



The Tidewater News



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\$1.00

Personal property tax relief rate set to fall

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

The Southampton County Board of Supervisors will be holding a public hearing Tuesday, Sept. 27, as it considers an ordinance that would reduce the personal property tax relief rate in light of increasing market values. A public notice stated that the

board will be considering “an ordinance setting the personal property tax relief rate at 27% for the first \$20,000 of personal use vehicle value; 100% for personal use vehicles valued at less than \$1,000.”

Southampton County Commissioner of the Revenue Amy B. Carr explained that this is a rate that is set each year.

“This is the amount of relief that the state will pay on each person’s qualifying vehicle, so it amounts to an increase in the taxes that the taxpayer will have to pay this year because the rate that the state is paying has



Carr

decreased,” she said.

She noted that instead of 27%, last year the rate was 38.64%.

“The state gives each locality a set amount of revenue to cover this, so it never changes,” she said. “It’s been the same since 2006.”

However, what the county’s rate

SEE TAX, A8

Senior Services declines agreement on WTC usage

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia has chosen to keep looking for a location to serve the older adults of Windsor and the surrounding area, opting not to go with the Windsor Town Center given some of the scheduling and logistical limitations involved.



Saunders

Windsor Town Manager William Saunders provided the background on this matter during the Windsor Town Council’s meeting Tuesday, Sept. 13.



Zollos

“At the Aug. 9 meeting of the Windsor Town Council, the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia proposal to provide senior programs at the Windsor Town Center was approved,” he said. “Following council’s approval, town staff met with Mr. (Steve) Zollos, (CEO) of the SSSEVA, to discuss the MOU’s parameters.”

Zollos submitted a statement to an affiliate of The Tidewater News,

SEE SENIOR SERVICES, A8



TITUS MOHLER | THE TIDEWATER NEWS

Participating in the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore’s Western Tidewater Branch on Thursday, Sept. 15, are, from left, Foodbank President and CEO Christopher Tan, Foodbank Board of Directors member Leila Rice, First Baptist Church of Franklin Senior Pastor Marcus Jennings, The Obici Healthcare Foundation President and CEO R. Battle Betts Jr., Franklin Mayor Frank M. Rabil, Western Tidewater community volunteer Janet Stokes, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Senior Advisor for Public Engagement Dr. Ruth Jones Nichols and Foodbank Board of Directors Chair Darius Davenport.

Foodbank’s Western Tidewater Branch opens

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

The Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore held the grand opening of its Franklin-based Western Tidewater Branch on Thursday, Sept. 15.

A Foodbank news release noted that the facility, located at 618 South St., is a nearly 17,000-square-foot building housing a fully equipped warehouse featuring walk-in refrigerators and freezers and dry storage capacity that can accommodate up

to 48 pallets — or 96,000 pounds — of dry, shelf-stable foods.

Additionally, the new branch facility features a marketplace where neighbors experiencing food insecurity can “shop” for-

SEE FOODBANK, A7

Prep underway for broadband install in county

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

The installation of fiber optic cable that will bring universal broadband coverage to the area has begun in Suffolk, and some citizens in Southampton County have received construction notices indicating that preparations are being made for installation work there.

Back in December 2021, the office of then-Gov. Ralph S. Northam shared a news release announcing new grants that would advance Virginia 90% to the goal of achieving universal access to broadband and high-speed internet, with Southampton and Isle of Wight counties and the city of Suffolk among the localities set to achieve universal coverage.

Ashley C. Covington is marketing and existing business manager for Franklin Southampton Economic Development Inc., and she noted that at some point in the past, Southampton County asked FSEDI to “figure out this broadband need and what was out there for it.”

She noted that there are two funds relevant to broadband in the region — the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Grant.

SEE BROADBAND, A8

Fall Festival Weekend approaches

BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER

The annual Franklin Fall Festival will be held Saturday, Oct. 1, preceded by the inaugural Food Truck Rodeo the night before, combining to comprise a Fall Festival Weekend.

The Food Truck Rodeo will be held Friday, Sept. 30, from 6-10 p.m. at Barrett’s Landing Park.

Franklin Director of Tourism Carson S. Blythe explained how the idea for this first-time event came together.

“We are playing off of the traditional block party that they used to have for Fall Festival Weekend,” she said. “We’ve decided to switch things up a little bit.”

She noted that this rodeo, designed to “kick off the weekend,” will feature as many as six food trucks, along with live music from the Hog Bear Band, Silverstreet Band, and Hickory Knoll. There will also be beer and



MITZI LUSKI | THE TIDEWATER NEWS

People pack Main Street in Franklin, with vendors lining both sides, during the 2021 Franklin Fall Festival. The 2022 edition of the event will be held Saturday, Oct. 1, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

wine available for purchase, she said, with the wine being sourced from the new Cork Tap Taste Tasting Room in downtown Franklin.

Among the food trucks that

will be involved is Triple B with Cheese.

“They have loaded mac and cheese, gourmet grilled cheeses-

SEE WEEKEND, A7

Former Isle of Wight School Board member Alvin Wilson dies at 76

BY STEPHEN FALESKI
STAFF WRITER

Former Isle of Wight County School Board member Alvin Wilson died Sept. 6 just over a month shy of what would have been his 77th birthday.

Wilson, 76, was born on Oct. 24, 1945, to Joshua and Lillian Bradby Wilson. By 1970, at age 24, he was mentoring children and teenagers in a summer recreation program for area youth at Smithfield Elementary — now known as Westside Elementary.

Wilson, who owned a barber shop in addition to his work in education, earned bachelor’s degrees in math and science from Virginia Union University and master’s degrees in biology and education from Virginia State University.

His four-decade career in public education spanned multiple school systems in Virginia and



Wilson

North Carolina, including more than 20 years with neighboring Surry County Public Schools.

“He was my first boss when I started teaching at L.P. Jackson (Middle School) in Dendron in 1979. He was a good person to

SEE WILSON, A7

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DEATHS

Antnette C. Harrell
Brian K. Jolley Sr.
Robert Knight Jr.
Mary E. Smith



BEST BET

Family Movie Night: Every first Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. at Courtland Branch of the Blackwater Regional Library. For more information, call 757-653-2821, visit our website or Facebook page. www.blackwaterlib.org.

Learn More at: dqhamptonroads.com

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SUBMITTED | JASHLEY C. COVINGTON

Participating in a broadband groundbreaking event held in June in Suffolk are, from left, Eric Collins, FSEDI President and CEO Karl T. Heck, Del. H. Otto Wachsmann Jr., Berlin/Ivor District Supervisor Christopher D. Cornwell Sr., Matthew Hannah, Southampton County Administrator Brian S. Thrower and Deputy Southampton County Administrator/Chief Financial Officer Lynette C. Lowe.

BROADBAND: Goal is for install to be complete in 3 years

FROM PAGE A1

A part of the FSEDI website focused on broadband initiatives describes the RDOF as a program created by the federal government, administered by the Federal Communications Com-

mission, to aid in the provision of high-speed broadband access to the most rural of areas. RDOF is a program between the FCC and a registered provider, meaning that Southampton County has no control over the selection, delivery,

award process, etc. "We were made aware that Charter (Communications) received some of those federal RDOF funds for Southampton County," Covington said.

The FSEDI website notes that the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative is a program administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The program is a grant process by which local governments and internet and/or cable service providers complete an extensive application process. The DHCD then reviews and chooses the top applicants to receive program funding.

Covington noted that the county partnered with Charter to apply for the VATI grant in 2020.

"We unfortunately did not get that award," she said. "But 2021 came

around, and Charter came back to us, but this time with Isle of Wight County and the city of Suffolk."

Southampton, Suffolk and Isle of Wight, in conjunction with Charter/Spectrum and the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, submitted a regional grant application for DHCD's 2022 VATI cycle, which totals around \$21 million, the FSEDI website states. Southampton County stands to service 4,962 previously unserved residences and businesses in the most rural areas.

The December 2021 news release from Northam brought the good news in response to that application.

"Thankfully we did receive that grant, and one reason that we're able to reach universal coverage is because Charter leveraged those RDOF grants in our VATI grant application to be able to say, 'At the end of this, we'll use both of these funds, and these three localities will have universal coverage,'" Covington said.

The FSEDI site notes that the regional grant application was awarded \$21.1 million to go along with the \$13.8 million provided by

the localities and Charter Communications/Spectrum.

"The city of Franklin already has universal coverage through Charter," Covington said. "Every citizen in the city of Franklin has access to Charter, so that's the only reason that the city wasn't part of it."

Covington said installation of fiber optic cable is underway in Suffolk, and she shared what she knows about progress in Southampton.

"I know that I've gotten a phone call from a couple of people that have received construction notices," she said. "So the way that they will do the build-out is when they get to your area, you'll get a door hanger that just notifies you that construction is starting, and it'll give you a business card for your construction team in case that resident has any issues or has any questions or things of that nature and just to give people a heads up, 'Hey, we're working in the community.'"

She also made a point to emphasize that construction related to the installation of the cabling is a phased process. She noted that people tend to get ex-

cited when they see work being done and think they are going to have service the following week.

"But it's not quite that fast," she said. "So they come through and they lay the conduit first, which is what people will see — the big orange rolls. And then they come back and run the fiber through it, and then there's an actual powering-on process that happens."

"So there still is a little bit of time after you see construction start, but once it starts, they're in your area, and that's where they're focusing on," she continued. "So it is a good thing, but it is a little bit of a process to get everything laid."

Covington also supplied a rough time table for when those doing the work expect to be finished and everyone is expected to have broadband access.

"Their greatest hope, with no huge delays, is that it will be done in three years, starting when construction started, which was end of July, early August," she said.

Those interested can visit www.franklinsouthamptonva.com/news-events/broadband-initiatives/ for more information.

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SENIOR SERVICES: 'We will have to continue to keep them in mind' office

FROM PAGE A1

conveying Senior Services' decision on the proposed contract.

"Senior Services is thankful to the Windsor Town Council for their ongoing support of the older adults and their support of the wide variety of programs and services provided by Senior Services," he stated. "We are also grateful for their hard work in developing a proposed contract to house a program for older adults at Windsor Town Center."

"After a careful review of the proposed contract, and due to the need to close the program for an extended time each year, as well as the concern of school-time traffic at that location, we have decided to look for another location that will better serve the older adults of Windsor and the surrounding area," he stated. "We greatly appreciate the Wind-

sor Town Council and all of Isle of Wight County."

Saunders noted to the Town Council that the reasons given by Zollos for declining the proposed agreement were the conflicts with the current use of the center by Isle of Wight County Schools and the Parks and Recreation Department.

During a Town Council meeting in March, Zollos shared some concerns he had about scheduling, though he still held out hope then that they could be alleviated.

"We're doing a year-round program that provides lunch, it provides social programs, it provides education, like chronic disease self-management, diabetes management, matter of balance and a host of impor-



Willis

tant programs for older adults to live healthy and active lives," he said. "This becomes a social network for these folks. They start to not only come for socialization but for their meals and other support services."

He said that giving up eight successive weeks of town center usage to allow for the Parks and Recreation summer camp is a big deal for SSSEVA.

At the council's Sept. 13 meeting, Mayor Willis was the lone elected town official to provide comment in response to Senior Services' decision.

"Disappointed that their decision went that way, and we will have to continue to keep them in mind and listen out, and maybe there'll be an opportunity as they start refiguring what they might be able to do as an alternative, and we still might be able to work something out there on that, so we'll see," he said.

TAX: Hearing will be held at county office

FROM PAGE A1

will be is affected by fluctuations in values, she stated.

"We have to set the rate at a rate that will cover just what the state gives us so we do not end up in the hole," she said. "Market values have gone up so much on the vehicles that the taxpayer is paying more, and the state is not

giving us enough money to cover that."

She noted that the Board of Supervisors sets the percentage to "just make sure that we do not lose money simply because the state only giving us a set amount. So they do have the power to control it, but if they increase it, then we're going to lose money, because it'll reduce the amount of

money that the taxpayer is paying, but the state is not going to give us enough to cover that."

According to the public notice, the public hearing will be held at 6 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be heard, in the Board Room of the Southampton County Office Center at 26022 Administration Center Drive in Courtland.