



The Lion's Roar

INSIDE

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THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 21, 2019

VOL. 107, NO. 8

INSIDE



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LOCAL

Vet clinic boards pets at Zion facility

Taking a vacation requires a fair amount of planning, especially for pet owners. Deciding where to leave your pet while you're away can be a challenge. For clients of Crossroads Animal Hospital in Zion Crossroads, there's an option to simplify the process.

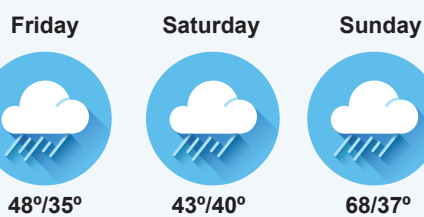
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Lions win first Jefferson District title

The Louisa Lions' boys' basketball team scored its first District championship win in nearly a quarter of a century last week, defeating the Albemarle Patriots 48-46 in The Den on Feb. 12.

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WEEKEND WEATHER



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Community mourns beloved coach

Inspiring others was his mission on and off the field

By Deana Meredith



Coach Mark Fischer, who retired from his position as head football coach at Louisa County High School, following the 2017 state championship run, lends some advice to one of his players on the sidelines.

Mark Fischer lost his seven-year battle with multiple myeloma on Feb. 17.

Fischer served two stints as Louisa County High School's head football coach. After his diagnosis, he continued to inspire his players, colleagues and community with his positive outlook and courage.

He was the head football coach at Louisa County High School for 12 seasons, first from 2003-2010, then from 2014 to 2017. In the three-year interim, Fischer served as head coach for St. James High School in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

The esteemed coach led the Lions to two state championship bids in 2006 and 2017. He accumulated 96 wins for the Lions, had three undefeated seasons, and was named Jefferson District coach of the year six times—in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010 and 2017.

He was also named Virginia Coach of the Year by the Associated Press in 2006.

"It's impossible to express how heartbroken we are at the news of Coach Fischer's passing."

See Fischer on A-2

Growth areas shrink under new plan

Citizen input needed at public meetings

By David Holtzman

County planning staff proposed a dramatic reduction in the areas planned for future commercial, residential and industrial growth.

Three public meetings are scheduled in the next two weeks for citizens to give their feedback on the changes, which staff developed as part of an overhaul of the county's comprehensive plan. After their own review of the document, the Louisa County Planning Commission will make recommendations to the board of supervisors.

Jeff Ferrel, assistant county administrator, said the county's existing growth areas were mapped during the last major study of the comprehensive plan two decades ago. Staff of the Louisa County Community Development department, working with Ferrel and a committee that includes two planning commissioners and two supervisors, came up with a scenario that would

See Growth on A-10



Mark Menton (l) and Curtis Heidel present their proposal to store boats and recreational vehicles on a property in the Lake Anna growth area. They requested to rezone the property to commercial, though it is designated for low-density residential use in the county's comprehensive plan.

Boat, RV storage plan rejected

Planners also turn down live concerts at Pleasants Landing

By David Holtzman

A boat and recreational vehicle storage facility and a live concert series, both at Lake Anna, were rejected by the Louisa County Planning Commission.

Curtis Heidel and Mark Menton pro-

posed rezoning about 17 acres on Zachary Taylor Highway (Rt. 522) from agricultural to commercial to allow the storage facility, which would also include trailer sales, a bathhouse and minor vehicle repairs. The property abuts the county's refuse and recycling center.

Commissioners brought up concerns at their Feb. 14 meeting about traffic, which the applicants tried to assuage by proffering that the facility would be members-only.

See Rejected on A-9

New chamber director brings marketing savvy

Eager to help Louisa businesses grow

By David Holtzman

The new director of the Louisa County Chamber of Commerce brings with her two decades of experience helping businesses to market themselves and grow.

Tracy Hale Clark said she is excited to assist the county's entrepreneurs, using some of the techniques she has learned working with businesses and

See Chamber on A-9



Tracy Hale Clark

Senate incumbent faces challenges

Two Democrats, one Republican hope to shake up the 17th district

By David Holtzman

Amy Laufer is one of three people who have emerged so far as challengers to seven-year incumbent Sen. Bryce Reeves in the 17th state Senate district.

Laufer, an Albemarle County resident who started her teaching career at Louisa County Middle School and later served on the Charlottesville School Board, introduced herself to the Louisa Democratic Committee at Roma's restaurant on Feb. 16. (See related article on page A-2.)

Ben Hixon, of Culpeper, is the other candidate so far on the Democratic side. He started his political career in

See Candidates on A-9

Growth

Continued from A-1

cut the share of land in growth areas from 10 to five percent.

“Some of the things you’re going to see tonight came directly from the citizens,” Ferrel told the planning commissioners during their Feb. 14 work session.

He was referring to seven public meetings last summer where residents reviewed the goals and objectives and growth area maps in the existing comprehensive plan. Participants then jotted down written comments and placed dots on goal statements they agreed or disagreed with.

The biggest impact of staff’s proposed growth area reductions would be around the towns of Louisa and Mineral. The areas slated for growth presently sprawl thousands of acres in several directions around the towns.

The Mineral growth area extends almost to Cuckoo, a community identified in the plan as a rural village. Most of the Mineral area is designated for mixed use, a category broadly defined in the plan to include commercial, residential or industrial development.

“What happens when that area is developed for mixed use?” Ferrel said. “Think about Zion Crossroads. That area is 2,000 acres, while Mineral has 8,700 acres. Think about the amount of resources—transportation, water and sewer—all the needs required to develop a property like this. It would be incredibly difficult to deliver services to that many acres of intense use, right in the middle of the county.”

Instead of mixed use, he said, the town of Mineral should be largely surrounded by low-density residential neighborhoods that don’t require public water and sewer

service.

“There is a lot of space in the town yet to be developed. This would hopefully drive more dense residential or commercial into the town,” he said.

The low-density residential area, in turn, would provide a buffer between the town and rural areas, where county leaders are considering making it somewhat more difficult to develop. The planning staff’s vision is that low-density residential sections of the growth areas would be limited to lots of at least 1.5 acres.

That’s the minimum lot size in the rural areas now. Ferrel said planners want the public to consider whether the minimum in those areas should be closer to five acres. Citizens will be asked at the upcoming meetings to consider minimum lot sizes in increments of two to four acres, four to six or six to eight.

“That avoids just asking a yes-or-no question of, ‘Are you in favor increasing lot sizes?’” he said. “The idea is, if you raise the lot size, it has a little more of a rural look to it.”

Another idea to protect the character of rural areas is to require property owners to share driveways to reduce the number of new entrances on primary and secondary roads. Currently, it’s possible to see as many as eight driveways within a stretch of 2,000 feet on a rural road.

Ferrel also introduced the concept of requiring more commercial uses in rural areas to have a conditional use permit from the board of supervisors. Rural landowners would be subject to design and buffering restrictions to ensure that their commercial projects fit with the rural surroundings.

These changes, if included in the revised comprehensive plan, would not affect zoning, which dictates what a landowner can do with their particular piece of property. The plan only affects future land use, which is what the community has decided is the best use in a given area. To change the zoning, the planning commissioners and supervisors would have to develop new ordinances.

Apart from Louisa and Mineral, another growth area that could shrink a lot is the one that adjoins the town of Gordonsville, in the county’s northwest corner. Boswell’s Tavern, already a small growth area at the intersection of routes 15 (James Madison Highway) and 22 (Louisa Road), would cease to be one altogether.

The Ferncliff growth area, which currently invites mixed-use development on both sides of Interstate 64, would be changed to allow industry south of the highway, but only low-density residential to the north. A small area for mixed use would be established around the intersection of I-64 and Route 208 (Courthouse Road).

“The area along Route 250 [Three Notch Road] is primed for industrial - there’s a lot of utilities, and good transportation,” Ferrel said. “We can limit that growth from getting on the other side of 64.”

Planning staff proposed a similar adjustment to the Gum Spring growth area, but with a more commercial than industrial focus. In both cases, the intent is to use the interstate to buffer residential from business areas.

The Shannon Hill growth area has dominated the community’s attention in recent months, as the county

unveiled plans for a large industrial park there.

Planners propose to eliminate much of the roughly 4,400 acres currently designated in this area for mixed use, which Ferrel said is more “what you think of in areas like Zion Crossroads—restaurants, subdivisions, apartment complexes.” He said low-density residential is more appropriate for most of this growth area, aside from the business park and a small mixed-use section.

The three public meetings are scheduled on Feb. 27, March 2 and March 5 at Jouett Elementary School, Louisa County High School and Spring Creek Clubhouse, respectively.

The Jouett and Spring Creek events will be from 6 to 8 p.m.; the high school meeting is scheduled from 12 to 2 p.m.

The planning commission is expected to review the results of those meetings at one or more work sessions later in March.

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Candidates

Continued from A-9

opening new businesses such as medical imaging centers because the state discourages competition.

“They say, once one is approved, there’s no longer a need for it,” he said. “It’s crony capitalism.”

Hixon criticized Reeves’ opposition to marijuana legalization and a multi-state initiative to control climate change. He said he supports developing more infrastructure for small farmers to sell their products locally, as

a means to help the area’s economy but also to reduce fossil fuel use in transportation.

He said he wants to prioritize vocational education and would push to create a two-year degree in computer coding in the state’s community colleges.

Rich Breeden, of Spotsylvania, is running against Reeves in the Republican primary. Breeden, who works for a government contractor in the security field, shares Reeves’ anti-abortion, pro-

gun stances. But he said voters should consider how he differs from the current senator.

“I want to bring conservative leadership back to government,” Breeden said in a statement. “My opponent has gone Richmond and is in the pocket of special interests. His votes are dictated by lobbyists, not his constituents. I will not do that. I will fight everyday for limited government and our shared conservative values.”

Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)

 **and**

 **MACAA Head Start**

Application and Screening Day: April 23, 2019

Location: Metal Gym behind Louisa County Middle School
(Follow the signs posted)

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Complete one application per child.

Child must be 4 by September 30th of the enrollment year for Louisa County’s VPI program

Child must be 3 or 4 by September 30th of enrollment year for MACAA Head Start program

Important information to bring to registration:

- Photo ID
- Proof of income: Must provide one of the following:
 - Most recent tax return (preferred) or W2s
 - Recent pay stubs – (attach 4 if paid weekly, or 3 bi-weekly pay stubs, or 2 monthly paystubs) OR
 - A letter from your employer stating your wages and number of hours worked per week
 - Documentation of SSI, SNAP & TANF benefits, Child Support, if applicable (SNAP/food stamps are not considered as income for Head Start)


Please bring child to event for educational screening.

Incomplete applications or those without all the required documents will be placed on hold until all information is submitted.

Applications received after May 15th are placed on the waitlist according to the percentage of federal poverty. Children placed on the waitlist may be considered for other services/programs if permission is given to share contact information with other service providers.

Applicants will be notified of their acceptance into the program no later than July 5, 2019.

If you are unable to attend on this date, please go to the school your child will attend to apply.

 **Louisa County Comprehensive Plan Update**

PARTICIPATE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LOUISIA COUNTY

REVIEW AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK ABOUT THE PRESENTED LAND USE CONCEPTS AND MAPS. MEETINGS WILL BEGIN WITH A BRIEF PRESENTATION.


MEETING SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 27TH AT 6:00 – 8:00
JOUETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

SATURDAY MARCH 2ND AT 12:00 – 2:00
LOUISIA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

TUESDAY MARCH 5TH AT 6:00 - 8:00
SPRING CREEK CLUBHOUSE

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Mineral Firemen's Parade Results & Photos

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MAY 16, 2019

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LOCAL

Man charged with gang-related burglary

A Bumpass man was charged by the Louisa County Sheriff's Office with breaking and entering into a Buckner Road home last week with the intent to commit murder, rape, robbery or arson.

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Virginia Community Bank sold

The parent holding companies of Virginia Community Bank and Blue Ridge Bank announced a merger agreement on May 14.

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Relay For Life Beauty Pageant

Page B-1

Racers flood Lake Anna State Park

More than 1,000 people gathered in Lake Anna State Park on May 11-12 for the Kinetic Triathlon Festival. The two-day event consisted of three triathlon races and several duathlon events.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

Friday



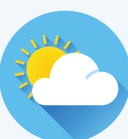
83°/62°

Saturday



85°/61°

Sunday



81/63

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Shannon Hill rezoning gets OK

Concerns about traffic impact on Shannon Hill Rd.

By David Holtzman

The Louisa County Planning Commission recommended rezoning 700 acres for the Shannon Hill Regional Business Park, but some members warned the project will result in unanticipated costs.

Chief among them is the potential impact on Shannon Hill Road (Rt. 605). Commissioners John Disosway and Chairman Holly

Reynolds (Green Springs district) said the road, which links Interstate 64 to the Mineral area, is ill-equipped to handle traffic they believe the business park will bring.

Commissioners voted to support rezoning the park from agricultural to industrial use by a 4-2 margin at their May 9 meeting. Disosway (Mineral district) and George Goodwin (Cuckoo district) opposed the rezoning. Commissioner Ellis Quarles (Patrick Henry district) was absent.

"I have not met one person who has said, 'I want this,'" Disosway said of the business park. "If we had private industry walking in the door, then we [would be] able to understand what they're doing and the impacts."

Goodwin and Disosway said the land should not be rezoned until a master plan is

completed.

Andy Wade, the county's economic development director, said that process will take eight to nine months. The county shouldn't put off the rezoning, he said, because it could lose potential park tenants.

"In this business you've got to have sites ready to go or you get eliminated," he said.

Still, Wade said the county would develop the business park one site at a time. The first site could be as small as 40 acres. Moreover, the county could rely on well water and a septic system for the first tenant if water from the James River isn't available in time.

The park's master plan and the second round of due diligence is contingent on a \$600,000 state grant. State officials will

See **Rezoning** on A-5

A Walk to Remember



Hoping for a cure

Annalise Nieman sits atop her grandfather Paul Unbehagen's shoulders during the third annual Louisa Alzheimer's Walk held at Walton Park in Mineral on May 11. The event generated \$2,074 for the cause. Photo by Deana Meredith

Affordable homes are difficult to find locally

County seeks solutions

By David Holtzman

As developers stampede to rezone land in Zion Crossroads for housing, county leaders are thinking about how to make some of the new homes affordable.

The strong economy has caused rents and home prices to climb gradually in Louisa County. The median sales price in the county was \$222,000 in the first quarter of 2019, while apartments and houses are difficult to rent for less than \$1,000 per month. Five years ago, the median sales price was \$199,000.

The trend has created a renewed interest in affordability among county leaders, who hadn't talked much about it in the past decade. The board of supervisors

See **Housing** on A-10

Two men arrested for church break-in

Cooked sausage and eggs, stole van

By Deana Meredith

Two men were arrested Tuesday and charged with breaking into Oakland Baptist Church in Gum Spring, destruction of property and stealing the church van.

The crime was discovered sometime around 10:30 p.m. Monday when Louisa County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to an unrelated domestic situation nearby.

"While deputies were there, they discovered that the church was broken into and the church van was missing," Major Donald Lowe said. "The van was recovered not long after that in Henrico with two people in it."

Robert Heath Wyatt, 21, of Henrico, and Christopher Samuel Causway Jr., also 21, of Highland Springs, were each charged with three felony counts.

Ron Taylor, who is a deacon at the church, said the suspects came in through one of the church's windows, went through everything in the church and kicked in the wooden doors to the pastor's office, sound room and library.

They even cooked up some sausage and eggs in the church's kitchen while they were there.

"They didn't do the dishes either," Taylor said.

See **Church** on A-7

Preparing for new adventures



Approximately 330 seniors will graduate from Louisa County High School Friday.

Graduation set for Friday

Five students have earned associate's degrees

By Deana Meredith

Three hundred and thirty graduation candidates are expected to be handed their high school diplomas during Louisa

County High School's commencement exercises May 17.

Five of them have already received an associates' degree from Piedmont Virginia Community College and many others have accumulated college credits that they can transfer to a four-year university.

"They're the first class to be in the

See **Graduation** on A-2



Titus and Ezra Nieman played in the "Promise Garden" May 11 during the Louisa Alzheimer's Walk.

Walking for a cure

Many people participated in the third annual Louisa Alzheimer's Walk at Walton Park in Mineral to raise funds to find a cure for a disease that impacts nearly 150,000 people in Virginia and their 465,000 caregivers. The event, held on Mother's Day weekend, drew several who were there to honor mothers who have lost their lives to a disease that robs memory.

Photos by Deana Meredith



Housing

Continued from A-1

even did away with the Affordable Housing Committee a few years ago. Now there are worries that rising prices could make it harder for some Louisa residents to put down roots, or to maintain them.

"We have a segment in our community that cannot afford to live here," Supervisor Fitzgerald Barnes (Patrick Henry district) said. "The average rent in the Charlottesville area is \$1,300 a month. I found that pretty shocking. When you put that together with the average monthly income of our residents, it makes it pretty tough."

Barnes asked his colleagues at the Louisa County Board of Supervisors' May 6 meeting to consider using tax credits as an incentive for private builders to include affordable housing in otherwise market-rate developments. He recently visited neighborhoods in Baltimore and Nashville where this has been a successful model. "You could not tell in those buildings who was making what," he said. "You had people making \$80,000 a year and others making \$8,000 a year."

Brian Roy, a developer who has applied to rezone property south of Interstate 64 in Zion Crossroads to build apartments and townhomes, said in an email that his client, Gordon Sutton,

would be open to the idea of designating some units as affordable. But Roy said "it is premature to say what direction they will go."

William Park, president of Pinnacle Construction and Development Corporation, which needs a conditional use permit to build apartments in Sommerfield Business Park in Zion Crossroads, said his firm has built housing developments using federal tax credits. In those instances, all of the units were affordable, rather than a portion of them.

Park said at a neighborhood meeting on May 8 that rents in the Zion Crossroads development would range from \$1,000 for a one-bedroom unit to \$1,500 for three bedrooms. Chris Henry, who heads Stony Point Design Build, which has proposed hundreds of apartments, townhomes and single-family units behind Walmart, said the market prices would be similar in that neighborhood. Townhomes could start in the low \$200,000 range, he said.

The affordability challenge isn't only for people at the low end of the income scale, Barnes said. It's also a problem for teachers, police officers and other professionals who make mid-range salaries, he said, arguing that the county should try to help people in both income groups.

Supervisor Duane Adams (Mineral district) said he isn't sure it makes sense to direct

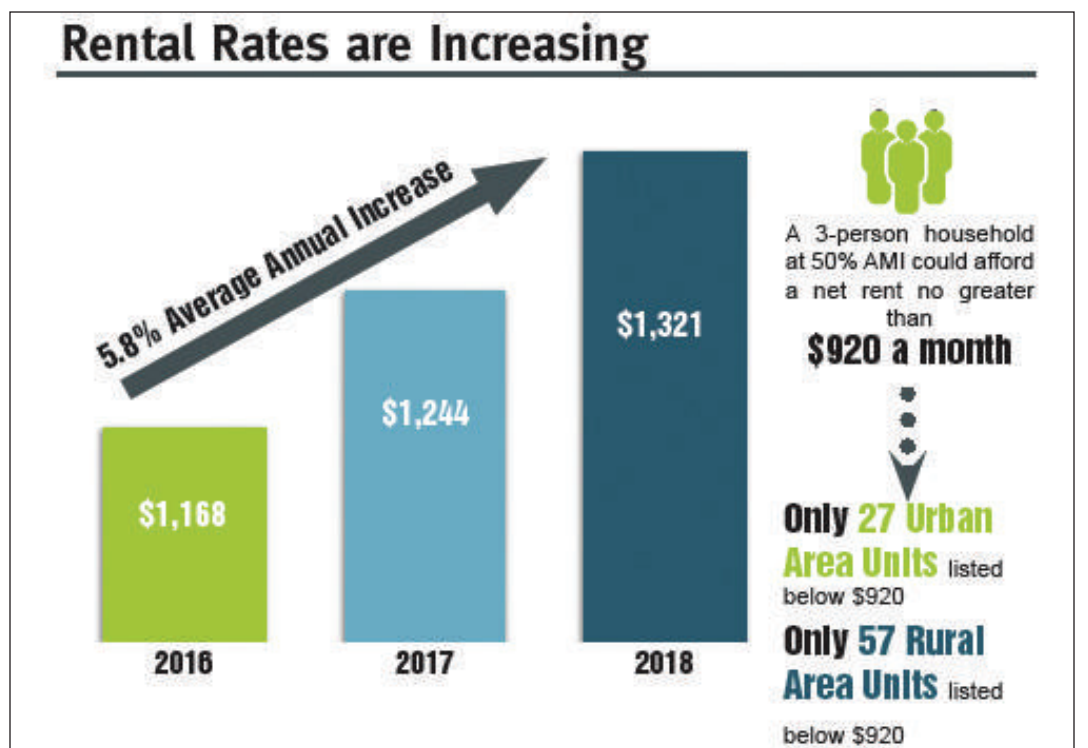
county resources at teachers, rather than people who make poverty-level wages.

"It doesn't look like the demographic that's having a challenge is the \$45,000-a-year income bracket, it's the senior citizen or single parent on a fixed income," Adams said. "It's probably somebody under the poverty level, which I think would be somewhere around \$25,000."

A regional housing study released by Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission last month suggests the affordability problem is broader than that. It shows that 42 percent of renters in Louisa County with incomes between \$36,000 and \$57,000 spend too much for housing, including rent and utilities. That is, they spend more than 30 percent of what they earn on their lease. A few renters commit more than half their income to housing costs. The study defines the latter group as "severely cost-burdened."

The problem is similar for many county homeowners, of which 34 percent in the same income range spend more than a third of their income on housing. An estimated 80 homeowners spend more than half of what they earn on their mortgage and related expenses.

But lack of affordability is most acute for people with



incomes less than \$36,000. About two-thirds of renters and mortgage holders with family incomes of less than \$21,400 are paying too much for housing, the study found.

A three-person household in the Thomas Jefferson region with an income of 50 percent of the area median family income, or \$36,000, can afford a rent of no more than \$920 a month, according to the study. The authors could find only 57 rental units listed below \$920 in the region, which ranges from Nelson County on the west to Louisa on the east.

Man charged with gang-related burglary

Sheriff's office gives few details

By David Holtzman

Keith Saunders-Mallory, 18, of Bumpass, was charged by the Louisa County Sheriff's Office with breaking and entering into a Buckner Road house on May 9 with intent to commit murder, rape, robbery or arson.

Saunders-Mallory is also accused of a criminal act in association with a gang.

Sheriff's office Major Donald Lowe declined to provide further details of the case, citing its sensitive nature. He did not say whether anyone was injured during the incident or if Saunders-Mallory knew the resident at the Buckner Road address.

The incident occurred at 6:40 p.m. in the 2400 block of Buckner Road, about 2.5 miles north of Jefferson Highway (Rt. 33).

Three gang-related



Keith Saunders-Mallory

shootings occurred in Louisa County in 2016, according to a sheriff's office report. It is not known if there have been any significant incidents since then that involved gangs.

Saunders-Mallory was held in Henrico County Jail over the weekend and was transferred to Central Virginia Regional Jail in Orange. He appeared briefly in Louisa General District Court on May 14 and is scheduled for a hearing on May 16.

Louisa Street Festival

The Louisa Street Festival will take place in the town of Louisa from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday, June 8. The free event is hosted by the Louisa County Chamber of Commerce and will feature live entertainment by the Courtney Brothers Band and Billy and the Backbeats. There will be plenty to do

including kid-friendly activities such as carriage and wagon rides, and horse and pony rides. New this year is a Seek and Find contest. There will be hourly prize drawings and a grand prize drawing. For more information, visit the festival's Facebook event page.

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Light refreshments will be served



Churches rally to give kids a healthy drink

B-4

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JUNE 20, 2019

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LOCAL

New insurance agency in Louisa

The owners of a new independent insurance company in the town of Louisa pride themselves on putting their customers' needs first.

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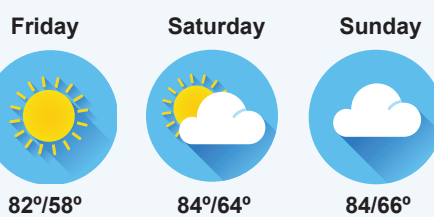


Gators make a splash in season opener

The Louisa Gators swim team hosted its 2019 season opener at the Betty Queen Intergenerational Center on June 12. The Gators competed against the Fluvanna Aquatic Sports Team and the Charlottesville Elks. Though the teams didn't garner points for a team score, the Gators scored a number of first-place finishes throughout the meet.

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WEEKEND WEATHER



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Vintage cars and fellowship



Unity Day in Holly Grove

Members of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Holly Grove gathered June 15 to celebrate relationships with others in the community at their 2019 Unity Day event. People like Billy Nicholas (left) and Claudie Houchens came from around the area to enjoy a day of food, fun and fellowship. They enjoyed a car show, a bouncy castle, music, yard sale and more.

Photo by Andrew Hollins

Zion housing plans stalled, for now

Worries about water project delays

By David Holtzman

County officials said this week they could be forced to put the brakes on development at Zion Crossroads while they wait for water to arrive from the James River.

They acknowledged the potential need for a slowdown as three developers' proposals for more than 1,000 new housing units move through the approval process.

Jeff Ferrel, assistant county administrator, gave the Louisa County Board of Supervisors two options at a June 17 work session. They could put a hold on building permits when 75 percent of the existing water supply has been sold, or delay site plan approvals.

The county has been waiting since 2016 for the United States Army Corps of Engineers to issue a permit to withdraw water from the James

See **Water** on A-2

Walton Park may be changing owners

Mineral council meeting with fire department to discuss details

By Joseph Haney

Walton Park in Mineral might be changing owners in the near future. Among the items discussed by the Mineral town council at its May 13 and June 10 meetings was the possibility of deeding the park to the Mineral Fire Department.

The land where the park is located was deeded to the town in July 1965 by Elizabeth Trice Walton, following a meeting with town residents Peyton Noel and Goodman Duke

in which Noel said he wanted to develop the land and use it for horse shows as a fundraiser for the fire department. Prior to its development, the land where Walton Park is located was used as a dumping ground for town residents, Duke said this week.

The land couldn't be deeded to the fire department directly because they were not incorporated at the time, and everything from their building to their equipment was in the town's name. Though the department did incorporate in 1986, the park remained in the town's possession.

Councilman Ed Jarvis raised the issue of ownership of the park at the May meeting. He cited concerns over liability should people using the park be injured as a result of the electrical hookups for RVs that were installed by the fire department when the

See **Park** on A-8

“ It's a situation where both entities are working for the betterment of the community. Whatever the final decision is, it will be in the best interests of the town, the fire department and the community.

—Lewis Keller, fire department and interim council member

”

Two die in crash near the lake

Unclear if weather was factor

By David Holtzman

Virginia State Police identified one of the two victims of the June 17 fatal crash on New Bridge Road (Rt. 208) as Larry Booth, 21, of Spotsylvania. The second victim was a 17-year-old male, also of Spotsylvania.

They were in a Ford Mustang traveling east at 6:44 p.m. when Booth lost control of the vehicle in a curve just west of New Bridge Market, according to Corinne Geller, state police public relations director. The car slid across the center line and was struck by a Dodge truck.

Booth was not wearing a seat belt. His passenger was wearing a seat belt. Both died at the scene.

The driver of the truck, a 31-year-

See **Fatalities** on A-8



Liz Nelson



Ronnie Roberts



Randall Skeen

New manager, chief for Town of Louisa

Promoted by town council

By Deana Meredith and David Holtzman

Liz Nelson and Randall Skeen were named town manager and police chief by the Louisa Town Council at their June 18 meeting.

Both had served in those positions in

an acting capacity in recent weeks. Nelson replaced Tom Filer, who resigned in May. Skeen was appointed to fill the shoes of Ronnie Roberts, who stepped down as chief of the Louisa Police Department on May 21 after his mother's health took a turn for the worse.

The council also named Jessica Ellis as both town clerk and treasurer. Previously, Ellis was the clerk and Nelson was treasurer.

Skeen started his career in law en-

See **Town** on A-8

Water

Continued from A-1

River. The process has been delayed because the water pump station will be located on the site of Rassawek, which the Monacan Nation and historians believe was their capital prior to white settlement. The Monacans are in negotiations with Louisa and Fluvanna counties and the Army Corps over ways to mitigate the project impacts.

While the Army Corps may issue the permit soon, there could be further delays after construction begins. County officials recently said the water should be available to users by 2021.

Existing development at Zion Crossroads uses water from wells. The wells have a capacity of 587,000 gallons per day, according to the Louisa County Water Authority. The three housing proposals, if built out with neighboring commercial development, would require more water than the wells can provide.

Concerns about the water supply, and other infrastructure issues in Zion Crossroads, led the Louisa County Planning Commission to defer action on June 13 on two of the three proposed housing developments.

The proposals are incomplete, according to county community development staff, who pointed to the need for traffic studies, less density and renderings that show what the buildings will look like.

One developer, Brian Roy, deferred his application to build apartments south of Interstate 64 before the meeting started. The others, William Park of Pinnacle Construction and Chris Henry of Stony Point Design Build, made their presentations but were quickly advised the commission will not make

any decisions until July.

Park said he was surprised staff wanted him to present details about traffic impacts as part of his conditional use permit request to build 312 apartments in Sommerfield Business Park. He said the county zoning ordinance doesn't require that much detail at this stage.

"I feel like we submitted everything that was asked of us," Park said. He admitted, however, that he hasn't talked with the Virginia Department of Transportation yet about how the apartments will affect traffic on James Madison Highway (Rt. 15).

"It may not be required, but I'm certainly interested," commission Chairman Holly Reynolds (Green Springs district) said of the traffic study.

Other commissioners said they are concerned about the new housing's potential impact on the county's tax base. Cy Weaver (Jackson district) said he sees no sense in giving up commercial land for costly residential projects.

Park presented data he said show the apartments will have a net positive impact on the county's bottom line, because there will be few schoolchildren living in them. He cited Stonegate, the apartment complex down the block, which he said has a mere 10 public school students in its 155 units.

Commissioner George Goodwin (Cuckoo district) worried about devoting a sizeable chunk of the county's sewer capacity to housing in Zion Crossroads. There needs to be enough left over to serve other growth areas, he said.

The county hasn't firmed up data about how much sewer capacity is available in Zion Crossroads, Jeff Ferrel, assistant county administrator, said. He said he hoped to have those details ready by July.

“ This county could probably get money to do its own study, and you won't have to listen to these numbers from other people. I am begging you to do that. ”

—Robin Patton

Robert Gardner, the county's community development director, said Stony Point's proposal to build up to 850 units behind Walmart is more detailed than the two other housing submissions. But he said he wants the VDOT to provide feedback about the developer's traffic study, which makes the claim that the housing will have only a minor impact.

Supervisor Bob Babyok (Green Springs district) said he has worked with the three developers for the past eight months to help them prepare their applications.

"You could see that by the quality of what was shown" at the meeting, he said.

Babyok said the apartment projects will be a net asset for the county, providing rental housing for young professionals such as Louisa County Public Schools teachers.

Other members of the board are more skeptical of the benefits. Supervisor Troy Wade (Louisa district) proposed at the board's Jan. 22 meeting to restrict public water use in some growth areas to non-residential development. Several members of the county's Tea Party chapter spoke at a more recent board meeting, warning the apartments will lead to higher property tax rates.

Thirteen people who live in Spring Creek subdivision and in or near the Green Springs National Historic Landmark District criticized the apartment plans at the June 13 meeting. They

included Renee O'Leary and Robin Patton, who said a cost of community services study would prove the housing will be a net loss to the county's tax base.

"This county could probably get money to do its own study, and you won't have to listen to these numbers from other people," Patton said. "I am begging you to do that."

Dan Girouard, who works for Spring Creek Land Development, argued the new housing is "much-needed" because it will eventually draw more stores and services.

"One of the reasons people decide not to buy at Spring Creek is the lack of services," he said.

Babyok said he has engaged VDOT to help address traffic issues at the intersection of Camp Creek and Spring Creek parkways and Rt. 15, which would handle much of the traffic generated by the Stony Point and Sommerfield housing developments. The Charlottesville-based Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission will perform a study this summer of the intersection.

Before adjourning the June 13 meeting, Reynolds took the unusual step of leaving the public hearing open until the commission meets next. Even if they already spoke during the hearing, residents will be able to comment at the July 11 meeting on the changes Park and Henry make to their applications.

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