

# COUNTY CONNECTIONS

The Newsletter of the  
Virginia Association of Counties

June 18, 2018



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## 2018 Presidential Initiative: Healthy Virginia Counties



By Sherrin Alsop  
VACo President

### Spotlight on Nutrition – Healthy Virginia Counties in Action

As we approach the official beginning of summer next week, our calendars begin to fill with graduation parties and backyard cookouts as summer crops like berries and tomatoes appear in our grocery stores, roadside stands, and farmers' markets. Too many of our neighbors, however, struggle to put nutritious food on the table, with a variety of serious consequences for the health of our communities. I shared some information about the state of food insecurity in Virginia [in my last column](#).

I'm always impressed by the innovation demonstrated by Virginia counties as they tackle problems in their communities, and I want to share a few examples with you of how several Virginia counties have worked to improve access to nutrition among county residents. Read on for some case studies and helpful resources.

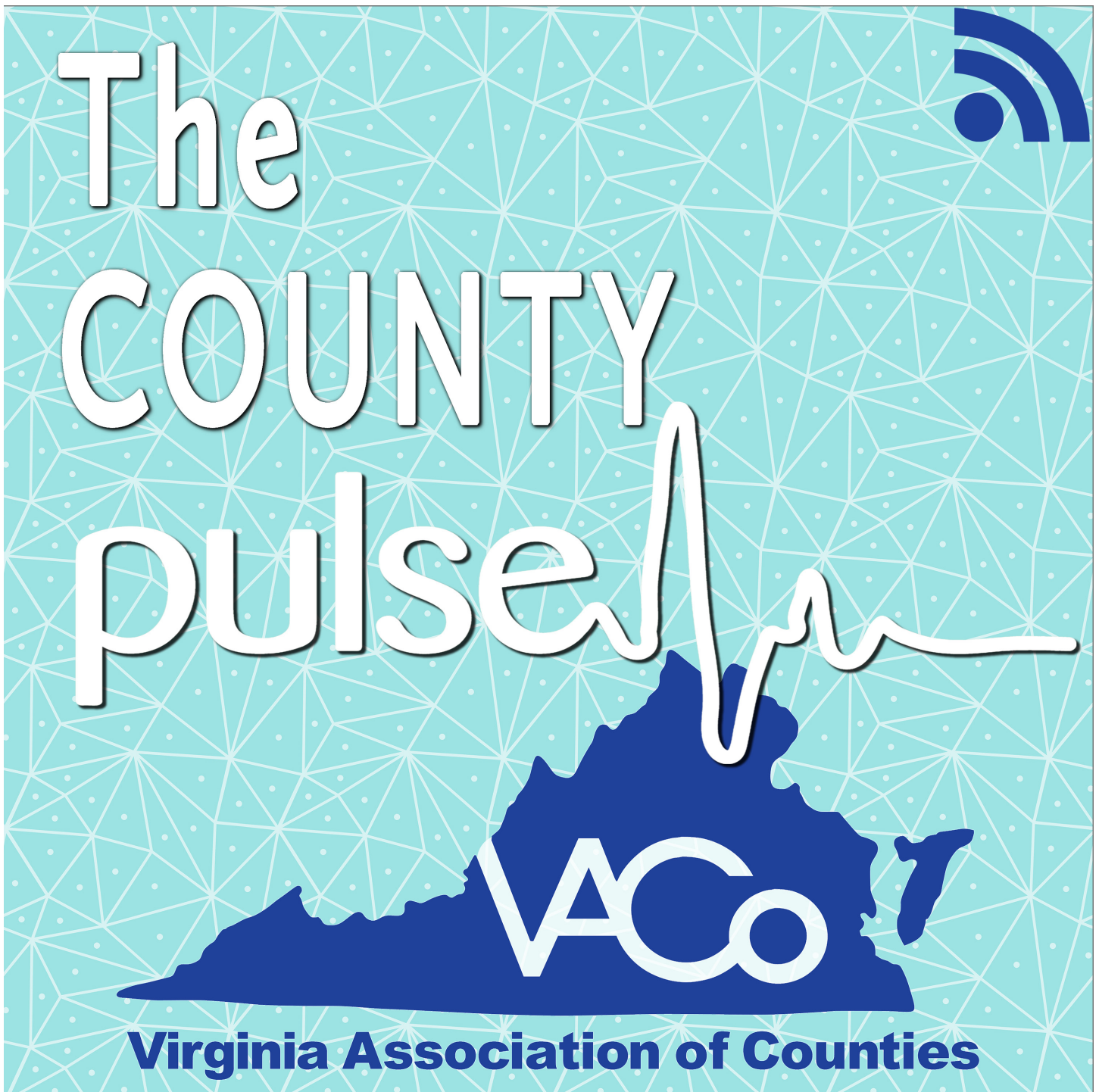
#### Louisa County – Student Gardens and Breakfast in the Classroom

Louisa County's program, a partnership between the school division and the County's Cooperative Extension Office, won a VACo Achievement Award in 2016 for its innovative approach to providing access to healthy food and promoting healthy eating by getting kids excited about vegetables. We liked this program so much in King and Queen County that we borrowed it for our own schools!

The program started at Moss-Nuckols Elementary School, where second-grade students learn about planting vegetables with the assistance of volunteer Master Gardeners; students from Louisa County High School's Future Farmers of America built the raised garden beds with the financial support of a "Fuel Up to Play 60" grant (a program sponsored by the National Dairy Council and the National Football League, in partnership with the US Department of Agriculture). The produce is harvested and served in the cafeteria, where it supplies enough greens for all cafeteria salads for most of the year. In addition to eating the produce as part of a regular school lunch, the students have a chance to sample the fruits of their labor at a tasting party, where the "two-bite rule" has encouraged many reluctant vegetable eaters to try – and enjoy-- Swiss chard and brussels sprouts. Here is a [short video](#) of some of the planting and tasting.

As a follow-up to the success of the garden program, Moss-Nuckols Elementary also established a robust "Breakfast in the Classroom" program to make sure students got a nutritious start to the day. Staff had estimated that fewer than one-third of students were eating breakfast each day, despite more than 40 percent of the student body qualifying for free or reduced-price meals. The program eliminates the time pressure of waiting in line at the cafeteria for breakfast, as well as

Story Continued on Page 9



Guests share the legislative pulse of Virginia Counties with host Dean Lynch. Click on the link below to listen to the next episode. Thank you for listening to the County Pulse Podcast.

## [\*\*VACo County Pulse Podcast\*\*](#)

### **Connecting Rural Virginia to the Internet**

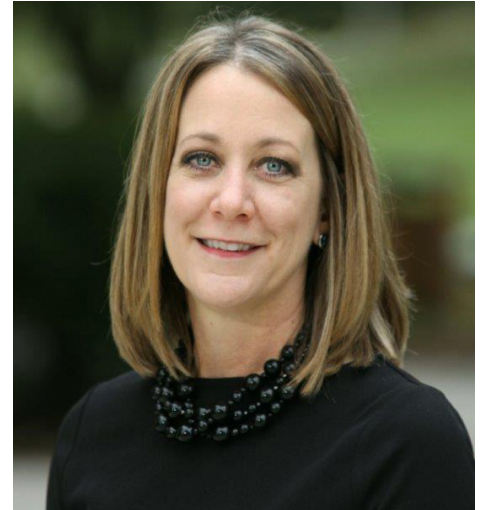
County Pulse Host Dean Lynch speaks with VACo's Joe Lerch and Khaki LaRiviere about broadband connectivity in rural Virginia.

## Lewis named New Assistant Loudoun County Administrator

Anne Lewis has been appointed as an Assistant Loudoun County Administrator effective June 21, 2018, after a nationwide search, Loudoun County Administrator Tim Hemstreet announced Monday.

“Among the very competitive pool of applicants for this position, Anne stood out as a seasoned professional and strong leader with a wide range of relevant experience at the top levels of local government,” Hemstreet said. “I am pleased to add her to the county’s executive management team.”

Prior to joining the Loudoun County government, Lewis worked most recently as an executive search consultant with Springsted | Waters, specializing in executive leadership positions in local governments and nonprofit organizations. Lewis previously served as the Deputy City Manager in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and Assistant City Manager in Winchester, Virginia. Over the last 15 years, her experience in municipal government has also included oversight of positions in emergency management, public information, human resources, housing, transit and tourism. Lewis earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree and a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership degree from Shenandoah University.



Lewis joins the other members of the Office of the County Administrator in directing and supervising the day-to-day operations of all Loudoun County departments and agencies that are under the direct control of the Board of Supervisors. The Office of the County Administrator is the highest level management office of the Loudoun County government and also serves as the Board of Supervisors’ official liaison to the constitutional officers, the judiciary, and state and regional agencies.



The reservation form for rooms at The Omni Homestead during the 2018 VACo Annual Conference was emailed to county administrators, VACo Board of Directors and confirmed exhibitors on June 18.

If you have questions about the room reservation process or did not get the form, call Carol Cameron at 804.343.2507. For anyone new to the reservation process, click [here](#) to review the [VACo Lodging Policy](#).

**VACo Contact:** [Carol Cameron](#)

## Financial Facts

State and local governments will be required to present direct borrowings and direct placements of debt separately from other types of debt in note disclosures in their financial statements for reporting periods beginning after June 15, 2018. Under a new GASB standard, GASB No.88, *Certain Disclosures Related to Debt, Including Direct Borrowings and Direct Placements*, this should clarify which liabilities governments should include in their note disclosures related to debt.

GASB is requiring direct borrowings and placements be presented separately because they may expose a government to risks different from, or in addition to, risks related to other types of debt. The new standard requires the disclosure of additional essential debt-related information for all types of debt, including amounts of unused lines of credit and assets pledged as collateral for debt.

Also required to be disclosed are terms specified in debt agreements related to:

- Significant events of default with finance-related consequences.
- Significant termination of events with finance-related consequences.
- Significant subjective acceleration clauses.

**VACo Contact:** [Vicky Steinruck, CPA](#)

VACo  
SPOTLIGHT

**Bryan  
Hill**  
Fairfax County  
Executive



**Q1. In addition to holding a master's degree in public administration, you majored in public administration as an undergraduate. What made you decide on that career path?**

**Bryan Hill:** I started my college career in computer science, but I attended a liberal arts college where I was fortunate enough to be exposed to many disciplines. After taking a few classes in public administration, the subject caught my interest and I decided to change my major, with a significant emphasis on public finance.

**Q2. What types of professional development experiences have been most helpful to you as you've progressed in your career?**

**BH:** Attending conferences continues to be a great professional development opportunity. I have gone from attending and speaking with colleagues to now delivering presentations on topics we all face daily. I try to provide alternative solutions as well as strategies to incorporate while communicating.

**Q3. You've served in county government in James City County and Beaufort County, South Carolina, and you've also worked in finance for two large public universities. How does your experience with higher education influence your approach to working in local government?**

**BH:** My approach has been to communicate how to get things done in a cost-effective and constructive way that benefits everyone involved. Every organization I've worked for has faced financial challenges due to reduced state support, and needed to grow revenue to accomplish the mission. The influence of my experience in higher education is probably most significant in my approach when it comes to ensuring that all relevant data has been analyzed through thorough research. That ability to interpret information, while using it to implement a plan, allows me to support our Board's goals and expectations.

**Q4. One of your most important projects at James City County was developing a 20-year strategic plan. From your perspective, what are the major challenges and opportunities facing Fairfax County in the next 20 years? Do you anticipate undertaking a similar formal planning effort in Fairfax County?**

**BH:** Fairfax County is in an excellent position for continued economic development. Our changing world climate is dictating our need to adjust and adapt. We are in the process of developing a countywide strategic plan detailing Board goals and objectives, with the process kicking off in August. And, of course, we are constantly reviewing our processes in an attempt to streamline and become more efficient.

**Q5. What projects are you most excited to take on in your new role?**

**BH:** There's a lot to be excited about here but two projects that I'm particularly happy to be a part of are the adaptive reuse of the old Lorton Prison facility—our plan is to renovate and incorporate the arts and sports tourism into this wonderful venue, providing our residents and guests with a place for family friendly activities that showcase our community. Another project is One Fairfax, which focuses on our work towards social and racial equity in Fairfax County. Our strategic planning process will incorporate necessary policies and goals as we move toward an even more inclusive community that provides opportunities for all.

**Q6. You likely have been very busy in your first five months in a new job. What do you do for fun when you have the chance?**

**BH:** Sleep.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

# Visit Page County and the Worker Statue at the Harry F. Byrd, Sr. Visitor Center

**Harry F. Byrd, Sr. Visitor Center**

**Location:** Mile 51 on Skyline Drive

**Available Facilities:** Restrooms, information desk, exhibits, ranger programs, videos, bookstore, publications, maps, backcountry permits, and first aid. Big Meadows across Skyline Drive from visitor center.

**SOURCE:** [National Park Service](#)





# Mark Your Calendars

## VACo Regional Meetings



VACo is excited to start the 2018 Regional Meetings season. We visited Westmoreland County on May 22 and Dinwiddie County on May 30. We traveled to Albemarle County on June 14 for the Region 5 Meeting. Regional Meetings are held annually to give local elected officials, county administrators, and legislators an opportunity to discuss challenges and offer solutions.

**Region 12** | Thursday, June 21 | 2-4PM | Grayson County | [Agenda](#)

**Region 3** | Wednesday, August 8 | 2-4PM | Hanover County | [Agenda](#)

**Regions 7 & 8** | Thursday, August 30 | 7-9PM | Stafford County | [Agenda](#)



VACo greatly values these meetings and offers sponsorship opportunities. [Sponsor one meeting or the entire season.](#)

**VACo Contact:** [Angela Inglett](#)

**NEWS FROM OUR  
ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

## Helping Counties Plan for the Impacts of Utility-Scale Solar Facilities



By [The Berkley Group](#)

On the Virginia and North Carolina border is Mecklenburg County, which has thousands of acres of agricultural and forested land, and an abundance of high voltage transmission lines. Mecklenburg County became the unexpected, but ideal site for solar energy companies to locate utility-scale solar facilities.

While the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) oversees nearly all the applications of wind and solar energy projects in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the counties are responsible for reviewing the land use impacts of renewable energy facilities, and what changes – if any – to make to their Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

The Code of Virginia §15.2 states that a Planning Commission must conduct a 2232 Review to determine if the facility complies with the Comprehensive Plan. The review ensures that the project is in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan (i.e., not in conflict with the County's current or future land use, doesn't negatively impact environmental, cultural, or recreational resources, etc.). Additionally, if utility-scale solar uses are permitted, the County's Zoning Ordinance should set forth application requirements and development standards.

But when there is no mention of renewable energy facilities in a County's Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance, how can the potential impacts of a utility-scale solar facility be evaluated?

In 2016, Mecklenburg County received two utility-scale solar facility special exception permits (SEP) for the Bluestone and the Grasshopper applications. At the time, the County's Comprehensive Plan did not address guidelines for utility-scale solar facilities. Instead, the Comprehensive Plan focused primarily on the preservation of the County's rural landscape. The Bluestone application outlined a 332.5-acre, 49.9 MW facility, while the Grasshopper application described a 946-acre, 80 MW facility. Given the size and scale of the proposed projects, there were numerous land use impacts that needed to be evaluated.

Without guidelines in the Comprehensive Plan, it was difficult to determine exactly how the projects would impact Mecklenburg County's growth areas; affect prime agricultural land, habitat, soil erosion, and other environmental factors; and mitigate these potentially negative effects. At this point, the County sought outside expertise and hired Gentry Locke Attorneys and The Berkley Group for assistance in evaluating the County's land use tools relative to utility-scale solar facilities.

Ultimately, Mecklenburg County's Comprehensive Plan was amended to specifically address land use impacts of solar facilities. The amendments included identifying major electrical facilities, developing growth area boundaries, recommending additional public review opportunities, creating locational parameters, and identifying mitigation strategies. Through these amendments, local officials can better evaluate solar facilities within the context of their Comprehensive Plan and other County policies and regulations.

In addition to Comprehensive Plan amendments, Mecklenburg's Zoning Ordinance also needed updating. While the Zoning Ordinance did address solar facilities, it was insufficient to adequately regulate larger scale facilities. For example, pre-application meetings are an effective tool, and planners can require applicants requesting Special Exemption Permits (also called special or conditional use permits) to follow certain guidelines such as: posting a public notice, outlining development standards, coordinating local emergency services, and properly planning for decommissioning. Similar performance measures can further mitigate potential adverse impacts.

While the land use impacts of utility-scale solar facilities on Mecklenburg County may be considered unusual in number, size, concentration, and scope, all utility-scale solar facilities impact land use in some way; therefore, it is important to explicitly state specific criteria that reflects the community's values and concerns in both a County's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance to properly guide the development of renewable energy facilities.

## SROs and Threat Assessments: Studying School Safety



The Commission on Youth met on June 6 to discuss recent data collection efforts on school safety and student discipline across the Commonwealth.

At the request of Senator Marsden, one of the five approved Commission studies focuses on the utilization of School Resource Officers (SROs). With an emphasis on preventive measures, the Commission provided an overview of current laws, training, and resources provided by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), student interactions with SROs, and training for SROs and School Safety Officers (SSOs). To view the presentation, please click [here](#).

Evaluating the linkage between school safety and the presence of SROs, the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety data states that security personnel in schools have been rising across the state since 2005. In 2017, full-time SROs staffed 30 percent of schools and part-time SROs staffed 24 percent, while full-time SSOs staffed 24 percent of schools and part-time SSOs staffed 53 percent.

The history of the SRO program in Virginia dates to the 1980s and is funded through a \$1.5 million grant, capped at \$50,000 per SRO and \$22,500 per SSO. According to DCJS, 30 of the 367 SROs across the state are funded through the allocation. Of note, SROs are law enforcement personnel and SSOs are school employees. SSOs are responsible for enforcing school policies, while SROs enforce law.

Schools with emergency preparedness plans related to school shootings increased from 79 to 92 percent. During the 2016-2017 school year, 66 percent of schools reported conducting one or more threat assessments. Section 22.1-79.4 of the *Code of Virginia* requires local school boards to adopt policies to establish threat assessment teams, outlines team membership and parameters for preventive and referral policies. Counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement personnel are involved in threat assessments. Though a team may refer a child for ongoing and preventive services like counseling, there is no statutory requirement to provide such wraparound services.

A 2016 study through Virginia Tech, in partnership with the National Institutes for Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and U.S. Department of Justice, surveyed almost 550 SROs, SRO law enforcement supervisors, SRO school-based liaisons, SSOs, and SSO supervisors. To view the presentation, please click [here](#).

Initial findings suggest that SROs seek more training in working with students with special needs, children with mental health issues, and dangerous/threatening students. SROs also identified additional training in student bullying and establishing effective relationships with parents. The Center for School and Campus Safety, housed in DCJS, provides training in all identified areas, but training is not mandatory for SROs due to resources and SRO availability during the school year.

The Commission will meet again in December to discuss recommendations on filling the service gap post threat assessment and SRO certification and training resources.

VACo Contact: [Khaki LaRiviere](#)



**Story Continued from Page 1**

the stigma associated with qualifying for assistance with meals, by serving breakfast in the classroom. Teachers found that students arrived to class earlier and settled into instructional time more quickly. In one year, participation in daily breakfast increased from 28 percent to 50 percent, and teachers observed a reduction in tardiness. Best of all, the school achieved full accreditation.

Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent Jenny Thompson attributes the program's success to a strong partnership with the school system and support from teachers and staff, a view echoed by Director of Nutrition Services Randy Herman. The second-grade garden program is now in place at all four of the County's elementary schools, and staff hopes to expand to more grade levels and perhaps to middle school as well. Randy Herman said, "This past spring, we were able to take the program full circle with our students," explaining that high school agriculture students germinated seeds, which middle school students transplanted and nurtured into plants for the elementary students to plant in their gardens. Those vegetables are intended to be used in the summer feeding program and for the start of school in August. Herman also said that a "mini farm" outdoor learning lab is now in place at the high school, with plans for students to manage the planting and harvest of vegetables to be served at school.

**Fairfax County – "Eat and Run" Program**

Very young children are learning all the time, including eating and activity habits that can promote a lifetime of good health. Several years ago, Fairfax County found that about 30 percent of children entering kindergarten in the county were overweight or obese. In response, Fairfax County's Office for Children, in collaboration with Live Healthy Fairfax, a community partnership working to strengthen the public health system and improve community health, developed the "Eat and Run" activity book for child care providers to promote healthy eating and physical activity for children, using funding from a grant from the Centers for Disease Control. The book contains 15 activities focusing on healthy eating and 15 activities designed to make physical activity fun. Office for Children staff, along with interns from George Mason University's graduate program in Nutrition and Food Studies, held workshops for providers to try the activities and conducted follow-up visits with providers. Between December 2013 and April 2015, 315 child care providers had attended "Eat and Run" workshops, and in follow-up surveys, many providers reported continuing to use the activities at least weekly. Staff have presented the program at several national conferences. In addition, as a result of the local outreach conducted to promote "Eat and Run," in 2014, 65 child care providers joined the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which provides federal reimbursement for meals and snacks that meet nutritional guidelines served to eligible children and adults. "Eat and Run" won a 2015 VACo Achievement Award.

Jene Moore, Director of Community Education and Provider Services in the Office for Children, said that efforts are underway to revise the activity book for parents so that it can be distributed throughout the community. She attributed the program's continued success to the way it makes nutrition and fitness fun activities that can be incorporated into everyday life, saying that although the program started small, "it can really have lasting effects" on community well-being.

**Prince George County Farmer's Market**

Agriculture is Virginia's top private industry by far, but sometimes smaller producers struggle to connect with consumers. Prince George County hosts a [weekly farmers' market](#) on Saturdays from May through late October for producers located within a 200-mile radius of the County. In addition to helping local farmers, the market helps low-income residents afford fresh produce, meat, fish, and other essentials by accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at the market (a machine converts benefits loaded onto a SNAP/EBT card into tokens that can be used like cash).

**Fauquier Education Farm**

Fauquier County's partnership with a local nonprofit helps residents learn about agriculture and try their hands at farming small plots. The [farm](#), which was created in 2010 and run almost entirely by volunteers, also grows produce for local food banks, donating more than 60,000 pounds in 2017. Read all about it in an article from the National Association of Counties, which is reprinted on page 15.

**Additional Resources**

- The [Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program](#) provides educational resources for eating well on a tight budget, including recipes. [This map](#) provides contact information for local Program Assistants.
- [Feeding America's mapping function](#) allows you to type in a ZIP code to find the closest food bank.
- To find the nearest site serving summer meals through the [Summer Food Service Program](#), text "FOOD" or "COMIDA" to 877-877.
- The SNAP program is administered through local Departments of Social Services; information on eligibility and program requirements is available at the Virginia Department of Social Services' [website](#). The [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\)](#), which provides additional nutritional support for pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and young children, as well as counseling and referrals to other services, is administered by local health departments.

2018 Presidential Initiative

# HEALTHY VIRGINIA COUNTIES



How is Virginia measuring the well-being of its communities, and what are the state's goals for ensuring that all Virginians have the chance to lead healthy lives? What role do local health districts play in promoting community health?

Please join VACo President Sherrin Alsop for a webinar with experts from the Virginia Department of Health and the Chickahominy Health District.

**Speakers:** Leslie R. Hogle, PhD, MEd | Director | Division of Population Health Data | Office of Family Health Services | Virginia Department of Health

Thomas Franck, MD, MPH | Director | Chickahominy Health District (serving Charles City, Goochland, Hanover, and New Kent Counties)

**When:** Thursday, June 28, 1 p.m.

**How to register:** Email Katie Boyle at [kboyle@vaco.org](mailto:kboyle@vaco.org)





VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR  
**GROWTH &  
OPPORTUNITY**  
IN EACH REGION

## GO VA Committed to Coordination and Regional Progress

The Virginia Growth and Opportunity (GO VA) Board met to approve new capital requests, evaluate proposed regional budgets, and strategize to grow the Board focus areas of site readiness and the start-up ecosystem. Voting to approve Board leadership for the coming year, the Board selected John O. “Dubby” Wynne as Chair and Ben J. Davenport Jr. as Vice Chair.

In total, GO VA received \$63.9 million over the biennium. With an additional \$15 million in the budget, Chair Wynne is now pushing to see more results from regional councils in the coming fall.

To facilitate more collaboration and coordination at the regional level, Chair Wynne advocated for more flexible funding for localities. The Code requires all GO VA funding to be matched \$1:1 by non-state funding, but new budget language authorized the Board to waive the match requirements. Before the waiver, each regional council was required to match \$250,000 – now only the additional \$1 million, equating to \$111,000 per region, requires a local match of \$2:1. For every \$2 in GO VA capacity building funds, regions put up \$1 in non-state matching funds. So, regional councils will have to revise their budgets up to \$361,111. Board members also expect a breakout of fund expenditures to include how much is apportioned for administrative overhead versus facilitating regional partnerships.

The waiver does not apply to capacity building funds, only per capita and competitively funded projects. New budget language allowed the Board to shift \$1.4 million from the competitive pool to the per capita distribution, raising the \$1 million floor.

In the area of cybersecurity workforce development, the budget adds \$20 million for the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative housed at Virginia Tech. The initiative is expected to develop partnerships among Virginia universities to strengthen the talent pool. The Virginia Research Investment Committee (VRIC) maintained its \$8 million funding for each year, carrying over \$5 million from the previous year to be allocated for a new research center at Virginia Tech. VRIC Chair and Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia Peter Blake is putting together an ad hoc workgroup to oversee the cyber initiative.

In the third round of capital grants, the Board approved three projects in the area of talent and workforce development – the Westmoreland County Welding Training Program from Region 6 received \$130,000; the Blue Ridge Community College Cybersecurity Workforce Development and Jobs Program in Region 8 received \$200,000; and, the Piedmont Virginia Community College Higher Paying Jobs and Adult Beverage Exports program from Region 9 received \$249,472.

For additional information, please view the June Board packet [here](#). Please note that the recommendation in the packet varies slightly from the Board-approved reduced match for the \$111,000 in FY 2019.

On July 10 from 9-11am, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will host a How-to-Apply Webinar for GO VA funds for the per capita and competitive grants. The webinar will provide an introduction to the GO VA program design, the funding priorities for each region, and a step-by-step overview of the application process, project requirements and best practices. To register, please click this [link](#).

VACo Contact: [Khaki LaRiviere](#)

## Discussions at the Region 5 Meeting focus on a plethora of issues



County leaders engaged in a robust conversation about issues ranging from agriculture to broadband to staffing volunteer fire departments to teacher shortages at the Region 5 Meeting in Albemarle County.

Senator Mark Peake also attended the meeting on June 24 and spoke about several issues of interest to him – water treatment legislation, state assistance with the costs of housing state-responsible inmates in local and regional jails and the Route 29 bypass.

VACo Region 5 members thank Senator Peake for taking the time to share his thoughts and listen to county perspectives. We also thank Delegate Steve Landes for having a representative at the meeting.

One highlight of many Regional Meetings is the “One Thing,” a segment in which each person introduces themselves and shares the issue they believe to be the most pressing concern facing their county. Not surprising, broadband and economic development were most often expressed. Additionally, local food chains, solar regulation, affordable housing, and misassigned voters were also discussed during the exercise.

Gary Wood, President and CEO of the Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVEC) followed by sharing how his Co-Op is working to provide Internet access to its customers. Wood spoke about a feasibility study conducted by the CVEC, which analyzed the potential of using CVEC’s infrastructure to bring broadband to its customers. In addition, the CVEC is attempting to utilize state grants, tax abatement incentives, and potential federal resources. Wood stressed that the ultimate goal of the CVEC’s broadband plan is to provide affordable Internet access to its customers.

VACo staff then reported on recent legislative developments impacting the budget, mental health, tobacco taxes, school security, water quality, and more.

Thank you Region 5 Director Ann Mallek and all who attended. These meetings are always very helpful to VACo staff, as they provide important insight into the policy questions that will be addressed in the next VACo legislative platform.

VACo Contact: [Angela Inglett](#)

## Comments on Draft Annexation Study due September 3

The [Virginia Commission on Local Government](#) (CLG) is taking public comments on a [draft Report on Annexation Alternatives](#). During the 2016 General Assembly session, the existing moratorium for city-initiated annexation and county declarations of immunity from annexation was extended until 2024. In extending the moratorium the legislature also directed CLG to study annexations and provide a report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2018 on the following:

- Evaluate the structure of cities and counties in the commonwealth;
- Evaluate the impact of annexation upon localities;
- Consider alternatives to the current moratorium on annexation by cities; and
- Consult with and seek input from the Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties and localities directly affected by moratorium.

In addition to written comments, the CLG will hold a hearing in the Richmond area on Tuesday July 10, 2018, to solicit public comment on its draft study on annexation. An additional hearing will be held on September 4, 2018, in the City of Staunton. For more info go to the [Commission on Local Government Annexation Study website](#).

Written testimony must be submitted or postmarked by September 3, 2018, and mailed to the Commission's offices at: Commission on Local Government, Department of Housing and Community Development, Main Street Centre, 600 East Main Street, Suite 300, Richmond, VA, 23219. Electronic testimony may also be submitted by September 3, 2018, to the following email address: [david.conmy@dhcd.virginia.gov](mailto:david.conmy@dhcd.virginia.gov).

Any person requiring special accommodations for the hearing should contact the Commission's offices at 804.371.8010 / Virginia Relay 7-1-1 by July 1, 2018.

VACo Contact: [Joe Lerch](#)

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## State General Fund Revenues Continue Growth in May

Governor Ralph Northam announced last week that state General Fund (GF) revenues grew by 1.4 percent in May relative to the same period last year, and revenues continue to outpace the annual forecast on a fiscal year-to-date basis. Secretary of Finance Aubrey Layne's revenue report notes that individual income tax withholding, a mainstay of GF revenue collections, turned in a strong performance in May, growing 12.6 percent; on a fiscal year-to-date basis, withholding collections have grown 5.1 percent, comfortably ahead of the annual estimate of 3.5 percent growth. Individual income tax nonwithholding payments were down in May, but typically these receipts must be analyzed in tandem with April collections; viewed together, collections were up more than 12 percent from the same period last year, and on a fiscal year-to-date basis, nonwithholding is up 15 percent relative to the same time period a year ago. This revenue source has been volatile in the past, and Secretary Layne notes that many individual income tax refunds may be due to "high net worth taxpayers" who have not yet filed 2017 state tax returns. Sales tax collections (reflecting April sales) grew by 0.8 percent in May – a slackening relative to stronger collections in April – but are still tracking the annual estimate of 3 percent growth on a fiscal year-to-date basis.

In accordance with budget language enacted earlier this month, FY 2018 surplus revenues will be deposited into the new Revenue Reserve Fund (after other requirements, such as deposits to the Water Quality Improvement Fund, are met) in order to strengthen the state's financial position in the event of an economic downturn or other financial stressor. Media reports have indicated that Standard and Poor's, which had placed a negative outlook on Virginia's AAA bond rating in April 2017 due to concerns about the state's low revenue reserves relative to its AAA-rated peers, has revised its outlook to "stable" and reaffirmed the AAA rating. Moody's Investors Service has similarly reaffirmed the state's rating and stable outlook.

The Governor is expected to report on June revenues as part of his address to the "money committees" in August. Secretary Layne's memorandum is available [here](#).

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

# The Virginia Environmental Excellence Program

An opportunity for counties to gain recognition for reducing environmental impacts.



Voluntary efforts to reduce environmental impacts can reap recognition and costs savings for counties.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provides an opportunity for both private and public-sector organizations to be recognized and awarded for facilities and projects that go above minimum regulatory compliance. The Virginia Environmental Excellence Program (VEEP) provides two tracks for recognition. The Environmental Management System (EMS) Track of the program has multiple tiers, each of which requires various levels of EMS implementation for membership. An EMS is a set of processes and practices that help an organization to reduce environmental impacts and improve operating efficiency. You can find more information at DEQ's [EMS Resources and Links](#) website.

There is also the Sustainability Partners (SP) Track for facilities that may not have an EMS but are high environmental performers. Sustainability Partners is a program especially focused on multiple facility entities that are moving toward environmental sustainability.

## How It Works

The multi-tier design of the EMS Track makes it accessible to all types of facilities and helps to drive improvement. The tiers are:

- [EMS Track](#)
  - [Environmental Enterprise \(E2\)](#) is an “on ramp” to the program requiring a few basic components of an EMS.
  - [Exemplary Environmental Enterprise \(E3\)](#) requires a full EMS.
  - [Extraordinary Environmental Enterprise \(E4\)](#) requires a full EMS that has been in place for at least 1 year and has been third party audited.
- [Sustainability Partners \(SP\) Track](#)
  - [Sustainability Partners](#) receive recognition, but not the other benefits listed below. If you are part of an organization that has a commitment to sustainability and is reducing its environmental impacts, you could be a Sustainability Partner.

## The EMS Track Benefits Include:

- Public recognition
- Permit fee discounts
- Opportunity for regulatory flexibility
- A single point of contact with DEQ

Participating facilities reported savings of over \$52 million through pollution prevention, recycling and energy efficiency efforts in 2016. In addition, VEEP members saved \$152,920 on annual permit fees with VEEP membership discounts.

For more information go to the [DEQ VEEP webpage](#) or contact Keith Boisvert at 804.698.4225, [Keith.Boisvert@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:Keith.Boisvert@deq.virginia.gov) or Morgan Goodman at 804.698.4122, [Morgan.Goodman@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:Morgan.Goodman@deq.virginia.gov)

## County helps teach farming 101



Photo courtesy of Fauquier Education Farm

Story written by [Mary Ann Barton](#) / NACo Senior Staff Writer and reprinted with permission from NACo

Heading west about an hour or so outside of Washington, D.C., you'll find green rolling hills, horses grazing in pastures and low walls made of weathered stone in Fauquier County. You'll also find city slickers new to the area who are embracing a new more laid-back lifestyle.

### [Learn more about the farm](#)

For those who are hoping to trade rush-hour grocery shopping for growing their own produce, Fauquier County points them to a program that is helping cultivate new farmers and preserve the county's rural heritage.

The county has teamed up with Fauquier Education Farm, a nonprofit, to offer several programs that lead to getting closer to Mother Earth. The county donated the land (and leases it to the nonprofit for \$1 per year), purchases farm equipment, offers grants, promotes the programs and pays for 5 percent of its annual budget. The county's Agriculture Department director, Ray Pickering, sits on the nonprofit's board.

"They do educational seminars involving agriculture and last year I think they produced over 60,000 pounds of food which was given to our local food banks," said Fauquier County Supervisor Rick Gerhardt, whose district includes the farm. "That's really a return on investment that the county gets in addition to teaching future farmers about agriculture. We're also taking care of our needy in the county."

Jim Hankins, executive director of Fauquier Education Farm, heads up the operation. "Our primary audience are folks who have moved to the county who do not come from a farm background and are eager to learn more about growing their own food," he said.

The 197-acre farm is used in several programs to help newbies who want to hone their skills. They can do so by checking out the farm's educational programs and volunteer opportunities. The educational programs include two multiweek classroom "Beginning Farmer" courses.

The new farmer "incubator" program leases quarter-acre plots from 10.5 acres set aside for them. The rest of the land is used to grow and donate vegetables and fruits to area food banks. In 2017, the farm and its volunteers donated 60,867 pounds of produce to several organizations that help the needy. The farmers-to-be try their hands at farming while paying no fee the first year and then \$100 per year after that. The opportunity is easier than having to purchase land in the area, which ranges from \$5,000 to \$15,000 per acre.

The farm also offers 10 drop-in workshops that are directly related to its demonstration plots. The workshop series is free and open to all. The farm also hosts numerous school tours and working visits for schools, clubs and scout groups, which often volunteer by picking produce.

The farm offers volunteer opportunities to anyone who wants to stop by to gather produce for food banks and notifies the public via social media and email newsletters about the farm's volunteer hours.

"Our volunteer opportunities are extremely popular," Hankins said. "People volunteer to gain direct hands-on learning for themselves and their families, and a great many people like to volunteer for good healthy outdoor activity with their neighbors while also supporting our donations to area food banks."

# employment opportunities



The Virginia Association of Counties accepts employment ads in a PDF file or a link to a job site. Please include information for applying, and a link to other important information. Please do not fax your employment ad. VACo members are not charged for placing an employment ad. The cost is \$50 per ad for non-VACo members. VACo publishes the ad on its website and mobile app as well as the upcoming County Connections issue. If you have any questions or concerns, please email [Valerie Russell](mailto:Valerie.Russell).



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### DEPUTY DIRECTOR COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD - ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

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VACo exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia.

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