average monthly residential water and wastewater rate increased 3.6 percent from 2016. Over the past 10 years, the combined average monthly water rate and wastewater rate increased by 60.3 percent.

It is not just that water and wastewater rates are rising, the frequency at which rates are adjusted is increasing as well. In 2017, 55 percent of respondents reported a rate increase; an additional 24 percent had increased rates in 2016 or 2015.

There are three primary reasons for the rise in rates and frequency of increases. First, providers face rising costs. From maintenance of treatment facilities and pipelines to chemical costs, water and wastewater systems are increasingly expensive to maintain and operate. Second, water and wastewater systems face significant pressure to cover their expenses. Many systems cannot rely on support from general fund accounts, because the general fund for most municipalities is stretched thin to cover other costs. Third, water consumption is down,

resulting in less revenue for water and wastewater providers. New homes have appliances, faucets and fixtures that use less water. Furthermore, as individuals purchase new appliances and fixtures for older and existing homes, many of those appliances use low flow technology.



Maintenance of treatment facilities and pipelines plus the cost of chemicals make water and wastewater systems increasingly expensive to operate and update.

The challenge for utilities is that as we become more efficient with the use of water and consumption decreases, costs to maintain and update water and wastewater systems continue to increase. This scenario places providers in a difficult position as consumption drops while costs continue to rise.

Water and wastewater providers across Virginia face these challenges and will likely need to continue to increase rates in the coming years to address them.

Top concerns

Respondents to the 2017 survey identified the top challenges faced by their utility and many respondents shared many of the same concerns. The most significant concern related to

financial matters and customer service was long-term financial stability. Fifty seven percent of providers who participated in the survey ranked this issue as most important. Maintaining levels of service was the second-highest ranked concern with 52 percent of providers listing it as most important as well.

The top concerns regarding the management of assets were not surprising. Aging infrastructure was the most frequently cited issue with 56 percent of providers ranking it as most important. Meeting regulatory requirements also was top of mind as 49 percent of providers listed it as most important as well.

Each of these challenges poses a unique set of problems for water and wastewater providers. Aging infrastructure is expected to remain a key concern. Utilities must continue to assess their existing facilities and invest in infrastructure maintenance and improvements. Ongoing investment now can reduce the likelihood of major system disruption in the future and can be more cost effective.

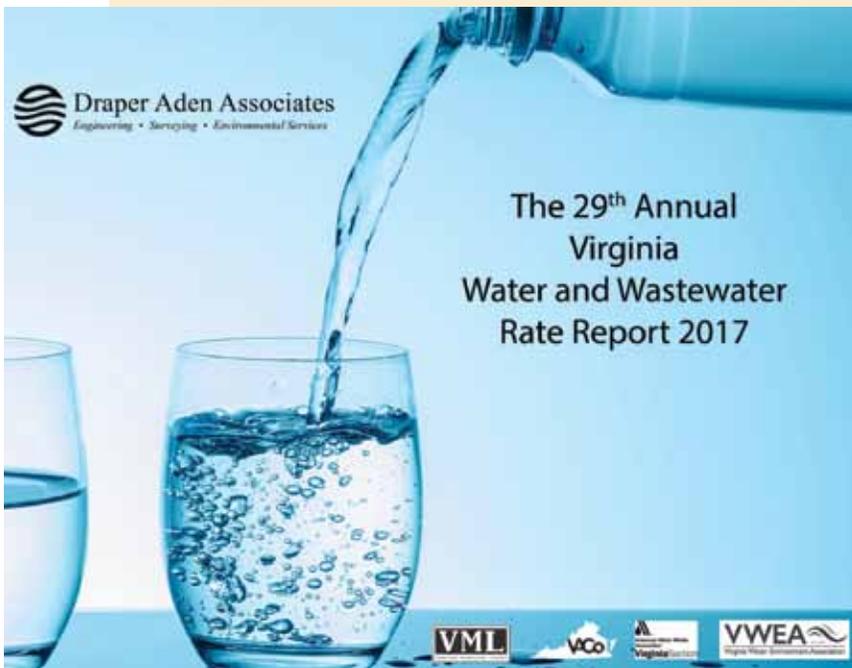
Although the top concerns shared by providers in the 2017 survey were expected, a few of the results surprised the survey team. One of the biggest surprises was the low ranking of declining water consumption as a concern. Only 12 percent of providers listed this challenge as most important while twice that amount, 24 percent of providers, indicated that it is not important. A similar surprise was that water conservation/demand management did not rank higher on the list of concerns. 

About the author: *Sheryl Stephens is a senior community resource specialist in the Site Development and Infrastructure Division of Draper Aden Associates. Sheryl is the primary author of the annual Virginia Water and Wastewater Rate Report. She can be contacted at ssstephens@daa.com.*

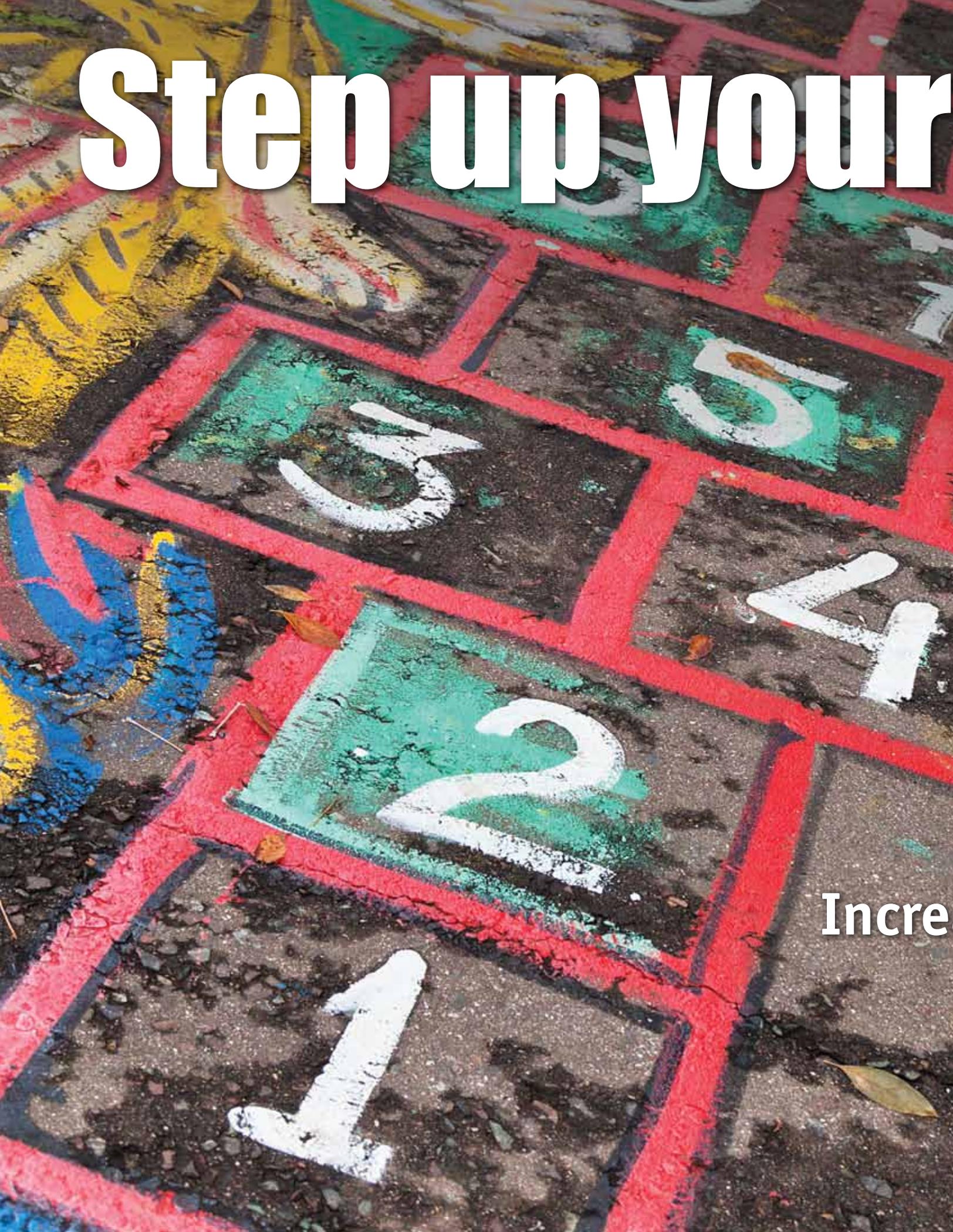
About the Report

The 29th Annual Virginia Water and Wastewater Rate Report 2017 was produced by Draper Aden Associates, an engineering, surveying, and environmental services firm with offices in Virginia and North Carolina. To conduct the survey and prepare the report, Draper Aden collaborated with leading trade associations that support municipalities and utilities, including the Virginia Municipal League.

Respondents include over 140 water and wastewater providers in Virginia. Of the utilities that responded to the survey, 47 percent were towns, 19 percent were authorities, 17 percent were counties, and 17 percent were cities. Respondents were asked to answer a variety of questions, including residential and non-residential water and wastewater rates, connection fees, and capital recovery charges. The report and an interactive Rates Dashboard can be accessed online at www.daa.com/resources. To receive a printed copy of the report, contact Sheryl Stephens at 804-261-2915 or ssstephens@daa.com.



Step up your



Incre



game

Increasing playability leads to healthy outcomes for all

By Kelley Hope

60 MINUTES. That's the amount of daily physical activity experts recommend for children. In addition to helping them grow healthy bodies, play enables kids to develop important social skills and learn about the world.

However, only one in four kids in the U.S. meets this minimum, according to KaBOOM!, a non-profit that works to bring balanced and active play into the daily lives of all American children, particularly those growing up in poverty.

Local governments can have a positive impact on youth health and development through the programs and infrastructure they offer. Investments in everything from playgrounds to events give people opportunities to be active and have fun. These quality-of-life resources also retain or attract residents, visitors, and economic development.

KaBOOM!'s Playful City USA program honors cities and towns that make play part of a community-wide agenda. It recently recognized eleven Virginia communities for their play-appeal, the most ever in the Commonwealth.

The recipients were the town of Ashland; the cities of Danville, Hopewell, and Richmond; and the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan.

Danville youth beat the summer heat with an afternoon of water play, set up temporarily in their neighborhood.



Waterpark-on-wheels a major attraction in Danville

With this year's recognition, Danville is now the longest running Playful City USA honoree in Virginia.

Danville Parks and Recreation Director Bill Sgrinia said his staff applied to the program in its second year. They have kept it up for 10 years because it fits with the department's and city's mission to make the city healthier.

As KaBoom! and Playful City USA strive to increase access to play for kids from low-income families, Sgrinia and his staff cite specific free programs, like the fun wagon and Rec Mobile offered during summer months, in their application.

The fun wagon is a parks maintenance truck that becomes a mini water park, complete with sprinklers and a slide, with the help of a fire hydrant.

The fun wagon and the traveling recreation center Rec Mobile circulate through the city on weekday afternoons, delivering games, activities, and sports to neighborhood children. By taking their resources to the people, setting up in neighborhood courts and side streets for an hour or two, Danville staff eliminate barriers to participation.

"Because transportation and income are a challenge for many residents, this program creates an exciting play opportunity for 18 neighborhoods at no cost to the families participating," shared Morgan Kerns, community programs coordinator.

Sgrinia welcomes the positive attention the Playful City USA designation brings to the city and his department.

"It keeps us in the view of, in the conversation with council members and the media," he said.

Hopewell overhauls riverside park

2017 marks the eighth time the City of Hopewell has been given a Playful City designation by KaBOOM!.

Aaron Reidmiller is director of Hopewell's Recreation and Parks Department. The department manages the Hopewell Community Center and more than 20 parks and athletic sites throughout the city.



Boys climb on a giant boulder, part of the new nature-themed playground at City Park in Hopewell.

He says the city offers more facilities than one might expect in a city of just 23,000 residents, and mentions those, plus diverse and accessible programs, that make Hopewell a repeat Playful City recipient.

“Being recognized by this program,” he said, “shows how we are trying to improve the quality of life in Hopewell.”

Reidmiller shared two programs in particular he uses for the Playful City application. One is a partnership between Hopewell City Schools and SwimRVA, a nonprofit who endeavors to make water safety and aquatic fitness more accessible to all. The group gives free swimming lessons to Hopewell second graders during the school day.

Swimming is a very necessary skill in a riverfront community like Hopewell, Reidmiller notes, but many families in the community lack the resources to pay for lessons.

The department’s summer camp program is another example. The eight-week program was recently revamped to feature themes, like archaeology, as well as guest speakers and field trips. At \$35, the weekly cost is intentionally low and the department offers scholarships for families who need additional help.

Reidmiller is especially proud of the recently-renovated City Park, which reopened in October. Before the renovation, the grounds didn’t take advantage of the natural resources in the area, mainly waterfront access to the Appomattox River. It also was being used for unsavory activity the city wanted to curb.

City Park now has a natural theme, highlighting the river, its benefits, and area wildlife. New play structures make it inviting to area families.

To fund the overhaul, Hopewell received a \$150,000 grant from the American Water Charitable Foundation, of which Virginia American Water, the city’s water supplier, is a subsidiary. The project’s expenses were further aided by in-house work done by the parks maintenance staff and public works department.

Richmond region holds day of play

In 2016, a collaboration between the City of Richmond and two non-profit organizations resulted in Richmond’s application and designation.

Ruth Morrison is chief innovation officer at Sports Backers, a non-profit located in Richmond that develops programs and events to encourage people to be active. The organization puts on, among others, the Anthem Richmond Marathon and Dominion Riverrock, an outdoor sports and music festival.

“As an organization operating in the active-living space,” she shared, “the Playful City designation was on our radar.”

She approached Tamara Jenkins, Richmond’s recreation program coordinator, and Ashley Hall, director of the Capital Region Collaborative, with the idea.

Hall’s organization brings together nine local governments with business and the community to develop regional initiatives. In addition to Richmond, the Town of Ashland and Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan counties are members.

Jenkins and Hall were on board.



Employees of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond have fun with students at Bellevue Elementary for Play Day RVA. For more photos of the events held in central Virginia, search #PlayDayRVA on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites.

ALEXA WELCH EDLUND - RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH



Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney showed off his skills at the launch of the city's new jump rope stations.

Playability survey leads to innovative sidewalk stations

THE TEAM OF HALL, JENKINS, AND MORRISON undertook a survey of Richmond to catalog the city's successes and places where it could improve playability.

Hall noted, "At each space, we asked, 'What about this space encourages or discourages play?'"

For locations to survey, Morrison advises examining your communities for places where people are sitting or waiting, or where families gather or pass regularly.

The team noted hair salons and bus stops as places where children might be found that aren't inherently fun for kids. They then brainstormed ways to add playability to these locations.

The team's idea: create and install retractable jump ropes stations around the city.

Richmond submitted the project to KaBOOM!'s National Play Everywhere Challenge and was one of only 50 communities selected for funding. The grant program received more than 1,000 applications.

The team then collaborated with Virginia Commonwealth University to create the stations, which they named Upswing. They launched the stations on Sept. 21 to coincide with the regional Play Day RVA initiative.

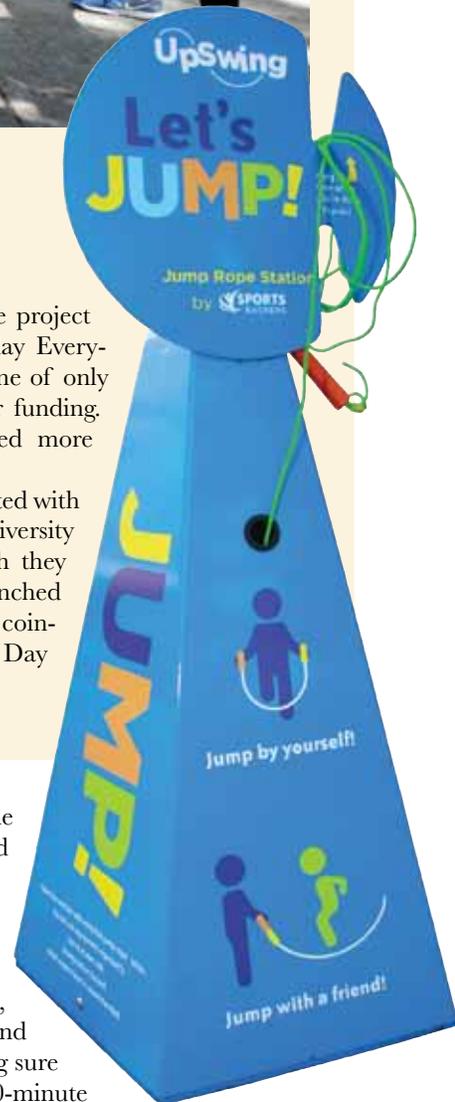
"It's wonderful to showcase all of the great playful things that are available within the city limits," said Jenkins.

The team noted in the Playful City nomination a number of resources the city has that help kids be active: a basketball league, a bike skills park, and the James River Park System. They also cited Sports Backers' running clubs for kids, 90 percent of which are at Title 1 schools. Title 1 is a federal program that provides additional services for disadvantaged students; 32 schools in the City of Richmond qualify.

After earning the Playful City USA designation in 2016, expanding to the other communities in Hall's group was a

natural follow-up. Each of the nine communities submitted individual applications to the program in 2017.

The smallest of the nine members of the collaborative is the Town of Ashland, with 7,200 residents. Ashland cited its dedication to making sure all residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park. Officials prioritize new



parks in areas of most need.

Recognizing the relationship between safe transportation and access to play spaces, Ashland also is working to improve and expand sidewalks and biking paths to parks.

After receiving word that all nine communities were awarded the designation, Hall, Jenkins, and Morrison wanted to promote central Virginia as a playful region.

On Sept. 21, the members of the Capital Region Collaborative held a region-wide Play Day RVA, inviting businesses and community organizations to participate. Seventy-five joined in the fun.

Some held simple activities such as an all-staff walk or bike ride. Employees of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond and CarMax joined non-profit organization Fit4Kids in coaching elementary school kids in “old-school” recess games.

Play well with others

To bring the Playful City USA designation to your community, Maggie Cooper, administrator of the program for KaBOOM!, shared some advice.

When deciding who to designate each year, KaBOOM! looks for communities who are promoting play beyond their parks and recreation departments.

“Are you having conversations with your schools, your public health department, your public transportation provider, for example, about how to incorporate play into more aspects of community life?” she asked.

In Danville, the parks and recreation department forms a committee to prepare the application. They invite city agencies like community development as well as outside groups including the local science center and organizers of community events to participate in cataloging the area’s resources.

Cooper also recommends community leaders tap into KaBOOM!’s Play Everywhere Playbook.

Using insights of more than 50 experts across the country, the playbook offers practical ideas and strategies to make play convenient, inviting, challenging, and unifying in a community. Cooper says an expanded version of the handbook, containing even more examples of successful play, will be published soon.

According to Cooper, the Playful City USA application period typically opens in February and ends in April, with winners announced in early summer. The dates for 2018’s program have not been set. Look for more information at vml.org/vtc-resources. 

About the author: *Kelley Hope is the editor of Virginia Town & City and a communications specialist for VML.*

Add a little play to your space

Pick a location:

- Streets and sidewalks
- Plazas
- Empty lots, yards, and other underused spaces
- Laundromats, grocery stores, and other stores where kids are brought in
- Buildings, fences, and walls
- Signs, benches, bus stops, and other street furniture

Make it temporary or permanent:

- Paint a surface
- Start a stand or booth
- Do something mobile (e.g., carts, trucks)
- Add decorations or “furniture”
- Launch a pop-up
- Create an installation

Excerpted from KaBOOM!’s Play Everywhere Playbook



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Retrofit project in Waynesboro brings nature to the city

TO THE NAKED eye, the detention basin that stretched across 10 acres in the City of Waynesboro appeared to be just a large grassed field. However, the underutilized Jefferson Park land provided the perfect opportunity for the city to construct a thriving wetland ecosystem that would improve water quality downstream and help the community connect with nature.

As a result of declining water quality from the South River to the Chesapeake Bay, Waynesboro was required to examine opportunities to treat stormwater runoff, either through the creation of new facilities or retrofit of existing facilities. Waynesboro, a city of 21,000 nestled in the Shenandoah Valley, called on Timmons Group who identified a prime candidate for the latter in the Jefferson Park detention basin.

Now home to a bustling wildlife habitat and community refuge, the Jefferson Park basin underwent a transformation that maintains its overall function to provide flood control during large rains.

Construction directed the Mulberry Run stream through a series of shallow and deep pools, allowing sediment to drop to the bottom and improving water quality. Trees, shrubs, and wetland grasses planted within the basin also work to absorb nutrients found in the stream flows. Native plants attract local pollinators, songbirds, and deer while wetland ponds host



Nearby residents supported the transformation of the detention basin into an oasis for wildlife.

frogs, turtles, and waterfowl. Berms within the park, designed with community access in mind, allow residents to enjoy the property.

Waynesboro plans to incorporate educational signage and a community garden into the park. The project has been hugely supported by surrounding residents who have watched the site be brought to life right in front of their eyes.

Waynesboro Mayor Bruce Allen said, “Completing the Jefferson Pond retrofit is part of a mindset and a local culture we’re promoting here for protecting water resources.”

The project won a 2017 Best Urban BMP in the Bay award (BUBBA) for Best Habitat Creation in a BMP and was nominated for an EPA Performance and Innovation in the SRF Creating Environment Success award. The constructed wetland, estimates predict, will remove approximately 300 pounds annually of total Phosphorus.

To keep the project cost effective, Timmons Group assisted the city in applying for grant funds and successfully secured 50 percent of the project’s cost through the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) grant program. The city funded the remainder of the project costs using a low-interest loan available through the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund. 

About the author: *Mike Claud is the stormwater services group leader with Timmons Group. The firm provides civil engineering, environmental, geotechnical, GIS/geospatial technology, landscape architecture and surveying services. For questions about this article, reach Mike at mike.claud@timmons.com.*



Aerial views before and after construction show how the project altered the topography of the Jefferson Park basin through the addition of pools and berms.

VML executive committee, staff visit localities

VML EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE members and staff have been on the road in October and November, meeting with councils across the state to share VML's 2018 legislative program and hear concerns facing local leaders.

On Oct. 19, Vienna Mayor Laurie DiRocco kicked off the visits by attending the quarterly meeting of the Towns Association of Northern Virginia with Director of Member Services Mike Polychrones. The association is formed by the towns of Vienna, Leesburg, Herndon, Middleburg, and Quantico.

Middleburg Council Member Bridge Littleton visited the Lovettsville Town Council with Acting Director/General Counsel Michelle Gowdy on Nov. 2. (See photo page 2.)

Poquoson City Manager Randy Wheeler and the Poquoson City Council hosted Newport News Council Member Patricia Woodbury, Director of Policy Development Janet Areson, and Adjunct Staff Neal Menkes during a work session on Nov. 13.

Also on Nov. 13, Martinsville Mayor Gene Teague visited a meeting of the South Boston Town Council assisted by Adjunct Staff Mary Jo Fields and Polychrones.

The Town of Louisa hosted Gordonsville Mayor Bob Coiner, Government Relations Associate Sandy Harrington, and Fields on Nov. 21.

Nov. 27, Galax Vice Mayor Willie Greene invited Polychrones and Harrington to a meeting of the Galax city council.

Next month, Harrington and Polychrones will call on the City of Petersburg council and Pennington Gap Council Member Jill Carson and Gowdy will visit Pennington Gap's leaders.

During the visits, Executive Committee members and staff encouraged council members to participate in the legislative



Gene Teague, mayor of Martinsville and an at-large member of the VML Executive Committee, reviewed VML's legislative policy development process with the town council of South Boston.

process by signing up for VML eNews and responding to alerts sent out during the legislative session. Read VML's legislative priorities at vml.org/advocacy and in the December issue of *Virginia Town & City*.

Follow VML on Facebook @virginiamunicipalleague and Twitter @Virginia_League to see more photos. 



2018



Finance Forum

Cosponsored by VML and VACo

January 3, 2018 – Richmond

Do you want to know what's in Gov. Terry McAuliffe's final budget to the General Assembly?

Are you curious about what all those state budget numbers mean for your locality's fiscal "bottom line"?

Do you know why VRS rates for local employee pensions will be relatively stable over the next few years? And, what path future rates may take?

Invest six hours with VML, VACo, and experienced people from the ranks of state and local governments and from the media to answer these questions at the 2018 Finance Forum.

Held Wednesday, Jan. 3 from 10 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., the forum will provide an opportunity for local elected officials and staff to learn about a number of important issues.

Who should attend: Members of city and town councils and county boards of supervisors, managers and administrators, budget and finance officers, legislative liaisons, and other interested local government staff.

It's time well spent. For further information and to register, go to www.vml.org/.

Have you figured out what November's elections mean for local governments in the next session of the General Assembly?

Are you interested in what state officials forecast the revenue outlook to be over the next two fiscal years?

Are you concerned about what you need to know and what you need to do as an elected official to keep your locality's financial ratings in peak condition?



Code enforcement association rewards service

IN APPRECIATION OF EXTRAORDINARY service and contribution to the code compliance/enforcement industry, the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association (VBCOA) recently presented three individuals with special recognition awards. VBCOA honored former Hanover County building official Richard E. Bartell, former executive director Mary Jo Fields, and entrepreneur Matt Paxton on Oct. 16 at its 2017 annual conference in Virginia Beach.

Jack A. Proctor Meritorious Service Award for Building Officials: Richard Bartell

Richard Bartell served Hanover County as chief building official for 28 years. An active member of numerous code organizations, Bartell also provided consistent support, representation, and contribution to VBCOA and VBCOA Region VII, International Code Council (ICC), and ICC Region VII, and the legacy Building Officials and Code Administrators International (BOCA). In 2004 with Bartell as president, VBCOA earned the ICC Chapter of the Year Award.



Mary Jo Fields and David Beahm.

Bartell instrumentally assisted the three regional legacy code organizations, including BOCA, to establish the single national consolidated code organization of ICC and thereafter to found the ICC Region VII Chapter. He acted as a leader, mentor, and promotor of VBCOA membership, attendance, and participation, continually encouraging and developing his staff, colleagues, and other members to advance efforts toward safely-constructed environments. Bartell was perpetually a catalyst of creative code discussion and a proponent of



(L to R) Ron Clements, Richard "Skip" Bartell, Mike Eutsey, and David Beahm.



(L to R) David Beahm, Matt Paxton, and Paula Johnson.

progressive code development to direct the code industry and organizations toward brighter and stronger futures.

Public Service Award: Mary Jo Fields

Mary Jo Fields served VBCOA as executive director for 30 years, providing unparalleled service, invaluable support, and immeasurable contributions to more than 35 VBCOA executive officers and numerous Boards of Directors, 323 local jurisdictions, and all Virginia citizens during that time.

While serving in this position under employment of Virginia Municipal League (VML), Fields' responsibilities included public administration, fiscal operations, and records manage-

ment. She continuously represented VBCOA during Virginia Legislative Sessions and consistently endorsed VBCOA to local jurisdictions and within Virginia Town & City Magazine.

Fields infallibly believed in the VBCOA mission and vision, substantially elevated the VBCOA organization and code professionals, and extensively advocated for building and life safety. VBCOA celebrated her exceptional public service and lifelong professional achievement with the Public Service Award.

VBCOA Citizen of the Year: Matt Paxton

Entrepreneur Matt Paxton is the former star of A&E's reality program "Hoarders". Hailed as the "extreme cleaning specialist" and the "clutter cleaner", Paxton has explored the interrelationship and psychology of addiction, hoarding, and living conditions.

Through the show and his businesses, including new venture Legacy Navigator, Paxton unashamedly shares his own challenges with others as he identifies factors to mitigate hoarding and similar unsafe, unsanitary, and uninhabitable dwelling environments.

Paxton demonstrates uncommon compassion and empathy to improve lives of relocating seniors, grieving families, and otherwise struggling individuals. VBCOA honored Paxton for his selfless service and unwavering support of safely-maintained properties and living environments. 

About the author: Paula Eubank is the deputy building official for Arlington County. She also is the chairperson of VBCOA's awards and resolutions committee.

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Understanding leadership's direction

Building and code officials association holds 88th conference

THE VIRGINIA BUILDING and Code Officials (VBCOA) held the 88th Annual Conference and School in Virginia Beach in October. VBCOA is a statewide organization of building safety professionals tracing its origins back to 1929 when the Virginia Building Inspectors Association formed a group with the purpose of providing an opportunity for the interchange of ideas among building officials. For decades their annual meeting was held in conjunction with the Virginia Municipal League (VML) annual conference. In 1970, VBCOA held its first annual conference separate from VML, however both organizations have continued to maintain a strong partnership, with VBCOA members actively participating in activities at the local, regional, state and national level in an effort to fulfill the mission to the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of all persons who live, work, or visit the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Outgoing President David Beahm, Warren County Building Official, concluded his term having achieved many great accomplishments including the largest number of schools nationwide participating in the High School Technical Training Program, the creation of a course for home inspectors, and the addition of the Women in Code Enforcement and Development (WICED) to the VBCOA Board of Directors. President Beahm created the new Military Families Career Creation Committee which will provide outreach efforts to members of the military and their families in Virginia. Mike Eutsey, VBCOA Education chair, was presented the prestigious President's Award for his extraordinary efforts with the New Residential Structures Course, which generated over \$35,000 in revenue from courses taught by the various VBCOA regions to home inspectors required to possess the certification, since the inception of the program in 2017.

Pete Mensinger, VBCOA 1st Vice President, had a surprise lined up for the incoming President Gregg Fields, City of Alexandria, Director of Code Administration. Gregg's childhood friend since the 1st grade, Andy Mueck. Drawing on his experience as a Naval Commander and the parallel between the goals and challenges in the Navy and those facing the leadership of the VBCOA, Mueck spoke about the heart and soul of an organization and the challenge of Understanding Leadership's Direction. Stating that this is the single most important step in getting an organization to reach its potential. It's a pretty simple approach, Mueck said during his keynote speech, when you boil it down: vision, message, expectations, performance:

Vision: Paint a compelling and inspiring picture of what the future will look like. If you don't articulate that message in a clear simple way, each person will interpret the message differently.

Message: Be clear and consistent for everyone to be on-board with it.

Expectations: Describe expectations and responsibilities for every employee, how their work contributes to the vision, and what outcomes are needed to succeed.

Performance: Teammates want to know what is expected of them. They want to know that leaders are paying attention to their efforts. How we support one another and how we respond when someone messes up. "My mantra to my teams as always been ... if you aren't making mistakes, you aren't trying hard enough".

Mueck stated, clarity and messaging are often a learned leadership skill that any leader can pick-up, but it takes persistence to stay the course. You know that old saying, you are only as strong as your weakest link, under Mueck's command, he elected to adjust that saying slightly, you are only as strong as your weakest relationship.



Incoming president Gregg Fields with the new ceremonial gavel, a surprise from outgoing president David Beahm to the officers.



(L to R) David Beahm, Matt Westheimer, James Moss, Pete Mensinger, and Gregg Fields.



Region VIII Chair Christina Jackson and Guest Speaker Andy Mueck.

Incoming President Fields leadership will include a continued dedication to the relationship with the International Code Council, with Virginia hosting the ICC Annual Conference in Richmond, October 2018. President Fields has indicated this will be the “year of mentoring” for VBCOA and will include a focus on developing emerging leadership training, as well as, continuing to implement goals and initiatives in the organizations strategic plan. President Fields has provided an updated message for the members and potential members in the organizations membership brochure:

As we know, all good buildings start with a strong foundation, and VBCOA is no different. Our foundation is our membership. It is through your efforts that we continue to lead the nation in the safe built environment. We hope you will join us in the many opportunities to serve our organization. You will enhance your technical knowledge, gain new resources, and a lifetime of friends.

The Annual conference was supported by exhibitors and sponsors to include the American Wood Council, Department of Housing and Community Development, Home Depot, Institute for Building Safety and Technology, JES Foundation Repair, Legacy Navigator, MiTek Residential Construction,



(L to R) Farrah Henderson, Pete Mensinger, Michelle Coward, and Janelle Baker.



Guest Speaker Andy Mueck and incoming President Gregg Fields.

Marwin Company, South East Hearth Patio Barbecue Association, Simpson Strong Tie, Total Construction Solutions, Tyler Tech, and Washington Area Council of Engineering Laboratories. 

About the author: Sandra Harrington is VML’s Government Relations Associate and serves as the Executive Director of VBCOA.

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