



Former Lady Lancer basketball standouts transition to college play, B1



Lancer varsity, JV basketball squares off with E.C. Glass, B2

AMHERST NEW ERA~PROGRESS

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LEE LUTHER JR. PHOTOS, FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

The Amherst County School Board listens to residents give feedback on face coverings during a special called meeting Thursday, Jan. 27.

Newman backs measures to pay off CVTC building loans

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A pair of state budget amendments proposed by Sen. Steve Newman, R-Lynchburg, would have a major impact on the Central Virginia Training Center property, a shuttered state-owned complex in Madison Heights that formerly served residents with disabilities.

Newman is pushing the amendments during the ongoing General Assembly in Richmond as part of SB30. One seeks \$22 million to pay off remaining bonds the state owes on the CVTC property while the other pushes for \$2.6 million to fund a proposed regional crisis receiving center pilot program for a portion of the training center grounds on Colony Road.



Newman

Newman lobbied against the closure of CVTC, which relocated its last remaining resident in spring 2020. Now that the property of more than 300 acres and roughly 90 buildings is shut down, Newman said in a phone interview he wants to see the remaining debt paid off to free up the property for future uses.

"I do think the state has an obligation to defease the bonds because, if we don't, it could be a blighted property for 20 years, and I'm not OK with that," Newman said.

The "defeasance of bonds" wording in the budget amendment refers to a financing strategy for repaying loans. Newman, who serves on the Senate's

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School board plans to make masks optional starting Feb. 22

Majority of board backs delay to give more time to prepare and monitor COVID metrics; cases in county's population surpasses 6,000 mark

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Parental choice for wearing of face masks in Amherst County's public schools will have to wait longer than some residents hoped for following a split vote from the county's school board on Jan. 27 during an emotional meeting with a few tense exchanges.

The board voted 4-3 at the special called meeting to maintain universal mask-wearing



Amherst County School Board members, some masked and others not, take part in the Pledge of Allegiance during a special called meeting Thursday.

by students and staff while inside public school facilities until Feb. 22, at which time face masks will become optional as long as health data metrics on COVID-19 cases do not exceed a certain level. At the board's Feb.

10 meeting, school officials will determine what those metrics will be, said Rob Arnold, superintendent of county schools.

Board members Eric Orasi, Dawn Justice and Ginger Burg opposed the delay and pushed

for the division to immediately begin following Gov. Glenn Youngkin's executive order to make mask-wearing in schools optional. More than a dozen residents addressed the board on the topic Thursday, with some speakers urging the board to adhere to Youngkin's order and others imploring school officials to not stray from a mitigation strategy they feel remains crucial as coronavirus cases continue soaring in the county.

Burg made an initial motion to follow Youngkin's executive order, which would make mask-wearing optional immediately, and to make masks available to teachers and students who need them. Board member John Grieser proposed amending Burg's motion to put in the delay until no earlier than Feb. 22, to give families and staff time to adjust, as well as making it conditional on to-be-determined

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Amherst residents unleash feelings on masks in schools

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Nearly two years' worth of emotions and views on face masks, their effectiveness or lack thereof, was at the forefront of a public comments session of the Amherst County School Board's special called Jan. 27 meeting on the subject.

The board took more than a dozen comments, most spoken and some written, before discussing the executive order from Gov. Glenn Youngkin on making masks optional for families inside school buildings.

Cari Mays, an Amherst resident, said her children have problems with masks, includ-

ing migraines, fainting spells, breathing issues and anxiety.

"I feel as though it's given a false sense of security to both the wearers and non-wearers," Mays said. "I just feel it is causing more daily harm than my children personally than it has helped them."

Betsy Allanson-Thomas, an Amherst resident who works for the school division, said her two sons have been told to wear face masks during physical education class, which she finds unacceptable and against common sense. She said many children she interacts with have speech concerns and delays and masks present a communication hardship.

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LEE LUTHER JR., FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Amherst County High School senior Cyanna Cabell gave an emotional talk to the school board for her reasons to support wearing masks in schools.

Good stumps in Amherst ahead of county's folding into redrawn 5th District

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On a trip Friday to Amherst, U.S. Rep. Bob Good, R-5th District, had lunch with a group of supporters in a county he is seeking to soon represent in a newly drawn district that includes eight new localities.

Good, a freshman congressman and staunch supporter of former President Donald Trump, recently announced his bid for the Republican nomination in seeking a second term. During a campaign stop at Vito's Restaurant, he said in an interview he is excited to soon represent Amherst County and will do his best to



Good

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