

The Virginia Beach Sun

April 2015

Virginia Beach's Hometown News and Leisure Magazine and Website

Free - Citywide

The "Hot" Stuff

City, school news, in case you missed it!

Ribbon-cutting ceremony, opening day set for Princess Anne Youth Development Park

The Princess Anne Youth Development Park held its ribbon cutting ceremony recently to open its athletic fields for the boys and girls in the Princess Anne and Green Run neighborhoods, at 4153 Dam Neck Road.

Local and state government officials joined in celebration of the new 26-acre site.

The "League," comprised of Green Run Little League and Princess Anne Little League, teamed up with the city of Virginia Beach and The Cal Ripken Senior Foun-

dation (founded by Major League baseball greats Cal Ripken, Jr. and Bill Ripken) to offer the youth a safe, positive environment to learn and grow, while playing the great game of baseball. The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation collaborated with Princess Anne Little League based on the league's growth, solid leadership and vision for the children of Virginia Beach.

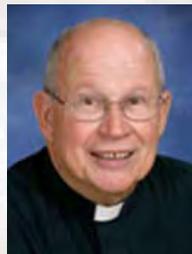
The park will include state-of-the art, synthetic turf youth fields, a natural grass, full-size Please see Hot, Page 3

In the Sunshine: Father Jim Parke

As head of the city's volunteer force, the energetic priest works tirelessly to help Virginia Beach blossom and grow

By Linda McNatt
Staff Writer

Growing up in Pennsylvania, not far from Pittsburgh, there was no mistake about what Father James Parke wanted to be when he was older.



Father Jim Parke

It was something that I saw as a way to live."

"I have always considered priesthood as the way I wanted to go," he said. "It was not that any priest encouraged me.

He's lived the life fully, from serving a local church in Virginia Beach for 17 years, to teaching in California and now Parke, at age 75, is director of the Virginia Beach Office of Volunteer Resources.

Parke's held that position since June and was previously chairman of the city's Human Rights Commission, a City Council-appointed body of volunteers of which he's still a member. He also serves on the Meals on Wheels board of directors and is retired from the Church of the Ascension and Holy Apostles on Princess Anne Road. He's no longer active in the

Please see In, Page 4



This photo shows The Tide running westward from its NewTown Road station.

Tide vote in May possible

HRT and City Council members share thoughts on light rail, insights, updates

By Linda McNatt
Staff Writer

When Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond was earning her doctorate at the University of Denver, she had plenty of time in the mile-high city to experience the trans-

portation system and in Golden, Colorado. She liked it, was impressed.

"It's interesting to watch the connectivity and how smoothly things go there," said **Councilwoman Ross-Hammond**,

Please see The, Page 6

Four Tide hearings this month

All comments will be part of official record

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) is hosting four public hearings in April to allow public comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) of the Virginia Beach Transit Extension Study. The study explores the possibility of extending light rail or bus rapid transit into Virginia Beach from Norfolk.

The public hearings are set for:

- **Monday, April 13, 6 to 7:30 p.m.,**
Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library,
4100 Virginia Beach Blvd.
- **Thursday, April 16, 6 to 7:30 p.m.,**
Linkhorn Park Elementary School, 977
First Colonial Road.
- **Monday, April 20, 6 to 7:30 p.m.,**
Virginia Beach Higher Education Center,
1881 University Drive.
- **Saturday, April 25, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.,**
Renaissance Academy, 5100 Cleveland St.

HRT staff will be present and handouts will be available, but agency staff will offer little input. This time is reserved for the public to comment. A court reporter will be present to record statements and all comments will become part of the official record. The formal 45-day public comment period began

Please see Four, Page 9

Say "Hello" to: Tom Michaels, owner, The History Buff Book Store – Page 12

VB Sports Club Jamboree features Chesapeake's Ed Beard

Tickets are on sale now for the 62nd annual Virginia Beach Sports Club Jamboree, set for Monday, April 13 at the Virginia Beach Convention Center ballroom, beginning with a social hour at 5:30 p.m. Keynote speaker will be Ed Beard, former NFL player and coach from Chesapeake, Va.

Fletcher Bryant, former club president and local youth coach for many years, will introduce Beard.

Twenty-two student-athletes will be recognized, as well as numerous outstanding local coaches.

Formed in 1952, the club in 1975 became the region's first

sports club to award female athletes, creating the The John A. Tucker Award for Excellence in Women's Athletics, which was named after one of the club's founders and a pioneer in women's AAU basketball in the city.

The highly-coveted "Sportsperson of the Year" award, which is kept secret until the event, will

also be announced.

Tickets are \$60 each. To reserve tickets call Tom or Claudy Barnes at 1-757-425-1522.

The Virginia Beach Sports Club meets the second Tuesday of each month at Atlantic Shores Retirement Community. Social hour is at 11:30 a.m., salad bar at 12:15 a.m., lunch at 12:30 p.m., and

guest speaker at 1 p.m. Visit the club's website at www.VirginiaBeachSportsClub.com.

Club officers are: Co-presidents, Tom and Claudy Barnes; 1st vice president, Mike Ware; 2nd vice president, Skip Johnson; treasurer, Dick Clark; secretary, Tom Bowen, sergeant-at-arms, Harry Acker.



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The “Hot” Stuff: City, school news, in case you missed it!

Continued from Page 1

The park will include state-of-the art, synthetic turf youth fields, a natural grass, full-size field and an adaptive baseball field to ensure the participation of children of all abilities can participate. This park construction is one of many parks being developed across the United States by the Cal Ripken Senior Youth Development Park initiative.

“Having played a little league baseball throughout my youth, I remember the lessons of teamwork, dedication, and goal setting it instilled in me. I treasure those experiences, and I appreciate the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation partnering with Princess Anne Little League to bring those same experiences to an underserved area of our city,” said Glenn Davis, Virginia Delegate, 84th House District, who is expected to attend the festivities.

City files petition to document public’s, city’s right to access Chesapeake Beach

The city of Virginia Beach recently filed a petition in Virginia Beach Circuit Court, asking the court to confirm that the public enjoys a recreation easement over Chesapeake Beach, known locally as “Chic’s Beach,” and that the city has the right to maintain and protect the beach. This action is a necessary precursor to any sand replenishment for Chesapeake Beach, said city attorney Mark Stiles.

“Protecting Chesapeake Beach is essential to the protection of public and private structures in that area,” said city attorney Stiles. “The public has been enjoying Chesapeake Beach for decades. We are simply seeking to document the public’s rights.”

The city contends that these rights arise from the public’s longstanding use of the beach and from the city’s monitoring of, tending to and providing emergency services at the beach over many years.

Chesapeake Beach extends approximately one mile along the Chesapeake Bay, from Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek to the western end of Sandy Bay Drive.

Many property owners along Chesapeake Beach agree that the public has long-standing rights to use the beach across their properties. Some, however, dispute the public’s right to use and the city’s right to maintain the beach. They contend the beach is private.

Much of Chesapeake Beach is suffering from significant erosion and the city hopes to protect the beach in the future, likely by partnering with the Army Corps of Engineers to place needed sand along the beach.

The public’s right to use and the city’s right to maintain and protect Chesapeake Beach must be confirmed and documented before a sand replenishment project can move forward. To make sure the court ruling is broad enough to cover the entire beach, the city has named as parties to the court action all property owners along Chesapeake Beach who have not previously signed a written acknowledgement of the public’s rights.

The city plans to work with these property owners to minimize any cost and inconvenience associated with the necessary court action.

Mayor William D. Sessoms, Jr., praises former Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf

Dear citizens of Virginia Beach:

As mayor of the city that Meyera Oberndorf loved so dearly, I am truly sorry to hear of her passing. There is hardly a person who has lived in Virginia Beach or done business in our city over the last forty years who does not know the name “Meyera Oberndorf.” She touched so many hearts and lives throughout the years that the name “Meyera” is instantly recognizable everywhere.

Please see Hot, Page 5



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Keynote speaker will be **Ed Beard**, former NFL player and coach from Chesapeake, Va.

• Fletcher Bryant, former club president and local youth coach for many years, will introduce Beard.

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In the Sunshine: Father Jim Parke

Continued from Page 1

ministry, he said, but does stay in touch with many of his former parishioners.

That helps keep him busy, as if he needs help. Parke has recently returned from the Bay Area of California, where he met with some former students in a high school there and where he was a teacher and school principal. His students are now in their early 60s, he said, with a chuckle, after completing

his whirlwind trip to the Pacific coast. Parke spends from 20 to 25 hours a week in his office as the city's chief volunteer administrator, overseeing the city's entire volunteer force,

mands of such a payroll that really isn't a payroll at all, but a gift to the city. He takes time to praise the work of his predecessor, the late Mary Russo, who started the office and continued to

places.

Parke has a scholastic degree in philosophy from Saint Vincent's College and a master's in theology from Saint Mary's Seminary and University. His dissertation for his master's degree focused on the Human Knowledge of Jesus.

"I have an intense interest in Christology," he said.

Parke received his most recent humanitarian award last month from the Virginia Inclusive Communities during an event at the Norfolk Marriott Waterside Hotel. The award is handed out annually to honor individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to the promotion of respect and under-

standing among people of diverse racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds, according to the organization's website.

Parke lives in a condo near the Town Center area, so there's little room in his life for pets, but he enjoys cooking, although he does little because he does live alone. He said he enjoys a good prime rib when he eats out, and his favorite desserts are good pies and Taramisu.

"I am a good cook, but living alone now, I do less," he said. "The crock pot is great."

Reach Linda McNatt at nclmcnatt@gmail.com or at TheVirginiaBeachSun.com. This story is also online at TheVirginiaBeachSun.com

Father James Parke is a "retired priest" now, but still looks for ways to touch peoples' lives and to have them touch him and "bless me in so many ways."

except for those in the public schools. He stays on top of the city volunteers' needs, from emergency rescue squad personnel to community volunteers who read to children in the public libraries. He keeps track of a Facebook page that helps him get the word out.

Last year, more than 20,000 city volunteers in Virginia Beach worked more than 1.4 million hours in dozens of places, manning ambulances, teaching children to read, helping stray animals, coaching sports teams and beautifying neighborhoods, according to a press release from the city when Parke was first appointed.

There are approximately three city volunteers to every paid city employee, according to city officials. That volunteer work is the equivalent of having 682 full-time workers, worth the equivalent of more than \$20 million.

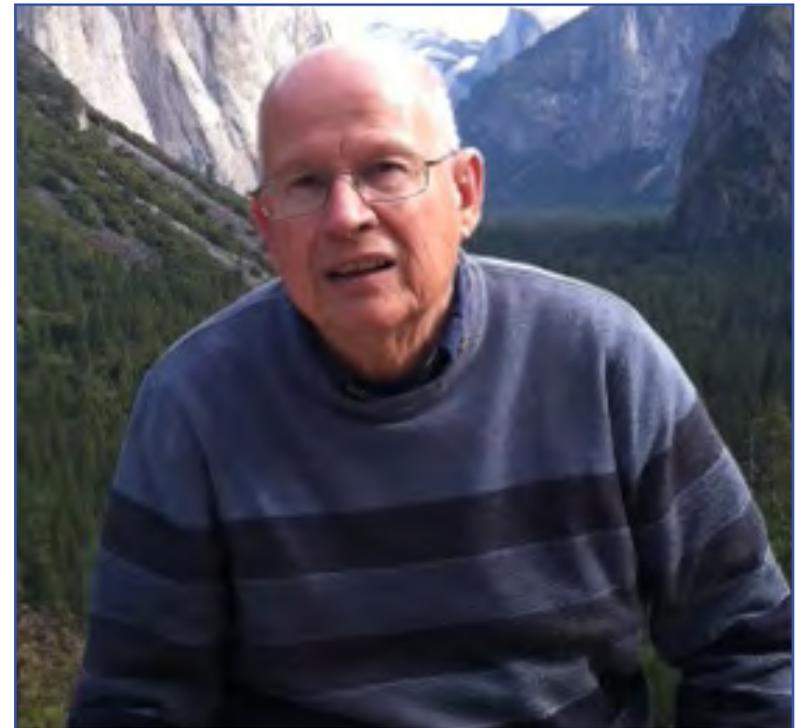
Parke isn't overwhelmed by the de-

serve until her death at the age of 87. Russo set the volunteering precedent for the position, refusing to ever take a salary in all of the decades she served, Parke said.

Parke says he's a "retired priest" now, but still looks for ways to touch peoples' lives, he said, and to have them touch him and "bless me in so many ways."

Even when Parke is simply talking on the telephone, his energy seems to surge through the phone line. He doesn't have a lot of spare time, he said, but, when he does, he loves "sharing with friends at table," racquet ball, reading and snow skiing.

An Eagle Scout and a vigil honor member of the Order of the Arrow, Parke still enjoys seeing what Scouting can do, he said. He loves to travel and lists Yosemite National Park and Point Lobos in California among his favorite



Father Jim Parke at Yosemite National Park in California.

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The "Hot" Stuff: City, school news, in case you missed it!

Continued from Page 3

The reason she touched hearts was because she cared passionately about this city and each and every one of its people. There was no such thing as a "stranger" to Meyera, and she was most passionate and engaged when she was out in the neighborhoods and businesses, talking and listening to the citizens. She knew every neighborhood, every civic league, every issue and every concern because she listened and she cared. If you were having a meeting, a celebration or honoring someone, there was always a chair for Meyera – you

knew she wouldn't think of missing it.

For 20 years as mayor, along with her service as vice mayor, a member of City Council and a member of the City's Library Board, Meyera dedicated her life to the city of Virginia Beach and its people. She was our greatest ambassador, and as an elected official, she acted based on her love, concern and commitment to the cares and concerns of the people. We all share great pride in her historic and distinguished career.

I personally enjoyed serving on the Virginia Beach City Council with Meyera. Virginia Beach made much progress as a result of her passionate leader-

ship. She had a very special way of building consensus and of putting a smile on people's faces.

My wife, Bev, and I and our family offer our prayers and deepest sympathies to her family and loved ones, and share with them our belief that there will never be anyone like her again, and because of her dedication to this city and its people, she has chiseled her name and memory into our hearts and history.

Sincerely, Mayor William D. Sessoms, Jr.

Please see Hot, Page 11



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The Tide may lay tracks to Town Center

Continued from Page 1

who represents the city's Kempsville District on Virginia Beach City Council. "Young professionals don't want to be car-bound. They're looking for multi-model transportation."

When she had the opportunity to go back to the Colorado area a couple of years ago, she said she was even more impressed.

"I was surprised to see the growth," she said. "The transportation system seemed especially to be benefitting the small businesses – the mom-and-pop businesses, and I was glad to see that."

Ross-Hammond said she's been in support of the light rail system from the very beginning and she's eagerly awaiting a City Council vote on whether to extend The Tide light rail system to Town Center, which could come as early as May. If built, the Town Center station would be located in her district.

"It will connect the two largest cities in Hampton Roads – Norfolk and Virginia Beach," she said. "It will give our people a chance to get where they need to go."

City Councilwoman Rosemary Wilson, who serves at-large on the City Council, had a chance to see a different kind of light rail system when she traveled to Shanghai, Chi-

na. The Maglev there – a magnetic levitation train that floats over a center rail – is one of only a few currently in existence. It travels from the city to the regional airport, a 19-mile trip, in seven minutes, traveling at a speed of 267 miles an hour. The city is considering running one from the oceanfront area to the convention center on 19th Street.

"I took a picture of it," Wilson said. "It was very pretty, and they say it's very safe."

As for the light rail system City Council will soon be considering, she'd like more data before finally making up her mind.

"Well, I'm still undecided," she said. "We need to find more information. The cost is still undecided. I don't think we're ready to make a decision yet."

A lot of people should be able to gather a lot more information on The Tide's future in Virginia Beach after Hampton Roads Transit holds a series of public meetings through April, said Tom Holden, HRT's media relations manager.

"Once the studies are complete, it's the city's decision," Holden said. "We're looking for feedback now. We want to know what it's going to cost to operate, what it's going to cost to build and how many people are going to ride it."

The light rail system proposed for Virginia Beach is a "modest one," said Holden. It would be nothing like transportation systems already in place in cities like Portland, Dallas,

seems the most attractive right now because it's shorter and it comes with a \$155 million incentive from the state.

The value in that choice is for all of the restaurants, bars, shopping and people in the Town Center area, said **Marc Davis**, the city's media and communications manager. But that option, of course, doesn't include the oceanfront and boardwalk, an option that a lot of people would like to see.

The city has to bring the public to the table, garnering as much input as possible, said Centerville District Councilman **Bob Dyer**.

"I'm from New Jersey," said Dyer. "Any big city

needs a public transportation system. We've just got to find something that is possible, feasible and affordable. We've got to find a solution. There are a lot of people out here who have trouble getting to a bus stop."

The city and HRT already have a well-tuned network of commercial bus routes, but they are also considering rapid bus transit as part of the city's overall transportation system.

Vice Mayor Louis Jones, representing the Bayside District, said he'd rather not talk about his thoughts on light rail yet.

"We're not ready to make a decision yet," said Jones. "And I'm not ready to say where I stand."

If at-large **Councilman John Moss** had to make a decision now, it likely wouldn't favor a light rail, he said. All of the studies indicate that the transportation line isn't directly expected to create development. Only about 2,250 people would be riding the system by 2034, he said.

"It would not be expected to decrease traffic congestion," he said. "It doesn't make sense. Why do you think we need it? We're not New York. We're not Los Angeles. We do not have a central downtown."

If the City Council decides to take light rail to Town Center, that would only be a first step in the system, said Davis, with the city. The city would then have to get in line for federal money, he said.

"Right now, it's light rail, buses or nothing," said Davis. "We've got to do what we can afford. Ultimately, it's City Council's decision."

Reach *Linda McNatt* at nclmncatt@gmail.com or at TheVirginiaBeachSun@gmail.com.

"It will connect the two largest cities in Hampton Roads – Norfolk and Virginia Beach. It will give our people a chance to get where they need to go."

Kempsville City Councilwoman Amelia Ross-Hammond, on The Tide possibly extending to Town Center

Denver and Pittsburg.

"Norfolk has already been described as a 'starter line,'" said Holden. "In Virginia Beach, we've got to look at different costs, different technologies. We've still got to look more into the four different alignments."

The alignment choices include two to the oceanfront, one to the Pembroke area and one to Town Center. The Town Center choice

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The Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) currently pays up to \$2,500 per semester for tuition & fees, and also includes a \$350 per semester textbook grant. This program must be used at schools located or headquartered in the Commonwealth of Virginia.



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On the sunny side: Thinking about the Tide sparks trolley memories from the past *If the city decides to extend The Tide eastward now, many future memories will be created*

By Linda McNatt
Staff Writer

My grandmother didn't leave home much. In fact, some people would have probably called her reclusive.

Oh, she went to the city market in Portsmouth on Fridays to purchase the hen she usually made pot pie from on Sundays and the sweet potatoes she baked daily. And she'd always make a stop at her favorite bakery to stand in line for the pound cake, rolls and pies her family loved.

But shopping, eating in restaurants or attending entertainment events just weren't a part of her life. Grandma was a North Carolina farm girl whose father died when she was very young. She quit school in the third grade to pick cotton and help support her family. When she married my grandfather, a railroad man, she actually didn't do much. I've always wondered how she got away with it.

Granddaddy did most of the cooking, except on Sundays and holidays, and there was a weekly cleaning lady who came to their home to keep things straight. Grandma fed the woman, loved her, and I think they watched TV soaps more than they cleaned. But that was all right. Grandma had it her way.

And, until I started thinking about the proposed light rail in Virginia Beach, I didn't recall that a part of Grandma's way was the occasional excursions to Ocean View on the trolley that ran from Norfolk to Ocean View. I remembered her talking about the trips and how much she enjoyed them.

Grandma? Leave home? She did. On

summer Sundays, she left the stew pot in the pantry and went to Ocean View, often with the church group my grandfather was a part of. Grandma didn't go to church. Oh, she was a good woman who had a reputation for handing out homemade biscuits and

sweet potatoes to the homeless from her back porch. But going to church each Sunday? That meant she would have had to get dressed and leave home.

Grandma went to Ocean View, on the trolley. She made sure that my grandpa and one

of my uncles, who loved to cook, had packed the picnic basket with plenty of fried chicken, potato salad and deviled eggs, enough to feed the hungry family until they got back home to Portsmouth well after sunset.

Well, those days are long gone. The trolley was stopped in 1948. I certainly don't remember it. I remember my grandmother's stories.

And we, Hampton Roaders, have a chance to make memories of our own. But where are we going? What's our destination? What would we have to look forward to? Something different? I don't know.

Of the four alternative routes the council is looking at, two of them end at the oceanfront.

That's a destination. But everybody is saying those two alternatives would cost too much. And we may have to wait years before we could go there.

Right now, we're looking at being destined to enjoy restaurants, retail stores, bars and shopping. Hop on The Tide to Virginia Beach and enjoy the beach? Oh, no, not right yet. There might be thousands of people who would enjoy that, but it's going to take time. Can we all be that patient? Maybe.

But grandma? I don't think so. She wouldn't even put on her coat to go to a bar in Virginia Beach. We need to think about this light rail thing.

First off, we need a destination, something that somebody would tell their grandchildren stories about, stories that would last for decades.

Reach Linda McNatt at nclmcnatt@gmail.com or TheVirginiaBeachSun@gmail.com.



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Task force formed to lower student suspensions, close racial gap, increase instructional time



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At a recently held School Board retreat, Dr. Aaron Spence, superintendent of Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS), outlined recommendations on future work priorities in a post-entry plan report.

In the report, "Charting the Course for Every Student, Every Day: Dr. Aaron Spence's Post-Entry Plan Report to the Community," Spence identified five leverage points that emerged as priorities for his work with the division: high quality teaching and learning, talent management, student-centered culture, culture or respect and community engagement.

As part of student-centered culture, Spence named as a work priority implementing a task force of stakeholder groups to review issues of poverty, race and diversity in order to prepare recommendations for improved discipline and academic achievement.

Following up with a first step, Spence created Student Discipline Task Force made up of administrators, teachers and community members, will be analyzing the division's current student discipline data with the goal of making recommendations to assist the school division in achieving three objectives:

1. Reducing the number of suspensions administered throughout the division.
2. Closing the disproportionate gap that exists in the number of suspensions and/or expulsions administered to African-American male students compared to those administered to students in other demographic groups.
3. Maximizing instructional time for all students in the classroom.

"It might be fairly stated this is not an issue that is unique to Virginia Beach. Nonetheless, if we are going to be the premier school divi-

sion in this nation, this is an issue that we must and will resolve together," Spence said. "This task force will help us identify procedures and processes we need to implement to ensure all students - no matter what gender, race or socioeconomic status - can walk through our doors feeling welcomed, believed in and loved."

Dr. Charles Corprew, an associate professor of psychological science at Loyola University, has been named chairman of this task force. Corprew, a graduate of and former teacher at Green Run High School, has extensively researched the factors associated with both resilient and vulnerable outcomes for African-American families and youth.

The task force, which was organized this month, will meet consistently throughout the spring. For more information about Spence's post-entry plan, visit vbschools.com.



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Four Tide hearings this month on light rail and rapid bus transit

Continued from Page 1

Friday, March 20. Citizens also may submit comments to vbtes@hrtransit.org or Marie Amt, Hampton Roads Transit, 509 E. 18th St., Norfolk, VA 23504.

The following are brief descriptions of transit options the city's considering. The DEIS provides various transit alternatives in Virginia Beach, including extending light rail from Newtown Road to various locations in the city. Four alignment alternatives were

studied, each with two different transit modes (light rail transit and bus rapid transit):

- Alternative 1A: Newtown Road to the proposed Town Center Station (Town Center Alternative) – Extends from The Tide station at Newtown Road east along the former Norfolk Southern right-of-way to a new station in the vicinity of Town Center (approximately 3 miles).
- Alternative 1B: Newtown Road Station to the proposed Rosemont Station (Rosemont Alternative) – Extends from The Tide

station at Newtown Road east along the former Norfolk Southern right-of-way to a new station near Rosemont Road (approximately 4.8 miles).

- Alternative 2: Newtown Road Station to the proposed Oceanfront Station via the former Norfolk Southern right-of-way (NSRR Alternative) – Extends from The Tide station at Newtown Road east to a proposed station at the Oceanfront, largely following the former Norfolk Southern right-of-way and includes segments along Birdneck Road, 17th

Street, Washington Avenue and 19th Street (approximately 12.2 miles).

- Alternative 3: Newtown Road to the proposed Oceanfront Station via Laskin Road (Hilltop Alternative) - Extends from The Tide station at Newtown Road east along the former Norfolk Southern right-of-way and then through the Hilltop area on Laskin Road to a new station at the Oceanfront via Birdneck Road and 19th Street (approximately 13.5 miles).

The DEIS compares the potential bene-

fits and impacts from each alternative on the human and natural environment. It also provides a summary of the full public involvement process leading up to the release of this DEIS.

The DEIS is available online for public viewing at www.gohrt.com. Printed copies are available for review at many locations, including all city public libraries. For more information on light rail and the Virginia Beach Transit Extension study, visit www.VBgov.com/lightrail.

Bayside Middle School students studying the Chesapeake Bay estuary, with some help from CBF!

Seventh grade science students from Bayside Middle School recently researched the Chesapeake Bay estuary by riding the waves. They studied maps of the estuary that stretches from Virginia to Maryland

and collected samples of the living organisms from the Bay. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation offers educational programs as part of its Saving the Bay effort.



Enjoying studying on the Lynnhaven River, left to right: Jessica Hall, Aminah Carter and Chevel Samuels.



Chesapeake Bay Foundation guide, Yancey Powell, explains aquatic life to Bayside Middle students.



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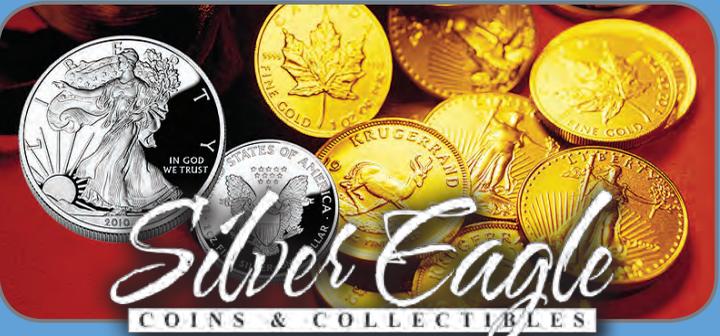
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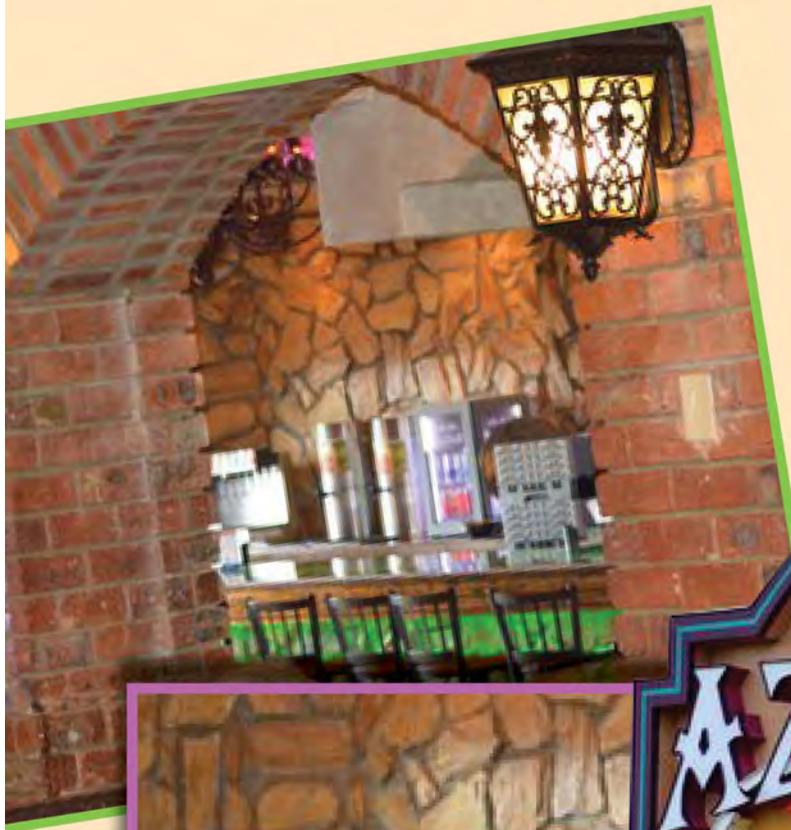
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The "Hot" Stuff: City, school news, in case you missed it!

Continued from Page 5

Virginia Beach City Council to explore creating broadband internet authority

As part of its long-term effort to promote Virginia Beach as a hub of biomedical research, the City Council will explore creating a broadband internet authority – alone or as part of a regional group, according to Marc Davis, the city's media and communications manager.

The City Council recently approved a resolution, introduced by Councilman Ben Davenport, directing city staff to study the idea, which could spread ultra-high-speed internet throughout much of Virginia Beach.

"Expanding access to ultra-high-speed Internet service in Virginia Beach would be a powerful incentive for new businesses here, especially in the expanding biomedical field," said Warren Harris, the city's Economic Development Department director. "This would meet the city's 2040 Vision for enhanced connectivity, as well as reduce the digital divide in our community."

Matthew Arvay, the city's chief information officer, added, "Cities nationwide are taking a look at their broadband services, not

because it's a luxury but because it has become a necessity in today's technology-rich and ever-changing world."

The Virginia Beach City Council has five long-term strategic goals for the city, with growing the local economy topping the list. At its annual goal-setting retreat, the City Council set seven top priorities for 2015, with developing biomedical research and health care businesses in Virginia Beach topping that list.

"This effort will make Virginia Beach a true competitor for technology-based businesses," Davenport said. "The push for biomedical research cannot succeed without ultra-high-speed Internet connections. This is the first step toward that goal."

Last year, in his annual State of the City address, Mayor Will Sessoms laid out four

ambitious initiatives. One is to establish Virginia Beach "as a destination for groundbreaking research and development, and headquarters of some of the world's leading innovators in healthcare, bio-technology, pharmaceutical development and healthcare delivery systems."

A city task force recently made recommendations on the best way to develop biomedical industries in Virginia Beach. One of its action items is enhancing regional broadband connectivity, "allowing researchers to perform more in-depth analysis in fields including bioinformatics and data analytics."

Later this year, City Council members will consider transferring 155 acres of city-owned property on Princess Anne Road, in Princess Anne Commons, to create a bio-related business park. Expanding ultra-high-speed Inter-

net to the park is a high priority, said Davis. The city and school division already have more than 200 miles of high-speed Internet fiber connecting many government buildings, including police stations, fire stations, libraries, recreation center and human services

facilities.

"The city's network is not fully maximized," Arvay said. "This study could lay the groundwork for leveraging that network to create a citywide system, which would help local businesses and underserved areas in Virginia Beach."

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Say "Hello" to: Tom Michaels, owner, The History Buff Book Store

The Landstown resident and ODU grad would like to make money from thin air, watches "Game of Thrones," drinks diet Coke and dances to the Temptations

Complete name:

Thomas L. Michaels.

City and neighborhood where you live:

I live in Virginia Beach on Landstown Road. I've also lived in Timberlake.

How long lived in the city:

Since 1974.

Occupation:

Owner, The History Buff Book Store.

How many years:

Celebrating our first anniversary in October.
Our opening day was Oct. 3, 2014

Brief job description:

Monitoring customer relations, maintaining inventory and paying the bills.

Family members, friends, spouse, relationships:

My wife, Brenda; and in Florida, there's my son and daughter-in-law, Brian and Danielle; and grandsons, David and Johnny.

City and state where you were born:

Portsmouth, Va.

City and state where you grew up and graduated high school:

Portsmouth, Va. I'm a 1968 Churchland High School graduate.

What activities were you involved with in high school?

Jobs? Athletics? I was on the track team, played basketball and studied girls.

What did you do after high school?

Went to Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va.; class of 1973. My degree is in economics.

What was your first job?

Bagging at a Churchland grocery store.

Who was your first love?

Shirley Valentine, in first grade at John Tyler Elementary School in Portsmouth. She had blonde hair.

What is your career goal now?

To retire comfortably.

What type of business do you have?

Military, U.S. and world history book store.

How many employees do you have?

Two. Blake West, manager, and Nedra McIntyre.

What other jobs have you had?

Owner of Ocean's East 2 Bait and Tackle Shop on Northampton Boulevard.

What's your dream job?

Owning this book store.

Will your business expand to other locations?

To be determined.

What do you like the best about the work you do?

Interacting with like-minded people.

Where do most of your customers come from?

The front door; most of them are from Virginia Beach.

What are your hobbies?

Reading and taking care of my three rescue cats, Tara, Dixie and Scarlett. I also own a horse farm on Landstown Road called Tara Plantation.

Are you artistic or musical?

I used to create charcoal drawings. I drew a lot of beached boat wrecks.

What's your favorite television show?

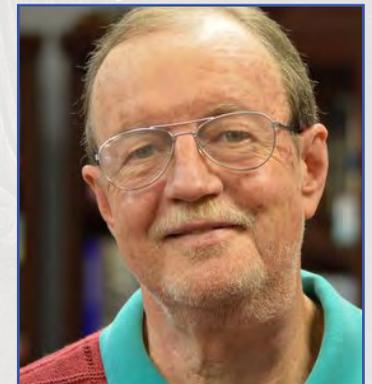
"Game of Thrones."

What's the name of your favorite band?

The Temptations.

What is your favorite season?

Spring because it starts to get warm, things start coming back to life again, it's a rebirth.



Tom Michaels, owner,
The History Buff Book Store

What's your favorite comfort food?

Chocolate ice cream.

What your favorite soft drink and alcoholic beverage?

Diet coke; I don't drink alcohol.

What's something most people don't know about you?

If I tell everyone, they'll know it.

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