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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Environmental Journalism Explored at CBES Annual Meeting

ShoreLine Staff Report

Approximately 80 CBES members gathered for the CBES
Annual Meeting at the Island House
Restaurant in Wachapreague on April
27, 2017, including 60 who came for
dinner beforehand. CBES President
Arthur Upshur gave a short introduction, noting that "really, it's the people
in this room that make CBES work."

CBES Executive Director Donna Bozza moderated the panel discussion on "Environmental Journalism in 2017," especially as it relates to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. She introduced the evening's three speakers: Karl Blankenship, editor of the Bay Journal since its inception in 1991 and recipient of several awards, among them a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Rona Kobell, a reporter for the Bay Journal and former Baltimore Sun reporter who also co-hosted "Midday on the Bay," a Baltimore public affairs radio show, for over five years; and Pamela D'Angelo, a veteran journalist who produces features and news for public radio stations in Virginia and Baltimore, as well as National Public Radio, on Chesapeake Bay issues and rural life along its shores.

Environmental Journalism in the Bay Watershed

Bozza began by asking each of the journalists about his or her perspective as an environmental journalist covering the Bay watershed. Blankenship described how the *Bay Journal*

started, and how its mission has changed since its inception in 1991; it started as a newsletter for the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, then started covering serious news stories. It has grown from a staff of one to a staff of 12 part-time and full-time employees, with 32-page issues published 10 times a year. They've also launched a travel publication, Bay Journeys, and a new publication for local government officials. The publication started with baywide issues,

but now is covering more local issues that would not be covered otherwise, he added.

Kobell stated that she started covering the Bay in 2004; her focus has been on making it interesting - "how people live and work and use the Bay" - with a mix of science. For instance. in an article about crab numbers, she would talk to crabbers, but also bring in the numbers and the science behind them. Her focus increasingly turned to science stories, and in 2009 she joined the Bay Journal, with a strong commitment to science. One topic Kobell is interested in is disappearing communities in the face of sea level rise, discussing the "loss of history, church graveyards disappearing under the waves, ground wasting away" and pairing that with the science of sea level rise.



(l-r) Pamela D'Angelo, Rona Kobell, and Karl Blankenship answer environmental journalism questions at CBES Annual Meeting. Photo by Cecil Watts.

Today's Media Climate

Bozza noted that "Thomas Jefferson railed against newspapers as 'polluted vehicles' of falsehood and error; Richard Nixon tangled with reporters in the toxic atmosphere of Watergate, considering them the 'enemy'; Bill

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Eastern Shore's Annual Juneteenth Festival Moves To Exmore Town Park

Submitted by the Northampton County NAACP

ayor Douglas Greer of Exmore and Jane Cabarrus, president of the Northampton County Branch NAACP, have announced that the 18th Annual Juneteenth Festival will be held at the Exmore Town Park on Saturday, June 17, from 10 AM to 4 PM. The Town of Exmore is co-hosting the event in partnership with Northampton County Branch NAACP and the Juneteenth Coalition.

Also known as Freedom Day, Juneteenth is a national day of pride honoring the official end of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it is the oldest known commemoration of this important milestone in our nation's history. Juneteenth has been celebrated on the Eastern Shore of Virginia for almost two decades as a family-friendly event for the entire Eastern Shore community. As in previous years, the focus is on education, cultural diversity and continuous personal development, including health and education.

The Juneteenth Festival is growing this year with the addition of a

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second important event, on Sunday, June 18, 2017. From 3 - 5 PM, guests can enjoy a Gospel Extravaganza: "Tribute to Fathers." An important goal of Juneteenth is to encourage strong family structure, an intrinsic value here on the Eastern Shore.

"The Town of Exmore is proud to partner with President Jane Cabarrus and the NAACP, one of our most respected community leaders, and to support this important event," said Mayor Greer. "Eastern Shore communities place a strong emphasis on unity and diversity, and Juneteenth reflects those values."

This year's Juneteenth – with two days of festivities – will include a complimentary Health Fair to encourage positive lifestyle choices and educate Eastern Shore residents on healthy living practices. Attendees can also expect historical displays, educational exhibits, fun and games for young people, food and music, along with representation and information

from area non-profit organizations and local businesses.

"With something for every generation, plus educational opportunities and fun for the entire family, we are anticipating our biggest turnout ever," remarked Ms. Cabarrus. "The open expanses and facilities of Exmore Town Park provide the ideal venue for accommodating large events. We are looking forward to another successful Juneteenth."

As always, the event is free and open to everyone, with ample free parking nearby. The Exmore Town Park has benches and seating for the older generation and a large playground for children. This is a family event, and alcohol is not permitted.

Sponsorship opportunities and vendor spaces are still available. For more information on festival activities and sponsorships, please contact Jane Cabarrus at 757-442-2139. To request vendor information, contact Barbara Boggs at 757-678-2137.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

25th Anniversary Between the Waters Bike Tour

Saturday, October 29, 2017

Silver celebration of a beloved cycling tradition!

Pedal to Protect Virginia's Eastern Shore, starting at our beautiful cape and weaving along the bay and sea, through historic hamlets and golden fields.

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4 Routes: 25, 40, 60, & 100 miles
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Info/Registration at www.cbes.org 757-678-7157, info@cbes.org

Annual, Cont'd from p. 1

Clinton publicly condemned 'purveyors of hatred and division.'" She asked, "How do you view the media climate you find yourselves in today? Has it affected how you do your job?"

Blankenship responded that people who read the *Bay Journal* have an interest in the Bay and its issues; he also provided a different quote from Jefferson – "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government with-

out newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should... prefer the latter."

CBES Board Member Sue Mastyl asked how to reach a wider audience, so we're not just "preaching to the

choir." Blankenship noted that they run a news service, with an audience of two million. Kobell said that a lot of their readers are watermen, poultry farmers and crop farmers, and home builders who read the *Bay Journal* to see what regulations may be coming up and what issues are in the forefront. "They look to us for objective, scientific information," she said. D'Angelo added that "everybody's getting worn out" with the news cycle; "you have to be repetitive and positive, and use every means of outreach – newsletters, emails, mail chimp, email blasts."

Local Environmental Issues

Bozza asked the three journalists, as those on the frontlines of environmental reporting in the Bay Watershed, what they considered as the biggest risks to the Bay's health, especially on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. D'Angelo noted that land use is a significant issue, and added that citizens have multiple opportunities to get involved. The local Wetlands Board approves homeowners' use of riprap versus living shorelines, and "you have a say in that." She added that databases are available for everything from maps of poultry houses to toxic release inventories. Data may actually be the equalizer, in which "citizens can give representatives a heads up."

Kobell sees sea level rise and the expansion of "mega" poultry houses as the biggest threats to the Bay. With sea level rise, "we're getting to the point where we're going to have to make some hard choices," she said. She cited Bishops Head, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland – "every time I go, there's more water, and more houses abandoned." Locations like Saxis, Tangier Island, Smith Island, and Bishops Head will be affected first, and strategies will need to be coordinated with local, state, and federal governments.

Bozza next asked the panel about "strategic retreat," which could be an implemented policy/strategy to mitigate rising sea level on the Shore, given the miles of vulnerable shoreline and creek banks. "Has local land use zoning,

based on a strategic retreat policy, been adopted anywhere you know of, when it's determined that public health and safety are compromised when first responders cannot reach certain areas during storm events? How do you feel about the merits of strategic retreat and the compromises communities will be asked to make?"

Kobell responded that Baltimore has changed the required elevation for new houses, especially in light of

continued flooding at Fells Point. She added that strategic retreat is tough; "the best example is Hog Island [on the seaside], when they moved to Willis Wharf – they just did it, there wasn't any FEMA." Although Louisi-

ana "has made some tough decisions," she noted, "I don't see us there yet in Maryland and Virginia."

D'Angelo noted that "insurers are making it happen," and are changing the maps. "We all see what's happening in Norfolk," she added.

Poultry Concerns

"They're not thinking about what's

appropriate on a tiny peninsula

between two bodies of water."

- Rona Kobell, Bay Journal reporter

Kathy Cummings, a resident of Pungoteague who will be affected by the 24-house poultry operation under construction there, asked the panel what can be done. "DEQ has been out there, people from Accomack County have been out there; nobody cares. There will be runoff from the site. I'll have to find a place to relocate my wildlife [from her rehabilitation facility]. Maryland and Delaware are already making changes."

Kobell said she understood Cummings' frustration, and committed to working with her. She said the problem is that this is being looked at "as a local zoning issue, not as a public health issue." Kobell continued, "it's being treated as basically aesthetic, with noise, odors, and [viewshed] issues, rather than monitoring air quality and water quality." The problem is, she noted, "the Department of Environmental Quality doesn't work for you, they work by the regulations; if they're allowed to permit it, they will. They're not thinking about what's appropriate on a tiny peninsula between two bodies of water."

Blankenship noted that this is a problem in many areas; Governor McAuliffe is encouraging poultry expansion in the Shenandoah Valley, and Lancaster County in Pennsylvania is the "fastest-growing area in the region for chicken."

Other issues discussed with the audience included using dredge fill from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel to augment Tangier Island, keeping rural communities sustainable, and making broadband access available to rural communities.

Clarifications on Composite Index May Have Impact on Solar Farms

By Sue Mastyl

report by Solunesco, a solar development company located in Reston, VA, sheds new light on the way taxes are calculated for solar farms, which may have implications for current and future projects in Accomack and Northampton counties. More information about the company can be found at www.solunesco.com.

This report is based on a letter issued on April 6, 2017, by Craig M. Burns, Virginia's Tax Commissioner, "clarifying the valuation of solar projects within the Composite Index (CI)." According to the report, the CI calculates "potential sources of tax revenue, including real estate value, gross income, and retail sales ... on per capita and pupil bases, and ... determines the proportion of the state total." This is done to determine the percentage of each county's school budget that is paid by the state vs. the county, with a higher CI indicating a higher share paid by the county.

The calculations for the CI are based on True Values, including real estate, calculated by the Department of Taxation (DOT), and Public Service Corporation property, calculated by the State Corporation Commission (SCC), including solar farms producing more than 25 megawatts (MW). Although the SCC reports both the Full Value (what can be taxed, based on fair market value, or FMV) and the Assessed Value (what is actually taxed), the DOT has historically calculated the CI based only on the Full Value.

After January 1, 2017, solar farms greater than 20 MW are eligible for an 80% tax exemption as pollution control equipment. Thus, a \$100 million project will have a Full Value of \$100 million, but an Assessed Value of \$20 million. Using the Full Value in calculating the CI results in a higher CI, with reduced state funding to the county. The report provided an example, using a \$100 million project with taxes of \$80,000. Using FMV for the CI resulted in a decrease of \$148,600 in state funding, with a net loss to the county of \$68,600. When Assessed Value is used for the calculation, state funding is only decreased by \$28,000, so the county has a net gain in revenue of \$52,000.

Based on this issue, Commissioner Burns issued a letter clarifying that the calculation of solar projects for the CI will be based on Assessed Value. Solunesco's report comments that the timing for this has been critical - "without clarity on the county permitting process, developers may have abandoned projects," and thanked "Governor McAuliffe's team and the staff for ... recognizing the need for a timely decision."

In Northampton

Little new tax revenue - few, if any, permanent new jobs for locals...

Is It Still "Economic Development"?

By Mary Miller

New industrial or commercial development, especially when it's located poor and it. when it's located near residential areas and has the usual impacts associated with industry, needs very careful assessment by the governing body. Intense development that is not compatible with surrounding land uses usually needs conditions and restrictions to mitigate any adverse effects, like noise, traffic, groundwater contamination, visual impact, etc. That's why a Special Use Permit (SUP) is required.

An industrial/commercial use in a residential or agricultural area might be approved if the town, county, taxpayers or residents received substantial benefits – jobs. training programs, community services, and especially new tax revenue. Sometimes commercial or industrial projects benefit the landowners and site developers, but may not have the anticipated benefits to the community at large. Elected officials need to balance the benefits to the community with project shortcomings or potential disadvantages. Some examples of recently approved SUPs that needed consideration of this balance:

- The 20 MW solar facility near Eastville will add renewable energy to the regional grid; the County negotiated payments from the operators to mitigate the 100% exemption of local personal property tax revenue imposed by the state and created a 30-yr. minimum real estate tax payment schedule. County staff confirms that 20-MW-or-less facilities appear to retain their full assessed values (\$2.3 million in this case) as part of the County's total real estate value for the complicated Composite Index formula to determine state aid for education. Impact to the County is still unknown (see article at left). During the SUP process, the developers stated that this project would "not be a job creator."
- The planned Rural Health facility at Eastville will continue to provide essential health care services for the county. Two existing locations will be closed; services and current staffs will be consolidated. Rural Health is a non-profit corporation and is tax exempt. The Eastville site is assessed at \$248,000, land only. When the new facility opens, the two closed locations, assessed at \$1.3 million, will remain off the tax rolls until they are either sold or used by a taxable entity. The new facility will provide needed community health services and continue the employment of local workers.
- The Wagner mining operation, which will now be used

Business Profile

Eastern Shore Coastal Roasting Co.

The owners of Eastern Shore Coastal Roasting Co. (ESCR) Coffee, Jamie and Kristin Willis, report that they are picking up their first two employees this year. The business was started in May 2006. Says Kristin Willis, "We take uncompromising pride in producing superior, customblended and roasted-to-order coffee, cultivating exceptional relationships by exceeding our supporters' high standards of taste and service."

The Willis Wharf General Store was the inspiration for the business: "We dreamed of bringing life back into the store for morning watermen and local traffic, visualizing large jars of coffee beans with local names like Hog Island Sunrise and Oyster Roast." After a trip to the Outer Banks and a visit to a coffee shop there, one thing led to another and in a few months, the Willises had launched the first specialty coffee roasting business on the Shore.

They feel the Shore is a good fit for their business due to the fact that they were the first to start roasting coffee here, and that they have "feverishly loyal" local customers. With the unflagging support of the community, the Willises feel they "keep rising to the highest level."

The most challenging aspect of the business for them is that larger companies hand out free equipment in order to get business. Even though ESCR coffee prices are competitive, a large outlay for equipment would be prohibitive. The Willises feel that they have overcome this hurdle by developing great relationships with their customers.

Kristin says that she has been surprised by how loyal their customers are: "Coffee is an intensely personal thing, with each drinker going through their own morning (or all day!) rituals. It has been a humbling experience to know how much they value our product and our company. We regularly get what I call "ESCR Love Notes" from our supporters, and they let us know they miss it when they are out!"

Economic, Cont'd from p. 4

as the dredge spoils site for the CBBT new tunnel project (see article on p.6), has eleven conditions on its SUP that are intended to minimize anticipated adverse impacts. The site, south of Eastville, is currently assessed at \$101,900. The addition of tons of dredge spoils is not expected to change the site's value. Future impacts on nearby property values is unknown. Hiring of drivers for the project will be controlled by the contractors, an off-Shore joint venture enterprise. Since the county gets 100% of the Bridge-Tunnel traffic, increasing use of the improved span may result in additional costs to Northampton for public safety and EMS transportation and staff. 🍒



Their advice to others who want to develop a successful business on the Shore? Find a niche. "The locals are more than willing to support a business that is fulfilling a role that isn't being done, or done well. If it is a year-round operation, it is essential to have local support in terms of services, hours, and offerings. Be smart about startup costs: spend good money where it's needed, but let as much as possible be used or found; and the more you can do yourself, the better off you'll be from a cash flow basis."

Look for Coastal Roasting Coffee in local retail shops and restaurants; for wholesale ordering and custom roasting and packaging information, email orders@coastalroasting.com. 7



Northampton County

As the Wagner Borrow Pit Becomes a Dredge Spoils Disposal Site...

Long-Term Questions and Concerns Remain

Staff Report (compiled from available public documents)

The (Wagner) site was selected by the contractor,

the Chesapeake Tunnel Joint Venture,

and not by the CBBT.

A s contractors for the CBBT begin excavation for a new tunnel, and the dredge spoils begin to be deposited at the Wagner Borrow Pit site between Eastville and Cheriton, there are still questions and concerns about groundwater, the selection of the Northampton County site and what, if any, long-term issues might arise. During the Public Hearings, information from the 42-page application (April 2017) and the 194-page "Data Compilation Report – Upland Placement Evaluation" (January 2016)

was discussed, testing protocols were explained, and several public and private spokesmen provided details of various studies and traffic impacts. The Evaluation

was prepared for the CBBT. One of the conditions of the approved permit states that there be, "Credible, reliable evidence that the material is not hazardous in any way to water quality or groundwater, based upon approval or confirmation by the Department of Environmental Quality of compliant material."

Concerns About Groundwater and Aquifer Contamination

A letter was subsequently sent from the Eastern Shore of Virginia Groundwater Committee to the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy and to the DEQ, both responsible for monitoring the site and the dredge spoils for contaminants. The Committee had not been previously contacted about the site. Concern was expressed for the potential of drainage from the site to impact the recharge to the upper Columbia aquifer, since the dredge spoils will probably mix with the groundwater in an existing pit, according to a hydrogeological study submitted by MSA, PC, a Virginia Beach engineering firm. The letter from the Groundwater Committee stressed the resource importance of the upper aquifer to the Shore. At the May 9 Board of Supervisors meeting, the owner of the site agreed to testing water in the existing pond.

Questions About the Choice of Dredge Spoils Disposal Site

Several questions and concerns were raised during the Planning Commission's review of the Special Use Permit application. Among them was why Northampton County had been chosen for a disposal site.

A Final Report, prepared for the CBBT by the Jacobs Engineering Group in Virginia Beach, indicated several potential sites for dredge disposal – Port Tobacco

at Weaneck, also called the Weaneck Land Reclamation Project and which provides barge off-loading, and several specifically named regional landfills. The Report states that options for the Parallel Thimble Shoals Project dredge spoils include "ocean placement at the Norfolk Ocean disposal site..." The CBBT 2016 Annual Report stated that, "The winning proposal of \$756 million was awarded to Chesapeake Tunnel Joint Venture (CTJV), a joint venture of Dragados USA (an international firm)

and Schiavone Construction Company (headquartered in Secaucus, New Jersey)".

Mr. Daniel Brown, who had previously been identified as Mr. Wagner's business

partner, responded in writing to the Commission's concerns about the choice of the site. The site was selected by the contractor, the Chesapeake Tunnel Joint Venture, and not by the CBBT, he wrote. The contractor finds the site "highly desirable"—it's close to the project, in a rural area with light traffic flow, with filling stations along Rt. 13 and convenient and affordable hotels/motels "for extended lodging needs," presumably for out-ofarea workers. Brown went on to state that Wagner, the applicant and site owner, had sought the disposal of the spoils on his borrow pit property and that he had worked through a series of proposals with "all four design-build firms asked to bid on the project". According to Tunnel Business Magazine Online, July 2016, the contract award marked "the end of a 3.5-year project development and procurement process."

When pressed about the alternate DEQ-approved upland regional landfills and ocean disposal sites, Brown cited the prohibitive transportation expense and landfill charges. He dismissed the Norfolk Ocean Disposal Site as "not an option," even though ocean dumping is frequently used for dredge spoil disposal.

The Special Use Permit has been approved with conditions designed to mitigate any short- or long-term adverse impacts from the dredge spoils. The choice of site appears to have been driven by convenience, low traffic volume and the lowest possible cost of disposal.

Editor's Note, some background history:

Northampton County has an uncomfortable history as a disposal site in the name of 'economic development'

Team CBES Seeking Volunteers for Clean the Bay Day with The Nature Conservancy in Oyster

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Clean the Bay Day is coming up on Saturday, June 3, and Team CBES will once again be joining forces with The Nature Conservancy to collect trash along the shorelines of Oyster Harbor and the marshes in the area.

Last year, with the help of 25 fantastic volunteers, our team picked up 2,880 lbs of garbage throughout the village (thanks, in part, to two very large tractor tires). Items collected ranged from bottle caps to a crock pot discovered by a CBES lifetime member which actually made CBF's online newsletter.

We are currently seeking volunteers, and we'd love to have your help! If you would like to join the clean up at Oyster Harbor on Saturday, June 3, 9 AM-12 noon, please contact Nature Conservancy outreach & education coordinator (and CBES board member), Margaret Van Clief at mvanclief@tnc.org or (757) 414-9227.

Other locations on the Shore include Onancock, Wachapreague, Morley's Wharf, Cape Charles, and Kiptopeke State Park. Go to http://www.cbf.org/events/clean-the-bay-day/ for more information and to register.

All ages are welcome, though children do need to be with a supervising adult. Long pants and closed toed shoes are required. Gloves, trash bags, and collected garbage removal provided. We hope you can join us!

Borrow Pit, cont'd from p. 6

- used by industry, the military and commercial entities needing a place to dispose of merely inconvenient or actively contaminated waste. Over the years, Shore-Line has reported on these activities. Sometimes benign - some locals remember in the 1980s, the string of tractor trailers depositing tons of a recalled personal hygiene product in a private landfill near Cheriton. And sometimes not so benign – in the early 1990s, pre-dawn lines of dump trucks, from as far away as northern New York State, depositing petroleum contaminated soil at an asphalt plant near Nassawadox. Citizen outcry forced the State to close down that activity. And some projects never got off the ground – like the plan to import more tons of fuel-soaked soil to a plant in Cheriton, where it would be transformed, using a "secret process," into garden soil amendments. Disposed materials once deposited here, whether benign or hazardous, never go away. After two years, the dredge spoils at the Wagner site can be "mined" and excavated, then sold and moved wherever fill dirt is needed.

New County Administrator for Northampton

Charles Kolakowski, recently the Town Manager of Bedford, VA, became the county's new Administrator on May 22. A graduate of the College of William and Mary, with a degree in Government, he has twenty-three years of experience in municipal administration.¹



In 2011, after three years of negotiations, Mr. Kolakowski successfully guided the City of Bedford through a process called "reversion" – the City worked with Bedford County to enter into a historic agreement to turn the city back into a town. As a result, the new Town of Bedford increased its unrestricted assets, dramatically cut expenditure and reduced taxes. In addition, the Bedford County government receives an additional \$6 million annually in education funding from the state. "I think it has certainly helped the town stabilize its finances," said Kolakowski at the time.²

The new administrator comes from a rural area of Virginia and is well acquainted with both the governing process and the economic realities of a rural economy. CBES and the *ShoreLine* Staff welcome Mr Kolakowski to Northampton and wish him the best in his new position.

¹ Northampton County Press Release, April 28, 2017

² The News & Advance, December 26, 2011





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SHORELINE

Community Calendar - June 2017

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

	CBES and Other Activities		Accomack County		Northampton County	
	Jun 3	Clean the Bay Day 9 AM, Oyster	Jun 7	Board of Zoning Appeals 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Jun 5	Board of Zoning Appeals 1 PM, Conference Room
	Jun 7	VIMS Public Seminar 7:30 PM, Wachapreague	Jun 14	Planning Commission 7 PM, Sup. Chambers	Jun 6	Planning Commission 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
	Jun 8	Shorekeeper Meeting* 3 PM, ES Chamber of Commerce,	Jun 20	School Board 6:30 PM, Sup. Chambers	Jun 13	Board of Supervisors 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
	Jun 17	Melfa Juneteenth Festival	Jun 21	Board of Supervisors 5 PM, Sup. Chambers	Jun 21	Wetlands Board TBA, Conference Room
	Jun 17	10 AM-4 PM, Exmore Shore Made Music Festival	Jun 22	Wetlands Board 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Jun 27	School Board 5:30 PM, Sup. Chambers
	Jun 20	1 PM-10 PM, Onancock ES Groundwater Committee 10 AM, Accomac		-	Jun 27	BOS Work Session 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
	Jun 20	CBES Board Meeting 7 PM, Eastville				
* Alternating between the ES Chamber of Commerce and the Barrier Islands Center		www.cbes.org				