

The Charlotte Gazette

DEVOTED TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY - FIRST, LAST AND ALWAYS

50 cents

Vol. 149 - Number 23

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Drakes Branch, Virginia

Rescue squad in financial hole

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

The Charlotte County Rescue Squad (CCRS) has found itself in a financial hole and in hot water with the county board of supervisors (BOS).

CCRS Captain Bill Mayhew addressed the board on Monday night, Feb. 14, asking for \$50,000 to \$80,000 in additional funding.

Mayhew said that waiting on payments from Medicare and Medicaid and inflation has put the squad in a bind.

"Fuel has gone up over 60%," Mayhew said. "Motor oil has gone up, and even a box of gloves has gone up."

According to documents from CCRS provided to the BOS, the squad's 2021 operating budget was listed at \$963,900.00 with over \$1 million in expenses. Included in their budget was over \$200,000 in a PPP Loan.

Documents show the squad in the red for over \$200,000.

Before Mayhew could finish his presentation, Supervisor Butch Hamlett wasted no time asking Mayhew how much the squad was paying in salaries. According to Mayhew, to run three crews a day, five days a week and two crews on the weekend, CCRS spends \$12,600 a week on salaries with members working anywhere from 48 to 60 hours a week. "Does anybody have any oversight on how much they are working," Hamlett asked?

Though Mayhew never got the chance to answer Hamlett's question, he said the squad was short-staffed.

"So, y'all been spending more than you really have?" Hamlett questioned. "I just have a whole lot of questions about your budget sheet. To me, there is no oversight. If the county's operating budget were like this, the citizens would have us by our toenails... y'all need to do something about management."

(See **SQUAD**, Page 2)



C.I. Hall and his wife Sharon could be seen playing music together throughout the years.

The Music Man

Hall's memory plays on

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

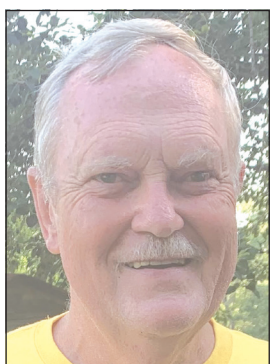
The loss of a beloved fixture in Drakes Branch is mourned following the death of lifelong resident and business owner Clyde "C.I." Irvin Hall Jr.

Hall, 73, known by most as "C.I." died on Sunday, Feb. 13, surrounded by his family after a long and courageous fight.

Everyone in Drakes Branch and the county for that matter seemed to know C.I. and his love for his community and music.

Hall started Hall's Farm Supply in Drakes Branch in 1977 with his brother Bill and was the sole owner after Bill left the business a few years later.

Hall could be seen working in the store day in and day out, helping his customers for more



Clyde "C.I." Irvin Hall Jr.

than 40 years before he retired in 2017 after he sold the business to his son-in-law Dwayne Davis.

"He really cared for his community and customers and believed in helping others when he could," Hall's daughter Rachel Warden said. "Dad really

(See **HALL**, Page 2)



Fire, police and EMS responded to the Monday afternoon crash that involved a county school bus.

No students injured in bus crash

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

No injuries were reported in a crash that involved a Charlotte County Public School bus and a passenger vehicle on Monday, Feb. 14. According to school Superintendent Robbie Mason, the accident occurred during the afternoon transportation of students at the intersection of Highway 92 and Kings Cross Road in

Red Oak.

Two students were on the bus at the time of the crash.

According to Mason, the exact cause of the crash has not been received from the Virginia State Police as of press time.

Bacon District Volunteer Fire Department, Charlotte County Rescue, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, and Virginia State Police responded to the scene.

The Legacy of Henrietta Lacks

Seventy-one years after her death, a Virginia woman's cells are still saving lives.

Because Henrietta Lacks was the subject of a medical experiment, she is an accidental pioneer of modern-day medicine, even though she died in 1951.

Lacks was a 31-year-old mother of five when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer.

Doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore biopsy pieces of tissue from her cancerous tumor without her consent just months before her death.

Her cells, known among scientists as HeLa, were unusual in that they could rapidly reproduce and stay alive long



enough to undergo multiple tests.

According to Johns Hopkins Hospital, these cells played an essential part in developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and vitro fertilization. The HeLa cell line has been used to create drugs for treating herpes, leukemia, influenza and Parkinson's

(See **LACKS**, Page 2)

Cases decline overall, rise locally

By Alexa Massey
The Charlotte Gazette

While COVID-19 cases continue to decline in the wake of the omicron surge, health officials are noting it may take longer for cases to slow down in the Piedmont Health District which sports vastly smaller vaccination rates compared to the rest of the state.

While cases are overall on the

downtrend in Piedmont and across the state, all nearby counties saw a rise in COVID-19 cases this week.

According to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Charlotte County reported 65 new virus cases from the period of Monday, Feb. 7, to Monday, Feb. 14.

Lunenburg reported 87 new cases this

(See **CASES**, Page 5)

WORKSHOP: Capture decisive moments'
Page 11

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SQUAD: 'Y'all been spending more than you really have'

FROM PAGE ONE

Hamlett went on to say he thought it was time for the board to take over and be the board of directors and set some parameters.

"The county can't afford, you know, \$60,000 a month, which is what you want," Hamlett said. "We don't have the money, and if we pay you that and continue to pay that, we'd have to raise the taxes probably 10 cents."

According to May-

hew, CCRS currently has over \$200,000 in accounts receivable they are waiting to receive.

"If this board approves giving you additional funding, is your organization open to oversight from this board," said Supervisor Hazel Smith. "Are you willing to open your books and let us see how many hours of overtime is being paid?"

Mayhew agreed. Chairman Gary Walker spoke up to

offer a solution.

"Obviously, this is a very serious situation for the people of Charlotte County and the taxpayers and certainly for the volunteers and people doing the work," Walker said. "You know how much we appreciate all that y'all do, and it's no doubt that we'd be in terrible shape without all the work being done. With that, I would like to see the board authorize our public service committee to authorize

the funds necessary to ensure the people of Charlotte County have rescue service."

Walker also suggested writing up an oversight agreement.

"This is a short-term thing we need to get over right now," Walker said.

In the end, the board voted 6 to 1, with Hamlett voting no to fund CCRS \$50,000. "It's a short-term Band-Aid, but we've got to start somewhere," Walker said.

Big South selects Lancers Feb. 17 game for ESPNU Wildcard

LONGWOOD

The Lancers will play on ESPNU on Thursday, Feb. 17 one week later at High Point, the Big South Conference announced recently.

The game will be shifted to Thursday after originally being scheduled for Wednesday night, with the tip at 9 p.m.

at the Qubein Arena and Conference Center.

Longwood finished the first half of conference play unbeaten and in sole possession of first place in the Big South following a 56-48 win over UNC Asheville.

LACKS: Cells help study of cancer

FROM PAGE ONE

disease. They've been influential in the study of cancer, lactose digestion, sexually transmitted diseases and appendicitis.

The cells have been used to test the effects of radiation and poi-

sons, study the human genome, learn more about how viruses work and play a crucial role in developing polio and COVID-19 vaccines.

Though the collection and use of Henrietta Lacks' cells in research was an acceptable and legal practice in the

1950s, this practice would not happen today without the patient's consent.

Because of the nonconsent, some have called for a reduction in the use of HeLa cells in research or even an end to their use entirely. The argument is that because the cells were obtained without Lacks' knowledge or consent, their use is unethical.

According to Johns Hopkins Hospital, they never sold or profited from the discovery or distribution of HeLa cells and do not own the rights to the HeLa cell line.

Instead, the hospital said it has offered HeLa cells freely and widely for scientific research.

Lacks died on Oct. 4, 1951, and is buried in an unmarked grave in the family cemetery in Halifax County, Virginia.



Henrietta Lacks

Lacks' exact burial location is unknown, but the family believes that it is within a few feet of her mother's gravesite, which was the only one in the family to have been marked with a tombstone for decades.



Henrietta Lacks and her husband, David, ca. 1945.

HALL: 'It means a lot to have him remembered by so many'

FROM PAGE ONE

appreciated the sense of community built in the small town of Drakes and Charlotte County. That was his favorite part of living and owning a business in Drakes - the people and how they supported each other and built relationships."

Warden said that her dad still helped out at the store occasionally, even after he retired.

"He enjoyed gardening, so he loved helping people start and grow their own vegetables," Warden said.

In addition to his love for gardening, Hall had a tremendous passion for music. So much so he was known as "The Music Man" by some of his closest friends.

"Dad loved music as a child and used to listen to 45 records when he was little," Warden said. "His mother Maude Hall taught him to sing harmony, and he took piano lessons but played by ear."

According to Warden, her dad taught himself to play guitar and started to perform as a singer and guitarist in the 1970s.

"He's played in numerous bands over the years, his most recent being the High

Tone Troubadours," she said. "Daddy had, at last estimate, almost 300 songs committed totally to memory."

While "The Music Man" may no longer be playing, his memory will live on.

"It means a lot to us to have him remem-

bered by so many," Warden said. "We've really appreciated all the comments and memories people have shared. We always knew he was special to us, but it's so comforting to see that he was special to so many others."

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Vol. 150 - Number 15

Wednesday, December 21, 2022

Drakes Branch, Virginia

Study finds fire, EMS should combine

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

During a special call meeting of the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors (BOS) on Dec. 12, members heard firsthand the outcome of a Fire and EMS study and are now faced with several decisions, one that could combine the two organizations.

The study was conducted at no charge to the county in September by the Virginia Fire Services Board in an effort to provide technical assistance and advice to the fire and EMS departments and the county.

Vice-chair of the Virginia Fire Services Board, Abby Johnston, addressed the BOS with the study's findings.

"The fire and EMS study provides broad recommendations for the local jurisdiction to review and to customize to benefit their citizens, fire and EMS organizations and the local jurisdiction as a whole," Johnston said.

In addition to a review of information provided to us by the County Administrator's Office, the study process involved in-person meetings with stakeholders throughout your system and a public hearing to allow community members to speak.

Johnston said the study recommended formally establishing and codifying Charlotte County Fire and EMS and including all agencies under one central umbrella and appointing a system director to oversee and coordinate the system.

"This would arguably be one of the most essential recommendations that our board has to offer," Johnston said. "This would create greater operational consistency and allow for centralized equipment acquisition and training to support efforts already in place by individual agencies."

Johnston said one of the first steps should include formal adoption and

(See STUDY, Page 3)



Joe Carey

Former supervisor dies in accident

By Brian Carlton
The Charlotte Gazette

A Wyliesburg resident and former member of the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors was killed Friday after a traffic accident. According to officials with the Virginia State Police, 66-year-old Brodnax Police Chief Joe Carey had pulled off to the right side of the road in the 200 block of Piney Pond Road.

Carey was going "to recover the remains of an animal that had been struck in the roadway," said Virginia State Police Public Relations Director Corinne Geller. "As Carey was returning to the side of the highway, an eastbound Ford F-150 pickup was unable to avoid striking the chief."

Geller said that Carey had been driving his police vehicle and at the time, the vehicle's lights were activated.

The adult male driver of the

pickup truck was not injured. Carey, meanwhile, was taken to Community Memorial Hospital in South Hill, where he later passed away.

"This evening, the Town of Brodnax lost a dedicated member of our community," said Brodnax Mayor Don Dugger. "Highly regarded for his public safety professionalism and experience, Joe was a genuine friend to so many of us. He truly loved his job and worked hard to make a difference while protecting and serving our town."

Carey is survived by his wife, four sons, a daughter and several grandchildren. Mayor Dugger asked that people keep Carey's family and colleagues with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office in their thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

Geller added that alcohol was not a factor in the crash, which remains under investigation.

Benn recognized for two prestigious awards

Rhonda Benn, Career and Technical Education teacher at Randolph-Henry High School (R-H), was recognized at the December School Board meeting for two prestigious awards.

Benn received the "5 of 5" Award as well as the JAG Outstanding Specialists Award.

The "5 of 5" Performance Award recognizes the highest-achieving schools across the United States that exceed all five of Jobs for America's Graduates National's performance metrics aimed at graduation and employment. Performance benchmarks include

(See BENN, Page 5)



Rhonda Benn, Career and Technical Education teacher at Randolph-Henry High School, has been awarded the "5 of 5" Award as well as the JAG Outstanding Specialists Award.

Christmas week storm looms for region

By Rachel Austin
The Charlotte Gazette

Will we get a white Christmas this year? For this region, the jury is still out on that. But one thing the National Weather Service can promise is bone-chilling cold temperatures for the rest of this week. With that in mind,

it's time to take precautions before Old Man Winter arrives.

From now until Thursday night, lows are expected to drop into the 20s. But that's practically balmy compared to what's coming after. The National Weather Service in Blacksburg

(See STORM, Page 5)





Accident closes road

A portion of Red House Road was closed on Thursday, Dec. 15, at approximately 6 p.m. following an overturned tractor-trailer accident in the 10300 block. According to the Red House Volunteer Fire Department Chief Chad Reeves, fire and rescue crews were on scene for three hours. No injuries were reported.

Santa gets letters from Charlotte County
Page 10

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Board recognizes teacher and staff

On Dec. 13, the Charlotte County School Board recognized Alyson Napier and the Randolph-Henry High School yearbook staff for the honor of being named in the Trophy Class from the Virginia High School League. Trophy Class yearbooks are noted for outstanding achievement in quality publications service to its school and community. The Log 2022 was sent to VHSL for judging in June 2022. Randolph-Henry competed with hundreds of other schools across the state of Virginia. The yearbook cover and each page of the book is carefully scored on the following categories: concept, coverage, design, writing, and photography. This is the second time Randolph-Henry has won the state award of Trophy Class. They were previously awarded the distinction for The Log 2019. The 2023 yearbook staff is currently hard at work on volume 79.



OBITUARIES

Carol Ann Noel

Carol Ann Noel, 72 of Charlotte Court House, passed away on Dec. 10. She was born in Grand Island, Nebraska, to the late William and Stella Schleicher on Feb. 14, 1950.

Carol was well traveled as a Navy wife and lived in places all over the world throughout her life including Japan and England. She was an enthusiastic animal lover, notable cook and an avid crossword puzzler.



She was married 33 years to the late John Wayne Noel until his passing in 2018 and together raised two daughters.

She is preceded in death by her sister, Lisa Langenheder.

She is survived by her two daughters; Sarah Noel and Elizabeth Noel (Mark Colombo) both of Alexandria; four brothers; Bill Schleicher Jr. (Becky), Dan Schleicher (Linda), Ron Schleicher and Tom Schleicher (Cindy) and two sisters; Connie Reid (John) and Ramona "Mona" Bales.

A funeral service was held on Sunday, Dec. 18, at 2 p.m., at Puckett Funeral Home with interment to follow in Trinity Memorial Gardens. The family received friends on Sunday, Dec. 18, from 1 - 2 p.m., at Puckett Funeral Home.

Puckett Funeral Home of Farmville is serving the family.

Cake Wars, R-H edition

On Dec. 14, Mrs. Tharpe's class hosted a cake making competition. Students worked in groups to create a lemon cake, a chocolate cake, and a spice cake. Each cake was beautifully decorated with its own homemade icing and embellishments. Guests were given a ballot and it was determined that the lemon cake was the winner.



STUDY: 'This would create greater operational consistency'

FROM PAGE ONE

codification of all agencies via a County government ordinance.

"In no way is centralized authority an attempt to reduce or alter the rich histories and cultures of the agencies in Charlotte County," Johnston said. "Rather, it's an essential step toward preserving agencies through creating strong guardrails around the system, increasing accountability and providing oversight for the provision of services while lessening the administrative burdens of independent volunteer operation."

In addition, the 28-page study suggested that a fire and EMS training Captain/volunteer coordinator position be added to the schedule and coordinate training for individual agencies and multi-agency drills to improve operational proficiency.

"This person would serve as the liaison to access training resources through both the office of EMS and the Virginia Department of fire programs," Johnston said.

The Virginia Fire Services Board also recommended hiring a public safety director that would have operational authority for both fire and EMS

departments to work to resolve any issues.

When it came to the local fire department, little was addressed; however, when it came to issues with the county's rescue squad, several items were brought up.

"Based on the information received during the interviews and comments shared at the public hearing, the study committee is concerned that the Charlotte County Rescue Squad (CCRS) had lost the confidence of the residents of the county," Johnston said.

In February, the BOS was faced with approving a substantial amount of funds to help keep the rescue afloat.

County officials say overspending for the past five to seven years had put the Charlotte County Rescue Squad in a financial bind.

So much, in fact, that the BOS has had to appropriate over \$100,000 in just two months. The overspending eventually led to county officials asking CCRS Captain Bill Mayhew to resign.

Following a troubling two months, the CCRS seemed to be turning its financial woes around when a leadership change was made. Sally Pyle, who has been involved in the EMS field for many years, was hired by the rescue squad to handle billing for Medicare,

Medicaid and insurance.

During the work session, Pyle presented her findings just after working with the squad for two weeks and began to work to clean up the squad's financial troubles.

During the Dec. 12 meeting of the BOS, Pyle told members that \$120,000 in debt had been paid off since March, and to date, the CCRS has received \$50,000 in donations.

CCRS Captain Matthew LaMotte told the BOS that they were

getting 33% of the money back in billable calls from insurance currently back in March. That rate is up to 59%

"Unfortunately, everything that comes in is going out to payroll," LaMotte said.

According to LaMotte, the CCRS is paying out a lot in overtime because there are not enough employees to fill the crew 24-hour service that is provided to citizens.

However, the Virginia fire Services Board study suggests that CCRS needs to add an

additional crew due to the county size and location of its two squad buildings.

Both Pyle and LaMotte said the CCRS is paying \$5,000 in overtime each week and the call volume is just not there to have a third 24-hour crew in operation.

The BOS made no decision on the study recommendation during the Dec. 12 meeting.

"Nothing is going to change overnight," said BOS Chairman Gary Walker. "This is a one to three year project."

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Vol. 150 - Number 7

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

Drakes Branch, Virginia

Tax relief coming for citizens via solar payments

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) has kept good on their promise to use revenue from solar projects to help reduce the tax burden on citizens of the county.

Beginning with the December tax bill, citizens will see a solar tax credit applied to their statements.

This tax credit will appear on bills in December and June of 2023.

“Staff estimated that 1 penny in real estate tax generates about \$100K,” said County Administrator Dan Witt. “So, each person will receive a credit of 5 cents per \$100 of assessed value. Therefore, it is estimated that \$500,000 will be refunded to the taxpayers.”

Witt further gave the following example.

If a person’s real estate is appraised at \$100k, their normal taxes would be

$\$100,000 \times .62 / 100 = \620 . This would be paid in two equal installments of \$310 due on December 5th and June 5th. With the new solar credit, it would be calculated this: $\$100,000 \times .57 / 100 = \570 with two installments of \$285 with a solar credit of \$25 each billing cycle.

The tax relief comes in a form of a \$500,000 payment the county received from Dominion Energy in regard to the Randolph Solar project.

“This credit will be given for this fiscal tax year only, and it just applies to real estate taxes,” said County Treasurer Patricia Berkeley. “Since the statements are divided into installments, the credit has been divided.”

For each qualified property, the treasurer will one-time credit the taxpayer’s real estate billing installment statements (due

(See **RELIEF**, Page 2)



Starting next year, drivers will begin to encounter construction at the intersection of Routes 15 and U.S. 360 as VDOT moves forward with a roundabout for the area.

Roundabout construction to begin in spring

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

Those who travel Route 15 to and from Farmville already know how the new roundabout in Prince Edward County at the intersection of Route 15/133/692 is causing delays.

Beginning next spring, drivers will encounter construction of yet another roundabout scheduled for Route 15, this time in Keysville.

According to Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Communica-

tions Manager Len Stevens, construction is expected to begin in late March/early April of 2023 and funding for the project includes both state and federal sources.

The project is expected to be completed by June 2024.

VDOT said due to safety concerns and accident history, the project will improve the intersection with a roundabout concept.

“The project includes grading, drainage structures, water line utility work, paving, pavement marking, and

(See **ROUNDABOUT**, Page 2)



Town lake may be opened for recreational use

Almost two years have passed since the Town of Keysville formed a 501c under Keysville Parks and Recreations. Recently the first organizational meeting was held and plans are moving forward. According to Keysville Mayor Steven Morris, the organization will be exploring opening up the Town’s lake area for recreational use. “There are numerous possibilities, including walking trails, nature trails and even the potential for biking trails,” Morris said. “The group will also be looking at opening the lake back up as a paddle only facility.”

County takes part in economic study

By Brian Carlton
The Charlotte Gazette

They all said no. Over the last two years, Buckingham, Cumberland and Prince Edward counties joined a growing list pulling out of Virginia’s Growth Alliance (VGA), arguing the cost to be in the economic development group was not worth the return on investment. Now they, along

with several other counties and Longwood University, want to form a new regional economic development organization, one focusing just on this part of Central Virginia. But first, they need to see if such a project is feasible. That’s where the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) comes in.

The CRC is a planning organization,

(See **STUDY**, Page 3)

Dominion proposes to acquire Courthouse Solar

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

In its third annual clean energy filing with the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC), Dominion Energy, Virginia, on Friday, Oct. 21, proposed nearly two dozen new solar and energy storage projects for Virginia customers.

One of those projects includes Courthouse Solar, a 167-megawatt facility developed and acquired from NOVI Energy.

NOVI Energy proposed to construct the solar facility on 1,354 acres just southwest of Charlotte Court House on 12 parcels owned by Blue Rock Resources, LLC, Ridgeway Farm LLC, and Robert Locke.

The project is southwest of Charlotte Court House and generally bound to the north by George Washington Highway (Rt. 40), to the west by Tollhouse Highway (Rt. 47), to the east by Eureka School Road, and to the south by Ash Camp Creek.

BY THE NUMBERS

Courthouse Solar’s revenue projections to the county are expected to be \$15,073,226 over a 35-year span.

In addition to Courthouse Solar, Dominion Energy’s proposal includes nine other solar and energy storage projects, totaling nearly 500 MW, that will be owned and operated by Dominion Energy Virginia.

The proposal also includes power purchase agreements (PPAs) with 13 solar and energy storage projects, totaling more than 300 megawatts, that are owned by independent

(See **SOLAR**, Page 2)

Yearbook staff wins state award

Page 2

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