



CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

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Housing for Shore Workers

The Conversation Continues

By Mary Miller

The shortage of moderate-priced housing for the Shore workforce has been a concern for several years. It has been exacerbated by the conversion of scores of rental units from yearly leases to short-term rentals to accommodate the tourism industry. The community has organized workshops, done surveys and studies, hired consultants, produced hundreds of pages of analysis, permitted accessory dwelling-unit construction, appointed committees, sought state and Federal funding – and both counties are still short of reasonably priced workforce housing.

Why?

The tourism rental industry takes a lot of the blame for the shortage of reasonably priced long-term rentals – several studies and surveys confirm this. Some point to low-density zoning in Agricultural lands outside the Towns and Villages; others complain about the lack of local government initiatives. The reality of the shortage of available infrastructure – chiefly central water and sewer – leaves only some of the towns able and/or willing to support higher-density, multi-family housing. Something lost in the small print of the plans, studies, surveys, and analyses is another of the biggest reasons for little moderate-priced rental unit construction – the lack of private investment capital. In a community with few builders, especially an area with a booming tourism and second-home economy, why would builders or developers choose to invest in below-market-rate rentals?



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

What Type of Housing Does the Shore Need?

It depends who you ask. Over the past 5 years, the number of housing units labeled “affordable” has declined drastically.¹ Northampton has over 50% fewer affordable units, and Accomack has 65% fewer units, than in 2018. So the need for truly “affordable” units has increased – units where tenants pay no more than 30% of household income for rent/mortgage and utilities. These units are almost always subsidized and have rents based on income. The need for mid-price, unsubsidized units has also reached a crisis – rental housing for teachers, business and restaurant staff, public service workers, etc. is almost non-existent.

According to a recent study, Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Housing Study March 2022, published by the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (A-NPDC),² on the state of housing in the 2 counties, the answers on the types of housing needed varied by category.

Business owners listed priorities: 4-apartment rental units for middle-income tenants; up to 10-unit apartment rental units for lower-income tenants, with rent based on

income; and 10-plus apartment rental units for middle-income tenants.

Landlord priorities were divided by county: Accomack landlords listed 4-unit apartment buildings for low-income and elderly tenants with rent based on income as priorities, and more rentals and home ownership for medium- and high-end households. Northampton landlords prioritized rental and ownership units for low-income and elderly households with rent/mortgage based on income, followed by up to 10-unit apartment buildings for middle- and upper-income households, and also income-based rental units for disabled persons.

Resident surveys in both counties had very straightforward priorities – new rental housing with or without rental assistance, senior housing, and home ownership.

See Housing, Cont'd on p. 3

Contents

Housing for Shore Workers	1
A Decade of Remembrances.....	2
General Assembly Wrap-Up	4
Water Quality Issues Raised for Captain's Cove	4
Recycling Corner.....	6
Recipe: Tangier Island Corn Pudding.....	6
Water Wise Home Challenge: Why You Should Pick Up After Your Pet.....	7
Funding Available for Living Shoreline Projects.....	7

A Decade of Remembrances: An Interview With CBES Outgoing President

CBES Executive Director, Donna Bozza, recently interviewed Arthur Upshur about his role as CBES President.

Donna: How long have you been President of CBES?

Arthur: I think I have been President of CBES for the last 10 years, something hard for even me to fathom completely. There is only 1 current Board member who was on the Board when I first became President.

Donna: You were President during some critical times for CBES.

Arthur: When I first started on the Board, we were on our 2nd year of adjustment after the Cary Foundation Grant ended, which was a \$25,000 annual award that funded much of the early efforts of CBES. It had allowed CBES to have a fairly secure existence, and to focus a lot more on organization and programs than on fundraising. CBES had run an annual deficit ever since, which was not sustainable. In one of my first Board meetings, I asked, “What is the plan to change that trajectory?” It was the exact question that others, particularly Jack Humphreys, wanted answered too. He was probably the reason they put me on the Executive Committee, to help develop a solution.

My first reaction was to stabilize the organization within its current

resources. So we reduced expenses everywhere. Staff salaries were reduced and many of our practices were changed, much to the discomfort of what was a proud and confident organization. But we survived that year, and during the next, Nancy Holcomb asked me to replace her as President of CBES. I remember Jack Ordeman telling me, “You only need to be in the role a year or 2, just until we get things stabilized financially, then you can step down.”

That turned out to be either a great sales technique, or one of Jack’s greatest misjudgements. When I became president, there were a lot of people, including several Board members, who believed that CBES had served its purpose and that this type of local organization could never be supported by such a small community as the Eastern Shore. It was the beginning of the raw political rancor so ubiquitous in our world today.

I just re-read some of my annual fundraising letters over the years. The letters had a recurring theme that I still believe in. For me, the Eastern Shore is a special place with a more strongly developed sense of place than is common in most communities. Maybe it is our sense of history, or how tightly bound many are to this place, but the fact is, we look out for each other, we support each other in times of trouble, and we have a fierce determination to protect this special place and make it better.

CBES plays an important role in informing citizens truthfully on the issues at hand, serving as a broker for ideas, and acting as a conduit for citizen action. Even if we disagree, we are all still neighbors in the end. We all still love this place and want it to be “better” in the future. In any case, I always felt that CBES still played an important role. I love the way Polk Kellam once said, “Where would we be without CBES? – we have to find

a way to keep this work going.” That belief became even more emphatic as our world changed in ways that make it so much harder to work together effectively, e.g., through social media, the reduction in civility of discourse, the personal-attack style of argument, the acceptance of dishonesty, and misdirection in debates as “normal.”

Our Board had seemingly unending discussions of potential next steps. When Denard Spady announced he was retiring, we decided it was time to take more risk again, hire a full-time Director, and rebuild the organization to do more, to play a larger role supporting a “better Eastern Shore.”

We hired you, Donna. I am pretty proud that I somehow convinced you to join us, despite no clear ability to fund your salary much beyond 6 months. I still think hiring you was the key to CBES success. We broadened and enlarged the Bike Tour under your marketing leadership into a much larger fundraiser. We kept up getting local support for our efforts, raising more money than anyone had thought possible. If Jack were still around, 10 years after his statement to me, I might be able to tell him that we are finally stabilized financially!

Donna: What are you most proud of or what are your favorite times as President of CBES?

Arthur: My best memories are from when we honored some long-time CBES contributors. I so enjoyed celebrating Mary Miller in front of her family for all she has done for *ShoreLine* and the Shore. I have fond memories of celebrating Jack Ordeman and Denard Spady for all they gave back to the Eastern Shore. At our last picnic, I finally got to recognize Mike Peirson, who probably had more to do with saving CBES, since he gave Donna and me time to find new ways to make it all work.

See Remembrances, Cont'd on p. 3

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General Assembly Wrap-Up

By Sue Mastyl

In contrast with last year's session (see June 2021 *ShoreLine*, "General Assembly Makes Further Progress for the Environment"), the environmental impacts from this year are a mixed bag, as listed below.

Environmental Protections

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act – H771 mandates that Tidewater localities must publish on their website their water-quality protection plans as required by the Act.

Citizen boards – In one of the most controversial moves, SB657 transfers authority to issue permits from the Air Pollution Control Board and the State Water Control Board to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and limits the authority of these Boards to issuing regulations. The bill does preserve the public comment/public hearing process, under the auspices of DEQ.

Flood protections – SB551 implements recommendations from the first Coastal Resilience Master Plan; establishes a Virginia Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee; provides guidelines for development of a Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan; and requires that the Coastal Resilience Master Plan be updated by December 31, 2022, and every 5 years thereafter.

Living shorelines – H1322 amended the previous definition of living shorelines to define "other structural and organic materials" as materials "that provide added protection or stability ... and do not interfere with natural coastal processes or the ... land-water interface."

Nutria – HB65 removes existing prohibitions against possession, sale, or liberation of nutria from employees of the Department of Wildlife Resources. Although this would seem counterintuitive when the goal is to eradicate these animals because of their impact on wetlands, wildlife officials need to "possess" them in order to collect urine and fecal samples to use in lures, and to "liberate" them to release the animals (with telemetry attached) to catch other animals.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) – HB892 establishes a reserve account for preexisting contracts before May 16, 2017, with a discounted rate. Although an attempt to repeal the 2020 RGGI act failed, Gov. Youngkin has indicated he will try to do this through executive action. RGGI proceeds are invested in energy-efficiency improvements (\$196 million in 2020) and flood resiliency projects (\$136 million in 2020).

SB756 creates the Resilient Virginia Revolving Load Fund for \$25 million of the proceeds, to provide loans and grants for resiliency projects.

Septic system pump-out – HB769 transfers oversight of pump-outs (required every 5 years) from the counties to

the Department of Health, effective July 1, 2023, and adds a web-based reporting system for licensed operators.

Solar and wind farms – HB206 directs DEQ to develop regulations and guidelines for mitigation plans, required for projects that disturb more than 10 acres of prime agricultural land, more than 50 acres of contiguous forest lands, or land in a forestry preservation program.

SB499 creates a task force to analyze the life cycle of renewable energy facilities, with a report due by May 1, 2023.

Other Issues

Bicycle laws – SB362 prohibits those riding bicycles or other personal devices from riding 2 abreast if it impedes "the normal and reasonable movement of traffic," and requires them to change to single-file formation when being overtaken from the rear.

Broadband – HB1265 calls for the creation of a Digital Affordability and Cost Effective Plan, which will allow the state to access up to \$600 million in federal infrastructure funds to make broadband more affordable, and will include the creation of a broadband affordability map and a plan by December 1, 2022.

Hunting – SB8 allows hunting on Sundays as long as hunters stay 200 yards from a house of worship.

Budget Decisions

In addition to legislation, many of the General Assembly's impacts actually come from the 2-year budget.

Eastern Shore investments – These include \$200,000 for a gas pipeline study; \$1.5 million for the Chincoteague inlet study; \$11.9 million toward the Hampton Roads Sanitation District sewer project (\$4.5 million for Accomac, \$3.5 million for Exmore, \$2.4 million for Wachapreague, and \$1.5 million for Parksley); \$5 million for a new dredging project fund for the Eastern Shore and the Middle Peninsula; \$350,000 for the new library; and \$114,000 for the new facility for the Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Education – The budget includes \$1.7 million for Accomack and Northampton counties to increase teacher salaries by 5%, plus a \$1,000 bonus; lifts the cap on support personnel; and provides \$1.25 billion for school construction (which currently has a \$18 billion backlog).

Environmental investments – These include full support for agricultural conservation programs (\$280 million, plus \$15.9 million in the 3rd year); \$40.6 million for forest and stormwater management; \$25 million for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund; \$700,000 for environmental literacy, plus \$500,000 to provide students with meaningful Chesapeake Bay watershed educational experiences; and \$93 million for trails.

Housing – The budget includes \$150 million for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, for affordable housing; and \$255 million for a new housing tax credit program, including 30% for rural areas.

See **General Assembly**, *Cont'd on p. 5*

Water Quality Issues Raised for Captain's Cove

By Sue Mastyl

Over the past few months, residents from Captain's Cove have spoken at meetings for the Accomack County Planning Commission, the Accomack County Board of Supervisors, and the Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee (GWC), to raise concerns over water quality in the community. At the June 21 GWC meeting, Dixon Tucker of the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water, provided an overview of the issue.



Tucker noted that the first Waterworks Operation Permit was issued to First Charter Land Corp. in 1975, for 25 connections. In 2004, the development was sold to Captains Cove Group LLC, with Captains Cove Utility Company running the water and sewer system. By 2008, 752 connections were recorded. Aqua Virginia purchased the water system in 2015. Currently, there are 1,257 homes in the community; half of these are full-time residents.

Of the 4,897 lots in the community, 3,519 have water lines available. Water pipes in the system range in diameter from 2.5 to 10 inches, with 6-inch pipes representing the highest proportion (41,600 of the 103,050 feet) in the system.

Tucker noted that the Office of Drinking Water has received numerous complaints concerning the taste, odor, and color of the water. In 2018, he took samples throughout the system, and noted a magenta color in some samples. Paul Muhly, GWC Chairman, noted that water-quality testing is being conducted for 27 Captain's Cove residents. Britt McMillan, Principal Hydrogeologist for Arcadis and GWC Consultant, suggested that the color could be the result of biofilm buildup in the pipes. Although Muhly suggested that the households with poor water quality were scattered throughout the community, Tucker noted that "quite a few of the residents with poor water quality were on the 10-inch line," adding that 10 inches might be too big and would not allow proper flushing.

Muhly also discussed a recent survey of the residents; of the approximately 600 full-time residents, 231 have completed the survey online and 93 have completed a door-to-door survey. Preliminary results for 229 online respondents include:

- 181 (79%) said they don't use the tap water for drinking.
- 67 (29%) have installed a water treatment system.
- Only 102 (45%) use the tap water for food preparation.

The data are currently being compiled, and results are being mapped to determine specific areas of concern.



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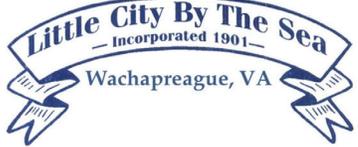
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General Assembly, Cont'd from p. 4

Polystyrene (Styrofoam) containers – Budget language will delay implementation of last year's ban by 5 years, from 2023 to 2028 for large restaurants and food vendors, and from 2025 to 2030 for all businesses.

Taxes – The budget includes a one-time tax rebate of \$250 for individuals and \$500 for couples, an almost 80% increase in the standard deduction for state income taxes, and elimination of the state's share (1.5%) of the grocery tax.



RECYCLING CORNER

By Sue Mastyl

Recycling on the Road

As we head out for our summer vacations, it's worth continuing recycling practices on the road. Leaving home doesn't mean leaving recycling habits behind. At an airport or a hotel, look for recycle bins. If they don't have them, ask why not. Other ways to lower your impact:

- Read and return – over 100 airports have stores, owned by Paradies Lagardère, where you'll get a 50% refund if you return a book within 6 months to any location.
- Don't use the airline's disposable earbuds – bring your own.
- Bring your own water bottle, instead of buying plastic water bottles. (They even make collapsible ones!)
- Bring your own utensils and straw – travel sets are available for under \$10.
- Pack a foldable tote bag – many cities and states have now banned plastic bags, and we shouldn't be using them anyway.
- Buy a TSA-approved reusable toiletry bag, rather than a ziplock bag – it won't wear out so often.
- Don't use the hotel's plastic laundry bag – bring your own mesh bag for soiled or wet laundry to bring home.
- Turn down the "turn-down" – let the hotel staff know you don't need new sheets and towels during your stay.
- Bring your own toiletries and soap, rather than using a bar of soap for only 1 or 2 nights.
- Don't print your boarding pass – just take a screenshot with your phone.

Finding Sustainable Businesses

Many businesses are starting to promote their sustainability practices:

- When planning your trip, search for eco-friendly hotels or short-term rentals at your destination. You can also search for eco-friendly tour operators.
- Use a carbon-footprint calculator to compare air travel versus driving.
- Yelp has partnered with Plastic Pollution Coalition to add searchable attributes such as "Plastic-free packaging," "Bring your own container allowed," "Compostable containers available," and "Provides reusable tableware" for restaurants.

Support Our National Parks

The Department of the Interior has begun phasing out single-use plastics (bottles, straws, cups, cutlery, bags, and food and beverage containers) in national parks, wildlife



Tangier Island Corn Pudding

Tangier Island – a remote community in the Chesapeake Bay accessible only by boat and small plane. Watermen, crabbing, commercial fishing, and a small tourism economy – all dependent on the bounty of the waters and the beauty of the island. Corn pudding is a side dish staple down our way. It's usually a light, almost delicate custard with eggs, fresh corn, and milk or cream. This recipe, based on recipes from old community cookbooks, appears to reflect the realities of isolated living in the '40s and '50s. While fresh corn and bottled milk may have been common on the mainland, island people relied more on canned goods. This sweet, somewhat dense pudding has a nice caramelized top – almost dessert with dinner.

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
- 2 eggs slightly beaten
- 1 tsp cornstarch
- 1 small can creamed corn
- 1 14-oz can evaporated milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick butter, melted

To beaten eggs, add sugar and cornstarch and mix well. Add milk and corn – stir to combine. Put in buttered 8 ½" x 11" baking dish – spoon warm butter over the top. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes at 400°. Pudding is done when knife inserted in center comes out clean.

The Kitchen Hive. Reprinted with permission: <https://www.talkrealnow.com/>



refuges, and other public lands over the next 10 years and replacing them with more sustainable products. The Department noted that the parks alone handle about 70 million pounds of plastic waste each year.

Sources:

Crunden EA. National parks to phase out single-use plastics. E&E News, June 8, 2022. <https://www.eenews.net/articles/national-parks-to-phase-out-single-use-plastics/>

Plastic Pollution Coalition. Yelp adds "plastic-free packaging" and more eco-friendly business attributes. April 13, 2022. <https://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/blog/yelpaddsplasticfreepackaging>

Stilwell K. 13 ways to recycle and reuse while traveling. Travelocity, Nov. 14, 2019. <https://www.travelocity.com/inspire/13-ways-to-recycle-and-reuse-while-traveling/>

Water Wise Home Challenge: Why You Should Pick Up After Your Pet

By Sue Mastyl

The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District (ESSWCD) has introduced the Water Wise Home Challenge (<https://www.esswcd.org/copy-of-scholarships>), with 9 challenges for folks to do more to help protect our water quality. Once you've adopted at least 3 of the action challenges, you can claim a yard flag or sign by contacting Julie.head@esswcd.org. Over the next 3 months, we'll reprint 3 of these challenges for our readers. We thank ESSWCD and Eastern Shore First for their permission.



If you have a pet, chances are you have pet waste. As unpleasant and time-consuming as pooper scooper duty may be, keeping doggie deposits off the ground is an important responsibility held by every pet owner. Here's why:

- Dog waste is an environmental pollutant. According to estimates by the EPA, 2 or 3 days' worth of droppings from a population of about 100 dogs can contribute enough bacteria to temporarily close a bay and all watershed areas within 20 miles of all swimming and shell-fishing.
- Pet byproducts can harm your health. Dog waste often carries parasites (such as roundworms) and bacteria that can be transmitted directly to humans and make them sick.
- Contaminated waste can make your pets sick. When pets are sick, contagions are typically passed through their deposits and into the yard. The longer infected waste stays on the ground, the greater the contamination becomes. When this waste is not picked up, pets have a high risk of catching infections over and over again.
- Rodents love pet waste. Dog poop is a common food source for rats and other rodents. Yuck!
- Dog waste is not fertilizer. Unlike herbivores, a dog's diet is made up of mostly animal products, making their waste unsuitable for soil enrichment.
- Mowing over doggie deposits doesn't solve the problem. Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not there.
- Children are especially at risk. When children are playing outside, they may not be washing their hands often. The bacteria and parasites found in dog droppings are most commonly passed to humans by touch.
- An unsightly mess. Nothing ruins a walk outdoors like little brown piles all over.

**So be a good neighbor, do your part,
and SCOOP THE POOP!**



Funding Available for Living Shoreline Projects

By George Mapp

Like other coastal Virginia locales, the Eastern Shore has been coping with shoreline erosion in a variety of ways over the years. Vertical retaining walls of wood, concrete, or stone have been deployed with varying degrees of success.

With recent changes in Virginia law, maintaining "hardened" structures is usually still allowed, but for new projects, living shorelines are required unless that approach is unsuitable for the site.

For homeowners compelled to take action to control erosion, or for those taking a proactive approach, there is a program administered by the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District (ESSWCD) called the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) that currently reimburses homeowners 80% of the cost of approved projects, up to \$30,000.

A Joint Permit Application must be submitted to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC). The application is then reviewed by VMRC, the local Wetlands Board, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

To apply for VCAP reimbursement, the first step is to contact Bill Savage at bill.savage@esswcd.org. He will determine if a living shoreline approach is feasible. Next, the homeowner is required to submit a detailed project plan and cost estimate. Most homeowners choose to hire a contractor for this. Next the plan is reviewed by the VCAP Steering Committee. If approved, ESSWCD personnel will meet with the homeowner and contractor at the site to discuss the plan. Once agreement is reached, construction can begin. Upon completion, inspection by ESSWCD is required and if all is well, a reimbursement check is issued. This program is not always fully funded each year, so anyone who is interested should start the process as soon as possible.

Homeowners can request assistance free of charge, from 2 state agencies:

- Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service:
<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/seas>
- Center for Coastal Resources Management:
CCRMinfo@vims.edu

Wetlands Boards and VMRC contacts can be found at:
https://www.vims.edu/ccrm/wetlands_mgmt/lwb/index.php.

VCAP also funds other projects like permeable pavement installation, conservation landscaping, and rainwater harvesting. Visit <https://vaswcd.org/vcap> for details.



Source:
Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Conservation Assistance Program. 2022. <https://vaswcd.org/vcap>

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New Exhibit on Pollinators



The exhibit, “Amazing Pollinators,” is open through Sept. 18 at the Virginia Living Museum in Newport News. The bilingual (English/Spanish) exhibit, developed in collaboration with the Florida Museum of Natural History and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, includes becoming a specific pollinator and navigating survival missions; learning how to help pollinators in our area; and pollinator versions of classic games. A companion live show, the “Pollinators & Pals Animal Show,” 3 times daily through Sept. 5, provides info on native species and pollinators. For more information, visit <https://thevlm.org/explore/exhibits/temporary-exhibits/>.

Between the Waters Apparel Store OPEN*

And you don't have to be a cyclist to wear these styles!

CBES Between the Waters Bike Tour Apparel – colorful originals, uniquely portraying this rare, coastal gem – Virginia's Eastern Shore, all thanks to the talents of popular Shore Artist Bethany Simpson.

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This wearable art makes for an incredible keepsake and great gifts, too!

See www.cbes.org or
CLICK LINK.

*A percentage of sales supports
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