

6 Friday, December 4, 2015

LOCAL NEWS

Air petition delivered to state leaders

A local environmental group earlier this week delivered a petition to state leaders with 1,000 signatures asking the Department of Environmental Quality to install an air monitoring system in the Southeast Community.

About a dozen Southeast Community children gave a presentation about the group's concerns about air quality and asthma in the community to Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources Molly Ward, a notebook former mayor.

The effort is organized by the Southeast CARE Coalition, a local environmental group partially funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The group also plans to hand the petition to U.S. Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, D-Newport News. The only state air monitoring system on the Peninsula is at Langley Air Force base — about

eight miles from the shipyard, and about 12 miles from commercial port operations and coal terminals next door to the Southeast Community.

7-Eleven planned for Bowditch property
A 7-Eleven gas station and convenience store is planned for half the Bowditch Ford property on Warwick Boulevard near Harpersville Road.

The 7-Eleven would go on the southern half of the dealership, where the parking lot is, while a Lidl grocery store is planned for the northern half of the property where the showroom now stands. Lidl is planning at least two stores in Newport News and one in Hampton.

Aldi, a competing German discount grocery chain, is planning a store in Newport News next to Kohl's. Aldi opened its first Hampton Roads store earlier this week in Portsmouth.

The Planning Commission recommended a conditional use permit for the 7-Eleven at its meeting earlier this week. The City Council will consider it Jan. 12.

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IT'S IN THE BUDGET: GLOUCESTER

\$549,617 for health department

Gloucester County is responsible for 45 percent of the costs associated with operating the local health department, according to the county's fiscal year 2016 budget.

The budget includes a total of \$549,617 for the health department. That is up 10.4 percent, or \$53,835, from fiscal year 2015.

Gloucester pays \$83,211 in rent for the health department space at 16568 Main St. and \$10,080 for the office's phone service.

The county pays \$456,326 to the state to cover its portion of the health department. The state covers the remaining 55 percent.

Gloucester's health department is managed by the Three Rivers Health District. The district serves Gloucester, Essex, Mathews, Middlesex, King William, King and Queen, Lancaster, Northumberland, Westmoreland and Richmond counties.

According to Lynn Bushler, the district's business manager, the 10 counties in the district save money by sharing certain common services or expenses.

She said the Three Rivers Health District is the largest in the state with the most facilities.

—Frances Hubbard

James City wants power to tax cigarettes

In its annual legislative wish list, James City County is asking the General Assembly to allow the county to impose a tax on cigarettes.

The Board of Supervisors met with local legislators, including Del. Brenda Pogue, R-James City, State Sen.

Thomas K. "Tommy" Norment, R-James City, and Del. Monty Mason, D-Williamsburg, to discuss legislative priorities in the upcoming session.

The move comes as counties across the state face increased budgetary constraints and are forced to rely increasingly upon the real estate tax to fund education and primary services, according to the Virginia Association of Counties.

"We put that in to see what could be done. The city can do it, but the county can't. We should be able to tax the same things that the city does," said Board Chairman Michael Hipple. "It would only be on smokers."

The only counties currently exempted under state law and allowed to tax cigarettes are Fairfax and Arlington counties. Different taxing authorities are given to cities and counties in Virginia, and they have different responsibilities for public services.

New fire chief
Ryan Ashe takes the helm at James City County Fire Department after serving as its interim chief for more than five months, James City County officials announced this week.

Ashe's appointment to the position is official as of Tuesday, County Administrator Bryan Hill said in a news release. "Over the past 14 months, I have been impressed with Chief Ashe's ability to be forward-thinking while considering how we can make James City County a better place to live, work and play," Hill added.

Ashe has been acting chief since June after the retirement of former Fire Chief Dal Luton. County officials had started looking for a new fire chief this month but hired Ashe after he interviewed for the position and made a presentation, Hill said.

Parade turns 50
This is a big year for the annual community Christmas Parade and not just because more than 100

parade units will participate and thousands will attend. This year, the Christmas Parade celebrates its 50th anniversary. "Our Golden Christmas" parade — presented by the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance — opens Williamsburg's holiday season at 8:30 a.m. Saturday.

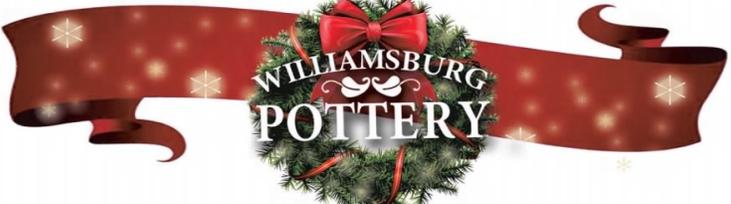
The 100 parade units, including 60 floats, represent all corners of the community, including churches, nonprofits, civic organizations and commercial groups. From marching bands to a visit from Santa Claus, there's something for everyone.

Each unit will incorporate a theme chosen from the parade's past 49 themes. Organizers also invited grand marshals from the past 49 parades to participate.

Cliff can be reached by phone at 757-247-7870.

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