

Dix/Communications



ISSUES-APRIL, MAY, JUNE OF 2012

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THESE ISSUES WERE DETERMINED TO BE CONCERNS OF THE AREA, THROUGH MANAGERIAL AND NEWS DEPARTMENT DISCUSSIONS, PUBLIC INPUT, THROUGH AN INTERNET WEBSITE, AND CONVERSATIONS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS.

EMPLOYMENT

April 2, 2012

CSX Plans to Hire in Maryland

CSX Corporation plans to hire more than 140 employees in Maryland this year. The new employees will be based primarily in Cumberland and Baltimore, will operate trains and maintain tracks, locomotives and rail cars. There are nearly 1400 miles of track to be maintained in the state. Applications are available at the company website. Last year, CSX hired about 4,000 employees, with nearly 350 of those positions in Maryland.

April 3, 2012

ATK Cuts 150 Jobs

Approximately 150 workers will lose their jobs at Allegany Ballistics Laboratory of Alliant Tech Systems over the course of the next six months. About 40 employees had volunteered for layoffs, before the mandatory furloughs were ordered. About 1350 employees worked at the facility before the layoffs, which were ordered because of the end of several defense programs and federal spending reductions.

April 20, 2012

County Could Cut Positions, Funding

Allegany County may have to cut between ten and 25 staff positions and reduce funding by up to two per cent, because of state budget cuts. Board of Education funding could also be held at Maintenance of Effort levels. Finance Director Jason Bennett has developed a three-step plan to help close a \$3-million plus budget gap. If the General Assembly restores a disparity grant to Allegany County, there would still be a budget gap, and portions of the plan would be needed to close that shortfall.

April 23, 2012

Business Fundamentals Workshop Set

A workshop on "Business Fundamentals" will be held on Wednesday, May 2nd from 3 to 6 p.m. in Franklin. The workshop is part of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center training and business coaching program. The workshop will be held in the Pendleton County Development Authority Building on Thorn Creek Road, Suite 400. For more information or to register, call (304)-530-4964. The registration deadline is Friday, April 27th.

April 25, 2012

ACS to Terminate 100 Employees

ACS in Frostburg has announced that about 100 employees at its facility will lose their jobs, as of May 31st. ACS employs about 400 people locally. Xerox, the parent company of ACS recently announced that 250 jobs have recently been added in Oklahoma City and about 380 in Rochester, New York. Published reports note that the layoffs are due to a loss of a customer contract at the facility.

April 26, 2012

Cumberland Processing Center to Remain Open

Maryland U.S. Senator Ben Cardin has been told by the Postmaster General that the Cumberland mail processing center will remain open to meet overnight delivery standards. Senator Cardin says the overnight delivery standards will be incorporated

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in the 21st Century Postal Service Act, or Senate Bill 1789. The Cumberland facility employs 72 workers and handles approximately 77 million pieces of mail a year.

April 27, 2012

Rocky Gap License Approved

A slot machine license was approved by the Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission yesterday, during its meeting in Annapolis. The vote was unanimous, and a slots facility could employ 400 workers during construction and about 520 once it is opened. Lakes Maryland Development was awarded the 850-machine license. That number should grow to 1,000 machines in the second year of operation.

April 27, 2012

Cardin Votes In Favor of Postal Act

Maryland United States Senator Ben Cardin was a member of the majority to pass the 21st Century Postal Service Act; the final vote in the Senate was 62 to 37. Senate Bill 1789 was termed a "victory for individuals and businesses throughout our nation that depend on timely mail delivery." To maintain those delivery standards, the U.S. Postmaster General has informed Senator Cardin that the Cumberland and Easton processing facilities will need to remain open.

April 30, 2012

Maryland Employers Add 1500 Jobs in March

Maryland employers added 1500 jobs last month; despite that, the unemployment rate inched up, as the pool of would-be workers expanded more rapidly. The Marcy rate was quoted at 6.6 per cent, up from 6.5 per cent in February. Gains in employment were noted in professional and business services, the leisure and hospitality industry and trade, transportation and utilities.

May 11, 2012

Macy's Distribution Center finished

The Macy's Distribution Center in Martinsburg has been finished; construction on the 1.3 million square foot building began in May of last year, and will serve as a distribution site for Macy's online orders. The first phase of hiring is underway, with about 400 employees starting at the center; hopefully, that number will increase to 1,000 with an annual payroll of \$32 million. It will be open for business in late June or early July.

May 14, 2012

Sierra Hygiene Renews Lease in Frostburg

Sierra Hygiene Products, LLC of California is renewing its lease with the county. The company is located in Frostburg, and focuses on the away-from-home paper market in North America, such as hand towels, bathroom tissue, soaps and sanitizers. The company located in Frostburg in 2007, and now employs ten people there.

May 18, 2012

Cumberland Unaffected by Postal Closures

The U.S. Postal Service still has plans to close dozens of mail processing centers, but the Cumberland location will remain unaffected, at least until January of 2014. The nearly bankrupt postal service says it can no longer wait, as Congress remains deadlocked on how to help. The Postal Service had been asked to hold off on closing any mail facility, until Congress could pass final postal overhaul legislation, but

at this point, that hasn't happened.

May 23, 2012

Maryland Loses 6,000 Jobs in April

The state of Maryland lost 6,000 jobs in April, the largest monthly loss in the country during a month when most states gain jobs. The U.S. Department of Labor has also revised its estimate for March, showing the state losing 600 jobs, rather than adding 1500. The unemployment rate rose from 6.6 per cent to 6.7 in March, in part because more residents began looking for work, or tried again after giving up.

May 25, 2012

Hiring Process to Begin for Administrator, Assistant in Keyser

The city of Keyser is beginning the process of hiring an administrator, an administrative assistant, positions on the inflow and Infiltration team and the water department. As far as the Administrator position goes, the city is forming an interview panel, consisting of professionals from the community. They will perform the interviews and choose the top three candidates.

June 6, 2012

Verizon Offering Buyouts to 1700 workers

Verizon Communications is offering buyouts to 1700 workers, mainly call center employees and technicians. The offer applies to less than 1 per cent of Verizon's overall workforce; the company is cutting its wireline costs, as households cancel their phone lines, opting to go to competitors or rely on cellphones. If not enough people accept the buyouts, there is the possibility of layoffs at Verizon.

COST OF LIVING

May 25, 2012

Keyser Approves Water, Sewer Increases

A new rate schedule for water and sewer charges in Keyser will take effect in 45 days. The Mayor and Council approved an increase in the rates, which had not changed since 1999. Mayor Randy Amtower notes that it is an approximate 127-per cent increase. The city is currently building a new wastewater treatment plant, which should be completed in late 2015.

June 4, 2012

PSC To Hear Billing Complaint

The Maryland Public Service Commission will hear a complaint that Potomac Edison is overbilling some western Maryland electricity customers by failing to read their meters as often as required. The hearing has tentatively been scheduled for June 20th; the complaint was filed May 19th by Sugarloaf Conservancy. The group says the company has read its members' electric meters an average of four times in the past 13 months, when they are required to read them every other month. The conservancy adds the practice results in usage estimates that exceed the amount of electricity consumed. Potomac Edison says it will respond to the complaint during the June 20th hearing.

June 5, 2012

Tuition Hikes Set for Maryland Colleges

The Board of Regents for the Maryland University system has approved a 3 per cent tuition hike for most in-state students. The increase was approved last week, and this is the third year in a row that tuition has gone up. For those out-of-state, tuition will rise as much as 5 per cent at College Park and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Employee salaries will remain largely frozen, except for a two per cent cost-of-living increase.

June 6, 2012

Sewer Rate Increase Delayed

The Cumberland Mayor and City Council voted unanimously last night to delay a vote on raising sewer rates, pending new information received about a long-standing industry pollutant surcharge. The matter will be brought up again in two weeks, so that the increase is based on the most accurate information available, according to Councilman Dave Kauffman.

June 12, 2012

Board Approves 5% Tuition Increase in West Virginia

The West Virginia Board of Governors has approved a five per cent increase for tuition and fees, effective this fall. The tuition increases amount to \$145 more per semester for resident undergraduates and \$449 more for non-residents on the main campus in Morgantown. The increases are slightly smaller at Potomac State College in Keyser, where both resident and non-resident undergraduates at Potomac State will pay \$72 more per semester.

June 14, 2012

Board Increases Meal Fee

The Allegany County Board of Education has approved a five-cent increase in the cost

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of school meals, due to a federally mandated shift to healthier school menus. Costs are being driven up by the requirement of fresh fruits, vegetables and other changes required by the federal government. Lunches must also include fewer favorites, such as tater tots and macaroni and cheese. The increase was approved as part of the consent agenda at this week's Board of Education meeting.

GOVERNMENT

April 2, 2012

Tempers Flare at Piedmont Council Meeting

A crowd which was attending the most recent meeting of the Piedmont Mayor and Council, left the meeting while elected officials argued and pointed fingers over the investigation surrounding the alleged illegal purchase of FEMA trailers by the town in 2009. Council Ray Hall, whose complaint sparked the initial investigation, claimed nothing had been done or discussed about the issue at the time, and accused Mayor Skip Clifford of choosing to, quote, "blow him off." The consensus was, however, to put the matter behind them, and move on with the business of the city.

April 3, 2012

Primary Election Day

Today is Primary Election Day in the state of Maryland, with polls open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Voters should vote at the polling place to which they are assigned. Voters in District 20 should also know their polling place has moved to the Ellerslie Volunteer Fire Department, instead of Corriganville. Cumberland residents who are not registered as either Democrat or Republican can still vote for the city council candidates on the primary ballot.

April 3, 2012

Emergency Management Division Chief Named

Allegany County Administrator David Eberly has appointed Susan Lee to be the Emergency Management Division Chief in the Department of Emergency Services. She joined Allegany County Government as an Emergency Services Planner in November of 2006, and was promoted to the position of Emergency Management Coordinator in March of 2008. She had been Acting Chief of the Emergency Management Division.

April 3, 2012

State Budget Compromise Being Sought

There is one week left in this year's General Assembly session, and lawmakers are waiting for members of a House-Senate Conference Committee to come to an agreement on the state budget, as well as a bill to increase income taxes. Lawmakers typically hold evening and weekend sessions during the final week, but both House and Senate leaders say they will try to avoid that this week, because of the Easter and Passover holidays. The session will end next Monday at midnight.

April 4, 2012

Four Advance in City Council Race

The field has been narrowed to four in the Cumberland City Council race. The top vote-getter in the primary was Dave Caporale; in unofficial results, Nicole Wagoner, John Cline and Nick DeArcangelis were the apparent primary winners, and will move on to the general election in November, when two will be chosen. DeArcanglis says, however, he doesn't want the job, but could not have his name removed from the ballot in time for the election.

April 4, 2012

Unofficial Federal, State Results in Primary Election

Mitt Romney swept Washington, Maryland and Wisconsin in yesterday's Primary Election. In local results, incumbent Roscoe Bartlett won his party's nomination in

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the Sixth District Race, and will face John Delaney in the November general election. Congressman Bartlett had 44 per cent of the vote in a field of eight. Maryland State Senator Ben Cardin garnered 73 per cent of the vote in that race.

April 4, 2012

Little Progress on Budget Proposals

The General Assembly has made little progress in resolving differences in budget proposals, the teacher pension shift, and complicated tax proposals. Some say the House plan on taxes is fairer, but the Senate plan would affect nearly all Maryland taxpayers. A committee of legislators is expected to discuss the tax measure, along with a tax on tobacco products.

April 4, 2012

School Bus Bill Passes House

A bill, making it easier to crack down on those who pass school buses loading or unloading students has passed the Maryland House of Delegates by a vote of 133 to 5. Currently, cameras have to capture both the front and rear license plate of the offending vehicle; under the new bill, cameras would only have to capture the rear plate. Private schools would be able to place cameras on their school buses if the bill passes the State Senate.

April 4, 2012

Corkage Bill Passes State Senate

The Maryland State Senate has unanimously passed a bill which would allow people in Maryland to bring their own wine into restaurants. The vote was 46 to 0. The bill, sponsored by Senator Ron Young, would allow restaurants or bars to open the wine bottles for free. Corkage is legal in Virginia and in the District of Columbia. Young is hoping the bill will keep money in Maryland

April 5, 2012

General Assembly Session May Be Extended

Governor Martin O'Malley has signed an executive order, extending the current legislative session, if lawmakers cannot resolve budget proposal differences. Legislators are still at odds over differences in two versions of the budget legislation. Governor O'Malley is also urging lawmakers to approve some form of increased transportation funding. Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller calls an idea of an increased sales tax, "dead in the water." In a special session called by O'Malley in 2007, the sales tax rate was increased from 5 to 6 per cent.

April 6, 2012

Primary Turnout Lowest in Over 30 Years

The turnout in Maryland for this past Tuesday's Presidential Primary was the lowest in at least 32 years. Only about one-fifth of registered voters cast a ballot, but that does not include absentee and provisional ballots. Allegany County, however, reported the highest voter turnout in the state at nearly 27 per cent. According to political science professor at the University of Baltimore, John Willis, says, however, the primary turnout is not a good predictor for the number of people who will go to the polls in November.

April 9, 2012

Piedmont Official Guilty of Attempted Extortion

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Piedmont Commissioner Ray hall has been found guilty of attempted extortion in Mineral County Magistrate Court. Hall had threatened to do damage to a local restaurant, after he accused employees of stealing a friend's personal credit card, and later used that information to "cyberstalk" his friend. He was charged with attempted extortion, because the transaction of money was not completed. Attempted extortion carries with it a penalty of two to twelve months and a fine of \$50 to \$500. His sentencing is set for tomorrow at 3 p.m.

April 9, 2012

State Plans to Appeal Gun Permit Ruling

The Maryland Attorney General's office is planning to appeal last month's ruling that a portion of the state's gun law is unconstitutional. The notice was filed in federal court. While the ruling is under appeal, the Maryland State Police won't make decisions on applications in which approval rests solely on the portion of the law that is being contested.

April 9, 2012

Bill To Modify Child Support Passed by Senate

The Maryland State Senate has passed a bill modifying a law that allows prisoners to ask the courts to suspend child support payments. The measure was passed on a 25 to 21 vote, allowing the payments to be altered without any action from a prisoner. Opponents say it is unfair, in that criminals are allowed to walk away from support payments while in jail. The bill now moves on to the Governor to be signed.

April 11, 2012

General Assembly Adjourns Without Revenue Plan

The Maryland General Assembly adjourned Monday at midnight, without passing a key revenue plan needed to avoid hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts. Although he hasn't said he would do so, Democratic lawmakers say they may ask Governor Martin O'Malley to call a special session for more time to work on a revenue package and possibly other measures such as an expansion of gambling. The budget, as passed, is balanced, as required by law.

April 11, 2012

State Revenues Could Mean Surplus for West Virginia

West Virginia tax collections for the month of March show withholding taxes up more than nine per cent and personal income tax and sales tax revenues were both above where the state tax department thought they would be for the month. The state is running ahead of last year by about six per cent. Sales tax revenues were \$4 million above estimates in March and personal income tax revenue was nearly \$10 million ahead of projections.

April 12, 2012

House Fails To Pass Teacher Pension Legislation

The Senate approved it, but the House failed to take action on shifting teacher pension costs from the state to Maryland counties. The shift was to have been phased in, beginning with the coming fiscal year. The House and Senate had planned to tie the pension shift into tax increases that would have helped offset the burden.

April 12, 2012

Tensions High Among O'Malley, Miller, and Busch

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During a bill signing ceremony this week, tensions were high among Governor Martin O'Malley, Senate President Mike Miller and House Speaker Michael Busch. Governor O'Malley described the budget outcome this week as "pretty much the low point of my experience here." O'Malley hasn't said whether he'll call a special session of the General Assembly, and Senator Miller notes that the state has until July 1st to have a special session to pass a plan to avoid the budget cuts that were made on Monday. The Governor did sign over 100 bills passed during this session.

April 13, 2012

Representatives Meet with Pennsylvania Governor on Route 219 Issue

Representatives from Somerset and Cambria counties in Pennsylvania and Garrett County, Maryland have met with Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett to discuss the progress of completing Route 219 from Meyersdale to Somerset. The "Continental 1" corridor is a proposed, 1500-mile direct route from Toronto to Miami, intended to develop business growth and faster, safer travel. Its current goal is to complete Route 219 from New York through Pennsylvania. A meeting of the North/South Appalachian Highway Coalition will be held later this month in Somerset.

April 13, 2012

Lawmakers Concerned About "Doomsday Budget"

Legislators approved a state budget that included budget cuts, but did not address increased state spending. The approved cuts amount to less than one-and-a-half per cent of the nearly \$36 billion budget, and Democratic lawmakers argue that the cuts would be devastating. A spokesman for Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller says a special session will likely be called by mid-May to pass a tax bill. Then, local governments will know how much money they will receive as they consider their budgets for the new fiscal year.

April 16, 2012

Hall Asked to Resign

Piedmont council member Ray Hall has been asked to resign by other members of the Mayor and City Council. Hall has been sentenced to a year in jail, following a conviction of attempted extortion. Hall refused to do so, saying he had "unfinished business." Town attorney Jim Carskadon is in possession of a petition, calling for his ouster; however, Hall claimed that some of the signatures were not valid. Speaking for the Mayor and Council, Finance Commissioner Freda Fisher said that a vote to dismiss Hall from the Council would be taken at the next meeting.

April 16, 2012

O'Malley Accepts Partial Responsibility for Budget Meltdown

Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley is accepting some responsibility for the failure to replace \$512 million in spending cuts with a package that included tax hikes and alternate savings. The Governor also was uncertain about when, or if, he will call a special session, adding that Republicans have prevailed by default so far in the budget debate, due to a lack of Democratic leadership, including his own.

April 17, 2012

Special Session Could Cost Taxpayers

A special session of the Maryland General Assembly could cost taxpayers more than \$20,000 per day. The daily costs include lodging, meals and mileage for lawmakers, as well as staff time, postage and printing charges. While the most recent special session on redistricting lasted only four days, the 2007 special session spanned 17 different days.

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April 17, 2012

Court of Appeals to Decide on Dream Act

The Maryland Court of Appeals will decide if the so-called "Dream Act" will be on the ballot this fall. A group, known as CASA de Maryland, is appealing a judge's decision to allow the referendum on the 2010 law. Arguments have been scheduled for June 12th on the issue. The measure provides college tuition discounts to certain illegal immigrants, but opponents blocked the law from taking effect last year by obtaining enough signatures to bring it to a referendum.

April 18, 2012

News Conference to Discuss Special Session

House Republicans in Annapolis are holding a news conference today, to discuss the possibility of a special session, as the Governor tries to broker a deal on a tax bill that would be the focus of the session. O'Malley says he will not call a special session until House Speaker Michael Busch and Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller come to an agreement on a tax bill. Leaders are urging Governor O'Malley to call the session, so a tax bill can be passed, thereby avoiding \$512 million in spending cuts, set to take effect on July 1st.

April 18, 2012

Two Groups Receive Funding

Friends Aware has received \$250,000 and the Allegany County Museum received \$200,000, as a result of state bond funding. Friends Aware had requested a total of \$634,000 in state bond funding, while the Museum asked for \$350,000. The county commissioners asked that the Allegany Museum be prioritized as it is completing the redevelopment of its building on Pershing Street.

April 18, 2012

New Piedmont Council Member Appointed

Robert Patenaude has been appointed to the Piedmont City Council, to fill the position left vacant by the resignation of Bob Fike. Mayor Skip Clifford says it is his impression that Fike did not want to return. Clifford then recommended Patenaude for the position, and it was approved on a 3 to 1 vote. Current Council Member Ray Hall, who has been urged to step down from the council, voted against the appointment. Hall was convicted of attempted extortion last week.

April 19, 2012

O'Malley Leaning Toward Special Session

Governor Martin O'Malley says he will call a special session of the Maryland General Assembly to deal with \$512 million in budget cuts and to adopt a tax package. When that session will be held is in question. O'Malley says he is looking for a consensus on a session; when that happens, he will call the session. O'Malley was not specific about how far apart the House and Senate are, but it did not appear a special session will happen soon.

April 20, 2012

County Could Cut Positions, Funding

Allegany County may have to cut between ten and 25 staff positions and reduce funding by up to two per cent, because of state budget cuts. Board of Education funding could also be held at Maintenance of Effort levels. Finance Director Jason

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Bennett has developed a three-step plan to help close a \$3-million plus budget gap. If the General Assembly restores a disparity grant to Allegany County, there would still be a budget gap, and portions of the plan would be needed to close that shortfall.

April 20, 2012

Keyser City Officials Discuss Pool

The Keyser Mayor and City Council have received an estimate for renovating the city pool, to the tune of \$417,000. Much discussion followed the proposal, including past consideration to a splash-park concept, and the actual costs for operating the pool each season. Despite the "hit" Keyser takes each year in operating the facility, there has been no indication it will close the pool. Officials there say the pool is a "service" to the community, according to the Mineral News-Tribune.

April 20, 2012

Property Tax Rate Remains the Same

Maryland's property tax rate will remain at 11.2 cents per \$100 of assessed property value, but Comptroller Peter Franchot is warning of rising debt-service obligations, to \$1.4 billion, in the coming years. The state Board of Public Works met Wednesday, and maintained the rate. Former Governor Robert Ehrlich set the rate at 13-cents for several years, and the Board may have to think about reverting to that in future years.

April 20, 2012

FEMA Extends Benefits to Three More West Virginia Counties

Preston County, West Virginia is among three additional counties that have been included in federal assistance from recent tornadoes and flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency says those counties are now eligible for federal assistance for temporary housing assistance, housing repair, and other benefits. Those seeking assistance are encouraged to call the FEMA hotline, or go online to www.disasterassistance.gov.

April 23, 2012

Piedmont Pool Readied for Opening

Work is continuing on readying the Piedmont pool for the traditional Memorial Day weekend opening. Parks and Recreation Commissioner Ray Hall told officials that several items needed to be taken care of, before the Mineral County Health Department would allow it to reopen this year. Those items include the complete scraping and repainting of the pool, and the installation of hot water heaters. Hall, who had recently been convicted of extortion in an unrelated case, thanked the Mayor and Council for "taking care of things at the pool."

April 24, 2012

Oldtown Man Pleads Guilty in Tax Case

Fifty-year old Oldtown resident Kenneth Harold Hogan has pleaded guilty in connection to a 2008 tax evasion case in U.S. District Court. Hogan, who had been awarded a total and permanent disability by the Railroad Retirement Board in 1999, allegedly was working after that, earning an income "beyond the monthly allowable earnings" established by law. He also failed to file income tax returns from 2006 through 2008. He faces a maximum six months in prison and a \$10,000 fine on just one of the charges. On the tax evasion count, he faces five years in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

April 25, 2012

Rocky Gap License May Be Approved Tomorrow

The Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission is expected to approve a slots license during tomorrow's meeting, set for noon in Annapolis. The item is on the Commission's agenda for tomorrow. The state Board of Public Works would have to take final action on the issue; Lakes Entertainment is expected to be awarded the license.

April 26, 2012

Chamber Hosts Legislative Breakfast

The 2012 session of the Maryland General Assembly is over...for now. During yesterday's legislative breakfast, hosted by the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce, Maryland State Senator George Edwards says there may be, in fact, two special sessions—one to deal with the budget and the other on table games. And, because of a number of factors, Delegate Kevin Kelly believes the same-sex marriage referendum will be defeated in November.

April 27, 2012

Rocky Gap License Approved

A slot machine license was approved by the Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission yesterday, during its meeting in Annapolis. The vote was unanimous, and a slots facility could employ 400 workers during construction and about 520 once it is opened. Lakes Maryland Development was awarded the 850-machine license. That number should grow to 1,000 machines in the second year of operation.

April 30, 2012

Hall Remains on Council

Piedmont City Council member Ray Hall is still in office, despite repeated pleas from the public and fellow elected officials to step down. However, it has been learned there is no precedent, either in West Virginia State law or the town charter, to remove someone from office. Elected officials and town employees have been under federal investigation for allegedly improperly purchasing six FEMA trailers in 2009; additionally, Hall himself was convicted earlier in the month on a misdemeanor count of attempted extortion.

May 3, 2012

Keyser City Administrator Resigns

Keyser City Administrator Deborah Pamepinto has resigned, after serving in that capacity for six years. She cited working conditions at City Hall, including what she termed "lewd comments of a sexual nature," and "inappropriate observations about (her) finances." She noted in resignation that she has "simply tolerated enough of the offensive behaviors and attitudes."

May 3, 2012

Special Session May 14-15 Possible

Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller says he hopes a "two-day-and-out" special session of the General Assembly will take place May 14th and 15th. The session will be held to deal with a tax increase bill, and will not address the matter of casino gambling. A budget was passed at the end of the 90-day session, but was laden with so-called "doomsday" cuts that Democrats never intended to take effect.

New Text Document

May 4, 2012

Dates for Special Session Set

The Maryland General Assembly will convene in special session on Monday, May 14th, but lawmakers still don't know the specifics of the legislation they will consider. It is known they will be addressing a tax bill that will prevent the so-called "Doomsday" budget, which now contains \$512 million in cuts. The session may last two to three days. Representatives from both the House and Senate say an agreement on tax increases is close.

May 4, 2012

County Will Eliminate Department

Allegany County's Commissioners will be eliminating a department because of a budget shortfall, but they aren't saying which department will be affected. The move will put an unknown number of employees out of work at the end of the current fiscal year. The decision was made during an executive session on April 19th, and announced at yesterday's commission business meeting.

May 8, 2012

Primary Election Day in Mineral County

Today is Primary Election Day in West Virginia. Early voting ended Saturday, with a little over 300 residents turning out to cast their early ballots. County Clerk Laurin Ellifritz noted that during the last presidential election, there were about 1700 early ballots. This past Saturday was the last day to have cast an early ballot.

May 8, 2012

O'Malley to Consider Gambling

While next week's special session of the General Assembly will be held to discuss tax increases, Governor O'Malley is hinting at another session this summer to address gaming. A proposal to legalize table games and bring a sixth casino to Maryland stalled in the legislature earlier this year. There is no time frame for when the Governor may create a gaming commission.

May 9, 2012

County Evaluating Operation and Organization of Government

The Allegany County Commissioners have announced an evaluation of the operation and organization of county government, and-more likely than not-downsizing. County staff has been directed to eliminate ten positions to save an estimated \$475,000 for the upcoming FY 2013 budget. The commissioners have decided to eliminate the position of county clerk. Two management positions within the County Roads Division will be consolidated into one. Further reductions will include positions in the Public Works and Division of Public Safety. And, the county won't move forward with filling vacant positions in the Department of Emergency Services, Finances, Planning and Public Works. In all, the county may be eliminating up to a total of 25 positions.

May 9, 2012

West Virginia Primary Held

Incumbent Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and Republican Bill Maloney will face off in the November general election. Both candidates won 83 per cent of the vote in yesterday's primary. Last year's special gubernatorial election saw Tomblin narrowly defeating Maloney for an unexpired term; the November election will be, of course,

for a full, four-year term.

May 10, 2012

Special Session will Include Tax Hikes and Cuts

Next week's special session of the Maryland General Assembly will include proposals, very similar to the one House and Senate budget negotiators approved in the final hours of the legislative session last month. Neither the House, nor the Senate, voted on the proposal. The so-called "Doomsday Budget" would have taken effect July 1st, unless lawmakers approved a tax bill, according to Governor Martin O'Malley. One aspect of the income tax law would see increased income tax rates for individuals with an adjusted gross income above \$100,000 and above \$150,000 for those filing joint returns.

May 10, 2012

Post Offices to Remain Open, Some with Shorter Hours

The United States Postal Service has backed down from a plan to close thousands of rural post offices, but some may have shorter hours. It had planned to close thousands of the outlets after May 15th, but rural areas expressed concerns that the closings would hurt their communities. Several local and regional post offices in both Maryland and West Virginia will operate with shorter hours.

May 10, 2012

Unofficial Primary Results

Tuesday was Primary Election Day in West Virginia, and locally, the unofficial results are in. The Board of Education race saw Craig Rotruck garnering 1,569 votes to 1,187 for "Butch" Wahl. Jerry Whisner received 1400 votes to 936 for Leon Ravenscroft in the Republican race for Mineral County Commissioner. For Mineral County Sheriff, Craig Fraley received 1343 tallies to 448 for Craig Courtney.

May 11, 2012

Mayor Eliminates Public Comment; Council Member Resigns

Keyser Mayor Randy Amtower has removed the citizen complaint items from the Keyser City Council agenda, but that didn't stop a number of residents who spoke during Wednesday's meeting. Several recent meetings have seen shouting matches, accusations of sexual harassment at City Hall and standing-room-only crowds. In a related story, Councilman Bill Roy resigned during an executive session, held after the meeting Wednesday night. The council will now have to decide who to appoint to fill the position until the city election next month.

May 11, 2012

Cardin to Participate in Health Care Reform Forum

Maryland United States Senator Ben Cardin will participate in a forum Monday at the HRDC building on Virginia Avenue. The subject will be health care, and it is being sponsored by the Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission, the Western Maryland Central Labor Council and the Alliance for Retired Americans. The Affordable Care Act Forum begins at 10 a.m.

May 14, 2012

Keyser Mayor Nearly Called on To Step Down

The Keyser City Council came within one vote this week to pass a resolution, calling on Mayor Randy Amtower to resign. The vote was 3 to 2 against the motion.

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Meanwhile, the status of City Administrator Deborah Pamepinto remains unclear. The council vote to not accept her resignation. She had indicated that she no longer wished to resign. And, Council has agreed to reinstate the public comment portion of the meeting, limiting individuals to ten minutes.

May 15, 2012

Special Session Underway

The General Assembly's special session is underway, and is expected to last through tomorrow. Lawmakers are considering a number of tax changes and spending cuts to trim \$500 million off the state's structural deficit and avoid what Democrats are calling a "doomsday budget." Income tax increases would affect about 16 per cent of Marylanders, and would be for individuals making \$100,000 or more, or households making \$150,000. Lawmakers are also expected to approve a plan to shift most teacher pension costs from the state to county governments over the course of four years, beginning with a 50 per cent shift, beginning in July.

May 15, 2012

Mineral Commissioners Discuss Grant Funding

The Mineral County Commissioners recently approved resolutions to eight different grant applications, and agreed to ask state permission to use some leftover grant money for another purpose. Some of the grant money requested would be used to fund the Mineral County Historical Society's projects at the Carskadon Mansion in Keyser, and \$2500 for the purchase of cameras and \$5,000 for equipment for the New Creek Volunteer Fire Department.

May 17, 2012

General Assembly Approves Tax Hikes, Pension Shift

The Maryland General Assembly, during its special session, increased state income taxes on individuals who earn more than \$100,000 per year and couples who make more than \$150,000 per year. And, the state will begin shifting teacher pension costs to local governments over the next four years. A tax increase on tobacco products, other than cigarettes, was also passed. There may still be another special session later this summer, to deal with the issue of tabling gaming in Maryland.

May 17, 2012

Acting Administrator Relinquishes Duties

Acting Keyser City Administrator Carissa Fazenbaker has relinquished those duties, but will remain as administrative assistant to Mayor Randy Amtower. She had been the acting administrator in the absence of Deborah Pamepinto, who is on medical leave, at least until the end of the month. Ms. Pamepinto had resigned during the April 25th meeting, but the Council voted 3 to 2, to reject her letter of resignation. She has since had a change of heart, and wants to remain in that capacity.

May 17, 2012

Recall Petition Presented

A recall petition for Keyser Mayor Randy Amtower was presented to the city administrator this week. The petition was presented for certification, and the administrator has ten days to verify that the petition contains 100 signatures of registered voters who participated in the last election. If verified, the recall election would be held no less than 30 days or more than 40 days from the date of petition certification.

May 18, 2012

Cumberland Unaffected by Postal Closures

The U.S. Postal Service still has plans to close dozens of mail processing centers, but the Cumberland location will remain unaffected, at least until January of 2014. The nearly bankrupt postal service says it can no longer wait, as Congress remains deadlocked on how to help. The Postal Service had been asked to hold off on closing any mail facility, until Congress could pass final postal overhaul legislation, but at this point, that hasn't happened.

May 18, 2012

Attorney Cites Code on Disrupting Meetings

To address what is being termed a "rapidly deteriorating situation" at Keyser Mayor and City Council meetings, Prosecuting Attorney James Courier has issued a statement, outlining a law addressing the intentional disruption of meetings. Violating the law is punishable by a fine of up to \$100, and jail time of up to 6 months. While he is not discouraging citizen participation, Courier says it is a last resort to keep order and allow the city to conduct needed business. Keyser is moving Tuesday's meeting to a larger venue, to accommodate an expectedly large crowd, as Council will consider water and sewer rate increases.

May 18, 2012

Kahl Elected President of Association

Allegany County Director of Public Works, Paul Kahl has been elected as President of the County Engineers Association of Maryland for 2012-2013. The Association includes nearly 600 county, state, municipal and consulting engineers, as well as public works personnel, contractors and suppliers. Kahl has been employed by the county since 1989, having served in the Department of Public Works in a number of capacities; he was promoted to Director of Public Works in 2010.

May 22, 2012

No Criminal Intent on Part of Councilman

Keyser City Councilman Clinton Faulk will not be charged in the disappearance of an ATV from the city of Keyser Streets Department. The vehicle had been stored at the garage for some time and Faulk—who is the city's streets commissioner—moved the ATV to get it out of the way. Fellow council member Herman Judy reported the ATV missing; Faulk had taken it to the city's sewer plant.

May 23, 2012

Second Special Session May Be In July

The Maryland General Assembly may re-convene in July to consider the expansion of gambling in the state. If there is a consensus among the leadership, a special session will be held the week of July 9th. The Work Group to Consider Gaming Expansion will look at how to compensate the operators of the state's five casinos, and will also determine the impact of allowing table games. If approved, the expanded gaming issue will go before voters in November.

May 23, 2012

Keyser Council Meeting Moved to Courthouse

In anticipation of a larger than usual crowd, the Keyser Mayor and City Council will move tonight's meeting to the Mineral County courthouse. The agenda will include a public hearing on proposed increases to the city's water and sewer rates. While the City Hall meeting room has a 55-person capacity, the courthouse could allow about

120 people. Along with the water and sewer rates, the city has also experienced ongoing citizen protests at the meetings.

May 23, 2012

Assistant to Resign Position in Keyser

Administrative Assistant to the Keyser Mayor and Council, Carissa Fazenbaker is set to resign at tonight's meeting. While City Administrator Deborah Pamepinto was on medical leave, Ms. Fazenbaker was promoted to acting city administrator. However, Ms. Pamepinto has also resigned, leaving the city without an administrator. Council member Bill Roy has also resigned his position.

May 24, 2012

One Person Removed From Keyser Meeting

One person was escorted from the Mineral County Courthouse, where the Keyser Mayor and Council held a hearing on revised water and sewer rates last night. Several Keyser Police Department officers were present for the meeting, where city officials also accepted the resignation of the city administrator and administrative assistant. City Administrator Deborah Pamepinto affirmed her desire to resign, despite the fact she had "backtracked" on her original request.

May 24, 2012

Senator Edwards Chosen As Work Group Alternate

Senator George Edwards has been chosen as an alternate to a work group considering gaming expansion in Maryland, as announced by Governor Martin O'Malley this week. While he says he doesn't know what an alternate is supposed to do, he believes table gaming should be allowed as surrounding states allow it, and those who want to gamble, are doing it elsewhere. The first meeting of the group will be held June 1st in Annapolis.

May 25, 2012

Hiring Process to Begin for Administrator, Assistant in Keyser

The city of Keyser is beginning the process of hiring an administrator, an administrative assistant, positions on the inflow and Infiltration team and the water department. As far as the Administrator position goes, the city is forming an interview panel, consisting of professionals from the community. They will perform the interviews and choose the top three candidates.

May 29, 2012

Four Vying for Three Keyser Council Seats

Four people, including two former mayors, are in the running for three open seats on the Keyser City Council. The election will be held on June 5th; Terry Liller, incumbent Ed Miller, Sr., along with former Mayors Roger Newlin and William "Sonny" Rhodes have filed in the election.

May 31, 2012

Keyser City Employee Resigns

Keyser City employee Bonnie Hannas has become the third employee to resign, following the resignations of the City Administrator and administrative assistant Carissa Fazenbaker. In her letter of resignation, published in the Mineral News-Tribune, Ms. Hannas claimed that she had been treated unfairly and disrespected, and that she had been in a hostile work environment. While the City

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Administrator position is an appointed one, the other two are regular employees.

May 31, 2012

First Round of Signatures Submitted for Marriage Referendum

The Maryland Marriage Alliance has handed in more than 113,000 signatures in its effort to place the same-sex marriage issue on the referendum ballot in November. Traditional marriage supporters say they need 55,000 valid signatures to get the measure on the ballot, and need to have 18,000 of those by today. The executive director of the Maryland Marriage Alliance says this is a non-partisan issue, and noted that petitions are even coming in from Allegany and Garrett counties.

June 1, 2012

Council Will Advertise for Administrator

During a brief, five-minute meeting the Keyser City Council passed a motion to advertise for a new City Administrator. The job listing is available at the city office, and interested applicants will have 30 days to apply for the job. At the end of 30 days, a panel will be assembled to select three possible candidates.

June 1, 2012

Incumbent Mayor Seeks Re-Election

Ed Clemons, Jr., the current mayor of Luke, is seeking re-election to that position in the June 11th municipal election. He announced his intention as he was elected by his fellow mayors to serve as the Allegany-Garrett Maryland Municipal League Chapter President.

June 4, 2012

Former Bedford County Commissioners Cited

Two former Bedford County Commissioners have been cited in an audit for receiving money they claimed for "in-county" travel. The Bedford County Free Press states that Mike Herline received more than \$1700 and Gary Ebersole received over \$2900. A policy was approved nearly five years ago, that stated no elected official would receive reimbursement for in-county travel. Three tax collectors, from Manns Choice, New Paris and Rainsburg, were also cited in the audit.

June 4, 2012

Federal Officials Shut Down Tour Bus Companies

More than two dozen bus companies in six states, including Maryland, have been shut down for safety violations. The operators transport more than 1800 passengers a day along Interstate 95, between New York and Florida. Most of the routes either originate or terminate in New York City's Chinatown District. The shutdowns cap a year-long investigation by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

June 6, 2012

Sewer Rate Increase Delayed

The Cumberland Mayor and City Council voted unanimously last night to delay a vote on raising sewer rates, pending new information received about a long-standing industry pollutant surcharge. The matter will be brought up again in two weeks, so that the increase is based on the most accurate information available, according to Councilman Dave Kauffman.

June 6, 2012

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Incumbents Returned to Office in Keyser Election

Ed Miller and Clinton Faulk were returned to office during yesterday's Keyser City Election. Also elected was Terry Liller. Results showed that 1,064 residents turned out to vote. The three won out over former Keyser Mayors Roger Newlin and William "Sonny" Rhodes.

June 7, 2012

Commissioner Repays Expenses

Former Bedford County Commissioner Gary Ebersole has reimbursed the county for over \$2900 in mileage expenses he charged over a two year period. Former Commissioner Mike Herline has not repaid the \$1700 he owes the county. A November, 2007 policy states that officials cannot be automatically compensated for mileage traveled inside county borders.

June 13, 2012

Board Comments on County Funding

The Allegany County Board of Education says the county is cutting back educational funding to the bare required minimum. During last night's work session, one board member, Mike Llewellyn, said the county is profiting from the state's arrangement to help pay teacher pension costs. While the percentage of the county budget used to fund education has dropped to about 35 per cent, the state average of funding per county is at about 49 per cent.

June 13, 2012

Incumbent Wins Mayoral Election

Incumbent Luke Mayor Edward Clemons retained his seat in Monday's election, winning over Joseph LaRue and Richard Miller, Sr. Also retaining their seats were Commissioners Janet Bryan, Thomas Clayton and James L. Lewis. Donna Fracasso will be joining the three incumbents, to serve a two-year term of office. Of the 57 registered voters in the town, 42 turned out to vote. The newly elected members will be sworn into office by the clerk of the Allegany County Circuit Court, Dawne Lindsey.

June 14, 2012

More Details on Orr Resignation

There are more details emerging on the resignation of Bedford County Jail warden Donald Orr. Orr is said to have turned in his badge and keys about an hour before the county commissioners' meeting. He had been on paid suspension since May 17th, after being placed under investigation for a May 14th incident that might never be fully explained to the public. The incident was a personnel issue, and not a criminal matter.

DRUG ABUSE

April 6, 2012

Convicted Dealer Sentenced to Prison

A convicted drug dealer was sentenced to 26-1/2 years in prison Tuesday in Circuit Court. Thirty-two year old Dwight Courtney II of Frostburg, will spend the first 25 years of his sentence without the possibility of parole or probation, since he is a repeat offender. He was found guilty in January on multiple counts of possession with intent to distribute cocaine and heroin, and the manufacturing of marijuana, along with other related offenses.

May 1, 2012

Woman Faces Possible Theft, Drug Charges

Twenty-four year old Heather Lynn Rotruck faces both possible theft and drug charges, following a stop Sunday afternoon. The Maryland State Police received an alert in reference to a possible theft that occurred in Lavale. A state trooper stopped Ms. Rotruck in Zihlman. When contacting Ms. Rotruck, the officer detected a strong odor of marijuana coming from inside the vehicle. He located marijuana and a smoking device, containing burnt marijuana in the vehicle. She was arrested for CDS possession of marijuana and paraphernalia. The original theft investigation is ongoing.

May 3, 2012

Three Arrested for Dealing Drugs in Bedford County

Three people have been accused of supplying drugs in Bedford County. Jason Fischer, Jennifer Shaw, and John Dunn are accused of selling heroin to undercover officers. Police say more arrests are anticipated. The arrests were made in an effort to take drug dealers off the street, one by one, according to Bedford County District Attorney Bill Higgins.

May 7, 2012

Pharmacy Break-In Probed

The Cumberland City Police and the C3I unit are investigating a breaking and entering that occurred at South Cumberland Pharmacy on Industrial Boulevard over the weekend. Police say several suspects forced open an entrance door at about 3:00 a.m. Saturday and stole a quantity of prescription medication pills. Anyone with information is asked to contact Cumberland City Police or CrimeSolvers.

May 7, 2012

Five Arrested on Marijuana Charges

Five Garrett County residents were arrested late last week, after breaking into a model home in the 100-block of Hailee's Lane in the Red Bush subdivision in the McHenry area. Several tried to flee on foot, but were apprehended. The five broke into the home with the purpose of smoking marijuana. Arrested were 19-year old Nicholoe Tichinel of Friendsville; Grantsville residents Cody Humberson and Zachary Merrill; and, McHenry residents Jorge Marquez and Nicholas Owens.

June 6, 2012

Woman Arrested on CDS Possession Counts

Twenty-six year old Samantha Jo Baker was released on personal recognizance, following a traffic stop on Monday, which yielded a baggie, containing suspected

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heroin. Originally stopped for an equipment violation, a K-9 drug scan of her vehicle resulted in a positive alert. The vehicle and its occupants were searched, and Ms. Baker handed the officer a baggie, containing suspected heroin. She was taken to police headquarters, processed and transported to District Court for an initial appearance.

June 7, 2012

Delaware Man Charged With Possession of CDS

A Smyrna, Delaware man faces numerous drug charges, including possession of prescription pills with intent to distribute, following a traffic stop yesterday on westbound Interstate 68 at Amish Road. Peter Bonsignore was initially stopped for speeding. Over 1,000 prescription pills were found hidden in his vehicle, with a street value of about \$30,000, as well as marijuana and drug paraphernalia. He was arrested and held on \$50,000 bond at the Garrett County Detention Center.

CRIME-LAW AND ORDER

April 2, 2012

Suspect Arrested in Robberies

Law enforcement officials from Allegany and Mineral Counties, along with the Pennsylvania State Police and FBI have made an arrest in a series of bank robberies in a three state area. Forty-nine year old John Allen Talerico is being held on a half-million dollars bond, on connection with the thefts from various banks, including two from the M & T Bank on Industrial Boulevard, one in Osterburg, Pennsylvania and the BB & T bank in Fort Ashby. A tip, from a car dealer in Short Gap provided a tip on a person, who had taken a vehicle that was spotted during the BB & T robbery. Further charges against Talerico, who lives on Meder's Lane in Cumberland, are pending.

April 4, 2012

Man Sentenced in Carjacking Case

Thirty-year old Jonathan Bittner of Frostburg was sentenced to 30 years in prison, with 16 years suspended and five years probation, in connection with a carjacking case last April. Bittner must also undergo extensive drug evaluation and treatment programs. He had pleaded guilty to the carjacking charge in December. The case involved his 71-year old neighbor. Bittner allegedly beat the man, then took him and his car and abandoned the car and the victim on Interstate 68, after hitting a retaining wall.

April 5, 2012

Two Acknowledge Guilt in Robbery

Two west Virginia residents have admitted their involvement in a robbery of the FNB Hampshire Square bank last month. Twenty-two year old Mark Yost of Shanks and Shannon Martin of Romney have acknowledged their part in the incident, in the robbery of a woman, trying to make a night deposit at the bank. She was uninjured and no weapon was displayed. Twenty-two year old Romney resident Justin Brown was charged in connection with the incident; he allegedly provided a false statement to officers in connection with the investigation.

April 5, 2012

Trial in Stabbing Case Set for June

A trial date of June 6th has been set for an Oakland man, charged with attempted murder. Forty-year old Kendall Shane Lowers is charged in the case. The victim, 52-year old William Sachs, needs to be located and is not in the Oakland jurisdiction. Lowers is charged with attempted first and second-degree murder and first-degree assault. Lowers remains at the Garrett County Detention Center, in default of \$250,000 bond.

April 5, 2012

Panhandling Law Moves Through General Assembly

A bill to outlaw panhandling in the county is moving through the General Assembly, having passed the House of Delegates on a vote of 130 to 1. It also received a favorable report by the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. No date has been set for the Senate vote, but the General Assembly is scheduled to end this Monday.

April 6, 2012

Convicted Dealer Sentenced to Prison

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A convicted drug dealer was sentenced to 26-1/2 years in prison Tuesday in Circuit Court. Thirty-two year old Dwight Courtney II of Frostburg, will spend the first 25 years of his sentence without the possibility of parole or probation, since he is a repeat offender. He was found guilty in January on multiple counts of possession with intent to distribute cocaine and heroin, and the manufacturing of marijuana, along with other related offenses.

April 6, 2012

Duck Stabbed in Frostburg Pond

A duck was found stabbed yesterday morning at the Glendening Recreational Complex in Frostburg. The weapon used was a National Wild Turkey Federation folding knife with a three-inch blade, making it unique. Frostburg City Administrator John Kirby is checking with the Frostburg City Police Department, to see if animal cruelty charges can be brought against whomever is responsible.

April 6, 2012

Show to Feature Local Homicide Incident

"America's Most Wanted" will feature a local case of a man, who has eluded police since last September. Rasshammach Roberts is wanted by both federal and local authorities for the killing of Ryan Henry and the attempted murder of his brother, Richard, last year in Ridgeley. He is considered armed and dangerous. Roberts is considered armed and dangerous. His brother and another man have been apprehended. "America's Most Wanted" airs at 09 p.m. tonight on the Lifetime channel.

April 9, 2012

Teen Arrested in Duck Slaying

A 14-year old boy from Carlos has been arrested in connection with the killing of a duck at Glendening Park in Frostburg last week. Criminal charges are being forwarded to the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. The youth has been released to his parents, pending further action.

April 9, 2012

Piedmont Official Guilty of Attempted Extortion

Piedmont Commissioner Ray Hall has been found guilty of attempted extortion in Mineral County Magistrate Court. Hall had threatened to do damage to a local restaurant, after he accused employees of stealing a friend's personal credit card, and later used that information to "cyberstalk" his friend. He was charged with attempted extortion, because the transaction of money was not completed. Attempted extortion carries with it a penalty of two to twelve months and a fine of \$50 to \$500. His sentencing is set for tomorrow at 3 p.m.

April 9, 2012

Former Band Director Allegedly Violates Bond

A former Meyersdale Area High School band director, charged with having a sexual relationship with a 16-year old female student is in the Somerset County Jail. Thirty-eight year old Joshua Steven Covert is accused of violating terms of his bond, by making contact with the alleged victim via Facebook and through two text messages sent from his wife's phone. Covert is charged with three counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault and corruption of minors.

April 9, 2012

Wanted Garrett Man Apprehended

A man wanted in connection with the robbery and assault of two Garrett, Pennsylvania teenagers has been arrested in Berks County. Samuel "Sammy" McFarland is being held on \$50,000 straight bond. He is accused of taking \$13 in cash, a pack of cigarettes and a cell phone from the two. He struck one of the two in the abdomen, and threatened to kill him if he contact police.

April 11, 2012

Three Sentenced in Home Invasions

Three men have been sentenced for their part in the armed robbery of a woman in the Rawlings area in December of last year. Cory and Cody Crabtree and Gregory Thomas Laisure will serve a total of twelve years in prison; following their release, they will be placed on five years' supervised probation. Two other co-defendants, Zachary Huffman and Melvin Howell have court appearances in the near future for their involvement in the robbery.

April 11, 2012

Councilman Receives a Year in Jail

Piedmont Councilman William "Ray" Hall was sentenced to a year in jail and fined \$500 on a charge of attempted extortion. Hall will also be liable for court costs and fees. Hall had alleged that a local restaurant had stolen personal information from a friend's credit card and later used that information to "cyberstalk" his friend. He also allegedly asked for \$20,000 to make the situation "go away," but later reduced the demand to \$10,000.

April 11, 2012

Contractor, Current and Former Council Members Charged

A contractor, along with several current and former Meyersdale Borough Council members, has been charged in connection with an investigation into bidding practices. The charges stem from the renovations being made to the town's community center on Main Street, with a total cost of over \$85,000. Thirty-seven year old Rodney Eugene Butler was arrested for bid rigging. Former council members Franklin Edmunds and Ricky Lee Sechler and current councilman Thomas Deakins have also been charged. A preliminary hearing for all the defendants will be held on May 3rd in Confluence.

April 11, 2012

Former Band Director Pleads Guilty

Former Meyersdale Area High School band director Joshua Covert has pleaded guilty to two counts of indecent assault and one count of corruption of minors on Monday. Covert, charged with having a sexual relationship with a 16-year old female student, will be sentenced on July 12th. He faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in jail and \$30,000 in fines. He is in the Somerset County Jail, awaiting a decision on a bond revocation.

April 17, 2012

Ellerslie Robbery Suspect Sought

The Maryland State Police and C3I unit are on the lookout for a female suspect, who tried to rob Mr. T's market in Ellerslie Sunday night. A woman wearing a mask and all dark clothing displayed a handgun; a customer entered the store and tried to

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intervene, causing her to run from the store in an unknown direction. A search of the immediate Ellerslie area and a wooded area outside residential neighborhoods was conducted on the ground and in the air. The C3I unit is continuing to investigate.

April 17, 2012

Sheriff Seeking Breaking and Entering Suspect

The Allegany County Sheriff's Office is seeking a suspect who entered a Douglas Avenue home in Lonaconing, and assaulted a woman inside her residence Sunday night. The victim described her attacker as a black male, with a dark hoodie, and dark jeans. He was in her bathroom when she entered the residence; he then allegedly assaulted her and ran out the back door of the house. A search, with the help of K-9 units and the Medivac helicopter, was unsuccessful. Home owners in the area say he may have been in the area over a two-hour period. He may also have left in a dark-colored Jeep. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Sheriff's Office at (301)-777-1585.

April 17, 2012

Panhandling Bill Effective June 1st

A bill designed to impose tighter controls on panhandlers has been signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley, and will become effective June 1st. The bill, sponsored by the Allegany County Delegation, passed both the House and Senate. The legislation allows Allegany County to begin a permit program for roadside solicitations, and can be issued for one calendar day per year.

April 17, 2012

Woman Pleads Guilty to Arson

Kelly Bradley, co-owner and manager of the Polish Pines restaurant, has pleaded guilty to second-degree arson in connection with the blaze that destroyed the restaurant and two other businesses in Keyser. Ms. Bradley entered an Alford plea, and a co-defendant, April Graham is still awaiting trial. Ms. Bradley's trial was to have begun later this month, and the plea was entered during scheduled pre-trial motions yesterday.

April 23, 2012

Piedmont Fire Ruled Arson

A suspect is being sought in a fire that damaged the United Methodist Church in Piedmont. Security video shows the alleged suspect walking behind the building when the fire was started. Moments later, the video shows smoke coming from an outbuilding. Anyone with information is asked to contact the West Virginia State Arson Hotline at 1-800-233-FIRE.

April 23, 2012

Bedford Mother Pleads "No Contest" To Charges

Alum Bank resident Gazella Victoria Oldham has pleaded no contest to charges she took her 11-year old daughter to a motel where the girl had sex with a traveling preacher. Ms. Oldham made the plea in response to charges of endangering the welfare of children, criminal solicitation and a misdemeanor charge of corruption of a minor. Charges of sexual exploitation of children and unlawful contact with a minor were dropped. Her sentencing is set for June.

April 24, 2012

Oldtown Man Pleads Guilty in Tax Case

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Fifty-year old Oldtown resident Kenneth Harold Hogan has pleaded guilty in connection to a 2008 tax evasion case in U.S. District Court. Hogan, who had been awarded a total and permanent disability by the Railroad Retirement Board in 1999, allegedly was working after that, earning an income "beyond the monthly allowable earnings" established by law. He also failed to file income tax returns from 2006 through 2008. He faces a maximum six months in prison and a \$10,000 fine on just one of the charges. On the tax evasion count, he faces five years in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

April 24, 2012

Assault Suspect Arrested on Dual Highway

A man wanted for assaulting a police officer last week in Hagerstown, has been apprehended. Jarvel Fostion was taken into custody over this past weekend at the Super 8 Motel on the Dual Highway, without incident. He was charged with first and second-degree assault, reckless endangerment, possession of a handgun, use of a firearm in commission of a violent crime and resisting arrest-related charges. Fostion allegedly pointed a gun at an officer, but dropped the gun and fled.

April 26, 2012

C3I Celebrates 20th Anniversary

The Allegany County Combined Criminal Investigations Unit is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The C3I agencies signed an updated agreement yesterday at City Hall, which will serve as a memorandum of understanding among the agencies involved. Since its inception in September of 1992, the agency has investigated over 20,600 cases, and has made over 6,000 arrests. The unit has successfully closed over 94 per cent of the cases it has investigated.

April 27, 2012

Man Sentenced for Armed Robberies

Cumberland resident Torrey Lamont Love has been sentenced to 77 years in prison for a series of armed robberies in the area. He was convicted on multiple counts of armed robbery, assaults and several other offenses, occurring during the first six months of last year. Due to alleged gang ties, State's Attorney Michael Twigg requested the assistance of the Maryland Attorney General's Gang Unit. Both Judges Timothy Finan and Gary Leasure presided over the trials and sentencing of Love.

April 30, 2012

Accused Robber Remains in Jail

A man suspected in the armed robberies of three banks on Industrial Boulevard in March, June, and September of last year, remains in jail on \$750,000 bond. Forty-nine year old John Allen Talerico was indicted on various counts of armed robbery. No date has been set for his trial, which is expected to be held within the next three months. He also faces charges in connection with robberies in both West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

May 3, 2012

Two Indicted by Grand Jury

Two men have been indicted by a Mineral County Grand Jury for bank robberies in Piedmont and Fort Ashby. John Allen Talerico, who is in the Allegany County Jail, was indicted in connection with the BB & T robbery in March; he also is facing charges in connection with a bank robbery in Osterburg, Pennsylvania last year. In a separate indictment, Alexander Devault, of Pasadena, Maryland and formerly of the

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Georges Creek area, has been charged in connection with the February 13th armed robbery of the First United branch bank in Piedmont. Devault also faces charges of robbing the Lonaconing branch of First People's Community Federal Credit Union on March 16th.

May 7, 2012

Pennsylvania State Police Looking for Child Abductor

The Pennsylvania State Police are looking for a man who abducted a ten-year old girl in Somerset County late last week. The girl has since been released. Police used air support to look for an older model, dark-colored mini-van with several dents. The driver is described as a male with a thin build, a full beard and grey hair. He was last seen wearing a dirty-orange shirt, dirty, ripped jeans and no socks. State Police are asking anyone with information to call them at (814)-445-4104.

May 7, 2012

Man Indicted for Attempted Murder

Among the indictments returned last week by a Mineral County Grand Jury involves a case, where a man conspired with another man's wife to kill him. Robert Tappia is currently housed in the Potomac Highlands Regional Jail, and was arrested in November, when a man told the Keyser Police Department he was the potential victim in a murder-for-hire scheme. Among the charges lodged against Tappia were attempted first-degree murder, attempted malicious wounding, and conspiracy.

May 7, 2012

Pharmacy Break-In Probed

The Cumberland City Police and the C3I unit are investigating a breaking and entering that occurred at South Cumberland Pharmacy on Industrial Boulevard over the weekend. Police say several suspects forced open an entrance door at about 3:00 a.m. Saturday and stole a quantity of prescription medication pills. Anyone with information is asked to contact Cumberland City Police or CrimeSolvers.

May 8, 2012

Police Seek Robbery Suspect

The Maryland State Police are seeking a woman, in her mid-20's, who robbed the First United Bank and Trust in Friendsville early yesterday afternoon. She entered the bank, gave the bank teller a note and demanded money. She left with an undetermined amount. The Maryland State Police Medivac helicopter and the Garrett County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene, along with a State Police crime scene technician. Anyone with information is asked to contact the McHenry barrack of the Maryland State Police at (301)-387-1101.

May 9, 2012

Man Arrested on Numerous Sex Charges

A registered sex offender from North Little Rock, Arkansas is being held on \$350,000 bond, following an incident that began Monday afternoon. Todd Edward Sparks faces numerous sex offenses, allegedly involving a 15-year old girl from the George's Creek area. Sparks posed as a 20-year old from Tennessee, when in fact, he was 36 years old. He met the victim through Facebook, and traveled to Allegany County to meet her. It was learned the two had checked into the Hampton Inn, and engaged in sexual contact. Sparks allegedly left the hotel and was located yesterday morning in the woods. He surrendered himself to authorities then. The investigation is continuing by the C3I unit.

May 11, 2012

Woman Robs Pharmacy of Drugs

The Rite Aid Pharmacy on Bishop Murphy Drive in Frostburg was robbed of an undisclosed quantity of pills by a lone female suspect Wednesday evening. The woman handed a note to an employee, stating there was a bomb in the bathroom, and it would be detonated if the employee did not comply. She received the drugs and fled the store on foot. It was determined there was no bomb on the premises. While the investigation is continuing, law enforcement authorities are asking anyone with information to contact the Frostburg City Police, the C3I unit, or Allegany and Mineral County Crime Solvers.

May 11, 2012

Liberty Gas Station Robbed

Another robbery has been reported in the area...this time, it happened at the Liberty Gas Station, at the intersection of Maryland Highway and Weber Road, just before 8:30 Wednesday night. The suspect is described as a white male, in his 60's; he entered the station, showed the employee a gun and got away with an undetermined amount of cash. The employee at the station was not injured. If you have any information, you're asked to call the McHenry barrack of the Maryland State Police.

May 15, 2012

Midlothian Man Sentenced to Prison

Thirty-five year old Christopher Minnick has been sentenced to ten years in prison, with all but 18 months suspended, for a third degree sex offense involving a four year old female child. Upon release, Minnick will be place on five years supervised probation, register as a sex offender for life and have no contact with the victim or her family. The case stemmed from an incident that occurred in July of last year.

May 15, 2012

Woman Sentenced in Murder-For-Hire Scheme

Augusta, West Virginia resident Brenda Lee Swisher has been sentenced to five years in prison in a murder-for-hire case in which she tried to hire someone to murder the wife of her ex-boyfriend for \$3500. Upon release, she will be on three years' supervised probation. She had pleaded guilty on January 11th to a charge of causing an individual to travel in interstate commerce from Virginia to commit the murder.

May 18, 2012

West Virginia State Police Seek Suspect

The West Virginia State Police are looking for a man they say fired shots at them, and who tried to run them down with a truck, near Berkeley Springs. David James Windham was allegedly trying to pull numerous strands of copper signal wire along the CSX Access Road with a truck. The troopers caught him in the act, and ordered him to stop. Windham allegedly accelerated, steering towards the troopers. They fired three shots. Windham ran over an embankment of the Potomac River near Hancock, but he was not located. Numerous law enforcement agencies are involved in the case. If anyone has any information, they are asked to contact the West Virginia State Police.

May 18, 2012

Police Seek Strong-Armed Robber

New Text Document

Law enforcement agencies are looking for a man, who robbed another of a deposit he was making at the M&T Bank on Industrial Boulevard Saturday morning. The victim reported the man approached him, struck him in the face with a forearm, causing him to fall to the ground. The suspect then took an undisclosed amount of money and fled the area on foot. It appeared he had hidden behind the hedges at the outside perimeter of the bank parking lot. Anyone with information is asked to contact Cumberland City Police, the C3I unit or Allegany/Mineral County CrimeSolvers.

May 22, 2012

Moorefield Area Man Sentenced

Moorefield-area resident Walter Richard Pritts has been sentenced in connection with the brutal beating of a Hardy County businesswoman. Pritts was sentenced to no less than one, but no more than 5 years. He is technically eligible for parole with his current time served. Pritts had pled guilty to unlawful assault, and was because prosecutors tried to salvage what they could of the investigation and the case. The victim allegedly impeded the criminal investigation and commented that she would be willing to lie under oath about the allegations in order to keep Pritts from going to jail.

May 24, 2012

Charges To Be Filed Against Two Juveniles

The Department of Juvenile Justice will be filing charges against two Fort Hill High School students, who are accused of assaulting another over a six-month period. The victim told Cumberland City Police and the School Resource Officer that the assaults were taking place during school hours, near the gymnasium. After being identified, the two suspects were suspended from school. The investigation is ongoing.

May 24, 2012

Keyser Man Sentenced to Prison on Sexual Abuse Counts

Thirty-nine year old Keyser resident Robert Rhodes was sentenced to 125 to 295 years in prison, after being convicted on more than 30 charges of sexual abuse and related charges involving six female minors. He will serve the sentenced in one of the state's maximum security prisons. He was convicted in October, having initially been charged with more than 50 counts.

May 29, 2012

No Trial Date in Shirey Case

There has been no trial date set in the capital murder case of Cumberland resident Mark Alan Shirey, because defense attorneys are awaiting reports from experts. Shirey is charged in the death of Michael Simpson, who was his ex-wife's boyfriend; the couple had been divorced for about ten years at the time of the incident. Simpson was killed at his home in Cumberland Valley Township. Shirey, who was arrested in Maryland and extradited to Bedford County, has been held without bail since April of 2011.

May 29, 2012

Man Sentenced in Robbery of Pharmacy

Twenty-one year old Dulin Jimmy Mayhew was sentenced to a year and a day in a Maryland prison, but he may face as much as 17 more years for a probation violation from Virginia. Mayhew was sentenced on a single count of conspiracy to commit robbery, in connection with an incident at Steve's Pharmacy on October 27th of last year. However, he had been on probation in connection with a conviction of felony burglary in Virginia, and his prison time could be extended.

New Text Document

May 31, 2012

Man Charged With Arson

Twenty-two year old Andrew Eugene Robinson has been charged with arson, after the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office determined he intentionally set ordinary combustibles on fire in his bedroom at the Archway Station facility at 501 Fayette Street. The incident occurred on May 23rd at about 1 a.m. The fire caused heat and soot damage in the area of the fire, inside a heat duct in his bedroom. Damages were estimated at \$1,000. Robinson was charged with first degree arson and five counts of reckless endangerment.

May 31, 2012

Bank Robbery In Preston County

Authorities in both Pennsylvania and Maryland have been notified that a bank robbery suspect is on the loose. The WesBanco branch bank in Bruceton Mills was robbed Tuesday afternoon. It's not clear whether the suspect was armed, but he left with an undisclosed amount of cash. The FBI and West Virginia State Police are investigating, and more details could be released soon.

June 1, 2012

Inmate Files Suit Against Sheriff, Other Officers

An inmate who is currently lodged in the Allegany County Detention Center is suing Jefferson County Sheriff Bobby Shirley and 14 unidentified law enforcement officers he says severely beat him after a failed bank robbery and vehicle chase in 2010. Mark Daniel Haines says officers repeatedly kicked him in the head and stomped on his face, while other officers threw him to the ground, and against a cruiser. He also alleges they punched him and shocked him with stun guns. The incident is alleged to have happened in late December, 2010. For his part, Sheriff Shirley's attorneys deny the allegations.

June 6, 2012

Better Quality Surveillance Photos Obtained

The Allegany County Combined Criminal Investigation Unit has obtained better quality surveillance photos, in connection with an incident that happened in early May at the Country Club Mall in Lavale. A man approached a 71-year old man, telling the victim he was under arrest; he was able to convince him to drive to his credit union and withdraw an undisclosed amount for a cash bond, before releasing him. The suspect is described as a white male, 30 to 40 years of age, and 6-feet to 6-feet, 3 inches in height. While the investigation is continuing, law enforcement authorities are asking anyone who can identify the suspect to contact the Maryland State Police, C3I Unit, or Allegany/Mineral County CrimeSolvers.

June 7, 2012

Search Underway for Bank Robbers

The Maryland State Police are part of the federal, state, and local law enforcement effort underway in three states to find a pair of robbery suspects who are believed to have committed multiple bank robberies during May in Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. One of the suspects is being sought in connection with the May 7th robbery of the M & T Bank in Friendsville. Other robberies have taken place in Salix and Tyrone, Pennsylvania and in Bruceton Mills, West Virginia.

June 7, 2012

Jefferson County Sheriff Indicted

The Jefferson County Sheriff, Robert E. "Bobby" Shirley, has been indicted on charges he used unreasonable force in making an arrest in 2010 and then falsified a report to obstruct a federal investigation. Mark Daniel Haines, who is currently a federal inmate housed at the Allegany County Detention Center in Cresaptown, filed a civil-rights lawsuit against Shirley and 14 "unknown police officers," claiming he was severely beaten in December of 2010 after a failed bank heist and vehicle chase that ended in Berkeley County, West Virginia.

June 8, 2012

Oldtown Man Sentenced for Sexual Abuse Crimes

Sixty-three year old Oldtown resident Marvin Dale VanMeter has been sentenced to a total of 20 years of actual jail time, in connection with a series of incidents between June 1st and December of last year, in which he engaged in sexual acts with two minor male victims. VanMeter, who had temporary care and custody of the two boys, also provided them with alcohol. Following his release from prison, he will be placed on three years' supervised probation with numerous conditions, register as a sex offender for life, have no contact with the victims or their families, be evaluated for, and complete any sex offender and drug/alcohol treatment. He must also submit a DNA sample to the sex offender registry and violate no laws of Maryland, nor any other state. An investigation was conducted by the C3I unit, specifically Detective Roger Plummer who, through the course of the investigation, identified Mr. VanMeter as the suspect.

June 13, 2012

Warden Resigns Position in Bedford County

Warden Donald Orr has resigned that position at the Bedford County Jail. Orr had been suspended, due to an unspecified incident at the jail earlier in May. The Bedford County Free Press says that Orr's resignation became effective yesterday.

June 13, 2012

Baltimore Number Six in Homicides

Baltimore City is no longer in the "Top Five" cities nationwide, with the highest homicide rates. However...it is number 6. According to the FBI, which released the figures this week, the homicide rate is at 31.3 per cent per 100,000 residents. Baltimore had 196 homicides last year, but that represented a 12 per cent decline in the number of murders. The total dipped below 200 for the first time since the 1970's.

June 14, 2012

Pair Arrested in Robberies

Two people have been arrested in connection with a series of bank robberies in Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania, including the robbery of a bank in Friendsville. Nichole Durst of Meyersdale and Corbin Will of Garrett, have been taken into custody, in connection with the five thefts in May. Will is alleged to have driven the getaway car, while Ms. Durst robbed the banks. The bank heists took place in Tyrone and Salix, Pennsylvania; Friendsville, Maryland; and in Bruceton Mills, West Virginia. The two were picked up after getting tips matching a car description.

New Text Document

EDUCATION

April 2, 2012

ACM Sets Open House

Allegany College of Maryland will hold an open house on Saturday, April 14th, from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Prospective new students can register to win one of six, \$500 tuition vouchers for credit study. They will be awarded by random drawing during the day. Prospective students can also learn about the dozens of ACM credit programs in career and transfer areas that prepare graduates for success.

April 4, 2012

FSU, Others Hosting Western Maryland Science and Engineering Festival

Frostburg State University will be the site of the second annual Western Maryland Science and Engineering Festival on Saturday, April 21st from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will be held on the Upper Quad of the Frostburg campus, and demonstration will also take place at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Application Laboratory in Frostburg. A shuttle will be available to transport individuals between the two sites. The event is open to kindergarten through 12th grade in public or private schools and their parents.

April 5, 2012

Schools Awarded Literacy Grant

The Allegany County Public School System is the only one in the state of Maryland to have been awarded the Chesapeake Bay Trust, three-year environmental literacy grant. The grant, in excess of \$100,000, will fund the work of the Allegany County Collaboration for Environmental Literacy, which includes Allegany County Public Schools, the Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

April 6, 2012

Provost Candidates to Visit Potomac State

Three candidates will be visiting Potomac State College of West Virginia University next week to interview for the position of provost. The three candidates include Cindy Kelley, dean of academic affairs at West Virginia University at Parkersburg; Leonard Colelli, dean of the Eberly College of Science and Technology at California University of Pennsylvania; and Warren Meyers, associate dean for academic affairs at WVU's Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources. Current campus provost Kerry Odell will be leaving that position on June 30th.

April 16, 2012

Kitzmilller School Wins \$5,000 in National Photo Contest

Kitzmilller Elementary School has earned a \$5,000 gift from the "Box Tops for Education" photo contest. Former teacher Bridget Corbin snapped a photo of a rainbow over the school, and it was placed in competition with other photo finalists. Judges and the public voted on their favorite, and the Kitzmilller school photo received nearly 16,000 votes-the most of any of the submissions. It was selected from hundreds of submissions from across the country.

April 17, 2012

Mount Savage Principal Receives Honor

Mount Savage Elementary School Principal Gary Llewellyn has been selected as the

New Text Document

2012 Maryland National Distinguished Principal. A surprise assembly was held yesterday at the school. The program recognizes excellence in elementary and middle-school level leaders who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character and climate for the students, families and staffs of their schools.

April 17, 2012

Gibraltar To Stay at FSU

Frostburg State University President Dr. Jonathan Gibraltar is staying at the school. He had been a finalist in presidential searches at both Northern Kentucky University and University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. He has withdrawn his name from contention. In a statement, Dr. Gibraltar said that while he was honored to be considered for the positions, now would not be a good time to leave Frostburg State University.

April 18, 2012

Plans for New Allegany "Encouraging"

The Maryland Interagency Committee on School Funding is expected to approve plans today, to use the former Sacred Heart Hospital as the site for a new Allegany High School. Architects Grimm and Parker are scheduled to report to the Board of Education early next month on how to best convert the former hospital into a school. If all goes well, the Board could solicit proposals for the design of the school by October.

April 23, 2012

New State School Superintendent Named

Maryland has chosen its State Superintendent of Schools...Lillian Lowery, the secretary of education in Delaware will begin her duties on July 1st, just over a year after former superintendent Dr. Nancy Grasmick left that position. Before becoming secretary of education in Delaware, she had been the superintendent of schools in Delaware's largest school district, where she closed a \$17.5 million fiscal deficit, and returned the district to solvency. Dr. Lowery has degrees in education and policy studies from Virginia Tech.

April 24, 2012

System Accepting Students for Dual Enrollment Courses

Junior students took the Accuplacer College Placement Test in January, and students passing the English, reading, and/or math portion of the exam, which is a pre-requisite for taking early college dual enrollment courses during the 2012-2013 school year, still have time to select courses for the dual enrollment college course program. Students should contact their school counselors to confirm that a particular college course is available at their respective schools.

April 25, 2012

IAC Approves Allegany Plans

The Allegany County Public School System has been notified that its official request for the approval of the site acquisition of the Western Maryland Health System's Braddock Campus for use to construct a new Allegany High School has been approved by the Interagency Committee for School Construction at its recent meeting on April 18th. Dr. David Cox, superintendent of the Allegany County School System, noted that the project has cleared another hurdle and the system is committed to clearing the next one with the Board of Public Works. Grimm and Parker Architects will present the results and recommendations of their feasibility study at the school board's May

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business meeting.

April 25, 2012

Two Garrett County Schools To Close

The Garrett County Board of Education has decided to close both the Dennett Road and Kitzmiller Elementary Schools. The county did receive a half million dollars from the Garrett County Commissioners. However, the school system was a million dollars short in its budget. The schools will close at the end of this school year, and students will be directed to other Garrett County schools in the 2012-2013 school year.

April 30, 2012

Board Approves New State School Superintendent

The Maryland State Board of Education confirmed the selection of Lillian Lowery as the next State Superintendent of Schools. Ms. Lowery has been the secretary of education in Delaware since 2009, facilitating a strategic grant application process that led to Delaware being the first state to be awarded the federal Race to the Top grant. She begins her duties on July 1st.

May 1, 2012

Modifications Made to 2012-2013 School Calendar

The Allegany County Board of Education will consider modifications to the previously approved 2012-2013 academic calendar at the May business meeting. The key changes could include the addition of the 190th day for teachers at the beginning of the school year, the creation of a "spring break" after the Easter holiday, parent conference times and various student days that were formerly scheduled off.

May 3, 2012

New Provost Named at PSC

A new campus provost at Potomac State College of West Virginia University has been named. Leonard Colelli has had experience at all levels of education, and is a graduate of The Ohio State University; he also has a master's degree from the University of Maryland and a bachelor of science degree from California University of Pennsylvania. He will begin his duties on July 1st.

May 9, 2012

Architects Recommend Demolition of Former Sacred Heart

The architects for the new Allegany High School are recommending the buildings there be demolished, and a new facility be built, from the ground up. Grimm & Parker say renovating the existing buildings would be too expensive, and too complicated, and may not be possible at all. New construction, they say, would be the least expensive and costs could range anywhere from \$10 million to \$16 million, depending on the school's square footage.

May 9, 2012

FSU to Offer Doctor of Education

Frostburg State University has received final approval to offer a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, with the first students to begin studies in the fall. This applied doctoral program is FSU's first, the culmination of more than three years of work by the FSU faculty and administration. Approval was required from the FSU Faculty Senate, the University System of Maryland, the Maryland Higher

New Text Document

Education Commission, and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the agency that oversees the University's accreditation.

May 11, 2012

Modifications to School Calendar Approved

The Allegany County Board of Education has approved several modifications to the 2012-2013 academic calendar, based on recommendations from the superintendent. Key changes include the addition of the 190th day for teachers at the beginning of the school year, staggering elementary and secondary parent conference times, opening schools on days they were originally scheduled to be closed and creating a spring break after the Easter holiday. To see the revised calendar, visit the school systems website at www.acps.allconet.org.

May 18, 2012

Two Finalists for Garrett County Superintendent's Job

There are two finalists for the job of Garrett County Superintendent of Schools, including Janet Wilson, the current chief academic officer for the Allegany County Public School System since 2010. The other finalist is Jeremy Raley, who is an assistant superintendent for administration and finance for the Shenandoah County Public Schools in Virginia, and a 1992 graduate for Fort Hill High School. Wendell Teets unexpectedly retired last summer.

May 23, 2012

Schools To Close Early

Two schools in Garrett County, Dennett Road and Kitzmiller will close at the end of the month, unless the Board of Education there decides to reconsider, or an appeal to the state to stop the closings materializes. The Garrett County Board of Education voted to close the schools permanently to cut costs. The schools are slated to close on May 30th, a day before the rest of the schools in the county close.

May 24, 2012

State Board Revamping Suspension Policy

The Maryland State Board of Education is revamping its policy on school suspensions, and will try to deal with the problem to keep more students in the classroom, rather than out. An average of 6500 students are suspended every year. The Board is looking for input from both parents and educators. Local school systems, according to the Board, must better report the number of minority and special education students who are being suspended. They also will be asked to review long-term suspensions and expulsions.

May 25, 2012

Board Approves IAC Recommendation

The Maryland Board of Public Works has approved the Interagency for School Construction's recommendation for school construction projects, including the Allegany High School project. The next step in the process will be the solicitation of proposals for architectural engineering services for the design of the new school at the former site of the Braddock Campus of the Western Maryland Health System.

May 31, 2012

FSU to Offer Computer-Related Programs

New Text Document

Frostburg State University will soon be offering a Bachelor of Science degree in secure computing and information assurance, a program unique to the western Maryland region. The program was approved by both the University System of Maryland Board of Regents and the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The program focuses on how to secure digital communications, information and access while being connected to the global community. The secure computing and information assurance program will be housed in FSU's Department of computer Science and Information Technologies.

May 31, 2012

"No Child Left Behind" waiver for Maryland

Maryland, along with 7 other states, have received a waiver for the "No Child Left Behind" law. Eighteen other states and the District of Columbia have also applied for a waiver and could receive approval in the coming weeks. President Obama has granted waivers in exchange for promises from states to improve how they prepare and evaluate students. Federal lawmakers agree the law needs to be changed, but disagree on how to do that.

June 5, 2012

Tuition Hikes Set for Maryland Colleges

The Board of Regents for the Maryland University system has approved a 3 per cent tuition hike for most in-state students. The increase was approved last week, and this is the third year in a row that tuition has gone up. For those out-of-state, tuition will rise as much as 5 per cent at College Park and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Employee salaries will remain largely frozen, except for a two per cent cost-of-living increase.

June 7, 2012

Public Schools Receive MSDE's Race to the Top Grant

As part of a \$3.7 million Maryland State Department of Education's Race to the Top grant project, Allegany County has been awarded over \$256,000 for infrastructure equipment purchases. The grant period is from June 1st of this year, through June 30, 2013. The application for additional funds and equipment upgrades have been submitted to MSDE should future Race to the Top funding be awarded to the counties.

June 8, 2012

Hope for Hyndman School Holds First Graduation

The Hope for Hyndman charter school held its first graduation earlier this week, a year since the Middle School there closed. Twenty-seven students graduated Tuesday, and the school is expecting to gain more students next year, because the Hyndman-Londonderry Elementary School will not be reopening after the school board voted to close it too.

June 12, 2012

Board Approves 5% Tuition Increase in West Virginia

The West Virginia Board of Governors has approved a five per cent increase for tuition and fees, effective this fall. The tuition increases amount to \$145 more per semester for resident undergraduates and \$449 more for non-residents on the main campus in Morgantown. The increases are slightly smaller at Potomac State College in Keyser, where both resident and non-resident undergraduates at Potomac State will pay \$72 more per semester.

June 13, 2012

New Text Document

Board Comments on County Funding

The Allegany County Board of Education says the county is cutting back educational funding to the bare required minimum. During last night's work session, one board member, Mike Llewellyn, said the county is profiting from the state's arrangement to help pay teacher pension costs. While the percentage of the county budget used to fund education has dropped to about 35 per cent, the state average of funding per county is at about 49 per cent.

June 14, 2012

Board Increases Meal Fee

The Allegany County Board of Education has approved a five-cent increase in the cost of school meals, due to a federally mandated shift to healthier school menus. Costs are being driven up by the requirement of fresh fruits, vegetables and other changes required by the federal government. Lunches must also include fewer favorites, such as tater tots and macaroni and cheese. The increase was approved as part of the consent agenda at this week's Board of Education meeting.

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COMMUNITY PLANNING

April 3, 2012

One of the largest wind farms in the state of Pennsylvania is being planned for Somerset County. The Twin Ridges Wind Farm will be constructed in the Big Savage Ridge area of the county and will span four townships, including Southampton, Northampton, Larimer and Greenville. Sixty-eight turbines, generating enough electricity to power 40,000 homes, will be erected.

April 4, 2012

Hagerstown Shopping Center Part of Large Purchase

Two investment groups have purchased five neighborhood shopping centers, including the 123,000-square-foot Hagerstown Shopping Center, at the corner of Dual Highway and Cleveland Avenue. Bon Aviv Investment, LLC of Englewood, New Jersey and Zamias Services, Incorporated of Johnstown, Pennsylvania have acquired the plaza, which includes an Aldi grocery store, Family Dollar and Super Shoe store. Zamias Services owns the White Oak shopping center in Cumberland.

April 5, 2012

Rocky Gap License Not Yet Issued

A slots license for Rocky Gap has yet to be issued, because of an agreement on payment in lieu of taxes has not been reached. The Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission met on March 27th, but did not award the slots license, but it is hoped an agreement can be worked out as soon as possible. There is no time frame or deadline to work out the agreement, although the anticipated award date was last December.

April 11, 2012

County Strikes Deal with Rocky Gap Group

The county has reached a deal with Evitts Resort, LLC for payment in lieu of taxes, making the slots casino at Rocky Gap one step closer to reality. The groups is seeking a license from the Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission. The proposed agreement stipulates that the county will receive \$295,000 of .9 per cent of Evitt's Resort's annual operator share, whichever is greater. The money will be paid for up to 15 years under the agreement.

April 11, 2012

Airport Manager Candidates to be Interviewed

From a field of 20, the search for the manager position at the Greater Cumberland Regional Airport has narrowed to seven. Those candidates will be interviewed today and tomorrow. Mineral County Commissioner Cindy Pyles, who is also chair of the Potomac Highlands Airport Authority, had asked Terry Malone to stay on until the position was filled, but Malone-whose contract was not renewed-left that position late last month. Commissioner Pyles also questioned the legality of Malone's contract termination was handled, as no decisions or votes should be made in executive session, which was how that issue was handled. Cumberland attorney Jeff Getty, who is legal counsel for the authority, says, however, he believes the decision was handled properly.

April 12, 2012

Canal Place Authority to Hold Open House

The Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority, in partnership with the

New Text Document

National Park Service and the city of Cumberland, will host an open house on Wednesday, April 25th, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. for the Canal Place Heritage Area Management Plan Update. The meeting will be held at the Western Maryland Railroad Station, on the second floor. Interested parties may stop in anytime during those hours. The project is being undertaken to develop recommendations for project areas and opportunities associated with the authority.

April 13, 2012

County Agrees to Deal for Rocky Gap

Allegany County signed a formal agreement yesterday with Evitts Resort, the company that wants to bring slots to Rocky Gap Lodge and Resort. The agreement should generate around \$900,000 per year in revenue for the county. Evitts is still seeking license approval from the Maryland Video Lottery Facility Locations Commission. Evitts plans to build a 50,000 square foot addition to accommodate around 1,000 gaming machines.

April 13, 2012

Cardin Announces Grant

Maryland U.S. Senator Ben Cardin has announced a \$300,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency and American Rivers to Frostburg State University, the Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The grant was given to reduce flooding, restore forests, and to promote local food production in the Potomac Highlands Region. The \$300,000 grant is part of a comprehensive initiative to help protect and restore rivers in the Potomac Highlands Region.

April 13, 2012

Two Maryland Food Banks Merge

The Maryland Food Bank and the Food Resources of Hagerstown have united to form the Maryland Food Bank-Western Branch. It will become a central distribution point for a network of more than 120 soup kitchens, pantries and shelters in Allegany, Garrett, Frederick and Washington counties. The merger will allow the group to serve more than 52,000 residents, who struggle to provide food for themselves. The merger took effect April 2nd.

April 18, 2012

Plans for New Allegany "Encouraging"

The Maryland Interagency Committee on School Funding is expected to approve plans today, to use the former Sacred Heart Hospital as the site for a new Allegany High School. Architects Grimm and Parker are scheduled to report to the Board of Education early next month on how to best convert the former hospital into a school. If all goes well, the Board could solicit proposals for the design of the school by October.

April 19, 2012

Railroad Bridge Could Become Part of Great Allegheny Passage

An old railroad bridge, near Southern States, could be rehabilitated and link the Great Allegheny Passage to North End. Plans to prepare the bridge are already being developed, with a total cost of about \$75,000. Local volunteer and inmate labor would be used to construct the bridge, and would be used to accommodate bikers and hikers. The work would be funded by local and private funding sources.

April 25, 2012

New Text Document

IAC Approves Allegany Plans

The Allegany County Public School System has been notified that its official request for the approval of the site acquisition of the western Maryland Health System's Braddock Campus for use to construct a new Allegany High School has been approved by the Interagency Committee for School Construction at its recent meeting on April 18th. Dr. David Cox, superintendent of the Allegany County School System, noted that the project has cleared another hurdle and the system is committed to clearing the next one with the Board of Public Works. Grimm and Parker Architects will present the results and recommendations of their feasibility study at the school board's May business meeting.

April 26, 2012

Rocky Gap License May Be Approved Tomorrow

The Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission is expected to approve a slots license during tomorrow's meeting, set for noon in Annapolis. The item is on the Commission's agenda for tomorrow. The state Board of Public Works would have to take final action on the issue; Lakes Entertainment is expected to be awarded the license.

April 25, 2012

Animal Control Board Seeks Members

The Allegany County Animal Control Board is seeking individuals to serve. The Board serves in an advisory capacity to the Allegany County Commissioners in all matters pertaining to the welfare of domestic animals in Allegany County, and is a volunteer position. Terms begin July 1st. Prospective board members should contact Richard Devore, Director of the Department of Emergency Services at (301)-876-9155, extension 100, or email at ddevore@allconet.org to express their interest.

April 26, 2012

Cumberland Processing Center to Remain Open

Maryland U.S. Senator Ben Cardin has been told by the Postmaster General that the Cumberland mail processing center will remain open to meet overnight delivery standards. Senator Cardin says the overnight delivery standards will be incorporated in the 21st Century Postal Service Act, or Senate Bill 1789. The Cumberland facility employs 72 workers and handles approximately 77 million pieces of mail a year.

April 27, 2012

Rocky Gap License Approved

A slot machine license was approved by the Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission yesterday, during its meeting in Annapolis. The vote was unanimous, and a slots facility could employ 400 workers during construction and about 520 once it is opened. Lakes Maryland Development was awarded the 850-machine license. That number should grow to 1,000 machines in the second year of operation.

April 27, 2012

Cardin Votes In Favor of Postal Act

Maryland United States Senator Ben Cardin was a member of the majority to pass the 21st Century Postal Service Act; the final vote in the Senate was 62 to 37. Senate Bill 1789 was termed a "victory for individuals and businesses throughout our nation that depend on timely mail delivery." To maintain those delivery standards, the U.S. Postmaster General has informed Senator Cardin that the Cumberland and Easton

New Text Document

processing facilities will need to remain open.

May 1, 2012

Hangars Being Demolished; Restaurant Locating at Airport

The hangars that were destroyed by fire at the Greater Cumberland Regional airport in December are being demolished, and new ones will be built. Soil testing, for oil and gas contamination, will still have to be done. A new restaurant will also be opening at the airport on or about June 1st. The new owner is from New Jersey, and the restaurant will be serving subs and sandwiches seven days a week. The Potomac Highlands Airport Authority won't be meeting again until June 28th, unless a special meeting is called to name a new airport manager.

May 3, 2012

Hagerstown, Washington County to Fund Stadium

Washington County's commissioners and the Hagerstown city council are agreeing to help fund construction of a new, minor league baseball stadium in downtown Hagerstown. The plan involves local public expenditures of \$16 million over 30 years; the project would also require state and private funding. Winchester, Virginia is also interested in acquiring the Suns, a Class A affiliate of the Washington Nationals. The new stadium could be ready by 2014.

May 4, 2012

Grant To Bring Broadband Internet Access to Garrett County

The Appalachian Regional Commission has given a \$250,000 grant to Garrett County, to expand Broadband Internet connectivity in Garrett County. The announcement was made by Maryland United States Senators Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin. The Garrett County Commissioners will use the funding to deploy 50 miles of fiber, to help connect county facilities, schools, community colleges, health facilities and libraries.

May 4, 2012

Regional Airports Receive Funding

The Bedford and Somerset County airports will receive funding from the state, as part of a total \$12.6 million package to enhance safety and improve facilities. Bedford County will receive just over \$767,000 to rehabilitate and apron, parking area, access road and taxiway and to construct another apron. Somerset County will receive over \$371,000 to update the airport master plan and to rehabilitate airport navigational aids.

May 8, 2012

Airport Manager Selected

Keyser, west Virginia resident Ryan Shaffer has been selected as the new manager of the Greater Cumberland Regional Airport. Shaffer will begin the part-time position on Sunday. Shaffer is a plane owner, commercial pilot and flight instructor for Shaffer Aviation. He replaces Terry Malone, who was fired by the Potomac Highlands Airport Authority in February.

May 8, 2012

Funding For Bedford Road Sewer Rehab Awarded

The Allegany County Commissioners have received an over \$303,000 grant and a \$510,000 loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program,

New Text Document

to help rehabilitate the Bedford Road sewer system. The sewer line replacement is necessary for the county to meet a Consent Order, which mandates a reduction of inflow and infiltration. Currently, the system is discharging raw sewage that could impact the Chesapeake Bay. The announcement was made by Maryland United States Senators Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin.

May 9, 2012

Architects Recommend Demolition of Former Sacred Heart

The architects for the new Allegany High School are recommending the buildings there be demolished, and a new facility be built, from the ground up. Grimm & Parker say renovating the existing buildings would be too expensive, and too complicated, and may not be possible at all. New construction, they say, would be the least expensive and costs could range anywhere from \$10 million to \$16 million, depending on the school's square footage.

May 9, 2012

New Sheetz Set for Moorefield

Sheetz has planned a new store for Moorefield, to be located on Ginny Lane and Route 220 North. Site plans were submitted, and the building plan for the nearly 6500 square-foot store has been approved. There will be seven gas pump islands, a car wash, a drive through, and parking for 39 vehicles.

May 10, 2012

Post Offices to Remain Open, Some with Shorter Hours

The United States Postal Service has backed down from a plan to close thousands of rural post offices, but some may have shorter hours. It had planned to close thousands of the outlets after May 15th, but rural areas expressed concerns that the closings would hurt their communities. Several local and regional post offices in both Maryland and West Virginia will operate with shorter hours.

May 10, 2012

Hagerstown Approves Funding for Multiuse Sports and Events Center

The city of Hagerstown's willingness to contribute up to \$400,000 annually over a 20-year period to support a multiuse sports and events center hinges on acquiring a long-term lease with the Hagerstown Suns. The City Council has voted to approve the motion, and an indirect contribution of \$400,000 would come from the Washington County Board of Commissioners. That way, the city can contribute up to \$800,000 toward the local share of debt service on the facility that is expected to cost about \$30 million.

May 11, 2012

Macy's Distribution Center finished

The Macy's Distribution Center in Martinsburg has been finished; construction on the 1.3 million square foot building began in May of last year, and will serve as a distribution site for Macy's online orders. The first phase of hiring is underway, with about 400 employees starting at the center; hopefully, that number will increase to 1,000 with an annual payroll of \$32 million. It will be open for business in late June or early July.

May 14, 2012

Rockwood Seeking Amtrak Station

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The town of Rockwood is seeking an Amtrak Station, which would provide additional use for the remaining tracks and reconnect the town to the federal rail system. The Capitol Limited passes through there every day on trips from Pittsburgh to Washington. Pennsylvania Senator Bob Casey is supporting a grant for the station, and he says having one in Somerset County would boost ridership for the Capitol Limited for those traveling to see the Great Allegheny Passage and the Flight 93 Memorial.

May 17, 2012

Canal Place Executive Director Named

Deidra "Dee Dee" Ritchie has been named the new executive director of the Canal Place Heritage area, and will begin her duties on June 4th. She had previously been manager of the Garrett County Heritage Area and will replace Rene Bone, who resigned in February, after nearly three years in that position.

May 17, 2012

Bedford County Wind Project Shelved

Plans for a 24-turbine wind farm on Dunning Mountain in Bedford County have been shelved, after many residents in the area opposed the project. Two other projects in the region, however, are moving forward. Another project, in Clearfield County is being halted, because of the economy and the end of tax credits for renewable energy. The Clearfield County project would have placed 40 turbines between Grampain and Luthersburg.

MAY 18, 2012

City Market Plan Put on Hold

The Downtown Development Commission has voted to put the City Market concept "on hold," at least until economic conditions improve. An Annapolis firm, FranPoint Partners had been hired, at a cost of \$2500, to study possible sites and economic conditions. The DDC, however, has voted to table the idea for the time being.

May 18, 2012

Move To Bring Elk into Maryland

A survey done by pro-hunting groups finds that nearly 75 per cent of Marylanders are in favor of returning wild elk to the western portion of the state. However, the survey also finds opposition among some western Maryland farmers and others, who fear the animals-which have not been in the state since the 1700's-could jeopardize their livelihood, spread disease or damage their property.

May 18, 2012

Rocky Gap Memorial Day Observance Set

Rocky Gap Veterans' Cemetery will hold its annual Veterans Day program next Monday, May 28th at 2:00 p.m. This year, the Guest Speaker will be former two-term Maryland State Senator John Bambacus. The public is invited to attend the program.

May 18, 2012

Rockwood Council Protests Train Stop

The Rockwood Borough Council is concerned about establishing a train stop in the town, partly because of safety issues, and partly because of financial concerns. One council member believes a stop would result in drugs being brought into the area. Another disagrees how the project would be funded, and who would pay for

New Text Document

constructing and maintaining a train station. A meeting between council members and the Somerset County Commissioners is set for this Friday.

May 18, 2012

Petersburg Facility Set for Closure

The Petersburg, West Virginia postal facility has been marked for closure, making it one of four consolidations to be completed there, between now and February of next year. Petersburg's processing work will move to Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The other three operations set to close in the Mountain State include are in Bluefield, Wheeling, and Parkersburg. Both U.S. Senators Jay Rockefeller and Joe Manchin have issued statements, calling on the postal service to treat West Virginia fairly in its consolidation efforts.

May 22, 2012

Lakes Entertainment Buys Out Evitts for \$590,000

The Cumberland Times-News is reporting that documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission show that Lakes Entertainment paid \$590,000 to buy out its partner Evitts Resort, LLC, the firm that will build a slots parlor at Rocky Gap. The closing of the repurchase was May 14th. The State Video Lottery Facility Location Commission awarded the license of April 26th, and the proposal is on the Board of Public Works agenda for its June 20th meeting.

May 25, 2012

Board Approves IAC Recommendation

The Maryland Board of Public Works has approved the Interagency for School Construction's recommendation for school construction projects, including the Allegany High School project. The next step in the process will be the solicitation of proposals for architectural engineering services for the design of the new school at the former site of the Braddock Campus of the Western Maryland Health System.

May 29, 2012

Economic Development Director Lobbies for Flight School

Economic Development Director Shawn Hershberger spoke on several strategic economic development initiatives during a recent Cumberland Mayor and City Council meeting. One of the points of discussion was to attract a flight school to the Greater Cumberland Airport. Another suggestion is the further development of the health care corridor along Willowbrook Road, which includes Allegany College of Maryland, The Western Maryland Regional Medical Center and the Allegany County Health Department.

June 1, 2012

ARC Grant for Garrett County

The Appalachian Regional Commission has granted Garrett County \$250,000 for construction of the Meadow Mountain Trail. The ten-mile, multi-user trail, will build on the county's effort to expand its outdoor recreation industry; it is projected to have an economic impact of more than \$3 million. The funding will be used to complete the trail design, to construct the trail, and improve two railhead parking areas.

June 1, 2012

Keyser Farm Service Office To Close

Keyser's federal Farm Service agency, along with four others around West Virginia,

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will be closing in the coming weeks. There are currently 29 FSA offices in the state, and ten were on the short list for closure. The criteria for closure were the level of farm activity in the local area, and whether an office was in 25 miles of another FSA office. Employees remaining with the offices will be transferred to the nearest FSA office, so there were no job losses.

June 5, 2012

Board To Consider Zoning Request

The Zoning Board of Appeals is set to review a request from a local resident on developing a property along the C & O Canal, which he bought at auction last year. Donelly Bohrer wants to use the land for a park center and a bed and breakfast. Zoning regulations, however, prohibit the house on the property, at 1 Elizabeth Street, to be used for an inn or conference center. Regulations state it could only be used as an office and/or single-family home, and portions of the site also fall within the 100-year flood plain. The Board has set a meeting for Wednesday at 4 p.m. to consider the matter.

June 5, 2012

Exercise Slated For Friday

The Berkeley County Health Department is holding an open "Point of Distribution" exercise at South Middle School in Martinsburg on Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This is a training exercise, to help prepare the area's community partners and the public, in the event of a real bio-terrorism incident. The Department is inviting its emergency partners to assist them, as if this were a real emergency.

June 6, 2012

Amtrak Station Could Cost \$4 Million

An Amtrak station in Rockwood, Pennsylvania could cost upwards of four-million dollars, according to a feasibility study commissioned by the Somerset County Planning Commission. Somerset County Commissioner Pamela Tokar-Ickes says the proposal has strong merits as an economic generator, but at the same time, they are addressing the concerns of the community. There will be a fourth public hearing on the proposal. The feasibility study addressed where the station would be located, who will pay for its maintenance and what kind of security will be needed.

June 8, 2012

Keyser Athletic Complex Goal Met

Keyser High School has raised \$102,000 for this year's payment on the athletic complex. It's not known where the balance of this year's payment will come from on the facility. Officials are, however, counting on a \$20,000 grant from the West Virginia legislature, \$20,000 given to the complex by the athletic programs, and interest accrued from various investments.

June 14, 2012

Panel Deadline Extended

The panel studying the impact of natural gas drilling in western Maryland is getting more time to produce its second set of recommendations. Governor O'Malley has extended the Marcellus Shale Advisory Commission's deadline until December 31st to produce a draft report. Public comment will follow, and a final report will be issued on August 1st of 2013. The group's third report is due August 1, 2014.

June 14, 2012

Wind Farm Plans Halted

The Shaffer Mountain Wind Farm project in Somerset County has been halted. The Gamesa Company's six-year battle for a wind turbine farm there is over. The Shaffer Mountain decision won't affect Gamesa's local employees, in that it has a blade manufacturing plant in Ebensburg and several wind farms already developed in the region.

STREETS AND HIGHWAYS

April 12, 2012

SHA To Replace Oakland Drive in Garrett County

The Maryland State Highway Administration will mill and surface one mile of Oakland Drive, just east of Route 219 in Mountain Lake Park, beginning this Monday night. Work will include milling, patching, resurfacing and restriping Oakland Drive, between Route 135 and Deer Park Avenue. Work will take place Sunday through Thursday nights from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. The project is part of a \$4.1 million area wide resurfacing contract, awarded to Keystone Lime Company of Springs, Pennsylvania.

April 25, 2012

Part of Route 51 to Be Resurfaced

A portion of Route 51 will be resurfaced, beginning Thursday. The Maryland State Highway Administration will remove the top layer of asphalt, resurface, and restripe nearly three miles of Route 51, between the Evitt's Creek Bridge and Uhl Highway. Weather permitting, the project will be completed by the end of June. Motorists should anticipate lane closures at any time between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m., and they should exercise caution when driving in the area.

April 27, 2012

Major Construction Activity Around I-68

Major construction activity is being undertaken below the I-68 overpass on Route 220. The Maryland State Highway Administration is working on that interchange to enhance safety and improve traffic operations. Weather permitting, work will be complete this fall. The work will require temporary traffic detours that will allow crews to construct a partial roundabout on Route 220. On Tuesday, crews will close the ramp from Route 220 and Greene Street to westbound Interstate 68.

April 28, 2012

Major Construction Activity Around I-68

Major construction activity is being undertaken below the I-68 overpass on Route 220. The Maryland State Highway Administration is working on that interchange to enhance safety and improve traffic operations. Weather permitting, work will be complete this fall. The work will require temporary traffic detours that will allow crews to construct a partial roundabout on Route 220. On Tuesday, crews will close the ramp from Route 220 and Greene Street to westbound Interstate 68.

April 30, 2012

Traffic Advisory Issued

The Cumberland Engineering Department is reminding the public that work is being done today in the far right southbound lane of North Mechanic Street, and it will be closed to allow for permanent repairs to the roadway. Work is taking place until 5 p.m. Parking in the 50-block of North Mechanic Street, between Bedford and Baltimore, will be restricted during the work time. Motorists are advised that delays should be expected during this time.

May 1, 2012

Traffic Affected on Oldtown Road Wednesday

A gas main replacement project will be getting underway tomorrow on Oldtown Road, between Long Drive and Sommerville Avenue. The gas main replacement will take place

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in the sidewalk on the south side of Oldtown Road. Traffic will be reduced to one lane with a flagging operation in place, and the work is projected to take approximately three months. Drivers should use caution while driving in that area.

May 1, 2012

Route 219 Expansion Awaiting Governor's Approval

Construction could start on the Route 219 expansion project, once Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett approves it. As of late last week, project organizers were waiting on a \$35 million commitment from the Governor. Estimates are that 2400 to 2600 jobs could be created, once the segment to Interstate 68 begins construction. Overall there will be between 8,000 to 10,000 construction jobs created.

May 4, 2012

Official Says Route 219 Funding Lacking

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Secretary Barry Schoch says the state cannot come up with \$35 million needed to leverage \$350 million for the completion of Route 219, until additional sources of funding are found. Maintaining the current system of highways, roads, and bridges is the priority of the state, under current budget conditions. He says toll credits need to be reinstated, or increases in revenue must be seen, before the completion of Route 219 can happen.

May 10, 2012

Wallace Street Repairs Underway

Permanent repairs are being made to Wallace Street, and the work should run through next Wednesday. Parking is limited during the repairs, and residents are asked to obey the "No Parking" signs that are posted. Please use caution in the area of work and obey all traffic control signs. Drivers should also expect delays during this time period.

May 14, 2012

Senator Urges Support for Route 219 Completion

Pennsylvania Senator Bob Casey is lobbying for support of the completion of Route 219. The Senator has sent a letter to the conference committee, charged with coming to a compromise on the House and Senate-backed versions of the bill. About \$35 million in matching funds will be needed to complete Route 219 from Somerset to Meyersdale.

May 18, 2012

Magruder Street To Be Closed Beginning Monday

Magruder Street, between Wallace and Lee Streets will be closed Monday through Wednesday, due to work by Columbia Gas of Maryland. Drivers are asked to use caution and obey all traffic control signs. They also should expect delays, while the closure is in effect.

May 29, 2012

Traffic Patterns Changed

The city of Cumberland Engineering Department says travel lanes in the area of Washington's Headquarters at the National Road monument will be reduced today. Flaggers will be present in the area. The department is urging caution; delays are to be expected between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.

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June 4, 2012

Road Work Slated

The City of Cumberland Engineering Department is notifying the public that, beginning at 6 p.m. this evening, the far right lane of south bound Route 51 will be closed from Third Street to Virginia Avenue until emergency sewer work is completed. Access to the Virginia Avenue underpass will be open. Drivers are urged to use caution in the work area, and obey all traffic signs.

June 5, 2012

Bridge Renovations on Hold

A renovation of the Interstate 68 bridge, which was to have begun this spring will be readvertised following a bid protest. The project now, most likely, will be delayed until the spring of next year. The low bid of \$13.9 million from Concrete General, Incorporated of Gaithersburg was contest by a Baltimore firm, Klicos Painting Company of Baltimore, which bid \$14.5 million. The bidding process was upheld by the State Highway Administration, while Klicos appealed to the Maryland Board of Contract Appeals.

RECREATION

April 19, 2012

Railroad Bridge Could Become Part of Great Allegheny Passage

An old railroad bridge, near Southern States, could be rehabilitated and link the Great Allegheny Passage to North End. Plans to prepare the bridge are already being developed, with a total cost of about \$75,000. Local volunteer and inmate labor would be used to construct the bridge, and would be used to accommodate bikers and hikers. The work would be funded by local and private funding sources.

April 20, 2012

Keyser City Officials Discuss Pool

The Keyser Mayor and City Council have received an estimate for renovating the city pool, to the tune of \$417,000. Much discussion followed the proposal, including past consideration to a splash-park concept, and the actual costs for operating the pool each season. Despite the "hit" Keyser takes each year in operating the facility, there has been no indication it will close the pool. Officials there say the pool is a "service" to the community, according to the Mineral News-Tribune.

April 23, 2012

Piedmont Pool Readied for Opening

Work is continuing on readying the Piedmont pool for the traditional Memorial Day weekend opening. Parks and Recreation Commissioner Ray Hall told officials that several items needed to be taken care of, before the Mineral County Health Department would allow it to reopen this year. Those items include the complete scraping and repainting of the pool, and the installation of hot water heaters. Hall, who had recently been convicted of extortion in an unrelated case, thanked the Mayor and Council for "taking care of things at the pool."

May 23, 2012

Rail Trail Extension Work Could Start This Year

A plan to extend the western Maryland Rail Trail could be approved by the National Park Service this summer, with construction possibly starting later this year. An environmental assessment looked at a section from Pearre, Maryland to Paw Paw, a section of the former railroad that is approximately 15 miles long. Maryland can contribute about \$3.5 million in funding available for a section of the trail, approximately 4 miles long from its side of the Potomac River to Little Orleans.

May 24, 2012

Swimming Prohibited at Somerset County Park

Swimming has been suspended at Kooser Lake in Somerset County, due to unsafe conditions related to too much sedimentation and algae. The swimming area is typically four to five feet deep, but levels have dropped to as low as 18 inches in some spots. Fishing will continue to be allowed, and fish caught at the lake are safe to eat. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will have the lake dredged shortly after the Labor Day holiday, with New Enterprise Stone and Lime assisting in the process.

June 1, 2012

ARC Grant for Garrett County

The Appalachian Regional Commission has granted Garrett County \$250,000 for

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construction of the Meadow Mountain Trail. The ten-mile, multi-user trail, will build on the county's effort to expand its outdoor recreation industry; it is projected to have an economic impact of more than \$3 million. The funding will be used to complete the trail design, to construct the trail, and improve two railhead parking areas.

June 4, 2012

Wisp Owners Meet with Potential Buyers

The owners of the Wisp, Maryland's only ski resort, have met with several potential buyers, but selling the resort is not inevitable. D.C. Development, LLC-the owners of the facility-are expected to file a plan of reorganization or debt restructuring that may preclude a sale of its assets. The partners blame slower-than-expected sales of homes at the Lodestone golf site for the financial woes that prompted them to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in October. For now, it's "business as usual" at the Wisp.

June 5, 2012

Heritage Days Festival This weekend

This weekend will mark the 44th annual Heritage Days Festival, in downtown Cumberland and in the Washington Street Historic District. A special aspect of this weekend's festival is the dedication of the National Road monument at the foot of George Washington's Headquarters at Riverside Park. The dedication will take place Sunday at 3 p.m. Along with hosting over 150 artisans and food vendors, Heritage Days will also feature tours of the tunnels under Emmanuel Episcopal Church, the site of the original Fort Cumberland.

WELFARE (Public Safety)

April 18, 2012

Bagged Salad Recall in Maryland, Virginia

The Dole Food Company is recalling 756 cases of bagged salad, which could be contaminated with salmonella. The recall affects both Maryland and Virginia. There have been no illnesses reported, but they were distributed in 15 states. If you have a bag of the contaminated salad, you're asked to simply throw them out. The "use by" date is April 11th, and contains a UPC code of 7143001057.

April 26, 2012

Customer Bill of Rights for Tax Riders

The Maryland Public Service Commission has put in place a Customer Bill of Rights for taxi passengers, with documents now placed in taxis that serve Cumberland, Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Cumberland. The posted rules inform passengers of their rights and responsibilities and facilitate communications with the PSC; for drivers, it will help in dealing with disorderly customers inside or outside of the cab. The rules were developed through a series of meetings among the Public Service Commission's Transportation Division, Taxicab Advisory Committee and industry representatives.

April 18, 2012

Police Issue Reminders to Motorists

The Cumberland City Police Department is offering a few reminders to motorists, regarding the parking of their vehicles on city streets. They are asking that vehicles be parked as close to the curb as possible, and in the direction of traffic. A second area of concern is vehicles that are parked on sidewalks, blocking alleys or travel lanes. They say it's a major safety concern, as it forces pedestrians out into the roadway. The department will continue to enforce those regulations through written warnings, citations and the possibility of having the vehicle impounded if it is a safety hazard.

June 1, 2012

County Schedules Electronic Recycling

Allegany County will have an electronics recycling event on Saturday, June 23rd from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the County Office Building. Most, but not all, electronics can be recycled for free; the event is restricted to county residents. Individuals will be required to present a valid drivers license or another proof of residency, such as a current utility bill.

June 4, 2012

Federal Officials Shut Down Tour Bus Companies

More than two dozen bus companies in six states, including Maryland, have been shut down for safety violations. The operators transport more than 1800 passengers a day along Interstate 95, between New York and Florida. Most of the routes either originate or terminate in New York City's Chinatown District. The shutdowns cap a year-long investigation by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

June 13, 2012

Boil Water Notice in Effect in Meyersdale

There is a boil water notice in effect, at least through today in Meyersdale, for

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customers of the Municipal Authority. An eight-inch water main at Second and Thomas Streets ruptured about 6:30 p.m. Saturday, and drained portions of the water distribution system. That line has been a problem before. People are being asked to boil water, not necessarily conserve it.