



The Queen Anne's Chronicle

CELEBRATING QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

INFORMING THE CITIZENS

GROWING THE BUSINESSES OF QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

Earlier this year, a study commissioned by QAC's Economic Development Commission found that while only 13% of the public sees *residential* growth in the County as insufficient, 40% or more thought we have insufficient *commercial and industrial* growth. The study, known as the BEACON Report, was done by Salisbury University, and we covered its major findings in our May/June 2013 issue.

In this issue, we thought we would take a closer look at the County's "business" sectors – commercial and industrial – and consider why a substantial minority of the citizenry might want these sectors to grow more robustly than they have.

Don't Forget Farming

One caution at the outset: the published information we're working with typically doesn't include agriculture under the heading of either "commercial" or "industrial". Either agriculture is treated separately, as in the Beacon Report, or it's left out entirely, as in Queen Anne's County's "Brief Economic Facts" on the website of Maryland's Department of Business and Economic Development.

But however one does or does not categorize it, agriculture is really the County's



Businesses, ranging from a sewing center to offices for engineers, doctors and tax preparers, have pretty much filled one side of Pennsylvania Avenue in Centreville, with parking on the other side. Designed in the style of an Eastern Shore town, the buildings have created attractive, up-to-date commercial real estate in an in-town growth area.

– Chronicle Photo

leading business. The County's Economic Development Report, issued in January 2010 as part of the Comprehensive Plan process, put it this way: agriculture is "a defined business sector that occupies over half of the County's land area and is the County's largest industry" (p.13). And it is where we are pre-

minent, as the county leads all others in the production of corn, soybeans and wheat.

In the following discussion of "business" in Queen Anne's County, we won't have anything more to say about agriculture – but don't forget the very big business that our

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CHESAPEAKE COLLEGE: ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR QUEEN ANNE'S

Chesapeake College President Dr. Barbara Viniar, in a recent interview with the *Chronicle*, stressed the importance in higher education of what she referred to as "rooted presence." Colleges and universities, she said, must understand the places where they are rooted – so that what a community college like Chesapeake does is "for here."

What Chesapeake College does for "here," the upper and middle Eastern Shore, is accomplished primarily through the kinds of programs it offers. Many of these programs support the business growth and job opportunities that some respondents to the Beacon Study want more of in QAC. (See related article on this page.)

In its Strategic Plan, "Charting the Course 2014-2018," Chesapeake College describes itself as "one of the region's most significant economic engines." This is due to the College's roles as "an institution of higher learning, an employer, and a training provider for new and incumbent workers."

Anyone who has taken a moment to look through the College catalog that comes in the mail, or checks out the full list of courses on its

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CHESAPEAKE COLLEGE BY THE NUMBERS

2,572 Students Enrolled for Credit, Fall 2013 - from Queen Anne's County: **674**

- Full-time: 849 Part-time: 1,723

- Male: 937 Female: 1,635

- Student Intent: - Career Training and/or Development: 1,127

- Plan to Transfer to 4-year college: 1,059

- Non-degree seeking: 386

7,292 Students Enrolled for Non-Credit Continuing Education*, Fiscal Year 2013

Age 22 and under: 1,645

Age 23-39: 1,975

Age 40-59: 2,007

Age 60 and over: 1,665

273 Faculty Members (Full-time: 63, Part-time: 210)

**Includes both job-training and personal interests*

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Growing the Businesses, *continued from Page 1*

marvelously productive farms represent.

QAC Businesses: A Snapshot

So, looking at QAC businesses exclusive of agriculture, what do we find?

- The county has about 1450 businesses that, with the County government, that employ about 11,000 of the County's labor force of about 24,000 employed persons. The rest of those employed commute to jobs outside the County.
- Four business groups account for nearly three-fourths of private sector employment in the County: trade, transportation and utilities; leisure and hospitality; professional and business services; and educational and health services.
- With almost 500 employees, Chesapeake College is the largest employer in the County, by a considerable margin. The next two largest employers – in the mid 200's – are S.E.W. Friel and Paul Reed Smith Guitars.
- Four-fifths of businesses in the County have fewer than 10 employees; collectively they provide about a third of the jobs in the County.

Where do our businesses live – and where might they live?

- QAC has several business parks: the Chesapeake Bay Business Park, the Thompson Creek Business Park, and, under development, the Centreville Business Park, the Matapeake Business Park, and the Shore Health System Medical Complex.
- When the County inventoried its commercially zoned

properties (excluding those in municipalities, like the Centreville Business Park), it found 469 parcels on 2,810 acres that are commercially developable (but all are not necessarily for sale).

Rationales for Business Growth

We come then to the question of why many QAC citizens want more businesses in the county than the ones we already have. There are several reasons, some obvious, some less so. And then there is the question of why the majority of citizens are either satisfied with or unconcerned about the County's rate of business growth.

SUMMARY OF COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES STUDIES, REVENUE-TO-EXPENDITURE RATIOS IN DOLLARS			
	Residential Including farm houses	Commercial & Industrial	Working & Open Land
Carroll	1 : 1.15	1 : 0.48	1 : 0.45
Cecil	1 : 1.17	1 : 0.34	1 : 0.66
Frederick	1 : 1.14	1 : 0.50	1 : 0.53
Harford	1 : 1.11	1 : 0.40	1 : 0.91
Kent	1 : 1.05	1 : 0.64	1 : 0.42
Wicomico	1 : 1.21	1 : 0.33	1 : 0.96

Source: <http://www.farmland.org/documents/Cost-of-Community-Services-08-2010.pdf>

More businesses would provide more places in the County – convenient places – to shop, to obtain services, and to work. In general, closer is better: frequent, long auto trips are not optimal.

Then there's the "look-and-feel" of the County. Many people regard the empty storefronts on our Main Streets and in our shopping centers -- not to mention large empty buildings, both abandoned and new, throughout the County -- as wasteful and sad. These vacant structures not only make us look like we're a depressed area, they reduce the income potential of other commercial properties and hold back their assessed value.

A particularly compelling reason many people want to grow business in the County is that while residential growth ends up hurting their pocketbooks, commercial and industrial uses of properties (like agricultural uses) contribute more money to the County than they require in community services. Here is a summary of revenue-to-expenditure ratios in dollars for a number of Maryland counties. The studies were conducted or collected by the American Farmland Trust between 1994 and 2003.

Putting these results into words, the studies show, as the Trust says using Cecil as the example, that "for every \$1 dollar generated by residential property in Cecil County in 2001, \$1.17 was spent providing services to those lands. For every \$1 received from commercial and business uses in the county, only 34 cents was spent to provide services. For every \$1 received from farm/open land uses in the county, only 66 cents was spent providing services." So "while residential development contributes the largest amount of revenue, its net fiscal impact is actually negative."

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WHAT IS FIBER OPTIC BROADBAND? WHY HAVE IT?

What is broadband? "Broadband" is the usual name for high-speed Internet access which is always on and is faster than the traditional dial-up access. Broadband service allows more content to be carried through the transmission "pipeline" so that you can, for example, download a photograph in 2 seconds rather than 2 minutes. Broadband service is increasingly required in order to take advantage of all the resources of the Internet.

What is fiber optic cable? Fiber optic cable is one type of pipeline for transmitting broadband service. It is high-quality glass or plastic fibers contained in a plastic tube to protect the fibers from the environment. The fibers carry light which transmits the information. Optical fibers are transparent, flexible, a little thicker than a human hair.

Why would we want fiber optic cable? Fiber optic cable allows transmission of data over longer distances and at a greater "bandwidth," that is, at higher rates. Megan DelGaudio, QAC's Information Technology manager, notes that fiber optic speeds will be up to 10 times faster than current Internet speeds.

What does the just-completed One Maryland Broadband Network (OMBN) do for Maryland – and for QAC? OMBN's 1,294-mile fiber optic broadband network, made possible by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, provides high-speed Internet access to over a thousand government facilities and community "anchor institutions" (schools, libraries, courthouses, hospitals, etc.) in every county in the State. In Queen Anne's County, our anchor institutions include all 15 public schools, the Department of Emergency Services, the Police Barracks, the Liberty Building, and the Kent Island Library. OMBN also interconnects and extends three existing independent networks.

So can I take advantage of the new Broadband Network? OMBN has provided the "backbone" fiber optic cable, running up Route 50 from the Bay Bridge to Route 213, and up 213 to the Chester River, as well as along 304 and to a number of anchor institutions including those mentioned above. But after the completion of the "backbone," there are still a "middle mile" and a "final mile" of fiber optic cable that have to be constructed before an individual business or home can hook up to the new Broadband Network.

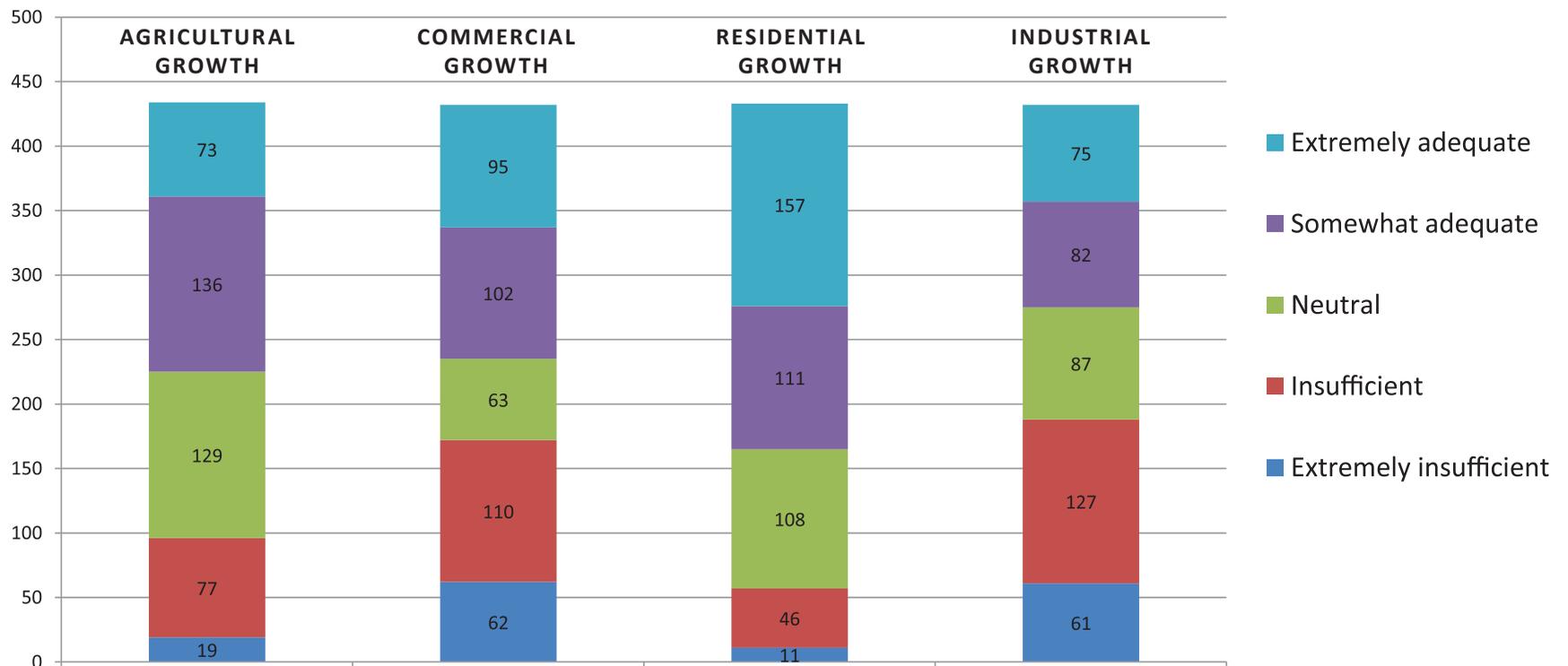
What is "the middle mile"? The middle mile is the connection between the "backbone" (which we now have) and the "last mile" – that is, between the global Internet and the local providers of Internet service to homes and businesses. According to County Administrator Gregg Todd, "the hurdle is getting providers to install the infrastructure for the middle mile That is really the missing link to the puzzle."

What is "the last mile"? The last mile is the final leg -- the connection between the middle mile and the customer. The "last mile" appears to be somewhat less of a hurdle in getting businesses connected, in part due to the establishment of the Maryland Broadband Cooperative.

What is the Maryland Broadband Cooperative (MDBC)? MDBC is a member-owned cooperative whose mission is to "drive economic development . . . by building an advanced, world-class broadband network across the rural communities of Eastern, Southern, and Western Maryland supported by its Members who provide Last Mile service." MDBC's President and CEO is a lifelong resident of the Eastern Shore.

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION SURVEY

How do you feel about growth and change throughout the County?



Growing the Businesses, *continued from Page 2*

Job creation is another reason for wanting more business in the County. Our unemployment rate is lower than the rest of the Eastern Shore, but still not low enough. We have a well-educated workforce, so the kinds of jobs we would want businesses to provide for QAC would be “good” well-paying jobs that would allow our citizens to work closer to home, reducing commuting time, expense, and frustration.

Ways and Means

What is the county doing to attract businesses and build our commercial tax base? The County’s Economic Development and Tourism Department offers considerable support to businesses looking to locate in the County. This support extends from help with site selection, development review, and permitting to providing economic benefits such as loans for financing expansion or creation of businesses in QAC.

The County offers four revolving loan programs (so called because as the borrower repays the loan, the money is returned to the Fund to help other entrepreneurs):

- ✓ Business Development RLP - helps businesses purchase machinery and equipment or real estate;
- ✓ Community Development Block RLP – loans money in amounts directly correlated to number of full time jobs created or retained for low to moderate income workers;
- ✓ Strategic Assistance RLP – provides capital funds for established companies seeking to expand and create jobs; and
- ✓ Commercial Vineyard Establishment RLP – funds for preparation, planting, and equipment acquisition for a property in QAC.

There are also business incentives from the State than can

assist businesses in QAC. Among these is a commercial property tax credit for businesses that make improvements that result in an increase in the assessable tax base of \$25,000 or more and create 12 new full-time positions for three years. There are also Research and Development Tax Credits, and incentives for projects in Priority Funding Areas (PFA). Priority funding is “for projects in municipalities, other existing communities, industrial areas, and planned growth areas. . . . locations where the State and local governments want to target their efforts to encourage and support economic development and new growth.” (MD Department of Planning). Recently, as noted in the last issue of the *Chronicle*, historic Stevensville just benefited from another State program when it was declared an Arts and Entertainment District resulting in incentives to encourage artistic and entertainment based development.

The Importance of Infrastructure

Internet access is key to business development and retention for telecommuting, web and video conferencing, billing, advertising, information gathering, expanding customer base. According to the 2012 Broadband Deployment Plan for the Upper Eastern Shore, as of two years ago no broadband service was available in almost a third of QAC, mostly in its eastern areas. It is of little comfort that the situation was substantially worse in our neighboring counties.

Now the State’s One Maryland Broadband Network (OMBN) has completed a fiber optic broadband “backbone” through the Eastern Shore, and every county in Maryland is connected together. OMBN has established a number of connecting “anchors” in each county. These are facilities like police departments, schools, 911 dispatchers, and courthouses. OMBN’s high-speed broadband network will ultimately be a boon to

businesses (and homes) – once the challenge is met of providing the “middle mile” and the “final mile” connections from the backbone to individual private locations. (See information in box on page 2.)

There is No Free Lunch

Economists like to remind us that benefits always come with costs. The goal should be to maximize the benefits while minimizing the costs. Business growth in Queen Anne’s County certainly could bring benefits, and we’re trying hard to get those benefits, as the foregoing has suggested. But at the same time we need to be mindful of the costs.

We are a predominantly rural county, as proclaimed in our Vision Statement (printed on page 6). Being rural means being quiet, peaceful, able to hear and enjoy the sounds of nature. It means being free from the traffic and congestion of urban and many suburban areas. It means preserving open spaces for agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Some businesses can generate too much noise or traffic. Too much noise and traffic can be major threats to the quality of life. Some businesses, in the wrong locations, would be damaging to the rural character of County and its natural lands. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan recommends (page 1-29): “Focus on attracting businesses that have the least impact on the environment.”

The way forward would seem to be to attract and encourage, not just any businesses, but **businesses that are QAC-appropriate**. We suspect that a future BEACON Report would find more than 40% citizen support for a business growth strategy with that as its controlling criterion.

CONGRATULATIONS, CENTREVILLE

Another one of our QAC small towns has been honored! In our last issue, we noted historic Stevensville's special new designation as an Arts and Entertainment District – the result of the combined efforts of citizens and local government. Now we would like to congratulate Centreville for its designation as a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Certified Community Wildlife Habitat. Centreville is the first community on the Eastern Shore, the third in Maryland, and the 74th in the country to receive this honor.

To become a NWF-certified Wildlife Habitat, a community must prove itself to be one where people, plants, and animals can all flourish. It is one that provides the four basic elements that all wildlife need – food, water, cover, and places to raise their young. And it is a community that encourages sustainable gardening practices such as reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, planting native plants, removing invasive plants, and composting.

Centreville's many beautiful wildlife-friendly yards and farms, its Baywise gardens, its parks, schoolyard habitats and outdoor classrooms, and its environmentally engaged citizens clearly earned this honor.

Situated in a rural county and at the head of a river, Centreville has a close connection to the natural world. The NWF designation shows how much Centreville's citizens value that connection and are dedicated to a safe and sustainable environment for its wildlife.

The National Wildlife Federation (and mascot Ranger Rick) awarded Centreville the distinction of being a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat on Centreville Day, November 2. Congratulations to the town, all the citizens who maintain their gardens, yards and farms in a wildlife supportive manner, and to the volunteers who spearheaded the effort to have Centreville recognized for the Community Wildlife Habitat that it is.



Autumn garden, Centreville

– Chronicle Photo

The Queen Anne's Chronicle

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Chris Pupke – Chairman of the Board

Jay Falstad – Executive Director

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

COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS

Here are selected items summarized from approved Minutes and QACTV coverage (www.qactv.com/qactv/) of the County Commissioners' meetings.

August 13, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Held a closed session to discuss with counsel options for the **Southern Kent Island Sewer Project**.
- Agreed, Commissioner Olds opposed, to award a design contract for the next phase of the Cross County Connector Trail, between Kent Narrows and Long Point Park.
- Authorized the County's entry into a 3-year contract enabling citizens, for a fee of 2.39%, to use their credit/debit cards over the internet to pay property taxes, building permit fees, and other charges.
- Approved without discussion an **amendment to the FY 2014 Budget** to allocate \$3.2 million in surplus funds to replace the bonds originally budgeted to pay for the EMS Radio System Upgrade.
- Heard two persons speak at Press and Public Comment.

August 27, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Received a report on the 53-room hotel, smaller than originally planned, for the Vineyards project on Kent Island off Pier One Road near the intersection of Route 50 and Route 8.
- Reviewed with staff a draft agreement presented by K. Hovnanian to provide "guarantees" on **Four Seasons** issues raised by the Governor, to wit: creation of an "eco-park", storm water management, and a cap on overall project density.
- Heard one person speak at Press and Public Comment urging more deliberate handling of the proposed agreement with K. Hovnanian.

September 10, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Approved purchase of ball field lights for Route 18 Park, with staff agreeing with Commissioner Simmons that effort should be made to ensure that these and other County lights are "**dark skies compliant**" (i.e. no light pollution overspill).
- Reviewed the proposed agreement (see above) modifying the **Four Seasons** project, in anticipation of a public information meeting at Kent Island High School.
- Approved, Commissioner Olds opposed, drafting an agreement, under which the County would contribute land and capital funds in the range of \$4M, for a **County/YMCA** partnership to build a community center and swimming pool in Centreville across from the high school.
- Received an update on the Kennard High School African American Cultural Heritage Center.
- Received, beginning at 117:55, a report from the **Watershed Stewards Academy** on its program to create on the Eastern Shore a network of trained volunteers ("stewards") to implement

cost-effective stormwater management projects in support of the Bay clean-up effort (contact: QAC UMD Extension Office, 410-758-0166).

- Agreed to ask counsel for the Board of Public Works to respond to the position of Planning Commission Counsel Drummond that the County does not have jurisdiction to enforce a prohibition against use of slips at the Queen's Landing marina by nonresidents.
- Discussed with Planning Commission Counsel Drummond the repeated Code violations by the **Merrick Farm** sand and gravel mine, for which fines had been imposed, and heard counsel's theory as to why these violations did not need to be disclosed to the Planning Commission (see *Planning Commission* article in this issue).
- Heard three persons speak at Press and Public Comment, two of them about non-enforcement of County rules relating to use of the Queen's Landing marina by nonresidents, one of them about the proposed Four Seasons contract (see above).

September 24, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Appointed to the Planning Commission, Commissioner Arentz recusing, marine biologist and Miles-Wye Riverkeeper Tom Leigh.
- Approved 2014-2019 County transportation priorities for submission to the State for possible funding, including a comprehensive Corridor Plan from the Bay Bridge to the Kent Narrows to identify and plan for improvements along the MD 18 and US 50/301 corridor.
- Approved without discussion, at 23:44, an amendment to the **budget for the recently completed fiscal year (2013)** to (1) recognize \$8.4 million of the operating surplus for that year [estimated by the *Chronicle*, pending release of final audited numbers, as exceeding \$10 million] and (2) transfer, from the amount recognized in this amendment, \$5.5 million to "General Capital Projects" and \$1.0 million for "Roads Capital Projects" [see Minutes, pp. 12-15 (Budget Amendment CC-46)].
- Discussed further, beginning at 101:40 and continuing for 50 minutes, the proposed agreement (see above) modifying the **Four Seasons** project in response to concerns expressed by the Board of Public Works and directed County Counsel to revise the agreement and present an amended agreement at the next meeting.
- Heard 16 persons speak at Press and Public Comment in opposition to the proposed **Four Seasons** development and, in particular, its likely effect on traffic congestion on Kent Island.

October 8, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Held a budget work session with Finance Director Seeman at which he discussed guidelines for preparing the **FY 2015 Budget** to adopted

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TIME FOR TURKEYS

By JANE SCOTT

The holidays are coming and that means turkeys. While you are enjoying that succulent roast this Thanksgiving, give a thought to one of our noblest native birds; the wild turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo*. I am happy to report they are once again plentiful in our Eastern Shore woods.

National Bird?

Ben Franklin, as many of you know, thought the turkey, not the eagle, should be our national bird. Actually, he never formally proposed the idea and even thought turkeys were “a little vain and silly.” Nevertheless, in a 1784 letter to his daughter, Sarah Bache (two years after Congress had voted to place the image of the bald eagle on the nation’s Great Seal), he praised the turkey as “a Bird of Courage that would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his farm Yard with a red Coat on.” In the same letter he dismissed the eagle as “a bird of bad moral character [who did] not get his living honestly.” The turkey, in his opinion, was a “much more respectable Bird and a true original Native of America.”

Of course, in Franklin’s day, the wild turkey was abundant here, as well as in most of the Northeast. It had been the principal game bird of Native Americans, although it is said that certain tribes spurned them, because they thought that eating them would make them as cowardly and silly as the birds! Nevertheless, the European settlers loved them, and with no restrictions on the numbers that could be taken, it wasn’t long before professional market gunners were slaughtering turkeys by the thousands to sell to the growing cities of Philadelphia and Baltimore. At the same time the woods were being razed for firewood, lumber and charcoal. Under such conditions, it is hardly surprising that, by the mid 1800s, there were precious few turkeys left in Maryland.



Wild Turkeys Along a QAC Wooded Edge. Wild turkeys roam over a range of 4 to 5 square miles (2560 to 3200 acres) during summer and fall. During winter and spring, their range is much more limited, covering only about 100-200 acres. The young emerge from the egg quite well-developed and are able to leave the nest and find food within 12 to 24 hours of hatching.

Photo credit – David Godfrey

Man Helps Wild Turkey

Eventually, laws limiting turkey hunting were put in place, and some of the woods began to return. The turkeys, however, did not. Determined to restore their populations, some wildlife agencies began to propagate what came to be known as “game farm wild turkeys” for release into the wild. It was not a success. Because the released birds were not truly wild, they were unable to fend for themselves, much less establish a burgeoning population.

It wasn’t until the 1960’s that game managers learned to capture wild birds in forests where they could still be found in healthy numbers, and transport them successfully for release. They caught them with rocket nets (a contraption that fired a net over a flock of feeding birds), put them in cages, and trucked them to another part of the state. This system was so effective, it became one of the state’s top wildlife success stories. Over the last fifty years, Maryland’s turkey population has grown from a few hundred birds to over 30,000 today. While the numbers have now stabilized in most of the state, they are still increasing here by about 12% a year!

Now they seem to be everywhere. Last July, I was walking in the woods, when I came upon a female crouched in the middle of the path. I was wondering why she didn’t move until she suddenly jumped up and came at me, squawking and flapping as several poults (that’s what you call young turkeys) scattered in all directions! She had been sheltering them under her wings. Another time I was driving down a wooded road when a huge dark bird flew right over the hood of my car, nearly causing me to run into the ditch. After I caught my breath and calmed my nerves, I knew it had to have been a wild turkey. No other bird is quite that massive.



The Courtship Display of a Male Wild Turkey. The male’s gobble as he broadcasts his presence to female turkeys can be heard as far away as a mile. He makes other sounds to announce himself as well. An air sack in his chest allows him to make a low-pitched drumming or booming sound; by sharply releasing the air in the sack, he can make a spitting sound. In turn, the females, or hens, let the gobblers know their location by “yelping.”

Males and Females

A male turkey is nearly four feet tall and can weigh up to 18 pounds. The female is slightly smaller. Both sexes have small, featherless heads with fleshy growths called caruncles. While she is a simple brownish gray, his brown feathers have iridescent highlights of green, copper and bronze. He also has spurs on his feet and bright red wattles on his throat and neck that turn bright blue when he is aroused.

Turkeys roost in the upper branches of trees, changing their perch nightly. They do not migrate, but a foraging flock may wander over many miles, feeding on the nuts of forest trees as well as succulent berries, wild grapes, grass, and seeds. They also eat insects such as grasshoppers and beetles. To rid themselves of pesky insects they like to wallow in the dust.

In spring, the toms put on their famous breeding display. They gobble furiously while dragging their wings over the ground, puff out their chests and fan their tails, all in an effort to attract the attention of a hen. She is not easily wooed, however. Turkey hens look over their prospects carefully, and it is not unusual for two or three to choose the same tom. Thereafter, they are referred to as his harem, although it was not he that did the choosing!

Man Eats Domestic Turkey

Those succulent barnyard turkeys that most of us will be feasting on this Christmas are actually descended from Mexican sub-species that early explorers took back to Europe in the 1500s. They were so successfully domesticated in Europe that English settlers eventually brought them back across the Atlantic. Most domestic turkeys these days are white. Even the brown ones have a white tip to their tail, while the tips of the native turkey are a light chestnut color. Domestic birds are also far too heavy to fly, a result of breeding for the market.

Just for fun I have been looking up wild turkey recipes for Thanksgiving. While online suggestions run the gambit from smoked, grilled, and deep-fried to potpies, they all seem to need a fair amount of preparation, and most seem to use only the breast meat. Perhaps a wild turkey’s legs are too strong to make good drumsticks! I guess I will still be roasting a barnyard bird for my family’s dinner.

Jane Scott, an Eastern Shore 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).

PLANNING COMMISSION

• September Meeting

Three citizens spoke at public comment at the beginning of the meeting. One citizen spoke about a recent County lawsuit shutting down the **Merrick Farm (Karbaum) sand and gravel mine** for alleged extensive violations of State and County land use laws. A second citizen called on the Planning Commission to use its creativity to implement the **Comprehensive Plan**, rather than trying to find ways to go around or outside it. The third speaker, County Commissioner Bob Simmons, asked for Planning Commission involvement in current negotiations with the developer to modify the proposed **Four Seasons** project.

(Full disclosure: Queen Anne's Conservation Association, publisher of the Chronicle, is assisting neighbors and/or citizen groups opposed to Four Seasons and to expansion of the Merrick Farm mine.)

In an update on legislation and legal matters, County Administrator Todd reported that the County Commissioners were consulting with the Town of Centreville concerning the proposal to allow regional shopping centers, fast food restaurants, and other new uses at the **intersection of Routes 301 and 213**.

Planning Director Cohoon, assisted by Planning Commission Counsel Drummond, explained why **Merrick Farm's** history of expanding its mine from two approved five-acre pits to a single unapproved 40-acre pit was not relevant to a decision to approve Merrick's current application to further expand the unlawful pit to 89 acres; Commissioner Reiss expressed reservations about the argument for the irrelevancy of past violations.

Counsel also reported that the State Board of Public Works had, contrary to the County's position, agreed that use of slips at the **Queen's Landing** marina should not be extended to nonresidents.

The Commission gave a favorable recommendation to a proposed 21-acre **solar array** on a property near Chestertown.

The Commission continued discussion of possible modifications to County land use law in response to State legislative enactments (*e.g.* changes to facilitate the creation of minor residential subdivisions in the agricultural areas of the County by allowing transfers of development rights from other farm properties into such subdivisions).

The Commission began discussion of staff work on a possible Handbook pulling together and illustrating desirable architectural design standards for development in the County (*e.g.* research on and examples of what is meant by "Eastern Shore vernacular").

• October Meeting

New Planning Commissioner Tom Leigh was introduced.

The Commission was updated on pending proposals for the Holly's site by **Royal Farms** and for 108 condo units and two office buildings at **Nesbit Road** near the Emergency Room.

Returning to the subject of the **Merrick Farm** mine expansion, the Commission and staff reached a consensus that in the future "it's best that everyone knows everything": when a development proposal is brought forward, there will be full disclosure to the Planning Commission of any existing or past violations associated with the development.

Principal Planner Spinelli led a discussion on implementing the 15 Land Use Objectives contained in the **2010 Comprehensive Plan**, with particular attention to which objectives have been or are being accomplished and which cannot be accomplished after State legislation limiting rural sprawl to minor subdivisions of seven lots. Much of the discussion was directed at possible changes in County law to facilitate the transfer of development rights from farm properties either to minor subdivisions on other farm properties or into existing growth areas. Commission Chairman Waterman stated that such changes needed to be considered in order to preserve farmland equity taken away by the State legislation.

Senior Planner Holly Tompkins continued discussion of the "Architectural Design Handbook" that she is working on.

WINTER'S WINTERBERRY



Photo credit – National Arboretum

A striking winter shrub is the winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*). A member of the holly family, it sports plentiful bright red berries. Unlike our traditional evergreen hollies, whose colorful berries are nestled among bright green leaves, in winter the winterberry is covered with nothing but berries. It is a deciduous member of the holly family, and in Queen Anne's County, it sheds its leaves in late October and early November, revealing branches loaded with sparkling berries.

Winterberry branches and twigs are a cheerful addition to holiday wreaths, swags, and arrangements. Its decorative usefulness should not be limited to holiday time, however. A simple branch or two of winterberry in a vase or jar is an arresting sight during the gray months of winter.

Out of doors, the bright berry-filled bushes are an eye-magnet in the bare winter landscape. A plant native to our East Coast and Canada, winterberry can grow quite large, from 3 to 15 feet. There are a number of cultivars of different sizes with differing berry colors and plant shapes. The berries are only produced on the female plant, so you must have a male winterberry nearby.

Winterberry does best in moist, acidic soil, often forming dense thickets in the wetlands of Queen Anne's County. It likes to be in the open but can do well in partial shade.

While the berries of the winterberry are poisonous to humans, they are highly prized by wildlife – at the right time. The berries, like the berries of other members of the holly family, are hard, and it takes some freezing and thawing to soften them up. That makes them most edible in late winter, when wildlife finds its other food sources scarce or exhausted.

Then the berries become appealing to many kinds of birds: bluebirds, cedar waxwings, brown thrashers, mockingbirds, catbirds – more than 48 species of birds are known to enjoy the berries. Small mammals like mice and rabbits also eat the fruit of the winterberry.

Not particularly interesting in spring and summer, the aptly-named winterberry comes into its own during the cold months, bringing cheer to man and sustenance to animals.



– Chronicle Photo

“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)

Chesapeake College Economic Engine, continued from Page 1



Wind Turbine at Chesapeake College Photo Credit – David Godfrey

website, cannot fail to appreciate the economic significance of what the College offers to our community.

Health Care

Great job training is provided by, for example, the College's programs in the burgeoning field of health care – nursing, emergency medical services, phlebotomy, physical therapy, radiologic services, and surgical technology.

Presently the College's health care training is offered primarily at Memorial Hospital in Easton. In 2015, however, the College will open its new the Health Professions and Athletics Center (HPAC) on the Wye Mills campus. This \$37 million, 46,000 square foot Center will house state-of-the-art classrooms, training rooms, health profession labs, the campus fitness center, a gymnasium, locker rooms and offices.

Ground-breaking for the Center will be on the afternoon of December 4; the public is invited.

Business Careers

For those considering starting a business, locally available programs include seminars offered jointly by Chesapeake College, Salisbury University, and the Maryland Small Business & Technology Development Center. Topics covered are deciding whether to start a small business, how to “smart start” a small business, and how to utilize data in financial statements to grow your small business. There are also courses in management and leadership skills, in marketing, and in using the internet to promote business.

For those interested in developing marketable skills for a career in business, if not necessarily running a business, there is a myriad of occupational training courses, some available online. These courses train for jobs, not only in health care, but in a wide variety of other businesses: bank teller, boating, child care, HVAC/heat pump technician, food service, hotel/restaurant management, teaching, real estate, truck/bus driver, wedding planning, veterinary assistant. There are computer/internet courses at all levels.

A real boon for those who are looking for a job is the job opportunities list, maintained for both students and the community, on the College website. The list is updated all the time and contains a large variety of available positions. The link is <http://www.chesapeake.edu/students/cpip/>, click on current job listing midway on the page.

Certificates and Degrees

There are a number of certificate and degree programs at Chesapeake College, typically taking a year or more to complete, in a wide range of career fields, including, in addition to many of those mentioned above, accounting, elementary and secondary education, environmental education, criminal justice, social media for business, electronic health records, forensic computer examiner, and much more.

Bachelor's degree programs are offered by the Eastern Shore Higher Education Center, a State facility housed on the Chesapeake College campus. Students come to Chesapeake for courses that meet their general education requirements, and then move on to guaranteed admission in a (but not any) Maryland public college.

“We are dedicated to helping you succeed in whichever way you define success.

Perhaps you would like to complete the first two years of your bachelor's degree before transferring to a four-year college. Maybe success is achieving an associate's degree or a certificate that will enable you to start your career right after graduation. Or perhaps it is taking a few courses that will lead to a new job or promotion. Whatever your goal, you've chosen Chesapeake and it's a great place to start!” – Chesapeake College

Chesapeake College is in the process of developing a Center for Leadership in Environmental Education (CLEEn), a community resource for green business development, training, and learning. The bold announcement of that initiative was the construction of the wind turbine we all watch on Route 50. This admirable initiative is still largely in the planning stage, as witnessed by the College's difficulties in finding someone trained to repair the turbine when it broke down. The breakdown and repair aptly illustrate the need for training courses in renewable energy technologies for students and businesses!



Photo credit – Tom Pendleton

NOVEMBER IS THE MONTH WHEN THERE IS THE LARGEST NUMBER OF DEER-RELATED AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS. Our large, handsome and plentiful white-tailed deer are in their breeding (rutting) season. It's a time when the bucks are looking for and chasing does. Much of this searching and chasing takes place from dusk to dawn. With the shorter days, dawn and dusk become humans' commuting times, increasing the likelihood of deer/car collisions.

Between July 2011 and June 2012, the insurance industry reports that there were 1.23 million deer-vehicle collisions in the U.S., resulting in more than \$4 billion in damages. The average cost of a deer-vehicle accident was about \$3,305.

Most sadly, there are also about 200 fatalities a year from deer-caused accidents. Stay safe. Use your high beams and watch for the helpful deer-crossing signs (which, we must admit, the deer often seem to ignore). Tell visiting city-folks what's going on here and advise them to drive cautiously.



Photo credit – David Godfrey

REGISTRATION INFORMATION FOR CHESAPEAKE COLLEGE

For spring classes - December 3, 2013 is the first day of open registration. Students may register up until the first day of classes, **January 21, 2014**. **For summer classes - March 24, 2014**, summer registration begins. Summer classes begin **June 11, 2014**. **For fall classes - May 6, 2014**. Open registration begins.

Resources for Quality of Life

Not to be forgotten in the emphasis on training for careers is how the College also serves Shore residents who simply want to keep their minds and interests active. Many find their quality of life enhanced by taking – and teaching – the College's many courses in creative arts, current events, home and garden, and languages and culture, to name a few.

In 2015, Chesapeake College will celebrate its 50th year. Over those years, many Shore residents have had the College to thank for equipping them for their life's work, either by learning their occupation from the bottom up or by advancing their career through additional training. As the Health Center and the CLEEn project attest, more Shore residents in the coming years will likely have the same experience.

Chesapeake College is indeed an economic engine for our County and the Shore.

THE DARK SKIES OF QUEEN ANNE'S IN LATE NOVEMBER

- The first faint light of DAYBREAK is seen after about quarter past five in the morning
- SUNRISE is at 6:50 a.m. on November 16, and at 7:05 by month's end
- SUNSET on November 16 is at 4:51 p.m., moving back to before 4:45 by the end of the month
- In just two weeks, we lose more than 20 minutes of daylight!
- And still ahead are THE DARK DAYS, from the first week in December, when the earliest sunset occurs, to the first week in January, when the latest sunrise occurs
- At NIGHTFALL, about an hour and a half after sunset, the last light of twilight has gone
- VENUS is the *very* bright "star" in the twilight western sky after sunset
- In the morning dawn, MERCURY is the bright "star" in the eastern sky
- The full moon at mid-month is the BEAVER MOON – time to set the traps before the marshes freeze, as the beavers are preparing for winter
- And what about COMET ISON – will it fizzle or dazzle? The *Chronicle* noted this 2-mile wide ball of ice and dust last January (Vol. 3, No. 1, p.4), as it crossed Jupiter's orbit, headed toward a Thanksgiving Day rendezvous with the sun. Look for it low in the southeast just before daybreak on Nov. 17 or 18, and then, if it emerges intact from around the sun, it may have grown a tail that by Dec. 10 could stretch a quarter of the way across the sky. Stay tuned – there are several Internet sites following this unpredictable beast: as has been said, "Comets are like cats; they have tails and they do precisely what they want."

COMMISSIONERS MEETING, *continued from Page 4*

next June, given his projection of an operating deficit of \$4.3M for FY 2015.

- (1) Considered a proposed agreement with the developer of **Four Seasons** (see above) providing that:
 - ownership of the Tanner Property (131 acres) will be transferred to the County;
 - the developer will follow Environmental Site Design standards for handling stormwater on Phases II-IV of the project; and
 - the project will be restricted to 1,079 units.
- (2) Heard 28 persons speak both for and against the County's entering into the agreement with the developer.
- (3) As moved by Commissioner Dumenil and seconded by Commissioner Olds, agreed 3 to 2, Commissioners Dunmyer and Simmons opposed, to sign the agreement.
- Met with MDOT Secretary Smith and SHA officials to present the County's transportation priorities (see above).

QAC'S LIBRARIES – THE PLACE TO GO FOR TECHNOLOGY HELP AND SOURCES

There are lots of reasons to go to the QAC libraries – to take out books or DVDs, to read magazines or newspapers, for a meeting or a book talk.

More and more, the public is realizing that our QAC libraries are also **technology centers**.

How do our libraries qualify as technology centers?

- Each library has a bank of 9-10 computers with high speed Internet access available for public use, and more computer terminals are on the way.
- Each library offers free one-on-one training with a librarian in basic technology skills – how to use email, Microsoft Office, e-readers, and iPads.
- The Centreville Library offers free small group computer classes.
- The librarians are very efficient at web-searching and are glad to help refine a search.
- Each library has 24 Kindles for loan; all of the Kindles are loaded with 20-25 books in 8 different categories such as romance, series, and current favorites.
- As of this month, each library will have 10 iPads for public use in the library.
- Both libraries have color copiers that can scan and email documents.
- Both libraries have fax service.
- Both libraries have PrinterOn – a service that allows you to send a print job to either branch from any computer at any time

for your retrieval during library hours.

- Both libraries have children's computers loaded with enjoyable learning programs for the very young.
- From your home, the libraries' easy-to-navigate website (www.quan.lib.md.us) gives you access to the library catalog, the state-wide interlibrary loan catalog, and your own library account.
- The libraries' website provides access, in the library (with help, if necessary) or at home, to a large collection of books, reference materials, and databases, including:
 - free downloadable audiobooks and e-books (there are currently about 1500 titles available as e-books, many with multiple copies; the number of titles is expected to balloon shortly as more publishers sell e-books to libraries);
 - 100-plus digital magazines (Zinio);
 - streaming Independent Films – film festival winners, documentaries, and shorts (Indieflix);
 - the Testing and Educational Reference Center – interactive practice tests for entrance exams and certification and licensing tests, including AP, SAT, GRE, civil service exams for places like the Post Office, the NCLEX for nurses, and many more employment fields; and
 - high-quality, reliable reference materials (databases) in a variety of subjects including genealogy, history, business, biography, and science.



Erin Neusbaum, Centreville's Public Service Librarian, teaches a computer class at the Centreville Library
Photo Credit – Erin Neusbaum

NOVEMBER: THANKSGIVING

Come, ye thankful people come,
Raise the song of harvest-home:
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin

All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto his praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown

– Henry Alford

DECEMBER: WINTER SLEEP

. . . [T]here may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off. . . .
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired. . . .

– Robert Frost

A Calendar Of Verses