



Meeting area needs

New Kent supervisors and VCU representatives broke ground on a new emergency center coming to the county. **Page 3**

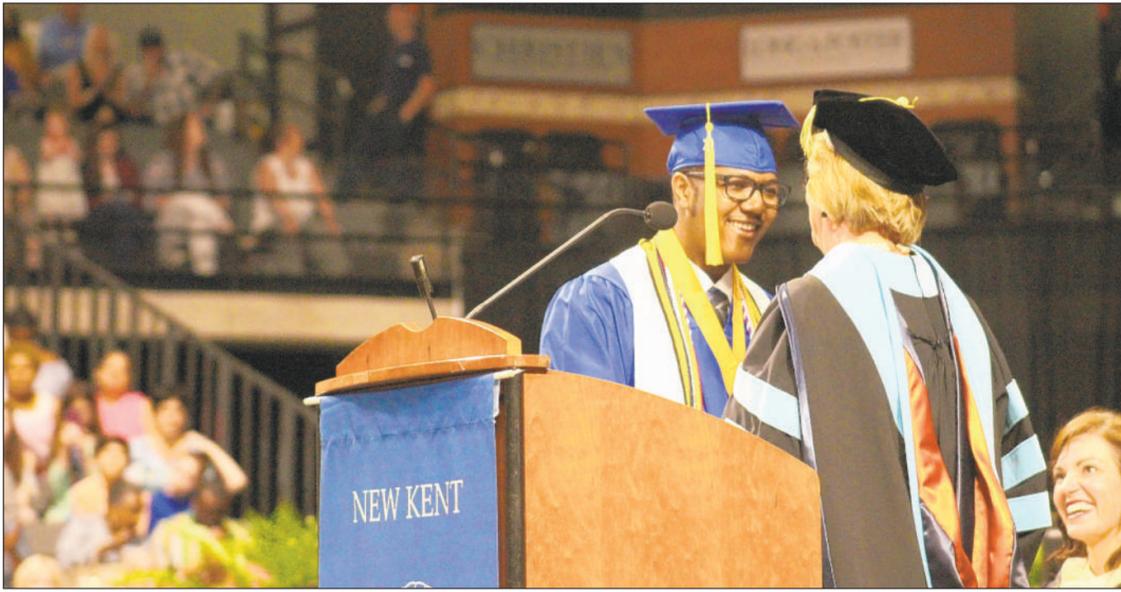
24-HOUR COVERAGE OF WEST POINT, KING WILLIAM, NEW KENT AND KING & QUEEN

Tidewater Review

JUNE 19, 2019

TIDEWATERREVIEW.COM

130TH YEAR, NO. 25 • \$2.00



SEAN CW KORSGAARD / STAFF

Brandon Bonner, New Kent High School's Class of 2019s salutatorian, reflected on progress made by the graduating seniors, as well as New Kent Public Schools, as this is the 50th school year since schools were desegregated.

Graduates 'let go to move forward'

New Kent Class of 2019 celebrates personal progress, community milestones

BY SEAN CW KORSGAARD
Staff writer

Friends and families of New Kent High School's 2019 graduating class filled the bleachers of VCU's Siegal Center Friday. They were there not only to celebrate graduation day and how far those students had come over the years, but how far New Kent Public Schools had come as well.

Former superintendent of New Kent Public Schools David Myers addressed the crowd and observed that for some families, it was the first time they'd heard him speak other than when calling about weather delays.

"I just want for everybody to just take the next five seconds to think about what was the most important moment of your senior year," Myers said. "For some of you, that may be today, for others, maybe it was a big moment on the field or on the stage, or maybe you need to reflect a bit longer, but now take a moment to appreciate all those moments over the past year that brought you to this one: graduation."

Myers pointed out that of New Kent's 218 graduating seniors, more than a third of them had qualified as honor grads and had GPAs above 3.5. Graduates had been awarded a total of \$1,182,681 in scholarship money.

In his speech to fellow graduates, salutatorian Brandon Bonner pointed out how far not only the

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Friends and family filled the bleachers of the VCU Siegal Center in Richmond Friday as they cheered on the 218 graduating New Kent seniors.



JACK JACOBS / STAFF

West Point High School graduates stand at their commencement ceremony Friday.

West Point graduates reflect on memories

BY JACK JACOBS
Staff writer

West Point High School graduates took a moment to consider the value of the experiences they shared together before they headed out into

the world during the school's commencement ceremony Friday.

There were 64 graduates who walked across the stage, diplomas in hand, which was set up inside the school gym. But not before their peers reminded them of the

good times shared and the good times yet to come.

"This is the last time we'll be together like this. The very last of our high school memories. The last of so, so many. In the last

See **REFLECT**, page 5A

County fires Fire Chief Aigner

King William will delay posting, filling position for three to six months

BY SARAROSE MARTIN,
STEVE ROBERTS JR
Staff writers

WILLIAMSBURG — After three years as King William County's fire chief, Andy Aigner was terminated from his position effective June 10, according to Supervisor Bob Ehrhart.

County officials would not discuss any details on the personnel matter, but County Administrator Bobbie Tassinari confirmed Aigner is no longer a county employee.

The county is in early discussions on how to move forward, she said. The posting and hiring of a permanent fire chief will be postponed for three to six months, according to an email Tassinari sent to county officials on Tuesday.

She will brief the Board of Supervisors at the next regular meeting on June 24.

"I'm working with internal staff, volunteers and full-timers to see what's the best course to go," Tassinari said. "I don't plan on posting the position immediately, I want to assess what we have and what needs to be done before we bring somebody new in."

Richard Nunnally, a lieutenant with the City of Richmond Fire Department who lives in King William, will act as the County's Fire and Rescue Department part-time Battalion Chief of Operations effective Tuesday, according to an email Tassinari sent to county officials.

He will be responsible for the deployment plan, apparatus, staffing and management, maintenance, personnel safety, accountability, incident critiquing and day-to-day management of the station, the email said.

In addition, Laura Nunnally will act as the County's Fire and Rescue Department part-time Battalion Chief of Administration and address training, logistics, public relations and more. She is retired from the City of Richmond Fire Department.

Last week, Tassinari said the county was attempting to operate out of both Station One and Station Four.

However, due to a shortage of fire-fighters, Station Four is no longer being staffed, Tassinari said Tuesday. The county still has a lease with the property owner of Station Four, located at 344 Fontaine Park.

"We already have a structure in place, we're still running 24/7, we still have our full-time people and part-time and volunteer, it's basically just business as usual at this point," she said last week. "We're just moving forward and we've got to just make the program better than it is, that's all I can say."

On June 12 the Station Four facility was a ghost town. The one bay in the

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FORWARD, from 1A

students had come, but New Kent County. Specifically, as an African American male, he said he owed a lot to men like the late Calvin Coolidge Green who went to the U.S. Supreme Court in his efforts to achieve full desegregation in the county, a process that would result in the founding of New Kent High School.

“Consider all the milestones, small and large, that got us to this moment. They began with walking and talking, or going to elementary school to learn how to read and play the recorder, to this moment, graduation day,” Bonner said. “Look how far we have come together, and whether we head now to college, a career or the military, I hope we all find our purpose and joy in all that we do.”

Bonner will attend the engineering school at the University of Virginia in the fall.

Valedictorian Taylor Lynne Yates spoke about how since she was a child, she’d had two dreams: To play softball and to attend Virginia Tech.

She played for the New Kent softball team that won a regional softball championship and talked about how she had to put that behind her as she heads to Virginia Tech to study chemistry, and how others graduating may have to do the same.

“I have loved softball and Virginia Tech my entire life, and today is sad because I now have to give up one to pursue the other, and I owe so much to softball, from friends at school, to my relationship with my father,” Yates said. “Perhaps it isn’t softball for you, but something here in New Kent made you who you are today, and I hope you cherish that, even if you have to let it go moving forward, because looking forward, so much greatness lies ahead of all of us.”

Sean CW Korsgaard, 757-968-1529, sean.korsgaard@vagasette.com, @SCWKorsgaard.

New Kent High School Class of 2019

James William Adams IV
Jayden Brooks Adkins
Dominique Logan Akrie-Williams
George Oscar Allen III
Joseph Carnell Allen III
Jabriel Esau Ames
Elijah Rashard Anderson
Cody Michael Andrascik
Tyler Stephen Andrews
Connor Patrick Arnold
Nakoma Litledove Austin
Noah Daniel Babin
Ian Josiah Bandino
Kimberly Cherie
Bardales-Diaz
Chantale' Antoinette
Barder
Dale Norman Barka
Dominic McKenzie Baum
Nathan Charles Baum
Emma Lynn Bell
David Jay Benfield Jr.
Nia Lynette Berkley
Christine Elizabeth Best
Noah Reeves Beukema
Michael Wyatt Birchfield
Gabriel Bennett Bollhorst
Brandon Barrington Bonner
Mikayla Allyn Bonsky
Tyler Joseph Borum
Justin Paul Bostic
William Samuel Bowery III
Morgan Olivia Bowman
Leah Marie Bozzell
Hannah Marie Bradley
Hailey Irene Brady
Savannah Ling Brady
Evan Anthony Branch
Jake Robert Bredehoft
Katherine Rose
Brightwell
James Colby Brooks
Daisha Kiara Brown
Gage Wesley Browning
Jacob Christian Broz
Harley Ray Bruce
Isaac Thomas Brunson
Elianna Danielle Burgos
Christian Craig Burks
Sarah Marie Buscarino
Alexis Katherine Butler
Benjamin Adam Caldwell
Kyle Lee Calvert
Abigail Mackenzie Carlson
Sarah Amber Carter
Robert Wilton Causway

Jasmine Leigh Cazares
Jessica Ellen Chambers
Jacqueline Yvette Clardy-Josephs
Abigail Elizabeth Clarke
Haley Renae Cleaver
Tyler Wayne Colgin
Kamarin Ann Collier
Dave Elliott Collins
Shaun Patrick Coons
Madison Paige Courtney
Abbey Kathleen Coutu
Braden James Coutu
Jared Michael Crawford
Jennifer Marie Critz
Rylie Elyse Cross
Caleb Justice Curry
Emery Harrison D'Arcy
Jack Austin Daniels
Nia Michelle Darrisaw
James Harrison Davis
Justin Wesley Davis
Brendan Mathew Day
Jaden Huck Dean
Logan Alexander Deters
Michael Levi Drain
Kenji William Ebisawa
Justine Marie Eckert
Thomas Riggs Ellis
Dylan Tate Estis
Caitlin LeeAnn Ferrell
Adam Jacob Ferris
Alex Michael Foley
Brooke Anne Forsythe
Adeline Maria Foster
Dylan Timothy Furr
McKenna Reese Garner
Hannah Katherine Gentry
Robert Kyle Gibson
Alexis Summer Gogets
Dylan Wayne Goins
Taylor Ray Goode
Madison Nicole Gray
Travis Edward Greene
McLeary Wildman Grey
Montana Lynn Grindstaff
Benjamin Neal Hager
Trevor Lee Hardesty
Kristopher Sean Har-gadon Jr.
Jade Elizabeth Hazeltine
John Michael Holland
Hunter Logan Holt
Jada Moya Hooker
Mackenzie Jordan Horner
Brooke Jenny Ruth Hughes
Dustin Wesley Hughlett

Jace Tanner Jefferson
Isaiah Douglas Johnson
Keenan Ray Johnson
Sideja Denessa Johnson
Cole Joseph Jones
Richard Daniel Jones
Karsyn Leigh Justice
Robert Dale Kain
Jolie Nicole Kamm
Brianna Michelle Keena
Brooke Marie Kelly
Madison Lynn Kerr
Madison Elizabeth Kersey
Robb Allen Kinder
Matthew Dillon Klevesahl
Nathaniel Christian Krause
Christopher Josef Krawiec
Maria Rose Krueger
Mary Rose Lawson
Barton Joseph Leader III
George Connor Leong
Malcolm Maurice Macon
Khadija Alexandria Manning
Joshua Samuel Mara
Alexander John Marino
Taneiya Alasia Matlock
Cameron Gage May
James Brenten May
Ryan Dakota Mayes
Connor Evan McBrayer
Marley Faith McCartney
Lyndsey Rae McCauley
Reilly Quinn McWhorter
John Alexander Mehalko
Charles Wayne Miles
Alexa Faith Mills
Emily Jacquelyn Montecalvo
Anthony Jordan Morris-Grant
Mitchell Payne Morse III
Michael Payne Morse
Katherine Marie Goodsky
Navarrete
Charles Joshua Neal Jr.
Blake Mitchell Newberry
Kayla Nicole Nutt
Margaret Katherine Oakes-Gantz
Forrest Ryan Parker
Alexandria Nikole Peace
Kyle Alexander Leroy Peck
Seth Alexander Perez
Catherine Johnson Perrine
Danielle Marie Peyton
Torii Mae Pickett
Austin Weldon Pine
Shane Tyler Pitts

Noah Edward Potter
Ronnie Dean Powell III
Jason Eugene Powell Jr.
Nicole Tielin Pullin
Taylor MacKenzie Pultz
Clarence Curtis Reeders Jr.
Todd Michael Reynolds
William Hunter Reynolds
Jonathan Rodrigo Reynosa
Gonzalez
John Lloyd Richart II
Kentell Terrique Richberg
Daron Marcus Robbins
Ashley Erin Roberson
Matthew Dale Rosser
Madison Lynn Rowe
Laurie-Ann Xyzoreyiah Sargent
Hannah Lynne Schureman
Austin Tyler Sharpe
Tyler Franklin Shiflett
Regan Elaine Shumaker
Logan Austin Sims
Navindra Justin Singh
Aidan Dean Smith
Breyden Wayne Smith
Brody Thomas Smith
India Audreanna Smith
Nicholas Bradford Sorensen
Hannah Noelle Spence
Brock Earl Sporbort
Devin Chase Spradlin
Trey Joseph Staub
Gavin Joseph Stevens
Joshua Adam Stinson
Breanna Lynn Sublett
Ke'Sean Leontrae Taliaferro
Jacob Wayne Terry
Wyatt Samuel Terry
LeeAnn Renae Testerman
Mitchell Reid Thomas
Caitlin Nicole Thompson
William Jackson Tolley
Nicole Lynn Tommaso
Alaina Michele Torres
Christopher McNeil Wade
Haley Marie Wagner
Benjamin Lee Wallace
Verner Gary Whitecotton Jr
Matthew Werner Wiechman
Benjamin Tyler Wilson
Emily Jeanne Wilson
Brian Allen Witherspoon
Elizabeth Marie Wooten
Taylor Lynne Yates
Gabriel Sage Yost
Abigail Jolene Young
Ciara Louise Young

REFLECT, from 1A

few years, we’ve learned, we’ve laughed and we’ve made mistakes,” said Abigail Peebles, student council association president.

She told her classmates that as they go through life, they should hold onto the memories made in the halls of their high school.

“Remember the lessons you learned in class, the people who helped you get where you are today, and how you grew. Remember how much fun you had,” Peebles said.

For her part, Peebles, who is also the class’ salutatorian, took a moment to reflect on her time as the varsity girls soccer team captain. The team had an undefeated season until its state quarterfinals game.

“I really don’t have words for how much that meant to me and how much I love every person on that team,” she said.

Senior class president MacKenzie Hilton compared high school to a roller coaster ride.

“Sixty-four of us strapped into our seats, put our hands up for the good times, held on through the tough times, laughed with the people beside us and wished to do it all over again when we got off,” she said.

She thanked parents and families for their support and teachers for the academic lessons they provided.

“Without each other, the class of

West Point High School class of 2019

Luke Davenport Aigner
Andrew Devante Asbury
Caleb Tecumseh Barnhouse
Ciara Cheyenne Barnhouse
Catherine Blanding Bishop
Wesley Lukas Black
Kathryn Leigh Bland
Dana Bennett Bohannon, Jr.
Emani La'Toi Braxton
Keyonna Carolina Burrell
Earl Russell Carter
Shaun Thomas Carter
Kathryn Elisabeth Crowe
Janiece Lorraine Deveaux
Kayleigh Grace Drudge
Viet-Thanh Tien Duong
Aidan Anthony Flores
Aric Wayne Garrett, Jr.
Justin Taylor Balod Goode
Olivia Nicole Gregg
Hunter Nicholas Haden

Rebecca Bailey Haden
Brianna Lynne Hagerty
Haley Elizabeth Hagerty
Zachary Ryan Hagerty
TaTy'ana Terchelle Harris
Krew Jackson Henshaw
MacKenzie Paige Hilton
Amber Leah Hodges
Ethan Michael Hoffman
Allyson Elizabeth Houser
Judith Anne Jones
McKenzie Renee' Krout
Noah Luke Lawson
Amber Celeste Lee
Grant Mason Martin
Kenneth Wayne Milam II
Blain Joseph Moker
Lauren Abigail Neale
Jacob Cooper Neblett
Noah Samuel Parker
Wyatt Henry Pedersen

Abigail Lee Peebles
Andrew Michael Pullen
Kaie Christian Robins
Walker Douglas Rowe
Kaitlin Nicole Seckora
Nyseim Amarte Marquez Shaw
Taylor Richard Shaw
Cassie Rhayne Small
Carina Anna Smith
Lauren Nicole South
Larsen Tainee Stewart
Caleb Hunter Stout
Jackson Dane Sturtz
Jessica Dale Teagle
Carter Finley Upshaw
Colby Alexander Uzel
Zachary Donald Vance
Joshua Logan Ware
Braden David West
Makayla Lyne Whittaker
Joseph Bradley Williams
Bodhi Arik Wolverton-Diggs

2019 would not be the same,” Hilton said. “I’m excited to see where college, the military and the world of work takes each of us.”

Principal Jonathan Hochman echoed those sentiments.

“For you, our graduates, this evening is about dreams and about looking back and about drawing on the past while also taking a glimpse into the future,” he said.

From homecoming week and theater performances, to sporting events and prom, there’s been a lot of memo-

ries made by the class of 2019. But there’s more to the graduates than their pasts.

“We all know we are products of our past but we do not have to be prisoners of our past,” Hochman said.

He asked the class to think into the future to its 20-year reunion and what kind of accomplishments the graduates want to be able to tell their classmates about. Hochman encouraged the graduates to be persistent in meeting the goals they set for their lives.

“Sometimes life will knock you

down. And when it does knock you down, you’ll be faced with a very tough decision. Will you stay down or will you get back up? Because it takes courage, it takes confidence and it takes inner strength to get back up and chase that dream,” he said.

Earl Russell Carter is the class valedictorian. The class of 2019 earned a total of \$918,343 in scholarships and awards.

Jack Jacobs, 757-298-6007, jojacobs@vagasette.com, @jjjacobs_

CHIEF, from 1A

building was empty and no one was at the facility. A single dusty ambulance remained at the property. According to Straughan Robinson, owner of the property the station is on, it hasn’t been staffed for about two weeks.

Robinson said he has notified the county the lease will end July 13. Under the agreement signed by Tassinari, he had to give 30 days notice. Robinson said he offered the property to the county free of cost.

“They say they have a station, but it’s really not a station,” Robinson said. “Basically it was being used as a parking lot. There’s no rhyme or reason on how it will go forward positively.”

The county has six full-time firefighters, 10 part-time firefighters and about five volunteers. Tassinari said the county is looking to hire about five more part-time people.

There are two open part-time firefighter positions and one volunteer position posted on the county website. Last week, there were two firefighter positions listed.

Meanwhile, Aigner said he will work with the Hanover Fire and EMS while he looks for another job, according to a post on Facebook last week. He said he doesn’t have any regrets about working with King William and he’s proud of the work that was done.

“I knew when I came here this was a risky move and that at any moment I could be gone. I had faith that I would be able to make changes and if anything ever happened I would be able to find something else in the greatest career/profession in the world,” Aigner wrote. “I will continue to maintain that faith, for I believe everything happens for a reason.”

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STEVE ROBERTS JR./STAFF

Station Four property owner Straughan Robinson said he notified the county its lease agreement will end on July 13. Robinson said the property has been utilized as a parking lot for the county's fire department.



Brain games

Challenge your mind with these fun puzzles.
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24-HOUR COVERAGE OF WEST POINT, KING WILLIAM, NEW KENT AND KING & QUEEN

Tidewater Review

JULY 10, 2019

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K&Q high school recognized with award

Improvement Award presented for progress in chronic absenteeism

BY AMELIA HEYMANN
Staff writer

WILLIAMSBURG — Central High School in King and Queen County earned the Board of Education's Continuous Improvement Award for reducing chronic absenteeism.

"I'm extremely proud of the staff and students," said Principal Preston McKellar.

The award is given to schools that are accredited or accredited with conditions by the Virginia Department of Education and show significant improvements in academic or school quality factors for the past three years.

"We have been fully accredited and met several of the required benchmarks for improved performance on accreditation-related school quality indicators," said Superintendent Carol Carter.

Charles Pyle, a spokesman with the Virginia Department of Education, said Central High earned the award for its steady decline in chronic absenteeism, which is when students miss 10% or more of the school year.

"Research tells us that if students are missing 10% of (school) they're at a much greater risk of having academic difficulties, so it's important to be in school," Pyle said.

Central High reduced chronic absenteeism from 36% in 2015-2016, to 30.4% in 2016-2017 and 28.5% in 2017-2018.

"The school is clearly making progress in reducing chronic absenteeism," Pyle said.

"Attendance is an important component of success for academic achievement," Carter said.

Carter said this improvement was spurred by creating committees to monitor graduation, dropout rates, chronic absenteeism and attendance. McKellar said these groups looked at student's needs and the district's data to address any areas of concern that they have.

"I like to do incentives, positive messages on the announcements ... but the bulk of the success lies with the hard work of the teachers," McKellar said.

Looking forward, Carter said the district wants to provide more opportunities for Career Technology Education, internships for seniors and more advanced placements opportunities.

Behind closed doors



King William County 5th District Supervisor Bob Ehrhart conducted an investigation into the county's fire and EMS program in the weeks before former Fire Chief Andy Aigner was fired on June 10.

Weeks of terse emails were sent between Supervisor Ehrhart and now-fired KW fire chief

BY SARAROSE MARTIN, STEVE ROBERTS JR.
Staff writer

WILLIAMSBURG — In the weeks before former King William County Fire Chief Andy Aigner was shown the door, tense and terse emails between Aigner and Supervisor Bob Ehrhart show there was conflict over fire department operations.

The email exchanges resulted in a complaint of retaliation and harassment against Ehrhart, according to more than a dozen records provided to the Tidewater Review by King William County under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

Aigner was fired by County Administrator Bobbie Tassinari on June 10 after he was placed on administrative leave on June 6 and suspended without pay on June 7, according to his termination letter.

In May, Aigner filed a formal complaint with Commonwealth's Attorney Matthew Kite against Ehrhart.

The complaint accused the 5th District supervisor of harassment, retaliation and creating a hostile work environment over the course of several weeks.



King William County 5th District Supervisor Bob Ehrhart, right, exchanged several heated emails with Chief Aigner in the weeks before Aigner's firing concerning fire and EMS dispatch procedure.

'Aigner drew first blood'

On May 3, Aigner said he received several anonymous tips from people concerned about a Mangohick ambulance parked at the Essex Bank on Route 360 advertising the department's barbecue fundraiser.

Aigner emailed Mangohick Volunteer Fire Department Chief Warren Haley and asked why his department didn't notify dispatch that the ambulance hadn't been marked out of its response area.

"Your lack of accountability and desire to do whatever you feel like with your units, makes it difficult to manage a system; not to mention it's disrespectful," Aigner wrote to Haley.

Haley responded the following day and dismissed Aigner's concerns; Ehrhart emailed Aigner and de-

manded to know who made the complaints.

The complainants wished to remain anonymous due to potential harassment by Ehrhart and the county's Tea Party, Aigner wrote in an email to Ehrhart, who submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to Aigner for the information.

Ehrhart also requested Aigner provide a copy of all procedures regarding fire and EMS dispatch and said he intended to press Aigner on standard operating practice aspects and the county's personnel policy at future meetings.

Ehrhart took specific issue with Aigner using a county vehicle to drive to a training session he was paid to give — although at a later meeting, board

See **DOORS**, page 2A

King William to vote on broadband internet

Supervisors will weigh Atlantic Broadband Franchise Ordinance, though questions still loom

BY EMILY HOLTER
Staff writer

KING WILLIAM COUNTY — The King William County Board of Supervisors will vote July 22 on whether to bring

broadband internet to some parts of the county.

According to the King William and Atlantic Broadband Franchise Ordinance, if the ordinance is passed, Atlantic Broadband:

- Gains rights to existing cable lines originally owned by Comcast
- Gains the right to build and construct broadband lines both underground and on above ground poles on county property including residential areas
- Gains the right to occupy county

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Want to attend?

The King William County Board of Supervisors will meet at 7 p.m. July 22 at 180 Horse Landing Road.

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Norment proposes gun legislation

Top Republican moves to ban guns from all government buildings

BY MARIE ALBIGES
Staff writer

In a move that is at odds with the majority of his own party, Republican state Sen. Thomas K. "Tommy" Norment says he wants to ban guns in all local government buildings.

The majority leader from James City County filed the bill Monday ahead of Tuesday's special session of the legislature convened by Gov. Ralph Northam to take up gun safety measures in the wake of the mass shooting in a Virginia Beach municipal building.

The proposed ban — especially one called for by the most powerful Republican in the state Senate — goes against traditional GOP support for fewer restrictions on guns. Democrats have proposed this bill in the past without success in the Republican-led General Assembly.

Indeed, Norment's colleague in the state Senate, Dick Black, R-Loudoun, has filed a bill banning localities from creating laws that restrict employees with concealed carry permits from bringing handguns into government buildings.

And in the House, Del. Mark Cole, R-Spotsylvania, filed a bill allowing state employees with concealed carry permits to bring their guns to work. An agency could only block that law if the agency hired police or armed security guards to man the entrances.

As the bills are debated, a petition with more than 5,000 signatures is circulating to call on the Virginia Beach City Council to allow employees to bring guns to work. Council has considered polling employees to see how they feel about allowing guns in city buildings.

Currently, state law largely prevents localities from regulating where firearms are carried, and only courthouses are gun-free. A state law already bans suppressors, bump stocks and magazines that hold more than 20 rounds of ammunition in large cities like Virginia Beach.

Norment's bill would also ban suppressors and "ammunition designed for use with a dangerous weapon." It also increases the punishment from a Class 1 misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony, punishable by one to five years in jail or a \$2,500 fine.

Law enforcement, magistrates, court officers, judges, treasurers and commissioners of the Virginia Workers' Com-



STEVE ROBERTS JR./STAFF FILE

More than 85 gun safety activists gathered in front of Sen. Thomas Norment's office June 3 to demand legislative action.

pensation Commission are excluded.

With Northam's support, Del. Cia Price, D-Newport News, and Sen. John Edwards, D-Roanoke, filed a bill that would give local governments the power to regulate guns, including in public buildings and parks and permitted events. But Norment's proposal doesn't give localities a choice about whether to allow guns in government buildings.

In an emailed statement, Norment focused on the increased punishment in his bill, rather than the expansion of the ban.

"The governor had nothing to do with this bill, nor have I conferred with him, or with any member of his staff or administration, on any bill I have submitted for the special session," he said, adding the bill would "not achieve the Governor's stated objectives regarding the authority of local governments" mentioned in Price and Edwards' bills.

In past sessions, including as recently as last year, Norment voted against bills that would give localities the power to regulate guns in meetings and in government buildings.

In a phone interview, Price said she opposed Norment's bill because it took options away from localities and doesn't come with any funding to enforce the ban.

After the deadliest shooting in the city's history, the Virginia Beach City Council voted last month to indefinitely postpone a resolution supporting a bill that would let cities ban guns in government buildings. The city has a policy that

prevents employees from bringing weapons to work.

Sabrina Wooten and Guy Tower were the only City Council members who voted in favor of the idea.

Mayor Bobby Dyer said on Wednesday that he is still taking a "wait-and-see" approach with this bill and others in the special session. He said the city is focusing on the emotional effects of the May 31 tragedy and ensuring city services get back to normal.

He said he thinks it's still too early to start debating gun control and rights, a complaint that has been echoed by others on the council. Dyer said he still doesn't see a consensus on whether to ban guns in city buildings, describing the public at the recent council meeting as literally divided down the aisle.

"I'm not sure it's healthy for Virginia Beach to have that discussion right now," Councilman Michael Berlucchi said Monday.

Berlucchi said he didn't know enough about the bill to take a position and hasn't heard much from constituents about the special session. He said he hopes the General Assembly focuses on efforts that have strong support, like increased funding for mental health resources.

Philip Van Cleave, who heads the pro-gun-rights group Virginia Citizens Defense League, was reading all of the bills filed Monday when a reporter called him to ask him about Norment's bill.

"Holy crap," he said after reading the bill. "We totally oppose this."

He added people have been bringing guns into government buildings for years with concealed carry permits, and it's only because one man entered the Virginia Beach Municipal Center with a gun on May 31 and killed 12 people that a bill like Norment's is being proposed.

November will be on lawmakers' minds Tuesday as all 140 seats are up for election and the GOP holds a narrow majority in each chamber. Norment faces a challenger, Democrat Herb Jones.

Norment's not the only Republican lawmaker from Hampton Roads to propose tightening gun laws. Del. Glenn Davis, R-Virginia Beach, also wants to give localities the option to ban guns in government buildings, provided the localities install security measures like metal detectors or hire security.

Other Republican legislators have filed bills increasing the mandatory minimum sentencing for gun-related crimes. Northam has vowed to veto such bills, saying they unfairly target people of color.

Many of the bills Democrats have filed fall in line with Northam's proposals, including universal background checks, reporting lost or stolen firearms, creating emergency risk orders and limiting gun sales to one a month.

Legislators convene at noon Tuesday. Staff writer Peter Coutu contributed reporting.

Marie Albiges, 757-247-4962, malbiges@dailypress.com, @Mariealbiges

DOORS, from 1A

chairman Bill Hodges said there was no problem with the practice.

"My inquiry and investigation into the situation came from at least three different people involved in Mangohick fire department, as well as other citizens over the last couple months," Ehrhart said on July 2.

Ehrhart said he had been drawn into the dispute after Haley copied Ehrhart into his response to Aigner.

Aigner said the concern he expressed to Haley was with resource management, not an issue with advertising the fundraiser. Mangohick firefighters left their service area and increased emergency response time by an average of 11 minutes, Aigner said in a follow-up email to Ehrhart. If other stations had to respond to a heart attack victim, that person would have had no chance of survival.

"It appears, by the email sent by Warren Haley, he and his members are more focused on money than protecting and serving the citizens of their district," Aigner wrote in a May 6 email to Ehrhart.

Furthermore, he said, the issue was not a political one or an issue with any fire station, it was a county issue that the fire departments should address together to better serve residents.

Ehrhart responded to the email and said Aigner's comments were incendiary.

"As Stallone said in the movie, Chief Aigner drew first blood. His inflammatory response was done outside of normal work hours, yet the County Administrator has the audacity to try to question me on board procedures," Ehrhart wrote in a May 7 email to the board, Haley, Tassinari and Aigner.

The complaint of retaliation wasn't the first one lodged against Ehrhart by county fire staff. Four days prior to Aigner's email to Kite, county deputy Emergency Management Coordinator Victoria Rowsey filed a complaint against

Ehrhart with county human resources director Juanita McInteer.

Rowsey complained she and her husband were targets of harassment by Ehrhart. "I, as a county employee, and now my husband as a citizen are being harassed by Supervisor Ehrhart, who as a board member is our district representative."

Rowsey listed four separate incidents of Ehrhart micromanaging her work and complaining to the county administrator for asking questions at a town hall meeting. Rowsey said Ehrhart had targeted her husband's livelihood when Ehrhart said the hunting dogs the family raises should be taxed, the complaint said.

Ehrhart said the complaints took him by surprise.

"I felt that it was something those particular individuals didn't want me snooping around in what the department was doing," Ehrhart said.

Closed door meetings

Ehrhart requested public records from the county and fire department for standard operating practices and fire dispatch procedures and demanded a meeting on May 13 with Aigner and Tassinari be recorded.

The Tidewater Review requested a copy of the audio recording of that meeting, but was told by Tassinari she forbade Ehrhart from recording the meeting. Instead, Ehrhart selected McInteer to sit in as an observer, Tassinari said. According to Ehrhart's notes, the meeting addressed many of his concerns having to do with the department's personnel policies and procedures.

At an open session of a board meeting on May 20, Aigner gave a stumbling summary of his stations' response times before apologizing repeatedly and refusing himself to answer questions only.

"The average response times out of... our average response times were 6 and a half minutes and... I apologize. It's been a rough day, it's been a rough couple of days," Aigner said at the meeting. "With Station Two, 6 and a half minutes and 9 and a half minutes. Again, I apologize.

You can ask me any questions. I apologize."

At a closed session on June 10, Tassinari told supervisors she fired Aigner. She has refused publicly to provide a reason for the firing and the board has refused to elaborate.

However, Ehrhart said he had no knowledge of Tassinari's plans to fire Aigner or the reasons she provided.

"I don't know why he was fired in terms of the specificity," Ehrhart said on July 2. "The county administrator pulled us into a closed session and the reasons that she gave for letting him go did not correlate with the things I had uncovered in my investigation. I can say that. It came as a surprise to me."

Tassinari and Supervisor Travis Moskalski declined to comment and called the matter a personnel issue.

INTERNET, from 1A

streets and public areas

■ Gains the right to sell cable, telephone and internet bundles

The ordinance states initial development will begin on the pre-existing Comcast lines. When economically feasible, Atlantic will expand its development outward into the county.

"We are excited because the way we were headed when we started this project, we were looking at years and millions to get the people internet," Ed Moren, King William Internet Connectivity Committee chairmen said. "Within the first rounds, we hope to have up to 3,000 homes covered."

Although there is no official start date for construction, if passed, Moren said within the next year, some residents will have better access to internet connection.

There is contention, however, as 4th District representative and supervisor David Hansen voiced concern about the cost and who will receive broadband initially.

"Termination justification of any employee is considered confidential and not for public consumption," Tassinari said in an email.

Chairman Bill Hodges said he always supported Aigner and the fire department, but when it comes to the board looking at fire rescue, supervisors can't just look within their districts.

"We got to look at the entire county as board members, and we need fire rescue in the entire county," Hodges said.

Kite and Aigner declined to comment.

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"At every meeting we have had, no one could answer the question regarding cost," Hansen said. "I don't trust Atlantic Broadband to deliver these services."

Atlantic Broadband has not released an estimate of cost for individual residents in King William County. However, their package pricing in other regions does not exceed \$70 a month per household.

Hansen is also concerned with the number of people who will get broadband access. He said it will benefit the business districts first, and it may take years to reach more rural areas.

The ordinance states, "Atlantic Broadband may refuse to provide cable service when it is not economically feasible to do so."

The Board of Supervisors will decide July 22 whether to sign the franchise agreement between the county and Atlantic Broadband.

There will be time for public comment at the meeting.

Emily Holter, emily.holter@virginiamedia.com



Give the gift of life

In response to a donation shortage, the Red Cross will hold several blood drives in the area. **Page 8**

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

Tidewater Review

JULY 17, 2019

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Interim chiefs assess staffing, organization

Rick, Laura Nunnally look to address problems plaguing King William fire department, streamline procedures

BY SARAROSE MARTIN, STEVE ROBERTS JR
Staff writer

WILLIAMSBURG — Amid turmoil at the top of the King William County's fire department, the new interim fire chiefs have started to assess the county's needs.

Although there are four fire stations with jurisdiction in King William County, all of them except Station One are staffed completely by volunteers.

Any changes in policy and procedures would apply only to the six paid, full-time and 11 part-time personnel and 10 active volunteers at Station One.

The volunteer stations are partly funded with county money allocated by the Board of Supervisors, but how the stations conduct day-to-day operations is independent.

Now operating entirely out of Station One, interim Fire Chiefs Rick Nunnally

See **CHIEFS**, page 2A



King William County Fire and EMS Department interim Fire Chiefs Rick Nunnally and Laura Nunnally are collecting dispatch data to map out service calls and analyze the county's needs. SARAROSE MARTIN/STAFF



STAFF FILE

Mattaponi Pamunkey Rivers Association holds kayaking trips as part of West Point's water series each spring. Town officials have worked to build the area's ecotourism niche for the past eight years by promoting access to the rivers.

Waterways growing West Point tourism

BY EMILY HOLTER | Staff writer

Resting at the confluence of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey rivers, West Point has a lot to offer those who like to recreate on the water: paddling in canoes or kayaks, fishing for croaker, catfish and rockfish, bird watching for eagles and osprey or watching sunrises and sunsets from the water.

Town officials have spent the past eight years developing the town's ecotourism niche in an effort to bring in visitors from across the state. They've built a boardwalk, boat launches and four kayak launches.

"We want people to enjoy the rivers, but also come and visit the town and shop around," Town Manager John Edwards Jr. said.

Town officials also have teamed up with the Middle Peninsula Alliance to help promote the growing tourism opportunities in the region.



EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

West Point Creek Kayak Ramp is at 13th Street, where beginners can launch their kayaks and observe the wildlife and plant diversity.

The Alliance works through the larger Virginia Regional Economic Development Partnership, whose goal is to promote each region's niche tourist attractions.

See **TOURISM**, page 2A

New Kent commission approves combat range definition

Supervisors will weigh whether to prohibit land use at Aug. 12 meeting

BY EMILY HOLTER
Staff writer

NEW KENT — On Monday night, the New Kent County Planning Commission approved a definition specifying which combat ranges would be prohibited in the county. The measure passed 6-2.

The Planning Commission defines tactical combat training facilities as any commercial, open-air facility designed to train against anti-terrorism, counter terrorism or any mission simulations using military weapons.

In its definition, the military weapons prohibited include: Outdoor firearms, indoor automatic or semi-automatic weapons, real simulations of firearms or other military weapons systems, simulated high-impact explosive devices, mach impact firearm blasts or rocket-power grenades in an unenclosed shoot house.

According to the the Planning Commission, combat ranges operated by local, regional, state or federal government agencies, bonafide law enforcement safety and proficiency training facilities and recreational firearm uses are excluded from this definition.

The move to adopt this definition follows a controversial proposal by Curtis Security Consulting Inc., which submitted a request to build a 266-acre tactical training facility in Barhamsville.

Members of the community banded together to form "No Combat Range New Kent." The group said if a range were to be built, it would affect property value, people's farms and livestock, noise pollution and overall public safety.

Curtis withdrew its request after Sen. Thomas K. "Tommy" Norment sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors opposing the proposal.

Last month's Planning Commission meeting focused on whether to adopt a definition and how to adequately ensure the public's and county's safety.

At the earlier meeting, one definition

See **RANGE**, page 2A

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TOURISM, from 1A —

“Each region has something to offer for tourism,” said Alliance member Liz Povar. “Our goal is to utilize these areas to improve quality of life using what differentiates ourselves from the rest of the state.”

Kayaking and other water sports have grown in popularity around the coastal region. This has led to the development of the Virginia Water Trails website, www.virginiawatertrails.org, through the Rural Coastal Virginia Alliance.

Although the site is still in development, it can be viewed by the public and offers maps of the region that show people where they can launch kayaks and other information pertinent to water tourism.

For Shannon Alexander, kayaking is a way to educate people about the wildlife in the area. She is the Coastal Resources Program Manager for the Accomack-Norhampton Planning District Commission and owner of Bay Country Kayaking Company.

“I am excited to see West Point expand their water trails,” Alexander said. “Those rivers have a lot of good access points and people can see some of the great wildlife.”

Learn more

Custom tours of West Point water trails and other places in the region can be arranged through Bay Country Kayaking, 804-695-4660, www.baycountrykayaking.com.

For more information on West Point's launching areas, visit www.west-point.va.us.

Alexander started her company in Gloucester in 2012. Today, she offers tours in and around the Middle Peninsula, as well as custom tours.

Activities and stops on custom tours are often up to the people booking them. They can choose where they want to launch and what they want to learn about, whether it's wildlife or history.

Alexander said she has gone to people's houses, created custom water trails and offered guided tours about the animal and plant diversity in the area.

Alexander takes groups of up to 10 and charges \$55 for adults and \$30 for children 12 and younger. These prices vary for custom tours. She provides the kayaks.

Those wishing to explore West



TIDEWATER REVIEW FILE

Kayakers enjoy a trip with the Mattaponi Pamunkey Rivers Association. In recent years, town officials have teamed up with the Middle Peninsula Alliance to help promote growing tourism opportunities in the region.

Point's rivers and wildlife can launch at:

- Glass Island Landing on Glass Island Road has fishing access, a boat ramp, picnic and parking locations and easy entry into the Mattaponi River.

- West Point Creek at 13th Street downtown offers access to the creek and features wildlife and vegetation.

- 5th Street launch is at the end of 5th Street and offers access to the Mattaponi River.

- Beach Park launch is on Main and

1st Street downtown.

This launch puts paddlers at the confluence of the Mattaponi and the Pamunkey rivers.

“Rivers before the fall line are a lot calmer and are great for beginners,” Alexander said. “It is easier to stop and talk and get up close and personal with the wildlife.”

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

CHIEFS, from 1A —

and Laura Nunnally are gathering data from the Computer-aided Dispatch system, or CAD, to begin to map out the locations and times of calls for service.

Fire departments across the country follow this same practice, they said.

“We're starting this now,” Rick Nunnally said. “The biggest thing we're doing now is we're plotting on a GIS map all of our calls— just addresses — and there will be pins set at each one to denote fire response or EMS response, so then we can start to look at the county as a whole.”

The Nunnallys generally declined to speak about fire department practices before January, including whether or not there had been call mapping during the past three years.

The information will inform the needs of the county, as far as personnel, equipment, public education, fire prevention

and the overall response model.

Right now, the chiefs are addressing policy and procedures at Station One, as well as challenges with maintaining equipment and complying with regulations.

“We did want to put policies and procedures in place for consistency,” Laura Nunnally said. “The biggest challenge that we have had is apparatus. Apparatus takes a beating — maintenance and putting together a plan for that and just keeping our trucks in service.”

Repairing equipment will be the department's biggest expense, Rick Nunnally said. In addition to changes at Station One, the new chiefs hope to establish an open communication and response model with the county's volunteer stations, so they know where volunteers at the other stations are and when they are able to help.

“For us, there is a value in knowing who is where, when,” Laura Nunnally said. “What we're trying to gain is the fact

we can help each other out and work as that team.”

They have said they will sit down with each of the county's volunteer stations individually. The chiefs met with the Mangohick Volunteer Fire Station on Monday evening.

“We're trying to figure out how to best help them because they don't have to talk to us, they don't have to tell us what they're doing, they don't need to tell us when they're staffed, they don't need to do any of that if they don't want to,” Rick Nunnally said.

The county's fire department has no way to convince or coerce volunteer firefighters to perform their duties in a particular way.

“We want them to (help us) because it helps make decisions countywide — what is best for the citizens in the county,” Rick Nunnally said. “While firefighting is a team effort, they have their own SOP's, they have their own policies, procedures and guidelines — all of that is separated from us.

“We are all part of the county, regardless if we are one entity or four.”

Because the stations are independent, it's hard to implement county-wide procedures such as the software called I Am Responding they started using about a year ago.

West Point, Mangohick, Station One, Walkerton and even the now-defunct Mattaponi Volunteer Rescue Squad used the service in the past 12 months, although since February, more than 25 volunteers stopped using the software altogether, including West Point Volunteer Fire Department Chief Joseph Bartos.

The software allows volunteer firefighters to begin their shifts and end their shifts, similar to a digital time-card system, but volunteers rarely punch in or punch out, leaving massive gaps in the data. And some stations don't have internet or data capabilities in their service area.

“It's fraught with human error,” Bartos said. “When someone doesn't mark when they're on or when they're off, the data is incorrect.

“(County staffers) need compliance, but once again, how do you get a volunteer to be compliant?” he added. “If they forget how do I hold them accountable?”

It becomes very difficult when they're not paid employees of the department.”

Based on a fire and emergency services report Laura Nunnally prepared July 8, Station One has 10 active volunteers, each identified as having worked 24 or more hours in a month, and three part-time candidates in the final stages of the hiring process.

Four volunteers resigned in the past 30 days.

Among them is Jeremy Hester, 41, a medically retired military veteran who used his time as a volunteer logistics officer under former Fire Chief Andy Aigner to get more involved with his community after his time in the Navy.

He said he resigned after County Administrator Bobbie Tassinari held meetings with paid firefighters and volunteers about a week before she fired Aigner.

“Volunteers just didn't exist,” Hester said of the meeting. “Volunteers were pushed to the side. I'm really disappointed.”

He said Tassinari didn't provide the department with all of the information it needed to run, and Aigner's firing left him with a sour taste in his mouth.

After six months of enjoying volunteering and racking up hundreds of hours of volunteer work for the department, Hester said he was moving on.

The Nunnallys said departments everywhere are struggling to attract and keep volunteers because it's tough work. “There's never enough,” Rick Nunnally said.

But the department is evolving. Hanover County has a few volunteer systems left, he said, but “they were us 25 years ago.”

They plan to hold regular meetings with the other stations in the county and build on what Aigner started.

“I can tell you ... the one thing we have in common is all of the stations want to help the citizens. So right now everything we have run into in the last four weeks has been let's figure out how we can do the best for our citizens,” Laura Nunnally said. “At this very moment, that looks like where we're moving and that's what our main goal is.”

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RANGE, from 1A —

was prepared by county staff and two were prepared by county residents.

County staff said tactical combat facilities could be defined as a facility for training government, military, law enforcement or private corporations.

County residents said facilities should be banned if they are commercially operated, but should not apply to law enforcement or military training operated by local, state and federal government agencies.

The Planning Commission tabled the

decision until Monday's meeting in order to bring forward a revised definition.

Board members Curtisa Thomas, Dr. Joanne Schmit, Amy Pearson, Patricia Townsend, John Moyer and Katherine Butler voted to approve the definition. Marc Bennett and Richard Kontny Jr. voted against the definition.

The New Kent Board of Supervisors will vote Aug. 12 on whether to add tactical combat facilities as defined by the Planning Commission to the list of prohibited land uses at its 6 p.m. meeting.

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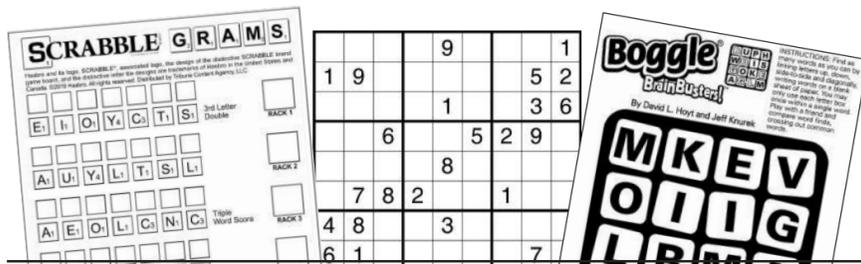
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Tidewater Review

JULY 24, 2019

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County increases funds for fire, EMS

King William slashes funding for volunteers in favor of paid staff after acquiring department

BY STEVE ROBERTS JR., SARAROSE MARTIN
Staff writer

KING WILLIAM COUNTY — King William County allocates more than a half million

dollars to volunteer fire organizations each year, but county officials say they have little, if any, oversight.

The county has budgeted \$1.43 million for fire and emergency services for the fiscal year

that started July 1, according to the county's adopted budget.

Overall, funding is up nearly \$20,000, but the amount of money the county gives volunteer departments has decreased since last year by almost \$220,000, according to the budget.

Last year, just more than half of fire and EMS funding,

\$754,205, went to volunteer departments. This year, just more than a third is going to the volunteer firefighters, \$524,956, according to the budget. Part of that decrease comes after the county bought out the King William County Volunteer Fire Department earlier this year. The department now operates with paid staff.

"We take their budget, they tell us what they need, we tell them what we can give them," County Administrator Bobbie Tassinari said.

West Point Volunteer Fire Department receives about \$337,655 from King William County, more than double than

See **EMS**, page 2A

Hope for the humble honeybee



As these important pollinators face increasing challenges, a King William commercial farmer offers advice for beekeepers

BY EMILY HOLTER | Staff writer

Hundreds of thousands of workers tirelessly labor every day to maintain one of the last melon farms in King William County.

At first glance, they are rarely seen working in the fields.

Without these workers, Riverside Produce Farm would not be able to distribute 33,000 watermelons, 15,000 specialty melons and 10,000 pounds of tomatoes in one season.

Although they are offered housing and even sometimes food, they ask for only one thing in return: pollen.

Commercial farmer and Riverside Produce Farm owner Luke Hallman uses honeybees to pollinate his crops.

"One flower needs five visits from a bee to even make a watermelon," Hallman said. "You cannot have a produce farm like this without the bees."

Hallman is not alone, as many farmers rely on honeybees to pollinate their fruit, nuts, grains, cotton and vegetable crops.

According to the Virginia Cooperative Extension, one-third of Virginia's food depends directly or indirectly upon honeybee pollination.

Hallman began beekeeping in 2009 when he started his commercial farm. Now, Hallman houses 25 beehives on his 40-acre farm; which



EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

Luke Hallman's honeybee's work building brood cells, storing their larvae and honey. Hallman has been raising bees since 2009.

More online

- The Virginia State Beekeeping Association has a list of local beekeeping associations that can help start the process at www.virginiabeekeepers.org.
- To learn how to plant a pollinator box, or to learn more about good pollinators for bees, visit www.vdacs.virginia.gov.

he said is not an easy feat.

"When I first got them, I thought they would save me money in the long run," Hallman said. "Turns out, they don't. Now they've become a sort of passion of mine."

During the 2017-2018 season, Virginia's winter colony losses reached nearly 60 percent, according

to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' State Apiarist Keith Tignor. That number was about 30 percent more than the average loss and the highest rate since 2000.

According to state research, bee

See **HONEYBEE**, page 2A

Residents voice their concern over road repairs

County's six-year plan calls for pothole repairs, additional signage

BY EMILY HOLTER
Staff writer

KING WILLIAM COUNTY — Several members of the community voiced their concerns about traffic and road safety at the King William Board of Supervisors meeting Monday.

Citizens in attendance said their main concerns were the many potholes, overhanging trees and brush, and the lack of road signs in the area.

"I am disappointed by VDOT. So many of the roads in the area need repairing," resident Vicki Beach said. "I would like to see the six-year plan to include more roads."

The King William Board of Supervisors adopted the six-year secondary road plan in 2016, which is in effect until 2021. The plan refers to road maintenance eligible for state and federal funding.

Following a fatal accident on Globe Road earlier this month, citizens urged the Board of Supervisors to widen roads and overall ensure traffic safety.

Virginia Department of Transportation Assistant Administrator Ron Peaks addressed concerns and offered updates on on-going road maintenance.

"We do listen to what the people have to say and we do take it to heart," Peaks said. "We will be sure to address these issues as soon as we can."

According to Peaks, VDOT sends a representative to assess crash sites and follow-up on ways the state can improve safety.

Peaks outlined ongoing projects including paving and improving roads on Route 600 and Route 604, clearing brush and mowing along roads out-

See **ROAD**, page 2A

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BEE, from 1A —

populations are declining and there is no clear answer as to why.

Throughout Hallman's years as a beekeeper, he has witnessed and studied many factors that could attribute to the loss of hives.

Both the state report and Hallman warn beginning beekeepers about varroa mites, which are parasites that feed on both bee larvae and adult bees and can shorten the lifespan of a worker bee.

The mites burrow into where the bee's larvae are stored and reproduce. Quickly, these mites can spread and kill a hive of 40,000 bees.

"It's common for most people starting out to lose an entire hive because they either don't know about these things or they don't know how to kill them," Hallman said.

According to Hallman, climate is another factor that can affect a hive's survival. As creatures of routine, honeybees rely on the seasons to forge their schedules.

In the summer and fall, they work around the clock to store as much honey as possible. Collecting pollen and nectar from plants, they fill their houses with honey for the winter.

In the winter, they lay dormant and eat off of the stored honey.

If there is a long winter, then the bees will not have enough honey to carry them through until spring. If it is a rainy summer, then the bees will not collect enough honey because the pollen and nectar get washed away.

"Bees are sensitive," Hallman said, "They will not fly if it's windy and they will not fly when it's hot so they are working against the clock."

Bees maintain a complex network within the hive, as every bee has an assigned role.

With only one queen to lay all the eggs for a hive, every bee works to benefit her. Whether it be mating, collecting honey or nursing the young, each bee serves its queen.

If a new queen emerges, then the bees will swarm and half of the hive will leave with

the former queen and start over.

If something happens to the queen, then the hive will work to produce a new one. This process can take months, leaving a hive without larvae to replenish bees that die and can ultimately kill off a whole hive.

"They will work to kill themselves," Hallman said.

Despite these difficulties, Virginians, like Hallman, are investing in beekeeping.

In the Tidewater region alone, there are several beekeeping associations working to maintain hives and help newcomers: The Tidewater Beekeepers Association, The Williamsburg Beekeepers, Colonial Beekeepers association and others.

According to VDACS, beekeepers are not the only ones who can help bee populations.

"We are tackling the problem in a variety of ways," Tignor said. "One way is encouraging people to plant pollinator gardens or pollinator window boxes."

ROAD, from 1A —

lined in the six-year plan, repairing Heritage Bridge and several other projects.

However, Supervisor Travis Moskalski said he was concerned about timing.

"(When) we first started this, farmers were beginning to plant and they couldn't legally drive their equipment because of how bad the

shoulders were in the road," Moskalski said. "Now, we are in July and these roads still aren't done."

Peaks assured the board VDOT's main marching order is road maintenance and they will continue to work to get back on track.

Peaks urged the public to call 1-800-FOR-ROAD if they have an

immediate road or traffic concern.

"When you call that number, it goes into our system and is recorded, immediately," Peaks said. "It'll be sent to the county and it'll be addressed."

The King William Board of Supervisors will hold its next meeting at 7 p.m. Aug. 26.

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EMS, from 1A —

what the county gives other volunteer organizations because West Point pays part-time firefighters and provides 24/7 coverage, Tassinari said.

The county offered the same funding increase to Mangohick for part-time employees, but they declined because it could leave them on the hook for certain regulatory costs, such as Social Security and benefits.

The money from the county comes without many strings attached, according to Tassinari. There's not an agreement in writing that stipulates the county will get certain services in return for its money.

"As far as what the county can hold them to, that's a little more nebulous," Tassinari said. "They've always been autonomous, but they have always complied with the state's (regulations), which is the primary (thing) and then they follow all of the basic lifesaving trainings and things like that."

"For us stepping in and telling them how to run their operations or who gets released and who doesn't, that's all internal (standard operating practices) that they create themselves."

Tracking system troubles

The county implemented a program last year called "I am Responding" to track volunteer hours at the departments, but volunteers rarely used it or stopped using it after a few months.

Data provided by the county through a Freedom of Information Act request shows a monthly average of 69 volunteer firefighters out of 122 did not log any hours between July 2018 and June 2019. In all, less than half of firefighters used the system.

For example, in seven of the past 12 months, Mangohick Volunteer Fire Department Chief Warren Haley did not log any hours in the system,

according to the data. Haley said earlier this month that the Mangohick department had just begun to use the software in June.

West Point Volunteer Fire Department Chief Joseph Bartos praised the software, but said the data it produces is "fraught with human error."

"If (volunteers) forget, how do I hold them accountable?" Bartos said. "It becomes very difficult for them when they're not paid employees of the department."

Bartos said he used a similar system for volunteers in West Point about five years ago and it was a nightmare. "It requires a lot of management and effort to make sure that the data collected is accurate."

It's a system without carrots or sticks, Bartos said. There's nothing to incentivize volunteers to follow the rules and there are no enforcement mechanisms if they don't.

"That's the thing when you're dealing with volunteer organizations or volunteers in general, you're reliant on them, it's kind of hard to put a lot of hard requirements on them," Tassinari said. "You can request that they use your software application but what can you come back and say, 'Oh, you don't get that kind of defeats the purpose.'"

Department health

While King William County officials have said they can't convince volunteers to use the system, other volunteer fire departments have been able to use similar systems to track how well their members are doing.

At the James City-Bruton Volunteer Fire Department, Chief Phillip Murdock said his department uses a fairly "primitive" system to keep track of volunteer hours: an Excel spreadsheet.

"There are many, including myself, who don't always record every single call and every single time we step into the station,

but it is a gauge we use to measure when, how often and how many hours we put into the station," Murdock said. "It gives us guidelines."

The department uses a point system and has integrated training and meeting attendance requirements, but volunteers continue to put their time in at the station, Murdock said. At the end of each month, the three volunteers with the most points will earn small prizes worth less than \$50 each. He said it keeps up morale.

At the James City-Bruton station, which receives some county funding, firefighters didn't have a system to track volunteer hours until about a year ago, Murdock said. They put it in place to know how healthy the department was.

"It wasn't a matter of something was wrong," Murdock said. "It was a way to give us a measuring stick."

Despite the new system, volunteers continue to return, Murdock said. They love their colleagues and the work they put in.

"It's the ability to serve your community," Murdock said. "It's the family that you're a part of, I think everyone's searching for a community to be a part of. Certainly, it's a sort of truth. There is a brotherhood and a sisterhood in the fire department that's unique."

The New Kent County Fire Department uses a similar system through a web-based application to track hours for paid and volunteer firefighters, according to New Kent County firefighter Ryan Shelton. The system tracks each firefighter's shifts, length of shifts, which trucks they were on and the status of their certifications with the state.

That has helped Shelton, a fire instructor for the department, to better keep track of certifications and ensure proper training before the certifications expire, he said.

For King William's two interim fire chiefs Rick Nunnally and Laura Nunnally, their concern is oversight of the county department that they control.

"(The volunteer departments) have their own chiefs, they have their own (standard operating practices), they have their own policies, procedures and guidelines, all of that is separated from us," Rick Nunnally said. "We are all part of the county, regardless if we are one entity or four."

While money flowing from county coffers to the volunteer organizations has declined, the amount headed for county-supervised fire and EMS administration and operations has increased this fiscal year by \$237,108, from \$501,778 to \$738,886.

That increase has paid for more career firefighters, Tassinari said.

The county has six full-time firefighters, 11 part-time firefighters and three more part-time firefighters are in the hiring process, according to Laura Nunnally.

At the end of the day though, volunteer organizations are the linchpin to the county's emergency response system, according to Tassinari.

"The full-timers, the career (firefighters), they understand that they can't do it all," Tassinari said.

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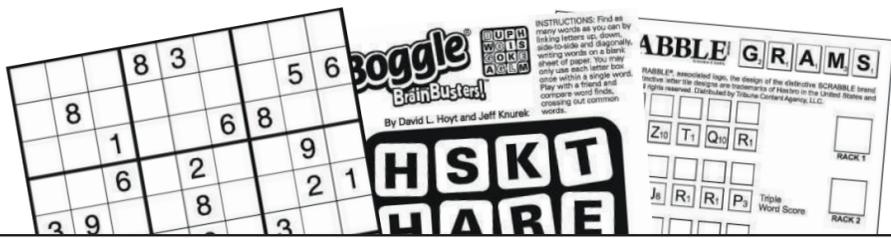
Other requirements include: Must be 21 years of age, possess a valid Virginia Operator's License, High School Graduate or Equivalent, if hired must complete the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (if not already certified). You must have No Felony Convictions, cannot have any serious Misdemeanor Convictions (nothing Domestic related), be willing to submit to Drug and Alcohol Testing, and must be a U.S. Citizen. The Applicant must submit to a Background Investigation, which includes but may not be limited to Submission of Fingerprints for Criminal Records check by the Virginia Central Criminal Records Exchange and FBI, Neighborhood Checks, Reference Checks, Financial Background Check, Previous Employer Interview and others as required. Applications may be picked up at the King William Sheriff's Office, 351 Courthouse Lane, Suite 160, King William, VA 23086 if unable to access online at King William County website, an Equal Opportunity Employer. Applications MUST be received by the King William Sheriff's Office by August 16, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.

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Puzzles inside

Boggle, word finds, scrabble grams and more are in today's section. **Page 8**

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

Tidewater Review

SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

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EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

Three golden retriever puppies at the Golden Garden greet anyone who comes to visit.

Therapy dogs help heal, provide love

Family-owned business Golden Garden breeds golden retrievers

BY EMILY HOLTER
Staff writer

As hundreds of West Point residents rise each morning and get ready for their day, the sounds of hydraulic machines and morning traffic quickly fill the air.

While 14th street comes alive with cars filing in and out of West Point, some of the adjacent streets lay quiet. Over on 12th street, the soft whines of puppies as they wake, stretch and begin their day fill the air.

Lazing in the sun, the golden retriever puppies are well-known around town as people come to watch them chase each other's tails, swim in their kiddie pool and sleep cuddled together.

The puppies belong to the Golden Garden, a family-owned business that breeds golden retrievers as therapy dogs.

In 2013, Golden Garden owner and breeder Leasha Donath began her

Want to learn more?

For more information on the Golden Garden call 804-536-1393 or visit bit.ly/2kCmGuz.

business in West Point. With a background in alpaca breeding and farming, Donath decided to try her hand with golden retrievers after seeing the benefits with their use as therapy dogs.

After a debilitating car accident, Donath struggled financially as medical bills became a constant. She was often faced with physical and emotional challenges as she worked to provide for her family as a single mother.

Donath decided it was time for a change and she and her daughter moved to West Point; it was an opportunity to start over in an area that offered new possibilities.

During the first year, Donath said it was exceptionally hard as she and her

daughter had to adjust to a new town and a new lifestyle.

However, after adopting her own golden retriever, she quickly realized the qualities the dogs possess.

"I am passionate about what I do," Donath said. "These dogs can do so much for people and I truly believe they can change the world one person at a time."

Donath is considered a "responsible breeder" by the American Kennel Club as she focuses on eradicating bad traits and breeding specifically for therapy dogs.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Animal Cruelty, responsible breeding is the focused effort on one breed in order to eradicate common hereditary defects with the goal of bettering the breed's genetic makeup.

Donath uses show-dog genetics and tests her dogs' DNA to ensure

See **DOGS**, page 3A

KW fire to focus on handling all service calls

Response times suffer from incomplete data

BY STEVE ROBERTS JR
AND SARAROSE MARTIN

WILLIAMSBURG — Fire departments across the country set benchmarks for how long it takes to respond to fires, car crashes and other incidents to track progress and hold themselves accountable, but King William County Fire Chief Laura Nunnally said setting a response time goal for the county's fire department is not realistic at this time.

Response times for the King William County Fire Department, West Point Volunteer Fire Department and the Mangohick Volunteer Fire Department are logged with the county's emergency communications center. King William's five and a half year response time average is about 13 and a half minutes. Between July 2018 and June 2019, the department was taking on average of about five minutes to respond to an incident.

But the data for all three departments are incomplete and missing key information, such as the time a unit arrived at the scene of an incident, according to records provided to the Tidewater Review through a Freedom of Information Act request.

Of 6,755 calls for service to the departments, 37.2% lacked complete information used to calculate response times, such as the time a unit arrived at an incident.

The best data KW has

The dispatch records are the best the county has, according to Loretta Collier, the records manager for the King William County Sheriff's Office and Nunnally.

In the last five years, the King William County fire department's average response time was about 13 and a half minutes, according to dispatch data. But the data ranges from response times that took 0 minutes to nearly six hours. And the data changed drastically in April of last year, which changed this year's average to about five minutes minutes.

The data includes all fire department calls and some EMS calls when a fire truck and EMS respond to a scene together. Response time are the amount of time it takes from when a person calls 911 and the time it takes for the fire department to arrive.

Mangohick Volunteer Fire Depart-

See **CALLS**, page 2A

Colonial Downs season ends, plans for 2020 already in the works

BY EMILY HOLTER
Staff writer

Colonial Downs ended its 2019 horse racing season, the first in six years, on Saturday.

More than 42,000 people attended races during the 15-day meet, more than

\$7.4 million in winnings and more than \$17.5 million wagers were taken, according to a Colonial Downs news release.

"It has been an exhilarating whirlwind of activity, but the revival of thoroughbred racing in Virginia is now etched in history," Vice President of Racing Operations Jill Byrne said in the release.

During the 2019 season, the races were broadcast to more than 900 outlets across the country including more than 15 million subscribers on the online horse betting broadcast channel, TVG.

The season featured 87 jockeys from

See **RACING**, page 2A

Want to learn more?

Colonial Downs and Rosie's Gaming Emporium is at 10515 Colonial Downs Parkway, New Kent. Rosie's is open from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. For more information, visit colonialdowns.com.



COURTESY OF COLONIAL DOWNS

Jockey Kent Desormeaux and Paddy O'Prado, right, won last month's Colonial Turf Cup by three lengths.

RACING, from 1A

Virginia with horse trainers traveling from 17 different states.

Colonial Downs reported the total money awarded to winning jockeys increased by 55% since the last season in 2013 with totals reaching \$7.4 million. Average daily winnings totaled \$492,000.

During the course of the meet, Colonial Downs held 144 races and ran 1,229 horses, averaging eight per race.

Colonial Downs stated there was an 18% increase in wagers placed this year over 2013 with totals reaching \$17.5 million.

The release stated 85% of wagers

came from outside the state with 15% placed in Virginia.

Colonial Downs said the group, in conjunction with Rosie's Gaming Emporium, already has paid more than \$3.5 million in taxes to the state and more than \$2 million in taxes to Virginia localities.

"The success of the 2019 meet is the culmination of so many people working hard and coming together to revive horse racing in Virginia," Chief operating officer Aaron Gomes said.

The report stated Colonial Downs has begun making plans for the next 2020 season.

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

CALLS, from 1A

ment responded to calls for service in 22 minutes and 28 seconds on average in the last five and a half years. West Point responded on average in 12 minutes and 55 seconds in the same time period.

King William's response times can fluctuate because of its expansive and rural coverage area, but the response times have fluctuated faster at the department than in Mangohick or West Point, according to the data.

"Are there average response times in the fire service? Yes, absolutely," Nunnally said. "If you take me and drop me in the City of Richmond, those firehouses have a district and because they're in, they have a response time they can hit it in. But (in) a rural EMS, average response time is not as easy to get."

Dispatch records

King William County employs a computer-aided dispatch system to track response times, and while it's the best the county has to measure response times, the data comes with caveats, according to Collier. There can be human error introduced by firefighters and dispatchers, she said.

Dispatchers will call firefighters over the radio to alert them to an incident the firefighters need to respond to and the time is recorded, according to King William County Sheriff's Office Emergency Dispatch supervisor Sherry Lipscomb. The time is recorded again when fire units mark that they are en route and again when the firefighters let dispatchers know that they've arrived on the scene.

The holes in the data are from instances when either firefighters did not let dispatchers know they'd arrived at an incident, the dispatchers couldn't make out the mark-ins due to too much conversation over the radios, or the dispatchers did not mark the time, Lipscomb said.

In addition to human error, in King William County dead zones can affect whether calls marked correctly, Nunnally said.

"You will get to a certain area in this county and they can't hear us and we can't hear them. So that will play into it. When it's a dead area for the radio it's usually a dead area for the cell phone too," Nunnally said.

But if dispatch doesn't receive a call from a unit en route, they call until they get a response, she said.

As the department continues to evaluate and assess its needs, which include years of dispatch data displayed on a map, the King William Fire Department will first aim to respond to all of the emergency calls it receives before it begins to set response time goals, Nunnally said.

"Once we get the mapping done, we have to get more paid personnel in place. Because as long as I don't have personnel that can immediately answer the 911 calls, then we're never going to be able to get an average," Nunnally said. "So that's part of the mapping and what's going on, to get all of that in place to figure out exactly what we need and how much of it we need."

No unit available

As King William County evaluates the needs of the fire department, its focus is to take all the emergency calls they receive, Nunnally said.

There were 608 "NO UNIT AVAILABLE" calls in five and a half years for the King William County Fire Department, meaning dispatchers requested any available firefighters to mark in to dispatch and dispatchers may have had to bounce the call to another station in the county.

When New Kent Fire and Rescue Chief Rick Opett assumed his position seven years ago, the county's average response time was around 19.5 minutes.

He attributes that to the county's four departments being predominantly volunteer-based.

The county has dropped its time down to 8.5 minutes on average since switching to a hybrid volunteer-paid staff system and aims to respond to incidents in the 212 square mile county in an average of six minutes.

The National Fire Protection Agency, a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the losses associated with fire-related disasters, set a guideline of a no more than four-minute travel time to an incident, which starts when a unit is en route, and recommends another 80 seconds between receiving a call and leaving.

"What that basically does, it's a guideline for us — you should be up there in a certain amount of time... As we continue with more staffing, that's going to continue to drop to around three minutes," Opett said. "It's the time it takes from the time of the call to the time of arrival. We're able to do it online so we can put responding and on the scene there. We have some redundancy built-in. Our dispatch center marks the time in, ensures compliance and makes sure the data is good."

For King William Fire and EMS, Nunnally said the department will eventually have a goal for an average response time, and that will be a sign the department is moving in the right direction.

"The goal now is to make sure we get the calls answered and working with our surrounding counties when we go several calls deep," she said. "How many 911 calls are we getting and how often do we not have personnel to answer them? That's the big number."

West Point Volunteer Fire Department Chief Joseph Bartos said his department mostly operates in the roughly six square miles of the town of West Point which makes it easier for his department to track its average response time and set goals.

"Obviously, the distance traveled is going to be a big factor from the time of the call to the arrival on scene," Bartos said. "When you go up and look at (the King William County Fire Department), they have a considerably larger response area. If they have to respond over a greater geographic area it takes longer for them to travel from their station to the call."

From the edge of West Point to the other end of the county, considered King William Fire and EMS coverage, is more than 40 miles long.

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Boggle Brain Buster!
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Kincaid

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Mind benders

Challenge your brain with these puzzles. Page 8

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

Tidewater Review

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

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EMILY HOLTER/STAFF

Caitlyn Giese shows off her heifer at Field Day of the Past in preparation for State Fair competitions.

County wins hearing in Great Dane seizure case

Couple denied custody of 30 dogs; lawyer says they'll appeal to keep two

BY STEVE ROBERTS JR
Staff writer

KING AND QUEEN COUNTY — In a hearing that lasted nearly three and a half hours, a St. Stephens Church couple forfeited 30 Great Danes to King and Queen County.

Judge Merlin R. Renne ruled Friday afternoon in favor of King and Queen County and against Richard A. Awlasewicz, 52 and Candice Jones Wheat, 39, after 32 Great Dane dogs and puppies were seized at the couple's home on Aug. 27.

Renne called the conditions the dogs were found in "absolute squalor."

The evidence had to be taken as a whole, Renne said. While some dogs arrived at the shelter in decent condition, at least half of the dogs arrived at the King William Regional Animal Shelter in emaciated and poor condition.

Wheat's attorney J. Terry Osborne declined to comment for this story, but in open court Osborne told Renne of her intent to immediately appeal his decision on behalf of two of the dogs. The couple told Renne they would forfeit the other 30 dogs to the shelter.

Awlasewicz and Wheat were ordered to pay \$8,320.16 in restitution to the county for the dogs' medical care and time at the shelter.

32 seized dogs

Three witnesses testified in the hearing including King and Queen Sheriff's Office Deputy Brian Burr who helped seize the dogs on Aug. 27.

Burr told the court the seizure began after another investigator visited the couple's home for another call. Wheat told that investigator the couple had about 20 dogs.

Burr later conducted a wellness check after finding out the couple only had seven dog licenses. Awlasewicz asked Burr if he had a search warrant and Burr told him he didn't. Burr asked to see the dogs and Awlasewicz walked eight of the dogs out, one at a time, in front of Burr at the front door.

That's what spurred the search warrant and the ensuing seizure of the dogs, Burr said. The dogs Awlasewicz showed Burr were in increasingly disheveled condition.

Burr returned to the home with the warrant and found one adult dog and 12 puppies living in the bedroom without food and water, Burr said. The puppies were housed in a red plastic, child-sized pool.

As deputies searched the home, they found dogs in increasingly dire straits, Burr said. There was blood, urine and feces throughout the inside and outside of the property.

Burr said he then found eight more dogs in a fenced in part of the backyard that connected to the home by a door that had a section removed to allow the dogs to go in and out. There was brown-green water in a bucket and food spread out on the ground.

At the hearing, Burr was told by Renne and Adkins to be quiet or stop

Blue-ribbon fun at the State Fair

Local residents prepare to show off livestock, crops at statewide competitions

BY EMILY HOLTER
Staff writer

Soon the rich smells of funnel cakes and deep-fried corn dogs will fill the air as timeless carnival music plays and folks line up for their turn on the next ride.

From the carnival games to the rides to the competitions and food, people have been making their way to the Virginia State Fair for more than 160 years.

The fair will celebrate its 165th year and the weeklong event will be held at the Meadow Event Park in Doswell from Sept. 27 through Oct. 6, with events and attractions that are sure to bring people from all across the state.

Best-in-state competitions are perennial favorites.

Some competitors take their chances and offer up their secret family recipes for pies and cakes, while others grow

Want to go?

- The State Fair will take place at Meadow Event Park, 13191 Dawn Blvd., Doswell from Sept. 27 to Oct. 6. The fair will open each day at 10 a.m. and will close Friday and Saturday at 10 p.m. and Monday through Thursday at 9 p.m.
- Tickets are on sale on the fair's website, statefairva.org, and will be available at the fair entrance. Adult tickets are \$12, senior citizens and ages 5-12 are \$10 and children younger than 4 will be admitted free. Unlimited ride wristbands will be available for \$25; \$12 for military personnel.
- General parking is free and shuttle buses will run to and from parking lots. Premium parking is available for \$15.
- Sensory spaces will be available on the fairgrounds, including low-key sensory input activities for those with sensory-processing issues. Wheelchairs, strollers and motorized scooters will be available to rent. Visit statefairva.org or call 804-994-2800 for more info.

pumpkins and watermelons that have to be fork-lifted into the fair.

Still others show off their livestock in hopes of bringing home a ribbon or prize money.

Caitlyn Giese, 17, of Aylett, first showed her cattle at the

fair a year ago and her heifer Annabelle placed in one of the youth competitions. This year, she will press her luck with her 1-year-old steer, Lil' C.

"Last year was a learning

See **FAIR**, page 2A

Fire department updates supervisors

Battalion chief seeks to fill fire marshal position, improve response times

BY EMILY HOLTER
Staff writer

KING WILLIAM — Battalion Chief Laura Nunnally and Sheriff Jeff Walton addressed problems at fire stations, spoke on improvements being made and discussed the appointment of a fire marshal at the King William Board of Supervisors meeting Monday.

Referencing a previous Tidewater

Review article, Walton addressed the lack of response to emergency calls. He said five years of response call data shows there are instances where there is no response recorded; however, he said there are reasons for the lack of responses.

The fire department went through a period of data conversion and some information was lost, leaving holes in the data, Walton said.

He also said when the fire department gets an emergency call, they send the information to all available vehicles. If several make it to the scene and deter-

mine the fire is not a threat, the response is canceled, showing no on-scene response time.

Walton said the fire department has major problems with radio reception at some of their stations.

"There are some areas that we have very poor radio reception, so if the unit marks they are on scene, dispatch might not have heard them," Walton said. "There have been occasions of multiple units marked on-scene and they get lost in the translation."

See **FIRE**, page 2A

See **CASE**, page 2A

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FAIR, from 1A

experience,” Caitlyn said. “I really kind of faked it and tried my best and it turned out great.”

Caitlyn attends Hanover High School, which monopolizes her time during the week.

But on the weekends, she travels across Virginia and to surrounding states competing in horse shows and showing her two cows in local cattle competitions. She said she is one of only a few in King William who shows cattle.

This year alone, Caitlyn has participated in seven local competitions, which she said is all in preparation for the State Fair.

“The local competitions are great because they allow her to practice and get her steer used to people,” mother Gail Giese said. “The State Fair is like the Olympics for these types of competitions, and she needs to practice as much as possible if she wants to win.”

At the competition

White tents dot the fairgrounds as dairy, beef and feeder cows wait behind red gates; ready to be judged.

For the market competitions, the objective is to have the cows perfectly sized and healthy to go to market. They are judged on how well they’d likely taste on the dinner table. Caitlyn will show a feeder cow, one that is not ready for market but is on track



Caitlyn Giese grooms her cow before a competition washing, drying and styling her fur.

to be ready next year.

On top of being judged for where their cattle stand on the market, handlers are also awarded points based on showmanship. This includes how well they handle the cattle, as well as their animal’s appearance and stature.

Competitions last about an hour, but it takes several hours to get the cows ready. Before each competition, Caitlyn washes the cows, blow dries them and cuts and styles their fur.

“The judges look for certain things, of course, but styling is really up to the owner and how they want their cows to look,” she said.

Caitlyn broke her collarbone during a horse show and will have to show her steer at the State Fair with only one arm. She said despite the pain and disadvantage, it will be worth it as she will get to meet other like-

minded people and continue to learn more about cattle competitions.

“When I started, I didn’t know a lot about the process, but I think now, after competing a lot, I have learned so much and I have better odds,” Caitlyn said. “The State Fair is a lot of fun and I’ve made a lot of friends through this experience.”

From the garden

Billy Hott, 60 of Lanexa, is no stranger to State Fair competitions. He has shown vegetables from his garden for at least five years.

Hott has shown everything from butterbeans to sunflowers to hay. Once, he even put his pound cake in a competition in hopes of bringing home a blue ribbon or prize money. Although unsuccessful, he said the experience

made it all worthwhile.

“The fair is always something I look forward to each year, and you really can’t beat the experience.”

This year, Hott will take his chances in the open crop competition showcasing his butterbeans, sunflowers, hay and for the first time, a watermelon.

The open crop competitions are judged according to vegetable. For the butterbeans, judges look for overall appearance, including pod uniformity and overall size. For sunflowers, the size of the flower is key. The same goes for watermelon, as size is a crucial factor for points.

“I always try to put in as many crops as I can enter and hope for the best,” Hott said. “The more I enter, the better my chances are.”

It only costs a dollar to enter, and Hott said the price is worth the reward were he to win. Several prizes are up for grabs, including ribbons and prize money.

“One year, I won enough money to pay for my seeds for next year — and seeds can be expensive.”

Hott’s interest in the fair doesn’t stop with the competitions.

As a chapter member of the Farm Bureau, he will also serve as a volunteer. While the fair is underway, Hott will spend his days at the horticulture tent where he will give advice to attendees looking to start and better their own gardens.

FIRE, from 1A

Board members addressed the problem with radio connections and said it is a matter of finding money to fix these issues.

Following a recent administrative change within the fire department, Nunnally said the department is working to improve previous issues.

The department is tracking response calls differently than three months ago and is looking in depth at each unit’s response times and locations. Department leadership will compile a more detailed response time data model that will be presented to the board in January.

“We are absolutely tracking response times,” Nunnally said. “We are also tracking other things, such as how many times we are going without units.”

Nunnally said if the department cannot dispatch units, they are reaching out to neighboring counties for additional resources, as well as tracking helicopter landings.

The fire department is also working to appoint a fire marshal. Nunnally said they considered transferring the position to the state, but determined it would not be beneficial to the county.

“In our area, we are down six fire marshals,” Nunnally said. “So we are way behind the eight ball on getting inspections done.”

If services were transferred to the state, inspections would occur on a first-come, first-served basis, Nunnally said.

Learn more

King William Board of Supervisors will meet at 7 p.m. Oct. 28 at 351 Courthouse Road, King William. For more information, visit kingwilliamcounty.us.

There are several schools and day cares that have not been inspected and need to be as soon as possible.

Nunnally said by appointing its own marshal, the needed inspections in the county would be conducted at a faster rate.

The fire department is considering Fire Investigator Skip Hardesty for the job.

The unpaid position would not require additional resources and it would not cost the county any money. According to Nunnally, the department is also sending six full-time employees to be trained to obtain their fire marshal certification.

“If we go transfer the role back to the state, the state is not going to come out and work with us in the same way,” Nunnally said. “I will be the first to tell you that if at any point I don’t think it is working, then I will step up and let you know and we will transfer it out to the state.”

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

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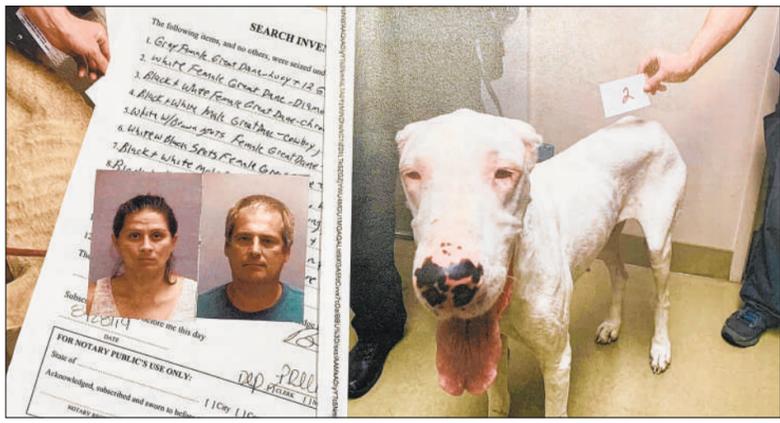
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STEVE ROBERTS JR./STAFF

After 32 Great Danes were seized from a home, two St. Stephens Church residents were charged with animal cruelty and arrested. Now the dogs are recovering at the King William Regional Animal Shelter.

CASE, from 1A

asking Awlasewicz questions from the witness box. At one point, a sheriff’s office deputy shushed Burr.

For nearly half an hour of the hearing, Awlasewicz and Osborne questioned whether or not images from the home did or did not depict feces.

“Do you have an independent recollection of these feces?” Osborne asked.

Adkins threw up his hands in exasperation multiple times and re-framed his questions to try to curtail the questions of the defense.

Renne told Awlasewicz twice to stop interjecting his own testi-

mony into his line of questioning.

Emaciated dogs

When Lauri Betts, the manager of the shelter took the stand she explained the dogs arrived in poor condition.

One of the dogs, she said, was nothing but “skin hanging off bone.”

On average, Betts testified, the adult dogs gained about 20 pounds each after arriving at the shelter. All of the dogs had worms, some had two kinds. Sunken eyes, protruding ribs, deafness, ears “packed with filth,” and swollen legs were common among the animals.

Shelter veterinarian Kathleen Slayman corroborated Betts’ testimony.

Awlasewicz said despite the testimony of Slayman and Betts, he’d have preferred to hire an “independent” veterinarian to assess the dogs before the hearing.

“Because of all the press and the news media,” Awlasewicz said before pausing. “No one would do an independent report.”

Despite objections by Osborne and Awlasewicz, who represented himself after his attorney quit, Commonwealth’s Attorney Charles Adkins’s argument persuaded Renne.

“They (Awlasewicz and Wheat) are treating these dogs worse than dogs,” Adkins roared. “They cannot be allowed to own animals.”

Renne agreed and banned both Awlasewicz and Wheat from owning any pets.

The case will come back before the court on March 20, 2020 to review the couple’s restitution payments.

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