

# VIRGINIA

## TOWN & CITY

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League



### Inside:

All Innovation  
Award winners

Annual Conference  
recap and  
highlights

Environmental Quality  
and President's Award

**Falls Church  
uses smart  
design to drive  
community and  
environmental  
improvements**





## VMLIP introduces telemedicine for injured workers

VML Insurance Programs (VMLIP) has partnered with Akos to provide telemedicine services for injured workers. Through telemedicine, employees can virtually consult with a healthcare provider at the time of injury - from nurse triage to provider consult - **all at no additional cost for VMLIP members!**

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9

## About the cover

*The City of Falls Church took home the 2018 VML President's Award for their groundbreaking curbside food and organic waste collection program. The city overcame several challenges, from helping residents get past the "gross" factor to transporting the high-water content material, to reduce waste going the landfill and help the environment in the process. Learn more on page 9.*

## Departments

**Director's message** ..... 2  
**Calendar** ..... 3  
**People** ..... 3  
**News & notes** ..... 6  
**Focus on our members** ..... 27  
**Professional directory** ..... 28

## Features

### Visit to Hampton's bethel high school impresses conference attendees

By Rob Bullington

Page 15

### People First: a plan to rebuild the St. Paul's community to improve resilience for all

By the Norfolk City Staff

Page 22

### Stacking Up: How Virginia's new energy plan compares to the rest of the nation

By Max Halbruner

Page 25



8



10



15



17



22



25



27

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# Watch for these threats to local land use authority

**B**EFORE I GET STARTED, I want to thank everyone who attended our annual conference in Hampton: Thank you all! I also want to thank the City of Hampton for their hospitality and for throwing a picture-perfect host night event.

As great as 2018's conference was, we know there's always room for improvement. Please help us by responding to the email survey we recently sent. We're already gearing up for 2019 in Roanoke!

Speaking of Roanoke, we are looking forward to working with our new president, Roanoke Council Member Anita James Price. I am confident that under her guidance, VML will continue to grow to provide even greater value to our members.

Now, it's time to discuss a couple of important items: proffers and small cell deployment. Both are exciting (in their way) so we'll take each in turn, beginning with proffers.

As many of you know, in 2016, Senator Obenshain offered SB549 which substantially changed the way that residential proffers are handled in Virginia. Under the new law:

- Offsite proffers are now restricted to public safety, transportation, parks and recreation facilities and schools.
- Cash is now deemed an offsite proffer.
- Proffers for residential developments must be "specifically attributable."
- Small-area comprehensive plans for areas with mass transit are allowed.
- The language regarding attorneys' fees states that the judge "may" award the fees as part of a remedy.

The Homebuilders Association of Virginia (HBAV) have been working on a draft residential proffer bill for the 2019 session which they have shared with VML. The changes that the HBAV intend to propose include:

- Allow localities and applicants to have discussions without fear of a lawsuit.
- Allow an applicant to submit any offsite proffer that the applicant deems reasonable and appropriate as evidenced by the signed proffers.
- Revise the language regarding attorneys' fees to indicate that they are mandatory as part of a remedy.

In addition to the forthcoming HBAV legislation, two bills related to impact fees offered by Senator Stuart (SB208 and SB944) will be on second reading in the Senate on the first day of the session.

None of the above options are ideal; however, proffers will be on our minds as we enter the General Assembly session.

Which brings us to small cell. The good news is that I don't think this fight will be at the General Assembly this year – it will be at the Federal Communications Commission. They say misery loves company and, when it comes to small cell, Virginia has 49 partners in misery!

In mid-October, the FCC issued a declaratory ruling, third report and order that sets the stage for a fight with local governments across the country. The ruling means that as 5G is deployed, many of our localities will be adversely affected in several ways.

First, the FCC proposes an extremely broad expansion of the definition of "effective prohibition" of cellular services that will almost certainly invite challenges to long-standing locally owned rights-of-way and usage requirements. The definition opens local governments to the likelihood of more conflict and litigation over matters such as aesthetics, spacing and under-grounding. VML feels strongly that localities should have the authority to prescribe the location and appearance of these small cells.

Second, the FCC's proposed new shot clock categories (i.e. the time limits for local actions on permit requests) do not give localities enough opportunity to review applications; the categories fail to account for a pre-existing structure's design or suitability for wireless equipment. Additionally, the lack of federal historical and environmental reviews places additional burdens on local governments to protect historic preservation sites and evaluate environmental and/or safety concerns.

Third, the proposal's definition of "fair and reasonable compensation" means a maximum of \$270 in compensation for every small cell installation in every locality across America regardless of circumstances. This mandated fee for one industry has the potential to discriminate against other industries that may use the same asset. Furthermore, local governments will lose the ability to negotiate fair deals with wireless providers which in many cases have provided additional benefits to the community.

In conclusion, the coming initiatives regarding proffers and small cell are indicative of the tendency of state and federal officials to take measures that erode local authority over land use. Both issues will continue to be on VML's list of priorities. If you share my concern, we ask that you talk about the issues associated with these initiatives with your state and federal elected officials. We will, as always, work to keep you informed as these items develop. 



- Gowdy -

VML connects you with a variety of networking and professional development events. Learn about these opportunities at [vml.org/events](http://vml.org/events).

**Jan. 8, 2019** **2019 Finance Forum**  
Greater Richmond Convention Center,  
403 N. 3rd Street, Richmond, VA 23219

**Jan. 24, 2018** **2019 VML Legislative Day**  
Omni Richmond, 100 S. 12th Street,  
Richmond, VA 23219

People

**Governor appoints local officials to state boards**

Governor Ralph Northam has appointed several local officials to state advisory and policy boards during the last couple of months.



- Perrow -

Lynchburg Council Member **Turner Perrow** was appointed to the Virginia Geographic Information Network Advisory Board. The board encourages the creative use of geographic information and oversees the development of a catalog of GIS data available in the state.

Strasburg Mayor **Rich Orndorff Jr.** was appointed as the Virginia Municipal League representative



- Orndorff -

on the State Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board. The board is an advisory group that serves as a formal liaison between the state Office of Emergency Medical Services and the public.

The board provides advice and counsel regarding methods and procedures for the statewide emergency medical services system.

Staunton Mayor **Carolyn W. Dull**, Portsmouth Chief of Police **Tonya D.**



- Dull -

**Chapman** and Chesapeake Chief of Police **Kelvin Wright** were reappointed to the Criminal Justice Services Board. The board is the approving authority for the regulations the Department promulgates in

accord with the Administrative Process Act. Further, the board approves most of the grants the department awards to localities, state agencies and private non-profit organizations.

Harrisonburg City Manager **Eric Campbell** was appointed to the State



- Campbell -

Pulaski Town Manager **Shawn Utt** will represent the Statewide Independent Living Council on the State Rehabilitation Council.



- Utt -

The council works with other groups to ensure quality services for Virginians with disabilities so that they can achieve meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence. The council is an advisory board that provides information and support for the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

**Marci Stone**, the battalion chief of emergency management and community



- Stone -

preparedness for the city of Roanoke, was appointed to the Secure and Resilient Commonwealth Panel. Reappointed to the board were **James Redick**, the director of emergency preparedness and response for the city of Norfolk and **Anna McRay**, the deputy coordinator of emergency management for Henrico County. The panel advises the state on homeland security and emergency management issues.



- Jackson -

**Christina Jackson**, the Codes Team Leader for the city of Norfolk, was appointed to the State Building Code Technical Review Board in August. The board's primary purpose

is to hear appeals from enforcement actions under the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, the Virginia Industrialized Building Safety Regulations, the Virginia Manufactured Home Safety Regulations and the Virginia Certification Standards.

**Lea recognized for promoting reading**

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Council of Champions has recognized



- Lea -

Roanoke City Mayor **Sherman Lea** for his support of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and his efforts to help students achieve reading proficiency by the end of the third grade, according to a city media release

dated October 4. Mayor Lea was honored for his "ardent and vocal support" of Star City Reads, and for his leadership of efforts such as the new Books for Barbershops program, which provides books for children to read while they visit area barbershops.

Three other people from Roanoke were also recognized: Dr. **Rita Bishop**, superintendent of Roanoke city public schools and Drs. **Craig Ramey** and **Sharon Ramey**, distinguished research faculty at the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute and chief science officers for human development with the city.

The Grade-Level Reading Council of Champions honors volunteers, early care and education providers, school and civic leaders, public officials, and others for efforts to support early literacy success.

**Witt appointed county administrator**

**Dan Witt** started his new job as county administrator in Charlotte County in September. Witt had served as assistant town manager in Altavista since 2003. Prior to that he was a casework supervisor in Lynch-

burg for a residential group home for male juvenile delinquents.

Witt has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Liberty University and a master's degree in public administration from Virginia Tech.

**Stevens tapped as JCC administrator**



**Scott Stevens** began work as the county administrator in James City County on October 1.

Stevens previously was the city manager in Goldsboro, NC. He also has served as the assistant city manager and city manager in Kingston, NC.

Stevens has a bachelor's of science degree in civil engineering from North Carolina State University and a master's of public administration from East Carolina University.

**Hynes appointed as Round Hill administrator**

**Melissa Hynes** took over the reins as town administrator in Round Hill in October.



Hynes was the zoning administrator and town planner in Round Hill prior to her appointment. Her previous experience included serving as zoning administrator and town planner in Lovettsville and comprehensive planner in Westminster, MD.

Hynes has a degree in urban studies from Towson University. She is a certified tourism ambassador, planning commissioner and zoning administrator. She also is a student of the International City/County Management Association's Mid-Career Managers Institute

She was appointed as town administrator after Amos "Buster" Nicholson left that position to become the director of public works in Purcellville, effective Oct. 22.

**Wise County taps new administrator**

**Michael W. Hatfield** has been appointed the county administrator in Wise County effective Oct. 22.

Hatfield has worked for the last 14 years for several engineering companies in Florida. A native of Wise County, Hatfield has a civil engineering degree from Virginia Military Institute.

**Reynal promoted to Ashland assistant manager**



- Reynal -

**Matthew Reynal** has been named the assistant town manager in Ashland. He has been the operations manager for the town, having served in that position since 2015.

Reynal received his undergraduate degree in administration of justice from George Mason University and is

in the process of acquiring a master's degree in public administration from Virginia Tech.

**Leesburg announces appointments**



- Watkins -

**Michael Watkins** has been promoted to zoning administrator for the town of Leesburg. He has served as the assistant zoning administrator since 2016 and began working for the town in 2008 as a senior planner.

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MSRB-registered Municipal Advisor

He previously worked with engineering firms in the private sector.

Watkins holds a bachelor's degree in geography with a concentration in urban and regional planning from Frostburg State University and is a certified zoning administrator.

**Melanie Scoggins** has been named the business development and retention manager. Her primary focus will be working with the town's existing businesses.



- Scoggins -

Scoggins holds a bachelor's degree in recreation resource management from George Mason University. Her prior experience includes serving as the rural retention and marketing manager for Loudoun County, the parks and recreation manager in Purcellville and the business manager in Suffolk.

### New economic development director comes on board in Hampton



- Rigney -

**Charles E. "Chuck" Rigney Sr.**, former director and assistant director of Economic Development in Norfolk, has been named Hampton's director of economic development.

Rigby has served as assistant director and interim director of development in Norfolk and as director of development in Portsmouth. He is a graduate of Old Dominion University.

### Albemarle County announces director of communications & community engagement

**Emily Kilroy** is Albemarle County's new director of communications & community engagement.



- Kilroy -

Kilroy has worked with the county since 2014, most recently as community engagement coordinator. The office itself is newly-created and is designed to emphasize the county's community-centered approach to communications and engagement.

Kilroy holds a master's degree in urban & environmental planning from the Uni-

versity of Virginia and a bachelor of arts in international development from American University.

### Boyle receives president's award

Newport News Commissioner of the Revenue **Tiffany M. Boyle** received the President's Award from the Commissioners of the Revenue Association of Virginia at the group's annual meeting in September in Roanoke.



- Boyle -

Boyle, the youngest female Commissioner of the Revenue in Hampton Roads, was recognized for her administration's commitment to training opportunities and regional meetings as well helping to initiate the first annual "Commissioners & Cans," a regional food drive and fundraiser which collected 600 pounds of food last year to donate to the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore.

### Briel named director of citizen services and response

**Peter Breil** has been named director of the recently-created Department of Citizen Service and Response in the City of Richmond.



- Breil -

The department has the purpose of improving service delivery and enhancing citizen engagement, Briel will oversee the recently launched RVA311 system and the City of Richmond's call center.

Briel has degrees from Virginia Tech, the University of South Carolina and the University of Pittsburgh. His professional background includes more than 15 years of experience at Capital One and Time Warner Cable.

### Johnson appointed as Emporia city manager

**William E. Johnson** began work as the city manager of Emporia in September. Johnson's previous experience includes work with WEJ Consultants. He served as city manager in Petersburg and in College Park, GA. He is a former assistant county administrator for Chesterfield County.

Johnson has a bachelor's degree in accounting from Hampton University and a master's degree in business administration from Averett University.

### Fitzgerald receives international telecommunication award

**Lisa Fitzgerald**, a 29-year veteran of the Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County



- Fitzgerald -

Emergency Communications Center, received the 911 Telecommunication Award at the August annual conference of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) International. The conference was held in Kansas City.

Fitzgerald is the first local recipient of this award. In 2013, she received the distinguished Virginia State CIT Emergency Dispatcher Award.

According to the city news release, Fitzgerald has facilitated and taught at all the CIT emergency dispatcher trainings for public safety telecommunication officers across the region over the past 11 years.

### Town of Marion appoints new chief of police

Chief **John P. Clair** was appointed as the Chief of Police for the Town of Marion,



- Clair -

after having served as the Chief of Police of the Town of Quantico since 2013. John is a veteran of the U.S. Army, having served as a Military Police Officer and a Military Working Dog Handler, completing his final duty at Ft. Myer Va. John is a graduate of Liberty University, has pursued studies at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and has served continually in law enforcement since 1999. He has recently moved from Culpeper County to the Town with his wife of 18 years and his four children, where he looks forward to embedding himself in the community.

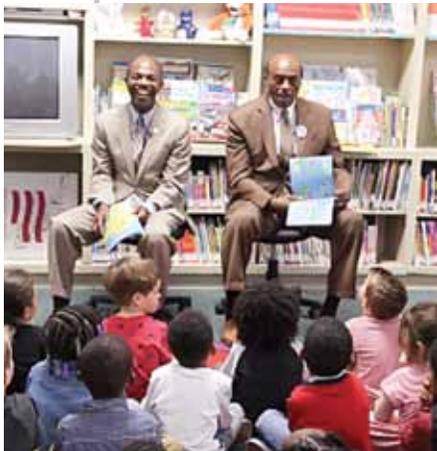
## Movers and Shakers

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

## Charlottesville launches MYCVILLE app

THE CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE recently released MyCville, an online and smart phone application that lets city residents request services and report quality of life and environmental issues to the appropriate department for quick resolution.

The application uses the smart phone's global positioning system to automatically provide the issue's location and the camera function to submit helpful images, simplifying the reporting process for residents and city staff. Once submitted, the information is routed automatically to the appropriate staff. Residents can track resolution efforts within MyCville or on the web. A map of nearby issues is also displayed so residents can see which issues have already been reported.



## 10th anniversary of Hampton's Mayor's Book Club celebrated

HAMPTON MAYOR DONNIE TUCK and former Mayor George Wallace read the book of the month at the Moton Early Childhood Center in downtown Hampton as part of the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the The Mayor's Book Club according to a September 18 city news release.

In 2008, then-Mayor Molly Ward asked that a special effort be made to improve the reading skills of Hampton children. Boys and girls in pre-kindergarten are given a copy of the chosen book to take home, while more copies are placed in school classrooms and libraries.

The news release notes that in 2011, Newport News Mayor McKinley Price joined the club, and today the Hampton-Newport News Mayor's Book Club has served more than 13,000 students in schools and various community programs.

## Alexandria holds voting sticker design poll

ALEXANDRIA RESIDENTS recently had the opportunity to help pick the final design of the "I Voted" sticker to be used in the 2018 general election through an online poll held September 17 through October 1. Over 1,300 votes were received from people across Alexandria and the winning design featured Alexandria's iconic ship.

Also new this year, those too young to vote will receive an official "Future Voter" sticker.

According to media releases, the public art project was initiated by the Alexandria Commission for the Arts in conjunction with the Alexandria Electoral Board and Office of Voter Registration and Elections. In response to an open call, local artist Christina Mazurkevich created three options for an Alexandria "I Voted" sticker. In September, the three designs were presented to the public. Mazurkevich also designed the "Future Voter" sticker.



## Winchester awarded for social media campaign for recruitment

WINCHESTER'S SOCIAL MEDIA campaign to enhance public safety personnel recruitment won a City/County Communications and Marketing Association (3CMA) Silver award for best use of Facebook, according to a city September 6 media release.

The media release notes that the campaign featured photographs of local officers and firefighter/paramedics and the reasons why their service makes a difference in the community

or why they chose Winchester. Both campaigns resulted in more applications being received from qualified applicants, which helped the city fill many vacancies for both new and hard-to-fill positions.

The campaign was created last year by the city's communications department.



## NorfolkOpenData expands to include parking datasets

NORFOLK'S DIVISION OF PARKING has added two datasets to the city's OpenData portal. First, a new parking citations dataset allows users to assess parking enforcement in neighborhoods, including the timing of when and where parking tickets are issued. The second dataset has information on parking permits by type and duration, including: daytime, 24/7, resident (downtown), nighttime and top deck parking.

Datasets on public safety, neighborhoods, code enforcement, economic development and parks and recreation were already available on the portal.



## New Market police design door hangers to improve communications

WHEN THE POLICE in New Market stop off at a business or residence but no one is home, they now leave a

door hanger with information about the stop, according to an October 1 article in the *Northern Virginia Daily*.



A sergeant in the department, George Smoot, came up with the idea after attending a leadership academy last year. Smoot and Police Chief Chris Rinker designed the door hanger, which includes space for identifying information on the officer and the reason for the stop, as well as information on reaching the police department.

The early feedback on the use of the door hangers has been positive.

# Announcing the winners of the 2018 VML Innovation Awards

**V**ML AWARDS ARE among the most distinguished honors in the state. The Innovation Awards are a statewide competition that emphasizes creative, pioneering problem-solving excellence in management, public participation, and service to citizens. One category winner is also chosen to receive the President's Award.

Recent years have seen strong competition with a high number of entries and 2018 was no exception. The five winners were:

## Environmental Quality AND President's Award

**City of Falls Church** for Virginia's first curbside compost collection program.

## Quality of Life Award

**City of Lynchburg** for its Community Action Team (CAT) which develops and nurtures working relationships with the local government agencies, businesses and citizens of Lynchburg.

## Community & Economic Development

**Town of Clifton Forge** for the redevelopment of an abandoned railroad property using local resources.

## Communications

**City of Fairfax** for its internally produced "Fairfax City Minute" social media program.

## Lifelong Learning

**Town of Leesburg** for the successful development and implementation of a self-guided walking tour app.



## The Judges

The judges' panel was made up of three experienced local governmental officials

**Ann Shawver** is a former director of finance for the city of Roanoke. She now is an assistant professor at Radford University and a consultant on financial issues.

**Bernard Caton** retired last year as the director of legislative affairs for the city of Alexandria. He is a former deputy director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and a former state deputy secretary of natural resources.

**Ted McCormack** is a former director of intergovernmental relations for the Virginia Association of Counties. Prior to that position, he was the deputy director of the Virginia Commission on Local Government.

# FALLS CHURCH

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and PRESIDENT'S AWARD



## Local government uses smart design to drive community and environmental improvements

IN AUGUST 2017, the City of Falls Church launched Virginia's first curbside collection program to target the "last frontier" in recycling: food and organic waste. The EPA, which in 2015 announced a major goal to reduce food loss and waste by half by 2030, estimates that this type of waste currently comprises 22% of all waste in landfills nationwide. For its part, Falls Church has data that shows that 25-30% of the items in an average Falls Church resident's trash is food and organic waste.

Getting people to store and separate compostable waste, however, is especially challenging due in large part to the "gross" factor. Moreover, collecting and hauling the waste presents its own challenges due to its high water content. Falls Church wisely elected to build their program slowly, first piloting a food waste collection program in 2015 to farmer's markets and then building on the enthusiasm of early adopters to establish a permanent drop-off facility in 2016 before launching their innovative curbside collection program a year later. By using a cost-share model with collection providers, the city was able to offer all these solutions

on a flat budget at minimal cost to residents (which, in turn, helped to increase enthusiasm and participation).

Thanks to the initiative – which expanded access to all city households and made food waste composting as convenient as regular trash – participation rose to nearly 20% of all households (and continues to increase). The positive impacts have been tangible: increased recycling rates, environmental progress and lowered trash bills. In fact, during the first five months of the program alone, 70 tons of food waste were diverted from the landfill – equal to the tonnage from five years of running special recycling events.



(L to R) Anita Price (VML President), City Manager Wyatt Shields, City Solid Waste Coordinator Chris McGough, Council Member Letty Hardi, Council Member Phil Duncan, Council Member Dan Sze, Mayor David Tarter, and Council Member Marybeth Connelly.

# LYNCHBURG

QUALITY OF LIFE AWARD



## Local law enforcement puts community first

**M**INORITY COMMUNITIES ACROSS the country are experiencing a decrease in their trust of law enforcement so the Lynchburg Police Department (LPD) wanted to find a way to increase trust between those residents and its officers. Due to staffing shortages, however, the LPD's regular field officers lacked the time to sufficiently handle the biggest issues confronting these citizens in Lynchburg: drug dealing and blighted property-related problems. So, the LPD created the Community Action Team (CAT) to develop and nurture working relationships with the local government agencies, businesses and citizens of Lynchburg.

CAT officers are uniquely positioned to address the issues most affecting residents because they do not answer radio calls and are able to devote the time and attention needed to focus on community policing. The results have been undeniably positive. In one instance, following a shooting in a neighborhood, CAT officers canvassed the neighborhood and provided support to the LPD. This engagement resulted in the improved understanding of the citizens' needs and dramatically lower crime-related activity in the area afterward.

Most impressively, the creation of CAT did not require any budget allocations: the LPD relied upon existing community resources to fulfill CAT's mission of addressing citizen concerns. In 2017, CAT expanded to form the One Community, One Voice Lynchburg (OCOV-L) faith-based group, a police and community partnership that works to build positive relationships between residents and police while addressing the needs of the city's impoverished citizens by



providing education and resources. This unique program is another example of CAT bridging the divide between Lynchburg's citizenry and law enforcement and pointing the way for other communities to do the same.



**(L to R) Council Member Turner Perrow, Deputy Chief Mark Jamison, Captain Daniel Meehan, Lieutenant Danny Couch, Sergeant Jeff Rater, Pastor James Camm (Community Advocate), Council Member Sterling Wilder, Robin Robinson (Community Advocate), Mayor Treeny Tweedy, and City Manager Bonnie Svrcek.**

# CLIFTON FORGE

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARD



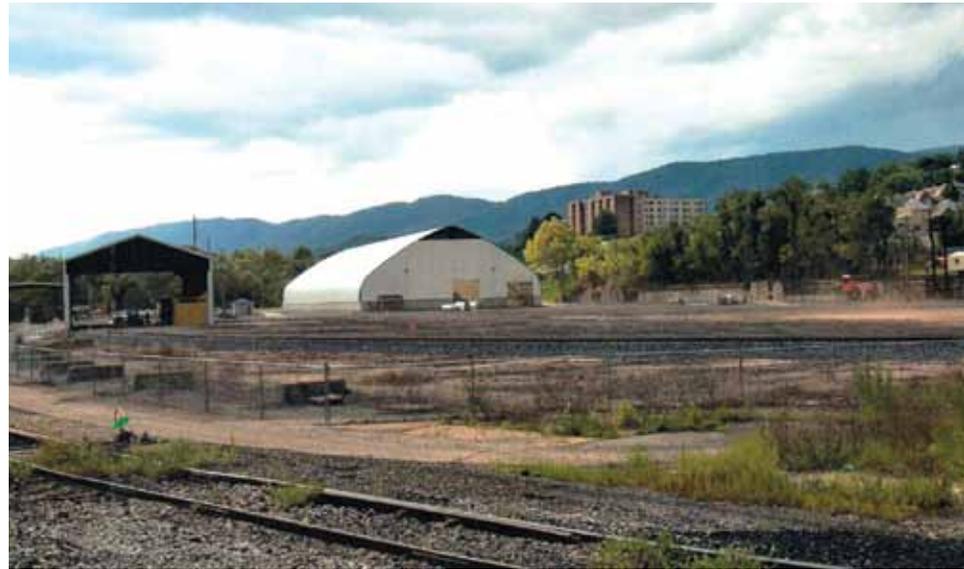
## Local leaders use available resources to strive and succeed when it counts

### What do you do if:

- A national company is committed to creating a new facility in your community on land deeded to the town for economic development.
- That land is currently occupied by abandoned buildings and hazardous materials.
- The main stipulation to move the deal forward is that your town has to get rid of those old structures and materials.
- At the eleventh hour, the company that agreed to do the job for free backs out because it now believes the recyclable materials onsite have been too depleted due to theft over the years?

If you are the Town Manager and the Public Works Director for the Town of Clifton Forge, you roll up your collective sleeves and develop a plan to get the job done by making the best use of local resources.

Lacking the funds to pay a contractor for the entire job, Clifton Forge was able to minimize the use of local revenue by utilizing available grants, working with contractors and salvage companies, obtaining additional equipment and reprioritizing other projects to most efficiently use the public works staff. After a prodigious, 8-month effort that saw delays, unforeseen issues and equipment failures, the structures and materials were removed along with 82 truckloads of



recyclable materials which generated enough revenue to offset all but \$1,614 of the town's costs for the project. Best of all: the new tenant has invested infrastructure and created jobs in the community.

While many factors combined to make the project a success, the key element to that success was the dedication, commitment and skills of the town's employees – something to make the whole community proud.



**Council Member Robert Umstead and Town Manager Darlene Burcham.**



## City staff gets creative to engage and inform their community in a new way

THE IN-HOUSE TV/VIDEO team for the City of Fairfax was discouraged because few residents were watching their programs. Worse, their programming was happening after-the-fact and could not be used to raise awareness about coming events. During the development of their new municipal website, however, they noticed a couple of interesting trends: more and more people were coming to the municipal site via mobile devices and at the same time the city's social media traffic was increasing. The team considered these trends in light of their viewership issue; they thought about how people increasingly choose to consume content in short, visual formats and took into consideration their available resources and...inspiration hit! The *Fairfax City Minute* was born.

The *Fairfax City Minute* is a weekly, one-minute (of course), informative, entertaining video about events, issues, and programs in the city. The team's approach is lean, smart and friendly with each high-quality video taking about an hour to produce. The episodes, which convey the voice and brand of the city, are released Thursday evening and reissued on Friday morning to take advantage of high-traffic viewership timeframes. Additionally, each episode is embedded on subscribers' social media accounts so it is already playing in their feed with they check in.



Since it first aired in April 2018, The *Fairfax City Minute* has proven universally popular. With residents and officials alike enthusiastically proposing story ideas, there's no shortage of material to choose from. In fact, the response has been so overwhelming, the team has set up

an editorial calendar to map out episodes for the coming months to ensure that all the city's programs are covered.

The *Fairfax City Minute's* success can be measured most tangibly by the increased attendance at city events. In some cases, events promoted on the program have seen attendance rise by as much as 30-50% over previous years. It's safe to say that the *Fairfax City Minute* has significantly changed how the City of Fairfax communicates with its residents.



**(L to R) Council Member So P. Lim, Council Member Jon Stehle, Council Member Jennifer Passey, Mayor David Meyer, Council Member Michael DeMarco, and Council Member Janice Miller.**

# LEESBURG

LIFELONG LEARNING AWARD



## Town helps visitors understand history using a 21st century solution



EVERY CITY HAS a story to tell, but the town of Leesburg has taken its storytelling to the next level with a walking tour app for residents and visitors who want to immerse themselves in the town's history. Prior to the app, demand for historical tours of Leesburg was high, but regular tours offerings were sparse; tourists were often unable to participate due to limited availability or had to crowd together on the downtown's narrow sidewalks.

To solve the problem, the town hired an intern who had just completed her master program in public history. She used local collections to research and to cull period photographs for the app. The intern then collaborated with the town's Preservation Planner and Library Director to compose the content for the app and a town staff member provided the voiceover narration.

Now, visitors and residents who want to learn more about Leesburg can use the app's map to select a location to start their tour, or they can begin at "stop #1" and follow the directions to each site. The app provides text, pictures, full narration and video so that individuals or small groups can guide themselves at their own pace through two experiences: "Highlights of Historical Leesburg" and the "African-American History Tour."

Regardless of how they use it, or which story they choose to follow, visitors to Leesburg now have an easy-to-use option to help them enjoy everything Leesburg has to offer.



**(L to R) Mayor Kelly Burk, Council Member Fernando "Marty" Martinez, Council Member Ron Campbell, and Assistant Town Manager Keith Markle.**

# Congratulations to these award recipients



## 2018 HEALTHY EATING ACTIVE LIVING CAMPAIGN

The HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign provides free technical assistance to local government leaders to help them adopt healthy eating and active living policies and practices. Across Virginia, HEAL cities, towns and counties are creating healthier and more prosperous communities by making it easier for residents and municipal employees to eat healthier and move more. HEAL is a project of the Institute for Public Health

Innovation in partnership with the Virginia Municipal League and funded by Kaiser Permanente, founding partner. For more information, visit the HEAL Cities and Towns website at [www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org](http://www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org).

### Resolution Passed

Charles City County  
Emporia  
Falls Church  
Galax  
Glade Spring  
Greensville County  
Manassas  
New Market  
Petersburg  
Scottsville  
Virginia Beach

### Bronze Level

Fairfax  
Haymarket  
Roanoke  
Staunton

### Silver Level

Ashland  
Falls Church  
Gordonsville  
Greensville County  
Lawrenceville  
Leesburg  
Richmond

### Gold Level

Big Stone Gap  
Bluefield  
Crewe  
Dumfries  
Lovettsville  
Middleburg  
Wytheville

### Platinum

Charlottesville  
Hopewell  
Prince George County  
Warrenton



## 2018 VML GREEN GOVERNMENT CHALLENGE

VML celebrated the 10th year of the Green Government Challenge with the presentation of plaques during the awards reception on October 1. The challenge encourages implementation of specific environmental policies and practical actions that reduce carbon emissions generated by the local government and the broader community. Cities, towns and counties earn points for these actions and the number of points determine the level of recognition.

The challenge itself is updated each year. That work is guided by an advisory committee chaired by Christina Luman-Bailey, a council member with the city of Hopewell.

### Platinum Level

*175 points and above*

Alexandria  
Arlington County  
Blacksburg  
Charlottesville  
Falls Church  
Herndon  
Hopewell  
Newport News  
Prince George County  
Purcellville  
Radford  
Richmond  
Roanoke  
Staunton  
Virginia Beach  
Williamsburg

### Gold Level

*150-174 points*

Fairfax

### Silver Level

*125-149 points*

Ashland

### Certified Green Government Level

*100-124 points*

Vienna

# Visit to Hampton's Bethel high school impresses conference attendees

**W**HEN THE MOBILE Workshop bus departed the Hampton Conference Center the Monday afternoon of the VML conference, it's fair to say that of the 15 or so people on-board only Hampton City Manager Mary Bunting knew what to expect. In her defense, Ms. Bunting did her best to prepare the riders en-route by explaining how excited everyone in Hampton is about the new academy model now being used in all four of Hampton's high schools. But the day was warm and sunny and the riders, who had just finished



Roanoke Council Member Selonia Miles takes a spin in the police cruiser simulator with some help from instructor Randy Seals, a retired Hampton Police Department Major.

lunch, were lulled by the gentle swaying of the bus as it navigated the roads to Bethel High School. Any sleepy thoughts were immediately dispelled, however, when the bus was greeted at the school by a brass band and a long row of enthusiastic student ambassadors, administrators, faculty and Mayor Donnie Tuck. While the band played, the attendees shook hands all down the line of smiling faces before being whisked to the school's bright library where two of the ambassadors presided over a panel discussion that served as an entertaining and engaging overview of the Hampton academies.

For the uninitiated: Hampton is the first city in Virginia to adopt the Ford Next Generation Learning model for its schools. Within the academy system, specific pathways (some of which are partially designed and supported by community partners), link academic courses to college majors and professional sector positions. The four Hampton high schools currently have 16 academies with a total of 44 available pathways. Each school has its own senior administrator while each academy has a dedicated principal.

How does it work? To begin with, every student starts their ninth-grade year in a Freshman Academy which includes Success 101, a Freshman Seminar course designed to equip students with the study and social skills they will need to succeed in high school. Beginning in 10th grade, students enter the academy and path of their choice where teachers use experiential learning and tailor each subject (i.e. math, science, English) to support the path. Students may change academies and paths once during their schooling and transportation is available for those who choose an academy not available at their district school.



Bethel High School student ambassadors with Dumfries council members Selonia Miles and Cydney Neville, Roanoke council member Anita Price, Hampton mayor Donnie Tuck and Hampton city manager Mary Bunting.



**Roanoke council member (and newly minted VML president) Anita James Price gets a check up from a Governor's Health Science Academy student.**

Through partnerships and grants, each academy has been able to offer students an immersive experience – those in the Academy of Law and Public Safety, for example, have access to one of only two police cruiser simulators located in school systems in the country; students in the Governor's Health Sciences Academy have a fully equipped medical exam lab complete with diagnostic equipment. The recently implemented Emergency Dispatcher program (Academy of Law and Public Safety – Law Enforcement path) is a fantastic example of how the academies draw on community resources and talent. Graduates of the program are pre-certified to hold a position as a Public Safety Telecommunications Specialist (an in-demand occupation paying nearly \$35,000 a year right out of high school). So, whether students are preparing to enter college, the workforce or some combination, the academy positions them to excel on their journey.

But the most tangible evidence that the relatively new program is succeeding is the amazing school spirit, (or, to be more precise, academy spirit) on ample display. The energy and confidence of the student ambassadors during the tour was contagious. Indeed, several attendees would have probably re-enrolled in high school that afternoon just for the chance to be part of the programs the ambassadors raved about. It is incredibly uplifting to see young people fully engaged and motivated about their future. This enthusiasm, combined with the impressive amount of work being done by the faculty and administrators to ensure that engagement and motivation translates into real-world success, is a compelling argument for making the academy model the future of education in Virginia, if not the United States.

The ride back to the conference center was anything but sleepy. City Manager Bunting happily fielded questions from the now energized riders who were obviously thankful that they had stepped onto the bus just two hours prior. It was, as one attendee

put it, "The best experience at a conference workshop, ever."

Hyperbole? Perhaps, but given the seemingly insurmountable problems with traditional education facing communities across the Commonwealth, the experience at Bethel High School made everyone involved feel optimistic that a path forward is being charted in the City of Hampton's academies. 

**About the author:** *Rob Bullington is VML's Director of Communications and Editor of Virginia Town & City. He was glad he got on the bus.*



To learn more about the Academies of Hampton, visit the website: [www.hampton.k12.va.us/schools/academies.html](http://www.hampton.k12.va.us/schools/academies.html).

To arrange a visit, contact Hampton City Manager, Mary Bunting: [mbunting@hampton.gov](mailto:mbunting@hampton.gov).

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# Highlights from Hampton

THE CITY OF HAMPTON proved to be a fantastic location for the 2018 VML conference. Hundreds of government representatives, exhibitors and speakers learned from each other, caught up with old acquaintances and met some of the new people working hard to make Virginia better every day. But it wasn't all work: Celebrations – beginning with a beautiful host night event at historic Fort Monroe and ending with a luxurious banquet at the conference center – were enjoyed by all. Thanks to everyone who participated and made this year's annual conference a smashing success.



**1.** Governor Ralph S. Northam spoke about his vision of Leading Virginia Forward at Monday's opening session. **2.** Roanoke Council Member and VML's new President Anita James Price receives a special gift of flowers from Roanoke City Mayor Sherman Lea. **3.** The 2018 Mayors Institute graduates. **4.** (L - R) Warsaw Town Manager Joseph Quesenbury, Clerk and Treasurer Julia Blackely-Rice, and Police Chief Joan Kent. **5.** Manassas Vice Mayor Sheryl Bass receives her voting flag from VML staff Sandra Harrington.



**1.** Thomas Crabs delivers a Quick Takes session about FirstNet. **2.** (L – R) City of Fairfax Council Member Sang Yi, City of Martinsville Council Member Jennifer Bowles, City of Danville Vice Mayor Lee Vogler, and Town of Chatham Mayor William Pace. **3.** (L – R) City of Hampton Council Member James Gray, Council Member Christine Snead, and Mayor Donnie Tuck **4.** Christopher Piper from the Virginia Department of Elections spoke on elections and mis-assigned voters **5.** W. Edgar Spivey from Kaufman & Canoles, P.C. spoke about opioids lawsuits. **6.** VML staff Rob Bullington demonstrates the new VML Conference App to attendees. **7.** Terri Paddy from Sparks@Play, Inc.



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**1.** VHDA Strategis Housing Officer Suzanne Armstrong. **2.** Michael Ausberry from Avenue Insights & Analytics. **3.** City of Franklin Council Member Linwood Johnson. **4.** (L – R) Town of Windsor Town Manager Michael Stallings, Vice Mayor Durwood Scott, and Council Member Tony Ambrose. **5.** Receiving their Go Green Certificate (L – R) Town of Vienna Mayor Laurie DiRocco, Council Member Tara Bloch, Council Member Carey Sienicki, and Town Manager Mercury Payton.

Conference highlights



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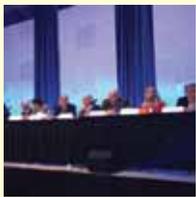
**1.** Christopher Byrd from BSquared Consulting spoke to attendees of the Veterans Affairs session. **2.** City of Staunton Mayor Carolyn Dull sings Mustang Sally with the band. **3.** Host night entertainers bring the swing at historic Fort Monroe. **4.** (L – R) City of Roanoke Communications and Media Officer Melinda Mayo and Citizen Engagement Officer Whitney Slightham. **5.** Finished art from the spouse’s event painting class and luncheon. **6.** Outgoing President Patricia Woodbury received a plaque award for her service from incoming President Anita James Price. **7.** Town of Dumfries Vice Mayor Monae Nickerson with VML staff Patrick Ford.



7



# 2018 CONFERENCE APP GALLERY OF PICS



# People First: A plan to rebuild the St. Paul's community to improve resilience for all

**N**ORFOLK, A VIBRANT and historic port city, offers residents and visitors an authentic urban experience. It serves as the center of commerce and as the arts and cultural hub of the Hampton Roads region of more than 1.7 million people. The 246,000 people who call Norfolk home live in more than 120 neighborhoods, distinctive communities that form the heart of this city.

As the city continues to grow and thrive, Norfolk seeks to ensure that all residents share in its success. In 2014, the city adopted the Norfolk Plan to Reduce Poverty and began to concentrate resources and efforts to address poverty in the city. Norfolk has the highest level of income inequality relative to other cities in the region. Nearly one-third of Norfolk's residents are significantly rent-burdened, spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing and some communities suffer from high concentrations of poverty.

One of these communities is the St. Paul's area. The city is transforming this neighborhood by focusing on both people and place. Norfolk seeks to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by providing opportunities for residents around housing, education, health,

and wellness. Transforming the physical space is just as important. Place matters. All residents should have access to safe, sanitary, quality housing in areas of low crime with access to quality education and amenities. The city is committed to an inclusive process. Residents are included in the planning to make their neighborhoods among the most desirable in the city, a place where families and residents of all income levels, races, ages and cultures can live, learn, work, play and thrive.

## St. Paul's area

The St. Paul's area includes three public housing communities, built more than 50 years ago and maintained through declining federal funding. More than 4,200 people call these neighborhoods home, and of those, more than half -- 2,200 -- are children ages 0-17. About 200 residents are seniors. The total average income is \$10,500 a year.

Roughly 50 percent of current residents have lived in the community for five years or less, while 30 percent have lived in the communities for over ten years. The population residing in this area is 98%



Aerial view of the St. Paul area today.



Artist conception of the transformed St. Paul area.

African-American. The poverty rate is 70 percent, unemployment is more than 50 percent, and 34 percent of adult residents do not have a high school diploma. Two public schools in the St. Paul's area serve primarily children from the community. Neither school meets state educational standards.

This compact area measures less than a mile from east-to-west touching downtown on the west and Norfolk State University on the east. However, it is bounded by urban highways, expressway ramps and expressways, which isolate it from downtown, the University, the waterfront, and nearby communities, and impose high traffic volumes on the streets.

The St. Paul's area also faces significant challenges from coastal and stormwater flooding. Much of the land is low-lying and experiences tidal flooding. During high tides and rain events, the area regularly experiences nuisance flooding, which is expected to increase with sea-level rise. As a member of The Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities, Norfolk has vowed to view all planning and development efforts through the lens of resilience as part of its efforts to deal with sea-level rise.

The total redevelopment area includes more than 250 acres of publicly controlled land in close proximity to downtown Norfolk, the NEON Arts District, and the Elizabeth River waterfront with easy access to the Tide light rail, regional bus service and interstate highways. A revitalized St. Paul's will provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity for people and place to create an economic engine that will improve the lives of residents in this area with economic and educational opportunities and improved housing, as well as benefit the entire city. The physical redevelopment will create a connected, walkable, thriving, mixed-income, mixed-use community of opportunity with access to quality amenities, healthcare and recreation and open space.

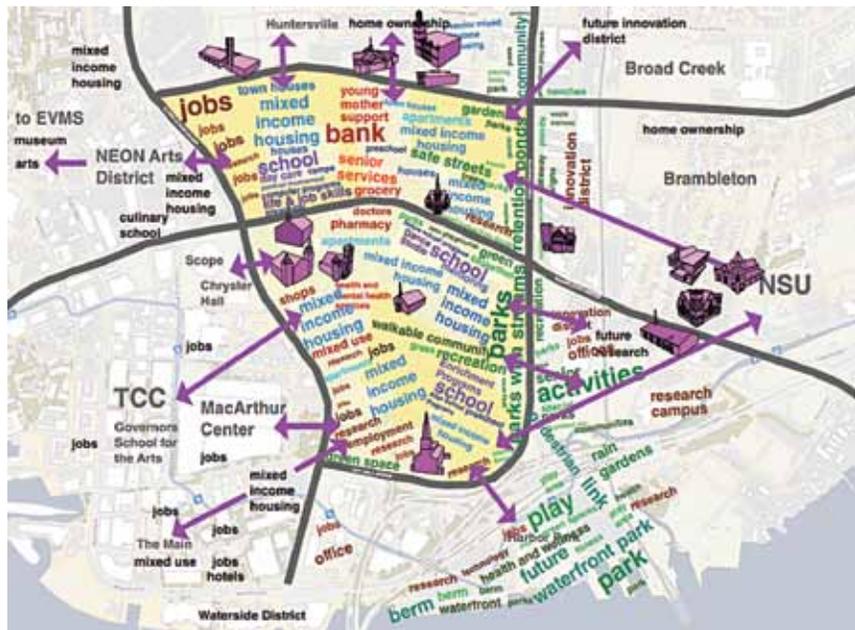
The Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) and the city have worked in consultation with the community to develop a vision and plan for the neighborhood. Extensive community meetings were re-established in August 2017 and culminated in the unveiling of a master plan in August 2018. This planning work has included wide-

spread community outreach and has considered the neighborhood holistically from the perspective of residents, infrastructure, economy, and the city overall. As the project for the neighborhood progresses, the city and NRHA will continue to ask for resident participation in workgroups and additional community meetings, and will provide progress reports to the community.

Based on this community input, Norfolk will achieve its goals for the initiative through a focus on people, the transformation of place, and incorporating resilience strategies throughout the redevelopment.

**People First** – Believing that people are Norfolk's greatest resource, the community will invest in a human transformation plan that unlocks our residents' ability to be economically self-sufficient, connect to maximum housing choice, and contribute to the dynamic fabric of our city. Program components will include individualized case management that enhances life outcomes for residents around housing stability, quality educational opportunities, youth and adult development programs, employment with livable wages, job training, and health and wellness programs. The City has committed to providing these services for up to five years until families are stable and thriving.

**Place Matters** – Data from the Norfolk Public Health Department shows that life expectancy at birth is more than 15 years lower in St. Paul's neighborhoods than it is for residents living in the adjacent downtown corridor. Differences in neighborhood conditions and patterns of residential segregation are the cause of health inequities among different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. This functional isolation has resulted in a lack of access to services and opportunity for the St. Paul's neighborhoods. The physical redevelopment will revamp how this community connects to surrounding neighborhoods, and rethink access to amenities like healthcare and recreation space. Each residential block would include a variety of housing types with a mixture of single family homes, town houses, apartments and high density mixed-use buildings. This variety ensures long term stability for the community by providing lifestyle housing for people in all stages and walks of life. It would



**The re-imagined St. Paul's – a place for people to thrive.**

include rental assisted housing, workforce housing and market rate housing with housing types for young people just starting their adult life, families with children, empty-nesters and the elderly.

**Resilience** – In light of the impacts of sea level rise, Norfolk's future lies in the city's ability to re-imagine what it will look like to live on the coast over the next 100 years. The need to better manage water serves as a catalyst to create strong neighborhoods resilient to effects of the environment and the economy, where all residents have the ability to withstand and successfully overcome those changes. The re-imagined St. Paul's neighborhood will include the transformation of the lowlands area that is often devastated by flooding into a water eco-center comprised of great parks and green spaces, as well as a dynamic living laboratory to provide research, educational and recreational opportunities for Norfolk residents, the region and the world.

## From Planning to Implementation

To support this work, the Mayor and City Council established the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the St. Paul's area. The board was established to provide leadership and work collaboratively with residents, the City Council, the City Manager, and NRHA on the revitalization of the area. The committee is led by two members of the Council. Its diverse set of stakeholders includes residents from the St. Paul's Community.

The redevelopment of the St. Paul's area will require significant investment. The entire project is estimated to cost approximately \$1 billion and will be supported by the public, private and philanthropic community. To support the public portion of the project, the city council approved a tax increase (effective July 1, 2018) and 1.9 cents of the tax increase or \$3.5 million is dedicated for the St. Paul's initiative. Of the dedicated general fund revenue, \$3.0 million will support Norfolk's long-term strategy to implement People First, a comprehensive program that increases financial independence, new housing choices, and successful outcomes for families living in the St. Paul's area. The remaining \$500,000 will support the management of the project. The city is also investing \$14 million over the next five years in Capital Improvement Program funds for demolition of the housing and relocation costs for residents.

The city will also maximize state and federal resources to support this initiative. Norfolk is prioritizing \$500,000 in Community

Development Block Grant funds for infrastructure improvements within the community. Norfolk has applied for an implementation grant under the Choice Neighborhoods Initiatives (CNI) program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Further, the city seeks to leverage various development financing tools. The Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 included provisions for a new revitalization tool, the Opportunity Zone and Opportunity Fund. Broadly speaking, the Zones and Funds will allow investors to receive tax benefits on currently unrealized capital gains by investing those gains in qualified census tracts (Opportunity Zones). The census tracts in St. Paul's have been designated as Opportunity Zones. In April, the city hosted HUD Secretary Dr. Ben Carson to discuss the opportunities to improve the lives of people living in the St. Paul's area and the use of tools such as CNI and Opportunity Zones to support this project.

This investment in the people of the St. Paul's neighborhoods and in the physical environment will be a multi-year process, one that requires many partners for success. Cities have the unique ability to pull partners around the table, to solve challenges together. Norfolk will need support from our private, philanthropic, nonprofit partners, all levels of government, and residents to transform this community. The revitalization of the St. Paul's neighborhood presents the city with one of the greatest chances for economic uplift and housing opportunity in a general, and will be our collective legacy. The city is committed. 

# Stacking Up: How Virginia's new energy plan compares to the rest of the nation

**V**IRGINIA'S COMPREHENSIVE new energy bill, the Grid Transformation and Security Act, contains new policies for energy efficiency investments, development assistance to localities, weatherization assistance, and community solar projects. As we consider these changes, it's important to remember that thanks to varying state approaches our nation's power grid is entering uncharted territory. Some states are choosing to curtail existing sources of energy production while expanding new sources. Others are choosing to double down on tried and true methods. So, as we think about the changes being proposed here in Virginia, it's useful to understand the plans being set in motion elsewhere. Here are some developments in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Washington to keep in mind.

## New Jersey's grid overhaul

Governor Phil Murphy and his faction in the legislature are setting a bold goal: by 2030 they want half of the state's energy consumption to come from renewable sources (currently only 4% of New Jersey's energy comes from renewable sources).

Two bills have been passed to meet this goal. The major piece of legislation, Assembly Bill 3723, directs the state's power companies to sell 35% of electricity from renewable sources by 2025. Then, by 2030, it requires that 50% of electricity sold in the state come from renewable sources. Like Virginia's Grid Transformation and Security Act, New Jersey's bill encourages community solar projects, which would be located on private property, and would allow the owners to gain revenue from the electricity returned to the grid. However, encouraging community solar is one of only a few pieces of guidance New Jersey offers its power companies as they embark on the overhaul and it's unclear if these projects will play a significant role in

**New Jersey, like Virginia, is a member of the United States Climate Alliance whose 17 members have pledged to adhere to the guidelines established by the Paris Climate Accords.**



achieving Governor Murphy's goal.

Passed at the same time as Assembly Bill 3723, a \$300 million annual subsidy to the state's nuclear power plants will prevent them from being closed and will halt a plan which would have transitioned New Jersey to cheaper, fossil fuel plants. This is viewed as a controversial move, however, since state groups have campaigned that the plants are no longer economically competitive and should be closed.

## Pennsylvania's natural gas boom

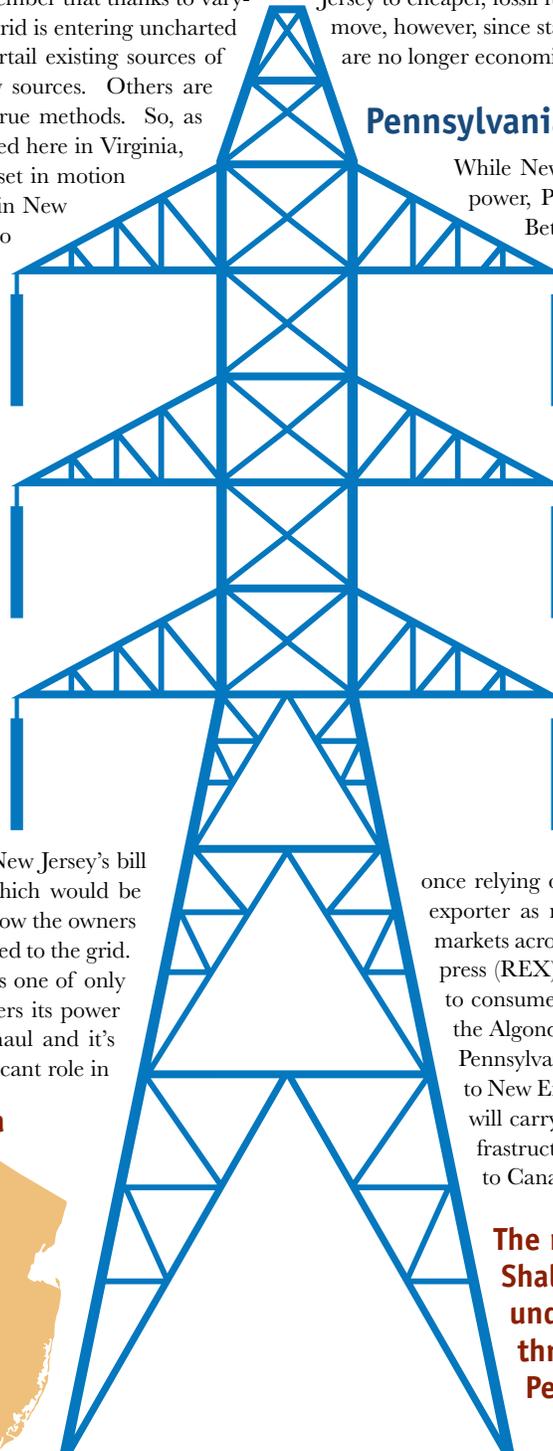
While New Jersey goes full tilt for solar and nuclear power, Pennsylvania is going all in on natural gas.

Between 2010 and 2016, Pennsylvania's natural gas production increased nine-fold. In 2017, the state produced 5.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, making it the second largest natural gas producer in the United States, right behind Texas.

This colossal production increase comes thanks to the Marcellus Shale rock formation, a vein of mostly black shale sedimentary rock that holds some of the most plentiful natural gas reserves on Earth. Put that resource under the feet of a population of 12.8 million energy consumers, loosen the previous presidential administration's environmental regulations, and you've got the recipe for a gold (or, in this case, black shale) rush.

Capitalizing on their natural gas resource, Pennsylvania issued 1,352 drilling permits in 2016, and another 2,038 in 2017. The state also accumulated 55 drilling rigs in both years. Pennsylvania, once relying on out-of-state natural gas, will become an exporter as new and existing pipelines open access to markets across the country. To the west, the Rockies Express (REX) Pipeline will enable the gas to be shipped to consumers across the Middle America. To the east, the Algonquin Incremental Market pipeline will allow Pennsylvania gas to reach consumers from New Jersey to New England. To the north, the NEXUS pipeline will carry the gas as far as Michigan. Additional infrastructure will enable Pennsylvania to ship its gas to Canadian markets.

**The natural gas-rich Marcellus Shale rock formation extends under roughly three quarters of Pennsylvania.**



## Washington State: The second greenest energy producer in the country

Vermont holds the title of “Greenest Energy Producer” in the US, but that title would mean a lot more if the state produced much energy. As it now stands, Vermont only produces a symbolic 30.5 trillion BTU of energy from various renewable sources. To meet the energy demands of its residents, Vermont purchases 121.8 trillion BTUs from outside the state. Most of the purchased energy is generated from natural gas, coal, and gasoline. The real title of “Greenest Energy Producer” should go to Washington State, whose grid produces a substantial amount of power while maintaining a near-fanatical commitment to the environment.

Although recent legislation putting a tax on carbon emissions narrowly failed to pass, the state is making great strides in reducing its carbon via other means. Washington’s 2017 biennial energy report claims that carbon emissions could drop by as much as 40 percent thanks to its policy of retiring coal plants. The report also states that emissions could drop by 70 percent in the same time frame with additional “demand management” to avoid the nighttime peaks that necessitate the continued burning of fossil fuels. This “demand management” constitutes a combination of financial incentives, energy efficiency requirements and a variety of reactive measures that minimize stress on the power grid.

Hydropower dominates renewable energy in Washington state with roughly nine-tenths of the state’s renewable energy production. Translate that to the population, and you can keep more than 3 million people warm just by watching the river roll along. Hydropower means that the electricity in the state is the second least expensive in the nation, at 7.68 cents per kilowatt. The marginal cost of producing electricity via hydropower in Washington is near zero.

**65% of the energy consumed in Washington state comes from hydroelectric dams while the state’s sole remaining coal-fired power plant is scheduled to close in 2025.**



## How Virginia stacks up

Virginia has nuclear power plants like New Jersey, but the state is not offering a \$300 million subsidy to keep them in business.

The natural gas-rich Marcellus Shale extends to southwest Virginia and we (especially Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise counties) have been dipping into the resource since the 1960s, but the wells in Pennsylvania produce 44 times as much natural gas.

Virginia has rivers and hydroelectricity, but nothing on the scale enjoyed by Washington state. As a result, our marginal cost of producing electricity is nearly 2 cents more per kilowatt than Washington’s.

It might seem like Virginia is falling behind, but that is misleading. Virginia is making progress that is just as transformative as those other states. Just ask Dominion and APCo, which together are slated to invest over a billion dollars in renewable energy in Virginia. That level of investment knocks New Jersey’s \$300 million nuclear subsidy down to size, doesn’t it? The key takeaway is that Virginia is working to improve the energy infrastructure and regulations we already have rather than starting in a completely new place. Remember, “Rome wasn’t built in a day” and “Slow and steady wins the race.” 

**The goal of affordable renewable energy is within Virginia’s grasp.**



**About the author:** *Max Halbruner was an intern at VML in the summer of 2018. He is a second-year classman at the University of Virginia.*



# FOCUS ON OUR MEMBERS

Local officials are a fascinating bunch of people who have careers all over the board and a range of backgrounds and interests. Over the next several months VML will include a brief focus on various members so that we can all gain an appreciation of what a diverse group occupies the seats in council and board chambers. Do you know someone who could be featured? Email Rob Bullington at [rbullington@vml.org](mailto:rbullington@vml.org).

## Sean Polster, Council Member of Warrenton

By Max Halbruner

SEAN POLSTER BEGAN HIS CAREER as a firefighter/paramedic in the early '90s on Vint Hill Army Base outside Warrenton. At Vint Hill he quickly learned that when a home is on fire, or a person is critically injured, the response time of those who rush to help means the difference between life and death. Each call for help meant turning on the siren and getting to the scene as quickly as possible. Oftentimes, Polster found himself racing to different corners of the base to keep our troops and their families safe.

Vint Hill Army base closed in 1997, but Polster's enthusiasm for responding to emergencies and helping people did not diminish. His first step into local government came in 2013 when he organized the town of Warrenton's Christmas parade which was

in danger of being cancelled. Under his guidance, the parade went off without a hitch.

In 2014, he won a seat on the town council. The citizens of Warrenton are hard workers; dual income households are the norm and many of the town's residents commute long distances for their jobs. Throw in a family to take care of, and there's not much community energy left for scrutinizing local politics. As a result, it had become difficult for citizens to be involved in their local government.

Polster considered this another emergency that needed his attention. Since taking his seat, Council Member Polster has sought to bring local politics to the citizens of his town by using the power of social media. He periodically posts updates that tell Warrenton's residents what is on the agenda in town hall. His goal is to make it possible for every one of his followers on social media to be an active participant in local politics. This mentality extends to his political record, including legislation he introduced to make campaign finance in Warrenton more transparent.

At the center of Polster's approach is a decidedly American philosophy that puts the responsibility for making a community a better place on every resident's shoulders. When it comes to local initiatives, Polster believes there isn't any room for the typical "us" versus "them" polarization of politics.

In describing the relationship between his town's residents and elected officials, Polster puts it this way: "They are the parents of our kid's friends. They own the businesses we support. They are the customers of the businesses we own. They are our neighbors and our friends, and their respect is the only currency we have to get things done."



## Carolyn Dull, Mayor of Staunton

By Mary Jo Fields

VML MEMBERS WHO ATTEND the annual conferences may best know Carolyn Dull for her show-stopping performances of "Mustang Sally" and "Staunton City" (aka Kansas City) during social events. Dull is a tried-and-true hand at performing in front of an audience; she was the founding member of a country-rock band based in Staunton named Whiskey Creek.

The music, however, is just part of her persona. More of her time was spent in finance-related areas. A certified public accountant, Dull retired as the business manager for Augusta Correctional Center. She says that the music was a nice contrast to her life as an accountant and that she found music was a way to bring happiness and joy and share a good time. And, she notes, there is research that shows playing music can improve mathematical skills.

Dull was first elected to council in 2006. She is serving her third term as mayor.

Dull says that what was significant to her about her music interests was that "I knew from the time I heard rock and roll that I was going to play in a band. I didn't know then that girls didn't play in rock and roll bands." But she says that her mother always told her that anything she wanted to do, she could.

And so, she did. She put together an all-girl band that won her junior high talent show. The other girls weren't as interested in staying with the music, but she was. She learned to play a lot of different instruments so that she could fill in for anyone absent from a band her brother started. She played the keyboards, harmonica, tenor alto sax, bass and guitar. She plays all those instruments, except for the sax, by ear.

She and her brother started Whiskey Creek but she says that she never considered herself a musician. She thought of herself as an entertainer. She tells of the joy of playing music—of how at one program at a fire department, one older man wanted to hear the bluegrass classic "Rocky Top," and how he started dancing by himself to the music when the band played it for him. The look on the man's face, Dull said, was that he was sanctified.

And, when she introduces herself, she will say that her name is Dull, as in boring (which she is not)!

**About the authors:** Max Halbruner is a second-year classman at the University of Virginia. He was an intern at VML during the summer of 2018. Mary Jo Fields is an adjunct VML staff member and a contributing editor to *Virginia Town & City*.





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