

# Virginia Beach Sun

July 19, 2012

Virginia Beach's Hometown Newspaper

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## Pungo "Red Barn" owner loves his work

*Pradip Patel began with \$8; now has six strong businesses*

By Greg Goldfarb

A warm, steady rain pelts Pungo's Red Barn Food Store, while customers shop and dine indoors, cool and dry.

Owner Pradip Patel's behind the counter, selling cigarettes, taking money for gas and minding the store. He's a long way from his home country of India, but with five successful local and regional businesses – plus one more in North Carolina – under his belt, he couldn't be happier.

"This is still a 'land of opportunity,' even in this economy," said Patel, who lives with his family in Sandbridge. "All you have to do is work hard."

Laid off as an electrical/biomedical engineer in Chicago in 2002, Pradip and his wife of 21 years, Parita, who has a degree in Business Admin-

## Business Profile

istration, decided to move the family to Virginia Beach that year, anticipating more prosperous financial times.

"My parents and I came to America in 1981 with \$8 between all of us," said Patel. "I had worked every day since I was 16. I was hoping things would work out for us."

Annual sales at the locations range from a low of \$700,000 to a high of \$1.4 million, said Patel, with average start-up costs for each one set at about \$350,000. All of the locations are leased.

Looks like things worked out pretty well, as Patel's opened six food and gasoline convenience stores over the last decade, employing some 34 people: Red Barn Food Store (with a Subway inside), opened at 2001 Indian River Road in Virginia Beach in 2002 and now has seven employees; Red Barn Food Store, on George Washington Memorial Highway, in Yorktown, 2007, four; Red Barn Food Store, 11309 Jefferson Avenue, Newport News, 2009, seven; Subway restaurant, 2817 Shore Drive in Virginia Beach, 2009, six; Salem Market, 11420 South Crater Road in Petersburg, 2011, five; and Holiday Food Mart, 2011, at Highway 32 North in Sunbury, NC, five.

"Owning your own business is a whole different thing," he said. "It's a whole lot better; the harder you work, the more you get."

Coming for India, which is Asia's second most populated countries and the world's largest Democracies, Patel and his family integrated easily

See Pungo, Page 3



Pradip and Parita, with their sons, Ankit, on the left, and Ankur, on the right. (Courtesy Photo)



The new code will allow oceanfront businesses to develop designs that are more compatible with the environment and overall more aesthetically-pleasing.

## Atlantic Avenue getting new look, improvements

*City Council approves pedestrian-friendly design code; new look similar to Town Center*

By a 9-2 vote, Virginia Beach City Council has approved an oceanfront form-based code, which is a new type of zoning for the resort area.

This new approach to regulating commercial and residential development focuses more on the form of the buildings and their relationship to the street; and less on a strict separation of land uses.

The result is a more

integrated development pattern, with a mixture of uses, pedestrian-friendly streets and more active storefronts.

City officials have worked for nearly three years on the plan, consulting all-the-while with property and business owners, who called for more tree-lined sidewalks, decorative brick buildings and more attractive storefronts, with con-

dos and apartments upstairs.

As part of achieving a more urban oceanfront environment, council agreed to develop a new parking and funding strategy, designed to meet the needs of employers, employees, residents and visitors.

Before the new code was approved, some 20 people spoke

See Atlantic, Page 2

## After 14 good years, city ends Lynnhaven Mall TIF district

*Public investment spurred \$100 million private expansion*

By Patti Phillips

Fourteen years after it began, the city's Lynnhaven Mall Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District is over – having achieved everything it was created to accomplish.

The city recently made its last payment under the TIF plan – \$1.7 million – and city leaders declared the district an unqualified success.

As a result, citizens will benefit for years to come. Now that the Lynnhaven TIF district has ended, about \$1.65 million a year in extra real estate taxes generated within the district will go to the general fund to pay for everyday city services, such as police officers, firefighters, schools, parks

and libraries.

Meanwhile, businesses in the district generate \$3.9 million a year in sales taxes, \$3.5 million annually in meal, admission and hotel taxes; \$1.6 million annually in business license taxes and \$1.1 million annually in business property taxes.

*About \$1.65 million a year in extra real estate taxes will now go to the general fund to pay for everyday city services, such as police, fire and schools.*

All this pays for "everyday" city services.

The city raised money for its share of improvements by using the increase in real estate revenue generated by the private invest-

ment in the mall: Tax-increment financing. No debt was issued. By paying off the TIF obligation two years early, the city saved \$365,000.

"Our goal, when we created the district in 1998, was to encourage private expansion of Lynnhaven Mall and to help maintain it is the No. 1 retail destination in Hampton Roads," said Mayor Will Sessoms. "And we've done just that. Today, Lynnhaven Mall and the surrounding shops and restaurants generate \$10 million a year in business taxes alone for city residents, not including real estate taxes. That money pays for vital city services and helps keep real estate taxes low for home-

See After, Page 2

## Five high schools eligible for full accreditation for 3 years

*Dey, Thoroughgood, Red Mill, Old Donation and Kemps Landing*

By Yolanda Jones-Howell

tive years.

John B. Dey, Red Mill and Thoroughgood elementary schools, as well as Old Donation Center and Kemps Landing Magnet School were among 101 performing schools statewide that were offered the waivers. Each school awarded a waiver will remain fully-accredited through 2014-

2015.

Virginia Beach Superintendent James G. Merrill commended the principals and teachers at the schools that earned the waiver for their hard work in preparing students for the SOLs.

"School leadership and faculties spend an enormous amount of

See Five, Page 2

## The Hot Stuff

*In case you missed it:*

### Jet crashed due to mechanical failure

In the wake of the jet crash this past spring into a local apartment complex, investigators determined that a "catastrophic mechanical malfunction" caused a \$64 million F/A 18D U.S. Navy jet to fall from the sky onto the Mayfair Mews Apartment complex, off Birdneck Road, destroying 27 of 64 apartments. No one was killed; nine people suffered non-life-threatening injuries, including the jet pilot and an instructor. Navy officials said the crash occurred just after noon on April 6, explaining that the jet had just taken off from Naval Air Station Oceana, when two seconds after takeoff, the crew felt a strong vibration; five seconds later, the aircraft's right engine failed and seconds after that, the left engine also failed, probably caused by a fuel delivery failure. The jet was 100 feet up in the air at the time of the failures and slowly began descending towards the oceanfront area. The crew ejected about 50 feet over land, but not before guiding the crippled jet into the apartment complex's courtyard. Affected residents received emergency compensation for food and housing. Public, private and military officials praised the public, the military and the city for working together in preventing the loss of life and property. Investigations continue.



No one was seriously injured following the jet's crash.

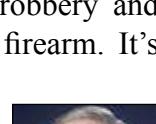
### Man charged in killing of NPD's Decker

Following a two-year investigation, Virginia Beach police have charged a 20-year-old man, already in prison for other crimes, in the 2010 murder of decorated Norfolk Police Officer Victor Decker, who was found dead on Oct. 26 at 7 a.m., beside his vehicle parked along Oceana Boulevard. Police



conducted some 200 interviews before charging Raymond Lewis Perry, formerly of Norfolk, who is serving an 88-year sentence in a South Carolina federal corrections facility for a series of robberies in Virginia Beach and other areas in 2010. He's charged with first-degree murder, armed robbery and two counts of use of a firearm. It's expected to take some time to move him to Virginia Beach to be tried.

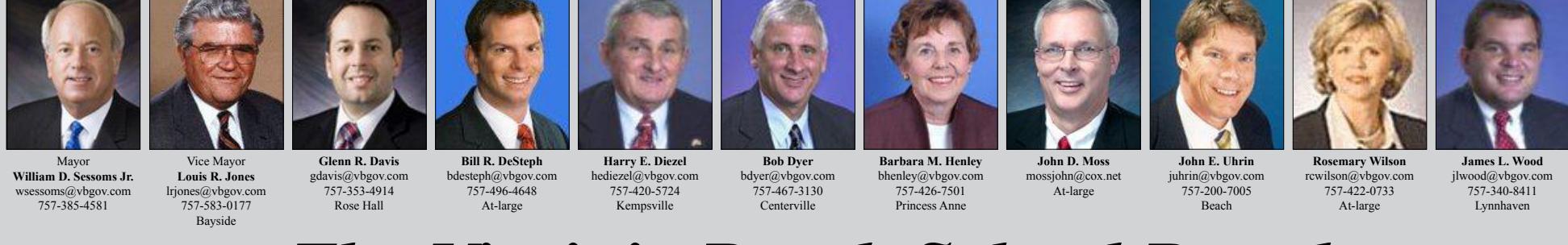
Decker, who was married and had a daughter, was attending a breast cancer fundraiser on Oceana Boulevard the night before his body was found by a passerby. Unarmed with his police badge hanging around his neck, he was shot at close range. His wallet has been taken, but was later found. Decker had been honored for valor. Norfolk Police Chief Mike Goldsmith issued the fol-



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*Say "Hello" To:*

## The Virginia Beach City Council



## The Virginia Beach School Board



## Catch Some Sun!

No matter where you live, work or play in Virginia Beach, the latest copy of the Virginia Beach Sun is only minutes away, at any one of its 22 distribution points throughout the Resort City. Take a minute and visit any one of these convenient locations for your copy of the Sun:

### Oceanfront/Hilltop

The Beach Pub - 1001 Laskin Road  
The Jewish Mother - 600 Nevan Road  
Pelon's Baja Grill - 3619 Pacific Avenue  
Heritage Health Food Store - 984 Laskin Road  
Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront - 5700 Atlantic Avenue

### Shore Drive/Great Neck

Starbuck's - 3273 Shore Drive  
Uncle Al's Hot Dogs - 3045 Shore Drive  
Shorebreak Sports Bar - 2941 Shore Drive  
Zero's Subs - 2272 West Great Neck Road  
Uncle Rich's Café - 2242 Seashore Shoppes

### Town Center/Pembroke

Bevello - 172 Central Park Avenue  
Confetti Café and Gelato - 233 Market Street

### Central Virginia Beach/Aragona

A & G Auto Sales - 5012 Virginia Beach Boulevard

### Kempsville

Frankie's Place for Ribs - 5200 Fairfield Shopping Center

### Lynnhaven

Eve's Hair Studio - 1104 Green Square  
Dolphin Laundry - 4221 Pleasant Valley Road  
Ryoshin-Kan Karate School - 1064 Lynnhaven Parkway

### Princess Anne/Pungo

Red Barn Food Store - 2001 Indian River Road

### Courthouse/Dam Neck

Bubbs's Deli and BBQ - 3600 Dam Neck Road  
Virginia Beach City Hall - Front Reception Desk

### Bayside

Jenro's Diner - 1085 Independence Boulevard

### Centerville

Care-A-Lot Pet Supply - 5457 Indian River Road

### City of Norfolk

Turpin's Florist - 1846 East Little Creek Road

## Five high schools eligible for full accreditation for three years

Continued from page 1

time and effort creating targeted lesson plans and activities to help their students meet and exceed the standards set by the state," said Dr. Merrill. "Their expertise is represented in the superior achievement of their students. We are extremely proud of these schools, their dedicated staff members and their hardworking students."

The Virginia Department of Education's State Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia Wright is also proud of Virginia Beach for its efforts.

"I congratulate the principals, teachers and students of these schools for performance and achievement that consistently exceeds the commonwealth's accreditation standards," said Wright. "These schools have earned an opportunity to set aside concerns about annual accreditation for three

years and lead the way in developing innovative instructional strategies and lesson plans that immerse students in the content of Virginia's rigorous new standards in mathematics, English, science and history, to prepare them for success on the corresponding assessments."

*On another note*, Virginia Beach City Public Schools honored 352 retirees at a retirement dinner recently held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. In total, they served the children of Virginia Beach for more than 8,482 years – among them, five employees who worked in the division for 40 or more years; and eight married couples.

Speakers at the dinner included School Board Chairman Dan Edwards; and John Mirra, assistant superintendent, Department of Human Resources.

**Reach Yolanda Jones-Howell at 757-263-1202 or [yolanda.jones-howell@vbschools.com](mailto:yolanda.jones-howell@vbschools.com).**

## After 14 good years, city ends Lynnhaven Mall TIF district

Continued from page 1

owners."

The City Council created the tax district in June 1998 to stimulate private investment in Lynnhaven Mall. At the time, the mall, which opened in August 1981, was threatened by new shopping centers across the region, including Norfolk's MacArthur

Center. The city invested \$11.5 million for a new parking garage, improved drainage, public transit and the "ring road" encircling the mall.

Lynnhaven Mall, located at 701 Lynnhaven Parkway, opened in 1981 and has about 144 stores and 18 restaurants.

**Reach Patti Phillips at 757-385-4681; or [PPhillip@vbgov.com](mailto:PPhillip@vbgov.com).**

## Atlantic Avenue getting new look, improvements, similar to Town Center

Continued from page 1

before council, most in favor of the new initiative, some dub as "New Urbanism," which per-

petuates mixed-use development over streets and cars.

The broader vision allows the oceanfront area to conform to other business corridors in the

city, such as at Hilltop and Town Center.

**For more information call 757-385-8573.**

### Virginia Beach Sun

Publisher

Greg Goldfarb

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Perita and Pradip Patel, at their Pungo Red Barn Food Store. (Sun photo)

## Pungo "Red Barn" owner living 'dream' *Pradip Patel began with \$8; now has six strong businesses*

Continued from page 1

into American culture. While America is not a perfect country, he said, its societal structure and overall business environment is conducive to potentially successful entrepreneurship.

Patel said that in his work, there are three important keys to success.

"First, you have good customer service – that's the 'number one' priority," he said. "Next, I make sure that all of my stores are clean; and finally, you have to have good food."

Patel's biggest operating expenses are payroll and rent, but all the stores are making money.

"They're all healthy right now," he said.

"They're still down about 15 percent, compared to

what it was before the economy had problems; but it's still a good business. I have no complaints."

The Patels have twin sons, both students at Bayside High School, studying pre-med. Ankit and Ankur, both 16, also volunteer at Sentara Leigh Hospital. Patel's brother-in-law and sister in law are doctors – general practitioners – in Texas and California, respectively. Patel's degree is from New Jersey Institute of Engineering Technology, Newark, N.J.; while Perita has a four-year degree in Business Administration from a university in India. His father, Ranchhod, now retired, was a college professor, teaching Indian history, geography and English; while his mother, Kumud, is a housewife. They both live in India. Patel has one brother and one sister, both Florida business

owners.

Thankfully, his entire family is healthy and doing well, he said. He appreciates the good fortune he's found in Virginia Beach.

"I had been an engineer for 12 years, got laid off, sold the house and bought a business," said Patel, 46, who lives in Heritage Park on Sandbridge Road. "I had a friend in Norfolk who suggested that I come to this area and I'm glad I did. It just goes to show, if you work hard enough, anything is possible – even in a 'recession.'"

**Reach Pradip Patel at 757-721-2869; or at [pradip430@gmail.com](mailto:pradip430@gmail.com).**

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# The Hot Stuff

## Man charged in killing of NPD's Victor Decker

Continued from page 1

lowing statement after Perry was charged:



"On behalf of the Norfolk Police Department, I would like to thank (Virginia Beach) Police Chief Jim Cervera and the Virginia Beach Police Department for

their relentless determination over the last 18 months to solve the murder of Officer Victor Decker. Their efforts and the hundreds of hours put into this investigation has resulted in an arrest that will provide a level of closure for the men and women of the Norfolk Police Department, particularly those who worked with 'Vic' on

a daily basis. I would also like to thank the public. Finally, and most importantly, continue to keep Victor's wife, Dawn, and daughter Charlotte, in your thoughts and prayers. While they too must be experiencing a measure of relief at the arrest, they will soon face the difficulty of the upcoming trial."

## Mayor Sessoms kicks off reelection bid

Mayor Will Sessoms launched his re-



lection campaign recently at the Jewish Mother restaurant at Hilltop. He began his political career in 1988 as an at-large city council member. In 1992,

the council selected him to serve as vice mayor, a position he held for 10 years. He was elected mayor in 2008. During his tenure as mayor, Virginia Beach has been named the best-run city in America by 24/7 Wall Street, has added more than 5,200 jobs within the city's borders, has

ranked No. 5 for best large city public schools by "Great Schools" and has had record-breaking tourism seasons, according to Toni Guagenti, a spokesperson for Sessoms. Also running: Richard Kowalewicz, Walter Erb and George Furman, III.

## City receives awards for cultural diversity

The Virginia Beach Inclusion and Diversity Council (IDC) was recently honored by two national organizations for its efforts to ensure that the city organization embraces cultural diversity and creates and sustains an environment of inclusion for all employees.

The council received the Champion of Diversity Award from the American As-

sociation for Affirmative Action (AAAA). That award is given to organizations that demonstrate a dedication to fostering equal opportunity and exceptional commitment to diversity.

The Association of Diversity Councils named the council as one of 25 winners of the 2012 Diversity Council Honors Award. The award honors outstanding contributions and achievements of councils that lead diversity processes in their organizations and demonstrate results in their workforce, workplace and marketplace. Applicants were judged on demonstrated council results, demonstrated management commitment, measurement and accountability; and communication and education.

## VBCCO holds 'party' at Mount Trashmore

The Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations held a "Party in the Park" recently at Mount Trashmore Park, which was free and open to the public.

Hot dogs, hamburgers, potato sal-

ad and alcohol-free beverages were served.

For more information on the VBCCO and how to get involved, call Franklin Gaillard at 757-343-4062; or visit [www.vbccco.org](http://www.vbccco.org).

## Correction

Father James Parke is chairman of the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission. His last name was miss-

spelled in the last issue's "Hot Stuff" section.



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(Off Lynnhaven Parkway, near Salem High School)  
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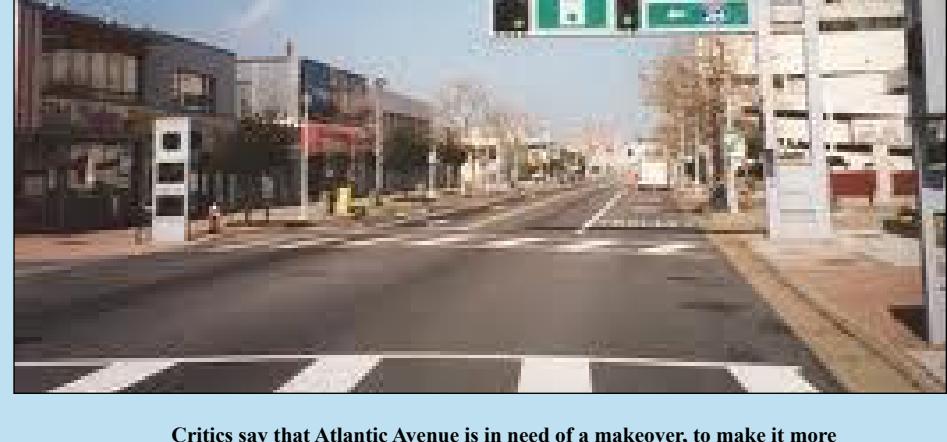
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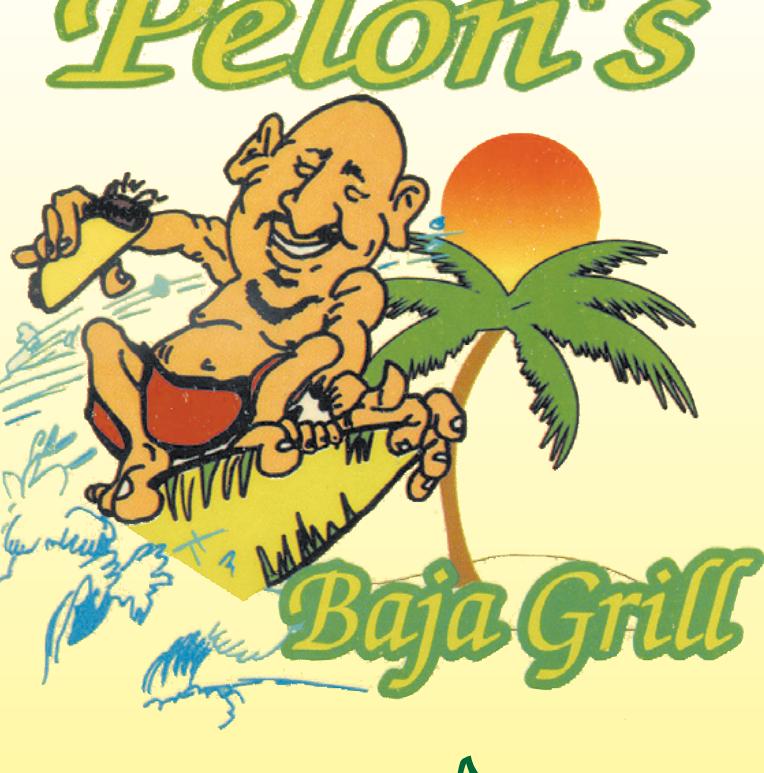
An artist's rendering shows how Atlantic Avenue might look after a form-based code is implemented.

## City approves plan to make Atlantic Avenue more appealing.

For decades, some people have maintained that Atlantic Avenue and some of its storefronts could use aesthetic improvements to give the resort area more of an upscale, urban appearance, which would give the resort area a more-inviting, family-style look and feel. To meet that goal, Virginia Beach City Council recently voted to approve new measures and zoning requirement, which could change the face of the resort strip forever. Please see story, page 1.



Critics say that Atlantic Avenue is in need of a makeover, to make it more attractive and alluring to locals and visitors. (Courtesy Photo)



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