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St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

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**Study Highlights
Dangerous Roads**

**Jamari's Law
Passes Senate**

**Apartment Complex
Hearing Postponed**

REPORT PUSHES EXPANSION FOR EMS SERVICES



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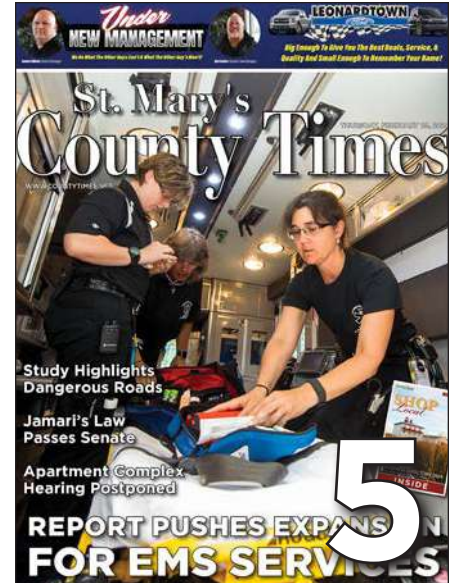
“WHEN WE SET UP OUR [DRUNK DRIVING] CHECK POINTS IT'S USUALLY IN THE LATE EVENING BUT THAT'S NOT THE PEAK TIME OF DRINKING.”
PUBLIC WORKS CHIEF JIM GOTSCH ON SERIOUS ROADWAY HAZARDS IN ST. MARY'S



LOCAL 4
Jamari's Law passes senate



LOCAL 4
Schools make budget pitch



ON THE COVER 5
Big changes are recommended for county EMS

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, FEB 29	FRI, MAR 1	SAT, MAR 2	SUN, MAR 3
Sunny Hi: 46° Lo: 31°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 50° Lo: 41°	Rain Hi: 57° Lo: 47°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 60° Lo: 48°
MON, MAR 4	TUE, MAR 5	WED, MAR 6	THU, MAR 7
Mostly Cloudy Hi: 59° Lo: 48°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 60° Lo: 47°	Showers Hi: 55° Lo: 43°	Showers Hi: 60° Lo: 43°

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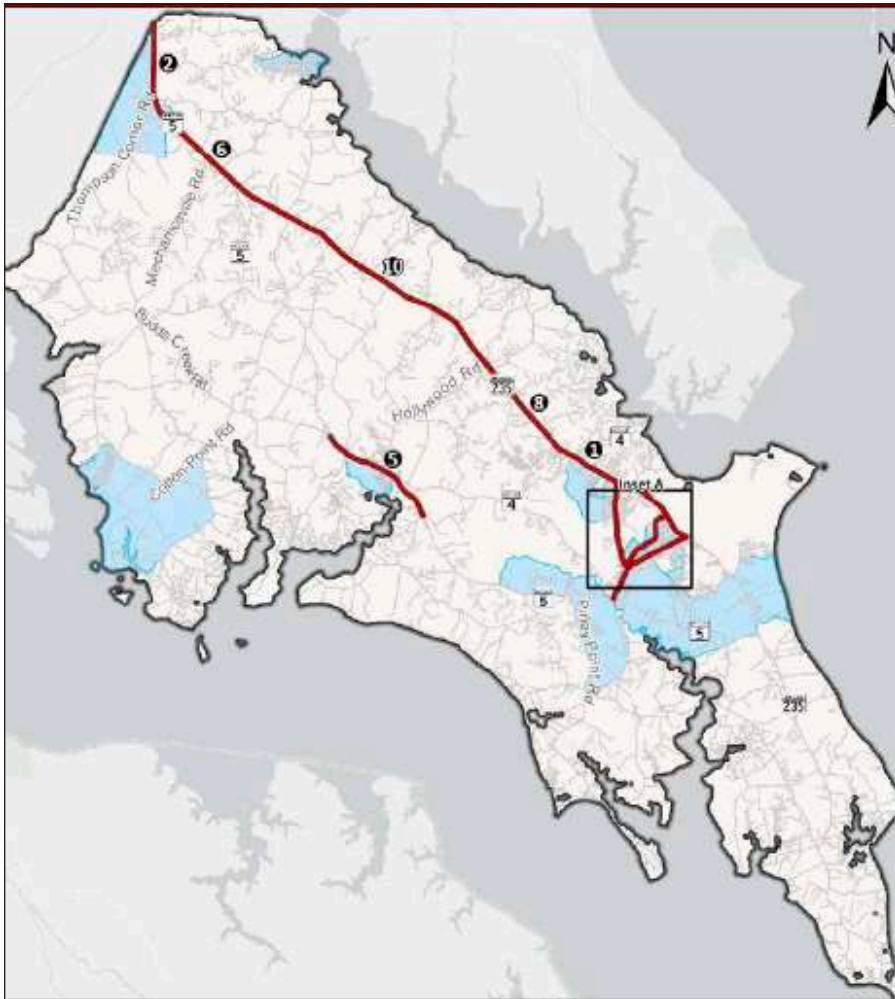
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Report Sheds Light on Dangerous Roads, Drunk Driving



A map showing roads of concern in St. Mary's county

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

A study reviewed last week at the county's Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee showed that of the county's more than 800 miles of roadways, a significant number of serious or fatal vehicle crashes occur on just about 60 miles of highway.

Also, the data reviewed by public works chief Jim Gotsch showed that approximately a third of serious or fatal crashes occur not at night or even in the early morning hours but between noon and 6 p.m.

This is roughly the same time frame, Gotsch said, for drunk driving violations.

"The peak drunk driving time is noon, after lunch time," Gotsch said. "When we set up our [drunk driving] check points it's usually in the late evening but that's not the peak time of drinking."

The data presented at the Feb. 21 meeting was gleaned from the June 2023 Local Road Safety Plan adopted by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. It showed that between 2017 and 2021 alone there were 1,567 crashes on county roadways that resulted in either a fatality or serious injury.

These types of collisions are referred to in the report as KSI or killed or seriously injured.

More than 63 percent of KSI crashes involved alcohol or drugs, the report stated; more than 46.3 percent of all those KSI crashes occurred on 60 miles of roadway.

Those sections of roadway were mostly Route 235 all the way to the border with Charles County down south to Gate No. 2 at Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

Also included in the roads of concern are Chancellors Run Road, Great Mills Road, Pegg Road and "old Route 5 going through Leonardtown," Gotsch said.

Just seven percent of so-called KSI crashes involved vulnerable persons such as pedestrians.

The push for local roadway safety plans is part of the state's Zero Deaths initiative, which seeks zero traffic fatalities by 2040.

Overall, 72 percent of KSI crashes occurred on just seven percent — or 60 miles — of county roadways; the report deems these roads as the High Injury Network.

"We need to put our improvements in those locations to get the most bang for the buck," Gotsch said.

Those include transforming the Lexington Park Development District, the largest of the two in the county, with more sidewalks and bike lanes to help prevent the death or injury of pedestrians.

"We should have an alternate route off of Great Mills Road [with proximity to the naval air station] sometime in the near future," Gotsch said of one example of pending safety improvements.

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THE Wentworth Weekly

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Commissioners Hear BOE Budget Request

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The state says that, according to its new Blueprint for Education plan, that St. Mary's County is doing well regarding fully funding the county's public school system.

But school system leaders here say they still need more money to fulfill education needs to the tune of an additional \$9.5 million to pay for teacher and administrator compensation, benefits and transportation.

The school system is asking for \$127.3 million total in local contributions, which exceeds their current maintenance of effort levels required by law as well as what the Blueprint for fiscal 2025 recommends, according to county budget documents.

The total available operating budget revenues as of this week, according to county budget reports, is \$318.3 million, or about \$14.1 million more than current fiscal 2024 budget allowances.

But the operating budget is holding at \$311 million, said county Chief Financial Officer Jeanett Cudmore at a Feb. 27 bud-

get work session with the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, which left just \$6.9 million for commissioners to allocate across all budget requests from departments in county government.

The school system argues that they face declining state funding under the Blue Print plan because of the county's wealth and because of lower enrollments.

Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith said the local schools would only receive an additional \$100,000 in fiscal 2025 from the state.

"With that money we're supposed to offer college tuition to anyone who is college and career ready, we're supposed to offer all-day pre-K for anyone who is income eligible, we are to provide any teacher who is nationally board-certified \$10,000..." Smith said, extending his continued criticism of the expectations of the Blueprint's plans. "That doesn't work and is patently unfair to you five gentlemen... because you were told from the beginning of the Blueprint: 'You don't have to spend more money.'"

"That you could flat fund the system in perpetuity until the end of the Blueprint and

money would just come down from the state and everything would work out."

The claims didn't make sense, Smith said, made all the more obvious by the mandate to raise starting teacher salaries to \$60,000 from just over \$47,000.

Smith even admitted that, due to lower enrollment, the commissioners could actually lower funding legally by approximately \$1 million.

"You could say: 'School system you're on your own; go figure it out, make some tough decisions.'

"You have never done that."

Smith noted the commissioners have always funded above maintenance of effort and that latest amount for which he was asking was a lot but it was needful.

"It sets your school system up for success," Smith said. "It will be one of the single greatest recruitment tools... that public education has seen in the history of our county."

Other jurisdictions are still grappling with how to fund the local Blueprint plans, Smith said, making them "convulse."



Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith

"If we can put this together and find a way to fund it people will look to us as the example," Smith said.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Jamari's Law Passes Senate, Advances in House

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

A bill in the Maryland General Assembly that doubles the penalty for vehicular homicide inspired by the death of an 18-year-old St. Mary's County man two years ago passed the senate and its companion bill in the house is moving forward.

Jamari Duckett was killed by a drunk driver at approximately 3a.m. July 9, 2022 when his 2015 Ford Focus was rear ended by 27-year-old Mark Mazza on Willows Road at Abberly Crest Lane.

Duckett was rushed to MedStar St. Mary's Hospital where he died the next day.

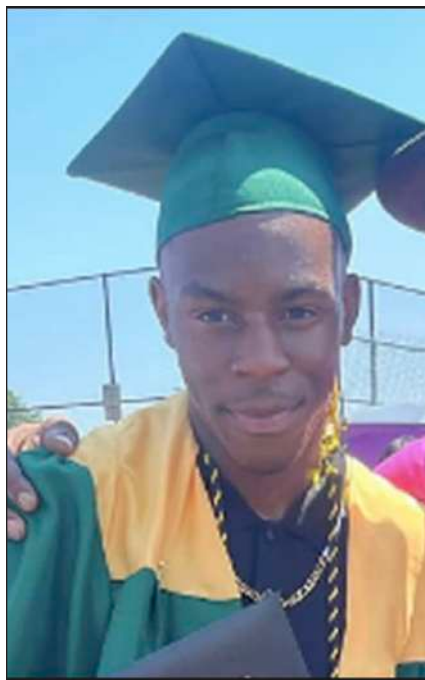
Mazza was sentenced to the maximum penalty allowable at that time for vehicular homicide — 10 years — but Sen. Jack Bailey (R-Dist.29), Del. Brian Crosby (D-Dist. 29B) and State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling set about pressing for stiffer penalties for the crime.

Last week, SB 26, known as Jamari's Law, passed the senate unanimously and it has had its first hearing in the house.

The law increases the maximum period of imprisonment for a first conviction for manslaughter by vehicle or vessel from 10 years to 20 years and for a second or subsequent conviction, or having been previously convicted for certain other crimes, from 15 years to 30 years.

Bailey testified in January before the senate's Judicial Proceedings Committee that when Mazza struck Duckett's car Mazza was driving at speeds between 76 and 91 miles per hour.

Tests also showed that Mazza's blood alcohol content was well above the legal



Jamari Duckett

limit of .08

"As this is considered a non-violent offense it is possible for the individual to serve a quarter of their sentence," Bailey testified, noting that credits for good behavior while incarcerated could further decrease the sentence.

"The defendant could be released in two-and-a-half years," said Bailey.

The bill did not require a minimum sentence, Bailey said, but only gave judges the ability to dole out stronger penalties in such cases.

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Apartment Complex Hearing Continued to Next Month



Artists rendering of Park Place Apartments

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The hearing for a concept site plan for a major apartment complex in California has been postponed to March 18 by the county's planning commission.

The project, known as Park Place Apartments, would place 160 new apartments in the heart of the Lexington Park Development District.

Christopher Longmore, attorney for the developers of the project, CMI General Contractors, Inc., requested a continuance from the planning commission to give more time to address comments and questions from the State Highway Administration about the scope of their project.

The project would be constructed on roughly six acres at two separate sites on Park Place Way with access to Abell House Lane, according to the traffic study provided in county planning documents.

The traffic study estimates that the 160 additional dwelling units will generate an

average of 1,035 daily traffic trips

The report claims that nearby key intersections will operate at "acceptable levels of service under future traffic conditions" but one.

The intersection of Route 235 and Shady Mile Drive/Old Rolling Road will operate at level of service "F" during evening peak levels of traffic; the other intersections are projected to operate at level of service "D" or better.

The developer proposes improvements to the intersection, the report states, to bring it to an acceptable level of service.

"The proposed improvements include remarking the existing right turn only lane along wesboudn [Route] 235 to an auxiliary right turn lane," the traffic study states. "This will allow the lane to be utilized not only by right turns onto Shady Mile Drive, but also through movements that may wish to make a right turn further west of Shady Mile Drive."

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Report Calls for More Paid Paramedics, EMTs, County Owned EMS Apparatus

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The county needs a significant expansion of the Department of Emergency Service's (DES) capacity to provide emergency medical services (EMS), a new report from a consultant hired by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County shows, as volunteer rescue squads continue to struggle to replenish their ranks after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rick Harrison, of Mission Critical Partners consulting group, told the commissioners the county needed 65 emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and 18 paramedics to ensure that emergency medical needs were met; these would all be paid EMS personnel.

DES currently employs 38 full-time basic life support EMTs and six full-time advanced life support (ALS) EMS providers, the report showed.

DES currently has 14 part-time EMT's on the rolls and 12 part-time paramedics.

Currently the county's Department of Emergency Services provides career EMS personnel to support volunteers by providing much needed daytime personnel to fulfill medical calls.

"The county is covered really well," Harrison told commissioners, noting however that volunteer companies are continuing to feel the strain of many calls and few active volunteers.

"Some of the agencies are getting to be what I call at-risk," Harrison said. "When you only have 20 active members in any agency... they're at risk of burnout."

The differences between the names on membership rolls versus those who actually run emergency calls are stark across almost all volunteer rescue squads but not as much for the volunteer advanced life support (ALS) unit, the report showed.

For the Lexington Park company, the busiest of all with upwards of 5,000 calls per year, has 300 members but only 45 active ones; at the Second District station in Valley just 18 out of 100 listed members are performing calls for service.

The great object, Harrison said, was to ensure that emergency response took no more than 10 minutes, which for St. Mary's broke down into approximately six miles from a station to the call.

But the county has difficult-to-reach areas, such as its northwest segment and places like Budd's Creek, Harrison said, that make it "tough to cover for anybody in that time frame."

The strain on volunteers and volunteerism



in general meant that it would be difficult to bring rescue squads back to their original strength.

"I'm concerned about some of these numbers getting lower," Harrison said. "When I was interviewing these folks [at the rescue squads] they weren't 18-year-olds, they were older people like me."

Deputy County Administrator David Yingling said it was not the county's intent to take over rescue squads.

"That's our roll, to supplement them as much as possible," Yingling said.

But Harrison said the county should work with rescue squads and encourage them to change their charters to allow the county to receive their facilities and apparatus should they ever dissolve their memberships.

Currently, none of the rescue squads have it in their charters to allow such a takeover of assets, Harrison said, instead they were to be given to other companies or their other financial assets given to charities.

Commissioner Eric Colvin said he had noticed a increase, if only a small one, in the number of younger people joining rescue squads after having seen them at installation of officer events recently.

"You want to hang on to the volunteer agencies forever if you can," Harrison said.

St. Mary's should ensure it becomes competitive with other jurisdictions when it comes to career EMS salaries, or else the county would fall into an all too familiar pattern of trained personnel leaving for more lucrative opportunities.

"They get their sea legs here and decide they want to go make some money," Harrison said. "They leave and go someplace else."

When it comes to apparatus, or units,

available to transport patients, the county is well supplied with 26 such vehicles, but the personnel problem remains.

"There are certainly enough units," Harrison said. "The problem is, are there enough people to put in those units to respond to calls?"

"No, you're not going to get 26 units on the streets in St. Mary's County."

The county should also consider purchasing ambulances it owns — virtually all are in

the hands of volunteer groups — and doing it soon to meet possible demands.

"If you ordered a new ambulance today you might get it in 2026," Harrison warned.

The physical plant has also not expanded at the emergency services department, though the services dimension has; the report said the county should provide upgraded facilities to allow for garaging of emergency vehicles and secure storage for medications and even authorized narcotics.

Emergency vehicles parked at the current DES building, adjacent to the commissioner building in Leonardtown, have not shelter.

This expansion of services and first line personnel would also necessitate more management and administrative support, said Harrison as well as opportunities for career advancement.

"A career ladder is needed in DES," he said. "And there needs to be a pay grade system for EMS."

The consultant report also suggested a sign on bonus for EMS workers to promote recruitment and retention, and resist the pull of other counties.

"You're going to get pressure from the outside," Harrison said.

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School Board Candidate Wants End To School Violence

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Angela Wathen, a former substitute teacher who said she had various jobs in the county school system during a 20-year period, wants to take the at-large seat of the St. Mary's County Board of Education.

Wathen, who has stakes in a marine construction company and an event venue, is disturbed by the violence that continues in certain schools between students as well as what she believes the oversexualization of education.

"It's just all sex," Wathen said. "I think it should all be taken out of schools.

"And violence, there should be zero tolerance."

The school system has policies against violence but Wathen questioned their adherence to enforcing them.

"Are they handling it?" she asked.

Wathen, who has no children, though she is married, wants to ensure more transparency and accountability in the school system, she said.

"It needs to be held across the board," said Wathen. "Not just for the students but for the teachers and the administrators.

"There need to be boundaries."



Angela Wathen

In her last two years with the school system, Wathen said she was the Artist in Residence at Chesapeake Charter School helping middle school students build high school portfolios.

Wathen also said any salary she would normally draw from her position on the school board she would put back into the school system "in some way."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Hollywood Resident Running for District 4 School Board

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

David Drys, a 45-year-old Department of Defense employee with two children who have graduated from the St. Mary's County school system wants to be the next representative on the school board for District 4.

Both of his children are now in college, Drys told The County Times, and they both learned much and had great experiences.

"I want to ensure future generations have the same opportunities as my kids did," Drys said.

He has several ideas about how he might accomplish that, he said, including digging deep into the school budget to ensure resources are being allocated as efficiently as possible and finding way to leverage special parts of the school system — such as the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center — to provide more opportunities for students.

Drys said his son had been a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) student since his primary school days but as he got older he decided to take part in a program at the technology center.

It was important, Drys said, to allow students have as many opportunities as possi-



David Drys

ble in their education.

"He gained a lot from it," Drys said of his son. "And he did it rather than sit for a lot of AP (Advanced Placement) courses."

Drys said he has a strong background in program management and budgeting and managing large teams, which he said would serve him well as a school board member.

"I want to ensure that we get a good return on investment," Drys said.

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ST. MARY'S COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

Automobile Accident Turned Shooting Becomes Homicide Investigation

On Tuesday, February 27, 2024, Malic Quinn Freeland, 23, was pronounced deceased at the shock trauma center, where he had been undergoing treatment following an incident.

Mr. Freeland was the operator of the vehicle involved in an accident on Monday, February 26, 2024. Upon initial investigation, it was found that the car accident was caused by the victim having sustained a gunshot wound.

The victim will be transported to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Baltimore for an autopsy.

Detectives from the Criminal Investigations Division of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office are now investigating this incident as a homicide.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact Detective First Class Benjamin Raley at 301-475-4200, ext. 8076, or Benjamin.Raley@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Sheriff's Office Investigating Attempted Murder

On Saturday, February 24, 2024, Deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office responded to the report of a disturbance in the 21000 block of Morris Drive in Lexington Park, MD. Upon arrival, a victim was found with a significant laceration to the throat. The victim was flown to a local shock trauma center for treatment.

Detectives from the Criminal Investigations Division and Crime Lab Technicians responded to the scene to continue the investigation.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact Detective Corporal Tyler Payne at 301-475-4200, ext. 8010, or Tyler.Payne@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Law Enforcement Accreditation Team Invites Public Comment

A Site-based assessor from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA®), is currently examining all aspects of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office (SMCSO) policy and procedures, management, operations, and support services, Sheriff Steve Hall announced today.

"Verification by the assessor that SMCSO meets the Commission's comprehensive state-of-the-art standards is part of a voluntary process to gain accreditation—a highly prized recognition of public safety professional excellence," Sheriff Hall said. As part of the assessment, agency personnel and community members are invited to offer comments at <https://cimrs2.calea.org/316>.

If, for some reason, an individual cannot access the portal but would like to provide comments to the assessment team, please do so by writing to the Commission on

Accreditation for Law Enforcement, Inc. (CALEA®), 13575 Heathcote Boulevard, Suite 320 Gainesville, VA, 20155, or email calea@calea.org.

A copy of the standards is available by contacting SMCSO, Jodi Irwin, Accreditation Manager, at 301-475-4200, ext. 1963.

The Sheriff's Office must comply with 183 standards to gain accredited status. Accreditation is for four years, during which the agency must submit agency status reports and participate in annual remote web-based assessments attesting to continued compliance with the standards.

For more information regarding the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., please write the Commission at 13575 Heathcote Boulevard, Suite 320, Gainesville, VA, 20155, or call 703-352-4225 or email calea@calea.org.



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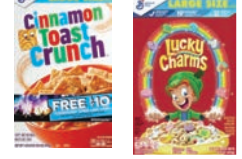
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750-ml Freixenet Prosecco

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MARCH MADNESS

MARCH 1

First Friday

Leonardtown

Maryland Day at St. Clements Island Museum

March 25, 2024
Great For Families
10AM - 5PM

Celebrate the founding of Maryland with free museum admission, boat rides, kids activities, food truck, and more!



Official Ceremony at 2pm (FREE)

More Info: [Facebook.com/SCIMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/SCIMuseum) or 301-769-2222



First Friday Itinerary

10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Visit the Old Jail Museum for FREE tours with extended hours for First Friday www.facebook.com/TheOldJailMuseum

5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Youth Art Show opening reception at St. Mary's County Arts Council www.facebook.com/smcartsCouncil

5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Meet & Greet with Hayden Williams - A local high school student, entrepreneur, & sock and tote bag designer at St. Mary's County Arts Council www.facebook.com/smcartsCouncil

5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Live music at Port of Leonardtown Winery featuring Titus & Simpson with Tasteez Bowls food truck on site www.facebook.com/portoftownwine

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Art games at the Yellow Line Art Studio www.theyellowline.co

8 p.m. Karaoke night with DJ C-Note at the Rex Theatre www.facebook.com/therexleonardtown

8:30 p.m. - Live music featuring Night Cap at Action Lounge and Billiards www.facebook.com/ActionLounge



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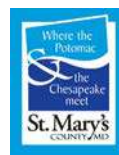
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Commission for Women Seeks Nominations for Annual Awards

The St. Mary's County Commission for Women (CFW) is pleased to announce the annual Women's History Month Brunch & Awards Ceremony, which will be held on Saturday, March 23, 2024, at the University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland, located at 44219 Airport Road, Bldg. 3 in California, Maryland (doors open at 10:30 a.m.). This annual event celebrates and recognizes the accomplishments of women and girls in our county.

This year's theme is "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion". St. Mary's County is fortunate to have many women who, through their volunteer contributions, have fought long and hard to stand up for other women and girls in our community. We invite you to help us celebrate their accomplishments!

Each year four awards are presented: the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Lifetime Achievement and Hometown Shero awards (selected by CFW), and the Woman of the Year and Tomorrow's Woman awards (community nomination; selected by independent panel of judges).

We are pleased to announce that the 2024 Ruth Bader Ginsburg Lifetime Achievement award will be presented to Mary Washington, a longtime advocate for education and current member of the St. Mary's County Board of Education. Frances Cullison has been named the 2024 Hometown Shero, in recognition and remembrance of her dedicated service with Ridge Volunteer Rescue Squad, including serving as the first female EMS Chief in St. Mary's County.

Nominations are now open for the "Woman of the Year" and "Woman of Tomorrow" awards. The deadline to submit nominations is 5 p.m. on Friday, March 8, 2024.

For event information, tickets, sponsorship opportunities, or to submit a nomination, please visit www.stmaryscountymd.gov/cwawards. For questions, please call (301) 475-4200, ext.1680.

Proceeds will support the Jane Hale-Sypher scholarship through the College of Southern Maryland, which was established to help returning, non-traditional students to further their educational goals.

Eleven Honored with Quilts of Valor



PAX Sound of Freedom awarded eleven Quilts of Valor, to all veterans, February 17 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lexington Park. From left front row are: John Gaskin, Jr, Army (20 yrs), William Burwell, Marines (29 yrs), Tarsha Carter, Army (10 yrs), Diane Thomas, Army (11 yrs), John Callahan, Marines (20 yrs). From left back row are: Stan Landreth, Army, (3 yrs), Robert Torstrick, National Guard (6 yrs), Thomas Walsh, Marines, (26 yrs), Jeffrey Guy, Army (3 yrs), Christopher Woehrer, Marines (4 yrs), David Clark, Sr., Navy (22 yrs).

If you have any questions about about Quilts of Valor or are interested in helping the local group produce quilts, please contact PAX Sound of Freedom Group Scheduler, Miriam Boles, at (240) 298-1744.

Pet of the Week

MEET AGATHA



Together let's find a cozy retirement spot for Agatha!

Hi, my name is Agatha and I'm a 16-year-old QUEEN OF COMFORT! Despite life's twists, my GENTLE SOUL radiates HOPE, longing for a FOREVER FAMILY to share sunny naps and ENDLESS AFFECTION. If you're ready to turn MY DREAMS into reality, PLEASE OPEN YOUR HEARTS and homes to a truly VINTAGE SWEETHEART who is ready to meet YOU today! Hurry on over during adoption hours, Monday-Friday 11am-4pm and Saturday 10am-3pm.

BE MY MIRACLE AND PLEASE CHOOSE ME! ALWAYS OPT TO ADOPT, please don't shop!

To see more of my amazing friends also available for adoption, "like" us on Facebook @ Charles County Animal Care Center or view us on our website at <https://www.charlescountymd.gov/services/animal-care-control/animal-care-center>



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How can women bridge the retirement gap?

March 8 is International Women's Day, a day for celebrating all the accomplishments of women around the globe. But many women still need to make up ground in one key area: retirement security.

Women's challenges in achieving a secure retirement are due to several factors, including these:

- **Pay gap** – It's smaller than it once was, but a wage gap still exists between men and women. In fact, women earn, on average, about 82 cents for every dollar that men earn, according to the Census Bureau. And even though this gap narrows considerably at higher educational levels, it's still a source of concern. Women who earn less than men will likely contribute less to 401(k) plans and will ultimately see smaller Social Security checks.
- **Longer lives** – At age 65, women live, on average, about 20 more years, compared to almost 17 for men, according to the Social Security Administration. Those extra years mean extra expenses.
- **Caregiving responsibilities** – Traditionally, women have done much of the caregiving for young children and older parents. And while this caregiving is done with love, it also comes with financial sacrifice. Consider this: The average employment-related costs for mothers providing unpaid care is nearly \$300,000 over a lifetime, according to the U.S. Department of Labor — which translates to a reduction of 15% of lifetime earnings. Furthermore, time away from the workforce results in fewer contributions to 401(k) and other employer-sponsored retirement plans.

Ultimately, these issues can leave women with a retirement security deficit. Here are some moves that can help close this gap:

- **Contribute as much as possible to retirement plans.** Try to contribute as much as you can afford to your 401(k) or similar employer-sponsored retirement plan. Your earnings can grow tax deferred and your contributions can lower your taxable income. (With a Roth 401(k), contributions aren't deductible, but earnings and withdrawals are tax free, provided you meet certain conditions.) At a minimum, contribute enough to earn your employer's matching contribution, if one is offered, and try to boost your contributions whenever your salary goes up. If you don't have access to a 401(k), but you have earned income, you can contribute to an IRA. Even if you don't have earned income, but you have a spouse who does, you might be eligible to contribute to a spousal IRA.
- **Maximize Social Security benefits.** You can start taking Social Security at 62, but your monthly checks will be much bigger if you can afford to wait until your full retirement age, which will be around 66½. If you are married, you may want to coordinate your benefits with those of your spouse — in some cases, it makes sense for the spouse with the lower benefits to claim first, based on their earnings record, and apply for spousal benefits later, when the spouse with higher benefits begins to collect.
- **Build an emergency fund.** Try to build an emergency fund containing up to six months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid account. Having this fund available will help protect you from having to dip into your retirement accounts for large, unexpected costs, such as a major home or car repair.

It's unfortunate, but women still must travel a more difficult road than men to reach retirement security. But making the right moves can help ease the journey.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

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Contributed by David McDonough

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Wanderings of an Aimless Mind

by Shelby Oppermann



They Paved Paradise...

It seems like so many changes are happening to our small county lately. Where there used to be old landmarks or forests, now there are areas of felled trees waiting for development. If someone has recently moved to St. Mary's County then they won't know



about all the things that once were part of the charm of St. Mary's. I'm a PG County transplant since 1979, although I spent lots of time here as a child at Point Lookout and St. Patrick's Creek with our Prowler camper trailer, and also spent quite a few summer sessions at Camp Maria in the late 60s and early 70s. We used to bring my grandmother down to Ye Coole Springs in Charlotte Hall in the mid-60s to get gallon jugs of the "healing waters" to slow down her cancer until her passing in 1969. The beauty and tranquility of Ye Coole Springs is one of the few things that have not changed except for the water has since been found unfit to drink.

You always hear change is good – I guess it depends on each person's definition. I do realize that people want their tax dollars to stay in the county and not have to travel to Waldorf for something that they like that may be unavailable here. Heck, I've always hoped that Nick's could open up another store in our county. But my thoughts right now are on the Charlotte Hall Farmer's Market which to me represents so many good memories over the years. Some early memories are when my brother Billy would come down from PG County in 1980 with well used Cintas pants and shirts that were being thrown away but were still in good enough shape for farmers and workers to wear. I would leave from my dorm room at St. Mary's College on Saturday mornings to meet Billy and we would set up at 5 am right up front near where Gardiner's Produce is now and sell the pants and shirts for \$3 and \$4 each to older gentleman that were thrilled to have them. My mother would come down from our hometown in Clinton and bring us a lunch of homemade fried chicken and potato salad, or some other amazing meal she would cook up for us.

The egg auctions next to the old Market restaurant fascinated me. I enjoyed watching how high or low the prices would go. It was all new to a suburban PG County girl 45 years ago. I also loved seeing all the Amish food stands and the animals they brought with them to sell. It seems like there were more Amish shops back then. Whenever I headed back home from college there was sure to be a Shoofly pie to take to my parents. And I remember all the years of my sons and I walking those dusty lanes between the buildings and finding treasures from all the vendors. So many memories.

I went to the Farmer's Market Saturday the 17th and met my oldest son there, we had a nice breakfast at Helen's Cafe and I walked in quite a few shops, and last Saturday I met my youngest son, his two little boys, and his girlfriend at The Farmers Market and we wandered in so many of the shops again. I know lots of the vendors there and worked with some of them over the years when I was dealing antiques and collectibles. In talking with the vendors, it seems that many were still in shock about leaving a lot sooner than they thought. I heard the word heartbreaking a few times here and there, as well as using it myself many times.

Just thinking of yet another county landmark being bulldozed down is heartbreaking to me, it truly brings tears to my eyes. I'm sure not everyone looks at the Farmer's Market and the old homes and businesses in St. Mary's County like my husband and my sons do, many look at it as progress or having "exciting" new fast food chains on the way. Some people probably think of everything at the Market as junk, well they must not ever have been in all the interesting shops or talked with all the wonderful vendors like Becky Tyer, Paula Johnson, or Charlie Brown. The photo with this column is of my friend Becky Tyer, a Farmer's Market vendor for 39 years, along with her hard-working nephews Darrian Hall (on left), Darius Hall, and her husband Oscar Tyer.

I see some of the reasons I stayed in St. Mary's County after college slowly getting bulldozed and paved over. Though I still love St. Mary's County with all my heart and am thankful for all that hasn't changed and all that is still rural. But I can never stop seeing ghost images of what was here or there, or the memories of what happened in those ghost place images. Now Joni Mitchell's 1970 Big Yellow Taxi lyrics are constantly in my head... "They paved paradise to put up a parking lot".

To each new day's adventure, Shelby

Please send your comments or ideas to: shelbys.wanderings@yahoo.com or find me on Facebook

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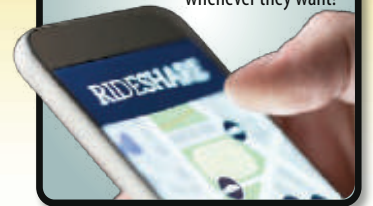
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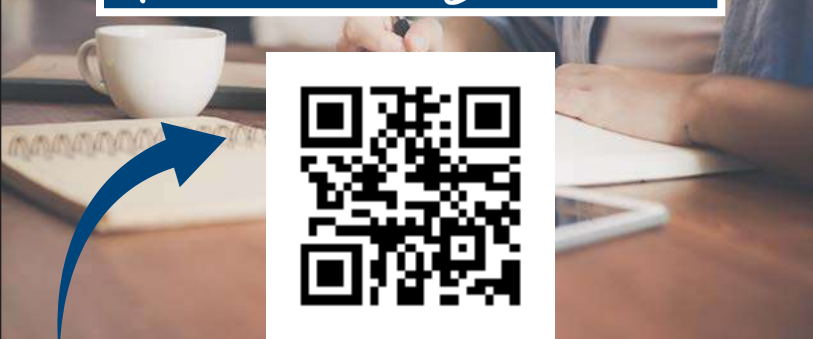
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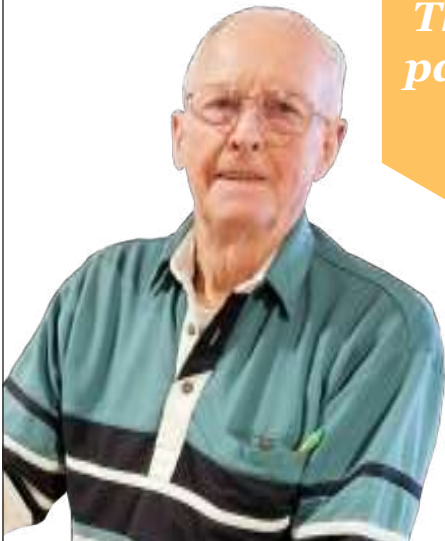
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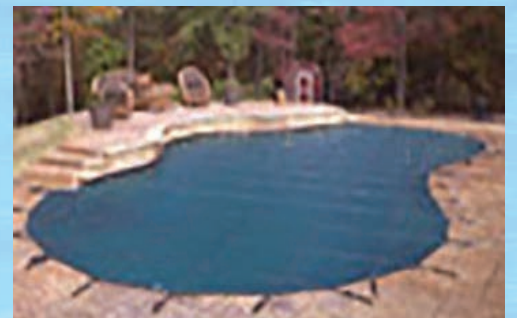
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To schedule an obituary in the County Times, submit text and picture to aldailey@countytimes.net by noon on Tuesdays for publication on Thursdays. Any submissions received after this deadline may run in the following week's edition.

In Remembrance

Carol Porter, 54



Carol Jeanette Ballew Porter, 54, of Hollywood, MD, gained her angel wings in the early morning hours of Sunday, February 18, 2024. Carol leaves behind her loving parents, Kay and Ray Ballew of Hollywood, MD, her sons whom she dearly loved, Darren and Daniel Ballew, her best friend and husband, Mark A. Porter, her brothers, Ray Ballew (Lisa) and Donny Goble, her sister, Sissy Goble of NC, four grandchildren — to Owen, she was “Gigi”, as well as two special fur babies that she loved, Minnie and Daisy.

Carol graduated from Leonardtown High School. Carol married her husband, Mark, in 1996, after meeting him at a Crime Solvers' Dance. They shared 29 wonderful years together and were married for 27 years. Carol worked at the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office and retired due to health issues that plagued her throughout her life; however, she was a fighter, and at times, hard-headed, which helped her overcome those health issues. She was then diagnosed with lung cancer in July 2023 and underwent three major surgeries in November 2023, but she never quit fighting.

Carol had a heart of gold and her smile would light up a room. She had many friends and always made time to speak with them. Carol had a love for sunsets and filled her phone with beautiful photos of them. She was a bright light with her beautiful brown eyes and special smile, and an incredibly remarkable woman who will be greatly missed and never forgotten. To know her was to love her. When you stop to take in a sunset, think of Carol; she is now free from pain. Fly high, my Carol.

The family will receive friends on Thursday, February 29, 2024 from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held in the funeral home chapel on Friday, March 1, 2024 at 10:00 AM with Pastor Gwen Banks and Pastor Larry Crabtree officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be her sons, Darren and Daniel Ballew, Kevin and Joey Somerville, her brother, Ray

Ballew, and her husband, Mark A. Porter. Condolences may be made to the family at www.mgfh.com.

Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

Donnie Chainay, 71



Donald Joseph Chainay, Sr., 71, of California, MD passed away on Sunday, February 18, 2024 at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital with his loving family at his side.

He was born on August 31, 1952 in Bethesda, MD to the late Raymond Elzear Chainay and Ruth Louise (nee: Faunce) Chainay.

Donnie is a 1969 graduate of Great Mills High School. He was retired from Calvert County Government as a Maintenance Supervisor after many dedicated years of employment. On October 21, 1983 he married his beloved wife, Kim Duke Chainay in Valley Lee, MD. Together they celebrated over 40 wonderful years of marriage. His hobbies included studying Genealogy and sharing the information with his friends and family. He enjoyed reminiscing about good times in Leonardtown. He loved Bluegrass music and played the stand up bass in the Dixie Ramblers and Flyin Blind Bluegrass bands. In his younger years he was an avid softball player and played on several teams, including: Budweiser, Dukes Bar and Pennies, as a third baseman. He also liked to play basketball and shoot pool. He enjoyed family vacations to Nags Head, Dunkin Donut Frappes and playing with his dog Emma. He instilled a love of music and a strong work ethic in his children. His family was his greatest joy and he especially loved time spent with them, especially his grandchildren.

Donnie is survived by his loving wife, Kim; his children, Cassie Mewbuorn (Matthew) of LaPlata, MD, Donald Chainay, Jr. (Taylor) of Lexington Park, MD; siblings: Rick Chainay of Piney Point, MD, Ruth Alice Schiros (Bob) of St. Pete Beach, FL, Bruce Chainay of Park Hall, MD, and Robert Chainay of Toms River, NJ; grandchildren, Austin and Carson Chainay; and extended family and friends. In addition to

his parents, he is also preceded in death by his sister, Sheila Farrell.

All services will be private.

Condolences to the family may be made at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

Tony Hyde, 60



Southern Maryland has lost a treasured soul and life-long member of the Charlotte Hall community with the passing of Paul Anthony Hyde, 60, affectionately

known as “Tony.” He passed away unexpectedly on February 1, 2024 with his adoring wife and loving family by his side.

He was born on January 27, 1964 in Prince Frederick, MD to the late Joseph Harold Hyde, Sr. and Mary Pauline (Wilkerson) Hyde.

On July 4, 2017 Tony married his soul-mate Dorinda Hill. He told her every year on their anniversary there would be fireworks. Tony and Dorinda knew each other since they were playmates as young children. They found each other again and over the next 6 years they shared a storybook love

and created a home that was their haven.

Tony was a hardworking man with an unmatched work ethic. After being a proud graduate of Chopticon High School Class of 1982 he became a truck driver. “Big T” was a Kenworth man, and started his own company Hyde's Trucking. Later, together with his wife, they opened up Hyde's Uniform Shop at the Farmer's Market in Charlotte Hall. Every Saturday he could be found there in his captain's chair joyfully meeting and greeting his family, friends and loyal customers.

Tony was a magnetic force, people gravitated towards him. If you ever met Tony you would never forget him. He was a positive man who could find the bright side of life no matter the circumstance. His motto was “tomorrow is a new day.”

Tony was best known for his hilarious sense of humor and having such a large compassionate heart. His presence would light up the room. If you were with him you were guaranteed to laugh because he would always have a great story or a joke for you. His very favorite thing to do was finding a steal of a deal and bargains offered on many auction sites.

Tony's life was one of giving. He was a steadfast provider and protector of his entire family. He shared his knowledge, his time, his great compassion and understanding. He

Continued on page 14



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REMEMBRANCES
IN PRINT & ONLINE

County Times

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www.brinsfieldfuneral.com

In Remembrance

Continued from page 13

had a generous soul and gave willingly to any in need. He would say, you do not need to tell anyone, this is between you, me and God. He was strong in his convictions and a straight shooter. His absence will be profoundly felt by all who knew and loved him.

In addition to his wife Dorinda, Tony is also survived by his children, Michael Hyde; John Hughes of Charlotte Hall, MD; Brendan Hughes of Florida; Marlena Navarro (Paul) of Fort Washington, MD; Sarah Hughes (Juan Carlos Molina) of Mechanicsville, MD; brother Charles "Rusty" Hyde (Beth) of Loveville, and his grandchildren: Allison Hyde, Braden Hughes, Ericka Bull, Camilla Navarro, Leiliana Navarro, and Julian Molina. He is preceded in death by his parents, daughter Ashley Hyde and siblings Joseph Hyde, Jr. and Debra Gray.

A Celebration of Life is being planned for the Spring. Invitations will be sent by his family.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com.

Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home & Crematory, P.A., Charlotte Hall, MD.

Nita Dohrman, 97



Oneita (Nita) Sommerkamp Dohrman, 97, of California, MD, passed away peacefully Thursday, February 22, 2024.

She was born in Cumberland, MD, to the late John Humbird and Anna Marion (Padgett) Sommerkamp.

Nita was raised in Cumberland where she graduated from Fort Hill High School in 1944 and Memorial Hospital Nursing School in 1947. Upon graduation she moved to New York City to begin a nursing career at New York Hospital/Cornell Medical Center. While living in New York Nita fell in love with everything about "the city that never sleeps". She would revisit often throughout her life with family and friends showing them all that New York has to offer including riding the subway and attending the most current theatre productions.

In November of 1951 she met her future husband, Wil, on a blind date and they were married in August of 1952. They moved to Morgantown, WV, where Nita worked as a Nursing Supervisor while Wil continued his college education. For the next decade they worked, studied, and started their family in Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties in Maryland before moving to St. Mary's County in 1965. She soon embraced "the County" life and enjoyed new food experiences including crabs, stuffed ham, and especially fried oysters.

Nita continued her nursing career first at the St. Mary's Nursing Center in Leonardtown then at the Village Medical Center in Mechanicsville. She left in 1974 to work with Dr. Eugene Guazzo at the newly

established Maryland Infirmary in Choptico before retiring after 25 years in 1989.

Nita was a woman of strong faith, and since 1965 a devoted member of Hollywood United Methodist Church, and active with the United Methodist Women.

Nita was an avid fan of baseball and football at all levels. Her love of football started while in high school where perennial powerhouse Fort Hill would pack Sentinel Stadium. She was a lifelong Orioles fan after the team's arrival in Baltimore in 1954 and a Baltimore Colts fan turned Washington Redskins fan after the Colts 1984 midnight "sneak out of town".

Nita was the scorekeeper for her son's little league baseball teams and enthusiastically supported her children's extracurricular activities. She also attended and enjoyed Great Mills and Chopticon High Schools' athletic and other events. Most of all Nita loved watching her grandchildren compete in gymnastics, swimming, baseball, and football.

Nita enjoyed playing Bridge, was an avid reader, and loved the music of Tony Bennett. She enjoyed knitting and was also an extremely skilled seamstress winning many ribbons at the St. Mary's County Fair for her entries.

Over the years Nita was a volunteer not only with her Church but also with Parent Teacher Associations, St. Mary's County Library, Interfaith Volunteers, Happy Hearts, St. Mary's County Fair, Meals on Wheels, St. Paul's UMC Soup Kitchen, SIDS Invitational Golf Tournament, and many others.

Nita is survived by her children Leigh Miller (Lee) Harrellsville, NC, Grace-Anne Dohrman (Herschel Wilder) California, MD, and Chuck Dohrman Baltimore, MD. Also survived by grandchildren Cassandra Fox (Daniel), Marinanicole Schultheiss (Matt), Luke Dohrman, Jacob Dohrman, and great-grandchildren Theodore and Lee Fox. She is also survived by many people special to her including sister-in-law Patricia Dohrman, Teresa Dohrman, cousins, nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and -nephews. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Wilbur Dohrman, her in-laws Wilbur J. and Eva Dohrman, grandson Zachary Dohrman, brother and sister-in-law Charles (Hummie) and Teresa Sommerkamp, brother-in-law Paul Dohrman, and son-in-law Ted Vickers.

The family will receive visitors Monday, March 4, 2024, at Brinsfield Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, from 4 to 7 pm. Funeral service will be held at 11 am Tuesday, March 5, 2024, Hollywood United Methodist Church, Hollywood, MD, with interment to follow at Joy Chapel Cemetery, Hollywood, MD.

Donations in her name may be made to: United Women of Faith, c/o Hollywood United Methodist Church, 24422 Mervell Dean Road, Hollywood, MD 20636 or The St. Mary's County Library Foundation, 23630 Hayden Farm Lane, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Estelle Ruleman, 86



Estelle Lee Ruleman, age 86, passed away peacefully on February 16, 2024, surrounded by her loving family. She was born December 21, 1937 to Dorothy N.

Poe (Bauer) and Edgar Allen Poe in Laurel, Maryland. She was a beloved Mother, Sister, Grandmother, Great-Grandmother, Great-Great-Grandmother, and cherished friend.

Estelle's early years were dedicated to family, where she lovingly embraced the roles of motherhood and homemaker. In her professional journey, she worked as a receptionist at the Fort Myers Press, made lifelong friends as a bartender at various locations, was a secretary at A&M Glass in Southern Maryland, and a clerk at Walmart. Her genuine kindness endeared her to many, and she gracefully concluded her career in the cash office for Walmart in Vero Beach, FL.

Beyond work, Estelle found joy in attending family functions, gardening, and watching her favorite western TV shows. Outdoors, she delighted in boating on the lake, fishing and catching crabs in the Chesapeake Bay, and always enjoyed being outdoors paying special attention to her many plants that surrounded her home. A fervent sports enthusiast, she passionately cheered for her favorite football teams, the Washington Redskins and Georgia Bulldogs. Her love for friendly competition extended to playing pool with family and friends.

Estelle is survived by her brothers, Floyd Poe of Athens, GA, and Lynn Poe (Paulette) of Lake Worth, FL, along with her sister, Nancy Grace (Tom) of Athens, GA. She is preceded in death by her parents, her sister Marie McAllister, her brother Dennis Poe, and her son-in-law Jim Graham.

Estelle leaves behind a legacy embraced by her loving daughters: Patti Albertsen (Roy) of Lincolnton, GA, Donna Graham of Orange Park, FL, Sandy Guy-Good (Haze) of Vero Beach, FL, Wendy Ruleman (Darren Buckler) of Mechanicsville, MD, Jodi Davidson of Vero Beach, FL, and loving son Brian Ruleman (Denise Dixon) of Vero Beach, FL. She is survived by her 23 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren, each a testament to the love she shared with them. Estelle also leaves behind many nieces, nephews, and extended family members.

Estelle celebrated a life beautifully lived, filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments. May her memory be a source of comfort and inspiration for all who were touched by her grace. Estelle will be deeply missed and forever remembered in our hearts.

The family will receive friends on March 2nd, 2024 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. with a memorial service at 1 p.m. at Beggs Funeral Home, 200 May Avenue, Lincolnton, GA 30817.

Memorial donations may be made to St Jude Children's Hospital.

Beggs Funeral Home, Lincolnton is hon-

ored to serve the family of Mrs. Estelle Lee Ruleman.

Dotty Ryce, 78



Dorothy Victoria Ryce, "Dotty", 78, of Mechanicsville, MD, passed away peacefully on February 25, 2024 at her home surrounded by family. Born on August 17,

1945 in Leonardtown, MD, she was the daughter of the late Eileen Burch and the late William Burch. Dotty was the loving wife of the late Dickie Ryce, whom she married on August 1, 1964 in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Mechanicsville, MD, and who preceded her in death on March 11, 2008. She is survived by her children, Ricky Ryce (Elise) of Mechanicsville, MD and Tammy Carpenter of Mechanicsville, MD, her sisters, Louise Gough (Francis) of Choptico, MD and Kathy Guy (Al) of Mechanicsville, MD, her brother, Michael Burch of Mechanicsville, MD, her sisters-in-law, Margaret Mary Burch and Peggy Derrick (Pete), grandchildren, Amanda Meshach (Seth), Wayne Carpenter, Cal Carpenter, and Cadence Ryce, and great-grandchildren, Charlotte Meshach and Jameson Meshach. In addition to her parents, Dotty was preceded in death by her brother, Bubby Burch.

Dotty was a lifelong St. Mary's County, MD resident and graduated from St. Mary's Academy in 1964. She was a Para Professional for the St. Mary's County Board of Education for 39 years, retiring on June 30, 2012. Dotty enjoyed watching county softball and soap operas, dancing, and playing pitch. Her fondest memories were those spent going to the beach with Dad, spending time with former classmates having lunch, and spending time with her family, grandkids, and great-grandkids. Dotty will be missed by all who had the pleasure to know her.

The family will receive friends on Tuesday, March 5, 2024 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held at 11:00 AM in the funeral home chapel with Deane Wolfe officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be Michael Burch, David Burch, Stan Guy, Timmy Carpenter, Cal Carpenter, and Robbie Cooper. Honorary pallbearers will be Amanda Meshach, Cadence Ryce, Katie Van Hoozier, and Butch Fox.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Clements Cuties Foundation, P.O. Box 992, Mechanicsville, MD 20659.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.mgfh.com.

Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

St. Mary's Community Calendar

To submit your event listing to go in our Community Calendar, please email timescalendar@countytimes.net with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

Thu, Feb 29

MVRS Chicken Dinner

Thompsons Seafood Corner Market
28765 Three Notch Rd, Mechanicsville
9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Please come out and enjoy a \$10.99 chicken dinner hosted by Thompsons Corner Seafood! The dinner will include four pieces of chicken, two sides, and a roll. Come support local first responders!

State of the Schools

Dr. James A. Forrest Career & Technology Center
24005 Point Lookout Rd., Leonardtown
11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Dr. J. Scott Smith will present an update in regard to St. Mary's County Public Schools. There will be an optional guided tour and a delicious lunch catered by the Forrest Technology culinary students. The doors will open at 11 a.m. and the program will begin at 12 p.m.

Fri, Mar 1

Drive thru Fried Shrimp Dinner

Mechanicsville Volunteer Fire Department
28165 Hills Club Rd., Mechanicsville
5p.m. to 7p.m.

Sat, Mar 2

Relay For Life of St Mary's County

St Mary's College of Maryland
47645 College Drive., St. Mary's City
4p.m. to 8 p.m.

FREE community walking event celebrating our county cancer survivors, remembering and honoring loved ones who lost their cancer battle, and supporting those currently undergoing treatment. This is an opportunity to fight back together against cancer. We will have entertainment, food trucks, music, Zumba, various on-site fundraisers and a Brown Bag auction. Opening ceremonies are scheduled for 4pm at the Michael P O'Brien Rec Courts at St. Mary's College

(19050 Hill Commons Dr, St Marys City, MD 20686)

HVFD Annual Spring Dinner

Social Hall of the Hollywood Fire House
24801 Three Notch Rd., Hollywood
1p.m. to 5p.m.

Carry Out Only: \$30 per dinner- cash or check. Menu: Stuffed Ham, Fried Oysters, Chicken Salad, Candied Sweet Potatoes, Parsley Potatoes, Green Beans, Cole Slaw, Beets & Roll. Stuffed Ham and Chicken Salad for sale by the pound. Bake Sale and 50/50 raffle

Sun, Mar 3

Benefit Quarter Auction for Peter Reshetar

Mechanicsville Moose Lodge
27636 Mechanicsville Rd., Mechanicsville
Noon to 4p.m.

Benefit Quarter Auction with a Silent Auction and a Leprechaun Hunt. There will also be food available for purchase

and a Bake Sale table to help satisfy your sweet tooth. Peter has been on dialysis since February 2020 and in search of a kidney donor. This is to help Peter with the medical expenses that he endures while waiting on a kidney. Wear something green to receive a free paddle with the purchase of at least 2 paddles or an "ALL IN" paddle. Limit one free paddle per person, Reservations are not required but encouraged. Call or Text Lori at 301-535-5778 with any reservations or questions you may have.

Wed, Mar 6

Leonardtown Lions Club Meeting

Olde Breton Inn
21890 Society Hill Rd., Leonardtown
7:30 p.m.

John Richards, President of the St. Mary's County Fair Association, will be the Guest Speaker at the Leonardtown Lions Club meeting.

All interested community members are invited to attend. Buffet Dinner (optional 6:45). For reservations contact Lion George georgekirbylions@gmail.com

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library

UPCOMING EVENTS



Gardening for Biodiversity: Connecting People and Native Plants for A Healthy Planet

Explore the fascinating world of pollinators and beautiful Maryland native plants, while learning to recognize invasive "look-a-like" plant species that are commonly found in home gardens at Leonardtown Library on Saturday, March 2 from 10 - 11 a.m. Recommended for ages 10 and up. Join Esther Bonney and Sam Rutherford, co-founders of Nurture Natives, along with Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay founders Marlene and Bill Smith, for an inspiring and educational family event. After the presentation, there will be pollinator crafts and activities, igniting a passion for conservation among all ages. You don't want to miss out on this inspiring presentation and workshop! Register on www.stmalib.org.

Stroller Squad Fitness Storytime

Our friends from SPICE Studio will teach a stroller fitness class, followed by

a storytime presented by the library, and a craft provided by SPICE at Leonardtown Library on Tuesday, March 5 from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. SPICE Studio will provide a 30-min workout incorporating power walking, jogging, and/or running with functional interval training to help you build endurance, strength, and core. Caregivers are led through movements that train their bodies for mom (or dad, or other caregiver) life. Suitable for all levels of fitness, no matter where you are in your fitness journey. Babies are there with you the entire time and entertained with whatever it takes to help you get in your workout for the day. Register on www.stmailb.org.

Cricut Crafts: Custom Bag

Come learn more about the library's Cricut Maker and practice cutting heat transfer vinyl to embellish a tote bag to take home at Leonardtown Library on Thursday, March 7 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. This introductory, in-person class will cover how to use an electronic die-cutting machine called the Cricut Maker to create an iron-on decal using heat transfer vinyl (HTV)

and how to apply that decal to a canvas tote bag using the Cricut Easy Press. Participants will also learn the basics of Cricut Design Space, the software used to create endlessly customizable designs. No experience necessary, all materials provided. Register on www.stmalib.org.

English Conversation Hour: Cafecito en la Biblioteca

Join us every 1st Thursday of the month at Lexington Park Library to Practice your English speaking skills in a group. The next session will be held on Thursday, March 7 from 6 - 7 p.m. This is a fun, casual atmosphere to practice and improve your English. Speakers of all levels are welcome. There will be a new topic for every meeting. Activities will be provided for accompanying children. No registration.

Resume Builder's Workshop

A workshop event to help job-seekers to develop skills to create resumes and improve existing ones. Join us at Charlotte Hall Library on Wednesday, March 13 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. In partnership with the

Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Renting vs Owning a Home: Lunch & Learn Series

Pack a lunch and join Dr. Troy Anthony Anderson, financial wellness expert, as he breaks down the complex decision that is whether to rent or buy a home at Lexington Park Library on Wednesday, March 13 from 12 - 1 p.m. There are many factors that go into making such an important decision, from the high initial cost of home-ownership to the home equity you might be missing out on by renting. interactive workshop is packed with practical, family-oriented exercises that will help you be the master of your own financial wellness. The Lunch & Learn series is a hybrid event. If you are planning to attend virtually, be sure to register for the event to receive a link to the online session. In-person walk-ins welcome. All registrants will receive a Zoom link the day before the session. Register on www.stmalib.org.

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Calvert Community Calendar

To submit your event listing to go in our Community Calendar, please email timescalendar@countytimes.net with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

Thu, Feb 29

Lawyers in the Library

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
12-2 p.m.

Need help with an expungement? Have civil legal questions? Meet briefly with an attorney at the library to get hands on help. We will also be offering JobSource help with resumes and job searching and information about treatment, recovery, healthy lifestyles, conflict resolution, youth intervention, vocational training and more. Partners include MD Legal Aid, SoMD JobSource, and Healthy Beginnings from Calvert County Health Department and Calvert County Community Mediation Center. No cost. Registration is not required but if you provide information about the charges you wish expunged, the process may go more quickly. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Anime Night

Calvert Library Fairview Branch
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Rd, Owings
6-7 p.m.

A fun night of anime! Tweens/Teens in grades 6-12 invited. Come hang out with friends and other fans of anime. We will watch anime, talk about our favorite manga and sample some books, use art supplies for anime creations, and try some Japanese snacks! 410-257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Reading Buddies

Calvert Library Southern Branch,
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons,
6:30-7:30 p.m.

At this event, elementary-aged children will do fun activities and read out loud to teen volunteers. Teen volunteers can earn one service learning hour for participating. 410-535-0291. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Fri, Mar 1

On Pins & Needles

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
1-4 p.m.

Bring your quilting, needlework, knitting, crocheting or other project for an afternoon of conversation and shared creativity. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

First Fossil Friday!

Calvert Marine Museum
1-4:30 p.m.

Fossil hunters, bring your fossil finds from the Calvert Cliffs or other local areas to be identified! This service is provided for free; however, admission fees apply for access to CMM exhibits. For more information, visit: Calendar • First Fossil Friday! (calvert-marinemuseum.com)

12 Hikes in '24 Hiking Challenge

American Chestnut Land Trust
8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Participants must register, and then sign-in using the QR code at any American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) trailhead at least one time each month to qualify for a prize at the end of the year. Participants are encouraged to upload photos from each hike to ACLT's Facebook and Instagram with hashtag #ACLT12Hikesin24, and to join the Facebook Group "ACLT's Hiking Challenges Group."

Sat, Mar 2

Farm to Table Heritage Breakfast

Calvert County Fairgrounds
7-10:30 a.m.

This community event is hosted by the

Calvert County Historical Society. The local product breakfast includes fried potatoes, bacon, sausage gravy, country links in sage, biscuits and local jellies, Olga's cakes, local yogurt and fruit, and scrambled eggs. Children's activities and historic pictures of Calvert County are featured. Tickets are \$18 with children 6 and under free. 410-535-2452. www.calverthistory.org.

ACLT Annual Meeting and Luncheon

St. John Vianney Family Life Center
225 Holy Family Ln, Prince Frederick
9:30 a.m.

Review accomplishments from American Chestnut Land Trust's current five-year plan (2019-2023) and adopt the next five-year plan.

Sun, Mar 3

Southern Maryland Bluegrass -High Fidelity

Calvert Elks 2620
1015 Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick
2 p.m.

The doors will open at Noon and the performance will start at 2:00 PM. Cuzin's N Harmony will open the show. Many folks remember the Bluegrass records from the 1950s and '60s. The power and soul of that music has won the hearts of people across the globe. Only a few bands have come along in recent years that draw their influence from that classic era of music's history. High Fidelity is a group that has a love and dedication to that style. The name alone says it all: "HIGH FIDELITY"! Many record albums from the '50s and '60s bears those words. Tickets will be \$23.00 per person and sold at the door beginning at Noon. Children under 12 are admitted free with a paying adult. Food will be available for sale by the Calvert Elks Lodge beginning at noon until 2:30. A 50/50 raffle and door prizes will be offered. For more information, please call 301-737-

3004 or go to www.somdbluegrass.com.

Thu, Mar 7

Sea Squirts: Animals with Pouches

Calvert Marine Museum
10:15 & 11:15 a.m.

Children 18 months to 3 years, with an adult, are invited to discover the museum together through music, stories, and special activities. Join us for story time and a craft, available while supplies last. Sessions are 25-40 minutes. Cost is free with museum admission. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive. For more information, visit: <https://www.calvertmarinemuseum.com/212/Sea-Squirts-18-mos---3-yrs>

Upcoming

Spring Auction

Online
Saturday, March 9 at 12pm - Sunday,
March 10 at 4pm.

Hosted by C.A.S.H. NSBE Jr., Calvert County Chapter of Maryland, a student chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)!. This online auction is a fundraising event to support the participation of our students in the National NSBE STEM annual convention scheduled for March 2024 in Atlanta, GA. Whether you're a seasoned bidder or simply want to support our cause, there's something for everyone. Plus, if bidding isn't your style, we offer a donation option too!

- To register, simply follow these steps:
1. Visit <https://app.galabid.com/cashnsbejauction>
 2. Click on the 'Register' button
 3. Follow the instructions to complete your registration.

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The County Times is a weekly newspaper providing news and information for the residents of St. Mary's and Calvert County. The County Times will be available on newsstands every Thursday. The paper is published by Southern Maryland Publishing Company, which is responsible for the form, content, and policies of the newspaper. The County Times does not espouse any political belief or endorse any product or service in its news coverage.

To be considered for publication, articles and letters to the editor submitted must include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number. Submissions must be delivered by 4 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication to ensure placement for that week. After that deadline, the County Times will make every attempt possible to publish late content, but cannot guarantee so. Letters may be condensed/edited for clarity, although care is taken to preserve the core of the writer's argument. Copyright in material submitted to the newspaper and accepted for publication remains with the author, but the County Times and its licensees may freely reproduce it in print, electronic or other forms. We are unable to acknowledge receipt of letters. The County Times cannot guarantee that every letter or photo(s) submitted will be published, due to time or space constraints.



County Times

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CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of February 12 – February 18, 2024, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,181 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health – 55
- Disorderly – 14
- Domestic – 18
- Motor Vehicle Crashes – 35
- Patrol Checks / School Checks – 1,114
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles – 31
- Traffic Complaints – 53 911
- Hang Ups – 62
- Arrests – 14

NOTABLE CASES / INCIDENTS



Zamahri Lydell Talley

Fleeing and Eluding: 24-12185 On February 14, 2024, DFC Wilder initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle traveling well above the posted speed limit in the area of Calvert Cliffs State Parkway in Lusby.

DFC Wilder observed the vehicle operating aggressively, in addition to running a red light. The driver then attempted to elude DFC Wilder by accelerating and turning off its lights while still in motion. The vehicle eventually came to a stop in the 1000 block of Ball Road, in a residential driveway. The driver, identified as **Zamahri Lydell Talley**, 20, of Prince Frederick, was apprehended and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Negligent Driving, Reckless Driving, Fleeing and Eluding, along with other traffic-related offenses.

Fleeing and Eluding: 24-12565 On February 16, 2024, Senior Deputy Idol observed a motorcycle traveling at a high rate splitting traffic through Dunkirk. S/D



Hunter Bruce Swarouth

the deputy's vehicle onto the shoulder and into the grass, passing vehicles on the wrong side of the road. In an attempt to end the pursuit, S/D Idol slowed his vehicle so the driver would stop safely on the roadway, but instead drove up an embankment continuing to flee. S/D Idol caught up to the vehicle and the driver pulled over. The driver, **Hunter Bruce Swarouth**, 27 of Lothian, was placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Fleeing and Eluding along with several other traffic-related violations.

Tampering: 24-12620 On February 16, 2024, Deputy Tunnell responded to the Ford Dealership located at 10 Solomons Island Road in Prince Frederick, for the report of vehicle tampering. Contact was made with the complainant who advised at approximately 12:45 a.m. on Feb. 15, an unknown white male was lurking around the dealership parking lot and made entry and removed items from approximately 25-30 vehicles. The estimated value of damaged and stolen property is unknown at this time.

Theft: 24-12301 On February 15, 2024, Deputy Zinn responded to the 7300 block of F Street in Chesapeake Beach, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised his 2022 Redmax EBX8560 75.66CC Backpack Leaf Blower was stolen from his trailer while parked on Horace Ward Road in Owings. The estimated value of stolen property is \$690.

Idol located the vehicle in the area of Ferry Landing Road and attempted a traffic stop with lights and sirens activated. The driver continued southbound at traveling at speeds of 80 mph+. The driver sped around

Theft: 24-12616 On February 16, 2024, Deputy Campbell responded to the report of an attempted vehicle theft at the Crossroad Christian Church Park and Ride located at 150 Ball Road in St. Leonard. The complainant advised someone had attempted to steal his company vehicle, a white 2020 Ford Transit Van. The complainant observed signs of forced entry; the glove box was found open, the ignition had been tampered with and drilled out of the steering column, and three Milwaukee 12v batteries were missing. The estimated value of the damaged property is \$1,100, while the approximate cost to replace the vehicle is \$18,000.



Donovan Lee Bragg

Weapon Violation: 24-13416 On February 18, 2024, Deputy Baxter responded to a traffic complaint along SB Rt 4 in the area of Lancaster Drive in St. Leonard. The complainant advised she observed a red passenger vehicle strike a guardrail multiple times while driving. Witnesses observed the vehicle facing northbound in the southbound lanes, spin around, and keep driving. The complainant observed the vehicle turn into the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Powerplant in Lusby, where security located the vehicle in their parking lot. The security officer witnessed the driver exit the vehicle and urinate in front of it. Upon making contact with the driver, **Donovan Lee Bragg**, 21 of Pataskala, OH, a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage was emitting from Bragg's breath. After a series of standard field sobriety tests, the investigation revealed Bragg was impaired and unable to safely operate a motor vehicle. As Bragg was placed into custody, he advised there was a loaded handgun in his vehicle. Two magazines and a holster were also recovered. Bragg was charged

with Negligent and Reckless Driving, DWI, DUI, and Loaded Handgun in a Vehicle.



Malakhi Rashawn Harvey

Weapons Violation: 24-12988 On February 17, 2024, at 3:45 p.m., Senior Deputy (S/D) Idol observed a blue street bike traveling at a high rate northbound from Cox Road in Huntingtown. S/D Idol caught up to the vehicle and reported it was exceeding speeds of 100 mph weaving in and out of traffic. Due to heavy traffic and additional police units responding, the driver was forced to slow down and bring the pursuit safely to an end. The suspect, **Malakhi Rashawn Harvey**, 20 of District Heights, was taken into custody. During a search incident to arrest, a loaded firearm (a polymer semi-automatic handgun) with ten 9mm Ruger rounds was discovered in Harvey's front pocket. Harvey was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Concealing a Dangerous Weapon, Loaded Handgun on Person, Negligent and Reckless Driving, Fleeing and Eluding along with other traffic-related violations.

Editor's Note: The above arrests are not an indication of guilt or innocence as the cases have not been adjudicated.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call the Sheriff's Office at (410) 535-2800 and reference the case number provided. Citizens may remain anonymous thru the 'Submit a Tip' feature on the Calvert County Sheriff's Office mobile app. To download, visit <https://apps.myocv.com/share/a39520678>. Tipsters may also email ccsotips@calvertcountymd.gov

Fatal Motor Vehicle Crash in Huntingtown

On February 28, 2024, at approximately 11:41 a.m., members of the Calvert County Sheriff's Office Patrol Bureau responded to the area of Hunting Creek Road and Deep Landing Road in Huntingtown, for the report of a single motor vehicle crash. Upon arrival, deputies determined that the operator sustained life-threatening injuries. The Crash Reconstruction Team responded to the scene to investigate.

Preliminary investigation revealed that a 2018 Chevy Silverado, operated by Charles Michael Sullivan, 81 of Huntingtown, MD, was traveling eastbound on Deep Landing Road approaching Hunting Creek Road.

The driver failed to slow or stop for the stop sign, proceeded across Hunting Creek Road, left the roadway striking several trees.

Sullivan was transported to CalvertHealth where he was later pronounced deceased.

At this time, the cause of the crash appears to be medical-related.

Master Deputy Jeffrey Hardesty of the Crash Reconstruction Team is investigating the crash. Anyone who may have witnessed the crash or has additional information is asked to contact M/Dep. Hardesty at 410-535-2800 or by email, Jeffrey.Hardesty@calvertcountymd.gov.

Prince Frederick Man Sentenced for Sex Offenses

Jonathan F. Huffman, 38, of Prince Frederick, was sentenced on Feb. 22 to 50 years in prison, with 18 years of active incarceration, for sex abuse of a minor and second-degree rape. In imposing this sentence, Calvert County Circuit Court Judge Mark S. Chandlee described Huffman as "a wolf in sheep's clothing."

The case originated last year as a result of a cyber tip to the FBI. A joint investigation by the Calvert County Sheriff's Office and the Department of Social Services revealed that Huffman had been abusing the victim over many years. He told the victim that if she reported the abuse "things would get worse."

Huffman will be on 5 years of supervised probation and required to register for life as a sex offender when he gets out of prison.

State's Attorney Robert Harvey would like to commend Senior Assistant State's Attorney Rebecca N. Cordero for her outstanding work on this case.



Jonathan F. Huffman

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Technology Services Capital Budget Presented

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) reviewed capital requests from several departments at their Feb. 27 meeting. Included was a \$15 million, six-year request from the Department of Technology Services.

Capital Projects Analyst Veronica Atkinson gave an overview in a memo to the BOCC. She wrote: "The Department of Finance & Budget has reviewed Communications & Media Relations (CMR), Technology Services (TS), Planning and Zoning (P&Z) and the Department of Public Works Enterprise Funds (solid waste/water & sewer) General Fund requests for the FY 2025 - FY 2030 6-year CIP Staff Recommended Budget, totaling \$19,857,673. Furthermore, the Department of Finance & Budget reviewed the proposed Staff Recommended Budget for the Enterprise Funds, totaling \$90,148,052. It's essential to note that the Enterprise Funds derive financial support from the users of the services."

She said, "The fiscal impact to the county's General Fund for CMR, TS, and P&Z is broken out below:

- Pay-Go: \$18,837,673
- Debt/Bonds: \$0
- Grants/Other: \$1,020,000
- Total: \$19,857,673

She wrote, "The fiscal impact to the Enterprise Funds for Solid Waste/Recycling, Water and Sewer:

- User Fees: \$1,698,000
- Debt- Enterprise: \$63,950,327
- Grants/Other: \$1,450,000
- Utility Fees/Cap Conn: \$23,049,725
- Total: \$90,148,052

For Technology Services, Director Stephen Pereira explained, "We submitted this proposed CIP, and then in January under the direction of the county administrator and the board, we tried to cut back as many costs as what we could."

He noted that the Geographic Information System (GIS) proposal was cut, "We have now, since we have removed that completely from the CIP, we have gone back through existing funds, and we've found ways to fund it. So just to be clear, what this is used for is the enterprise systems, which is ESRI, and it's also used to pay for the imagery that we get done. There's a plane that flies over, provides all of the imagery for the GIS maps and systems."

He added, "Within enterprise systems, we have also cut back \$89,000 from that. So, the enterprise systems' request now sits at \$596,000; within that request you've got Workday Adaptive Planning. That is a new budgeting system for Workday. We have already paid for that, but we need to pay for the implementation of the system. We will start that once the system is stable. Initially

our target was to have a completely stable system within a year."

Pereira said, "There is \$150,000 for records management. That is for a new records management system. We also have \$226,000 in there. And that is for ServiceNow. That would be an upgraded ServiceNow system. What that would enable us to do is more people to become more digital across the organization, digitalize workflows. It also has the potential to have a 311 system on the website so that systems can have a single location to go to. And it will make it easier for them to access government services. But that is still something that you would need to consider whether or not you want to push forward with it or not."

Pereira noted, "In network infrastructure, the \$800,000 there is \$400,000 for a fiber hub switch replacement. That's part of our four-year project to replace the 10-year-old switches. We also have \$300,000 for storage and memory. When we put in all these new systems, all these new cameras and AI (artificial intelligence) and everything else, there's an unglamorous bit that sits behind it that people don't think about. And that is where we're going to store all this data. The need for storing data is increasing dramatically, particularly with the onset of Gen AI. I heard a stat recently that in FY 25 they believe that 10 percent of all data on the internet would've been created by Gen AI.



Technology Services Director Stephen Pereira

And that's a system that's only existed a little over a year. So that will give you an idea of the need for data and how much it's increasing."

Atkinson will conclude her presentation of the CIP next week with the transportation budget.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Proposal Mandates Direct Access for 911 Calls

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has approved a public hearing on a proposal to ensure direct access to 911 service with phone landlines inside businesses and other buildings.

At the BOCC Feb. 27 meeting, Department of Public Safety Emergency Communications Division Director Stanley Harris, Jr., explained, "Kari's Law was enacted by Congress in 2018 following the tragic death of Kari Hunt, who was killed by her estranged husband on December 1, 2013, in a Texas motel bathroom. Hunt's daughter attempted to dial 911 four times without success, as she was unaware that the hotel telephone system required dialing an additional access digit, "9," to reach an outside line. MD Public Safety Code § 1-314 mandates that multiple-line telephone systems connect directly to a public safety answering point (PSAP) without necessitating the user to dial any supplementary numbers. Additionally, the enforcement and PSAP certification of compliance are integral aspects of the code."

The proposal designates the Department of Public Safety as the enforcing authority for the proposed article in the county code. They also would be charged with establishing penalties for non-compliance.

Harris said, "Any person who violates the article is subject to a fine of \$100 on their first offense and a fine of \$200 for their second. And each subsequent offense each day that the violation exists would be considered a separate offense. And we're suggesting or proposing that no fines should be imposed until after 90 days after adoption. That would allow us to do public education and also provide time for everybody to make sure that their system is in compliance before any fines were lefty."

Commissioner President Buddy Hance asked, "So I assume this is going to impact hotels. Any business that uses a switchboard where you have to dial a number to get out?"

Harris replied, "Correct. Any business that uses a multi-line telephone." Examples given were the hospital and county government, although Harris said the county has already complied. He said, "A couple of years ago we realized that we had to dial nine to get out and we worked with TS (Technical Services) to have that changed in Calvert County government."

As to enforcement, Harris said, "The fire marshal's office in Maryland is actually doing the inspections and has been doing the inspections for Calvert County. So, we would continue that. They report when they actually do the inspection, it gets logged in our computer-aided dispatch system. And then we report to the state that how many

inspections that have been done and how many that were found not in compliance." He said the inspections are random.

At the same meeting, the BOCC also agreed to proceed with a public hearing on requirements that emergency responders be able to receive and send communications within buildings.

Harris explained, "Calvert County operates an 800 MHz digital trunked public safety radio system for first responder communications within the county, while the State of Maryland operates a statewide 700 MHz digital trunked public safety radio system. These systems are utilized by both local and state first responders in Calvert County. However, modern building design and construction techniques, particularly those required for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building designs, can hinder reliable two-way radio coverage for first responders inside buildings. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1 Fire Code, 2021 Edition, and NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, 2021 Edition, outline requirements for ensuring reliable public safety radio system coverage in both new and existing structures."

The proposed regulations would apply to new or renovated buildings.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

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Owings Garage Fire Under Investigation



By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Maryland State Fire Marshal's office is investigating a fire that started in the interior wall of a garage at a house in Owings/

According to a report from the fire marshal's office, "A neighbor discovered the fire and alerted the homeowner. The neighbor was able to safely evacuate her from the home. There were no injuries as a result of the fire."

The fire was reported on Feb. 26 at 3:58

p.m. The Dunkirk Volunteer Fire Department responded to the fire at 2185 Haleys Way and it took 15 firefighters 10 minutes to extinguish it. Damage was estimated at \$200. The occupant was identified as Deanna Stone.

There were no fire alarms or sprinklers in the building.

Anyone with any information regarding this incident is asked to contact the Office of the State Fire Marshal, Southern Regional Office, at 443-550-6835.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Planners Pave Way for Reopening of Indoor Sports Complex

Had Been Closed for Zoning Violation



Photo courtesy of Jason Scaggs

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Planning Commission has paved the way for an indoor recreation facility in Owings to reopen after it was issued a cease-and-desist order and closed for a zoning violation.

The MMG Sports Performance Center in the Meadow Run Park is located in one of two buildings that had been approved for flex space, not an indoor recreation facility. Although an indoor recreation is a permitted use in the zoning category in which it is located, that use has stricter parking requirements than a flex space.

Planner III Olivia Vidotto explained to the planners at their Feb. 21 meeting, "This site is part of the Meadow Run Park located in Owings. The site plan for Scaggs Industrial Flex Space (SPR2019-291) was approved by the Planning Commission on December 18, 2019, and received stamped approval on March 20, 2022. The project consisted of two flex space buildings... totaling 28,980 sq ft. and associated site improvements. The project was to be phased for construction. Both buildings have been constructed under permits issued for shell buildings. The zoning use category on the approved site plan is for Flex Space which allows a mixed use of retail, warehouse, and office."

Vidotto added, "The approved use on the site plan is for two flex space buildings. As of January 22, 2024, these buildings and property are under a zoning violation and a stop work order for commencing the use of an indoor recreation facility without proper site plan approval and permits. Bldg. #1 is currently leased to MMG Sports Performance Center for an indoor commercial recreation facility. This redlined site plan has been submitted to address the zoning violations. The applicant has indicated his plan for the use of Bldg. #2 will also be for an indoor commercial recreation center. This will require another redline approval for the change of use and to address parking requirements."

There is not enough parking around the occupied Building #1 for an indoor recreation facility under the zoning regulations, so the land owner has agreed to allow parking for

that use around the unoccupied Building #2, with plans to request offsite parking across the street when a use and occupancy permit is requested for the second building.

Before it was closed by the county, the indoor recreation facility of MMG Sports Performance Center was being rented by county high school teams and travel teams, largely for practice, according to the business owner Brian Griffin.

"It would be a combined use from soccer, baseball, softball. There's batting cages. Anything that's a grass sport really," Griffin said. Teams using the facility before it was closed were Northern High School baseball and football, Huntingtown High School baseball, and the two basketball teams.

Commission member Chris Gadway wanted to know why the indoor facilities at the schools weren't being used. Griffin said they weren't large enough.

Gadway noted that there's a trend to require fewer parking spaces for commercial property, a point confirmed by the applicant. Property owner Jasib Skaggs said, "These folks were driving to Waugh Chapel, which was a terrible place to drive through at five o'clock, terrible. These parents, they'll go up there, they're likely going to sit in the parking lot because it's too far to drive. But if you live on Briscoe Turn Road and you're coming basically Skinner's Turn Road, you're going to drop your kid off two hours and go home. So, I'm quite confident that we're not going to generate the parking need that the code requires."

Consulting engineer Dan Kelsh of COA Barrett said they hope to prove their case for the need for fewer parking spaces by showing the actual usage when the facility reopens and before the application for a use and occupancy permit for the second building.

After hearing the discussion, the planners approved, with two dissenting votes, the intensification in use and to proceed with review of the redline site plan addressing all agency comments including county, state, and federal requirements to obtain final signed site plan based on conditions recommended by staff."

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MICHAEL PALASCAK is a comedian who grew up in Indiana and now lives in LA. He performed on both *The Late Late Show with James Corden* and *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* in the same year. In addition, his résumé includes appearances on *A Little Late with Lilly Singh*, *The Tonight Show*, Letterman, Craig Ferguson, Conan, has a Comedy Central half hour special and was a top five finalist on *Last Comic Standing* where one judge claimed, "My first impression of Michael was a great likability. Michael's optimism continues in the new National Lampoon series on YouTube, *The Bright Side*, where he takes a positive stance on a negative topic. Consistently writing and performing, Michael released both a new album, *The Internet Live*, through 800 Pound Gorilla and a new stand-up special called *1984* on the Dry Bar app this summer. Visit www.michaelpalascak.com for more information.



HAYWOOD TURNIPSEED JR. During the day Haywood Turnipseed Jr. is a Husband, a Dad, a Telephone Man, and a Jedi; at night he becomes a Stand-Up Comic, and occasionally a Sith Lord. Haywood likes both Michael Jackson's & Prince's Music; Hip-Hop; The Pittsburgh Steelers Football Team; Mambo Sauce on chicken wings; and Laughing. Originally from the Holy Land of Indiana, Haywood graduated from high school in Moon Township, PA., attended two semesters at Waynesburg College, then enlisted in the US Air Force.



EDDIE MORRISON is a D.C. native who has performed stand-up comedy all over the metro area. His career includes appearances include the DC Improv, the Kennedy Center, the Comedy Store and Magooby's Jokehouse, where he was named runner-up at the 2015 New Comedian of the Year Competition. Eddie won Comedy Kumite 15.2 at the DC Improv in spring 2018 and Kumite 30 in spring 2021.

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State Joins Lawsuit over Kroger, Albertsons Merger

Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, along with a bipartisan coalition of eight other states, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have announced the filing of a lawsuit seeking to block the proposed merger of The Kroger Company (Kroger) and Albertsons Companies, Inc. (Albertsons).

Kroger and Albertsons are the two largest national supermarket chains. Together, the companies employ approximately 710,000 people nationwide and thousands of people across more than 80 stores right here in Maryland.

(Editor's Note: Kroger operates Harris Teeter, and Albertson's operates Safeway. Those two brands are located across from each other on opposite sides of Route 4 in Dunkirk. A divestiture plan with C&S Wholesale Grocers, LLC, which operates Piggly Wiggly, involved 10 unspecified Harris Teeter locations in the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia areas being sold to C&S and converted to Piggly Wiggly stores.)

"Americans spend more of their income on food than they have in decades. As Attorney General, I will not hesitate legal action to ensure Maryland families have access to affordable prices, a wide selection, and high-quality groceries," said Attorney General Brown. "I will also aggressively challenge anticompetitive corporate deals to ensure all Marylanders have the benefits of more, not less competition, in the marketplace."

Attorney General Brown also issued a full statement to the people of Maryland about this action his office took today, which can be found here: https://youtu.be/7jD0qbXGJ0?si=2_XuZqzTmmbP0Xgi.

The lawsuit alleges that the merger violates the federal Clayton Act. The Clayton Act prohibits the merger of firms if the merger may substantially reduce competition or create a monopoly. Businesses with fewer competitors can charge higher prices to consumers, reduce the quality and quantity of the products that they sell, and offer lower-quality customer service. In addition, anticompetitive supermarket mergers can impose other harms, including reduced labor market competition, which



Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown

may lower wages or slow wage growth, worsen benefits or working conditions, and otherwise lower workplace quality.

In August 2023, the Maryland Office of the Attorney General published an online survey on its website to give Marylanders an opportunity to provide input on the Kroger/Albertsons merger. When asked how such a merger "might affect you and your community," a majority of Marylanders who responded to the survey, nearly 60 percent, expressed concerns that it could lead to "decreased competition," "lower quality," "less product diversity," and would "inevitably [wreak] havoc on pricing and food availability."

In filing the lawsuit, Attorney General Brown joins the FTC and the Attorneys General of Arizona, California, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wyoming. A copy of the filed lawsuit will be made available at a later time.

Marylanders can continue providing their feedback to our Office by visiting www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov and completing the Kroger/Albertsons merger survey featured on our front page.

Press Release from Maryland Attorney General's Office

Bipartisan Support Cited at Ethics Bill Hearing

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Maryland House Environmental and Transportation Committee held a hearing on Feb. 22 on House Bill 834 intended to put teeth in the county's ethics law by allowing the removal of an elected official for an ethics violation. The bill came as the result of the legal wrangling over former commissioner Kelly McConkey's vote to include property he owned in the Huntingtown Town Center.

The bill was sponsored by Del. Mark Fisher (R: 27C) and Todd Morgan (R: 29C) but Fisher at the hearing pointed out that the county's third delegate Jeffrie Long (D: 27B) would also co-sponsor it. Senators Michael Jackson (D:27) and Jack Bailey (R: 29) also supported it. It also has the support of the Democratic and Republican Central Committees and other local groups, causing speakers to point out the bipartisan support.

Josh Johnson, chair of the Republican Central Committee, said, "There's affirmations in this bill that shows true nonpartisanship, something that we sorely need."

Fisher explained the bill to the committee: "It's an emergency bill requiring the county to include a provision in its ethics law that are equivalent to or exceed the provisions of state law relating to a court's authority to enforce the ethics law. In addition, the bill requires Calvert County to enact a law or regulation requiring the removal of a county elected official from office for violations of conflict-of-interest statutes as specified."

The bill was suggested to Fisher by representatives of Calvert Citizens United (CCU), which the delegate said, "is made up of Democrats and Republicans. It's an interesting organization where everybody agrees, and it's nice to see."

Myra Gowans of CCU told the committee, "The past county commissioner (McConkey) voted for his own property, and he tried to usurp the legal authority of the Calvert County Ethics Commission. In doing so, he ended up supporting his own property. He voted for his property. He seconded the motion for the property, and that is when Calvert Citizens United was formed. We speak for the people who have a voice. They have a voice. They don't tell you that they don't have a voice. They have a voice, and they were not listened to."

Gowans added, "The commissioner in question, he didn't take on this case for four months. He took it on for four years. He sued the county, the ethics commission chairperson, and it completely neutered the ethics commission in our county."



Del. Mark Fisher

Johnson said, "I represent 27,912 strong as the chair of Calvert County Republican Central Committee. With my father being in the pastorate, there's always been a need to get things right, to do what's transparent and what's selfless. This is the obligation that we have to the taxpayers in our community. HB 8 34 does this."

Susan Dzurec of CCU said, "In the final minutes of the Calvert County's Comprehensive Plan adoption process, a county commissioner voted to place two pieces of his own property inside the geographic expansion of a town center. As a result of that vote and the complaints filed afterward, the County Ethics Commission's Finding of Facts and Conclusion report found staggering evidence in relation to the events leading up to the commissioner's vote and concluded that the commissioner had a conflict of interest, knew he had a conflict of interest and voted anyway. The commission's findings were upheld by the Maryland Court of Special Appeals. Our County Ethics Commission is charged with enforcement of the ethics code. Currently, the strongest consequences for violations such as this available to the commission is to issue a letter of censure and a cease-and-desist order, which they did in this matter. Clearly, the thought of being censured was not enough to deter the commissioner from voting on his own property. Therein lies the need for House Bill 8 34."

County Attorney John Norris also spoke via Zoom to relay the unanimous support of the county commissioners for the bill.

The committee has not yet reported out its vote on the bill.

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Teacher Satisfaction Survey Shows 'Alarming' Results

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

A survey on teacher job satisfaction has shown a majority contemplating getting out of the profession or moving to another school system. The survey was conducted by the Calvert Education Association (CEA), the union that represents Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) teachers.

Association President Dona Ostenso told the school board at their Feb. 22 meeting, "As of this morning, 663 members, 63 percent of the membership, had responded. The average response rate for a survey to be considered valid is 33 percent. So, the data that I'm sharing is considered very good and statistically significant with a greater than 60 percent response. Unfortunately, the data itself is very alarming; 402 people responded that they were considering leaving the educational profession due to job satisfaction and another 158 people were unsure when asked

what action they have taken toward leaving education. Two-hundred thirty-two people responded by saying they were actively searching for other employment or preparing to retire soon."

Ostenso asked, "Why? What are the primary reasons one would consider leaving the field of education?" She responded that, "483 people provided written comments. The following reasons were overwhelmingly repeated: salary, lack of respect and support by leadership, disrespect and negative behaviors by students, and workload and no work-life balance."

She went on to add, "The excessive push for inclusion with the lack of support and resources. Yesterday, one teacher said it best, the demands of teaching and what is being added to our job description responsibilities is not reflective in our pay, nor in the time that is given to get our job done. The expectation of meeting every student's needs, socially, emotionally, academically,

physically, when supports are lacking, and it all falls on us to figure it out."

Ostenso opined, "It saddens me that we are not seen as critical employees worth the compensation regardless of a budget cut. This year's budget is coming with a unique set of challenges. I recognize that, but what cannot be lost in this process is that educators are the backbone of our school system. They are the single most important resource that contributes to student achievement. Recruiting and retaining educators must remain a priority in your budget."

At the meeting, several board members warned that if the current \$32 million budget gap couldn't be closed, then staff cuts would be forthcoming. Board Vice President Inez Claggett said she hoped that would not come in the classroom, but the size of the shortfall that would be difficult.

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CEA President Dona Ostenso

School Board President Calls for Consistency in Conduct Enforcement

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Calvert County Board of Education President Antoine White has weighed in on the school system's ongoing discipline controversy.

At the school board's Feb. 22 meeting, White said, "It seems like we are talking about behaviors a lot. (Superintendent) Dr. Townsel, we are hearing this and everyone who needs to hear this, you guys are the experts. And it would be nice to have within two to three months, to figure out a way of having consistency. Because when I was (recently) at (a) school, I was able to talk to a lot of the SGA (Student Government Association) students and they were saying, their safety, they don't feel safe in a lot of the things that are going on. They were

also talking about the code of conduct, stating that they don't feel that it's really being enforced. They're saying that it's about 10 percent of the students who are causing some of the problems, but 90 percent of the students are the ones who are suffering for it. And I don't think that it's the classrooms."

This was the first time that White has expressed concern about the issue that has been before the school board repeatedly in recent years, from teachers, parents, and students.

White went on to say, "There were kids who were acting up when I was in school, and I don't think it's the teachers. I think that that help has to come from outside of the school, out of the classroom and possibly outside of that school. So, this is something that we need to have some sort of consistency if something happens at a school at

the southern end, and the same thing happens at a school at the northern end, there should be some sort of baseline of this is what happens. This is what we're going to do. I understand that principals have their own pulse on what's going on in their schools, but there needs to be some sort of consistency that takes place from one end to the other."

White said there needs to be a reporting system. "I think the principals where if there's an incident that is reported and also the details are placed in there. So, this way everyone from one end of the county to the other knows this happened at this school, so this is what should happen there. But I don't know if we have that. It doesn't seem like we have that right now. And so, it would be nice to get some sort of consistency or some sort of system in place within maybe 30 to 60 days. And I'd like to put a time on something because if not, it may not get done. But I know that it is not an easy task, but I'm not an expert. I leave that up to the behavior experts and Dr. Townsel so he can work on it with his staff to try to get some results with that."

At the meeting, several teachers complained that the school system reneged on what it had promised to pay them for staff development. White said, "I think that Dr. Townsel and everyone, this meeting is being recorded. If people are supposed to be paid a certain way, I think that we should make sure that they're paid the way that they should be. And if there's writing or there's something that they don't understand, make sure that they fully understand that before they get into a venture. We keep hearing one job should be enough. I hear that, I understand that it's very expensive to live in



School Board President Antoine White

Calvert County. We all know that. So, as my colleagues have said, we're working very hard to make sure that we try to get everybody what they need. It's not an easy haul."

The school board is faced with a \$32 million shortfall in Townsel's proposed budget, with \$22 million coming from a state cut and \$10 million that the county says they can't fund. The county commissioners and school board are working with state legislators to see if they can do something about the state cut.

White is a candidate for reelection this year. He is facing a challenge from Paul Harrison.

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State joins lawsuit over supermarket merger



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Owings garage fire investigated



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Planners deal with sports complex issue

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, FEB 29	FRI, MAR 1	SAT, MAR 2	SUN, MAR 3
 Sunny Hi: 46° Lo: 31°	 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 51° Lo: 41°	 Rain Hi: 56° Lo: 46°	 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 59° Lo: 48°
MON, MAR 4	TUE, MAR 5	WED, MAR 6	THU, MAR 7
 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 59° Lo: 47°	 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 59° Lo: 47°	 Showers Hi: 54° Lo: 43°	 Showers Hi: 60° Lo: 43°

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