

# Election results online

Voters selected candidates in several key races across Tidewater yesterday. Visit [tidewaterreview.com](http://tidewaterreview.com) to find out who won.



24-HOUR COVERAGE OF WEST POINT, KING WILLIAM, NEW KENT AND KING & QUEEN

# Tidewater Review

NOVEMBER 6, 2019

TIDEWATERREVIEW.COM

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## Woman convicted in Great Dane case

St. Stephens resident gets 12 months for animal cruelty

BY STEVE ROBERTS JR  
Staff writer

KING AND QUEEN COUNTY — A St. Stephens Church woman was convicted of animal cruelty in King and Queen County General District Court on Friday.

Candice Jones Wheat, 39, was convicted of one misdemeanor count of animal cruelty, according to online court records.

The charge was amended from a felony to a misdemeanor and the Commonwealth Attorney's office dropped 32 charges against Wheat for failing to vaccinate and license dogs at her Owens Mill Road home, according to online court records.

King and Queen County Commonwealth Attorney Charles Adkins said he couldn't comment about the case specifically, but generally prosecutors will drop less severe charges against a person in order to attain guilty verdicts for more severe charges.

King and Queen County Sheriff's Office deputies found 15 dogs and 12 puppies, all Great Danes, in the house without water and with little food on Aug. 27, according to court testimony from King and Queen County Sheriff's Office deputy Brian Burr. Deputies found five more Great Danes in a hot, poorly ventilated camper. The dogs and the camper were covered in feces, and there was no food or water.

King William Regional Animal Shelter manager Lauri Betts testified at the civil forfeiture hearing in the case that one of the dogs was nothing but "skin hanging off bone."

Wheat and her partner Richard A. Awlasewicz agreed to forfeit 30 of the 32 dogs at the civil forfeiture hearing on Sept. 20. Adkins said the couple never appealed the case, so the remaining two dogs have been forfeited. Neither are allowed to own or possess animals.

As a result of her conviction at the criminal trial on Friday, Wheat was sentenced to 12 months in jail with all but four days suspended, according to online court records. She was ordered to pay court costs of \$571 by March 26, 2020.



EMILY HOLTER/STAFF PHOTOS

After teaching for 42 years, West Point art teacher Sue Kurfees retired only to find herself back in the classroom sharing her passion for visual arts. Below, fourth-grader and drawing enthusiast Eden Morr shows off her project.

## The art of education

West Point teacher Sue Kurfees returns from retirement to instill love of art in next generation

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

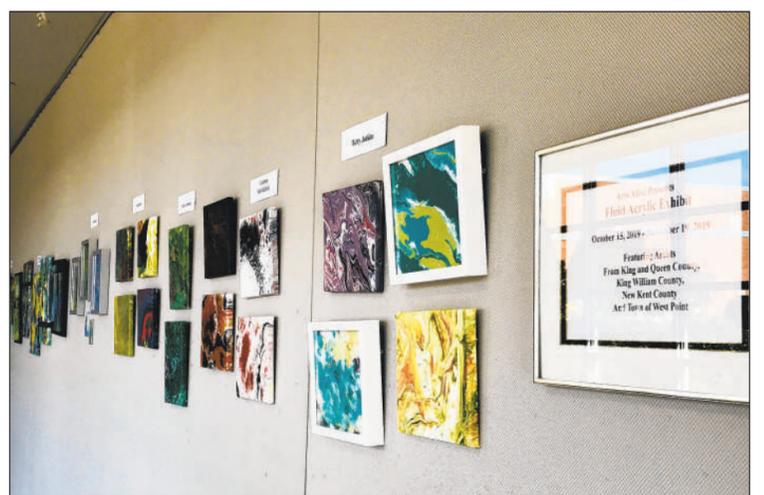
As students filed in, found their name cards and took their seats, they glanced around the classroom, their eyes fixed on the various materials that covered the walls.

A color wheel hung in one corner, while posters lined another. Filling the empty space, cut out pieces of paper scrawled with words give clues as to what the lesson will be that day.

The children, trained to find motifs, locate the one word that stands out. Written in purple marker it reads: Pattern.

In 1972, Sue Kurfees began her career as the first art teacher at West Point schools. After 42 years of teaching visual arts, she retired and set her sights on other art-driven endeavors. But after five years of retirement, Kurfees is back teaching art classes to the town's pre-school and elementary students.

Throughout her long career, Kurfees has seen many faces pass through



West Point art teacher Sue Kurfees hosts and teaches workshops and showcases artwork on the walls of West Point High School.

her classroom, but the one thing that remains constant is her belief in visual arts and her drive to pass it on to future generations.

"My goal is to make art a part of

See **ART**, page 2A

### More online

To learn more about Arts Alive and its programs, visit [artsaliveinc.org](http://artsaliveinc.org).



COURTESY OF JUSTIN CAMACHO

West Point band director Justin Camacho credits his students' success to their hard work and dedication.

## West Point marching band brings home gold

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

WEST POINT — For West Point High School's marching band, the school year started a month before everyone else's. Despite the summer heat, the ensemble marched and played for hours under the sweltering August sun.

When the school year began, they

continued to hone their craft, practicing after school twice a week. They performed their signature "Heart" show at every football game, pep rally and concert event available.

The long hours and grueling work paid off for them as the band claimed first place in several categories at Powhatan High School's 29th annual Pow-

See **BAND**, page 2A

### INSIDE

Calendar .....8  
Opinion .....5

Puzzles .....8

Church .....4  
Classifieds .....6

[mail@tidewaterreview.com](mailto:mail@tidewaterreview.com)



# Commissioner's office costumes raise concern

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

**KING WILLIAM** — The King William Commissioner of Revenue's office is facing backlash from county government officials and the public after the commissioner and her staff wore controversial costumes to the County Administration's annual staff Halloween party.

Commissioner Sally Pearson and her staff dressed as various salad ingredients. Pearson

wore a shirt that featured a head of lettuce and the words 'romaine calm.' Deputy Commissioner Pauline Miller dressed as a tomato, Deputy Commissioner Miranda Berry dressed as a bottle of vinaigrette and Deputy Commissioner Barbara Ford dressed as a red onion, according to a photograph posted on Facebook by Chris Couch.

The photograph caused public outcry after it circulated among various Facebook

groups. Some people voiced their opinions in the comments, stating the Commissioner's office was out of line.

King William resident and small business owner Chris Couch said Pearson, an elected official, and her staff mocked his business with their costumes.

For several months, Couch and Pearson have feuded over the meals tax. Couch's business specializes in growing, preparing and delivering salads to customers in

the region. Couch said he briefly sold salads to people in the Commissioner's office until Pearson informed him he must pay a meals tax for every salad he sells.

Couch argued that his salads were prepackaged, so the meals tax did not apply. However, Pearson argued his business was within the limitations, and he needed to comply with county code.

In late September, Couch announced he was running for the Commissioner of Reve-

nue seat as a write-in candidate. Couch said on Oct. 9 the commissioner's office sent him a bill for back taxes from August to October.

King William's County Administrator Bobbie Tassinari issued a statement regarding the costumes and presented it at the Board of Supervisors' work session on Monday.

In the statement, Tassinari said that the Commissioner of Revenue and her staff's costumes were inappropri-

ate, unprofessional and made several people uncomfortable.

"The actions of those four individuals do not reflect the Board of Supervisors, nor the county staff's views," Tassinari stated. "I would like to go on record to state the Commissioner of Revenue and her staff's actions give a black eye to all of us that professionally and respectfully serve the citizens."

Pearson was unavailable for comment Tuesday morning.

## ART, from 1A

my students' life and have them carry it with them wherever they go," Kurfees said. "I found that the one thing that every single one of my students can relate to is a pattern."

Her teaching method is simple: Teach the students about the different elements of visual art, and then teach them how to apply those elements to the outside world.

"After some years, I had students who I had taught their parents and now, I am teaching grandchildren of some of the (students) I taught," Kurfees said. "Some of them still come up to me and say, 'I can't go anywhere without seeing some aspect of art,' and that's what makes this job special."

For Kurfees, her decision to come out of retirement was an opportunity to continue to share her passion and make a difference in children's lives, she said.

For the school division, Kurfees' decision was an opportunity to keep its promise of excellence, Superintendent Laura Abel said.

"Mrs. Kurfees has inspired so many former students to develop their own talents or just develop a love and appreciation of art," Abel said. "Now, a whole new generation of students will have an opportunity to learn about art from a true master teacher and an accomplished artist."

## In the classroom

As the overhead projector hummed alive, paisley patterns appeared on the whiteboard. Kurfees began her lesson by explaining the complexity of the pattern.

Pacing through slides, Kurfees honed in on one picture in particular. It was a close-up of a paisley design she had found in a rug. She explained to her students that these patterns are present everywhere and someone had the job of designing it.

When it was their turn, students eagerly grabbed at colored pencils and began coloring, shading and designing their own creations.

For some, the task was easy. They tucked their heads down and got to work drawing intricate designs, shading in different areas and practicing color intensity.

But others were hesitant. They expressed concerns about their ability and feared they would ruin their creations.

With each question, Kurfees assured her students that every artist's creation is unique and that there is no wrong way to create.

For fourth-grader Eden Morr, art class is one she always looks forward to because it relaxes her. Eden said she has a passion for drawing



EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

Art teacher Sue Kurfees tells her students art is unique to the artist and there is no wrong way to create.

and one day wants to team up with her sister to create paintings.

"I really like to draw and I'm good at that, so I'm thinking I can draw the pictures and my sister, she's good at coloring, can paint it," Eden said.

## In the town

Outside the classroom, Kurfees has been a key figure in bringing art to the community.

Along with Town Council member and local artist Gail Nichols, Kurfees co-chairs the Visual Arts Committee at Arts Alive, a West Point-based organization that promotes and showcases visual and performing arts in the region.

The organization hosts summer camps, workshops, performances and events across the region, said Arts Alive Director Donna Kline. One of the

group's main goals is to make these events affordable and accessible to everyone in the community.

"With our summer camps, we want kids to learn all that they can and maybe, they experience a spark that drives them to be the next great artist," Kline said. "People come from all across the state to see the performance events we host. It's been great exposure for us and the town."

Pairing with local museums, including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the organization has exposed the community to a wide array of artwork.

For example, Arts Alive recently hosted the VMFA's traveling art mobile, which made appearances at West Point schools and the Crab Carnival.

By bringing traveling

art exhibits to town, people were exposed to artwork they may have never been able to see.

Kurfees and Nichols are responsible for the 10 visual arts workshops held each year. The workshops are available for anyone who wants to attend and is willing to learn.

Throughout her years on the board, Kurfees has curated several exhibits in the region. The exhibit outside the West Point High School auditorium showcases artwork created at the workshops.

However, 16 years ago, there was no central art association in town. There were no camps or workshops for people to learn the craft. There were no performances or events for people to see.

The idea came from a former appointed official who said the town needed an art association.

After several months of hard work and determination, Arts Alive was born, Nichols said.

This year, the organization has 20 board members and more than 100 volunteers, and Kline said the organization is growing each year.

Despite returning to the classroom, Kurfees said she will continue to devote her time and energy to hosting and teaching workshops and bringing visual arts to the community.

"I believe in my heart that the one thing I can do is what I'm passionate about, and that's making art relevant in people's everyday life," Kurfees said. "That's all I can do and I will continue to do it until I can't anymore."

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## BAND, from 1A

hatan Fall Classic Competition on Oct. 26.

Every year, the Powhatan Fall Classic Competition brings smaller high school marching bands from across the region together to compete in various categories.

Focusing on equity, judges placed the 29 participating marching bands in separate divisions based on size and skill level.

With just 15 minutes to perform, West Point's marching band showcased their talents against seven other schools in their division, including rival school New Kent.

After each band performed their routine, the judges deliberated and then announced the

placings. West Point took home five first-place trophies in music, visuals, percussion, drum major and overall general effect.

Band director Justin Camacho attended West Point and performed in the band while in school. Four years ago, he returned to the division and began leading the band department. He said the band's success is indicative of the students' determination and the community's support.

"Everyone in the band has the skills and the ability, but these kids are committed," Camacho said. "It also helps that we have strong community and administrative support. It takes a lot of people to make



COURTESY OF JUSTIN CAMACHO

West Point marching band earned five first-place awards at the Powhatan Fall Classic Competition.

these things possible, and we have so many willing to help out."

Sophomore Jordan Booker mastered three different instruments before she stepped into the role of drum major.

As drum major, Booker stands front and center, conducts the music, determines the band's placement and commands its movements. She said the job comes with a lot respon-

sibility and often, the pressure is on her to succeed. Booker sacrificed her summer days to learn the job.

"We work on pushing ourselves to be better than we think we can be," Booker said. "It gets more interesting as you grow and learn."

Senior Peyton Braband has played the saxophone for several years and is no stranger to competitions.

Braband said the competitions were not just about the trophies. Instead, they served as the perfect opportunity for everyone to showcase months of hard work and conditioning.

"Everyone in the band works hard and they put the effort in every day and it shows," he said. "It was a nice way to go out."

The competition marked the last per-

formance of the year. For Braband, it was the last of his high school career.

"I owe so much of who I am as a person to this band," he added. "It is hard to think of who I would be if I didn't keep with it."

Emily Holter, [emily.holter@virginiamedia.com](mailto:emily.holter@virginiamedia.com), 757-256-6657, @EmilyHolterNews.

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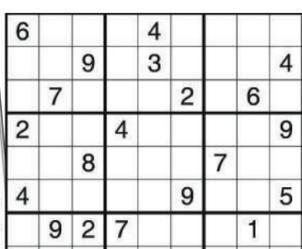
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# Puzzled?

Challenge your mind with this week's games. **Page 3**

24-HOUR COVERAGE OF WEST POINT, KING WILLIAM, NEW KENT AND KING & QUEEN

# Tidewater Review

OCTOBER 16, 2019

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## New talent, leadership has brought King and Queen's Royal Tigers back from several dismal seasons to stand undefeated



EMILY HOLTER/STAFF PHOTOS

King and Queen Central High Royal Tigers defensive linemen take the field Friday to face Mathews' offensive line.

# Tigers hungry for a winning season

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

For a moment, all was silent as the starting line-up took the field.

The overhead lights gleamed across the players' red helmets, and there wasn't a sound from those watching in the nearly full visitors section. Everyone held their breath to see if King and Queen's Central High Royal Tigers could do it again: win.

In an instant the silence broke, cheers rang out and the opening kickoff sailed down the field. Friday night football had begun.

In the past 10 years, the Central High football team has taken home seven wins and 82 losses. But when all hope seemed lost, the Royal Tigers flipped the script. This season, the undefeated team has won as many games as it did in the past nine years.

In the past, it was sometimes difficult for the school to even form a team. Whether it was problems with attendance, injuries or players quitting because of low morale, the school struggled to put together a winning team, Central High Athletic Director Joe Harper said.

"It is always a numbers game and sometimes we just didn't have enough," Harper said. "There's so many things that can go wrong, but we are looking forward to finishing up the season and hopefully winning more games."

### Watch them play

Central High School's Royal Tigers will take on West Point at its homecoming match 2 p.m. Saturday.



Central High head coach Kenneth Waters shares a smile with players at halftime.

The stakes were high Friday night as the Royal Tigers took on Mathews High School, a team they often lost to in the past. Many wondered whether the winning streak would come to an end that night. With a full moon shining over Ken Brown Field, anything was possible.

See **TIGERS**, page 2A

## Division graduation rates hover near state average

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

The Virginia Department of Education released its on-time graduation rates for the class of 2019 this month and numbers from West Point, New Kent, King and Queen and King William school divisions were all near or above the state average.

The state measures the percentage of students in a graduating class who earned a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years of entering high school for the first time. On-time graduation rates are factored into school's accreditation.

Virginia's 2019 on-time graduation rate was 91.5% and has remained fairly constant over the past three years. In 2018, the average was 91.6% and in 2017 it was 91.2%

### West Point

For three years, West Point's on-time graduation rate has been 97%, consistently above the state average.

According to the Virginia Department of Education, West Point's 2019 graduating class had 65 students; 42 of them earned an advanced diploma and 18 graduated with a standard diploma. One student dropped out and one student earned a GED certification.

"A key piece of our success is a focus on building and maintaining relationships with our students and families," Superintendent Laura Abel said. "Through these relationships, we are able to ensure that students don't fall through the cracks and they receive both the academic support and encouragement needed to meet on-time graduation expectations."

### New Kent

The New Kent school division improved its on-time graduation rate from 88.9% to 93.5% from 2018 to 2019. But the rate fell to 90.5% in 2019, below the

See **RATES**, page 2A

### More online

Statewide school-by-school quality data and graduation ratings are available at School Profile reports, [schoolquality.virginia.gov](http://schoolquality.virginia.gov) and on the VDOE website, [doe.virginia.gov](http://doe.virginia.gov).

## Two seek King and Queen sheriff's position



Charboneau



Chandler

### Former fire chief Mark Chandler will challenge Sheriff John Charboneau Nov. 6

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

In King and Queen County, the race for sheriff is a competition between experience and

new ideas.

Sheriff John Charboneau has held the position for 10 years and has more than 30 years of experience in law enforcement. Former county fire chief Mark

Chandler is seeking the post, saying he wants to bridge the community's trust in law enforcement.

Sheriff Charboneau began his law enforcement career in 1980 and moved up the ranks.

He served as a dispatcher until he was promoted to road deputy and held the position for 10

years. Former sheriffs appointed Charboneau to various positions including narcotics investigator and a 14-year stint as chief deputy and captain.

With a background in narcotics investigation, Charboneau said the biggest problem the

See **SHERIFF**, page 2A

### INSIDE

Calendar .....3    Puzzles .....3    Church .....4  
Opinion .....5    Obituaries .....4    Classifieds .....6

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## TIGERS, from 1A

"We went from losing almost every game to being undefeated. It has truly been a roller coaster ride," Central High Principal Preston McKellar said. "But these are humble guys who went from struggling last year to now, getting the wins. It's been amazing to watch and cheer them on."

As the final buzzer rang out, cheering fans repeated the game winning chant, "6-0."

With the final score reading 50-6, the Royal Tigers solidified their undefeated status and placed themselves fourth in the 1A Division.

### Something changed

No one can say for certain why the team is successful this year; some say it's the players' determination, hard work and dedication, while others credit new head coach Kenny Waters.

Waters began his football career playing at King William High School. An injury kept him from playing in

college, but soon after he graduated he went back to the sport.

Coaching at various high schools in the area, Waters built a solid reputation.

In 2018, he took the head coaching job at King and Queen, where he quickly found himself in a novel situation.

"Our first year we had some growing pains. I had to recruit new players and get them interested in the game," Waters said. "Compared to last year, it's apples to oranges."

Coming into the season with low numbers, the team barely had enough players to field a team. Now there are 30 players, most are freshmen and many have never played until now.

"For most teams, its unheard of to have freshmen starting, but I have a quarterback, a running back and a wide receiver who are all freshmen," Waters added. "They are all willing to get in there and get the job done."

Alumnus Ryan Berry played for Central High until he graduated in



EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

Central High's defense lines up to kick off to Mathews' offensive line on Friday. The Royal Tigers won 50-6.

1997. Now he watches his sons play, freshman Kam Berry, a running back, and senior Dre Berry, an outside linebacker.

Cheering them on at every game, Ryan Berry said crowd sizes have doubled this year. As each players' morale grows, so does community support.

"I think people have waited a long time to see them win. I mean, this is the most (people) I have ever seen at an away game," Berry said. "This team is young, and I think they'll continue to grow

### Community Day

On Saturday, King and Queen County will hold a Community Pride Day at Central High School with several events.

■ Activities begin at 10 a.m. with a homecoming parade. At 11:30 a.m., Lawson-Marriott Elementary will play King and Queen Elementary in the third annual Tiger Bowl football game.

■ During the 2 p.m. Homecoming game between Central High and West Point, the Homecoming Queen and King will be announced at halftime. Admission is \$5 and fans are encouraged to wear red.

■ Central High School will host the school's Homecoming dance from 7-10 p.m. Admission is \$5.

to win."

Senior Antonio Carter has played defensive end and offensive tackle for three years.

He credits the team's

success to players' willingness to work together.

"No one is thinking of themselves anymore," Carter said.

"We work together

as a team and we are getting better because we think as a unit."

"I didn't know what winning felt like. Now that I do, I don't plan to stop."

## RATES, from 1A

state average of 91.5%.

According to the VDOE, New Kent's 2019 graduating class had 233 students and 51.5% graduated with an advanced diploma and 39.4% graduated with a standard di-

ploma. The division's drop-out rate was 3.7%.

Superintendent Brian Nichols said there are many of factors that could lead to a decline, but the division is looking ahead and tracking pat-

terns to ensure it exceeds the previous rate and surpasses the state average. Nichols was hired in July.

"We are looking not only at our current seniors, but also our juniors, sophomores and freshmen to find patterns and fix problem areas," he said. "Graduation is a

project and we have a project manager, and every nine weeks we look at the numbers to find ways to improve so that we can continue to better our trends."

### King and Queen

King and Queen has improved its on-time graduation rates each of the past three years.

In 2017, the division's rate fell behind the state average with 73.7% of its class graduating in four years. In 2018, the division was still behind the state average, but improved to 86.8%. In 2019, the division improved its on-time graduation rate to 94.1%, higher than the state average.

Superintendent Carol Carter said the division's success is due to the faculty and staff who work to meet every individual student's needs.

"We started looking at

our (students) several years ahead of their graduation date," Carter said. By looking at each individual grade, she said it was easier to identify problem areas and fix them.

In 2019, King and Queen's graduating class had 34 students, with 61.8% finishing with an advanced diploma and 32.4% receiving a standard diploma. No students dropped out.

### King William

King William County's on-time graduation rate has fluctuated over the past three years. In 2017, the division's rate was 92%, but in 2018 its score dropped to 90%, below the state average.

In 2019, King William improved its graduation rate to 94.8% of students graduating on-time.

Superintendent David White credits the

school's faculty with the success in improving rates.

"The decrease in the number of students dropping out is a reflection of the dedication of our staff and the addition of a school social worker who monitors students absences and works with students and families to keep them engaged in school," White said.

The school also provides additional courses that offer students workplace experience while being enrolled in high school.

In 2019, King William graduated 170 students, with 56.5% of them earning an advanced diploma and 38.2% receiving a standard diploma. The drop-out rate was 2.9%.

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## SHERIFF, from 1A

county faces is drugs.

"We can't keep looking people up. We have a lot of good people who get into trouble because they can't get rid of their habits," he said.

Charboneau said if re-elected, he will continue to represent the county and address the ongoing drug problem.

Lifelong King and

Queen resident Chandler said he hadn't planned to run for office.

"I had a lot of citizens come to me and ask me to run. I even had people I had arrested say they like me because they liked the way I treated them," he said.

Chandler has a six-year career in law enforcement and 30 years of experience volunteering with fire and EMS. He served 10 years as the Lower King and Queen assistant fire chief and six years as fire chief.

Chandler said he is running because he wants to

rebuild trust between law enforcement and citizens; something he said the county has not had in 20 years.

"The community needs to be able to trust the police for us to have a good foundation," Chandler said. "My goal has always been to treat people fairly and equally and to treat them how they would like to be treated."

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### Want to learn more?

Election day is Nov. 6 and the polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. For a list of polling places, visit the King and Queen County website, [kingandqueencounty.net](http://kingandqueencounty.net) or call 804-785-5980.

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24-HOUR COVERAGE OF WEST POINT, KING WILLIAM, NEW KENT AND KING & QUEEN

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NOVEMBER 27, 2019

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West Point Schools' Kelly Cade is the first to arrive each morning. She sets up the kitchen and readies breakfast.

EMILY HOLTER/STAFF PHOTOS

## County declared state gun sanctuary

King William supervisors approve 2nd Amendment resolution saying county won't restrict gun ownership

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

KING WILLIAM — As people filled the courthouse seats and spilled out into the lobby, families, hunters and gun enthusiasts came to demand the Board of Supervisors declare King William a "Second Amendment sanctuary" in which officials oppose state-legislated gun restrictions.

Before opening the comment period, the board addressed the estimated 220 attendees by introducing a resolution stating the board upholds the federal Constitution and refuses to recognize any state legislation restricting gun laws.

"Folks, we already hear y'all loud and clear and I hope this rings out to the General Assembly," Chairmen Bill Hodges said.

The board unanimously approved the resolution declaring King William a Second Amendment sanctuary at its meeting Monday.

Following the vote, cheers rang out from the courtroom and the lobby. During the comment period, several people came forward to express their thanks and shake the supervisors' hands.

"I want to thank you all for ensuring my livelihood and my retirement," Pamunkey River Guns owner Chris Berberich said.

King William will join 14 other counties that have declared themselves sanctuaries and is the first to do so in the Tidewater area. Citizens are pressuring New Kent and King and Queen officials to do the same.

With the recent state elections, Democrats won control of the General Assembly running, in part, on a gun control platform. Now, many fear they will face gun restrictions.

Supervisor Travis Moskalski said the board is not an enforcing body but a governing body, and the board will uphold its resolution.

Sheriff Jeff Walton has not definitively said whether he would enforce potential state gun restrictions.

"I am a constitutional officer who took an oath to enforce the Constitution and I support the Second Amendment," Walton said.

Emily Holter, 757-256-6657, emily.holter@virginiamedia.com, @EmilyHolterNews.

## District lauded for focusing on hunger

West Point schools earn award for efforts to keep students fed

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

Before the sun rises and the first buses carrying sleepy-eyed students arrive, cook and self-proclaimed worker bee Kelly Cade begins her day readying the kitchen and setting up the breakfast line.

Soon, the other staffers fall-in and the hive comes alive as they prepare to feed the masses.

When the morning bell rings, students trickle in to pick up their hot breakfast. They are greeted with smiling faces and words of encouragement.

For Cade, the students make the job worth it.

"If you are having a bad day, these kids make it better," she said. "They make it all worth it to get

See **HUNGER**, page 2A



Cook Christine Hansen prepares the lunch of the day and a student favorite: chicken tenders. The cafeteria offers several new options every day.

## Solar energy company addresses concerns at community meeting

BY EMILY HOLTER  
Staff writer

Following the recent controversy surrounding a proposed conditional-use permit for a proposed 77-megawatt solar farm in King William County, Chicago-based renewable energy company Invenergy held a community meeting Nov. 22 to address citizens' concerns.

Invenergy's Renewable Development Manager Edward Barry explained the project initiatives and answered citizens' questions regarding land use, environmental issues, revenue and the panel engineering.

The proposed project site is between

See **SOLAR**, page 2A



Invenergy Renewable Development Manager Edward Barry spoke to a crowd of 30 people about the Sweet Sue Solar farm proposal.

EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

### Want to learn more?

The Board of Supervisors will meet at 7 p.m. Dec. 16 at 180 Horse Landing Road. For more information, visit [king-williamcounty.us](http://king-williamcounty.us).

### INSIDE

Calendar .....8  
Opinion .....5  
Obituaries .....4  
Puzzles .....8  
Church .....4  
Classifieds .....6

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7 199462 00008 5

## HUNGER, from 1A

out of bed and come to work.”

With a new menu each week and a dedicated staff, the West Point School Division offers students an experience different than most. And their efforts to serve quality meals to every student have not gone unnoticed, as the state recently recognized the division for its work to end childhood hunger.

“We make sure no child in West Point ever goes hungry and if they are, we need to fix it,” said Larry Frazier, director of student services.

### Dorothy McAuliffe Nutrition Award

For three years, the state has awarded the West Point School Division the Dorothy McAuliffe Nutrition Award.

Begun in 2017, Virginia's former first lady Dorothy McAuliffe launched the initiative to reward school districts' efforts to end childhood hunger.

“Virginia has become a national model for ending childhood hunger because of the hard work and innovative approaches of this year's School Nutrition Award recipients,” McAuliffe said in a news release.

In order to qualify, 70% of students who receive free or reduced-price lunch must also eat breakfast, and the division must sponsor at-risk students to receive after school and summer meals.

No Kid Hungry Virginia, an organization created to tackle child hunger in the state, presented the award and West Point was among 14 school divisions in the state that received the award. The division is the only one in the region to receive it.

“Schools play a critical role in connecting children with the nutrition they need to fuel their bodies,” Clair Mansfield, No Kid Hungry Virginia state director, said in a news release.

### Doing what works

West Point's Nutritional Manager Misty Osborne and her staff are committed to stopping child hunger within the town's schools.

“At the end of the day, we're here to feed children,” Osborne said. “We make sure no one ever goes home hungry.”

In order to make their goal a reality, Osborne and her staff have cre-



EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

With more than 45 years of experience, Addie Morrow has retired twice in her career. She said the children keep her working. West Point schools have been recognized by the state for efforts to end childhood hunger.

ated several programs to eliminate food waste and ensure students have access to meals during the day.

According to Osborne, if a student qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch, then their meal is free as the division does not reduce prices. About a third of the student body — 268 students — have access to food they might not otherwise have had.

Beginning in 2016, the cafeteria began serving a second breakfast for students who may have missed the first one.

Specialized meal carts are placed in the halls, and students can buy something on the way to class or to eat in first period. The carts have options that include

smoothies and decaf-coffee beverages.

Introducing the carts has been a huge success, Osborne said. Before, the cafeteria sold roughly 20 breakfasts each day. Now, the school averages more than 100 each day.

The division has not stopped there in its quest to ensure everyone goes home well-fed. Recently, the cafeteria introduced a “share bin.”

Located at the front of the cafeteria, the insulated box keeps items cold. If a student goes through the line and takes an item they no longer want, they can place it in the share bin as long as it is an unopened, prepackaged item that came from the cafeteria. If someone is still hungry after lunch,

they can take what they want from the bin.

### Taking the extra step

For the high, middle and elementary schools, Osborne has gotten the menus down to a science. Attending several conferences and surveying students and faculty, she is attentive to what the people want.

“We've seen an increase in the number of people who eat lunch, and it's because we serve them what they like,” she said.

With diverse options, customized food items and vegetarian options, the cafeteria staff is committed to serving quality food to students.

For staffers Christine

Hansen and Patti Roane, their mornings are spent creating salads and sandwiches. Hansen is responsible for creating the sandwich of the week and Roane makes three different chef salads; a task they said they enjoy doing because students like it.

“We're dedicated and invested in these kids. We smile and ask about their days. We learn their names and what they like,” Roane said. “There's one kid we know always gets extra fries, so we have it ready before they hit the line.”

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## SOLAR, from 1A

Enfield and Manfield roads in Aylett. The 1,262 acres will be leased from two property owners. Solar panels would be placed on half of the proposed acreage, while the rest of the land will serve as a buffer from adjoining properties, Barry said.

Trees will be planted in the buffer zones to hide the farm from view, Barry added.

The plot is located on farmed land and Invenergy said it will pay farmers rent that is greater than what they'd make from crops.

“It makes sense for farmers to lease their land,” Barry said. “It gives them an opportunity to generate revenue greater than crop farming.”

While those in support of the solar farms say landowners have the right to lease their land, others are concerned about their own properties, specifically, their property value.

Adjacent property owner Larry Tyler said he is concerned his property value will diminish and the county will lose its rural integrity if King William becomes a center for solar development.

“With all these solar farms coming up, I'm concerned that our rural community will be Plexiglass and look like LEGOs in a few short years,” Tyler said.

Tyler's concerns follow Gov. Ralph Northam's executive order for the state to produce electricity from 100% carbon-free sources by 2050. Several prospective solar projects have their sights set on the Tidewater re-

gion, according to previous Tidewater Review articles.

Barry assured citizens that the company conducted a study and found that property values have not been affected by solar farms.

The proposed land sits in the county's Land Use Program area. If built, the company must pay five years of back taxes totaling \$80,000, and then an additional \$20,000 every year the solar farm is in use. The company estimates it will pay \$780,000 in property tax during the farm's lifespan. Additionally, the company will pay \$87,000 a year in machinery and tools tax, Barry said.

Several citizens posed questions about how the farm will benefit the county.

“You are asking to come to our community and put this farm in,” Brian Hodges said. “The energy is piped away to a different community and we don't get much of an impact. When do we get something back?”

Barry said the company plans to hire more than 300 local workers to construct and manage the solar farm, the county will receive a net increase in tax revenue, individual landowners will make money from rent and it will ease the tax burden for citizens.

Several citizens said they were concerned about safety, citing chemicals in the panels, run-off and weather and fire safety.

Invenergy Engineer Emily Baughman explained the panels are

made from a crystal silicone that is not hazardous and can withstand time and weather.

“We have to follow national fire safety codes and most of the materials the panels are made of are not conducive to fire,” Baughman said. “We have panels in California where the grass below was on fire but the panels were fine.”

The panels can withstand hurricanes, she said, but if the panels are damaged and a clean-up is required, then the company is obligated to do that clean up on the property.

In order for the company to build the farm, it must meet federal, state and local requirements. The King William Planning Commission has issued several conditions along with the county's established ordinances. Barry said the company is willing to meet any of the county's current and future requests.

If approved, the permit would allow Invenergy to build a 77-megawatt solar facility on 1,262 acres of leased land and operate it for 35 years.

The Planning Commission originally approved the conditional-use permit and the Board of Supervisors was set to vote on it at its Oct. 28 meeting. However, the project was sent back to the Planning Commission after an adjacent property was not notified, according to King William's Community Development Director Ron Etter.

The Planning Commission will hold a public comment period and vote on the proposal at its meeting 7 p.m. Tuesday.