



Lancer tennis secures win at Brookville B2



Pumping iron brings cash flow for ACHS event B3

AMHERST NEW ERA~PROGRESS

Amherst County's only hometown newspaper | THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 | NewEraProgress.com | Amherst, Va.

Amherst County planning 6.5% raises for employees

Supervisors commit to funding new grants administrator position, budget includes \$100K to cover higher fuel costs

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Amherst County officials are planning on a 6.5% raise for county employees and a 20% reduction in taxes for residents' vehicles and motorcycles in the

upcoming fiscal year 2023 budget. The Amherst County Board of Supervisors voted 3-0 during a March 15 work session, with members Claudia Tucker and David Pugh absent, to bump up the pay increase so it can line up with the county's public school divi-

sion, which is giving a 6.5% raise. The draft budget previously included a 5% cost of living increase. The board considered revised figures during the latest work session, which showed forecasted revenue of \$51.4 million, a higher figure than reviewed in earlier

meetings. With additional money projected, supervisors backed the hiring of a new grants administrator position that county staff says will be helpful in securing more grant funding.

A majority of the board previously took a stance against adding

new staff positions to the county budget but made an exception for the grants administrator, a post that costs \$67,000 in recurring money and \$20,000 in one-time costs. Vice Chair Tom Martin, who

Please see **BUDGET**, Page A3

Broadband expansion work progressing in Amherst

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The push for universal broadband coverage in all of Amherst County continues to pick up speed through Firefly Fiber Broadband, a subsidiary of Nelson County-based Central Virginia Electric Cooperative working to cover the gaps.

Gary Wood, president of CVEC, on March 15 addressed the Amherst County Board of Supervisors on the ongoing and upcoming work to install a fiber network that provides internet coverage in unserved and underserved rural areas of Amherst.

Areas in service include Boxwood Farm Road, Grandmas Hill Road, Roses Mill Road, Warrick Barn Road, Flatwoods Road and areas close to CVEC substation areas in Gladstone and Colleen, according to Firefly's report. Those areas combined pass 650 homes, covering 352 active accounts and 60 miles of fiber laid out for an investment of \$4.2 million, the report states.

Overall, Amherst County broadband expansion through Firefly's Regional Internet Service Expansion (RISE) project costs \$28.5 million, which largely is funded through grant money. The RISE initiative covers 526 miles in the county and Amherst County has provided a \$3 million grant match.

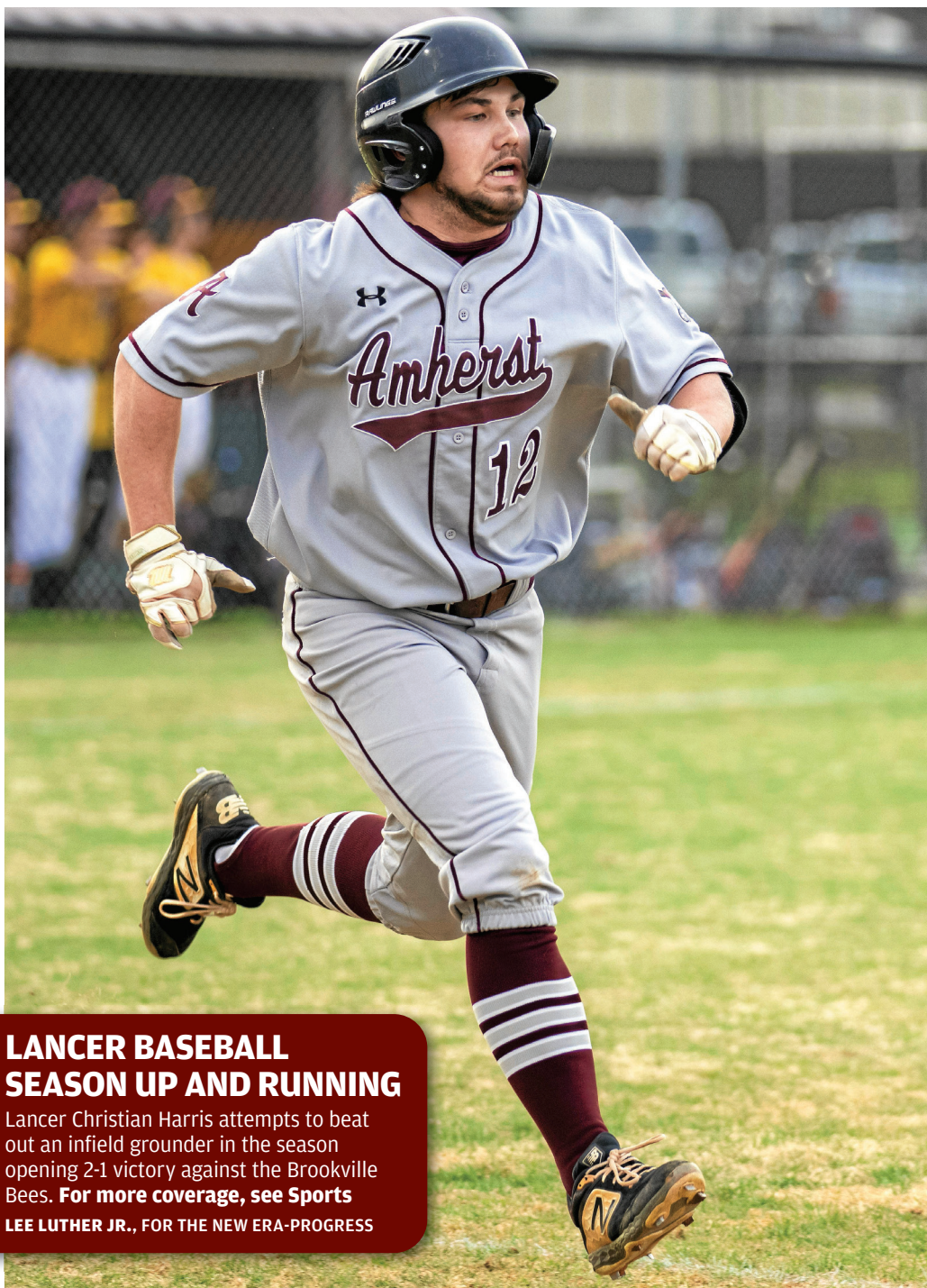
The RISE project is bringing service to just more than 36,200 underserved homes, businesses and other locations to 13 counties, including Amherst.

Wood said crews are slated in upcoming weeks to begin work in the Temperance area.

"Our intent is to get all of the Central Virginia [cooperative] area built out by mid-year," Wood said.

The expanded coverage will bring service to 5,500 to 6,000 homes in Amherst County,

Please see **BROADBAND**, Page A3



LANCER BASEBALL SEASON UP AND RUNNING

Lancer Christian Harris attempts to beat out an infield grounder in the season opening 2-1 victory against the Brookville Bees. For more coverage, see Sports

LEE LUTHER JR., FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Special permit sought for pastor's retreat, church events venue

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An Amherst couple is seeking a special exception permit from county officials to establish a venue for pastor retreats, church events and weddings.

The property is on 15 acres at 1770 Early Farm Road in Amherst zoned Agricultural Residential (A-1). The Amherst County Planning Commission recommended approval of the special exception request from Brian and Julie Parrow during its March 17 meeting.

"Our business plan is to host pastors and missionaries for overnight retreats," the Parrows wrote in a letter to Amherst officials.

The events would be held on weekends in months of May, June, September and October ending at 9 p.m., according to the letter. The "unique" building on site was constructed in the 1990s and has been used as a hunting lodge, a bed-and-breakfast, an assisted living center and most recently as an inpatient drug and alcohol recovery center.

"These past business ventures have improved the location with ample, well lit parking and a gated entrance," the couple wrote in the letter. "The dwelling on the property, in addition to our existing living space, will be available for guest lodging."

The property previously has been called Blackberry Ridge LLC, according to Jeremy Bryant, director of community development.

The existing land use is a single-family dwelling. Outdoor improvements planned, according to the letter, include a cement lab that will allow for erection of a tent during events, a storage building and overhang.

"I am intimately familiar with this property because we built

Please see **PERMIT**, Page A3

One killed, four injured in shooting

A Lynchburg woman was killed and four others were hospitalized from injuries in connection with a shooting in Madison Heights, the Amherst County Sheriff's Office said early Saturday.

According to a post on its official Facebook page, the Amherst County Sheriff's Office was notified of a shooting at 351 Old Wright Shop Road

at approximately 1:47 a.m. March 19.

Deputies and emergency medical services personnel arrived and located T'Khira Monique Browley, 21, suffering from a gunshot wound, according to a release from the sheriff's office. Browley was pronounced dead at the scene.

The sheriff's office also re-

ceived information that four people were at Lynchburg General Hospital suffering from gunshot wounds from the same location.

The incident is under investigation. No other details were released at press time. Anyone with information on the shooting is asked to call (434) 946-9300.

- Justin Faulconer

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Amherst schools honor Teacher of the Year, A2



B Team cranks it up in Lynchburg, B1

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KENDALL WARNER, NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Graduates parade through lines of their professors after receiving their diplomas during commencement at Sweet Briar College on Saturday.

'Cultivate your courage'

Sweet Briar College celebrates Class of 2022 graduates in 113th commencement ceremony

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Sweet Briar College President Meredith Woo opened Saturday's commencement ceremony by saying it was a day to celebrate.

"We celebrate the successes of this class of tenacious and strong-willed women," Woo said to the audience. "We celebrate their families for their faith in them and in the college they have called home."

Faculty, family members and supporters filed into Sweet Briar College's Upchurch Field House to recognize the graduating Class of 2022. The private nonprofit women's college in Amherst County awarded more than 70 degrees and 25 commencement awards.

Griselda Vasquez Ramirez, a graduate who will be working at The Hershey Company as an associate engineer, said it was "really exciting" to graduate and receive her degree.

"I'm the first person in my family to

graduate, so I'm very proud of that," Ramirez said.

Channing Entrican, a studio art major and psychology minor who plans to do

Please see **SWEET BRIAR**, Page A6



VIEW: To see video and more photos from Sweet Briar College's commencement, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

Council again denies motion to nix charter provision allowing removal of elected officials

Member who was expelled, later reelected motioned for removing language she feels subverts the will of voters, other councilors say it maintains accountability

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For the second time in two years, the majority of Amherst Town Council voted against a motion to initiate a change to the town's charter to remove a provision allowing expulsion of a town council member.

After brief discussion, council on May 11 voted 3-1 to deny a motion from Councilor Janice Wheaton to begin the process



Wheaton

to amend the town charter so elected officials cannot be removed by concurrence of two-thirds of a council vote as currently stated. The charter provision was used in an extremely rare occurrence in July 2019 when Wheaton was expelled by a 4-1 vote.

Wheaton, who first was elected in

November 2018 and begin serving two months later, was reelected in a special election and reassumed her seat in November 2019. She motioned unsuccessfully in May 2020 to seek a change

Please see **CHARTER**, Page A6



VIEW: For video of the council meeting point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

Amherst town budget with raises approved

Spending plan braces for effects of inflation on local government operations, keeps real estate and personal property tax rates at zero

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Amherst Town Council has approved the \$3.9 million 2022-23 fiscal year budget for the town that includes a 7.4% raise for employees and braces for many effects of inflation.

Town Manager Sara McGuffin said the town continues to be well positioned fiscally with a well-trained workforce and fund balances that continue to be healthy and mostly increasing. Inflation in 2021 was the highest in decades and construction costs for projects continue to escalate, but sales tax revenue, a major revenue for the town, was higher than anticipated, according to McGuffin.

Please see **BUDGET**, Page A3



VIEW: For video explaining the Amherst Town budget, point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

Amherst school officials express angst over state budget wait

Urge action from state legislators sooner than later, board also talks involvement with VSBA and honors late former official

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With fewer than two months before the start of the new fiscal year and no state budget closure in sight, Amherst County Public Schools officials recently expressed frustration with the wait.

The angst was discussed during the

Please see **WAIT**, Page A6



KENDALL WARNER, NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Community members clap for Bill Wydner during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Camp Trapezium in Amherst on June 10, 2021. Wydner's family has owned the building where Trapezium now is housed for decades.

Amherst mourns passing of Bill Wydner

'He was an institution'

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One of Amherst County's most familiar faces and avid storytellers, Bill Wydner for many years held court among friends and customers in the former Amherst Milling Company.

When Amherst County Board of Supervisors member Claudia Tucker would often go by the mill on Union Hill Road to

pick an item up for her farm, she would chat with Wydner, who kept the mill going into its final days, about the weather and the county's latest.

"...And I'd always get a story from way back when," recalled Tucker. "He was an institution."

The Amherst community is mourning

Wydner, who died May 9 at age 83. Richard Wydner, Sr., his father, acquired the mill, now the Camp Trapezium brewery and restaurant, in 1940 and Bill Wydner worked for years maintaining the gristmill on Rutledge Creek.

Please see **WYDNER**, Page A3



VIEW: For video of Bill Wydner at Camp Trapezium's June 2021 opening and for more photos of Wydner at the Amherst Milling Company, point your smartphone camera on the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

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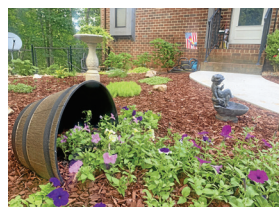
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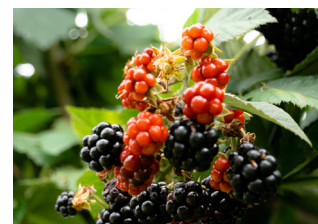
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Amherst woman's front lawn garden a labor of love, B3



Local fruits faring well through the summer, A5



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OLIVIA SMITH PHOTOS, FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Inside the Hamble Center, one of the many history interpreters, Dawn Doss, spun wool to turn into knitting yarn.

COLONIAL DAY BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE IN AMHERST

The Amherst County Museum and Historical Society on Aug. 13 hosted Colonial Day, which allowed residents to take a step back in time and experience how life was during the colonial period.



Multitude of items were laid out on a blanket to show what soldiers used to take with them during the Colonial era.



Living history interpreter Mashall Scheetz was dressed as a cooper and talked about making things such as wooden barrels and buckets.

Loud exhaust noise restricted

Town Council narrowly passes ordinance targeting vehicles altered for purpose of more sound

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In a split vote, Amherst Town Council adopted a new ordinance on Aug. 10 that regulates loud exhaust noise from vehicles.

Amherst Town Attorney Eric Lansing said the ordinance is patterned after new state legislation that went into effect July 1 and prior to that time localities had very limited options in regulating excessive noise from vehicles.

"I understand this is a problem the town has had quite a bit of," Lansing said.

Council members Janice Wheaton and Ken Watts were in support of the ordinance. Vice Mayor Rachel Carton and councilor Andra Higginbotham opposed and councilor Sharon Turner was absent. Mayor Dwayne Tuggle, who only votes in cases of tiebreakers, was the deciding yes vote.

Lansing said laws regarding loud exhaust

Please see **EXHAUST**, Page A3

WATCH: For video of Town Council's public hearing on the exhaust noise measure point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

AMHERST COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Focus on safety as new year launches

Division will not provide remote classes this year

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With Amherst County Public Schools heading into a new school year Aug. 17, the division is focusing on safety and what Superintendent William Wells describes as a "back to basics" approach to education in the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a recent video address on the division's website, Wells spoke of the exhaustive work the schools have done to educate children in person with extensive mitigation strategies and through online learning the past two years.

"As a result we have much ground to make up as we return to school this fall," Wells said, adding the division is working to return to strong instructional programs for all students to address learning deficits. "We are aware students will have gaps in their prior knowledge, but we will make it a priority to meet

students where they are and provide instruction designed to overcome those gaps."

In order to provide quality instruction, Wells said families need to be engaged in their children's education. He said Amherst schools will not provide virtual remote learning this year,

Please see **SAFETY**, Page A6

WATCH: For video of the safety training session point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

#ShowUpAmherst a strong concept in new school year

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After two and a half years of social distancing from the COVID-19 pandemic, Amherst County Public Schools is pushing an effort to reengage the community called #ShowUpAmherst.

"What we are doing is we're encouraging our families, our students and our staff to show up, to be present," Superintendent William Wells said. "We want our staff and our students to be present in the community.

We want our community to be present in our schools."

The effort is largely driven by a desire to keep children in school after two years of remote learning being included in the curriculum.

"They can't learn if they are

Please see **#SHOWUP**, Page A6

WATCH: For video of Amherst Schools' ShowUpAmherst explanation point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

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