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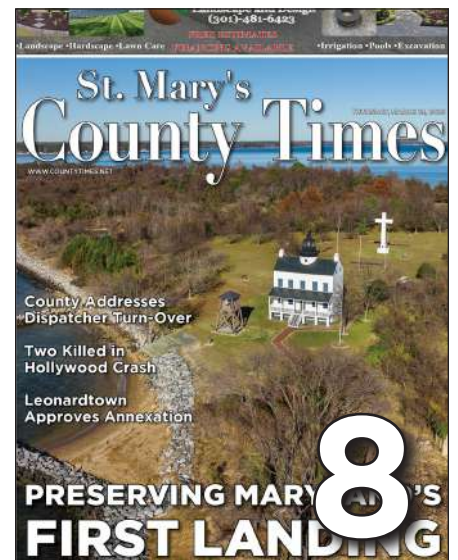
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WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, MAR 19 Partly Cloudy Hi: 54° Lo: 36°	FRI, MAR 20 Partly Cloudy Hi: 63° Lo: 50°	SAT, MAR 21 Partly Cloudy Hi: 67° Lo: 49°	SUN, MAR 22 Partly Cloudy Hi: 78° Lo: 47°
MON, MAR 23 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 52° Lo: 34°	TUE, MAR 24 Partly Cloudy Hi: 48° Lo: 38°	WED, MAR 25 Partly Cloudy Hi: 56° Lo: 43°	THU, MAR 26 Partly Cloudy Hi: 61° Lo: 52°



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County to Outsource Some Emergency Dispatchers

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Facing vacancies and difficulties retaining staff, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County have agreed to a plan to use a contract agency to supply emergency dispatch workers. The commissioners on March 17 agreed to contract with GetResQ911 after a presentation by Director of Emergency Services Jennifer Utz.

She said of the company, "They provide trained, certified dispatchers. They have... all the qualifications, all the security parameters. They provide us with staff, up to eight people, that we're requesting, to balance our shifts."

Utz said of the workers who receive from their employer a monthly housing stipend of \$2,200 in addition to their salary, "They acclimate well to new communities. They learn a geography fairly quickly. And then, we are required to provide them two weeks of training prior to arrival, where they would learn our CAD system and call types, and how we function as an organization. So, our assistant manager and our CAD specialist would be primarily responsible for getting

them trained before they get here. And then once they get here, we expect them to be fully functional in our center in less than a month."

Why the move? Utz said, "We've had the turnover and we've really kind of evaluated our system to find out what's driving our turnover. And quite honestly, it's fatigue. We've had to mandate overtime, excessive hours for our current staff to make sure that we meet the demands of the citizens and the community and the first responders that we serve."

"We're seeing a lot of staff burnout as a result," Utz said.

"This a complex job," she added. "It's not dangerous for us, but it's dangerous for the people. If we don't train them correctly; our first responders count on that voice on the other end of the radio. Our citizens count on that voice on the other end of the phone. So, ensuring that our people are properly trained that we hire, the onboarding process, it takes a little bit of time to get them onboarded, but then we look at six to eight months to fully train and turn loose a dispatcher. So, when we have vacancies, and we currently have seven, two assistant supervisors and five PSD ones, it takes us up to eight months to

get them certified, cleared, trained to function on their own."

Utz said, "If we can eliminate some of that turnover, we can decompress our workforce, get them their energy back, strive for some more work-life balance."

She added, "But we haven't been able to afford that to them because of the vacancies and the shortages."

The county pays the contractor and they pay their employees. But Utz said, "We also have a lot of leeway. So, if someone's not working out, if there's issues, if there's disciplinary matters, we have full rights and authority to ensure that they're operating within the confines of our center and our needs. And then if they're not successful, we contact the company and then they engage with that person."

Deputy Director of Emergency Services Kiersten Shea told the commissioners that for dispatch to be fully staffed they need 28 employees. They have 14. Others are in various stages of either being hired or in training.

She said, "If we are successful with every employee that we have right now in the training, and we do not lose any of our current employees, our projections are that we



Director of Emergency Services Jennifer Utz

would not become fully staffed until May of 2027. So, this one-year contract really helps us achieve that and get to that road mark."

The commissioners unanimously agreed to enter into a one-year contract with the professional services company.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Sheriff's Office Investigating Double Fatality in Hollywood

On Sunday, March 15, at 4:35 p.m., deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office responded to the intersection of Three Notch Road and Hollywood Road for a motor vehicle collision.

The investigation determined that a 2016 GMC Sierra, operated by Austin Schultz of Leonardtown, was making a left turn from northbound Three Notch Road onto Hollywood Road at the traffic signal when a 2013 Toyota Camry, operated by 42-year-old Keith Mersing II of Charlotte Hall and traveling south on Three Notch Road, ran the red light. The Camry was reportedly using the shoulder to bypass vehicles stopped at the intersection when it struck the GMC pickup.

Mersing and the front-seat passenger of his vehicle, 35-year-old Troy Coley of New Carrollton, were transported to a local hospital, where both succumbed to injuries sustained during the collision.

The operator of the GMC pickup and a juvenile passenger were transported to a local hospital with minor injuries.

Currently, it appears that excessive speed and reckless driving are contributing factors in the collision.

Sheriff Steve Hall said, "Reckless and careless driving costs too many lives, and this crash also very nearly cost the lives of one of our deputies and a member of his family. When you get behind the wheel, you are entering into a social contract; you

take on a responsibility to everyone else on the road. This crash is a sobering reminder that the choices drivers make in a matter of seconds can have life-altering consequences for many; our prayers are with the families of those who died."

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Collision Reconstruction Unit has assumed the investigation. Anyone with information about the events leading up to this collision is asked to contact Sergeant Shawn Shelko at 301-475-4200, ext. 8147, or by email at shawn.shelko@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Tippers can also submit tips anonymously:

- Text 847411: start your message with "SMCSO", add a space, and then your tip.
- Online: Submit a tip through the Sheriff's Office website at www.FirstSheriff.com/tips.
- App: Send a tip directly through the SMCSO app. Download the free app from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.
- Phone: For those who prefer to make a phone call, tips can also be shared through the Crime Solvers line at 301-475-3333.

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Press release from SMCSO

Alderson: No Data Centers!

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

With data centers becoming a hot topic, not only in Maryland, but around the country, Commissioner Mike Alderson has a stern message for anyone considering St. Mary's County.

During commissioner time at the March 17 meeting, Alderson said, "There's been a lot of talk and controversy about data centers showing up. There are things going on in Calvert County, I'm sure you've heard about, and there's a plan for Morgantown in Charles County. Just put it out there on my stance on data centers in St. Mary's County is absolutely, unequivocally no, not now, not ever."

Alderson said, "I've been watching some town council meetings and county commissioner meetings from across the country, most notably in Wisconsin, where they are experiencing the same sort of data center boom that Northern Virginia has. And they're at least in Virginia projecting over 80 million square feet with the data centers in the entire state and within the next 10 years."

He added, "And a lot of these data centers are not capable of using any kind of water other than fresh water for their cooling systems, which is a huge drain on an area like ours where the majority of where all of our water is well water, but majority of households are served by individual wells. And I know for years we've talked about aquifers being diminished."



Commissioner Mike Alderson

And the amount of power that they use is ridiculous," he said. "If someone were to come down here and say they wanted to do a small modular reactor, I might have no problem with that because at least we're getting the energy. Whereas (when) a data center comes in, they're cranking up the energy usage."

Alderson said, "Looking at the property tax revenue from these data centers, it looks great, but I think it comes at a too high of a cost to the residents of the surrounding areas."

"So, if you want to ask me about data centers, this is going to be a one-word complete sentence of 'No'."

dickmyers@countytimes.net



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Panhandling Bill Amended, Appears Likely to Pass

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

A bill that the Commissioners of St. Mary's County have sought for several years could be successful this time, albeit in an amended form.

Deputy County Attorney John Sterling Houser, who follows what's happening in Annapolis, told them on March 17, "The looming date is crossover next Monday, March 23. This is going to be a pretty frenetic pace this week. We are starting to see movement on our local bills. HB 668 which commissioners are well aware, got out of its subcommittee and its committee last week with amendments. HB 668 is the bill that would've, as originally submitted, prohibited roadside solicitation on roadways in the county. As introduced, it would've required the commissioners to designate roadways that are inherently dangerous. And then forbid all standing, loitering, soliciting, basically non pedestrian moving activities in those inherently dangerous roadways."

Houser added, "And with these amendments that were required apparently to get it out of committee last week would require before designating a state owned highway or median or divide or strip of land right next to the roadway, will need to consult with the State Highway Administration before making that determination and would need explicit approval from the State Highway Administration before installing the required signs to effectuate that prohibition."

He observed, "Those amendments are a change. Obviously any involvement in the State Highway Administration, you worry about delays. You worry about slow walk-

ing, you worry about if we do not see eye to eye on what we think is an inherently dangerous road versus what the state is. It's a concern that was raised by Delegate (Todd) Morgan. It was raised by this office. State Highway Administration apparently dug its heels in a little bit.

"I think the important clarity we have is that on a few roadways that would come immediately to the fore, the intersection at 235 and 4, and then others yet to be specified, parts of that 235 corridor, State Highway Administration does think as a matter of first impression, first blush, those would be inherently dangerous. So maybe the worst of the disputes or disagreements to come are obviated by that. It does look like with this amendment. State Highway Administration withdraws any objections or concerns they have about the bill. And this is poised to pass in its amended fashion."

Houser also reported on the state budget that has revised revenue estimates that might overcome some of the state budget woes.

He said, "The worst-case scenario is that Board of Revenue estimates were going to come in last year with maybe a \$300, \$400, \$500 million write down. because either less federal funding would be there because less revenues would come in because certain expenses not anticipated or suddenly anticipated. That did not happen either. Top level is that there is an increase of about \$300 million in FY 26 revenues beyond what was initially projected. That's not expected to be year over year. That is because of apparently anomalous increase in a state and inheritance tax at the state level."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Town Approves Route 5 Annexation

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of Leonardtown have formally annexed about 16.35 acres of land known as the Hall property into the town. The property is across Route 5 (Point Lookout Road) from the Leonardtown Centre. The approval came at the March 9 town meeting after a presentation by Assistant Town Administrator Jeanine Harrington.

According to a staff report, the existing St. Mary's County zoning is Rural Preservation District (RPD). The proposed town zoning would be Commercial Highway (CH). The existing use is Residential. The Proposed Use is Commercial (Auto Services).

According to the Staff Report, "The parcel is developed with a single-family dwelling and an accessory storage shed."

The property has constraints that would have to be addressed by the planning com-

mission once a site plan is presented. The staff report said, "A preliminary constraints review found several sensitive areas (highly erodible soils, wetlands) and it is noted that additional studies will be required at the time of development if the property is annexed. The property is also burdened by two county-held encumbrances: approximately five acres on the southern portion are subject to Transferable Development Rights (2010), and the northern portion contains Protected Open Space (2009). Any future development of the property will undergo a full review process to confirm that all required environmental safeguards and Town development standards are met."

The annexation was delayed while the town reviewed the property's frontage on Route 5. It was unanimously approved at the March 9 meeting.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

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**NAVAL AIR STATION
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Navy Declares Initial Operational Capability for SDB II on F/A-18



An F/A-18 conducts testing with the Small Diameter Bomb (SDB) II at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md. The SDB II variant includes an advanced tri-mode seeker, allowing it to engage dynamic targets in adverse conditions. (U.S. Navy photo)

The U.S. Navy recently declared initial operational capability for the Small Diameter Bomb II on the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, marking a significant advancement in the fleet's precision-strike technology.

The weapon, also known as the StormBreaker, saw its first operational use on the Super Hornet during a limited early operational capability in 2025, proving real-world validation of the bomb's performance on the platform.

With SDB II, Super Hornets can now engage moving and stationary targets in all weather conditions and rapidly changing environments. The weapon features a tri-mode seeker that integrates infrared, millimeter-wave radar and semi-active laser guidance. This technology allows the bomb to see through fog, smoke and rain. As a network-enabled weapon, it supports in-flight target updates from air or ground controllers, providing increased flexibility during

dynamic missions.

"Bringing SDB II to the fleet gives our air crews a reliable way to hit targets in adverse weather conditions," said Tyler Alt, Navy SDB II program manager. "This isn't just about a new weapon; it lays the foundation for future Super Hornet weapon capabilities to provide the flexibility to update a mission in real time, even after the bomb has been released."

Led by the U.S. Air Force, the SDB II joint-interest program is already operational on the F-15E. It is currently being integrated across other platforms, including the F-16C/D and F-35.

The Navy's portion of the program is managed by the Precision Strike Weapons Program Office (PMA-201). The office is responsible for delivering the Navy's air-to-ground precision guided weapons, general purpose bombs and aircraft armament equipment.

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St. Clement's Hundred: Preserving Maryland's Birthplace

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Maryland Day is March 25, 2026. It will be the 392nd anniversary of the founding of Maryland in 1634. That date is usually pinpointed as the founding because it was the date a hearty band of misfits and gentry arrived in the ships "The Ark," and "The Dove" at a 400-acre island now known as St. Clement's. There a Roman Catholic mass was said and the colonists spread out along the Potomac to colonize what was to become St. Mary's County.

Today a small but extremely dedicated band has picked up where those original settlers left off and is working diligently to preserve and protect the island.

Known as St. Clement's Hundred (for acres not people), the organization was established in 1991.

According to their website, "While the state had already begun preservation efforts, the St. Clement's Hundred focused the community's desires and worked with the state government to keep up those efforts."

By the time the state began shoreline protection, that 400-acre island had shriveled to 40 acres and was in desperate need of saving before it was all gone.

According to the St. Clement's Hundred website, "As a result of a small bequest from Josephine Mattingly, granddaughter of

Josephine McWilliams Freeman, Lighthouse keeper, the St. Clement's Hundred took on the task of building a replica of the original Blackistone Lighthouse. Funds for the rebuilding project were raised with the help of its many donors, while major funding support was provided by the Maryland General Assembly and the St. Mary's County Commissioners.

"Using original plans, the Lighthouse replica began construction in the spring of 2007. At completion in 2008, the Lighthouse once again opened its doors to the community. Yet, the Lighthouse was still missing something — a Bell Tower. In summer 2010, the replica Bell Tower was completed and once again the sound of a fog bell could be heard."

Preservation of the lighthouse and Bell Tower are two of its mission as stated in their Mission Statement: "Our mission is to preserve, protect and maintain the Blackistone Lighthouse, the Bell Tower and the Memorial Cross on St. Clement's Island, and to gather, preserve and share information about the Island, its buildings, history, culture and significance to St. Mary's County and Maryland history."

But even though the state owns the island, the St. Clement's Hundred volunteers have taken on the task of doing whatever needs to be done, from mowing the lawns to showing the lighthouse to visitors.

Don Cropp is not only a board member, but the builder and developer was instrumental in getting the replica lighthouse built.

Cropp explained that the volunteers originally focused on getting trees planted to help the state in its stabilization effort. But the donation for the lighthouse got them in gear for the big project.

Cropp said, "And then it's almost like 15 years ago, 16 years ago, there's a lady who left money in her will and she was hoping that maybe the lighthouse could get rebuilt or something on the island. And she left them like \$5,000. Well, then they decided that they wanted to build a lighthouse out there, so they found plans for the original lighthouse and then they started raising money. And then they started reaching out to a lot of builders about building the lighthouse, including to me. And, I said nah that's too hard for me to go to an island, but then everybody else's bids are coming in, well over a million dollars. And then they got back with me and asked if I could take a second look at it. And I go, yeah, you buy the materials, I'll do it for free."

Cropp added, "So we ended up building it for maybe \$600,000, probably half. But ever since then they started taking care of the lighthouse and taking care of the island."

He said, "Over the last 10, 12 years, we just really expanded. We mow all the island, we take care of the bathrooms, we take care

of the tour at the lighthouse."

Cropp said of the state ownership of the island, "When we went to build the lighthouse, they gave us a 50-year lease on the island. And at first it was just a small section and then they expanded it. So, we have a lease on almost the whole island, because the state quit mowing grass."

The group's big fundraiser every year is the Osprey Ball, held the Friday before the Blessing of the Fleet in early October, which is a celebration of the island put on by the Seventh District Optimist Club. The two organizations have a close relationship.

Because of the construction of the new museum, last year and this year the Osprey Ball is held at the club's President Joe St. Clair's venue hall and in a large tent erected adjacent to it. Yearly more than 300 people attend, Cropp said.

According to their website, "The Osprey Gala and Auction takes place in late September/early October of each year. When fundraising ideas were first thrown around over 25 years ago, the idea of having a black-tie dinner gala under a tent in the 7th District was sparked. Since its inception, its success has continued to grow and provides the main funding for the Hundred's operations of the Blackistone Lighthouse and Bell Tower."

The program includes a reception, plated dinner, full open bar, sponsorships, and live



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Volunteers with St. Clement's Hundred manage everything from major preservation and restoration projects to routine landscape maintenance on St. Clement's Island.

and silent auctions.

The organization is busy throughout the year. Cropp said back when the state was more involved “we started mowing grass, then we started mowing more and more, and then we started buying lawn mowers and we started putting equipment out there. But now we have tractors and golf carts and everything. Now we do have the county. So, the county gives us \$25,000 a year now because we tried to get contracts and people going, it’s going to be way over \$100,000 because they need to go back and forth on the island. So, we get \$25,000, but we pay more than \$25,000 in equipment and gas and maintenance alone. Plus, we rent a boat and take people out there.”

Cropp added, “We had to go rent another boat because you go all the time. And now we got with the state and we’re getting another real big boat. And so, the county has a brand-new boat right now. And we ended up getting a grant from the state where they gave the money to the county, but then the county’s kind of turned it over to us to get this boat built. And once we get the boat built, we’ll sell it back to the county for a dollar. But now we’re going to have a boat that’s handicapped accessible, it’ll have ramps so we can take lawnmowers and we can take more people out there. And, you know, sometimes we need backhoes out there because we’re always working.”

They try to help as many people as possi-

ble enjoy the island. Cropp said, “We have a group of Catholic school kids come out, we make money to help them. We’ve gone up to Charlotte Hall [Veteran’s Home] and we’ve got veterans come down and make sure we treat them well.”

St. Clement’s Hundred board has 10 members and then they have a little over a dozen additional volunteers. Many of those involved are getting up in years. “Three years ago, we had one young person. He was 59 and we had a 62, and the rest of us are in our 70’s,” he quipped, although recently two new recruits in their 30’s joined and they’re always looking for new blood.

“We just love to help people,” Cropp said, “and we think this is very important. It’s the

birthplace of Maryland, Catholicism, and freedom of religion. And it’s probably the most iconic place in the entire county. You know, it’s where it all started and we just have real strong feelings towards that.”

Because of the museum construction, this year’s Maryland Day celebration will only consist of a commemorative mass on the island.

According to the county museum division, “Celebrate the founding of Maryland at the state’s birthplace with a commemorative mass on St. Clement’s Island, the first landing, at 10 a.m. All are welcome.”

dickmyers@countytimes.net



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LEONARDTOWN ELECTION AND DEADLINE FOR FILING AS A CANDIDATE

Election of three (3) Council Members of the Town of Leonardtown will be held on Tuesday, May 5, 2026

The candidate deadline for filing is Monday, April 13, 2026 at 4:30 PM.

To obtain forms or for any questions, please call 301-475-9791 or go online at <https://leonardtown.somd.com> or email leonardtown.commissioners@leonardtownmd.gov.

Deadline for submitting a completed application for an Absentee Ballot is Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at the Town Office by 4:30 pm.

Deadline for Obtaining Emergency Ballot is Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 7:00 pm.

Deadline for registration to vote is Friday, April 17, 2026 at 4:30 pm.

Visit the Board of Elections office at 23250 Hollywood Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650, Monday through Friday, between the normal business hours of 8:00 am through 4:30 pm or call 301-475-4200 ext. 1625 or <https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/SupervisorOfElections/>

The polls open Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at the Town Office 22670 Washington Street, Leonardtown, Maryland, between the hours of 12:00 pm and 7:00 pm, on said date, for voting.

If you would like to place a classified ad or legal notice, please call the County Times at 301-373-4125 or email aldailey@countytimes.net

County Times
ST. MARY'S • CALVERT

Christmas in April Moves Away from One-Day Blitz

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

St. Mary's County Christmas in April is changing the way it does business. Previously the organization did a one-day blitz on the last Saturday in April, fixing dozens on homes around the county with hundreds of volunteers.

Christmas in April Executive Director Darene Kleinsorgen told the Commissioners of St. Mary's County on March 10, "We are here earlier than normal because we've decided to change how we do things for the homeowners of St. Mary's County. This is our 36th year of supporting the county. We've done 908 projects, 30 community projects, we've invested \$10 million worth of repairs to the houses, and we've used 4,000 volunteers in the county.

"What we've decided to do this year to be more efficient is instead of doing everything in one day, which was very difficult trying to organize, we're going to do it whenever the house captains pick the project and pick the time when they want to do it. This has several advantages. We're going to continue to do inspections. We're not going to have a deadline. So, our deadline was December 1st. If someone comes in January with an application that needs a roof done and I have to tell them there's going to be 18 months before you can get that repaired, that will not happen anymore. We'll continue to do inspections, and the house captains will pick their date."

Kleinsorgen observed, "This gives our skilled trades, which are at a minimum for us because they're very busy and they don't have a lot of time to give to us, they can help at several projects when they're not on the same day.

"Also, we have a lot of support from the base. A lot of those people travel, so if they travel over Christmas in April day, that's it. They can't support us. So, this is a way they can pick a date. We can have more volunteers, more people involved."

She said, "It also keeps Christmas in April out there for people to see what we do it more often. And we're hoping that this project is going to work."

Kleinsorgen was at the commissioners to ask, "Instead of having the dump certificates, which you graciously give us every year for one particular week, we kind of have to have a floating timeframe so that we can use it for the projects as they come up."

"We're just trying to spread it out. We just think it would better to serve the community this way."

Commissioner Mike Hewitt observed from personal experience the need for more than one day.

She said, "We're still working through some of the logistics of it all, but everybody seems to think it's a good idea."

Hewitt said, "It sounds great. In years past I've been involved. They haven't done it the last several years, but the point is we couldn't get it done by the end of the day and it got dark. And what we do is we go back the next day. So, this will allow that type of activity if it takes two days or three days to get it done."

Kleinsorgen said, "Sometimes they have to go the weekend before if it's a thing like we have to put cement posts in or something that has to be done like the week before and then they go back and build the ramp or whatever we're doing."

Hewitt noted, "We had great, great team captains, but sometimes their agenda or their scope of work was pretty broad. And we couldn't get it all done at that time. We started early and we were there at dark and it was a long day. I support this a hundred percent."

She said the first project this year will be on March 21

The commissioners unanimously agreed to waive the tipping fee for Christmas in April projects.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

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**Saturday, March 28, 2026 – 8 am
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Lothian, Maryland**

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MON, TUES, WED, March 23, 24, 25 – 9 am to 7 pm
THURS March 26 – 9 am to 5 pm
FRI March 27 – 9 am to 2 pm

For more information call: 240-486-6592

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A Contrary Woman Takes Stage at Three Notch Theatre

A woman at the center of a turbulent century will be onstage this Sunday afternoon, March 22, at 2 p.m. when *A Contrary Woman: A Visit With Jeannette Rankin* is presented at Three Notch Theatre, 21744 South Coral Drive in Lexington Park

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors, students and military, and are available at The Newtowne Players website, www.newtowneplayers.org, or at the door.

The one-woman show, written by Prince Frederick resident Richard Thompson, catches Miss Rankin in 1970, at the age of 90. She is portrayed by Piney Point resident Linda Hiortdahl.

Jeannette Rankin's exciting life story takes place against the backdrop of a century that included two World Wars, the Great Depression, the women's suffrage movement and a range of social justice issues.

Among the figures populating the story are six Presidents, two Speakers of the House, a mayor of New York City, other women's suffrage leaders, and her family.

In the show, Miss Rankin tells the story of her life, experiencing first her growing up amid the extreme winters and equally extreme summers of late 1800s Montana.

One of the first women in her state to graduate from college, she started as a social worker before becoming a leading figure in the campaign for the right of women to vote. She spoke nationwide in that campaign, and in 1914 led the successful campaign for women's voting rights in Montana.

That political involvement led to her running for Congress and in 1916 becoming the



Linda Hiortdahl as Jeannette Rankin in *A Contrary Woman*, this Sunday, 2 p.m. at Three Notch Theatre in Lexington Park

first woman ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. There she introduced what eventually became the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote nationwide.

Jeannette Rankin was fiercely against war. She voted in Congress against America's entrance into World War One, then cast the only vote against World War Two on the day after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and later continued her anti-war efforts into the Vietnam era.

Through it all, she remained what she called herself — "A Contrary Woman."

Press release

Earth Day Celebration Planned for April 25

Vendor Opportunities Available



The St. Mary's County Commission on the Environment (COE) is excited to announce the annual Earth Day Celebration will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Summerseat Farm in Mechanicsville, MD.

This family-friendly event will take place rain or shine. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet and engage with local environmental organizations, explore unique vendor crafts, and enjoy a variety of interactive activities. Take part in a guided nature walk or relax on the lawn while listening to live music and savoring local food offerings. Whether you're a nature enthusiast, a craft lover, or

simply looking to enjoy a day outdoors, this event has something for everyone!

The Commission on the Environment is currently accepting vendor applications for this event. Local artisans, environmental groups, and community organizations are encouraged to participate.

For more information, questions, or to request a vendor application, please contact the St. Mary's County Commission on the Environment (COE) at COEStMarys@gmail.com. Learn more about the COE at www.stmaryscountymd.gov/COE.

Press release from St. Mary's County

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MEET MOO MOO

Hello, I'm Moo Moo, the cat who, clearly, is not actually a cow. I'm a 12 yr old Siamese mix who has spent years living in a busy house with kids, dogs, and other cats, and has perfected the fine art of quietly moo-ving myself to a peaceful corner when the chaos gets too loud. Think of me as a gentle pasture supervisor who preferred calm fields, cozy beds, and a nice serving of wet food after my recent dental work (several teeth decided it was time to retire from crunching).



Even better, thanks to our Spring a Senior promotion, my adoption fee is only \$5!! That is less than the price of a fancy coffee for a sweet senior who promises zero early morning rooster noises—just quiet companionship and the occasional polite "mew." Adoption hours are Mon-Fri 11am-4pm and Sat 10am-3pm.

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

MEET JAXX



Jaxx is a 2.5-year-old Pit Bull Terrier who has been waiting far too long, and we truly don't understand why. He's sweet, affectionate, eager to learn, and has that perfect mix of playful energy and snuggly charm. If you've ever wanted a dog who can make you laugh, keep you company, and love you endlessly, Jaxx is your guy. If you are interested in meeting with Jaxx or learning more about him please contact Animal Relief Fund (ARF) at 301-866-0303 or visit www.animalrelieffund.org

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Wanderings of an Aimless Mind



Spring Cleaning... Everywhere

By Shelby Opperman
Contributing Writer

I believe sweet Mother Nature has been having fun with us; 85° one day, 35° with heavy winds dropping the “feels like” temperature to freezing the next day. The heavy winds have helped a lot of us with tree-filled yards with our outdoor spring cleaning. All the limbs and branches have fast filled up our two fire pits with lots of piles to spare. However, each time we get these fierce winds I worry about the swaying trees or really big limbs falling on our house. I keep looking at three trees in the backyard that give me an uneasy feeling. Two are dead, and one is iffy and leaning towards the side of the house with our bedroom and deck. I don't know, this may be the year for them to come down.



Tuesday, a couple of us met in the basement of our parish hall for a couple hours to do some spring de-cluttering in preparation for real spring cleaning. Lots of paperwork and items from groups who met down there in years past were sorted into the donate, recycle, and trash categories. One more day with a couple hours of sorting and reorganizing should get the basement in good shape before the big cleaning.



At home, I have started the spring cleaning and decluttering. It's hard to know when its really time for getting in the mood for spring cleaning with the crazy weather. I made a mental promise to myself that I would take our late dog Mindy's bedding out of the living room when I started spring cleaning and decorating, which I did. Wow, was that hard to do. My husband began cleaning out some old items from our 16' x 20' shed. I went through some Rubbermaid totes that were in the big shed from when we married 25 years ago. My mother had passed the year before so there were items packed from her house, plus the items from my apartment in the shed that I hadn't seen in all these years.

I did find some neat items going through these first few boxes like the drawings my Uncle Race made while in a coma for 8 years. He was in a hospital in New York. My mother, Aunt, and I made lots of trips to see him, but we were told he was unconscious. I knew he was trying to tell me things with his eyes, and I would read to him. A few times I asked him if he would like to draw something since he was an amazing artist: Uncle Race was the one who painted the large Coca Cola bottle on a building in Times Square decades ago. Sometimes, I would draw a picture or a word and he would copy it. Two of those times he tried to draw my father with his left hand (photo of those attached). The doctors at Coler Hospital on Roosevelt Island were not very interested in him and still insisted he was in a complete coma. We tried hard to get him down here to Charlotte Hall Veteran's Hospital.

I also found notes on who my Uncle Race and my mother went to see at the Department of Energy (Energy Related Inventions Division) probably in 1980. I came home from college and typed up 12 pages of information with a carbon sheet in reference to Uncle Race's invention application for his Engine of Perpetual Motion. He even made a model of it in the late 70's. I was hoping to find the copy of those 12 pages. I called the DOE inventions division quite a few years ago to get a record of their visit and a copy of what they brought with them, but no one had a record of it. I know my sons would love to see it. The Segway came out in 2001 based on a similar principal.

It is so easy to get lost in the past when you go through boxes and boxes of old paperwork. My youngest son and I picked out a few interesting things, but the rest is waiting in the burn pile area. And I need to get back to in-house spring cleaning.

To each new day's adventure,
Shelby

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

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In Remembrance

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

Jane Leonard, 79



Jane Ellen Bridges Leonard, 79, of North Little Rock, Arkansas, passed away peacefully on January 30, 2026. Born on August 13, 1946, Jane spent her life rooted in

North Little Rock, the place she proudly called home.

She was preceded in death by her former husband, Guy Joseph Leonard, Sr.; her son, Guy Joseph Leonard, Jr.; and her parents, Arthur Bridges and Mary Jane Bridges (Merriman).

Jane is survived by her brothers, James A. Bridges (Diann) and Douglas Bridges (Kate); daughter-in-law, Tegan Leonard; nieces, Rebecca Bridges Blankenship (Greg) and Christy Bridges Vargas (Edison); nephews, Shane Bridges (Ronda) and Keith Bridges (Melanie); and many great- and great-great-nieces and nephews, all of whom she loved dearly.

Jane devoted more than 33 years of service to the United States through her work with the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division. Known for her loyalty, professionalism, and integrity, she earned multiple honors, including the Department of the

Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Award and the Area Commander's Award, recognizing her exceptional dedication and performance. Upon her retirement on March 3, 1999, she received a personal letter of appreciation from President Bill Clinton.

Jane continued serving the NAWC/NAVAIR community for an additional 10 years with Eagan, McAllister Associates, Inc., where she was again honored for her dedication and outstanding service.

Jane's days were brightened by her cats and her fondness for anything that sparkled. Her memory will bring that same warmth and brightness to all who knew her.

Mary Fones, 76



Mary Allen Fones, 76, of Hollywood, MD, passed away at Tidal Health in Salisbury, MD, on March 15, 2026. Born on March 25, 1949, Mary was a lifelong resident of

Hollywood and a deeply cherished presence in her community—a woman whose warmth, humor, and love left a lasting imprint on everyone who knew her.

Mary was preceded in death by her husband, Kirk Russell Fones, who passed away

on December 3, 2015, as well as her her stepfather, Ben Wilkinson, and brother, Butch Emory. Their memories remained close to her heart every day.

She is survived by her loving mother, Virginia Wilkinson, of Hollywood, MD, her devoted children: Karen Mistretta (Stevie) of Hollywood, MD, Maggie Murphy (Audie) of Great Mills, MD, and Michelle Kohut (Ricky), of California, MD. She also leaves behind her beloved siblings, Mickey Emory (Bobbi), Cherrie Fearn (Joe), Parran Wilkinson (Krista), and Chris Clark.

Mary's greatest pride and joy was her family. She was a proud grandmother to 13 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild. Each one held a special place in her heart, and she found endless happiness in watching her family grow and thrive.

For 33 years, Mary worked as the Kitchen Supervisor at Placid Harbor, where she became known not only for her incredible work ethic and dedication, but also for the laughter she brought into the workplace. Her days were filled with joking, teasing, and sharing laughs with coworkers who quickly became lifelong friends. She had a way of making even the busiest shifts feel lighter, and her presence will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of working beside her.

Mary was also an active and proud member of the Hollywood Moose Lodge, a place where she truly came alive. Whether she was surrounded by friends, sharing stories, or enjoying a laugh, she made every moment memorable. She loved her nights out, often with a martini, margarita, or her favorite, an ice-cold Michelob Ultra—in hand, always ready to toast to life, friendship, and family.

Known for her vibrant spirit, Mary was truly the life of the party. She loved gathering with friends, enjoying trips to the casino, and most of all, spending treasured time at the beach with her grandchildren. Those beach trips were filled with laughter, sunshine, lazy rivers, and memories that will be held close forever.

Mary had a true gift in the kitchen. Cooking was one of the many ways she showed her love, and she poured her heart into every dish she made. She loved sharing an appetizer, trying new foods, and dining with family—never passing up a plate of nachos, one of her favorites.

Her husband, Kirk Russell Fones, was the love of her life. The two shared over 50 years of marriage. Together, they built a life rooted in love, loyalty, and countless shared memories. Even after his passing, that love remained a guiding light in her life.

In her quieter moments, Mary enjoyed working on puzzles and simply being surrounded by the people she loved most. Above all else, she loved fiercely and unconditionally, and her family was the center of her world.

Mary will be deeply missed but never forgotten. Her legacy of love, laughter, strength, and unforgettable moments will live on through her family and friends, and all who were lucky enough to know her.

Pallbearers will be Wyatt Redman, Michael Sullivan, Kirk Prinsen, Tony

Mistretta, Matthew Griffith, Larry "Bear" Johnson, and Scottie Bean.

Services will be officiated by Father Keith Burney of St. Michael's Catholic Church and Father Ray Schmidt of St. John's Catholic Church.

Family and friends are invited to celebrate and honor Mary's life at a public viewing on Monday, March 23, 2026, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with prayers recited at 7:00 PM, at Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 11:00 AM, at St. John's Catholic Church, Hollywood, MD. Interment will follow at Joy Chapel Cemetery, Hollywood, MD.

A repass will be held at the Hollywood Fire Department immediately following the services, where family and friends are welcome to gather, share stories, and to support one another—just as Mary would have wanted.

Flowers are welcome, or memorial contributions may be made to the Patuxent Moose Lodge in honor of Mary Fones.

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

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

Ted Greer, 84



James Theodore "Ted" Greer Sr., 84, of Leonardtown, died at his home on March 12, 2026 surrounded by his loving family.

Born December 16, 1941, in

Washington, DC, he was the son of the late Theodore "Ted" Ovid Greer and Hilda Agnes Greer.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his loving wife of 56 years Joan Ann Gough Greer, and sisters Daphne Jo Greer and Beulah Jean Greer.

He is survived by his siblings Barbara June Miller (John) and William Edward "Bill" Greer (Barbara); his children Barbara "Jill" Klear (Kerry), James Theodore "Tad" Greer Jr. (Julie), Stephanie Nan Konecny (Vac), Michael Gough Greer (Erika); and his dog and faithful companion Diego.

He is also survived by 8 grandchildren: Kristin Klear, Scott Klear (Erika), Tad Greer III (Maria), Alex Konecny, Elizabeth Konecny Petschk (Mike), Emily Konecny, Cody Greer, and Kayleigh Greer; and 2 great-granddaughters, Sophia and Olivia Greer.

As a lifelong resident of St. Mary's County, Ted owned and operated several businesses over the years. His final business—St. Mary's Pet Sitters—was his most rewarding because he got to make so many new Furry Friends along the way.

Ted was very athletic, excelling in many sports, especially basketball and baseball, and playing in high school and several leagues throughout St. Mary's County including the Men's Baseball League and the Rocking Chair Softball League.

Ted enjoyed watching the Washington

St. Mary's County

Caregivers' Support Group

The St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services Caregivers' Support Group is a safe space for caregivers to share their experiences and learn about resources.

March 24, 2026

6-7 p.m.

Garvey Senior Activity Center
23630 Hayden Farm Lane
Leonardtown, MD 20650

For more information or to register:

Call: 301-475-4200, ext. 1057

Visit: www.stmaryscountymd.gov/Aging/HCBS-Overview/

Walk-ins are Welcome!

Registration for the Caregivers' Support Group is encouraged, but not required.

In Remembrance

Redskins and the Nationals and remained a faithful fan to both teams, proudly wearing their logos even during the losing seasons and rebuilding/rebranding years. But most of all, Ted enjoyed time spent with his family and the gatherings that would often find him enjoying a bourbon, spinning tales of big adventures, and slipping snacks to his granddogs.

All services will be private.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to St. Mary's HOSPICE of St. Mary's, P.O. Box 625, Leonardtown, MD 20650 or to the St. Mary's County Animal Services, 22975 located on FDR Boulevard, California, MD in Lexington Park 20619.

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

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Evelyn Millen, 85



Evelyn Patricia Millen, 85, passed away peacefully on March 8, 2026, in Solomons, Maryland. Born on April 12, 1940, in Baltimore, Maryland, she was the beloved daughter of the late Richard E. Musgrove, Sr. and Elizabeth M. (McCaffrey) Musgrove.

Evelyn graduated from Franklin High School in Baltimore and pursued further education at Baltimore Business College. She dedicated many years of her professional life to serving others, working as an administrative supervisor at the Naval Health Clinic in Patuxent River, Maryland. She also worked as an associate at Belk in California, Maryland for several years.

A woman of deep faith and commitment to her community, Evelyn was a devoted member of Lexington Park Baptist Church in Lexington Park, Maryland. Her dedi-

cation extended beyond her church as she also served as a member of the Order of the Eastern Star.

Evelyn's greatest joy was her family. She is survived by her children; Sheryl Strohm (Michael), Marvin Millen (Dora), and Mark Millen (Linda). She was affectionately known as Grammy to her grandchildren; Darren Hardman, Adrien Strohm, Sara Millen, and Lindsey Perry (Bryan) and she cherished her role as great-grandmother to Taylor Perry and Erik Perry. Evelyn is also survived by her brother, Richard Musgrove (Phyllis), and her sister, Betty Ann Brown, along with several other family members who will hold her memory close to their hearts.

In addition to her parents, Evelyn was predeceased by her brother-in-law, Earl Brown, as well as those who came before her, but whose love shaped the foundation of her life.

Evelyn will be remembered fondly by all who knew her for her unwavering devotion to family and friends. Her kindness and dedication left an indelible mark on those fortunate enough to share in her life. Special thanks are given to the staff of The Hermitage in Solomons, MD, for the care and support they provided to Evelyn and family during the past several months.

Family and friends will be received for a visitation on Friday, March 20, 2026, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at Lexington Park Baptist Church, 46855 S Shangri La Drive, Lexington Park, MD, 20653 with a Funeral Service beginning at 11:00 a.m. Light refreshments to follow in the Fellowship Hall.

May Evelyn's memory bring comfort and peace to all who mourn her passing. She will be laid to rest on March 21, 2026, in a private burial ceremony at Saters Baptist Historical Church Cemetery in Timonium, MD.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Cancer Society to aid in research efforts for the advancement of cancer prevention and treatment.

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

Arrangements are by Brinsfield Funeral

Home, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

Butch Mori, 87



Alfred Frank "Butch" Mori, 87, of Tall Timbers, Maryland, formerly of Hillside, Maryland, passed away peacefully on March 9, 2026 surrounded by family.

Visitation will be held at St. George Catholic Church in Valley Lee, Maryland, on March 16, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. Funeral Mass to follow at 11:00 a.m. under the direction of Rev. John Nguyen and Rev. Paul Nguyen.

Alfred, or as his family and friends called him, Butch, was born in Washington, D.C. to Alfred Mori and Florence White on November 9, 1938. Butch enjoyed playing football at Suitland High School. After his graduation, he started an apprenticeship as a steamfitter and spent his entire career as a member of the Steamfitters Local 602. He was locally known for driving the "Chev Wagon" with his brother Gene, for over forty years as part of Mori Brothers Racing. He married the love of his life, Joyce on August 10, 1957. Butch and Joyce were married for 68 beautiful years. Together they lovingly raised three children, Debra, Richard and Raymond, in their home

in Clinton, Maryland. Butch enjoyed spending time with family and friends, playing card games, solving puzzles, fixing anything that was broken, eating peanuts, and enjoying his 8pm evening ice cream scoop. He especially enjoyed afternoons with loved ones and a bushel of Maryland blue crabs.

Butch was preceded in death by his parents, Alfred and Florence Mori and brother Gene Mori. He is remembered with love by wife Joyce Mori; sister, Ida Finch; daughter Deb White (Michael); son Rick Mori; son Ray Mori (Sheryl "Doody"); along with 6 grandchildren, George White (Ashley), Tony Mori, Michael Mori, Mindi Finamore (Kara), Rob White (Ian), and David Mori; and 3 great-grandchildren, Camille White, Vincent Finamore, and Carmine Finamore. He will also be missed by a large network of extended family and friends.

Condolences for Butch and his family may be left at <https://www.brinsfieldfuneral.com/>

Donations in lieu of flowers can be made to St. George Catholic Church <https://saint-georgecatholicchurch.org/> or the Second District Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad <https://sdvfd.org/>, both located in Valley Lee, Maryland.

The family wishes to extend their gratitude to the friends and neighbors who have given their time, love, and support over the years.

Funeral Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

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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 20

13th Annual 'Pitch Card Parties'

Knights of Columbus Hall
16441 Three Notch Road, Ridge
Doors open at 6 p.m., games begin at 7 p.m.

Sponsored by Ridge Lions Club. There is a \$10 entrance fee per person and you are guaranteed to go home with at least one prize. There will be door prizes, a 50/50 raffle, a food basket raffle, and more. Food will be available for purchase, but dessert and beverage are free. All proceeds go to helping those in need in our community. For more information contact: Kim Carter, (240) 925-7664, kimcarter@ridgelionsclub@yahoo.com, or Bobbie Bell (301) 872-5114, or go to <https://www.facebook.com/RidgeLionsClub>

Sat, Mar 21

Dueling Pianos

Bowles Farm Event Barn
22880 Budds Creek Road, Clements
5:30-10:30 p.m.

Music, food, fun. 18 & over only. Cash bar, no outside alcohol. 50/50 raffle, money wheel.

Sun, Mar 22

Kids Bingo

Seventh District Firehouse

21660 Colton Point Rd, Avenue
Doors open at 12 p.m.

Sponsored by Seventh District Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary. Bingo starting at 1 p.m. Admission will be \$10 and includes 10 regular games, four specials and a door prize ticket. Refreshments will be on sale. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Only kids play bingo. Bingo prizes will be various gift cards and other items for door prizes. Reservations recommended but not required. For information or to make reservations text or call Nicki at 240-298-5026 or email at nhammett12@gmail.com.

Quarter Auction Benefit

3390 Point Lookout Road, Ridge
1-3 p.m.

American Legion Post 255 (Ridge) Auxiliary. Regular bidding paddles are \$3 each, 2 for \$5, or 3 for \$7. Please bring your quarters for bidding.

All in paddles will be available for \$45 each and include a bid on every program item. Concessions available on site.

For additional information or reservations, please call 240-416-4224. Proceeds benefit Ridge American Legion.

Mon, Mar 23

Republican Women of St Mary's County

The Call Signs 46580 Expedition Drive
Lexington Park; 11 a.m.,

Social begins at 11 a.m. Meeting will begin

at 11:30 a.m. The guest speaker will be Howard Thompson and Steve Hall.

Ongoing

SoMD Fishing & Outdoor Adventure Fair

St. Marys County Fairground
42455 Fairgrounds Road, Leonardtown
Saturday, March 21, 8 a.m.- 3 p.m.
Sunday, March 22, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Fishing & Outdoor Vendors—reels, rods, lures, tackle, outdoor gear, painting, crafts. Maryland Boater Safety Course. Sponsored by the Southern Maryland Recreational Fishing Organization Inc. \$5.00 Admission, Kids 12 and under fREE

Annie

Great Mills High School
March 19 & 20, 7 p.m.
March 21, 1 p.m. & 7 p.m.
March 22, 1 p.m.

Great Mills High School's Lighthouse Productions presents *Annie*. With equal measures of pluck and positivity, little orphan Annie charms everyone's hearts. You don't want to miss this classical musical.

'All Creatures Great and Small'

North End Gallery, Leonardtown
Month of March

Another exciting event celebrating North End Gallery's 40th year! March 3 – March 29. Show lead contact: Bea Poulin, president.northendgallery@gmail.com

Upcoming

Spring Craft Show

24801 Three Notch Rd., Hollywood
Sunday, March, 29, 10 A.M.-3 P.M.

Sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department. Free admission & free parking

Bake sale & 50/50 raffle. Stuffed ham, food & beverages available for purchase: cash or check. ATM on site. For more information contact craftshow@hvfd7.com

Touch-a-Truck Festival

Little Flower School
Great Mills
Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

This exciting, hands-on event gives children and families the opportunity to get up close and personal with an impressive lineup of trucks and heavy equipment, all in one place. s open at 10 a.m., and the event runs until 2 p.m. Admission is just \$5 per person, making it an affordable outing for the whole family. Attendees can explore a wide variety of vehicles and equipment on display, from fire trucks and construction machinery to utility and emergency vehicles, with hands-on access to climb in, honk horns and interact with operators and owners. Beyond the trucks, guests will enjoy food, local vendors, a bounce house, hay ride and fun activities for all ages. More Info: littleflowercatholic.org/touch-a-truck-event

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library UPCOMING EVENTS



Make Your Own Merch: Buttons

Want to showcase your love for your fandom? This series will show you how to make your own fan merch for whatever it is you love! This session will be about designing and making pinback buttons. Charlotte Hall Library on Thursday, March 19 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Saturday Movie Screening

Enjoy a cozy afternoon movie, relax, and chat! After the show, there will be a brief discussion to share thoughts

and connect. There will be something new and fresh to explore each month. Check out movies you've never seen, or share some love for one of your favorites! Popcorn will be provided. All movies will be rated PG-13 and under. Charlotte Hall Library on Saturday, March 21 from 2 - 4 p.m. Intended for tweens and teens. Register on www.stmalib.org.

World Poetry Day: Blackout Poetry

We will be making blackout poetry by using existing text to create new pieces! All materials will be provided. Writers

of all experience are invited to attend. Registration will give you a reminder email but is not required to attend, walk-ins are welcome! Lexington Park Library on Saturday, March 21 - 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Transplanting: The Roots to Success

Eager to start your spring planting? Master Gardeners will teach you the proper methods for transplanting seedlings into the garden or containers, whether you winter sow them yourself in milk jugs, grow them indoors or buy from

nurseries. A colorful presentation will be followed by a hands-on chance to transplant seedlings into pots you can take home. This program is made possible with support from the Lexington Manor Passive Park Community Garden and the University of Maryland Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs. This workshop may qualify for continuing education hours for Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists. Lexington Park Library on Sunday, March 22 from 2 - 3:30 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

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.

Fri, Mar 20

artLab After Hours: The Great Puppet Challenge

Annamarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
5-8 p.m.

18+ Only. Can't wait for the next Bad Art Night? Then join us to . In celebrate the Main Gallery exhibit, Climate Affect Collective: Puppets with a Purpose. Guests are invited to raid artLAB's collection of recycled materials and design their own puppet masterpiece, whether thought-provoking, hilarious, wildly unhinged, or unexpectedly poetic. Prizes will be awarded for Best, Wildest, and Most Creative creations. College students receive free admission with a valid student ID. Live music, a cash bar, and a food truck will round out the evening. Standard admission is \$7 per person; AMG Members are free; no reservations required. Learn more at www.annmariegarden.com

Food Truck Friday at Annmarie

Annamarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
5-7 p.m.

FREE Admission. Enjoy extended hours in the garden with food trucks on site. Grab a drink or snack and wander the wooded paths that meander past sculpture collections. Perfect for a date night, a gathering with friends, or solo reflection. Evenings at Annmarie during golden hour are truly magical. Food Truck: Heidi's Eats and Sage's Treats

www.annmariegarden.org/annmarie2/content/food-truck-fridays-1

Sat, Mar 21

Farm to Table Heritage Breakfast

Calvert County Fair Building
140 Calvert Fair Dr., Prince Frederick
7:30-10:30 a.m.

Bring your family and friends and enjoy a delicious, mouth-watering Country Breakfast using locally sourced products. This annual event is sponsored by the Calvert County Historical Society. Shop for unique gift items while children enjoy some kid-friendly activities. A basket plentifully filled with local breakfast foods and Calvert County memorabilia will be raffled off. Share a good time with folks you know and meet new friends. Admission is \$20. per

person, children 6 and under free.

Dee of St. Mary's Table Exhibit

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

Discover the museum's historic skipjack at a winter tabling exhibit. Through hands-on interpretation and conversation with crew members, discover how watermen dredge for oysters, manage sails, and work on the Chesapeake Bay.

Garden Smarter: Restoring Plants to Historic Gardens

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
10-11:30 a.m.

The Patterson House and Gardens at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum completed a multi-year renovation in 2025. Join the park horticulturalist for a virtual tour of the 64 varieties of plants brought back to two formal gardens designed by pioneering female landscape architects in the 1930s. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Jigsaw Puzzle Swap

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Bring your gently used puzzles and exchange them for new-to-you challenges. It's a fun, eco-friendly way to refresh your collection and connect with fellow puzzle enthusiasts. Registration is not required but will let us know who is interested in other puzzling events! 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sun, Mar 22

NB Fire Department 100th Anniversary

North Beach Town Hall
1-2 p.m.

Bayside History Winter Lectures. Join us to learn about local history and more from local experts. John Tippett will tell us about the incorporation of the North Beach Volunteer Fire Department as we celebrate 100 years! Co-sponsored by Calvert Library, Bayside History Museum and John Hanson Chapter NSDAR. 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Southern Maryland Bluegrass Concert

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

Live Bluegrass event featuring The Country Gentlemen Show with Calvert County's Mike Phipps

Mon, Mar 23

Mindfulness Series

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

Discover the power of presence with a Sound Bath Meditation led by LJ of Dusk and Willow Designs in North Beach. The combination of meditation, sounds, and vibrations produced by different instruments such as crystal bowls, drums, chimes, and other instruments allows your mind to enter a meditative and relaxed state that will instill ultimate peace and relaxation to your body, mind, and spirit. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Native Plants for the Garden

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
6:30-7:30 p.m.

This presentation will go over some of the most common native plants and where to plant them for success. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Tue, Mar 24

Writers by the Bay

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
6:30-7:30 p.m.

All writers and would-be writers are welcome to come for critique & camaraderie. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Mar 25

Job Seeker Resources

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

MD Labor Workforce—Veterans Services will be available (in person) to meet with those seeking employment-related support and community service information. This event focuses on Veteran's Services, but all jobseekers are welcome! 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Business Law Basics

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

An introduction to the legal requirements of starting and operating a business. Learn the legal fundamentals for starting a business. Delivered by an attorney, in an informal educational setting. This event is co-sponsored by Calvert Library, C4, and the Calvert Commission for Women. All events are recorded and later posted on Calvert Library's YouTube. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Upcoming

Janie Meneely & Rob van Sante

Calvert Marine Museum
Friday, March 27
7-9 p.m.

Chesapeake songster Janie Meneely and guitar-playing balladeer Rob van Sante join forces for an evening concert showcasing their largely homespun music from the Chesapeake Bay and beyond. Doors open at 6 p.m. with beverages available for purchase. Tickets are \$20 online up to one day in advance, and \$25 online or at the door on concert day.

OtterMania

Calvert Marine Museum
Saturday, March 28
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. Meet the biologists who care for the otters, wish them a happy birthday, and enjoy an otter story time with the author of *Ozzy Otter Learns to Ski*. Activities 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.

Waterside Music Series Concerts Announced



Brothers Osborne

The Calvert Marine Museum is proud to announce the 2026 Waterside Music Series, bringing a summer of live music to the Motto Mortgage Preferred and RE/MAX One Waterside Pavilion in Solomons.

Set along the Patuxent River, the waterfront venue will host a lineup of nationally recognized artists including country hitmakers, a rising star, and a tribute night celebrating one of rock's greatest bands!

Saturday, June 13: Almost Queen with Separate Ways — A Tribute Night

Almost Queen: A Tribute to Queen recreates the legendary band's sound and spectacle with remarkable precision. Known for their powerful four-part harmonies, authentic costumes, and high-energy performances, the band delivers fan favorites including "Bohemian Rhapsody," "We Will Rock You," "We Are the Champions," and "Somebody to Love." Joined by Separate Ways The Band — The Ultimate Journey Tribute Band for a special night celebrating the enduring power of classic rock. This concert will feature general admission seating and lawn chairs are welcome for this concert only.

Friday, July 24: Warren Zeiders

Country artist Warren Zeiders has quickly become one of the genre's fastest-rising stars. The Pennsylvania native has earned more than 3.6 billion global streams and scored a No. 1 hit with the double-platinum single "Pretty Little Poison." Known for his gritty vocals and powerful live performances, Zeiders continues to build momentum with his album *Relapse, Lies & Betrayal* and his upcoming Warren Zeiders World Tour 2026.

Saturday, August 22: Brothers Osborne

Multi-award-winning duo Brothers Osborne return to Southern Maryland as hometown favorites. Raised in nearby Deale, John and TJ Osborne have earned 13 GRAMMY nominations and a 2022 GRAMMY Award for "Younger Me," along with multiple

CMA and ACM awards. Known for their genre-blending sound and electrifying performances, the duo will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of their breakthrough album *Pawn Shop* in 2026.

Tickets

Tickets for the Waterside Music Series go on sale to Calvert Marine Museum members on March 24 at 10 a.m. EST, with public sales beginning March 27 at 10 a.m. EST.

Ticket prices:

- Almost Queen + Separate Ways: \$40 (general admission)
- Warren Zeiders: \$60–\$110 (all-in pricing)
- Brothers Osborne: \$70–\$110 (all-in pricing)

Tickets for Waterside Music Series events are sold exclusively through Etix, the museum's verified ticketing platform. Tickets purchased through third-party resellers cannot be verified by the Calvert Marine Museum.

To become a member and enjoy all that the museum has to offer year-round, visit www.calvertmarinemuseum.com or call 410-326-2042, ext. 8063.

Proceeds from the Waterside Music Series support the education and preservation efforts of the Calvert Marine Museum. This event would not be possible without the generous support of the community and many local businesses. Sponsors include Motto Mortgage Preferred, RE/MAX One, Prince Frederick Ford Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram, Riverside Trailers, Quality Built Homes, City Wide Mechanical, Bayside Fire, Bozick Distributors, Inc., Blue Heron Bed and Breakfast, Shore United Bank, Sabre Systems, Asbury-Solomons, Bahr Insurance, and J. Calvin Wood.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact Director of Development Bonnie Barrett at 410-326-2042, ext. 8065.

Press release from Calvert Marine Museum

CSM Receives Funding Package for Aviation Maintenance Program

The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) will receive more than \$1.7 million in federal funding to support a new Aviation Maintenance Technology Program and a Water and Wastewater Treatment Program.

The FY2026 Appropriations Package, signed February 3, includes \$1.7 million of Congressionally Directed Spending allocated to CSM for these initiatives.

CSM President Dr. Yolanda Wilson said the legislative support affirms the college's value to Southern Maryland and reinforces its role in preparing students to fill critical workforce needs.

"We appreciate the advocacy and support of our congressional partners on behalf of CSM students and programs," said Dr. Wilson. "This funding creates new opportunities for hands-on training and career pathways leading directly to in-demand careers. This investment strengthens our workforce pipeline and supports future economic growth in Southern Maryland."

Funding for the projects was made possible through the support of U.S. Senators Angela Alsobrooks and Chris Van Hollen.

Senator Alsobrooks said she is proud to work with Senator Van Hollen to jumpstart programs that will train students and address workforce needs.

"Young Marylanders want to prepare for successful futures, and for many that means getting hands-on, technical training to prepare themselves for the workforce," Alsobrooks said. "These programs won't just prepare students for demanding careers; they also support our economy and fill necessary jobs that our state needs to thrive."

The college will receive \$997,000 to help launch the Aviation Maintenance Technology Program and outfit the lab with industry-standard equipment.

The program will prepare students to diagnose problems with airframe components, identify and maintain propulsion systems used in aircraft, perform aircraft

maintenance and inspections, understand Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulation and guidelines related to aircraft maintenance, and be prepared to test for a mechanic certificate and associated ratings.

In October 2025, CSM received approval from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to offer the Associate of Applied Science degree in Aviation Maintenance Technology program, the first program of its kind in the state. This month, CSM also received MHEC approval to offer Lower Division Certificates (L.D.C.) in Powerplant and Airframe within this program.

During the development and approval process, more than 30 representatives formed a regional Aviation Program Advisory Board made up of aviation businesses, local government, military installations, public and private school systems, and community groups.

Several of the board members wrote letters of support included in the funding request, including Calvert County Public Schools, Charles County Public Schools, and St. Mary's County Government Department of Economic Development.

The program is expected to launch in the fall of 2027.

The college will also receive \$732,000 in funding to launch a Water and Wastewater Training Program Partnership.

The partnership will expand on the existing water and wastewater program offered at the Maryland Center for Environmental Training (MCET) at CSM. It will create a pipeline for students to access employment opportunities in the water and wastewater industry. The funding will support training, outreach, recruitment, and hands-on experience to prepare students to fill critical needs in water infrastructure operations.

More information about a launch date will be available as the program develops.

Press release from CSM



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CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of February 23, 2026 – March 1, 2026, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,555 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 58
- Disorderly: 10
- Domestic: 26
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 43
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 1258
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 28
- Traffic Complaints: 79
- Traffic Stops: 453
- 911 Hang-Ups: 49
- ARRESTS: 52



Amanda Marie Dilda

CDS Violation: 26-18064 On February 23, 2026, Deputy Morgal conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle at the intersection of Rt. 4 North and Lower Pindell Road, for aggressive driving and expired registration tags. Upon making contact with the driver, **Amanda Marie Dilda**, 38, of Waldorf, deputies observed controlled dangerous substance (CDS) paraphernalia in plain view. Dilda informed deputies that she was in possession of a pocketknife. Further investigation resulted in the recovery of numerous items of CDS paraphernalia containing suspected CDS residue, a black digital scale, empty cannabis packaging bags, and a concealed butterfly knife. Dilda was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Concealing a Dangerous Weapon, CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis, and CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia.



Chad Edwin Jenkins

CDS Violation: 26-19641 On February 27, 2026, DFC Hill initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle for an equipment violation and erratic driving, including traveling well below the posted speed limit along N. Solomons Island Road and Church St. in Prince Frederick. The vehicle failed to stop and accelerated at a high rate of speed. The driver failed to stop at mul-

tipled red traffic signals, proceeded through intersections against traffic signals, crossed double yellow lines, entered oncoming lanes of traffic, and reached speeds exceeding 70 miles per hour in posted 30- and 45-mile-per-hour zones. While attempting to evade deputies, the vehicle struck a curb within a traffic circle, then collided with a small tree and a fire hydrant before re-entering the roadway. Deputies ultimately conducted a PIT maneuver near the intersection of Prince Frederick Blvd. and Braschers Blvd., successfully disabling the vehicle. Deputies made contact with the driver, identified as **Chad Edwin Jenkins**, 35, of Washington, D.C. Deputies detected a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage emitting from Jenkins, and his speech was slurred and incoherent. An adult female passenger and three juvenile passengers were also inside the vehicle. The juveniles were transported to a local hospital for evaluation. A search of the vehicle resulted in the recovery of two digital scales containing suspected cocaine residue, as well as alcoholic beverages and CDS paraphernalia. Jenkins was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Kidnapping, False Imprisonment, Neglect of a Minor, Reckless Endangerment, CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis, CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia, Intoxicated Endangerment, Obstructing and Hindering, Resisting Arrest, Negligent Driving, Reckless Driving, and several additional related charges.



Debrah Ann Lawrence



Chelsea Lynn Lawrence

CDS Violation: 26-19399 On February 27, 2026, at approximately 10:16 a.m., DFC Campbell conducted a traffic stop for an obstructed license plate near N. Solomons Island Road and Stoakley Road in Prince Frederick. Contact was made with the driver, **Debrah Ann Lawrence**, 50, of Lothian, and the passenger, **Chelsea Lynn Lawrence**, 31, of Lothian. During the investigation, a consent search of the vehicle was conducted. Deputies located a small metal tin containing

burnt copper wire commonly used to smoke crack cocaine, a metal push rod with suspected crack cocaine residue, two small white rock-like substances suspected to be crack cocaine, and a clear plastic container containing suspected crack cocaine. Deputies also recovered a Maryland registration plate that was confirmed to have been stolen through the Anne Arundel County Police Department. Chelsea admitted the paraphernalia belonged to her and acknowledged the burnt copper wire was used to smoke crack cocaine. Both subjects were transported to the Calvert County Detention Center. During the intake process, additional items were discovered in Chelsea's pants pocket, including an improvised glass smoking device containing white powder residue, a folded paper containing a light brown powdery substance suspected to be heroin, and an electronic smoking device (vape). Debrah Lawrence was charged with CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia, CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis, and Theft: \$100 to Under \$1,500. Chelsea Lawrence was charged with CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia, CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis, and Possession of Contraband in a Place of Confinement.



Tarvio Lavey Jenkins

CDS Violation: 26-19434 On February 27, 2026, at approximately 12:11 p.m., DFC Huy conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle for a registration violation in the area of N. Solomons Island Road and Aspen Woods in Sunderland. During the stop, S/DFC Idol conducted a K-9 scan of the vehicle, and K-9 Benji alerted to the odor of narcotics. While speaking with the occupants of the vehicle, passenger **Tarvio Lavey Jenkins**, 45, of Sunderland, admitted to having cocaine in his pants. A search of Jenkins' person revealed a small clear plastic bag concealed containing a white powdery substance. Jenkins was placed under arrest and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, where he was charged with CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis.

Damaged Property: 26-17882 On February 23, 2026, Cpl. Callison responded to Smithville United Methodist Church Cemetery, located at 3289 Smithville Drive in Dunkirk, for a report of damaged property. Investigation revealed that an unknown vehicle drove through the cemetery grounds, causing significant damage. A headstone was broken off at ground level, and deep tire tracks and ruts were observed throughout the cemetery property. The estimated damage to the headstone is \$5,000, with an additional \$2,000 in landscaping damage, for a total estimated loss of \$7,000. This case remains under investigation.

Damaged Property: 26-17881 On February 23, 2026, at 2:05 p.m., DFC McCourt responded to the 11100 block of Little Cove Point Road in Lusby for a reported hit-and-run. A complainant advised he heard a loud crash and observed a white SUV, leaving the



Frank L. Berry, Jr.

area at a high rate of speed. Investigation revealed the vehicle struck a residence, causing significant exterior and interior wall damage. Deputies identified the driver as **Frank L. Berry, Jr.**, 66, of Callaway, who was operating the vehicle while making a DoorDash delivery. Berry stated he failed to place the vehicle in park, causing it to roll into the home. Berry was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Failure to Stop After Unattended Vehicle/Property Damage Accident.

Trespassing: 26-19557 On February 27, 2026, DFC T. Bowen responded to Walmart, located at 150 N. Solomons Island Road in Prince Frederick, for a reported trespassing complaint. Upon arrival, the complainant advised that **Evan Michael Franklin**, 27 of no fixed address, had previously been issued an indefinite trespass notice from the property. Franklin was placed under arrest and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Trespassing: Private Property.



Jesse James Herberson

Weapons Violation: 26-19613 On February 27, 2026, at approximately 9:43 p.m., Deputy McIntosh conducted a traffic stop in the area of Brickhouse Road and Chaney Road in Dunkirk for a traffic violation and expired registration. Contact was made with the driver, **Jesse James Herberson**, 34, of Dunkirk. While speaking with Herberson, deputies asked multiple times if there were any weapons inside the vehicle. Herberson initially responded, "not that I know of," before later advising he had two large knives in his pockets. Deputy Morgal observed the barrel and handguard of a firearm in plain view. The firearm, identified as a Mossberg International 715T .22 caliber AR-style pistol, was recovered from the vehicle. The firearm contained one round in the chamber and 11 rounds in the magazine, and deputies observed that parts of the firearm appeared to have been altered. Herberson was charged with Loaded Handgun on Person, Handgun on Person, Loaded Handgun in Vehicle, and Handgun in Vehicle.

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

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MON-SAT

County Adopts Animal Control Revisions

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

After a public hearing and some revisions, the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has approved changes in the county's animal regulations, including the addition of a fancier's license.

Deputy Director of Animal Services April Coleman gave the background at the BOCC's March 17 meeting. She said, "On Dec. 16, 2025, the Department of Public Safety, Animal Services division, appeared before the BOCC to conduct the public hearing on the proposed revisions to Chapter 7 of the Calvert County Code – Animals. Prior to the hearing, the department submitted a memorandum outlining the purpose and scope of the proposed updates, including the need to modernize the ordinance, clarify accountability and align local regulations with current animal welfare standards and enforcement practices."

She added, "In accordance with the BOCC's direction, the proposed revisions were previously presented during work sessions, followed by the duly advertised public hearing to receive community input. The public hearing on the proposed revisions to Chapter 7 has concluded and the required public comment period has closed. Three public comments were received during the public comment period. All comments received were reviewed and considered by the Department of Public Safety, Animal Services division."

Coleman said, "The proposed revisions reflect current animal welfare standards, enhance clarity and consistency within the ordinance and address enforcement and administrative processes identified during prior work sessions and public input."

Several of the commissioners asked questions before the decision was made. Commissioner Mike Hart said, "My top priority is, as you always know, the animal safety. So, have you guys had a chance to go through the emails that have come in and any questions and talked to any groups? Do you believe that number one, animals are in the safest possible position and that it's very fair and equitable (for) the owners as well?"

Coleman responded, "I believe so. A lot of it is more aligning with what the state is coming out with as well as Maryland law, but most of it is just promoting more accountability for things that are already in place, especially like the weather. There are more parameters there to give citizens a better understanding. We're taking away a lot of gray areas, so we're given, I believe, more of a clear guideline to citizens of expectations, especially when it comes to weather and housing."

She further explained, "I know it says when it's 32 degrees or lower, then you need to do X, Y, and Z for your pet. So that way it's not just cold outside, but for everybody it's different. What does that mean? So that way there's more of a number there that can tell people this is when we're saying we need to do this for cold and we need to do this for hot."



Lagatha is available for adoption

She was asked to discuss the new fancier's license. She said, "We've always had a county license, which has only been one year. The rabies vaccine can be good for up to three years. So, we've actually added a three-year license, so that's less that people have to do. And it goes in line with their rabies vaccine, get your rabies vaccine, get your license. They're both good for three years. I do think that's going to make it easier for the citizens with compliance in doing that."

She explained, "We did add in a fancier license. I did recently when we did receive some public comment, I went through the active licenses we have, and there's not a lot of households that even meet that threshold to get the fancier license. And I will say the ones that did are the ones that usually have a lot of interactions with animal control. I really don't foresee us issuing too many of these fancier licenses, but it is there. And it does take away extra steps for those that are going to own multiple animals because they don't have to go and get an individual license and keep track of license for six different animals. It can all just be under one thing."

Commissioner Catherine Grasso praised the animal services staff. She said, "Thank you for working on this. And also, I want to assure the public, I met with staff and we got the whole packet along with the comments. We read the comments, and then I commiserated with staff to make sure comments were taken into consideration where they were applicable. And our staff gets back to the people who do make comments, although out of the three we received, there were only two who we could get in touch with because the third one was anonymous. So, staff works very hard to get public input, take it into consideration, and then to put things like chapter seven into law. So, thank you all very much for being so diligent."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Hearing Set for Staff Recommended Budget

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

It's the first major milestone in every year's budget process in Calvert County. The county staff releases their recommended budget and holds a public hearing. That is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24 in the commissioner's hearing room in Prince Frederick.

In a letter to the commissioners at the beginning of the document, staff say, "This proposed budget reflects a thoughtful and disciplined approach to financial planning and is firmly aligned with the Board's vision, mission, strategic priorities and long-term goals. Calvert County's vision to remain a safe and thriving community that balances economic growth with rural living, invests in every generation, and provides opportunity and quality of life for all residents guided the development of this budget. In support of that vision, the county's mission emphasizes transparency, effective communication, responsible growth and the delivery of meaningful services across every stage of life."

The letter says, "The FY27 Staff Recommended Budget is balanced at \$411 million in revenues and expenditures and sustains current service levels across all county departments and agencies. Operational funding for Calvert County Public Schools is recommended at \$163 million, which exceeds the state's required maintenance of effort by approximately \$3 million." It falls short of the \$6 million sought by the school board.

The letter goes on to say, "This investment underscores the county's continued commitment to public education.

"This budget includes a request to appropriate \$12 million of prior-year fund balance to support the pay-go component of the FY27 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The total FY27 CIP is \$86 million and continues to prioritize school construction, renovations and systemic infrastructure repairs.

"The Enterprise funds, Water & Sewer and Solid Waste, are balanced at \$12 million and \$17 million, respectively. Additionally,

two special revenue funds are being proposed: one to properly account for AMOSS grant funding received on behalf of the volunteer fire departments, and another to segregate revenues and expenditures associated with the EMS Cost Recovery Program."

The letter goes on to say, "Throughout the budget development process, staff collaborated across departments to ensure that funding recommendations directly support the Board's five strategic priorities:

- "Public Safety and Community Well-Being: Investments strengthen emergency services, enhance preparedness and address the health and safety needs of our residents.
- "Clear and Effective Communication: Resources support improved internal coordination, consistent leadership communication and meaningful public engagement.
- "Fiscal Responsibility and Efficiency: Every recommendation reflects prudent stewardship of taxpayer dollars, operational efficiency and a focus on long-term financial stability.
- "Education and Generational Investment: Funding supports partnerships and services that benefit children, families, working adults and seniors, recognizing the importance of opportunity at every stage of life.
- "Environmental Stewardship and Quality of Life: The budget advances policies and capital investments that preserve rural character, protect natural resources and promote sustainable growth."

Once the public hearing on the Staff Recommended Budget is complete, the commissioners will review the results and put their own stamp on it and have their own hearing in May.

The Staff Recommended Budget is available for viewing in the Finance and Budget section of the county's website.

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Commissioners Speak Out on Data Centers

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Data centers continue to be Calvert County's hot topic. At the March 17 county commissioner meeting, three of the commissioners spoke out on them during commissioner time.

Commissioner Mike Hart explained his call for a two-year moratorium.

He said, "We are the Board of County Commissioners. There's five of us, but I'm my own individual. And no disrespect to the four that I have here with me, I've served with two other boards, and I was an individual, as are they."

He observed, "This time of year, everything gets political. It's just what happens. It doesn't mean you stop doing your job because things are politics. The questioning that I have received over my moratorium motion... is legitimate. The rumors are insane. I had a person walk off the street the other day to my work asking me about was this property in play, that property in play. Too many questions. You try to do the right thing, zoning put in place to make sure. Data centers are not illegal in the state of Maryland. They're not. But what happens if this board, next board, whatever comes in, you want to build some parameters for if that day ever happens."

He said, "My attempt was not to have the same mistakes as the LNG facility. Anybody has any history? That was under a lawsuit by the Sierra Club. They lost. They wanted to move that facility further away from people, but they lost. They stayed 68 feet from a house, put it on Cove Point Road that I drove past every day and my fellow citizens every day. It was loud, it was noisy.

"Just a total interruption of a way of life.

"Now, I don't have any clue if one day a data center will come to this place, but what I do want, whatever it is, I want it done right. My citizens did not get an option, their say was immaterial. The moratorium that I proposed is not some political gain. Whether anybody chooses to spin it that way or not, it's me doing my job. And if the citizens want it and they scream up and down, they want it, well then I guess that will happen.

But if they say they don't want it, then I'll support that as well."

"Right now, the little bit of knowledge I have," Hart said, "I cannot see why I personally would want it or my seat would want it. See, I know what happens when big construction comes.

"I know about the road interruptions. I know about the displacement of your normal day. People coming into me saying they couldn't get across the bridge, how many workers come in and all that. There's such a big piece here. It's not just so simple of a yes or no. It's the ramification.

"When a big project comes in, it cannot be rushed through. We had a gentleman come for public comment last week, said how it was going to be right on his piece of property. Got emailed from another constituent. It's too much unknown. What that two years does, it gives the public time to tell us what we don't know, gives us a chance to go out and get experts to help us get things. And I'm not backing down off of that. I get it, it's a political season. I get it. Okay? But at the end of the day, we're all supposed to want the right thing for this county. Whether I'm sitting here or anybody else is sitting here, my job for my folks is to ask those questions.

"Some people think or are saying back-room deals, all this kind of stuff. I don't do that. Okay? I don't. It's your right to ask that. You should ask that as a citizen. If you think I'm dirty, say, Mike Hart, you're dirty. Don't put them in it. I'm a big boy. I walk my own feet. Come see me. I'll tell you, I don't do that.

"When the people came in from the bridge, if anybody remembers the toll bridge, I listened. That's my job to listen. My response was, can you tell me how much my people would pay? They could not.

"I don't know what the data center, is it one? Is it 50? Does anybody know? I don't know. How could I possibly want to approve a project that I have no clue how big it is? How many buildings? What it does? Is it next to my neighbor? I'm 57 years old. How many more years of life do I have left and I darn sight don't want to live in congestion and noise and pollution.

I have pushed back continuously on high density. Why would I push back on high density on the level that I have and turn around and want to make something like apartments look small. It's ridiculous.

"I've been accused that I can't balance a budget without it. I've done 11 of them without a data center. This budget will be balanced without a data center."

He insisted, "I love my town. It's where I'm going to die."

Commissioner Buddy Hance said, "As Commissioner Hart said, we haven't made any deals. The NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements) have expired. We were contacted two years ago, I think, by Constellation, that said Hey, we're working on this project. All those things that were talked about earlier, we have no idea that they were occurring, haven't had any information. I don't know the size of the project, just like Commissioner Hart. Until we see something from somebody, I have no clue how big it's going to be. I think that's been worked on by other people and not involving us."

Hance added, "So, just like he's trying to keep an open mind, I'm trying to, and as he said, we're going to balance our budget this year. We might not meet all the needs, and the services that are being demanded of us, but we're going to balance our budget. I can guarantee you that."

But he added, "You know, it's a challenge. Since COVID ended, I think every meeting we've had with the bond raters, when we go through our bond rating process, have said, you all need to find another revenue source that you're too heavily dependent on residential. And you only have two real commercial ventures going on in the county. And long term, those are capped out. So, you've got to find other revenue sources. Our ears are wide open. If someone has a suggestion, we can cut. People say, cut, you can cut, you can cut the schools. I think we gave them \$34 million in three years to implement Blueprint. And they still have programs that are underfunded. We don't get into how they spend their money, but they're going to come this year and ask us for \$6 million, I believe. But they're going



Commissioner Mike Hart

to add \$16 (million). They're going to take \$10 (million) out of their fund balance. So, they're actually going to increase their budget by \$16 million based on the proposal that we're going to see next week."

"Just like Commissioner Hart, is, I'm going to die right here. I make decisions based on what I think is best for this community. It has nothing to do with me. And we do listen. That's why we're trying to put in place parameters if a data center were to come to protect those issues that concern all of you out there as we know them today. But as I've said before, until a project actually comes, we don't know what it looks like. And that's the truth," Hance insisted.

Commissioner Mark Cox said, "I think this board is trying to be proactive and not reactive on data centers. We have done text amendments to try to safeguard some items here in the county. We do have an open house next Thursday, March 26th. The first session is at 5 p.m. The second session starts at six 30. If you want to go from the first session to the second session, help yourself. They're going to have open tables for questions and answers for everybody. I'll be there and I think my fellow commissioners will also be there. So come ask questions, learn so that we can decide what's best for this county."

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Four Public Schools Earn Pre-K Accreditation

Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) is proud to announce that four schools have been awarded Pre-K Accreditation by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in 2026, recognizing the district's commitment to providing high-quality learning environments for Calvert County's youngest students.

The following CCPS schools received MSDE PreK Accreditation in 2026:

- Barstow Elementary
- Calvert Elementary
- Patuxent Appeal Elementary Campus
- Sunderland Elementary

Michelle Ward, CCPS Supervisor of Early Childhood, emphasized the significance of the recognition and the dedication of educators across the district. "Achieving Maryland Accreditation is a powerful affir-

mation of the developmentally appropriate, playful, and engaging instruction happening every day in CCPS classrooms. This accomplishment reflects our educators' deep commitment to nurturing young learners and creating environments where children thrive. It also demonstrates our dedication to continuous improvement as we work together to ensure high-quality early childhood experiences for every child and family we serve."

Maryland Accreditation for early childhood, established in the 1990s, provides a framework for licensed childcare centers and public pre-kindergarten programs to show their commitment to high-quality learning. Programs that achieve accreditation demonstrate effective instruction, supportive learning environments, and con-

tinuous program improvement.

The recognition also aligns with the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which emphasizes both expanding access to pre-kindergarten and strengthening the quality of early learning programs across the state. The Blueprint recognizes that high-quality early childhood education plays a critical role in supporting children's development and long-term success. In addition to earning Pre-K Accreditation, Barstow Elementary, Patuxent Appeal Elementary Campus, and Sunderland Elementary also achieved a Level 5 rating in Maryland EXCELS in 2026, the highest level in the state's quality rating and improvement system for early childhood programs. Maryland EXCELS (Excellence Counts in Early Learning and School-Age Care) rates licensed child-

care and early education programs on a scale from Level 1 to Level 5, with Level 5 representing the highest level of quality. Programs at this level demonstrate exemplary practices that exceed licensing requirements, including earning Accreditation, and align with nationally recognized standards. To achieve Level 5, programs must show strong performance across key areas including curriculum and instruction, child assessment, family engagement, health and safety, and program administration. They must also demonstrate advanced staff qualifications, ongoing professional learning, and the use of data – including child outcomes and family feedback – to support continuous program improvement.

Press release from CCPS

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“I LOVE MY TOWN. IT’S WHERE I’M GOING TO DIE.”

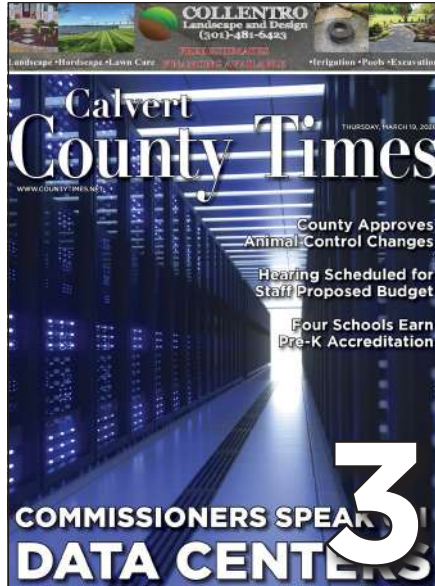
COMMISSIONER MIKE HART ON HIS CONCERNS OVER DATA CENTERS



LOCAL 4
New animal control ordinance includes fancier’s license



COMMUNITY 6
Waterside Music Series returns for 2026



3 ON THE COVER
Commissioners continue conversation on data centers

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, MAR 19	FRI, MAR 20	SAT, MAR 21	SUN, MAR 22
Partly Cloudy Hi: 53° Lo: 37°	Mostly Sunny Hi: 62° Lo: 50°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 67° Lo: 49°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 77° Lo: 46°
MON, MAR 23	TUE, MAR 24	WED, MAR 25	THU, MAR 26
AM Showers Hi: 50° Lo: 32°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 49° Lo: 38°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 56° Lo: 43°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 61° Lo: 52°

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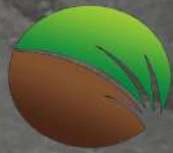
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**County Approves
Animal Control Changes**

**Hearing Scheduled for
Staff Proposed Budget**

**Four Schools Earn
Pre-K Accreditation**

**COMMISSIONERS SPEAK ON
DATA CENTERS**