

The WV INDEPENDENT Observer

JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

SEPTEMBER 2023

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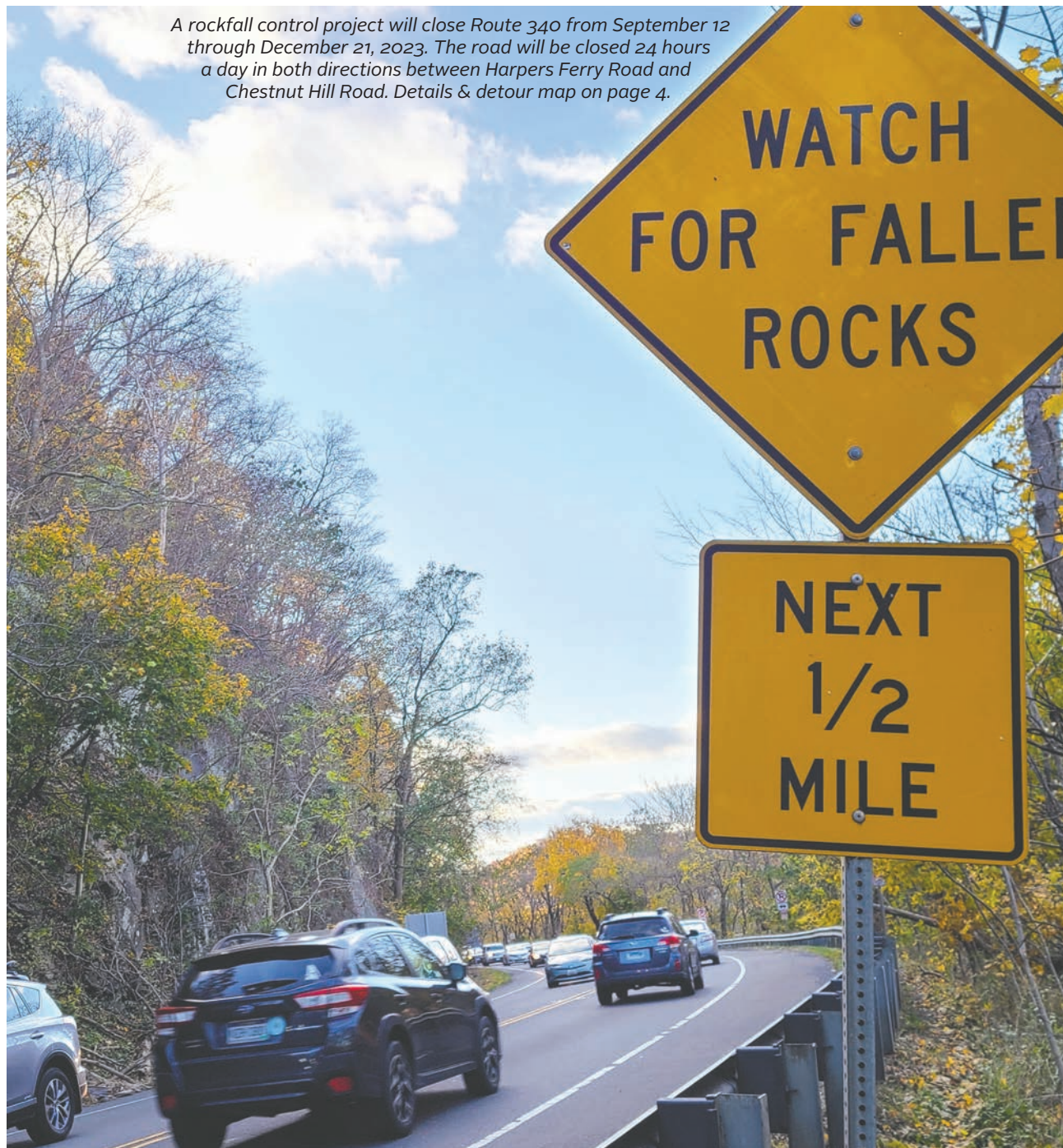
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A rockfall control project will close Route 340 from September 12 through December 21, 2023. The road will be closed 24 hours a day in both directions between Harpers Ferry Road and Chestnut Hill Road. Details & detour map on page 4.

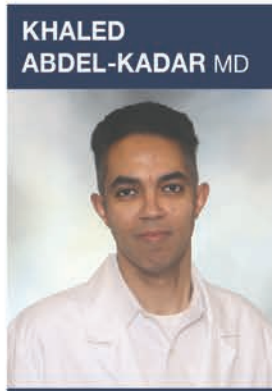
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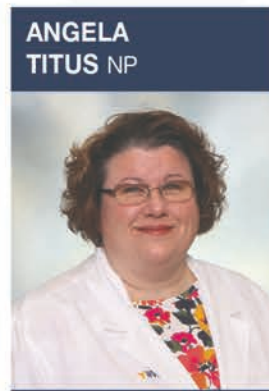
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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED. 



Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department Steve Allen (left) and Deputy Director Dick Myers (center) staffed the department's booth at the Jefferson County Fair every day to talk about programs to help prepare for natural and man-made disasters. Staff from the County Commission's office joined them after work on Thursday evening to assist (from left to right): Budget Director Bessie Nelson, County Administrator Makayla Zonfrilli, Deputy County Administrator Cindy Rezmer.

TO OUR READERS — A lot of what makes local government work is listening to what's on people's minds and connecting to the right resources to solve problems. Talking with lots of people is a big part of the job for Steve Allen, Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for Jefferson County, as he coordinates among various county departments, state & federal agencies, and local organizations to prepare for emergencies (see story in March 2023 *Observer*).

Allen recently organized a meeting with the West Virginia Department of Highways (WVDOH) and local first responders to review the upcoming closure of Route 340 near Harpers Ferry. While he's satisfied that the local police and fire agencies' concerns are being addressed, he's worried that the information and guidance available to the public has been very limited. It's a concern that was echoed by Jefferson County's mayors: the project is outside of any of their jurisdictions, but the traffic confusion will likely be felt throughout the county over the next three months (story on page 4).


Jefferson County Schools is also emphasizing communication: Its "Attendance Awareness" initiative aims to address a key stumbling block to academic success before it becomes an insurmountable obstacle (story on page 7).

When you have honest conversations about important issues — such as education and transportation — it's surprising how interrelated they can be — and how addressing roadblocks in one area can improve the quality of life of everyone in the county.


Steve Pearson
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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 **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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// COMMUNITY

ROUTE 340 ROAD CLOSURE BEGINS SEPTEMBER 12

Work To Fix Falling Rock Danger Will Affect Traffic Across County

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ROUTE 340 between Harpers Ferry and the Potomac River Bridge is closed? We're about to find out. On September 12, the West Virginia Department of Highways (WVDOH) will close the road between the intersection of Chestnut Hill Road (to the east of the Shenandoah River bridge) and the traffic signal at Harpers Ferry Road (by the Exxon station) for a project that will stabilize the rock cliff along the highway. The project schedule indicates the road will be closed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week until December 21 (that's 100 days if you're counting).

The falling rocks at this location have been a concern for years and WVDOH announced its intent to schedule this project a couple of years ago. Local leaders and businesses requested alternatives to the 24x7 closure, but ultimately, the concern that the work would be dislodging a large amount of rocks that could fall on the road at any time led WVDOH to pursue the full closure for the duration of the project. 📍



The unstable rock above this stretch of road poses a persistent danger along this heavily-traveled route.

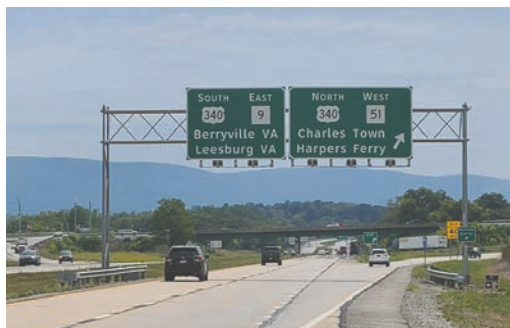
THE 340 DETOUR ROUTE TAKES SHAPE

For drivers heading from Harpers Ferry to Maryland (or the reverse), WVDOH estimates the full 22 mile detour route (see map, right) will take 35 minutes. For drivers starting from Charles Town and heading to Maryland (or the reverse), the detour route will add approximately 6 miles and 10 minutes of travel time. A big caveat to these numbers — they are a best case scenario with clear skies and no other traffic on the road.

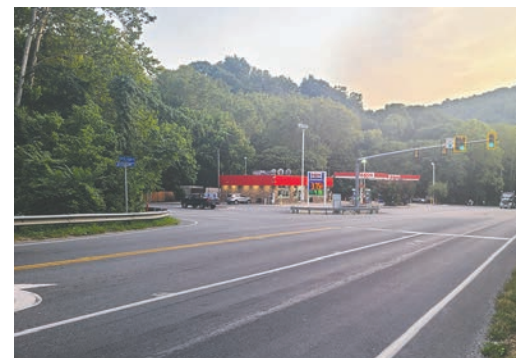
WVDOH has not provided traffic volume estimates for the existing route or the planned detour. Published information from 2022 reported that peak westbound evening traffic at the intersection of Route 9 and Harpers Ferry Road (Route 671) was approximately 1,700 vehicles per hour.

The peak evening traffic at the intersection of Route 340 and Harpers Ferry road was approximately 2,100 vehicles per hour (and 10 to 13 percent of the Route 340 traffic was heavy trucks). If all of the Route 340 traffic follows the detour through the Routes 9 & 671 intersection, that would be a doubling of the traffic heading over the mountain and coming down the hill on Route 9.

The project website (US340HarpersFerry.com) will not provide traffic updates. WVDOH representatives suggested the WV511.org website as a resource for drivers looking for current traffic information during the project. The Observer will post any project updates from WVDOH on our website at WeAreTheObserver.com.



For traffic heading from Charles Town towards Maryland, the official detour signs will start at the interchange of Routes 340 and 9 (just outside of Charles Town, near the casino).



All southbound traffic from Maryland will be routed left onto Harpers Ferry Road (Route 671) through Loudoun Heights to connect with Route 9.

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Andrew Skinner Stephen Skinner

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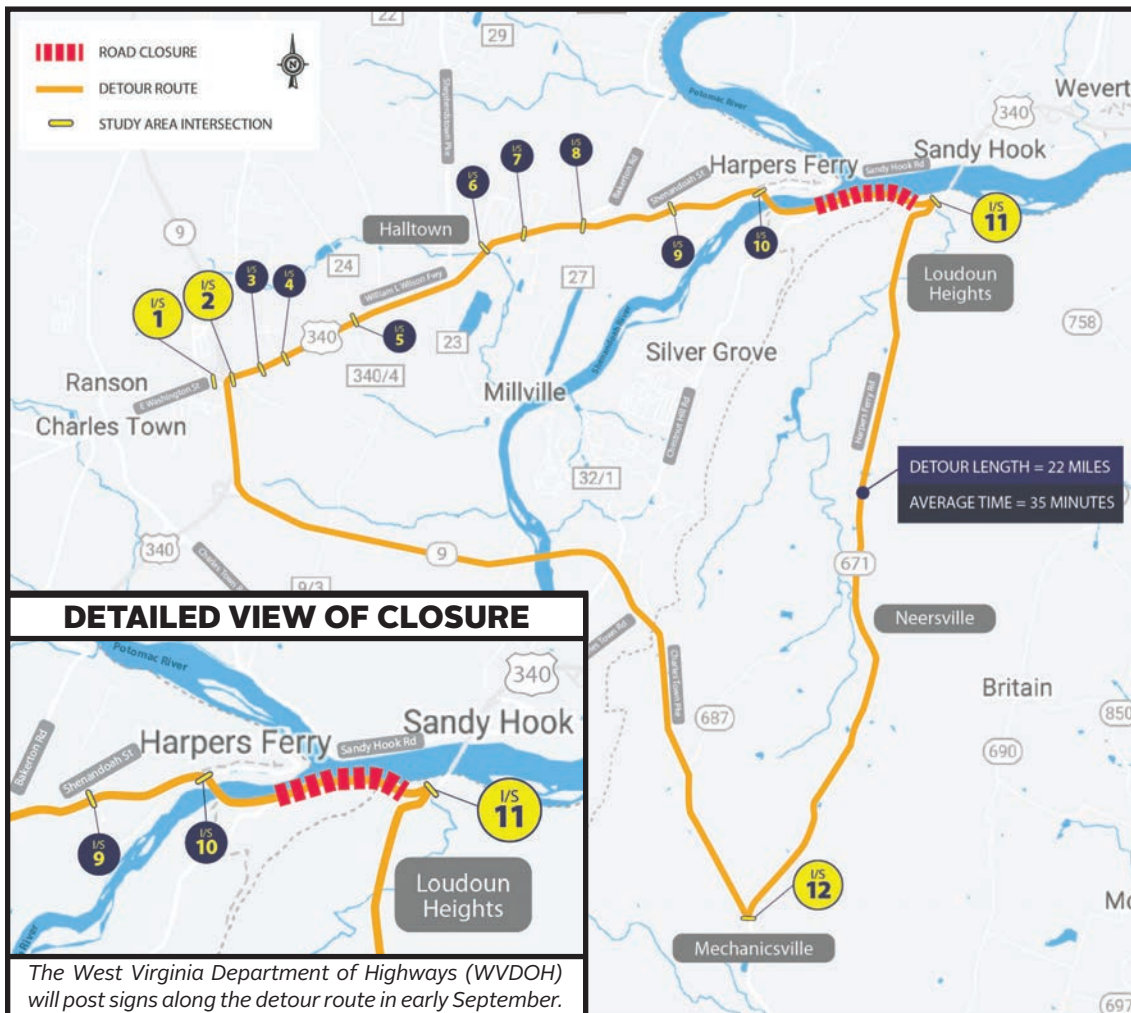
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Attorneys: Stephen Skinner, Andrew Skinner, & Bryan Ogilvie | Stephen Skinner is responsible for the content of this ad.



The West Virginia Department of Highways (WVDOH) will post signs along the detour route in early September.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION AROUND THE COUNTY

WVDOH reports that it has alerted online mapping services about the project detour, but drivers elsewhere in the county (and surrounding region) can expect to see spillover delays as drivers find their own directions around the expected traffic backups along the official detour route. These alternative routes have their own chokepoints and limitations, so drivers may find themselves in just as much traffic as on the official detour.



(Above) Backups at the stop signs south of the bridge in Shepherdstown are a regular occurrence, even in the middle of the day with typical traffic volume.



(Above) Route 40 Alt through Boonsboro was a state-of-the-art highway when it was paved a century ago — now it's a low-speed (25 MPH limit) local road through a small downtown village. (Below) There is no left-turn arrow at the signal to head south towards Sharpsburg and Shepherdstown, so even a slight increase in traffic will likely trigger an extended bottleneck throughout downtown Boonsboro.





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
File by September 1st

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PERSONAL PROPERTY REPORT*
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// BUSINESS

CHILD CARE OPTIONS NEEDED IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

Average Wait For Care Opening Exceeds One Year

A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE THINKING about child care. Across the state, there are more than 26,000 children under 6 whose parents or guardians are seeking care but couldn't find a placement, according to data reported by *Mountain State Spotlight*. Locally, the Jefferson County Development Authority (JCDA) did its own research and estimates that more than 1,600 families in Jefferson County have an unmet need for licensed child care.

The West Virginia state legislature debated more than a dozen bills related to child care in its regular session earlier this year. Many of those bills addressed affordability, focusing on tax credits, employer credits, and subsidies. Still, the fundamental question went unresolved — how to build up the capacity to meet the demand.

According to the JCDA report, the average wait for an open child care slot in Jefferson County exceeds 13 months. The average wait time for a slot in Berkeley County is 6 months and the average wait time in Frederick County (MD) is 3 months. Eddie Benites, the executive director of the JCDA, presented this information to the JCDA board and the Jefferson County Commission, noting that it's not just a concern for parents — employers have concerns that the lack of accessible childcare is limiting their potential workforce and ability to expand.

Child Care Is Business

The same concern was voiced at a joint meeting of the Berkeley and Jefferson Chambers of Commerce earlier in 2023, during a presentation led by Dr. John Deskins

of the West Virginia Bureau of Business and Economic Research. During the presentation, Dr. Deskins presented multiple statistics that



Mariah Burnley, owner of the Ohio Valley Child Learning Center, with her son Noah. Photo by Allen Siegler, courtesy of Mountain State Spotlight. Burnley's experience with a three-year waitlist for her first child inspired her to establish her own child care business in Ohio County (Wheeling WV).

indicated a strong outlook for economic growth in the Eastern Panhandle. The lack of child care capacity stood out as one of the singular constraints in the region that has much potential to expand its role as an economic engine of West Virginia.

Benites reported that the JCDA will be working on several initiatives in the months ahead to help local residents start or expand child care businesses. Helping businesses understand the permitting process is at the top of the list, along with ongoing discussions with other county agencies to clarify and streamline the permitting process. The JCDA will also be announcing in-person seminars and other resources to assist small business entrepreneurs.

Benites also announced that the YMCA of Frederick County MD will be evaluating the Eastern Panhandle as a potential site for a new facility that would include child care services in addition to a broad range of family health and recreation offerings. She sees the potential of a YMCA child care facility to make a dent in the gap between the need and the capacity for child care, but it would still leave lots of room for local entrepreneurs to flourish. 📍

For more information about JCDA programs and resources available for local businesses, visit JCDA.net.

The Observer will be covering child care as an ongoing issue — Sign up for email updates at WeAreTheObserver.com to get news about this topic.

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// SCHOOLS

ATTENDANCE MATTERS FOR ACADEMIC SKILLS County Schools Aim To "Elevate Jefferson"



A school bus waits in front of Shepherdstown Elementary School for students to board at the end of the day. At its August 14 meeting, the school board approved a construction bid of \$28 million for the new Shepherdstown Elementary School facility that will be located south of Shepherdstown. Construction of the new building is expected to begin in October of this year and the facility is expected to be available for students in the fall of 2025.

JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS (JCS) welcomed students back to the classrooms on August 21. The first day enrollment number was just under 8,300, but official counts won't be available until October (inbound transfers and late enrollments can change the numbers significantly over the first month of school). A JCS spokesperson indicated that all but two classroom vacancies had been filled as of the first day, with long-term substitutes in 13 percent of the classroom positions. JCS reports that many of these substitutes intend to seek full teaching certification through WV's alternative certification program.

The new superintendent, Dr. Chuck Bishop, shared a message of openness to change to mark the start of his tenure and the beginning of the new school year: "The education landscape has changed over the years, and it is our responsibility to adjust accordingly. Jefferson County Schools does many things well, but our collective goal should be to Elevate Jefferson." He described "Elevate Jefferson" as a fresh approach to reviewing processes, procedures, and practices that work well and considering alternative solutions when necessary. Bishop also touched on the topic of bullying, an issue that received much attention but no resolution, through various Board of Education committee meetings last spring: "There is no place in our school system for harassment, bullying, intimidation, or hate speech, and each of us has a responsibility to ensure that it is not tolerated."


Being In The Classroom Makes The Difference
The school system is starting the school year with a focus on attendance. The nationwide post-pandemic drop in academic proficiency scores has focused attention on the link between consistent classroom attendance and academic performance, backed by a broad

amount of research.


JCS has designated September as "attendance awareness month" — an early emphasis intended to establish strong attendance patterns. In a short video presentation available on its website, JCS notes that students who miss fewer than 9 days of classroom instruction have the best chances of strong academic performance throughout the year. On the other hand, students who miss more than 18 classroom days throughout the year are very likely to struggle academically — and the results are cumulative, spilling into the following year and significantly increasing the likelihood of dropping out of high school before graduation for students with chronic absenteeism.

To put those numbers into perspective, a single absence each month translates into 9 absences over the entire year. Two absences each month equates to 18 days — 10 percent of the year's classroom time. The JCS presentation notes that students, parents, and teachers working together can help offset the loss of classroom instruction time for children who need to be out of school for illness or other reasons, but that it's important to be proactive, reporting necessary absences to improve the opportunities to provide timely alternative instruction and learning resources.👏

Jefferson County Schools has published information about attendance and suggestions for assistance on its website (jcs.wv.org). Scan for link >>>



Additional resources available through the JCS website's Parent and Educator Resource Center. Scan for link >>>



“Whenever we give up, leave behind and forget too much, there is always the danger that the things we have neglected will return with added force.”
—C.G. Jung (*Memories, Dreams and Reflections*)



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NEW STATE LEGISLATION FROM AUGUST SESSION

By Susan Benzinger

Susan Benzinger is a retired tax attorney and active volunteer in Jefferson County. She currently co-manages the newly-established Blue Ridge Food Pantry to provide food assistance to residents of the easternmost portion of Jefferson County (FB: BRFoodPantry).

WEST VIRGINIA'S STATE SENATORS AND DELEGATES were already scheduled to meet in Charleston from August 7 to 9 for interim meetings. Then on August 6, Governor Jim Justice called a special session to address budgetary issues and other issues that the governor, in conjunction with House and Senate leaders, agreed needed to be addressed by the legislature now rather than waiting for January 2024. The special session and the interim meetings were conducted at the same time (see sidebar for explainer of how the legislature meets).

Bills that passed in special session

Governor Justice asked for action on 44 issues. The legislature passed 35 bills which are either effective on passage or awaiting the Governor's signature (see the online version of this article for a link to the legislature's bill status website). Here's a summary of some of the bills relevant to our local community:

Adjustment to child support calculations — The definition of gross income that is used to determine child support was amended to exclude student loan payments. How our local delegation voted — For: Sens. Barrett, Rucker, Delegates Clark, Espinosa, Hardy; Not voting (absent): Delegate Ridenour.

Funds for fire protection — A trio of bills were passed to provide funds for fire protection. The funds will be administered by the WV Department of Homeland Security and will be provided to the All-County Fire Protection Fund, the County Fire Protection Fund, and the Fire Protection Fund. How our local delegation voted — For establishing the fire protection funds and

providing funds from the State surplus to these funds: Sens. Barrett, Rucker, Delegates Clark, Espinosa, Hardy; Not voting (absent): Delegate Ridenour. For making an appropriation to all three funds: all members of our delegation voted yes.

State department of corrections — Bills were passed to address staffing issues with WV prisons and jails. Correctional officer vacancies are 30 percent across the state with some facilities having a vacancy rate of 60 percent. Bills were passed to increase starting pay and pay scales for correctional officers as well as to provide one-time bonuses for support staff. How our local delegation voted — All members of our local delegation voted for this legislation.

Budget items — Many bills focused on moving money from surplus funds to specific needs. These included funds for highway maintenance and equipment (\$150,000,000), the Veterans Nursing Home (\$1,000,000) and the Behavioral Health Program of the Department of Health & Human Resources (\$5,225,000). How our local delegation voted — All members of our delegation voted for this funding.

Personal property tax clarification — During the 2023 regular session, the legislature passed tax rebates for personal property taxes. The rebates are effective for the 2024 tax year and potentially future tax years. Confusion has arisen as to which payments are reported for the 2024 tax year, as current personal property tax bills are dated 2023 and are due September 1, 2023 (first half payment) and March 1, 2024 (second half payment). The legislation passed during the current special session clarifies the answer — second half personal property taxes that are due on March 1, 2024 are reported on the 2024 tax return even if they are paid in 2023 (WV Tax Division form TSD 454 has been updated to reflect this clarification). How our local delegation voted — All members of our local delegation voted for this legislation.

THE LEGISLATURE'S SCHEDULE

The West Virginia legislature (consisting of the House of Delegates and the Senate) convenes each year for a **regular session** that runs for 60 consecutive days beginning on the second Wednesday of January. During the regular sessions, bills are introduced, debated, amended, referred to committees and some become law.

The legislature also meets monthly (this year they did not meet in June) between legislative sessions, for three days of **"interim meetings"** of its various committees. These meetings allow discussion of continuing and new issues facing the State and include public comment. They are held in Charleston as well as other locations. No bills are passed during interim meetings because the full legislature is not convened.

When issues are considered too pressing to wait for the next annual regular session, the governor may call a **special session**. The governor issues a proclamation listing the only issues that will be addressed. During a special session, legislation may be presented, voted on, and passed because the legislature is convened.

Upcoming Meetings

The legislature has announced interim meetings scheduled for September 10-12, October 15-17, November 12-14, December 10-12, and January 7-9 (2024). The next regular legislative session will begin on January 10, 2024.

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PERSPECTIVE // NATURE

HAMMERHEAD WORM HAS ODD HABITS

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.

I WAS ABOUT TO OPEN the front gate at my driveway when I spied a small worm crawling across my muddy tire track. Its golden color made me go back for a second look. Surprisingly, the front end of the worm resembled a hammerhead shark. As I returned with my cell phone to take a snapshot for identification purposes, the worm showed no alarm but seemed to flow over the ground like water. A quick search revealed its name described exactly what it looked like — a hammerhead flatworm.

Hammerhead flatworms, although recently touted as our latest alien threat, have been in the USA since 1891. It is believed they were introduced here accidentally through imported garden and landscaping materials from Southeast Asia. These creatures are possibly more common than they seem. The first and only one I saw was out and about in the early morning after a rain, which is when most of them are visible in the open. They would be difficult to find during dry spells.

According to one source, at one time these worms were so plentiful in New Orleans they were used as demonstration specimens in biology classes. Hammerhead worms have become very prevalent in greenhouses throughout the country, so you may already have introduced them into your garden. Because they are voracious predators of earthworms, they are often a nuisance on earthworm farms.

Sexual reproduction has not been observed but these flatworms are known to lay eggs. Their typical way of reproducing is to regenerate themselves by fragmentation. A



Photo: D. Pifer

flatworm pinches or constricts the rear part of itself until it breaks off. The piece of worm left behind eventually develops a new head and lives on. This leads some people to call the animal “immortal,” which is not exactly true.

Hammerhead flatworms are between four and eight inches long, sometimes longer. Unlike tomato worms which are immature insects, hammerheads are free-living flatworms, related to the parasitic tapeworms and liver flukes. The scientific genus name of this worm, *Bipalium*, means “two shovels, having a head shaped like a pickaxe.” Also known as broadhead planarians, they have become established in many tropical and subtropical parts of the world. Several species are now found throughout the United States, most commonly in the hotter, more humid regions of the southeast.

The distinctive, half-moon shaped head contains sensory organs that help the worm locate its earthworm prey. Its method of feeding, rather gruesome, involves secreting a neurotoxin that immobilizes the earthworm. Then the flatworm digests the earthworm directly through the flatworm’s stomach, located on the underside of its body. Flatworms may not be permanent or abundant enough in an area to decimate earthworm populations. They also prey upon snails, slugs, and certain soft bodied insects.

They also frequently eat each other. Otherwise, they have few natural enemies. The neurotoxin they secrete makes them distasteful or sickening to predators and is their only defense.

The negative label “invasive” is often applied to species that have been introduced into this country. Often invasives out-compete native species, sometimes even diminishing entire populations. In the case of this flatworm, however, the earthworms it feeds upon are also invasive species. Most of the earthworms we see around here are species that have been brought in or accidentally introduced from other countries and have taken over the soil once populated by our native American earthworms.

Nonetheless, the hammerhead’s toxicity to pets and potential to cause severe irritation to gardeners who touch them has led to a general recommendation to remove any of these worms that you find in your garden. But don’t squash or cut a flatworm into pieces with a shovel. As I described above, the broken pieces are able to survive and become new worms.

Here’s the preferred method of destroying a hammerhead flatworm. Wearing plastic or gardening gloves, place the creature in a sealable plastic bag and add table salt or 30 percent (cleaning grade) vinegar. Some sources additionally suggest placing the sealed plastic bag in a freezer for at least 24 hours before discarding to ensure the worm is dead.

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PRESERVING THE SHEPHERDSTOWN BATTLEFIELD

Local Efforts Draw \$2.5 Million In Funding & Recognition Of Volunteers

By Steve Pearson

SUPPORTERS GATHERED on August 26 at the James Osborne Farm (also known as Mountain View Farm and Far Away Farm), to celebrate the results of diligent efforts by the Shepherdstown Battlefield Protection Association (SBPA) to preserve this 121-acre property at the core of the Shepherdstown battlefield site. In late 2022, the American Battlefield Trust acquired this property through the efforts of the SBPA. By the end of this year, SBPA expects title to be transferred to the Jefferson County Landmarks Commission, culminating a 19-year effort led locally by the SBPA that involved a complex mix of coordination and funding involving the American Battlefield Trust, the National Park Service, the US Department of Agriculture, the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, and the Jefferson County Landmarks Commission.

The event's festivities included presentation of the 2023 Conservation Award to the SBPA from the Two Rivers Giving Circle. The citation of this award highlighted the SBPA's wide-ranging efforts over the past two decades to preserve the battlefield. Leading up to the event, the SBPA also announced the results of recent efforts to fund ongoing preservation of the site, with recent funding sponsored by both of West Virginia's US Senators. In the past 18 months, SBPA's efforts have directed \$2.5 million to the battlefield preservation effort.

Both Senators provided statements that underscored the significance of this work. Senator Capito said: "Our state's proud tradition of service extends all the way to its



The Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association worked with many partner organizations to preserve the multiple properties at the core of the battlefield site.

very inception. Maintaining the Shepherdstown Battlefield is an important duty we owe to the legacy of those who sacrificed so much, and it will inspire West Virginians who learn of their bravery and sacrifice."

Senator Manchin noted that, "We are fortunate in West Virginia to have such a vibrant wealth of history and culture. Born out of the fiery turmoil of the Civil War, our state was founded by courageous patriots who risked their lives in a united pursuit of justice and freedom. Shepherdstown Battlefield is truly a unique and integral piece of West Virginia history. One hundred and sixty-one years ago, the battle took place on this land. Because of the efforts seen here today, it will continue to be a wonderfully preserved part of our state's



The Osborne farm remains relatively unchanged from the time of the Civil War battle, except for the many trees which now stand between what would have been open fields all the way to the banks of the Potomac River.

identity for generations to come. Today's event represents the type of unique, community-based thinking that keeps our Great State on the map. I appreciate the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association and all who work to shed light on this region's treasured past."

Mike Nickerson, president of SBPA, remarked that this event celebrates a major preservation achievement that extends beyond this property to protect a significant portion of the entire battlefield. Now that the property is protected, the SBPA's next tasks are to develop a plan to manage the property and enable visitors to access and enjoy the site, which may include trails for walking, biking, and bird watching.

The Shepherdstown Battlefield Protection Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. The SBPA can arrange tour guides for the extended battlefield site and welcomes new members and donations to support ongoing efforts to preserve the battlefield site and provide public education about the battle. More info at ShepherdstownBattlefield.org.

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PERSPECTIVE // LOCAL HISTORY

GRANDPARENTS DAY HAS WEST VIRGINIA ROOTS

Shepherdstown Public Library Hosting Local Event To Celebrate

By Addison Reese

An educator by training, Addison Reese enjoys researching the local history of Jefferson County. She works at the Shepherdstown Public Library and also serves on the Jefferson County Historic Landmark Commission (JCHLC). She can be contacted at Addison@ShepLibrary.org.

FUN FACT — THE WOMAN behind National Grandparents Day was a West Virginian. Marian McQuade, born in 1917, was the mother of 15 children and lived to see 43 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great grandchild before her death in 2008. McQuade drew from her experience with her own grandmother and mother as she took on various leadership roles in the state, focusing on support for older adults, including serving on the West Virginia Committee on Aging and the Nursing Home Licensing Board.

McQuade's advocacy work expanded beyond West Virginia when she was appointed as a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging in the early 1970s. Throughout the following decade, she worked with senior citizen organizations to petition local political leaders, Congress, and presidents to have Grandparents Day recognized as a national holiday.

McQuade envisioned the holiday as an opportunity to highlight the importance of intergenerational relationships. Rather than a commercial holiday, she envisioned it more as a way to alleviate loneliness and recognize the value of the young and old spending quality time together. Having meaningful conversations between generations can provide guidance from life experience or an opportunity to hear different and fresh perspectives from a younger generation. Grandparents Day is a time to honor grandparents and surrogate grandparents as well as an opportunity to explore one's roots and traditions. McQuade wanted the holiday to be celebrated with homemade cards, family gatherings, or by visiting a nursing home.

McQuade's home state was her first success for the campaign, when West Virginia Governor Arch Moore signed a proclamation in 1972 to establish a Grandparents Day. Several other states soon followed with their own official support. McQuade's persistence led the US Congress to pass legislation in 1978 for a national Grandparents Day. President Jimmy Carter signed it into law the following year and designated September 9, 1979, and the first Sunday after Labor Day in each succeeding year, as National Grandparents Day.

On September 9, from 10-12, the Shepherdstown Public Library will be hosting a Grandparents Day event, co-sponsored by the Pack Horse Ford Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The public is invited to join in the activities, which will include card-making and a photo booth (for pictures you can send to grandparents).



Marian McQuade in 1982 with children holding homemade Grandparents Day cards. Photo courtesy of Ruth McQuade.

From President Carter's 1979 proclamation:

Grandparents are our continuing tie to the near-past, to the events and beliefs and experiences that so strongly affect our lives and the world around us. Whether they are our own or surrogate grandparents who fill some of the gaps in our mobile society, our senior generation also provides our society a link to our national heritage and traditions.

We all know grandparents whose values transcend passing fads and pressures, and who possess the wisdom of distilled pain and joy. Because they are usually free to love and guide and befriend the young without having to take daily responsibility for them, they can often reach out past pride and fear of failure and close the space between generations.

I urge officials of Government at the national, State, and local levels, and of voluntary organizations to plan appropriate activities that recognize the importance and the worth of the 17 million grandparents in our nation. I urge all Americans to take the time to honor their own grandparents or those in their community.



SAVE THE DATES! 2023-24 CONCERT SEASON

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Bologne, Porumbescu
Irina Muresanu, violin

FEB. 17, 2024

TWO RIVERS WIND QUINTET
Ligeti, Arnold, Milhaud,
Molnar-Suhajda, Still, Danzi

MAR. 23 & 24, 2024

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All-Bach program featuring
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EXPLORE // PARKS & RECREATION

MOULTON FAMILY LAND EXPANDS RIVERFRONT PARK



The Moulton family members gathered on the family farm for the recognition and ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 22 (from left to right): Christopher Huvos, Brucie Moulton, Emma Huvos, Greg Faxon, Barbara Moulton, Tom Helm, David Moulton, and Mark Moulton.

“THIS IS MY CHILDHOOD HOME, I love it dearly. It’s where I first explored nature,” commented Brucie Moulton, as she spoke at the ceremony to mark the transfer of “Riverside,” her family’s farm to the Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Commission (JCPRC). Brucie’s daughter Emma Huvos, who also lived on the farm as a child, followed with her

own comments outlining the history of her great-grandparents who purchased 500 acres in Jefferson County to start a dairy farm and her grandparents who donated 3 acres along the Shenandoah River in 1976 to create the present-day Moulton Park. Emma remarked that she was “thrilled to know that this property will remain undeveloped and enjoyed by the community for generations.”

The ceremony on August 22 marked the family’s transfer of the remaining 82 acres of the farm, creating an 85-acre park along the Shenandoah River. The transfer process, which involved a sale of the property at below market value, a grant from the West Virginia Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund, and support from the Chesapeake Conservancy, took several years to implement and includes a conservation easement that stipulates that the land be managed for watershed protection, education, native species protection, and soil and forest regeneration, in addition to the family’s legacy of creating recreation opportunities and public access.

JCPRC will be developing a formal plan for the property over the next several months and anticipates opening the expanded park to the public by mid-2024. In addition to an existing outdoor pavilion designed and built by a family member in 2015, the proposed features of the park include hiking trails, camping facilities, and parking infrastructure to alleviate congestion for people accessing the Shenandoah River.

Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn highlighted the significance of this gift: “The generosity of the Moulton family is truly a model example of how we, as a society, can achieve success in this era of conservation. Governments and nonprofits can’t do it alone. Our society needs the support of private philanthropists, such as the extraordinary Moulton family, as we race against time to adapt to climate change and [meet our goal to] protect 30 percent of the Chesapeake Bay watershed by 2030.”

COME SEE A SHOW





Join us for September events marking the anniversary of the Battle of Antietam

Sunday, September 12 (3 pm) — “Shepherdstown Remembers Antietam,” an original film written and produced by local history researcher Jim Surkamp. The film describes the Battle’s impact through the eyes of Shepherdstown-area residents of the time, many of whom mobilized to aid wounded and hungry soldiers. A short Q&A will follow the film.
Free admission (advance reservation available at website)

Thursday, September 21 (7 pm) — “When Hell Came to Sharpsburg: The Battle of Antietam and Its Impact on the Civilians Who Called It Home,” a lecture by historian and screenwriter Steven Cowie.
Free admission (no reservations required).


Movies & Music coming this fall — See website for details.

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EXPLORE // ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT

SEP 2 (SAT) – Charles Town Car Show – Cars from classics to hot rods, food trucks and vendors. 10 am - 3 pm. Downtown Charles Town. FREE. FB: Charles Town Car Show.

SEP 6 (WED) – Auditions for Shepherd University Community Orchestra – Resuming this fall as primarily a strings-only ensemble (no winds). 6 - 8:30 pm. Frank Center. 260 University Drive, Shepherdstown. Web: Shepherd.edu/music/community-orchestra.

SEP 7 (THU) – Faculty Jazz Ensemble – Dynamic set of original music from the Shepherd University Jazz faculty, featuring Kurtis Adams on saxophone, Peter Heiss on guitar, Bob Sykes on piano, Kevin Pace on bass, and Kelton Norris on drums. 7:30 pm. Frank Center (Shipley Recital Hall), 260 University Drive, Shepherdstown. Web: Shepherd.edu/music/calendar-of-concerts.

SEP 12 (TUE) – Shepherd University Lecture – Dr. Linton Wells will speak on “Public Service, Shepherd International, Disruptive Technology — A Challenging and Fascinating Future Awaits.” 6:30 pm. Byrd Center Auditorium, 213 North King St, Shepherdstown. FREE. Web: Shepherd.edu/president/presidents-lecture-series.

SEP 12-13 (TUE-WED) – Speak Story Series – Storyteller Diane Macklin will present “Zora Unveiled: Echoes of a Cultural Muse,” a story commissioned by Speak Story Series. Tuesday performance at 7:30 pm at Reynolds Hall, 109 North King St, Shepherdstown. Wednesday performance at 7:30 pm. War Memorial Building, 102 East German St, Shepherdstown. \$15. Web: SpeakStorySeries.com.

SEP 14 (THU) – Constitution Day at the Byrd Center – Kathy Kiely will present a talk titled “Defending Freedom in a Digital Age.” 7 pm. Byrd Center Auditorium, 213 North King St, Shepherdstown. FREE (advance reservation required). Web: ByrdCenter.org.

SEP 15-17 (FRI-SUN) – Shepherdstown Book Festival – A celebration of books and writing featuring multiple authors and events. Various locations in Shepherdstown. Web: ShepherdstownBookFestival.com.

SEP 16 & 17 (SAT & SUN) – Bluemont Fair – Old time country fair with children's activities, petting zoo, arts & crafts, vendors, food & music. 10 am - 5 pm (both days). 33846 Snickersville Turnpike, Bluemont, VA. \$10 (under 9 free), no pets, free parking. Web: BluemontFair.org. >> See ad above

SEP 17 (SUN) – Oktoberfest at the Bavarian Inn – German band & dancers, food and beverage stations, vendors and children's activities. 11 am - 5 pm. 164 Shepherd Grade Rd, Shepherdstown. \$5 adults, \$2 youth. FB: TheBavarianInn.

SEP 17 (SUN) – Shepherdstown Remembers Antietam – An original film written and produced by local history researcher Jim Surkamp, with Q&A to follow. 3 pm. Shepherdstown Opera House, 131 West German St, Shepherdstown. FREE (advance reservation suggested). Web: OperaHouseLive.com >> See ad on page 12.

SEP 22 (FRI) – Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal and the Fight for Coalfield Justice – A documentary film by Chet Pancake, with discussion to follow. Presented by Shepherdstown Film Society. 7 pm. Byrd Center Auditorium, 213 North King St, Shepherdstown. FREE.

SEP 23 (SAT) – Appalachian Heritage Festival – Celebration of Appalachian music, hosted by Shepherd University (various locations on campus). See article on page 15 for details.

SEP 30 (SAT) – Blue Ridge Arts & Crafts Festival – 70 artists/crafters, food trucks, live music. 11 am - 5 pm. Sam Michaels Park, 235 Sam Michaels Lane, Harpers Ferry. FREE. FB: Blue Ridge Arts and Crafts Festival.

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MORE EVENTS >>> PAGES 14 & 15

The Animal Welfare Society is hosting a

RABIES VACCINE CLINIC
Saturday, September 9
8:00 — 10:00 am

Ranson Moose Lodge parking lot
(77 Universal Forest Products Road)

Cats & dogs only. \$10 per pet. Dogs must be on leash and cats must be in carriers (no feral cats allowed).

For previously vaccinated pets, bring the rabies certificate to receive a 3 year vaccination.

Visit **AWSCJ.org** or call **304-725-0589** for more information

ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY
 JEFFERSON COUNTY

EXPLORE // ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT

YOUTH THEATER OFFERS PRODUCTION WORKSHOPS

THE BLACK BOX YOUTH PLAYHOUSE in Shepherdstown is offering theater production workshops this fall. These workshops are designed for children who want to explore the theater arts but are looking for roles behind the scenes.

The production workshop for *Snow Queen* is open to children aged 8 to 18. The story of this play follows two best friends, Kay and Gerda. Kay becomes enchanted by the Snow Queen and forgets his happy life, turning to a cold-hearted view of the world. Gerda goes on a journey to find her friend and to help him discover hope and joy again. The *Snow Queen* workshop program will run for 8 weeks and participants will engage in classes, rehearsals, and other hands-on activities to create a live production for the stage. All production activities will take place at the Black Box Youth Playhouse in Shepherdstown. For youth who want to perform on stage, auditions will be held on October 14 & 15.

The beginner production workshop for *Peter Pan* is open to children aged 5 through 9. This play presents the familiar tale of Peter, the boy who would not grow up and Wendy, the mature-beyond-her-years girl, who helps Peter through his adventures. This program will meet twice a week for four weeks and will feature all crew members as the performance cast as well.

The participant fee for the Snow Queen workshop is \$295; the fee for the Peter Pan workshop is \$175. For details and registration, visit BlackBoxYouth.org, email info@BlackBoxYouth.org, or call 304-870-4685.






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EXPLORE // ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT

APPALACHIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL TO HIGHLIGHT FAMILY & COMMUNITY

THE 2023 APPALACHIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL at Shepherd University, celebrating its 27th year, will have a focus on families and the community ties that bind us together. The day-long event schedule for Saturday, September 23 will feature artists of three different generations of families with diverse musical styles and traditions: the family band **Just Us Lillys** featuring John Lilly; blues and songs of freedom from **Sparky and Rhonda Rucker**; and the newlywed couple of powerhouse fiddler **Tessa Dillon McCoy** and Grammy Award-winning artist **Chance McCoy**.

The festival will kick off on Saturday morning with free workshops including an introduction to unaccompanied Appalachian singing, a conversation with award-winning songwriter John Lilly, a presentation about songs of struggle and civil rights with Sparky Rucker, and a post-concert jam session. The evening outdoor concert will begin at 7 pm on the Frank Center patio on Shepherd University's West Campus under the stars (in the event of inclement weather, the concert will be moved inside to the Frank Center auditorium). This is a pay-what-you-can event with donations accepted to the right of the stage. Community members are invited to bring their own lawn chairs.

The festival is held in conjunction with the Shepherd University Appalachian Heritage Writer In Residence project, which also has events scheduled in September. For more information on the festival and the writer in residence project, visit the online version of this article at WeAreTheObserver.com.



For artist bios & festival details, visit WeAreTheObserver.com

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ENGAGE // PUBLIC MEETINGS

ROCKWOOL FACTORY SEEKING MODIFICATION TO AIR PERMIT



The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) has indicated it will hold a public meeting in Charles Town sometime in September to provide an update on — and answer the public's questions about — the air permit for the Rockwool factory in Ranson. The tentative meeting schedule is Tuesday, September 19 at 6:00 pm, at 119 East Washington Street in Charles Town. The confirmed schedule will be posted on WeAreTheObserver.com.

What's the Issue?

IN 2018, WHEN THE COMPANY RECEIVED its initial air permit (the regulatory framework for releasing pollutants into the air), Rockwool indicated it would be using coal as the primary fuel for its melting furnaces. In 2020, the company announced that the factory would use natural gas as its primary fuel. The WVDEP issues air permits based on “best practices” for specific activities, so a permit for a coal-fueled furnace allows higher air pollution levels than a permit for a gas-fueled furnace. In late November 2022, after a year of production, the company did apply for a modification to the initial air permit to reflect the fuel change. One of the questions on the table, as the company applies for its permanent air permit, is whether the WVDEP draft permit will require lower emission levels that should be applied for a natural-gas fired facility. *Once the WVDEP publishes the draft of Rockwool's modified permit, the public will have 30 days to file comments.*

PLANNING COMMISSION WANTS YOUR INPUT ON GROWTH PLAN

THE JEFFERSON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION will hold two meetings in September to accept public input on the Comprehensive Plan update. On Wednesday, September 13, the Commission will hold a public meeting at Washington High School (300 Patriots Drive, Charles Town), from 7 to 9 pm. The agenda for this meeting will be an open discussion of agricultural issues. On Monday, September 18, the Commission will hold a public meeting at Jefferson High School (4141 Flowing Springs Road, Shenandoah Junction), from 7 to 9 pm. The agenda for this meeting will include a presentation on the feedback gathered from the recent survey and opportunities for the public to comment on possible objectives to be included in the updated plan and the locations of preferred growth areas.

HARVEST HILLS HEARING DELAYED

The County Commission's public hearing for the Harvest Hills subdivision that was scheduled for August 17 was postponed at the request of the property owner. The Observer will post the updated hearing date when it is announced.



Show your Ram spirit! SAVE THE DATE!
OCTOBER 19-21

HOMECOMING



Join us for Shepherd University's 2023 Homecoming!

Celebrate the Ram Fam and show off your spirit during our weekend celebration. We're hosting a number of events for Shepherd University's alumni, students, and community:

- Outstanding Alum of the Year & Finest Under 40 Award Reception
- Alumni Breakfast on McMurrin Lawn
- Homecoming Parade
- Rams v. West Chester Football Game
- And more!

Learn more about our Homecoming events!
www.shepherd.edu/homecoming2023



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