

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

SHORELINE

A Journal of Natural Resources, Public Affairs and Culture on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

Volume 27

September 2014

Number 9

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Is Northampton business-competitive?

A ShoreLine Staff Report

Northampton County – *Competitiveness Assessment* (July 7, 2014) is the title of a new 43-page report by Investment Consulting Associates NA, LLC, of Newton Highlands, Massachusetts. The study was commissioned and funded by the Northampton Development Department at a cost of \$6,750 and provided to the Board of Supervisors in August.

The report analyzes the county’s ability to attract and retain business, especially its appeal to site selectors for new businesses. The main roadblock cited by the authors was difficulty finding county data from traditional resources used by site selectors. But by tapping available secondary and empirical research, the authors did find many of the same disincentives to business relocation into Northampton that previous studies found – geographically isolated; a declining and aging population; no interstate highway; a single toll-road connection to mainland Virginia; an underperforming public school system; lack of economic data on the county website; uneven broadband, internet and cell phone service; an untrained workforce; and now, increased concern about critical healthcare after the hospital’s move. Inexplicably, however, counties used for comparison purposes had between 3 and 300 times Northampton’s population.

The county’s “base industries” are identified as:

- Agriculture and Aquaculture
- Tourism
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Food Services

“Northampton County should focus on growing or maintaining all base industries,” the report emphasizes on page 5. “The County should also focus on identifying the sub-industries for trade, transportation and utilities companies as well as retail trade since they all account for a significant amount of the area employment even if they are not considered Base industries.” Twenty-one strategies for implementing this directive are provided. Zoning changes were not listed.

The report cites specific issues potential site selectors might see as red flags, and suggested solutions:

- **“A lack of [online] data represents a significant risk – and would likely remove a community from consideration at a very early stage.”** Solutions: include Excel file/graphic economic data and studies on an updated website, repair links, create marketing brochures, increase tourism links.
- **School and workforce training problems.** Solutions: more online high school AP classes, internships, have businesses create and fund training programs, concerned parents to use private, non-religious schools, charter schools.
- **Infrastructure shortfalls.** Solutions: create map of high-speed communication areas, revise toll structure on CBBT, roadside and community cleanup, rethink railroad as economic asset (calls to posted phone numbers “connected to only dead air”), use available infrastructure i.e., “no additional industrial parks are needed.”

The county Supervisors are expected to discuss the report at their September 9 regular meeting. The report is expected to be available on the county website soon.



A breath of fresh air

By Denard Spady

On August 19, Edward Lawrence, the new Superintendent of Northampton's schools, met with the CBES Board of Directors to discuss his approach to education and answer questions from the board members.

Eddie Lawrence arrived on the Shore 35 years ago – a kid just out of college, looking for a teaching job. He got the job in Accomack County, and in succeeding years painted houses to supplement his income, lived in Exmore for 16 or 17 years, attended a lot of football games in both counties, found a wife in Accomack, moved to Onley, coached basketball, rose through the Accomack County school system to become a high school principal and eventually an assistant superintendent – and he became an Eastern Shoreman.

In discussing his new job as head of the Northampton schools, Lawrence recalled that in the 1980s Northampton was seen as “an elite [school] division.” He insists that the Northampton school system is poised to begin a rebound, and he says that he has been overwhelmed by the support of the community, staff and students. As evidence he cites the fact that they all turned out to help the recent tornado victims sheltered at Northampton High. He says that he has seen many positive things in the schools, and he believes that he has

to work to build that support in the community by “getting students out to work with the public” – at ballgames, concerts, plays and intern-type jobs in the community. He knows it will take many “small steps.” As an example of progress that is already being made he said, “We’ve got 40 kids out for football!” – a big number for a small school and evidence of the enthusiasm of students and their families for the school system. The administration has encouraged this enthusiasm for the football program by providing school bus service to get players to and from late afternoon practices.

Asked what new programs he will be proposing, Lawrence said, “Not a lot in the first year.” He wants to review what’s been put in place over the last several years and see what’s working and what’s not, what to get rid of and what to keep. Referring to recent problems with accreditation, he said that Northampton High School is “very close” to making accreditation and, he believes, will succeed.

A questioner, noting that community support for the schools was very strong in the past, asked if demographic changes might not make that support difficult to regenerate with older retirees not so interested in the schools. He acknowledged that there have been some demographic changes, but he feels the support is still there. He said that it’s in everyone’s best interest to have a strong school system and that “we just have to give them a reason to come out.” Asked about plans to build parental support, he repeated that we need to do more to get kids before the community and their parents. He acknowledged that some parents “may not trust us as much as they need to,” but says that every parent will come out to see and support their child at a school activity.

Asked what he would like to see from an organization like CBES, Lawrence said, “Be an advocate for education” – see that education stays a priority, have a student intern work for you, critique the coming building program to make it as good as possible – just support high quality education in any way you can.”

One CBES board member asked Lawrence about his longer term personal plans. He reiterated that he is encouraged

by the community support in Northampton and emphasized that he “did not come here to fail.” He said that he had a comfortable job and a good salary in the Accomack school system, where he could have retired in as little as six years. But he said his wife had encouraged him to apply for the Northampton job because she sensed that he needed a new challenge. Now she finds him happier, and their home is “back to normal” with an engaged husband and piles of work everywhere as evidence of his involvement for his new job. Eddie Lawrence summarized by saying that he intends to make Northampton a “happy” school system” and that he “wants to be known as the Superintendent who returned the Northampton school system to what it used to be.”

As the CBES meeting closed, one board member, a recently retired teacher, in implied criticism of other recent Superintendents, said that Eddie Lawrence is “a breath of fresh air.” He certainly made a favorable impression on his CBES listeners. We all wish him well.



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“Fish otoliths as ‘black box’ recorders of movement patterns at sea”

Dr. Ian McCarthy

Senior Lecturer
School of Ocean Sciences
Bangor University

Understanding the movement patterns of fishes at sea is critical to their effective conservation and management...over the last 20 years there has been an increase in the use of internal structures such as otoliths (fish ear stones) to try to study the origins and movement patterns of fishes.

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

7:30 PM

**Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Wachapreague, Virginia**

The seminar is free and open to everyone. Coffee and light refreshments will be provided. For further information call VIMS at 787-5816

National flood programs help at the local level

By Hali Plourde-Rogers

On the Shore, floods are a part of life. Whether it's due to a hurricane, a nor'easter, or just a really big rainstorm, the Shore's low lying land is repeatedly inundated. The points of highest elevation are inland and top 50 feet above sea level. Nevertheless, with the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay flanking both east and west coasts, much of the Shore lies very close to sea level and is at high risk during storm events. It's common for residents to move their vehicles to higher ground (and often themselves) in preparation for a big storm, leaving their homes to weather the storm. The Eastern Shore has resisted developing the barrier islands, which add important protections during storm events. Still, many homes on the peninsula lie within the floodplain and are at risk of significant flood damage. To help communities like the Shore, the federal and local governments have instituted plans to help reduce and manage flood damage and risk, such as the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the Community Rating System (CRS). Several communities on the Shore participate in these programs.

Standard homeowner insurance does not cover flooding because it's too high-risk to be profitable. However, people are drawn to coastal areas. The reality of people settling the coast and insurance agencies' unwillingness to risk flood coverage, left a large gap. In order to help communities affected by hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other flood events, Congress enacted the NFIP in 1968. This program helps property owners financially protect themselves against the damages caused by flooding. Participating communities adopt and enforce ordinances consistent with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) requirements.

The NFIP also includes an additional voluntary incentive program for communities known as the Community Rating System. The CRS program, implemented in 1990, recognizes and encourages community floodplain management that goes above and beyond the NFIP requirements. The CRS program has three goals:

- reduce flood damage to insurable property,
- strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP, and
- encourage a comprehensive approach to floodplain management.

Communities that choose to participate in the CRS program receive discounted insurance rates in increments of 5% and up to 45%. In order to receive discounted rates communities must rank within the CRS class system (Class 1-9, where 1 equals a 45% discount and 9 equals a 5% discount). To rank, communities earn points in four categories encompassing 19 different activities. The four categories are

- (1) public information,
- (2) mapping and regulations,
- (3) flood damage reduction, and
- (4) flood preparedness.

To participate, communities must have at least 500 points and complete the two required activities: hold elevation certificates for new buildings within the floodplain and complete Floodplain Management Planning, if considered a repetitive loss

community. All 17 other activities are optional. Most communities rank in classes 6-9, receiving as much as a 20% discount on flood insurance premiums. In Virginia, 7% of the 285 communities that participate in FEMA's NFIP also participate in the CRS program. Locally, Accomack County (Class 8, 10% discount), Town of Chincoteague (Class 8, 10% discount), and Town of Cape Charles (Class 9, 5% discount) participate in the program.

William Neville, Director of Planning for the Town of Chincoteague, is currently reviewing their CRS program: "There is a new manual that says what you need to do to continue to qualify. We need to compare how we have qualified in the past and what we need to do in the future," he noted. This process, according to Neville, will require coordination with other communities and a committee including insurance agents, realtors, and elected officials. "Our goal

is for the community to continue to improve to a 7 or a 6 for a better insurance premium discount," said Neville. Much of Chincoteague's current program focuses on community education, awareness, and identification of what landowners can do to protect their properties. To improve the Town's rating, Neville plans to identify areas where the community can gain more points

like protecting open space. Neville said, "The Town can work on protection of open space, which gets more points than it has in the past. If you are in an area of high risk, then the best thing you can do is not build there. If you do have structures, then it's best to raise them."

David Fluhart, Director of Building and Zoning, manages the program for Accomack County. One way the County participates is to "process all building permits the same and require flood elevation and flood resistant construction consistently throughout the county, whether you are located in the county or in an incorporated Town within the county's building code enforcement jurisdiction," said Fluhart. The county has been involved in the program for 17 years and over that time has seen great success. Fluhart reported, "This year alone, participation in the CRS allowed a savings of over \$250,000 to flood insurance policy holders in the county with an average savings of \$88 per policy." While Fluhart notes the benefit to residents, he also stressed the challenges to communities who have yet to apply for the program. He explained that the program requires significant

"The Community Rating System (CRS) recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP standards. Depending upon the level of participation, flood insurance premium rates for policyholders can be reduced up to 45%. Besides the benefit of reduced insurance rates, CRS floodplain management activities enhance public safety, reduce damages to property and public infrastructure, avoid economic disruption and losses, reduce human suffering, and protect the environment" (FEMA, 2014).

A profile of socioeconomic measures

Tracking 40 years of trends and changes

By Mary Miller

In July, the Board of Supervisors received a 22-page social, economic and demographic history of the county from 1970 through 2012 – *A Profile of Socioeconomic Measures... Northampton County, VA.** It was produced for the county by Headwater Economics, an independent non-profit research group. The report uses data from Bureau of the Census, Bureau of Economic Analyses, US Department of Commerce, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the US Department of Labor. Page after page of statistical information is carefully explained as to methodology and clarifies the definitions of what was measured. Trends in employment patterns and industries, personal income changes and self-employed versus wage-earners were exhaustively examined. Then additional commentary explains why certain trends and changes are important, both as stand-alone facts and as compared to other trends, and how the information can be used by the county to assess its competitive economic position and use its economic realities to plan for the future.

Just the Facts.

The report compares many of the statistics first as “Historical,” the forty years between 1970-2012, and then as “Recent Trends,” the twelve years between 2000-2012.

Long term trends from 1970-2012 include:

- Population down 14%
- Number of wage/salary employees down 5%
- Earnings from wage/salary jobs up 42%
- Number of proprietors/self-employed (excluding “limited partners”) up 42%
- Earnings from proprietors up 70%
- Average earnings per job up 54%
- Income from labor/wages/employment (including self-employed) up 57%
- Income from non-labor sources (unearned income) up 298%
- Per capita income (both earned and unearned) up 146%

Recent trends from 2000-2012 include (period covers several years of major national recession):

- Population down 6%
- Number of wage/salary employees down 10.6%
- Earnings from wage/salary jobs down 0.7%
- Number of proprietors (excluding “limited partners”) up 31.7%
- Earnings from proprietors up 23.1%
- Average earnings per job up 6.6%
- Per capita income (both earned and unearned) up 23.1%

The information provided to the Board of Supervisors digs down into the actual measurements of earnings and income and provides decade-by-decade explanations about the actual jobs, employees and industries that made up the data. This solid material provides a factual, objective track record of what has worked for Northampton, whether the same trends continue to

work, and where change is occurring. It should provide a solid planning basis for making realistic decisions about the county’s future economic direction.

What Do All These Numbers Say?

As the county population declined, both historically and recently, the numbers of wage/salary jobs also declined. But the average earnings per job have increased steadily over the 40 years measured.

These data changes are due to several factors – the aging of the population and people retiring and leaving the workforce, the increase in the number and salaries of government jobs, the increase in numbers and personal income from agriculture/aquaculture related jobs, the increase in personal income from service related jobs, the dramatic increase in income from non-labor sources and the equally dramatic increase in the numbers and personal income of the self-employed and proprietors, who are *not* considered to be salaried wage earners or job holders for statistical purposes.

This solid material provides a factual, objective track record of what has worked for Northampton, whether the same trends continue to work, and where change is occurring. It should provide a solid planning basis for making realistic decisions about the county’s future economic direction.

Jobs by industry.

Just as important as job numbers are the changes in types of jobs and other work that create employment trends in the county. “*Most new jobs created in the US economy in the last 30 years have been in service related sectors – a category that includes a variety of high and low wage occupations ranging from jobs in hotels and food service to legal, health, business, educational and medical services.*” Northampton County has followed the trend of an increasing number of new jobs in the service sector.

Between 2000 and 2012, the percent of total employment for Northampton County in the non-service sectors of construction fell 15%, and of manufacturing fell 21.3%. But the percent of total employment in the service sectors of finance and insurance grew by 78%, real estate rental and leasing grew by 78.6%, and professional and technical services increased by 65.7%. During that same 10-year period, the three top industry sectors that added the most new jobs were real estate rental and leasing, health care/social assistance, and business administration.

But not all localities can attract the service-related, higher wage jobs. Does an area have the elements in place to accomplish that, asks the report? These elements include, “*access to reliable transportation including airports, amenities, recreation opportunities, a trained workforce and good schools.*”

See “Socioeconomic Profile,” Cont’d on page 5

“Socioeconomic Profile,” *Cont’d from p. 4*

For 2012, data show that **government jobs** paid the highest wages with the fewest employees and nonservice-related jobs paid the lowest wages. Service-related jobs paid the second highest wages with the largest number of employees.

The Self-employed....

“Entrepreneurial activity can be interpreted as a positive indicator of economic health. In some areas a high number of self-employed may indicate few jobs are available and working for one’s self is the only alternative. However, if self-employment and real personal income are both rising over the long-term, [and they are in the county], this is a healthy indicator for entrepreneurial activity.” The report specifically excludes as proprietors those who are assumed to be “limited partners.”

- From 1970 to 2012, the number of proprietors increased 42% and now comprise 25% of the county’s total employment
- From 1970 to 2012, proprietors’ earnings increased 70%
- From 2000 to 2012, the number of proprietors increased 31.7% and their income increased 23.1%

...and the In-migration of Retirees

“In many rural areas and small cities, non-labor income is often the largest source of personal income and also the fastest growing. An ageing population, including an increase in the number of people retiring to an area and bringing their retirement and investment income with them, are some of the reasons that non-labor income is growing in an area.” While this *“growth can be beneficial [to the economic vitality of an area], it can also stress communities and lead to income stratification.”* The increases in per capita income, both historically and in the past decade, reflect an average of all the types of earnings – wages, proprietors’ income and non-labor income.

The report concludes with some comparative performance benchmarks, comparing Northampton County to the rest of the US. Three significant differences between the county and national figures stand out:

- The percent change in per capita income from 2000 to 2011: per capita income increased in the US by 5%, and in Northampton it increased by 23.1% -- it includes earned income [wages, salaries, self-employed income] and unearned income [pensions, investments and transfer payments, including Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, Disability, Unemployment Insurance, etc.].
- The percent change in average earnings per job from 2000 to 2011: in the US the increase for the decade was 3.2% and in Northampton County the increase was 6.6%, more than double the national figure.
- The percent of non-service related jobs in the county, led by agriculture and aquaculture, increased 25.7%, compared to a national increase of 14.8%.

The ongoing economic change for the county includes some national trends like more new job creation in the service sector, with some of the per capita income increases fueled by the higher-wage service jobs in finance, health care and professional services. The increase in the retired population, especially among those who have relocated to the county, has also added to the per capita income increases. Unique to the county is the increase in non-service related jobs, wages and self-employment in the

traditional county industries of farming and seafood – confirming the centuries-old trend of a local asset-based workforce and economy. And finally, as other recent economic development studies have shown, the steady increase in entrepreneurial businesses, and the steady rise in proprietors’ income, confirms the long history of small business ownership in the county.

“These trends and changes are important in determining what factors are driving a shift in industry makeup and competitive position of a locality.” Also, *“it is useful to see whether the relationship between sectors has changed.”* For Northampton County, maintaining the balance among the earnings and jobs growth of the traditional industry sectors of agriculture and aquaculture, the increase in both per capita income and non-labor income, the declining population, the decrease in construction and manufacturing jobs, both nationally and in the county, and the decades-long increase in entrepreneurial activity, will continue to define the economic competitiveness of the county.

Author’s Note: all quotes above are from the Headwaters Economics report.

ShoreLine Comment. *Included in the Northampton County job description adopted in August, 2012, for the position of Development Director, is the following:*

“DATA RESPONSIBILITY: Synthesizes or integrates analysis of data or information to discover facts or develop knowledge or interpretations; modifies policies, procedures, or methodologies based on findings.”

The Headwaters Economics report detailed above, created for the county by an independent research group, is an important data source for discovering facts, developing interpretations and modifying policies – as outlined in the job description above. The report was distributed to the Board of Supervisors but was buried in a bulky meeting packet; it is assumed that it has been made available to the Development Director. The data provided is almost certainly the type of “economic studies and other studies” required by VA Code § 15.2-2284 to be considered before applying zoning changes. The stated economic importance to the county of the traditional industries of farming, seafood and entrepreneurship appear to have received little consideration in the proposed zoning changes.



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2014 CBES Between the Waters Bike Tour

Saturday, October 25

Onancock, VA

ROUTES & STARTING TIMES

100-mile English Century - 8:00 a.m.

60-mile Metric Century - 9:00 a.m.

40-mile - 10:00 a.m.

25-mile - 11:00 a.m.

Details online at cbes.org

Northampton County at the crossroads

By Marcy Benouameur

Marcy Benouameur is a resident of Mathews County on the Western Shore. She is a board member of the Marine Environmental Research Corporation (MERC), the Mathews Maritime Foundation (MMF), and she assists at the Gwynn's Island Museum. Daughter of Gwynn's Island boat builder, naturalist and writer Gilbert Klingel, Benouameur inherited her love for and conservation of the Chesapeake Bay from her father. As co-chairperson, she was instrumental in creating the Mathews Blueways Water Trail. She is a member of the project management team of the Mathews Maritime Heritage Trail, assists with the Kids Kayak Camp and, as an avid kayaker, is the organizer of kayaking trips for a large group of paddlers. Benouameur is retired from the Smithsonian Institution.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is a very special place. On one side is the Chesapeake Bay and on the other is a protected stretch of the Atlantic Ocean. A major highway runs down the middle, and off to the sides are many small winding roads which often run down to the water. For 400 years, life has centered on the water with its abundance of seafood and on agriculture with its fertile soils. Small towns grew up along the coast and around the farms. Small businesses flourished around these towns. The two counties of Accomack and Northampton have both kept their rural charm over the years while maintaining their local economy at a steady pace.

In recent months, however, the southernmost of these two counties, Northampton County, has been in the midst of a serious controversy regarding newly proposed zoning ordinances which are not in accordance with the current comprehensive plan. If these zoning ordinances pass, the way of life in this county will be forever changed. It is important to take a much closer look at these proposals and bring the inconsistencies and unanswered questions out into the open for discussion. It is urgent to study the problems, the consequences, and then find alternative solutions to these issues.

Perhaps the first step in this study is to ask why is there a need to change the zoning ordinances in such a drastic fashion. We all know that the downturn of the national economy beginning in 2008 and the housing bubble that followed have created a necessity for local governments to make plans for future economic development in order to create jobs, balance budgets, and provide the essential services for its citizens. The question is how to go about this. There are choices as to which direction to take. Do you follow the traditional route of building more houses and trying to bring in more industries or is there another way which looks ahead to a more sustainable future in an ever changing world?

It appears that the reason for these zoning changes involves opening the way for high density housing everywhere in the county because of a new economic plan which has been designed after that of Ocean City, Maryland. This plan was seemingly well-intentioned, but whom should it benefit; a handful of developers and realtors – or the farmers, fishermen, shopkeepers and the many local businesses in the county? The answer should be clear. Maybe it would be worthwhile to find out who is behind

the new regulations and what is in it for them. It seems there is more here than what meets the eye. Openness in government at all levels is something all concerned citizens desire.

The Bay.

Many years ago in the 1960's, a well-known Chesapeake Bay naturalist and writer, Gilbert Klingel, (my father) wrote about the effects of population growth on the Bay. Already then he was alarmed at what he saw happening to one of the most beautiful estuaries on earth. Since his classic book *The Bay* appeared in 1951, many changes had already taken place.

In 1966, he wrote in a special edition of *The Bay*: "In comparison with what it once was, the Chesapeake is in process of becoming a relative biological desert. This prediction may seem unduly pessimistic but in the short span of the author's lifetime the numbers of many species have been diminished by half. Each year the rate of destruction and change occurs at an accelerating pace. In the few years since *The Bay* was written, I have been appalled at the rapidity with which superlatively lovely places have disappeared or lost their charm, at the increasing barrenness and sterility being enforced on all sides by the needs of an expanding population, by sheer indifference, by commercial exploitation, and by what is often called 'progress.' It is one of the tragedies of our times that this is so."

These words of warning bring us back to the current case of Northampton County and the drastic changes about to be made in your name and seemingly behind your back. While most folks were hibernating in the cold of last winter, something was going on without their knowledge – plans were being made to change the rural Northampton County into something it was never meant to be. But the resulting zoning proposals were not in accordance with the existing Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, the Planning Commission had been shut out of the drafting process for these new zoning codes. According to Virginia Code Section 15.2-2284 a county's zoning ordinance must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan.

In 2009, after several years of meetings, workshops and public input, a Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Agriculture, aquaculture and sustainable tourism were noted to be the key economic development initiatives. In this plan it states that "the citizens of Northampton County value their rural lifestyle and rich natural heritage and oppose development that would degrade or destroy it." They wanted to strengthen agriculture, the seafood-based industries and water-related activities for economic development while maintaining the county's rural character.

It has been only five years since this Plan was adopted. Now the input of the public is being ignored. In recent months, however, people are beginning to become aware of what is happening in their name thanks to letters and ads in the media and recent public meetings with the Board of Supervisors.

The proposed changes in the zoning codes are too numerous to list here but basically they are intended to make changes

See "Crossroads," Cont'd on page 7

“Crossroads,” *Cont’d from page 6*

in land use and development, increase residential densities and decrease setbacks. It will also add commercial and other uses in residential neighborhoods with no notice or public hearing. Everyone in the county will be affected one way or another by the new economic development plan and the long list of zoning changes that go along with it.

Economic Development Plan.

Now we come to the question of the proposed economic development plan itself. Although apparently presented to the public last winter, there does not seem to be any clear purpose for all of the recommended zoning changes or why all these changes are needed. Why is there to be an increase of nearly 100% in housing units and 4000% increase in density in the waterfront villages of Oyster and Willis Wharf? Why would so many high impact uses be allowed in residential neighborhoods? Why should so many non-agricultural uses be permitted “by right” in the Agricultural zoning district?

Once you know what the real purpose is for the economic development plan, then you will have to look at the consequences if the proposed zoning regulations are passed. What would be the impacts of all this high density housing and new population growth? Some of these consequences are pretty obvious. Others are fairly hidden, so that questions will not come up until too late unless some serious studies are made now before drastic measures are taken.

Impact of Zoning.

Among the most obvious impacts of the proposed zoning will be those on agriculture. If the zoning for farmland is changed to residential, the property taxes would be too high for most of the small farms. Farmland does not require any services to support it. Taxes should be at least based on services rendered. If there is no tax relief for farmland, many of the small organic and CSA farms would be forced to close down.

The Agricultural and Forest Districts (AFDs) are also in jeopardy. If the AFD program is reduced or eliminated, the agricultural community will be forced to pay higher taxes, which could force some of the smaller farm operations out of business.

The impact on aquaculture would be equally disastrous. Clean water resources are essential for the shellfish industry. Virginia is the leading producer of hard clams in the country and most of that production comes from the Eastern Shore. Oyster production is growing as well.

Removal of seaside Bay Act protections will take away most working waterfront aspirations which are part of the maritime heritage of the county

The water supply for Northampton County comes from a sole source aquifer. This is a very important issue which sets the County apart from nearly all other counties in Virginia. Uncontrolled residential sprawl development threatens the sole source aquifer. The new zoning ordinances call for developing the Rt. 13 corridor, the only viable groundwater recharge area, but apparently no studies have been made regarding the consequences of such sprawl. The current Comprehensive Plan calls for limited development along this Rt. 13 spine.

Rising sea level would adversely affect the proposed high density housing, especially along the seaside. There is no denying that climate change is upon us – regardless of the reasons. Any

future economic development plan must take this into consideration when planning communities or tourist destinations. One need only look at the city of Miami, Florida. The mayor of South Miami, Philip Stoddard, has pointed out that there are significant parts of south Florida under serious threat of inundation. In some areas, another foot of sea-level rise will be enough to bring salt water into the fresh water supplies and the sewage system. It might be wise to look twice before considering Florida style economic development as suggested by Northampton’s Economic Development Director. Closer to home, just look at the problems the Carolina coast as well as Virginia Beach are facing due to strengthening hurricanes. The New Jersey coastline is a prime example of an over-development disaster after Hurricane Sandy.

These are just some of things to consider when making final decisions about the new proposed zoning codes. There is much to think about.

Additional Considerations.

Do you really want your coastline to look like another Ocean City? Do you really want small organic farms to close down? Do you really want to discourage aquaculture? Do you really want to compromise the area’s drinking water in order to further develop the route 13 corridor? Do you really want Northampton County to lose its rural charm and look like every other overgrown and overpopulated county? Is fulfilling this new economic plan more important than the people who live here?!? Wouldn’t you rather see growth in what is already established and successful?

Think about a return trip from Norfolk or Virginia Beach. You are stuck in traffic. The air is heavy and polluted. There is so much congestion. You cross the bridge-tunnel to the other side. Suddenly there is a different world. You breathe a sigh of relief. This is what you have now. Take a good look at it, for if the citizens don’t put enough effort into modifying or defeating the new proposals presented by the Board of Supervisors, the southern part of Virginia’s Eastern Shore will become an extension of the urban metropolis of Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

It is time to look at some alternative solutions to the new proposed economic development package. You, the citizens of Northampton County, have a choice. You can copy the outdated Ocean City style pattern of economic development, which is considered by many folks to be the “normal solution” to manmade economic problems, or you can be innovative by creating ways to support sustainable agriculture and aquaculture, by expanding eco-tourism, by searching for new technologies for renewable energy. There are farmer’s markets to support, community gardens and aquaponics projects to develop. The Eastern Shore also has the potential of being a beacon of light in shining the way to “green” technology as the wave of the future.

The Shore is ripe for alternative energy research and development, as well as manufacturing and actual installation of wind turbine blades, and solar panels. There is room for tech research companies and start up alternative energy companies. The conditions on the Shore are perfect for this type of economic development because of low traffic, low rents, low real estate values and thousands of empty building lots and a large unused industrial park in Cape Charles, all ripe for development. Small businesses such as these fit right in with the Comprehensive Plan. Agriculture would remain intact (#1 in the state for certain products) and

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“Community Rating System,” *Cont’d from p. 3*

paperwork and staff time. Therefore, communities with fewer resources may see this as a barrier to entry. Nevertheless, Fluhart noted, “The Class 9-rating is fairly simple to achieve, with minimal paperwork involved.” Fluhart explained that while the program works well, it places strain on staff time with no direct benefit to the county. As a solution, Fluhart suggested, “Incentives or benefits directed toward staff and the county could result in a greater urge to participate in the program.”

Many communities that do not participate are already implementing policies that qualify for the program. To participate in the CRS program, communities must:

1. participate in the regular phase of the NFIP for a full year;
2. show compliance with the minimum NFIP criteria;
3. maintain elevation certificates;
4. address and assess repetitive loss properties;
5. maintain flood insurance policies for community-owned buildings;
6. show Limit of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA), areas affected by waves 1.5 feet or greater in height, on their Flood Insurance Rate Map (required for coastal communities); and
7. have a designated CRS coordinator and recertify each year.

For communities interested in the program, more information can be found at <http://www.fema.gov>, <http://crsresources.org/>, and www.floodsmart.gov.

Participating in the CRS program rewards communities for protecting themselves against major flood events and making smart development choices within the floodplain. While it takes time and resources to participate, the program provides financial incentive and helps protect the safety, health, and well-being of the community and its residents. As William Neville, Town of Chincoteague, pointed out, additional benefits include public education about flood risk and emergency preparedness. However, there is room for improvement within the program. Perhaps local participation would increase with added incentives to the local government in charge of implementation.

Resources:

1. Blue Urchin. “Community Rating System (CRS) Overview.” Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 27 Feb. 2014. Web. 11 Jul 2014.
2. “Community Rating System (CRS),” Floodsmart.gov, 2014. Web. 11 Jul 2014.
3. CRS Resources. Web. 11 Jul 2014.
4. Federal Emergency Management Agency. “Community Rating System Fact Sheet.” FEMA, 21 Mar 2014. Web. 11 Jul 2014.
5. Federal Emergency Management Agency. “National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System: A local official’s guide to saving lives, preventing property damage, and reducing the cost of flood insurance.” Online brochure. FEMA, n.d. Web. 11 Jul 2014.
6. “National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System,” Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2014. Web. 11 Jul 2014.



Lee Trower

The *ShoreLine* editorial board regrets the passing of Lee Trower. Through the late 1980s and 1990s, Capt. Lee was a CBES board member, a stalwart worker at CBES events and was in charge of making sure that *ShoreLine* got mailed on a timely basis. Lee worked at the Eastville town office, right next door to the “old” CBES office, and as soon as the volunteers got through folding, wafering and labeling *ShoreLine*, Lee was there to count and separate zip codes for the bulk mailing. No one else understood the mysteries of bulk mailing as he did.

An Eastern Shore and Eastville area native, Lee spent a career in public education, retiring as a principal in the Norfolk city school system. He represented AAA on the Eastern Shore and was an active member of the Cape Charles Rotary Club. When CBES began in 1988, he was recently retired and willing to take an active role in supporting a new community organization. When he left the CBES board in the late '90s, he was made an *emeritus* director and remained so until his death.

CBES has been successful because of the dedication of Lee Trower and others of its early leaders like him. He will be missed.

“Crossroads,” *Cont’d from page 7*

so would aquaculture (#1 in the State and #10 in the nation). Add on eco-tourism and tourism and green energy initiatives to this mix and there would be a progressive, sustainable economic plan with tremendous potential.

At the Crossroads.

Northampton County is at an important crossroads on the pathway to the future. The choices made now will determine that path.

If Northampton County is to remain unique, it must preserve what makes it special: the historic towns, the cultural landmarks, the Chesapeake Bay, and the Barrier Islands on the Atlantic Coast. It is important to preserve the landscapes we all love – farms and forests, wetlands and wildlife. We must protect the Bay and the Ocean and its natural resources, keep the rural charm of the county, and preserve the historical, agricultural and maritime heritage for future generations. Northampton county residents are the keepers of natural resources and an ecosystem that is unique on the Atlantic Coast. It is imperative that the residents do anything and everything they can at this time to protect and preserve them, as once they are gone, they can never be recovered.



No town halls, no dialogue

By John Ordeman

The *ShoreLine* editorial board announced several months ago that we have begun a campaign to get county Supervisors to hold occasional Town Hall meetings with their constituents, a practice that would give the people who elected them an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion with their representatives and enable the Supervisors to be more responsive to the will of the electorate.

All of the Northampton Supervisors responded to a query from *ShoreLine* asking whether they would schedule meetings with their constituents. Granville Hogg, who has been holding Town Hall meetings ever since he joined the Board of Supervisors in January, wrote:

“I have always thought Ron Wolff [the Accomack Supervisor who holds monthly public meetings] did a great job by meeting with his constituents. I decided 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.”

Hogg’s statement is an excellent summary of what can be accomplished at Town Hall meetings, and it is remarkable that Hogg’s colleagues will not follow his example and give their constituents the opportunity to exchange information and debate issues with them. Larry LeMond’s response to the query was, “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.” Larry Trala sent word through Janice Williams that “he has no problem or objection to having constituent meetings.” Oliver Bennett replied, “No comment.” None of the Supervisors, other than Hogg, has held a Town Hall meeting in spite of the fact that Northampton County is embroiled in the most contentious issue, the proposed overhaul of zoning regulations, that residents have had to deal with in recent memory.

Month after month, members of the public have been coming to the podium at the Supervisors’ meetings to raise issues and present factual information in opposition to the proposed zoning regulations. There is no response from the Supervisors. They do not express their views or explain their positions. They give no satisfaction to those who have valid concerns about the consequences of the proposed zoning regulations, no answers and no opportunities to question them or to debate with them. They apparently do not feel that, as elected officials, they have an obligation to respond to the very real and legitimate concerns of the residents of Northampton County by meeting with them face-to-face and taking the heat of angry dissatisfaction. Harry Truman said, “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” Town Halls are the kitchen. Constituents should encourage – indeed, *urge* – indeed, **demand** – that their Supervisors meet with them, for that is the citizens’ right and the Supervisors’ obligation.



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SHORELINE

Community Calendar - September 2014

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

CBES and Other Activities		Northampton County		Accomack County	
Sept 3	VIMS Public Seminar 7:30 PM, Wachapreague	TBA	Board of Zoning Appeals 1 PM, Conference Room	Sept 3	Board of Zoning Appeals 10 AM, Sup. Chambers
Sept 9	CBES Exec. Committee 5 PM, CBES Office	Sept 2	Planning Commission 7 PM, Sup. Chambers	Sept 10	Planning Commission 7 PM, BOS Chambers
Sept 11	Shorekeeper Meeting* 1 PM, ES Chamber of Commerce Melfa	Sept 9	Board of Supervisors 7 PM, Sup. Chambers	Sept 16	School Board 7 PM, BOS Chambers
Sept 18	UVA Seminar Series 7 PM, Oyster	Sept 17	Wetlands Board TBA, Conference Room	Sept 17	Board of Supervisors 6 PM, BOS Chambers
Sept 16	CBES Board Meeting 7:00 p.m., Painter	Sept 23	School Board 5:30 PM, Sup. Chambers	Sept 18	Wetlands Board 10 AM, Sup. Chambers
Sept 16	ES Groundwater Committee 10 AM, Accomac	Sept 23	BOS Work Session 7 PM, Sup. Chambers		

* Alternating between the ES Chamber of Commerce and the Barrier Islands Center

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