



CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE SHORELINE

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Culture on the Eastern Shore of Virginia*

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A Community's Compass: Community Unity Day 2019

By Donna Bozza

"People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other." Martin Luther King, Jr.

A new year is traditionally a time of renewal and a chance for individuals to realign their lives like a compass, orienting to a better purpose. As with individuals, it can be for communities as well. So, it is fortuitous that our Shore community can come together, in the dawning days of hope that each January represents, to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

In Northampton County, that means the 29th Community Unity Day, held on Martin Luther King Jr. Day to honor the civil rights icon whose life was devoted to the nonviolent pursuit of freedom, justice, and equal opportunity for all.

The Community Unity Celebration was founded in 1990

by Jane Cabarrus, representing the NAACP; Dr. Dawn Goldstine, Superintendent of the Northampton County Public Schools; and Suzanne Wescoat, president of CBES. The annual breakfast event is still sponsored by the 3 founding organizations, and is held on the third Monday of January in the Northampton High School cafeteria.

This year's program is dedicated to long-time Unity Day volunteer Effie Giddens Spady, who assisted in founding the event through the NAACP. The Keynote Speaker is Rev. Felton T. Sessoms, of First Baptist Church, Cape Charles.

The emcee of last year's event, Ted Shockley, a journalist who has covered our diverse community for decades, spoke powerfully about the importance of unity in these divided times – unity that begins on the local level.

"For we cannot expect the world or our country to be fair and just if we

don't have the same expectations for our community," he said. "So it starts here – in this room, on our streets, in our schools, in our governments, in our towns, in our neighborhoods. The decisions we make about unity and civility and equality will dictate the environment in which we live."

It is an uplifting morning of inspirational talks, awards to the often-unsung heroes among us, the voices of our youth, goosebumps-producing Gospel songs – all in all, it's a big Shore hug. Join us.

The event is a grassroots effort and funds are a challenge. Would you or your business consider being a Sponsor? Contact CBES at info@cbes.org



**2019 Community Unity Breakfast
January 21, 8:30 AM
Northampton High School
Eastville, VA
\$6 for adults, Free for children.**

We Have Winners!

Shore Artist Bethany Simpson pulls the winning ticket for her painting "Between the Waters 2018." For the second year, Simpson, popular for her Coastal Folk Art, donated 100% of the raffle proceeds to CBES: \$1,780! The winner was Linda Dawson of Cape Charles, who bought her ticket at Lemon Tree Gallery and Studio.. The winner of the 2 free 2019 Between the Waters Bike Tour registrations was Elizabeth P. of Leesburg, Virginia. The drawing was held for those who took part in the 2018 Bike Tour Survey, filled out by 303 tour participants.



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Rural Economies ... USDA Predicts the Best Bets for a Sustainable Future

By Mary Miller

Traditionally, rural counties have long depended on farming and some small manufacturing for economic stability. The aftermath of the Great Recession has left both those sectors continuing a decline in employment, according to the USDA. But entrepreneurs are taking up the slack.

This has been most recently confirmed in numerous rural development studies, including a research paper by Colorado State University's Economic Development Department entitled "Entrepreneurship and Poverty Reduction in Rural America." The authors found that in rural areas, entrepreneurial "businesses are more resilient in terms of five-year survival rates, even and especially after the Great Recession."

Rhea Landholm, of the The Center for Rural Affairs, also notes in a 2017 article, "Small Businesses Are the Backbone of Rural Communities," that rural entrepreneurial start-ups consistently have lower failure rates than their urban counterparts.

Natural Amenities a Major Asset

The USDA Economic Research Service has created a colorful map, locating those rural counties that have all the elements for sustainable economies, based on assets already in place. The Eastern Shore of Virginia ranks 5 on a scale of 1 to 7 for Natural Amenities. Vast areas of the country show rural counties with few or none of these amenities. Amenities include:

- Preserved historic sites, towns, and monuments
- Beaches, lakes, and rivers for water-oriented recreation
- Local asset-based special events, festivals, tournaments, and rallies
- Specialty food cultures
- Mountains, wild areas, and scenic beauty for outdoor sports recreation
- Heritage preservation sites: natural, cultural
- Natural amenities-based retirement destinations

The USDA research continues:



"... employment in [rural] retirement-destination or recreation counties has increased sharply. Many of these counties have also grown by attracting entrepreneurs and leaders of 'footloose' businesses who seek a high quality of life for themselves and their families." The fortunate counties with "natural amenities" already have the assets on which to build tourism, recreation, and retirement destination communities – and the jobs and small entrepreneurial business opportunities that come with them.



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Follow-up: Annual Groundwater Stakeholder Forum

ShoreLine Staff

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) hosted the second Annual Groundwater Stakeholder Forum, which included important presentations of interest to Shore residents, in November. As noted in December's "Keeping Track," it was not widely promoted. Scott Kudlass of DEQ stated that their only responsibility was to list the meeting on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website, and they would no longer send meeting notices by email to stakeholders. Although some staff members of the A-NPDC were aware of the forum, they were not responsible for advertising or promoting it.

Our intention in the December article was not to criticize any one agency, but to highlight an unfortunate chain of events that prevented many Shore residents from being aware of an important meeting. Although we hope that there will be more coordination in the future between DEQ and A-NPDC, we all need to do our part in following up on key events. A-NPDC *did* announce the meeting at the October Ground Water Committee meeting, and those who were interested should have taken a more active role in getting the necessary details.

Stakeholders Hold Final Meeting for Bay Watershed Implementation Plan

By Sue Mastyl

On November 29, 2018, local citizens and agencies met to finalize the plans for the draft Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). The draft WIP for the Eastern Shore, which was slated to be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on December 14, was developed on 2 tracks – the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (A-NPDC) focused on unregulated urban, developed, and septic programs, while the Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) focused on agricultural practices. Following the submission to DEQ from each region, the draft WIP will undergo stakeholder review and will be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on April 12, 2019. Public comments will be solicited from April 12 to June 7, and the final WIP will be submitted to EPA on August 9, 2019.

According to James Davis Martin, Chesapeake Bay Coordinator for DEQ, the Eastern Shore and the Potomac are the two major basins with the greatest effect on the mainstem of the Bay.

WIP III reduction targets

	Nitrogen (lbs/yr)	Phosphorus (lbs/yr)
Virginia total	55,730,000	6,192,000
Eastern Shore	1,430,000	164,000
Agricultural	1,355,477	157,153
Non-agricultural	74,523	6,847

A model is being used to track individual actions and predict the associated reductions for each. For Virginia, climate change scenarios have been incorporated into the model.

Non-Agricultural Recommendations

Denise Nelson, Environmental Engineer for the Berkeley Group, who facilitated the non-agricultural discussions for A-NPDC, summarized the discussions of the group over 3 previous meetings. In addition to updating the data to reflect current practices, highlighted actions for the Eastern Shore included:

- Septic – maintain 5-year pump-out schedule in both counties; investigate advanced septic systems; renew efforts to convert homes without adequate plumbing; investigate additional connections to Onancock and Cape Charles treatment plants
- Shoreline management – increase adoption of shoreline protection measures, use of oyster substrates; add best management practice (BMP) for oyster aquaculture

- Land use – add growth management policy as new BMP
- Conservation and wetlands – credit all land conservation activities; add credits for dry retention ponds within developed areas
- Stormwater – work with VDOT to utilize stormwater drainage infrastructure for water quality

Agricultural Recommendations

Darryl Glover, Director, Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) Soil & Water Conservation Division, summarized the recommendations for the 32 SWCDs. Highlighted actions relevant to the Eastern Shore included:

- Cover crops – negotiate with EPA to allow later planting dates in the case of rain events, backed by scientific data; get more farmers to report cover crop planting; explore the potential to reduce seeding rates
- Animal waste – increase practice caps; increase lifespan for animal waste facilities; include an Eastern Shore poultry litter transport program, which moves litter out of the Bay watershed.
- Programmatic – increase maximum tax credits for precision agricultural equipment, conservation tillage equipment, agricultural BMPs
- Bundle practices – nutrient management, cover crops, precision agriculture
- Nutrient management plans (NMPs) – incentivize verification by private planners (most NMPs are written by private planners); ensure consistency with DEQ permit requirements

Glover noted they are moving toward regional BMP priorities by FY2021, although the number of regions has yet to be determined. Russ Baker, Deputy Director, DCR, noted that Governor Northam has increased funding toward natural resources and conservation from 0.6% to 2% of the budget. He added that the work “doesn’t end in 2025; we will have to stay at these levels as population increases and the animal numbers increase.” Other issues DCR is focusing on include floodplain management, land conservation, living shorelines, and stream restoration. He noted that DEQ and DCR are “a bit silo’ed; we need to knit these programs together.”

SL Comment. Significantly, all the recommended actions, whether BMPs or programmatic actions, are voluntary, so there is no assurance that the goals will be met. ShoreLine will continue to monitor these important developments and will include a follow-up article next month.



Handlebars and Holly

An Unusual Partnership

By Donna Bozza

It was an unusual yet successful partnering opportunity. Thanks to the Onancock Business & Civic Association (OBCA), the energy of the 2018 Between the Waters Bike Tour in Onancock was able to fuse with the 19th Annual Onancock Christmas Homes Tour.

Each year, the OBCA selects a nonprofit to reap the proceeds of the holiday event, a splendid showcase for the historic harbor town. (Prior to 2018, OBCA had donated close to \$125,000 to local non-profit organizations.) In 2018, CBES was honored to be the recipient of OBCA Christmas Homes Tour proceeds.

Since its inception 27 years ago, CBES Bike Tour has had a dual mission. Along with being CBES most important fundraiser is the goal of bringing economic impact to the Eastern Shore in the form of ecotourism. To spread the benefits throughout the area, it was set up on a 4-location rotation between the 2 counties.

The tour date was chosen in view of the fact that the growing tourism industry had a relatively busy summer season, but fall was another story. Back then, you could practically have a picnic in the middle of the Shore's main streets with little worry of spilling the iced tea. As the bike tours rolled on, CBES encouraged visitors to stay longer and spend more money locally by bookending the event with other opportunities such as the Friday Fun Ride and Saturday night's Oyster Roast.

This year, with the committed funding from the OBCA Christmas Homes Tour proceeds, CBES promoted several events in Onancock to cyclists and their friends; these ranged from a bike-themed movie at the Roseland Theatre, to a "Bike and Brew" gathering, to a church's spaghetti dinner, to a kayak tour highlighting local history. The town was also heavily promoted for months through Bike Tour advertisements, a feature in *Coastal Virginia Magazine* entitled "Explore Onancock on the Eastern Shore," rack cards, and extensive social media coverage.

Onancock saw a solid uptick in business during the Bike Tour weekend. One restaurant manager commented that staff knew they had at least 40 cyclists dining with them one evening.

Responses to the Bike Tour 2018 Survey indicated that riders expanded their participation by more fully experiencing the local area, with 60% spending 2 or more days, and an additional 16% staying 1 night.

Once more, the Bike Tour was a great way to show off the Shore, and this year, Onancock in particular. The 2018 sold-out registration proved again that the event is a

large tourism draw, with 94% of cyclists coming from off the Shore.

Alongside the 2018 Bike Tour was CBES promotion of the linchpin of the 4-day Christmas in Onancock festival, the Annual Christmas Homes Tour. This year, it was dubbed "Christmas on the Creek," as the 6 homes featured were sited along Onancock Creek.

The partnership was a powerful way to leverage a new audience for the event: the 1,110 registered cyclists and their network of families, friends, and other supporters. As Bike Tour Survey comments made clear, attendees fell in love with Onancock and its people. CBES promoted the idea that bikers return in December to explore the holiday season in a small town. In a statement, OBCA President Terris Kennedy called partnering with CBES to support the annual Bike Tour a "great benefit to Onancock and surrounding Eastern Shore Businesses":

"The cyclists were wonderful visitors and brought family and friends who also visited many businesses and attractions in Onancock," she said. "It was a partnership that has been tremendously valuable in promoting and advancing not only the CBES Bike Tour but also the Christmas Holiday weekend events in Onancock, including the Christmas Homes Tour."

Organizers said the 2018 Christmas Homes Tour was a resounding success, bringing an estimated 600 visitors, many from off the Shore.

As to future CBES Bike Tours, we hope these successful partnership spinoffs continue.



Accawmacke Elementary School second-graders enjoy a November nature walk at Brownsville. See story on page 5.

County/Town Boards of Zoning Appeals ... What Do They Do?

By Mary Miller

Any Virginia locality with a Zoning Ordinance is required by the State to create a Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) – with members appointed by the Circuit Court Judge. The Board acts in a quasi-judicial capacity and is authorized to hear appeals from decisions made by the Zoning Administrator, who administers ordinance requirements regarding permits for land use activities, administrative waivers, and other zoning decisions.

Although the Zoning Administrator's decision is always assumed to be correct, an appeal by a property owner for an exception may challenge that decision and ask for relief. The BZA is authorized to determine whether the Zoning Administrator correctly interpreted the Zoning Ordinance and/or whether an exception or other change can be lawfully granted under state guidelines. The burden of proof to rebut the correctness of the administrative decision rests with the applicant – and hardship or unreasonable restriction must be supported by “a preponderance of the evidence” from the applicant (VA Code).

The State Sets the Rules

The state guidelines for granting exceptions and variances are fairly narrow. Does strict application of the Zoning Ordinance unreasonably restrict the use of the property? Would a variance/exception alleviate a hardship due to the physical condition of the property? Was the property acquired in good faith? Was any stated hardship created by the applicant? Shoreline buffer variances and exceptions are to be the minimum necessary for relief, must include

a water quality impact assessment, and must always be mitigated.

The *Albemarle County Land Use Law Handbook* provides specific legal advice regarding variances/exceptions and the limits of a BZA's authority, and these guidelines are often used by other localities:

- Variances/exceptions should be sparingly granted.
- Variances/exceptions should be granted only to achieve parity with other properties in the district.
- They should not be granted to allow the applicant to do what others in the zoning district may not do without a variance.
- The BZA is not compelled to grant relief because another BZA granted similar relief.
- The BZA should not determine what is in the public interest since that is a legislative decision.
- Equitable considerations are inappropriate.
- If there is an existing reasonable use of the property, then neither an unreasonable restriction nor a hardship exists, and a variance/exception may not be lawfully granted.

The Accomack County BZA meets the first Wednesday of the month; the Northampton BZA meets the first Tuesday of the month, unless there are no cases to be reviewed. Town BZA information can be obtained at Town offices. All meetings are open to the public; hearings must be legally advertised in the local press with date, time, and description. 

Second-Graders Take a Walk

By Arthur Upshur

The Eastern Shore is blessed with a number of organizations that support preserving the environment of this special place we all call home. There is almost always a natural tension between these organizations and the local community because they so often play the role of restricting local use of these special places in order to make sure that their ecology is preserved. When I was growing up on the Shore, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was frequently a bit feared for how much local territory they were acquiring and restricting from local use. The Virginia Eastern Shore (VES) Land Trust, while loved for keeping so many wild places undeveloped, was also thought of as a tool mostly for the wealthy landowners, since so much land was tied up in their holdings. Today, both organizations are working hard to break down these barriers to the community. The VES Land Trust regularly holds walks and seminars to give access to conservation easements to our broader community. In addition, TNC has dedicated significant resources to education and outreach in our schools.

Many of our readers may know that TNC offers 10th graders from both Shore counties field trips to show them the treasures of our barrier islands. But another long-standing effort has been between the VES Land Trust and TNC to partner with local schools to get all the second graders out on a nature hike. Led by VES Land Trust volunteers and staff, each class hikes about a mile on TNC's Brownsville Preserve Birding and Wildlife Trail. They explore upland forest and marsh habitats; discover types of seeds and signs of how wildlife use the habitat for their shelter and food; and generally get excited about being outdoors and experiencing the wonder of the wild places that surround the Eastern Shore as only second graders can. “We hope to encourage the kids' natural curiosity, connect them to nature, and open the door to a lifelong relationship with the land, plants, and animals,” said Hali Plourde-Rogers, the VES Land Trust Executive Director. It is clearly a big hit for the kids and their teachers, and for the volunteers leading each group. 

Keeping Track

Sewer Line Study Funded

Northampton County Board of Supervisors approved \$10,000 to fund a study to determine the feasibility of running a wastewater line between Exmore/Nassawadox and the Onancock wastewater plant. Board Chair Spencer Murray said that the towns of the Eastern Shore need to get away from individual wastewater treatment. The Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) will conduct the study; it was unclear whether the District would be further involved in managing wastewater on the Shore. In addition to managing sewer facilities in Hampton Roads cities, the HRSD manages projects in James City, Middlesex, and King William Counties.

Improving wastewater facilities in Exmore and Nassawadox was the goal of a previous Public Service Authority (PSA) project that fell apart when Northampton County could not produce required matching funds to receive a Department of Environmental Quality/US Department of Agriculture grant/loan package. A second PSA project in the Cheriton/Cape Charles area was suspended by a Board action in 2015, in response to cost concerns by property owners and competing county priorities.

It is unclear whether the HRSD study will incorporate previous engineering work done by the PSA for the two major Northern and Southern Node projects in Northampton County, both of which meandered through low-income rural neighborhoods in order to access community/rural development grant funding. Or would the new sewer line, pump stations, etc., be a straight run connecting the Northampton towns to Onancock, perhaps using highway or railroad rights-of-way?

ShoreLine welcomes information from officials on this potential initiative to develop a follow-up article.

Northampton Makes a New Start on Comprehensive Plan Review

At its last meeting of the year, Northampton County Supervisors voted to send the submitted Comprehensive Plan Draft back to the Planning Commission (PC), with a strategy to begin a new Code-required review. The Board's motion indicated that the Draft, begun in 2012, used much outdated information, did not reflect current conditions, failed to present the many positive factors in the county's economy, and lacked components now required by Virginia Code (surface and groundwater protection, affordable housing needs).

Board Chair Spencer Murray especially noted the lack of extensive outreach to the community, as well as the absence of recent, widespread public input on which a Plan would generally be based. The PC has requested the help of an outside planning consultant to assist with their work and the Board agreed with that idea. Supervisors Dave Fauber and John Coker were appointed to collaborate with the PC.

Northampton County Administrator Charles Kolakowski is currently developing a list of potential consultants, and work on a Request For Proposals (RFP) is being coordinated by the Board and the PC.

The revision of the Comp Plan has been playing out for several years. Through it all, CBES has been raising many of the same concerns. This action is another example of the power of our involved citizenry on the Shore and we are glad CBES played a role in it.

Clarification to 2018 Volunteers

In our December 2018 *ShoreLine* list of Between the Waters Bike Tour and Oyster Roast volunteers, we regretfully omitted Nicki Tiffany as a Bike Tour volunteer and Paul Tiffany as an Oyster Roast volunteer. Nicki and Paul, your services are always appreciated!

Join us for a reception to meet the scientists of the **Virginia Coast Reserve Long Term Ecological Research** program.

Enjoy Gordon Campbell's captivating photography while discovering what the researchers study about the coastal landscapes of your Eastern Shore.

Bring your questions. Enjoy refreshments.

See What the Scientists See

Wednesday January 9th

4:30-6:30pm

At Altitude Gallery

Cape Charles, VA

RSVP: @virginia.coast.reserve on Facebook; coraj@virginia.edu



January Is Virginia Oyster Month



Photo credit: Roberta Kellam

To mark the occasion, here's a celebratory Eastern Shore recipe shared with us by Roberta Kellam.

Nassawadox Creek Oysters in a Sea of Butter and Lemon

One pint of shucked oysters (salty seaside work best; might need to add salt if using bayside oysters), the juice of one large lemon, and a stick of butter. Dump pint of oysters with their liquid into a sauté pan, add lemon and butter. Using lowest heat, cook slowly until butter is completely melted and oysters are just done. Don't over-cook. Pour into soup bowls; serve with bread as a first course.

And once again, we give thanks for the hearty souls who take the boats out, even in January, to harvest our seafood.

CBES Membership 2019

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_____ 1 yr. Regular Membership (includes *ShoreLine*) \$25

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Please provide recipient's name, address, and email: _____

Volunteer for our community-building opportunities:

Bike Tour _____	Community Unity Day _____
Oyster Roast _____	Clean the Bay Day _____
<i>ShoreLine</i> reporter _____	Hospitality _____
Fundraising _____	Candidate Forums _____
Administrative _____	Where needed _____

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Join online at www.cbes.org



Celebrating 30 Years of ShoreLine

2006

- Professional planning consultants led Northampton County community workshops to focus on county assets for the Comprehensive Plan update.
- Cheriton began planning for areas adjacent to the Town.
- *Daily Press* headline: "Area lawmakers aim for an overhaul, and perhaps a state takeover, of the cash-flush but little-used Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel."
- The Accomack Board of Supervisors considered withdrawing from the Tourism Commission.
- Northampton County lost significant state aid to schools as real estate values continued to soar.
- Grassroots group, Save Our Shore, submitted a 1,500-signature petition to the Accomack Board of Supervisors, supporting a Zoning Ordinance Amendment to manage growth through zoning and subdivision regulation changes – a hearing was denied.
- Shore real estate auctions sometimes failed to even draw opening bids.
- The Virginia Senate considered a resolution involving a limited-access highway from Dover, DE, down the Shore to I-95 just west of Charleston, SC.
- The Virginia Supreme Court, in a precedent-setting decision, upheld Northampton County's zoning supporting waterfront buffer incursion along Cherrystone Creek.
- Northampton County planners discovered that the Dillon Rule prohibits a county ordinance that would require disclosure of impacts and regulations of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and the Right to Farm Act to purchasers of property in the county.
- The new Anheuser-Busch Coastal Research Center of UVA was dedicated in Oyster, providing tools and space for the long-term study of barrier island ecosystems.
- Walmart announced a new store in Onley, promising a "coastal design," and 350 mostly full-time jobs with an average wage of \$9.93/hr.
- Over objections from some Northampton Industrial Development Authority members, the Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park (STIP) in Cape Charles was deeded to the county – after a deal with Bay Creek's Dickie Foster fell apart.
- And Accomack Supervisors finally voted to reduce residential density in Agricultural Districts.

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SHORELINE

Community Calendar - January 2019

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

CBES and Other Activities		Accomack County		Northampton County	
Jan 2	VIMS Public Seminar 7:30 PM, Wachapreague	Jan 2	Board of Zoning Appeals 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 2	Planning Commission (PC) 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Jan 9	ABCRC Presentation 4:30 - 6:30 PM, Cape Charles	Jan 2	Board of Supervisors Organizational Meeting 5 PM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 8	Board of Zoning Appeals 1 PM, Conference Room
Jan 15	ES Ground Water Committee 10 AM, Accomac	Jan 9	Planning Commission (PC) 7 PM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 8	Board of Supervisors (BOS) 7 PM, Sup. Chambers
Jan 15	CBES Board Meeting 7:00 PM, Eastville	Jan 15	School Board 6:30 PM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 16	Wetlands Board TBA, Conference Room
Jan 21	Community Unity Day 8:30 AM, Eastville	Jan 16	Board of Supervisors 5 PM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 16	PC Work Session 7 PM, Conference Room
		Jan 24	Wetlands Board 10 AM, Sup. Chambers	Jan 22	School Board 6 PM, Machipongo
				Jan 28	BOS Work Session 7 PM, Conference Room

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