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TWO SECTIONS • 75¢

Virginia Attorney General: 2nd Amendment Sanctuary County resolutions have 'no legal effect'

by Larry Chowning

Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring issued an advisory opinion on December 19 that said Second Amendment Sanctuary County resolutions passed by localities across Virginia have "no legal effect."

Herring stated in his opinion letter to Democrat Jay Jones, Virginia's 89th District Delegate from Norfolk, that localities and local constitutional officers (sheriffs) cannot nullify state laws and must follow potential gun violence prevention measures passed by the General Assembly.

"When the General Assembly passes new gun safety laws they will be enforced, and they will be followed," said Herring. "These (Second Amendment) resolutions have no legal force, and they're just part of an effort by the gun lobby to stoke fear."

The General Assembly will reconvene in January 2020 and are expected to consider gun safety proposals intro-

duced by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam.

"What we're talking about are the kind of commonsense gun safety laws that Virginians voted for just a few weeks ago, like universal background checks to make sure that dangerous people aren't buying guns," Herring wrote in his statement. "Too many Virginians have lost their lives to guns and it is well past time that we enact these gun safety measures that will save lives and make our communities safer."

"Recurring incidents of gun violence continues to plague the Commonwealth of Virginia," Herring wrote. "The scale of the gun violence epidemic is staggering. Over 10,000 Virginians have been killed by a gun since 2007. Virginians have also been victims of several mass shootings, including the 2019 tragedy in Virginia Beach."

"Issues related to gun safety were also a central [issue] in the legislative elections," Herring wrote. "Fol-

lowing those elections, the Governor has promised . . . to enact certain gun safety measures."

As of December 19, 94 cities and counties across Virginia approved some type of resolution to become a Second Amendment sanctuary. The Middlesex County Board of Supervisors approved a sanctuary resolution by a 3-1-1 vote on December 3.

Several surrounding counties that have adopted similar resolutions are: Lancaster, December 12; King William, November 25; Mathews, December 17; Gloucester, December 3, and Northumberland, December 12. The board of supervisors in Essex County tabled the matter until its January 14 meeting.

Middlesex County Sheriff David Bushey has stated that if "unconstitutional" laws restricting certain types of guns are adopted by the General Assembly, he will tell citizens not to bring their guns to him but instead "take them to the state police."

Proposed county school bus garage could cost \$1 million

by Larry Chowning

The Middlesex County School Board learned at its regular monthly meeting on December 9 that a proposed new bus garage may cost considerably more than the \$500,000 originally estimated and set aside in the Capital Improvement Fund by county supervisors.

The "concept cost estimate" by Bay Design Group of Urbanna estimated the total cost of the project could run from between \$936,000 to \$1,240,000.

For several years, county supervisors and school board members have discussed whether to build a bus garage on county-owned property at Cooks Corner near the Middlesex Animal Shelter and combine school and county maintenance programs.

The school system has had a bus shop at Cooks Corner for years and

used it solely for school vehicle maintenance. As part of the Cooks Corner Revitalization Project, the old bus garage is scheduled to be torn down.

The school board recently decided to build a garage solely for school vehicles on land at Middlesex Elementary School (MES) near the solar farm behind the school at Locust Hill.

The estimate by Bay Design Group states that site development for a bus garage at MES will cost between \$535,000 and \$605,000; a small three-bay building, 60 by 80 feet, will cost \$336,000; and a large three-bay building, 80 by 100 feet, will cost \$560,000.

Site design plan costs, including surveying and civil engineering, will be 6% of the total cost—estimated to be between \$30,000 to \$36,000. Geotechnical evaluation will cost between \$8,000 and \$9,000, and "site construction oversight" between \$27,000 and

\$30,000.

The school board approved a 2020 capital improvements plan project submission form requesting \$936,000 for the project to be sent to the county board of supervisors. The submission application states that the anticipated start date of the school bus garage will be in the spring of 2021 and anticipated completion date in October of 2021.

The increase in funding for the school bus garage has to be approved by the Middlesex County Board of Supervisors. The project has not been bid. A competitive bidding process could bring the total cost down, noted Pinetop District school board member Garland Harrow.

The next school board meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Monday, January 13, at the Historic Middlesex Courthouse in Saluda.

Pilot Kyla Ford is ready to fly

by Tom Chillemi

Kyla Ford of Hartfield received her private pilot's license on October 30, 2019 at just 18 years of age and is the only teenager in Middlesex County to have a license to fly and to carry passengers.

Kayla and her twin sister Cheyanne were destined to fly. After all, they were raised by two pilots, Oscar Barber and his wife Ms. Leo Ford-Barber.

After months of instruction, Kyla and her twin sister Cheyanne each made their solo flight the summer of 2018 when they were just 17 years old.

Many dream of flying some day. Kyla and Cheyanne acted on their dreams and attained the goal as teens.

Kyla would tell anyone who wants to fly to stop dreaming and take action. "It's good to start as soon as possible," she said. "There is so much to learn and do. Flying is definitely something that never gets boring."

Kyla graduated from Middlesex High School in June of 2019 and found time to pursue her pilot's license while being a student at Rappahannock Community College studying criminal justice. "I won't lie," said Kyla. "It's a bit overwhelming at first with all the information, but it's the most fulfilling thing to be able to say you finally have your pilot's license in the end."



Eighteen-year-old Kyla Ford

Getting started

Kyla recommends researching and possibly finding an equipped pilot that is able to teach. "I would say that's the best option. It's way more personal when you have someone who is teaching you one-on-one instead of being in a classroom with 10 other people. Usually you can bargain a better price when it's a one-on-one kind of situation."

Actual teaching institutions can get pretty pricey by the hour, she said. "If you have no other choice but to attend a flight school, do your best research to find a school that best fits you financially."

"The best advice I could give a new pilot starting out is to learn as much

as possible on your own time," said Kyla. "The more you know, the less you have to ask your instructor, and the less you have to ask the more time and money you save!"

Kyla said she is fortunate to have grown up and been around pilots her whole life. "They've always waited for the day I could get my pilot's license. My 'uncle' Oscar Barber is the one who really made it possible for me. He bought me my plane when I was just 14 and I've been flying and studying aviation ever since. None of this would have been possible without him and I'm very thankful for all the time and effort he's put in to make this

(See Teen pilot, Page A6)



Holiday cat

A mysterious Urbanna cat emerges from shadows, contrasting holiday decorations. (Photo by Tom Chillemi)

Counseling will be offered in connection with death of school resource officer

Many in the community are saddened by the death of Middlesex Deputy Sheriff Melinda Hart, who has served as the school resource officer at St. Clare Walker Middle School for several years. While the circumstances surrounding her passing are still under investigation by the Virginia State Police, the Middlesex Sheriff's Office is working closely with the Middlesex Public School System to offer counseling services to students and the community, stated a press release from Middlesex Sheriff David Bushey on Monday, December 30.

Sheriff Bushey said on Monday that a meeting was planned for Tuesday to develop a strategy to offer counseling to students who knew Deputy Hart. Agencies to be involved in that meeting included the Middlesex County Public Schools, Middle Peninsula-Northern Neck Community Services Board, and Middlesex County Administration.

All unattended deaths are investigated by police and an autopsy is performed by the state medical examiner in Richmond.

Sheriff Bushey said he could not comment on the investigation.

It is not clear if Hart's death is the subject of a press release issued on December 29 by Virginia State Police

public information officer Sergeant Michelle Anaya regarding a death in the Topping area. However, there has been no other deaths reported this week, and Sgt. Anaya declined to comment further or identify the deceased.

Sgt. Anaya's press release stated that on Sunday, December 29, the Virginia State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigations, Chesapeake Field Office, was requested by the Middlesex County Sheriff's Office to investigate an unattended death. Agents responded to the 8400 block of General Puller Highway in the Topping section of Middlesex County where a male stated that a family member would not leave the residence, states the December 29 press release.

At approximately 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 29, the Middlesex County Sheriff's Office was called to respond to the residence and, upon arrival, a 48-year-old female was found deceased at the above address.

The death does not seem to be suspicious in nature at this time, said the press release.

State police have identified and notified family members at the scene and are currently investigating the incident.

Urbanna pool appears okay for another season

by Tom Chillemi

Urbanna's aging swimming pool appears to be in good enough shape to make it through another season.

Brendan Harris, a retired professional firefighter who has managed three pools, has been helping manage the town pool. He told council at its December 19 meeting the pool is not

leaking. There had been concerns the pool was losing water, but Harris told council that valves have been repaired.

Harris said the pool water alkalinity is very high and can damage the pool and its pipes if not adjusted with chemicals. Harris recommended the

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