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JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

SPRING 2025

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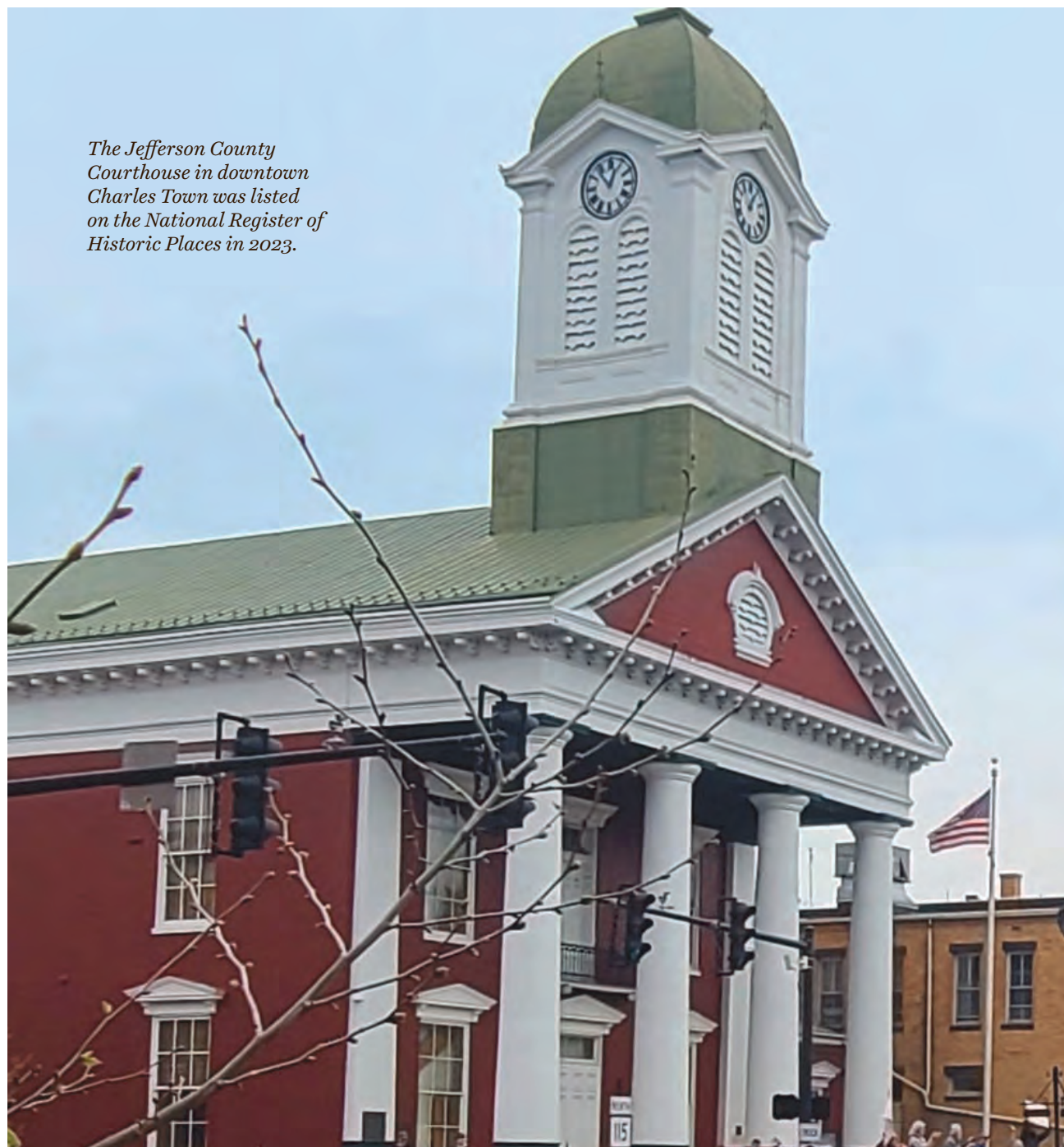
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FOR MORE FEATURES, COMMUNITY NEWS, AND LOCAL EVENTS, VISIT OBSERVERWV.COM

// LOCAL HISTORY

BEELINE TO BOSTON: A MARCH IN HISTORY

TO MARK THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEELINE MARCH this year, a series of events will take place in and around Shepherdstown during every month between April and September.

The Beeline March Story

Trouble was brewing in June 1775 when the Continental Congress took two key steps to prepare for the battles to come — it put out a call for 10 companies of riflemen from around the colonies and it appointed a 43 year-old Virginian, young, but experienced, to head this new “American Army.” The Virginia Colony was asked to supply two of these companies. In Mecklenburg (the original name for Shepherdstown), Hugh Stephenson stepped and had 98 men equipped and trained by mid-July.

The men assembled just outside of town at Morgan’s Spring on July 17, 1775. Twenty-five days later, after a 600 mile march, the men arrived in Cambridge (Massachusetts) and presented themselves to General Washington. Because of the speed at which they travelled, their march was immediately dubbed the "Bee Line March," and that nickname has stuck through the years.

The company that made the Bee Line March is of particular significance for three reasons: it was among the first of the ten companies to reach Washington's encampment, it is probably the best documented of any of the ten companies because of a detailed diary that was kept by one of its members, and the starting place of its march to Cambridge is likely the only starting place of any of the ten companies that can be identified reliably today.

250th Anniversary Events Schedule

On the evening of Wednesday, April 16, a talk will be held on Colonial-era gunsmithing and the types of rifles likely used by those who marched to Boston 250 years ago. Sponsored by Historic Shepherdstown, the

talk will be held at 7 pm. at the Byrd Center auditorium on the Shepherd University Campus. (Free)

During the weekend of April 19 and 20, a new exhibit of locally made Colonial-era flintlock rifles will open at the Historic Shepherdstown Museum. The exhibit will be open from 11 am to 5 pm on Saturday and 1 to 4 pm on Sunday. (\$5 donation requested; children and military free)

A May 14 talk about the Bee Line March, by Jefferson County historian Doug Perks and sponsored by Historic Shepherdstown, will take place at 7 pm in the Byrd Center auditorium. (Free)

On the morning of May 31, there will be a 5K Run-Walk event starting at 8:30 am. at Morgan’s Grove Park sponsored by the Bee Line Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. (register at BeeLineDar.com, \$35 fee)

The Anniversary Celebration continues with multiple events in June and July including a daylong event at Morgan's Grove Park on June 14 and a reenactment event during the weekend of July 19-20.

For details of the anniversary celebration events, follow the “Beeline March 250th Anniversary” page on Facebook.

By Observer Staff



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STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF
STEVE PEARSON
Editor@ObserverWV.com

MANAGING EDITOR
CATHERINE PEZZARO

PUBLISHER
HARRIET PEARSON

BUSINESS MANAGER
LESLIE DAVISSON

FOR ADVERTISING
Email: SALES@ObserverWV.com
Phone: 304-249-8968

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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED. 



The “Little House” on the Shepherd University campus (120 North Princess Street).

TO OUR READERS — It will be five years next month since Harriet and I rescued *The Observer* from shutting down at the start of the pandemic in 2020. It sounds funny now, but that first year we were worried about running out of story ideas. Then we started digging into how the county planning commission was handling industrial solar zoning. The following year, we were digging into the county’s ambulance service transition. And the issues keep coming.


It’s crystal clear to us now how important local journalism is — especially when it helps prod our government to serve us. That’s a key reason why we recently launched the Jefferson Weekly, an email newsletter that brings local news and events information direct to your inbox for free. We’re delighted by the positive response so far. We invite you to join over 2,500 of your neighbors and sign up for the Jefferson Weekly at ObserverWV.news.

We get to write about the good things that happen around here, too. Jefferson County is a place where history rolls into the present — and into the future, as well. The Little House (above) on the Shepherd campus is a good example.

The building, built almost 100 years ago as a teaching aid for students, is getting some work done with the intention of re-opening to visitors. The work is being funded by a \$26,750 grant from the Women Investing in Shepherd (WISH) giving circle, a group of over 200 women focusing their philanthropy on campus and the local community.


Steve Pearson
EDITOR IN CHIEF

“There is no energy unless there is a tension of opposites; hence it is necessary to discover the opposite to the attitude of the conscious mind.”
— C.G. Jung (*Collected Works, Volume 7, Par 78*)


Cathryn Polonchak LCSW
Psychotherapist & Jungian Analyst

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// GOVERNMENT

GOVERNOR HAS BIG PLANS FOR DATA CENTERS

Data Center Complex Planned For Kearneysville Industrial Site

By Steve Pearson

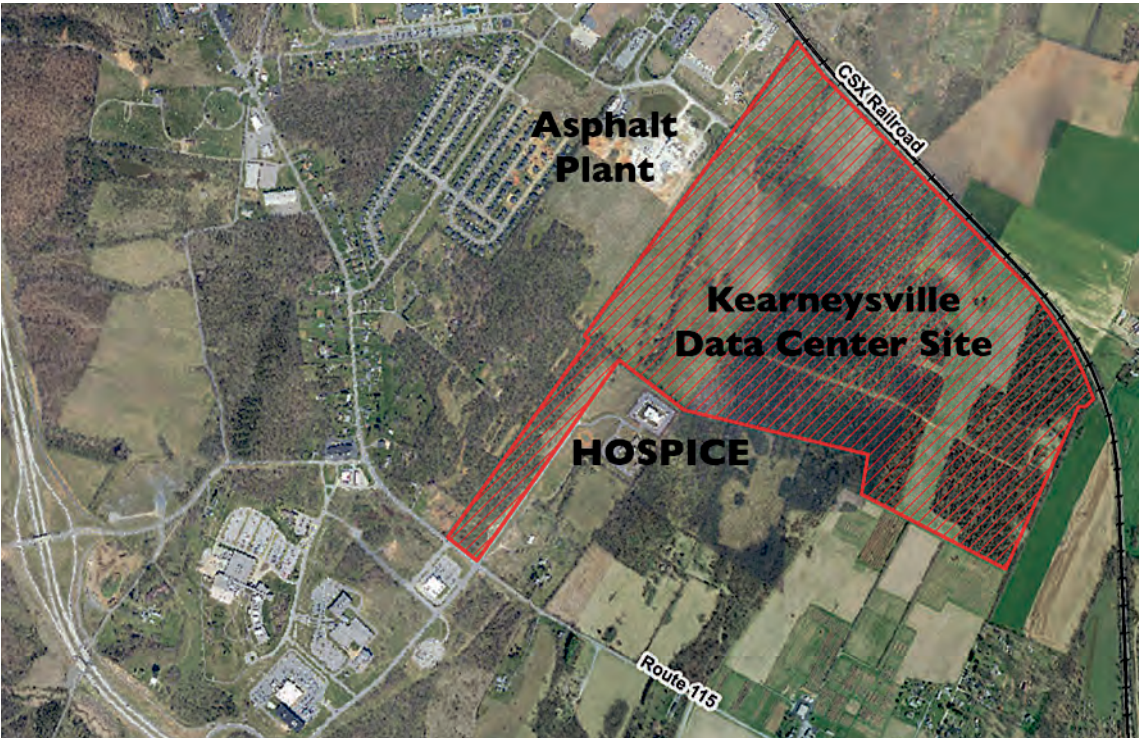
“THE SINGLE BIGGEST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT bill in the state in a very long time,” said Governor Patrick Morrisey during an April 7 press conference where he urged the state legislature to pass House Bill 2014. This legislation, which came directly from the Governor’s office, sets up a new regulatory, energy, and tax framework focused on attracting data centers to the Mountain State (see details on page 5).

Data centers are large, complex facilities that house computer systems and related support components such as cooling systems, power supplies, and security controls. Data centers dot the landscape in nearby Loudoun County, Virginia, which has almost 200 data centers and more than 100 in the pipeline. These data centers power Loudoun’s tax revenues and the Governor sees this industry as a way to direct new tax dollars to the state.

State Wants The Tax Dollars

The rub, as far as local officials are concerned, is that property tax revenues have historically been the funding source for counties and municipalities. House Bill 2014, which passed on the last day of the legislative session after several rounds of amendments, would direct most of the property taxes from any new “high-impact data centers” to the state.

The loss of local property tax revenue will hit close to home. In mid-March, the Berkeley County Planning Commission



The Kearneysville data center site consists of 116 acres in Berkeley County and 191 acres in Jefferson County. The only publicly-disclosed plans so far are a concept plan for the Berkeley parcels. That plan shows two 2-story data center buildings, a guard shack, an electrical switching station, a water tank, and several stormwater retention ponds.

approved a concept plan for two data center buildings located on 116 acres just northwest of the Hospice of the Panhandle property. The data center developer’s property also includes 191 acres in Jefferson County. The company has not disclosed any plans for the Jefferson parcel, but it could fit another 4 or 5 data center buildings.



<<< **READ MORE**
Scan the QR code to read more about HB 2014, the Kearneysville data center project, and other data center projects planned for West Virginia.

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// GOVERNMENT

THE 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION: A QUICK RECAP

60 Days, 2460 Bills Introduced, 246 Passed by Legislature

By Steve Pearson

The West Virginia state legislature spent 60 days in session this year, beginning on February 12 and ending at midnight on April 12. The first bill introduced in the Senate was to “prevent the digging up of newly paved roads for utility projects” and it took until April 11 to pass both houses as completed legislation.

In the House, the first bill introduced was “relating to changing circumstances for when a child may be removed from a foster home.” The foster care bill had less support than the road paving bill and didn’t make it out of the Senate Health and Human Resources Committee before the end of the session.

The final bill to pass both houses was Senate Bill 474, “Ending diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.” This bill was introduced by Senate President Randy Smith on behalf of the Governor. According to the text, the bill “eliminates divisions, officers, programs, training, and policies related to diversity, equity, and inclusion from all departments, divisions, agencies, boards, public primary and secondary schools, and institutions of higher learning.”

During the final evening of debate in the House on April 12, the 9 member Democratic caucus offered up 22 amendments to SB 474, with only three adopted before the bill was passed 87-12. During the House debate, the Minority Leader (image above) said that DEI has “never been about unqualified people skipping the line. It’s been about qualified people getting a chance.” The bill was sent to the Senate and passed 31-2 after a procedural motion to suspend the rules allowed the vote to take place before the midnight deadline.



Delegate Roger Hanshaw (left), the Speaker of the House and Delegate Sean Hornbuckle, the House Minority Leader, confer on April 13, the final day of the 60 day regular legislative session.

Microgrids Are Big

The “Certified Microgrid Program” legislation (House Bill 2014) was also one of Governor Patrick Morrisey’s top priorities. Microgrids are power generating facilities that are designed to operate without connecting to the normal electric grid. The intent is to provide power directly to data centers and other facilities that are co-located in “certified microgrid districts.”

The language in HB 2014 also prohibits local governments from enforcing zoning regulations in these districts. The incremental property tax revenues generated by “high-impact data centers” and microgrids will be directed to the state. The threshold to qualify for the “high-impact” designation is one or more facilities requiring 90 megawatts of power — a low bar given that individual data centers can require 100 megawatts or more.



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NOTICE

The Towers, LLC, proposes to build a 154-foot Monopole Communications Tower at the approx. vicinity of 600 Conservation Way, Shepherdstown, Jefferson County, WV 25443 [39-29-14.86,-77-48-44.76]. Public comments regarding potential effects from this site on historic properties may be submitted within 30 days from the date of this publication to:

Trileaf Corp, Kayla Lauer, k.lauer@trileaf.com, 8600 LaSalle Road, Suite 301, Towson, MD 21286. 410-853-7128.

// GOVERNMENT

COUNTY ON SCHEDULE TO BUY 2 BUILDINGS

Projected Cost To Purchase & Renovate Now at \$35 Million

By Steve Pearson

THE COUNTY COMMISSION expects to close the deal to purchase two buildings from American Public University Systems in May. The Commission announced its plans for 393 North Lawrence Street (bottom image) in November. This building has 91,600 square feet of space and will house all of the County departments currently located downtown, along with the health department and other functions currently housed in Bardane.

In March, the Commission announced it would be purchasing the 330 North George Street building (top image). The county will use this 45,000 square foot building to house the court functions currently using the historic courthouse, the courthouse annex, and the St. Margaret's building.

The Commission agreed to pay \$16.6 million to buy the Lawrence Street building and says it will spend an additional \$2.5 million to renovate the building for the county uses — a total cost of \$19.1 million. The Commission agreed to pay \$6.952 million for the George Street building, and has disclosed that it anticipates spending an additional \$9.1 million to renovate this building, bringing the total cost to \$16 million.

The Commission has approved \$13 million from its capital reserve fund to be used for the purchase. In early April, the Commission announced it plans to issue bonds to fund \$16 million of the purchase price. The Commission expects to fund the remaining \$6 million with impact fee revenues.





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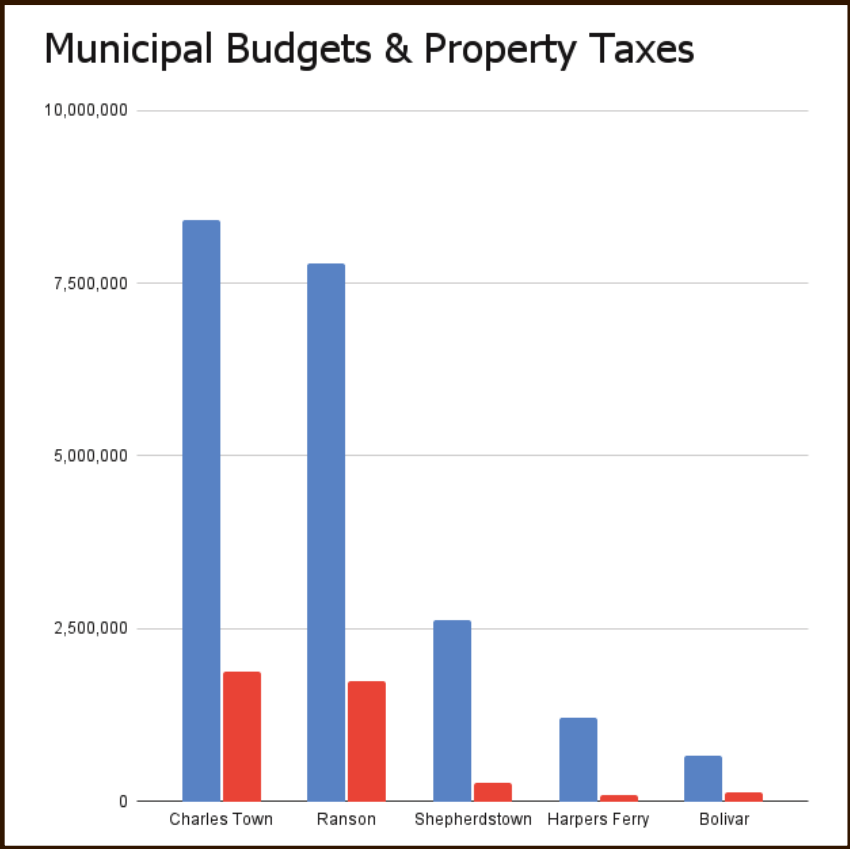
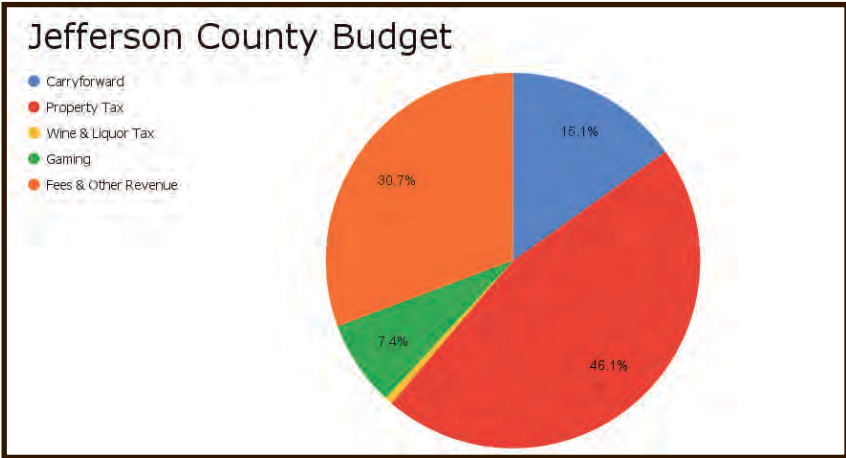
// GOVERNMENT

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FINALIZE BUDGETS

County Relies On Property Taxes, Cities & Towns Rely On Other Taxes

By Steve Pearson

Property taxes make up a significant portion of local government funding. The Jefferson County government relies on property taxes for almost half of its funding. The cities and towns rely more on sales taxes and business & occupation taxes, but property taxes still make up 10 to 20 percent of their budgets. Scan the QR code to read *The Observer's* continuing coverage of budgets for the Jefferson County, Bolivar, Harpers Ferry, Shepherdstown, Ranson and Charles Town.



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EXPLORE // NATURE

WE'RE GONNA ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM A ZOOM

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.

IN THE DAWN OF THE FIRST MORNING of daylight savings time, I looked out the window at the woods beyond the barn and caught a glimpse of a big brown bird floating by. It disappeared into the woods before I could guess what it was — a barred owl, perhaps?

Then I saw the same brown object sailing along in the opposite direction. It wasn't a bird but a deer. Several of them chased each other back and forth through the woods at high speed. Dodging trees and brush, turning sharply and tearing after each other, they were having a crazy time.

Animal behaviorists call such sudden bursts of energy FRAPs — frenetic random activity periods. Pet owners call them zoomies. They're simply animals burning excess energy, presumably to relieve boredom and tension. I believe they also serve a practical purpose. Many animals spend much of their day resting or sleeping. A sudden need for a getaway or burst of speed could result in injury if they aren't in shape. FRAPs occur most often just at dawn and dusk when many animals become active and may serve as warmups to help keep tendons, joints and muscles in working order.

Deer can run at breakneck speed through the woods, over blown-down trees and broken limbs, and through thick brush, without suffering severe injury or killing themselves.

Forgetting how very springy and flexible their leg joints are, I sometimes almost cringe while watching them run.

Such frolicking often leaves a deer breathless and overheated. And panting gives a deer's face a weird, toothless grin because the open mouth exposes an empty space between the front "nipper" teeth and the back "grinders."

I've spent most of my career illustrating deer for hunting and outdoor publications. I've filled sketchbooks with hundreds of deer sketches, many of them made while I looked through a spotting scope trained out my studio window. I've discovered that it's impossible for a deer to look awkward, unless it's drawn incorrectly in my sketchbook. While making my illustrations, I still refer to sketches made years ago. Many feature young fawns zooming in circles around their mothers or chasing in and out amidst a group of deer. Other sketches, made late in summer, show young bucks sparring with each other, testing their newly hardened antlers after the velvet covering comes off and before the breeding season kicks in, and working out social dominance. I think they're also letting off steam and having fun.

Various animals engage in FRAPs. A free flying pet crow I kept during my high school years would suddenly fly off in a crazy, zigzag pattern, while making guttural growling noises. He flew around trees and other objects, making sudden swerves, dives and dodges, and then would return to his treetop perch, with beak open and panting.

Our mule, Eli, gets excited seeing deer run through in the woods beyond the paddock. He sometimes runs along with them, or takes off bucking and kicking in another direction, clearly inspired by his wild neighbors. Such is the joy of life.



Sketches of young deer in springtime.
Illustrations by D. Pifer



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EXPLORE // LOCAL FOOD CHARITY

MOBILE FOOD PANTRY SERVES GROWING NEEDS

MARK PEIFFER RECALLS when Community Markets brought him on board as its first hire four years ago. “The initial plan was about ecommerce. The USDA had announced plans to allow SNAP benefits to be processed for online grocery purchases from farmers markets,” he said. “The plan was for us to connect with local farmers who would be too small to set up their own online processing and provide a service that could help with economic development and healthy eating.”

The USDA online program ended up focusing on grocery retail stores, but the seed was planted for Community Markets to build up a local network. Peiffer now works full time for the non-profit as its operations manager. He has a staff of five, with four of these positions funded in part through the AmeriCorps VISTA program.

According to information provided by Peiffer, Community Markets serves 10 counties in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. Since the beginning of 2023, the organization has provided 134 thousand pounds of food to 12,300 people in its service area. He estimates that equates to over \$300,000 in business for the local farmers and small businesses from which Community Markets sources its food.

Peiffer says he works closely with the



other local organizations that run food pantries in Jefferson County. One of the Community Markets programs is a food box that they deliver at the end of each month. According to Peiffer, the intent of this program is to bridge the gap as household funds run short at the end of the month.

The local sourcing and supporting local farmers is an important aspect of the organization’s work. As Peiffer described it “it’s about getting more food grown locally, and getting nutrient-dense food to people that would otherwise not be available to them.”

Community Markets also operates a

farmers market every Thursday from 5:00 to 6:30 pm on the grounds of St. James Catholic Church (49 Crosswinds Dr, Charles Town). Both the food box program and the farmers market rely on volunteers — Peiffer says he welcomes all the help he can get.

More information about Community Markets programs, volunteering and donations at CommunityMarketsInc.org.



County Commissioner Pasha Majdi (above, left) stopped and spoke with Mark Peiffer (above, right) by the Community Markets office on the Covenant Church campus. Community Markets uses its refrigerated trailer (top) to deliver food across 10 counties in the WV Eastern Panhandle.

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EXPLORE // SHEPHERDSTOWN

BACK ALLEY GARDEN TOUR AND TEA: MAY 17 & 18



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Facebook: Shepherdstown Farmers Market

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE WEEKEND of May 17 and 18 to explore the back alleys and hidden gardens of Shepherdstown.

Attracting longtime residents as well as new visitors to the town, this popular annual event is organized and staffed entirely by volunteers. Proceeds will support the maintenance of the War Memorial Building and Morgan Grove Park, two historic facilities owned and operated by the Shepherdstown Community Club.

More than just pretty gardens, the Back Alley Garden Tour & Tea includes a formal tea service featuring home-made tea sandwiches, cookies and sweets prepared by local chefs and volunteers. As in prior years, local girl scouts will be serving guests for this event.

Adding to the atmosphere, regional artists have been invited to paint “plein air” in several of the gardens during the tour. The addition of plein air painters in 2024, in collaboration with Kathryn Burns of the Bridge Gallery, proved to be a popular addition. The artists’ works of art will be on display and available for purchase, allowing visitors to take home a unique memory of their garden tour.

“Events like these are fun for visitors and residents alike and they strengthen our community while supporting our local businesses and organizations,” said Shannon Thomas, the head of Experience Shepherdstown and a town council member. “We’re so grateful for the amazing volunteers who make events like these happen.”

The Community Club is also offering a limited number of tickets to a special donor event on Friday, May 16. Tickets for this event in the garden of a private home are \$100 each



and include access to the weekend Back Alley Garden Tour & Tea as well.

Event Details

Date: May 17 & 18 (Sat & Sun). There will be 15 gardens on the tour, open 10 to 4 (both days). This year’s tour will feature Shepherdstown’s east side. Tea service runs 11 to 3 both days, upstairs at the War Memorial Building (102 East German St). Ticket price is \$30 (children under 10 are free) and includes access to all gardens both days and one tea service.

The event is rain or shine. Wear comfortable shoes and dress appropriately for the weather forecast. There will be at least one water station along the tour (and the downtown restaurants are open too).

Tickets are available in advance online and at the Sunday Shepherdstown Farmer’s market and several Shepherdstown businesses (Dogwood General Store, German Street Marketplace Coffee & Candlery, Four Seasons Books, Shepherdstown Sweet Shop, Grapes & Grains Gourmet, and Dickinson & Wait).

Web: ShepherdstownCommunityClub.org


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EXPLORE // FINE DINING

NEW CHEF RETURNS TO BAVARIAN INN

CROSSING THE BRIDGE FROM MARYLAND into Shepherdstown, one the first sights to catch the eye is the distinctive European-style architecture of the Bavarian Inn, perched high above the Potomac River. To catch up on what's new at this local landmark, *The Observer* recently chatted with the Bavarian's President, Christian Asam.

Tell us about the new Executive Chef, Clem Tamasang and his approach. Chef Clem's family roots are West African however he grew up locally in Martinsburg and graduated from the James Rumsey Technical Institute. He did his practical internship with Chef Jeff Ault at the Bavarian Inn. His career then took him to Final Cut at Hollywood Casino, Cress Creek, Branded Chop House and most recently the Goodstone Inn in Middleburg. He draws on two strong culinary backgrounds: Eastern European techniques along with a touch of West African nostalgia.

Any menu changes to highlight? Are your favorites staying the same? Our goals are to stay true to our European roots, improve upon and master the staples that many guests have been accustomed to enjoying at the Inn for almost 50 years, and introduce our guests to new seasonal items that are still reflective of our resort's roots and the area. There are about a dozen new items, including Wagyu Beef Carpaccio, Lobster Ravioli, and Pan Seared Salmon. And, Truffle Fries!

Tourism is big business in Jefferson County, and the Bavarian is a recognized leader. Any tourism trends in our region that you are seeing? The trend continues to be experience-based tourism. Guests want a nice place to stay and dine, but they also want to be in an area where there are cool things to see and do. We are blessed to have a 12-acre campus with great river views, but many of our guest love



the local attractions as well, such as shopping on German Street, visiting the Civil War sites, cycling, hiking and exploring!

Any new beers on tap or beer events coming up? Our beer making team is made up of two very talented local brewers. Aaron Blessing and Nick Ledden tag team the operations of the brewery and are usually turning out a few new flavors a month. Lately they have been focusing on German style beers. Current features include a "Landbier" which is a German Rustic Lager, a "Schwarzbier" German Dark Lager and a "Gose" a German Sour with Apricot and Blackberry. This is in addition to our 8 house brews that have all become quite popular.

Anything else to know? We have grown into a resort style property with multiple dining areas. Whether you just want drinks with friends in the brew pub or our multiple outdoor areas or a romantic location to celebrate another milestone, we think we have the perfect space for you. The Rathskeller is still a very popular spot to dine and listen to live music on Fridays and Saturdays. We encourage those who have not been to the Inn in a while to come meet our team, taste and see what is new. We are confident that you will enjoy what we have been up to!




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Make Money with Your Voice!



Eight (8) week course online on Zoom Mondays from 7:00-9:30 p.m.
beginning Monday, May 5 and concluding Monday, June 23rd.
All the classes and your professional reels for just \$336.

Contact National Arts Television at 917-536-4002 to register!
Class is limited to 10 students.

Whether it is in theatre, film, or radio, there is a voiceover opportunity for you. Seven-time Emmy-winning and five-time Telly-winning TV host and producer, Mike Baker, Jr. of Shepherdstown, West Virginia will teach you the latest voiceover techniques in a whole host of fields to include travel, food, retail, narration, promos, political, and PSAs. Each week, you will be provided commercial voiceover copy, record at least two spots, and be individually coached on the techniques of storytelling and delivery. As part of this class, you will also record a professional voiceover reel (WAV) in person. A video (MP4) of your reel will also be provided so you can post it to your YouTube, Facebook, and other social media sites.

Following your in-person record session on Saturday, June 28 at East Coast Studio in Martinsburg, WVA and Free Marketing Seminar on Sunday, June 29th, you will receive a flash drive containing your professionally recorded reels.

ENGAGE //LOCAL NEWS & EVENTS

WE HAVE OUR EYES ON JEFFERSON COUNTY

Keep Up With What's Going On In The County & The State



WHETHER IT'S COUNTY AND TOWN BUDGETS, water bottling plants, data centers, or solar facilities, *The Observer* team works hard to bring you timely information and analysis. Now we've made it even easier to receive our reports: we've launched a FREE weekly email newsletter.

Stay connected to the stories that shape Jefferson County with the Jefferson Weekly—a new email newsletter from *The Observer*. Each week, you'll get a quick-to-read roundup of local reporting and updates on the issues that matter most to our community. We'll be looking at what's next for housing growth, what happens to the vacated buildings in downtown Charles Town, data centers, solar facilities — and more.

There's also lots of fun things happening in and around Jefferson

County, if you know where to look. In April, we'll let you know where to find Easter Egg hunts, nature walks, garden tours, and fun runs, like the Stronger Each Step 5K (below). In May, we'll be exploring gardens, jigging at the World Fiddle Day in Harpers Ferry, and getting warmed up with live music.

It's free to subscribe! visit ObserverWV.news or scan the QR code to sign up.



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BLEEDING KANSAS

by Kathryin Walat, directed by Joe Yates

performed by theTown Run Theater Company

OperaHouseLive.com

May 16/17/18 & 23/24/25 at the Shepherdstown Opera House

Stronger with Each Step 5K

COLOR RUN

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025



The **WV Independent Observer** writes about community news, local events, and feature stories of interest to the people who live, work, and visit Jefferson County, West Virginia. For more of our stories, visit **OBSERVERWV.COM**

