



ISSUES-JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH
2014

I. COMMUNITY PLANNING

II. COST OF LIVING

III. CRIME-LAW & ORDER

IV. DRUG ABUSE

V. EDUCATION

VI. EMPLOYMENT

VII. GOVERNMENT

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

January 13, 2014

Canal Place to be Discussed

In a letter to Delegate Kevin Kelly, Senator George Edwards has promised a face-to-face meeting with all those involved with Canal Place. And now, that meeting has been set for Wednesday in Annapolis. Representatives from the City of Cumberland, Allegany County, Canal Place and the media will be on hand for the meeting. Delegate Kelly says his position is to be "transparent" on the issue and will insist the media be present. Kelly says he would like to see Canal Place directly under the jurisdiction of elected officials, who will be accountable to the taxpayers. If that happens and if they (the taxpayers) are not satisfied, they have the option of changing their elected officials. Delegate Kelly says he would like to see "all-around accountability" for Canal Place.

January 16, 2014

Meeting Held on Canal Place

A meeting with all parties involved in Canal Place was held in Annapolis yesterday afternoon, and the future of the entity was discussed. Delegate Kevin Kelly says the city and county will not meet to come up with a plan for the promotion, maintenance and operation of Canal Place. Once that agreement is in place, they will approach the state to see what it would want to relinquish control of Canal Place. Kelly noted that the Governor has allocated \$164,000 in the FY '15 budget for the continued operation.

January 21, 2014

"Wait and See" Attitude for Canal Place

What will happen with Canal Place and the Footer Dye Works building depends on meetings to be held over the next several weeks, among the city, county, and state officials. Maryland State Senator George Edwards says if a private developer is secured for Canal Place, the situation will move forward. Senator Edwards notes that \$116,000 has been set aside in next year's budget for Canal Place. While salaries for the three employees totaled over \$211,000, the state has only agreed to set aside \$116,000 in Governor O'Malley's \$39 billion budget. Senator Edwards says that revenues are also generated from the shop leases, and from parking at Canal Place.

January 21, 2014

Carpendale Bridge Topic of Discussion

A bridge, linking Carpendale, West Virginia to Maryland was the topic of each meeting during Mineral County Day in Charleston. The bridge is a priority project for several reasons, including the development of a business park, additional employment, and additional revenue for Mineral

County. The project was estimated to cost around \$5 million, which is according to Mineral County officials a small price, when compared to the economic possibilities the bridge would bring.

January 23, 2014

Hospital Demolition on Schedule

If you've been in the area of the former Memorial Hospital, you may have noticed there has been no exterior demolition of the building at this point. Cumberland City Council member David Kauffman says there has been some interior issues, such as asbestos removal and other environmental concerns. He says crews are preparing for the demolition of the exterior of the building. He emphasizes the demolition is on schedule. The Mayor and Council had received a change order for asbestos removal, which is not uncommon.

February 18, 2014

Future of Canal Place To Be Discussed

Allegheny County Commission President Mike McKay has come up with the draft of a plan for the future of Canal Place, which includes the abolition of the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority, and the creation of a smaller board. That would include representatives of both the city and county. McKay's plan would also have the state continue to own the property, but allow the city to manage and market the shops and the festival grounds. The Authority is scheduled to meet today.

February 19, 2014

New School \$6.2 Million Short

The new Allegheny High School is \$6 million over budget. The updated price estimate on the facility is now \$42.3 million. While the proposed three-story school has a number of features, it was pointed out at the Board of Education meeting that not having an auditorium would save around three-million dollars, and removing a bay of classrooms would save over a million dollars. And, estimates on the demolition of the former Sacred Heart campus of the Western Maryland Health System would cost around \$4 million. Board officials are hoping that all projected funding sources come through; however, that would still leave the project nearly \$3 million short.

February 19, 2014

Authority Interviews Applicants

The Mineral County Development planned to interview applicants for the position of executive director. There are 16 prospective candidates, and the position has been open since the January

1st retirement of Mona Ridder. Interviews for the position were held in executive session at the authority office at 87 North Main Street in Keyser.

February 19, 2014

Piedmont Foreman to be Named

The town of Piedmont is expected to name a new foreman at its meeting next Wednesday. There are 10 applicants for the position, and that field was narrowed to five, who will be interviewed today. The new foreman will replace John Shingler, who was recently released from a federal penitentiary, after serving a sentenced for being convicted of felony embezzlement in connection with FEMA trailers.

February 19, 2014

Ridgeley Community Center to Open

The Ridgeley Community Center will be reopening, following an agreement reached yesterday evening. Town Council members have entered into an agreement with Lamar Smith to lease the center for 25 hours per week for \$20 per hour. Smith is a captain in the town's volunteer fire department, and the center will be used for baseball and softball practice; there are also plans to start a volleyball league at the center.

February 19, 2014

Sanitary District Meeting Set

The Allegany County Commissioners have scheduled a public meeting regarding the upcoming sewer rehabilitation projects in the Braddock Run Sanitary District. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 4th at 7 p.m. The location is the Mountain Ridge High School cafeteria in Frostburg. All customers in the Sanitary District, residents of Frostburg, along with all interested citizens are invited and encouraged to attend the meeting.

February 25, 2014

Comprehensive Plan to be Presented

Allegany County will have a public hearing on its 2014 Comprehensive Plan in April. The meeting, set for Wednesday, April 9th at 5 p.m., will cover areas such as housing, transportation, public facilities, mineral resources, and other areas. The first ten chapter provide the background information for the last chapter, "Land Use and Implementation," that includes future land uses and proposed general zoning changes.

February 26, 2014

Rocky Gap Announces Expansion Plans

Rocky Gap Casino Resort had previously announced the addition of 150 new parking spaces, but it is also enlarging its Pro Shop and the kitchen at Signatures Bar & Grill. The fitness center will also be expanded and will include new exercise equipment. Landscaping will be added around the resort and new parking lot. Construction will begin this spring, and it was noted in a news release, that the expansion is compliant with the lease from Maryland's Department of Natural Resources.

March 4, 2014

Downtown Bill Approved in Senate

A bill, sponsored by Senator George Edwards that would benefit downtown areas has unanimously passed the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. The legislation would create a tax credit to attract developers and support building owners, and would make the upper stories of downtown buildings more attractive to potential business owners. The vote was 13-0, and a companion bill has been introduced in the Maryland House of Delegates.

March 6, 2014

Meeting Set to Discuss CSO Proposal

A meeting among all interested parties has been scheduled to further discuss the combined sewer overflow issue for the Cumberland, Frostburg, and LaVale areas. A meeting was held yesterday morning at the office of State Senator George Edwards in Annapolis. Among those in attendance were representatives from the Maryland Department of the Environment, Cumberland Mayor Brian Grim, City Engineer John DiFonzo, Dave Wendt of the LaVale Sanitary Commission and members of the Western Maryland Delegation. At issue is should the city spend \$30 million to mitigate problems with the combined sewer and storm water system; and, if so, would the area be liable for fines if the mitigation does not work.

March 14, 2014

County Receives Legacy Funding

Allegany County will benefit from an over \$400,000 Community Legacy Award from the state of Maryland. The money will be used for four programs and a renovation project. The state recently awarded \$5.5 million. The money will be used locally for the Upper Story Redevelopment Program and for renovation efforts at Friends Aware, among other projects.

March 14, 2014

Bowling Greene Water Project Meeting Set

The Allegany County Commissioners have scheduled a public meeting on the upcoming water projects in Bowling Green. the meeting is set for this Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the Bowling Green Fire Department. Residents and all interested citizens are invited and encouraged to attend.

Allegany County Department of Public Works officials will also be at the meeting to discuss the projects and answer questions.

COST OF LIVING

January 6, 2014

Gas Prices Rise in West Virginia

Gas prices rose about four cents over the last week in West Virginia, with the average price of a gallon of regular gas, pegged at \$3.39. That is higher than the U.S. average of \$3.32, but below some of the steep increases reported in several other states. Prices range from a low of \$3.22 in Parkersburg to a high of \$3.50 a gallon in the Martinsburg and Wheeling areas.

January 14, 2014

Gas Prices Fluctuate in 2013

For the fifth straight year, New Year's Day brought higher gas prices than the year before. This year, on January 1st, a record was set for the highest price for a gallon of gasoline. Marylanders ended the year paying an average of \$3.46 per gallon. Triple "A" of Maryland has a list of the lowest gas prices in the state.

January 15, 2014

O'Malley Wants Minimum Wage Increase

Governor Martin O'Malley has come up with a figure for Maryland's minimum wage-\$10 per hour, as compared to the present rate of \$7.25. While Montgomery and Prince George's counties have already raised the minimum wage, Governor O'Malley would like to see the increase across the board in Maryland. And while he says this is the biggest issue of his final General Assembly session as Governor, O'Malley may see some opposition from business and restaurant owners, who say an increase could actually harm those it seeks to help by forcing employers to cut staff or hours, or even close down.

January 22, 2014

Miller Skeptical of Over \$10 Minimum Wage

Maryland Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller says that it is going to be difficult to find a solution to address economic differences in the state. Prince George's and Montgomery Counties have already decided to raise the minimum wage to \$11.50 by 2017, but Miller says lawmakers from other, rural parts of the state won't be able to support an increase that high. Governor O'Malley is proposing a minimum wage of \$10.10 per hour, but Miller says the debate over raising it will be difficult.

January 28, 2014

West Virginia Residents' Bills Rise

West Virginia residents paid 1.2 per cent more for utilities last year than in the previous year, primarily because of increases in natural gas and water rates. The average monthly utility bill was just over \$280 for gas, electricity, water and telephone service. In 2012, the average monthly cost was just over \$277.00. Increases in natural gas and water rates last year were offset by a decline in electricity rates.

January 29, 2014

Postage Prices Rise

The price of a postage stamp has risen to 49-cents, and that is a ten cent increase in the past decade. The United States Postal Service says it has to keep up with rising costs and dwindling business. The hike will translate in to about two billion dollars in annual revenue for the Postal Service, which has experienced what a spokesperson called a "challenging" last few years.

February 7, 2014

Mineral Commissioners Oppose Pay Raise

Due to a number of factors, not the least of which is the economy, the Mineral County Commissioners have gone on record, opposing a bill, which would increase the salaries of county elected officials. The bill would implement a pay raise for all county elected officials, including county commissioners, circuit clerks, county clerks, prosecuting attorneys, sheriffs and assessors. The commissioners oppose the raise also because of impending money woes for the year, decreases in severance monies, and budget cuts on the state and federal levels. Currently the county commissioners earn just under \$35,000 annually. County clerks earn just over \$53,000, and prosecuting attorney's salaries are around \$90,000 annually.

February 12, 2014

Chamber Issues Minimum Wage Position

While the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce does not oppose raising Maryland's minimum wage, it feels the amount of the increase should be determined by the individual counties. Executive Director Stu Czapski says there are eight bills being considered in the General Assembly. He notes three things can happen now, including allowing businesses to absorb the cost; they can eliminate the expense, or pass it on to the consumer. Czapski said that one small business in the area did a quick calculation on increasing the minimum wage by only one dollar. Raising the minimum wage would increase the cost of goods and services, possibly driving consumers out of the area. Czapski observes that it is very easy to move, to do business elsewhere.

February 14, 2014

Minimum Wage Debate in Annapolis

Both Governor Martin O'Malley and Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown have testified in favor of a bill that would increase the state's minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour by 2016. Washington County Delegate Neil Parrott has also testified in support of a bill that would allow counties to set their own minimum wage rates. George Mason University economist Stephen Fuller says that even with an increase to \$10 per hour, one-half billion dollars is taken out of the economy, and there are effects from that.

February 17, 2014

Minimum Wage Debated in Annapolis

Governor Martin O'Malley wants to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour by July of 2016, and also wants to tie future increases to the federal cost of living index. House Economic Matters Committee Chairman Derrick Davis says there are strong feelings on both sides of the issue. Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller believes the Governor's figure of \$10.10 per hour is too high. Davis says he is not a big fan of the various minimum wage proposals; he says it can lead to a competitive disadvantage situation. There are still several weeks left in the General Assembly session, and a vote on the issue is not imminent.

February 27, 2014

Legislation to Correct Retirement/Pension System

Maryland State Senator George Edwards and Delegate Andrew Serafini have sponsored a bill that would allow a certain class of correctional officers to be part of the Correctional Officers Retirement System, rather than the less generous state pension system. The measure would benefit correctional officers who serve as security chiefs, facility administrators, assistant wardens and wardens. The bill was heard by the House Appropriations Committee this week, while a Senate version of the bill was heard in committee last week.

March 5, 2014

Gas Prices on the Rise

Gas prices have risen fifteen cents higher per gallon, on average, than they were a month ago locally and 17 cents higher nationwide, according to the Triple-A Daily Fuel Gauge report. The average price for a gallon of regular gas in Maryland is now \$3.46; In West Virginia, the price is \$3.50, and in Pennsylvania, the price is \$3.63. The national average is \$3.45, which is up from the \$3.41 average last week.

March 5, 2014

Minimum Wage Debate Continues

The Maryland General Assembly has yet to agree on a minimum wage bill. Governor Martin O'Malley wants to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour by 2016, with future increases tied to the inflation rate. Lawmakers on Monday night proposed a statewide increase to \$10.10 an hour over the next three years, rather than allow smaller counties with a lower cost of living to have less of a wage hike. Matt Hanson, campaign director for "Raise Maryland," says the Governor's minimum wage plan for "tipped" workers would be 70 per cent of the minimum wage. He says tipped workers are more likely to fall below federal poverty levels. Hanson acknowledges there are objections from both Republicans and Democrats on the minimum wage issue. Hanson says if the minimum wage had kept pace with inflation since 1968, it would now be over \$10.74 per hour.

March 18, 2014

Senate Debates Minimum Wage

The Maryland State Senate continues its work on a minimum wage bill for the state. Senator Mac Middleton, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, says there will be differences with the House version of the bill. There has been a proposal "floated" in the General Assembly, where the minimum wage would be set at \$8.25 per hour, but with an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit, according to Senator Middleton. Senator Middleton see a compromise of both an increased minimum wage and Earned Income Tax Credit.

March 18, 2014

West Virginia Officials May Receive Pay Raise

Even though the Mineral County Commissioners opposed it, West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin may sign a bill that would raise the pay of county elected officials by 12 per cent. The bill was passed during a special session of the Legislature last Friday. The local commissioners felt a raise would put an unfair burden on already strained county budgets.

CRIME-LAW & ORDER

January 6, 2014

Safe Streets Initiative Begins

The Safe Streets Program is conducting another warrant initiative, beginning today, and running through Friday. Sixteen residents are being sought for a number of violations, including drug counts, violation of probation/failure to appear, robbery and domestic assault. The Safe Streets program is requesting citizens and residents of communities to assist in the apprehension of numerous individuals wanted for various criminal activities.

January 13, 2014

Man Indicted in Child's Death

A Hampshire County grand jury has indicted Cody Orndorff of Green Spring. He is suspected of killing his girlfriend's child, 18-month old Leah Barnes, last October. Orndorff was charged with a count of death of a child by a custodian, involving child abuse and five more counts of child abuse resulting in injury. The grand jury formally indicted 25 people, with charges ranging from drug counts, sex-related crimes, sexual assault and distributing obscene material to a minor.

January 14, 2014

Sex Offender Wanted By Authorities

Registered sex offender Paul Luther Kennedy is being sought by authorities for an alleged violation of probation. Anyone with information on his whereabouts, is asked to contact local law enforcement authorities. Kennedy is wanted on an open arrest warrant.

January 15, 2014

Schleuniger Sentenced in Simmons Murder

Steven Schleuniger who pleaded guilty to the 2nd-degree murder of Lisa Simmons of Cumberland, was sentenced in Allegany County Circuit Court yesterday. Judge Timothy Finan sentenced Schleuniger to the maximum of 30 years in prison, without the possibility of parole. Schleuniger was allowed to plead guilty to 2nd- degree murder in exchange for cooperating with investigators by confessing to the murder of Lisa Simmons and showing them where he had buried the her body in Winchester, Virginia. Schleuniger also admitted to the July, 2010 murder of Tammy Myerly of Hagerstown; because of the plea agreement, Schleuniger will not be prosecuted in that case.

January 15, 2014

Zello Found Incompetent to Stand Trial

Finan Center patient Craig Harris Zello, who attacked a male nurse there last October has been found incompetent to stand trial in the case. He had been charged with attempted first-degree murder, and other counts, when he allegedly stabbed the nurse in the back of the head with a 7-inch galvanized metal spike. The victim was treated and released at the hospital following the incident.

January 17, 2014

Bedford Man Arrested on Child Porn Charges

Bedford County resident Kerry Ritchey is jailed in lieu of \$100,000 bail, set at 10 per cent, on numerous counts of possessing child pornography. Ritchey is one of five men across the state of Pennsylvania who have been arrested, on unrelated charges, as part of ongoing efforts to target online sharing. Items seized from Ritchey's home included a laptop and desktop computer, a notebook computer and an external hard drive, along with other electronic media. Ritchey has a preliminary hearing next week.

January 17, 2014

Safe Streets Initiative Nabs 22 Fugitives

The latest Safe Streets Initiative, conducted by the Cumberland Police Department, has resulted in the arrest of 22 people on a variety of charges. Counts ranged from robbery, to driving under the influence to theft, and failure to appear. The Cumberland City Police has expressed its thanks to the public for their help in apprehending those who were wanted.

January 20, 2014

Children Removed from Potomac Center

Two dozen children have been removed from the Potomac Center on Blue Street in Romney, because of what one state official says was "inhumane and degrading" treatment. West Virginia State Police are conducting an investigation. Two other group homes, on Birch Lane and Washington Street were not affected. While not being specific on the nature of the investigation, it is known that State Police will continue to monitor the situation on a 24-hour basis.

January 21, 2014

Charges May Be Filed in Potomac Center Case

Charges will be brought to those proven to be involved in alleged abuses at the Potomac Center in Romney, West Virginia. Specific details on the alleged abuses from an undetermined number of lower management employees have not been revealed, but it is known that minor incidents of sexual abuse may have taken place. State representatives will be traveling to Charleston to discuss the situation with the Department of Health and Human Resources.

January 27, 2014

Garrett County Teacher Arrested on Sexual Abuse Charges

Garrett County teacher Richard Allan McCrobie has been arrested on charges of sexual abuse of a minor, possession of child pornography, and displaying obscene material to a minor. He had been under investigation since last summer, when he allegedly allowed students unsupervised access to computers on Northern High School property, and had provided access to pornographic materials to students. From the start of the current school year, McCrobie has not had access to any students nor the Northern Garrett High School property. The Maryland State Police are continuing their investigation.

January 27, 2014

Teacher Arrested for Embezzlement

A Hampshire High School teacher, Bradley W. Tenney, has been arrested for embezzlement. He has admitted to taking \$781 from a fundraiser at the school. The choral group, Harmony, was attempting to raise money to go to New York; Tenney was the director of the group. Tenney is accused of depositing the checks, but not depositing the cash. The hearing on the embezzlement charge, which is considered a misdemeanor, has been set for March 12th.

January 27, 2014

Breakings and Enterings in Midland, Lonaconing

The Allegany County Sheriff's Department is currently investigating several incidents, either breakings and enterings or forced entries in homes in the Watercliff Street area of Lonaconing and in the Midland area as well. There are reports from the Sheriff's Office that at least one suspect is in custody.

January 29, 2014

Burlington Man Charged in Home Invasions

Twenty-five year old Burlington, West Virginia resident Gary Dale Hamilton has been charged in two home invasions this past weekend in the Watercliffe Street area of Lonaconing. Hamilton, who had been held on drug charges, is being held on \$20,000 bond at the Allegany County Detention Center. Sheriff Craig Robertson said he obtained information on the robberies from residents of the area from a Facebook account; from that, a suspect was developed. Officers found evidence in Hamilton's backpack, that linked him to the crimes.

February 4, 2014

NBCI Warden Fired

The warden at the North Branch Correctional Institution, Bobby Shearin, was reportedly fired yesterday morning. Shearin says that two officials from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services delivered a letter of termination to him around 10 a.m. He was placed on administrative leave, and will be terminated from state service on February 17th. A list of complaints accompanying the letter, which included a charge of failing to hold staff accountable for their actions, creating an unsafe environment, and allowing the chain of command to lapse to the point where supervisors have become ineffective.

February 5, 2014

Man Held on a Total \$50,000 Bond

Cumberland resident Louis Passano was arrested Monday afternoon, and is being held on a total \$50,000 bond at the Allegany County Detention Center. Passano is accused of assaulting three victims at a Knox Street residence. He was seen leaving the residence, but was stopped and officers determined he was impaired, and a small amount of marijuana was found on him. Police also discovered that there was a warrant for his arrest, for assaulting another female victim in the 1,000-block of Van Buren Avenue. Passano also stolen some U.S. Savings Bonds. He was held on \$30,000 bond and on \$20,000 for the arrest warrant.

February 6, 2014

Frederick Officer Arrested in Garrett County Assault

Frederick Police say one of their own, Officer Benjamin Whitmore, was arrested and charged with second-degree assault in Garrett County on Tuesday. There were no specifics on the incident, but it is known that Officer Whitmore's police powers have been suspended. An investigation is being conducted by the Garrett County Sheriff's Department; there will also be a separate internal investigation by Frederick Police.

February 6, 2014

Woman Sentenced to 8 Years Home Detention

A Garrett County woman was sentenced to eight years of home detention, with four years suspended. Miranda White had been accused of attempted second-degree murder and other counts in connection with an incident in March of last year. White is accused of assaulting her former boyfriend. she struck him with a car, then crashed the vehicle into the Cornish Cafe. She was also ordered to make restitution to both the victim and the business.

February 6, 2014

Shearin "Surprised," Union Officials Praise Former Warden

Former NBCI Warden Bobby Shearin says he was surprised to have been replaced at the prison, and union leaders say employees are "puzzled" by the move. For his part, Shearin-who placed

the inmates there on lockdown for weeks following the stabbing of a correctional officer-Shearin says he had been gradually lifting those restrictions, but state officials were unsatisfied with the pace. The officers' union praised Shearin's record at the prison, but the former warden says he was disappointed that he couldn't "finish what he started." He had been on the job since 2009.

February 6, 2014

Three Potomac Center Employees Fired

Three employees of the Potomac Center have been fired and 50 have been laid off so far. The executive director of the West Virginia Behavioral Health Care Providers Association, Mark Drennan, says "demeaning and degrading acts" were experienced by the children, and West Virginia State Police characterize them as acts of physical and sexual abuse. The program is a 6 to 24 month residential stay for kids between the ages of 5 and 17, who have developmental disabilities and behavioral issues.

February 10, 2014

Plea Agreement Reached in Child's Death

Green Spring resident Cory Orndorff will be sentenced on March 12th, in connection with the death of 18-month old Leah Grace Barnes. The penalty for abuse, resulting in death is not less than 10, nor more than 40 years in prison. Orndorff was arrested last October. On Friday, his \$150,000 bail was revoked, and taken to jail to await sentencing.

February 19, 2014

Inmate Sentenced in Death

An inmate at the Western Correctional Institution has been convicted of the first-degree murder of a fellow inmate. Corgiss Ross was sentenced to life, consecutive to the 10-year sentence which brought him into the correctional system. Ross is accused of murdering cellmate Jerod Pridget in November of 2012. Pridget later died at the University of Maryland Shock Trauma center in Baltimore. The case was investigated by the Maryland State Police Homicide Unit and the Maryland Department of public Safety and Correctional Services.

February 24, 2014

Sheriff Wants Refunds Intercepted from Fugitives

Allegany County Sheriff Craig Robertson will testify in favor of a bill that would withhold state tax refunds from fugitives who have outstanding warrants. Anne Arundel County has had some success with similar legislation. The Sheriff's Office would provide the Maryland State Comptroller's Office with the names of those with outstanding warrants. Their state income tax refund with then be withheld, and the comptroller will send a letter with instructions on how to collect the refund.

March 4, 2014

Garrett County Developers Headed to Trial

Two Garrett County men will go to trial in May, after pleading not guilty to a \$3.7 million bank fraud scheme. Forty-nine year old Samuel R. Van Sickle and 47-year old year old Louis Strosnider of Oakland were indicted by a federal grand jury last month. They are accused of attempting to fraudulently obtain money and property from area financial institutions through false names, and inflating the value of the properties. Both are on release, promising to appear for their next court date.

March 10, 2014

Everett Man Accused of Over 2400 Counts of Rape

Everett resident Michael William Edmonson is in the Bedford County jail in lieu of \$100,000 bail, after being accused of 2,426 counts of rape and contributing to the condition of minors. He is accused of raping three young girls, beginning when they were as young as five, over the course of several years. Edmonson was arrested after two of the victims came forward, after several years of abuse. Bedford County District Attorney Bill Higgins says, that when it comes to pedophiles, he will "put them in jail for as long as I can."

March 12, 2014

Potomac Center Investigation Continues

Allegations of physical and sexual abuse at the Potomac Center in Romney continue to be investigated, and it could take most of this year to finish. Two dozen children were removed from the center, with as many as 12 identified as victims of abuse, with ten suspects identified. Removing the children has had a financial impact on the center, as fifty people have been laid off, and the remaining staff cut to 32 hours per week. The management and staff of the Potomac Center are cooperating with the investigation.

March 13, 2014

Former Firefighter Convicted of Theft

Douglas Kiser, a former Corriganville Volunteer Fire Department firefighter has been convicted in Allegany County Circuit Court of both theft and destruction of property. Judge Tim Finan presided over the trial. Kiser was accused of staging a burglary at the fire department in March of last year, and stealing \$5,000 in cash and gift cards from the organization's safe. He was only one of five people who had access to the safe room, and had used the gift card at a local convenience store. A pre-sentence investigation was ordered; Kiser remains free on bond.

March 17, 2014

"Capt. Ed" Utilized as Crime Prevention Tool

"Capt. Ed," an acronym for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design is being implemented by the Cumberland Safe Streets Program as a crime fighting tool. Chuck Sczuroski, a Master Trainer with the National Crime Prevention Council, says the concept is used in crime "hot spots," using access control, territorial reinforcement, surveillance and maintenance. Sczuroski says businesses are also key in the program, and praised the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce for its participation. He spoke on another aspect of the program. And, he also commented on Mayor Brian Grim's campaign against blighted properties in the city of Cumberland.

March 18, 2014

Man is "Person of Interest" in Murders

Charles Severance, who had been arrested several times in Cumberland in the early 2000's on charges of assault and indecent exposure, has been called a "person of interest" in three northern Virginia murders. Severance has been living in Loudon County, Virginia, but was taken into custody over the weekend on a charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

March 18, 2014

Safe Streets Initiative Conducted

Another in a series of "Safe Streets" warrant initiatives was conducted last week. A total of 31 people were arrested on 32 warrants being served. Numerous charges were lodged, ranging from fraud, to violation of probation and theft, and obstruction of justice. The Safe Streets operation sought, and received, help from citizens in locating and apprehending those who were wanted.

DRUG ABUSE

January 3, 2014

Large Drug Bust In Hagerstown

Three Hagerstown residents are in jail, following a large drug bust in Washington County. Police say about \$50,000 worth of drugs were found inside a home on Hamilton Boulevard. Both heroin and methamphetamine were found, along with several guns and \$9,000 in cash. Arrested were 23-year old Breezy Jill Bequette, 26-year old Cody William Grant, and 25-year old Daniel Matthew Anderson. A warrant is out for 25-year old Benjamin Joseph Bequette. The investigation is ongoing.

January 6, 2014

Police Investigate Possible Meth Lab

The C3I unit is expected to file charges, after a possible meth lab was found in the 500-block of Linden Street late last week. Cumberland Fire and Police departments responded to the fire, inside the residence. Firefighters observed some suspicious items that lead them to believe some of the materials in the home may have been used to manufacture methamphetamine. Also responding to the scene was the Allegany County Hazardous Material team.

January 8, 2014

Moorefield Man Arrested in Garrett County

Moorefield resident Benjamin Whetzel was charged with possession of marijuana and possession of paraphernalia, following a traffic stop late yesterday morning on Route 219, north of Glendale Road. Whetzel was originally stopped for speeding and not using his seat belt. A probable cause search was done on the car, and Whetzel was taken into custody, and later released after signing a criminal citation.

January 28, 2014

Sheriff Warns of Deadly Heroin

Garrett County Sheriff Rob Corley is warning the area of a deadly heroin mixture that resulted in the deaths of four people in Pittsburgh recently. People in the community obtain the drug by traveling to Fayette and Allegheny counties. The heroin is laced with fentanyl and are labeled as "Theraflu." Immediate medical treatment is the only hope for a person who has taken an overdose of this particular strain. Sheriff Corley also urges those who overdose, to be completely honest with medical providers.

February 10, 2014

Everett Woman Arrested for Paraphernalia Possession

Thirty-four year old Everett, Pennsylvania resident Cody Amanda Clark was arrested at the Sheetz store on Virginia Avenue, and now faces various drug charges. Police responded to the store, after a report of two people acting suspiciously. Ms. Clark, was found to have a hypodermic needle, along with heroin paraphernalia. She had admitted to using heroin earlier in the day. She was taken to District Court, and released without bond.

February 12, 2014

Garrett County Man Sentenced for Heroin Possession

Thirty-one year old Grantsville resident Jarrod Olen Wilburn has been sentenced to ten years in prison, with six of those suspended, for conspiracy to possess heroin with intent to distribute. Wilburn entered an Alford plea, which does not admit guilt, but acknowledges the state had sufficient evidence to convict him. He will be on probation, following his release. The case stems back to July, when he was stopped for a traffic violation; police found hypodermic needles in his car. Wilburn had admitted that he was traveling to purchase heroin for others.

February 18, 2014

Pseudoephedrine Bill Considered in Charleston

A bill that would require a doctor's prescription for cold medications containing pseudoephedrine is being considered by the Senate Judiciary Committee in West Virginia. "Pseudo" is the main ingredient in methamphetamine, and lawmakers are trying to reduce meth manufacturing in the state. Sales of medications, containing pseudoephedrine are limited and tracked in the Mountain State; a complaint of many residents is that they don't want to go through the process of getting prescriptions for medication they can now buy over the counter.

February 25, 2014

Man Sentenced on Drug Charges in Garrett County

Pittsburgh resident Jacob Omar McDonald has been sentenced in Garrett County to three years in prison, after pleading guilty to possession of heroin, with intent to distribute. Related charges against McDonald were dismissed as part of a plea agreement, and \$820 in cash that was seized at the time of his arrest was ordered to be forfeited. Mc Donald was arrested at a Grantsville hotel, after the Garrett County Narcotics Task Force acted on an anonymous tip. He had more than 120 "stamps" of heroin in his possession at the time of the arrest.

March 19, 2014

Man Convicted of Dealing Heroin

Slanesville, West Virginia resident Robert Glenn Ford was found guilty of dealing heroin on Wednesday. The jury, which took only a half hour to deliberate, found Ford guilty not only of possession with intent to deliver heroin, but also possession of oxycodone with intent to deliver. He was arrested after a confidential informant, wearing a "wire," purchased heroin from Ford.

EDUCATION

January 3, 2014

Public Schools Launch Facebook Page, Twitter Account

The Allegany County Public School System recently launched a Facebook page, as well as a Twitter feed in an effort to enhance communication with parents, students and the community. Both social media platforms will feature announcements, information about upcoming events, ACPS highlights, as well as school closings and delays. The Facebook page can be accessed by visiting www.facebook.com/acpsmd. The Twitter address is ACPS_Supt.

January 6, 2014

Grants Awarded by Pennsylvania Department of Education

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has announced \$1.7 million in career and technical education equipment grants, including nearly \$50,000 to Somerset and Bedford Counties. The Bedford County Technical Center was awarded \$10,000, while Somerset County's Technology Center was granted over \$38,000. Funding will be used to purchase equipment for training students in the programs, but they must also align with Pennsylvania targeted industry areas.

January 13, 2014

Second Marking Period Extended

The Allegany County Public School System will extend the end of the second marking period for the school year, as the result of losing four instructional days due to bad weather. The end of the second marking period will be on Thursday, January 23rd, with a three hour early dismissal for students on Friday, January 24th. This Friday will now be a full day for students. Report card distribution will now be delayed until Monday, February 3rd. Schools will be closed for parent conferences on Thursday, February 6th, as originally scheduled.

January 14, 2014

Superintendent Eyeing Instructional Time

State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jim Phares says that, even though schools in West Virginia started earlier, some school systems may not meet the 180-day instructional mark this year. State law now requires school to end by June 8th, but a new Senate bill will allow classes to continue through much of June.

January 17, 2014

Garrett Public Schools Set Graduation Date

The Garrett County Board of Education has set the graduation date for both Northern and Southern High Schools. Northern High School's graduation will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 31st. Southern's graduation will take place the same day, at 3 p.m.

January 20, 2014

Scholarship Fund MOU Signed

A memorandum of understanding was signed last week, that would establish the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship at Frostburg State University. The fund would benefit students from Allegany County, and will be funded by revenues to the county from the Rocky Gap Casino Resort. One-fourth of the revenue received will benefit Allegany County Students attending FSU, and the first of those will be awarded this year.

January 20, 2014

Adult Education Orientation Sessions Set

The Adult Education Program offered by the Allegany County Public School System will offer two, two-hour orientation sessions on February 5th and 6th, and February 19th and 20th at the One Stop Job Center in Cumberland. The orientation will give an overview of the adult education programs, the GED and the National External Diploma Program. For more information, call the Adult Education Program at (301)-687-8025.

January 24, 2014

Safety Grants Available for Schools

There are \$50 million available to school districts across the country to develop or update their school safety plans. Senator Barbara Mikulski announced the new Comprehensive School Safety Initiative. Another \$25 million will be used for research into analyzing the causes of school violence, including the gaps in mental health for students and their exposure to violence.

February 5, 2014

Adult Ed Program To Sponsor Career and College Readiness Week

The Allegany County Adult Education Program, in partnership with the YMCA Family Center, the Western Maryland Consortium and Allegany College of Maryland will sponsor a week-long Career and College Readiness event next week. Two events during the week that require registration include a seminar on hospitality and a College Goal Maryland event. To register and get more information on session times, call the Adult Education Program at (301)-687-8025.

February 10, 2014

BW Principal Announces Resignation

Bishop Walsh School principal Shelby Webb is announcing her resignation, effective this Friday, for what she called "personal reasons." Assistant Principal Ann Workmeister has been named principal, until the Department of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of Baltimore works with the school to appoint a new principal. Webb was appointed principal in June of 2011, to replace Sister Phyllis McNally, who retired; Ms. Webb had previously been assistant principal for three years.

February 11, 2014

Waiver Granted for President's Day

Students will have to go to school on Monday, which was, for them, the President's Day holiday. The Thursday before Easter and the Monday after, are also being used as make up days. Dr. David Cox, School Superintendent, has requested a waiver for Monday, as the result of 11 missed days of school, due to bad weather. The Board of Education will vote on Dr. Cox's recommendations at its February 18th meeting. While Maryland requires a minimum 180-day calendar, State Superintendent Dr. Lillian Lowery may consider waivers from local school districts later this year.

February 11, 2014

"Financial Aid Days" at ACM

Financial aid officials at Allegany College of Maryland will share their knowledge with students and parents at the second annual Financial Aid Days on Monday and Tuesday of next week. Graduating high school seniors and community members planning to enroll at the college next fall are encouraged to attend. The event is being held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the ACM College Center. For more information, contact the ACM Student Financial Aid Office at [\(301\)-784-5213](tel:3017845213).

February 11, 2014

Report Outlines Reading Challenges for Maryland Fourth-Graders

Overall, Maryland fourth-graders are more likely to be on track with reading proficiency, as compared to ten years ago. However, the story changes for low-income students, according to a report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. David Beard, at Advocates for Children and Youth says 76 per cent of low-income students are behind, as compared with 42 per cent of higher-income students. Beard says absenteeism often is a problem in the early years of a child's education, and there are a lot of reasons why children miss school.

February 14, 2014

Grading Periods Pushed Back in Mineral County

Mineral County is moving its last three, six-week grading periods because of the number of weather-related school closings. The end of the school year is also being delayed. The last six-week period will now end on Thursday, May 29th, and the date for report cards will be announced.

February 14, 2014

Committee Holds Hearings on Pre-K

The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee held hearings on a bill that would expand pre-kindergarten to 1600 more children in the state. Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown has set a goal of making pre-kindergarten universal in Maryland by 2018. Governor O'Malley has budgeted \$4.3 million for the project, and would expand kindergarten to children who are up to 300 per cent of the federal poverty level.

February 18, 2014

Teacher Raise Being Proposed

The West Virginia Senate's Education Committee is proposing a \$1,000 pay raise for all teachers across the state. The goal of the bill is to attract highly qualified teachers to West Virginia. Another aspect of the legislation would increase the minimum salary for entry-level teachers to \$43,000 by 2019. The bill has passed to the Finance Committee.

February 21, 2014

Last Day of School Now June 18

Fourteen days of school have been missed this year because of bad weather, and now the final day for students will be June 18th. Teachers will finish up on June 23rd. The school system has also had numerous two-hour delays, one regional closure and a three-hour early dismissal. While the state of Maryland requires 180 days of school, State Superintendent Dr. Lillian Lowery may be able to grant a waiver, to reduce that number.

February 21, 2014

College Readiness Program Set

The Allegany County Adult Education Program will sponsor a career and college readiness event, entitled "College Goal Maryland" tomorrow from 2 to 4 p.m. at the downtown YMCA, in the adult education classroom. This will be an opportunity for free on-site professional assistance in completing the FAFSA form, talk to financial aid professionals, and to get information on

statewide student services. Registered participants will have the chance to win one of two \$500 scholarships. For more information, contact [\(301\)-687-8025](tel:301-687-8025).

February 24, 2014

Board to Consider Proposed Calendar

The Allegany County Board of Education will consider approving the 2014-2015 academic school calendar at their March meeting. One key change to note on the proposed calendar could include modifications to the structure of parent/teacher conferences in both October and February. The school system is asking for input on the calendar. A draft of the calendar can be found on the school system's website, at "acpsmd.org," under the "Quick Links" section of the main page.

February 24, 2014

WVSDB Improvements from School Building Authority

The West Virginia House of Delegates has passed a resolution that states improvements for the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind should come from the School Building Authority. The Romney school, according to the resolution, should not have to provide locally matching money for the building improvements. There are several steps involved in asking the SBA for the money, including the testimony principal Lynn Boyer in mid-March. Children from across the Mountain State attend the school, yet their home counties are not responsible for the cost of their education, nor the maintenance of the facilities.

February 25, 2014

Teacher Planning Bill Passes in Senate

West Virginia may allow its teachers to determine, for themselves, how to use their planning time. A bill passed late last week in the Senate, that stated, in part, administrators may not require a teacher to attend training, meetings, or any work-related event during a planning period. This includes parent-teacher conferences. The bill will not go to the house for action.

February 27, 2014

Ex-Officio Bill Passed By Senate

A bill that abolishes ex-officio seats on the Allegany and Garrett County Boards of Education was passed unanimously in the Maryland Senate this week. Ex-officio members include one member of the Allegany and Garrett County commissions on the boards. An ex-officio member has the right to attend meetings, including executive sessions, but does not have a vote on issues. The position has caused some problems between the Allegany County Commissioners and the Board of Education in recent years.

February 28, 2014

Pre-K Through First Grade Registrations Set

Children who will enter Allegany County Public Schools this August should be registered on March 21st and 22nd at the appropriate elementary school, as determined by residence. A child entering the pre-K program must be four years old on or before September 1st of the school year in which they apply for entrance. There is other documentation required. For more information, call either (301)-759-2001 or (301)-759-2012.

March 3, 2014

More Allegany County Make Up Days Announced

The Allegany County Board of Education has voted to change the Thursday before Easter and the Monday after, as instructional make-up days for students. To date, Allegany County Schools have been closed due to bad weather a total of 14 days. With the most recent decision to reclaim the time around Easter, the final day for students will be Monday, June 16th; the last day for teachers will be Thursday, June 19th, barring no further calendar adjustments.

March 5, 2014

School System Extending Marking Period

The Allegany County Public School system will extend the end of the third marking period of the current school year, as the result of additional lost instructional days due to inclement weather. The end of the third marking period will be Friday, April 4, 2014, with a three-hour early dismissal on Monday, April 7th. Report card distribution has been delayed until Monday, April 21, 2014.

March 6, 2014

Board's General Fund Declining

The Allegany County Board of Education's General Fund has dropped to \$9.6 million in 2013, and is expected to decline even further to about \$1.8 million in Fiscal Year 2015. This year's decrease in funding is due to the board using just over \$3 million for operations of the school system and a million dollars to be used for the demolition of the former Sacred Heart Hospital, so that the new Allegany High School can be built on the site.

March 7, 2014

Marking Period Extended, Board Reclaims Days

Earlier this year, the Allegany County Board of Education was forced to extend the second marking period. Mia Perlozzo-Cross, spokesperson for the board says because of recent bad weather, they have been forced to extend the third marking period. Ms. Cross says the third marking period will end on Friday, April 4th, and there will be a three-hour early dismissal on Monday, April 7th. The board has reclaimed April 17th and 21st as instructional days. Schools have been closed for 15 days during the 2013-2014 school year. The Maryland State Board of Education had granted a waiver to the local board, to reclaim President's Day in February.

March 7, 2014

Maryland Adjusts Testing Dates

Because of the days lost during the latest snow storm, Maryland Education officials are giving local school systems more flexibility in adjusting the days they give the Maryland School Assessments. The original 12-day window can be extended two more days, until March 14th. Make up tests can be given between March 17th and 18th. The MSA Science Test will begin as scheduled on March 24th, and will close on April 11th. This is the final year for MSA testing, which has been given for more than a decade in grades 3 through 8.

March 10, 2014

FSU Opportunity Scholarship Applications Available

Current and prospective Frostburg State University students from the county are encouraged to apply for the Allegany County Opportunity scholarship. The application deadline has been extended to April 1st. Eligible recipients are required to have been a resident of the county for at least three years, must be admitted to FSU, have at least a 3.0 grade point average, and complete the FAFSA applications. The scholarship was established by the Allegany County Commissioners, with revenues from the Rocky Gap Casino Resort. More information can be obtained from the FSU Financial Aid Office at [\(301\)-687-4301](tel:301-687-4301).

March 11, 2014

BW Outranks in National PSAT Scores

The ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students at Bishop Walsh School earned higher scores than the national average in the 2013 Preliminary SAT tests. The higher scores were reported in the critical reading, math and writing categories. An average of 3.5 million United States students take the preliminary SAT tests each year. Bishop Walsh also learned that its most recent test scores for students in Advanced Placement course are among the highest in the world.

March 18, 2014

General Assembly Considering Common Core

The Maryland legislature is doing its homework on Common Core, with action on three bills recently to ease the transition. Maryland State Education Association President Betty Weller says it's encouraging to see that concerns about Common Core are being addressed, from ensuring that misaligned state standardized test scores aren't used punitively for a couple of years. Legislators are also looking to provide feedback on how to improve Common Core implementation. Weller points out that Common Core isn't what's being debated, but rather the need for other types of support, to help make the change to Common Core and that new evaluation systems happen smoothly.

March 19, 2014

Mineral Students Could Return August 7th

Mineral County students could be returning to class next year in early August, but will be getting out of school for summer much earlier. Beginning next year, the West Virginia Board of Education will require 180 instructional days, but that may not be attainable if the winter is especially harsh. So far this year, Mineral County has had 15 "snow days," and have only been in class for 172 days this year. While the first hearing on the calendar was held last night, the second has been scheduled as part of the regular board meeting on April 1st.

March 19, 2014

State Board to Formulate Waiver Plan

The Maryland State Board of Education meets next week to come up with a plan for instructional waivers for the public schools. Bill Reinhard, of the State Board, says the plan will include meeting the need of having 180 days of instruction, at the minimum. Reinhard says the local boards must show ways to make up the time lost, due to bad weather. Reinhard addressed one option: extending the school day. He says that has not yet been discussed at the state level. Allegany County Schools have now been closed a total of 16 days, with Monday's cancellation of classes, due to snow.

March 20, 2014

ACM, Schools Present Budget Requests

The Allegany County Commissioners have begun budget hearings for Fiscal Year 2015, and yesterday heard from both Allegany College and the Board of Education. The school board has requested a 3 per cent increase in its funding, while Allegany College requested flat funding. ACM is planning on increasing tuition in 2015.

March 20, 2014

No Comment on Mineral School Calendar

There was no public comment on two school calendars, proposed for Mineral County Schools for the 2014-2015 school year. The first calendar would make the first day of school August 7th, with the first semester ending before the Christmas break. The second would begin the year on August 14th, and end the first semester on January 9th. Both calendars provide for 180 days instruction, which will be required by the West Virginia Board of Education, starting with next school year.

EMPLOYMENT

January 8, 2014

No Changes Foreseen at Luke Mill

The purchase of NewPage Corporation by Verso was unanimously approved by the boards of directors of both companies, and will better position the new company to serve its customers and compete in a competitive global marketplace. Patsy Koontz, public relations manager at the NewPage plant at Luke, says they will be able to offer a broader range of products, which is important in light of the decline in the use of paper products. Ms. Koontz emphasized there are no plans to close any NewPage or Verso mills and the company will continue to do what they do best. Rick Watro, Luke Mill manager released a statement, thanking the dedicated employees for an improved year-over-year performance in both safety and production. Watro's statement noted the company's focus will remain on making the Luke Mill an ever safer and more cost-effective operation in 2014, so that it will be a valuable asset to the new organization.

January 14, 2014

Unemployment Rate Drops in County

The unemployment rate in Allegany County dropped to its lowest point in five years in November; the rate was 7 per cent. In November of 2008, the rate was 6.3 per cent and in December of 2008, it was 7.1 per cent. In 2008, the average number of people in the labor force was 35,562; in 2013, that number grew to 36,396.

January 17, 2014

Valley Health Laying Off Workers

Thirty-three Valley Health employees were laid off this week, including one from Hampshire Memorial Hospital. The furloughs were in response to payment cuts from the federal government, and Virginia's decision not to expand Medicaid. Valley Health also trimmed about six employees from Valley Health's corporate office. The federal government's two-per cent spending cut equates to about \$5 million less from Valley Health's bottom line.

January 20, 2014

PBS Lays Off More Workers

PBS Coals, based in Friedens, Pennsylvania, has laid off another 40 people. The coal company reached a high of 1,000 employees in 2011, and was one of Somerset County's largest employers. The company now has fewer than 450 workers.

January 20, 2014

Citi Facility to Lay off Employees

The Citi facility, north of Hagerstown, has announced plans to lay off 650 employees by the end of the year; fifty will be furloughed by the end of March, and an additional 600-about 200 who work at the facility and another 400 who work from home-will be laid off by the end of the year. Layoffs are part of Citi job losses nationwide. A total of 950 will be laid off as a result of the sale of mortgage-servicing rights.

January 29, 2014

Love's To Open in the Fall

Love's Travel Center will be opening in the fall at its Ali Ghan road location. The center will employ about 60 people. This will be the first location for Love's in the state of Maryland. The facility will include both a Subway and McDonald's restaurant. It is about 10,000 square feet, and will include seven diesel lanes and eight gasoline islands.

January 30, 2014

New Page/Verso Merger Hits Snag

Although the debt exchange offers are open until February 10th, the lack of interest by creditors in a debt exchange plan could cause a problem in the New Page/Verso merger, announced earlier this month. A letter has been received by New Page, expressing Verso's concern about its ability to satisfy the condition of the merger, and thus, close it. New Page Corporation emerged from bankruptcy in December of 2012.

January 30, 2014

Maryland Gains Jobs in December

Maryland added 7300 jobs in December, the most job creation since 2004. Most of the gains came in the private sector; government agencies accounted for 300 jobs added last month and 1900 of the jobs added last year. The December unemployment rate was 6.1 per cent, down from November's rate of 6.4 per cent.

February 5, 2014

Meritus Cutting 120 Positions

Meritus Health in Hagerstown plans to cut about 120 position, including 60 current workers by February 15th, as part of a system-wide staff reduction. The health system also plans to cut hours for 43 employees; the layoffs were blamed on shrinking revenues due to federal budget cuts and an upswing in costs due to uninsured patients.

February 14, 2014

Verizon Reorganization Affects Some Maryland Workers

Verizon announced some changes this week, which include closing customer service centers in some states and changing the types of jobs in other states. Severance packages are being offered to those who don't want to move or can't find different jobs within the company. The changes are expected to be completed by May, and would affect workers at the Hanover, Maryland location.

February 21, 2014

Rust-Oleum Facility Moving to West Virginia

Rust-Oleum will be moving a distribution center from Maryland to a 630,000 square feet of space in Martinsburg, which formerly had served as the GM building. The Berkeley County Development Authority has been working with the company since last April.

February 27, 2014

Mineral Resident Offers Input on Jobs

Mineral County resident Robert Hines has made several suggestions to boost the economic viability of that area. Hines, a native of Mineral County, urged the development of the Fort Ashby Business and Technology Park by marketing it to the health care and/or hospital industry. He also offered suggestions on the development of the CSX property in Keyser. Hines was asked to serve on the Mineral County Development Authority, and a letter of interest will be submitted to the group.

March 19, 2014

Maryland Loses 9800 Jobs in January

The U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics says Maryland's employment base shrank by nearly 10,000 jobs in January, and had grown at a much weaker pace last year than originally thought. Even though the state has yet to recover all the jobs it lost in 2008 and 2009, there was an actual drop in unemployment figures, from 6.1 per cent in December to 5.8 per cent in January. Locally, Allegany County's jobless rate dropped to 7 per cent in November this past year, as compared to a rate of 7.5 per cent for November, 2012. Those are the most recent figures available.

March 24, 2014

Jobs, Economy Important to West Virginians

Jobs and the economy are top priorities for West Virginia residents and about half of those surveyed, believe those issues were not adequately addressed during the regular Legislative session this year. More than half-51 per cent-said the state was on the wrong track, and 50 per cent said the Mountain State has one of the worst legal systems in the U.S. The survey,

conducted by MBE Research, also showed that 51 per cent of those interviewed see lawsuits hurting job creation in the state.

GOVERNMENT

January 6, 2014

Scarpelli Officially Announces House Bid

Cumberland City Council member Nick Scarpelli has officially announced his bid for the District 1-C House of Delegates seat being vacated by LeRoy Myers. During his announcement Saturday, Scarpelli noted that he has had the opportunity to work with a team that has taken a city that couldn't pay its bills, to one that now has a positive fund balance. All this, without cutting services to its citizens. Having chosen his family home and business, the Scarpelli Funeral Home to make the announcement, Scarpelli promises, if elected, to work diligently to bring employment opportunities to Western Maryland. Councilman Scarpelli noted that he has assembled a team that has accomplished several objectives, including having secured funding for a playground at Canal Place.

January 8, 2014

Cumberland To Receive Block Grant Funding

The city of Cumberland is expecting around \$700,000 in block grant funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for FY 2015. The money will be distributed to a variety of local, non-profit organizations that offer programs for low-income neighborhoods. Interested organizations should submit requests in person at the regular Cumberland Mayor and City Council meeting on February 11th at 6:15 p.m.

January 10, 2014

Mineral Receives Block Grant Funding

Mineral County has received \$1.3 million in Small Cities Block Grant Funding, to be used for the Fountain Water Project, which will extend water service and increase capacity to nearly 413 households in the Fountain Public Service District. Nearly \$13 million in funding was presented by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, which will be used with more than \$40 million more in federal, state, and local funding to serve over 11,000 low and moderate-income individuals.

January 10, 2014

Top Democrats Want Website Abandoned

Maryland may set a precedent if it decides to abandon the state-run health care website, as other states may follow. FoxNews.com is reporting that Governor Martin O'Malley has shifted his tone, and appears open to a solution to the problem, if only temporarily, until the state website improves. Congressman John Delaney first proposed the idea of switching to the federal site, and several other Democrats, including Attorney General Doug Gansler-who is running in the

primary against Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown-who said that "all options for a potential fix" should be on the table.

January 10, 2014

O'Malley Comments on Marijuana Legislation, Minimum Wage

Governor Martin O'Malley says he is "not much in favor" of legislation to legalize recreational marijuana, but says the state can afford to make strides with the regulation and use of medicinal marijuana. Governor O'Malley, in explaining his position, says he has seen so many people, whose lives were ruined by drug abuse. The Governor says that raising the minimum wage is his top priority during this General Assembly session. He points out that although 21 states have a higher minimum wage than Maryland, none has a higher median income. Governor O'Malley points out that there are several different economies at play in Maryland-a different consumer price index, cost of doing business, and cost of living.

January 13, 2014

Three Positions Open on Mayor and Council

With a little over a month away until the filing deadline, only Mayor Brian Grim and Council member David Kauffman have announced their intentions to seek re-election. Councilman Nick Scarpelli announced his intention to the run for the House of Delegates seat being vacated by Delegate LeRoy Myers. The council seats of members Nicole Wagoner and Dave Caporale will be open in 2016. The deadline to file for this year's election is February 25th.

January 14, 2014

County To Apply for Funding

Allegany County is applying for Block Grant Funding from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to access unspent federal funds that have been set aside for the state of Maryland to address damage caused by Hurricane Sandy in October of last year. If successful, the county intends to use the funds to buy additional properties in a mapped flood plain. Over the past two decades, over 250 homeowners chose to participate in the county's voluntary flood buyout program.

January 15, 2014

Issues Discussed During Delegation Meeting

Several local issues of importance were discussed during a legislative meeting, held yesterday in Annapolis. During a conference call with the media, members discussed raising the speed limit on Interstate 68 to 70 miles-per-hour; bond funding for the Allegany County Animal Shelter and Friends Aware was also discussed. Delegate Wendell Beitzel also discussed increasing highway

user funding for this area of the state. The delegation will meet today with all interested parties, to discuss the future of Canal Place and the Development Authority.

January 15, 2014

First Full Week of General Assembly

This is the first full week of the General Assembly session, and on the agenda is final approval of emergency legislation, submitted by the Governor to address those who couldn't get health insurance through the state's health benefit exchange website. Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller says he would like to make the sessions more productive, and to balance the work load more evenly during the session. Miller says he had encouraged lawmakers to pre-file bills before the session began. Miller says that, traditionally, most of the major bills don't pass until the last day of the session.

January 16, 2014

Two Candidates File in Mineral County

Two people filed to run for office on Monday, the first day of the official filing period. Kevin Watson has filed to run for re-election to the Mineral County Board of Education; David Webb has filed to run for Mineral County Commission. Watson's seat is one of three opening up this year. Other seats that will also be open this year will be those of Lara Courier and Terry LaRue. The board of education race is a non-partisan one.

January 16, 2014

No Ethics Violation for Young

The Frederick County Ethics Commission has dismissed a complaint of misconduct against County Commission President Blaine Young. A political activist, Patrick Allen, made an allegation that Young was having an affair with a county employee. Harold Otis, Ethics Commission Chairman, has ruled there was no evidence of an ethics ordinance violation.

January 17, 2014

McKay Comments on "State of the County"

Allegany County Commission President Mike McKay says the county is in its strongest financial position in years, despite the reduced size of government. This has been accomplished, without sacrificing services. Commissioner McKay says county employees have "bought into" the idea of doing more with less, and expressed his thanks to them. Commissioner McKay notes that the Rocky Gap casino now has 500 full-time employees, who have benefits. Thanks to the Western Maryland delegation, and in particular to Senator George Edwards, the county can designate where and how proceeds from the casino can be spent. Through the Allegany County

Commissioners' Scholarship Fund, funds are sent to both Allegany College of Maryland and Frostburg State University.

January 20, 2014

O'Malley To Speak at PACE Breakfast

Governor Martin O'Malley is scheduled to deliver the keynote address Friday morning at the Loew's/Annapolis hotel. The breakfast begins at 8 a.m., and other speakers include Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot and Maryland United States Senator Ben Cardin. The annual PACE reception will be held Thursday evening, and 22 displayers are signed up for the event.

January 20, 2014

Edwards Submits Speed Limit Legislation

Maryland United States Senator George Edwards is submitting legislation that would increase the maximum speed limit on Interstate 69 to 70 miles-per-hour. The legislation was read for the first time last Monday, and also addresses speed limits in other areas of the state.

January 20, 2014

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January 24, 2014

Changes Considered for Black Bear Hunt

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is considering the elimination of a quota system during the annual black bear hunt, which takes place primarily in Allegany and Garrett counties. Instead, the season would be of a pre-determined length. The proposal, which will be considered during a stakeholders meeting in Owings Mills next month, would help hunters plan better. Last year's hunt yielded 94 bears, and the quota was anywhere from 95 to 130.

January 30, 2014

Action Awaited on Legislation

Maryland State Senator George Edwards has four bills pending, and is waiting for a hearing time and date on each. The legislation includes a bill regarding the Sideling Hill Wildlife Management area, and the prohibition of off-highway recreational vehicles. Another bill would regulate Sunday hunting in Allegany, Garrett and Washington counties. Another bill would take a look at Sunday deer hunting in the three westernmost counties. Finally, a bill dealing with an enterprise zone property tax credit in Garrett county is still awaiting a time and date for a hearing.

February 3, 2014

Dallara Chosen to Succeed Howsare

Sixty-eight year old Alum Bank resident Barry Dallara has been chosen to replace outgoing Bedford County Commissioner Steve Howsare. He announced his resignation, which became effective yesterday, as he accepted the position of executive director of the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission. Dallara ran unsuccessfully for Bedford County Commissioner three years ago. He is being sworn into office today.

February 4, 2014

Two More File for City Election

Two more candidates have filed for a spot on the Cumberland Mayor and City Council. Seth Bernard and Dustin Freas have filed for election, as the two council seats up for election are currently occupied by Nick Scarpelli and David Kauffman. Scarpelli has announced his candidate for the Maryland House of Delegates in District 1-C.

February 4, 2014

O'Malley Running for President in 2016

Governor Martin O'Malley has told the Washington Post that he is preparing a possible run for President. Not waiting for former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, O'Malley says he needs to get started on the groundwork for a national campaign. O'Malley has raised nearly \$1.7 million last year with his political action committee.

February 6, 2014

Lawmakers Consider Contraband Penalties

Maryland lawmakers are considering stiffer penalties for bringing in or receiving contraband cell phones in correctional centers. The measures are being considered following the contraband conspiracy at the Baltimore City Detention Center, where 44 people were indicted last year; that number includes 27 correctional officers. One proposal would increase the penalty for providing a cell phone to a detained person from three to five years, and making it a felony, rather than misdemeanor. In a separate proposal, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services would like to see the use of a polygraph test on correctional officers as a condition of their employment.

February 7, 2014

Edwards Receives Award

Maryland State Senator George Edwards has been honored by the Maryland Business for Responsive Government for what is termed his "exemplary track record of supporting pro-business legislation in 2013." The organization is a statewide, non-partisan organization which selects recorded votes in the General Assembly session that have practical or philosophical importance to the widest possible range of Maryland businesses, trade associations, and chambers of commerce. Senator Edwards received a cumulative score of 84 per cent, along with a minimum of four years of service.

February 11, 2014

Cumberland Man Files for County Commission Seat

Cumberland resident Jake Shade, the legislative director to Delegates LeRoy Myers and Andrew Serafini in the Maryland House of Delegates has filed his candidacy for Allegany County Commissioner. Shade, a Republican says he sees two major issues facing the county; those include economic development and growth, along with the Allegany County budget. He is a graduate of Allegany High School and the University of Maryland-College Park.

February 11, 2014

County Sets Budget Process

The county's budgeting timetable for Fiscal Year 2015 has been set, with the first hearings scheduled for March 20th. Various groups, such as the library system, circuit court, and the Allegany County Narcotics Task Force will present budget requests that day. After all requests have been received, preliminary hearings will begin in May, with the adoption of the budget set for Thursday, June 5, 2014.

February 14, 2014

Beitzel Introduces Highway User Legislation

Delegate Wendell Beitzel has introduced a bill in the house which would increase the portion of motor fuel tax and highway user revenue that is shared with the counties, Baltimore City and municipalities. The state has drastically reduced the Highway User Revenue share, and local governments have struggled to adequately budget for local funding to maintain roads. Some counties have been forced to reduce road crews and eliminate or delay road projects and improvements. Delegate George Edwards has cross-filed a similar bill in the Senate, and it is expected to be heard next Wednesday, February 19th.

February 21, 2014

Filing Deadline is February 25th

Next Tuesday at 9 p.m. is the filing deadline for the upcoming 2014 Primary Election. Federal and state candidates file a certificate of candidacy in Annapolis, while local candidates filed at the local Board of Elections. The primary election will be held on June 24th, while the general election is set for Tuesday, November 4th.

February 24, 2014

Bond Bills, Speed Limits Discussed in Annapolis

Legislation has been cross-filed in both the House and Senate for bond bills, benefiting the Allegany and Garrett County Animal Shelters and the Adventure Sports Complex in Garrett County. State Senator George Edwards says ASCI received a million dollars in bond money last year for upgrades, in preparation for the 2014 World Whitewater Championships. Some of that money was spend on the trial, and that money could not be recouped. The House has voted unanimously to pass a bill that would allow the state to hike the speed limit on interstate highways, including Interstate 68, to 70 miles-per-hour, according to Senator Edwards. Senator Edwards says this is enabling legislation and not mandatory, even though the interstates were constructed to accommodate speeds of 70 miles-per-hour.

February 25, 2014

Teacher Planning Bill Passes in Senate

West Virginia may allow its teachers to determine, for themselves, how to use their planning time. A bill passed late last week in the Senate, that stated, in part, administrators may not require a teacher to attend training, meetings, or any work-related event during a planning period. This includes parent-teacher conferences. The bill will not go to the house for action.

February 26, 2014

Candidates File For Office

There are several candidates who have filed for the offices of Mayor and City Council and Allegany County Board of Education. Incumbent Mayor Brian Grim will be opposed by Mary Miltenberger and Jeffrey Grogg. City Council candidates include Seth Bernard, Dustin Freas, Sylvester Young, and incumbent David Kauffman. School Board candidates include Bill Davis, Lorelee Farrell, Wayne Foote, and incumbents Sara-Beth James and Laurie Marchini.

February 26, 2014

Edwards, Beitzel Unopposed

Senator George Edwards and Representative Wendell Beitzel will be unopposed in the coming election; however, current Delegate Kevin Kelly is being opposed by Jason Buckel, in District 1-B. Delegate LeRoy Myers is leaving statewide political office, and there are several candidates for the District 1-C seat. They include Nick Scarpelli, Ray Givens and current Allegany County Commissioner Mike McKay. Candidates for the office of Allegany County Commissioner include Kevin Shaffer, Tom Striplin, incumbents Creade Brodie, Jr., and Bill Valentine, Jake Shade and Mark Widmyer.

March 4, 2014

Keyser Receives Reduction in Finance Rate

The city of Keyser will save nearly a million dollars on the financing of a loan. Mayor Randy Amtower appeared before the Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council in Charleston last week, to ask for a reduction in the interest rate on a 40-year loan on a \$2.6 million project in Hawthorne Heights. The rate was reduced from 2.5 to just one percent, with the total savings estimated at \$921,000. Improvements to the Hawthorne Heights area includes new sewer lines, storm water management systems, gutters and drainage, and repaved streets.

March 5, 2014

City Begins Budget Discussions

Discussions have begun on the city of Cumberland's Fiscal Year 2015 budget, which has been estimated at \$36.3 million. The city could save \$400,000 annually by switching the health care provider to CIGNA insurance, from the present coverage provided by Blue Cross/Blue Shield. The Mayor and City Council are currently involved in a dispute with the International Association of Firefighters Local 1715, as the firefighters want workforce and safety issues addressed in conjunction with switching the providers.

March 11, 2014

Extra Sessions in Store for Lawmakers

House Speaker Michael Busch is telling legislators to expect both morning and evening sessions this week, as next Monday is "Crossover Day." That means bills have to be approved by at least one chamber of the legislature, so they can be considered by the opposing chamber during the final three weeks of the legislative session. There is also the possibility of a Saturday session to finish the work. Two major issues that remain are reducing the penalty for possessing small amounts of marijuana, and the Senate Finance Committee is now considering raising the minimum wage.

March 17, 2014

Piedmont Council Member Resigns

Piedmont City Council member Gary Bradley, who had been elected in May of last year, has resigned his position, citing his work schedule, and "personal reasons." Bradley had been elected to serve as parks and recreation commissioner, and it is hoped an appointment will be made from the citizens of the community.

STREETS AND HIGHWAYS

January 2, 2014

Local Governments Want Highway Funding

For years, local governments received about 30 per cent of money raised from the gas tax and vehicle registrations for local transportation projects, but now receive only about 10 per cent. The other 20 per cent has been used to balance the state budget. One legislator says he doubts the local funding will be restored this year. Michael Sanderson, president of the Maryland Association of Counties believes that, with the increased gas tax, the legislature should return a greater share to local governments.

January 15, 2014

Traffic Disruption Possible Thursday

Traffic on Interstate 68 Eastbound, between LaVale and Cumberland and on Route 51 (Industrial Boulevard) from Lamont Street to Interstate 68 will be disrupted tomorrow evening, between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. Local crews will be moving a large piece of equipment in the area. Drivers are asked to avoid those areas, if possible; otherwise, expect delays during those hours.

January 15, 2014

Traffic Proposals Won't Happen In Mineral County

Mineral County residents received some bad news during their day at the Legislature in Charleston, when they were informed three proposed traffic projects won't happen. Requests included a traffic light, at Fort Avenue and South Mineral Street, primarily for Potomac State College students, who would cross Fort Avenue to get to campus. The second denial came when a traffic signal placement was requested at Route 220 and Stoney Run Road. And the third would have provided a left turn arrow from Southern Drive onto Route 220.

February 25, 2014

Bills Seek Road Repairs and Jobs

Two West Virginia senators are urging the legislature to consider bills to allot funds to repair roads and create jobs. Several bills addressing job creation have not advanced from committees. And, several others are trying to advance bills to address the state's crumbling roads during this spring's paving cycle. One senator says the roads are already in worse shape than he has seen in years.

February 26, 2014

Highway User Fund Bill to Receive Hearing

A bill that has been filed in both the House and Senate that would increase the Highway User Revenue Fund to local governments will be heard next Tuesday. Local governments were receiving 30 per cent of the money from the Transportation Trust Fund; that amount has dwindled to about 5 per cent. The bill was filed by Senator George Edwards in the Senate, and by Delegate Wendell Beitzel in the House of Delegates.

March 20, 2014

Bridge Work Begins Monday

Preparation work will begin Monday for the rehabilitation of the Route 26 bridge in Everett borough. The work is part of a three-bridge rehabilitation contract in West Providence Township and in Everett. The initial phase will involve short term, daylight traffic control, and delays will be minimal. Beginning on April 1st, there will be a one-and-three-quarter mile detour, which should be in place until September 30th. Pedestrian access will be maintained on one side of the bridge at all times.

March 24, 2014

I-68 Left Lane Closures Start Tomorrow

Interstate 68, both east and westbound, in the vicinity of downtown Cumberland, will have its left lanes closed, beginning tomorrow morning, and running through April 10th. Drivers should expect delays during peak travel times. The work is part of a \$14 million, two year bridge rehabilitation project in Allegany County. The lanes will be closed, around the clock, until the work is completed.

TAXES

January 29, 2014

Maryland One of 10 "Worst States for Taxes"

The state of Maryland has made the unenviable "Top 10 Worst States for Taxes," according to The Fiscal Times. The top state income tax rate is 5.75 per cent, and made the list, due to its relatively high taxes across the board. The article also notes that the state is considering a proposal that would lower the corporate income tax rate in the next five years from 8.25 per cent to 6 percent, bringing it in line with neighboring Virginia. The number one state for taxes? New York, with an 8.82 per cent income tax rate, and per capita property taxes of over \$2300.

February 3, 2014

House, Senate Join Forces on Tax, Business Bills

Maryland Speaker of the House Michael Bush and Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller are working together to improve the state's economy, including tax credits and changes in the estate tax to exempt a higher amount from taxation. Through a series of bills, Miller says the General Assembly is trying to both create and retain jobs in the state. As for the estate tax, they are suggesting moving it from a one million dollar to a five million dollar exemption over the next four years. This is one of the few times Miller has "teamed up" with Busch on legislation.

February 5, 2014

West Virginia Tax Collections Up in January

Tax revenue collections in West Virginia brought in about \$391 million last month, which was about \$8 million above projections. However, the state remained \$73 million below estimates for the fiscal year. The current state budget may require more cuts or a mid-year search for additional revenue. The personal income tax shows a current shortfall of \$61.6 million.

February 21, 2014

Chamber Supports Preservation of Tax Credit

The Allegany County Chamber of Commerce has written a letter of support for preserving the tax credit for Maryland-mined coal. The letter, to Sheila Hixson, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, is signed by Bill DuVall, Legislative Committee Chair, and Stu Czapski, Executive Director of the Chamber. The letter points out the harsh economic consequences, and the inevitable loss of jobs in the area, should the coal tax credit be repealed. The letter urges the Committee to all the coal tax credit to remain in effect.

February 21, 2014

Income Tax Relief Proposal Floated

The House Republican Caucus has announced a General Assembly bill that would provide tax relief to all residents of Maryland. House Bill 326 would give a 10 per cent cut in Maryland personal income taxes, regardless of income level, and will be phased in over the next three years. The state ranks 43rd out of 50 in overall business climate

March 6, 2014

February Good Month for W.Va. Tax Collections

State tax collections in West Virginia came in at \$9 million above estimates. It is the second month in a row for better than expected revenue collections. Overall, the news is not as good. Revenue collections are \$64 million below estimates for the year with just four months remaining in the present Fiscal Year. Personal income tax collections were about \$6 million above estimates, while sales tax collections were reported to be \$2.3 million below estimates.

March 18, 2014

Mineral Wants Bigger Share of Delinquent Taxes

Mineral County Sheriff Jeremy Taylor presented the Board of Education with a letter, requesting the county receive part of the share of recovered personal property taxes. Currently, the Board receives 71 per cent of total collections, and there are over \$100,000 in delinquent property taxes at stake, some dating back to 2009. Personal property taxes are collected on items such as mobile homes, business inventory, and vehicles. The issue is on the agenda for tonight's Mineral County Board of Education meeting.

March 24, 2014

Maplehurst Taxes Due Next Monday

The Maplehurst Country Club may be the subject of a tax sale, unless its board can come up with over \$67,000 in property taxes, dating back to 2010. City Administrator John Kirby pointed out that anyone's property that is more than two years in arrears is subject to a tax sale. City Attorney Michael Cohen has informed the Maplehurst Board that a payment of just over \$67,000 must be made by the close of business next Monday, to satisfy the tax and interest payments that are due to Frostburg and Allegany County.