

The WV INDEPENDENT Observer

JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

JULY 2023

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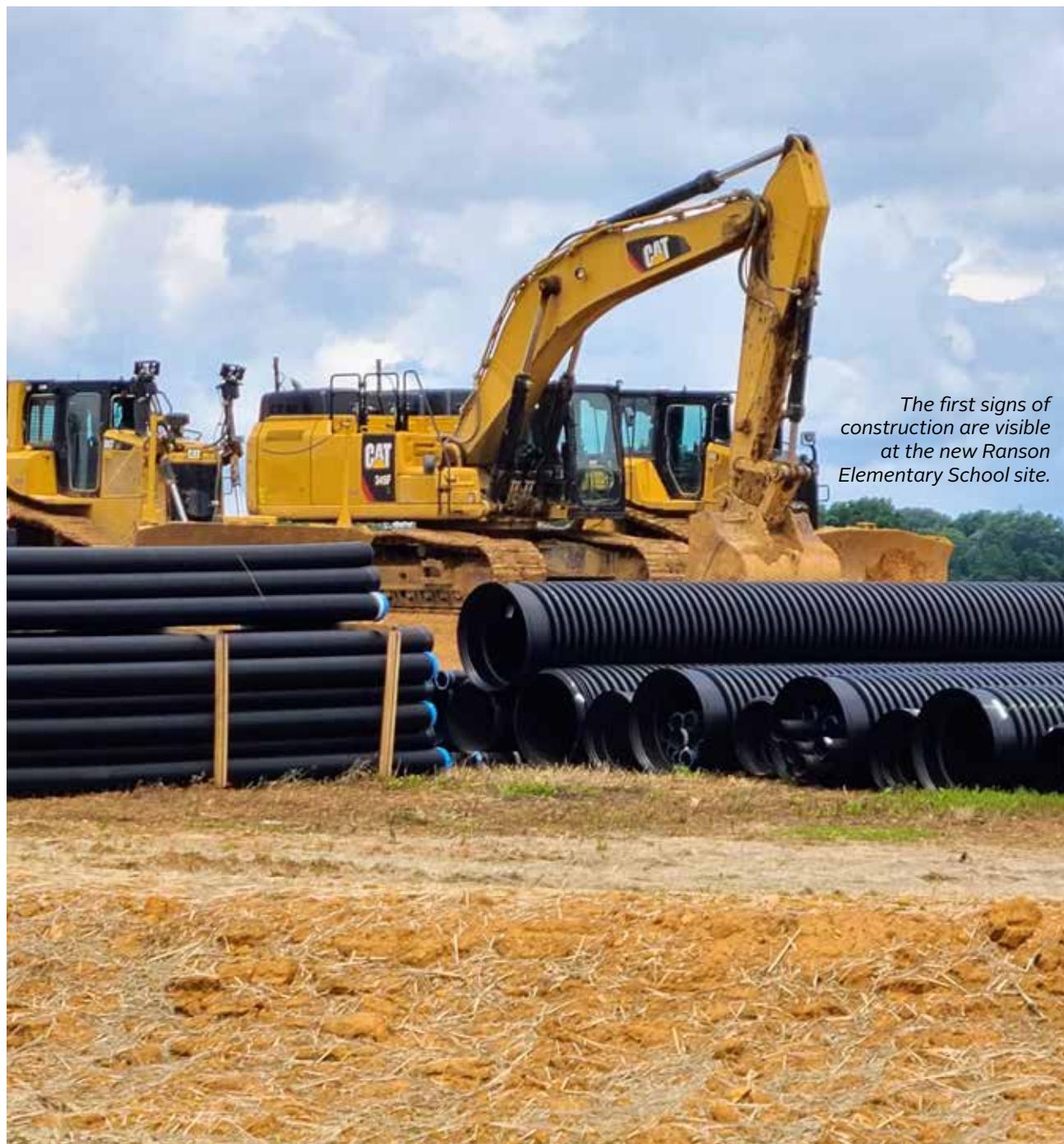
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*The first signs of
construction are visible
at the new Ranson
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WELCOME



WVUMedicine.org

WVU Medicine is pleased to introduce 10 new providers who have joined our medical staffs at Berkeley Medical Center, Jefferson Medical Center and University Health Associates – East.

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APARNA BEHARA MD



Hospitalist
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DOUGLAS BENKELMAN MD



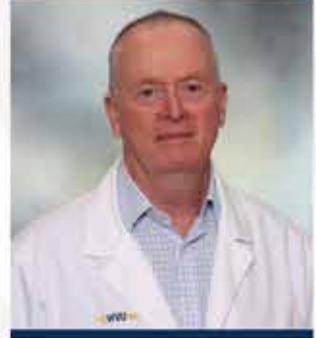
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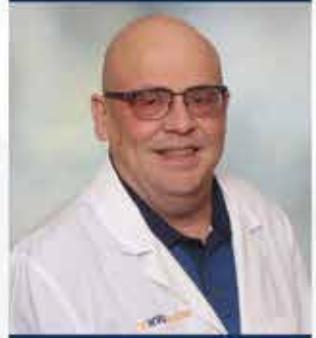
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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED.



Colorful decorations adorn a lawn in Shepherdstown.

TO OUR READERS — I couldn't help but smile at the disordered lawn decorations pictured above as I drove into Shepherdstown last week. For some reason, this display reminded me of some of the recent County Commission meetings, including the one on June 23 called for the purpose of appointing a Commissioner following the resignation of Clare Ath (see page 16). Despite having eight applicants to choose from, several of whom appeared well-qualified, the Commissioners deadlocked 2 – 2 on a pair of candidates apparently favored for political reasons. With no resolution at this meeting, the Commissioners now await recommendations from the local Republican party — and the Commission's attorney foreshadowed more potential gridlock ahead as he outlined the uncertainty of determining how a tie might be broken in the next round.

The Board of Education kept to its timetable of appointing a new Superintendent, who starts on July 1 (page 4). He inherits some big holes from his departing predecessor — literally in terms of the two elementary school construction projects, one of which has yet to even go to bid despite the hoopla of a ground-breaking ceremony over a year ago. The twin challenges of retaining & recruiting staff and addressing the fall-off in student achievement are arguably even more complex. All of these issues will no doubt be topics for the School Board election next May.

At a recent public input session organized by the county's Planning & Zoning Office, residents offered their thoughts on how the county might manage future growth. One comment in particular summarized the sentiments expressed by the participants — let's avoid the mistakes that northern Virginia counties have made as their populations have grown. Easy to say, hard to achieve, especially if our county leaders can't work with each other.



Steve Pearson
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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Coming this summer

Our goal is to keep residents informed about what's happening in Jefferson County — to provide an independent perspective and help residents explore and engage with the community and local government. We intend to keep the newspaper free to readers and, as the population of Jefferson County continues to grow, we're changing how we mail the paper to local residents. Depending on each month's story topics, we'll be mailing to different neighborhoods around the county. If you don't see an issue in your mailbox at the beginning of each month, **you can still find us in our red & white newspaper boxes.**

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- Post Office (street box)
- Community Garden Market
- Four Seasons Books
- MJ's on German DeliCafe
- Sweet Shop Bakery
- Shepherdstown Public Library

BOLIVAR - HARPERS FERRY

- Bolivar Bread Bakery
- Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library
- Bakerton Market

SOUTH JEFFERSON COUNTY

- Middleway Market
- Depot Market (Summit Point)
- South Jefferson Public Library

DOWNTOWN CHARLES TOWN

- Bushel & Peck
- Siblings Coffee Roasters
- Charles Town Library

KEARNEYSVILLE - SHENANDOAH JUNCTION - Black Dog Coffee Company

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// SCHOOLS

NEW SUPERINTENDENT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Chuck Bishop Begins Work With Jefferson County Schools On July 1



WILLIAM "CHUCK" BISHOP steps into the role of Superintendent for Jefferson County Schools on July 1. The Board of Education voted on May 24 to hire Dr. Bishop from a pool of 17 applicants to replace the outgoing superintendent, Bondy Gibson-Learn, who resigned on short notice earlier this year. Bishop earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from Virginia Tech and his Master's and Doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Virginia and has thirty years of experience in K-12 education. *The Observer* spoke with Dr. Bishop as he was preparing to start his new role and posed the questions below for his responses:

Observer: *What inspired you to pursue a career in K-12 education?*

Dr. Bishop: Initially, I wanted to pursue engineering out of high school, but as I considered my options I was drawn to education. During my educational career, I had so many teachers and coaches who had such a profound impact on me that I chose education. I never really considered administration and it wasn't until I was serving at Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton, Virginia that I was encouraged to pursue administration by my principal at the time, Jim Peak. Mr. Peak became my mentor as I continued to grow in this profession and as a result, I have had a 32-year career that I have thoroughly enjoyed.

Observer: *You grew up in Augusta County and have spent your entire career so far working for Virginia public schools, correct? How has K-12 education changed over that time — looking both at the time you were a student yourself to the present?*

Dr. Bishop: Yes, I have spent my entire career

as a student and educator in Virginia. As a student, I was focused on my academic program and athletic participation. Like most students, even today, I didn't focus on how the education system worked. I have worked with a lot of students over the years and I really don't think kids have changed that much overall. Students are exposed to much more than I was primarily due to social media and the internet, but there are still a lot of similarities between today's students and those from the past.

The biggest changes to education as a professional that I've seen are our accountability systems and the impact of politics in our schools. Early in my career, the Commonwealth of Virginia used the Literacy Passport Test as a gateway to graduation, and since the mid-1990s we have had SOL assessments. Every state in the country has some form of assessment system in place to measure student achievement. These test scores are viewed as a measure of the success of our local school systems, but they are often one test on a given day and do not reflect a broad representation of what our students have learned.

Just in the past few years, political viewpoints have really impacted the conversation around public schools. Discussions related to the rights of transgender students, the appropriateness of instructional and library materials, and the appropriateness of returning to school during the pandemic have been topics at the forefront in many communities. Citizens with varying viewpoints on these topics, and many others, have become more involved in local Board of Education meetings.

Observer: *What would you say were most proud of about your tenure as the superintendent of the Clarke County Public Schools (CCPS)? What were some of the significant challenges facing CCPS during your tenure and how did you deal with them?*

Dr. Bishop: During my nine-year tenure in Clarke, we have supplemented our wonderful academic program with a variety of new career and technical education (CTE) opportunities for our students. Many times people view students as either college-bound or going to work upon completion of high school. We have worked hard to blur that line. It is not one or the other. Our message has been that all of our students are going to be employed in the future so a great academic program should be coupled with outstanding CTE opportunities.

In 2014 when I came to Clarke, our starting teacher pay with a Bachelor's degree was right around \$38,000. This year, the starting pay will be \$51,000. With the support of the school board and our Board of Supervisors, we have made a commitment to increasing the compensation for all classifications of employees.

In addition, we have also worked hard to develop a culture where our employees can thrive. Several years ago, Clarke was losing 5 or 6 people per year to other higher-paying divisions. Now, we are seeing new staff migrate to Clarke from those districts because of the culture that we've collectively created.

The biggest challenge that I faced when coming to Clarke was a fractured relationship between the School Board and the Board of Supervisors. Through transparency and open, honest communication, both Boards work extremely well together at this point.

Observer: *You've worked in a city school system, a medium-sized county system, a small county system. What have you experienced in each of these environments that you see as most relevant to your role with Jefferson County Schools?*

Dr. Bishop: Small school divisions offer an opportunity for the superintendent to have a great understanding of all areas of operation. In both Radford and Clarke, I have been involved daily in conversations related to instruction, special education, personnel, transportation, building security, and the list goes on.

The responsibility that I had in Augusta with 21 schools and 3 regional centers is more similar to Jefferson County. It is harder to be involved in every day-to-day discussion, but you receive briefings from senior staff. Because of my experiences, I have a great understanding of the different facets of the school environment and the ability to manage those through collaboration with staff.

Observer: *Is the role of superintendent in West Virginia different from the role in Virginia? What would you say to someone who is concerned that you've not previously worked in a WV school system?*

Dr. Bishop: The day-to-day work of teaching and learning is similar across state lines. The curriculum that has been adopted by the state might be a bit different, but not drastically. Federal laws that govern school division

operations are no different in Virginia than they are in West Virginia. The biggest things that I'll have to learn quickly are local policies, state laws, and the school funding process. The school funding piece will be specific to local and state revenues. The Federal grants that are received are the same as those that are received in Virginia.

Observer: *You mentioned that you like a new challenge in a recent interview with The Winchester Star. What do you see as the most significant challenges you'll be facing as you take the helm of Jefferson County Schools?*

Dr. Bishop: As I move to Jefferson County, we will be faced with the continued challenge of recovering from the pandemic. Students lost so much during that time and it continues to be an uphill climb to get them back to where they should be. The student achievement data that I've reviewed indicates that there is room for growth. We have a great staff in Jefferson and I know that they are committed to helping our students grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

We have to keep our eye on growth in the community. As you drive around the county, the new housing starts will mean more students in our schools. I will need to work with our staff, community leaders, and the Board of Education to make sure that we are prepared for new students as they arrive.

Observer: *Looking at the broader civic landscape across the country, the question of trust — or lack thereof — seems to be a concern at all levels of government, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. How can you, as a new superintendent, help increase the community's trust in the public schools?*

Dr. Bishop: Communication and transparency are two key elements in increasing the community's trust in our public schools. Using the pandemic as an example, [in Clarke] we understood that some in our community felt that schools should not be open at all while others believed that we should return with few restrictions. As a school division, we communicated via email, video, letters, and phone calls to ensure that parents and our community had accurate information.

We also provided a dashboard that outlined the number of confirmed Covid cases and the number of quarantined individuals by school. That dashboard was updated daily to provide the most accurate data.

Observer: *What's the "elevator pitch" you would make to someone who asks you about the value of public education?*

Dr. Bishop: Public education is one of the greatest institutions in our country. We are certainly not perfect, but we are the one system of education that welcomes every student regardless

of race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or disability. The education of our community's children is one of our most important responsibilities.

Observer: *Do you have specific objectives you hope to accomplish in the next few months before the first day of school?*

Dr. Bishop: I really look forward to rolling up my sleeves and learning more about the operation of the school system and getting into our schools and meeting the staff and students. Fostering positive relationships with our parents and the larger community is also an extremely important part of this process. I want to make sure that I listen to what's working well and what might need to be examined more closely.

Observer: *Whenever you retire from JCS, what would you hope that people in the community - students, teachers, parents - remember about you?*

Dr. Bishop: First and foremost, I would like to be remembered as someone who always made decisions in the best interests of our students while also building a culture where Jefferson County Schools is an employer of choice. I also hope that people will remember me as a good steward of our resources. I hope that people would remember me as serving Jefferson County with honesty and integrity and that I unified a community around the public schools.

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// LOCAL GOVERNMENT

RESIDENTS WEIGH IN ON COUNTY'S FUTURE GROWTH

Online Survey Open For Public Comment On Comprehensive Plan



Jefferson County residents shared and voted on thoughts about future growth during a recent public input session.

AT THE JEFFERSON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION meeting on June 13, County Planner Luke Siegfried shared the findings of a public input session held on June 5 in the cafeteria at Jefferson High School. 46 residents participated in the public input session, which was structured to allow participants to identify priorities in small groups with follow-up discussions with the entire group.

Strengths, Weaknesses & Opportunities

At the top of the lists of Jefferson County's strengths identified by participants are natural beauty & open space, historical spaces (downtowns & battlefields), close proximity to the metro DC area, and tourism (history, culture & agriculture-related). Weaknesses identified

are too many houses being built vis-a-vis the county's build-out of infrastructure, divisiveness in local government, lack of job opportunities for younger people, and low pay for public sector employees. Participants were also asked to identify opportunities for the county to improve the quality of life for residents. The list includes expanding public transportation, focusing on responsible development, preserving natural resources, and supporting small businesses (particularly tech-related jobs).

Getting Specific Input

The general discussion at the June 5 session drilled down to identify specific concerns in these general areas. There was strong agreement among participants that natural beauty is a key

asset of the county. Looking at the concern of growth and lack of infrastructure, participants suggested clustering development around existing urbanized areas of the county and a focus on improving the roads in those areas.

The group voiced support for reinstating higher impact fees [the County Commission significantly reduced these fees in 2021, with the schools impact fee cut to \$1]. Several participants expressed the hope that Jefferson County could avoid the mistakes of Northern Virginia during its recent decades of population growth.

The next step of the Comprehensive Plan update process is an online public survey, which is open for responses until July 21 (visit the online version of this article at WeAreTheObserver.com for a link to the survey).

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WEST VIRGINIA RETOOLS SOCIAL SERVICES DELIVERY

By Susan Benzinger

Susan Benzinger is a retired tax attorney and active volunteer in Jefferson County. During her 2022 campaign for WV State Delegate campaign she became very familiar with the issues facing West Virginia and offered to share updates on the state legislature during the 2023 session with The Observer.

THE WV DEPARTMENT of Health & Human Resources (DHHR) was established in 1989 by merging the state’s Department of Health and the Department of Human Services. It is the State’s largest Department, employing some 5,000 employees across all 55 counties and has a budget in excess of \$7 billion (state and federal money combined).

DHHR oversees West Virginia health, social and welfare programs. Over the years, DHHR has received many complaints ranging from failing to care for children who require foster care, to providing bad checks to caregivers, to poor health results compared to other states. The McChrystal Group, an independent consultant, has noted that West Virginia, as compared to other states, is rated “lowest for life expectancy, as having the highest rate of drug-related deaths, the highest percentage of minors in foster care, is second highest for food insecurity, and 35th for access to care.”

Legislative actions to address performance

House Bill 2006, passed by the legislature in February of this year, is intended to improve DHHR services. The bill follows a similar bill that was passed in the prior legislative session that called for breaking DHHR into two parts, but was vetoed by the Governor. Following the veto, the McChrystal Group was hired to study DHHR. The study concluded that simply splitting DHHR into two departments would not just by itself resolve the problems. Rather, it suggested more systemic changes, including improving the organizational structure, creating an organization-wide strategic focus, and developing operational efficiencies so that workers receive necessary resources.

The 2023 bill ultimately reorganized DHHR into three parts — the Department of Health, the Department of Human Resources, and the Department of Health Facilities. It provides for the governor to add three new cabinet secretaries who will focus on their respective departments. In May these positions were filled by professionals with strong backgrounds related to the focus of each department. The transition to the three departments was also guided by suggestions and concerns expressed by staff “on the ground”, those who provide services directly to the public.

The bill strengthens the Office of the Inspector General and establishes the Office of Shared Administration which all three departments will use for such things as information technology, human resources and communications. The transition to three departments is to occur effective January 1, 2024.

An Example – Child Protective Services

The new Department of Human Services includes the Bureau of Social Services which includes Child Protective Services (CPS). CPS is charged with investigating reports of child abuse and neglect as well as providing services to protect children including placing them in foster care. Over the past several years, many complaints have been raised about CPS failures to administer foster care properly, often as a result of understaffing, with case workers being given an impossible number of cases to administer and having a lack of resources to care for children and their families.

Others have noted that not only are CPS staffing levels inadequate but also that staff need to be highly trained and have timely access to resources to perform their duties. Training takes time and must be supported from the top down. Professional managers and staff are a must.

The legislature, meanwhile, is aware that reorganizing in and of itself may not be enough to address needs of the public. Mike Pushkin, D-Kanawha, House Health and Human Resources Committee Minority Chairman, voted for the bill. He said that the hope is that the three different departments, which will have additional oversight, will do better. He also noted, however, that recruiting additional employees, such as for Child Protective Services, is difficult because of low staff pay levels compared to other states.

Transition and Next Steps

According to the Governor’s office, the transition is going well and there have been no significant roadblocks to reaching the goal of completing the transition by January 1, 2024. At the same time, the Legislature is continuing working on restructuring DHHR’s \$7.7 billion dollar budget and the Legislative Oversight Commission on Health and Human Resources Accountability is working on performance and outcome reporting for the new departments.

Summary

Will the reorganization of DHHR into smaller, more focused, departments improve services to West Virginians? The Governor, the interim leader of DHHR, the new cabinet secretaries and others in the legislature are hopeful that this reorganization and focus on health and social services will result in better services to the public. Others are concerned that without intense focus by professional staff leading the new departments as well as full professional staffing for serving the public directly, the reorganization will be nothing more than moving pieces on a chess board. Time will tell if the reorganization leads to improvement in the health and welfare of West Virginians.

More information about DHHR can be found online at dhhr.wv.gov. The complete McChrystal Group report and a chart summarizing the reorganization is included in the online version of this article at WeAreTheObserver.com.



Assessor's Office
Jefferson County
West Virginia

NOTICE OF FILINGS DUE

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION as of JULY 1, 2023

DATES TO FILE:

JEFFERSON CO. DOG TAGS
July 1st

FARM USE FORMS & FARM STATISTICS
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PERSPECTIVE // COMMUNITY

THE BURDENS OF DEFUNCT HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS

Lack Of Regulations In WV Leave HOA Residents Few Options

By Daniel Bennett

Daniel Bennett is the Executive Director of Homeowners Voice, a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization. His career has focused on the intersection of technology, government and civic engagement. He can be contacted at advocate@homeownersvoice.com or 304-207-0710. For more information about Homeowners Voice resources to assist homeowners visit HomeownersVoice.com.

ARE YOU STUCK IN A NEIGHBORHOOD with an HOA board that has gone rogue by not following its own rules or not taking care with your HOA fees? Know someone in an area where nobody knows who is supposed to maintain the roads? You might be living in a “zombie HOA.” Here in West Virginia, we have great neighbors, but we don’t have an effective way to protect our neighborhoods from rogue and zombie HOAs.

We are on our own with no clear law that allows our legal system to address serious HOA problems. Until a law is passed that brings government oversight over HOAs, like any other business, nonprofit, or governmental organization, the problems will only get worse. We’ve been told by lawyers that you can try and fix things by suing your HOA — but that means shelling out thousands for a lawyer, if you can even find one, and perhaps get satisfaction. But here in West Virginia, homeowners need better legal tools to keep HOAs following the rules and protecting our home values.

At Homeowners Voice, we have been getting complaints from homeowners across the state, and we have found there is little



protection from outrageous situations. And home property values are likely being dragged down too, according to our discussions with real estate agents. What real estate agent wants to sell a house in a neighborhood with a rogue or zombie HOA? In the past year, our state legislature has introduced legislation to begin to address the mess, including by our State Senator Patricia Rucker (see the online version of this article at WeAreTheObserver.com for a link to the draft legislation). HOAs are mock municipalities, often in charge of our roads, water management, and other infrastructure in our neighborhoods but with little oversight or capacity to handle these vital services for us. Of course, many HOAs have great leadership and

follow the rules and we applaud them.

It’s difficult to solve a problem without knowing how bad the situation is. So at Homeowners Voice, we are reaching out to you, the homeowners, to ask you to let us know about your own HOA. We have an online survey if you are concerned about your own HOA (see the online version of this article at WeAreTheObserver.com for a link to the survey). We may follow up with you or your neighbors, but will not release people’s names without their permission. The results will be made public and given to state elected officials. And as we craft legislation working closely with state agencies, county governments and with you, the homeowner, we will keep you informed of the progress.



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PERSPECTIVE // COMMUNITY

BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

By Judy York

Judy York is a retired CEO turned executive leadership coach and local educator. She's taught as adjunct faculty for Shepherd University and Frostburg University, a substitute for Jefferson County, a MATHCOUNTS math coach, a 4-H Club leader, a Sunday School teacher, and a homeschooling mom. For over twenty years she's lived in Shepherdstown with her wife, raising their three kids and many dachshunds.

"When you do nothing you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better." — Maya Angelou

IN THE DOG DAYS of the pandemic I often wandered over to my neighbor's yard. As we had for the past two decades, we'd explore new gems growing in her gardens while pondering the problems of the world. She's a retired social worker, long-time resident, and youth volunteer in the community, and I've always valued her wisdom and enjoyed our talks.

The education and the future of my kids weighed on my mind a lot during this time. After they were sent home in the pandemic and school assignments withered away, uncertainty loomed. Over the years we've experienced a mix of successes and challenges in the public schools. How might this new upheaval impact them?

We saw veteran teachers we'd long counted on retiring early as local political power struggles and cultural wars began tugging apart our schools and community. I shared with my neighbor that in my darkest days, when feeling overwhelmed and powerless, I sometimes wondered, too, if maybe it was time to dismantle and rebuild the whole system. Then one day she said to me, "You know what we need? We need a Saturday School."



Photo credit: R. Heller

Saturday School Inspires

As a former social worker in Maryland, my neighbor was familiar with Saturday School, which was founded by Dr. George B. Thomas, Sr. thirty-five years ago to close academic achievement gaps. The program grew from a modest 21 children and 19 volunteers to now over 3,000 children, 400 volunteers, and paid teachers. It's fueled by the core vision that the success of students rests with the entire community, not just traditional educators and institutions. Since that afternoon, a question has teased at the corner of my mind: How might 400 volunteers transform education in Jefferson County?

This spark encouraged me to launch the Jefferson County Math Circle, a registered MATHCOUNTS Math Club. MATHCOUNTS is a free program, mapped to middle school math standards, and sponsored by many organizations including the U.S. Department of Defense and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

What I love most about MATHCOUNTS is that it builds community around learning. This summer I've partnered with Rachel Heller, the Shepherdstown Library's Youth Director, to create our local Math Circle. We've recruited a dozen volunteers from local high schools and colleges. Together we lead, support, and challenge a group of middle schoolers with math games and brain-teasers. Students learn to work together, talk through puzzles and problems, and share their strategies and solutions.

Creative & Fun Exploration

The program is not just for "mathletes," although we did have two members place in West Virginia's state competition this year. Students who are less confident in math benefit from a low student-to-coach ratio and fun, creative ways to explore math. For instance, in addition to math games teams can enter a contest to write and record their own videos on how to solve math problems.

MATHCOUNTS will be expanding this fall through a West Virginia legislative appropriation of \$50,000 to hire math coaches in middle schools throughout the state. I am eager to work with others in the community who are motivated to branch off our efforts or even begin their own.

And the question still teases: How might 400 volunteers transform education in Jefferson County? Wouldn't it be awesome to find out?

If you are interested in volunteering or are the parent/guardian of a middle school student who might be interested in learning more about MATHCOUNTS, email Judy York (judy.york.wv@gmail.com).

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TENDING TO THE HERB GARDENS

By Erin Atticus Mooney

Erin Atticus Mooney is the former owner of a creative events and leadership development company based in Washington, D.C., a creative business coach, and a lover of nature.

HILLARY BANACHOWSKI, FOUNDER AND OWNER of Sacred Roots in Shepherdstown, welcomes me to the land with bare feet and open arms. “This spring has been so weird!” she muses as sparse rain falls from a sunny sky. Banachowski has been an herb grower, educator, and steward on these beautiful 30-plus acres for seven years.

In November 2022 Banachowski launched her inaugural Full Circle Herb Grower’s School, a “ten month intensive with a focus, specifically, on growing and selling medicinal herbs — from seed to harvest,” she explains. Banachowski shares that her joy in life is to empower people and that the school is a potent way to impart valuable skills to people from all walks of life.

“I’m connecting with all kinds of people over the herbs now,” she beams. It used to be that a small number of people would flock to the land for herbal education, but now Banachowski is thrilled to be sharing herbalism with a much wider array of individuals. She’s effectively witnessing a real-time evolution in acceptance of what was once considered woo-woo and fringe. Already, the Full Circle Herbal School is halfway through its first year and has a waitlist for six of the 15 available spots for fall 2023.

We Need More Local Herb Growers

“I’d been going to herbal conferences for years and I kept hearing, ‘we need more local herb growers’ — there just isn’t enough,” Banachowski explains. There still aren’t enough growers over

a decade later and it’s for this reason that she’s educating others. When she began growing herbs wholesale she found that there was a major disconnect between the reality of production and the demand of consumers who wanted to place an order for several pounds of any given herb and expect to receive it within a couple of days. “It just doesn’t work that way,” Banachowski laughs.

This disconnect has its roots in society’s rather recently developed expectation that anything can be bought at will and at any time of year — be it fruits, vegetables or herbs. Even just two or three generations ago, this was not the way people related to plants. The local food movement, Banachowski points out, has begun to shift that mentality for consumers, but it remains pervasive overall. As the enthusiasm for herbal medicine continues to increase, there will be an even greater need for more local growers.

According to Ann Armbrecht in her book, *The Business of Botanicals*, “\$37 billion in herbal supplement sales [were made] in the US in 2019.” Both Armbrecht and Banachowski alike are asking the question: “how has herbal medicine become ‘transformed from the traditional practices of kitchen medicine... to an incredibly complex, mechanized, sanitized global supply chain?’”

Positive Growth

Currently, an astonishing amount of dried herbs, roots, berries, and other raw components used in the making of herbal medicine and teas come from outside the US, requiring a huge amount of energy to transport and store. These herbs, now the product of a full-blown industrialized process, may arrive in a domestic storehouse and sit for months to well over a year, but there’s little transparency on that timeline for consumers.

“Herbs lose their potency as soon as you [process] them... the longer they sit, the less



vitality they will have,” Banachowski continues, “I sell my herbs by the ounce and usually sell out within 3 weeks.” For individuals eager to work with herbal medicine, potency and thereby effectiveness, is, of course, the entire point.

The return to traditional kitchen medicine is embodied in the work of Banachowski at Sacred Roots and her Full Circle Herb Grower’s School, which reconnects individuals to the source of their herbal medicine at a pace in alignment with Nature, not Walmart. And it’s more than just improving the quality of products in bottles and tea bags — the very act of growing contributes positively to the local economy and the ecosystem.

Sacred Roots is a proud member of United Plant Savers, which fulfills its mission “to protect native medicinal plants, fungi, and their habitats while ensuring renewable populations for use by generations to come.” These plants attract pollinators, heal the soil and restore a harmonious buzz of interconnected life, which stimulate a cascade of long-lasting, positive benefits.

To learn more and register for classes and programs or to purchase locally grown herbs visit the Sacred Roots website at SacredRootsWV.com.



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BATTLE BETWEEN KINGBIRD & HAWK

By Doug Pifer

Doug Pifer is an artist, naturalist, and writer. He has a Master's Degree in Journalism from Penn State and has been an editor and art educator. His illustrations have appeared in various books and magazines and he has been a contributor to *The Observer* for several years. He lives with his wife and assorted animals on 5.7 acres in a historic farmhouse near Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

YESTERDAY A HAWK FLEW OVERHEAD. It was a Cooper's hawk carrying prey in its talons, probably headed towards its nest of hungry young in our neighbor's woods. But it also looked as if something was riding on its back. As the hawk flew over our upper pasture and headed for the woods, a smaller bird flew off the hawk's back and returned to our field. I recognized the white banded tail tip of a kingbird. Drama over — and enemy departed — the kingbird returned to the vicinity of its nest.

We often see a kingbird perched on our pasture fences, sitting ramrod straight with an immaculate silvery breast and charcoal-gray back. A kingbird turns its head slowly. Sharp eyes scan the skies for flying insects to eat or wandering hawks to chase. Sighting prey, it will sally forth on wings that beat quickly and shallowly, almost like a shorebird. Befitting its regal bearing, a kingbird has a crown. A small patch of scarlet feathers is normally hidden within the black feathers of its head and only

Eastern kingbird watches its mate attack a red-tailed hawk. Illustration by D. Pifer, courtesy of PA Game Commission.



shows up when the bird becomes excited. No doubt that red crown was on full display while that kingbird jabbed its bill into the feathers of that hawk's neck and back.

A Contrast Of Styles

Last month on a recent bird walk with the Potomac Valley Audubon Society near Shepherdstown, we watched a pair of kingbirds chase a fish crow carrying something in its bill. We surmised the crow had just snatched one of their eggs or nestlings. Such encounters are relatively common during the nesting season but in the twenty-first century most of us miss the everyday drama going on around us. Contrast my terse, prosaic description with the fiery text that John James Audubon* wrote to accompany his superbly drawn "tyrant fly catcher, also known as the field martin or king bird" in his *Ornithological Biographies*. In the florid style of the 1850s Audubon wrote:

"Should he espy a Crow, a Vulture, a Martin or an Eagle, in the neighborhood or at a distance, he spreads his wing to the air, and pressing towards the dangerous foe, approaches him, and commences his attack with fury. He mounts above the enemy, sounds the charge, and repeatedly plunging upon the very back of his more powerful antagonist, essays to secure a hold. In this manner, harassing his less active foe with continued blows of his bill, he follows him probably for a mile, when, satisfied that he has done his duty, he gives his wings their usual quivering motion, and returns exulting and elated to his nest, trilling his notes all the while."

Changing Habits

Audubon concluded this passage describing the kingbird as a gourmet delicacy. He claimed that many farmers shot kingbirds on sight because they caught and consumed honey bees, writing "the flesh of this bird is delicate and savory. Many are shot along the Mississippi, not because these birds eat bees, but because the French of Louisiana are fond of bee-eaters." Much has changed since Audubon wrote his *Ornithological Biographies*. No longer do we eat songbirds, which are protected by state and federal law. Even so, the National Audubon Society lists the eastern kingbird as "moderately vulnerable" to climate change. This species has lost 45 percent of its original range in our part of the Mid-Atlantic region.

**Author note: Audubon, always a colorful figure, has come under serious criticism as a former slaveholder, a habitual liar, a womanizer, and a fraud. Even the National Audubon Society has considered changing its name. But Audubon the man had tremendous fire and passion for nature and remains unsurpassed as a bird painter.*

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SUMMER FUN FOR ALL AGES >> PAGE 14

JUL 1 (SAT) – FIREWORKS – Sam Michaels Park hosts the Jefferson County fireworks show to celebrate Independence Day · Gates open at 6:30, concert by Kelli Bell at 7:30, fireworks begin at dark · Bring your own chairs, blankets, food & drinks (no alcohol please). The AMP is a non-smoking venue · Details at FB: The AMP at Sam Michaels (events)

JUL 4 (TUE) – INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE & PICNIC – Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Shepherdstown · Parade marches down German Street in Shepherdstown, starting at 11 am · Picnic at Morgan’s Grove Park with live music, children’s activities, food & beverages for sale by the Rotary Club (or bring your own - no alcohol please) · FREE admission · Details at FB: Shepherdstown 4th of July Parade and Picnic · For parade participation inquiries, email ShepherdstownParades@gmail.com



JUL 7 (FRI) – TALES OF LOCAL PROHIBITION – Museum Historian Doug Perks will speak about local history (including historic taverns and Prohibition) on the former site of the Blue Ridge Rod and Gun Club, rumored to be the site of parties for the Feds during the prohibition era. Enjoy amazing views of some of the places where this history happened. A Prohibition Pilsner will be on tap in honor of the Jefferson County Museum’s latest exhibit · Discussion begins at 6:30 · Harpers Ferry Brewing Co, 37412 Adventure Center Lane, Purcellville, VA (just east of Harpers Ferry off of Route 340, before the Potomac River bridge) · Free Admission · FB: Jefferson County Museum (events)

JUL 8 THROUGH AUG 5 – SUMMER EXHIBIT AT BRIDGE GALLERY – Featuring paintings by Seth Hill, Tim Clayton, Walt Bartman, and Fran Skiles; collages by Tracey Donnolly Franklin, and sculpture by Loraine Strait · Opening reception July 8, 4 - 7 pm; check FB for exhibit hours · Bridge Fine Art, 8566 Shepherdstown Pike, Shepherdstown · FB: The Bridge Gallery

JUL 11 & 12 (TUE & WED) – SPEAK STORY SERIES – Adam Booth is the 2022 West Virginia Folk Artist of the Year. His original stories blend traditional mountain folklore, music, and an awareness of contemporary Appalachia. The July performance will be a premier of “The Heron’s Journey” · 7:30 pm · Frank Center Auditorium, 260 University Dr, Shepherdstown · \$15 · Web: SpeakStorySeries.com. [See spotlight next page >>>](#)

JUL 21, 22 & 23 (FRI, SAT, SUN) – STUDIO TOUR SAMPLER – Over the Mountain Studio Tour is a self guided autumn tour through the studios of 18 of Jefferson County’s most passionate artisans. The tour includes craftspeople who work in a plethora of mediums. Creations in steel, glass, clay, copper, paper and ink meld with works in wood, cotton and wool, wax and paint and even flowers, fresh and dried. The Tour artists will present a sampler of their works at Evolve in Shepherdstown. Opening reception Friday, 5 - 8 pm. Gallery show Saturday 11 am - 7 pm and Sunday 11 am - 4 pm · 106 West German St, Shepherdstown · FREE · Web: OverTheMountainStudioTour.com

JUL 29 (SAT) – THE REAGAN YEARS – 80s tribute band concert at Sam Michaels Park · Gates open at 6:00, concert 7:30 - 9:30 · Bring your own chairs & blankets. Food & alcohol vendors on site. No carry-in food & drink. Rain or shine. The AMP is a non-smoking venue · \$18 (advance), \$25 (door) · Details & tickets at FB: The AMP at Sam Michaels (events)

FREE CONCERTS – LEVITT AMP MUSIC SERIES AT SAM MICHAELS PARK
The summer outdoor concert series at the AMP has shows every Thursday in July. Doors open at 6 pm, concerts start at 7 pm. Bring your own chairs, blankets, food & drinks (no alcohol please). The AMP is a non-smoking venue. Details at FB (events): The AMP at Sam Michaels. July schedule: Maria Isolina and Sol y Rumba Band (Jul 6), John R. Miller (Jul 13), Howay the Lassies (Jul 20), Incendio (Jul 27), Jah Works (Jun 30).

EXPLORE // LIVE PERFORMANCE

NEW STORY TAKES FLIGHT DURING THEATER FESTIVAL

“THE HERON’S JOURNEY” is coming to Shepherdstown! You won’t want to miss world-renowned story artist Adam Booth’s original program brought to you by Speak Story Series, in partnership with the Contemporary American Theater Festival. “The Heron’s Journey” uses spoken storytelling, quilting, and paper sculpture to tell an allegory filled with magic, challenges to opposition, and transformation. Meet the title character in various forms of self-discovery and take part in giving the story wings.

Adam created “The Heron’s Journey” in collaboration with other artists, a first in the 11 years of the series. He worked with a choreographer to ensure his movements would be in concert with the herons. In addition, he collaborated with a paper sculptor and a quilter to create this unique artistic experience.

Adam is the founder and artistic director of Speak Story Series. Speak has offered over 100 opportunities for both in-person and global online audiences to laugh, cry, and bond as story artists from around the world have shared their experiences and insights. Adam’s vision and connections have made Speak Story Series one of the preeminent storytelling events in the world.

Adam Booth is the 2022 West Virginia Folk Artist of the Year. His original stories blend traditional mountain folklore, music, and an awareness of contemporary Appalachia. As a nationally touring artist his professional telling appearances include premiere storytelling events across the United States, including the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage, the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival, the International Storytelling Center, the National Storytelling Festival, the Appalachian Studies Association Conference, the National Storytelling Conference, the National Academy of Medicine, and as a Spoken Word Resident at the Banff Centre (Alberta, Canada). He is a four-time champion of the West Virginia Liars’ Contest. Adam is the inaugural Storyteller-In-Residence at Shepherd University.

Performances are July 11 (Tue) 7:30 and July 12 (Wed) at 7:30, both at the Frank Center Auditorium, 260 University Drive (on the Shepherd University campus).



More Info At
SpeakStorySeries.com



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July 7 through July 29 – The Contemporary American Theater Festival presents the world premiere of Jeffrey Lieber’s *Fever Dreams* (of *Animals on the Verge of Extinction*). Visit CATF.org for times & tickets.

August 20 – The Appalachian Chamber Music Festival presents an encore concert of favorites from the first week of the 2023 festival, featuring Stravinsky’s “*Dumbarton Oaks*”. Visit AppalachianChamber.org for festival information & tickets.

We’ll be announcing our fall lineup of movies and concerts soon!

For event details, scan QR code above or visit
OperaHouseLive.com/Calendar-of-Events

131 W. German St, Shepherdstown | OperaHouseLive.com

EXPLORE // SUMMER FUN

SUMMER EVENTS AT BOLIVAR-HARPERS FERRY PUBLIC LIBRARY



All Ages Storytime with stories, songs, play instruments, and everyone's favorite activity - BUBBLES! (Wed, Jul 5, 11am); **Fieldtrip Yoga** at Murphy Farm w/Chrissy Lewin (30 minute yoga session including a story and science info), grades 1-5 (Thursday, July 6, 10 am - pre-registration required); **Make your own seed paper**, Grades 1-5 (Saturday, July 8, 1 pm - pre-registration required); Drop-in outdoor activities with **Jefferson County Parks & Rec Mobile center** (at the library), Monday, July 10, 10 am; **Crafty Storytime**, ages 3+ (Tuesday, July 11, 4 pm - pre-registration required); **Amazing Owls** at 10:30am: **Learn about owls**, what they eat, and how they help the environment, grades 1-5 (Thursday, July 14, 10:30 am - pre-registration required). *For all pre-registration events, call 304-535-2301. More info at BolivarHarpersFerryLibrary.com.*

FUN FOR ADULTS — LIBATIONS LOVERS TRAIL



The Jefferson County Convention and Visitor Bureau has launched an interactive event around Jefferson County that runs through October. The Libations Lovers Trail highlights **local craft beers, spirits, and the best spots for relaxing around the county**. Participants can download the passport app to earn points, enter for prizes, and find special events all summer long. *Details at WhereAlmostHeavenBegins.com/libations.*

SUMMER EVENTS AT SHEPHERDSTOWN LIBRARY

Weekly Story Time at 11 am in the Children's Library, Tuesdays for Lap Babies & Toddlers, Wednesdays for PreK (ages 3-6); **Falconry Event** - Colin Waybright, master class falconer, from Laurel Fork Falconry will be showing off his expertise with an indoor program, Best for ages 5+ (Wednesday, July 5, 3 pm); **Family Yoga** with Whitney Ingram of Ebb & Flow Adventures, for kids ages 7+ and their caregivers (Saturday, July 15, 1 pm, drop-in - bring your own towel or mat); **Human-Beaver Coexistence Alliance program** - Learn about beaver habitats and how people can live in harmony with these amazing animals, best for ages 5+ (Monday, July 10, 11 am); **Kevin Sherry's Wild Imagination** - Author/Illustrator Kevin Sherry ("The Yeti Files") shares his creative mix of songs, art, and stories, best for ages 3+ (Saturday, July 29, 11 am). *More info at ShepLibrary.org.*

READING FOR FUN & PRIZES

The Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library summer reading program theme is "Tales & Trails." Participants can earn raffle tickets for each book they log, with a drawing for prizes on July 29. **The Shepherdstown summer reading program** theme is "All Together Now." Participants who turn in a completed reading log by August 15, 2023 will receive a booklet of coupons from Shepherdstown businesses. *Stop by the libraries to enroll (residents can participate in both programs).*



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ENGAGE // LOCAL AWARDS

RECOGNIZING THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE COUNTY WORK

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS often labor out of the public eye, but they keep the county, cities, and towns running. Here's a few who recently received public recognition for their important work.

AWARD FOR WATER OPERATOR

Everyone calls him Woody, but the name on the 2023 Perkins Boynton award is Charles Coe III, chief system operator for the Shepherdstown Water Department. The award, presented by the WV Section of the American Water Works Association, recognizes exemplary ability in the operation of a water treatment plant. Pictured with Coe (center) are Shepherdstown Mayor Jim Auxer, Seth Meyers of the WV Bureau of Public Health, Susan Kemnitzer of the water board, and Frank Welch of the town's Public Works Department.



LOCAL PROFESSIONALS RECOGNIZED DURING NATIONAL EMS WEEK



Since 1974, the third week of May has been designated National Emergency Medical Services Week, to recognize the important work that these professionals perform in their communities. Locally, the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency recognized several individuals. A Life Saving Award was presented (above left) to Caileigh Oliver-Miller, Gary Viands, Kaila Napier, Caitlyn Ralson, Eduardo Hernandez, Adam Waugh & Patrick O'Meara for saving the life of a young woman found unconscious and without a heartbeat earlier this year – she's now recovered and doing well according to the JCESA statement. A Unit Citation Award (above center) was presented to Charles Thomas, Jason Marcus, Larry Slusher, Emily Shade, Kayla Burkner & Clara Boggs (not shown, Mike Lightfoot, Andy Grogg). A Stork Award (above right) to recognize the safe delivery of a baby at home last November was presented to Todd Turner, Brittany McLaughlin, Emma Shroadess, Leah Megeath, and Andrew Biller (not shown, Dale Gottschalk, Rufus Sine, Jr.).

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—C.G. Jung
(Collected Works, Vol. 1, "Letters" p. 33)

Cathryn Polonchak LCSW
Psychotherapist & Jungian Analyst

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ENGAGE // COUNTY NOTES

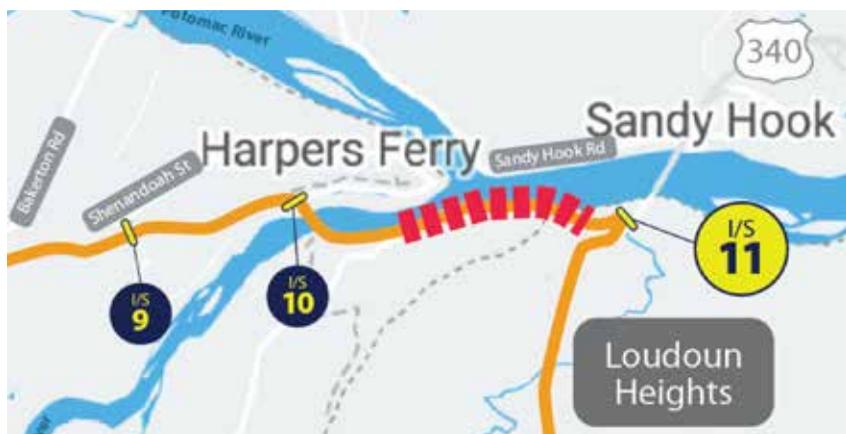
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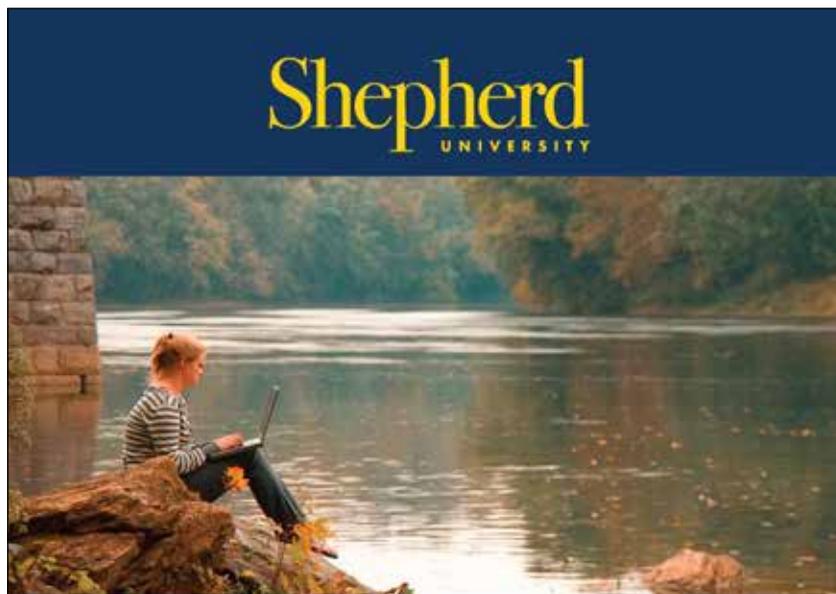
CLARE ATH ANNOUNCED at the end of May that she would resign, six months after she was first elected to the County Commission (she had been serving previously by appointment, filling a seat vacated by the resignation of Josh Compton in May 2021).

West Virginia law calls for the four remaining Commissioners – Steve Stolipher, Tricia Jackson, Jennifer Krouse (all Republicans) and Jane Tabb (independent) – to appoint a county resident to fill the seat until voters select someone in the 2024 general election to serve out the remainder of the term (through the end 2028). Ath was elected as a Republican, so the appointee will also need to be registered as a Republican. The Commissioners met in a special session on June 23 and failed to agree on a candidate. The Commission now has 15 days to solicit recommendations from the local Republican Party executive committee and try again to make a decision.

HARPERS FERRY ROADBLOCK



IF YOU TRAVEL ROUTE 340 between Harpers Ferry and Maryland, mark September 12 on your calendar. The roadway will close for 90 days to stabilize the rock wall above the road. *Detour options and project info at US340HarpersFerry.com.*



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