

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

SHORELINE

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TM

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Ethical and Sustainable Issues Highlighted at Poultry Forum

by Sue Mastyl

A town hall meeting on “CAFOs, Economics and Public Health,” hosted by Preserve Our Shores and Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP) on November 10 at the Eastern Shore Community College, was attended by approximately 50 citizens from both counties. Maria Payan, a consultant for SRAP and Executive Director of Peach Bottom Concerned Citizens Group, moderated the forum.

Sustainable Farming Highlighted

The evening began with a presentation by Matt Wechsler and Annie Speicher of Hourglass Films, makers of the award-winning documentary “Sustainable,” with a goal to “reconnect to our food supply.” Wechsler and Speicher are self-described “passionate foodies,” who likened “what’s happening in these counties” where our food is produced to “third-world conditions.” They showed a short film centered on Kewaunee County, Wisconsin, with 100,000 dairy cows and 20,000 people. The film cited large manure spills, lax enforcement, and a lack of implementation of nutrient management plans. It argues for a more sustainable way of farming, with rotational grazing, where the manure is directly deposited from the cows, rather than trucked to remote fields, and with a “living wage for a family.”

Lisa Inzerillo, a fourth-generation farm owner near Princess Anne,

Maryland, described living surrounded by 96 large poultry houses within a three-mile radius, and noted that with all these poultry operations, Somerset County is the poorest county in Maryland.

“We’ve turned our rural communities into dumping grounds.” – John Ikerd, PhD

Craig Watts, a former contract grower for Perdue Chicken and consultant for SRAP who received the 2015 Whistleblower of the Year award, also cited the economics: “my county is the poorest county in North Carolina; they got the life sucked out of them,” he said. Watts challenged the notion that industrial-scale agriculture “was supposed to provide cheap food and feed the world – it’s not true.”

Impact on Communities

Doug Gurian-Sherman, PhD, Director of Sustainable Agriculture and Senior Scientist for the Center for Food Safety, focused on “putting a human face on what this type of agriculture does to communities.” In the Midwest, he said, 40% of wells have too much nitrate; “it’s not just Flint, Michigan, but also rural America.”

Although the grain and the resulting meat are sold as high-quality and low-cost, the underlying subsidies belie this. Long-term grain subsidies were started in the FDR administra-

tion, he noted, to mitigate the “vagaries of crop agriculture.” Now with larger farms, we don’t need the subsidies, and “taxpayers are subsidizing a destructive kind of farming,” in which the adverse effects “are not reflected in the price of meat.”

Gurian-Sherman referred to the current industrial system as “economic blackmail,” noting that these are low-paying, dangerous jobs, and that localities are accepting concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) instead of real economic development, and sacrificing tourism dollars as a result. He argued that we can grow food more sustainably. Rather than integrating livestock and crop farming on a wide scale, “we’ve turned a valuable element – manure – into a toxic substance.”

See Poultry Forum, cont’d on p. 2

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CBES, Dandelions, and *ShoreLine*

By Donna Bozza, Executive Director

It's winter, but I have been thinking about dandelions. I grew up viewing these flowers as pesky weeds as I spent many a childhood summer on bended knee attempting to yank them out with my Olive Oyl "muscles." My Philadelphia-raised father believed his sacred suburban lawn should be an uninterrupted carpet of lush green. Environmental awareness wasn't what it is now back then, though at least his removal methods were organic – the free labor force of his four children.

I learned how tough dandelions are hands-on. A nearly one foot long taproot keeps them firmly rooted in terra firma. You can rough up a dandelion. But even damaged, any part of the taproot that remains in the ground will regenerate and grow right back. That's tenacity.

I liken a similar tenacity to the longevity of grassroots organizations like Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore. Our taproot is our roots that run deep in the community we love and have served for an amazing 29 years.

Nearly three decades!

At the dawn of 2017, CBES mission continues to guide our work


in promoting balanced growth, enhancing the quality of life of all our citizens, and preserving our natural and cultural resources.

CBES mission is in many ways broad. Long before being CBES Executive Director, as a member I respected the variety of campaigns CBES had tackled, from supporting educational initiatives and monitoring water quality to advocating for affordable housing and open government.

We believe having such a comprehensive mission has been CBES strength and a key to our longevity. It has allowed us the fluidity to address the needs of our diverse community, the pressing needs as well as the developing ones.

Central to our success in serving you has been *ShoreLine*, CBES monthly news journal, which also turns 29 this year. As the local media's capacity to cover our community continues to shrink, the need for *ShoreLine* increases. *ShoreLine* has always been an independent voice providing information and in-depth analysis on a broad range of issues that impact Accomack and Northampton counties.

We are proud of CBES work, the steadfast efforts of our board, and a small but committed staff. And like the humble dandelion, our grassroots organization endures because of strong roots. And that, my friends, is you, our loyal CBES members.

Happy New Year & Godspeed 

Poultry Forum, Cont'd from p. 1


Ethics vs. Economics

The final speaker, John Ikerd, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri, said he's seen "both sides of the issue" as an agricultural economist. He referred to CAFOs as part of the "larger battle of ideas" in this country, which will "ultimately determine the future of farming and the food system."

Ikerd contrasted the power of industrial agriculture (which is "far more like factories than like farms") with the power of the people. "It's a question of ethics and morality, and of how we should treat each other, the land, and the animals."

He referred to agricultural subsidies as a "noble experiment" that "simply didn't work." More people are food-insecure, affordable food is making people sick, and soils are depleted, with decreased nutrient density. He also cited mistreatment of workers, decreased quality of life for neighbors, and impaired waterways.

"We've turned our rural communities into dumping grounds," he said; "you get to choose between a prison, a landfill, a toxic waste dump, or a CAFO." He added that the "science is overwhelming," with multiple meta-studies showing unacceptable risks to public health and the environment, and adverse socioeconomic effects.

To change the system, he continued, will require not increased productivity, but sustainability. "What's required is a fundamentally different system," Ikerd said. We can't "continue to allow the rights of someone to make money to take precedence over basic human rights." He called for a national moratorium on CAFOs and a nationwide right-to-farm bill that would supersede state laws and exclude CAFOs. 

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Groundwater Forum Highlights Challenges for Wells and Septic Systems

by Sue Mastyl

About 25 citizens of both counties braved the cold and rain to attend the Eastern Shore Wells and Septic Forum, sponsored by the Eastern Shore Groundwater Committee on December 6 at the Eastern Shore Community College.

Groundwater Issues

Shannon Alexander of the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission hosted the forum; she provided a brief overview of the aquifers on the Eastern Shore – the shallow Columbia aquifer (15 to 60 feet) and the deeper Upper Yorktown-Eastover and Middle Yorktown-Eastover aquifers (up to 350 feet), with confining layers between each aquifer. She added, “Eighty-four percent of the precipitation never infiltrates into groundwater;” The net recharge is five to six inches per year into the Columbia aquifer, with only 0.05 inch per year into the Yorktown-Eastover aquifers.

Alexander reviewed withdrawal issues for groundwater, noting that there are currently 70 permits, most including multiple wells, for groundwater withdrawal (required for more than 30,000 gallons per month) on the Eastern Shore of Virginia – 46 for irrigation, 12 for public water utilities, and 12 for industrial/commercial users. The latest figures for 2014 showed permitted levels of 4.7, 2.1, and 3.7 million gallons per day (MGD), for a total of 10.5 MGD, for agricultural, public, and industrial users (respectively), and actual usage levels of 1.1, 3.7, and 1.0 MGD, respectively, with a total of 5.8 MGD. However, usage varies from year to year depending on seasonal rainfall. Although the E. S. Groundwater Committee encourages use of the Columbia aquifer for irrigation, most current permits are for the Yorktown-Eastover, with only 61 wells currently permitted in the Columbia aquifer.

There are 12 U.S. Geological Survey wells located throughout the shore, which were sampled in 2008 and again in 2016. A small amount of salinity was seen with the latest survey, which could be due to storm surges or lateral movement into the freshwater lens. Alexander indicated that they are hoping to increase the sampling to every year, and will be asking for funding from the Boards of Supervisors for both counties.

Challenges for Wells

Jimmy Bundick, President of Bundick Well and Pump, reviewed some of the challenges of drilling wells on the Eastern Shore. Drilling through the Columbia aquifer, he said, is “very tough, with sand and gravel; there’s a blue clay layer that’s 5 to 50 feet thick, about 30 to 90 feet

down. We call it ‘marsh mud’; it’s very sticky, and hard to drill through.” Screening is critical on wells, in order to not pump sand. Well failure is usually due to blockage of the screening, and in most cases a new well has to be dug.

Bundick reviewed a couple of common issues with wells. He noted that the pressure switch has to be replaced approximately every 10 years, but should be done professionally, since it’s important to balance the air in the tank in order to set the pressure properly. He described a do-it-yourself hand pump that can be put down the well to a static level of about 30 feet, to be used in case of power failure; plans for this can be obtained by contacting Bundick. Finally, he noted that if a wellhead is covered by stormwater, whether from storm surge or inland flooding, the well should be cleaned out and chlorinated thoroughly to prevent bacterial contamination; this should also be handled professionally.

Challenges for Septic Systems

Jon Richardson, Environmental Health Manager Senior for the Eastern Shore Health District (ESHD), reviewed the requirements for conventional and alternative septic systems, noting that the latter allow for development of previously undeveloped parcels “due to a high seasonal water table.” Because of these locations, he added, these systems have a “higher potential to contaminate environmentally sensitive areas if they fail.” The alternative systems also require maintenance at least yearly (because they have “more moving parts”); however, of the 1,006 systems on the Eastern Shore, only 192 (19%) have ever received any maintenance, according to Health Department records.

Potential Changes for Health Department

Richardson described the potential impacts of HB558, which “directs the State Health Commissioner to develop a plan to eliminate evaluation and design services by the Department of Health for onsite sewage systems and private wells,” and which passed both houses of the General Assembly unanimously (although both Del. Bloxom and Sen. Lewis expressed concerns) and was signed by the Governor in 2016. The bill provides recommendations only; further legislation will be needed in order to implement the plan.

Richardson noted that ESHD issues an average of 660 well and septic permits and reviews approximately 540 building permits each year, with three staff members dedicated to these services. If the plan was implemented, these would transfer to two private Authorized Onsite Soil Evaluators (AOSEs) on the Shore; although there are also

See Groundwater Forum, cont’d on p. 4

A Look Back at 2016

As we begin a new year, *ShoreLine* takes a look back at some significant issues on the desks of the Boards of Supervisors of each Shore county – some resolved and some still on their desks. This month, we cover Northampton.

Northampton County Supervisors:

- ✓ Began a county management restructuring; released the long time County Administrator and abolished the position of Director of Economic and Community Development.
- ✓ Adopted Zoning Ordinance amendments that removed most restrictions on Commercial and Industrial District uses, clarified the intent of residential districts and preserved Working Waterfronts.
- ✓ Adopted new protections to mitigate the impacts of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) on natural resources and residential areas.
- ✓ Began the planning and funding process for construction of a new high school complex.
- ✓ Initiated a funding plan for additional EMS staff and vehicles to assure timely ambulance response for County residents because of increased travel distance and turn-around times to emergency rooms in Onley or Virginia Beach.



Groundwater Forum, Cont'd from p. 3

three professional engineers on the Shore, their fees would probably be too high. He indicated that the fees for these services could be increased significantly; the current fee for review of a repair or upgrade is up to \$100; this would increase with private services to \$1,150 to \$1,550 for a septic system and \$565 for a well. Similarly, review of a new well and septic currently is \$325 to \$850; this would increase to \$600 to \$1,200. Building permit reviews, which are currently free, would cost \$750. The risk is that repairs, which are critical in rural areas, will be postponed or not done at all.

In addition to the higher fees, Richardson expressed concern that the two AOSEs would not be able to keep up with the workload, and would approve permit applications that could be questionable. “The Health Department acts in the best interest of the public health and the environment,” he noted; “the private sector is profit-driven.” One element of the plan would mandate that the Health Department will inspect 100% of installed septic systems, but will only conduct site visits prior to issuing permits for 10%, which could lead to conflicts if permits are issued and systems are built incorrectly or in environmentally sensitive areas.



Northampton County

Rural Counties Work to Find New Local Revenue Sources

Northampton Needs a New High School

By Mary Miller

Community infrastructure, schools, courts, and government offices are funded, for the most part, by local tax revenue – primarily real estate and personal property taxes. Counties could fund a new school by (a) raising tax rates across the board to pay-as-you-go; (b) borrowing through bonds for long-term debt repayment, which might still need a tax rate increase; (c) hoping for grants and proffers; or (d) attracting new industry and increasing the tax revenue stream. Most rural communities would prefer option (d).

But it’s an uncomfortable observation that private sector, tax revenue-producing industries generally don’t locate in rural communities – due to a lack of transportation options, a small, often low-skilled workforce, insufficient communication infrastructure, etc. The chart on page 5 illustrates this reality, illustrating private vs. public industry sectors, with the latter usually prevailing.

The counties listed were chosen by Davenport & Co. for comparison purposes in their Comprehensive Financial Review to the Northampton County Board of Supervisors. Common to most of the counties listed is that their top employers and industries are local and state governments and non-profits, including health care facilities – all of which provide needed employment, but which are also exempt from local taxes and provide no tax revenue stream.

In spite of that, all of the counties listed are repaying debt incurred for government facilities through local tax revenue – nearly all are paying for schools. Northampton County is repaying debt, about \$3 million every year, for government and court buildings and a regional jail. The dilemma now facing the Board is whether, or how, to take on more debt for a high school – can residents afford it?

Attracting new private sector industry to help pay the bills may be the same old hopeful rhetoric. County commercial and industrial parcels languish on the market, even though new zoning allows most business uses by right. But still no takers. The chart below does offer some useful guidance and good news. Most of the private sector industries listed by county often rely on the natural and human resources available in rural communities – seafood and farm production, small specialty manufacturing, tourism services and resorts, and the retail trade generated by these two industries. Northampton has these industries – and they’re growing. Rural localities have nurtured and expanded these private sector industries to help provide additional revenue to fund county services.

See *Revenue Sources*, Cont'd on page 5

Revenue Sources, Cont'd from p. 4

For at least a decade, studies and reports have urged Northampton County to make better use of its unique resources to expand its economy. Now a financial report has illustrated how comparative counties are doing exactly that.

Editor's note: Although some "Health Care" including the "Hospital" will be eliminated from the county, the next largest industry sector is the seafood industry.



County- Population**- Per Capita Income***	Top 5 Employers*	Top 5 Industry Sectors*
Northampton Pop. 12,176 Per Capita Income-\$23,233	Hospital—School Dist—Bayshore Concrete—Northampton Cty—CBBT	Health Care—Local Govt—Agriculture—Manufacturing—Tourism Services
Accomack Pop. 33,516 Per Capita Income-\$22,766	Perdue—Tyson—School Dist—Accomack Cty—NASA	Poultry Processing—Local Govt— Retail Trade—Health Care—Prof. Services
Essex Pop. 10,914 Per Capita Income-\$23,795	Hospital—School Dist—WalMart—brake mfg—Essex Cty	Retail Trade—Health Care—Local Govt—Manufacturing—Tourism Services
Greene Pop. 19,840 Per Capita Income-\$24,969	School Dist—WalMart—Greene Cty—outsourcing firm—Lowe's Home Ctr.	Local Govt—Retail Trade—Health Care—Tourism Services—Professional Services
Lancaster Pop. 11,297 Per Capita Income-\$29,275	Hospital—School Dist—Retirement Home—WalMart—Lancaster Cty	Health Care—Retail Trade—Local Govt—Tourism Services—Construction
Madison Pop. 13,099 Per Capita Income-\$26,081	Plow & Hearth—School Dist—private boarding school—Madison Cty—nursing home	Retail Trade—Local Govt—Health Care—Manufacturing—Construction
Middlesex Pop. 11,082 Per Capita Income-\$28,593	Mental Health Ctr—School Dist—Home Health Care—Middlesex Cty—Hospital	Local gov't—Retail Trade—Health Care—Tourism Services—Construction
Nelson Pop. 14,993 Per Capita Income-\$26,996	Wintergreen Resort—School Dist—Nelson Cty—Brewing Co—Health Care Ctr	Tourism Services—Local Govt—Manufacturing—Health Care—Agriculture
New Kent Pop. 20,468 Per Capita Income-\$31,741	School Dist—excavation firm—Hospital—New Kent Cty—Food Lion	Construction—Local Govt—Health Care—Retail Trade—Tourism Services
Northumberland Pop. 12,220 Per Capita Income-\$28,646	School District—sensor mfg firm—Northumberland Cty—Omega Protein—seafood co	Manufacturing—Local Govt—Retail Trade—Construction—Other service industries
Southampton Pop. 18,551 Per Capita Income-\$21,201	School Dist—State Prison—Southampton Cty—fabric mfg—wood pellet mfg	Local Govt—State Govt—Manufacturing—Health Care—Retail Trade
Westmoreland Pop. 17,725 Per Capita Income-\$27,801	School Dist—trailer mfg—Westmoreland Cty—Town School Dist—oyster co.	Local Govt—Manufacturing—Retail Trade—Tourism Services—Health Care

*Derived from "Community Profiles", VEC, 2016 **2015 population estimates from Weldon-Cooper, UVA-- *** US Census



Happy
New Year

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2017



Keeping Track

Northampton Bay Act Change

When a Public Notice contained the two phrases, “setback may be reduced” and “resource protection area buffer”, it caught the attention of a lot of folks in the county. Board Chairman Murray admitted that the legal wording might have been confusing, but when the dust settled, both the intent and the impacts of the change had been made clear.

The change will reduce the number of administrative waivers for intrusion into the Bay Act buffer, which is allowed under certain circumstances especially for existing small lots, by allowing a reduction to the front yard setback. This would allow *less* intrusion into the waterfront buffer by permitting structures to be placed closer to roads. The waiver will apply only to lots eligible for waivers, for principal structures, and require at least a 50’ setback from roadways.

To further reduce confusion, an intent statement, suggested by a private citizen, which clarifies that the purpose of the change is to reduce waterfront buffer intrusion, was included in the modification. Intent statements, which define the purposes of various zoning districts and requirements, are an integral part of the county’s Zoning Code.

Tourism—big business and getting bigger every year

No question about it—tourism is a big and growing industry in both counties on the Eastern Shore. For many of the last several years the region has outstripped the increased tourism numbers for Virginia, and has been #1 or #2 in increased annual tourist spending. This translates directly to more employment for residents, more sales for local businesses and more revenue for both counties’ coffers. The bottom lines for 2015:

- Accomack County had tourism expenditures of more than \$185.2

million, up 2.5%; increased employment to 2,103, up 2.9%; and increased local tax revenue to \$5.6 million, up 5.9%.


- Northampton County had tourism expenditures of more than \$75.9 million, up 3%; increased employment to 808, up 3.4%; and increased local tax revenue to \$1.5 million, up 6.4%.

A combination of a perfect recreational environment, the small town atmosphere, a thriving arts community and some of the best food and hospitality anywhere, all combine to make Virginia’s Eastern Shore an ideal tourist destination.

Northampton: Help Wanted

As part of the Board of Supervisor’s staff management restructuring, the position of Director of Economic and Community Development has been abolished. According to Board Chair Murray, in spite of the hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars invested, results produced by past Directors “have been dismal, at best.” Although the Director’s position involved management of the planning and zoning staff for the county, the job description required no expertise in either of those areas. According to published reports, neither of the two past Directors, both hired by a former County Administrator, had land use planning or zoning administration skills or experience.

The County has accepted applications “for a highly qualified and experienced Director of Planning, Permitting & Enforcement”. The successful candidate will be required to have a Bachelor’s degree in a relevant discipline and five years of professional experience. A Professional Engineer (P.E.) certification or a Master’s degree in planning or a related field is preferred. Several professional state management and review certifications will be required as a condition of employment.

The new Director will not only manage the planning, zoning, permitting, building inspection and code compliance responsibilities of the county, but will also be expected to advise and consult “with appropriate officials, commissions, department heads, staff agencies, developers, civic or private groups, and individuals on problems, strategies, policies, and procedures related to planning.” 



Danhof VanDyke

Dan VanDyke passed away on October 2, 2016. He was the consummate volunteer – quiet, unassuming, agreeable and almost always available.

He began working with *ShoreLine* distribution in the late 1990s shortly after his retirement as Postmaster in Cape Charles. He often brought freshly made coffee cake to encourage the seven or eight volunteers in their folding, wafering, labeling and counting. He continued to work with *ShoreLine* distribution until 2014.

He also worked at the Bike Tour and Pig Roast until health problems prevented his participation. At the Bike Tour he helped mark the bike route, shuttle supplies, ladle chowder at the Oyster Roast and with the several days of cleanup following the event.

In his quiet way, Dan Van Dyke was the kind of person that CBES and many other community organizations depend upon – doing the background work, often unacknowledged, that allows those organizations to achieve their goals. He will be missed.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Community Unity Day Celebration

ONE DREAM . . . ONE WORLD ONE COMMUNITY . . . A DAY ON NOT A DAY OFF

SPONSORS:

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY CHAPTER NAACP

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Friends:

The celebration of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday is attributed not to one man or to one race, but to principles that are universal. To remember Dr. King is to affirm the nonviolent pursuit of freedom, justice, and equal opportunity for all. In that spirit, the citizens of Northampton County (Virginia) will again join to celebrate Dr. King's ideals and to recognize the progress our community has made toward those ideals.

This year's 26th Annual Community Unity Breakfast will be held on January 16, 2017, at 8:30 a.m. in the cafeteria of Northampton High School. Tickets are \$6.00 for adults and no charge for students. The featured speaker for the breakfast will be the Reverend Jeffery L. Smith, pastor of the New Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Exmore.

As always, the focus will be on the youth of the community. The Eastern Shore Community Services Network, Inc., and Optima Family Care, will coordinate a health booth on information relevant to health education and prevention. In addition, Voter Registration will also be avail-

able. Attendees are asked to bring non-perishable foods for the needy. A special commemorative souvenir booklet will be sold to help fund this event.

The breakfast will be followed by the 26th Annual Unity Walk, which is dedicated to "Walking for Good Health." Participants will walk to the Eastville Courthouse grounds, where the speaker will be Reverend Russell Goodrich, pastor of Cape Charles Baptist Church.

Participants in the walk to the Eastville Courthouse are strongly encouraged to wear warm clothing and comfortable shoes. Please join us in this celebration of unity.

Jane Cabarrus

President Northampton County Chapter NAACP

Please remember to bring a non-perishable food item to help those in our community who are needy.

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SHORELINE

Community Calendar - January 2017

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

CBES and Other Activities		Accomack County		Northampton County	
Jan 4	VIMS Public Seminar 7:30 PM, Wachapreague	Jan 4	Board of Zoning Appeals 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 2	Board of Zoning Appeals 1 PM, Conference Room
Jan 9	CBES Exec. Committee 5 PM, CBES Office	Jan 11	Planning Commission 7 PM, BOS Chambers	Jan 3	Planning Commission 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Jan 12	Shorekeeper Meeting* 3 PM, Barrier Islands Center, Machipongo	Jan 17	School Board 7 PM, BOS Chambers	Jan 10	Board of Supervisors 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Jan 16	Community Unity 8:30 AM, Eastville	Jan 18	Board of Supervisors 6 PM, BOS Chambers	Jan 18	Wetlands Board TBA, Conference Room
Jan 17	ES Groundwater Committee 10 AM, Accomac	Jan 19	Wetlands Board 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 24	School Board 5:30 PM, Sup. Chambers
Jan 17	CBES Board Meeting 7 PM, Eastville			Jan 24	BOS Work Session 7 PM, Sup. Chambers

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

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