

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

SHORELINE

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Aquaculture Concerns about Zoning
(See page 1)

Supervisors Mixed on Town Hall Meetings
(See page 2)

Flood Insurance Changes
(See page 4)

Cape Charles Candidate Forum
(See page 5)

Do You Know Where Your Tax Dollars Are Going?
(See page 6)

Community Calendar
(See page 8)

Northampton Ground Water Summit

Wednesday, June 11

6:30 to 8:00 PM

Supervisors' Chambers

in Old Courthouse, Eastville

- Where is the ground water?
- How much ground water is there?
- How can we protect ground water?
- How can we ensure the safety of groundwater?

All this and more at the Northern Northampton Ground Water Summit. No reservations required, just show up.

For more information, contact Curt Smith at 787-2936 or csmith@anpdc.org

In Northampton County

Aquaculture Concerns about Zoning

By Dr. Michael Peirson

Most of us have little reason to think about our local zoning regulations unless we want to add a structure to our property or start a business or keep our neighbor from doing something with their property which we don't think is appropriate. Yet, all of us here on the Eastern Shore are very much affected by the protections offered by effective zoning, as proper zoning helps to protect our sole source aquifer, maintain the safety and viability of US Route 13 as a major transportation corridor, control the look and feel of our communities and protect our aquatic resources on both sides of the peninsula.

A prominent industry on the Eastern Shore that is absolutely dependent on clean and healthy aquatic resources is our shellfish aquaculture industry. Virginia is the leading producer of hard clams in the country, and the vast majority of that production comes from the Eastern Shore. According to the recently released *Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Situation and Outlook Report*, prepared by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) in 2013, 495 million seed clams were planted in Virginia, and 214 million littleneck clams were sold at a market value of \$34 million. The hard clam industry has reached a fairly mature state as the nine-year average of seed planted per year is 476 million and doesn't seem to be growing significantly.

The zoning changes are supposed to encourage economic development, but they could very well have negative effects on one of the few growing industries in Northampton County – shellfish aquaculture.

One segment of the shellfish industry that is still expanding rapidly is the production of single oysters for the half-shell market. Oyster seed planting has grown from 6.2 million in 2005 to 66.7 million in 2012 to 106 million last year. Sales of single oysters have increased from 0.8 million in 2005 to 31 million in 2013 with a market value of \$11 million. While the Eastern Shore is a major producer of oysters, the wide ranging salinity tolerance of oysters allows them to be grown in the northern reaches of the Bay and in the rivers of the Western Shore. The VIMS report does not allow the breakout of production by region so as to protect the confidentiality of the survey participants.

Proposed changes to Northampton County's zoning ordinance would eliminate the application of the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area standards from the seaside of Northampton County, reduce setbacks and allow many uses by right in many zoning classifications. The zoning changes are supposed to encourage economic development, but they could very well have negative effects on one of the few growing industries in Northampton County – shellfish aquaculture.

Heather Terry Lusk of H. M. Terry Company, Inc. is primarily concerned about the potential for water quality degradation on the seaside of Northampton County if the bayside protections currently in the zoning are removed from the seaside. Of particular concern is Parting Creek in Willis Wharf. During the last writing of the County Comprehensive Plan, many Willis Wharf citizens participated in drafting a vision for Willis Wharf that would preserve its seaside village character and preserve

See "Aquaculture," Cont'd on page 2

Supervisors' mixed opinions and plans for Town Hall meetings

By John T. Ordeman

The editors of *ShoreLine* decided at their May planning session to publish a series of articles that would encourage county supervisors to hold regular meetings with their constituents, a practice that would give citizens an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion with their elected representatives and enable the supervisors to be more responsive to the will of the electorate. The lead article in our May issue, "The Town Hall Meeting," by Sarah Morgan, dealt with Accomack Supervisor Ron Wolff's practice of holding monthly meetings with the residents of his district. Complimentary copies of *ShoreLine* are sent to supervisors, so presumably they saw and, we hope, read Ms. Morgan's article.

On May 7, I sent the following e-mail to the nine Accomack supervisors and the five Northampton supervisors:

'CBES has received a number of positive comments on "The Town Hall Meeting," the lead article in the May issue of *ShoreLine*, and the editorial board has decided to ask all Eastern Shore supervisors whether they will schedule meetings of the sort Ron Wolff holds each month for his constituents. Mr.

Wolff is quoted as saying that he has a genuine desire to hear from his constituents: their concerns, their visions for the community's future and whatever else they want to share, and that his regular presence at these meetings gives people an occasion just to talk with him and with each other. Town Hall meetings give him the opportunity to explain his positions on matters of interest and concern to the community and to hear his constituents' opinions, suggestions and complaints. All the people who have commented on the *ShoreLine* article have said they wish their supervisors would follow Mr. Wolff's example and make themselves available and meet with their constituents at least occasionally. In all future Meet the Candidates Forums that CBES conducts for Board of Supervisor elections we will ask the candidates, 'If you are elected, will you hold regular Town Hall Meetings for your constituents?' We are now putting that question to all incumbents: Will you now schedule meetings of this sort for your constituents? Please respond to that question, adding whatever you would like to say by way of explanation of your decision, by e-mail by May 17 so we will be able to publish your remarks in the June issue of *ShoreLine*.'

The e-mail to the Northampton Supervisors included this sentence: "Presumably you have heard, as we have, that there has been a most favorable and appreciative response by people who attended Granville Hogg's meetings with his constituents."

Having received only a few responses to the May 7 request for a statement, I sent this e-mail, together with a copy of my original request, to the Supervisors who had not responded:

"I have not yet received a response to my request for a statement of whatever plans you may have to meet with your constituents, and the absolute deadline for me to be able

"Aquaculture," *Cont'd from p. 1*

the water quality of Parting Creek. Lusk points out that there are now five aquaculture hatcheries on Parting Creek. Small changes in water quality can have devastating consequences to hatchery production, and the aquaculture industry is based on hatchery production. Would the current operators of these hatcheries have built new hatcheries or expanded operations on Parting Creek if they had known that the zoning would be subsequently changed?

Lusk also raises the risk posed by the addition of "by right" uses in many zoning classifications without the need for special use permits. If someone wants to use their "by right" option to do something that would have an adverse impact on aquaculture operations (or anything else), there would be no public comment opportunity on the new use. She also has concerns about the lack of affordable housing for her workers with the elimination of additional mobile homes in the proposed zoning. While agriculture has a "by right" ability to provide worker housing in agricultural districts, shellfish farming does not own agricultural property; their farming is done underwater.

While we in Northampton County have gotten used to superlatives in the negative (the poorest county in Virginia), we now are in a position to be the best in something. I am fairly confident that Northampton County produces more littleneck clams than any state in the country. While Virginia's total shellfish production was \$45 million in sales last year, the oyster component of those sales is still growing. Not yet reported in the VIMS data is a rapidly developing spat-on-shell oyster business which relies on hatcheries to produce billions of oyster larvae for setting on shell, mimicking traditional oyster culture methods, except for the source of the larvae. The resulting oysters are mostly used in the shucking industry, which in recent years has relied on oysters from the Gulf States. If we can maintain our water quality on the Shore through smart resource management, we can expand our oyster hatchery capacity and become one of the leading states in cultured oysters as well as the leader in clams.



See "Town Hall," *Cont'd on page 3*

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“Town Hall,” *Cont’d from p. 2*

to include your remarks in the June issue of *ShoreLine* is Tuesday, May 20. If I have not received your comments, I will simply write that you chose not to respond to my request, but I hope I will be hearing from you.”

That e-mail was sent a second time on the morning of May 20 to the supervisors who had not responded to the earlier requests.

Ron Wolff wrote in response to the first request:

“Thank you for input and opportunity to have my comments published. I too heard positive feedback from some of your readers on the article. Mr. Miner, the County Administrator, said he would like to see it in the National Association of Counties newsletter.”

Granville Hogg responded:

“I have always thought Ron Wolff did a great job by meeting with his constituents. I decided that it would be good for me to adopt a similar policy so long as residents were interested in what was happening. I would try to keep them informed and listen to what they thought was important. At those meetings I would exchange information with constituents. If there was disagreement, why did they disagree and what information were they relying on? In some cases, they had better information than I possessed; hence, I took that information into consideration for future decisions.”

I have had responses from the other four Northampton Supervisors.

Larry LeMond wrote, “To answer your question, I thought about holding a town hall meeting last year, but never got around to it. But, I do think it is a good idea and I plan to hold one or two this year – probably the first one will be in July or August.”

Rick Hubbard wrote, “I will give your idea some consideration and look into possibly doing it sometime. I have thought about some type of meeting before. Also, I do a good deal of talking with many people already on a regular basis.”

In response to the e-mails sent to Larry Trala and Oliver Bennett, I received this message from Janice Williams, Assistant County Administrator: “Oliver and Larry do not have e-mail capability. Messages addressed to them come to my desk. I printed out your message and have mailed it to both supervisors.” Ms. Williams subsequently e-mailed me to report that Mr. Trala had asked her to tell me “He has no problem or objection to having constituent meetings,” and Mr. Bennett had said, “No comment.”

Apart from the e-mail from Ron Wolff, I received only two responses from Accomack supervisors. Laura Belle Gordy wrote:

“I am privileged to represent District 7 on the Accomack County Board of Supervisors and have done so for more than 20 years. During this time I have found it very beneficial to my constituents and me to be visible, accessible and keeping them aware of county issues being addressed by the Board of Supervisors. I travel through Election District 7 on daily basis listening to the public concerns; I attend meetings, visit with people in their homes, have conversations at stores and over the telephone. At no time during my tenure in office has anyone complained about a lack of accessibility on my part and I have found this approach serves my constituents and

Accomack County well.”

Grayson Chesser phoned me to say that he holds public meetings as the need arises on special matters. “I don’t hold regular meetings, but I go to meet people where they are, in the Black churches, for example.”

I have sent three requests for a comment to the other Accomack supervisors, but Wanda Thornton, Kay Lewis, Jack Gray, Robert Crockett, Donald Hart and Renata Major have chosen not to respond.

ShoreLine Comment. *We believe the supervisors who hold Town Hall Meetings with their constituents are bound to be better informed about issues and better able to make decisions that reflect the interests and will of the people in their districts. If a supervisor does not take the initiative and schedule Town Hall Meetings, the residents of his district should urge him to do so and, if necessary, schedule a meeting and invite the supervisor to attend. Elected officials have a responsibility to report to the people who put them in office and to give these people an opportunity to discuss matters of concern.*



Oldest emancipation festival

Fifteenth annual Juneteenth

Juneteenth is the oldest known festival to celebrate the end of slavery. For fifteen years, the Eastern Shore Juneteenth Festival has been an arena to educate and to promote cultural enlightenment and diversity on the Shore. The annual Juneteenth Festival celebrates African-American freedom, encourages strong family structure, emphasizes the importance of the church in the African-American community and helps to inform the community about the historical significance of slavery and how it relates to the Eastern Shore.

This year’s event will be held on Saturday, June 21, at Eastern Shore Community College near Melfa from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Registration for the “Walk for Good Health” hosted by the Sickle Cell Association will begin at 9:00 AM. This is a Family Fun Day Event – admission is free and open to the public.

The Juneteenth Festival will be combined with a health fair to encourage and educate Eastern Shore residents on healthy living practices. We invite historical displays, exhibitors, youth activities, and informational booths about non-profit organizations, Greek Fraternities and Sororities, agencies and vendors. The celebration will begin with the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, Gospel performances, poetic reflection, music, games and contests, food and much more. The day’s events will also feature a special tribute to National Black Music Month.

Vendor spaces are available. For more information on the Festival activities or becoming a vendor, please contact Jane Cabarrus at (757) 442-2139 or for information about booth space contact Barbara Boggs at 757-787-3900.



Revised flood maps may lower rates for some

By Sue Mastyl

Two separate processes related to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) may be converging to bring relief to at least some homeowners in Accomack and Northampton counties.

Modification of Biggert-Waters Act

As reported in the November 2013 issue of *ShoreLine* (“Higher Flood Insurance Premiums,” by Shannon Hulst of Wetlands Watch), the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act passed by Congress in July, 2012, was scheduled to be implemented late last year. This would have resulted in the removal of subsidies and grandfathering provisions for many property owners, including about 15% of policyholders in Virginia. However, Congress realized that some of the provisions of the Biggert-Waters Act were too onerous for homeowners, and in March, 2014, passed the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, which repealed and modified certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Act.

Some of the provisions of the Biggert-Waters Act have already been implemented, and the NFIP is working with individual insurance companies to assess potential changes and to stop policy increases and/or issue refunds for certain subsidized policyholders. Instead of the immediate increases to full-risk rates mandated in the Biggert-Waters Act, the 2014 Act requires gradual increases for homeowners who have artificially low or subsidized rates. The rates will increase by at least 5%, but no more than 18% a year for most policies. A few properties could see rates increase by a maximum of 25% a year – those with subsidized rates that are either non-primary residences or have suffered severe repetitive losses, or properties with a history of substantial damage built before the local adoption of a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM).

In order to maintain the financial sustainability that was the goal of the Biggert-Waters Act, all policies will receive a surcharge of \$25 a year for primary residences and \$250 for all other policies. This surcharge will continue until all pre-FIRM subsidies are eliminated.

The 2014 Act also repeals the provi-

sion of the Biggert-Waters Act that had eliminated FEMA’s ability to grandfather certain properties into lower risk classes.

At the same time, the 2014 Act has authorized the National Academy of Sciences to complete an affordability study, which is already underway. Once this is completed, FEMA will submit to Congress a draft affordability framework, including proposed regulations to ensure flood insurance affordability for low-income households.

New Flood Insurance Rate Maps

While the 2014 Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act may provide relief to some homeowners in their flood insurance rates, the current revision of the Flood Insurance Rate Maps may also affect local homeowners. The FIRMs are updated every five years, and the latest process has incorporated LiDAR data and storm surge data from the Army Corps of Engineers. This has resulted in more precise mapping, and some properties may now actually be out of the flood plain completely. Property owners were able to discuss this in detail with representatives from FEMA, Accomack and Northampton Counties and insurance companies at two open houses held on May 12 and 13 in Eastville and Parksley, and they were able to see the proposed changes for their properties.

The most commonly known flood risk area is the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), which refers to any land that has a 1% chance of being flooded in any year (also referred to as the 100-year flood plain). For Accomack County, approximately 2,000 properties will come out of the SFHA, while approximately 200 will actually move into the SFHA. In Northampton County, approximately 900 homes will be removed from the SFHA, while 11 homes will move into the flood plain.

The SFHA is further divided into specific zones, including VE (1% annual flood rate, with additional risks due to storm-induced wave action), AE (1% annual flood rate, with different base flood elevations [BFEs] delineated), and

Facts About Floods and Flood Insurance

- More than one in five claims for flood insurance occur outside of mapped high-risk areas.
- Floods can occur as a result of flash floods, mudflows, snow melt, or heavy rains at any time of the year.
- Almost 21,500 communities participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
- Don’t walk or drive through a flooded area. Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down, and just 2 feet of water can lift and move a car, even an SUV. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else during a flood.
- Keep away from downed power lines and major electrical wires – electrocution is often a major cause of death in floods.
- Only direct physical damage to your building or personal property from flooding is covered; temporary living expenses or housing are **not** covered by NFIP. Property and belongings outside of a building, such as trees, wells, septic systems, seawalls, and most vehicles are also not covered.
- Raising a building does not remove it from the SFHA, since ground saturation could lead to partial or total collapse of the structure, although it can result in significant reduction in premiums.
- Renters can buy flood insurance for their personal property for as little as \$57 a year.
- Residential coverage is available up to \$250,000 for the building and \$100,000 for the contents, starting as low as \$129 a year.

Adapted from National Flood Insurance Program: FEMA F-671 (FloodSmart.gov: Know Your Risk); FEMA F-684 (Flood Preparation and Safety); FEMA F-687 (Flood Insurance Claims Handbook); FEMA F-679 (Summary of Coverage); F-084 (Answers to Questions About the NFIP).

See “**Flood**,” *Cont’d on page 5*

“Flood,” *Cont’d from p. 4*

the limit of moderate wave action (LiMWA). Areas outside the SFHA are labeled as Zone X, with a 0.2% annual flood rate (or a 500-year rate). Properties in Zone X are not required to carry flood insurance, although it is available in communities with flood insurance.

Interactive maps are available online for both counties. The overall flood mapping process is described at: <http://www.riskmap3.com/maps> (for all of FEMA region III).

The maps for the counties are provided at: <http://maps.riskmap3.com/VA/NorthamptonCo/> and at <http://maps.riskmap3.com/VA/AccomackCo/>

These show detailed information by address, for both the current and the preliminary flood maps. In the example shown here, the old flood map from 2009 had the entire property in a single zone (AE elevation 8 feet). The new map is much more detailed, showing zone AE elevation 7 feet for the edge of the property (bayside marsh), with the majority of the parcel out of the 100-year flood plain (shaded).

FEMA is still in the process of finalizing the flood maps. The preliminary maps were issued in July 2013; following meetings with both counties, notices were posted in the local newspapers to solicit any appeals. The 90-day appeal process ends June 16 for Northampton County and August 11 for Accomack County. A Letter of Final Determination will be issued in September, after which the counties will have six months to formally approve the revised maps and update their flood plain ordinances. Once the flood plain ordinance is updated, insurance companies can adjust individual homeowners’ policies. However, even if a property is no longer in the SFHA, a lender may require that the homeowner retain flood insurance. At any time, a homeowner can submit a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) if they believe the map is incorrect; this must be accompanied by a survey or other data.

Additional information is available from FEMA at www.floodsmart.gov, and for Region III at www.R3coastal.com, and the planning departments of both counties.

ShoreLine comment. *We’re encouraged by the changes in the 2014 Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, since some of the property owners in the most flood-prone areas are those least likely to be able to afford higher premiums, and by the refining of the flood maps with more accurate data. We are, however, concerned that the predicted rise in sea level has not been factored into the new maps. Since many properties in both counties will no longer be in the 100-year flood plain, many homeowners will opt to drop their coverage. This means fewer people paying into the risk pool, and higher premiums for everyone else. And, in 10 or 20 years when many of these properties may move back into the flood plain with even modest sea level rise, we’ll be right back where we started, only with less money in the till to pay the increased number of claims. In addition, because this is not part of the new maps, it won’t be reflected in the local flood maps used by the counties for future planning. We hope the next round of map revisions will take a more enlightened approach to this.*

**CBES first town-level candidate forum**

Cape Charles Forum

On April 29, CBES conducted a “Meet the Candidates” forum in Cape Charles for candidates for Town Council and Mayor. CBES was asked to conduct the forum by several town citizens who felt that it would improve the tenor of the public conversation surrounding the campaign to get the candidates together in an orderly forum that would better inform the citizens about candidates’ views. The Cape Charles Rotary Club also held a forum for the same candidates.

Margaret VanClief and Jack Ordeman organized the CBES forum, which was moderated by former CBES Board member, Wayne Bell. Other CBES members assisted with the event, which was held at Arts Enter’s Palace Theater. The objective of CBES candidate forums is to give candidates the opportunity to address local issues and express themselves as well as they can. Candidates were given the opportunity to make an opening statement. They then responded to questions that had been provided by CBES before the event and then to questions from the audience.

The sitting Cape Charles mayor, Dora Sullivan, who was not running for re-election, wrote to Jack Ordeman to compliment the event:

“I wanted to take a moment to express my appreciation to you and the members of the Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore for sponsoring one of the Candidate Forums for this year’s Cape Charles Town Council election. I was impressed with the number of people who attended your Forum, and it was a great venue for the citizens to meet and learn about the candidates and their viewpoints regarding a number of issues. Your members did an outstanding job in organizing the event, and Mr. Wayne Bell did an excellent job as moderator. Thank you again for organizing this event.”

CBES frequently holds candidate forums for local Supervisor and Constitutional officer elections but had never held a town council forum before. CBES forums have developed a reputation for fairness and objectivity and are said to add favorably to the public discussion surrounding local election campaigns.



Clean the Bay

CBES is partnering with the Virginia Eastern Shorekeeper and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to sponsor a Clean the Bay Day project in the seaside village of Oyster on Saturday, June 14. Those who are interested in volunteering can contact the CBES office at 678-7157 or info@cbes.org, or the Shorekeeper Jay Ford at jaycford@gmail.com.

**Saturday, June 14
9:00 AM to 12:00 noon
Oyster Harbor**

Do you know where your (tax) dollars are?

By Mary Miller

Counties around the state are finishing up their budgets for the next fiscal year. This is the time of year we can easily see where our county's tax dollars are going – and take a look at similar expenses for the counties around us.

This year, and not for the first time, Northampton County wins the spendthrift award. Compared to Accomack County, and compared also to several eastern Virginia counties with similar populations, Northampton spends more per person for county administration, public safety and debt service, and provides more education dollars per student than most of the others. Northampton also tops the list in per person local tax revenue collected.

When comparing expenses of the two Eastern Shore counties with a disparity of population (Accomack's population is about 3 times Northampton's), it's more informative to compare the costs for what are assumed to be similar services on a per person basis. For instance, Northampton collects almost \$1,700 in local tax revenue per person, while Accomack collects about \$1,100. Assuming that the actual costs of several locally funded services are similar from one county to the next, it would be logical that the same costs spread over a larger population would make the services less costly per person. All things being equal, one might assume that the total costs for many services in Accomack could be as much as three times as much as in Northampton, which has one-third the number of residents.

Similar costs for similar services?

But what if the assumption of costs for similar services is inaccurate? Debt service has been an oppressive burden to Northampton taxpayers since the massive building projects – a new courthouse, regional jail, landfill closure and county administration building makeover – began over fifteen years ago. Even though Accomack's total annual debt service is greater, Northampton's cost per person for debt service is nearly twice as much as Accomack's. The same is true for Public Safety and Jail operation – the annual *per capita* costs are more than double for Northampton residents over Accomack's. The state Auditor of Public Accounts publishes detailed annual reports of county and city revenues and expenses, and those reports indicate that the day to day costs of running county administration offices, which are locally funded, costs 30-40% more per person in Northampton than in Accomack, to provide similar services to 1/3 the population.

The Northampton County's debt currently stands at almost \$30 million. Not much can be done to reduce the county's recurring costs of debt service – except, perhaps, decide not to incur further debt without a public referendum. Nor can Public Safety costs be easily reduced – likewise, cutting costs for operating the regional jail (“regional” in name only, since Accomack county neither uses it nor contributes to its operational expenses). Those fixed costs eat up a lot of the local tax revenue collected – and those costs restrict the dollars available for community services.

Northampton collects more than enough local taxes (\$20,195,116) to provide adequate services to a population of 12,089, but so much of that local tax revenue is spent to pay interest and principal on the long term debt for construction projects

and for the state mandate to keep the half-empty regional jail fully staffed and operational that other services suffer. However, a closer look at Northampton's budget figures – at dollars spent on county administration and at dollars allocated, or not, to community services – might provide more understanding of how the county frequently spends more than other small counties on similar expenses.

Staff costs and benefits

The biggest allocation for most entities, public or private, is personnel – wages and benefits, which can equal more than 30% of the base salary and may include Health & Dental Insurance, FICA/Medicare, Retirement, Life Insurance, Unemployment and Worker's Compensation, bonuses and travel allowances, etc. Costs of operations for Virginia elected constitutional officers are subsidized by the Commonwealth through the State Compensation Board and, therefore, only part of those personnel and operational expenses are funded at the local level. But for local government personnel, the budgets for administration departments and employees come entirely from local taxes, and usually relate to the population of the locality – costs of similar services in each locality are linked to the number of people served. So when *The Virginian-Pilot* began publishing employee salaries of major, high population Hampton Road cities, some on the east side of the Bay took notice.

The cities of Portsmouth, Chesapeake and Virginia Beach have 8 to 40 times the populations of Northampton. They provide the same basic administration services the county does. Most of the big city salaries for directors of these basic services – Zoning Administration, Public Works, Human Resources, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Parks and Recreation – are between two and four times the salaries for the same positions in Northampton County. However, there are some noteworthy exceptions – Economic Development Director, Information Technology Director and Finance Director. These positions here, serving about 12,000 residents, receive Northampton County salaries which are only 25-35% below the salaries paid for the same positions in Hampton Roads cities – each with 100,000 to 450,000 residents.

Salaries or services – establishing priorities

Some Northampton County staff has been reduced through retirements and attrition, yet in mid-May the county was advertising to fill positions. A 1.5% “Bonus to Employees” is contingent upon state budget passage. No employee raises were included in this year's budget, but the public hearing presentation included the information that county employee's health insurance was increasing by 10%, and that the county would be funding the entire increase. According to the Virginia Employment Commission's May *Community Profiles*, the average weekly wage for local government employees in Northampton is \$703 (see table) while the private sector average weekly wage is \$547. In Accomack, the average weekly wage for local government employees is \$619, while the private sector is \$630 per week.

During Northampton's budget preparations by the county staff, many reductions were made to requests by county departments,


“Budget Time,” *Cont’d from page 6*

EMS, local fire companies and other community interests, for personnel, supplies, operations and equipment. While some adjustments were small and not likely to cause much pain, such as a reduction of \$149 in a service contract – others could contribute to life threatening crisis, such as deletion of \$91,883 for two new EMS positions, deleting \$8,394 from the ES Coalition Against Domestic Violence – and others are simply removing funds from enjoyable community activities, such as a fireworks display or a refinished gym floor. But major salary or benefits adjustments did not appear to be part of the budget balancing act.

Public input – is it needed?

When considering salary versus services priorities, there does not appear to be a forum for public discussion of those priorities. The county might be well served by public discussion of what a small rural county can comfortably afford to pay for county administration and services.

The public, the taxpayers who pay the bills, have virtually no input into the creation of a locality’s annual budget. And judging from the process and public meeting discussions, elected officials, at least in Northampton, appeared to have had little input. The budget was advertised as required, a brief synopsis of the \$42,000,000 budget was printed, and both the Board of Supervisors and the public were presented with a nearly completed budget document by the County Administrator. The budget documents contained a 132-page budget, a 48-page PowerPoint presentation and an 88-page wages, salaries and benefits spreadsheet. Public comment at the required public hearing was limited and reflected very specific concerns about allocations.

Would the budget have been any different if the taxpayers had been involved in the process? Perhaps Town Hall meetings by the elected Board of Supervisors would be a good place to start discussions about how the community wants its tax dollars spent before the next budget appears. 

N.B. County salaries are determined by the Board of Supervisors.

Highest Paid County Staff & Constitutional Officers

(Northampton County proposed FY15 Budget)

Sources: Northampton County FY15 Budget and Budget PowerPoint presentation; Public hearing notices for county budgets; US Census Quick Facts 2013; the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts *Comparative Reports of Local Government Revenues and Expenditures* for FY ending June, 2012.

Department Head	Salaries	Total Department
Number of Staff	Staff Salaries	Salaries+Benefits¹
County Staff²:		
County Administrator	\$120,507	
1 staff	<u>66,536</u>	\$ 234,797
Director of Economic Developm’t	\$107,409	\$ 135,877
Director of Finance	\$ 95,605	
3 Staff	<u>116,215</u>	\$ 283,140
Director of Info Technology	\$ 74,683	
1 Staff	<u>42,753</u>	\$ 153,245
Constitutional Officers³:		
Commonwealth Att’ney	\$ 124,262	
2 Staff	<u>97,329</u>	\$ 286,287
Clerk of Circuit Court	\$ 98,665	
3 Staff	<u>89,688</u>	\$ 256,694
Sheriff	\$ 92,725	
21 Staff ⁴	<u>1,328,587</u>	\$1,786,733

¹ Benefits include: FICA/Medicare, unemployment insurance, workman’s compensation insurance, health and dental insurance, retirement, life insurance.

² County Staff salaries are determined by the Board of Supervisors.

³ Constitutional Officer salaries are determined by the State Compensation Board.

⁴ Does *not* include Regional Jail staff.

Detach and return to CBES, PO Box 882, Eastville, VA 23347 • Join online at www.cbes.org

CBES Membership 2014

New

Renewal

For Office Use

I would like to receive *ShoreLine* by email: Yes No

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

My volunteer interests are: _____

Enclosed is \$ _____ for the following:

- * _____ Regular Membership (includes *ShoreLine*) \$ 20
- * _____ Life Membership (includes *ShoreLine*) \$ 200
- * _____ Optional Additional Contribution of \$ _____
- * _____ *ShoreLine* subscription without CBES membership \$ 20
- * _____ Gift subscription to *ShoreLine* for a friend (*write name and address on reverse*) \$ 20

For our membership records, tell us how many there are in your home 16 years or older: _____

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SHORELINE

Community Calendar - June 2014

Note: Please verify times and places prior to attending meetings.

CBES and Other Activities

- June 4** **VIMS Public Seminar**
7:30 PM, Wachapreague
- June 10** **CBES Exec. Committee**
5 PM, CBES Office
- June 11** **ES Groundwater Summit**
6:30 PM, Eastville
- June 12** **Shorekeeper Meeting**
1 PM, Barrier Islands Center,
Machipongo
- June 17** **CBES Board Meeting**
7 PM, Painter
- June 19** **UVA Seminar Series**
7 PM, Oyster

Northampton County

- June 2** **Board of Zoning Appeals**
1 PM, Conference Room
- June 3** **Planning Commission**
7 PM, Sup. Chambers
- June 10** **Board of Supervisors**
7 PM, Sup. Chambers
- June 18** **Wetlands Board**
TBA, Conference Room
- June 24** **School Board**
5:30 PM, Sup. Chambers
- June 24** **BOS Work Session**
7 PM, Sup. Chambers

Accomack County

- June 4** **Board of Zoning Appeals**
10 AM, Sup. Chambers
- June 11** **Planning Commission**
7 PM, BOS Chambers
- June 17** **School Board**
7 PM, BOS Chambers
- June 18** **Board of Supervisors**
6 PM, BOS Chambers
- June 19** **Wetlands Board**
10 AM, Sup. Chambers

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