

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

SHORELINE

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Hospital Closing Will Have Immediate Impacts on Northampton County Residents

By Mary Miller

The community hospital in Nassawadox, originally named Northampton-Accomack Memorial Hospital, then Shore Memorial, now Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital, has been part of Northampton County since the late 1920s. In September 2009, the local Shore Memorial Hospital Board voted to affiliate with Riverside Health Services, Inc., and shortly after that the Riverside organization announced plans to close the Nassawadox facility, including the Emergency Room, and relocate to Onley. The hospital doors will close in Northampton at the end of February, 2017, when a new facility is scheduled to open in Onley, in Accomack County.

Emergency Care Committee Appointed

In 2013, in preparation for this event, especially the loss of local emergency services, the county Board of Supervisors appointed an *ad-hoc* Emergency Care Committee to study alternatives for providing emergency care in the county. Committee members included: Willie Randall, Larry LeMond, Spencer Murray, Martina Coker, Pat Coady, Dr. Ervin Jones, Dr. Federico Molera, and Dr. Pamela Gray, among others. The Committee's Report in February, 2014, listed the following adverse impacts on county residents in the absence of a local Emergency Room:

- Increased ambulance turnaround times to and from the closest Emergency Department;
- Decreased access to ambulances caused by significant increases in distance to the closest Emergency Department – out-of county ambulances traveling to Nassawadox will no longer be available in the county on an as-needed basis during peak call volume times;
- For locations in the southern part of the county, the closest Emergency Department is Sentara Independence in Virginia Beach – across the 17-mile long Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel (CBBT), “which frequently experiences delays and closures due to traffic, weather, maintenance work, accidents, etc”;
- Required use of the Virginia Beach emergency room, which is already serving a large population, “could cause delays in patient turnover times”;
- Emergency patients who “have never traversed the CBBT and will have significant challenges returning home upon release” from the Virginia Beach facility – failure to offer assistance to patients in this situation could cause “refusal of transport when emergency care is truly required.”

After a study was conducted to determine that more and better health care services were needed in the com-

munity, there was little follow-up by the Committee in the following years to work towards achieving that goal.

County Leaders Now Strive to Improve Emergency Services

Even though the community has been aware for the past several years of the coming change, little was done by elected officials to deal with the impending impacts. Current Board Chair Murray: “Not only will loss of the hospital deprive Northampton citizens of local emergency services, other critical services will ... be lost including many diagnostic imaging, laboratory testing, screening and other primary care services will also be lost or severely diminished.”

The possibility of a stand-alone emergency facility in the county

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has been rejected as unfeasible, due to lack of a year-round population to support it – even though several thousand tourists fill the County every summer. Although an Urgent Care Center was promised for the County in Riverside’s Certificate of Public Need Application, a full-service, extended hours Center has so far not been announced. Rural areas everywhere are facing the same situation – loss of hospitals and emergency rooms and increased distances to access care. Some areas are increasing the use of telemedicine, paramedicine (visiting nurses, etc.), and increased Broadband and communication towers to improve emergency and primary care services.

Improved Emergency Transport Critical

Again, to quote Board Chairman Murray: “As has been pointed out repeatedly since 2009, the negative impact of the hospital's relocation to Northampton citizens for both public health and economic development is the life threatening ambulance transport times and the additional taxpayer

burden for EMS services.” Even though the County has a professional Emergency Medical Services Department, many ambulance runs are

“... the negative impact of the hospital's relocation to Northampton citizens for both public health and economic development is the life-threatening ambulance transport times ...”

Board Chair Spencer Murray

manned by volunteers. “The volunteer agencies are essential to our total effort and must continue to receive our support,” said Murray. The county last year adopted a revenue sharing policy with the volunteer stations to ease their financial burdens.

A new ambulance is being funded and outfitted (see "EMS request to Shore Health Foundation" on page 6). And in January the Board of Supervisors approved a \$48,000 request to fund two additional EMS staff for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The Long Range View

In a February 2016 *ShoreLine* article, "The Future of Healthcare Services in Northampton County," Dr. Ervin Jones, a retired professor from the School of Medicine at Yale University, now a Cape Charles resident, presented an eloquent summary of the county’s current situation. “A strong, well-equipped EMS service is clearly needed. However, EMS systems were

never designed to comprise the entire healthcare delivery system for a locality. EMS cannot and should not function as ‘gate keeper’ and principal provider for health services in the county. Instead, healthcare delivery and access must be viewed in the broader context of a well-balanced system of healthcare: emergency medical services, urgent care services, primary care and nursing home care. Solutions will require a concerted effort on the part of all of those with a stake in this matter.”



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Editor/Design

Sarah Morgan, Savoy Studio

How to reach CBES

P.O. Box 882, Eastville, VA 23347
(757) 678-7157
info@cbes.org • www.cbes.org

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The Northampton County EMS Station in Machipongo.

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Why Dunes and Beach Replenishment Won't Work for Assateague

by Sue Mastyl

The final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR) was released at the end of 2015; the option chosen was Alternative B, in which the beach access will be moved 1.5 miles north, with a new 961-space parking lot protected by existing dunes. The plan will be phased in over the next eight years, or sooner as funding becomes available; the cost is estimated at \$22 million.

Many residents and visitors have questioned why this move is necessary, rather than just continuing to maintain the current beach, and using beach replenishment and dune construction to protect the beach and parking lots. Both costs – and science – make this approach unfeasible.

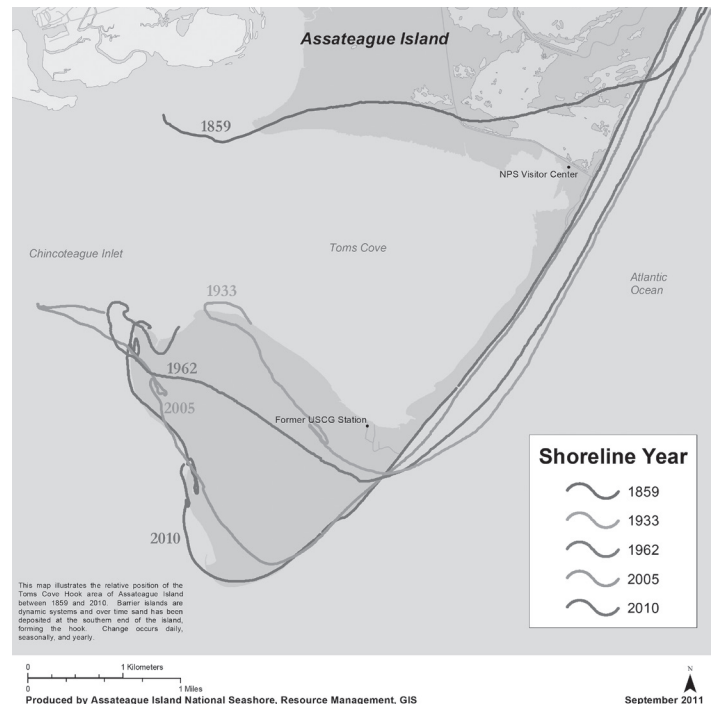
Twice the Cost, With No Guarantees

In the CCP, the costs for beach nourishment along the 1.5-mile length of the beach, with 14-foot high dunes, were estimated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at \$24 million for the initial construction, with \$8.3 million in maintenance every 3 to 7 years. Over 15 years, this would add up to \$49 million, over twice the estimated cost for moving the beach access. This estimate only included minimum sea level rise, and noted that the project would “not prevent tidal flooding from the interior or backside of the shoreline,” or slow the movement of the island north and south of the project area. It also did not include any repairs for ongoing storm damage. Importantly, the CCP notes that USACE policy requires that 35% to 50% of the costs for any project would have to be borne by local or state authorities.

Fighting Mother Nature

In addition to the added costs, beach replenishment and dune construction have little chance of success in the dynamic environment of Assateague Island, especially at its southern end. Sea level rise for the Mid-Atlantic region is conservatively estimated at 2 feet by the end of the century. The CCP notes that increases as little as 2 mm/year (0.54 feet by 2100) could “push it over the threshold” to landward migration and breaking up of the island; “the impacts of a 7 mm/year rise (1.9 feet by 2100) would be devastating.”

The nature of barrier islands is dynamic. The northern end of Assateague Island is eroding at a rate of 30 ft/year, while the Atlantic shore of the island is eroding by 1.5 ft/year (1/4 mile since 1940). At the same time, the Toms Cove Hook has been growing since the 1850s (see figure), adding about 132 ft/year. Where sand spits accumulate as with Toms Cove Hook, new platforms of sand are deposited and build up, leading to the natural formation of dunes, or beach ridges, with stabilizing vegetation. However, erosion by storms



*Changing Shoreline of Southern Assateague Island.
Courtesy U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.*

or wave action, as happens frequently at the current beach access site north of the Hook, interrupts this process.

In fact, the regular repair and maintenance of the parking lots for the current recreational beach may actually be contributing to this problem. With little room to allow the beach to migrate westward, the National Parks Service builds up the sand into small dunes to protect the parking lots. By stopping the natural processes, including periodic overwash, the strip of land is actually narrowing, according to Kevin Sloan, manager of CNWR, which may actually shorten the lifespan of the beach.

In addition, a 2016 study by Wooldridge, Henter, and Kohn in *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science* found that beach replenishment may have adverse effects on the ecosystem of the beach. The scientists monitored the abundance of intertidal invertebrates at eight beaches (with replenished and control sections) over 15 months in San Diego County, and found a twofold reduction in invertebrates on replenished beaches. Since these invertebrates are an important food source for resident and migratory shorebirds and small inshore fish, this could have long-term impacts on the overall health of the ecosystem.

The final CCP can be viewed at https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Chincoteague/what_we_do/CCP.html.



Accomack Approves Solar with Sheep, Then Removes Solar from Ag Zoning

Staff Report

During their January 18 meeting, the Accomack County Board of Supervisors approved two conditional use permits for a 20-MW solar farm in Tasley, which will incorporate grazing of endangered Hog Island sheep as part of the operation. As members of the Van Kesteren family testified during the public hearing, the project will allow them to keep the family farm, and will allow Logan Nordstrom, grandson of owner John Van Kesteren, to return to the Shore to run the project and raise a family.

Although the Tasley project received a warm reception from the Board, they then switched gears to remove utility-scale wind and solar projects from agricultural zoning throughout the county. During the public hearing, there were two speakers. Sue Mastyl of Harborton noted the “tension between ‘agricultural’ and ‘industrial’ that [is] a little baffling.” In addition to the initial lack of support by planning staff for the Tasley project because it did not fit with the agricultural setting “of the Tasley circle, no less,” she also pointed to the incongruity of considering passive solar panels as industrial, but large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) as agricultural.

Tony Picardi of Belle Haven also noted the contrast between solar and CAFOs – “If the Board wishes to eliminate contradictions to agriculture, it should do something about the poultry industry.” Supervisor Grayson Chesser agreed that “yes, there are problems with agriculture, and poultry may be more compatible with industrial than with residential, but agriculture is what turns the wheels in Accomack County.”

Supervisor Ron Wolff added that the two solar projects that have been approved in the county so far are “two different animals,” contrasting the 20-MW project in Tasley, incorporating sheep grazing and concentrated on a 200-acre site, with the 80-MW project in Oak Hall, occupying over 900 acres. After clarification from County Attorney Cela Burge and Planner Rich Morrison that the proposed amendment would remove all solar and wind projects over 1 MW from agricultural zoning (which represents 83% of the land in the county) until the Planning Commission has developed an alternative plan, the Board voted 7-2 (with Supervisors Donald Hart and Renata Major voting against) to approve the amendment.

ShoreLine comment. *This is a good example of why proactive zoning is a more efficient way to manage complicated zoning questions.*



A Look Back at 2016

Last month, *ShoreLine* looked at what Northampton County was up to in 2016; this month we look at Accomack:

- Adopted Zoning Ordinance amendments for CAFOs (with increased setbacks and requirements for landscape buffers), with additional refinements possible in 2017 after input from the Mass Balance Study.
- Saw activity on two solar farms in the county, including:
 - Construction on the 80-MW solar farm in Oak Hall, the largest facility to date in Virginia, with \$200,000 given to the county for solar panels for county buildings and demolition of derelict buildings in the county.
 - Review of an application for a 20-MW solar farm with sheep in Tasley.
- Initiated review of zoning changes for utility-scale solar and wind farms, to remove these by right in agricultural zoning.
- Participated in a Joint Land Use Study with Wallops Flight Facility, to identify potential hazard areas.



Native Plants Highlighted

By Sarah Morgan

The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program recently released the second publication covering native plants for our area. *Native Plants for Southeast Virginia* features plants that were selected for their utility to wildlife, general attractiveness, and ease of maintenance for the home gardener. This publication joins *Native Plants of Accomack and Northampton* as valuable resource material for selecting plants that are most beneficial to the environment.

The reasons for planting natives are varied. Some are essential for pollinators; others provide habitat for native animal species. As natural habitats are altered or lost, home gardeners are increasingly choosing natives to help support the local ecosystem and prevent the extinction of species. In addition, since native plants are adapted to the local environment, spraying pesticides for insects or diseases is usually unnecessary, saving time and money. And natives are better adapted to local rainfall and temperature fluctuations than imported varieties.

The publications are beautifully illustrated, and include vital information for the successful propagation of the plants selected. Along with close-ups of each plant, the guide includes light requirements, soil moisture guidelines, height of plant at maturity, and other interesting facts.

For information on obtaining a copy of either publication, please contact Virginia Witmer: Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov.



Community Unity 2017

In the context of all the divisions highlighted in the recent inauguration, our local Community Unity event nearly doubled in attendance from last year. On January 16, nearly 400 men, women, and children from the Eastern Shore community gathered at Northampton High School for the annual Community Unity breakfast and walk. Co-sponsored by the Northampton County Chapter of the NAACP, Northampton County Public Schools, and CBES, this event has retained strong support by area churches, schools, and other organizations as a way to bring together diverse segments of the Eastern Shore population and celebrate the ideals of Dr. Martin Luther King.

The breakfast celebrated the diversity of the Shore with live music and inspirational speakers. The event opened with an enthusiastic rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," Additional musical selections were performed by Rev. Roland Major, Broadwater Academy's Varsity Voices, and Northampton High's Kanijah Brickhouse.

Keynote speaker for 2017 was Reverend Jeffery L. Smith, pastor of the New Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Exmore. Following breakfast and presentations in the cafeteria, participants joined in the Unity Walk to the old Courthouse, where the speaker was Reverend Anton Brown, outreach pastor of Cape Charles Baptist Church.

Unity Walk Mistress of Ceremonies and CBES Director, Donna Bozza, quoted Maya Angelou: "It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength." Bozza continued, "But as adults, we need to re-teach ourselves this powerfully simple truth –over and over if necessary....So, on this morning I speak for the entire CBES board when I say that it is our hope – as we stand neighbor to Shore neighbor that YES, we teach our children – our future, but all of us ALSO this day. We re-energize our commitment to Dr. King's dream and embrace it as our reality." 🐦



Jane Cabarrus, Dr. Dawn Goldstine, and Charles Bell.
Photo: Cecil Watts



Reverend Jeffery L. Smith delivers the keynote address.
Photo: Cecil Watts




Sixth-graders from the Girls Empowerment Motivational Society at Kiptopeake Elementary School.
Photo: Cecil Watts



Unity Walk participants join hands and lift their voices in song on the Courthouse Green. Photo: Cecil Watts

Keeping Track

New Department, New Director


Northampton County has created a new Department of Planning, Permitting and Enforcement, and has hired Susan McGhee, a Professional Engineer and Project Management Professional, as its first director. With eighteen years' experience in managing projects throughout Virginia, and in supervising erosion and sediment control and storm-water management plans, she is currently certified as a Stormwater Management Plan Reviewer and comes to the county department with the skills, training and experience expected for the new position (see January 2017 *ShoreLine*, "Keeping Track"). The new department and position are part of the ongoing restructuring of county management by the Board of Supervisors. 




Northampton Board Chairman Addresses Chamber

The Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce held its annual Eggs and Issues Breakfast January 5, at the Historic Eastville Inn. Although not widely promoted, even on the Chamber's website, *Shore Daily News* provided audio of the event online. (<http://www.ask4direct.com/news/wesr>)

Northampton Board Chairman Murray talked about recent changes to county personnel and policies made in support of growth and better service to county residents. New tourism and health related facilities, a solar farm approval and increasing EMS staff, equipment and services as the hospital prepares to close and relocate to Onley, were among the positive steps forward. A restructuring of county management and Staff includes hiring personnel who are Professional Engineers in addition to their other qualifications, in order to decrease reliance on outside services, to deal in-house with changing state regulations and to allow county departments to respond in a more timely manner.

Budget development for 2018 will include initial analysis of the financing and timing of a new middle school/ high school complex. District meetings will be held to obtain community feedback. Murray then proposed a joint project with Accomack – a speed-up of the expansion of broadband through the Eastern Shore Broadband Authority. The counties already own the project, and the expansion is critical for economic growth and expanding telemedicine among health care providers. 


Thank You Notes

The Northampton County Supervisors got a pleasant surprise when they opened their January meeting packets – two thank you notes. One couple wrote: "Thank you very much for putting quality of life and natural resources at the forefront for Northampton County." The other writer said this: "As a Northampton County taxpayer, I just want to say thanks that Northampton County is not facing the future groundwater and pollution problems that Accomack will face with the build out of all those new poultry houses." The complete Agenda and documents included in the Supervisors' packets are available several days before every meeting at <http://www.boarddocs.com/va/northco/Board.nsf> 




EMS Request to Shore Health Foundation

In a letter from Northampton County Director of Emergency Services Hollye B. Carpenter to the Shore Health Foundation, a request was made for cost share funding for new ambulance equipment and supplies. A new county ambulance, including radios and stretcher, comes with a price tag of \$218,023. A grant for \$172,586 was awarded by the Virginia Office of EMS Rescue Squad Fund. The request to the Foundation for \$96,797 would cover both the remaining ambulance cost and the additional equipment and supplies needed to begin service.

Carpenter cited the aging of the ambulances serving the county, including the volunteer squad vehicles, the frequent down-time for repairs and the increased toll on the vehicles from the additional 36-mile roundtrip to the new hospital in Onley as the basis for the request. Quoting from the request: "Currently we have six ambulances in the county...Two of them are out of service frequently for repairs and have required patient transfer to another ambulance due to failure during transport. A third has more than 110,000 [miles]." 



E-Recycling No Longer Available


In the "Guide to Recycling on the Shore" in the April 2016 *ShoreLine*, we had indicated that electronic household items were being accepted at the Fishers Corner convenience center in Accomack County. Unfortunately, this service has been discontinued, although the county is actively looking for a new partner to handle these items. We'll let members know as soon as this is available again. 

KUDOS

OR

NER


- ♥ CBES would like to thank Roberta Kellam for her generosity in donating a new laptop and printer. It will be put to good use with the CBES Bike Tour.
- ♥ A huge hug to Eastern Shore Coastal Roasting Company for donating their wonderful coffee to the Community Unity Breakfast. A heartfelt example of a local business supporting local people.



**EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA
BROADBAND
AUTHORITY**

Residential Broadband

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority has begun a test project in Harborton to bring fiber to the home. Future projects under discussion include Vacluse Shores and Church Neck. The fiber will be strung to the nearest pole, so residents only have to pay for the hookup from there to their houses. Four different download/upload speeds will be offered; the lowest is competitively priced compared to DSL.



**WILLIAM & MARY
VIMS**
VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF MARINE SCIENCE

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science Eastern Shore Laboratory will hold their public seminar series on the first Wednesday of the month. We hope you can join us.

“New insights into the disease ecology of *Hematodinium perezii*, an important parasite in the American blue crab”

Dr. Jeffrey D. Shields
Professor of Marine Science
College of William & Mary, VIMS

Dr. Shields will discuss the sentinel methodology he is using to determine routes and rates of transmission of this parasite, which causes disease and death in blue crabs along the eastern seaboard and Gulf Coast.

Wednesday, February 1, 2017 – 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. If you would like to access the seminar on your home computer, please go to: <http://vims.adobeconnect.com/afterhours> and log in as a guest at the date-time of the event. For further information call VIMS at 787-5816.

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SHORELINE

Community Calendar - February 2017

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

CBES and Other Activities		Accomack County		Northampton County	
Feb 1	VIMS Public Seminar 7:30 PM, Wachapreague	Feb 8	Planning Commission 7 PM, BOS Chambers	Feb 6	Board of Zoning Appeals 1 PM, Conference Room
Feb 9	Shorekeeper Meeting* 3 PM, ES Chamber of Commerce, Melfa	Feb 15	Board of Zoning Appeals 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Feb 7	Planning Commission 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Feb 21	ES Groundwater Committee 10 AM, Accomac	Feb 15	Board of Supervisors 6 PM, BOS Chambers	Feb 14	Board of Supervisors 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Feb 21	CBES Board Meeting 7 PM, Eastville	Feb 21	School Board 7 PM, BOS Chambers	Feb 15	Wetlands Board TBA, Conference Room
		Feb 23	Wetlands Board 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Feb 28	School Board 5:30 PM, Sup. Chambers
				Feb 28	BOS Work Session 7 PM, Sup. Chambers

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

www.cbes.org