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Amherst, Va.

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Thursday, January 16, 2020

Women take top spots on boards

Simultaneous female chair, vice chair a first for supervisors

By Justin Faulconer
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"Madam Chair" is a phrase that will get much use at local government meetings in Amherst County this year.

The Amherst County Board of Supervisors during its first meeting of the year Jan. 9 selected a fe-

male duo to fill both chair and vice chair role, a first for the county. Claudia Tucker, the board's current longest serving member who has served the past 10 years, was unanimously chosen as chairwoman while Jennifer Moore, who has served the past two years, was tapped as vice chairwoman.

Tucker, who also has

served a few prior years in the chair role, said she is honored by the board's trust and looks forward to continuing working alongside fellow supervisors, including Tom Martin, who served his first meeting Jan. 9 as the board's new District 1 representative.

"We have a wealth of subject matter expertise on this board and I know



Moore



Tucker

that all of us look forward to using that along with the phenomenal staff to continue to move Amherst County forward," Tucker said.

She said top priorities this year are supporting the county's law enforcement and public safety personnel in compensation and equipment.

"We want to maintain and recruit the best available because our residents deserve no less," Tucker said of staff.

She said supervisors want to work closely and in partnership with the Amherst County School

Board to promote the highest quality of education and to ensure vocational opportunities in the schools are the best in the region, including a renewed emphasis on agriculture, an area that has major financial impact in the county.

"Most importantly, we must remember that in order to attract businesses

SEE WOMEN | A5

A meeting with some drama

Theater students showcase improvisational skills before Amherst school officials



Amherst County High School drama students Leeland Mowery (left) and Carson Peters perform during an improv skit.

Amherst County High School's theater program had a special audience on hand for an up close and personal view of their improvisational skills on Jan. 9.

The Amherst County School Board, which held its monthly meeting at the high school, took about 20 minutes to observe the drama students in their best form. Seated in two rows at the rear of the stage, the students took part in an improvisational exercise that led to the creation of several scenarios using phrases, places and professions such as "budget cuts," Madison Heights and plumber.

The students created much much laughter during a "Quad" exercise where they rotated places. Drama instructor Patricia Emmert said the goal of the improvisational exercise is for students to advance the scene and such on the spot acting can be difficult to perform.

"They make it look easy," Emmert said.

The drama program held its Improv Night the following night on Jan. 10. Amherst County Public Schools Superintendent Rob Arnold thanked the students for showcasing their talents.

"If you have an hour and a half you can come see our show," Arnold said



ABOVE: Amherst County Public Schools Chief Officer Teresa Crouch (from left to right), Assistant Superintendent William Wells, Superintendent Rob Arnold, Amherst School Board member Amanda Wright and School Board Chairwoman Priscilla Ligon look on with smiles as students act out a few improvisational scenes. RIGHT: Amherst County High School drama teacher Patricia Emmert reacts as she watches her students perform an improv skit for the Amherst County School Board.

to the students, referring the board's meeting in progress, with a smile.

— Justin Faulconer



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Start times changed for first session each month

Members decide to push meetings ahead to 3 p.m.

By Justin Faulconer
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The Amherst County Board of Supervisors' first meeting of the month now will have a later start time of 3 p.m. starting in February.

The board instituted the change with a unanimous vote at its Jan. 9 meeting. The first Tuesday meeting of the month for many years has started at 1 p.m.

Prior to those meetings the Amherst County Service Authority's board, which consists of supervisors, meets at 11 a.m. The authority board is expected to discuss at its February meeting bumping the meeting time to 1 p.m.

Tom Martin, the board's newest member who took office in January, recently suggested the change. He has said the move could be advantageous in allowing more residents to attend the later meeting.

SEE MEETINGS | A5

MADISON HEIGHTS

Land transfer approved for road project

By Justin Faulconer
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The Amherst County School Board during its Jan. 9 meeting approved conveying a section of Trojan Road near Monelison Middle School as part of a major road reconstruction project planned for Woodys Lake Road in Madison Heights.

The board will transfer the 9,456 square feet area to the Amherst County Board of Supervisors for purchase by the Virginia

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Jeff Harrington (right) gives fellow competitor Turner Neblett a high elbow bump after Harrington won the 10th annual IRON 5K Race. Neblett won second place.

Going the distance while social distancing

5K race draws smiles, grit and fist bumps in Amherst



Jodie Chandler was the first female runner to cross the finish line Sunday. Her official time was 26:12.

PHOTOS BY LEE LUTHER JR./FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

BY LEE LUTHER JR.
For The New Era-Progress

The weather was picture perfect for the 10th annual IRON 5K Race on Sunday, which drew 73 competitors of many ages.

This year's race had to adjust to COVID-19 in the date, moving from spring to fall, and the location of the start/finish line as it was moved from Amherst County High School to U.S. 29 Business 29 adjacent to the Ambriar shopping center.

"We decided to postpone our race for six months because safety is our top priority. We wanted to create a race environment that was as safe as possible for our runners, volunteers, and community," said Derrick Brown, race director and founder of IRON Lives, a youth mentoring organization.

"By changing the course, requiring masks, checking temperatures, offering a virtual option and social distancing, we feel like we accomplished that goal," Brown said. "It was important for us to not cancel the 5K because this is one of our biggest fundraisers and it allows us to help hundreds of students throughout the school year."

The runners still gave it their all as the course had them go uphill in first stage.

As the time clock hit the 19:15 mark, race winner Jeff Harrington crossed the finish line to claim the 5K victory. Turner Neblett crossed for a second place finish 23 seconds later.

Jodie Chandler was the first female competitor with her time of 26:12, which also was the 14th best overall time. Runners received medals for their efforts.

"Given the unprecedented circumstances of this year, we're very pleased with how well the event went," said Brown, principal of ACHS.



Jeff Harrington won Sunday's IRON 5K race with a time of 19:15.

MORE PHOTOS
» More images from the race. A8



Turner Neblett from Amherst County took an overall second place in Sunday's 10th annual IRON 5K Race with a time of 19:48.



Race volunteers set up road blocks and the start/finish for the IRON 5K race on U.S. 29 Business behind the Loose Shoe Brewery on Oct. 4.

RIGGLEMAN RELEASES BIGFOOT BOOK

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Thursday, December 3, 2020

Amherst County mulls EMS expansion

BY JUSTIN FAULCONER

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A proposal to fully staff a fourth ambulance to serve Amherst County is expected to come forth in the county's 2021-22 budget process early next year.

The county has an additional vehicle it can put into service for emergency outreach but does not have the staff for it, according to a report recently presented to the Amherst County Board of Supervisors. An additional four emergency medical services employees would be needed, a cost of about \$200,000 annually with salary and benefits.

The money, if the positions receive approval, would have to come from recurring revenue in the county budget. The amount will be included as part of a list of supplemental budget requests where the board prioritizes the need against other line items, which will come before supervisors in early 2021, County Administrator Dean Rodgers said.

"All localities are experiencing increased call volume and suffer from challenges of recruiting new staff," the report to supervisors states. "The solution to reduce response times and deal with the increasing workload is to hire more EMS personnel."

The increased calls are driven by residents living longer with more health care challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of assisted living facilities and limited space in skilled nursing care facilities in Amherst County, according to the report.

All fire and EMS departments in the Lynchburg region are competing for the

SEE EMS | A8

FLIGHT CLUB



PHOTO BY LEE LUTHER JR./FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Amherst County High School pole vaulter Amelia Wilson heads towards the bar during recent practice at the Balance Pole Vault Club in Concord, which is owned and operated by ACHS track coach Lance Carter. See **Sports, A6**.

Shooting suspect denied bond

BY RACHEL MAHONEY

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A man charged with first-degree murder of a 92-year-old woman and maliciously wounding her daughter in a shooting last summer was denied his request for bond Monday.

Justin Jay Sales, 19, of Amherst, has been in jail since his July 2019 arrest. Besides murder and malicious wounding charges, he's also facing two counts of using a firearm in a felony.



Sales

His charges date back to June 25 of last year, when Doris Puleio was found dead and Trudy Ann Goetz injured at a house on Bobwhite Road. Puleio had been shot in the torso and left arm, while Goetz suffered two piercing gunshot wounds to the torso and one that grazed her chest, prosecutors in the case said.

Shell casings at the scene led investigators back to a handgun that Sales' girlfriend had bought for his friend, Takota Cash, in March, according to evidence presented at Sales' court hearings thus far.

Cash testified at a hearing last year to loaning Sales the gun a week prior to the

SEE BOND | A8

Planners: Redevelopment of CVTC an 'exciting but challenging' endeavor

BY JUSTIN FAULCONER

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Following a weeklong series of public input sessions on the future of the Central Virginia Training Center site in Madison Heights, Amherst County planners recently discussed how county zoning affects the roughly 350-acre campus.

CVTC, a state-owned medical facility, recently closed after more than a century of operating in the county. The last resident

was relocated in April and fewer than a dozen employees are still employed there as the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services is in the process of working to transfer the site to the Department of General Services.

The Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and area officials want the site successfully redeveloped to bring jobs and economic activity back into the region. HDR, Inc., a Nebraska firm, is working on a master plan for future redevelopment and representatives recently traveled to Lynchburg for a week of input sessions in early November.

During the sessions numerous ideas and thoughts for the property — including a mix of housing, business and office space uses with amenities — were presented.

Jeremy Bryant, director of community development for Amherst, said the public input is an important component in formulating a vision in a master plan for future redevelopment at the CVTC grounds, which in-

For latest on CVTC redevelopment

» To learn more about the master plan for the Central Virginia Training Center site, visit www.trainingcentermasterplan.com.

cludes more than 90 buildings in close proximity to the Lynchburg border.

The master plan is vital in pursuing a redevelopment concept that eventually will come before the Amherst County Board of Su-

perisors.

"We're really thrilled about it," Megan Lucas, executive director of the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, said of the plan in a video post during the input sessions.

The document will telescope a vision for the site's future, Lucas said.

Bryant said the CVTC property currently is zoned Public Lands (P-1) Public and a rezoning process is anticipated.

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