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REGION » B1



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# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

SUNDAY, April 24, 2022

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## Ukraine battered again

Zelenskyy says two US officials to visit

BY DAVID KEYTON and YESICA FISCH  
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces in Ukraine tried to storm a steel plant housing soldiers and civilians in the southern city of Mariupol on Saturday in an attempt to crush the last pocket of resistance in a place of deep symbolic and strategic value to Moscow, Ukrainian officials said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, announced he would meet Sunday in his nation's capital with the U.S. secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the U.S. secretary of defense, Lloyd Austin. The White House declined to comment.

Speaking at a news conference, Zelenskyy gave little detail about logistics of the encounter but said he expected concrete results — “not just presents or some kind of cakes, we are expecting specific things and specific weapons.”

It would be the first high-level U.S. trip to Kyiv since the war began Feb. 24. While visiting Poland in March, Blinken stepped briefly onto Ukrainian soil to meet with the country's foreign minister. Zelenskyy's last face-to-face meeting with a U.S. leader was Feb. 19 with Vice President Kamala Harris.

In attacks on the eve of Orthodox Easter, Russian forces pounded cities and towns in southern and eastern Ukraine.

A 3-month-old baby was among eight people killed when Russia fired cruise missiles at the Black Sea port city of Odesa, officials said. Zelenskyy said 18 more were wounded.

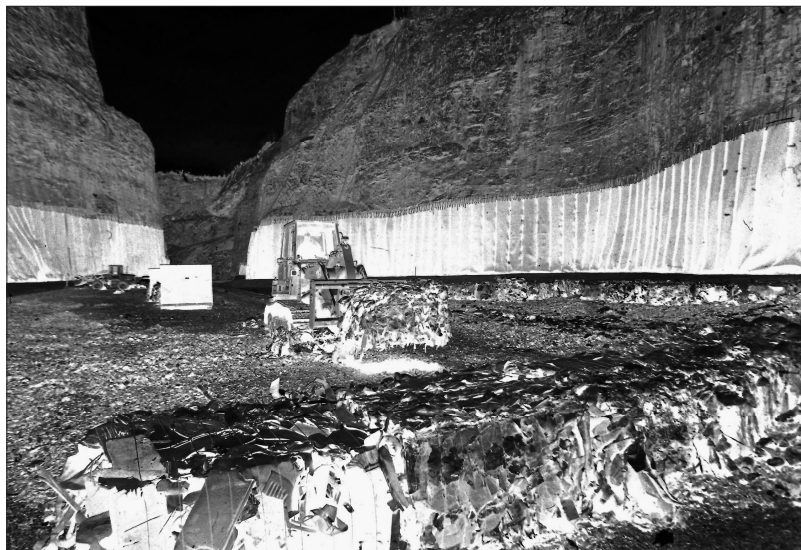
“The war started when this baby was one month old. Can you imagine what is happening?” Zelenskyy said. “They are just bastards. ... I don't have any other words for it, just bastards.”

See UKRAINE, Page A9

Thank you, David Casey, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.



## LANDFILL OPENED IN 1998



The Bristol, Virginia landfill opened in March 1998. Today the city awaits recommendations from a panel of experts on how to resolve odor issues.

# Genesis of the stench

A look back at how Bristol's smelly situation began

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**B**RISTOL, Va. — Former city leaders were convinced, as early as the 1980s, that converting an old quarry into a landfill would not only solve where to put the city's trash but generate profits by accepting trash from across the region. ♦ A review of more than a decade's worth of Bristol Herald Courier stories and other sources reveals the path the city of Bristol, Virginia followed to develop a landfill that today is the center of controversy and concern — awaiting recommendations from a panel of national experts on how to resolve odor, emission and other issues.

The panel's work follows some 18 months of suffering by residents on both sides of town; a dilemma that has attracted this unprecedented review by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, air monitoring by the Environmental Protection Agency and other reviews. The city has invested more than \$3 million to date trying to address the problem and is programming millions more into its budget for expected future remedies.

“The expert panel appointed by the commonwealth to address persistent odors from

the city's landfill has identified and will be recommending effective strategies to mitigate landfill odors. The panel's recommendations will include steps for immediate emissions containment. These steps will be deployed within the landfill and analyzed to confirm their effectiveness,” panel Chair and Virginia Tech Department Head Mark Widdowson wrote in a March 28 email to stakeholders. “The panel is recommending additional engineering design, construction, and operational steps for managing the landfill in an environmentally-respon-

sible manner now and into the future. The details of the panel's findings and recommendations will be provided to you in a report on or about April 25.”

The panel was appointed by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the same agency that approved the city's original landfill permits in 1993 and 1996. That permitting process would typically be completed in less than half that time and speaks to the complexity of this expansive project.

In fact, it took the city more than a decade — from initial conversation to opening day —

and borrowing more than \$20 million to establish the quarry landfill.

### Beginnings

As early as 1981, Bristol, Virginia leaders considered the former Vulcan Materials rock quarry — a 137-acre, 400-foot-deep site as a potential replacement for its 17-acre Shakesville Road landfill which operated nearby.

A private waste collection firm studied the quarry but opted not to begin the permitting process. The City Council voted

See LANDFILL, Page A4



Trash was originally compacted into bundles before being taken into the Bristol, Virginia landfill.

INSIDE: CLASSIFIED E1-12 | COMICS INSERT | DEATHS B2-3 | OPINION A10 | SCOREBOARD C2 | TELEVISION B6

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## Landfill

From Page A1

in 1989 to spend \$125,000 for a three-year option to purchase the property. City officials told state lawmakers at a December 1989 meeting where they were seeking state support for a proposed regional landfill. The city wanted to enlist other regional localities to help defray the costs of developing a landfill since its own landfill was expected to be full by 1992, a Herald Courier story reported.

Then-City Manager Paul Spangler told lawmakers he'd received a "lukewarm" reception from state environmental regulators because of "expected engineering difficulties" in a process that could take up to two years to complete — with no guarantee of acceptance. They admitted the site presented challenges, including how to deal with water "seeping into the quarry," pumping it out and environmental monitoring. But city officials envisioned the quarry as a solution for its trash for the next 50 to 60 years.

While the envisioned regional effort never materialized, city officials pressed forward and retained STS Consultants of Deerfield, Illinois to conduct a feasibility study and cost analysis, which was completed in 1990. With space in its landfill running low, the city directed the firm to develop preliminary plans and begin work on a state landfill permit application.

Under DEQ, landfill permitting is a two-step process. Part A provides basic information about a proposed site, maps, reports and other demonstrations that the proposed facility "meets all applicable siting criteria and is suitable for its intended use," according to the agency's website.

The consultants told the city one big advantage of the site was that it was 200 feet below the groundwater table and, since groundwater flowed into but not out of the site, any potential pollutants should remain trapped in the site where they could be "monitored and collected," according to an article about innovative landfill projects that appeared in the Sept. 1, 1996, issue of "City and County Magazine."

### Initial permitting

The city submitted its Part A landfill permit application in September 1992 and DEQ approved it one year later, in September 1993.

Simultaneously, the city was buying time in its existing landfill by refining some processes, including switching from soil to membrane covering, upgrading waste compaction equipment, excluding tree waste from the site and securing vertical expansion permits from DEQ in 1991 and 1993. They also began operating an incinerator and tire chipper to reduce waste stream impact and added the shredded tires to its daily cover.

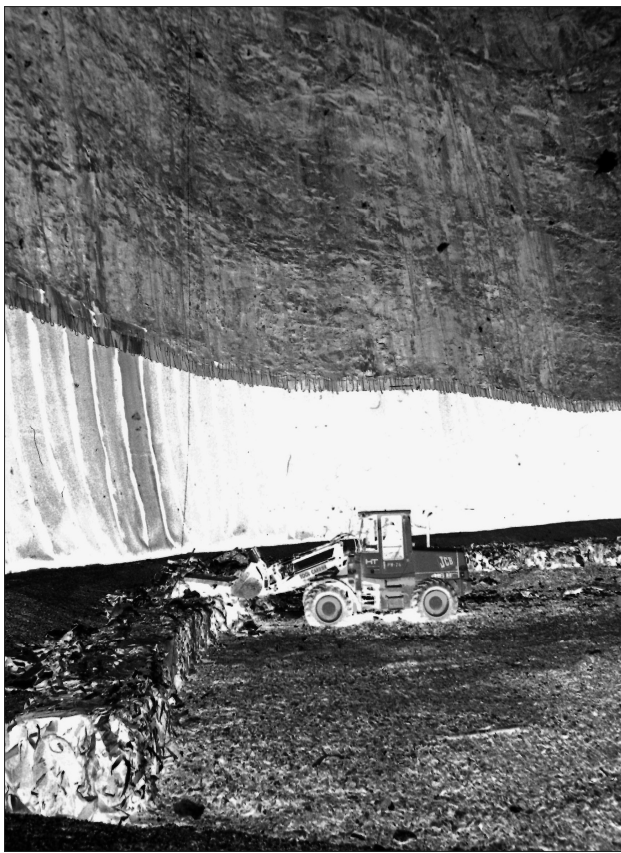
On Feb. 24, 1994, the City Council unanimously approved borrowing \$9.9 million to construct the landfill in the former quarry. The money went into an enterprise fund to finance the project. STS was retained to design the landfill, its groundwater and leachate collection systems and multi-layer clay liner. Engineering was expected to cost about \$900,000, former City Manager Spangler told the council.

At this point the city had already spent more than \$2.1 million on the project. Spangler said the city would ask the Tennessee Valley Authority to reimburse those costs out of the \$3.5 million TVA pledged to pay the city for renewing its power agreement.

At the time, Bristol, Virginia generated about 70 tons of waste per day, so paying for the landfill debt and operations costs would require taking in outside trash. City officials had no shortage of potential clients.

When word of a potential new landfill got out, the city's phones began to ring. Bristol, Virginia was first contacted by Lee County, then a private firm that collected trash in Damascus and Smyth County, Virginia, plus Sullivan County, Johnson City and Washington County in Tennessee and others about the possibility of accepting their trash.

"If I took trash from everyone



About 350 tons of baled trash were unloaded onto the landfill floor when the site first opened on March 2, 1998.

who has expressed interest within the last 60 to 90 days, we would have in excess of 1,040 tons per day," Spangler told the newspaper in March 1994.

### Opposition

The first public opposition to the quarry landfill emerged in April 1994 in the person of Bristol, Tennessee resident Charles Barnes, who expressed concern the project could damage adjoining land. She told the City Council she was gathering signatures on a petition opposing the quarry landfill.

Within a month the movement secured signatures of hundreds of people, all imploring the city to turn back. They cited a 1971 engineering study indicating faults existed in the eastern and southern walls of the quarry that extended a half-mile into Tennessee. The city manager said that information had been reviewed as part of the city's approved Part A permit.

The group also reached out to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bristol Tennessee City Council to try and enlist their support. One member of the group wrote a letter to the White House and received a reply that the matter had been turned over to the EPA for review.

### Overdesigned

In response to those and other environmental concerns, the city held a sparsely attended public meeting in June 1994 where Spangler called the landfill "overdesigned."

"All the state requires is that you have a double liner and a leachate collection system. That's all," Spangler said. "People a whole lot smarter than me assure that what we've done is a whole lot better than that. This thing is overdesigned."

He explained the base of the landfill would have three layers of "closely compacted clay and three collection systems that will be closely monitored."

Spangler said "many other alternatives were considered before the quarry project was initiated."

"We're taking every precaution, and people a whole lot smarter than me have tried to pick this thing apart," Spangler said. "This is the very best solution we have. This is the answer for us, for Bristol, Tennessee, for both Washington counties, for Smyth County and Lee County. It's the best choice we've got."

By July 1994 the city had already spent \$2.35 million on the landfill, including nearly \$990,000 to prepare and submit its Part A application, over \$520,000 for equipment and related costs and a \$200,000 down payment on the land.

### Part B, delays and approval at last

In September 1994 the city and its consultants submitted its Part B landfill application to DEQ. It included five volumes of specific information regarding the proposed landfill's design, operations plan, groundwater and landfill gas sampling and analysis.

The initial review was completed in about six months, by March 1995. The following month — on April 4, 1995 — DEQ officials visited the quarry site, met with city officials and the city's consultants. City officials said at that time no new issues were raised, they expected the permit would be approved that summer and hoped to open the landfill by July 1996.

In May 1995, a DEQ official told the newspaper the agency was in the "final stages" of its technical review, but this was the "most technical" Part B application the department had ever received and, if approved, would be the "first of its kind in the state."

Throughout this time, the city kept bringing its trash and some from outside localities to its nearly full landfill.

City officials continued to express optimism the approval and a required public hearing could be completed by July or August. However, that was soon moved to late September, following a July meeting in Richmond.

"We're extremely pleased that the state appears to be ready to issue the final approval," then-Mayor Jerry Wolfe said at that time. "I think the fact that this process has taken two to three years for approval shows that the state was very diligent in studying the project."

A new wrinkle emerged in late August when DEQ requested additional information regarding the clay liner. The city was told to provide a computer model to "prove the three-layered liner material will work," then-Assistant City Manager Bill Dennison said.

"It's a design problem. It is technical in nature. It has absolutely nothing to do with the environmental integrity of the

landfill," Dennison said at that time.

After September passed without any update, the city reached out to then-state Sen. William Wampler and asked him to inquire about the review.

Wampler said he contacted the agency to expedite, not influence, a decision.

"All I'm asking them to do is just make their mind up about what questions remain," Wampler said at the time. "This has a sensitive timeline on it. We need to know whether this [quarry site] is an option or not."

That approval arrived a few days later, on Oct. 12, setting the stage for a final public hearing, which was held Jan. 3, 1996.

A number of residents of both Bristol reconfirmed their opposition to the project at that time, with one man warning an "environmental disaster" could result from the project.

### Work begins

On Valentine's Day 1996, Bristol, Virginia received the final permit approval from DEQ. Two weeks later the City Council approved spending \$475,000 to pay off the balance and acquire the quarry site.

Throughout that spring and summer the city continued to negotiate with other localities, particularly Sullivan County, to accept its trash. A tentative deal was finalized in late June that was forecast to generate \$663,000 annually, but Sullivan officials continued shopping around, newspaper reports show.

"The landfill will be a money-maker when it opens," Spangler said in July 1996. "It's an investment to make money down the road."

But the market evolved during the three years Bristol, Virginia was securing its permits. Thirty miles away, Johnson City had opened its massive Iris Glen landfill and was seeking trash from area localities. Just down U.S. Route 11E in Tennessee, Browning Ferris Industries expanded its landfill in Hawkins County and was also recruiting new clients.

In the middle of this tipping tug-of-war was Sullivan County which saw a private landfill close in 1991 and had been sending its trash elsewhere.

Bristol, Virginia proposed charging Sullivan \$25.50 per ton, while charging Bristol, Tennessee and private haulers \$24.50 to attract the county's trash — which was going to Johnson City at that

time. BFI's rate was around \$23 and Johnson City was \$30 per ton.

Besides angling for the best deal, Sullivan leaders acquired land near Blountville and took initial steps toward constructing its own landfill.

Bristol, Virginia held a formal groundbreaking ceremony at the landfill site on Nov. 19, 1996, and signed a \$6 million construction contract a month later. Under that agreement, a Knoxville firm had 240 days to construct the liner and install the leachate system.

A 40,000-square-foot baling room was also being built. Initially the plan was that all trash brought into the landfill would be brought into that building, compacted and baled into blocks weighing 1,400 to 1,600 pounds apiece, city officials said during a March 1997 tour. Items not conducive to baling would be placed into the city's small, existing landfill.

Prolonging the life of that landfill temporarily saved the city an estimated \$3 million in closure costs. Once closed, post-closure monitoring was expected to cost about \$100,000 per year for 30 years.

The floor of the quarry was leveled using several feet of rock taken from the sides, Spangler told reporters during the tour. It would then be layered with a burlap material, a plastic liner, the leachate collection pipe system, more rock and another plastic liner.

### Borrowing until the end

In July 1997 the Bristol Virginia City Council approved issuing \$8.75 million in tax and revenue anticipation notes, to complete the city landfill. The short-term borrowing was to be paid off that December when city tax revenues were collected. Jerry Wolfe, then a council member, expressed concern, since that was projected to be the entirety of the city's real estate tax collections for the year.

"I just don't like it," Wolfe said. "When the payment comes due in December we're going to be sitting there with no money for the rest of the year."

Spangler said that route afforded the city a lower interest rate, but admitted it will "put a strain on the city" but said the additional cost had been anticipated since the project began.

The \$8.9 million was needed to purchase equipment to operate the landfill and to cover final construction costs, Spangler said.

At this point the city had incurred about \$20 million in debt. Over the three years the city spent developing the quarry landfill, Dennison estimated it would have spent \$15 million to haul its trash elsewhere.

"We're putting in a whole lot more base liner than anyone's regulations call for [to protect the water and leachate systems]," Dennison told the Herald Courier in September. "To the left of the transfer station we're building a 500,000-gallon leachate storage facility that will be used during big storms to keep from overwhelming the storm sewer system."

Construction was expected to be finished in October 1997 but wasn't finalized until December. The landfill couldn't open before another inspection and review by DEQ, Dennison said.

### Open for business

The Virginia DEQ inspected the landfill for the final time on Feb. 20, 1998, and issued a certificate to operate the following week, with gates opening to accept the first loads of trash on March 2. About 350 tons, including about 70 from the city and the balance from other areas, was unloaded, baled into large cubes and stacked onto the landfill floor.

A synthetic tarp was used to cover the bales overnight, and then removed the next morning to allow stacking more cubes. City leaders continued speaking with localities within a 100-mile radius about bringing their trash with a goal of bringing in more than 400 tons daily.

Then-Mayor Farnham Jarrard called the facility an "engineering marvel" that "puts the little town of Bristol on the leading edge of technology," during a May dedication ceremony.

dmcgee@bristolnews.com  
Twitter: @DMcGeeBHC

# Helping to heal

'Immense' need brings group together to create 'Mended Women' program

REGION » A3



# Staying power

Cross hopes to end trend for local MLB position players

SPORTS » B1

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

FRIDAY, July 15, 2022

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## Abingdon Man charged in 2002 death

Call from Roanoke PD reopened Deborah Page Fletcher case

BY JOE TENNIS  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
A second-degree murder charge has been filed against Derek Wayne Journell in a case from nearly 20 years ago.

Journell was dating Deborah Page Fletcher, who was 39 at the time of her death in 2002, Abingdon Police Chief John Holbrook said.

Events surrounding the death began at Johnston Memorial Hospital, which at the time was located at 351 N. Court St. in Abingdon, Virginia.

Throughout the course of the investigation 20 years ago, the Abingdon Police Department interviewed witnesses, medical staff, members of the medical examiner's office and consulted the local commonwealth's attorney, Holbrook said.

"The medical examiner at that time said that the cause of death was blunt force to her head, but the manner of death was undetermined," Holbrook said.

After extensive investigative efforts, no charges were sought and the case became inactive.

"In January of last year, Roanoke City Police Department called us because they had a man report he had committed a violent crime nearly 20 years ago here in Abingdon," Holbrook said.

"Our investigators got to work immediately and have been pursuing this case tirelessly since then."

It took effort to open this cold case, the chief said.

"When they contacted us, I sent investigators straight to Roanoke. Other staff was called

See **CASE**, Page A4

“They all have their stories ... and they're all heartbreaking.”

— Denise McGeorge, disaster programs director, Buchanan County Department of Social Services

# All safe

Victoria Fleming searched through mud and sticks in the floor of her home for treasured items for her grandchildren after Buchanan County floodwaters receded. Fleming and her husband, Columbus, had to climb into the rafters of the house they were renting to escape the water.

**INSIDE**  
» Check out additional photos from Buchanan County, A2

EMILY BALL/  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER



Floods hit Buchanan County hard, but no lives lost

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
and MIKE GANGLOFF  
ROANOKETIMES

VANSANT, Va. — All of the residents of Buchanan County are safe and accounted for, a day after flash flooding devastated sections of the county — sweeping homes off foundations and depositing vehicles atop buildings and in riverbeds.

Officials of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and Buchanan County Sheriff's Office shared that good news Thursday during a mid-day briefing that attracted news outlets from across the region. On Wednesday,

See **SAFE**, Page A9

## Bristol rescuers among first to respond

'No power, no telephone, no cell service, no water ...'

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
GRUNDY, Va. — Members of Bristol Virginia Fire Department's Swift Water Rescue Team encountered near-total destruction after floodwaters ravaged parts of Buchanan County Tuesday night into early Wednesday.

See **RESPOND**, Page A9

## “He said, “Where are you?” I said, “In this tree.””

On Thursday, Patty Mullins surveys flood damage from Tuesday night's flooding near her home. Washed into a tree, she hung on through the night.

PHOTO BY DANIEL SANGJIS MIN/  
RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH



BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
AKWOOD, Va. — Awakened around midnight Tuesday by her black Labrador Vayda, Patty Mullins was startled to see floodwaters a foot deep and rising inside the bedroom of her single-story home next to Dismal River. Barefoot, wearing just a nightgown and T-shirt and carrying

Holding on to a tree or climbing through the ceiling, residents escaped the flood

See **ESCAPED**, Page A4

Partly sunny today with 8 to 12 hours of sunshine; relative humidity 75% early. **87/61** Weather » A10



**INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B8-10 | COMICS B6 | DEATHS A4, A9 | OPINION A8 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B7**

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# Obituaries

From Page A4

## James Sluss

April 29, 1948 - July 10, 2022



**CASTLEWOOD, Va.**  
James Roger Sluss Sr. was born on April 29, 1948, at Holston Valley Memorial Hospital in Kingsport, Tenn., to the late Willard Hobart and Elma Ruth Wampler Sluss of Castlewood, Va. Along with his parents, he was predeceased by grandparents, Jonathan H. Sluss and Nannie Belle Johnson Sluss, Singleton Candler Wampler and Goldie Gibson Wampler; his brother, Stephen Russell Sluss; brother-in-law,

Eugene Fields; and sister-in-law, Freda Sluss. Roger as he was known to his family and friends grew up on the family farm in Castlewood, Va. He was a farmer from the day he was born until the day he died. He graduated from Castlewood High School and Virginia Tech with BS and MS. He taught Agriculture Education classes and adult night classes at Castlewood High School for over three decades and served as a little and senior league baseball coach for local youth teams. His knowledge of agriculture and his skills as a wood artisan was unmatched. Though he loved farming, his passion was always his family and students.

Roger is survived by a loving family including his wife, Dr. Dorothy Justus Sluss; son, Dr. James Roger Sluss II and wife, Mrs. Amy O'Neil Sluss; along with their children, Madeline Rebecca and James Roger Sluss III (Jay) of Winchester, Va.; siblings, Glenda Kay Fields of Kingsport, Tenn., Ronald Sluss (Margie) of Nickelsville, Va., and Theresa Katherine Tiller (Michael) of Bristol, Tenn.; three nephews, Stephen and Abigail Betis Fields of Kingsport, Tenn., Ronald Chester II and Brandi

Monroe Sluss of Atlanta, Ga., and Benjamin and Fannie Tiller of Austin, Texas; one niece, Kacy Tiller of Bristol, Tenn.; grand nieces and nephews, Jackson Eugene, Sierra, and Samuel Phillip Fields of Kingsport, Tenn., Jacob and Kylie Sluss of Atlanta, Ga., and Kaleb and Sophie Tiller of Austin, Texas; extended family includes the families of Mary Elizabeth Justus Salmons (Kevin), Ashley Plaster (Jason, Mc Kenna, Gabriel, and Quinton Plaster), Amanda (Matthew and Grace Salmons) and Shea, JD, and Jaxxon Hunt), Sherman Timothy Justus of Charleston, S.C., and Lawrence Carter Justus of Hurley, Va., and Debbie Hurley of Richlands, Va. (Jeremy Justus, Kelly and Kara Hill).

The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. on Friday, July 15, 2022, at Castlewood Funeral Home. A time of remembrance will follow at 7 p.m. with his family and friends sharing memories.

Funeral Services for James Roger Sluss Sr. will be conducted at 11 a.m. on Saturday, July 16, 2022, at Castlewood Funeral Home Chapel, Castlewood, Va., with Pastor Willie Ellis officiating. Committal services will follow at Temple Hill Memorial Park, Castlewood, Va. Honorary pallbearers will be Frank Kilgore, Tim Long, Billy Osborne, Bobby Osborne, Bob Salyers, K.D. Cook, Bobby Horne, Jody Salyers, Jeremy Sharp, and James Woody. The family invites everyone to the Western Front Hotel from 1 until 5 p.m. following the committal services.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial contributions be sent to Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Tennessee, Inc., 5801 Kingston Pike, Knoxville TN 37919, or Clinch River Little League, P.O. Box 1126 Castlewood, VA 24224.

Online condolences may be sent to the Sluss family through our website at [www.castlewoodfuneralhome.com](http://www.castlewoodfuneralhome.com). The funeral service will be available for viewing on our website following the service. Castlewood Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

## Barbara Jean Lowry Thomas



The Thomas family celebrates the joy-filled life of Barbara Jean Lowry Thomas who passed away on July 10, 2022, in Harrisonburg, Va., age 85. Barbara was born in Washington D.C., and spent her early years in Austin, Minn., Horseshoe Bend, Va., and Chilhowie, Va.

Given the option many evenings during her childhood, Barbara chose practicing piano over drying the dinner dishes.

Her resulting proficiency in piano performance was a lifelong talent she nurtured, and a gift she shared with many. During her late teens, she was pianist and vocalist performing with The Gospel Four. This group achieved some acclaim in southwest Virginia, and it was at a fateful studio recording session for the group at radio station WMEV outside Marion, Va., where Barbara met her life-long love, Bob Thomas, whom she married October 1957.

Barbara pursued professional training at the Mary Dalton Frye Private Secretarial School in Abingdon, Va. After she and Bob moved to Washington, D.C. early in their marriage, Barbara became a secretary for the director of the National Science Foundation. The Thomas family moved to Berryville, Va. in 1965, where Barbara spent happy years, managing the household and raising three boys.

Barbara enjoyed numerous interests, including geography, astronomy, and meteorology, as evidenced by notes written into the margins of the atlas during cross-country trips, and waking her boys to gaze at meteor showers in the middle of many nights. She was a member of the Battletown Garden Club. Barbara also served as a docent at Abram's Delight in Winchester, Va., for several years.

Ultimately, Barbara's life was one of service. She was unparalleled in her work for Christ and for community. She led fund-raising for the American Lung Association

and the American Heart Association. She sang in the choir and taught Grade 3 & 4 Sunday School at Duncan Memorial (Berryville). Barbara also served with the ecumenical FISH organization in Clarke County, aiding with the food pantry and providing rides to those needing transport to medical appointments. She continued as an enthusiastic parishioner at Greene Memorial (Roanoke) and Asbury United Methodist Church (Harrisonburg).

Barbara was diagnosed late in life with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis which proved to be a challenge during her final years, but her iron efforts, marked by love and good humor, enabled her to thrive with even the worst that ALS gave her. She died at Sunnyside Retirement Community surrounded by many who loved her.

Barbara was preceded in death by husband, Kenneth G. "Bob" Thomas; grandparents, Dolphus and Cartha Porter; mother, Della Porter Testerman; and father, Taylor Scott Lowry. She is survived by sons, Andy (Kathleen Mueller), Tim (Laura), and Nathan Thomas (Amanda Lin); sister, Judy Mullinax Ferrell (John); and great friend and brother-in-law, Jack Ryburn of Abingdon, Va. Barbara also admired the work of five grandchildren, Lucy Thomas (Dee Dee Hyde) of Seattle Wash., Sophia and Cecelia Thomas of Harrisonburg, Va., and Isabel and Luke Lin of Princeton, N.J., along with numerous nieces and nephews.

The family hosted a visitation Thursday, July 14, 2022, from 6 until 7:30 p.m., at the Meredith Chapel, Sunnyside Retirement Community, 3935 Sunnyside Dr, Harrisonburg. The family will gather for a graveside service at Sherwood Memorial Park, Salem, Va., with arrangements pending.

In lieu of flowers, the family encourages memorial contributions to one of these causes, The Clarke County Educational Foundation, P.O. Box 1252, Berryville VA 22611, The FISH Organization, P.O. Box 1154, Berryville VA 22611, or The ALS Association - DC/MD/VA Chapter, 30 W. Guide Dr., Ste. 150, Rockville, MD 20850.

Condolences may be shared at [kyger.com](http://kyger.com).



Eric Breeding, chief deputy of the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office, providing updates to media outlets. He reported no people unaccounted for, no fatalities and one injury.

## Safe

From Page A1

44 residents remained unaccounted for, but that number shrank to 17 by Thursday at 7 a.m. By noon the remainder had been located alive, according to Chief Deputy Eric Breeding.

"Crews were out all night last night and again this morning reaching those in the flooded area that were reported missing on our hotline yesterday, and they were all located," Breeding said during the midday news briefing. "We are also happy to report we are at zero fatalities during this flooding incident."

One person was injured, after receiving a snake bite.

With the search and rescue work nearly complete, officials are trying to assist with immediate needs. "This was a massive search area with about 30 road miles and about 400 structures," VDEM search and rescue coordinator Billy Chimes said. "We are checking vehicles in the river but we expect to wrap those up and we continue to take requests for wellness checks, medical needs, food, shelter, those types of things."

Chimes said the damage is extensive, with landslides, trees down and roads washed away.

"It's everything from just minor damage to houses that were washed away. We don't have an exact number. That damage assessment is going to begin tomorrow and those numbers will come out as the days go on," Chimes said.

That is part of the assessment process to see if the damage estimates meet federal emergency thresholds. Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin declared a state of emergency and federal lawmakers said they will push for federal assistance.

He said the type of damage is similar to flooding last August in the Hurley area.

He said support efforts will continue for the coming weeks.

Appalachian Power reported more than 1,300 homes were without power in the affected area. Emergency response personnel said much of the impact zone has no power, water phone service, sewer, or cell phone service.

The Virginia Department of Transportation reported crews from its Oakwood headquarters have been working since about midnight Wednesday and other crews are assisting with cleanup and damage assessments, Bristol District spokesperson Michelle Earl.

"Currently three VDOT routes remain impassible, Route 715 with a span of bridge washed out, Route 635 and Route 628," she said. The latter two were expected to be passable by late Thursday.

Other affected routes are 616, 638, 680, 641, 613,

640, 666, 654 and 685 are passable with care. Dismal River Road, also known as 638, near Twin Valley High School, was extensively damaged.

The greatest need is cleaning supplies, Breeding said.

"Our immediate need at this time is cleaning supplies such as mops, buckets, shovels, general cleaning supplies, bleach, stuff like that," Breeding said. "These items can be taken directly to the Twin Valley Elementary School in Oakwood on Route 460."

At an emergency shelter set up at Twin Valley Middle School, people loaded cases of water and other supplies Thursday morning, preparing to deliver them to those directly affected by the flood.

Though the shelter was ready, no one needed to spend the night there, said Mary Watson, Buchanan County's director of social services.

"They're just coming here to shower, charge phones," she said.

About a dozen elderly people with medical conditions were placed in nearby motels because their homes were damaged, Watson said.

Denise McGeorge, disaster programs director for the Buchanan County Department of Social Services, was waiting at the shelter to take reports of damages.

McGeorge said she had already heard from people whose homes were devastated and who had lost "everything they've worked for in their lives."

She said a couple described their residence beginning to collapse around them Tuesday night, with water rushing in so quickly that they had trouble getting out.

"He's 6-2 and the water's already up to his chest," McGeorge said.

McGeorge said that the man turned to his wife and said that if he did not make it out, he hoped she would tell the children that he loved them. The wife responded that they were going to make it, McGeorge said.

The couple then clawed at the ceiling until they broke through to rafters, and clung to them to keep from being swept away.

Another husband and wife reported being bitten by a copperhead snake and stung by bees as they fled from rising water, McGeorge said.

"They all have their stories... and they're all heart-breaking," McGeorge said.

McGeorge said that the extent of the flood's damages would not be known for days or longer.

Hired to coordinate the response to the Hurley flood 10 months ago, McGeorge noted that state relief funds were still coming in for that disaster.

"We're on the front end, the beginning stages" of the response to Tuesday's flooding, McGeorge said.

## Respond

From Page A1

The Bristol unit was among the first to respond to a flash flood alert in parts of Buchanan County, starting rescue operations about 2:30 a.m. Wednesday. What they found were people clinging to life in the Dismal River area near Twin Valley High School.

"They had major, major flooding over there; cars are completely gone, cars in rivers, bridges torn out and no means of egress for most of the citizens," Capt. Gary Russell of the Bristol department said Thursday morning. "On the initial search we finished 10:30 a.m. Wednesday we probably made contact or moved out 30 to 40 individuals. We probably hauled out 15 to 20 on our vehicles."

Many, he said, are devastated.

"They meet you, begging for help, with what's on their back. Everything else in their life is gone at that point," Russell said, shaking his head.

The Bristol team also responded to Buchanan



Capt. Gary Russell of the Bristol Virginia Swift Water Rescue Team checks out the equipment before leaving the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office on a house-to-house search on Thursday morning.

EMILY BALL/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

County last August when flood waters tore through the Hurley area. The scenes are similar, but this is a much larger event, Russell said.

"It's substantial compared to Hurley. It's a lot more widespread - over 27 miles altogether," he said. "Bridges and roads washed out, homes blocking roadways, homes completely gone. Every resident we made contact with said it came very quickly and a lot of them didn't have time to get out."

In many cases residents are cut off.

"The areas we're working in they have no power, no telephone, no cell ser-

vice, no water, no sewer, and no roadways in some instances. Some of them don't have any neighbors - there's some distance between houses - or the neighbors left that night. There is no communication in their areas. Our radio communication is spotty due to the terrain and cell phone service is zero."

Rescue teams have been able to distribute water to impacted residents who choose not to leave their homes, Russell said.

"Not everyone wants to evacuate. Some people want to evacuate. It's their home and they want to stay there," Russell said.

On Wednesday night 44 residents were unaccounted for. That number was reduced to zero by noon Thursday after Bristol and other units were dispatched to another area to resume searching Thursday morning.

"We call it ground pounding. Basically we walk, we interview people, we ask about names off the list we have. If they are supposed to live in a certain house and the house is hit by flood waters we go in, do a thorough search looking everywhere. Hopefully we can go out, make contact and it's over. But we're here until the end."



**Exit 17 construction keeps traffic backed up for miles**

REGION » A3



**'Doc' Adams makes final house call at Lebanon**

SPORTS » B1

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

WEDNESDAY, June 15, 2022

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## Both Bristols reach agreement on landfill injunction

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — Bristol, Tennessee and Bristol, Virginia have reached an agreement designed to resolve emission and odor issues and ultimately close the latter's embattled solid waste landfill.

Attorneys for Bristol, Tennessee filed a 56-page stipulation document in U.S. District Court in Abingdon on Tuesday morning stating that Bristol, Virginia agreed to



**READ:**  
To read the agreement, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

the court granting "preliminary injunctive relief" to Bristol, Tennessee, as sought in a May 26 filing.

Bristol, Tennessee accepts the terms spelled out in a proposed settlement that

came from Bristol, Virginia, including a \$250,000 payment to offset the Tennessee side's expenses for legal counsel and expert consultants.

The difference is this latest proposed settlement spells out specific timelines for certain actions to occur, and there is no language regarding the availability of funds.

"Today, a significant victory has been won for the people of Bristol. Bristol, Ten-

nessee has obtained an agreement from Bristol, Virginia to close the landfill and to immediately take actions to address the ongoing impacts on our community," according to a written statement from Bristol, Tennessee.

Bristol Virginia City Manager/City Attorney Randy Eads also released a statement, noting the city received a letter from the

See **LANDFILL**, Page A5

## Biden focuses on workers as high inflation remains a risk

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE  
and JOSH BOAK  
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — President Joe Biden told the largest federation of labor unions on Tuesday that he's working to rebuild the U.S. economy around workers, an attempt to draw a contrast with Republicans who have increasingly attracted blue-collar votes.

"We should encourage unions," Biden said. "I'm not just saying that to be pro-union. I'm saying it because I'm pro-American."

The speech before the AFL-CIO convention in Philadelphia was the president's attempt to reset the terms of the debate on the economy as the president's own approval ratings have slid while consumer prices and the cost of gasoline have surged.

Inflation at a more than 40-year high has caused voters to sour on the economy, despite a recovery after the pandemic-induced downturn that has led to robust hiring and a healthy 3.6% unemployment rate. The president on Tuesday tried to remind his audience of the food lines and layoffs during the coronavirus pandemic that preceded his presidency, contrasting that with the improvements in household balance sheets under his watch.

But even as the economy has quickly amassed jobs, inflation has left many workers feeling worse off as wages have not kept up with the costs of living. The Labor Department said Friday that average hourly earnings, after adjusting for inflation, have fallen

See **BIDEN**, Page A5

## HOTTEST JUNE IN MORE THAN A DECADE

# Beating the heat

Utilities appeal for reduced electricity use during near-record heat to avoid brownouts



EMILY BALL/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Molly Shatterly laughs in the splash pad at Steele Creek Park. TVA is asking residents to reduce electricity use to avoid brownouts.

**BRISTOL HERALD COURIER**  
The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is expecting hot temperatures to be the highest for June in more than a decade and encourages customers to reduce their electricity intake through Thursday.

According to the TVA, at 6 p.m. this Monday, their power system was providing 31,311 megawatts of energy, with temperatures in the region reaching 94 degrees.

That is 213 megawatts higher than the previous record high of 31,098 megawatts in June of 2012.

The TVA and the 153 local power companies in the region are asking their consumers to use ceiling and portable fans to circulate air and postpone using electric appliances such as ovens, dishwashers, and dryers during the week from 2 to 6 p.m.

In a Monday press release, Dr. Mike Browder, the CEO of BTES, expressed support for TVA's request and explained why the reduction in consumption is necessary.

See **HEAT**, Page A5

## Congress & Guns

## In a boost, McConnell backs Senate bipartisan gun deal

BY ALAN FRAM  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell announced his support Tuesday for his chamber's emerging bipartisan gun agreement, boosting momentum for modest but notable election-year action by Congress on an issue that's deadlocked lawmakers for three decades.

The Kentucky Republican said he hoped an outline of the accord, released Sunday by 10 Democrats and 10 Republicans, would be translated into legislation and enacted. McConnell's backing was the latest indication that last month's gun massacres in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas, had reconfigured the political calculations for some in the GOP after years of steadfastly

opposing even incremental tightening of firearms curbs.

"If this framework becomes the actual piece of legislation, it's a step forward, a step forward on a bipartisan basis," McConnell told reporters. He said the proposal "further demonstrates to the American people" that lawmakers can work together on significant issues "to make

progress for the country."

McConnell's comments were striking, coming five months before midterm elections in which Republicans hope to win control of the Senate and seem likely to win a majority in the House. For years, GOP candidates could risk their careers by defying the views of the party's loyal

See **GUN**, Page A7

Thank you, **Dorothy Penley**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

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Weather » A10



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INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B8-10 | COMICS B6 | DEATHS A4-5 | OPINION A8 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B7



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## Obituaries

From Page A4

### Christopher Ryan Toomey



Christopher R. Toomey spent his 46 years on this earth with love and intentionality. Chris passed away unexpectedly in his home of a cardiovascular event on June 6, 2022. But his life will continue to impact the world in light of eternity through the innumerable lives he touched and invested in.

Chris was the beloved son of Susie Kelly Toomey and Rick Toomey, born on August 3, 1975. He attended Sullivan Central High School in Kingsport, Tennessee, and King University in Bristol, Tennessee where he played tennis and worked with the women's volleyball team.

Following college, he received his master's degree from the University of Tennessee, where he was a member of the men's volleyball team and served as the student assistant for the Lady Vols volleyball program. Chris spent over 15 years as the assistant and head coach of the King University women's volleyball team, leading the storied program and investing in the lives of his players and the King community. Chris also served as the youth pastor of Indian Springs Baptist Church and Cold Spring Presbyterian Church. He spent the last nine years serving and leading as the Life Journey Director at Pathfinder Church in Ballwin, Missouri with a staff family that he deeply loved.

Chris served on and led over 30 mission trips spanning 5 continents, 14 countries and 9 states. His passion for travel and adventure was contagious and his smile was infectious. Time in his presence was filled with joy, laughter, and adventure.

Ultimately, his life was defined by faith, family, and friendships. Chris loved and pursued Jesus relentlessly. His deep love and investment in his family and friends was rare. He made others feel seen and known, and called out their best through encouragement and affirmation. His kind and generous heart impacted all those around him. If you knew him, you loved him. The ripple effect of his life is immeasurable.

Chris was preceded in death by his grandparents, Lockett Wilson Toomey, Olney Toomey, Robert Lee Kelly, and Edna Miser Kelly. In addition to his parents, Chris is survived by his sister, Kelly Toomey Elliott, with whom he shared a special bond and love; by his brother-in-law and friend, Michael Elliott, and by his nieces and nephews, Anna Elliott, Isaac Elliott, and Brooke Elliott—who were one of his greatest joys in life. Chris is also survived by his stepmother, Marcie Toomey, and numerous family and friends spanning many places from East Tennessee to St. Louis to Kentucky to Georgia to Brazil.

There will be a Celebration of Life service at Indian Springs Baptist Church in Kingsport, Tennessee, on Saturday, June 18, 2022, at 2 p.m. EST, with a time of receiving friends to follow.

Chris truly lived his life "on mission." He longed to invest in people for the sake of eternity whether at home or abroad. Chris traveled extensively sharing the love and hope of Christ with all those he encountered.

If you would like to participate in extending that legacy, we would like to ask you to consider a contribution to a mission fund in his name in lieu of flowers. The commitment of his family and friends is to completely utilize these contributions to help fund mission trips for high school and college students.

You may use the website below if you would like to join this effort. Thank you for loving Chris and thank you for your desire to continue his legacy of living on mission. <<https://pathfinderst.org/chris/>>

## Landfill

From Page A1

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality advising they implement all of the recommendations made by its expert panel in its April report.

"This is timely because the city of Bristol, Virginia, received a counter proposal from the city of Bristol, Tennessee, related to the landfill lawsuit settlement offered by Bristol, Virginia, on May 27. Following several rounds of proposals and negotiations, Bristol, Tennessee, agreed to accept the terms of Bristol, Virginia's first proposal with some minor changes," Eads said.

During the negotiations, Bristol, Tennessee advanced specific time frames, suggested by its engineering consultants, ranging from 90 days to 365 days to complete certain tasks, according to its statement.

"Implementing VDEQ's recommendations in the report will satisfy Bristol, Tennessee's chief concerns laid out in their suit and proposals. Because of this, and in hopes of avoiding additional, unnecessary litigation, Bristol, Virginia, agrees to Bristol, Tennessee's proposal. As part of this agreement, Bristol, Virginia, has offered Bristol, Tennessee, \$250,000

in the good faith that additional legal expenses can be avoided, and that both Bristols can work together to solve the issues at the landfill that have impacted so many Bristolians over the past 18 months. We remain hopeful that our sister city will join us to address this matter in a collaborative fashion," Eads said in the statement.

In its initial complaint, Bristol, Tennessee alleged the city of Bristol, Virginia had violated the federal Clean Air Act and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and failed to take the proper steps to resolve emission and odor issues with its landfill.

It also filed a request for a preliminary injunction, asking the court to direct Bristol, Virginia to immediately take specific steps to address problems with the landfill.

Under terms of the stipulation, Bristol, Virginia agrees to abide by an expert panel report filed in April, take steps to address issues with the landfill as recommended by that panel and work toward closing the landfill, which has sparked widespread public concern for the past 18 months.

The action is pending approval by a judge, but the lawsuit will remain in place, according to the statement.

"We are optimistic that the judge will enter the or-

der. Once entered by the judge, this order will provide a clear set of actions and enforceable timeline, starting from the date of entry of the order, for addressing issues at the landfill. While this order resolves Bristol, Tennessee's motion for preliminary injunction, the lawsuit against Bristol, Virginia remains open, giving Bristol, Tennessee the ability to seek further enforcement action and damages if necessary. Bristol, Tennessee will closely monitor Bristol, Virginia's compliance with this order," according to the Bristol, Tennessee statement.

The proposed order requires Bristol, Virginia to take six specific steps in regards to the landfill.

1. Install a sidewall odor mitigation system around the perimeter of the landfill in accordance with the expert panel report within 365 days of entry of this order.
2. Install a dedicated system of thermocouples in the waste mass to monitor landfill temperatures in accordance with the expert report within 90 days of entry of this order and conduct monitoring until the landfill is permanently closed.
3. Cease the acceptance of all waste at the landfill within 90 days of entry of this order.
4. Install cover sufficient

to meet the intermediate cover requirements of the Virginia Solid Waste Management regulations within 90 days of entry of the order.

5. Submit a report to Bristol, Tennessee setting forth how Bristol, Virginia will accomplish implementation of all other recommendations of the expert report within 60 days of entry of the order. That includes a timeline for the permanent closure of the landfill.

6. Allow Bristol, Tennessee and its agents access to the landfill to confirm compliance with the above

## Heat

From Page A1

"BTES has joined TVA in reducing power usage at our facilities by adjusting thermostats, reducing lighting, and taking other measures to reduce electricity consumption," Dr. Browder said. "The voluntary reduction is need-

ed to help ensure a continued supply of power throughout the Tennessee Valley region and avoid interruptions in service."

The TVA also asks consumers to reduce the use of cooling by adjusting thermostats two to three degrees warmer and turning off lights, appliances and other electrical equipment when it is not in use.

## Biden

From Page A1

3% over the past year.

Inflation has left Biden and Democrats' control of the House and Senate vulnerable in the upcoming midterm elections. Republican lawmakers have blamed the president's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package for causing inflation to start rising last year. GOP lawmakers also say the Biden administration has been too restrictive on domestic oil production.

"Working families' budgets took a back seat to the far-left's wish list," Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said in a Monday speech.

Biden says the GOP is focused on cutting taxes for

companies and the wealthy. Republicans argue that their 2017 tax overhaul created a firmer base for growth by reducing corporate tax rates and making U.S. companies more competitive. They say enabling companies and individuals to hold on to more of what they earn will boost growth, while Biden counters that laws enabling unionization and boosting child care benefits for families will lead to growth through a stronger middle class.

Biden has tried to take specific aim at a proposal by Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., that suggests all Americans should owe federal income taxes. Many Republican lawmakers have either disowned the proposal or offered caveats, since tax credits are a means of financial support for poorer and middle class U.S. families.

actions, upon reasonable notice and during regular business hours.

Negotiations have been ongoing between the two sides since May.

Last Wednesday, Bristol Virginia Mayor Anthony Farnum announced the city had begun notifying its solid waste customers the city would stop accepting waste at some undetermined time.

Also last week, Bristol, Virginia entered into a consent order with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to take steps to resolve landfill is-

suess. In a June 8 letter to city leaders, Southwest Virginia DEQ Director Jeffrey Hurst outlined his agency's discussions with city staff and consultants SCS Engineers. In it, Bristol, Virginia agreed to take actions 1-4 listed above within the associated timelines, as proposed in Bristol, Tennessee's complaint.

Bristol, Virginia is to provide a plan of action to DEQ by July 6. The department anticipates having a "fully executed enforcement action by August."

dmcgee@bristolnews.com  
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# Juneteenth

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**VDOT** Virginia Department  
of Transportation

### Route 83/Main Street Clintwood Roundabout (Dickenson County) Location and Design Public Meeting

Thursday, June 23, 2022, 4 – 6 p.m.

Dickenson County Administrative Offices  
818 Happy Valley Drive, Clintwood, VA 24228  
<https://www.virginia.gov/Route83RoundaboutClintwood>

Find out about the proposed plans to replace the traffic signal at the intersection of Route 83 and Main Street in Clintwood with a roundabout to improve safety and traffic flow.

In addition to the in-person meeting, public meeting materials can be found on VDOT's website at the web address listed above.

Review the proposed project plans and the National Environmental Policy Act document in the form of a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion at the public meeting, on VDOT's website at the address listed above, or at VDOT's Wise Residency Office located at 703 Hurricane Road, N.E., in Wise, 276-321-6463, 800-367-7623, or TTY/TDD 711. **Please call ahead to assure the appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.** Property impact information, relocation assistance policies, and tentative construction schedules are available for your review at the above addresses and will be available at the public hearing.

Give your written or oral comments at the hearing or submit them online from the survey on VDOT's website at the address listed above by July 3, 2022, to Mr. Joseph Mullins, P.E., Wise Assistant Residency Engineer, Virginia Department of Transportation, 703 Hurricane Road, N.E., Wise, Virginia 24293. You may also e-mail your comments to [bristolinfo@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:bristolinfo@vdot.virginia.gov). Please reference "Route 83 Roundabout Clintwood (Dickenson County) PH Comment" in the subject line.

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In the event an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held June 30, 2022, at the same time and location.

**A1 EXTRA**



**VIEW:** Herald Courier reporter Joaquin Mancera talks about the State Street Tattoo Fest. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.



**PLUMB ALLEY DAY RETURNS**

REGION » A3

**Tenn. High girls reach state tennis doubles final**  
SPORTS » B1

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**BRTN files landfill lawsuit**

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — The city of Bristol, Tennessee on Thursday filed a civil complaint and is seeking an injunction against its sister city on Bristol, Virginia's lack of action on the embattled landfill.

The complaint, a motion for a preliminary injunction and supporting documents were filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Abingdon.

Initially the source of widespread odor complaints more than a year ago, the landfill has prompted deeper angst over what is causing those

odors and potential health impacts on those breathing the fumes.

In its motion for a temporary injunction, Bristol, Tennessee asks a judge to order Bristol, Virginia to immediately take four steps recommended



**READ:** See a PDF of the preliminary injunction. Point your

smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.



**READ:** See a PDF of the legal complaint. Point your

smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

See **LANDFILL**, Page A2

**TEXAS SCHOOL SHOOTING**



KIM MANHEU/THE SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS VIA AP

Dora Mendoza, grandmother to victim Amerie Jo Garza, wipes tears from her eyes as she pays respects Thursday to her granddaughter and others at a memorial site for the victims of the Robb Elementary School shooting earlier this week in Uvalde, Texas.

**Contradicting details**

Texas school gunman's final 90 minutes fuel questions about police delays

BY JAKE BLEIBERG, JIM VERTUONO and ELLIOT SPAGAT  
Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas — It was 11:28 a.m. when the Ford pickup slammed into a ditch behind the low-slung Texas school and the driver jumped out carrying an AR-15-style rifle.

Twelve minutes after that, authorities say, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos was in the hallways of Robb Elementary School. Soon he entered a fourth grade classroom. And there,

he killed 19 schoolchildren and two teachers in a still-unexplained spasm of violence.

At 12:58 p.m., law enforcement radio chatter said Ramos had been killed and the siege was over.

What happened in those 90 minutes, in a working-class neighborhood near the edge of the little town of Uvalde, has fueled mounting public anger and scrutiny over law enforcement's response to Tuesday's rampage.

"They say they rushed in," said Javier Cazares, whose fourth grade daughter, Jacklyn Cazares, was killed in the attack, and who raced to the school as the massacre unfolded. "We didn't see that."

On Thursday, authorities largely ignored questions about why officers had not been able to stop the shooter sooner, with Victor Escalon, regional director for the

See **SHOOTING**, Page A10



DAVID MCGEE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

The city recently secured grant funds to address this exterior deterioration of bricks on the former Oak Street school building and to remediate lead paint and asbestos issues inside the building.

**Rezoning could give old school new life**

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — A vacant, 120-year-old former school could find new life after the Bristol Virginia Planning Commission recommended rezoning the property Thursday.

Once known as Robert E. Lee Elementary School, the two-story brick building at 222 Oak St., was built in 1900. A two-story addition was constructed around 1930. After the school closed, much of the 11,200 square feet of space was used for offices for city school administrators and the School Board. Those offices relocated about a decade ago leaving the city-owned building empty ever since.

See **REZONING**, Page A2

**YWCA Tribute to Women Awards**

**Kay Ward dedicated to public education**

BY CALVIN SHOMAKER  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Kay Ward has been a dedicated servant of public education for more than four decades.

As coordinator of family and community engagement for Bristol Tennessee City Schools, Ward's duties are vast but rewarding.

"Basically my job is helping meet



Ward

the basic needs of our boys and girls of poverty, ensuring that they come into our classrooms ready to learn with a focus on learning and not on life's basic needs," Ward said. "Just meeting the basic needs of our children right now is very rewarding to me."

**ABOUT THE AWARD**

» Recipients of the YWCA Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia's Tribute to Women Award are nominated by area organizations and selected by an independent panel of judges based on leadership abilities, their achievements and positive influence. This is the 31st year of the awards.



**READ:** See the articles on the other winners. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

See **WARD**, Page A2

Thank you, **Debra Cross**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

Weather » A10



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**LOTTERY RESULTS**

Here are the winning numbers picked Thursday, May 26, 2022, in the Tennessee and Virginia lotteries:

**TENNESSEE**  
 (morning drawings)  
 Cash 3: **178 (4)**  
 Cash 4: **2-3-6-2 (6)** (midday drawings)  
 Cash 3: **5-0-5 (4)**  
 Cash 4: **9-4-2-6 (2)** (evening drawings)  
 Cash 3: **8-8-0 (8)**  
 Cash 4: **8-8-4-4 (0)**

**VIRGINIA**  
 (day drawings)  
 Pick 3: **8-5-7 (3)**  
 Pick 4: **3-3-8-1 (2)**  
 Cash 4 Life: **3-9-33-57-58 (1)** (night drawings)

The night drawings were not available at press time.  
 All lottery numbers are subject to verification.

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**CORRECTIONS**

The Bristol Herald Courier corrects mistakes. If we get it wrong, we want to make it right. Errors should be brought to the attention of the managing editor by calling 276-645-2513.

**Landfill**

From Page A1

in an expert panel's report — including stop accepting trash — and direct the city to file a report within 60 days of how other recommendations would be accomplished.

The 11-member expert panel met in March, at the request of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and developed a series of recommendations included in a report that was released April 25. The complaint raises the issue that the city hasn't yet taken any of those recommended actions.

"For at least two years, Bristol, Virginia has been in continual violation of the permits issued by DEQ while taking no concrete steps to address these problems," Bristol Tennessee City Manager Bill Sohr said in a written statement. "These violations stem from a failure to properly manage the landfill, which not only violates state and federal law, but has also resulted in a number of adverse impacts on the quality of life for our community."

Bristol Virginia City Manager/City Attorney Randy Eads said late Thursday he hadn't seen the complaint.

DEQ recently directed the city to submit an action plan by July 6 regarding the recommendations included in the report, and Eads said at Tuesday's City Council meeting that the consultants are working on that plan and intend to submit it to DEQ by the deadline.

Bristol, Tennessee cited a perceived lack of urgency in requesting the court take immediate action.

"Moreover, it is unclear whether Bristol, VA's statement that it will 'address' the panel's recommendations means that Bristol, Virginia accepts and will implement those recommendations, and if so, when it will take action," according to request for an injunction. "Given Bristol, Virginia's long track record of failing to take action to correct problems at the landfill, it is unlikely that anything it

does to implement the recommendations of the expert panel will be timely or adequate. In fact, Eads has suggested that it may be another year — or more — before Bristol, Virginia implements the expert report's recommendations: "Over the next year we're going to continue to get data and give it to the experts, give it to our consultants and engineers so that they can come to some conclusion as to how we move forward," citing a Wednesday Bristol Herald Courier story.

Bristol, Tennessee is seeking a preliminary injunction requiring Bristol, Virginia to immediately implement the some of the 10 recommendations made by the expert panel:

1. Install a sidewall odor mitigation system around the landfill perimeter;
2. Install and monitor a dedicated system of thermocouples in the waste mass to monitor landfill temperatures;
3. Prohibit Bristol, Virginia from accepting any more waste at the landfill;
4. Provide adequate cover of the waste at the landfill; and
5. Require Bristol, Virginia to submit a report within 60 days detailing how the other recommendations of the expert panel will be accomplished.

During Tuesday's Bristol Virginia City Council meeting, Eads reviewed the expert panel's report with the City Council and said its consultants, SCS Engineers, "had a copy of the report, have had discussions with DEQ and they are discussing how to move forward with these recommendations, and they will provide us an update shortly. They have also met with BVU as it relates to benzene mitigation."

Eads also said any plan the consultants develop to comply with the report must first be reviewed and approved by DEQ. He also said some of the recommendations will involve some trial and error.

"This is a process that is going to take time. These things cannot be implemented overnight, and many of the things,

according to the expert panel, [are] a test. Especially the sidewall liner sealing; they said to test an area before we move on with the full sealing. A test area may or may not work, based on current known engineering solutions. We may have to test [an] additional two, three or four times before we get a solution for that sidewall liner."

The injunction request addresses that timeline.

"Given the ongoing emergency, Bristol Tennessee cannot wait until July 6, 2022, much less another year or more, to see if Bristol Virginia will take the very actions it should have been taking over the past several months," according to the injunction memorandum. "The expert panel recommendations outlined immediate actions that should be taken to minimize the ongoing harms and to develop the information necessary to address the more structural issues in the long term. Action is needed now to implement these immediate action items, even if Bristol Virginia is developing its long-term plan over the next 60 days."

"Moreover, the expert panel noted that these immediate items could not effectively be implemented while waste continues to be accepted for disposal. Thus, the cessation of waste must take place immediately," according to the document.

Bristol, Tennessee is also seeking to recover damages arising from Bristol, Virginia's inadequate operation of the landfill, including securing a third-party report from a toxicologist regarding potential health effects from landfill exposure, acquiring and installing air purifiers at city buildings and to explore the legal options available to protect the community and the city itself.

Late last year Bristol, Tennessee retained the law firm of Troutman, Pepper, Hamilton and Sanders, of Richmond, Virginia, and has already spent more than \$480,000.

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**CALENDAR**

**MAY 28**

**GATHERING IN THE GAP** — The Gathering in the Gap music festival at the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park Saturday, May 28, will include performances by Crystal Gayle and well-known cellist, pianist and composer Crystal Gayle. For more information or to make reservations, call the Virginia State Parks Reservation Center at 1-800-933-PARK or visit VirginiaStateParks.gov.

**WATER PARK OPENS** — Wetlands Water Park will open for the season Saturday, May 28, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, call (423) 753-1533.

**PLUMB ALLEY DAY** — The 40th annual Kiwanis Plumb Alley Day returns after a two-year absence Saturday, May 28, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Abingdon United Methodist Church parking lot. There will be a chalk drawing contest, golf putting, coin hole and other games. More than 50 vendors will be selling art, crafts and other items.

**LIBERTY OUTDOOR DRAMA** — The 43rd season of the Liberty outdoor drama will be held on weekends in June beginning June 3 in the Fort Watauga Amphitheater at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park in Elizabethton, Tennessee. Tickets are \$19 for adults, \$14 for people above age 55, \$8 for students age 6 to 17 and free for children under 5. For more information, or to purchase tickets, go to www.TheLibertyDrama.com.

**JUNE 4**

**COMMUNITY YARD SALE** — A community yard sale will be held Saturday, June 4, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Tannersville Community Building. There will be spaces for rent inside and outside the building for \$20. The money will be used for the creation of a veterans' wall. See Evelyn Barton for space reservations or mail a check to c/o Tannersville Post Office 24377.

**GLADE SPRING SCHOOLS REUNION** — A reunion for all who attended the old Glade Spring Schools, high school or elementary, will be held Saturday, June 4, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. A pot luck meal will be served at 12:30 p.m. Paper goods and water will be provided. Please bring food to share and any photos or mementos you may have. The reunion will be at the Glade Spring Baptist Church Family Life Center, 414 Monte Vista Drive, Glade Spring, Va. Call or text (276) 608-5976 with questions.

**SOUNDS OF SUMMER RETURNS** — Bristol, Tennessee's Sounds of Summer concert series returns Saturday, June 4, to kick off its 25th anniversary season with country trio Texas Hill. The celebration will begin at 7 p.m. with a special commemoration of the event's 25th anniversary. Local bluegrass band Breaking Tradition will open the concert. Visit [bristoln.org/sounds](http://bristoln.org/sounds) to preview this summer's lineup.

**COMMUNITY COFFEE** — The Southwest Virginia Museum Historical Park will host its First Saturday Community Coffee House Saturday, June 4, from 7 to 9 p.m. Singer/pianist Ron Short will serve as the host. Admission is free. Interested musicians, storytellers and poets should arrive by 6:30 p.m. for sign-up and scheduling. For more information, call (276) 523-1322.

**WILDFLOWER WALK** — The Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park will host a Wildflower Walk for National Trail Days Saturday, June 4, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The interpretative wildflower walk will begin at the front gate of the museum and travel around the Big Stone Gap Greenbelt Trail along the Powell River. Admission is free. Participants must register before 4 p.m. Friday, June 3.

**JUNE 5**

**AVOCA VBS** — Avoca Christian Church will host Vacation Bible School Sunday, June 5 to Thursday, June 9. Kids will explore the sunbaked Southwestern desert as they dig into God's love. The VBS is from 6 to 8 p.m. each day for children 3 years old to fifth grade. Registration is at [www.AvocaChristianChurch.org/children](http://www.AvocaChristianChurch.org/children).

**JUNE 6**

**GOLF TOURNAMENT** — The Bristol Public Library Foundation will have a Captain's Choice Golf Tournament at the Golf Club of Bristol Monday, June 6, at 9 a.m. Team registration is \$300 for a team of four. Single player registration is \$75. Visit [BristolLibrary.org](http://BristolLibrary.org) to register or become a sponsor. All proceeds go to the Bristol Public Library Foundation.

**JUNE 11**

**5K RUN** — A 5K benefiting the Boys and Girls Club of the Mountain Empire called, Runnin' For A Young'un will be held Saturday, June 11, at 9 a.m. at Sugar Hollow Park. The registration fee is \$25 for pre-registration and \$30 the day of the event. Visit [runtricties.org](http://runtricties.org) to register or for more information, call (276) 669-8932.

**Rezoning**

From Page A1

On Thursday, the commission voted 5-0 to rezone the 0.8-acre site from R-2 [single- and two-family residential] to FRD, or flexible development district. The relatively new zoning designation is designed to allow more ease of development, interim Director of Community Development and Planning Jay Detrick said.

"There are a couple of instances of that zoning elsewhere in the city. The former Southern States property on Alexis Drive, on Williams Street and the Massachusetts Avenue-Fairview area," Detrick said.

The entire Solar Hill neighborhood was rezoned from R-3 to R-2 in 2001, in an effort to better preserve the old homes in a neighborhood now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The former school is listed as a contributing structure to the historic neighborhood.

The FRD zoning would allow a wide array of commercial applications, from studio or gallery, to business or trade school, financial institution, hotel, amusement or entertainment facility, dance or music studio, laboratory, health club or fitness center, micro-brewery, offices, retail store, light manufacturing, warehouse, museum and restaurant.

The property was on the market for many years, but with a small lot size and small paved parking lot, its uses are limited in the current, more restrictive zoning. "Nobody wanted to buy it as a single- or two-family home or as a church or something that is allowed in that R-2 zoning," Detrick said, adding the city has had some interest. "The City Council will make any decision as to whether or not they would sell it."

Commission member and former Mayor Ed Harlow called it a "difficult" building and said the former council "did all it could" to try and

sell the property years ago.

The commission recommended adding a stipulation to any sales contract that the building remain and not be torn down.

The building has some challenges, but the city intends to address many of them later this year, Detrick said.

"The roof needs some work, but there is a grant to allow us to do some lead and asbestos abatement and to fix the issues on the side with the downspout that created that erosion. That work is expected to begin around the beginning of the fiscal year [July 1]," Detrick said.

The issue will go before the City Council at an upcoming meeting. The council held a public hearing on the rezoning question during its Tuesday meeting. No one spoke for or against the plan. Detrick said all adjoining residents were notified, but the city has received no feedback — good or bad — on the question.

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**Ward**

From Page A1

Meeting those needs means providing students with clothing, school supplies and even food if necessary.

"It's rewarding" seeing children's faces light up with a new coat or a new pair of shoes, hearing relief in parents' voices because services have been delivered from the Family Resource Center and needs have been met," Ward said.

For 27 years, Ward — a 2022 YWCA Tribute to Women Award recipient in the "Nurture" category — has been an employee of the city school

system, the past 15 of which have been with the Family Resource Center following many years as a classroom teacher. Before coming to Bristol, Ward taught for 17 years in Wilson County, Tennessee.

"My real passions are literacy and helping boys and girls escape the cycle of generational poverty," Ward said. "That all circles back to literacy and ways we can support classroom literacy instruction at home."

One program supporting that mission is the Reading Buddy Program, which is back after a COVID-19 break. Through reading buddies, and the summer Book Bus Program, kids are able to

start building a home library through book distributions.

"I enjoy promoting literature to children, especially when our children of poverty are involved," Ward said. "They can travel anywhere. They can have experiences — any experience — through a book."

When asked what led to her path in education, Ward pointed to her upbringing.

"I come from a very strong family of women, and a good education was an expectation," Ward said. "I had a mother that worked very hard, and she really inspired me to find something that I really loved and to work very hard to attain those goals."



**READ:** Find the full community calendar. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

# Smyth County attorney responds to request to appeal air strip decision

REGION » A3



# After struggling in the sport, Chastain may have turned the corner

SPORTS » B1

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

TUESDAY, April 26, 2022

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## BVPD chief, police testify in officer's murder trial

BY CALVIN SHOMAKER  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — Two Bristol, Virginia police officers who witnessed a fellow officer fatally shoot a suspect last year testified in the officer's murder trial Monday.

Officer Timothy Sizemore of the Bristol Virginia Police Department (BVPD) was one of three officers who responded to shots fired at the Rowday Inn on Euclid Avenue with Officer Johnathan Brown around 3:20 a.m. on March 30, 2021.



Brown

The officers found Jonathen Kohler in the parking lot of the motel behind the wheel of his 1994 Ford Mustang. Kohler wouldn't comply with the officers' commands, and despite being told to keep his hands up and on the wheel, Kohler reached down "several times," Sizemore said.

One of the officers then told Kohler to turn the car off before he backed out of the parking space and attempted to flee. Sizemore testified to hearing the tires squeal and the engine rev as the vehicle moved forward before Brown fired his rifle.

Kohler, who suffered gunshot wounds to the head and neck, died almost instantly. The car then crashed into a parked car with "a loud boom," Sizemore said.

"It all happened so fast," Sizemore said.

Sizemore said he was afraid Kohler was reaching for a gun. Although the officers didn't know it at the time, there was a loaded pistol under Kohler's seat.

Surveillance footage later revealed Kohler had fired five shots out the window of his Mustang while in the motel parking lot, which prompted four 911 calls. Investigators also discovered extra ammunition in the vehicle and found text messages where Kohler had threatened to shoot

See **TRIAL**, Page A8

Thank you, **Billie Penley**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

60/36  
Weather » A8



# Panel: City should 'strongly consider' closing landfill

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

An expert panel Monday urged Bristol, Virginia to "strongly consider" ceasing landfill operations as part of a detailed series of recommendations regarding its embattled landfill.

The 11-member panel was assembled last month to study issues with the city's 137-acre quarry landfill and offer suggestions on how to remedy widespread odor and emission issues. A 40-page report was issued



**ONLINE**  
Read the full report at [HeraldCourier.com](https://www.HeraldCourier.com).

Monday outlining proposed steps.

The panel was assembled by Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Director Michael Rolband at the urging of state lawmakers and coordinated through the Virginia Tech School of Engineering.

The report includes 10 specific findings regarding the landfill's current state and 10 proposed action steps to address odor mitigation. Finally, the panel considered scenarios for how the city could continue operating the landfill, or reasons to close it.

No cost estimates were associated with any of the recommendations.

The report recommended engineered actions intended to "minimize the release of odors, reduce landfill temperatures,

and manage problematic conditions beneath the landfill." This strategy includes preventing infiltration of precipitation and control and management of stormwater inside the landfill. In its conclusions, the report also delves into potentially closing the facility.

"The city should strongly consider a cessation of waste disposal operations at the landfill due to incompatibility of operations

See **LANDFILL**, Page A4

## TENNESSEE HIGH & TUSCULUM UNIVERSITY



DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Tennessee High School Principal Kim Kirk congratulates some of the seniors that received their Tusculum University Associate Degree Cords on Monday. The small group of seniors earned their associate degree from Tusculum while still at THS. Read more about the ceremony on **Region**, page A3.

## Tenn. High, Northeast State partner with Robinette Co. for preapprenticeship program

BY JOAQUIN MANCERA  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Tennessee High School (THS) and the Robinette Co., along with Northeast State Community College, formalized their new preapprenticeship pro-

gram Monday.

Representatives from THS and the Robinette Co. kicked off their partnership agreement by introducing Anthony Campbell, the first student enrolled in the preapprenticeship program, and having

a signing ceremony in Tennessee High School's auditorium.

Carolyn Ferrell, the vice president of human resources and community relations for the Robinette Co., welcomed Campbell to

Robinette as the company's first-ever manufacturing preapprentice.

"The Robinette Co. is thrilled to have Anthony as the very first manufacturing

See **PROGRAM**, Page A4

## Food City plans to hire 1,500 at upcoming event

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Food City, one of this region's largest employers, is looking to add more than 1,500 people to its workforce.

The grocery chain has sched-

uled a systemwide hiring event Thursday at all of its stores, its Abingdon distribution center and online at FoodCity.com.

The Abingdon-based company employs about 16,000 people at about 140 locations in

Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia and Alabama, plus its distribution center.

"It's an exciting time to be a part of the Food City team. As we enter into the summer and traveling seasons, we are looking to

hire over 1,500 associates across five states, 136 retail locations and our 1.1 million-square-foot Food City Distribution Center in Abingdon, Virginia, to best serve

See **JOBS**, Page A8

INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B7-B8 | COMICS B4 | DEATHS A4 | OPINION A7 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B5

Regular	<b>A.R.M.</b>	9/10
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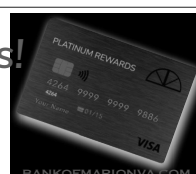
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# Obituaries

A4

TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2022 • BRISTOL HERALD COURIER • HeraldCourier.com

## Today's deaths

**Frank Robert Milanese, 81, Marion, Va.**

Information and wording for obituaries are provided by funeral homes and are published as paid notices. Obituaries also appear online at [www.HeraldCourier.com](http://www.HeraldCourier.com). Obituaries must be submitted by 3 p.m. for publication in the following morning's newspaper.



### ONLINE

To have the Herald Courier's obituaries delivered to your inbox daily, log on to [HeraldCourier.com](http://HeraldCourier.com) and sign up for our obituary newsletter. Obituaries are also now available on the Herald Courier mobile app. Look

## Program

From Page A1

preapprentice, not only in East Tennessee but the whole state of Tennessee," Ferrell said.

Campbell, highlighted the various reasons he jumped at the opportunity to work at the Robinette Co. in a video. He said the reasons range from the joy he gets from working with his hands to his family's history in manufacturing and helping her family financially. He said he is eager to continue honing his craft.

"I'm happy and nervous all at the same time," Campbell said. "It's been wonderful. Honestly, my supervisors, Bill and Tim, have been helping me out a lot, just teaching me how to do everything, and it's been great."

Campbell is not too worried about having to balance his time between school and working at Robinette Co.

"It's been fine. I keep my grades up and go to work, nothing too stressful," Campbell said. "I've really enjoyed coming to work, and the day just kind of flies by for me. I enjoy it so much."

Through the manufacturing preapprentice program, students will complete 180 skills certification modules and obtain an OSHA10 Manufacturing Industry Certification. Upon completion of the preapprenticeship, students will be guaranteed, based on their attendance and disciplinary record, an interview with the partnering company. Contractors J.A. Street have also signed onto the THS preapprentice program.

For Sheena Kayton, Anthony Campbell's mother, the preapprentice program is important because it has opened the door for her son to have a successful future. She encourages other students at THS interested in the program to enroll.

"It means he has a jump-start on a bright and successful future. I see my son going places above and beyond what I could ever dream of doing myself, and that makes me happy," Kayton said. "It's a phenomenal program for any student looking to have a career, and I encourage them to take advantage of it and do the best they can."

## Donald Frye

November 16, 1947 - April 23, 2022



Donald Dean Frye Sr., 74, of Abingdon, Virginia, passed away on Saturday, April 23, 2022.

Don was born on November 16, 1947, in Saltville, Virginia. After graduating from R. B. Worthy High School in 1967, he enlisted in the United States Navy and served until honorably discharged.

After serving our country, he went on to have a successful career with Appalachian Power (A.E.P.); where after decades of employment retired.

Don was very engaged in the local community with his children's activities. He thoroughly enjoyed coaching all the kids in youth baseball and football leagues. He was a proud father and even prouder grandfather.

Don and his wife Dolores enjoyed travel, community events, and spoiling grandchildren.

Don was preceded in death by his mother, Norma, his father, Earl, and his sister, Kathy.

Don is survived by his wife of 22 years, Dolores; her daughter, Nicki and husband, Brandon, of Wytheville, Virginia; his son, Donald Jr. and wife, Emily, and their sons, Andrew and Thomas, of Lake Wyle, S.C.; daughter, Holly and husband, Josh, and his grandson, Tyler and

granddaughter, Brynn of Tega Cay, S.C.

Don is also survived by his brothers, Ronald and Ann, Allen and Pat, Dennis and Sissy, Larry and Christie, and brother-in-law, Bill Smith and Katherine, along with their loving families.

Don also had many special cousins, nephews and nieces and close friends that were very important in his life.

The family will receive friends on Tuesday, April 26, 2022, at 6 until 8 p.m. at Pleasant View United Methodist Church located at 18416 Lee Hwy, Abingdon, VA 24210.

The funeral service will be held on Wednesday, April 27, 2022, at 11 a.m. at Pleasant View United Methodist Church with the Rev. Barbara Farmer officiating. A graveside service will follow in the Forest Hills Memory Gardens Cemetery in Abingdon, Va. with Military honors provided by the United States Navy and the Highlands Veterans Honor Guard. Pallbearers will be Tim Frye, Rodney Frye, Caleb Frye, Todd Smith, Brandon Blankenship, and Brandon McPherson.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Wake Forest Baptist Hospital Cancer Center.

Those wishing to express sympathy online may do so by visiting [www.farrisfuneralservice.com](http://www.farrisfuneralservice.com) and signing the online guestbook.

The family of Donald Dean Frye is being cared for by Farris Funeral Service and Crematory, 427 E. Main St., Abingdon, Va. 24210 (276-623-2700).

### FARRIS FUNERAL SERVICE

427 E. Main Street, Abingdon, VA 24210

## Frank Robert Milanese

July 5, 1940 - April 23, 2022



**MARION, Va.**  
Frank Robert Milanese, age 81, passed away on Saturday, April, 23, 2022, at the Johnson City Medical Center in Johnson City, Tenn.

Mr. Milanese was born in West Chester, Pa. to the late Anthony Joseph Milanese and Ruth Jane Keimer Milanese and was preceded in death by four sisters. He was retired from the U.S. Navy as a Boatswain 1st Mate with over 22 years of service.

He served in the Vietnam War and received several medals of valor. He was a member of the VFW, American Legion, South Fork Baptist Church, DAV, Virginia Vietnam Veterans and served with the Highlands Fellowship Honor Guard. He was very patriotic and loved his country. He loved people and never met a stranger.

Survivors include his wife of 50 years, Linda J. Milanese; five children, Adrian Milanese of Chicago, Ill., Christopher Milanese and wife, Beverly, of Rural Retreat, Victoria Milanese of Lapel, Ind., Frank Russell

Milanese and wife, Casey, of Marion, Kimberly Milanese and fiancé, Robert Jenkins, of Charlotte, N.C., and Jennifer Overbay; grandchildren, Jarod Milanese and wife, Molly, Jordan Milanese, Spencer Thomas, Isabella Milanese, Logan Davenport and wife, Zoe, Cassandra Milanese, Danielle Milanese, Sophia Milanese, and Lily Jenkins; great-grandson, Oliver Franklin Davenport; siblings, Esther Olinger, Joseph Anthony Milanese, Ann Hinkle, Peggy Stoner, James Vincent Milanese, Nancy Echard, Margaret Giadella, Johnny Milanese, Norlina Sotello, and Gabrielle Milanese; and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held at 1 p.m. Thursday, April 28, 2022, at South Fork Baptist Church with pastor Jason Mullinax officiating. Full Military Honors will be rendered by the Highlands Fellowship Honor Guard. The family will receive friends on Wednesday, April 27, 2022, from 6 until 8 p.m. at the funeral home. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to the family at [www.bradleysfh.com](http://www.bradleysfh.com). Bradley's Funeral Home is serving the Milanese family.

### BRADLEY'S FUNERAL HOME

938 North Main Street, Marion, VA 24354



## Landfill

From Page A1

with the necessary odor mitigation and ETLF (elevated temperature landfill) remedial strategy," according to the report.

City consultants had previously warned that trying to close the quarry landfill without building up the amount of waste included in its operating plan — more than another 20 years' worth — wasn't practical and could lead to additional problems.

"Consensus was that landfill odors are the result of a reaction taking place beneath the landfill surface within the buried waste. The chimneys along the landfill perimeter are likely the major avenue for release of these odors into the atmosphere," according to the report. "The presence of the chimneys suggests that the subsurface sidewall liner system has failed locally and the resulting poor contact between the landfill liner and quarry sidewalls hinders containment of high-temperature landfill gases."

The panel agreed engineered remedial action can significantly reduce the release of odors around the landfill perimeter, but regulatory approvals are needed to implement the proposed remedial approach involving any changes to the liner configuration.

The panel further concluded there is insufficient data to determine the degree to which odorous gas are

seeping through the landfill interim cover material into the atmosphere.

The panel also concluded benzene, which is seeping into the landfill's wastewater discharge, is "not believed to be derived from an external source of contamination based on currently available data. Benzene is likely being derived from the waste mass, but the mechanism of production or release is unknown due to insufficient data," according to the report.

While the report does not classify the site as an "elevated temperature landfill," the experts wrote that it does have similar traits.

"The panel consensus was the landfill is exhibiting early signs of an elevated temperature landfill (ETLF) which is linked to production and release of odors. ETLFs are primarily characterized by temperatures in excess of 55°C (131°F) over a broad area for a sustained period of time and an atypical accumulation of heat," the report says.

"ETLFs are characterized by low methane content in the landfill gas, high leachate production rates, leachate with elevated concentrations of organic compounds, production of odoriferous gas, rapid settlement, and self-propagating reactions that generate heat. This condition has the potential to worsen unless prompt (immediate) action is taken."

The panel recommends the following actions to address odor and emission issues:

» Test and construct a sidewall odor mitigation system around the landfill

perimeter that will be designed and constructed to mitigate landfill gases emanating from the landfill/quarry sidewalls.

» Improve the performance of existing gas extraction wells, including minimizing air intrusion pathways through landfill cover. Additional gas extraction wells will be needed to reduce emissions and temperatures.

» Identify and eliminate to the extent practical any landfill gas fugitive emissions at the landfill surface. Weekly monitoring activities of gas emissions at the landfill surface will be required.

» Install settlement plates and conduct monthly surveys to document the locations and rates of settlement in the waste mass.

» Install and monitor a dedicated system of thermocouples in the waste mass to monitor landfill temperatures for greater spatial resolution (horizontal and vertical) and to provide data at a greater frequency.

» Install at least five deep dedicated monitoring wells to enable sampling and characterization of leachate and measurement of temperature profiles in the waste.

» Install and operate large-diameter dual-phase extraction wells for removal of gas and leachate. Treatment requirements for extracted leachate must be determined.

» Install a temporary geosynthetic cover over the entire landfill. This will require substantial grading of the existing landfill surface to direct runoff to the southeast corner

of the landfill, where it is expected a stormwater management pond can be constructed to manage stormwater that is collected on top of the geomembrane cover.

» Develop and implement an effective and sustainable stormwater management plan and settlement management plan for the landfill.

» Create an active community outreach program to communicate strategies, provide status and progress reports and receive citizen feedback.

However, the panel also cited additional concerns.

"Continuing landfill operations while implementing the proposed remedial actions is problematic. Limiting operations to the northern end of the landfill while addressing the ETLF condition in the southern area of the landfill is not recommended," according to the report.

Among its closure deliberations, the panel considered options for early closure including the "feasibility of (1) installation of a permanent landfill cap at the current waste level following mitigation of odors and reduction of landfill temperatures; and (2) rapid fill of waste to the quarry rim followed by installation of permanent landfill cap."

"Installing a permanent landfill cap designed to accommodate expected waste mass settlement without additional disposal of waste (other than shaping the landfill surface) once odors and landfill temperatures are adequately reduced is a feasible option," accord-

ing to the report. "Rapid fill of the remaining permitted air space in the landfill followed by a permanent landfill cap is not recommended given concerns for the ETLF considerations and cost considerations."

"Resuming operations at the landfill in the future may be technically feasible once the odors are controlled and ETLF conditions managed. However, there may be other technical, cost, and political considerations that would inform such a decision," the report concludes.

Rolband, in a written statement, called the report "crucial."

"We appreciate all the hard work and dedication of the panel members and the city to focus on these important issues and develop this detailed report of recommendations on time," Rolband said in the statement. "The report, the result of the panel's careful and thoughtful collaboration, will be crucial to helping the city of Bristol implement practical solutions for these issues going forward."

City Manager Randy Eads said Monday he had just received a copy of the report.

"The city appreciates DEQ's willingness to step in and provide a panel of experts to review our landfill and the odor situation. Obviously, the report has just been released, and I have not had an opportunity to review the report in depth. Over the next several days, I will review the report with the city's consultants, council and DEQ and begin taking the

appropriate steps to follow the recommendations of the experts," Eads said.

State Sen. Todd Pillion expressed his appreciation.

"Our priority has been and remains getting the best relief for the residents of Bristol in the best way possible. That means getting the best information from experts and regulators who understand the complexity of the situation with the Bristol landfill," Pillion said. "I commend this expert panel for spending multiple days in Bristol visiting the landfill, smelling what Bristolians smell and working collectively to develop these findings and offer recommendations to the city of Bristol."

Pillion said the report can be a guide and expects the state to assist with funding.

"During the 2022 General Assembly session, we introduced Senate and House budget amendments authorizing the Department of Environmental Quality to provide emergency technical assistance to the city of Bristol, Virginia in resolving ongoing issues with the city-owned landfill and to facilitate a long-term plan for the operational status of the landfill," Pillion said. "The findings by this expert panel provide important guidance and direction for the city's consideration in determining how to proceed. We continue standing ready to facilitate state-level support for a solution to this matter."

# Helping to heal

'Immense' need brings group together to create 'Mended Women' program

REGION » A3



# Staying power

Cross hopes to end trend for local MLB position players

SPORTS » B1

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

FRIDAY, July 15, 2022

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## Abingdon Man charged in 2002 death

Call from Roanoke PD reopened Deborah Page Fletcher case

BY JOE TENNIS  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
A second-degree murder charge has been filed against Derek Wayne Journell in a case from nearly 20 years ago.

Journell was dating Deborah Page Fletcher, who was 39 at the time of her death in 2002, Abingdon Police Chief John Holbrook said.

Events surrounding the death began at Johnston Memorial Hospital, which at the time was located at 351 N. Court St. in Abingdon, Virginia.

Throughout the course of the investigation 20 years ago, the Abingdon Police Department interviewed witnesses, medical staff, members of the medical examiner's office and consulted the local commonwealth's attorney, Holbrook said.

"The medical examiner at that time said that the cause of death was blunt force to her head, but the manner of death was undetermined," Holbrook said.

After extensive investigative efforts, no charges were sought and the case became inactive.

"In January of last year, Roanoke City Police Department called us because they had a man report he had committed a violent crime nearly 20 years ago here in Abingdon," Holbrook said.

"Our investigators got to work immediately and have been pursuing this case tirelessly since then."

It took effort to open this cold case, the chief said.

"When they contacted us, I sent investigators straight to Roanoke. Other staff was called

See **CASE**, Page A4

“They all have their stories ... and they're all heartbreaking.”

— Denise McGeorge, disaster programs director, Buchanan County Department of Social Services

# All safe



Victoria Fleming searched through mud and sticks in the floor of her home for treasured items for her grandchildren after Buchanan County floodwaters receded. Fleming and her husband, Columbus, had to climb into the rafters of the house they were renting to escape the water.

**INSIDE**  
» Check out additional photos from Buchanan County, A2

EMILY BALL/  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Floods hit Buchanan County hard, but no lives lost

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
and MIKE GANGLOFF  
ROANOKETIMES

VANSANT, Va. — All of the residents of Buchanan County are safe and accounted for, a day after flash flooding devastated sections of the county — sweeping homes off foundations and depositing vehicles atop buildings and in riverbeds.

Officials of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and Buchanan County Sheriff's Office shared that good news Thursday during a mid-day briefing that attracted news outlets from across the region. On Wednesday,

See **SAFE**, Page A9

Bristol rescuers among first to respond

'No power, no telephone, no cell service, no water ...'

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

GRUNDY, Va. — Members of Bristol Virginia Fire Department's Swift Water Rescue Team encountered near-total destruction after floodwaters ravaged parts of Buchanan County Tuesday night into early Wednesday.

See **RESPOND**, Page A9

“He said, “Where are you?”  
I said, “In this tree.””

On Thursday, Patty Mullins surveys flood damage from Tuesday night's flooding near her home. Washed into a tree, she hung on through the night.



PHOTO BY DANIEL SANGJIS MIN/  
RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
AKWOOD, Va. — Awakened around midnight Tuesday by her black Labrador Vayda, Patty Mullins was startled to see floodwaters a foot deep and rising inside the bedroom of her single-story home next to Dismal River. Barefoot, wearing just a nightgown and T-shirt and carrying

Holding on to a tree or climbing through the ceiling, residents escaped the flood

See **ESCAPED**, Page A4

Partly sunny today with 8 to 12 hours of sunshine; relative humidity 75% early. **87/61** Weather » A10



INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B8-10 | COMICS B6 | DEATHS A4, A9 | OPINION A8 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B7

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# Obituaries

A4

FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2022 • BRISTOL HERALD COURIER • HeraldCourier.com

## Today's deaths

**Lawrence Ivan Keith Sr.**, 84, Saltville, Va.,  
**Harold Eugene Robinson**, 84, Marion, Va.  
**James Suss**, Castletown, Va.  
**Robert F. Spriggs**, 88, Abingdon  
**Barbara Jean Lowry Thomas**, 85

Information and wording for obituaries are provided by funeral homes and are published as paid notices. Obituaries also appear online at [www.HeraldCourier.com](http://www.HeraldCourier.com). Obituaries must be submitted by 3 p.m. for publication in the following morning's newspaper.

## Escaped

From Page A1

A small flashlight, the 67-year-old Mullins forced open a screen so she and her dog could climb out a window. She reached her Ford Ranger pickup truck parked in the driveway, climbed on top and reached for Yavda.

"I tried to pick her up but she's about 70 pounds. I couldn't pick her up. The last time I saw her she was headed down the river backwards right over there," Mullins said while gesturing. "She had a Santa squeaky toy in her mouth." But the horror which unfolded Wednesday morning in the mountains of Buchanan County was just beginning.

"I tried to wade but the water was too deep, and I can't swim, but the current brought me up in that tree over there," Mullins said. "I stayed up in the tree all night with the water up to my waist."

"I could hear all these trees falling and smell all this diesel fuel," she said. Did she think she was going to die?

"Absolutely," she said. "I'm lucky to be alive." By 6 a.m., Dismal River was starting to recede and she heard men walking along the nearby railroad track, so she flashed her flashlight, which remarkably worked.

"He said, 'Where are you?' I said, 'In this tree.' He said, 'I'm going to get help. Stay where you are.' That was cute," she said. Freed from the tree, Mullins walked barefoot across a small bridge littered with downed trees, limbs and debris. A vehicle and a generator were wedged beneath the bridge among a gaggle of tree limbs. Further downriver, the roof of a white vehicle was visible. Floodwaters were about



EMILY BALLY/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER  
**Columbus Fleming is handed potentially salvageable items that remained in his rental home in Oakwood, Virginia.**

10 feet deep in her home, which is a total loss. The scenes nearby are equally horrific.

Homes shoved off foundations by raging floodwaters, a pickup truck on top of a building, sides of houses blown out by the force of the rushing water and at least two homes are in the roadway.

At the same time Mullins was trying to escape the waters, Columbus and Victoria Fleming climbed up into the rafters of the house they were renting. "My daddy always said 'keep your head above water.' I told him 'we can't give up, we've got to climb higher,'" Victoria said.

They emerged after the water began receding and, on Thursday, tried to salvage whatever they could as the home is also a total loss.

The couple said the Lord spared them.

Mullins grew up along the Dismal River and has seen it flood before. She said her mother always told them to head to the [nearby] railroad tracks if waters rose but this time they were too deep to traverse.

"The 1977 flood didn't do none of this," Mullins said.

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## Case

From Page A1

in to go back through our old records," Holbrook said. "They went back and found this old report of this death, and the details of that. It was handwritten."

This charge brings some level of finalization to the woman's family, Holbrook said. Fletcher was known as Page.

"She was my first cousin. She was an only child," said Kim Farris Luke of Abingdon. "The last two years before she died, she actually worked as my nanny. She was more like a sister than a cousin."

Investigators from the Abingdon Police Department worked in cooperation with the Roanoke City Police Department, the medical examiner's office, and the Washington County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.

"These combined efforts of the cooperating agencies have made justice in this case possible," Holbrook said.

After the warrant was issued, the U.S. Marshals Service adopted the case and assisted in getting the warrant served. Journell was subsequently taken into custody in Roanoke, Virginia, and is currently being held without bond.

In a statement, Deborah Page Fletcher's family said, "On behalf of Page Fletcher's mom, Vicki Fletcher, and the rest of the Fletcher and Harris family, we want to express our appreciation to the detectives and chief of the Abingdon Police Department, Commonwealth's Attorney Josh Combo, and the victim assistance team for their dedication and professionalism." "Page's death, almost 20 years ago, was a tragic time for our family. And the unanswered questions surrounding her death made our grief more complicated. We hope now to get answers and seek justice for Page, and we feel a sense of peace knowing that process has begun."

[jfennis@bristolnews.com](mailto:jfennis@bristolnews.com)

## Lawrence Ivan Keith Sr.

June 11, 1938 - July 14, 2022



SALTVILLE, Va.

Lawrence Ivan Keith Sr., age 84, of Saltville, Va., went to be with the Lord on July 14, 2022, at Francis Marion Manor. He was born on June 11, 1938, in Saltville, Va., to the late Ellie Talbert Keith and Alvin Keith. Ivan was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and friend to everyone he met. He was a longtime member of Mt. Pleasant Union Church and was a faithful servant to the Lord which showed through his loving and kind nature. He earned the nickname "Fireball" because he had an uncommonly fast baseball pitch. He was a devout New York Yankees fan; if you knew him, you knew of his love for baseball and his favorite team.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his stepmother who raised him, Faye Keith; his brother, Jim Keith; his half-brother, Roy Keith; his half-sister, Trish Armstrong; and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins. Left to cherish his memory is his wife of 62 years, Joyce Ann B. Keith; his daughters, Gaye Keith Gilley and Tina Goff; his son, Lawrence Ivan Keith Jr.; his grandsons, Travis Lee Gilley (Ashley), Zachary Lawrence

Keith, Derek Shayne Goff, and Matthew Lawrence Keith; his granddaughters, Emily Kristian Keith, and Dana Marie Goff; great-grandchildren, Warren Gilley, Wylee Gilley, Wilkes Gilley, and Weller Gilley; his half-sisters, Elwanda Holley, and Hazel Porter (Bobby); numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins; and many friends.

The family would like to extend special thanks to their neighbor Joyce Lee, the staff of Frances Marion Manor, the Saltville Volunteer Rescue Squad, and Ballad Hospice Care of Wytheville for their impeccable care and support during this difficult time.

A visitation will be held on Saturday, July 16, 2022, from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the D.R. Henderson Funeral home. A funeral service will be held on Saturday, July 16, 2022, at 1 p.m. at the D.R. Henderson Funeral Home with Pastor Wally Chestnut and the Rev. Scott Spence officiating. A committal will be held at the Mt. Pleasant Union Church Cemetery following the funeral service with Pastor Wally Chestnut and Rev. Scott Spence officiating. Travis Lee Gilley, Zachary Lawrence Keith, Derek Shayne Goff, and Matthew Lawrence Keith will serve as pallbearers.

Those wishing to express sympathy online may do so by visiting [www.drhendersonfuneralhome.com](http://www.drhendersonfuneralhome.com) and signing the online guestbook. The D.R. Henderson Funeral Home is honored to be serving the family of Lawrence Ivan Keith, Sr.

**D. R. HENDERSON FUNERAL HOME**  
 148 East Main Street

## Harold Eugene "Bud" Robinson

May 8, 1938 - July 13, 2022



MARION, Va.

Harold Eugene "Bud" Robinson, age 84, passed away on Wednesday, July 13, 2022, at his home in Marion, Va., surrounded by his loving family.

Bud was born in Smyth County, Va., to the late Herbert Ray and Oma Belle Wyatt Robinson. Along with his parents, he was also preceded in death by his wife of 58 years, Mary Ann Troxell Robinson; brothers, Herbert, Gordon, and Clifton "Tip" Robinson; and sisters, Mary Belle Poston, Helen Goodman, Alice Marie Blevins, and Betty Jackson.

Bud started working at Center Furniture, then McNeil Furniture, and retiring, at age 79 1/2, after 37 years with Holston Hills Country Club. Bud was a hardworking man and his determination and drive led numerous people throughout the community to reach out and ask for help with odd jobs, repairs, and small projects over the years. Although he had two biological children, he was a father figure to many in his life. He was the father that many wished they had. Bud was a devoted member and loved his church family at Mt. Zion UMC. Above all else, Bud was blessed with his loving family, and a fulfilled active healthy life all the way up until his last seven weeks.

## Robert F. Spriggs



ABINGDON, Va.

Robert F. Spriggs, age 88, passed away on Tuesday, July 12, 2022, in the Johnson City Medical Center.

He was born on September 2, 1933, in Damascus, Va. He attended the Rock School and upon graduation joined the Army and served in the Korean War and later served two tours of duty in the Vietnam War, earning various medals for meritorious service including the Silver Star and the Bronze Star.

He was a Paratrooper and earned Master Jumper Wings after completing over 306 jumps. He retired in 1971 and moved with his wife and five children to Abingdon, Va.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary Elizabeth (Hurley) Spriggs and his youngest daughter, Sandra Dawn (Babe) Spriggs. He is survived by his children, Robert F. Spriggs Jr. of Abingdon, Va., Curtis D. Spriggs and his wife, Jane, of Bristol, Va., Linda Shaddon and her husband, John, of Medford, Ore., and Lisa Amburn and her husband, Ray, of Morristown, Tenn. In addition, he is survived by numerous grandchildren

and great grandchildren.

He was an avid Braves Fan and loved baseball his whole life. He used to skip lunch in school to play baseball with his friends. He also loved fishing and hunting and spent a lot of time outdoors. He enjoyed sports cars and pickup trucks and drinking Twisted Tea and bottled Coke. He had a lot of good times in life, but also had his share of the storms of life - cancers, heart issues a few other health issues that are common to people of advanced age. He also liked to tell stories of people he knew in the Army and his childhood in Damascus.

Visitation will be held from 2 until 3 p.m. Saturday, July 16, 2022, in the Forest Hills Chapel of Farris Funeral Service, 19415 Lee Highway, Abingdon, Va. Graveside services will follow at 3 p.m. in Forest Hills Memory Gardens with Pastor David Robins officiating. Military Rites will be conducted by Highlands Veterans Honor Guard and the Virginia Army National Guard.

Those wishing to express sympathy online may do so by visiting [www.farrisfuneralservice.com](http://www.farrisfuneralservice.com) and signing the online guest register. The family of Robert F. Spriggs is being cared for by Farris Cremation & Funeral Center, 19415 Lee Highway, Abingdon, VA 24210, 276-623-2700.



## Ivana Trump, 73 Businesswoman, former president's first wife dies

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ivana Trump, the first wife of former President Donald Trump and mother to his oldest children, has died in New York City.

She was 73. People familiar with the matter tell The Associated Press that police are investigating whether she fell accidentally down the stairs at her home.

The people spoke Thursday on the condition of anonymity. Ivana



Trump

Trump was a Czech-born ski racer and businesswoman who with Donald Trump formed half

of a public-

ity power couple in the 1980s.

They had a messy, public divorce after he met his next wife, Marla Maples. But Ivana had recently been on good terms with her former husband.



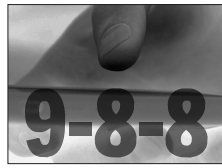
See OBITUARIES, Page A9

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**On the rise:**  
Bland County's Watters expected to join Gavin Cross on MLB draft list

**SPORTS » B1**



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Nationwide mental health hotline goes live today

**NATION » A5**

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

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## Virginia child vax % low, better than US

5% of 4-and-under kids vaccinated in state

**BY ERIC KOLENICH**  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

About 21,000 babies and toddlers in Virginia have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the three weeks since the shots were made available. That's not a high number — it's almost 5% of the state population for tots ages 4 and younger.

But it's better than the national average, which reached 2% this week.

**Percentages**  
 » **5%:** The rough % of Virginia kids 4-and-under who have been vaccinated  
 » **2%:** The percentage of US kids 4-and-under who have been vaccinated  
 » **20%:** The approximate percentage of parents who said they'd vaccinate immediately

The low numbers reflect the trepidation of parents waiting to see how the shots perform, the relatively few babies and toddlers who develop severe illness and a general sense of disregard for the more than two-year-old pandemic — despite rising hospitalizations and the emergence of the B.A.5 variant.

"It is low," said Christy Gray, Virginia's vaccine coordinator. "But there are reasons, and we did anticipate it would be a lower uptake."

On the other side of the equation are parents who are quickly signing up their kids for shots and analyzing the pros and cons of Moderna and Pfizer. Pediatricians are largely choosing Pfizer for its familiarity, but some parents are chashing down doses of the faster-

See **VAX**, Page A9

Humid today; sun and clouds in the morning, then mostly cloudy in the afternoon.

**87/65**  
Weather » A10



## BUCHANAN COUNTY FLOODING



Patty Mullins and her beloved dog Vayda were reunited after being separated in the Buchanan County flood. Vayda woke Patty up during the middle of night and saved her life from the floodwaters then unfortunately got separated soon after.

EMILY BALL/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

### Governor visits



Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin met with members of the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office at Twin Valley Elementary Middle School, a shelter for flood survivors.

## Youngkin: 'A ton of cleanup' lies ahead

**BY MIKE GANGLOFF**  
Roanoke Times

OAKWOOD — Gov. Glenn Youngkin visited flood-ravaged parts of Buchanan County Friday as residents began what promised to be a long process of cleanup and recovery.

"You can't feel it but feel your heart sink" when viewing the damage, he said.

The governor arrived by helicopter, landing with a second

See **CLEANUP**, Page A9

# A blessed return

**BY DAVID MCGEE**  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Patty Mullins' prayers were answered.

Mullins, 67, survived this week's Buchanan County flash flood by clinging to the branches of a tree in her backyard.

But the same raging floodwaters that brought her to that tree also carried away Vayda, her 2-year-old black Labrador, after Vayda awakened Mullins from slumber and alerted her to the imminent danger.

Late Thursday, the two were reunited.

"She didn't quite know it was me at first, and when I started talking, she jumped up to my shoulders loving and licking and kissing. It took just a second and then that was it," an emotional Mullins said by phone Friday.

Vayda went missing early Wednesday morning, but word of Mullins' miraculous survival and her missing dog spread quickly.

On Thursday evening, she

Vayda alerted woman to danger before being swept away; Thursday brought a reunion



Vayda gets a well-deserved scratch from Patty Mullins on Friday after their reunion.

"I have been so blessed. I got my puppy dog back and have a place to stay."

— Patty Mullins, Buchanan County resident

EMILY BALL/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

See **RETURN**, Page A9

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## Vax

From Page A1

immunizing Moderna. So far, roughly 400,000 babies and toddlers in the U.S. have received a COVID shot, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That's about 2% of the 19.5 million American children under the age of 5.

And it's well below the 1 in 5 parents who told a Kaiser Family Foundation poll they would vaccinate their children immediately.

But it's been only three weeks, and the number of vaccinated babies is growing.

At clinics offered by the Richmond and Henrico Health Districts, every clinic has operated at capacity, a spokesperson said.

### Vaccination rate is lowest in school-age kids

Based on the vaccination rate of other age groups, the number of babies and toddlers getting shots might remain low. The vaccination rate of elementary school-age children is lower than every other age group in Virginia.

Among kids and young adults ages 12 to 34, the vaccination rate is fairly consistent, between 76% and 79% have gotten at least one shot. For kids ages 5 to 11, there's a steep drop off. Only 45% of them have gotten one shot or more.

There are a few factors at play here. Children and young adults are less likely to develop severe disease from a COVID infection, and vaccines for kids haven't been available as long.

But parents who think their kids are somehow protected from hospitalization are wrong. In the past 13 weeks, as subvariants of omicron have spread through the state, more children ages 0 to 9 have been hospitalized than adolescents and teens ages 10 to 19.

COVID is still hitting the oldest in society the hardest. The vast majority of recent hospitalizations in Virginia—82%—were for patients ages 50 and up.

When you look at hospital patients below the age of 50, there isn't a big difference between the number of kids and young adults. There have been 78 patients in their 40s and 59 patients under the age of 10.

Omicron and its subvariants have dispro-

portionately affected younger kids, who are less vaccinated or not vaccinated, said Dr. Mark Grabill, a pediatrician with Pediatric Associates of Richmond. The populace is less likely to participate in prevention measures such as masking and the state health department no longer recommends masks in schools, day cares and summer camps.

"Masks came off, and things seemed to resume back to normal," Grabill said.

The type of illness kids are developing has changed with recent variants, too, Grabill said. Lately, kids have displayed flu-like symptoms—fevers up to 104 degrees, fatigue, body aches, nose symptoms, cough and a sore throat. A few have been hospitalized with breathing issues.

That's a change from earlier in the pandemic when cold-like symptoms, including congestion and cough, were more common. The BA.5 variant has been blamed for the current uptick in hospitalizations in the state and across the country. Many of the infected were previously vaccinated.

While kids have been hospitalized at rates similar to young adults, kids haven't died at the same rate. There have been eight COVID deaths in the state in the past three months among patients in their 40s. Among kids 0 to 9, there's been one.

Deaths from COVID have been relatively low since the original omicron wave ended in February.

Among parents who have babies and toddlers, these individuals are more likely to wait and see how vaccine distribution goes before signing up their own kids, Grabill said.

"I think parents are understandably hesitant," Grabill said. "But I think we have really good data from the trials to show it's a safe vaccine, and we're recommending it when parents come into our office."

While vaccinated adults are still catching the BA.5 subvariant this summer, experts say the baby vaccines are good at warding off severe disease.

It's hard to say how Virginia compares with other states, as state-by-state data is still hard to find. North Carolina and Maryland have not yet published their vaccination numbers for kids under 5.

"She's perfect," Mullins enthused. "Last night she must have dreamed about swimming because she kept kicking her feet all night. We went to sleep with her paw in my hand."

Mullins credits Vayda with waking her around midnight Tuesday as flood waters from Dismal Creek rose to a foot deep in her bedroom. The pair climbed out a window and sought shelter atop Mullins' pickup truck.

Mullins was unable to lift the 70-pound dog up, and Vayda was carried away by the waters.

As waters rose up on the truck, Mullins made her way over and into the nearby tree. Relieved to be alive, Mullins was uncertain about her dog. "I have been so blessed. I got my puppy dog back and have a place to stay," she said.

## Return

From Page A1

learned a dog matching Vayda's description was seen at a house across from Twin Valley High School—more than a mile away her flood-ravaged home.

Mullins said her emotions took over while riding there with her Aunt Peggy Keen.

"I just wanted to cry. Before we even got there and I wasn't sure it was even going to be her. When we went across the mountain I told Peggy, 'It's hitting me now.' I'm going to start crying if this is her."

The women stopped at several houses before finding the right one.

"The man said she came and laid down in his yard and he fed her. He kept her there and let her sleep on his porch," she said.

The dog is healthy, missing only a collar.

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Twitter: @DMcGeeBHC

## Cleanup

From Page A1

helicopter escort on the football field at Twin Valley elementary and middle schools in Oakwood. The school facility became a hub of emergency response after heavy rains Tuesday sent Dismal River and nearby creeks out of their banks and washed away roads vehicles and even entire homes.

Youngkin made his way down a receiving line of dozens of law enforcement and emergency workers in front of the school, thanking them. In brief remarks to a crowd of reporters, Youngkin said that he was glad that dozens of people initially said to be missing were found to be safe. There were no fatalities reported after the flooding.

"God bless everybody that was able to locate everybody we were concerned about," Youngkin said.

The governor said that there was "a ton of clean-up" ahead and said he was cheered to see so many agencies and volunteers working to help. He invoked his catchphrase, saying, "the spirit of Virginia is alive."

Youngkin posed for pictures carrying an armload of relief goods from a tractor-trailer into the school. There, workers in an auditorium put batteries in flashlights to distribute to residents without electricity.

The governor then headed out in a motorcade of Virginia State Police vehicles for a more ground-level look at flood damage.

As the governor swept through, Ida Proffitt, a 61-year-old retired cook, waited in the school lobby for some of the cleaning supplies that were being handed out. On Tuesday, Proffitt waded through knee-deep water with her husband to escape—then watched a flood-borne pontoon boat crumple a vehicle into the side of her mobile home and knock her front porch off kilter.

"I don't know how I am," Proffitt said in response to a reporter's question. "I'm homeless. I know that."

In Proffitt's neighborhood, a small mobile home park on Dismal River Road, Danny Joe Boyd and his wife Barbie Jo Boyd surveyed the damage Friday and said they were not sure how to even begin setting things right. Some of the trailers were torn open. All were battered and surrounded by piles of debris that included vehicles that had washed in from somewhere upstream.

The pavement around the mobile homes was ripped up so the only trucks they could handle rough terrain could even enter the park.

"If I can get help, I'm going to move out of here," Barbie Boyd said.

The Boyds missed the flood because they went to Kentucky on Tuesday for a funeral.

But family members called to say Barbie Boyd's mother was missing, prompting a panicked attempt to rush home—only to find that roads were closed and that they could not return.

By Wednesday, Barbie Boyd's mother was found and they knew she was safe.

They came home to find that the skirting to their mobile home had been stripped away and debris piled beneath the residence, probably knocking the water lines off, Danny Boyd said.

They had no electricity but were planning to use charcoal to grill all the meat in their freezer before it could spoil, and then give



One of Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's stops on Friday was M&M Body Shop in Whitewood, which suffered a great amount of damage in this week's flood. The family business' losses included six of its nine tow trucks.

it away.

The Boyds said they had been sleeping in the trailer because they were worried about looters. A man burst into the trailer Thursday night, alarming Barbie Boyd, who yelled at him to leave, they said.

Now the Boyds were keeping a rifle handy, Danny Boyd said.

Well above Dismal River, Barbie Boyd's mother Ellen Howell pondered how to recover from her own flood experience.

When relatives reported her missing, it was because she had been trapped in her car by a mudslide.

Howell, 67, recounted how she went to church Tuesday night thinking that she could beat the storm home. But as she drove back at about 9:20 p.m., she saw a tree in the road and slowed, then felt her Honda Civic hit by a wave of dirt that slid down a steep mountainside.

The mudslide completely surrounded the car, burying it to the top of her back tires. She could not open her doors. Water began to stream over the car, Howell said.

"I thought it was going to break my windows," she said.

Howell said she stayed in the car until after midnight, when she was rescued by firefighters and sheriff's deputies.

Another driver, an older man, spotted her, Howell said. He wanted to try to get her out himself, but a woman with him persuaded him that it would be too dangerous for them to try to cross the mudslide and water. The pair summoned emergency crews, Howell said.

She said that she did not know yet who the man and woman were, but worried about the man because he began having medical issues as the night went on.

Howell said that the emergency workers dug out her front passenger door and she was able to exit that way, stepping into at least two feet of water. Deputies and firefighters

walked her to emergency vehicles, Howell said.

They also picked up other people fleeing the storm, including a man whose predicament became a minor discussion topic around the county—he was bitten by a copperhead snake while trying to escape high water.

On Friday, Howell was waiting for someone from her insurance company to come look at her car. It had been towed back to her home and showed an array of dings and dents from the slide.

Mud had oozed onto the floorboards.

Howell figured she was going to end up having to replace the vehicle. She said she would miss it.

"It ran like a top," Howell said.

A small, slow-moving convoy traveled down Dismal River Road. It carried Elliott and Rebecca Godfrey, their son Elijah, and friends from the Refuge church in Bradshaw, West Virginia. The Godfreys' pickup truck pulled a trailer loaded with 277 cases of bottled water—obtained through a deal arranged by a member of their church who drives for Coca-Cola, they said.

At each new address, they stopped to give away some of the cases. More than half the water was gone by mid-afternoon.

The Godfreys said they had carried out similar relief efforts before, spurred by their faith and by having gone through floods themselves.

Rebecca Godfrey urged residents to stock up while relief supplies were easily available.

"Everybody forgets about you in two or three weeks and then you're on your own," she said.

The Godfreys said they plan to return in coming days with diapers, wipes and cleaning supplies, then furniture such as mattresses.

Then they would turn their attention to War, West Virginia, which also experienced flooding recently.

Buchanan County "got it worse, so we came here first," Elliott Godfrey said.

Randall Matney, 69, and a helper welded hoses Friday on the porches of two houses Matney owns, washing dark river mud back into the yards. One of the houses got about a foot and a half of water in its first floor Tuesday, the other about an inch, Matney said.

Retired from a career with SunCoke energy, Matney remembered sitting on the porch of the older house in 1977 and watching the flood then that was remembered as the regions worst—until Tuesday. The 1977 flood did not come into the house, Matney said.

Now drywall would have to be replaced and other repairs made.

Much worse, however, was the damage to eight mobile homes that Matney had rented out since the 1970s. Six were flattened or carried away entirely by the flood, Matney said. Bits and pieces of the mobile homes were strewn along a riverside meadow.

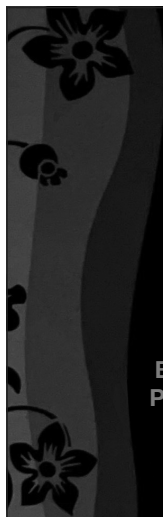
One of the trailers was the home of Patty Mullins, who was caught by the flood Tuesday but was able to climb into tree branches and stay there until she was rescued the next day, Matney said.

Matney said that his tenants lost basically all the possessions in the flood. He said he tried to help them out with money as he could.

He said that he did not think he would be able to rebuild because floodplain regulations have changed since the mobile homes were first placed in the meadow.

Asked for a short description of the situation, Matney shook his head. "Nightmare," he said.

Sections of Dismal River Road were washed away completely by the flood. On Friday, crews with heavy equipment continued clearing dirt, rocks, trees, and other flotsam.



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# Rail jump

Virginia passenger rail numbers see record increase

NEWS » A5



# Chucking it

Ax-throwing venue's soft opening keeps owners busy

REGION » A3

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

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## Bristol Virginia Landfill

# City gets time and a talking-to

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

A federal judge on Wednesday granted Bristol Virginia's motion to extend deadlines for two aspects of city work at its landfill. U.S. District Judge James P. Jones first admonished the city for not anticipating potential delays before agreeing to a series of deadlines, but then granted their request to extend deadlines

Judge extends one deadline, puts second on hold

to install "adequate cover" soil over the trash.

The city sought the extension due to heavy rains and a COVID-19 outbreak combining to slow the work, court documents

show. The schedules were established as part of a temporary injunction in an effort to resolve a complaint filed by Bristol Tennessee over the conditions and impacts of the landfill. Bristol

Virginia will stop accepting trash in less than two weeks on Sept. 9.

Jones also vacated the deadline regarding the installation of thermocouples — which are

used to monitor temperatures in the waste mass — until more information was available.

"Based upon the evidence before me, I find that Bristol Virginia should have anticipated the problems it now faces before agreeing to the strict deadlines of the injunction," Jones wrote in his ruling. "While there is

“Bristol Virginia should have anticipated the problems it now faces.”

— James P. Jones, U.S. District judge

See TIME, Page A5

## Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

# Protesters put focus on flood control \$

Leader: Carbon credit program 'has done nothing but good' as source of flood prevention funds

BY JOAQUIN MANCERA  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABINGDON, Va. — Protesters gathered outside the offices of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality in Abingdon, Virginia, on Wednesday to voice concerns about Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's push to remove Virginia from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Emma Kelly, the new economy field coordinator for Appalachian Voices and the organizer of the rally, explained Virginia joined the initiative, or RGGI, a year ago and highlighted how important it has become for Southwest Virginia, which receives flood prevention funds from the program.

"It's a carbon credit program, and it's been very beneficial for Southwest Virginia because it is the main source of flood prevention funding, which, as we can see from recent events, is absolutely key. Kelly said. "It has done nothing but good in the area, and to have that announcement layered on top of everything that

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EMILY BALL/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Above, Emma Kelly (front left), Appalachian Voices' new economy field coordinator, walks down the streets of Abingdon with rally participants in support of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative despite Gov. Glenn Youngkin's bid to withdraw Virginia from the program.

# Youngkin eyes regs to exit carbon collective

Notice is governor's latest bid to pull Virginia out of greenhouse gas group

BY CHARLOTTE RENE WOODS  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Gov. Glenn Youngkin plans to move forward with a regulatory process in an attempt to remove Virginia from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

His administration will initiate a Notice of Intended Regulatory Action "in the coming weeks," according to Travis Voyles, acting secretary of Natural and Historic Resources.

At a state air control board meeting on Wednesday, Voyles gave a presentation that outlined the process through the Administrative Process Act — which entails a period of public comment and eventually a vote by the air board.

The goal, he said, is for Virginia to withdraw by the end of 2023.

Debates have surfaced over whether or not that is a viable route to remove Virginia from the initiative, or RGGI, a consortium of 12

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# TriPride '22: 'The best one we've had'

Organizers say Bristol event drew 13K; more than 1,000 marched in parade

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Saturday's TriPride parade and festival in downtown Bristol was the largest, best organized event in the group's history, organizers said Wednesday.

More than 1,000 people marched in the parade, which also included 22 floats

and about 30 to 40 vehicles. The festival at Cumberland Square Park attracted more than 13,000. Jason Willis, president of TriPride's executive council, told the Bristol Herald Courier on Wednesday.

"I think it's been the best one we've had thus far," Willis said.

See TRIPRIDE, Page A5



The Emory & Henry College Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging marches in the TriPride Parade Saturday on State Street.

BUCKEY BOONE

Beautiful today with plenty of sunshine. Relative humidity 40% in the afternoon. 86/61 Weather » A10

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Passengers depart and prepare to board the first train in the expansion of Amtrak Northeast Regional service to and from Roanoke.

SCOTT P. YATES/  
THE ROANOKE TIMES

## Virginia's train routes see record increase in ridership

**BY LYNDON GERMAN**  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

With the expansion of train routes in Richmond, Norfolk and other parts of Virginia, the commonwealth's passenger rail system had a 30% increase in Amtrak ridership in July compared with June, new data shows.

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority recorded more than 110,000 passengers during July, an all-time high. It also represents a 20% increase compared with the same 2019 period.

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority recorded more than 110,000 passengers during July, an all-time high. It also represents a 20% increase compared with the same 2019 period.

Virginia has six state-sponsored Amtrak routes. "We're thrilled with the way rail transportation is coming back post-COVID," said Donald "DJ" Stadler Jr., executive director of the agency. "Thankfully, over the last year or so, we've seen that ridership come back, but we've still got a long way to go."

Stadler said July's boost is partly due to the addition of round-trip routes to Roanoke and Norfolk, along with the return of a round trip to Newport News that had shut down during the pandemic's peak.

The Norfolk route, which includes stops at Richmond's Staples Mill Sta-

tion, had the second-largest increase in the state, growing 23% between June and July to 40,763 passengers.

The Norfolk route is part of a \$3.7 billion agreement the commonwealth signed last year with CSX and Amtrak to double passenger service along the Interstate 95 corridor.

Overall, 908,075 passengers used Virginia's Amtrak services in 2021. Richmond's Main Street and Staples Mill stations accounted for 193,999.

The only station in Virginia that recorded more passenger boarding was in Lorton, and it is not a state-supported train.

Stadler said these numbers make it clear Virginians are more likely to travel by train if routes are made available, but the state still has a long way to go in assuring its rail network is accessible and reliable.

"We have 10 trains that go through Richmond every day," Stadler said. "If you go to any big city like Chicago, Boston or New York, they've got trains coming in and out all times ... We've got to do more."

Stadler said in order to

make Richmond a true multimodal city, investing in its rail network is a key. In order to make those investments, Stadler said, both the city and VPRRA need to make partnerships in and beyond the region.

VPRRA this year partnered with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and was awarded a \$58 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to improve the rail corridor between Raleigh and Richmond.

The grant will fund preliminary planning and engineering design for the approximately 162 miles of the S Line between Raleigh and Richmond.

Stadler also said VPRRA plans to add more routes in 2026 and 2030 after the scheduled construction of a \$1.9 billion rail bridge over the Potomac River that will expand the capacity for passenger trains.

VPRRA has also maintained its partnerships with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and the Virginia Department of Transportation as it continues a mission of increasing rail access in the city of Richmond and the commonwealth.

## Time

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no doubt that there has been considerable rainfall since the injunction was entered into in mid-June, weather conditions are frequently a concern in any construction project and Bristol Virginia did not condition its agreement to any flexibility in that regard."

He also said the city should have anticipated the possibility of an outbreak.

Jones went on to grant the city's request for an additional month to apply the dirt, extending the deadline from Sept. 10 to Oct. 10.

In granting the extension the judge also expressed concern about the amount of dirt already in place, based on last week's testimony of Michael Williams, a geologist who visited the land-

fill site two days prior last week's hearing. Williams testimony conflicted with Bristol Virginia assertions about how much dirt was in place.

"As a condition of the intermediate cover deadline extension set forth above, Bristol Virginia must file with the court, on the public docket of this case, a written report within 14 days of the entry of this opinion and order setting forth its efforts to accelerate the approved soil deposit on the landfill, taking into account the measures suggested by Mr. Williams, the witness for Bristol Tennessee, including larger equipment, more employees, and overtime work," the judge wrote.

That report must also certify the percentage of total landfill containing the required 12-inch cover layer at the date of the report, Jones wrote. Based on that report, the court

may require additional reports.

"The deadline for the installation of a dedicated system of thermocouples as required by the preliminary injunction is temporarily vacated and the appropriate deadline is subject to further submissions by the parties and further consideration by the court," the judge wrote.

He also directed Bristol Virginia to file a written report setting forth a detailed timeline of its intended bid process and available options for expediting the installation of the thermocouples system. That is also due in 14 days and the court will then establish a new deadline for that work.

Jones also directed Bristol Virginia to pay all legal fees and expenses incurred by Bristol Tennessee's attorneys.

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## Flood

From Page A1

happened that has impacted thousands and thousands of people, it's just a real blow, especially because he (Youngkin) does not have a plan in place now, to replace that funding for us."

Through RGGI, Virginia has so far, received \$378 million in funds for low-income energy efficiency programs and flood resiliency infrastructure.

Peggy Mathews, one of the protesters, stressed the importance of RGGI flood prevention funds to the communities in the region that have been affected by flooding in recent months. "I am genuinely concerned about the move that our governor is proposing,"



EMILY BALL/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Rally participants walk through Abingdon on Wednesday.

Mathews said, "I lived in Scott County right close to Wise and Buchanan, where we've had tremendous floods just this year. If we were not in RGGI, those communities with not yet have the money they are

receiving, not only to deal with the current floods but to prevent floods. We need to be resilient communities, and RGGI lets us do that."

Email: jmananca@bristolnews.com

## Exit

From Page A1

states in which energy producers trade emission reductions for credits, or they buy credits to emit carbon dioxide past a capped amount.

Environmental and legal groups argue that the purview lies within the state legislature (which put Virginia into RGGI in the first place). At an air pollution control board meeting this spring, member Hope Cui said she had received correspondence from the attorney general's office reiterating that point.

Environmental advocacy group Appalachian Voices has a pending lawsuit in which it seeks to obtain a copy of the correspondence after it unsuccessfully requested the document under the Freedom of Information Act.

On Jan. 15, the day he took office, Youngkin signed an executive order directing the development of an emergency regulation for the air board to vote on in an effort to pull Virginia out of the initiative.

"An administration cannot just magically override the will of the democratically elected legislature," Walton Shepherd, a senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, said Wednesday.

The notice of regulatory action is the latest route the Youngkin administration has explored for removing Virginia from RGGI.

"They're certainly rattling a different doorknob, but it's going to open into the same dead end," Shepherd added.

Should RGGI opponents in the General Assembly seek legislative action to remove Virginia from the consortium during the 2023 session, it might not clear the state Senate, where Democrats hold a 21-19 edge.

The air board, made up of gubernatorial appointees on staggered terms, has some new Youngkin-appointed members.

Shepherd said that even if the regulatory process unfolds and the board votes in Youngkin's favor, there could be court cases challenging the removal of Virginia from RGGI.

Under RGGI, proceeds go toward environmental and energy efficiency projects. Virginia has participated in RGGI since 2021 after the General Assembly passed a law in 2020 for Virginia to join the market.

Virginia received \$228 million in 2021 for flood protections and energy efficiency programs.

Ahead of the board meeting, environmental advocates held a rally where attendees reflected on their support of RGGI.

Leah Jones, an organizer with Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, called it "more than a carbon capping program."

"RGGI allows us to take money from polluters and put money back in the hands of impacted communities," she said. "This initiative is a genuine opportunity to support our neighbors all over Virginia who are already experiencing the negative impacts of climate change."

Despite the benefit for some, opponents of RGGI take issue with the cost to ratepayers.

"The fact that RGGI operates as a direct tax on consumers is reason enough by itself to have serious doubts about our future participation," Voyles said.

In his presentation, Voyles noted rising energy costs for Dominion Energy customers. Since Virginia has participation in RGGI, the utility has used a rate adjustment clause (colloquially referred to as a rider) that it estimates has raised customers' average monthly bills by \$2.39. This summer, the State Corporation Commission halted the rider at the request of the company.

Air pollution control board member Lornel Tompkins asked why Youngkin is targeting Virginia's participation in RGGI when the SCC halted

the rider and it is not the only rider the company has attached to customers' bills.

"When you're talking about the cost, if you're using Dominion as your source, you will see a number of riders," she said. "Yet we are picking out RGGI to be the one to go after."

Earlier in his presentation, Voyles also noted other riders, but added that removing Virginia from RGGI could remove that particular cost to consumers. Calling it an "unnecessary burden," he also pointed to how the SCC recently granted Dominion another rider related to its proposed offshore wind project.

Tompkins suggested that rather than pulling Virginia from the program, the state legislature could revisit RGGI laws to add more consumer protections.

"A lot of the issues with RGGI are based on the General Assembly's direction and laws or rules to operate," she said. "Why are we not going after the General Assembly to change the rules rather than taking away something from the state that is turning out by some factors to be a positive?"

Though there was no agenda item Wednesday about removing Virginia from RGGI, environmental advocates remain concerned. Appalachian Voices and other environmental groups held a rally ahead of the meeting before sitting in on the presentations.

Demonstrators posed as Youngkin in the form of a puppet with his rejected Natural Resources appointee Andrew Wheeler holding the strings.

Wheeler now serves as the head of the state's new Office of Regulatory Management.

Wheeler has been a controversial figure among environmental advocates for his past as a coal lobbyist and for overseeing rollbacks of environmental regulations as head of the Environmental Protection Agency under President Donald Trump.

## TriPride

From Page A1

lis said. "We certainly had more people than we had in Johnson City or Kingsport. We had more vendors and exhibitors. All around, I think it was an amazing success that, at least for me personally, exceeded some of the expectations we had."

Prior events in Johnson City and Kingsport attracted crowds estimated at 10,000.

"We knew it was going to be big because we haven't been able to have it the last couple of years due to COVID, but it definitely exceeded expectations," Willis said.

Beyond its absence due

to the pandemic, Willis credited city government staff members who were "incredible" to work with.

"It takes a city that is willing to commit to helping. They are our host cities, they are our partners and they do their best to make it a fun, safe event for everyone," Willis said.

"I think, where we were in Virginia, we were able to tap into some resources we were not able to in Kingsport and Johnson City. For example, Virginia Tourism. They really partnered with us ... Working with Wirt Conroy at Virginia Tourism, he was able to open up some avenues that helped bring people to the event," Willis said.

Beyond the Tri-Cities, Saturday's events attract-

ed people from southern Kentucky, North Carolina, across Virginia and the Knoxville area.

"The parade was definitely much larger. Everyone was very happy and just able to be themselves. I think it was a fantastic event. We couldn't have done it without our volunteers," TriPride Secretary Jason Hall, a Bristol Virginia native, said.

The parade included a "wide, wide variety" of participants from nonprofit groups, businesses including Citi and Eastman, churches, colleges and others.

"The only response from the public to security was the long lines to get through the metal detectors. It was brutal out there

on the pavement, but everybody got it," Willis said, regarding the need for security measures.

In addition to city personnel, police, fire and EMS, the event had security from Virginia State Police, Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

"They were doing everything they could to make sure it was a very boring day for them," Willis said.

One person was arrested and a couple of people were treated for heat-related symptoms.

Previous events at Kingsport and Johnson City were marked by threats from federally designated "hate" groups.

"Bristol was different. We had no threats, none of

that," Willis said.

Organizers plan to shift to Johnson City next year, but will try to apply some Bristol's formula for success.

"I'm hoping to take everything; the city plan, the traffic plan from Bristol to Johnson City and say we had an amazing, successful event. We had two years to knock this out and provide as much information as we can to the next host city and the next (TriPride) board," Willis said. "This is what worked, this is what didn't."

Hall agreed. "I have been writing out every night things I remember from Saturday in regards to security or alcohol sales, stuff like that. Security is always our

number one and I'm not familiar with Johnson City like I am Bristol, so I hope to take time to get familiar with Johnson City so we can bring security measures to Johnson City," Hall said. "Both Bristol's, especially Virginia side, I think they were amazing. Their security efforts and security plans and traffic plans were just top notch. Without them I'm not sure how we'd be able to pull it off."

The group paid \$50 for a special beverage permit and \$70 to reserve the park, City Manager Randy Eads said. The city picked up the tab for city police, EMS and other city employees who worked to support the event.

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