CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

SHORELINE™

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

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Local NAACP President Jane Cabarrus honored Retiring Executive Director Denard Spady for his longstanding support of Community Unity Day. CBES was also recognized for its commitment to the event, held annually on Martin Luther King, Jr Day.

In Northampton

Committee reviews tax structure

By Arthur Upshur

Four months ago, the Northampton Board of Supervisors appointed a committee to review county taxation, in particular the merits of the Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFDs) and whether change was warranted in that program. The final review was presented to the Board on January 13, and the new Board Chairman, Rick Hubbard, has indicated his broad agreement with much of the committee assessment. ShoreLine *thought it would be of interest to our readers to publish a summary of the committee's report since these are topics of long-standing debate in both Accomack and Northampton Counties.*

Although Arthur Upshur is the president of CBES and a member of the ShoreLine *edit board, he was appointed to the committee based on his business background and experience, and not as a representative of CBES. He presented the committee's findings to the Board of Supervisors, and he speaks for the committee and himself in this report.*

The Northampton *ad hoc* Tax Committee, which consisted of Wayne Bell, Stephanie Castro-Webber, Pat Coady, John Coker, Ralph Dodd, Bill Prosise, Willie Randall, and Arthur Upshur, was asked by the Board to review and recommend changes to the taxes charged and collected for Northampton County. We have completed that review and propose a number of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on how some taxes could be more fairly assessed and collected in the future.

Committee Principles.

After much discussion, the Committee developed a strong consensus that taxes should be collected on as broad a base of activities as practical. Today the county is too reliant on real estate property taxes, and a broader base would allow a lower real estate tax rate with reduced disruption to economic activity and fewer unforeseen consequences from tax avoidance. We also felt strongly that taxes on comparable activities or property should be consistent. For example, two properties with equal valuations should be taxed consistently and two businesses with similar claims on county resources should be taxed consistently. Finally, we recognized the value of predictable and consistent taxation. This allows businesses to better plan and expand activity in the county and reduces the likelihood of personal hardship created when taxes change rapidly and unpredictably for specific businesses or individuals.

Broadening Tax Base.

In terms of broadening the tax base, we noted that one of the central problems for our county is that two of its primary economic activities, agriculture and aquaculture, are predominantly wholesale operations where Virginia does not permit local taxation. A third major industry, tourism, has a number of applicable taxes, which is particularly appropriate given the county services required by that sector. Agriculture is taxed primarily through land taxation and generally has limited demand for county services. But because agricultural output is only linked to taxation through land assessment valuations, we noted the potential for uneven taxation since wholesale agricultural output has no local tax.

See **"Tax Structure Review,"** *Cont'd on page 2*

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

Particularly problematic from the tax perspective is aquaculture. Given its importance to the county in providing employment and pulling in resources from sales outside the state, we would not recommend any tax that could jeopardize that sector. We note that the industry is somewhat mobile in moving county to county or to Maryland. That said, today there is almost no tax collected by the county in this sector. Tax revenue is limited to equipment taxes, boat taxes and the limited real estate holdings of the processing facilities, which pale in comparison to the gross sales and economic impact generated by aquaculture.

We recommend that the Board of Supervisors begin a conversation with our state representatives to see if any adjustment to local taxation of wholesale operations would be appropriate, in particular on aquaculture's local activities. We recognize the unlikelihood of much progress at the state level, but clearly appropriate local taxation of the major economic sectors is key to broadening and stabilizing tax rates to support required county services.

AFDs and Land Use Taxation.

The Committee carefully reviewed the tax on agricultural and forested lands. There were three issues considered in this discussion:

- whether AFDs **and/or land use taxation make sense** for Northampton County,
- whether the **rate of taxation was appropriate**,
- whether the implementation of the **AFD process resulted in equitable tax treatment.**

The consensus of the Committee was that the use of AFDs is appropriate in Northampton County. The use of AFDs reflects the importance of this economic sector for our county. It also supports the apparent desire of a majority of residents to maintain open land and rural character in the county. Since the land valuation in AFDs for tax purposes is based on the State Land Evaluation and Advisory Council (SLEAC) values as applied by the Commissioner of the Revenue's office, the property assessment is from an independent third party and theoretically reflects the agricultural productivity of the lands involved.

The Committee also discussed the merits of returning to an annual land use taxation scheme rather than relying on AFDs. The consensus was that, while the land use approach has merits in terms of fairness and predictability, without a time commitment and the other considerations proposed for AFD applications, it was not well targeted to lands that should qualify for tax reduction. We also discussed shortening the AFD commitment period of ten years as a compromise between the two approaches. However, the Committee largely felt that the ten-year period indicated a high level of commitment and also enabled longer term planning for farmers.

The current tax rates within AFDs appear to be broadly "normal" when compared with such rates/acre in other jurisdictions, although it was noted that many jurisdictions do not charge taxes on agricultural equipment, which Northampton County does. We also discussed at length what relationship we should recognize between services required by this economic sector versus what taxes are collected. We noted that some forms of farming such as industrial tomato farming or poultry production may well make higher demands on county resources than commodity crops. This may be appropriate to factor into the application process for reduced taxation.

See **"Tax,"** *Cont'd on page 3*

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Spady Honored at Community Unity Celebration

By Jack Ordeman

Denard Spady, who served as the CBES Executive Director for nearly two decades, was the principal honoree at the 25th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Community Unity Day Celebration. The award plaque, which was presented by Jane Cabarrus, president of the Northampton Chapter of the NAACP, reads "For dedicated service, effort and support for the many activities that foster unity and equality on the Eastern Shore of Virginia." The tribute to Denard in the program states: "The mission of Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore is to promote balanced growth while enhancing our quality of life and preserving our natural resources, all causes to which Denard has continually devoted his time, talents and understanding of the needs of our community and his concern for the people and the land – the consummate example of the good citizen."

The Community Unity Celebration was founded in 1990 by Jane Cabarrus and the Rev. William Whitaker, of the NAACP, Dr. Dawn Goldstine, Superintendent of the Northampton Public Schools and Suzanne Wescoat, president of CBES. The annual breakfast event, which is still sponsored by the three founding organizations, is held each year on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the Northampton High School cafeteria.

The Guest Speaker this year was the Hon. Mignon L. Clyburn, a commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission, whose theme was Dr. King's efforts to promote cooperation among all people for the good of the community and the need for citizens to work to make things better. She quoted Dr. King's statement: "Our lives begin to end the day we become content about things that matter." With a mind to the three sponsoring organizations, it seemed an especially appropriate message.

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"Tax," *Cont'd from p. 2*

The AFD process.

While we felt that the AFD tax approach was appropriate, the Committee was concerned by the unpredictable nature of the AFD application process. We suggest that the process could be improved if the Board of Supervisors worked towards targeting an overall acreage for inclusion in reduced taxation from the combination of both Conservation Easements and the AFD program rather than reviewing individual proposed additions without context. We would like to reduce the emphasis on the timing of the AFD application and focus more on long term county needs and strategies in awarding the tax reduction. It is relatively common that one property in an AFD is taxed lower than another property that is not in an AFD but is equally qualified and desirous to join an AFD. We noted that Northampton County's application fee ($500) is unusually high and felt that in the current environment the imposition of the fee is unfair unless the process can be made more predictable.

We recommend that the Board consider formalizing the AFD application process with a rating system or scoring system based on the objectives of the program. For example, more points might be assigned for owner-operators versus off-Shore owners. Or more points might be allocated for properties that are part of critical habitats. These weights and scores would be approved by the Board and should reflect long term strategic priorities for the county. The Board would publicize both its target acreage for inclusion, the approximate number of acres that could be considered for addition/renewal each period and the ranked scores calculated for both new applicants and renewal applicants. We recommend that the assessor's office provide the rating score for each parcel already in an AFD well before the renewal period so that parcels can be ranked within the current allocated acreage totals and against proposed additions on the waiting list. That way, owners of renewal parcels can understand clearly where they are ranking and what is the likelihood of their renewal being approved. Properties containing residential subdivisions should not be renewed. New applicants would provide the information for scoring, and the AFD Committee would review for accuracy. Applications above the Board of Supervisors' target would be moved to a waiting list and no fee would be charged until the application was moving towards Board of Supervisors approval.

We felt that, over time, this new application process would help move the AFD program towards the constituencies and targets in which the Board of Supervisors has expressed interest – specifically towards owner-operated farms that have lower county service demands and towards properties that contribute best to county goals of open space and good agricultural practices (e.g., drainage management, soil quality, etc.). It would also help dispel the perception that the award of an AFD is more linked to politics than to county policy and goals.

Other Taxes and Fees.

The Committee also completed a summary review of all other taxes and fees. Overall the Committee was somewhat troubled by the admittedly common practice of commingling fees and taxes by the county. We recommend that fees be minimized and be limited to covering only incremental expenses incurred by the county for managing a service rather than supporting administrative overhead by fees. This current practice of high fees creates fairness problems in which radically different applications or operations pay the same fee. For example, the BPOL (Business / Professional / Occupational License) should be a small license fee (such as, $30) that encourages the largest number of businesses to register and pay their fee. Any remaining charge would be more clearly a tax and should be assessed as a percentage of gross receipts. This would eliminate the possibility of a lemonade stand paying the same BPOL to the county as our largest businesses. The BPOL is a minor source of revenue today, but this is an area where state authority is needed to enable the county to assess a higher proportion of the businesses operating in the county so as to keep the tax collected fair to all parties.

We also felt that the machinery and tool tax could be returned to its level prior to the 2013 reduction. This reduction appears to have been made to provide relief to one local business, which may not need that level of subsidy any longer. In general, we felt that the county should continue to review tax rates to make sure they are comparable to surrounding, comparable jurisdictions.

> ...taxation is much more agreeable when there is confidence that revenues raised are well spent to provide services to taxpayers.

Improving County Services' Efficiency.

Finally the Committee would like to reiterate that taxation is much more agreeable when there is confidence that revenues raised are well spent to provide services to taxpayers. We recommend that a similar *ad hoc* committee assist the Board of Supervisors in examining expenses and spending at the county level with an eye toward increasing the efficiency with which those services are provided for county residents. Clearly there is a perception in the public that there have been overspending, resource miss-allocations and poor investments across all sectors, and it would be helpful for the School Board, County Administration, Constitutional Officers and the Board of Supervisors to all support efforts to improve efficiency across all county functions.

ShoreLine Comment. *Creating these* ad hoc *committees is an increasingly common practice for the Board of Supervisors. There is value to assembling a collection of citizens to help guide the Board in their deliberations. While we applaud this citizen contribution for the county, we should note that its value is completely dependent on the make up of the committee. In this case, the committee members represented a broad cross section of the county and apparently did not have a self-interested agenda. Sadly, this is not always the case. That said, we do particularly support the final finding of the committee, that the county needs help in better managing the expenses and capital investments to provide county services. CBES has frequently pointed out where county investments or expenses should be more carefully reviewed. It is our hope to both report about this work in the future and support and participate in it whenever we can.*

Comprehensive Plan nearing completion

What happened to the public input??

By Mary Miller

The Northampton county-wide rezoning and the sewer line along Route 13 have been the focus of most of the community attention for the past year. During that time the Planning Commission has been conducting a state Code required five-year review "*to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan*" (VA Code). Month after month they've reviewed the current Comprehensive Plan, sorted through various goals and strategies and made decisions about what planning language is retained and what gets crossed out. The decision to "*amend the plan*" appears to have been already made.

The Code requires that the Planning Commission ***"shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies"*** of existing conditions, trends and current and future requirements of the community as they prepare recommendations for changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Since 2011, many studies and surveys have been completed; the accumulated data represent almost 200 pages already included in the required review and are available on the county website. An additional 60 pages of community input is available to the Commission, informing them of community priorities and the requests and aspirations of county residents – research that's already on the public record and is intended to support and inform the work of the Planning Commission. Seven meetings, in every area of the county, were held to solicit that public comment in preparation for the five-year review of the Comprehensive Plan. And most of that public input supported sustainable rural-type development for the county.

How the Planning Commission is working.

Commission minutes since September describe discussions of wording changes, comments on whether to keep or discard current language and decisions about inserting new language – and considerable wording in the current Plan which confirms that preferred sustainable rural development has been deleted or changed. Minutes reflect almost no reference to data already collected, changed circumstances already recorded or community meeting input collected for this five-year review. Most of the discussion and changes appear to reflect the thoughts of individual Commissioners. For instance:

- Acknowledgment by most Commissioners that agriculture and aquaculture are valuable to the county, then striking language that supports zoning to protect those industries.
- Acknowledgment in working papers that natural resources would be protected to "the maximum extent possible" and that the county would support existing businesses, but then striking all language in support of the growing research industry, which depends on natural resources.
- One Commissioner stated that "poverty would take care of itself if jobs come" – while the Commission's own data show that most of the county's poverty is concentrated in the elderly, well past working age, and among single parent households with young children – poverty compounded by low skill levels and educational attainment of the single parent and complicated by uncertain transportation and affordable childcare, even when jobs are available.

Planning Commission meetings are sparsely attended. The Commissioners are working more or less in a vacuum. There is discussion about obtaining more public input, but like the arrival of the county-wide rezoning document, the public will most likely be presented with a finished draft of the Comprehensive Plan. Several years ago a stakeholders group, a large, diverse cross-section of residents, businesses and organizations, was established to provide input as the review progressed. There appears to have been no attempt to include this group in the current review process. There was even a Commissioner's comment at the January 6, 2015, meeting that "all citizens are stakeholders – we don't need a list."

What the community said it wanted for the future.

Below are several of the public input preferences and priorities from Planning Commission files collected for the current ongoing Comprehensive Plan review:

- ✓ Preservation of rural character, historic assets, protection for agricultural lands, emphasis on vibrant small towns
- ✓ Protection of ground/surface water, groundwater recharge area
- ✓ Improve quality of education and workforce preparedness
- ✓ Protection & improvement of water access, including for aquaculture activities
- ✓ More recreational opportunities
- ✓ Capitalize further on county's tourism assets/natural resources
- ✓ Availability of adequate emergency medical care
- ✓ Expansion of job opportunities – emphasis on entrepreneurship & small business
- ✓ Protection of priority conservation areas
- ✓ Support & expand existing county industries: agriculture/ aquaculture, tourism, research
- ✓ Promote economic development in towns
- ✓ Rt. 13 safety concerns
- ✓ More jobs/ & better wages compatible with county assets
- ✓ Expand affordable housing/rentals
- ✓ Broadband, high speed internet
- ✓ Expanded public transportation

Infrastructure was at the bottom of the list.

Page after page of comments, from all seven public meetings, also reflected a common desire to maintain the open space, rural environment of the county and to preserve the unique combination of farmland, small towns and distinct historic villages and hamlets.

What the Planning Commission is proposing.

Below are some examples compiled from Planning Commission minutes and working papers of what to expect to see *removed* in the amended Comprehensive Plan draft:

See **"Comprehensive Plan,"** *Cont'd on page 5*

"Comprehensive Plan," *Cont'd from p. 4*

- □ Promote compact development and **maintain town/village edges** – ***Deleted***
- □ Develop **proffer guidelines** [cash and other proffers help a community offset the increased cost of services, especially to residential development] -- ***Deleted***
- □ **Discourage rezoning to higher density** or more intense uses in Conservation areas – ***Deleted***
- □ **Towns** are the **most appropriate** location for **new development** – ***Deleted***
- □ Industrial growth should be focused on areas designated on the Future Land Use Map – ***Deleted***
- □ **Industrial uses should be evaluated** for impact on groundwater resources – ***Deleted***
- □ **Limit strip commercial** development on Rt. 13 – ***Deleted***
- □ **Establish a certified Community Kitchen** for use by small businesses, i.e., food processing, catering, etc. – ***Deleted***
- □ Develop a marketing list of shore asset-compatible businesses/industries which **provide year round jobs, livable wages** – then market the county to that target – ***Deleted***

Many changes support providing additional financial resources and authority to the Economic Development Director to manage the marketing and further development of county tourism and business investment. No specific strategies are included so far. Other changes include creating incentives for owners of real estate to upgrade their properties – and to dedicate demolition funds for dilapidated structures.

What happened to the process?

There may be a disconnect between how community residents planned for the county's future, and how the current Planning Commissioners appear to be interpreting those plans. To be fair, most of the Commissioners were not serving when the public input meetings were held. The names of only two current Commissioners appear on any of the sign-up sheets. In the absence of any new public meetings soliciting input before the draft Plan is complete, however, public input already on file and the Commission's own published data is what the state Code intends to be the basis of any Comprehensive Plan amendments. That may not be happening. One Commissioner was heard to ask instead what the Supervisors wanted them to do.

There may not be a complete understanding of the Planning Commission's statutory obligation to create or amend a Comprehensive Plan. The state Code directs the work process. This obligation, and the Code requirements, were made clear to the Commissioners in the required state training program. It's equally important to understand that while the Supervisors have complete authority over the adoption of any or all county plans or ordinances, the Planning Commission has the authority and legal obligation to provide the Board of Supervisors with a Comprehensive Plan proposal that was created in compliance with the Code of Virginia.

PSA Review – On track or off the rails?

A ShoreLine Staff Report

Tens of thousands of dollars have been spent since 2010 on planning and engineering for waste water treatment up and down Northampton County, and not one pipe has been lain and not a drop of water has been treated. Pushing this effort forward have been some members of the Public Service Authority (PSA) and the PSA's Executive Director, Katie Nunez, who is also the Northampton County Administrator – all of whom maintain that they are only doing what the Board of Supervisors has instructed.

In the beginning (2009)...

A project was first proposed to serve the Exmore-Nassawadox area (the so-called Northern Node), with emphasis on retaining the hospital as per the PSA's Articles of Incorporation, with a second project (the Southern Node) to serve the Cheriton / Cape Charles stoplight area. It soon became apparent that the county would be unable to match the funding requirements of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and USDA grant-loan packages for the Exmore-Nassawadox project. So in spite of thousands of taxpayers dollars already awarded for preliminary engineering to the Lynchburg firm Hurt & Proffitt, the Northern Node project was virtually abandoned.

Seed money for wastewater infrastructure was diverted from a "southern rivers" planning grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The $20,000 grant was originally allocated for researching the use of alternative cluster-type waste-water systems in Oyster. One condition of the grant diversion, which was approved by the DHCD in early 2010, was that it was to be applied to projects in the Atlantic, or seaside, water shed – specifically *not* to projects that "drain into the Chesapeake Bay." Other benchmarks included holding community meetings, conducting neighborhood surveys and producing follow-up documents for the funding agency to confirm that grant approval conditions continued to be met.

However, in another grant application in late 2010 to another state agency, the project was described like this: *"The overall goal of the project is to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and King's Creek by replacing up to 495 failing or questionably functioning on-site septic systems."* (This from the application for funding made to DEQ and the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund prepared by Hurt & Proffitt and referenced at a Supervisors meeting on Nov 10, 2010.)

To further define the PSA's direction from the Board of Supervisors, minutes from a joint meeting in April, 2011, note that a consensus was reached that PSA projects would be understood to further "economic and commercial development ***in the towns***" and that projects would be for current needs and ***not for future development***.

See **"PSA Review,"** *Cont'd on page 7*

Keeping Track – Lite

The Old Days. Back in the good ole days of the late 1990s and early 2000s, *ShoreLine* featured a monthly column called "Keeping Track." Many regular readers said that it was the first thing they turned to in a new issue of *ShoreLine*. "KT," as the *SL* staff called the column, had a reputation for short, hard hitting pieces that kept readers abreast of back channel happenings not always covered in the general press or more substantive *ShoreLine* articles. We've had requests to re-institute KT, and this will be our first effort. It may take a while to get back in the swing of things, but here goes!

BoS Gatekeeper. The BoS revised their manual in their January 13 meeting. Interestingly, the Board gave broad new powers to Katie Nunez. Now she serves as Parliamentarian to supervise the Supervisors' conduct of their meetings and she also serves as gatekeeper of information to the Board.

After a brief discussion about the possibility of asking for legal review of this new requirement, the Board voted 4-1 to accept the manual *without* any such review. As a result, it now appears that every man, woman and child in the county will have more access to county information and staff than any of the five elected Supervisors because citizens can go directly to the departmental staffs and ask.

Sterling on Exmore. Congratulations to the Town of Exmore and Bill Sterling, retired editor-in-chief of *The Eastern Shore News*. Sterling's article, "Exmore: A Town Divided," appeared as part of a "small-town trilogy" in the January issue of *Cooperative*, the statewide publication of local electric cooperatives. "When the highway bypassed the town in the late 1960s, downtown Exmore saw many of its shops shutter their doors." And three years ago, Mayor Doug Greer recalled that we "wondered how we were going to pay the bills." "We were down to $75,000 in the general fund."

Today, the town has approximately $1 million in the general fund, new equipment, an improved infrastructure and a positive vibe..." "All of this was done without raising taxes." Greer goes on to describe the town council pulling together, new revenue from hotels in the town, stepping up police patrols on Rt. 13 as it passes through town, and new computer software that has increased efficiency – all contributing to the current positive trend for the town.

The article also includes photos of town notables and landmarks – Mayor Greer, international mosaic design queen Sara Baldwin and the Cameo Theatre, the Exmore Diner, town staff and town patriarchs Herman Walker and Lloyd Kellam. "Exmore is a working-man's town," said Town Manager Robert Duer – and the town has certainly worked to improve itself!

Point of Order! Can a citizen in attendance at a Virginia public meeting raise a point of order? Honestly, we don't know – after all, the citizens in attendance are not members of the public body whose meeting they attend, and Virginia doesn't hold New England-style town hall meetings. No matter. It happened recently at the Northampton Board of Supervisors – and the Board Chairman reluctantly yielded. Democracy works best when its citizens are involved.

Best Rookie Supervisor: Granville Hogg. Well, actually he's the only rookie Supervisor, but he *has* been working hard at it. Said to be up at 5:00 every morning to read all the material sent to Supervisors and attends virtually every meeting. Well done!

Best Retiring Supervisor: Wanda Thornton. Whether you loved or hated her, all could agree that Wanda was like a pit bull when it came to defending her Chincoteague Island community even it if pitted her against the rest of the county. Detractors will say that she was mean-spirited and a divisive force but can't say she didn't do her homework and put in the hours, whether it be on public beach access on the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge or the CBBT Commission. Is there anyone who can fill her high heels? Or will the Accomack Board now be a kinder, gentler, friendlier body – but lack that fiery force?

Northampton Zoning. For all those who are searching for clues on the fate of the new Northampton zoning, at least one developer is still confident the new zoning will go forward. When Bill Parr was asked why he was locating a drainfield on a separate lot from his proposed 3-bedroom apartment building, he responded, "The goal is to leave the lot for other uses. When the new zoning ordinance is adopted, to see what the uses might be By Right." A great example of how important those "By Right" rules will be in the new zoning.

Support by Chairman Lemond for approving Parr's application seemed to be based on this project's providing affordable housing for the county – certainly a critical need in Northampton. However, affordable housing legally requires housing cost that is capped based on its relationship to median household income. This would generally be below current market prices and is not in the conditions included in Parr's special use application. So while we really do not know how affordable this proposal's housing will be, we do hope that genuine affordable housing proposals can be put forward by others and that they will get similar support from our elected officials.

CBBT's Quiet Impact. Those somewhat recently arrived on the Shore may not know much about the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Commission (CBBT) and its impact on the Shore. The Commission consists of eleven members appointed by the Governor – one seat for the Commonwealth Transportation Board, one seat for each of the six cities in the District (Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News) and two seats for each of the Eastern Shore counties of Northampton and Accomack. Those cities and counties are the jurisdictions that the facility was intended to serve when the Commission was created back in the 1960s.

The Commission is a public body which meets each month in the conference room of the CBBT offices at the north toll plaza. The meetings are open to the public, and the public has the opportunity to address the Commission members at its regular meetings.

The Commission and its staff have traditionally had an amicable relationship with Eastern Shore local government and been supportive of the community in general. However, the

See **"Keeping Track,"** *Cont'd on p. 7*

"Keeping Track," *Cont'd from p. 6*

Commission has seldom participated in local planning efforts such as the county Comprehensive Plans. The Commission and its decisions can have a dramatic effect on the Eastern Shore as it sets tolls that affect all our citizens as individuals and encourage commuter traffic that could significantly impact our community. The Commission attracted much attention and experienced much public attendance in the early 2000s when it first proposed such a commuter toll.

Recent Eastern Shore appointees to the CBBT Commission include former Delegate Robert S. Bloxom, Sr., and Deborah Christie from Accomack County and former Supervisor Jeffry K. Walker and Dr. Paul E. Bibbins, Jr., from Northampton County. All know the Eastern Shore community well and should be assets to the Commission. We encourage interested citizens to attend Commission meetings and challenge the Commission to become more involved in land use planning for Accomack and Northampton Counties.

BoS to hold rezoning meetings

Dates will be set soon for two public information meetings to receive comments on the county-wide rezoning. A Public Hearing will be scheduled shortly afterwards. Public input will be heard on only the changes adopted by the Board to the original March 11, 2014, Public Hearing draft. CBES will strive to keep the community informed as the rezoning process moves forward.

"PSA Review" *Cont'd from p. 5*

...And now to the present (2015).

The currently proposed PSA project maps a barely developed service area and Special Tax District both on and off Route 13 around the Cape Charles light, which would serve commercial users. At the December 15, 2014, PSA meeting both the Chair, John Reiter, and a former Chair, Bob Panek, described the project: "this is for growth…not for what's there now," and that the project is for future "development for this area."

Over five years and tens of thousands of dollars, the PSA projects have morphed from an attempt to provide service for the hospital complex, replacing failing residential septic tanks and furthering economic development in the towns, into a plan to promote commercial development on Route 13, including acreage currently zoned Agricultural.

During the taped December meeting a PSA member spoke about public relations and the public perception and criticism of PSA activities. He moved that the PSA spend no more dollars until another joint public meeting is held with the Board of Supervisors. Both the Chair and a previous Chair tried to dissuade consideration of the motion – and there was no second for the motion. After the meeting adjourned, four members of the PSA, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, closed the meeting room door and continued discussion.

In spite of repeated calls from the public to rein in or dismantle the PSA and the Southern Node commercial sewer pipe project, at the January, 2015, meeting the Board of Supervisors voted down a motion to provide any further guidance to the PSA.

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SHORELINE

Community Calendar - February 2015

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

CBES and Other Activities

Feb	**VIMS Public Seminar** Canceled this month
Feb 9	**CBES Exec. Committee** 5 PM, CBES Office
Feb 12	**Shorekeeper Meeting** 3 PM, Barrier Islands Center Machipongo
Feb 17	**ES Groundwater Committee** 10 AM, Accomac
Feb 17	**CBES Board Meeting** 7 PM, Eastville
Feb 19	**UVA Seminar Series** 7 PM, Oyster

Accomack County

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

Northampton County

Feb 2	**Board of Zoning Appeals** 1 PM, Conference Room
Feb 3	**Planning Commission** 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Feb 10	**Board of Supervisors** 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Feb 17	**Public Service Authority** 7 PM, Conference Room
Feb 18	**Wetlands Board** TBA, Conference Room
Feb 23	**School Board** 5:30 PM, Sup. Chambers
Feb 23	**BOS Work Session** 7 PM, Sup. Chambers

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