

Melanie's Country Curl to close after 38 years

**BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER**

For more than 38 years, Melanie's Country Curl Beauty Salon has afforded its owner, Melanie Beale, the opportunity to do what she enjoys.

She provides haircuts, perms and colors out of a shop in her home in Windsor while still having the flexibility to take care of her family, which was particularly key when her two children were still at home near the beginning of the beauty salon's run.

But on Dec. 23, Beale will be retiring and closing the salon.

"This has been the greatest — to get to do what you like to do and do it from home," she said.

The inspiration that led to Melanie's Country Curl was first on display when Beale, a Carrsville native, was in elementary school.

"When I was in the fourth grade, I wanted to be a hairdresser," she said. "I had a neighbor, she was a senior in high school, had hair done to here, and I'd go next door just to brush her hair."

Beale said that being a hairdresser is "just what I wanted to do forever, didn't



Melanie Beale smiles for a photo in her business, Melanie's Country Curl Beauty Salon, that has existed in Windsor since September 1983. She will be retiring and closing the salon Dec. 23.

TITUS MOHLER | THE TIDEWATER NEWS

want to do anything else."

A graduate of Windsor High School, Beale said her part of her class's high school prophecy was largely accurate.

"In the prophecy, I owned my own beauty salon, and it was called, 'The Tease,'" she said. "That's how somebody wrote it up. I thought, 'Well, we ended up with the beauty shop, but it wasn't called

'The Tease.'"

She noted that she went to beauty school during her last year of high school.

"I've been fixing hair since I was 18," she said. "It was something I wanted to do, so (I've) never regretted a minute of it."

She opened Melanie's Country Curl Beauty Salon in September 1983, operating out of another house in

town.

Beale had a babysitter helping to look after her son and daughter when she was at work in the first few years of the business, including a few years before that when she worked for another hairdresser.

Then Beale and her husband purchased a lot on Twin Circle in Windsor and built their current house.

"Instead of having a two-car garage, I made half of it into my beauty shop," she said.

The house was completed in 1986, and that is when Melanie's Country Curl moved there — its long-standing, final location.

Beale has always been the business's only hairdresser. She operates by appointment only, and for the majority of her beauty salon's run, she has taken appointments on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

She noted that from 1983 until now, she has always been as busy as she wanted to be. In the early years, she was serving clients amid a schedule that included her children's participation in sports, cheerleading, dance and more.

"It's been the best career I think anybody could have that wanted a family too,

because when having children, I've been at home, so the bus comes, (the kids) get off, Momma's always home," she said.

When time allowed for more clients, more of them came.

"I've done as many as five perms in a day, and I probably lost my mind," she said with a laugh. "That was a lot, and that was in my younger days. But I could work 10, 12 hours a day."

She said she never advertised her business in any newspaper, but rather, it was sustained by good word-of-mouth.

"That's the best kind of advertisement there is," she said.

Her clients have come from all over the Hampton Roads area, and in some instances, she has served multiple generations of families.

She said what she will miss most about running the business is seeing the people.

She does not have any immediate retirement plans, but she said her

daughter wants to take her on some trips, and now she will have more flexibility to visit different places, since she will not have the need to get back to town and the shop.

As for why December 2021 was the right time to retire, she pointed to some wear and tear on her knee and arm.

"I think that was it, and then another thing was a perm that I've been giving for over 40 years is no longer available," she said. "I thought, 'Well, Lord, that must be my other sign.' I can't get it anymore, they're not making it anymore, (and) I thought, 'Well, it's time to stop then.'"

Some of her longtime clients have been making the effort to come out for a final appointment this month, honoring the 38 years of service to the community by Melanie's Country Curl Beauty Salon.

As she finished sharing the salon's history, Beale said, "That's the story of a little girl getting to do what she likes."

A little bit of home for the holidays

**BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER**

Franklin native Tony Surace makes a point of decorating his home each holiday season to help set the scene for Christmas, and for decades now, included in his decorations has been a front page from *The Tidewater News* dating back to the early 1900s.

"It's got a good story behind it," he said.

He noted that in the past, when people would build their houses, they would insulate the inside walls with newspaper and whatever else they could gather.

On a day in the early 1970s, Surace's brother, Dickie, was helping demolish a house somewhere in Franklin when he discovered a colorful front page from *The Tidewater News* dedicated entirely to a Christmas-themed artistic work that prominently featured Santa Claus.

"(Dickie) doesn't even remember the house that it was at, but he saw it when they pulled the wall down," Tony said. "He says, 'I've got to have that.' So he cut it out."

In short order, he gave it to Tony, who framed it himself soon thereafter.

Tony highlighted some of the details of the front page, noting it was from the Friday, Dec. 12, 1913, edition of the paper.

"That's pretty old," he said. "This one has got damage on it in different places, but it's held together."

He pointed out a faint label on the paper near the top of it that seemed to indicate who had owned it.

"You can see the owner of it was T.H. Barrett, and there's the date, October the 8th, 1914," Tony said. "So that's kind of weird, a year later, but maybe he ordered it a year later, I don't know."

Tony cited the price of the paper in 1913 as listed at the top of the page — "As you can see, '\$1 a year in advance.'"

He noted that the color on the page has held up quite well.

"I didn't even know they had color in 1913," he said. "I was surprised it wasn't black and white."

Tony and his wife of 52 years, Joani, live in Ches-



Franklin native Tony Surace holds up a framed, Christmas-themed front page of *The Tidewater News* from 1913 that he has hung above the fireplace in his home around the holidays for more than 40 years.

TITUS MOHLER | THE TIDEWATER NEWS

apeake but grew up, went to school and married in Franklin.

Incorporating the now-108-year-old front page from *The Tidewater News* into their Christmas decor serves as a fitting remind-

er to the Suraces of their own history and also that of the city from whence they came.

"We've been putting that picture up over the fireplace for over 40 years," Tony said.

GOODWYN: '... he has the passion and objectivity to really excel'

FROM PAGE A1

Goodwyn was born and raised in Southampton County on Deloatche Avenue in the town of Boykins.

He graduated from Southampton High School as part of the class of 1979.

The Virginia Supreme Court press release stated that Goodwyn earned his undergraduate degree from Harvard University, magna cum laude, in 1983 and his law degree from the University of Virginia in 1986. Prior to going on the bench, he served as a research associate professor at the University of Virginia School of Law and as a litigation partner at a Norfolk law firm.

He served as a judge of the General District Court for the city of Chesapeake for two years and also served as a judge of the Circuit Court for the city of Chesapeake for more than 10 years.

The release also noted that Goodwyn was appointed to the Supreme Court of Virginia by Gov. Timothy M. Kaine in 2007 and was unanimously elected by the General Assembly to the Supreme Court of Virginia in 2008

before being reelected in 2020.

"I'm sure I speak for all of the Boykins District as well as all of Southampton County when I say how proud I am of Justice Goodwyn," Boykins District Supervisor Carl J. Faison said. "I've had the pleasure of knowing him and following his career for a long time. I met him when he was a teenager, excelling academically in high school and also on the football team. He was the quarterback for Southampton High School during its glory days."

In the class of 1979 superlatives, Goodwyn was voted Most Likely to Succeed.

"And he's lived up to that, hasn't he?" Faison said.

Faison noted he has followed Goodwyn's career from the beginning.

"He's made some great accomplishments, and I guess this is sort of his crowning one," Faison said of the chief justice election. "I'm so proud of him. He's been such an inspiration to all of us. He was a model for my kids, and I am so thankful for him and just pray that God will con-

tinue to bless him and his family."

Boykins Mayor Jackie Robertson said the town is quite proud of Goodwyn.

"My family has a personal connection with Justice Goodwyn," Robertson said. "My wife's grandmother was his babysitter and said he would be president one day. The citizens of Boykins are bursting with excitement and pride."

Goodwyn also has ties to the town of Branchville, which is where his parents moved after buying a small farm there in 1983. Goodwyn presently lives in Chesapeake and is a member of Branchville's Galilee Baptist Church, where he serves as a deacon like his father before him.

Goodwyn is brother to Southampton County School Board Chair Dr. Deborah Goodwyn, who expressed her excitement for her younger brother Tuesday.

"I know that he's going to enjoy this new role," she said. "I think that he has the passion and the objectivity to really excel in this position."

Chief Justice-elect Goodwyn said, "I'm just going to do the best I can to carry

out responsibilities of the job in a way that hopefully benefits all the citizens of the commonwealth."

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Some business leaders not opposed to minimum wage hikes

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

Raising the minimum wage has been a focus of conversation and action at both the state and national levels, and it is something that, if and when enacted, has an impact on businesses everywhere, including those in the Town of Windsor.

A couple of prominent business managers in the area and the county's director of economic development took a few moments this past week to share their thoughts on the subject.

Mark Pierce is the vice president of operations of Mid Atlantic Dairy Queen, which has 14 stores in Virginia, including the one located in Windsor at 61 W. Windsor Blvd.

He said he is not opposed to minimum wage hikes, but he noted that they do create new challenges and have sometimes negative and sometimes positive effects as far as the bottom line goes.

"I've been doing this for a very long time," he said. "I started in March of 1986. Every time we've had a minimum wage increase, we've actually had a good sales year."

The U.S. Department of Labor states that the federal minimum wage for covered nonexempt employees is \$7.25 per hour. According to the Code of Virginia, as of May 1, the minimum wage in the commonwealth moved up to

\$9.50.

"We're at the point now, just like every other retail business is, where we're not paying minimum wage anyway," Pierce said. "We pay above minimum wage — well above it. Now, I don't think all fast-food restaurants are, to start, but we have been for a long time now — I mean years.

"When the minimum wage hike that we just had a few months ago came into effect, we actually raised everybody up even more that was already making more in our company," he said. "So yes, it did cost us a lot of payroll dollars when minimum wage just went up a few months ago."

Pierce asked and answered a key question that comes up in connection to an increase in the minimum wage: "Do we get better help because minimum wage goes up? Well, no, because you've got the same help."

He indicated that some have said better pay will mean better workers.

"Well, you're not going to get better help," he said. "You're going to pay more for the same help, really."

But Pierce made clear he approves of increasing the minimum wage.

"I will tell you I am a fan of minimum wage going up because I know it was \$7.25 an hour, and you cannot feed a family or even yourself on that," he said.

Gabrielle Olya, with GOBankingRates.com, wrote that President Joe Biden tried to incorporate

raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour in the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, but this measure ended up being dropped before the bill passed. Biden did, however, recently issue an executive order to raise the minimum wage from \$10.95 to \$15 for federal contractors.

Olya noted that in addition, some individual states, cities and counties have implemented a \$15 minimum wage, as have several major companies.

But not everyone is on board with raising the minimum wage, with some analysts believing that over 1 million Americans would lose their jobs, Olya wrote. Research conducted by the Congressional Budget Office also found that an increase in the minimum wage would "reduce business income and raise prices" as companies pass on the higher costs of labor to consumers. In addition, it could slightly reduce the U.S.'s total output.

Pierce shared what would happen with his store in Windsor if the federal minimum wage went up to \$15. "Well, obviously, the cost would be passed on to in-

flation to our customers, just like everybody else would have to," he said. "Nobody can absorb a 75% wage hike."

For Mid Atlantic Dairy Queen, the hike would not be mitigated much by the fact that it already pays

more than the current state minimum wage because the company would still want to pay its workers more than whatever the minimum wage happened to be.

"If minimum wage is \$9.50 and we're paying that person \$11.25, when they move it to

\$15, we're going to pay that person \$17.50," Pierce said. "We would have to (in order) to run our business the way we want it run."

According to the Code of Virginia, assuming the federal minimum wage remains unchanged, the state minimum wage will increase over the next six years, with the caveat that employers are required to pay employees at least 75% of the amount listed in the section. From Jan. 1, 2026, until Jan. 1, 2027, the wage is listed as \$15 per hour, with 75% of that being \$11.25 per hour.

"I will tell you I am a fan of minimum wage going up because I know it was \$7.25 an hour, and you cannot feed a family or even yourself on that."

Mark Pierce
President of operations
Mid Atlantic Dairy Queen

By Oct. 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, a commissioner will establish the adjusted state hourly minimum wage that will be in effect during the 12-month period commencing on the following Jan. 1, the code states in the same section.

Jake Redd, owner of Redd's Storage at 45 W. Windsor Blvd. in Windsor, said he did not have too strong a stance on the minimum wage issue.

Like Pierce and Mid Atlantic Dairy Queen, he offers wages in excess of the minimum, and also like Pierce and Dairy Queen, he is having trouble hiring needed staff.

"I've been offering \$10 and \$12 an hour for general labor help from young people, even high schoolers that were kind of looking for jobs," he said, noting that he thought he could get together a team, but it has not happened. "It was a lot different when I was that age. I would have jumped on it, and I'm not far off of that age, honestly. It's just that's how much has changed."

He noted that in his opinion, the market is too artificial right now.

"In my opinion it's got everything to do with the unemployment market right now and what they're paying for unemployment and everything related to COVID (as to) why this market is so crazy, that along with a few other things, I guess," he said.

He said he has no idea how raising the minimum

wage would affect the market as it exists right now.

"From what I'm seeing, what's so hard for me as a brand new business finding some (employees) is that right now, everyone else is trying to find people," he said.

But if the minimum wage were increased again, he said, "I don't think it would affect my business too poorly if it was raised to \$15 an hour."

He said he is willing to pay more and does pay more because the market rates — even for entry-level, younger workers — demand it.

"I think that the market is proving itself to be stronger than any of the state or federal laws," he said.

Chris Morello, Isle of Wight County director of economic development, acknowledged the challenges a rising minimum wage can pose to businesses, but he also expressed optimism that increases will be a net positive.

"Many of our small businesses sustain themselves on relatively thin profit margins, and labor cost increases of any type will always threaten worker hours and possibly even jobs," he said. "However, the last 14 months shed light on the remarkable amount of resiliency and courage Isle of Wight businesses continue to demonstrate, so I remain hopeful that workforce and consumer spending benefits will far outweigh negative impacts, overall, as the minimum wage rises."

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The Tidewater News

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Southampton stays competitive in state redistricting maps

BY STEPHEN FALESKI
STAFF WRITER

Southampton County would remain a General Assembly battleground under a redistricting plan the Supreme Court of Virginia released on Dec. 8.

The county is currently located in Virginia's 75th House of Delegates District, which flipped Republican in November when Otto Wachsmann defeated incumbent

Democratic Del. Roslyn Tyler, who'd held the seat since 2006. Per federal and state constitutional requirements, state legislature and congressional voting districts must be redrawn once every 10 years based on the latest census data.

Under the proposed maps created by two court-appointed special masters, Southampton County would move to the 83rd District, which would encompass

much of the same territory as the present-day 75th, minus the city of Franklin, which would move to the 84th.

The currently majority-Black 75th would become majority-white as the 83rd by including parts of Isle of Wight and Dinwiddie counties, and subtracting Franklin and part of Lunenburg County. According to an analysis by the Virginia Public Access Project of the proposed 83rd's

share of votes cast in the 2016 presidential election, the district could swing Republican or Democratic in future elections by a margin of up to five points. A memorandum from special masters Bernard Grofman and Sean Trende has the district leaning slightly more Republican based on the results of the 2017 Virginia attorney general election.

The 84th District is expected to lean Democratic by five to 20

points based on VPAP's analysis. In addition to Franklin, it would encompass part of Suffolk and the remaining areas of Isle of Wight County — including where Republican 64th District Del. Emily Brewer now lives.

SEE MAPS, A10

Goodwyn elected as Virginia's Chief Justice

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

The Supreme Court of Virginia announced Monday, Dec. 20, that state Supreme Court Judge S. Bernard Goodwyn, a Boykins native, had been elected chief justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia after current Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons made known he was stepping down from the role effective Friday, Dec. 31.



Goodwyn

Goodwyn, who was elected to the top position by the other justices on the Supreme Court of Virginia, will assume the office Saturday, Jan. 1.

"I'm very honored that my colleagues have the confidence in me to elect me to the position, and I'm looking forward to the opportunity to serve," Goodwyn said Tuesday, Dec. 21.

He said the chief justice position was not one that has been the focus of his goals and dreams, but rather his focus has been on the overall opportunity of public service.

"I've always known that I wanted to serve in some type of a capacity in public life, but I did not have any idea of what capacity that might be," he said.

SEE GOODWYN, A7



TITUS MOHLER | THE TIDEWATER NEWS

Highground Services Inc. President and Co-Founder Lisa Strozier and CEO and Co-Founder James "Jim" Strozier stand in front of the location their business graduated to — 500 N. Mechanic St. in Franklin — after incubating in the Franklin Business Center.

The Franklin Business Center is booming

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

The Franklin Business Center exists to help new and developing businesses get established, and its success stories are being told every day by those businesses that have graduated out of the center and into the community.

As noted on the Franklin Southampton Economic Development Inc. website, the

center is a four-story, 40,000-square-foot, fully renovated and restored mixed-use incubator located in Historic Downtown Franklin at 601 N. Mechanic St. The building houses office space, support staff and programs that nurture young firms and expanding businesses.

The center helps businesses get started by letting them first incubate in the supportive environment of the center

for as many as seven years.

Evidence is readily available inside and outside the building that the FBC program is effective.

Starting with the evidence inside, FSEDI President and CEO Karl Heck recently said, "We hit 100% occupancy for the first time in our history on Dec. 1."

SEE CENTER, A10

Council starts informal event committee

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

Windsor Town Manager William Saunders stated that the Windsor Town Council voted unanimously Dec. 14 to direct town staff to start an informal event committee that will become a standing committee at some later date if deemed prudent.



Saunders

In a memorandum to the mayor and the council, Saunders reminded them that the initiation of an event committee had been discussed at previous Town Council meetings, and he summarized some of the details surrounding the committee.

"The committee would be to assemble town officials with other stakeholders in the community to explore the potential for future town events," he stated. "With the July 4th celebration and the Christmas Parade not being held for the last two years, a number of citizens and groups have contacted town staff to express interest in the town initiating events in the future."

He noted that whether these events could or would be reinstated as they were or whether other events could or should take their place will require study and planning to determine the community's interest and capabilities.

SEE COUNCIL, A10

Holiday schedule for county, municipal services

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

The Christmas and New Year's holidays bring with them some temporary changes in the operations schedule for county and municipal government services.

For the city of Franklin, municipal offices will be closed Thursday, Dec. 23, and Friday, Dec. 24, for the Christmas holiday. A city announcement on

social media added that trash collection for Thursday will occur Monday, Dec. 27, and trash collection for Friday will occur Tuesday, Dec. 28.

"The city is also closed on Friday, Dec. 31," Franklin City Manager Amanda C. Jarratt stated, acknowledging the New Year's holiday. "That trash route will



Jarratt

be collected Monday, Jan. 3."

The city's social media announcement noted that those with questions regarding trash collection should call the Franklin Department of Public Works at 757-562-8564.

Southampton County Administrator Michael W. Johnson



Johnson

shared the schedule information that is available on the county's website, SouthamptonCounty.org.

He noted that on Dec. 24, the refuse convenience sites that are normally open on Fridays will close early at 5 p.m., and all sites will be closed Saturday, Dec. 25.

Sites will return to regular hours on Sunday, Dec. 26.

On Dec. 31, the sites that are normally open on Fridays will

again close early at 5 p.m., and all sites will be closed Saturday, Jan. 1.

Sites will return to regular hours on Sunday, Jan. 2.

For more information, call Southampton County's Department of Public Works - Solid Waste Refuse at 757-653-3015.

Isle of Wight County lists on its website — www.co.isle-of-

SEE SCHEDULE, A10

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Franklin blood drive: The Franklin Community Blood Drive will be from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at American Legion Post No. 73, Main Room at 935 Armory Drive. Visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: FranklinC to schedule an appointment.

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CENTER: 'Our goal is to give the business the best chance of success'

FROM PAGE A1

The economic impact of the FBC in 2020 was significant. During that year, eight new and expanding businesses signed leases in the building. The businesses at the center featured a combined 71 full-time employees, with average salaries of \$74,269, and 55 part-time employees. There was \$132,247 in rent paid to the city, and \$10,168 in taxes.

James "Jim" Strozier is chair of the advisory board for the business center and one of the center's graduates.

He said the biggest thing the advisory board does is set the policies for the operation of the business center with regard to what the criteria are for a business being accepted into the program, and then the board reviews all applications of applicants for space in the building.

"So our goal is to give the businesses the best chance of success," he said. "So we work with the staff, (Business Development Manager) Lauren (V. Sloan) and (Marketing and Existing Business Manager) Ashley (C. Covington), to help set the applicants up for success and making sure they meet the criteria and have done the proper preparations before they launch a business into the business center."

Strozier understands firsthand what the applicants are going through because his business, Highground Services Inc., entered the FBC in late 2007.

The business, which deals in engineering, automation and electrical construction, has since graduated out of the building and operates at a location that happens to be directly across the street from the center — 500 N. Mechanic St.

Highground Services also has had an office in Newport News since about 2012.

Strozier said that for him, the biggest advantage he derived from the FBC was the ability to grow his business and not have to physically move every time it needed more space.

"So we started off with one small office space, and as the business grew and our needs grew, we could just add another office (in the center) and pick up additional space," he said. "So we were able to go through a period where we actually went through some pretty quick growth, and had we have had to move every time we needed more space, we would have had to have moved several times and gone through the disruption of moving."

He later added that by the time the business was moving out of the center, "we had almost the whole first floor of the business center and an office or two upstairs."

The location Highground Services has graduated out to across the street is a larger space than his business has ever had before and includes storage and shop space.

Highlighting another of the success stories the FBC helped tell, Cheryl Morton is CEO and owner of Helping Hands Sitter Service LLC, which provides personal care, consumer-directed care and respite care for the elderly and disabled.

Her business began its run in the FBC in September 2014 and graduated out of the building in April 2021 to its location at 207 S. Main St. in Franklin.

Before entering the center, Morton, a registered nurse, started her business from her office in her home.



TITUS MOHLER | THE TIDEWATER NEWS

Abe Applewhite, owner of KCA Logistics Inc., stands outside his business' location at 151 Sachs Avenue in Franklin, where it graduated to after three years incubating in the Franklin Business Center.

"When I retired from Obici, I started doing private duty, and I had two other people with me, so I saw the need, and I just started the business," she said.

However, she emphasized that the FBC incubator program allowed her business to grow from infancy to maturity.

"The Franklin Business Center did this by allowing the business to keep the cost down with the low rent for new businesses, saving costs on utilities and other services needed for a business," she said. "The Franklin Business Center impacted Helping Hands Sitter Service with the mentoring program that they have for new businesses and also with workshops that offered valuable information for business growth."

Morton added that when her company was getting ready to transition out of the center, the staff, especially Covington, was extremely helpful, aiding her in secur-

ing a new rental office.

"The staff at the Franklin Business Center were professional, friendly and very helpful with all of our needs," she said. "I would personally say that Helping Hands Sitter Service and I felt like part of a family, and like any family, when the child matures and grows up, he or she leaves the nest. The Franklin Business Center made it less complicated for Helping Hands Sitter Service to grow and fly."

Abe Applewhite is owner of KCA Logistics Inc., a company that provides transportation services for imports and exports, products and materials coming through the Port of Virginia.

His business started in the FBC in 2015 and graduated out of it in 2018 to 151 Sachs Avenue in Franklin.

Applewhite said he and his business benefited from the structure the FBC provided as opposed to working at home, where distractions can be abundant, in-person

visibility to clients can be minimal and operating days and hours are often not set.

"It's really hard to put into words what the business center did, because they did so much," he said. "The staff was always ready and willing to help. They were constantly giving us ideas on ways that we could grow our business and gave us ideas of how to open your thinking up."

When KCA Logistics Inc. first came into the business center, its main customer and main focus was Perdue Farms, Applewhite stated.

"At that time, that was our biggest customer, and we had kind of put ourselves in a box with Perdue," he said.

"But when we came to the business center, we were able to go to some of the seminars that they had at the business center, (listen to) some of the speakers that they had come to the business center and just talk to some of the other businesses that were in the business

center at that time, like one example — Highground.

"Being able to talk to Jim about his business and how he developed his business caused me to stand back and look at my business in a different (way), which caused us to go out and solicit other business, not knowing that it would lead us to customers that are in Turkey, that are in Italy."

Being based at the business center helped Applewhite and KCA Logistics impress customers who thought they would be meeting him in an office trailer on a dusty lot.

"I remember we had a safety audit with Federal FMCA, and the auditor that came to do the audit, he was impressed by the building himself," Applewhite said.

"He was impressed that we had a conference room to do the audit in. Just being in the business center alone opens you up to a lot of opportunities that you won't see if you stay at home."

It also helped raise Applewhite's standards for where he would want to graduate his business out to.

"Just having customers come to our office and see that we're in a location like the business center and hear the customers (speak positively), when you leave, you can't leave and go to an office trailer," he said.

He also praised the helpfulness of the FBC's staff in finding a good location to move out to.

In summary, Applewhite said, "The way I see it, anybody that is serious — I mean, very serious — about their business, if they start in the business center, they can't go anywhere else but up because that's how much value that the business center gives a person that's starting their business out."

MAP: 'No current state senators would live within the boundaries ...'

FROM PAGE A1

According to VPAP's analysis, the map gives House Democrats a slight edge statewide, reducing the number of solidly "red" Republican seats and "purple" districts that could swing either way. The special masters' memo, however, states Republicans "may find it slightly easier to win a majority" but "Democrats will have a tendency to enjoy larger majorities when they win."

A congressional battleground

The city of Franklin and parts of Southampton County would also become more competitive in the 2022 congressional midterms.

Currently, Southampton County is located entirely in the 4th District and represented by Democratic Congressman A. Donald McEachin, who won reelection in 2020 with just over 61% of the vote. The proposed redistricting map would move Franklin and areas of Southampton County east of the Nottoway River and Ivor Road into the 2nd District, which

Democratic Congresswoman Elaine Lura most recently won with 52% of the vote. The special masters' analysis of congressional elections spanning 2016 through 2020 shows the 2nd District leaning Democratic by a slim margin. However, VPAP's analysis has the district leaning Republican by five to 20 points based solely on its share of the votes from the 2016 presidential election.

The newly redrawn 4th District, which would also remove areas of Chesterfield and Henrico counties, would have a slightly higher percentage of Black voters than it does currently, and as such, would "likely continue to elect the African-American population's candidate of choice," according to the special masters' memo. The memo and VPAP's analysis both show the district remaining solidly "blue," with Democratic candidates likely to secure roughly two-thirds of the vote.

"In a very good Republican year, Republicans could win a majority of the seats in Virginia's delegation," but "we would expect to see a 6-5 Democratic edge," the memo states. In a very good Democratic year, "Democrats might perhaps achieve the same 7-4 advantage that they now enjoy from having won two highly competitive seats in 2020."

No Senate incumbents No current state senators would live within the boundaries of Southampton County's or Franklin's newly created Senate districts, according to an analysis by VPAP. According to the special masters' memo, Grofman and Trende "maintained ignorance about the residences of incumbents" since the federal and state statutory criteria for redistricting "make no mention of protecting incumbents."

A total of nine state Senate districts and 24 House of Delegates districts would

be left without an incumbent legislator, according to VPAP, while in other cases, this lack of taking incumbency into account would result in two or even three legislators — some from opposite parties — all living within the proposed new boundaries of a House or Senate district.

Southampton County and the city of Franklin are currently split between the 14th and 18th state Senate districts, held by Republican Sen. John Cosgrove and Democratic Sen. L. Louise Lucas, respectively. Under the proposed map, Southampton and Franklin would move entirely into the 17th District, which would also include Suffolk, Isle of Wight County and part of Portsmouth. The district would be just over 50% white and would lean five to 20 points in favor of Democratic candidates based on VPAP's analysis of its share of votes from the 2016 presidential election. The special masters' memo

also has the district leaning in favor of Democrats.

According to the memo, each party would need to win an election in an "unfriendly territory" in order to control the state Senate.

Per a 2020 change to the state constitution, Virginia's Supreme Court took control of the redistricting process after a bipartisan committee of legislators and citizens deadlocked in October on how to redraw the state's Senate, House and congressional districts.

The state Supreme Court scheduled two virtual public hearings on the proposed maps on Dec. 15 and Dec. 17. According to a Dec. 8 press release from the state Supreme Court, there will be no in-person hearings. Written comments may also be submitted by emailing remarks to Redistricting@vacourts.gov by 1 p.m. Dec. 20. Written comments will be published to the "public comments" link on the court's website.

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COUNCIL: Include a mix of representatives

FROM PAGE A1

Saunders also pointed out that Action Item No. 13 of the town's Strategic Plan, "Increase the number of community events and activities," lists as one of its key tasks/activities to "put together a committee that will plan and execute events, such as 4th of July party and car show, block parties, fall festival..."

He stated, "It would

seem that this committee should include a mix of representatives of the town and its numerous civic and nonprofit groups that can come together to make recommendations to Town Council about town-sponsored events and also work on a comprehensive event calendar for the town to prevent various groups' events conflicting with one another to the extent possible."

The options Saunders presented to the council for the committee were as follows:

- begin as an informal group that is initiated administratively by town staff
- begin as a standing town committee
- begin informally and become a standing committee if it seems prudent at a later date

The council opted for the final option.

SCHEDULE: All sites close early Dec. 24, 31

FROM PAGE A1

wight.va.us — a refuse and recycling center holiday schedule for the county.

The schedule notes that all sites close early at 4 p.m. on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31, and all sites are closed

on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

For more information, call the Solid Waste Division of Isle of Wight County's Public Works Department at 757-365-1658.

Windsor Town Manager William Saunders stated that Windsor town offices will be closed Dec. 23, 24

and 31 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays, adding that the town typically follows the commonwealth of Virginia holiday calendar for state employees.

For more information, call the town of Windsor at 757-242-4288.