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Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024

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Staff Budget Relies on Fund Balance

Calvert Leads State in Wealth Growth

New Projects Coming to Calvert

SCHOOL BOARD FACES BUDGET CRISIS

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“I AM TIRED OF THOSE WHO WANT TO SAY WE ARE NOT BEING TRANSPARENT.”
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LOCAL 3
Staff budget relies on \$37m from fund balance



COMMUNITY 8
Students complete D.A.R.E. program



ON THE COVER
The county commissioners had tough questions on the school budget

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, MAR 21 Mostly Sunny Hi: 49° Lo: 32°	FRI, MAR 22 Mostly Sunny Hi: 54° Lo: 47°	SAT, MAR 23 Rain Hi: 56° Lo: 36°	SUN, MAR 24 Partly Cloudy Hi: 52° Lo: 38°
MON, MAR 25 Mostly Sunny Hi: 55° Lo: 40°	TUE, MAR 26 Cloudy Hi: 53° Lo: 45°	WED, MAR 27 Showers Hi: 57° Lo: 48°	THU, MAR 28 Showers Hi: 59° Lo: 44°

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Is Calvert Wealthy? Study Says 'Yes'

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

County officials have been told that the proposed \$22.5 million cut by the state in aid to Calvert County Public Schools is based on the county's wealth. That apparently has been compounded by the addition of the Cove Point LNG plant to the county's assessable tax base after being in a PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) for five years.

Commissioner President Buddy Hance, School Superintendent Dr. Andraé Townsel, the county legislative delegation and other local officials have attempted to get the decision overturned, so far to no avail.

Hance has said that Gov. Wes Moore has refused to meet with the county to discuss it.

Hance said, "The only response we get back is you're living in a wealthy community, raise taxes. That's what we're told."

Is the county wealthy? Ask many county residents and they would laugh at the assertion, noting their own financial situation. But a study released last week by consulting firm SmartAsset on where wealth has increased most in Maryland places Calvert at the top with a Wealth Index/Growth Index of 42.88, ahead of Talbot, Frederick, Montgomery, and Anne Arundel. St. Mary's County is tenth on the list.

Components of the index include

Medium Home Value Raw Growth of \$128,530, Investment Income Raw Growth of \$9,000m and Median Income Raw Growth of \$24,818.

The company lists the following methodology: "To identify the areas with the greatest increases in wealth, we compared all U.S. counties across three metrics: investment income, property value, and median income over the course of 10 years.

"We started the analysis by calculating the Investment Income for each county by evenly weighing the Ordinary Dividends, Qualified Dividends, and Net Capital Gains. From there we calculated the change in Median Home Value, and the Median Income for each county, and ranked them on all three metrics.

"We calculated a Wealth Index for all U.S. counties based on a combination of these three metrics and ranked them accordingly to provide a holistic view of which areas of the U.S. are accumulating the most wealth.

"We then took the raw change of the three metrics as well as the Wealth Index to rank the counties with the greatest increase in wealth over a 10-year period."

The company is headquartered in New York City.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Staff Budget Relies Heavily on Fund Balance

Gap Created by Lack of Dominion Agreement

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of Education is not the only government entity with budget woes this year. The school board voted March 18 to ask the county for \$10 million more next fiscal year to help close the funding gap caused by a \$22.5 million reduction in state aid. But the county has its own problems, according to information provided at the March 19 public hearing on the Staff Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2025.

Director of Finance and Budget Bruce Miller said, "Revenues for funds aggregate up to \$405 million. The expenditures, on the other hand, total \$442 million. This leaves a funding requirement from fund balance of \$37 million."

Miller noted, "Dominion, the Cove Point LNG, and Constellation, the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant, pay revenues to the county through payment in lieu of tax agreements, also known as PILOT agreements. These agreements expired on July 1, 2023, and remain in negotiation. Therefore, specific revenue projections remain unknown at this time."

An inquiry to the county for further explanation of that agreement delay was not received as of press deadline.

At the start of the hearing, County Administrator Mark Willis said, "We take this responsibility very seriously as we draft a budget. This is really a starting point as we prepare this budget for the commissioner's budget, which will happen later in May."

Willis explained, "Agencies were directed to present a flat budget, and I will tell you that budgets are never flat because you do have escalators like contracts that are built into previous budgets, but where we could keep it flat, we kept it flat. Keeping that in mind, going forward into that budget effort, even though we had increases in that flat line budget, we reduce that budget for Fiscal Year 25 by \$3 million. So, it's \$3 million in this draft recommended budget, less than last year."

A slide presented at the hearing listed budget directives as:

Agencies were directed to submit flat budgets at FY24 levels.

– Resulted in \$3M in net deductions.

Leadership was proactive and transparent with agencies on the projected FY25 budget so they could plan accordingly.

Budgeting conservatively, this budget



Director of Finance and Budget Bruce Miller

includes very few increases.

Twenty people spoke at the hearing, with most talking about the education budget and the majority of them supporting the school board's request.

An example of the education supporters was Sylvia Batton, a county resident since 1992. She said, "Despite Covid and all the chaos of the last four years. CCPS has a state ranking of number five for quality, even with teacher salaries ranked at number 18 in the state. Our high school ranking enhances our property values. If commissioners do not fill the school budget hole, then this ranking is in danger. Not making up for just this next year's loss of school funding will result in years at the other end of increased costs to restore quality staff, address deferred maintenance, et cetera. Taxes need to be increased."

The staff recommended budget does not include a Step and COLA (cost of living adjustment) for employees. Sheriff Ricky Cox asked for that for the members of his department.

Margaret Dunkle, chair of the Harriett Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Committee, thanked the commissioners for continuing support for the community center to be named for the county's civil rights hero, and expressed hope the project could be accelerated.

The commissioner kept open the window for written comments through the close of business on April 19.

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School Board Cut Superintendent's Revised Budget

Uses Big Chunk of Budget Fund Balance

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

In response to an impending \$22.5 million cut in state funding to Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS), Superintendent Dr. Andraé Townsel presented a revised budget to the school board on March 14 that uses \$20 million of the school system's \$28 million general fund balance and asked the county to pony up \$13.9 million more in the next fiscal year.

But after presenting the revision, the school board appeared divided, leading Vice President Inez Claggett to call for more discussion in an attempt to achieve a unanimous vote. That effort occurred March 18 during a three-and-a-half-hour work session in which CCPS staff answered multiple questions as the budget was dissected line by line. At the end of that discussion Claggett suggested that Townsel trim the request to the county down to a \$10 million increase and the other three members in attendance agreed. Lisa Grenis, who repeatedly questioned parts of the budget at the March 14 meeting, was not at the March 18 work session.

Townsel presented the revised request to the county commissioners during their meeting the next day (see separate story).

Claggett before the vote said, "As we move forward to ask the county commissioners for whatever number we ask them to fund in our budget, I would say that it is incumbent upon all of us to walk next door and make public comment to make it clear to our county commissioners that our school system needs to be funded because this is what is on the line. It's plain, it's simple, and it's transparent, and I am tired of those who want to say we are not being transparent. To put this out into our community at an early stage would've been detrimental. There are already two million rumors."

"However, as we get closer to the deadline and our superintendent and his staff work to decide what is more important and what is not important, that decision is not an easy one. It's like picking between your children, which child is more important to you than another. They're all important, hence

why it comes down to today."

What Claggett was referring to was a listing of possible cuts necessitated by the budget shortfall if the county doesn't make up the budget gap. Even with those cuts they still would not overcome Townsel's \$13.9 million requested county increase, it was noted.

The possible further cuts listed were:

- AP Pathway Reduction – Pay for 5 AP courses following CCR attainment or limit to 5 AP courses per student.
- Contractor CPI escalators (Operations Fee/Driver's Salary/Paid Spare Vehicle Fee/Trip Fee)
- Cut all workshop pay (50 percent/100 percent) in the Department of Instruction – professional learning outside of the school day and no curriculum work outside of the school day. If it can't be done during the teacher workday, it does not happen.
- Cut all workshop registration fees (50 percent/100 percent) for all depts excluding grant funded – professional learning outside of the school day and no curriculum work outside of the school day. If it can't be done during the teacher workday, it does not happen.
- Elementary class size increase to 25 in Grades 3-5 (7), Grades K-5 (18) Grades K-5 (27).
- Furlough Days – four
- High school teacher reduction – Baseline Staffing - Increase divisor from 20.8 to 21.0 (4) from to 21.5 (12) from 20.8 to 22.0 (16)
- Limit Dual Enrollment courses.
- Middle school additional teachers for CMS, SMS, MCMS (3) (6) (9)
- Middle school athletics
- Non-teaching school-based positions (5) (10)
- Reduce any 11-month teacher position to 10-month – use of Year 15 teacher salary to determine a month's pay x 29 (Specialists)
- Reduce the online learning program to only Music Appreciation, Health I and Health II, Spanish I and II in Summer School. No longer offer Foundations of Computer Science

- Administration (2) (3) (5)
- Reduction of bus driver day by .5 hour/1 hour
- Reduction of non-teaching central office specialist positions (3) (5) (9)
- Reduction of school-based administration
- Remove Step increase CEA/CAESS/CASA/M&C
- Support staff positions (9) (18) (26)

To achieve the extra \$3.9 million in cuts requested by the school board, he will have to go back to the drawing board. But even achieving the extra \$10 million the school board is asking from the county is far from assured. The commissioners will be reviewing all parts of their budget before coming up with their own budget which will be presented at a public hearing in May.

At the March 14 school board meeting, Townsel said, "I have the opportunity to kind of reflect and do some research on the Calvert County Public Schools looking at our budget."

Townsel said he met with former superintendent Dr. Daniel Curry and other people with institutional knowledge. He said of the proposed state cut, "It had nothing to do with anything we've done as a school system. All we're doing is educating young people and working closely with our educators."



Board of Education Vice President Inez Claggett

Townsel added, "There's not been a time like this. This is unprecedented to Calvert County. And I do want to share it is like solving one of the hardest Rubik's Cubes possible to have that kind of cut and maintain the integrity of the district."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

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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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Commissioners Grill Townsel on Budget Request

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Calvert County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Andraé Townsel met with the county commissioners on March 19 to present the revised proposed budget for the school system as voted on the day before by the board of education. The commissioners grilled Townsel on the need for the additional \$10 million being asked from the county and the advisability of using \$20 million of the school system's \$28 million general fund surplus to balance next year's budget.

While the \$22.5 million state aid cut for the coming fiscal year was the subject of much of the discussion, Commissioner President Buddy Hance asked perhaps an even bigger question: "What are you going to do next year?"

Townsel responded, "That's the great question. Collaborate with our county administrators and figure out how we can maintain the integrity of Calvert County Public schools. Because the bottom line is we can't generate any more funds. There's no revenue; we're not a business. We only get what we're told. So, it's a hardcore reorganization of how we do business."

Townsel added, "What we're doing as a school district, we're starting July 1 work-

ing on the Fiscal Year 26 budget. So that puts us in a proactive stance where I can ask those tough questions immediately. So, I'm not waiting until January 2025 to know that we're going to receive potentially the same state aid next year that we received this year. And what this does is it buys us time. It gives us a year to maintain the integrity of Calvert County Public Schools while we redesign what Fiscal Year 26 looks like. Very challenging stuff, I'll be honest with you."

Townsel said he had met with or talked to multiple state and local officials to try to work out the state aid cut. But he noted in response to a question from Commissioner Mark Cox, "In short, the budget is moving forward as is. So, it's up to us to respond. So, the conversation is what do you think you can cut? Which puts the ball back in our court. So as a school district, what we're doing is, I showed you the academic return on investment of us receiving what we've gotten in the past couple of years. But right now, this is a strategic inflection point that we're at. Because where we are with that point of this here, the goal is how to do it at a minimum of equal or greater value. So, this is what it is."

An example of the at times contentious back and forth occurred when Hance questioned the needs for the size of the fund bal-

ance in the current school system budget. Townsel said the amount was actually less than was recommended based on being able to operate the schools for two months in case of an emergency.

But Hance asked, "And when has the school system ever needed two months' worth of operating capital? I know you both are new (Townsel and Chief Financial Officer Scott Johnson) but in the history of the school system, when have they ever needed two months' worth of operating capital?"

Townsel responded, "My purpose of sharing that is that we follow the recommendation of best practices from our Govern Finance Operations Association. So just best practices as a school leader."

Hance persisted: "And what happens if you don't have it?"

Townsel said, "One of the reasons to have fund balances is to reduce the risk and protect against disruptors, for example, significant revenue reductions. So, thank God, we have it because negative \$22.5 million from the state. Thank God in the past the county has generously funded our school system where we now can at least save ourselves for this upcoming year." Townsel said the state cut was a perfect example of "significant revenue reductions."

Townsel made a similar presentation



School Superintendent Dr. Andraé Townsel

to the public at the hearing on the Staff Recommended Budget later in the day.

During that hearing the public was told that the county is using \$28 million of their fund balance to close the revenue shortfall in their budget (see separate story).

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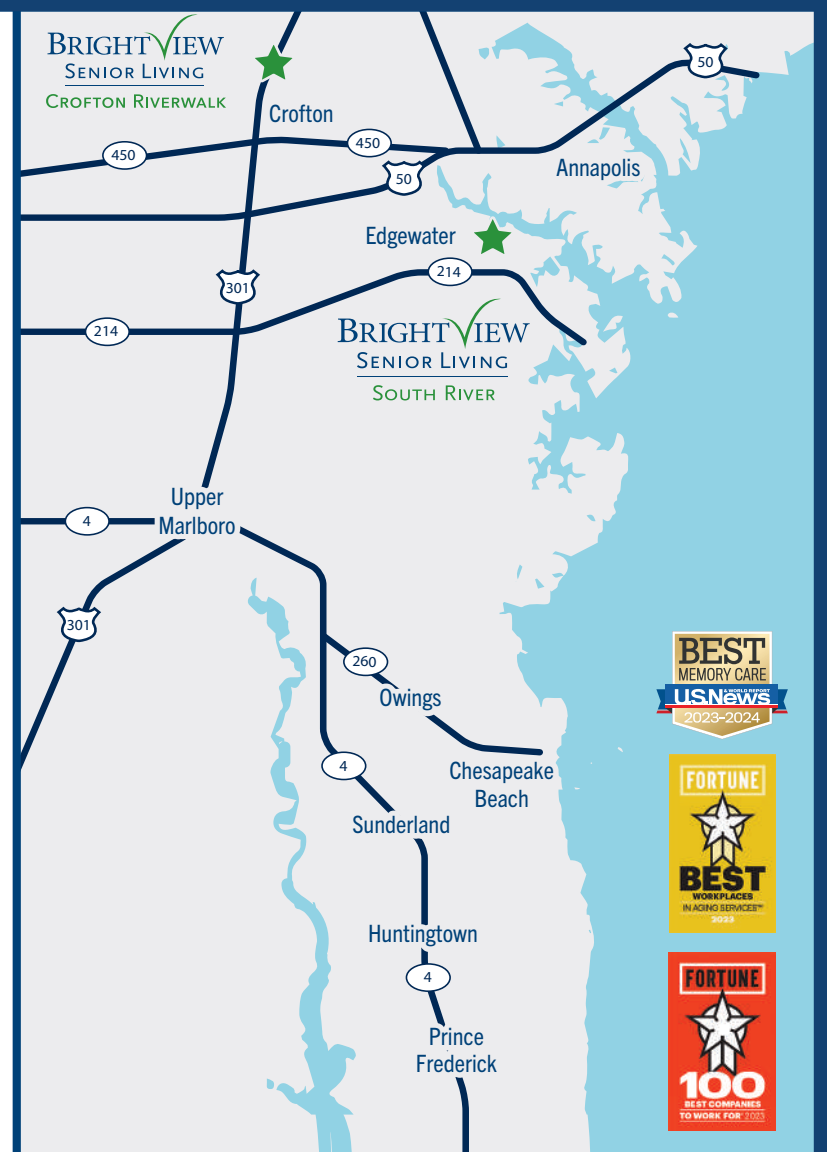
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CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of March 4– March 10, 2024, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,053 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health – 49
- Disorderly – 19
- Domestic – 31
- Motor Vehicle Crashes – 44
- Patrol Checks / School Checks – 1,103
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles – 35
- Traffic Complaints – 69
- 911 Hang Ups – 61
- ARRESTS – 23



Steven Vandevander

CDS Violation: 24-18223 On March 4, 2024, at 4:30 p.m., Sgt. Livingston received a traffic complaint for a vehicle driving all over the roadway. The vehicle was observed crossing into the opposite

lane of traffic multiple times, driving on the shoulder, striking the grassy area and abruptly swerving back. Contact was made with the driver, **Steven Michael Vandevander**, 54 of Prince Frederick, and a strong odor of alcohol was emitting from his person. Further investigation revealed Vandevander was placed under arrest for DUI. A search of his person revealed 12 Buprenorphine and Naloxone Sublingual film strips. Vandevander was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis.

Property Destruction: 24-19534 On March 8, 2024, DFC Sturdivant responded to the 10600 block of Fielders Court in Dunkirk, for the report of property destruction. The complainant advised an unknown suspect (s) egged his residence. A silver passenger car was observed in the roadway at the time of the egging. The eggs caused minor damage to the victim's shutters. The estimated value of damaged property is \$30.

Theft: 24-19100 On March 7, 2024, DFC Childress received report of a theft at Patuxent High School located at 12485 Southern Connector Blvd. in Lusby. The complainant advised on March 6, an unknown suspect entered his vehicle and removed \$100 in US Currency from the center console of his unlocked vehicle. No other items were missing. There was no damage to the vehicle.

Theft: 24-18957 On March 6, 2024, at 9:08 p.m., Deputy Daily responded to the Dunkirk CVS located at 10095 Ward Road in Dunkirk, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised two males entered the CVS and proceeded to place various

lotions into a bag. The suspects then fled the store without making payment. Suspect # 1 is described as a black male wearing a red hoodie, and black pants, with dreads and a beard. Suspect #2 is described as a black male wearing a black hoodie with unknown writing on the front, black pants, and no facial hair. Deputy Daily conducted a follow-up with the store manager on March 7 and an investigation revealed a total of 92 various skin care products were stolen. The total value of stolen property is \$2,754.78.

Theft: 24-18958 On March 6, 2024, DFC Strong responded to the CVS Pharmacy located at 7955 Bayside Road in Chesapeake Beach MD, for the report of a theft in progress. The complainant advised two black males wearing a black hoodie and a red hoodie entered the store and proceeded to grab numerous high-value hair and skincare products from the shelves. The suspects then fled the parking lot in a white sedan. Deputy Hudson located the vehicle and occupants matching the descriptions traveling on Rt. 260 and attempted a traffic stop, but the vehicle failed to comply. The total value of stolen property is \$876.48.



Terry Edward Davis

Trespassing: 24-19078 On March 7, 2024, at 11:15 a.m., DFC Huy was flagged down by a citizen in reference to a suspicious vehicle in the area of Country Road in Dunkirk. The

complainant advised she observed a gold truck that had been lurking around the area for a few hours. Contact was made with the driver, **Terry Edward Davis**, 61 of Lothian, who advised he was in the area to meet a female and 'drop off a package' at a residence in the 2800 block of Feather Ridge Court. Upon making contact with the property owner on Feather Ridge Ct., the homeowner advised Davis on March 6, not to return to the property. Davis was placed under arrest and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Trespassing: Private Property.

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

Unpermitted Signs within Public Rights-of-Way to be Removed

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) recently approved a proactive initiative aimed at enhancing the safety and aesthetics of our community by eliminating unpermitted signage that does not conform to the signage regulations. These unpermitted signs pose a hindrance to motorists by obstructing views at intersections and they contribute to excessive clutter along our roadways.

Beginning April 1, 2024, unpermitted signs will be removed by the Department of Public Works staff. The signs will be stored for two weeks at the Appeal Landfill located at 401 Sweetwater Road in Lusby, and may be retrieved by the owner for a fee of \$6 per sign. Any signs remaining after two weeks will be discarded.

The BOCC encourages all residents and businesses to support this initiative by adhering to the sign regulations listed in the Calvert County Zoning Ordinance. If you require permitted signage, the process is designed to accommodate legal and safe placement. View the sign ordinance at <https://ecode360.com/29293346Z>. By working together, we can ensure pleasing aesthetics, safer roadways and intersections free of obstructions.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are open to the public and are subject to change.

Board of County Commissioners meeting, Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 10 a.m., Commissioners' Hearing Room, 175 Main Street, Prince Frederick

Boards and Commissions Meetings

Meetings are held via Zoom unless otherwise noted.

Call-in information can be found on www.calvertcountymd.gov.

Environmental Commission Meeting - Prince Frederick Library, Monday, March 25, 2024, 6 p.m.

Public Hearings and Meetings

Public Hearing: Public Safety Communications Coverage, Requirements and Fees, March 26, 2024, 10:30 a.m., Commissioners' Hearing Room, 175 Main Street, Prince Frederick



RABIES CLINIC COMING APRIL 17, 2024

Registration for the April 2024 Rabies Clinic is now available!

A limited number of spots are available so register online at calvertcountyanimalshelter.com

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ARTICLES 20 & 21 OF THE DRAFT 2023/24 CALVERT ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

Public Comment Period open March 8 through April 5, 2024

Joint Work Session: Calvert County Board of County Commissioners & Planning Commission, April 17, 2024, 7 p.m., Harriet E. Brown Community Center, Prince Frederick

Find the full schedule and documents online at www.CalvertCountyMd.gov/ZoningOrdinanceUpdate.

Primary Election Day is Tuesday, May 14
For polling locations, important dates and more visit
Visit www.CalvertCountyMd.gov/Vote



Cast your vote by mail!
Mail in ballots can be requested prior to Election Day: Request by Tuesday, May 7 to have your ballot delivered by mail/fax or request by Friday, May 10 to have your ballot delivered digitally.

Want to avoid potential lines? Vote early!
Starting Thursday, May 2, through Thursday, May 9, early vote sites will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Southern Community Center
20 Appeal Ln, Lusby, MD 20657

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30 Duke St, Prince Frederick, MD 20678

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Project Grad is a substance-free graduation celebration offered FREE to the Class of 2024.

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What's Coming to Calvert

The following list of pending Category 1 site plans was presented to the Calvert County Planning Commission at their March 20 meeting. That means that the proposals are on the list for consideration by the planning commission at a future meeting. The meeting was in a hybrid form, both virtually and in person at the Harriet E. Brown Community Center (HEBCC), 901 Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick



1) CSPR-142988, **St. Leonard Volunteer Fire Department**, located on Calvert Beach Road, St. Leonard, on a 5.076-acre parcel, zoned Town Center/Village District Subarea B. This project will have public water but will utilize a private septic system. Proposed 4.1 acres of disturbance for demolition of the existing pavilion and construction of a two-story, 40,280-sf fire & rescue service building with eight double-loaded apparatus bays. The concept submittal was accepted June 28, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett.

2) CSPR-142881, **Prince Frederick Town Center South, Shopping Plaza**, located on South Solomons Island Road, Prince Frederick, on 115-acre parcel, zoned Town Center/Forest District. This project will have private water but will utilize public sewer. Proposed about 75,000 sf of commercial retail & office space with parking and site improvements. The concept submittal was accepted September 28, 2022. Agent: COA Barrett.

3) CSPR-143112, **CCIP Lot 3R**, located at 171 Skipjack Road, Prince Frederick, Lot 3R in the Calvert County Industrial Park, zoned Light Industrial. Proposed redevelopment of a portion of the 4.5-acre lot by demolishing the existing office and constructing a new two-story office building in its place. It is further proposed to repave the southern portion of the site and to construct a storage warehouse and wall to segregate parking between the storage building yard & adjacent flex space tenants. A total of 6,524 sf of new construction with a total disturbance of 1.2-acres is proposed and the amenities will utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted December 20, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett.

4) CSPR-143116, **145 Adelina Business Office**, located at 145 Adelina Road, Prince Frederick, combining Parcel 120 and Parcel 250, Lot 2 for a total of 2.44 acres, zoned Rural Commercial. Proposed remodeling of existing structure for use as an office and construction of a new 7,400-sf, two-story building for business-related storage with associated parking area required for the two buildings. This project will utilize private well and septic. The concept submittal was accepted December 20, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett.

5) CSPR-143134, **Kelly Generator Storage Facility**, located at 7645 and 7655 Meadow Run Lane in Owings, MD. A redevelopment of Lots 6RR

(1.43 acres) and 7RR (2.26 acres) in the Meadow Run Park Subdivision, zoned Light Industrial.

Proposed construction of a 16,800-sf, two-story industrial storage facility with parking and site improvements. This project will utilize well and septic. The concept submittal was accepted January 24, 2024. Agent: COA Barrett.

6) CSPR-143148, **SMILE Driveway Expansion**, located off of H.G. Trueman Road in Lusby, MD and is zoned Farm and Forest District. This project proposes an expansion of the access drive leading to the SMILE Warehouse & Thrift Shop facility. Work is proposed on the SMILE property as well as the adjoining St. Peter's Parish property, both being owned by St. Peter's Parish. Due to the necessary operation of the donation center, parking stalls that were originally created for SMILE along the east side of the building are proposed for removal from the site plan. The reduction in parking will be mitigated through a shared parking agreement. The concept submittal was accepted February 28, 2024. Agent: COA Barret.

The following Major Subdivision Proposed Project List for Upcoming Review was also submitted at the same meeting.

1) SD-142770, **Lusby Villas**, Lot 1, located on Lusby Parkway in Lusby. One commercial lot proposed on one parcel consisting of 24.87 acres, Zoned Lusby Town Center, Village Residential Office District, Tier I. The preliminary plan submittal was accepted January 26, 2022. Agent: COA Barrett.

2) SD-142999, **Magnolia Ridge**, located on Fox Run Boulevard, Prince Frederick, on a 31.29-acre parcel, zoned Prince Frederick Town Center, New Town District and will be served by public water & sewer. Proposed 164 townhouse units and 96 apartments with a density of 8.3 units per acre. The project proposes 3.04 acres of recreation area and 12.58 acres of open space. The preliminary plan submittal was accepted August 23, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett.

3) SD-143071, **Magnolia Ridge West**, located at Armory Road and Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick, with frontage and access from Dares Beach Road & Armory Road. The project is proposed on multiple parcels totaling 26.3 acres, zoned Prince Frederick Town Center, New Town District. The subdivision proposes 79 townhome lots and associated improvements with a density of ~3 units per acre. This project will be served by public water and sewer. A total of 19.47 acres of total open space is provided, including 3.81 acres of proposed recreation area. The preliminary plan submittal was accepted September 27, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett.

Concept submittals have been removed from this list. There is no assurance that those projects will reach Preliminary Plan status. If/when they do, they will be placed on this list under their Preliminary Plan project.

Cardinal Hickey Students Complete D.A.R.E. Program



Congratulations to Mrs. Wenzlaf's 5th grade class at **Cardinal Hickey Academy** in Owings, MD for the successful completion of the D.A.R.E. program.

Under the guidance of Master Deputy A. Clas, the students engaged in D.A.R.E.'s 'Keepin' it REAL' elementary curriculum based on the Socio-Emotional Learning Theory (SEL). This curriculum focuses on cultivating essential skills and developmental processes needed for healthy development which include, self-awareness and management, responsible decision-making, understanding others, relationship and

communication skills, and handling responsibilities and challenges.

A special acknowledgment goes to Mary Grover and Otto Savisaar, the distinguished D.A.R.E. essay award recipients.

Sheriff Ricky Cox had the pleasure of attending the ceremony lending an official recognition and a touch of honor to the occasion.

Thank you, Master Deputy Clas and Cardinal Hickey students for all your hard work and achievements.

Press Release from CCSO

Celebrate Your Favorite Provider on National Doctors' Day

CalvertHealth is proud to participate in National Doctors' Day, celebrated annually on March 30. Our Doctors' Day celebration publicly honors and acknowledges the dedication, talent and commitment to excellence of our affiliated physicians.

Individuals wishing to participate in CalvertHealth's Doctors' Day celebration can do so by donating \$5 or more to the CalvertHealth Foundation. When completing the online donation form, community members will be able to provide the name of the local physician or medical professional they would like to honor, as well as a personal message of tribute. All providers being honored will receive a red carnation, the national symbol for Doctors' Day, and a note sharing the personal tribute. All deliveries will be made on Thursday, March 28.

President and CEO Jeremy Bradford said, "In my time here at CalvertHealth, I have seen our providers consistently go above and beyond to serve our community. We are so fortunate to have a medical staff that cares so deeply for their patients and strives to help CalvertHealth realize our vision of being the trusted healthcare leader, delivering a lifetime of exceptional care." He continued, "I am looking forward to celebrating our physicians, and I know the personal tributes from our community members will mean the world to our physicians."

All gifts to the CalvertHealth Foundation's Doctors' Day celebration are tax deductible. You can make your National Doctors' Day gift online at CalvertHealthFoundation.org/Doctors-Day or by calling 410.414.4570.

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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, Mar 21

Build Your Budget

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Join local mortgage loan consultant and author, Jessica Sullivan, to learn how to create and maintain a budget. Learn how to track your spending habits. Discover how budgeting can help you create an emergency fund, pay off debt, and invest for your future. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sat, Mar 23

Easter Egg Hunt

St. Leonard Polling House
5095 St. Leonard Road, St. Leonard
11 a.m.

Hunt eggs, decorate a cupcake and have a snack. For children 10 years and younger. Sponsored by the St. Leonard Vision Group. Contact Nancy Zinn, 410-586-0682.

Calvert Marine Museum Society Otter Trot 5K

Calvert Marine Museum
8 a.m.

Get ready for otterly awesome fun! You're invited to the inaugural CMMS Otter Trot 5K! Whether you're sprinting, strolling, or just really into otters, this timed race is for you. Secure your spot by Feb. 29, 2024, to guarantee your t-shirt! If you're not ready for your otterly awesome day to end after the race, head into the museum at 10 a.m. for the museum's Ottermania event and say hello to our beloved North American river otters Chessie Grace and Calvert. Cost is a \$40 Race Fee + \$2.80 Sign-Up Fee. Proceeds from the 2024 Otter Trot 5K will contribute to building a new enclosure for our beloved North American river otters Chessie Grace and Calvert. Link

to register: Calvert Marine Museum Society
Otter Trot 5K (runsignup.com)

OtterMania

Calvert Marine Museum
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Help us celebrate our favorite museum mammal – the North American river otter! Ideal for families, OtterMania! invites kids to dance the "Swim" with the otter mascots, discover how the otters stay warm, explore other adaptations that help otters survive, and complete an "otterly" awesome craft. Don't forget to visit Calvert and Chessie Grace along the way! All activities included with museum admission. Free for CMM members.

Salute to Veterans' Gala

Herrington Harbor, Rose Haven
4-10 p.m.

Dr Simpson, US Army veteran, the founder of My Brother's House, mbhouse.org, is sponsoring the event.

Garden Smarter-Using Native Plants to Attract Wildlife

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
10-11 a.m.

Find out why native plants are the way to enjoying more of beauty of nature in Calvert County. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

Chesapeake Beach Eggstravaganza

Kellam's Field
12-2 p.m.
Rain Date: Sunday, March 24th

Join Calvert Library and the Town of Chesapeake Beach for a day of family fun as we search for Easter eggs hidden throughout Kellam's field, play games, and visit the Easter Bunny! <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

Sun, Mar 24

World War II on the Potomac

North Beach Town Hall
1-2 p.m.

Talk with historian Vincent P. Turner. Co-sponsored by Calvert Library, Bayside History Museum and John Hanson Chapter NSDAR. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Southern Maryland Bluegrass

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

Featuring for the first time multi-award-winning Russell Moore & IIIrd Tyme Out.

The doors will open at noon. For over 30 years, Russell Moore & IIIrd Tyme Out have been touring and releasing great, original Bluegrass music.

Tickets will be \$23.00 per person and sold at the door. 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.

The final show in the series will include David Peterson & 1946 on Sunday April 28. For more information, please call 301-737-3004 or go to www.somdbluegrass.com.

Mon, Mar 25

Guided Bird Walks

Calvert Marine Museum
10:30 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 12 p.m., and
12:45 p.m.

With fields, woodlots, thickets, a saltmarsh, and Back Creek all nearby, many different species of birds visit the Calvert Marine Museum campus. Join us for guided bird walks to appreciate and explore the diversity of our avian friends. Space is limited. Included with museum admission.

Wed, Mar 27

Professional Interview Workshop

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

Participants will learn professional techniques and the importance of effective interviewing. This workshop will teach you best practices enhancing your interviewing skills by providing insight on dress attire, appropriate attitude, and professional etiquette and presentation. Virtual interview techniques are also discussed. More job-seeker help is available on mwejobs.maryland.gov. If you have questions or need more information about resources available, please contact Cheryl Thorne at Maryland Department of Labor (cheryl.thorne@maryland.gov) 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

Chesapeake Ospreys

Calvert Marine Museum
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

One quarter of all ospreys in the United States nest in the Chesapeake Bay region! These "fish hawks" arrive in spring and stay through the summer months. Discover more fun facts about these amazing birds today at the museum and create your own kite (supplies are limited). Appropriate for ages 5 – 10. Included with museum admission.

Thu, Mar 28

Chesapeake Blue Crabs

Calvert Marine Museum
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

As the waters of the Chesapeake Bay warm up, the native blue crabs emerge from their winter dormancy. Discover fun facts about Chesapeake blue crabs today at the museum and create a blue crab craft (supplies are limited). Appropriate for ages 5 – 10. Included with museum admission.

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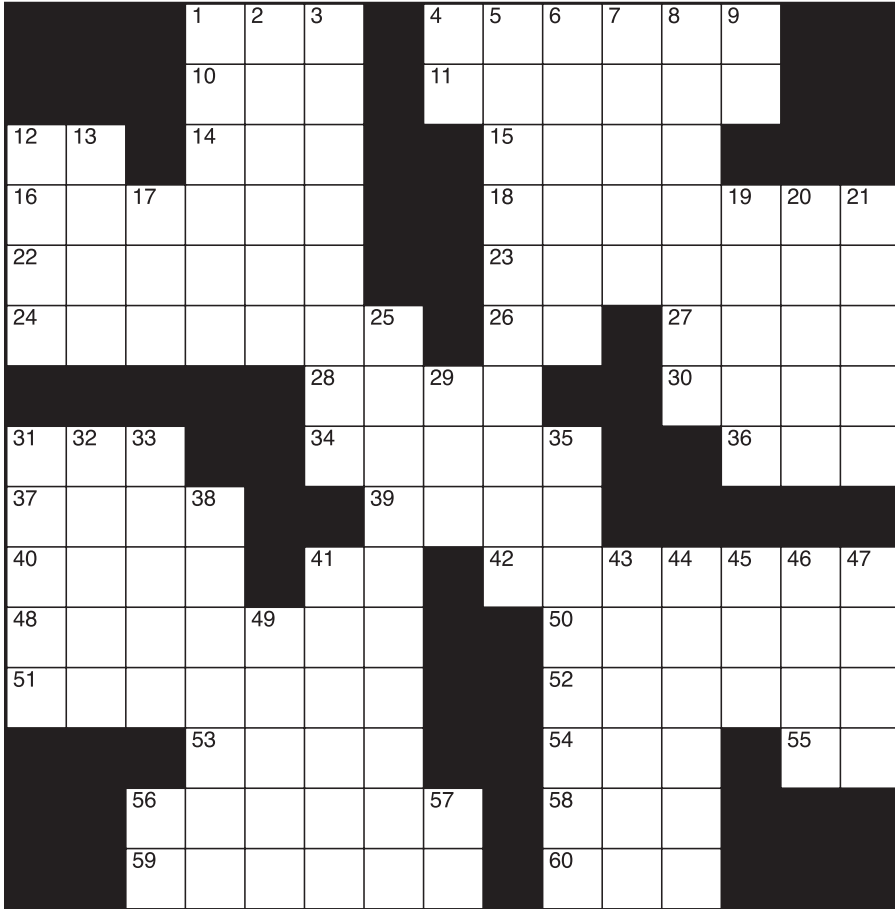
The County Times is a weekly newspaper providing news and information for the residents of St. Mary's and Calvert County. The County Times will be available on newsstands every Thursday. The paper is published by Southern Maryland Publishing Company, which is responsible for the form, content, and policies 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.



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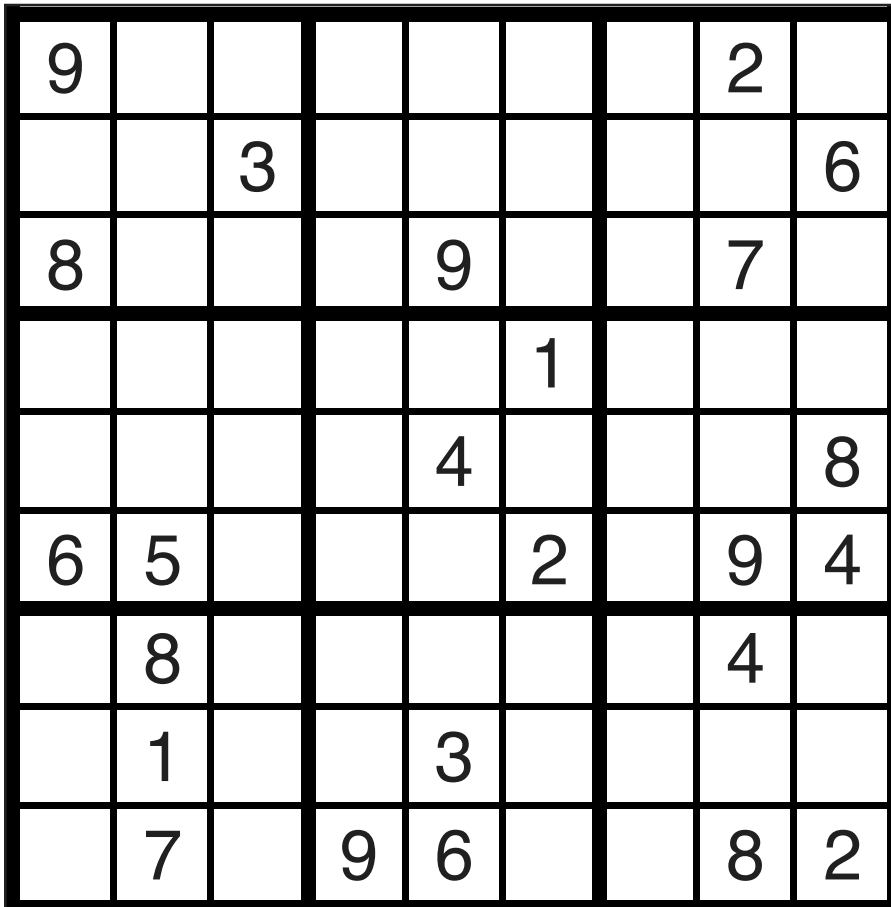


CLUES ACROSS

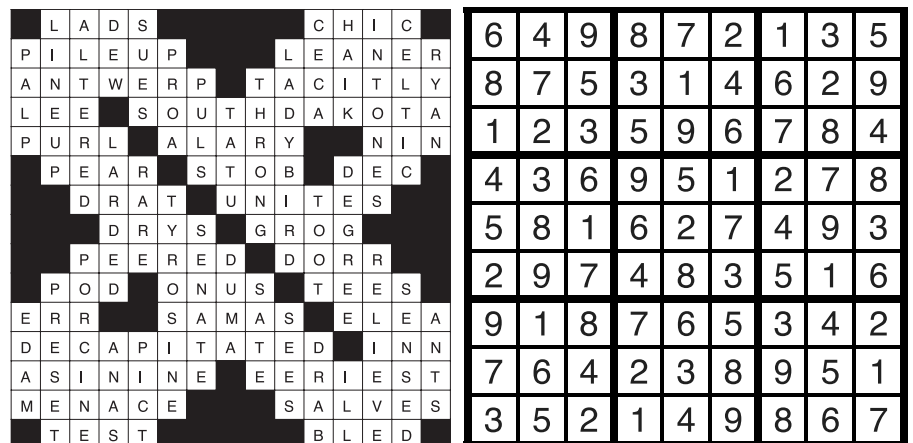
- 1. Small Eurasian deer
- 4. Irish county
- 10. A major division of geological time
- 11. Broadway actor Lane
- 12. Canadian province (abbr.)
- 14. Human gene
- 15. Two
- 16. A famous one is blue
- 18. Utter repeatedly
- 22. Ring-shaped objects
- 23. Spoils
- 24. Occurs
- 26. Commercial
- 27. Near
- 28. Products you may need
- 30. Pledge thrown down as a challenge
- 31. TV network
- 34. Silk or cotton garments
- 36. Soviet Socialist Republics
- 37. Retired American football coach Dean
- 39. Hot dish
- 40. A type of gin
- 41. Atomic #84
- 42. Sawhorse
- 48. About ground
- 50. Medicine man
- 51. Seedless raisin
- 52. Capital of Albania
- 53. Appendage
- 54. OJ trial judge
- 55. By the way (abbr.)
- 56. Bicycle parts
- 58. Barbie's friend
- 59. Moved one's neck to see
- 60. Commercials

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Make up for
- 2. Baltimore ballplayer
- 3. Salary
- 4. Influential world body
- 5. Engravers
- 6. Declared as fact
- 7. One who steals
- 8. Jewelry
- 9. Hospital employee (abbr.)
- 12. Nonsense (slang)
- 13. Town in Galilee
- 17. Value
- 19. A fake name
- 20. Sheep in their second year
- 21. Town in Surrey, England
- 25. Appropriate for a particular time of year
- 29. Creative works
- 31. Recesses
- 32. W. Pacific island group
- 33. Tolkien character
- 35. Ancient symbol co-opted by the Nazi party
- 38. Pioneer
- 41. Scribe
- 43. Painted a bright color
- 44. Lowest members of British nobility
- 45. Actress Thurman
- 46. Type of sugar
- 47. Crest of a hill
- 49. N. American people of British Columbia
- 56. Device
- 57. The Mount Rushmore State



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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.

Fri, Mar 22

Lenten Fish Fry

Our Lady of the Wayside's Loretto Hall
37575 Chaptico Rd., Chaptico
5p.m. to 7p.m.

Our Lady of the Wayside's annual Lenten Fish Fry. Dine in or drive thru carry outs available. Adults-\$20 Children 6-12 \$10 and Children 5 and under are free. Menu- Fried fish, fish nuggets, fried popcorn shrimp, French fries, green beans, coleslaw, rolls and iced tea. Desserts available for dining in. Drive thru carry outs will be whole fish only. For more information contact Brenda Russell at rsbrsll@aol.com or at 301-247-01871.

Lenten Fish Fry

St. George's Catholic Church
19199 St Georges Church Rd., Valley Lee
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Come get your fresh caught catfish or steamed shrimp dinners with french fries, pancit and more. \$20 per take out order, we will be there until sold out, so come early.

SMTMD HomeSpun CoffeeHouse—Open Mic

Christ Episcopal Church—Parish Hall
37497 Zach Fowler Rd., Chaptico
7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

4th Friday of the month* September through June. Acoustic musicians of all skill levels are warmly welcomed to perform their favorite tunes. Doors open at 7 pm with performances beginning promptly at 7:30 PM. Admission is \$8; performers are admitted free of charge. Contact Chris Dudley in advance (ccdudley@rocketmail.com) to sign up as a performer. Info: smtmd2@gmail.com, www.smtmd.org/#/open-mic-night/

Sat, Mar 23

Maryland Day (observed)

Historic St. Mary's City
47418 Old State House Rd.,
St. Mary's City
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Celebrate Maryland's anniversary with observance, ceremony, speeches, and FREE

admission to living history and museum exhibits! The 1 p.m. ceremony will take place at the Margaret Brent Pavilion. FREE Admission. Info: 301-994-4370 or info@hsmcdigshistory.org

Easter Egg Festival

St. Mary's County Fairgrounds
42455 Fairgrounds Rd., Leonardtown
11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Don't miss this Southern Maryland spring staple, featuring the Easter Bunny, egg hunts for ages up to 12, live entertainment, free arts and crafts, face painting, delicious local food options, and shopping from area vendors!

For a \$5.00 fee, children can participate in the egg hunt, visit with the Easter Bunny and Mrs. Cottontail, enjoy face painting, and participate in a variety of other bunny-approved activities. www.stmaryscountymd.gov/recreate/easter/

Sun, Mar 24

Spring Craft Show

Hollywood Vol Fire Dept
24801 Three Notch Rd., Hollywood

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department will sponsor its Annual Spring Craft Show in the Social Hall. Come shop about 120 vendors. Stop by the kitchen and purchase lunch or a snack while you shop. Stuffed Ham available for purchase by the pound. Don't forget the BAKE SALE!! ATM on site. For more information email: www.craftshow@hvfd7.com

Hollywood-Leonardtown Optimist Club Easter Eggstravaganza

VFW Post 2632 Pavilion
23282 Three Notch Rd., California
10 a.m. to 1p.m.

This is a free event for kids 12 and under. We'll have goody bags and fun activities for the first 150 kids to join us for this event. There will be hot dogs, french fries, popcorn and more (free for kids 12 and under). The event will be rain or shine (held at the VFW Post 2632 Pavilion). We hope to see you there.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library

UPCOMING EVENTS



Fix-It Fair: Electronics & Electrical Wiring

Community members are invited to bring in broken household items and learn how to repair them themselves at Lexington Park Library on Saturday, March 23 from 2 – 4 p.m. Local experts will be here to guide you through the repair process, with a different focus each month. March's focus is electronics & electrical wiring! Bring in your broken small kitchen appliances, faulty DVD players, frayed charging cables, and anything else with electrical wiring, and let's see if we can't fix it together. Tools, materials, and light refreshments will be provided. Registration is encouraged; walk-ins welcome as space allows. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Helb Barn: German Tradition, American Capitalism

Join us for this virtual archaeology presentation on Monday, March 25 from 7 – 8 p.m. Guest speaker Dr. Jim

Gibb will discuss the significance of a nineteenth-century barn constructed in Southern Maryland. Frederick Helb, a tanner who had emigrated from Wittenberg, Germany, to the US in 1847, built a Pennsylvania Standard open-forebay bank barn in 1881. The event is notable because he had it built in Southern Maryland, an area then replete with barns, but virtually all of which were louvered ground barns designed to cure tobacco. The barn stands at the intersection of ethnic tradition and industrial capitalism, each coloring the expression of the other. Please register with an email address to receive the Zoom link on www.stmalib.org.

Who's Nesting in My Backyard?

Join Barb Whipkey, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited in Lexington Park and LaPlata, as she shares information about the birds who may be nesting in our yards in a virtual presentation on Thursday, March 28 from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Barb will give tips on helping to create successful nesting

habitats and feeding tips for these birds. Register on www.stmailb.org.

Solar Eclipse Party

Join us for an exploration of the solar system in preparation of the Solar Eclipse! We'll have a variety of activities and crafts for people of all ages at Charlotte Hall Library on Friday, March 29 at 2 p.m. and at Lexington Park Library on Saturday, March 30 at 2 p.m. Those in attendance at this program will get a pair of solar eclipse glasses to use to safely view the eclipse on April 8. Please register each participant. Register for a session on www.stmalib.org.

Holocaust as Portrayed in Pop Culture

Paul Rose, a Research Historian at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, will share how books, films, comics, and television have portrayed the Holocaust over the years at Lexington Park Library on Saturday, March 30 from 10 a.m. –

12 p.m. Starting with media created during World War 2, to media made today, learn how pop culture's view of the Holocaust and how it is discussed has changed throughout history. After the presentation, there will be a short time for Q&A. Paul Rose is a researcher at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum but is not acting a representative of the institution in this presentation. Register on www.stmalib.org.

D&D Saturdays

Dungeons And Dragons at the library for players of all experience levels at Charlotte Hall Library on Saturday, March 30 from 2 – 4 p.m. Characters will be provided for players in this month's game. Drinks and snacks will be provided. No experience required! Adventures are standalone and don't require having played at previous library games. Ages 16+; under 16 permitted with parent or guardian. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Legal Notices

NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION

Date: Thursday, March 21st, 2024
Address: 45840 Highway To Heaven Ln, Great Mills, MD 20634
Time: 11:00 AM Local Time

By virtue of default by Cardinal Multi Services, LLC (Individually and collectively "Client"), under a Negotiable Promissory Note and Security Agreement(s), Security Agreement(s) Promissory Note(s), Lease Agreement(s) and related documents dated December 30, 2019, April 19, 2021 & June 18, 2021, payable to Commercial Credit Group Inc. ("CCG"), which obligation is secured by the property described below (the "Equipment"), CCG will sell at Public Auction, to the highest bidder, AS-IS, WHERE-IS, WITHOUT ANY REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES, EXPRESS, IMPLIED OR STATUTORY, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY WARRANTY OF MERCHANTABILITY OR ANY WARRANTY OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, all of its right, title and interest to the following Equipment:

- One (1) 2019 Sakai SW354 Smooth Drum Roller S/N: 4SW78-30200
- One (1) 2021 Ram 2500 SLT Crew Cab Pickup VIN: 3C6UR5DL0MG607467
- One (1) 2021 Ram 2500 ST Crew Cab Pickup VIN: 3C6UR5CJXMG594257
- One (1) 2021 Ram 2500 ST Crew Cab Pickup VIN: 3C6UR5CJ2MG609950

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Successful bidder must pay 25% of purchase price at time of sale via cash, certified or acceptable bank check, with the balance payable in good funds on the next business day, unless:

1. The bidder has pre-qualified by presenting CCG with a written non-contingent, lending commitment from a source and in a form acceptable to CCG in its sole discretion, in which case we will entertain bids up to the amount of such written commitment; or
2. The bidder has obtained from CCG written credit approval in advance of the scheduled public sale.

CCG reserves the right to bid at the sale. Contact Adam Clough at (716) 353-7537 for additional information or to arrange an inspection of the Equipment.

COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Franchise Agreement with Comcast of Maryland, LLC

The Commissioners of Leonardtown will hold a public hearing on Monday, April 8, 2024 at 4:15 p.m. at the Town Office, 22670 Washington Street, regarding the proposed franchise agreement with Comcast of Maryland, LLC and The Commissioners of Leonardtown. The purpose of the hearing will be to present for public review and receive public comment regarding the request to enter into a ten-year Franchise Agreement with Comcast Maryland, LLC. Copies of the documents are available for public review at the Leonardtown Town Office. The public is invited to attend and/or send written comments to the Commissioners of Leonardtown, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, MD 20650 to be received no later than April 8, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Ordinance No. 221

The Commissioners of Leonardtown will hold a public hearing on Monday, April 8, 2024 at 4:25 p.m. at the Town Office, 22670 Washington Street, Leonardtown, MD. The purpose of the hearing will be to present for public review and receive public comment regarding the request to acquire a 1.5544 +/- acre parcel of real property shown on Tax Map 32, Grid 12, Parcel 175, being donated by Quality Built Homes, Inc for the public purpose of constructing a water tower to serve the residents of Leonardtown. Copies of the documents are available for public review at the Leonardtown Town Office. The public is invited to attend and/or send written comments to the Commissioners of Leonardtown, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, MD 20650 to be received no later than April 8, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING Ordinance No. 220

The Commissioners of Leonardtown will hold a public hearing on Monday, April 8, 2024 at 4:35 p.m. at the Town office at 22670 Washington Street, Leonardtown, MD. The purpose of the hearing will be to receive comments on the Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Copies of the recommended budget will be available on April 1, 2024 online at <http://leonardtown.somd.com> or at the Town Office between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The public is invited to attend or send written comments by 3:00 p.m. on April 8, 2024 to: leonardtown.commissioners@leonardtownmd.gov or POB 1 Leonardtown, MD 20650. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

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A View From The BLEACHERS



SCROLLING ON

By Ronald N. Guy Jr.
Contributing Writer

As any parent of a high school student who is involved in a theater production will tell you, it is an intense experience. The lines. The choreography. The preparation of the actors and the set. The daily afterschool practices. It is an intense experience. Add in potential life variables – like a sore throat ahead of a musical (gasp!) – and you have an incubator for parental anxiety.

Usually, like most things in life, everything works out just fine. That is not an immediate tonic for the anxiety, though. Watching your kid perform covers the gamut of emotions. It is absolutely excruciating in process; there is no ability to influence, much less control, the situation, which leaves mom and dad with the worst of all strategies – hoping for the best. But then again, is there a better bumper sticker for parenthood than “Hoping for the Best”? Other than “Clinging to the Frayed Ends of Sanity” or “Can I Get a Drink Up in Here?”, of course.

The last show brings peace. The mind calms and joy swells without the fear of another performance. Not long after the final bow, curtain drop and after-show congratulations and mingling, the emotional enormity of the end sets in. There are no more practices. No more shows. Months of preparation and high-intensity performances have reached a natural, if abrupt, conclusion.

It is a rough transition – for parents, yes, but particularly for the kids. The time, the energy and the emotional investment are undeniable. Then there’s the experience of the show – all involved performing in unison to create a magical artistic expression. It is an incredible emotional peak. Then it is over. There are videos, pictures, mementos and memories, of course, but that show, with those kids, in that moment along the time continuum will never be again. Don’t be sad it’s over, be grateful that it happened. Sage wisdom. If only it was only that easy. The mind doesn’t easily bow to the words.

This is a lame transition. It doesn’t measure up to the thud families feel after a school play concludes an epic run. But as a sports fan (and a non-actor and a cringy karaoke singer at best), the Super Bowl is my best comp. It is the pinnacle of a slow and steady build of the nation’s most popular sport. Hope abounds in August. Real contests begin in September. The legitimate contenders are known when the cool air of fall arrives. Injuries happen. Inexplicable outcomes influence playoff standings. Some teams surprise, others underwhelm. Thanksgiving. Christmas. New Years. It gets serious, captivating, enthralling. Hearts are broken. Dreams get bigger. And finally, two teams take the world’s grandest stage for a final duel.

The clock ticks to zero. Confetti falls. A trophy and MVP are handed out. The game is reviewed – on the net, the radio, at the watercooler... everywhere. The context within NFL history – for the team and individual players – is pondered. The rush is intense. The immediate aftermath is consuming. But by Wednesday the following week, save for the fanatics of the winning team, it’s over. By Sunday of the subsequent week, the void of the NFL’s departure after its annual and incomparable crescendo is undeniable.

But life quickly moves on. Pitchers and catcher report to spring training. March Madness arrives. April introduces The Masters and the NBA and NHL playoffs. And then, in the blink of an eye, the NFL returns in September.

Individual human feelings are inconsequential to the unstoppable scroll of life - an inconvenient truth in magical moments that we wish would linger, but therapeutic after tough losses, unfortunate life events or for any experience best forgotten. Regardless, nothing is static. Something ends, something begins. For good or ill. For good and ill. Memories, however, travel untouched across time. Accumulate enough, though, and the joy of yesterday can become tinged with melancholy. The trick – good advice from a friend, particularly in mid-life - is to keep moving with the scroll. Carry the past, but don’t allow it to burden the on-going journey. Embrace the next game, the next season and the next musical – the next chance for something special.

Send comments to RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com

In Remembrance

Dan Carney, 76



Daniel L. Carney, peacefully passed away on March 16, 2024, in Leonardtown, MD, at the age of 76, after bravely battling glioblastoma. Born on June 12, 1947, in Taunton, MA, Dan was the son of the late Lawrence V. and Jeannette Piche Carney. Dan's formative years were spent in Sag Harbor, NY, where he attended St. Andrew's Catholic School and later graduated from Pierson High School, leaving a mark as a standout varsity basketball player.

After graduating in 1965, Dan was selected to attend the United States Coast Guard Academy, where he met the love of his life, Patricia. They were married on February 14, 1970, and their marriage lasted for 54 remarkable years. Dan's commitment to service and education defined his career. He earned his MBA from George Washington University and served honorably in the United States Coast Guard for 23 years, demonstrating his unwavering dedication to his country.

Transitioning to civilian life, Dan continued his service, becoming the Chief Financial Officer of the St. Mary's County School System in 2001, a role that allowed him to blend his financial expertise with his passion for education. His impact extended

beyond his professional duties, as he served on the St. Mary's County School Board and various county committees, leaving an indelible mark on the educational landscape of his community.

A devout Roman Catholic, Dan found solace and community at St. Francis Xavier Church in Leonardtown, MD. His commitment to service extended to Rotary International, where he forged lasting relationships while dedicating himself to serving others. Dan's legacy of love and service lives on through his cherished wife Patricia "Pat," his children Michael (Bari) and Jennifer, grandsons Luke and Drew, siblings Philip (Genie), Laureen Santini, Robert (Rhonda), and Joseph (Mary), and numerous nieces and nephews. A sister, Muriel Valure, predeceased him.

Family and friends are invited to honor Dan's life at a memorial gathering on Friday, April 5, 2024, from 5:00 – 8:00 PM at the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home in Leonardtown, MD, with a Mass of Christian Burial to follow on Friday, May 17, 2024, at 11:00 AM at St. Jude the Apostle Catholic Church in Taunton, MA. Burial will be at St. Joseph's Cemetery, Taunton, MA. In lieu of flowers, donations to MedStar Health: Hospice of St. Mary's are welcomed to honor Dan's memory. Condolences and memories may be shared with the family at www.mgfh.com.

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

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Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Announces 'Rebels & Redcoats'

St. Mary's County Government's Museum Division, in coordination with the Southern Maryland 250th Committee, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, and numerous Southern Maryland civic organizations, is proud to present Rebels & Redcoats: A Southern Maryland Revolutionary War Family Event, on Saturday, April 6, 2024, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Piney Point Lighthouse Museum & Historic Park.

Rebels & Redcoats is a free family event commemorating the American War for Independence as it happened in St. Mary's County and Southern Maryland. The event will be held near the site of the Battle of St. George Island – the only Revolutionary War battle to occur in Maryland.

Exhibits and displays by other organizations related to area local 18th century history will be on hand, along with musket and canon fire demonstrations, distaff cooking and games, food truck, beer truck, Tobacco Barn Distillery, educational and period programming, kids and family activities, reenactors, period encampment, military demonstrations, live fire drills and much more.

Visitors can experience life in camp for Maryland's Revolutionary War soldiers and militiamen as we begin the celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary. Visit their tents, learn about what they wore and carried, join the militia for a rifle drill, and listen to some military music, along with more period fun.

Event parking will be off site at Piney Point Elementary and free shuttles will



transport visitors to the event at Piney Point Lighthouse Museum from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information about the event, please call Piney Point Lighthouse Museum at (301) 994-1471 or visit Facebook.com/1836Light.

This event is part of the Southern Maryland Semiquincentennial, Maryland's 250th and America 250th celebrations, commemorating Southern Maryland's contributions to our nation's founding. Event made possible by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, St. Mary's County Museum Division, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, Southern Maryland Semi Quincentennial Committee, and other area civic organizations.

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Loyal Powerball Player Wins \$50,000

Powerball fan James Stogner of St. Mary's County buys a ticket for practically every drawing and saw his loyalty to the game pay off in a big way this month. He won a \$50,000 third-tier prize in the March 11 drawing. The happy winner said he will play Powerball whether the jackpot is reset to \$20 million or rolling to record highs past the \$1 billion mark.

"It doesn't matter. The base jackpot is still a lot of money," he said.

One of the HVAC worker's favorite Lottery retailers is the Charlotte Hall Dash In #13533 at 30100 Three Notch Road. The Mechanicsville resident often purchases and checks his tickets at the St. Mary's County gas station.

This time, when he checked the quick-pick ticket, the 51-year-old noticed a little more money than usual — \$50,000 — had appeared on the screen.

"I had to check it three times just to make sure," he said with a smile.

The Dash In store owner confirmed his big win and congratulated James on his prize. The Southern Maryland resident said he will use his money to pay bills. James was one of two big Maryland winners in



the March 11 Powerball drawing. A Lanham woman also won \$50,000. He plans to keep playing until he wins the jackpot.

Speaking of jackpots, both are climbing. Mega Millions returns Tuesday night with an estimated jackpot of \$875 million or an estimated cash option of \$413.5 million. Powerball is not far behind. Tonight's jackpot is estimated at a \$645 million annuity with an estimated cash option of \$307.5 million.



NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER News

Pax MWR Staff Take Shipboard Familiarization Tour

“Sailors belong on ships and ships belong at sea,” goes the old adage of naval service. While it may not mean much to those on shore duty at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, most Sailors and Marines can expect to be shipboard at least once in their tour of duty. So to better understand the experiences and challenges of the sea services personnel they support, civilian staff of the NAS Patuxent River’s Fleet and Family Readiness (FFR) department toured USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN -78) in Norfolk, Virginia Feb. 28.

The shipboard tour, coordinated through NAS Pax River’s N9 director Jeff Sias, sought to shed some light on what the average Sailor experiences during a sea tour, and how to better serve them.

“Over thirty years ago I was the ‘Fun Boss’ aboard ship,” said Sias. “It was an experience I’ll never forget working with those Sailors. But in talking to some of my teammates here at Pax I found out that some of them have never even seen a ship...let alone step foot on one, and I wanted to make sure they had an idea of how the people we serve live and work when in that environment.”

Working with Naval Air Forces Atlantic Public Affairs, Sias was linked up with the Ford’s staff, who welcomed the 16 Pax Pros on board and escorted them throughout the ship, including the forecastle, flight deck, GRF museum, and a swift climb up a series of ladders from the main deck to the bridge on the O9 level.

“Being able to tour a real Navy warship was impressive as well as eye opening,” said Keira Patterson-Rice, NAS Pax River N9 Administrative Officer. “Sailors are away from their families for long periods of time, so life aboard a ship can be both challenging and rewarding. Gaining insight into the complexity of modern naval operations, as well as the dedication and teamwork required of those serving their country at sea, reconfirms the respect I have for our military.”

The FFR program at NAS Patuxent River is focused on providing quality of service programs for Active Duty and their families, as well as Retired Military, DoD Civilians and Government Contractors with base access. For more information on FFR programs at Pax, visit www.navympaxriver.com or www.facebook.com/mwrpaxriver.

PMA-273 Conducts Change of Command

Capt. Duane Whitmer relieved Capt. Holly Shoger as the Naval Undergraduate Flight Training Systems Program Office (PMA-273) program manager during a change of command ceremony in California, Maryland, on Thursday, March 7.

PMA-273 develops and oversees diverse and carrier-capable naval flight training systems for student pilots and undergraduate military flight officers to acquire mission-critical aviation skills for current and future missions of the U.S Navy. Shoger assumed command of the office in March 2020.

“It has been a tremendous honor to serve as PMA-273’s program manager for the past four years,” said Shoger. “The program’s exceptionally dedicated team has made this tour both memorable and rewarding. We learned to work together while quarantined at the height of the pandemic; we overcame obstacles when aircraft needed repairs; and we developed new aircraft to train the next generation of flight officers.”

During Shoger’s tenure, the program office laid the groundwork to replace many of its aging aircraft systems. The team delivered the first TH-73A Advanced Helicopter Training System (AHTS) in 2021, which

will replace the TH-57B and TH-57C rotary aircraft. The first AHTS instructor pilots earned their wings in 2023. Also in 2023, the program office awarded a contract for the development of the T-54A Multi-Engine Training System to replace the T-44C aircraft. In January 2023, the Navy released a request for information regarding the program office’s next-generation training aircraft, the Undergraduate Jet Training System, which will replace the T-45.

“Capt. Shoger led the program office through several important milestones in the advancement of Naval flight training,” said Whitmer. “I am thrilled to take the reins and lead this ‘can-do’ team through the next round of milestones as we develop and sustain aircraft systems that will be used across commands to train pilots into the future.”

Whitmer joins PMA-273 after serving as executive assistant for Commander, Naval Air Systems Command, since March 2023. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 2000 with a Bachelor of Science in aerospace engineering and was designated a Naval Aviator in 2002. He has over 2,000 flight hours in a multitude of rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

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Letters to the Editor

'How to Survive on St. Mary's County Highways'

I have lived in this county my entire life. I have never seen our roads this unsafe. I was a member of the Regional State Highway Safety Committee and then later the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Highway Safety Committee under Sheriff Tim Cameron. Both Committees were dissolved.

It appears there is some traffic enforcement by the sheriff's office and state. However, the public sees the County for what it is. Therefore, what can you do to protect yourself?

When you are driving assume every driver out there is out to get you. Drive defensively! Another thing you can do is drive in the far right lane whenever possible. This is because the vast majority of drivers out there are distracted when they are driving. They assume it is always the other guy that has a problem. It could never be them. By the time they realize it is them, they hit someone or something or they are dead. Another thing you can do is slow down. When you drive slower, you are giving yourself more reaction time. Also, if someone does end up hitting you, you are improving your chance of survival in an accident by driving slower. Remember, the fatality rate of a head on collision is based on the combined speed of the drivers. I won't bore you with the mathematical equation that proves the point.

Assume a person at any intersection will run the stop sign or stop light. As you know, 99 percent of the time, they are fine. That 1 percent when they don't stop can kill you if you are not ready to react.

When there is no median and there is traffic in the other direction such as Leonardtown, assume the person is going

to come directly in to your lane. Be alert and give yourself time to react. Or, be in the right lane.

If a person is driving beside you in two or more lanes, assume the person will merge either right in to you or directly in front you, cutting you off. Be ready to use your horn to alert the person or try to take evasive action and slow to a stop if necessary. But, watch behind you for someone distracted that will rear end you. If you have to stop anywhere, don't assume the person behind you will stop. Other than emergencies, try to come to a slow stop when you are required to stop. When lane changing in to what you believe is an empty lane, use your turn signal and merge gradually. This gives you time to react if someone else suddenly comes in to the empty lane. Assume someone will either come over in to the empty lane or speed up from behind to occupy the lane. This is not because someone is purposely trying to get in your way. Most people are not paying attention. Assume someone will stop suddenly in front of you. This is how people get hurt in rear end collisions. Assume the person behind you might hit you. Sudden stopping causes what is known as chain reaction collisions. Use your turn signal and look both ways when turning on to another road. Even if it is clear, continue to look both ways. Make sure you have a clear vision of where you are turning on to. And continue to look as you proceed. This is just some examples to keep you alive. Drive safely and stay alive!

Roy Fedders
Dameron, MD

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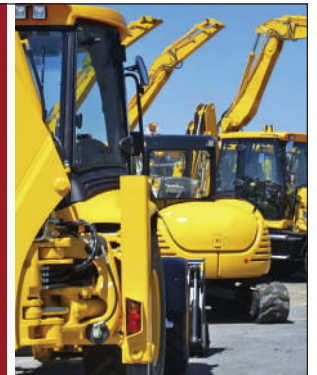
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7th District Fire Company Celebrates 75 Years



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

John "Speedy" Nelson, president of the 7th District Volunteer Fire Department based in Avenue remembers what it was like in the early days of the department.

He and some of the other older members tell stories to the younger firefighters there but he's not sure they can really understand just how different things were in those days.

"I've been here 50 of the 75 years the department has been in service, looking at all the struggles we had to go through just to get here," Nelson told The County Times. "First of all, it took us a couple of years just to build a fire house. "All of our equipment was used, we might have gotten things from a fire company that didn't need them anymore."

Before the county government instituted a fire and rescue tax the members of Company No. 5 had to fend entirely for themselves by engaging in all manner of fundraisers.

"Before the fire tax we had dances at the fire house and all other kinds of activities," Nelson said.

He looks back on the firefighter's basic loadout from all those years ago and sees some of the biggest changes.

In those early days a firefighter was usually equipped with a pair boots, a fire coat and a helmet; it cost about \$80, Nelson said.

Now, with the advent of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) being an essential piece of firefighter gear, the cost to fully equip a member to knock down a blaze is

about \$10,000.

"And maybe that's on the light side," Nelson said. "Each SCBA alone costs about \$8,000.

"It's the cost to keep firefighters safe."

Fire apparatus have increased in cost, too, with new models reaching up into the millions of dollars to purchase.

But through all of the challenges past and present, Company 5 is celebrating its 75th anniversary starting Mar. 23 with a banquet for special guests, but the public will be able to take part in the celebration later this summer in July when the department holds an open house, Nelson said.

Planned for that open house are fire apparatus and equipment displays, Nelson said, as well as food trucks and perhaps entertainment.

It's part of the company's way of giving back to the community, Nelson said, for all of its support over three-quarters of a century.

"Our community is a big supporter," Nelson said. "If we need something they're always there to help us."

There are 51 members who still actively run calls for service, he said.

"We have a younger crowd who do an awesome job," Nelson said. "And we have older members who take on more administrative tasks.

"We do well with volunteers but we can always use more."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

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St. Mary's Native Wins Big at Rodeo Finals

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Brandon Cullins, late of Texas, learned to ride and race horses growing up on his family's farm in Clements and has used it to great effect while competing in national level rodeos.

Just last week Cullins rode to victory in the barrel racing competition at The American Rodeo in Abilene, Texas.

Cullins, who trains horses for a living now, went home with \$1.1 million in winnings.

"The fastest time wins," Cullins said of the simple goal of racing a horse around a clover-leaf formation of three barrels positioned in a rodeo ring. "It's tough but this is the sixth time I've made it through to the finals.

"I went in thinking I had the horse to win it."

The horse is a mare named MJ Segers Fast Lane, a young horse full of speed and poise.

"She's seven years old," Cullins said. "I've been working with her for the past year-and-a-half."

MJ is owned by another family but she stays with Cullins at his ranch so they can train together for competition.

After having trained so much for racing in the saddle, Cullins said, he's grown accustomed to its intense effects on the body and mind but he says it can still be an exhilarating experience.

"I do it all day, every day," Cullins told The County Times. "It's like you're out of control but you're in control."

He said he's built a strong working rela-



Brandon Cullins, third from left

tionship with MJ through all the hours of training and said that he has to do little but provide some guidance to the animal, who does much of the racing work herself.

"They're extremely rare to have a horse of this caliber," Cullins said of MJ's performance. "Some are more like dogs, but she's more independent."

Cullins can remember his childhood growing up in Clements, and was introduced to horses when he was about 15 or 16 years old.

"We had a farm and I grew up cutting tobacco," Cullins, whose family is well

known in the 7th District, said.

A relative introduced him to horses and his interest in the powerful but temperamental animals grew from there.

He learned about the different kinds of horses and their uses and began to ride one around the farm.

He attended local 4-H shows of livestock and saw speed events involving horses and from there he was in the game of training and racing equines.

"It just caught my interest," Cullins, who races in denim jeans, tucked-in-cowboy-style shirt, boots and prominent Stetson-style

hat, said. "I got hooked that way, I guess. "I didn't want a real job, so I started training horses."

When it comes to working with the winning horse MJ Seger, he doesn't have to take her through the barrel course much at all, he said.

"We just work on body control, working to keep her responsive," Cullins said. "It's a lot more going on that what it looks like."

Cullins said that the event he just one was perhaps the most significant in the rodeo world.

"It's probably the highest level you can get to," Cullins, 35, said. "This was like our Super Bowl."

For his part, the impact of his accomplishment is still something he is coming to grips with, he said.

He plans to use the winnings to further his horse training operations, he said.

"It still hasn't really set in," Cullins said Mar. 18. "I just deposited the check for my winnings."

Celebrating its 11th year, The American Rodeo features competitors in all eight traditional rodeo disciplines: barrel racing, breakaway roping, steer wrestling, team roping (heading and healing), tie down roping, bareback riding, saddle bronc riding and bull riding, a statement from The American Rodeo reads.

Cullins is also the first man to win the top barrel racing championship, according to The American Rodeo.

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Watermen File Suit Against Rockfish Regulations



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The latest round of regulations on the harvesting on rockfish from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has raised the ire of regional watermen who have now filed suit against the regulatory agency in federal court.

The suit was filed by the Delmarva Fisheries Association, Inc. (DFA) and several other watermen filing individually against "drastic limitations" on pursuing their livelihood.

The Maryland Charter Boat Association has also joined the suit.

[The fisheries commission] acknowledges that the Atlantic striped bass (rockfish) is not overfished and that overfishing is not currently occurring," the lawsuit states. "The January 24 ... action of ASMFC, taken over the opposing votes of the States of Maryland and New Jersey, was devoid of any scientific or rational factual basis, inconsistent with ASMFC's own rules and regulations and failed to take into account the economic impact on fishery-dependent industries and other adversely affected Chesapeake Bay businesses and local communities.

"Absent immediate relief on these claims, many of the Plaintiffs, who are overwhelmingly small and medium-sized family businesses, will be forced out of business as a direct consequence of this illegitimate gov-

ernmental action which, through its public announcement alone, has already caused charter cancellations for the upcoming fishing season."

The lawsuit also claims that the regulations enacted are unconstitutional, specifically in conflict with the protections of the 14th Amendment.

The regulatory agency claimed when it released its new regulations that harvesting of rockfish had greatly increased in recent years but that overall, the harvests had declined.

"In 2022, total Atlantic striped bass removals commercial and recreational, including harvest, commercial discards and recreational release mortality were estimated at 6.8 million fish, which is a 32 percent increase from 2021 total removals," the ASMFC statement from January reads.

Phil Langley, a charter boat captain based in Dameron, said there are legitimate concerns over the lagging volume of spawning stock of rockfish for the past five years but commercial and recreational fishers had already been saddled with restrictions on the catch as recently as last summer.

"It's not doing us any favors," Langley said of the recent regulations. "They're not giving [the prior] regulations a chance to see if they're working."

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Plan for Apartment Complex Rejected



Artists rendering of Park Place Apartments

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

A concept site plan that would have brought 160 new apartments into the Lexington Park Planning District has been rejected by the county planning commission.

The vote to deny the proposal for the Park Place Apartments, which would have been built behind the SAIC building and the current Holiday Inn off of Route 235, was a unanimous one.

Members of the planning commission expressed many concerns over the project, particularly on the stress it might put on public services such as schools and first responders as well as worries over adding more traffic to an already congested intersection with Shady Mile Drive.

The project would have been spread over four buildings on a six-acre plot of land.

There was also considerable public oppo-

sition to the project.

Chris Findlay of COPT Defense Properties, said his company owned the three-story, Class A office building that was next to the property in question.

“We object to the Park Place concept site plan because ... it introduces an uncontrolled security threat immediately adjacent to our Abell House [Rd.] property,” Findlay said. “Residential properties are particularly risky because an adversary can place agents in close proximity to the mission work, with around-the-clock observations and install complex electronic systems of detection undetected because of the inherent privacy of a lease of an apartment.”

“The approval of the concept site plan will render the Abell House property less desirable for mission work.”

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Marbury Man Sentenced for Shooting into an Occupied Residence

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling announced today that James Stephen Gass, 32, of Marbury, Maryland, was sentenced to 25 years in prison with 13 years of active incarceration for first-degree assault and possession of a firearm with a disqualifying conviction.

“The Defendant was prohibited from possessing firearms due to prior criminal convictions yet continued to illegally do so,” said Sterling. “His dangerous actions could have created large-scale harm to our community due to his total disregard for human life when he brazenly opened fire at an occupied residence and a nearby vehicle.”

The incident occurred on July 2, 2022, at approximately 12:32 a.m. Several bullets were recovered from inside the residence. No persons were injured, while property damage was reported.

Senior Assistant State's Attorney Donna Pettersen prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County.



James Stephen Gass

Corporal Christopher DiToto of the Maryland State Police was the lead investigator.

The Honorable Michael J. Stamm presided over the case.

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Charity Started for Victims of Fatal Crash

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Family members of a young boy who was killed in a car crash, in which his two siblings suffered life-threatening injuries and his mother was also hurt, have started a GoFundMe page to raise funds for burial and medical costs in the aftermath.

Police say that on March 16 patrol units from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office were dispatched to a motor vehicle crash near the intersection of Point Lookout Road and Chingville Road in Leonardtown and found a single 2008 Honda Odyssey upside down on Chingville Road.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the vehicle, operated by Ashley Nicole Nolan, 27, of Leonardtown was traveling north on Point Lookout Road when the driver failed to negotiate a turn. The car left the road and overturned several times before striking a tree, according to the sheriff's office.

Three juvenile occupants were found not to be correctly restrained, according to sheriff's deputies. Two juveniles were ejected from the vehicle and were transported to area trauma centers with life-threatening injuries. The third juvenile identified as Brysen Carter, 8, was transported to MedStar St. Mary's Hospital and was later pronounced deceased.

"Ashley and her three younger kids were in a tragic car accident that claimed



the life of Brysen Carter," the GoFundMe page reads. "The expenses will go towards burial services, traveling back and forth to Children's Hospital and medical bills for Jenesis and Nazire [the other juveniles injured in the crash.]"

Nolan, the driver, sustained minor injuries and was transported to MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, according to the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's office reported that alcohol and speed are considered contributing factors in the crash.

"No day should ever begin with news like this," said Sheriff Steve Hall in response to the crash. "It is both difficult to process and to believe.

"Based on the preliminary investigative information, decisions were made that have caused the loss of the innocent and marred the lives of families in our communities forever."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Commissioners Briefed on Annapolis Tax Battle

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The House of Delegates has released a set of amendments to the Senate's statewide budget bill that would raise an extra \$1.2 billion in revenue, Deputy County Attorney John Houser told the Commissioners of St. Mary's County this week, but the future of that bill is in doubt as the Senate apparently has no desire to raise taxes.

"These are euphemistically called revenue enhancements," Houser said of the numerous fee and tax increases included in SB 362 as amended. "The good news is that the House plan would make permanent the restoration of transportation revenue funds that... Gov. [Wes] Moore's budget originally cut."

The House proposal would raise about \$300 million by legalizing on-line gambling — also known as igaming — as well as an additional \$225 million by changing how corporations report on their income taxes.

The House proposal also posits a \$125 per year surcharge on electric vehicles — which do not contribute currently to the transportation improvement fund because they are

not affected by the gas tax — as well as an increase in the vehicle excise tax from 6 percent to 6.5 percent, Houser said.

Tolls on out-of-state travelers and motorists would also be increased under the proposal.

Houser said the amended proposal would make it out of the House but it faced serious challenges in the opposing chamber even though both were controlled by Democrats.

"[Senate Majority Leader] Sen. [Bill] Ferguson has telegraphed fairly strongly at this point that they are not considering meaningful tax increases this year," Houser said. "The Senate would prefer just to pull from the 'Rainy Day Fund' for this year."

There was no telling, Houser said, which of the leadership cast would win the budget battle or "what victory would look like."

"This is a terrible time to raise taxes because people are stressed," Commissioner Mike Hewitt said.

The governor has proposed a \$63.1 billion budget for fiscal 2025; the state has a \$2.3 billion rainy day fund.

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Commissioners Vote to Increase Income Tax

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

By a near unanimous vote the Commissioners of St. Mary's County voted this week to increase the county income tax from 3 percent to 3.2 percent in an effort to raise an extra \$7 million for the school system.

The lone opposition vote to the measure came from Commissioner Mike Hewitt, who implored commissioners to leave off pursuing a tax increase before the vote.

"Commissioners, once we go to 3.2 [percent], we're maxed out," Hewitt said. "This is taking care of maybe one year, then what happens the following years?"

"The only thing we have left is [the] property [tax]."

Commissioner Eric Colvin, who professed the motion to increase the income tax, said the county would only get half of the increase this year and next year would receive the full amount.

"Income in St. Mary's County is doing better than anywhere else in the state," Colvin said. "We are a strong county and we will be OK with that."

Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith said the state is projected to give the school system \$6 million in funding next school year, which would be a funding formula more consistent with what the county was used to in prior years.

Smith has said repeatedly that this year the state is set to give the county virtu-

ally no additional funding because of the county's overall wealth and its flat student enrollment.

If the schools had to cut \$7 million from their budget, Smith said, he would have to cut about 120 positions.

"I'm more along the line of providing \$2 million," Hewitt had said to Smith earlier in the March 19 budget work session. "It's a terrible time to raise taxes."

Smith said a severe lack of funding would likely trigger a round of redistricting of students as well to that point that a school might have to be shut down to preserve funding elsewhere.

"That is truly something I would prefer not to experience," Smith said.

"Had the state provided what it historically had provided... we'd be looking for \$4.5 million to \$5 million from you."

"We have said over, and over and over again we are not getting our fair [state] share in St. Mary's County."

The schools' initial request from the county this year in the budget was \$9.5 million.

Hewitt said he believed Smith and his administration could find enough money in the schools budget to come up with increased salaries for employees without tax increases; Smith said the state agreed that the system should move away from such "inefficiencies like smaller schools."

Commissioners said that if there were a strong public outcry over the proposed tax



Commissioner President Randy Guy

increase at the April budget public hearing, then they would consider rescinding the tax increase.

"We want to hear not just from one commissioner or two commissioners, but we want to be able to hear from the public at large," said Commissioner Mike Alderson. "They should have their say in this also."

Commissioner President James "Randy" Guy said raising taxes was necessary.

"We're here to provide all kinds of services," Guy said. "I hate to say this but the state has let us down."

"And that's just the way it is; the county has to pick up the pieces as move on."

The public hearing for the fiscal 2025 budget is set for April 23.

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“I HATE TO SAY THIS BUT THE STATE HAS LET US DOWN.”

COMMISSIONER PRESIDENT JAMES “RANDY” GUY ON THE NEED TO RAISE THE INCOME TAX



LOCAL 5
Commissioners approve income tax increase



LOCAL 7
Child killed in crash



ON THE COVER
St. Mary's native wins \$1.1 million in top rodeo competition

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CULLINS WINS TOP RODEO PRIZE