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TWO SECTIONS • 75¢

Sidewalks are a problem in town

by Tom Chillemi

Sidewalks in Urbanna that are uneven or broken have been an issue for years.

While some sidewalks are the responsibility of VDOT, the town owns much of the sidewalks and is responsible for their upkeep and repair.

For example, the sidewalks on Virginia Street from Cross Street to Prince George Street were replaced during a major streetscape renovation more than 10 years ago. Before that renovation, the sidewalks belonged to VDOT. Once that renovation took place, the sidewalk ownership was turned over to the town, reported town administrator Holly Gailey at council's September 10 work session meeting.

These Virginia Street sidewalks have sunk in places, especially around drainage culverts, creating tripping hazards. In some places these sidewalks slope and have sunk slightly

below the street gutters.

Council member Boyd Wiley said some sidewalks have separated from the curbing, which allows water to get under the concrete.

The town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has recommended just \$12,000 for sidewalk repairs, said Gailey. Being listed on the CIP does not ensure funding. The CIP lists projects that have a long lifespan and is merely a planning tool for council.

High traffic sidewalks would be repaired first, said Gailey.

VDOT owns sidewalks on Virginia Street that are west of Rappahannock Avenue, and on Cross Street from Virginia Street to Marston Avenue, Gailey noted.

Antennas

A recent power outage at the Urbanna water tower triggered several phone calls from technology compa-

(See Sidewalks, Page A4)



Honoring the most decorated U.S. Marine

A U.S. Marine Corps detachment from Fort Lee in Petersburg made its 26th annual relay run to Christ Episcopal Church at Christchurch for a memorial service at the grave of Lt. General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, the most decorated U.S. Marine. "Chesty Puller is a national hero," said Lt. Col. Marina D. Foster. "From World War II to the 'Chosin Few' (in Korea) his actions and efforts helped shape the Marine Corps' history and that of our nation. He was a true leader and an American legend." See video at SSentinel.com.

(Photo by Tom Chillemi)

Six candidates for Constitutional offices address the issues

by Tom Chillemi

Candidates for the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, Middlesex Commissioner of the Revenue and Middlesex Commonwealth's Attorney spoke at a candidate forum on October 10 at the Deltaville Community Association (DCA).

In his opening statement, sheriff's candidate C.B. Blair Sibley said he started in law enforcement in 2001 and joined the Middlesex Sheriff's Office in 2005. He was promoted to investigator in 2006 and was the lead investigator until 2016. He currently is working part-time with the Mathews County Sheriff's Office.

Sibley said among major concerns in the county are visibility of deputies on the road, that only one deputy is on duty at certain times, and the visibility of the sheriff.

The most important concern is drugs in the community, said Sibley.

He said he would use every resource available to combat the drug problem.

Incumbent sheriff David P. Bushey said he has lived in Middlesex for 30 years. He has been in law enforcement for 25 years. He served as a deputy U.S. Marshal in Washington, D.C., with the Richmond police for five years and worked in management with a marketing company for five years, where he learned how to run a business.

In 1994, he became a Middlesex deputy and worked all aspects from patrolling as a road deputy to investigations.

Bushey said he has graduated from the FBI Academy and the National Sheriff's Association executive management course.

He said he will continue to do his best to support and protect the community.

Jon Farinholt and E. Mae Burke are candidates for the Middlesex Commissioner of the Revenue. The current commissioner, Bonnie Davenport, is not seeking re-election.

Farinholt made his opening statement first. He has lived in Hartfield since 2008. For nearly 20 years Farinholt worked in Europe and Asia and ran multiple businesses for one company for which he had full financial responsibility.

Farinholt said he is running for commissioner of the revenue because it is time for him to serve this community. If elected Farinholt said he will use his background in business and finance to develop systems to

improve the property assessment process.

Mae Burke said she has worked in the Middlesex Commissioner of the Revenue office for seven years and has been the chief deputy commissioner for four years. Burke said she has taken certification courses through the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service School for Continuing Education through the University of Virginia, which has been a good source of information for her.

Burke graduated from Middlesex High School in 2001 and the University of Virginia College at Wise in 2005.

Burke said she has been a substitute teacher and a paraprofessional with Middlesex public schools.

A question for the commissioner of the revenue candidates was: "What experience in financial education do you have that makes you the most qualified for the position of commissioner of the revenue?"

Farinholt answered first, and said he graduated from VCU with a business degree. He said he also spent 20 years in his international business running multiple companies that were quite large in size—many of them had a budget larger than that of Middlesex County—and he had full financial responsibility and bottom line responsibility.

Farinholt said he and his brothers have three marinas in Middlesex and he is the business manager. He said he has more than 33 years being in a position of financial responsibility.

Burke said her main experience has been on-the-job training for the past seven years in the Middlesex Commissioner of the Revenue's office and the courses she has taken through the certification program to prepare her to help citizens of the county as far as tax exemptions for which they may be eligible, and in dealing with personal property appraisals and real estate. Burke said her on-the-job training has been more extensive in the past few years. Because of the health issues of the current commissioner of the revenue, Burke said she has had to take on more leadership roles in the office.

Incumbent Middlesex Commonwealth's Attorney Michael Hurd, who is seeking a fourth term, is being challenged by David Eberline.

Hurd made his opening statement first. Hurd said he has been a trial attorney for 30 years and has been

(See DCA forum, Page A5)

Supervisor candidates discuss the issues at DCA election forum

by Larry Chowning

The Deltaville Community Association (DCA) sponsored a two-hour and 15-minute political forum Monday, October 7, at the DCA building. The speakers were board of supervisor candidates from Jamaica, Harmony Village and Pinetop districts.

DCA president Carolyn Schmalenberger thanked the large crowd of citizens for coming.

Master of ceremonies Eddie Harrow Jr. informed the candidates that the questions to be asked had come from citizen input.

All six candidates introduced themselves to the audience and afterwards Harrow asked questions and gave ample time for each candidate to answer.

The main questions from the public were: Should the boat tax be eliminated? What needs to be done to lower the county's \$23 million debt? How does each candidate feel about solar farms? Should the county continue to subsidize the Middlesex Family YMCA? Should the county's retail sales tax be increased to 6% or 7%?

Jamaica District

The two candidates running for supervisor of Jamaica District are lifelong Middlesex County residents and Middlesex High School graduates. Elizabeth (Williams) Whitaker was born and raised in the Remlik area and incumbent Wayne Jessie was born and raised in Jamaica.

Whitaker's family has lived in Middlesex for five generations. She is a graduate of Bluefield College with a BS degree in organizational management and leadership. She works for Bay Aging and has over 15 years experience in financial services with private businesses, banks and non-profits.

Jessie is a local contractor who owns Jessie Construction Co. He is a graduate of Concord College where he earned a BS degree in business. He has been a member of the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department in Urbanna for 34 years; was elected to the Middlesex County School Board in 1986; and has been Jamaica District's supervisor since 2001.

Boat tax

Whitaker said that she was not in

favor of the county currently having two boat tax rates—a high rate on boats under 5 tons and a lower rate on boats over 5 tons. "We have watermen trying to make a living out there in small boats," said Whitaker. "They should not have to pay the highest rate. That is not right." She also said by eliminating the boat tax the burden of making up the lost revenue would fall on those who own homes and cars and many of them cannot afford increases in taxes.

Jessie has been an advocate of keeping the boat tax and he voted against giving owners of large boats a tax break. The lower tax rate on boats over 5 tons was approved by supervisors by a 3-2 vote. "We have been over and over this," he said. "We cannot afford to get rid of the boat tax. We lost \$148,000 by lowering the rate on boats over 5 tons from 98 cents to 62 cents. We have had to make that up and we gave the wealthy a tax break. I am opposed to doing away with the tax."

\$23 million debt

Whitaker said much of the county's debt is tied into school construction and she said "our schools" are an investment in the county's future. She has no problem with debt associated with schools or construction of the new county courthouse. She said if there is new debt associated with the Cooks Corner Revitalization Program it will be offset by revenues generated by a 24-unit apartment complex and growth of private businesses at Cooks Corner, which will put tax revenues back into the county coffers.

Jessie said that most counties have debt. Middlesex has managed its debt properly and the county has a good bond rating. The new Cooks Corner Revitalization Project might create some debt but it will be offset by the establishment of a new restaurant, brewery and event center that will create at least 20 jobs, he said. The

(See Supervisor, Page A10)

A Message from the Publishers

Southside Sentinel editor Tom Hardin has announced his retirement, effective in March 2020. He will be ending a career that has benefitted the community we serve and the 124-year-old weekly newspaper in many positive ways.

Led by Tom, we believe the Sentinel news staff has become truly unique when compared to any similar size paper in the country. With the talents and interests of reporters Larry Chowning and Tom Chillemi, there's a synergy among these three that we really don't want to see end.

They are a dedicated crew, constantly keeping our readers informed with "real" news and entertaining feature articles.

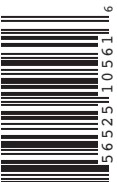


However, to make the Sentinel what it is Tom has devoted many long days, even weekends, editing virtually every news item and photo that appears in the paper, designing pages and working with constantly changing technology, and it takes a toll. He says he is ready for a break, and there are grandchildren to visit!

Tom's tenure at the Sentinel will total nearly 40 years. He joined the paper in 1976 as its first full-time reporter and later served briefly as managing editor before leaving in 1981 to help with a family farming operation. He returned to the staff in 1987 and soon became editor.

Can we clone Tom? We're afraid not, but a search is on to fill some big shoes. If you know of a candidate, send them to our ad in the help wanted section. Thankfully, Tom has given us time to find someone he can train.

And, there will be a retirement party in the spring. We hope you'll plan to join in celebrating Tom Hardin's contributions to our hometown paper and the greater Middlesex community.

—Fred and Bettie Lee Gaskins

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