

Supervisors back big broadband expansion plan

► County may contribute \$5.9 million as part of regional project ► Akre family pledges \$3.5 million

BY JULIA SHANAHAN
Rappahannock News Staff

The Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors and Broadband Authority voted to continue forward into phase 2 of their agreement with All Points Broadband that could greatly expand internet service in the county.

The bodies (made up of the same people) could not reach a decision at their meeting on Sept. 1, and held a continuation of the meeting on Tuesday.

Hampton Supervisor Keir Whitson, Stone-wall-Hawthorne Supervisor Chris Parrish, and Wakefield Supervisor Debbie Donehey voted in favor

of moving forward with the agreement, Jackson Supervisor Ron Frazier voted against the agreement and Piedmont Supervisor Christine Smith abstained.

All Points is estimating the project to cost \$19.5

See **BROADBAND**, Page 18

County real estate taxes are inequitable and comparatively high, yet vital to preserving Rappahannock's identity

BY TIM CARRINGTON
For Foothills Forum

Rappahannock County property taxes are a financial lifeline, a tool for preservation and an algebra of minute calibrations, some of which benefit large properties over small.

For all its complexities, it's the indispensable tax, raising money from what everyone values – real estate – which gets converted into the services Rappahannock residents need.

But the taxes involve trade-offs which go to the heart of the Rappahannock identity,

including its stresses and contradictions. The county's land-use valuations give large landowners a significant tax break that isn't available to owners of small properties, unfairly saddling these residents with a higher rate of taxation. The tax breaks also cut into local county revenue, meaning there's less money available for the county's largest single investment— its schools.

At the same time, however, the land-use tax breaks are crucial to Rappahannock's defining commitment to protect an unequalled rural

See **TAXES**, Page 20

ANALYSIS

A look at the lifeline: For richer, for poorer, property taxes fund the county

A Foothills Forum - Rappahannock News special report

At the county park, good fences make good neighbors

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Another brewery in Sperryville OK'd — with conditions

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Supervisors approve paid fire & rescue department

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9-11: 20 years later, memories endure

"I felt it was my duty to make the children feel safe," said Deborah Flinchum, who was teaching at the elementary school. Four residents reflect on their Sept. 11 experiences. 12



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CenturyLink outages pose safety risks to residents, officials say

► 'I don't know what happens if someone tries to call 911, can't and dies in their home.' ► Broadband the solution?

BY BEN PETERS
Rappahannock News staff

Some Rappahannock County residents say that for years they have been forced to contend with unreliable service from telecommunications giant CenturyLink, with frequent and lengthy outages posing potentially dire health and safety issues in

areas where cell and broadband service is unpredictable at best, if not wholly unavailable.

Geneva Welch, who helps to care for her husband, former Rappahannock County Supervisor Roger Welch who is suffering from Parkinson's disease in their home located near Flint Hill, received landline and internet service through CenturyLink. But for

nearly three weeks in November, her connection unexpectedly failed, leaving them with few communication options during a time when her husband has had to recently make several 911 calls for emergency medical care. It was just one of many outages in recent months.

See **CENTURYLINK**, Page 8



Sarah Latham on the job in the 1960s.

IN APPRECIATION

Sarah Latham got the job done

Rappahannock News editor told the county's stories for decades

BY DAPHNE HUTCHINSON
Special to the Rappahannock News

Sarah Latham was a liberated woman. The long-time editor of the Rappahannock News, who died Nov. 24, 2021, would have chuckled to hear that term applied to herself. Likely she would have squeezed her lips tight, looked over her specs and shaken her head in disagreement. She never saw herself as a libber, a ground breaker or a trail blazer. But what better way to describe a woman with a high school diploma who became editor of the county's paper of record in 1956 and led the newspaper through the transition from manual Underwood to computer, from hot lead to digital type, and from tabloid to broadsheet as the county changed around her? At the same time, she was a magistrate for two decades and a founding member of the Amissville Fire Dept. who set records for fundraising. And she did it all as a single parent, widowed at 35 with four daughters, the youngest 8 months, the oldest 14 years.

See **LATHAM**, Page 12



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Peter Hornbostel's new short stories twist and surprise

The Flint Hill resident's book hops from past to present, jumps from Switzerland to Brazil to Rappahannock, and from heartbreak to happiness. 10



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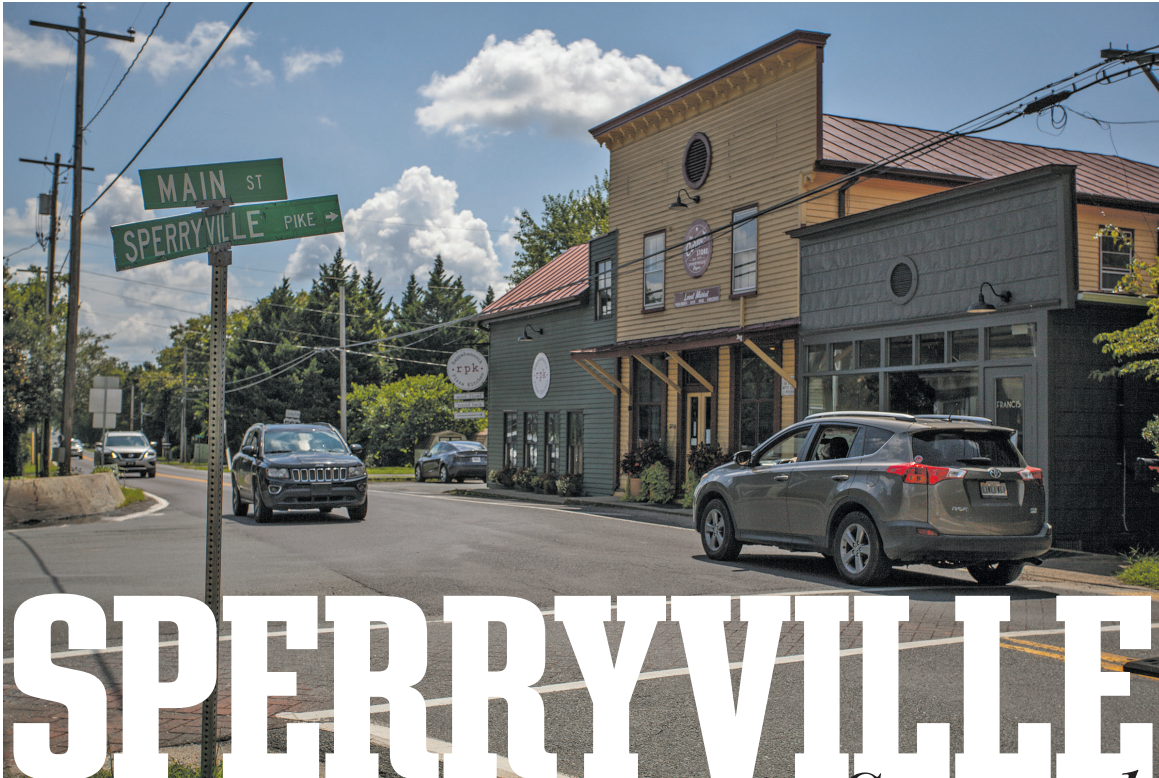
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A FOOTHILLS FORUM • RAPPAHANNOCK NEWS SPECIAL REPORT



BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER FOR FOOTHILLS FORUM

at a Crossroads

The 'Little Apple' faces both challenges and opportunities as residents look toward the village's future

BY BOB HURLEY
For Foothills Forum

Crossroads:

- An intersection of two or more roads.
- A point at which a crucial decision must be made which will have far-reaching consequences.

— Oxford English Dictionary

Since its founding in 1820, Sperryville has been a crossroads village. In its early years, it was a place where newly arrived settlers built

their homes and shops, and travelers paused to refresh themselves. Union and Confederate troops crisscrossed the area during the Civil War.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the village evolved into a prosperous community boasting general stores, distilleries, hotels, local eateries, apple processing operations, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, a doctor, and a dentist. With the opening of Shenandoah National Park (SNP) in 1936, the village experienced another growth spurt responding to the rising number of tourists, motels, restaurants, and roadside stands that had begun to spring up along what is now U.S. Highway 211, approaching the park.

"When I first moved here 37 years ago there were a lot more local people living in the village," said

See **SPERRYVILLE**, Page 12

COVID-19 concerns in Rapp schools lead some parents to pull their kids

Superintendent 'exhausted by the push and pull of political divisiveness that has caught us in the crosshairs of public ire'

BY BEN PETERS
Rappahannock News Staff

After the first day back from summer break at Rappahannock County Public Schools, Claire Snelson made a judgement call in the face of the highly infectious delta variant to pull her eighth-grade son from in person learning.

The decision was made in an effort to protect her youngest child who suffers from a chronic lung illness that's landed them in the hospital twice after catching the common cold. Snelson, a former Rappahannock County Public Schools PTO president, also suffers from an autoimmune disease that places her at risk for developing complications from the virus should she become infected.

See **PARENTS**, Page 6

Man out on bond after fatal crash that killed young girl

▶ Page 10

Rush River Commons moves forward, public hearing set

▶ Page 19



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The Farm Tour is almost back!

After a pause in 2020, the annual tradition is scheduled to return late next month. Meet goats, horses, cows, and chickens; enjoy hayrides; and see milking, beekeeping, and cooking demos. *The Rapp*: 4



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