



The Queen Anne's Chronicle

CELEBRATING QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

INFORMING THE CITIZENS

THE FUTURE OF QAC – CITIZENS SAY WHAT THEY WANT

- We like our farms and forests, our water-based industries, our good teachers, and our small businesses.
- We want broadband, health care and emergency services, safe drinking water, and adequate roads.
- We want job opportunities for our young people – but most of us do not think we have insufficient growth.

These were some of the headline results from a survey of County residents recently presented to the Economic Development Commission (EDC). Overall, the survey results were an elaboration -- and strong reaffirmation -- of the citizens' "visioning" that went into the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

The Survey Exercise

The survey, launched by the EDC last November, was carried out by the BEACON group at Salisbury University (the same folks who analyzed the economic benefits of our top-notch public schools, as reported in the July/August 2012 *Chronicle*). Their survey instrument was a lengthy questionnaire "distributed to a sample of participants from the various industries in the County . . . [and] made available on the EDC's website and publicized through local advertising media" to the public (*Final Draft 032613*, p. 3).



Photo Credit – David Godfrey

In presenting the *Final Draft* survey to the EDC meeting on March 27, Beacon's team expressed their satisfaction with the representativeness and number of the responses. 436 County residents responded to the questionnaire, while only 250 responses had been needed for the results to

be valid. The survey was in 24 sections: 11 asked for responses on economic development issues facing the County, 4 were a kind of mini-visioning exercise, and 9 collected demographic information about the

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SURPLUS! COUNTY SPOUTS BLACK INK

The County appears to have run an operating surplus of nearly \$11 million for the fiscal year 2012, and the surplus is now up to over \$5 million for the fiscal year 2013 that ends this June.

This \$16 million eruption of black ink comes as quite a surprise to those who watched the Commissioners adopt their budgets for the past two years. Even after substantial tax hikes and stringent cost-cutting, it seemed that break-even years were the best we could expect.

What happened, as we now see, was very different.

How did the surpluses come about? In this article, the *Chronicle* tries to put some of the pieces together.

The 2012 Surplus Unfolds

In our last issue of 2012 (Vol. 2, No. 6, available at www.qaca.org), we reported the announcement this past September that the County was estimating an operating surplus for fiscal 2012 (which had ended the previous June 30) in the amount of \$7,258,739. Our article traced the story of the emerging surplus from the original adoption of the break-even 2012 budget up to the September announcement of a big surplus.

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QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY OPERATING FUND RESULTS (FY 2012)

- Revenues: \$111.9 million
- Expenditures: \$101 million
- Surplus of Revenues Over Expenditures: \$10.9 million
- Transfers from Surplus for Future Capital Projects: \$5.0 million

Source: Queen Anne's County, Maryland, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2012, pp. 107-109; also p. 23, at <http://www.qac.org/Docs/Finance/2012%20QAC%20MD%20Cafr.pdf>

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A BOUNTY OF LOCAL PRODUCE AND PRODUCTS AT QAC FARM MARKETS



Kent Island Farmers' Market

— Chronicle Photo

In our July/August issue, the *Chronicle* lists all the farm stands in QAC that we know of — if you will have a farm stand this summer that has not been listed in the past, please let us know at info@qaca.org and we will include it in the listing. In this issue, we would like to draw our readers' attention to the two local farm markets that we know of. We are distinguishing between a “farm market”, where multiple vendors are present selling their products and produce, and a “farm stand”, where a single vendor sells his/her own (and sometimes other farmers') products and produce.

On Kent Island

We have on Kent Island the only farm market on the Eastern Shore that is open throughout the year. The **Kent Island Farmers' Market** carries a large assortment of specialties — among them are sustainable wild-caught fish, naturally-raised pork and grass-fed beef, gourmet flavored humus, yogurt made with local maple and honey, raw-milk artisan cheeses, organic fruits and vegetables, a wide variety of artisan breads, vinegars and oils, soups, gluten-free baked goods, lavender products, and eggs. The Kent Island Farmers' Market is located at Christ Church, 830 Romancoke Rd. (Route 8), 1.5 miles south of Route 50, and is open on Thursday afternoons from 3:30 – 6:30. Visit its website at www.kentislandfarmersmarket.com or its Facebook page and/or join the Market's email list to learn the specialties of the week.

In Centreville

The **Centreville Farmers' Market**, located at the Court Square on Commerce Street, is growing, with expanded hours and new vendors. It now is open from 3-7 p.m. on Wednesdays (parking meter charges waived) as well as from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays. The offerings include jams, baked goods, a wide variety of fresh local fruit and vegetables in season, baked goods and herbal teas, as well as local beef, sausage and veal, cheeses, and artisan breads. Also for sale are native plants, potpourris, herbs, hand-made jewelry, and household items. Centreville's Main Street Program is pleased that the Centreville Farmers' Market is partnering with the QAC Future Farmers of America.



— Chronicle Photo

Surplus! County, continued from Page 1

We noted that the final results would appear later in the official Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for FY 2012. That document became available on the County website sometime after its formal transmittal on January 24 of this year (go to **QUICK LINKS** and click on **Budget & Financial Information**).

The CAFR (pronounced “caffer”) shows actual revenues and expenditures for 2012 that depart markedly from the budget that was adopted in June 2011. As we reported, that budget projected both revenues and expenditures at about \$106 million. More precisely, the budgeted *operating* revenues, excluding transfers in from other funds, were about \$105 million, and budgeted expenditures on *operations*, excluding a transfer of \$2 million into a holding account for capital projects, were about \$104 million.

In the CAFR, however, actual operating revenues for 2012 were almost \$112 million (see page 109), the expenditures on operations were only \$101 million (see page 109), and so the “excess of revenues over expenditures” came to almost \$11 million — an operating surplus of \$10,889,024, to be exact (also on page 109).

Where Did the 2012 Surplus Go?

We know from following the Commissioners' meetings that \$1.5 million of the surplus went to the Board of Education for school buses and technology, and some \$2-3 million went to fully restore the “Rainy Day Fund” (a reserve for contingencies). While it's beyond our ability to track where all of the surplus went, the CAFR itself shows one other place where a good chunk of it went.

Looking further down page 109 in the CAFR, one sees a “Transfer Out” to the “General Capital Projects Fund” in the amount of a little over \$5 million. Going back to page 23 of the CAFR, one finds out what that was: “In fiscal year 2012, transfers

out included \$5.0 million to the General Capital Projects Fund, which will help build up the fund balance available for future capital projects. The County plans to move aggressively on several capital projects and will sell bonds for a portion of the expenditures, but would also like to have fund balance available to cover some of the costs. There was no such transfer from the General Fund to the General Capital Projects Fund in fiscal year 2011.”

So a big piece of the 2012 operating surplus was taken out of the operating fund and squirreled away in a holding account for future capital projects like the proposed County Complex. Some of that money was sent out, unremarked by the public, in the original budget; the rest of it went out quietly in a late budget amendment adopted last November, after the fiscal year was over.

Did the Commissioners carefully weigh, against the County's various other needs, whether that was the best use for \$5 million of the surplus?

The 2013 Surplus Emerges

The budget for the fiscal year we are currently in, FY 2013, was adopted by the Commissioners on June 12 of last year. It is another break-even budget, with both revenues and expenditures projected at a shade below \$108 million.

Given what had actually happened in the previous fiscal year, a knowledgeable observer might have anticipated that in fiscal year 2013 we would actually end up, not at break-even, but with another surplus. The adopted budget was projecting revenues about \$4 million *below* what was received in FY 2012 -- even though a modest economic recovery was under way and the State was projecting a sharp rise in income tax receipts.

But be all that as it may, and whatever the budget-makers knew or should have known at the time, the actual result is once again looking like major black ink. On March 12 of this year, in

a regular bi-monthly “Finance Review”, the Commissioners were told that the actual revenues and expenditures for FY 2013 were on track to be *over* budget on revenues by \$4 million, and *under* budget on expenditures by \$1 million — with the result being a projected surplus in the range of \$5 million.

The Finance Review presentation can be seen on the always-informative QACTV “Public Meetings on the Web”, beginning at minute 48:24 of the 03/12/13 Commissioners' Meeting.

Looking Ahead

As the *Chronicle* goes to press, the Commissioners are at work on another break-even budget for next year, fiscal 2014, projecting revenues and expenditures both at about \$111-112 million. That's a much rosier scenario than the citizens were treated to at the special session on August 13 of last year, when the Financial Forecast presented there showed projected revenues for FY 2014 of only \$108 million and a *deficit* of \$2.5 million.

But, far from being rosy, is the FY 2014 budget once again being too gloomy? In an improving economic climate, we're projecting revenues for the next fiscal year that are no greater than what we actually took in two fiscal years ago. No doubt being conservative in one's financial projections is generally a good thing, but *unrealistic* financial pessimism, whatever may be driving it, has real consequences for taxpayers, teachers, County employees, roads maintenance, education quality, and on and on.

Finally, there's still the question of just how far in the black the actual FY 2013 operating results will turn out to be. Now the projection is for a \$5 million operating surplus, but what will we be told after the year ends? What will the FY 2013 CAFR show?

Keep watching QACTV (and the *Chronicle*) for further exciting episodes in our ongoing County fiscal drama (provisional title: “How the Sky Still Hasn't Fallen on QAC”).

THE WAYS OF WOOD DUCKS

It came as a surprise that the Department of Natural Resources says on its website that “[i]n Maryland, wood ducks are the most common breeding duck”. It was a surprise because what we commonly see are Mallards -- hanging out around a landing, crossing the road (as happens in Wye Mills), looking for a handout at a waterside restaurant, or gathered near a pond. In contrast, wood ducks are a more unusual sight.

The Life of a Wood Duck

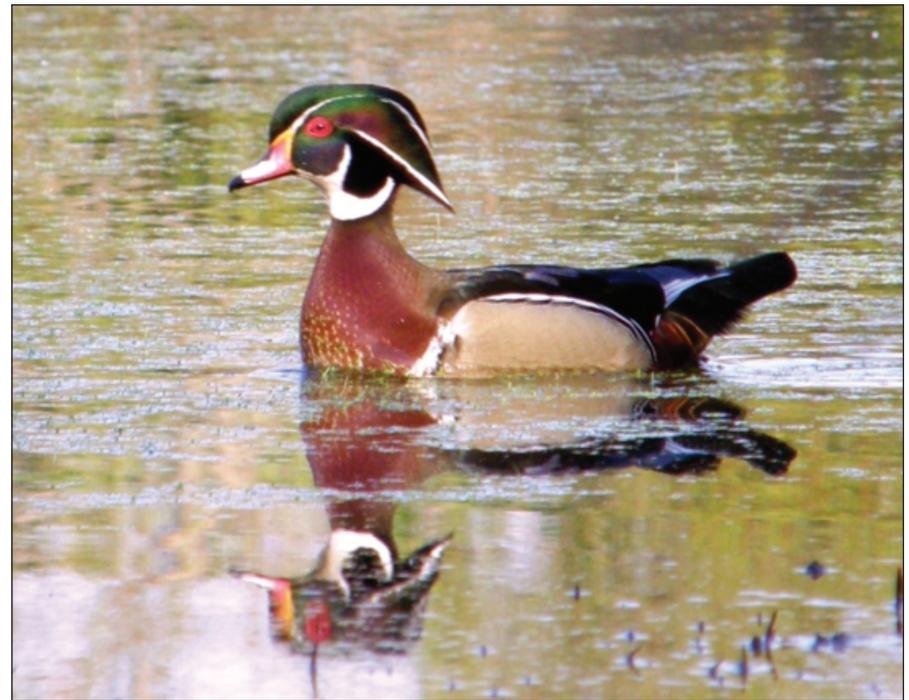
Baby wood ducks are a brave lot and get off to an exciting start in life. As a species, wood ducks are cavity nesters, preferring to nest in cavities at heights up to 20 or 30 feet that are near or over the water. Within 24 hours of hatching and 2 months before they can fly, the baby wood ducks scramble up to the cavity opening and leap out onto the ground or water.

There are some wonderful videos of the baby wood ducks heeding the call of the mother duck and courageously jumping to join her. You can watch this impressive feat of day-old wood ducks by Googling “You Tube Jump Day Box 4” or “You Tube Bet you never knew wood ducks could bounce.” There are any number of videos on You Tube demonstrating the courage of these babies. The ducklings never return to the nest after that first 24 hours.

Wood ducks frequent the interface between land and water – lakes, rivers and streams, including freshwater marshes and wooded swamps. They do not frequent salty water due to their physiology. Like mallards, wood ducks are dabbling ducks, going bottoms-up in search of food, but not diving completely under as canvasbacks do.

Unlike many ducks, wood ducks spent a lot of time up in trees. They have strong claws that allow them to perch on branches. The claws also help the baby wood duck as it climbs from the bottom of the nesting cavity or box up to the opening.

Plants, like sedge, duckweed, and smartweed, comprise the largest part of the wood duck diet, but they also eat insects and small aquatic animals.



Local wood duck

Photo Credit – David Godfrey

Wood Duck Nesting Boxes in Sudlersville

In the early 20th Century wood ducks were in sharp decline due to hunting and loss of habitat. The wood duck population was saved when volunteer protectors of wildlife teamed up with state and federal governments to manage hunting and establish a nest box program.

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PLANNING COMMISSION TAKES UP ZONING AMENDMENTS, “ROADBLOCKS” TO IMPLEMENTATION OF 2010 COMP PLAN

• March Meeting

Staff introduced, for consideration by the Commission next month, five citizen-sponsored amendments to the text of the zoning laws and three amendments to the zoning maps. Principal Planner Spinelli explained that citizens are authorized to submit amendments to the zoning text or maps once a year during the first 10 days of February. With respect to map amendments, Spinelli said that these are essentially rezoning requests that, because they are not part of a comprehensive rezoning, can be granted only upon a finding of a mistake in the zoning maps or a change in the surrounding neighborhood inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Director Cohoon, assisted by Principal Planner Spinelli, surveyed a number of matters, some related to new State legislation, that were said to have created problems for land use regulation by the County under the existing zoning laws and the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. Several instances were noted in which our local rules were now inconsistent with State requirements.

Although it was not in that category, particular attention was given to **a proposed residential development in Grasonville** that was being blocked by the APFO requirement that the elementary school there not be further crowded. This frustration of the developer’s project is undesirable, it was suggested, because Grasonville is a designated Growth Area. Accordingly, staff indicated that they would be bringing forward a proposal for a “mitigation fee” that the developer could pay in order to avoid APFO’s limitations on residential development that causes school crowding.

• April Meeting

The Commission considered various citizen-sponsored text and map amendments. Some of these are described here.

– Staff and the applicant, Centreville National Bank, agreed to work further to reach agreement on an amendment relating to limited expanded use of electronic (LED) signs.

– The Commission approved, Chairman Waterman recusing himself, a favorable recommendation to the County Commissioners on a text amendment to facilitate a mixed use development on the **Lowery Farm** property across from the Kent Island Safeway. The applicants,

Washington-based developers of Bethesda Row and Gallery Place, expressed their intent to create a “town center” for Chester consisting of offices, retail, restaurants, movie theatre, and residential units, with walkable streets based on a concentrated core and decreasing densities as one moves outward from the center. Staff advised that the text amendment was consistent with the Chester-Stevensville Community Plan’s treatment of the Lowery Property.

Counsel for the Commission asked “whether we will get the **Dundee Overpass** out of this” – referring to the long-standing recommendation (repeated in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan) for another north-south crossing over 50/301 to alleviate Kent Island traffic congestion. The applicants stated that they were aware, especially after meeting with community groups, that traffic was the main issue they would have to address in order for their project to move forward. They further stated that they had already retained a traffic consultant to begin work on the problem.

– The Commission, upon application of Gateway Commerce Center LLC, considered an amendment to allow regional shopping centers, convenience stores, fast food restaurants, car sales, and other new uses at the **intersection of Routes 301 and 213** outside of Centreville. The applicant stated that in 2002 he had purchased a property on the southeast corner of the intersection, a portion of the historic Peace and Plenty Farm, and that under the restrictions in the existing zoning, he had been unable to finalize any of a series of potential development deals, including one with Walmart from whom he had had a letter of intent.

Other property owners in the immediate vicinity testified to traffic issues that would arise if the development contemplated by the applicant were to occur, and two owners expressed the view that the controlling consideration in determining the uses of the properties at this intersection should be what uses would be to the advantage of the town of Centreville, for which this intersection is now a “beautiful entry”. The Commission directed staff and the applicant to work together to narrow the proposed amendment and bring it back for further consideration in May.

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EDITORIAL: COVER CROPS

The lush green farm fields we have been driving by in late winter and early spring were mostly planted by farmers enrolled in the Maryland Cover Crop Program. Financed by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration and 2010 Trust funds, that Program provides modest grants to offset some of the seed and labor costs for fall planting of “winter wheat”, barley, and other cold-hardy crops ranging from radishes to ryegrass. (The field pictured below is planted in wheat.)

Cover crops recycle unused nutrients remaining in the soil after harvest of the summer crop of corn or soybeans, and they protect fields against wind and water erosion. In addition to water quality benefits, cover crops improve soil health, increase organic matter in the soil, reduce weeds and pests, and provide habitat for beneficial insects.

QAC farmers are to be congratulated for having planted over 45,000 beautiful green acres of cover crops, notwithstanding difficult wet conditions this past fall.

Cover crops are one of the most cost-effective “best management practices” in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay cleanup strategy. As the Maryland Department of Agriculture website puts it (click on the Conservation tab):

“Nothing says conservation farmer like a green field of cover crops in winter.”

The sign-up period for the 2013-2014 Cover Crop Program will take place during a three-week window early this summer. Keep up the good work!



Winter wheat

— Chronicle Photo

The Queen Anne's Chronicle

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Chris Pupke — Chairman of the Board

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Queen Anne's Conservation Association (QACA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, is the Eastern Shore's oldest conservation organization. Its mission is to promote stewardship of Queen Anne's County's natural resources and to protect its rural character and small towns while encouraging the management of prudent and sustainable growth.

Queen Anne's Conservation Association

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Back issues of *The Queen Anne's Chronicle* can be accessed at www.qaca.org

COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS

Here are selected items summarized from the approved minutes and QACTV coverage of the County Commissioners' meetings.

February 12, 2013.

The Commissioners:

- Started the process to procure architectural design services for the **Circuit Court House Project**.

- Approved an agreement with MDE for a grant to improve water quality and reduce stormwater runoff in Centreville through rain garden/bio-swales and other projects in partnership with the Town, Corsica River Conservancy, and State agencies.

- Authorized Narrows Pointe homeowners to borrow \$375K from the State for erosion control.

- Heard, in a discussion of the **Southern Kent Island Sewer Project**, Commissioner Simmons present the possibility that the cost of the S.T.E.P. option (“Plan F”) might be as little as one-half of what was previously presented.

- Approved, upon submission by Sudlersville Volunteer Fire Company President Michael Faust, use of the **Old Sudlersville Middle School** property for the Company's carnival fund-raiser and heard of the Company's possible interest in acquiring the entire property including the building.

- Re-appointed, upon request of Chairman Wayne Humphries, 13 members of the County Drug & Alcohol Council and, separately, appointed Joann Wilkerson to a four-year-term on the Personnel Board.

- Received, from Reese Butler of Suicide Hotline, a presentation on the QAC Community Wide Suicide Prevention Plan and, from QACTV Manager George Harvey, a presentation on the “Live Work Play in QA” element in the campaign to brand the County as “A Great Place to Live, Work and Play”.

- Heard, from Chair Mary Margaret Revell Goodwin, an update from the QAC War of 1812 Committee.

- Adopted Ordinance No. 12-23, Revisions to the Queen Anne's County Public Ethics Law, in conformity with new State requirements.

- Received a proposed ordinance for a property tax credit for buildings renovated for arts and entertainment purposes (No. 13-04, introduced by Commissioner Dumenil).

- Heard nine persons speak at Press and Public Comment, seven of them on the subject of proposed Sunday deer hunting.

February 26, 2013.

The Commissioners:

- Agreed, following a closed session, to release a January 14, 2010 legal memorandum addressing various options in the **Southern Kent Island Sewer Project**.

- Adopted, in response to State mandates, amendments to the Solid Waste Management Plan relating to recyclable materials from public schools and recycling of fluorescent lights.

- Agreed to award, using State funds, a contract for design, engineering and construction oversight to Manns Woodward Studios for the Our Haven Shelter in Stevensville.

- Re-appointed two members to the Bay Bridge Airport Advisory Committee.

- Approved budget amendments to reflect receipt of federal/state funds for further work on the County's floodplain ordinance and for trails in the Route 18 and Old Love Point parks.

- Designated “Responsibility” as the Character Counts! Pillar of the Month for March.

- Held hearings, and heard testimony from two persons, on proposed ordinances relating to:

- special events at bed-and-breakfasts, farms, and homes in agricultural areas (No. 13-01);

- what is a “winery” under County zoning law (No. 13-03); and

- a tax credit for certain arts and entertainment buildings (No. 13-04).

- Heard seven persons speak at Press and Public Comment, principally on the proposed second McDonalds on Kent Island in the Thompson Creek Mall, and assured the speakers that there would be an opportunity for public comment on the proposal before the Planning Commission.

March 12, 2013.

The Commissioners:

- Approved a 3-year extension of the Planning and Zoning Department's lease on the Coursevall space.

- Received a presentation from Budget & Finance Director Seeman on:

- **FY 2013:** expenditures projected close to \$1 million *below* budget, revenues about \$4 million *above* budget, implying a **\$5 million budget surplus for the current fiscal year ending in June;**

- **FY 2014:** we project revenue growth for next year of 3.9%, or about \$4 million, and our budget will be balanced;

- **5-Year Forecast:** we are still projecting that expenditures will grow faster than revenues in FY 2015 through FY 2017;

- **Bond Rating:** we have maintained our AA+ rating and our “outlook” has been upgraded to “Stable”: Wall Street likes the fact that we “basically have a structurally balanced budget”.

- Received a report from Hospice of Queen Anne's Executive Director Heather Guerieri and her HQA colleagues on the Hospice's new acute-care option for terminally ill patients, with medical management by a physician and 24-hour RN care in a home-like environment.

- Approved an agreement with Shore Health System (SHS/Easton Memorial Hospital) and its parent University of Maryland Medical System

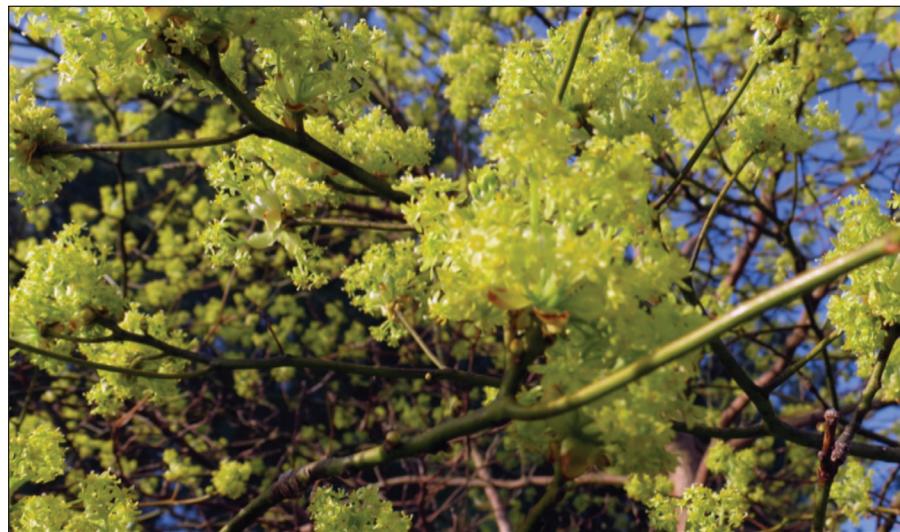
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GARDENING FOR THE BIRDS AND OTHER CREATURES

By JANE SCOTT

We gardeners like to think of ourselves as being in tune with nature, yet we could do far more to help our local wildlife, not to mention our beleaguered planet. The fact is, we still mow too much, use too much water and pesticides, fertilize too much, and are far too tidy.

While I love watching birds at my backyard feeder, I know if they are to thrive I must give them the conditions they need. That means insects, leaf litter and fruiting shrubs, as well as herbaceous



Sassafras tree in flower. Male and female flowers appear on separate trees. Just about all parts of the sassafras tree are fragrant.
— Chronicle Photo

plants that are allowed to go to seed. And if I am to have clouds of bees and butterflies around my flowers in summer, I must also make room for their eggs and larvae.

Coming Home to Native Plants

Everywhere there is a new interest in our native plants. That's a good thing. Until very recently, virtually all of this nation's gardens, great and small, public or private, were collections of commercial hybrids or selected species from all corners of the world. Now many of us are coming back home, so to speak, to our own botanical heritage.

Why native plants? For one reason they are used to our hot, humid summers, periodic droughts and winters of intermittent freezes and thaws. For another, many have beautiful fruits and fall coloring, as well as flowers in spring and summer, thus providing year round interest for the gardener as well as food for wildlife. It is this last that makes them especially important. Birds are very efficient seed dispersers! In fact, it is they who are responsible for the masses of Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese bittersweet and multiflora roses that have invaded our woods and old fields like a conquering army.

As a gardener, I am particularly chagrined by the fact that both honeysuckle and bittersweet were originally introduced as garden plants. I am also old enough to remember when multiflora rose was heavily promoted as a living fence! Other destructive plants that are widely sold and planted in this area are English ivy, Norway maples, Russian olive, and Bradford pears. They all spread widely and seriously suppress our native flora and fauna. Shun them!

Wildlife Gardening

So how does one design a garden that not only suits your family but also supports some of the creatures that share our world? For those of us who live in town, just adding a few choice natives that are attractive to birds and butterflies may be all that is needed. Those with a bit more room could introduce a grove of layered trees and shrubs reminiscent of a natural woods, or possibly just release an existing community from the grip of alien shrubs and vines.

Of course, we will still want some traditional garden flowers, as well as herbs and vegetables. No problem, just keep those areas close to the house and increase the degree of wildness as you move outward through the garden. If you think of your lawn as outdoor living space and keep only as much as you will need, it will not only save you time, money and effort, but reduce your carbon footprint as well.

But what plants to choose?

Trees to Consider

Starting with shade trees, almost all of the native oaks have high wildlife value and some, particularly the **scarlet oak**, *Quercus coccinea*, turn a lovely deep red in late fall. **Elms** are

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Shad tree in flower. The tree is called the "shad" tree (or bush) because it blooms as the shad begin to run in local waters. The fruit disappears quickly as it is a favorite of wildlife, especially birds. George Washington planted shad trees.
— Chronicle Photo

COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS, *continued from Page 4*

(UMMS) for provision of enhanced health services in the County (e.g. ambulatory surgery, in-home dialysis) and a commitment to add 7 years to SHS/UMMS's present 3-year commitment to operate the Nesbit Road emergency room.

- Heard one person speak at Press and Public Comment.

March 26, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Prepared for the upcoming meeting on **SKI Sewer** with the Governor's Bay Cabinet Secretaries (MDP, MDE, DNR, MDA) by adding to the staff presentation, at the instance of Commissioner Simmons (Olds opposed), optional enhancements to Plans B and F that would also provide service to 702 homes on septic that are not in the 9 communities covered in the two Plans.
- Agreed, upon submission by School Superintendent Williamson, to use excess funds in a health care reserve to pay a one-time bonus of \$1,000 to 924 teachers and administrators.

- Designated "Trustworthiness" as the Character Counts! Pillar of the Month for April.
- Presented to Robert Huntington, Artistic Director of the Queen Anne's Chorale, a proclamation of The 25th Anniversary Year of Queen Anne's Chorale.
- Adopted ordinances, upon which hearings had been held in February, relating to wineries and special events.
- Received from Budget & Finance Director Seeman: (1) The County Administrator's recommended **FY 2014 Operating Budget** of \$111.4 million in revenues and expenditures, providing for:
 - No change in the property tax rate;
 - Cost of living adjustment of 2% for County employees;
 - Seven new County positions, primarily in public safety; and
 - \$1.2 million for the Board of Education above the Maintenance of Effort level.

- (2) The recommended **FY 2014 Capital Budget** of \$42.1 million, including borrowing of \$29.3 million for:

- County Complex (\$5.0 million);
 - Public safety radio system upgrade (\$3.2 million);
 - Stevensville Middle School renovation (\$11.4 million);
 - Construction of the Center for Allied Health and Athletics at Chesapeake College (\$8.0 million); and
 - Airport capital projects (\$1.1 million).
- Heard four persons speak at Press and Public Comment.

April 2, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Met to review the budget requests of the County departments for Information Technology, Health, Public Works, and Office of the Sheriff.
- Heard one person speak at Press and Public Comment.

Gardening for the Birds, continued from Page 5

also very attractive to orioles and some disease resistant selections are now becoming available. Hummingbirds like **tulip poplars** and everybody likes **beeches** and **basswood**.

For evergreens, it may surprise you to know that the berries of our old friend the **eastern red cedar**, *Juniperus virginiana*, are consumed by over 50 species of birds. The familiar **American holly**, *Ilex opaca*, is also relished by birds as well as by foxes, raccoons and even box turtles.

Of the smaller understory trees, flowering **dogwoods** are always lovely and have year round interest. **Redbuds** mix well with them and, like all legumes, act like a natural fertilizer by their ability to fix nitrogen in the soil. **Hawthorns** are also good year round, especially the cultivar called "Winter king."

And don't forget the **shad trees**. Their delicate blossoms are among the first to appear in spring and while they don't last long, the fruits ripen in June providing tasty food at a time when little else is available. They also turn an attractive orange in the fall. If you have room to accommodate its suckering habit, **sassafras** is another interesting choice and is a host plant for the larva of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly.

On to Shrubs

Attractive native shrubs include two more hollies, **inkberry**, *Ilex glabra*, and **winterberry**, *I. verticillata*. In the wild, inkberry forms large suckering colonies, usually near the water, but there are several compact forms now available that make very attractive hedges. Winterberry comes into its own at Christmas time when its brilliant red berries glow in the landscape.

If you have a dampish spot in your yard, think about *Clethra alnifolia*, the **sweet pepper bush**, with its fragrant blooms in August. It is very attractive to bees. And don't forget **spicebush**, *Lindera benzoin*, and its delicate yellow flowers in spring. While they cannot compete with the ubiquitous and flamboyant forsythia, they have an attractive shape and are another valuable host for the spicebush swallowtail.

Of course, no shrub is more attractive to both humans and birds than the native **high bush blueberry**, *Vaccinium corymbosum*, but you will have to be quick to get any fruit for yourself! We also have many lovely native azaleas, including the **Choptank River azalea**, *Rhododendron atlanticum*, which blooms in May and the **swamp azalea**, *R. viscosum*, that blooms in July.

Both smell divine and attract large butterflies, hummingbirds and moths.

Viburnums are also a great choice. Many have lovely white flowers in spring and interesting berries in fall. My favorite is *Viburnum nudum*, especially the cultivar "Winterthur." It has glossy leaves, white blossoms at the end of June and berries that turn from green to white to pink to blue all in the same cluster. It also turns a lovely wine red in the fall.

Vines and Plants

Two native vines that are especially beloved by hummingbirds are **trumpet vine**, *Campsis radicans*, and the **native honeysuckle**, *Lonicera sempervirens*. It has lovely red flowers and is also a larval host for the spring azure butterflies.

There are also numerous herbaceous plants. Most of the valuable ones for wildlife are summer blooming and easy to find. First on the list would be the milkweeds, particularly **butterflyweed**, *Asclepias tuberosa*, with its spectacular blossoms that can be any color from yellow to coral red. It is thought that the widespread elimination of the **common milkweed**, *A. syriaca*, is responsible for the alarming decline of monarch butterflies. If you have any in your fields, let them be!

The **Lobelias**, the blue *L. siphilitica*, and the glowing red cardinal flower, *L. cardinalis*, are special favorites of hummingbirds. The **Eupatoriums**, including the stately **Joe Pye Weed** (supposedly named for a native American herbalist who lived near Salem, Massachusetts), and the white **Boneset** are loved by both birds and butterflies.

And finally there are the goldenrods. Before you throw up your hands at the thought of the tough weedy ones that spread widely into abandoned fields, think of the gentler sorts. **Sweet Goldenrod**, *Solidago odora*, for instance, or

the one sold as **Golden Fleece** that is available at Garden centers.

This is far too big a subject for a short article, but I hope I have inspired you to consider some of the possibilities that are out there. And think of the fun you will have, not to mention the satisfaction of doing something really important for the earth.

Jane Scott, a writer and illustrator, is the author of Between Ocean and Bay: A Natural History of Delmarva (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1991), and Field and Forest, A Guide to Native Landscapes for Gardeners and Naturalist (Blackburn Press, 2002), as well as other works. She traces her roots in Delaware back to the 1730's and now lives on the Eastern Shore.



The sassafras tree displays three leaf shapes: unlobed or oval, bi-lobed or mitten shaped, and tri-lobed or three-pronged. Much to children's delight the mitten-shaped leaves can be found for both right and left hands.

— Courtesy John O'Neill

The Future of QAC, continued from Page 1

participants. The economic development sections were the heart of the survey, as respondents were asked to express their opinions on a total of 112 "issues" ranging from "support for agriculture" to "adequacy of recycling stations".

The survey technique used to elicit the citizens' opinions on the issues was principally the so-called "Likert scale", which provides a way of measuring the strength/intensity of respondents' opinions (use google for more info about the scale). Thus, the participants were asked to rate most of the 112 issues on their *importance*: "[a]n issue that is VERY IMPORTANT or IMPORTANT to the County is one that will affect our economy well into the future. Such an issue would need our attention and will require deliberate action to ensure success." Besides Very Important or Important, the citizen could choose Somewhat Important, Not Important, or No Opinion.

A similar scale was used to rate respondents' views on the adequacy of County growth (4 items) and the state of the general economy of the County (6 items).

Survey Highlights

Given the survey's format, a useful focus is the proportion of Very Important/Important (VI/I) responses on a particular issue. For example, the 4 business types with the greatest number of VI/I responses for "recruiting, job retention, and expanding support" were the 4 we headlined at the beginning of this article: "Agriculture and agricultural products", "Waterman and seafood industry", "Education/Educational Services" and "Small businesses."

Some among us may feel a bit of a twinge upon learning that of the 17 business types presented, the one receiving the lowest number of Very Important/Important ratings was "Professional services (law, accounting, finance, etc.)" — followed closely, we are bound to report, by "Non-profit sector".

On a set of 12 Business and Economic Development Issues, our farmlands and waters once again got a big thumbs-up. The top-ranked issue here, with more VI/I votes than any other, was "Support for working farms, forests, and water resource-based industries". (At the bottom was "Global competitiveness".)

As headlined above, the top VI/I ranking among 14

Workforce Issues went to "Employment opportunities for youth and recent college graduates", and among 15 Infrastructure Issues, the largest number of Very Important/Important votes were for "Broadband/high-speed internet infrastructure and access", followed by "Adequacy of LOCAL streets and roads".

Support for Conservation and Preservation

On Growth Planning and Management Issues, respondents attached the greatest importance to "Active community participation in economic development planning" and "Encouraging reuse of abandoned or underutilized sites". (The County's quite visible collection of empty commercial buildings must have played a role here.)

In Social/Cultural Issues, the VI/I leader was "Investing in and protecting historical, cultural, and 'sense of place' assets". This result should be a source of particular encouragement to the often-unsung individuals and groups working so hard to preserve and display the rich heritage of Queen Anne's County.

All of the 6 Healthcare Issues got strong VI/I responses, including "Access to health care services", "Access to mental health services", and "Adequacy of emergency services". These

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THE WAYS OF WOOD DUCKS, *continued from Page 3*

Wood duck broods need good marshy and/or flooded brushy habitat if they are to fledge. Ned Gerber, Director and Wildlife Habitat Ecologist for Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage (CWH), cautions that conspicuously placed nest boxes can draw wood ducks from more protected nesting sites in wooded or marshy wetlands and make the exposed and flightless broods vulnerable to predators. So boxes need to be carefully placed if they are to support the wood duck population.

CWH placed boxes at the head of the Chester some years ago, many of which are still being maintained by private landowners and volunteers. In the north County, the members of the after-school Ecology Corps at Sudlersville Middle School aid and monitor the progress of the local wood

duck population along the Wood Duck Nesting Box Trail they have created. Under the direction of the Corps' Founder and Director, Dr. Darryl Calloway, the Corps has placed 41 nesting boxes in wetland habitats in Queen Anne's County.

The nesting boxes, built and maintained by several generations of middle school students beginning 18 years ago, have been the birthplace of hundreds of baby wood ducks. The young volunteer scientists have tracked and recorded written data demonstrating the activities and nesting successes of wood duck populations along the trail.

What a constructive use of after-school time!



Deep in the box

Photo Credit – David Godfrey



Sudlersville Middle School Ecology Corps members Claire Dean of Church Hill, Jensen VanDyke of Chestertown, Madalyn Romberger and Olivia Mimmick, both of Sudlersville, brave the cold and wet to place a wood duck box in a suitable area. It looks like a beaver likes that location, too!

Photo Credit – Darryl Calloway

“THE VISION WE SHARE”

The VISION is to continue the ethic that the County remains a quintessential rural community with the overall character of the County preserved as:

- *A predominantly rural county with small towns connected by creeks and county roads through fields and forest – **a great place to live;***
- *A county that encourages agriculture, seafood and maritime industries, tourism and outdoor sports, small business and high tech enterprise – **a good place to work;***
- *A county that is a faithful steward of its natural and cultural heritage – **a good neighbor for the Bay and other Eastern Shore counties;***
- *A county in which development does not impair the quality of life enjoyed by all – **a community that protects the expectations and opportunities of all its citizens;***
- *A county that supports the **highest quality of education** that seeks to fully prepare its citizens for the future.*

(Queen Anne's County 2010 Comprehensive Plan, “Overall Community Vision”, page 2)

QAC HOME PRICES RISE

Recent reports show an improving real estate market in Queen Anne's County.

- Between February 2012 and February of this year, the average price of QAC homes sold in the month rose 14%, from \$333,400 to \$378,800.
- March to March, the rise in the QAC average home price was a remarkable 36%, from \$275,400 to \$375,300 – a current price very similar to the previous month, as against a year-ago price that was much lower.
- The number of QAC homes sold in the two months also rose, if only modestly, compared with last year: in February, from 29 to 33; in March, from 41 to 43.
- State-wide, average home prices and number of homes sold are both up about 7-8%, and the Maryland realtors' president is predicting a “healthy recovery” in 2013.

The Future of QAC, *continued from Page 6*

responses will come as no surprise to the past County Commissioners who made improving local health care a top priority.

Most of the 12 Environmental and Energy Issues got strong Very Important/Important support, with the leaders being “Protecting drinking water quality and quantity” and “Protecting shorelines”. The laggard was “Addressing climate change”. One has to speculate that it did relatively poorly because, taken literally, it is, like “global competitiveness”, not something that one can do a lot about at the County level.

On 10 Education Issues, citizens placed the greatest importance on “Quality and accountability of teachers” and, in second place, “Supporting vocational/technical training”.

Growth and Economy/Government

The last two subsections of the questionnaire on economic development issues varied the scoring system a bit to get at attitudes on first, adequacy of various kinds of growth (agricultural, commercial, residential, industrial), and second, quality of the County’s economy and government leadership.

For each of the 4 kinds of growth, the choices ranged from “Extremely adequate” to “Insufficient” and “Extremely insufficient”. No type of growth was deemed Insufficient/Extremely Insufficient by a majority of the respondents, but by far the fewest number of respondents (only 13%) regarded our residential growth as Insufficient or Extremely Insufficient.

On the quality of the “general economy” of the County, there were very high marks for the County “as a place to live” and “as a place to play”. The marks were not as high for the County “as a place to work”, but still a 2-1 majority rated it as moderately good or better. The strongest negative sentiments (over one-half) were registered against “Effective government leadership” and the County as a “Location for high tech activity”.

The Mini-Visioning Section

The questionnaire included four open-ended questions asking respondents to identify the County’s strengths, its challenges, recommendations for facing the challenges, and the respondent’s vision for the County. In providing bullet-point summaries of the responses, the BEACON report lists anywhere from 19 to 41 often-overlapping items for each question.

The Visioning Report from March 26, 2009, pp. 4-5, also used four categories when it collected views, from about 800 online survey respondents, on County Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (the famous “SWOT” exercise). Thus, only one of the categories (“Strengths”) was the same in both surveys, and the 2009 Report only listed the top 3 responses in each of its categories – making it hard to do an apples-to-apples comparison.

In a separate box we present the first 3 responses in each category from each survey, for you to make of them what you will. Our only comment would be to point out that traffic has emerged as a top issue in the later survey.

VISIONING SURVEY, 2009

STRENGTHS

- Natural beauty
- Agricultural and rural character
- Access to water

WEAKNESSES

- Power of the development community
- Lack of affordable housing
- Preservation and conservation of open space and agricultural lands

OPPORTUNITIES

- Growth management – identify location and pace of development
- Natural resource management
- Retention of viable agricultural industry

THREATS

- Unmanaged growth
- Loss of farmland/open space
- Loss of natural resources

BEACON SURVEY, 2013

STRENGTHS

- A strong sense of community
- Natural resources
- School systems

CHALLENGES

- Traffic congestion
- Inadequate commercial tax base
- Drug use

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pro-active, long-term, strategic planning with input from citizens
- Staggered terms for local government leadership
- Increased funding and focus on education

VISION

- A balance between land conservation and appropriate growth
- A desirable place to work, live, play, and visit
- A place where future generations will want, and be able to afford, to return to after college

Planning Commission, *continued from Page 3*

Beginning at minute 341:00 of the 04/11/13 Planning Commission Meeting on QACTV “Public Meetings on the Web” and continuing for about 20 minutes through the conclusion of the meeting, Director Cohoon and Chairman Waterman led a discussion of State-created “**roadblocks to implementation of our Comprehensive Plan**”.

The principal roadblock was said to be the recent State legislation (the Septics Bill) that limits rural sprawl by forcing QAC either (a) to restrict itself to having only minor subdivisions in the rural areas (i.e. no more than 7 subdivision lots on a farm property) or (b) to downzone farmland to one house per 20 acres and thereby gain the ability to have major subdivisions of up to 15 lots.

This is considered a problem because the State legislation means that farmland owners have sharply reduced opportunities to exploit their properties’ “development rights”, as these have been recognized in County zoning law, by selling the rights to developers of rural sprawl subdivisions. The new obstacles to exploiting the rights were said to be compounded by (i) the unwillingness of Centreville and other municipalities to require infill developers to purchase development rights from farmland owners and (ii) the several difficulties that the County would face in trying to create (as the 2010 Comp Plan contemplated) one or more new Growth Areas in which purchases of development rights could be required.

The discussion ended with the staff being instructed to prepare for a special meeting in June at which, in the Chairman’s formulation, there would be a work session involving the farm bureau, business groups, MDP, and someone to talk about MALPF. At this session, options for dealing with the “roadblocks” would be considered. The agenda for the session was to be refined at the next (May) meeting of the Commission.

A Calendar Of Verses

MAY: WILD FLOWERS

... Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow; they toil not,
neither do they spin:
And yet I say unto you,
That even Solomon in all his glory
was not arrayed like one of these.

– Matthew 6:18,19 (KJV)

JUNE: BIRDSONG AT NIGHT

... The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

– John Keats

