

Regional Update

A Monthly Report of Activities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia



February 2007

New Economic Development Efforts Planned

The A-NPDC has contracted with the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development to create a new economic development strategy for Accomack and Northampton counties. This was made possible by support from both counties and the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA).

One of the results of this project will be a separate economic development study for each county. The results from these studies will be combined into a "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy" for our region. The completion of a "CEDS" every five years is one of the EDA's conditions for retaining the Shore's vital "Economic Development District" designation that ensures potential funding for important local projects. The most recent beneficiary of this funding was the Eastern Shore Community College, which received \$1.1 million from EDA for its new Business Development and Workforce Training Center. Retention of the EDD designation could be critical to the development of the Wallops Research Park project, on which Accomack County, NASA, and the Marine Science Consortium have been diligently working for several months. This funding could also be applied to construction and deployment of affordable, high-speed fiber-optic broadband services for the Shore.



VT's team has proposed a four-step approach to researching the Shore's current assets and developing an economic development strategy for each county. First, they will conduct a community assets inventory, collect data, and come for a site visit that will include a "windshield tour" and meetings with county staff and others. The second step consists of two public summit meetings, one in each county. Step three will involve reconvening with staff for a follow-up assessment and planning meeting in which the team and county staff will review the information developed through the summit meetings. A plan of action encompassing organization for implementation and specific steps towards advancing the vision of each county will also be developed. Step four will be development of the final report

for each county that will summarize the data, discussion, and analysis developed throughout the process.

The public summit meetings have been scheduled for February 27

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and 28, from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. The Northampton County summit will be held at the Northampton Middle School in Machipongo on February 27, and the Accomack County summit will be held on February 28 at Nandua Middle School. Input from as many citizens as possible will be needed in order to develop an economic development strategy that will truly reflect the needs and vision of each county. Please plan to attend these important meetings. If you would like additional information about the project, please contact Barbara Schwenk, Economic Development Coordinator, at 757-787-1247 x115 or bschwenk@a-npdc.org.

To see the type of work that the VT Office of Economic Development has done for other communities, see their newsletters at: www.econdev.vt.edu/quarterly.html.

Exmore, Belle Haven Sewer/Water Survey Starts

Starting Friday, February 2, surveyors will be walking door-to-door throughout Exmore and Belle Haven asking residents questions about their home and business water and sewer systems.

The results of the surveys will be used to assess the need for public water and sewer systems in these towns, and may result in funding applications to expand existing systems to meet needs identified by the surveyors.

Questions asked will include condition of systems, number of users in the household/business, and willingness to connect to public systems. "We thank our residents for being willing to answer our questions," said Mayors Guy Lawson of Exmore and Marion Long of Belle Haven. "This information is critical to developing plans for future growth of our towns."

186 Homeless Identified in 2007 Count

The preliminary count of homeless persons on the Virginia Eastern Shore is 186 persons. They include 24 men, 68 women, and 94 children.

"This number is considerably higher than last year's count of 49 persons," said Paul Berge, secretary of the Eastern Shore Continuum of Care on Homelessness. "This is likely due to the exceptional number of organizations that participated in the 2007 Count."

Twelve organizations identified homeless individuals and surveyed them. At least another dozen public and private agencies participated in the count, but did not come in contact with homeless persons or families during the three-day survey period, January 23rd through 25th.

Berge emphasized that these numbers are only preliminary. "Some organizations still have surveys to turn in. And we need to check for duplications."

"We truly want to thank all of the organizations that participated this year," said Eleanor Drewniak, chair of the Continuum, a coalition of agencies that provide services to the homeless. "This survey demonstrates the huge need we have on the Shore and the challenge we face in providing shelter for the homeless."

Staff Mark Anniversaries at A-NPDC

Several 5-year staff anniversaries occurred in 2006. Barbara Schwenk, Economic Development Coordinator, started with A-NPDC in April of 2001; Leslie Mason, Planning Technician, began in October 2001, and Robert Williams, Housing Specialist, first came to work in November 2001. In addition, Elaine Meil, Director of Planning, has worked at A-NPDC for 3 years, since January 2004.

Lead Safe Homes Program & Lead Poisoning

The Eastern Shore Lead Safe Homes Program received a grant last year to reduce lead hazards in 16 homes during a period ending June 30 2008. So far only 4 homes have been identified for the project. Statistics reveal that the Eastern Shore, with its disproportionate number of older homes, is among the areas in the U.S. at the highest risk for lead poisoning in young children. Lead poisoning interferes with brain development and can cause damage to the nervous system, yet most children with elevated levels show no symptoms. Homeowners and tenants of homes built before 1978 containing chipped or deteriorating paint and wooden painted windows are advised to have their chil-

dren under 6 tested. Qualifying families (whose income falls within low to middle income range) are urged to apply for the Program. Call Patti Merritt at the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, phone 757-787-2936, ext 119, with questions or to apply.



Lead Paint Hazard

Tabbi Walker Celebrates 10 Years at A-NPDC

Tabatha Walker, Administrative Assistant, began working for the A-NPDC in 1997. Tabbi performs general administrative duties for the Planning District Commission, assists with grant application correspondence, performs computer trouble-shooting, acts as back-up to the clerical assistant, assists and directs clients and carries out many other tasks. She attends most of the meetings at the A-NPDC, composes minutes, and assists with the Regional Update Newsletter. Tabbi holds an Associates in Applied Science Degree in Office Systems Technology from the Eastern Shore Community College and hopes to continue her education. Tabbi is most proud of her ability to assist with computer problems and

with grant applications. She considers herself a "people person" and enjoys greeting and working with the public.

Mrs. Walker is a resident of New Church, Virginia. She is married to Scotty Walker and they have one son, Seth.



How to Contact the A-NPDC

If you have questions or would like to discontinue your subscription, please contact the Planning District Commission.

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