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The History of the Barrier Islands, the Future of Chincoteague

A t an October 29 presentation at the Island Theater in Chincoteague, Dr. Christopher Hein, Associate Professor and head of the Coastal Geology Lab at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, discussed "Islands Past, Present, Future: Studying the History of Virginia's Barrier Islands to Better Predict the Fate of Chincoteague." The presentation is available at https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=7gZhkLZjmGM.

Noting that "barrier islands change every day," he presented data based on maps, photos, satellite imagery, ground-penetrating radar, sediment cores down to 30 feet, and drilling down to 90 to 100 feet. Studying the history of the formation of Chincoteague, he said, "tells us something about the future."

Changes to Virginia's Barrier Islands

Hein discussed the changes in the 13 Virginia barrier islands south of Chincoteague ("some of the most dynamic in the world") from 1851 to 2017. The landward movement of the islands during this time ranges from 10 to 23 feet/year, with total area change ranging from a net loss of 2,915 acres (Parramore) to a net gain of 1,830 acres (Assateague). While Parramore and Hog Islands are rotating and generally losing area, Wreck Island, Cedar Island, and most of the other islands south of Wallops are gradually moving westward. The peat chunks commonly found on the beach at Assateague (as well as many of the

By Sue Mastyl

other islands), he noted, are from the marsh that used to be on the bay side. On Cedar, he added, "much like the

The 13 Virginia barrier islands south of Chincoteague are "some of the most dynamic in the world."

- Dr. Christopher Hein, VIMS

marsh upon which they were built, the houses didn't move; the island moved underneath them."

One phenomenon he noted is that as inlets widen (such as Wachapreague inlet, due to the shortening of Cedar Island at its southern end), the waves become stronger, which can lead to erosion of marsh inside the bays. He described the difference between progradation, in which islands (such as Chincoteague in pre-historic time) widen over time, and elongation, in which islands (such as Assateague) lengthen.

Focus on Chincoteague and Assateague

In studying both Chincoteague and Assateague, Hein noted the dozens of ridges on Chincoteague, which are really just old beaches and dunes. These are oldest along the western side of the island and get younger to the east. Prominent ridges on Chincoteague date back to 250 BC, 730 AD, and 1600 AD (Piney Island). "2,250 years ago," he continued, "Chincoteague was a tiny strip of sand, with Assateague to the northeast."

Between 1,270 and 400 years

ago, Chincoteague widened and Assateague elongated. In modern times (beginning around 1830

AD), Chincoteague assumed its modern shape, while Assateague elongated, sometimes with formation of large dunes, such as the one upon which the Lighthouse is built.

In 1880, there was no Toms Hook, so the southern end of Chincoteague was exposed to the open ocean. Toms Hook first formed around 1912; it's still growing, taking sand from the "longshore transport system." Nor'easters especially move sand from the north to the south, and it "gets stuck" in the region of Toms Hook and Wallops Island, essentially starving islands to the south of sand. Together, Assateague and Wallops have trapped 134 million cubic meters of sand since the 19th century (720,000 cubic meters/ year), with 90% on average going to

See Barrier Islands, Cont'd on p. 2

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Barrier Islands, *Cont'd from p. 1* Assateague.¹ In fact, Hein notes, there is more sand in Chincoteague, northern Wallops, and southern Assateague (including Tom's Hook) than in all other barrier islands to the south, combined. A recent analysis showed that the jetties around Ocean City Inlet only affect approximately 5% of the sand supply for Fishing Point at the end of Toms Hook.

In the 1980s, Fishing Point protruded more to the west at the end of Toms Hook. Now, as the hook grows to the south but Fishing Point recedes (see figure),¹ the inlet has opened up, allowing "higher-energy waves to erode the marsh close to and along the southern tip of Chincoteague."

Looking toward the future, Hein noted that sea-level rise will make things worse, "with erosion at the margins of Chincoteague and interior drowning of low-lying areas of the island." Over the long term (50 to 100 years), 2 scenarios are possible -Fishing Point will become elongated, with ridges growing on Wallops; or a storm will cut an opening across the isthmus connecting Toms Hook to Assateague, forming a new island. Although the latter scenario has happened in the past, the break has quickly healed every time so far, and Hein indicated this was likely to continue into the future.

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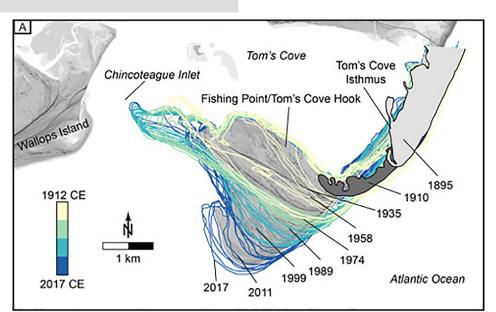
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Fishing Point shoreline change from 1895 to 2017. From Shawler et al. 2021.¹

Thus, he foresees a future in which Toms Hook continues to grow to the south, but with higher sea levels and the waves associated with a wider Chincoteague Inlet continuing to threaten Chincoteague Island. He added that marshes, "generally speaking," are keeping up with sea-level rise; the greater threat is wave action eroding the edges of the marsh.

¹ Shawler JL, Hein CJ, Obara CA, Robbins MG, Huot S, Fenster MS. The effect of coastal landform development on decadal- to millennial-scale longshore sediment fluxes: Evidence from the Holocene evolution of the central mid-Atlantic coast, USA. Quaternary Science Reviews, Sept. 1, 2021. https://doi. org/10.1016/j.quascirev.2021.107096



Part-Time CBES Bike Tour Coordinator*

Be a part of the oldest, most popular bike tour on the Eastern Shore!

The 2023 Between the Waters Bike Tour is scheduled for October 28, 2023. The successful candidate for the job of Bike Tour Coordinator will be detail-oriented and unflappable, with keen organizational skills to handle the many moving parts of the Bike Tour process. These include: reviewing the 4 tour routes for functionality and viability; planning/managing pre-event setting up, morning sign-in, Lunch/Rest Stops, and finish; facilitating sponsorships and sign-off for VDOT Permit; and helping to recruit and coordinate volunteers.

Event-planning experience is a plus, as well as good people skills. The job involves flexible hours throughout 2023, with a concentration of full-time hours needed during the 2 weeks leading up to the Bike Tour.

The job comes with a detailed manual and access to the previous BT Coordinator. A great project to share with a spouse/partner/friend.

Contact info@cbes.org or 757-678-7157 for more information.

*Mary Ehmann, 2021 & 2022 Bike Tour Coordinator, has returned to fulltime teaching but has agreed to serve in an advisory role in 2023.

Short-Term Rentals and Workforce Housing Northampton to Address Both Issues

By Mary Miller

Short-Term Rentals

In many rural and urban, tourism-oriented towns and counties across Virginia, Vacation or Short-Term Rentals (STRs) have proliferated, often unchecked. At first, they seemed like a reasonable way to increase visitor accommodations, especially in areas with few hotels. Then the number of vacation rental homes began to negatively impact neighborhoods – with constant transient occupants, empty homes in the off-season, the loss of year-round rental housing, and increased noise, parking and partying.

Northampton County currently permits STRs by right – with no location or time period restrictions. The vacation rentals have multiplied. Except for a town or subdivision that doesn't permit STRs, there isn't a place in the county where a buyer can purchase a family home and have any assurance that the house next door or across the street won't become a transient occupancy rental. There is currently no notice given to neighbors, and the few restrictions include number of people and vehicles, compliance with county noise ordinance, and some limits on event venues.

The proposed changes being considered include:

- <u>A new definition</u>: <u>SHORT TERM RENTAL UNIT</u> An entire dwelling rented for less than thirty (30) consecutive days for compensation
- <u>Additional standards</u>: "In addition to notifying the adjacent property owners, Applicant shall notify all property owners within 1,000 feet of the parcel of proposed Short-Term Rental or Bed and Breakfast"; and there are some additional safety requirements. The STRs will require a Minor Special Use Permit in every zoning district except Conservation, Existing Industrial, and Working Waterfront, where they are prohibited.

The change specifies "entire dwelling" instead of "dwelling unit," which have separate definitions in the Zoning Ordinance, and doesn't mention underlying zoning density compliance or Health Department inspection/ approval.

This proposal would be a major change for the county. Other communities have gone further in managing STRs – considering them businesses and requiring commercial licenses; assessing Personal Property Tax; limiting the number of weeks of operation per year; permitting only single-family units; curbing amplified music, fireworks, and bonfires; and prohibiting parties. Virginia Beach has created an overlay map for permitted STRs. Albemarle County, a model for land use for other rural counties,¹ only allows "unhosted Home Stay" rentals (alternate term for STRs) on 5+ acre parcels in rural areas – and restricts rentals to "up to 7 days a month and a total of 45 days a year." It's unclear what would be addressed by neighbors in public comments during Public Hearings for an STR Special Use Permit, since the Use is still widely permitted with no time period or area restrictions – and on what basis the application would be approved or denied. Possibly conditions could be placed on the permit in response to any concerns presented.

Workforce Housing

The housing shortage for local workers is a national issue – builders generally are not interested in building below-market-rate housing, and localities are reluctant to get into the housing and rental business. Northampton County is attempting to address the issue by permitting a new low-impact, commercial Use: multi-family workforce housing units in existing buildings, as part of its Adaptive Reuse zoning. Low-impact commercial uses are permitted in non-commercial districts if existing buildings are used. There are several criteria standards for these businesses.

Proposed changes include:

• <u>A new definition</u>: <u>WORKFORCE HOUSING</u> – Housing which is accessible to households whose primary source of reported income is from employment, and whose maximum gross household income does not exceed the Standard Household Income Limits calculation by Virginia Housing.²

The maximum household income eligible would be 67,200/yr – and payment of 30% of that income for rent/utilities would be 1,680/month. By contrast, the average wage in the county³ is 892/week – and using the 30% formula, the rent/utilities would be 1,070,40/month. And a further comparison – a minimum-wage salary⁴ household, 12/hour, would need a 576/month rental including utilities.

• <u>Increased density</u>: "In existing buildings used for Workforce housing, density shall not exceed 4 units per acre with a maximum of 8; units shall not be used for short-term rental."

The county's proposal, with careful attention to preserving the integrity of the underlying zoning district and mitigating any adverse impacts, shows some promise. But in exchange for the often great increase in housing-unit density for a developer, the county may not be able to ensure the long-term workforce-affordable rental prices. Virginia Beach's workforce housing plan, including increased densities, is voluntary for developers, with no stated longterm rental price agreements. Albemarle County is considering 30-year deed restrictions in return for increasing densities for workforce housing, and establishing a county

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New Coalition Supports Agricultural Workers on the Shore

Submitted by Rick Willis, Agricultural Workers Advocacy Coalition

For as long as agricultural workers have come to the Eastern Shore of Virginia to plant and harvest the produce that feeds America, local groups and individuals have attempted to make workers feel welcome, improve their living and working conditions, and provide other services.

Agricultural Workers Advocacy Coalition Formed

Earlier this spring, these groups and individuals came together to form the Agricultural Workers Advocacy Coalition (AWAC), whose mission is to serve as advocates for the workers while they reside at camps in both counties on the Shore. AWAC strives to carry out this mission by raising community awareness of the workers' daily lives and their positive impact on the community. AWAC assists the workers with transportation and medical resources, food from the Dos Santos and Eastern Shore Food Banks, offers legal assistance, and arranges regular gatherings with local residents to break down stereotypes and underlying prejudices, as well as organizing other activities with the goal of putting a human face on these agricultural workers.

Most agricultural workers (this is the designation the workers prefer rather than "migrant workers") come to the Shore from Mexico under the H-2A Temporary Worker Visa Program. The program provides temporary workers for the agricultural industry when domestic workers are unwilling or are unavailable to do this work. Some workers come from Florida, as well as under other designations. As many as 1,500 workers come to the Shore each year, residing in more than 12 camps - their "home away from home" from late March through October. The workers contribute approximately \$10 million to the local economy (The Commonwealth Institute analysis of U.S. Census American Community Survey data, 5-year data 2015-2019; U.S. Department of Labor). The work is extremely difficult, often dangerous, and carries exacting standards for worker productivity.

AWAC meets monthly in a local church and bi-monthly in a park in Onley during the peak of the season. The meetings involve the workers and include dinner, personto-person conversations, and roundtable discussions with simultaneous translation devices to bridge the language barrier. AWAC is committed to relating to the workers as neighbors and welcoming and assisting the workers when they are far from their homes and loved ones.

Recently, AWAC has focused on 2 critical worker areas: food insecurity and lack of broadband internet. With input from the workers, AWAC has been working with Lipman Family Farms, one of the largest agricultural enterprises, at the corporate and local levels to address these critical issues. Lipman owns 6 farms on the Shore. Food insecurity reached a critical level recently. Each year, when it rains or there is a lack of harvest, agricultural workers do not have money to buy food, let alone send money home to their families. This year was particularly hard for workers. Dos Santos Food Pantry, a partner of the AWAC, along with the Food Bank of the Eastern Shore, delivered food to approximately 230 workers. AWAC raised over \$4,500 to meet this emergency.

The second priority is to provide broadband internet access to workers. Since many of the camps are in remote and rural areas of the counties, internet service is spotty or not available. Access to the internet, either though mobile hotspots or through a contract with a local provider, would help the workers connect with family and friends, schedule medical appointments, have access to community services, etc. In short, the workers would have access to communications we take for granted. Three members of AWAC met with Lipman representatives via Zoom in August to solicit their commitment to getting internet access to their workers. A proposal shared with Lipman Family Farms during this meeting outlined the needs, cost estimates, and options to negotiate with carriers for internet access. We are continuing to engage with management to proceed with the project during the winter months, with the goal of providing access for the 2023 season.

Top priorities for AWAC during the coming months are: continuing efforts to resolve food insecurity and access to broadband; raising public awareness of the workers' work and living situations through organizational newsletters (such as this article), features, letters to the editors, and news stories in local and regional media; soliciting churches and other organizations to become part of AWAC; fundraising to support AWAC's activities; and a "gently used" shoe drive during the 2022 Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

AWAC has many opportunities for individuals or groups to be involved, such as volunteering to transport workers to the monthly meetings and medical appointments; collecting and/or distributing clothing and personal items; donating and distributing food; serving as interpreters (Spanish/English or Haitian Creole/English); teaching English as a Second Language; and informing local churches and groups about and encouraging them to join AWAC.

Among the groups affiliated with AWAC are the Eastern Shore Chapter of Virginia Organizing, the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia (the Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes, Bishop) Legal Aid Justice Center, the Latino/x Ministries of the Diocese of Southern Virginia, and the Dos Santos Food Pantry (an outreach mission of St. James'

"Messy" Areas a Boon to Wildlife Habitat

By Arthur Upshur

Many people like things in nature to be neat and ordered, e.g., a freshly mowed field, or a grassy lawn with trimmed landscape plants. Most of us love the look of mature trees without much understory, the layer of vegetation that grows beneath the forest canopy. Something deep in our history may make us prefer this "cleaned-up" openness. Was it safer without places for predators to hide? Could it be that neatly trimmed-up areas signaled our affluence? Maybe – but it also reflects the fact that messy, overgrown areas are not as easy for us to traverse or use. We spend prodigious energy, time, and resources to buy equipment and fuel – all to keep our open spaces "cleaned" up. But good wildlife stewardship depends on unkempt areas and the wildlife they support. If we leave more areas "messy," it makes a big impact on improving habitat.

On my farm, I have several fields that I mow a few times a year for my hay mulch. My neighbor whose yard abuts my field mows his yard weekly. I know I frustrate him with my messy field. He used to offer to help me mow the field if I wanted to "clean it up." His yard is green and trim and neat, a mixture of short grasses. My field is a raucous chaos of vines, tall grasses, goldenrod, wild rye, vetch, Black Eyed Susan, milk weed, dogs-bane, Yarrow, passion fruit, small trees, and a little poison ivy and honeysuckle coming in from the edges. Every season is a different mix, often waist-high when mowed.

Each mowing has surprises: my last mowing, I kept hitting big red volunteer watermelons. My field is filled with life. I jump quail coveys along the edge. The deer bed down in the tall parts, jumping up and springing along when I mow. I see box turtles everywhere, snakes slithering along. In migration season, the number of birds, small brown sparrows to jays to flickers, is amazing. Any time you walk the edge, there are birds jumping and moving about by the hundreds. Harrier hawks and redtails hunt continuously above the field during their migration and the owls are mighty noisy each night in the wood edges. At dusk, masses of swallows swoop, along with the dragonflies that hang out just above the field. I have surprised foxes carrying squirrels in their mouths, raccoons meandering over to check out persimmons, woodcocks exploding under my dog's nose.

My neighbor's yard meanwhile is predictably sterile. A flock of blackbirds or robins migrating through might land every now and again in mass. But largely it is empty except for animals crossing to check out my field; they all come from a far neighbor's field that is now developing into a young forest. It is quite the lesson in how well a messy landscape supports wildlife.



A dead tree provides food and shelter to many species. Photos by Arthur Upshur

And it is not just less mowing that helps. When I see a dead tree, I always think I should cut it down and turn it into firewood, or perhaps even lumber, before it rots and is "lost." But dead trees are critical for woodpeckers and a host of animals and birds that use those snags and those woodpecker holes for nesting. The deadfall that accumulates around a dying tree is a critical habitat for all kinds of insects, especially all those solitary bees that play such a crucial role in pollination, and a number of predator insects that mostly spend their winters in rotten wood debris to shelter and protect them. Leaving those dead trees to decompose is an amazing gain in habitat. It's not as pretty, I agree. But it's better habitat for wildlife.

So, consider slowing down cleaning up Mother Nature this winter. Leaving areas messy is a great way to add productive habitat. And you, too, can explain to your visitors and neighbors that the mess is all for wildlife habitat!



The contrast between my "messy" field and my neighbor's "well-ordered" one is stark in every season.



Got Boxes? Info on Cardboard

Cardboard on the Rise

Cardboard production saw a steep rise in the 2010s at the start of e-commerce, and an even sharper increase at the start of the pandemic. Even now, the trend lines have not reversed, as we've become used to ever-increasing deliveries.

Cardboard, or corrugated paperboard, requires pulp with long, strong fibers, primarily from loblolly pine, native to the Southeast. It takes a lot of them – a single International Paper plant in Rome, Georgia, goes through 8,000 tons of trees a day. And with the increasing demand comes a major increase in loblolly pine plantations, including large farms in Brazil destined for the Chinese market.

Sustainability

Up to 90% of cardboard is recycled. However, not all recycled cardboard can be made into new cardboard; some will go into flat, non-corrugated paperboard or other paper products.

With the increase in demand, some manufacturers and retailers are looking at alternative sources for cardboard, including plant materials such as seaweed or mushrooms. Others are developing products to reduce the amount of packaging, including a 3M product called Cushion Lock, a fiber-based version of Bubble Wrap that can expand to 60 times its volume as needed.

Amazon has developed an algorithm to determine the best-sized box for each product; they also give consumers options on packaging, including waiting to ship products together in one box, or shipping some items with no additional outside box. This is partly in response to regulations from the European Union and tax incentives from many U.S. states, related to reducing or eliminating shipping materials.

What Can You Do?

- Buy local to avoid shipping
- Check out sustainable shipping options on websites where you shop
- Provide feedback to companies on good or bad packaging
- Recycle all cardboard without food residue Source:

Shaer M. Where does all the cardboard come from? I had to know. The New York Times Magazine, Nov. 28, 2022. https://www.nytimes. com/2022/11/28/magazine/cardboard-international-paper.html

Keeping Track Community Outreach Now Part of Coastal Resilience, Flood Protection Plans

A bill (HB516/SB551) passed during the 2022 General Assembly mandates that the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), along with the Director of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion, develop a Community Outreach and Engagement Plan (COEP) as part of the process of developing and updating the state's Flood Protection Master Plan and Coastal Resilience Master Plan. The draft COEP can be seen at https://www. dcr.virginia.gov/dam-safety-and-floodplains/document/ Draft-COEP-for-Public-Comment.pdf.

The draft COEP states that DCR "will adopt a 'whole community' approach to outreach and engagement ... in preparedness efforts," including individuals and families (including those with access and functional needs); businesses; faith-based and community organizations; nonprofit groups; schools and academia; media outlets; and all levels of government, including state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal partners. The outreach efforts will include information (fact sheets, open house events, and social and other media); consultation (public comments, focus groups, and surveys); involvement (interactive workshops and community meetings); and collaboration (citizen advisory committees, data gathering and analysis, and partnership agreements). The specific proposed partnerships and outreach measures are outlined in the draft COEP.

A public comment period for the COEP is open through January 31 at https://townhall.virginia.gov/L/ViewNotice. cfm?GNid=2523. DCR is specifically seeking input from tribal representatives, community-based organizations, public health representatives, nongovernmental organizations, civil rights organizations, communities impacted by recurring flooding, and the state's Emergency Management Equity Working Group.



New Coalition, Cont'd from p. 4

and St. George's Episcopal Churches). Many individuals are involved from the 5 Episcopal Churches on the Shore as well as those from other denominations. Dos Santos is a volunteer-run 501(c)(3). 100% of donations are used to purchase food for the pantry. In addition, Dos Santos recently opened a thrift store in Onley and established an Emergency Fund to assist workers with unforeseen emergencies. Monetary donations may be sent to: Dos Santos, P.O. Box 758, Accomack, VA 23301.

For more information about AWAC, you can contact the Rev. Rick Willis, 757-894-4068.

Salt – That's It, Salt?



Well, not quite. Start with a nice flaky sea salt, one with terroir – think about citrusy top notes, add a little heat – and end up with something's that's a lot more than the sum of its parts. This particular version of spicy salt was inspired by the lime peel spirals drying everywhere on hot sunny clothes lines in Granada. Asking around, it was surprising the number of uses folks had for those flavor-filled peels.

A little advance prep is needed for the peels. This spicy, flavored salt can perk up sliced vegetables, summer melons, fish, and seafood – even the rim of your favorite summer cocktail. Store in a closed glass jar. Putting this together is like a summer camp craft project. Enjoy!

- Using a sharp vegetable peeler, carefully peel off the rinds of 1 orange and 1 lime – leaving the white pith behind.
- Place the rinds on a plate, in a single layer, and leave to dry in a warm sunny spot. You'll know they're ready for the next step if you can easily snap the pieces into bits.
- Process broken peels, ½ tsp of the salt, and dried pepper flakes (to taste!) in a "bullet" if you have one, or a food processor or with a mortar and pestle to the consistency of ground black pepper.
- Combine all with remaining flavorful sea salt – like Barrier Islands brand. You're done.

The Kitchen Hive – Mary Miller Reprinted with permission: https://www.talkrealnow.com/ salt-thats-it-salt/

STRs and Workforce Housing, Cont'd from p. 3

trust fund for future housing. But unless a locality, or a private nonprofit, has a financial investment and chooses to set rent restrictions on a project, there does not appear to be a mechanism to force private owners into rent restrictions. A proposed workforce housing project in Cape Charles, two 3-story apartment houses near Bay Creek, is in the planning stage. The project features micro-studios at 360 sq ft, to 2-bedroom units at 702 sq ft. "The targeted income range is 80% to 150% of the Area Median Income (\$55,104 for Cape Charles) and no greater than 30% of income to be spent for housing costs (rent and utilities)" states the presentation by the developers. That would mean annual household incomes between \$44,083 and \$82,656, with housing costs between \$1,102 and \$2,066/ month – but no long-term rental price guarantees appear in the presentation

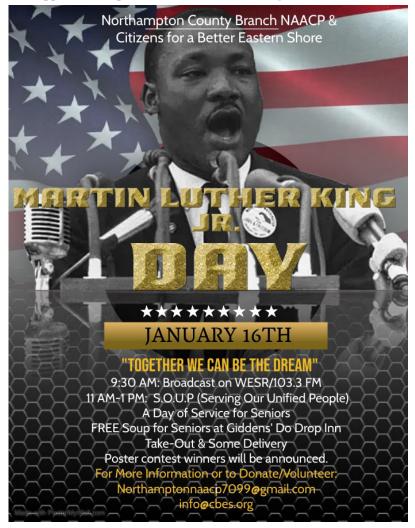
to the Town Council.

Innovative partnerships among for-profits and non-profits, Federal and State funding sources, a willing developer, and local governments, with financial involvement by all, are in the beginning stages in some rural communities in Virginia. These partnerships can write their own rules for preserving workforce housing rental prices.

The Northampton County Planning Commission will study these Zoning Text Amendments and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

¹https://www.albemarle.org/government/ community-development/apply-for/ homestay-clearances ² https://www.virginiahousing.com/partners/ rental-housing/income-limits ³ https://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic/ news-release/countyemploymentandwages_ virginia.htm

⁴ https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/ title40.1/chapter3/article1.1/



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Email us: info@cbes.org, subject line: ShoreLine.