



ISSUES-OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2011

- I. Community Planning**
- II. Crime-Law & Order**
- III. Drug Abuse**
- IV. Economy**
- V. Education**
- VI. Employment**
- VII. Government**
- VIII. Streets & Highways**
- IX. Taxes**

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.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

October 6, 2011

Indiana Man Chosen To Head YMCA

Don Enterline, currently the chief operating officers for the YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne, Indiana, has been chosen as the CEO of the Cumberland facility. He brings with him vast YMCA leadership experience, including securing grants and fundraising, membership, and board development. He will begin his new duties on November 7th.

October 6, 2011

Lonaconing Will Select new Administrator Next Year

Lonaconing Mayor Jack Coburn says the town will fill the position of town administrator next year, depending on outside help until then. Town Administrator John Winner passed away in September. He had been the town administrator for decades. Coburn says Lonaconing primarily depends on grants, and until a new administrator is hired, grant funding agencies and RKK Engineering have stepped forward to make sure applications are dealt with in a timely manner.

OCTOBER 10, 2011

Penn Mar Recycling to Expand Local Operation

Penn Mar Recycling, LLC, a multi-state recycling operator and subsidiary of miller's Recycling of Bedford will be expanding its operation in Allegany County in Riverside Industrial Park. Penn Mar currently occupies 10,000 square feet in the county, and by November 1st, they will expand and lease approximately 75,000 square feet in Buildings 24 and 25 in Riverside Industrial Park in Cumberland. Increased demand for new recycled materials, an opportunity to tap new markets, and favorable partnerships with the local area all factored in to the company's decision to expand in Allegany County.

OCTOBER 11, 2011

Residents Overwhelmingly Oppose Corridor Alignment

The west Virginia Department of Highways held a meeting last week on a proposal, known as "Corridor 'C,'" which would help connect Corridor "H" with Interstate 68. The proposal would run through Short Gap, and in fact, through the fire hall, as it connects to the Interstate. The overflow crowd at the meeting spoke out against the plan, which is the most expensive of the options to complete Corridor "H" in the Mountain State, costing more than \$200 million more than other routes.

October 12, 2011

Legislation To Be Introduced On Redistricting

A Republican State Senator will introduce legislation in the upcoming special session of the General Assembly to preserve the 6th Congressional District from changes made under a draft plan. Senator Joseph Getty says his proposal would keep the Western Maryland District largely as it is. Representative Roscoe Bartlett has held that seat since 1993. The special session will begin next week, and many angry Republicans are saying Democrats are trying to make it harder for Bartlett to win re-election.

October 14, 2011

PACE Reception Dates Set

The Cumberland/Allegany County Industrial Foundation and the Garrett County

New Text Document

Development Corporation are hosting the "PACE" Reception and Legislative Breakfast in Annapolis. The events are held to educate state legislators and officials about Allegany and Garrett Counties from the local perspective. This year's theme is "Come to Play-Plan to Stay." The PACE reception is planned for Thursday, January 26, 2012 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The Legislative Breakfast will be from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. at the Loew's/Annapolis Hotel.

October 19, 2011

Slots Commission To Hold Public Meeting

The Maryland Video Lottery Facilities Commission will hold a meeting at Rocky Gap State Park, to consider two proposals to bring slots to the area. The meeting has been set for 2 p.m. on November 8th, with a public hearing set for 5 p.m. There are two proposals for Rocky Gap, as a third was rejected by the commission. They are Lakes Entertainment, Incorporated of Minnesota and Evitts Resort, LLC.

October 26, 2011

City Hires Consultant for City Market

The Cumberland Mayor and Council voted 3-0 last night to hire consultants FranPoint Partners to help find a location for the proposed City Market. FranPoint is the same group hired by the city of Annapolis to reopen its historical downtown market. The City will pay half of a \$2500 fee to bring a representative of the group to town to officially take a look at possible sites for the City Market, according to the Cumberland Times-News.

October 27, 2011

Public Hearing Set on Slots

Maryland's Video Lottery Facility Location Commission will conduct a site visit and public hearing for the Allegany County facility operation license proposals on Tuesday, November 8th from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. This will be the Commission's first of two site visits and public hearings for the remaining locations proposed for video lottery terminal operation licenses in Maryland. A tour of Rocky Gap is scheduled for 2 p.m.; applicant presentations will take place at 3:30 p.m., and a public hearing will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. The applicant presentations and public hearing will be held in the Cumberland "A" room of the lodge.

October 31, 2011

Keyser Memorial Bridge work on Schedule

The new Keyser Memorial Bridge is on target to open by the end of next year. According to the Mineral News-Tribune, crews are beginning to lay forms between the steel girders that will hold steel reinforcements and the concrete deck itself. The deck concrete will be poured early next spring. During the winter, construction crews will be focusing on other aspects of the project.

October 31, 2011

Man Files Redistricting Suit

A Smithsburg resident has filed suit in U.S. District Court of the redistricting map, approved last week. In the suit, Howard Gorrell contends the map dilutes the voting power of agriculture-related electorates in the 6th Congressional District. The map moves a large portion of Montgomery County into the western Maryland District; Governor O'Malley says it reflects changing demographics along the Interstate 270 Corridor. The courts must rule on the case by January 11th, the filing deadline for candidates in the April 3rd primary.

November 3, 2011

Traffic Pattern Change for Homecoming Game

There will be changes to the traffic pattern in the vicinity of Greenway Avenue Stadium for this Saturday's Homecoming Game. There will be no vehicular traffic permitted in front of the stadium from 8 a.m. until one hour after the game. Traffic on Greenway Avenue will be detoured into the circle in front of Fort Hill High School. Traffic on Brookfield Avenue will be detoured with a right turn only, allowing motorists to continue onto Greenway Avenue, away from the stadium. Questions about handicapped parking, or those in the bands or Homecoming Court, should be directed to an officer on Saturday.

November 7, 2011

Higher Gas Tax On The Way

Maryland Senate President Mike Miller acknowledges it is not a popular idea, but a gas tax is coming. Increasing the tax is likely to be a divisive issue in the upcoming legislative session. Miller and House Speaker Michael Busch spoke at the Maryland Chamber of Commerce business Policy Conference, and Busch previewed a tax increase by saying that lawmakers are looking at ways to fund a large-scale public works program, but gave no specifics. For their part, Maryland Republicans are opposed to raising taxes.

November 8, 2011

Rocky Gap Hearing Set for Today

A hearing will be held by the Maryland Video Lottery Facility Location Commission at Rocky Gap State Park, to hear from bidders for the slots licenses there about their plans for the facility. The public is invited to attend the hearing. The two applicants for the slots licenses will begin their presentations at 3:30 p.m. The public hearing will take place at 5 p.m., in the Cumberland "A" room at the lodge. Earlier in the day, representatives of the companies bidding for the licenses will tour the proposed facility location.

November 9, 2011

Emergency Test on Wednesday

Radio and television stations across the country will be participating in a nationwide test on Wednesday at 2 p.m. The test is scheduled to last approximately 30 seconds. This will be the first test of its kind, and could be used for any reason, including an address by the president of the United States. The emergency alert system will be activated under the EAN or Emergency Action Notification code, which the President could use in a national emergency to conduct the Emergency Alert System Test.

November 9, 2011

School Board, City Council Discuss Possible Property Swap

The Allegany County Board of Education and members of the Mayor and City Council are talking about a concept that will allow the school system to own the property located at the Braddock Campus of the Western Maryland Health System, to be used as a potential site for the new Allegany High School. Through the development of a joint agreement between the city of Cumberland, the Western Maryland Health System and Allegany County Public Schools, the city could convey the property near the new hospital to WMHS, in exchange for WMHS deeding the property at the Braddock Campus to the public school system.

November 9, 2011

Companies Make Presentations on Slots

Two companies, vying for a slots license at Rocky Gap State Park, made presentations yesterday on who should win the rights for the facility. The two companies-Evitts Resort, LLC and Landow Partners-made presentations to the Maryland Video Lottery Facilities Commission. During a public hearing for the resort casino, strong support was offered, with only one strong dissension. Dave Williams of McClarran and Williams noted that the \$62 million investment would be the largest private capital investment ever made in the county.

November 11, 2011

National Emergency Alert Test Called a Failure

wednesday's test of the national Emergency Alert System did not go exactly as planned on wednesday. Problems were reported across the country. In some instances, broadcasters failed to interrupt programming for the test; FEMA says the test was the beginning of a much larger effort to strengthen and upgrade the nation's public alert and warning system. FEMA and the Federal Communications Commission says, for now, it's back to the drawing board, and that ongoing testing is the only way to work out the bugs in the Emergency Alert System technology.

November 14, 2011

Turbines Being Individually "Commissioned"

The wind turbines on Green Mountain are spinning, but not yet in commercial operation yet. Plans call for the wind farm to become operational by the end of the year. The structures are being individually certified for full operation by Mitsubishi, the manufacturer. When operational, the Pinnacle wind Farm project will generate approximately 55 megawatts of electricity, enough power for over 14,000 households.

November 15, 2011

Councilman Wants Public Hearing on Proposed Allegany Site

Cumberland City Councilman David Kauffman wants a public hearing on the land swap, proposed last week, which would result in a new Allegany High School at the former site of the Braddock Campus of the western Maryland Health System. School Superintendent David Cox says that a decision must be made quickly, so the Board of Education can comply with deadlines set by a state funding agency and the Board of Public works. while Kauffman says the city can respond in a timely manner to the deadlines, he doesn't want to bypass citizen input in the process.

November 15, 2011

DNR Secretary To Attend Deep Creek Meeting

DNR Secretary John Griffin is scheduled to attend a meeting on the water levels at Deep Creek Lake. The meeting, set for today, is being held by the Garrett County Commissioners who, according to the Cumberland Times-News, have been concerned about the effect of low water levels on the lake. The meeting is set for 4 p.m. at St. Peter's Catholic Church Hall in Oakland.

November 22, 2011

Meeting on Proposed Allegany Site Set

The Cumberland City Council will hear public input on a proposal to locate a new Allegany High School at the site of the former Braddock Campus of the western

New Text Document

Maryland Health System at its 6:15 p.m. meeting tonight. The Mayor and Council have been asked to vote on the matter before the end of the year, but they first want public comment on the issue, before they make up their minds. A vote on whether or not to support the project should take place next month.

Novmer23, 2011

Most Favor Land Swap for Allegany

Most of those in attendance at last night's Cumberland Mayor and City Council public meeting on a proposal for a new Allegany High School were in favor of the "land swap" between the City and the Western Maryland Health System. However, the majority spoke on the disposition of the current Allegany High on Sedgewick Street, and what would happen to the facility. Cumberland City Council member Harold "Butch" Hendershot proposed the land swap and disposition of the old high school be tied together with a single memorandum of understanding, while other council members and residents believe the issues should be separate.

November 23, 2011

Garrett County Wind Project Fined by MDE

The Garrett County wind project was among 51 major enforcement actions, taken by the Maryland Department of the Environment. Specifically, white Construction, Synergics Roth Rock Energy, LLC is being fined \$35,000 to resolve alleged sediment control violations that happened during the construction of the facility, near Red House.

Deember 5, 2011

Somerset County to House Wind Farm

The Twin Ridges wind Farm will begin construction in Somerset County, and will span four townships, including Southampton, Northampton, Larimer and Greenville. In all, there will be 68 turbines built, and once operational, the wind farm will create enough electricity to power 40,000 homes. The four townships will share up to \$240,000 per year. The Meyersdale School districts will split up to \$93,000 annually, with Somerset County receiving up to \$37,000 per year.

December 8, 2011

County Naming New Emergency Services Director

Allegany County is expected to name a new director of the Department of Emergency Services. Dick DeVore is the acting director of the department, which includes the Animal Shelter and Animal Control, 911 Joint Communications, Emergency Management Division, and the Emergency Medical Services Division.

December 9, 2011

Devore Named Head of Emergency Services

Richard DeVore has been permanently named to the position of Director of Emergency Services, effective Monday, December 12th. He has served as Acting Director since July of this past year. The appointment was made during last night's Allegany County Commissioners' meeting. DeVore originally served as a dispatcher for Civil Defense, now the 911 Joint Communications Center. He has held a number of key positions during his 26 years serving the citizens of Allegany County. Most recently, he held the position of Emergency Management Division Chief.

December 9, 2011

Cardin Sponsors Home Heating Legislation

New Text Document

Maryland United States Senator Ben Cardin is co-sponsoring bipartisan legislation to provide more help for low income Maryland families in paying their heating bills this winter. The LIHEAP Protection Act would maintain last year's funding level of \$4.7 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Co-sponsors of the bill include U.S. Senator Jack Reid of Rhode Island and Olympia Snow of Maine. Senator Cardin also signed a letter to Senate appropriators, urging continued funding for the weatherization Assistance Program and State Energy Program, at adequate levels.

December 12, 2011

Garrett County opposes Elk Reintroduction

The Garrett County Commissioners are going on record in opposition to reintroducing elk in western Maryland. The commissioners say the idea originated with a special interest group, and that they were not included in preliminary talks on the issue. In Allegany County, Commissioner Bill Valentine says meetings with sportsmen's groups will be arranged to discuss the proposal. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has formed a partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Foundation to study reintroduction in western Maryland.

December 16, 2011

Cooperative to Enter into Agreement with County

The Maryland Broadband Cooperative, in partnership with the Allegany County Commissioners, is expected to enter in to an agreement, in which the county will provide access to space for MDBC electronics to light fiber along Interstate 68. This partnership brings the county into the Cooperative's agreement with the state of Maryland, which received a \$115 million federal stimulus grant for broadband availability throughout the state through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, or "B-TOP," administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

December 19, 2011

County Announces Holiday Schedule

All Allegany County Government offices will be closed on Monday, December 26th and Monday, January 2nd. Allegany County Transit will not have any fixed route bus service and All Trans vans will not operate on Friday, December 23rd; Monday, December 26th; Friday, December 30th and Monday, January 2nd. Public transportation services will operate on Tuesday, December 27th; Wednesday, December 28th; and, Thursday, December 29th.

December 20, 2011

Postal Service holds Meeting

About 100 people turned out at a public meeting at Fort Hill High School last night to protest the U.S. Postal Service plan to close more than 250 mail processing centers, including the one in Cumberland. They are also considering plans to eliminate overnight mail, extending delivery times to two or three days. The Postal Service, however, has delayed those plans until May, to give Congress time to consider the matter. Written comment is being taken through January 3rd on the plan.

New Text Document

CRIME-LAW AND ORDER

OCTOBER 10, 2011

Kroll Trial Set for Later This Month

The trial of 62-year old John Leroy Kroll will take place in Bedford County in the next two weeks. Kroll is accused of attempted homicide, aggravated assault, corruption of a minor and several other counts, in connection with the kidnapping and assault of a Flintstone girl in 1980, when she was just nine years old. Kroll's original conviction, in Allegany County, was overturned because of a "lack of territorial jurisdiction," since the crimes against Charity Shankle occurred in Bedford County. Kroll was scheduled to be released in March of next year, having served time for first-degree assault and kidnapping in connection with the incident. Charges were filed in Bedford County in August of last year, for the crimes that actually occurred in Bedford County.

October 11, 2011

Two Arrested in Pharmacy Armed Robbery

Two people are now in custody in connection with the Friday armed robbery of Reed's Pharmacy in Capon Bridge, West Virginia. Twenty-three year old Kristal Dawn Swisher was arrested on Saturday, while 26-year old Cerferino Jose Delgado was arrested Sunday in Star Tannery, Virginia, near Winchester. The pair stole about 1200 Oxycodone tablets, with a street value of about \$30,000. It was also reported the two had their two small children in the car, when the robbery was committed. Delgado is being held in a Frederick County, Virginia jail, awaiting extradition to West Virginia.

October 14, 2011

Compound Bow Shooting Was Self Defense

The woman at the center of a fatal confrontation in Somerset County says it was a matter of self-defense. Thirty-eight year old Lisa Woolley, of Central City, was planning to divorce her husband, Carl, to marry the victim, 43-year old Tony Bittinger of Salisbury. Following Sunday's confrontation, she said her husband fatally shot Bittinger with a compound bow, because he wouldn't leave their home. State Police are still investigating the case, and have not said if charges will be filed, as they are awaiting the results of blood tests.

October 21, 2011

Kroll Pleads Guilty in 1980 Sexual Assault

Cumberland resident John Leroy Kroll has pleaded guilty to all charges filed against him in Bedford County, in connection with a 1980 incident in which he kidnapped a girl in Cumberland, and sexually assaulted her in the Lake Gordon area. Bedford County District Attorney credited his counterpart in Cumberland, Michael Twigg, for his extreme vigilance in the prosecution of Kroll, who will be sentenced on January 12th of next year. He will remain in the Bedford County Jail until his sentencing.

October 24, 2011

Change of Venue Motion Denied

A motion for a change of venue in the case against Kelly Bradley has been denied in Mineral County Circuit Court. Ms. Bradley, along with her husband, are accused of setting fire to the Pines Restaurant and Lounge in June of last year, which also destroyed the Wee Care Day Care Center and CitiFinancial. Her attorney, Angie Collins, argued that the trial should be moved because of the popularity of the Pines as a social gathering place and the extensive coverage the case has received.

New Text Document

A pre-trial hearing is scheduled for Friday, December 2nd, and the jury trial has been set for April 23rd through the 27th of next year.

October 24, 2011

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October 25, 2011

Another Arrest in Labor Day Weekend Shooting

Another person has been arrested in connection with the fatal Labor shooting death of a New Jersey man and wounding of his brother. Tavon Joseph Kearney, formerly of the Baltimore area and Cumberland, was arrested yesterday in Hampton, Virginia. Kearney was taken into custody by U.S. marshals and the Hampton, Virginia Police Department. He was charged with first-degree murder and attempted first-degree murder. In the incident, 25-year old Ryan Henry was killed and his brother, Richard, was seriously wounded.

October 25, 2011

Man Charged in Theft Case

Cumberland resident John Ervin Arnold has been arrested on theft charges, stemming from an investigation by the Maryland State Police and the Allegany County C3I unit. Arnold is accused of taking a large sum of cash from his employer, Mountainview Healthcare. Approximately \$15,000 had gone missing from a business account, and Arnold had been working as the office manager at the time. He was charged with three counts of theft and one count of theft scheme. He was ordered held on \$20,000 bond; he has since posted bond and is free, pending his next court appearance.

October 27, 2011

More Details on Murder Investigation

There are more details regarding the arrest of a Cumberland resident, in connection with the murder of Ryan Henry and the wounding of his brother, Richard, in Ridgeley last month. Tavon Kearney had been the target of the federal murder investigation. Kearney was arrested in Hampton, Virginia. Still at large is Rasshammach Roberts of Hollis, New York. Anyone with information on the whereabouts of Rasshammach Roberts should call (304)-262-8615 or send an email to michael.ulrich@usdoj.gov.

October 27, 2011

Rhodes Trial Underway in Mineral County

The trial of Robert S. Rhodes, Jr., is underway in Mineral County Circuit Court. Rhodes is charged with several sexual assault and sexual abuse counts, involving seven minor children. Rhodes' attorney says his client is innocent of all 39 charges against him, which allegedly involved six girls and one boy. Rhodes is expected to testify on his own behalf.

October 27, 2011

New Text Document

Student Charged in Connection with South Penn Fire

A seven-year-old juvenile at South Penn Elementary School is being charged in connection with yesterday's fire at the school. He is being charged with malicious burning, malicious destruction of property and disruption of school activities. He was released to his mother, pending further disposition. He allegedly used a lighter to set fire to combustible plastic in the bathroom. Damages were estimated at \$200.00. The school was evacuated at the time of the incident, and staff members extinguished the fire. South Penn resumed normal operations with the area of the fire being closed, pending cleanup.

October 27, 2011

Student Arrested At Allegany

A 14-year old male student at Allegany High School was arrested on Tuesday, and charged with possession of marijuana, along with possession with intent to distribute. The Cumberland Police Resource Officer, who investigated, transported him to police headquarters. The Department of Juvenile Services was contacted and the teen was released to his parents, pending court action.

October 28, 2011

Pharmacy Robbed in Bel Air

Police are continuing to look for two suspects who robbed Steve's Pharmacy in the Bel Air Plaza, then fled on foot. One of the suspects, who displayed a handgun in the waistband of his pants, demanded prescription medication. The other suspect, apparently acting as a lookout, was seen outside the business. Both fled with an unspecified amount of medication. The suspect who robbed the pharmacy is described as a white male in his twenties, 5'10" to 6-foot tall, thin build and short brown hair. He was wearing a blue and white checked flannel shirt, blue jeans, gloves, and a pair of sunglasses to conceal his identity. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Maryland State Police, the C3I unit, or Allegany/Mineral County CrimeSolvers.

October 28, 2011

Keyser Man Found Guilty of Sexual Assault

Thirty-nine year old Keyser resident Robert Rhodes was found guilty of sexually assaulting six female minors, with over 30 counts of sexual abuse and related charges lodged against him. The trial concluded yesterday, as the jury announced the guilty verdict. Rhodes was taken to the Potomac Highlands Jail, after his bond was revoked. Rhodes could be sentenced to up to 200 years in jail, on the 34 counts of which he was convicted.

October 31, 2011

Police Seek Food Lion Robber

Area authorities are still searching for the person who robbed the Food Lion market in Bel Air Friday evening. The incident occurred around 7:30 p.m., as a man displayed a handgun, and demanded money from the register. He then left the store and possibly got into a vehicle and fled the area. This is the second armed robbery in the Bel Air/Cresaptown area, as two others are being sought for taking prescription medication from Steve's Pharmacy last week. Anyone with information on either crime, or the identity of the subject is asked to contact the Allegany County Sheriff's Office or the C3I unit.

October 31, 2011

Keyser CVS Pharmacy Robbed

New Text Document

West Virginia law enforcement authorities are seeking the person who robbed the CVS Pharmacy Saturday night; this is the second robbery of a pharmacy in Keyser within four days. There are few details about this robbery, and Keyser Police say they will provide more information as the investigation continues. It is known the robbery took place around 9:04 p.m., and there are surveillance photographs available. Not only is this the second robbery of a pharmacy in Keyser, it is the fourth robbery in the area in the last several days.

November 1, 2011

Former Teacher Accused of Relationship with Student

A former Meyersdale Area High School teacher has been charged with having a sexual relationship with a student. Joshua Steven Covert of Johnstown allegedly had the relationship with the juvenile from May 20th to September 8th of this year. The incidents allegedly took place in both Somerset and Cambria Counties. Covert has resigned his position, and has voluntarily surrendered his teaching certificate.

November 1, 2011

More Details on Robberies

There are more details on the rash of robberies, both locally, and in Mineral County, West Virginia over the last week. In the Keyser CVS robbery Saturday night, the suspects stole the painkillers Oxycodone and Fentanyl; the Sheriff's Department, along with Keyser City Police are working to solve that theft. Meanwhile, authorities are looking for the suspects who robbed Steve's Pharmacy in the Bel Air Plaza; The Rite Aid Store on Route 220 in Keyser; and the Food Lion robbery from Friday night. The local incidents are being investigated by the Allegany County Sheriff's Office, the C3I unit and the Maryland State Police.

November 3, 2011

Law Enforcement Seeking Brothers in Robberies

Following the arrest of their father on Tuesday, law enforcement authorities are looking for his sons in connection to two robberies that occurred in Mineral County, West Virginia and at Steve's Pharmacy in the Bel Air Plaza. Forty-nine year old Stephen Mayhew was arrested earlier in the week. His sons-25-year old Dulin Mayhew and 25-year old Stephen Mayhew-were last known to be in the Keyser area on Monday. Their current whereabouts are unknown, but they could be driving a 2000 Buick Century, with West Virginia registration "DMA-724." Anyone with information on their whereabouts are urged to contact their local police department.

November 4, 2011

Juvenile Arrested in Destruction of Property

A 17-year old male juvenile is being accused of causing \$50,000 in damage to a home on Utah Avenue last Saturday evening. The victim advised police that the damage occurred between 9:30 p.m. and midnight. The door was broken, and the inside of the house had been ransacked. Ketchup and other food items were strewn all through the house, causing damage to walls and carpeting. The juvenile was arrested on Wednesday. The Department of Juvenile Justice has reviewed the case and has determined the juvenile could be released back to a family member, pending trial in Juvenile Court.

November 7, 2011

FSU Student Stabbed to Death; Suspect Under Arrest

New Text Document

Frostburg State University student Kortneigh McCoy died in a weekend stabbing on Maple Street in Frostburg, and fellow student, 23-year old Shane Liggins is under arrest. Ms. McCoy became involved in a verbal argument with Ms. Liggins early yesterday morning; Ms. Liggins is accused of first and second degree murder. She is from Waldorf, Maryland, while Ms. McCoy was from Baltimore. A motive for the murder has not been established and the investigation is continuing.

November 7, 2011

Romney Man Under Arrest for Wife's Murder

Eighty-two year old William Shelley is under arrest for his wife's murder, after an apparent murder-suicide went wrong late Friday morning. Barbara Shelley died from cuts to her wrist and chin area, and blunt force trauma to her head. The two were discovered just after 11 a.m. Friday underneath the Romney bridge, along the Potomac river. William Shelley was taken to the Potomac Highlands Regional jail in Augusta, after he was unable to carry through with a suicide attempt.

November 7, 2011

Two Robbery Suspects Apprehended in Virginia

Twenty-year old Dulin Mayhew and 25-year old Stephen Mayhew of Keyser have been apprehended in connection with the armed robbery of Steve's Pharmacy on October 27th. The two were taken into custody in Henrico County, Virginia. Law enforcement authorities at the federal, state and county level participated in the search for the two. The Mayhew brothers will remain jailed in Henrico County, pending extradition back to the state of Maryland.

November 8, 2011

Suspect Held Without Bond

The suspect in Sunday morning's fatal stabbing of Kortneigh McCoy is being held without bail, and faces first and second-degree murder charges. Shane Liggins is accused of the murder, following an altercation between the two at a Maple Street residence in Frostburg. Liggins claims someone else did the stabbing. Meanwhile, McCoy's friends are planning a memorial in her honor at the school on November 26th. McCoy was a physics major, while Liggins was a Business Administration major, originally from Waldorf, Maryland.

November 8, 2011

Emergency Personnel Receive Death Threats

Frostburg Police Chief Royce Douty has issued a directive, following Sunday morning's fatal stabbing of Frostburg State University student Kortneigh McCoy. Some members of the emergency response crew allegedly received death threats from some of the 100 to 150 people who were gathered on Maple Street early Sunday morning. They were upset because they believed the crews did not get the scene quickly enough. Chief Douty has now issued an order the Frostburg Police respond to calls within the off-campus college district.

November 9, 2011

Suspects Returned to Allegany County

Two suspects, wanted in connection with the armed robbery of Steve's Pharmacy on October 27th have been returned to Allegany County from Henrico County, Virginia. Brothers Dulin and Stephen Mayhew of Ashland, Virginia are being charged with armed robbery, conspiracy to commit armed robbery and possession of a handgun during the commission of a felony and theft. Each is being held on \$300,000 bond at the Allegany County Detention Center.

New Text Document

November 9, 2011

Augusta Resident Charged in Plot

Forty-nine year old Brenda Lee Swisher has been charged by federal prosecutors in a murder-for-hire plot. She appeared before a federal magistrate in Martinsburg, and was remanded to the custody of U.S. Marshals, without bond. She is scheduled for a detention and preliminary hearing tomorrow. The details of the case were not immediately available, according to the Cumberland Times-News.

November 11, 2011

Pair Arrested in Murder Plot

Cumberland resident Robert Tappia and Keyser resident Katrina Ellifritz are in jail, on charges that the two plotted to kill Ellifritz' husband. An investigation revealed the two had been involved in a relationship and they allegedly conspired to kill her husband. Tappia had allegedly displayed a handgun in October, and had threatened to kill the victim. The investigation is continuing.

November 11, 2011

Man Found Guilty in Animal Cruelty Case

Cumberland resident Ricky Allen Adams was found guilty on charges of animal cruelty and conspiracy to commit animal cruelty, in the case involving "Ducky," the dog whose muzzle was duct-taped shut earlier this year. A pre-sentence investigation was ordered for Adams, and he will be sentenced at a later date. The case was prosecuted by attorney Samuel Lane and Thomas Werthman of the Allegany County State's Attorney's Office.

November 11, 2011

Second Meyersdale Teacher Charged

Thursday's news that a Meyersdale Area School District substitute teacher and assistant football coach had been arrested for allegedly having sex with a student, is not the first incident of its kind in that area. Steven Alan Schrader was charged this week; at the end of last month, Joshua Steven Covert was charged with three counts each of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault and corruption of minors. He was the former band director at Meyersdale. A relationship began at the end of last school year, and continued through the current one. He resigned in September. Covert will face charges in Somerset County court as well.

November 14, 2011

Reported Stabbing at Local Bar

The Mineral County Sheriff's Office is investigating a possible stabbing at My Place over the weekend. The victim was transported to the Western Maryland Regional Medical Center, with non life-threatening injuries. The incident reportedly occurred just after 3 a.m. Saturday, after "last call." As patrons were exiting, a fight allegedly broke out. The victim said as he was leaving he felt a "sharp pain" in his back. The incident remains under investigation.

November 14, 2011

Sentencing for Convicted Sex Offender

Fifty-eight year old Ralph James Clark of Cumberland has been sentenced to a year in the Allegany County Detention Center and suspended six months for a fourth-degree

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sex offense. Following his release, Clark will be placed on five years supervised probation, register as a sex offender for fifteen years, and have no contact with the victim. The case stemmed from an incident in 1984, in which Clark engaged in sexual contact with a six-year old female. A C3I investigation pointed to Clark as the suspect.

November 15, 2011

Soldier, wife Held on Child Sex Offenses

A soldier from Petersburg and his wife are being held on numerous child sex offense charges. The soldier is based at Fort Drum, New York. The couple's identity is being withheld to protect the identity of the victims. They are each charged with 15 felony counts of first-degree sexual assault, incest, child pornography and other counts. The couple's children were removed from their home. The woman is being held on \$157,000 bond, while her husband was arrested by the Central Intelligence Division of the Army and jailed on \$20,000 bond, pending extradition to West Virginia.

November 15, 2011

Murder-For-Hire Suspect Released on Bond

An Augusta woman, who is accused of hiring a hit man to kill the wife of her former boyfriend, has been freed on personal recognizance bond. Brenda Lee Swisher is charged with one count of solicitation to commit a crime of violence and one count of causing interstate travel in the commission of a murder for hire. An undercover West Virginia State Trooper was to have been paid a total of \$3500 in the plot. The intended target is a resident of Strasburg, Virginia. She is a probation officer and was not harmed.

November 15, 2011

Third Teacher in Meyersdale Under Investigation

A female teacher in the Meyersdale School District is under investigation, although no charges have been filed. This comes on the heels of two other teachers being charged with various sexual offenses against students. The school district had no comment, but is aware of the allegations, and will hold an executive session to discuss further action against the teacher.

November 17, 2011

Cab Driver Stabbed, Robbed

The Allegany County C3I unit has entered the investigation of a cab driver who was stabbed and robbed early yesterday morning in the 400-block of North Mechanic Street. The 52-year old victim says he picked up a fare from in front of Rose's Department Store around 4 a.m. While transporting him, the suspect stabbed the driver in the chest, neck and head area; an undisclosed amount of cash was taken and he fled on foot. The suspect is described as a black male, but the victim couldn't provide any more information other than that. Anyone with information is asked to contact C3I, Cumberland City Police, or Allegany/Mineral County CrimeSolvers at (301)-722-4300.

November 17, 2011

Ten Arrested in Warrant Sweep

A warrant sweep was conducted yesterday by the Allegany County Sheriff's Office, Maryland State Police and the C3I unit. Each was given a packet of outstanding warrants to attempt to serve for various offenses including theft, violation of probation and failure to appear. Additional sweeps are planned for the near future.

New Text Document

A van from the Allegany County Detention Center was used to transporting those who were arrested, taking them to Allegany County District court commissioners' office for processing and bond hearings.

November 17, 2011

Meyersdale Discusses Allegations Against Teachers

The Meyersdale Area School District held a closed door, executive session Tuesday, to discuss inappropriate sexual conduct involving two former teachers. Also discussed was a female middle school teacher, who has been suspended. Superintendent Tracey Karlie would not give a reason for the investigation. The board may be considering a firmer fraternization policy in the future; two forums have been scheduled to address parents' concerns. They will be held today at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

November 18, 2011

Man Pleads Guilty to Running Child Porn Site

Seventy-year old Cumberland resident George Sell has pleaded guilty in federal court to running a child pornography website. According to his plea agreement, he and others conspired to operate a website, dedicated to trading child pornography images, called the "Country Lounge." Sell's sentencing is set for January 25th; an agreement between Sell and the government states that 10 years in prison is an appropriate sentence. Silver Spring resident Terry Lee Nolley pleaded guilty in October to being involved with the same website.

November 18, 2011

Grant County Couple's Name Revealed; Facing Sex Charges

The couple who were charged earlier this week with sexually abusing a child to make pornography have been identified as Army Private First Class Brian Alt and his wife, Alicia. Brian Alt is in jail at Fort Drum, New York, while his wife remains at the Potomac Highlands Regional Jail on \$157,000 bond. The charges involve Alicia Alt's nine-year old daughter, who is Brian Alt's stepdaughter. The girl lives in Baltimore with her biological father, but had been visiting her mother when the alleged abuses occurred. The girl and her brother have been removed from the Alt home and are back with their father.

November 21, 2011

Suspect Arrested in Tri-Towns Burglary

A twenty-eight year old Piedmont man has been arrested in the weekend burglary and theft from the Tri-Towns Pharmacy in Westernport. Richard Taylor Saville is accused of breaking into the pharmacy and taking a number of narcotics, with a street value of approximately \$25,000. Saville faces numerous charges of drug possession with intent to distribute, destruction of property and burglary. He is being held without bond, and more arrests are expected in connection with the case.

November 28, 2011

Murder Conviction From 1980 Overturned

A man who had been convicted in connection with the murder of a Garrett County Sheriff's deputy in 1980, has had that conviction overturned. Sixty-three year old Roberto Rezek's conviction has been overturned, because a Hagerstown judge ruled the jury was given improper instructions. Rezek and Richard Tichnell-who died in prison in 2006-were convicted of murdering Garrett County Sheriff's Deputy David Livengood in an a 1979 attempted robbery of the Oakland Army-Navy surplus store. Deputy Livengood's dog, Sarge, was also killed in the incident.

November 28, 2011

Aruban Prosecutors to Appeal Giordano Release

A Gaithersburg man, who is still considered a suspect in the disappearance of his traveling companion in Aruba is expected to be released from jail this week, and will be allowed to leave the island. Fifty-year old Gary Giordano could still be extradited from the United States and rearrested if there is sufficient evidence to do so. Investigators had sought more time to gather and evaluate evidence in the presumed death of 35-year old Robyn Gardner of Frederick.

NOVEMBER 29, 2011

Three Sought in Robbery

Three people are being sought in the armed robbery of the Brass Kactus bar on East Offutt Street yesterday morning. An employee, who also serves as the bookkeeper, arrived just after 5 a.m., only to be confronted by three suspects, including one who displayed a small handgun. The employee was struck in the head, and the suspects demanded money. The fled the bar on foot, and the direction of travel was unknown. Only limited information about the suspects was provided; the employee says the three were wearing black ski masks. Anyone with information is asked to contact the C3I Unit, Cumberland City Police or Allegany/Mineral County Crimesolvers.

November 29, 2011

Stabbing Incident Investigated

The Allegany County Sheriff's Office is investigating a reported stabbing on Bear Hill Road early yesterday morning. The victim suffered non-life threatening injuries in the incident. Cumberland resident Jacob Lewis was arrested and charged with several counts, including first and second-degree assault. He was held on \$25,000 bond. The investigation is continuing, with several additional arrests anticipated.

November 29, 2011

Grand Jury Indicts FSU Student

An Allegany County grand jury has indicted 23-year old Shanee Liggins of Waldorf on a charge of first-degree murder, in connection with the death of 19-year old Kortneigh McCoy earlier this month. Ms. Liggins has told police that someone else stabbed Ms. McCoy; she has retained the same private defense team who defended former FSU student Tyron Hall against murder charges. Hall is serving five years in prison for manslaughter.

November 29, 2011

Garrett Stabbing Suspect Held on Bond

Kendall Lowers, who is charged with attempted murder in the stabbing of Oakland resident William Sachs on Sunday, remains jailed on a quarter-million dollars bond. The stabbing occurred early Sunday morning in a wooded area off Hutton Road. Sachs was flown to Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown, and is being listed in fair condition. A bail review set the amount at \$250,000, during a hearing yesterday afternoon.

December 5, 2011

Robbery, Stabbing Suspect Captured in Charles County

A man accused of assaulting, stabbing and robbing a Cumberland cab driver in mid-November, has been captured in Charles County, Maryland.

New Text Document

Terry Allen Craig was taken into custody, following a C3I investigation, which included interviews with several witnesses and a review of surveillance video. He was charged with armed robbery, kidnapping, first-degree assault, theft and related charges. Craig was returned to Cumberland over the weekend to face the charges.

December 6, 2011

Former Keyser Teacher Sentenced

Former Keyser teacher Denise Fitch has been sentenced to serve between one and five years in prison, after earlier pleading guilty to three counts of third-degree sexual assault. The sentences will be served concurrently for each counts of sexual assault. After the first year, it will be determined whether she will continue to serve the remainder of the sentence.

December 6, 2011

State Will Not Seek Death Penalty

The Garrett County State's Attorney will not seek the death penalty in the case of Jeffrey Charles Minnick, who is accused of killing two residents in a wooded area of Oakland earlier this year. He is accused in the deaths of 18-year old Jessica Baker and 24-year old Brandon Lax. State's Attorney Lisa Thayer Welch cited the wishes of the victims' families and lengthy delays that are sometimes involved in death penalty cases, as reasons for seeking life imprisonment, without the possibility of parole for Minnick.

December 7, 2011

Police Continue to Investigate Robbery

The Maryland State Police, the Allegany County Sheriff's Department, and Frostburg City Police are continuing to investigate the armed robbery of the 7-11 store, along Main Street early yesterday morning. The suspect is described as a white male, about 5'8" or 5'9" tall and wearing a white shirt and blue jeans. The suspect also wore a plastic bag over his head to conceal his identity. He entered the store around 4 a.m. and fled with an undetermined amount of money.

December 7, 2011

Keyser Residents Arrested on Drug Charges

Three Keyser residents have been arrested on drug charges in Frederick County. Their car was pulled over Saturday, for lack of a working rear tag light. After a drug-sniffing dog alerted officers to the presence of drugs, they found both heroin and cocaine. Taken into custody were 44-year old Joletta Rebovich; 35-year old Celesta Jamison; and, 26-year old Chad Lewis. All are charged with possession of heroin; additionally, Lewis was charged with possession of cocaine.

December 7, 2011

Woman Pleads Guilty in Infant Death

Moorefield resident Vicki Hawks has pleaded guilty in the death of her infant son last May. She will undergo an evaluation, after which the court could accept the plea, or not. She could be sentenced to life in prison with or without mercy. She was charged with first-degree murder in the case; she reportedly told a co-worker before the baby was born, that the infant would not live very long. She gave birth on May 1st, and the child had been alive about two hours. The body was discovered in a plastic bag outside a residence on Jenkin's Run Road in Hardy County.

December 8, 2011

New Text Document

Billie's Gas-N-GO Robbery Investigated

The Maryland State Police and the C3I unit continue to investigate the armed robbery of Billie's Gas-N-Grub in Flintstone Tuesday evening. Just before 7:30 p.m., two armed men entered the store, threatened the cashier with a handgun, then fled with money from the cash register. There were no injuries and the suspects have not been apprehended.

December 8, 2011

Man Robs Steve's Pharmacy

The third robbery in two days occurred last night at Steve's Pharmacy in Bel Air Plaza. The suspect is described as a white male, 5 feet, eight inches tall, and wearing a Pittsburgh Steelers sweatshirt. He walked into the pharmacy, armed with a knife, and fled southbound on U.S. Route 220. This is the second time Steve's Pharmacy has been robbed in three months; earlier this week, both the Frostburg 7-11 Store and Billie's Gas-N-Grub in Flintstone were robbed at gunpoint.

December 12, 2011

Man Arrested in Pharmacy Hold-Up

A Cumberland man has been arrested in the armed robbery and theft at Steve's Pharmacy last Thursday evening. Thirty-year old Shannon Lee Cline was taken into custody on Friday evening. He is accused of entering the pharmacy with a knife, and demanding prescription pain medication. He then fled the business on foot, headed toward McMullen Highway. Surveillance video and numerous interviews led to Cline's arrest. He had been staying at a private residence in Rawlings. Numerous items of evidence were recovered at the home. Investigators also found several other types of drugs, as well as paraphernalia.

December 14, 2011

Three Arrested in Robberies

Three men have been arrested in connection with a series of robberies in the area, and they are seeking a fourth suspect. Twenty-three year old Cody Crabtree, 20-year old Cory Joseph Crabtree of Cumberland and 21-Zachary Huffman of Oldtown have been taken into custody in connection with the robbery of the Brass Kactus on Offutt Street, Billie's Gas and Grub in Flintstone, and the robbery of a woman at a private residence on Hawk Street in Rawlings. Investigators have obtained an arrest warrant for Gregory Thomas Laisure, also in connection with the robberies. Cody and Cory Crabtree are being held on \$2.5 million each and Huffman is being held on \$25,000 bond.

December 14, 2011

Three Baltimore Men Arrested in Connection with Strong-Armed Robbery

Three Baltimore residents have been arrested in connection with the assault and robbery of a gas station attendant at the Sunoco station on Industrial Boulevard Monday. Karl S. Chambers, Jason McCray and Bruce Satterfield. The three claimed that they had given the attendant \$40, but received only \$20 worth of gas. An argument led to one of the suspects striking the attendant. Cumberland City Police apprehended the three, and all are being held at the Allegany County Detention Center.

December 14, 2011

Man Pleads Guilty in Carjacking Incident

New Text Document

Frostburg resident Jonathan Bittner has pleaded guilty to carjacking his 71-year old neighbor earlier this year. He entered the guilty plea, and other charges against him were dismissed as part of a plea agreement. Carjacking, however, carries a maximum prison term of 30 years. Bond was revoked and Bittner was remanded to the Allegany County Detention Center to await sentencing.

December 14, 2011

Inmate Death Ruled Homicide

The death of an inmate at the North Branch Correctional Facility last week has been ruled a homicide. He was identified as 57-year old Lewis Thompson, who was found strangled in his cell last Thursday. The investigation into the incident is continuing, and State Police have briefed officials in the Allegany County State's Attorney's Office.

December 15, 2011

Fourth Suspect Apprehended

A fourth suspect in a series of business and home invasion robberies was captured in the parking lot of a downtown Cumberland business yesterday afternoon. Gregory Thomas Laisure is being charged in connection with the robbery at the Brass Kactus on Offutt Street, Billie's Gas-N-Grub in Flintstone, and at a private residence on Hawk Street in Rawlings. Earlier, the Pennsylvania State Police executed a search warrant at a private residence in Stringtown, Pennsylvania; as a result, investigators were able to find Laisure. Jerome and Cory Crabtree, along with Zachary Huffman are already in custody and have been charged in connection with the same incidents.

December 16, 2011

Another Arrested in Robberies

Another suspect has been arrested in connection with the robbery of a Cumberland Valley couple Sunday night. Thirty-five year old Melvin Ray Howell III, of Cumberland, was captured south of Hyndman on Wednesday. The Pennsylvania State Police conducted the search near the intersection of Route 96 and Stringtown Road. Howell was taken into custody without incident, and jailed on \$150,000 cash bail. On the scene Wednesday were about two dozen state police vehicles, along with one personnel carrier and two vans. The area they searched is sometimes known as Hosselrode Hollow.

December 19, 2011

Cumberland Resident To Stand Trial

Mark Alan Shirey of Cumberland will stand trial in the death of his ex-wife's boyfriend. Charges were bound over for trial, following a hearing Friday in Bedford County Court. He is accused of first-degree murder in the death of Michael Wayne Simpson. No trial date has been set, but Shirey is due back in court next month, for a status conference.

December 19, 2011

Smith Trial Postponed Until February

The trial of Keyser businessman Brian Smith has been postponed until February, as the court must first sort out what will and what won't be allowed as testimony in the case. Motions and responses will be kept sealed until the trial date to enable the court to seat an objective jury in February, according to the Mineral News-Tribune. The new trial dates are February 6th through the 8th, with a pre-trial hearing set for January 17th at 2:30 p.m.

DRUG ABUSE

October 4, 2011

Man Charged with Possession of Hypodermic Syringes

A 29-year old Cumberland man, Brandon Michael Holliday, was arrested this past weekend, and charged with CDS possession of hypodermic syringes. He was arrested in the area of Pershing Street, in reference to an earlier incident, which was reported to Cumberland Police, who searched his car, after being given consent to do so. He was taken to District Court for an initial appearance and released on personal recognizance.

October 12, 2011

Man Jailed in Prescription Drug Incident

Nicholas County, west Virginia resident Roger Dale Proctor is being held in the Allegany County Detention Center on \$10,000 bond, after being arrested Monday night. He was a passenger in a car that was stopped on Interstate 68 near Rocky Gap. After noticing an odor of marijuana, the car was searched, and packages containing 228 morphine pills and 26 suboxone pills were discovered. Proctor was charged with possession with intent to distribute both.

October 14, 2011

Woman Charged with Theft of Medication

Cumberland resident Megan Michelle Batzel has been charged, following an investigation by Cumberland City Police, with the theft of medication from the Devlin Manor Nursing Home on September 19th. She was in possession of the medication, which was not prescribed to her. Following an appearance in District Court, she was released on personal recognizance.

October 21, 2011

Maryland Bans Sale of "Bath Salts"

The state has taken emergency action to ban the sale of so-called "bath salts," sold in mini-marts and smoke shops. They are being banned because of how dangerous they are; they can be inhaled, smoked, ingested or injected. The end result of taking the drug can be paranoia, hallucinations, and other extreme effects. The emergency regulation takes effect immediately.

October 26, 2011

Task Force Arrests Twenty Suspected Dealers

The Bedford County Drug Task Force has arrested twenty residents who are suspected drug dealers. Residents, ranging in age from 18 to 50 were taken into custody during "Operation Scarecrow," culminating an eight-month investigation. Most were arrested for heroin offenses, although some were taken into custody for allegedly dealing other substances, such as mushrooms and marijuana.

October 27, 2011

Brooklyn Resident Faces Drug Charges

Thirty-three year old Timmie Cotton of Brooklyn, New York faces numerous drug charges, after being stopped in the 300-block of Pennsylvania Avenue. A search revealed an electronic hidden compartment under the front passenger seat. The compartment contained a substantial amount of crack cocaine and Ecstasy, two handguns, and drug paraphernalia. The street value of the street drugs is estimated

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at over \$31,000. Cotton is being charged with possession with intent to distribute crack, possession with intent to distribute MDMA, or Ecstasy, possession of crack, possession of Ecstasy, possession of cocaine and marijuana, and a handgun in a vehicle.

November 8, 2011

Washington County Deputy Arrested

A Washington County Sheriff's Office Correctional deputy has been arrested on numerous drug charges in connection with the distribution of narcotics to an inmate at the county detention center. Deputy Leslie Allen Martin allegedly brought the drug Suboxone to inmate Ronnie Wilson. He was arrested last Friday as he was coming to work on the midnight shift, and two packets of the drug were found on him at the time. He has been suspended without pay, pending the outcome of the criminal charges.

November 29, 2011

Keyser To Host Town Hall Meeting

The city of Keyser will host a town hall meeting on December 8th, addressing substance abuse in Mineral County. The meeting will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. in Davis Hall on the campus of Potomac State College. Those wishing to attend should RSVP to Jessica Blizzard at (304)-788-9099. Seating is limited. There will be information resource tables available, as well as a question and answer period.

ECONOMY

OCTOBER 10, 2011

Bankruptcy Hearing for NewPage Friday

There will be a Meeting of Creditors of the NewPage Corporation is set for Friday at a federal courthouse in Wilmington, Delaware. This is a major step in the proceedings for the company; a representative of NewPage is required to be at the hearing as part of federal bankruptcy rules. The company website states that it will be selling its Canadian mill in Nova Scotia, but there are no plans to sell its domestic facilities.

October 13, 2011

Bedford Board Facing Major Cuts

The Bedford County Emergency Food and Shelter Program is facing a \$30,000 reduction in funding, making it more difficult to stock food banks and pantries. The program had previously been awarded just over \$39,000, now has just over \$6300 in allocations to the food bank and shelter program. At a board meeting this week, some decisions were made on how to most effectively allocate the money, with \$1,000 going to the Breezewood Trucker Traveler Program, and the balance to the Bedford Food Outreach.

October 17, 2011

Wisp Owners File for Bankruptcy Protection

D.C. Development, LLC, owners of the Wisp Ski Resort, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The filing, on Saturday in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Greenbelt, Maryland, stems from the group's alleged default on nearly \$30 million in loans from BB&T Corporation of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The money was to be used to build a golf-course community near the ski hill, but the partners are financially strapped, as the home sites have not sold as well as expected. The sale of Maryland's only ski resort remains an option; The Wisp is expected to open on November 25th, weather permitting.

October 19, 2011

WVSBDC Offering Small Business Workshops

Two small business workshops are scheduled for Wednesday, October 26th in Parsons, West Virginia. The workshops, entitled, "Business Fundamentals," and "Sustainable Growth," are part of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center new training and business coaching program, "Three Step Jump Start," to help small business owners receive the right information at the right time. Registration is required at least two days in advance. Call (304)-530-4964. Both workshops will be held in the City of Parsons Administrative Center, 341 Second Street.

October 26, 2011

Slots Revenue Estimates Adjusted Downward

While the state's slot machine commission considers locations in Baltimore and at Rocky Gap State Park, analysts are adjusting estimated slot machine revenues downward, because of the economy and increased competition from neighboring states. Maryland's two operating casinos in Perryville and near Ocean City report an estimated revenue drop of \$56 million, to \$161 million.

November 8, 2011

Toys for Happiness Celebrates 30th Year

WTBO/GO-106 received a gubernatorial proclamation, as did other founding members of Toys for Happiness for its participation in the program over the last 30 years. Senator George Edwards and Delegate Kevin Kelly presented the proclamation during last night's kickoff dinner at the Bedford Road Volunteer Fire Department. Other groups receiving recognition for initiating the program in 1981 were the Western Maryland Street Rod Association, the Country Club Mall, and the local chapter of the American Red Cross.

November 21, 2011

Bank Merger Will Affect Five Branches

A merger of Susquehanna Bancshares and Tower Bancorp will cause five regional branches to close, including one in Washington County, three in Franklin County, Pennsylvania and one in Fulton County. The merger, which still needs final regulatory approval, is expected to be completed on February 17th of next year. Once the merger is approved, Susquehanna will have about 260 branches in a four state area, including Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia and New Jersey.

November 22, 2011

Economic Development Funding Announced

The Tri-County Council for western Maryland has received a \$70,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration to establish an economic strategy to support investment and job creation in the region. The award was jointly announced by United States Senators Ben Cardin and Barbara Mikulski. This EDA planning investment supports the development and implementation of a comprehensive economic development strategy in the region serviced by the Tri-County Council, which is comprised of Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties.

November 30, 2011

NewPage Bonusing Executives

Even though it has filed for bankruptcy, NewPage Corporation is asking to bonus about 15 executives \$1.5 million this year and the same amount for 2012. NewPage is also asking that many of the documents filed in support of the request be sealed, because it contains personal information about the executives and the company. A hearing on the request for the incentives is set for December 13th.

December 8, 2011

Home Heating Program Up in the Air

The Maryland Energy Assistance Program in western Maryland is in jeopardy this winter, unless the federal government agrees to a final budget decision on benefits or provides those benefits while waiting on the decision. The Cumberland Times-News reports that in Garrett County alone, MEAP provides services to about a quarter of the households there, but they have not been given permission to release any of the money. Community action agencies have about a million dollars in benefits, and is waiting for permission to release the money.

December 8, 2011

Fees To Rise in City

The Cumberland City Council is looking at raising fees for eight services, in connection to construction projects. The rise in fees includes site plan review, zoning map amendments and Board of Appeals applications. It has been fifteen years since any of the fees have been updated, and some may go up as much as 900 per cent.

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December 15, 2011

American woodmark to Close Hardy County Facility

The continuing housing slump has caused the closure of the American woodmark in Hardy County, west Virginia. That location, and another in Kentucky, will shut down by April 30th of next year. The Washington Business Journal says the company is closing its employee defined-benefit pension plans, effective May 12, 2012, shifting instead to higher company contributions to employee 401(k) plans. According to the company's most recent annual report, American woodmark employed about 3700 workers. An assembly plant in Oklahoma was idled in 2009.

EDUCATION

October 4, 2011

Schools Meet System Improvement Status

The Allegany County Public School System met System Improvement Status to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress for the 2011 school year. System Improvement Status measures AYP at the elementary, middle and high school levels. In addition the percentage of students passing the High School Assessments increased and graduation rates climbed.

October 13, 2011

Misprint in Calendar Clarified

The Allegany County Board of Education is correcting an item that appeared in the printed and online version of the Town Planner. It shows that schools are closed on Friday for the Maryland State Education Association Convention. That is a mistake, and the MSEA Convention is actually being held next Friday, October 21st, and school will be open.

October 25, 2011

Kindergarten Report Card Distribution to be Delayed

Allegany County Public Schools' kindergarten report cards will be on a delayed distribution schedule for the first nine-week period of the 2011-2012 school year. The current timeline that Maryland has established for data collection does not align with report card distribution; therefore, kindergarten report cards will not be distributed on Monday, November 21, 2011.

October 27, 2011

Parents Lose State Appeal

The Maryland State Board of Education has upheld a decision from the Allegany County Board of Education, regarding its decision to phase out the Washington County School Choice Program. In a five-page opinion, the State Board supported the local board's decision to bus children in the far east end of the county into Allegany County Schools, and against the parents who had filed suit to keep their children in Washington County Schools.

November 1, 2011

Catholic School Enrollment Continues Decline

Enrollment in Catholic Schools continues to decline, although at a slower pace than recent years. The number of students declined 4.3 per cent this year. The Archdiocese of Baltimore closed 13 schools at the end of the 2009-2010 school year; school enrollment declined by 9 per cent. About two-thirds of the students in those schools moved to another one in the Archdiocese. Catholic school leaders believe the decline is the result of a poor economy and the need for more financial aid.

November 3, 2011

Focus on the Future Showcase

The Allegany County Public School System will host the 6th annual Focus on the Future Showcase Tuesday and Wednesday at the Allegany County Fairgrounds in the multi-purpose building from 9:30 a.m. To 1:30 p.m. each day. The showcase will target all seventh grade students, and strives to raise public awareness regarding the importance of career

New Text Document

preparedness. Focus on the Future also promotes economic growth in Allegany County by keeping graduates locally employed with the necessary expertise to enter the job market.

November 9, 2011

School Board, City Council Discuss Possible Property Swap

The Allegany County Board of Education and members of the Mayor and City Council are talking about a concept that will allow the school system to own the property located at the Braddock Campus of the Western Maryland Health System, to be used as a potential site for the new Allegany High School. Through the development of a joint agreement between the city of Cumberland, the Western Maryland Health System and Allegany County Public Schools, the city could convey the property near the new hospital to WMHS, in exchange for WMHS deeding the property at the Braddock Campus to the public school system.

November 11, 2011

School Board Approves Purchase, Contract Extension

The Allegany County Board of Education has voted to approve the purchase of property on Humbird Street, as well as extend the contract with Grimm and Parker Architects for the feasibility study of Allegany High School. School system staff members negotiated for the purchase of property on Humbird Street located directly behind John Humbird, which includes a duplex house on a double lot. Plans are to demolish the house and convert the area into a parking lot for school staff, and thus help remedy the school's off-street parking issue.

November 15, 2011

Councilman Wants Public Hearing on Proposed Allegany Site

Cumberland City Councilman David Kauffman wants a public hearing on the land swap, proposed last week, which would result in a new Allegany High School at the former site of the Braddock Campus of the Western Maryland Health System. School Superintendent David Cox says that a decision must be made quickly, so the Board of Education can comply with deadlines set by a state funding agency and the Board of Public Works. While Kauffman says the city can respond in a timely manner to the deadlines, he doesn't want to bypass citizen input in the process.

November 15, 2011

Board Member Cites "Significant" Savings With Land Swap

Allegany County Board of Education member Ed Root says taxpayers will save millions of dollars by using the former Sacred Heart Hospital to house a new Allegany High School. He cited the cost of buying land outside the city and constructing an entirely new school would cost significantly more. Additionally, the Western Maryland Health System and the city are set to sign a memo of understanding regarding the former Memorial Hospital, where the health system would have first right of refusal on the land near Constitution Park.

November 17, 2011

Humbertson Named ACPS Supervisor of Transportation

Larry Humbertson, the assistant supervisor of transportation for the Allegany County Public Schools, has been named supervisor of transportation and will replace Jay Walbert upon his retirement next month. Humbertson has been employed by the school system since 1992, when he began his career as a mechanic/transportation specialist. He was later promoted to his current position of assistant supervisor of transportation. In addition, he is also certified as a classroom instructor and

New Text Document

Maryland state school bus driver trainer, through the Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Pupil

December 1, 2011

Education Officials to State Their Case

A group of Allegany County education officials will have 20 minutes today before the Interagency Committee on School Construction to state their case for a new Allegany High School. Superintendent Dr. David Cox will tell the agency about the proposed land swap between the city of Cumberland and the Western Maryland Health System, and that the community is in need of a new Allegany High School. The Cumberland Mayor and City Council is expected to vote in the next week on the land swap proposal.

December 12, 2011

Public School Benefit from Hooley Plunge

The Allegany County Public School System was the second largest beneficiary of the 2011 Hooley Plunge, held on March 5th of this year at Rocky Gap State Park. The schools earned more than \$27,000 for certain programs and Unified Sports. Money allocated will help fund computers, instructional supplies, equipment and field trips. Founder of the event, Dr. Sean McCagh says he hopes as the event grows, it is hoped the amount of money the school system receives will also increase.

December 14, 2011

ACM To Hold Commencement

Allegany College of Maryland will graduate 225 students in ceremonies Friday evening in the Physical Education Building. Graduation ceremonies begin at 7 p.m., with about 240 associate degrees and certificates to be conferred. The exercises include students who attended ACM campuses in Bedford and Somerset counties in Pennsylvania.

December 20, 2011

Board To Hold Special Meeting

The Allegany County Board of Education will hold a special meeting today at the Central Office on Washington Street. The meeting will be held to consider the Memorandum of Understanding among the school board, the city of Cumberland, and the Western Maryland Health System. The meeting is open to the public. Immediately following the special meeting, the Board will meet in executive session for an appeal hearing.

December 20, 2011

Maryland to Share "Race to the Top" Grant

The state of Maryland and nine others sharing a half-billion dollar grant through the federal "Race to the Top" program. The federal competition offers an incentive to schools for good student behavior. It's unclear how much Maryland will receive, but the money will go towards early childhood education programs. Maryland received a quarter million dollars last year.

December 20, 2011

Reducing Dropout Rate Would Improve Economy

There were 6900 high school dropouts in the Class of 2010 in West Virginia, but one person says reducing that would translate to new jobs, increased pay for individuals and more tax revenues for the state. Former Governor Bob Wise, who heads the

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Alliance for Excellent Education, says the Mountain State would see a dramatic rise in earnings and increased spending, if those dropouts became "new graduates," and 60 per cent of them go on to complete some kind of higher education.

EMPLOYMENT

October 13, 2011

No Railroad Strike in Near Future

There won't be a strike by CSX workers, nor will there be a lock out in the near future. President Obama has issued an executive order, appointing a five-member board to look into a labor dispute, affecting freight railroads, but not passenger service. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen had voted to strike earlier this month; the executive order provides for a two-month negotiation period, between labor and management, along with an additional 30 days to decide whether to accept a recommended settlement, according to the Cumberland Times-News.

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October 13, 2011

Expansion Slated for Bedford County Business Park

A company in the Bedford County Business Park is planning to double its size there, in part, due to the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry. Rex Heat Treat, one of the original tenants in the park, will build a 30,000-square foot building to service "expanding markets." At least seven more employees will be hired following the expansion. Long-range plans call for a doubling of the Rex Heat Treat workforce.

October 19, 2011

WVSBDC Offering Small Business Workshops

Two small business workshops are scheduled for Wednesday, October 26th in Parsons, West Virginia. The workshops, entitled, "Business Fundamentals," and "Sustainable Growth," are part of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center new training and business coaching program, "Three Step Jump Start," to help small business owners receive the right information at the right time. Registration is required at least two days in advance. Call (304)-530-4964. Both workshops will be held in the City of Parsons Administrative Center, 341 Second Street.

October 25, 2011

Unemployment Rate Rises in Maryland

The state's unemployment rate continued to inch upward for the fourth consecutive month in September, rising from 7.3 per cent in August to 7.4. This year's low was 6.8 per cent in May. The rise in the rate could indicate that discouraged workers who had been sitting idle, have resumed their job search. Most of the jobs lost were in the government sector, but the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation could not say which municipalities cut jobs.

December 1, 2011

Keyser Drafts Policy for New Police Hires

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The Keyser Mayor and City Council adopted a policy this week, that would require all new law enforcement hires to pay a percentage of training and equipment if they choose to leave employment within a year of graduating from the academy. City Police Chief Karen Shoemaker has two prospects to replace two others the city is losing. One of the potential officers dropped out of the police academy, while another is leaving, to work for the Mineral County Sheriff's Department.

December 7, 2011

Thirty Workers May Be Affected by Processing Closure

If the United States Postal Service consolidates mail processing operations in Cumberland, up to 30 jobs would be eliminated, and first class mail that now takes a day could take two to three days to be delivered. As proposed, the mail processing operation could be moved to Johnstown. The Postal Service has scheduled a public hearing on the changes for December 19th at 6 p.m. at Fort Hill High School. The public will then have the opportunity to make comments, ask questions and register their feedback, according to the Cumberland Times-News.

December 19, 2011

Fechheimer To Lay Off Workers

Fechheimer Brothers Company facility in Grantsville plans to lay off 59 workers by March 1st. The company notified state regulators of the move. Fechheimer is based in Cincinnati, Ohio, and makes uniforms for police, firefighters, umpires and a range of other professions.

GOVERNMENT

October 4, 2011

Redistricting Means A Possible Challenge for Rep. Bartlett

Some political strategists would like to see Maryland's redistricting maps drawn, that would transform the 6th District race into a toss-up between Representative Roscoe Bartlett and a Democratic challenger. The five-member panel charged with recommending a redistricting map to Governor Martin O'Malley, according to an article Monday's "Herald-Mail." Two members of the panel are Senate President Mike Miller and House Speaker Michael Busch both Democrats.

October 6, 2011

Tomblin Wins Tuesday Election

Acting Governor Earl Ray Tomblin was elected earlier this week to lead the state of West Virginia until next year's elections. With the majority of the vote counted, Tomblin received 50 per cent of the vote to Republican challenger Bill Maloney's 47 per cent.

OCTOBER 10, 2011

Congressman Discuss State Redistricting with Governor O'Malley

Two Maryland Congressmen have asked Governor Martin O'Malley to make "substantial" changes in the state's proposed new political map. The Governor met with Representative Christopher Van Hollen, a Democrat and Sixth District Congressman Roscoe Bartlett. Governor O'Malley says he will consider their suggestions before submitting a final proposal to the General Assembly next month.

October 12, 2011

Legislation To Be Introduced On Redistricting

A Republican State Senator will introduce legislation in the upcoming special session of the General Assembly to preserve the 6th Congressional District from changes made under a draft plan. Senator Joseph Getty says his proposal would keep the western Maryland District largely as it is. Representative Roscoe Bartlett has held that seat since 1993. The special session will begin next week, and many angry Republicans are saying Democrats are trying to make it harder for Bartlett to win re-election.

October 14, 2011

Special Session Set Next Week; No Jobs Bill To Be Considered

It's official...Governor Martin O'Malley has signed an executive order, calling lawmakers back into session Monday, to redraw the boundaries of the state's Congressional Districts. Speaker of the House Michael Busch, and aides to Governor O'Malley both say there will be no consideration of any kind of jobs bill. Members of the General Assembly's Tea party Caucus are planning to hold a rally next Tuesday in Annapolis to protest high state taxes.

October 14, 2011

PACE Reception Dates Set

The Cumberland/Allegany County Industrial Foundation and the Garrett County Development Corporation are hosting the "PACE" Reception and Legislative Breakfast in Annapolis. The events are held to educate state legislators and officials about Allegany and Garrett Counties from the local perspective. This year's theme is "Come

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to Play-Plan to Stay." The PACE reception is planned for Thursday, January 26, 2012 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The Legislative Breakfast will be from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. at the Loew's/Annapolis Hotel.

October 19, 2011

Senate Committee Approves Redistricting Plan

The Maryland State Senate has voted 33 to 12, to approve a plan to change the boundaries of the state's eight Congressional Districts. The plan calls for the removal of part of Frederick and Baltimore, and all of Carroll Counties from the 6th Congressional District, now represented by Republican Roscoe Bartlett. It adds part of Montgomery County to that district, an effort many see as making it easier for a Democrat to win that Congressional seat. Opponents of the redistricting plan say they will file suit, if it is approved by the full General Assembly. A new map must be in place in time for candidates to file to get on the ballot for the April 3rd Maryland Primary election.

October 19, 2011

Slots Commission To Hold Public Meeting

The Maryland Video Lottery Facilities Commission will hold a meeting at Rocky Gap State Park, to consider two proposals to bring slots to the area. The meeting has been set for 2 p.m. on November 8th, with a public hearing set for 5 p.m. There are two proposals for Rocky Gap, as a third was rejected by the commission. They are Lakes Entertainment, Incorporated of Minnesota and Evitts Resort, LLC.

October 20, 2011

House Debating Redistricting

House Democratic leaders say they are confident that its redistricting plan will pass without changes. The General Assembly is meeting in special session to debate the plan, which needs a three-fifths majority to pass, since it is emergency legislation. The plan calls for the removal of part of Frederick and Baltimore, and all of Carroll Counties from the 6th Congressional District, now represented by Republican Roscoe Bartlett. In other legislative news, a number of committees have met to discuss a gas tax hike, which Governor O'Malley supports; a vote on that will, most likely, be taken during the regular session, which starts in January.

October 20, 2011

Garrett County Votes to Not Hire Lobbyist

The Garrett County Commissioners have decided to not participate in a plan to hire a lobbyist to advocate issues important to Western Maryland in the General Assembly. County Administrator Monty Pagenhardt says too many uncertainties surround the issue, such as whether the lobbyist would pursue one issue or several. A plan suggested earlier called for a lobbyist for the western Maryland counties of Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick and Carroll; each county would have contributed about \$5,000 each to pay his or her salary.

October 21, 2011

Special Session Wrapping Up

Governor Martin O'Malley has signed a bill that sets new boundaries for the state's eight Congressional Districts. Meanwhile, Sixth District Congressman Roscoe Bartlett, whose area was drastically altered by redistricting, criticized the plan, but says he filed for re-election in June and approval of the map has not changed his plans to seek re-election to represent the residents of Maryland's Sixth District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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October 21, 2011

Bedford County Hears Budget Requests

Bedford County's commissioners are conducting budget hearings and heard presentations from several departments on Wednesday. The Sheriff's Office has requested an increase in the budget for uniform allowance, travel expense, materials, supplies and other services. The Tax Assessment and Tax Claims Office is requesting just over \$300,000 for FY 2012. That represents an decrease from the estimated spending total of just over \$9700, when compared to FY 2011.

October 27, 2011

More Interest in Sixth District Race

Two Republican lawmakers, State Senator Christopher Shank and Delegate LeRoy Myers are considering jumping into Maryland's Sixth District Congressional Race. An article in Monday's Hagerstown Daily-Mail noted that there is widespread speculation that the current representative, Roscoe Bartlett will retire, since his district now has a larger percentage of Democrats, especially in Montgomery County. Another indication is that Bartlett has raised only \$1,000 from July 1st through September 30th. Publicly, Bartlett has said he has filed for re-election, and will run.

November 8, 2011

Cardin Launches Re-Election Campaign

Maryland United States Senator Benjamin Cardin has kicked off his re-election campaign, with a speech, attended by some of Maryland's top Democrats, including Governor Martin O'Malley, and fellow Senator Barbara Mikulski. According to the Federal Elections Commission, Cardin has a campaign "war chest" of more than \$2.3 million in the bank.

November 9, 2011

School Board, City Council Discuss Possible Property Swap

The Allegany County Board of Education and members of the Mayor and City Council are talking about a concept that will allow the school system to own the property located at the Braddock Campus of the western Maryland Health System, to be used as a potential site for the new Allegany High School. Through the development of a joint agreement between the city of Cumberland, the western Maryland Health System and Allegany County Public Schools, the city could convey the property near the new hospital to WMHS, in exchange for WMHS deeding the property at the Braddock Campus to the public school system.

November 9, 2011

Keyser Changes Software Provider

The city of Keyser is contracting with NPO Resources to provide technical support for its accounting software. The Mineral News-Tribune reports that Keyser had utilized Mountaineer Computer Systems of Lewisburg, West Virginia. NPO is based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Mayor Randy Amtower says mastery of the "Accufund" software will allow the city to move forward on a variety of fronts, from securing grant funding for water and sewer projects.

November 16, 2011

Commissioners Holding Rocky Gap Meeting

The Allegany County Commissioners will hold their regular weekly public business

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meeting at Rocky Gap Lodge and Golf Resort in Flintstone. The meeting begins at 5 p.m. in the Martin's Conference Room. Community members and all interested individuals are invited to attend.

November 22, 2011

Meeting on Proposed Allegany Site Set

The Cumberland City Council will hear public input on a proposal to locate a new Allegany High School at the site of the former Braddock Campus of the western Maryland Health System at its 6:15 p.m. meeting tonight. The Mayor and Council have been asked to vote on the matter before the end of the year, but they first want public comment on the issue, before they make up their minds. A vote on whether or not to support the project should take place next month.

November 23, 2011

Most Favor Land Swap for Allegany

Most of those in attendance at last night's Cumberland Mayor and City Council public meeting on a proposal for a new Allegany High School were in favor of the "land swap" between the City and the western Maryland Health System. However, the majority spoke on the disposition of the current Allegany High on Sedgewick Street, and what would happen to the facility. Cumberland City Council member Harold "Butch" Hendershot proposed the land swap and disposition of the old high school be tied together with a single memorandum of understanding, while other council members and residents believe the issues should be separate.

November 28, 2011

Bartlett Will Run For Re-Election

Maryland's Sixth District Congressman, Roscoe Bartlett says he will run for another term, despite speculation he was about to give up his seat in Congress. Bartlett, who is 85, filed for re-election at the end of June, despite talk from some, who said they would consider running for the seat if Bartlett didn't. Some of those names include State Senator Christopher Shank, and Delegate LeRoy Myers, Jr.

December 5, 2011

West Virginia Plans for Special Session

West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin says there will be a special session of the legislature this month to make changes in the regulatory bill for natural gas drilling in Marcellus Shale. The special session will begin next Monday, with Governor Tomblin indicating that the \$10,000 permit fee in the proposed legislation for the first well on a pad may be lowered, but a 625-foot distance from an unoccupied dwelling for the drilling sites, most likely will stay in the bill. The regular 2012 West Virginia Legislative Session begins next month.

December 6, 2011

Post Office Cutting Service to Save Money

The United States Postal Service is going ahead with cuts to first class mail that will slow delivery and eliminate the chance for stamped letters to arrive the next day. With no immediate help from Congress in sight, the USPS is looking to quickly trim costs by about \$3 billion. The move could provide short-term relief, but could also prove counterproductive, pushing more business onto the Internet.

December 7, 2011

Thirty Workers May Be Affected by Processing Closure

If the United States Postal Service consolidates mail processing operations in Cumberland, up to 30 jobs would be eliminated, and first class mail that now takes a day could take two to three days to be delivered. As proposed, the mail processing operation could be moved to Johnstown. The Postal Service has scheduled a public hearing on the changes for December 19th at 6 p.m. at Fort Hill High School. The public will then have the opportunity to make comments, ask questions and register their feedback, according to the Cumberland Times-News.

December 7, 2011

Chamber Hosts Pre-Legislative Breakfast

Three of four members of the Western Maryland delegation to the General Assembly attended yesterday morning's pre-legislative breakfast at the downtown Cumberland Holiday Inn. In his remarks, Senator George Edwards says that some of the major issues of the upcoming session will be the gas tax, Marcellus shale legislation, and Plan Maryland, a new land use plan for the state. Delegate Kevin Kelly says that the state may get involved in the "panhandling" issue. And, Delegate LeRoy Myers that while state government debates raising any number of fees, there is little to no discussion on how to streamline government and reduce spending.

December 14, 2011

Counties Form Coalition Against PlanMaryland

Allegany, Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties are joining forces against a proposed statewide development plan, known as PlanMaryland. They are forming the coalition to lobby against the plan, saying they also hope to include other rural counties, such as those on the Eastern Shore, to strengthen their influence in Annapolis. Frederick County Commission President Blaine Young says that the interests of urban and suburban areas sometimes outweigh those of rural sections of the state.

December 15, 2011

Postal Service To Delay Cutbacks

The United States Postal Service is delaying the closure of 252 mail processing centers and 3700 local post offices until mid-May. The agency is giving Congress more time to pass legislation that would give it more authority and liquidity to stave off bankruptcy. The postal service is expected to default on a \$5.5 billion payment to the Treasury, and is predicted to lose a record \$14.1 billion next year. The postal service had planned to hold a public hearing next week on a proposal to transfer mail processing from Cumberland to Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

December 20, 2011

Delegation Meeting Set

The Western Maryland Delegation to the General Assembly has announced its annual public meeting, which will take place on Wednesday, January 4th at 7 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Allegany College of Maryland auditorium. The meeting is open to all citizens, who are encouraged to attend and contribute any comments, questions or suggestions regarding state issues or legislative matters. The Allegany County Teacher's Association will provide refreshments.

STREETS AND HIGHWAYS

October 11, 2011

Residents Overwhelmingly Oppose Corridor Alignment

The West Virginia Department of Highways held a meeting last week on a proposal, known as "Corridor 'C,'" which would help connect Corridor "H" with Interstate 68. The proposal would run through Short Gap, and in fact, through the fire hall, as it connects to the Interstate. The overflow crowd at the meeting spoke out against the plan, which is the most expensive of the options to complete Corridor "H" in the Mountain State, costing more than \$200 million more than other routes.

October 12, 2011

Henderson Avenue Bridge to Close

The Henderson Avenue Bridge is closing for about a month, starting next Wednesday, October 19th. Repairs will be done during the month-long shutdown. Motorists will be required to follow the detoured route, using Valley Street to connect from Henderson Avenue to Centre and Mechanic Streets. Local residents in the North End will be permitted access to Pear Street and adjacent alleys from the east side of the bridge, via Henderson Avenue.

October 24, 2011

North-South Coalition To Hold Meeting

The North-South Appalachian Highway Coalition will hold its second annual meeting in Meyersdale on Friday, October 28th at 9 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Morguen Toole Company, located at 130 Center Street in Meyersdale. The Coalition is a three-state group of individual businesses, county and municipal governments and non-profit organizations, focused on the development of U.S. Route 219 from Somerset, Pennsylvania to the Maryland state line, and U.S. Route 220, from the Cumberland area to Appalachian Corridor "H" in West Virginia.

October 27, 2011

North-South Coalition To Hold Second Annual Meeting

The North-South Appalachian highway coalition will hold its second annual meeting in Meyersdale this Friday at 9 a.m. at the Morguen Toole Company on Center Street. The Coalition is a three-state group of individual businesses, county and municipal governments and non-profit organizations, focused on the development of U.S. Route 219, from Somerset to the Maryland state line, and U.S. Route 220 from the Cumberland area to Appalachian Corridor "H" in West Virginia.

November 1, 2011

Crossing To Be Closed

The railroad crossing at Washington Street in Westernport will be closed on Wednesday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. for repair work.

November 8, 2011

Paving Operations Underway

The City of Cumberland Engineering Department is notifying the public that mill and paving operations are underway for Park Street, Williams Street, and their connections with intersecting streets. The work should take approximately three weeks to complete, weather permitting. Parking will be restricted as posted. If possible, motorists are advised to take alternate routes to avoid the construction

work.

November 11, 2011

Temporary Street Closures Announced

Through Monday, weather permitting, milling and paving operations for Park Street and Williams Street will cause the temporary closure of streets and alleys that connect with them during the hours of 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. Residents are asked to use the alleys that parallel Park Street and Maryland Avenue. The city of Cumberland's Engineering Department is advising motorists to take alternate routes to avoid the construction work, if possible.

November 14, 2011

Toll Credits in Transportation Bill

The use of toll credits as matches for highway construction projects is in both the House and Senate Transportation Bill, paving the way, so to speak, for the completion of Route 219 from Meyersdale to Somerset. Once that project is underway, the process for completion of the segment from Meyersdale to Interstate 68 will begin. Pennsylvania Representative Bill Shuster says he doesn't expect action on the transportation bill until next year.

November 14, 2011

Utility Installation Planned

The northbound lane of Mechanic Street, from Harrison Street to Baltimore Street, will be closed for approximately two weeks for a utility installation. Pershing Street, from Liberty Street to Mechanic are closed to thru traffic. A detour route is in place, directing traffic around the construction area. Drivers are asked to use caution in the area of construction and follow the detour route in place.

November 15, 2011

Milling, Paving Operations to Continue

The city of Cumberland says milling and paving operations will continue today and tomorrow, weather permitting, in the Park Street and Williams Street areas. The work is scheduled to take place from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. today and tomorrow. Drivers should expect delays, and if possible, are urged to take alternate routes to avoid the construction work.

TAXES

OCTOBER 10, 2011

Alcohol Tax To Pay for School Projects

The Maryland Board of Public works has approved \$18 million for school construction projects in Howard, Montgomery, and Anne Arundel counties. The BPW approved the money, which came from the first portion of revenue from the 50 per cent increase in the sales tax on alcohol that the General Assembly approved in April. The money will specifically be earmarked for athletic fields in Howard County, renovations to schools in Montgomery County and a new high school performing arts center in Anne Arundel County.

October 13, 2011

Cigarette Tax Opposed by Local Lawmakers

A proposal to place a \$1-per-pack tax on a pack of cigarettes is not sitting well with local lawmakers. The AARP of Maryland is pushing for the tax, but State Senator George Edwards says that if they want to do away with smoking in Maryland, the General Assembly should pass a law, banning the sale of any tobacco products in the state. Delegate Kevin Kelly, called the proposal "outrageous," noting that people do not have the money to pay more taxes.

October 21, 2011

Gas Tax Increase Not a "Tough Sell"

Leaders from Maryland's two largest counties and Baltimore city have asked lawmakers to raise the state's gas tax to fund road projects and create jobs, and Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake says the tax increase won't be a "tough sell," because residents realize there is a need to patch roads, which would create jobs. Governor Martin O'Malley, who is advocating an increase, says a 15-cent increase would put tens of thousands of people to work. The current tax is 23.5-cents a gallon.

November 1, 2011

Franchot Says Tax Hikes Would Be A Mistake

Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot says raising either the state's gasoline tax or "flush tax," or both would be, in his words, "a mistake." He says the state needs a two-year tax "break," which would give the private sector a chance "to catch its breath." A state advisory panel has recommended that the gas tax be raised by 15-cents a gallon over three years, as well as vehicle registration and inspection fees, in order to raise money for new highway projects. A task force is also recommending doubling or tripling the state's "flush fee" over the next several years.

November 7, 2011

Higher Gas Tax On The Way

Maryland Senate President Mike Miller acknowledges it is not a popular idea, but a gas tax is coming. Increasing the tax is likely to be a divisive issue in the upcoming legislative session. Miller and House Speaker Michael Busch spoke at the Maryland Chamber of Commerce business Policy Conference, and Busch previewed a tax increase by saying that lawmakers are looking at ways to fund a large-scale public works program, but gave no specifics. For their part, Maryland Republicans are opposed to raising taxes.

November 30, 2011

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Commissioners To Follow Staff Recommendations

The Allegany County Commissioners, most likely, will follow staff recommendations, and not change the county's paper gaming taxation structure. The commissioners may, however, ask the western Maryland Delegation to the General Assembly to look for a change in the law, which would give the commissioners more flexibility in setting local tax rates on the games. For-profit businesses had asked for a reduction in the tax rate earlier in the year; presently, that rate is 40 per cent.

December 7, 2011

Bedford County Raises Taxes; Hyndman Holds Line

The Bedford Borough Council voted this week to raise property taxes, and to make substantial cuts in a budget that will require drawing from reserves. Meanwhile, Hyndman borough is keeping its property tax rate steady for 2012, even though spending is expected to increase by a few percentage points. Hyndman Council president Stanley Robinson noted that he would not take a look at any tax increases, while the borough still has a surplus in its accounts.

December 8, 2011

Bedford Tables Reassessment Bid

The new board of Bedford County Commissioners will be sworn in on December 21st, so the current board voted to table the 2012 property reassessment bid, sending the matter to the new incoming commissioners. The only bid received was from Tyler Technologies, which conducted the 2009 reassessment. Bedford County's nearly \$14.5 million budget is also being revealed, and does not include capital expenditure requests or revenue from housing state inmates, who were withdrawn from the county jail last February with no explanation.