

The Farmville Herald

Honor for the past, help for the present, hope for the future

Farmville, Virginia

Friday, December 16, 2022

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Gold mining committee set up

Buckingham County isn't waiting for the General Assembly to make a decision about gold mining. The Board of Supervisors looks to go their own way. By a unanimous 7-0 decision on Monday, Dec. 12, the group formed a committee to recommend what the county's next steps will be.

That committee includes two supervisors, District 5 representative Harry Bryant and board chairman Jordan

Miles, who represents District 4. They'll work with Joseph Abbate of Yogaville Environmental Solutions to go over the recently completed state gold mining report and develop options for how Buckingham County can respond. Then the three-person group will return to the full board of supervisors and present the options. At that point, it'll be up to the full board to choose which path to take.

BUCKINGHAM

Miles was a late addition to the committee. The original proposal, made by Bryant, included himself, Abbate and Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Joe Chambers. Board members wanted Bryant on the committee since it is his district impacted by the gold prospecting done by Aston Bay. However, other members questioned why Miles

wasn't included, seeing as he served on the workgroup that created the state gold mining report.

"I'm not making light of anyone's contribution, but Mr. Miles served on the state board in regards to gold mining," Supervisor Don Matthews said. "I would think he would be very knowledgeable about this document. That would be my recommendation, to have someone that

has actually been on the state work group."

Chambers withdrew his name from consideration and proposed Miles in his place. There was no opposition.

A CALL FOR ACTION

The vote came after supervisors heard an hour of testimony from Buckingham County residents, all of whom asked

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Investigation into courthouse threat continues

BY BRIAN CARLTON
The Farmville Herald

An investigation into Tuesday's threat at the Prince Edward County Courthouse continues in Farmville. On Tuesday, Dec. 13, officials stopped cases and evacuated portions of the downtown area. Sections of Downtown Farmville around the courthouse were blocked off. Farmville Police also closed South Main and South Streets, between High to East Third Street, for just under two hours.

"At approximately (1:19 p.m.), we received a call to our communications center stating that there was a bomb in the Circuit Court, set to detonate before 2:30 p.m.," Farmville Police Chief Andy Ellington said.

As a precaution, the Prince Edward County Sheriff's Office staff evacuated the courthouse and they brought in bomb sniffing dogs to determine if there was an actual bomb on scene. No bomb was discovered, but the courthouse remained closed to the public for the rest of the workday. It opened back up at 7 p.m. Tuesday night, as the Prince Edward County

Board of Supervisors held their regularly scheduled meeting.

Residents also had to hold off on calling the sheriff's office for that two hour period. In a statement at the time, Epps asked people to call 911 if they had an emergency. He said the sheriff's administration line would remain down until the courthouse was secured. Once the building was searched and confirmed as safe, the administration line went back on.

Both Farmville Police and the sheriff's office are continuing the investigation into who placed the call.

What happens next?

When caught, the person will face felony charges, as Section 18.2-83 of the Virginia Code details. It says anyone who communicates "any threat to bomb, burn, destroy or in any manner damage any place of assembly, building or other structure... is guilty of a Class 5 felony." Anyone convicted of a Class 5 felony faces at least one year and no more than 10 years in prison.

The sentence is completely dependent on the jury or judge involved in the case.



BRIAN CARLTON | HERALD

A look at Pamela Stepko right after she was announced as the winner.

Stepko honored with national award

BY BRIAN CARLTON
The Farmville Herald

CUMBERLAND

Pamela Stepko was surprised. The math interventionist, who works at Cumberland Elementary, thought she was going into a school rally Wednesday to celebrate literacy. Instead, she was in shock as her name was called and she walked to the middle of the room. Stepko was announced as the recipient of one of this year's Milken Educator Awards, marking the first time a teacher from Cumberland earned the honor.

Consider the Milken Educator Awards to be like the Oscars of Education. For the last 35 years, the Milken Family Foundation has honored top educators across the country. The winners get \$25,000, to use however they want. They also get

lifelong memberships in the Milken Educator Network. That's a group with more than 2,900 members, each a former Milken award winner. Milken staff members said Pamela made an impression.

"Pamela Stepko's unique combination of leadership and classroom experience makes her a valuable asset to Cumberland Elementary School and the community at large," said Milken Awards Vice President Stephanie Bishop. "Through her creativity, compassion and high expectations for excellence, Pamela builds both academic skill and the confidence in her students to become productive young citizens."

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Judge dismisses lawsuit

BY BRIAN CARLTON
The Farmville Herald

CUMBERLAND

A case challenging a zoning decision by the Cumberland County Board of Supervisors was dismissed Monday, Dec. 12.

In February 2021, supervisors unanimously agreed to rezone a plot of land off Route 45. It had been A2 General Agricultural and they agreed to turn it into M-2 Industrial, so that some local business owners could use it for a meat processing facility. However, one family challenged the decision. Darin and Phyllis Justus argued the decision was improperly approved.

The two family members claimed that first, the public hadn't been properly notified of the changes. The lawsuit also claimed that Cumberland County's comprehensive plan was not valid when the changes were approved.

Here's where it gets complicated. Back in October, Judge Margaret

Spencer had announced her intent to dismiss the case, but granted the Justus family and their attorney, John Janson, a 21-day window. They either had to amend their lawsuit within that 21 days or she would sign the Oct. 12 order to dismiss the case. At the time, she believed all parties involved understood. Which is why Spencer was confused on Monday, when she showed up to the hearing and found Janson had not filed anything during that 21-day period.

In fact, the only thing showing up in the court record was a filing 16 minutes before the hearing was supposed to start on Monday afternoon, asking for an extension.

Janson told the court both of his clients were ill, to the point of being incapacitated. He argued that they couldn't discuss the case with him, therefore preventing him from filing.

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Free clinic provides care for those in need

BY RACHEL AUSTIN
The Farmville Herald

As winter brings the return of cold and flu season, the Heart of Virginia Free Clinic is ready to help people stay healthy despite their financial struggles.

The Heart of Virginia Free Clinic is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays at 401 E. 3rd St., Farmville. The clinic is a private nonprofit that provides primary medical care at little or no charge to low-income, uninsured adults ages 18

to 64. The clinic is run by volunteers, grants and generous donations.

For the past 10 years, the Heart of Virginia Free Clinic has provided primary medical care for the nine counties of Prince Edward, Cumberland, Charlotte, Buckingham, Nottoway, Lunenburg, Amelia, Appomattox and Mecklenburg. It serves those who are at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and cannot afford to purchase health insurance. Most patients are those who have

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