

Rappahannock News

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143rd Year • No. 34

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2020



\$1

SCHOOLS FACE THEIR BIGGEST TEST

‘A whole lot of moving parts’

BY RANDY RIELAND
For Foothills Forum

When Rappahannock’s public school students return next Monday, they’ll kick off their school year with a temperature check.

They’ll be wearing masks, too, at least on the buses and in the hallways. They can remove them once they get to their desks, where they will be shielded with plastic barriers from their classmates.

But beyond the obvious pandemic precautions, the school district is about to become part of something far more abstract and challenging. It is a kind of experiment to see not just how well students learn and teachers teach when a school’s top priority is to keep everyone safe, but also how kids, used to the messy swirl of personal connections and social interactions, adapt to

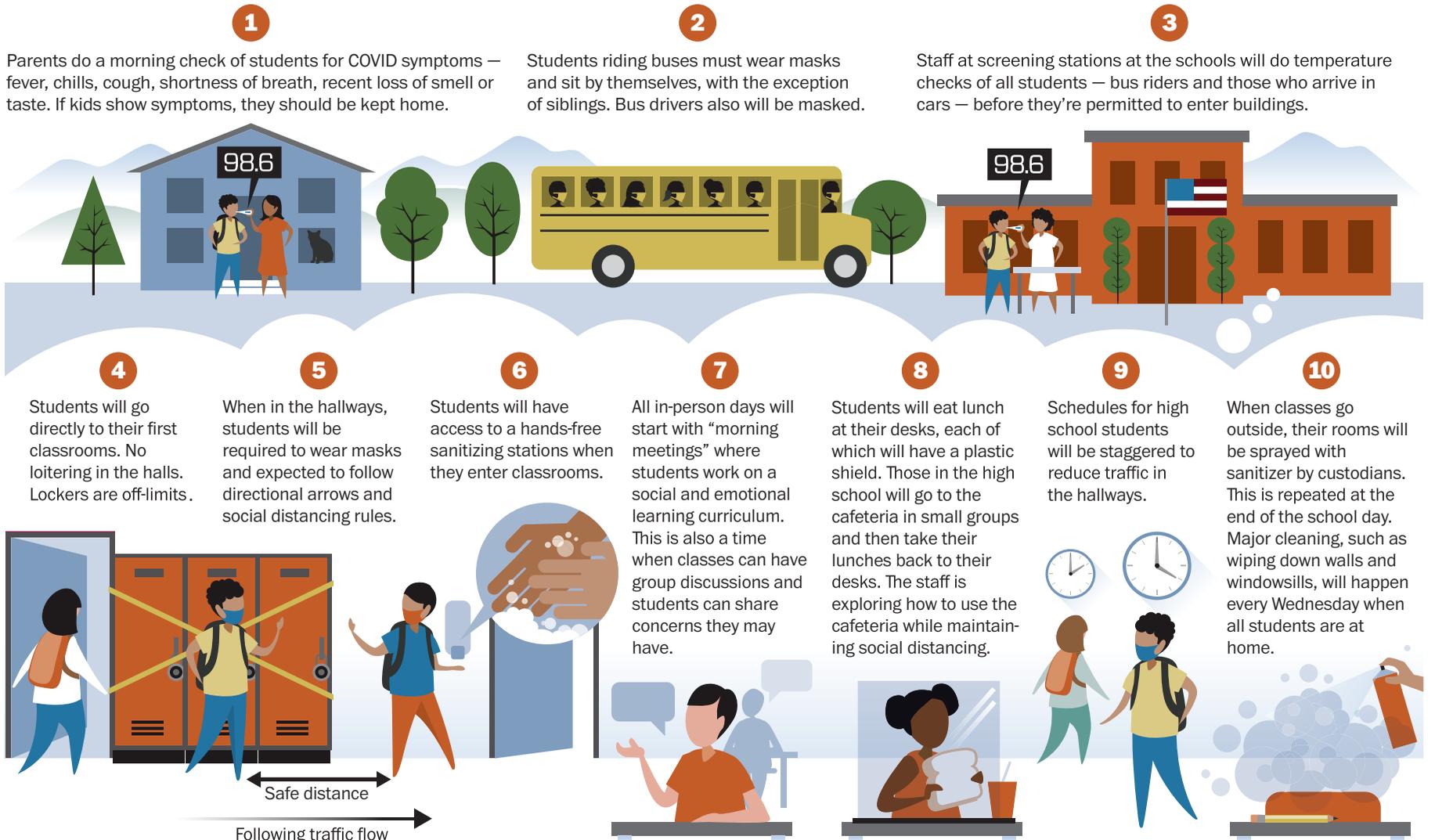
See **SCHOOLS**, Page 12



BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER FOR FOOHILLS FORUM

‘I MAY NEVER PLAY FOOTBALL AGAIN’ | The reality of COVID-19 is just now hitting Taven Murrah, a Rappahannock County High School athlete who is entering his senior year. Taven’s story and others from RCPS are found beginning on Page 13.

A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY IN ATYPICAL TIMES | How Rappahannock County's public school students will get back to class next week



BY LAURA STANTON FOR RAPP NEWS AND FOOHILLS FORUM



Running Republican, juggling a pandemic

At a Rappahannock fundraiser last weekend, Congressional candidate Bob Good conceded risks of COVID-19 — sans mask: “I believe that we need to take reasonable precautions.” Page 16

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

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Not so fast with amended comprehensive plan

County residents pointed out typos, incorrect information in document

BY PATTY HARDEE

Special to the Rappahannock News

A behind-the-scenes showdown between County Administrator Garrey Curry and Planning Commission Chair David Konick headed off what could have been an illegal process to amend the comprehensive plan approved for

Board of Supervisors' consideration at the planners August 19 meeting.

At that meeting's public hearing on the comp plan, several speakers pointed out typos and incorrect information in the document or suggested additions. For example, one speaker urged the planners to add "bicycling" to the list of outdoor activities enjoyed by tourists and residents, although there were far more serious corrections to

See **PLAN**, Page 8

Learning your 'A's' and 'B's'



BY HOLLY JENKINS

Rappahannock County Public Schools held their "second" first day of school on Thursday, Aug. 27. Teachers and staff greeted Group B students for the first time for in-school instruction after Group A, which had returned Monday, Aug. 24, completed their classes for the week. Seen here, 5th grader Mary Reinboldt waves hello to the new school year while kindergartner Daiana Flores brings a pretty pink reflection to her COVID-altered classroom.

HOMIE SWEET HOMIE?

A RAPPAHANNOCK NEWS/FOOTHILLS FORUM SPECIAL REPORT

- Is there a housing problem in Rappahannock?
- Are there not affordable houses to rent or buy here?
- What's at the root of the housing challenges in the county?
- How do housing prices compare to elsewhere?
- Who faces the biggest challenge: Renters or buyers?
- Who is most in need of affordable housing?
- What is housing's impact on hiring?
- What's the impact of Airbnb and weekend rentals?
- And why does affordability matter?

STARTING ON PAGE 10, find answers to these questions – and a clearer picture of the county's housing situation.



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Three ways Rappahannock can vote early, starting Sept. 18 • 5



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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

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Rapp taxpayers footing the bill in Bragg lawsuit

Attorney's fees could have been steeper were it not for judge

BY JOHN McCASLIN
Rappahannock News staff

Rappahannock County taxpayers aren't off the hook by any stretch despite Judge Designate Jeffrey W. Parker awarding attorney David Konick a mere \$6,250 of the \$132,769.46 in attorney's fees he claimed he was owed in representing Marian Bragg v. The Board of Supervisors of Rappahannock County.

That said, the lawsuit filed by Bragg could have been far more costly to taxpayers.

While an exact dollar amount has yet to be calculated by the Rappahannock County government, Treasurer Debra Knick said this week, it is safe to assume the county has already paid \$50,000-plus in outside attorneys' fees to defend itself in the FOIA-related case, which doesn't include hundreds of hours both the county attorney and deputy county attorney spent in defending the charges.

Konick's paltry slice of the pie, dished out August 28 in a rewritten opinion by Judge Parker of the Twentieth Judicial Court of Virginia, might have been more difficult for taxpayers to swallow had Bragg's counsel chosen to settle this

See **LAWSUIT**, Page 18

Enough is enough, chief judge says of carpenter's 58th criminal violation

Lawrence 'Junior' Wood 'needs to get a taste of incarceration'

BY JOHN McCASLIN
Rappahannock News staff

Labeling him a "danger to an unsuspecting public," Rappahannock County Chief Judge Douglas L. Fleming, Jr. on Monday informed Amissville master carpenter Lawrence "Junior" Wood that he would be spending the next four years behind bars.

Upon his release, Wood will serve five years' probation, with the stipulation that any future contracting work the 45-year-old laborer enters into must be approved in advance and then monitored by his probation office down to the last finishing "nail."

Your "history is profoundly sad . . . a history that makes everybody doubt you," Judge Fleming told Wood when it came time for his sentencing.

"I know I've done wrong," said

See **WOOD**, Page 8



HOME SWEET HOME?

A RAPPAHANNOCK NEWS/FOOTHILLS FORUM SPECIAL REPORT

'We are out of balance'



BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER FOR FOOTHILLS FORUM

Hope Dunn, seen with daughter **Marley**, recently extended her lease in Amissville for another year, but buying a home still feels out of reach.

TRYING TO MAKE RAPP HOME

The stories of three residents that sketch a picture of life in Rappahannock and what it means to find a home here.

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COVID-19 SQUEEZES THE MARKET

The pandemic spurred demand for country homes while also reducing supply as sellers took their homes off the market.

And that supply-demand gap helped drive up prices. PAGE 14

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

What might work in Rappahannock? A look at some efforts — both local and national — aimed at addressing the shortage of affordable housing. PAGE 15



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Voting: What you need to know

In Rappahannock, there's already been a 60 percent increase in absentee ballot requests. A look at key dates and voting rules. **10**

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