



# The Queen Anne's Chronicle

CELEBRATING QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

INFORMING THE CITIZENS

## LAW AND ORDER IN QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

Queen Anne's County is, in the words of the Comprehensive Plan's Vision, "a great place to live". One big reason why that's true is that the quality of life here is not significantly impaired by fear of crime.

Generally, we feel safe in our homes and as we move about on town streets and country roads. Most of us feel that crime isn't a major feature of our lives in QAC.

Are we right to feel that way, or are we just kidding ourselves?

Pondering this question, the *Chronicle* decided to take a look at the facts – first at the QAC crime picture itself, and then at the local law enforcement agencies on the front line against crime.

### The Crime Picture in QAC

Delving into federal and State crime reports, we were pleasantly surprised by what we found. In reality, Queen Anne's County is remarkably – in Maryland almost uniquely – safe from major crime. By major crime, we mean (following the FBI's categories) the violent crimes of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault, plus the serious property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.

Let's look at the crime data (for 2012 except as noted).



At the County Fair

– Photo Courtesy QAC Sheriff's Office

- The QAC major crime *rate* is the lowest of any Eastern Shore county and the second lowest in the State. (Only Carroll has a lower rate, and unlike ours it has risen rather than fallen.)
- The absolute *number* of major crimes in the County (93 violent, 821 property) is lower than all but three Maryland counties (Kent, Somerset and Garrett, all of which have far

smaller populations than QAC).

- Over the past several years, crime in QAC has declined, even though population has grown substantially.

- Perhaps most remarkably, while the population of Centreville was more than doubling over the past decade, its major crimes declined by a quarter (from 4 violent

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## ELECTION YEAR: LOCAL OFFICIALS ON THE BALLOT

2014 is a year when we choose the officials who will run our State and local governments for the next four years. We'll also pick our U.S. Congressional representative from District 1 as well as a U.S. Senator, but it is the State and local offices we are voting to fill that will have the most direct impact on our daily lives.

The State offices to be filled this year are Governor, State Attorney General, Comptroller of the Treasury, and representatives in the State Legislature.

The local offices are our County Commissioners, our State's Attorney, our Sheriff, and the members of our School Board. We'll also be deciding who will be Judges of the Orphan's Court, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Register of Wills, and members of the Democratic and Republican Central Committees.

The Democratic and Republican Primaries will be on June 24th, with early voting at the Kent Island Library and the Kramer Center in Centreville beginning on June 12.

**Candidates for all of the above offices must file with the Board of**

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## CRIME ON THE EASTERN SHORE

(rates in 2012 per 10,000 population)

County	Violent Crime*	Property Crime**	Total
Queen Anne's	19.1	168.2	187.2
Kent	41.7	171.6	216.2
Talbot	23.2	226.6	249.8
Caroline	34.5	284.7	319.2
Dorchester	50.1	347.1	397.2
(Maryland)	47.7	274.9	322.6)

\*Murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault \*\*Burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft Data Source: <http://www.goccp.maryland.gov/msac/documents/2012CrimeInMarylandUniformCrimeReport.pdf>

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## Law and Order, *continued from Page 1*

and 76 property crimes in 2002 to 2 violent and 56 property crimes in 2012).

• Centreville has about one-fourth the population of Easton, but only one-tenth the amount of crime. — Centreville has about



Sheriff Hofmann tapes "QAC's Most Wanted" for QACTV.

— Photo Courtesy Sheriff's Office

the same population as Denton, but less than one-quarter the crime. — Centreville is only 18% smaller in population than Chestertown, but its crime is 75% less.

• Leaving population aside and looking instead at land area, QAC is almost (90%) the size of Anne Arundel, but has only 5% as much crime.

From the standpoint of safety from major crime, Queen Anne's County is indeed a great place to live. Law enforcement has to have a lot to do with that — so what's going on there?

Here the *Chronicle* looks at our two local law enforcement agencies, the Sheriff's Office and the Centreville Police Department. (In a future issue we hope to report on the key State enforcement agencies active in QAC: State Police, Natural Resources Police, and Maryland Transportation Authority Police.)

## Community Policing

The law enforcement agencies headed by Sheriff Gary Hofmann and Centreville Police Chief Charlie Rhodes are, each in their own ways, effective practitioners of what has come to be known as "community policing". That philosophy of law enforcement was summarized in an authoritative study twenty years ago in these words:

"Community policing is, in essence, a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems. . . . The foundations of a successful community policing strategy are the close, mutually beneficial ties between police and community members." (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/commpp.pdf>)

These "close, mutually beneficial ties" are manifested in myriad ways, all of them relating to the kind of "presence" law enforcement has in the community. Where there is the right kind of police presence, which we have in Queen Anne's County, not only is

crime deterred, but citizens work with the police to solve and further reduce crime.

### Police Presence

At its most basic level, presence means having police officers on patrol 24/7 in the community. The Sheriff's Office has 6 command staff and 49 deputies, the Centreville Police Department has a chief and 10 officers. In QAC, there is never a moment day or night when there are not police officers in patrol cars circulating through the County and through Centreville.

The patrolling officers are always ready to respond to the 911 calls that are dispatched to them by radio from the Emergency Operations Center behind the State Police Barrack at 301/304. A modern patrol car is in effect a mobile office, equipped not only with multiple radio channels but also with video and audio

recording systems and data terminals enabling, for example, persons to be identified at the scene by MVA photos.

As they make their rounds, the officers are on the look-out for situations or conditions that indicate the potential for crime or accident — a door left open at night through which a thief might enter, a suspicious vehicle that might suggest illegal spotlighting of deer, a loud dispute that might escalate into violence, a child out at Halloween in danger of being hit by a car, an illegal dump of trash or construction debris. Coming upon such hazards, the officers respond to the incident, communicating with those involved, educating citizens on how to avoid becoming victims of crime, and, when necessary, making arrests of perpetrators.

**TIP:** In today's world, anything stolen that has a serial number — from a lawn tractor or chain saw to a TV — stands a good chance of being recovered by law enforcement — **IF** you have saved the number in a place where you can find it when you report the theft.

Patrolling capabilities are not limited to the Sheriff's 63 cars or the 9 cars of the Centreville Police. Sheriff Hofmann's resources also include such equipment as several bicycles and an ATV, especially useful for keeping safe the County's many park lands and walking trails, and a zodiac boat and trailer,

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Centreville Police Chief Charlie Rhodes by Nickerson Memorial Park

— Chronicle photo

# POLICING IN MARYLAND: SOME MILESTONES

- **1637:** St. Mary's County organized with oldest documented sheriff's office in Maryland.
- **1706:** Queen Anne's County organized under a sheriff.
- **1776:** Maryland Constitution provides for an elected sheriff in each county; he is to serve for a three-year term and must be a resident of the county.
- **1794:** Centreville created with a bailiff (see article on page 7 in this issue).
- **1868:** State Oyster Police created to enforce oyster laws on the Chesapeake Bay.
- **1894:** Centreville appoints "a night watchman or night police officer, to be clothed in uniform and to have full police powers".
- **1896:** Office of the State Game Warden established to enforce new laws for conservation of game birds and animals.
- **1894:** State Fire Marshal created to investigate and prosecute arson.
- **1914:** Corps of motorcycle officers under Motor Vehicles Commissioner begins to enforce motor vehicle laws throughout Maryland.
- **1922:** State Police Force, the first Maryland law enforcement agency with state-wide jurisdiction over criminal cases generally, is created by county sheriffs deputizing the motorcycle officers corps.
- **1925:** Sheriffs' terms set at 4 years.
- **1935:** Maryland State Police established as a separate unit of State government.
- **1971:** — Natural Resources Police created by combining various conservation enforcement successors of original State Oyster Police.
  - Maryland Transportation Authority Police, then known as Maryland Toll Facilities Police, created by merger of State Roads Commission Bridge Guards with Harbor Tunnel Special Police Force.
- **1997:** State Fire Marshal and State Fire Prevention Commission transferred to State Police.

## Election Year, *continued from Page 1*

**Elections by February 25 at 9 p.m.** That filing deadline applies to all candidates, even those who, because they are not affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican party, will not appear on the Primary ballot. Those unaffiliated candidates will appear on the General Election ballot in November with the winners of the two party primaries.

How do these elected officials help make our county work? What are the salaries they receive from us taxpayers for doing their jobs? Here are the answers for our Queen Anne's County officials.

• **County Commissioners:** There are five -- one from each of the County's four districts and one at large, but, as is sometimes forgotten, every voter in the County can vote for the candidates for each of the five seats. The Commissioners regularly meet twice a month, sometimes more often if necessary. They have wide-ranging responsibilities that include budget, finance and taxes; appointments to boards and commissions, including the Planning Commission; adoption of the County's Comprehensive Plan; and direction of emergency services, public works and many other agencies and projects serving the health, safety and welfare of County residents. Salary is \$25,000 annually beginning with the 2014-2018 term.

• **State's Attorney:** The State's Attorney prosecutes all criminal, serious motor vehicle, and juvenile cases that take place within the County. The State's Attorney must be a member of the Maryland Bar. He/she administers an office

which includes a Deputy State's Attorney, three Assistant State's Attorneys, a Prosecution Assistant, and an Investigator. Salary is \$127,252 annually.

• **Sheriff:** The Sheriff's Office is a law enforcement agency with County-wide jurisdiction performing the full range of policing duties described in this issue of the *Chronicle*. In addition, the Office performs a variety of other functions including prisoner transport, service of court papers, and courthouse security. The Sheriff's salary is \$95,000 annually.

• **School Board Members:** The Board of Education, with the advice of the Superintendent, sets goals and expectations for the instructional program and management of the schools through the development, revision and adoption of policies for carrying out the QAC schools' vision and mission. These non-partisan offices are chosen in the November General Election when three of the five School Board seats will be on the ballot: the At-large position, and District 1 and District 2. The salary of the Board President is \$4,000 and a member's salary is \$3,500.

• **Judges of the Orphans' Court:** The Orphans' Court consists of three judges who do not need to be lawyers; voters vote for three candidates. The judges have jurisdiction over deceased person's estates, hear all matters involving contested estates, and supervise all estates that are probated judicially. Each judge receives a salary of \$6,150 annually.

• **Register of Wills:** The Register of Wills is tasked with keeping records of wills and estates, collecting inheritance taxes,

and acting as a clerk to the Orphans' Court. He/she oversees the administration of decedents' estates and assists those administering them. The State pays the operating expenses of the office of the Register of Wills. Salary is \$90,700 annually.

• **Clerk of the Circuit Court:** The Clerk not only handles the Circuit Court's paperwork and manages jury selection but also records deeds, issues licenses, files liens, performs civil marriages, and collects real estate recordation and transfer taxes. Some of the fees collected by the Clerk go to the County and municipalities. The Clerk's office budget is set by the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts. The Clerk's salary is \$92,600 annually.

• **Party Central Committees:** The Democratic and Republican Central Committees each have seven members, being selected in the respective party primaries as the seven candidates receiving the most votes. The regular duties of the Central Committees are to promote their party and its candidates; participate in local, state and national party activities; and conduct voter registration drives. Two of their most important functions are exercised when the need arises, namely, making recommendations to the Governor (1) to fill vacancies on the QAC Boards of County Commissioners, Education, and Elections, and (2) in combination with the central committees of neighboring counties, to fill State Senator and Delegate vacancies in the 36th District in the General Assembly. They receive no salary.



Eagle in flight with prey bird over Reed Creek

Photo Credits – Penny Griffith

## PLANNING COMMISSION

### • November Meeting

The morning portion of the meeting was largely devoted to a continuation of previous discussions of the residential growth opportunities that remain after recent State legislation restricting **rural sprawl development**. State legislation such as the “septics bill” is evidently believed by County staff and a majority of the Planning Commission to have taken away equity in QAC farm properties by curbing the conversion of farms into residential subdivisions. Accordingly, the Commission and staff continue to explore possible changes to County law that, consistent with State law, would provide avenues for farmland owners to exploit the residential development rights believed to attach to their farm properties.

Chairman Waterman summarized his view of the task at hand as follows (at QACTV 59:23): “If we want to preserve our agricultural lands, yet still preserve the equity that the farmers have had... forever, we have got to look at that big picture and say how do we get some kind of program that will allow the market to drive [development rights] to the growth areas.” Commissioner

Perkins, in an exchange with Commissioner Howard, provided a different perspective on the underlying question of whether farmland owners have actually suffered any loss of equity, when he observed (at 88:37): “Since about 2004 the economics of farming have really picked up, and the landowners aren't looking to move [development rights], and the price of land has risen to the point where they don't have to move them.”

A further cautionary note about the potential demand for development rights was added by Principal Planner Spinelli (beginning at 91:08): “There is an inventory of existing [undeveloped] lots in Queen Anne's County... The opportunity to sell a right is reduced because of that.” (*Chronicle Note*: Spinelli did not state on the record the staff's estimate of the size of that inventory, but a study by Washington College in 2011 put the number of approved but undeveloped lots in the County at just shy of 3,000 – clearly enough, as Spinelli suggested, to dampen for the foreseeable future any demand from developers for farmland owners' development rights.)

At the conclusion of the discussion, staff was charged with “fleshing out options” relating to

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## EDITORIAL: THE VISION WE SHARE

"The Vision We Share" appears on the second page of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The *Chronicle* reprints the Vision from time to time. As we begin a new year, we thought we would reprint it this time along with some of the language on page one that introduces it.

"This Plan, as an update to the 2002 Queen Anne's County Comprehensive Plan, continues to reaffirm our land use ethic to ***maintain the County as a quintessential rural community***. The theme of this update is to ***preserve our connections from the past in order to create the future through sustainability***. A sustainable community consists of strong, attractive and economically thriving neighborhoods supporting all sectors of a community including our agricultural industry, residential neighborhoods, businesses, the government and our natural environment. This Plan builds upon the past ethic to assure the County's sustainability through enhanced preservation and conservation of agricultural land along with our cultural resources, while also managing growth in order to reduce sprawl by directing growth to locations in existing communities and designated planning areas, promoting economic development and protecting our sensitive natural resources...

*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.*

## COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS

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

**October 22, 2013.** The Commissioners:

- Heard and discussed a report from Jackie Carter of Character Counts! on QAC school programs initiated to reduce bullying, including Unity Day and its orange "Bullying stops with me" T-shirts worn by students and school employees.

- Received an update from Mary Margaret Goodwin, chair of the Queen Anne's County War of 1812 Commemoration Committee, on signage for the Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail in the County and on new historical finds concerning militia activities in QAC during the War of 1812.

- Received an overview from School Superintendent Carol Williamson of the draft State-required Bridge to Excellence Master Plan reflecting how all funding (local, state and federal) is used to provide an effective education for the students.

- Heard two persons speak at Press and Public Comment, one against the WIP process, the other calling for more realistic revenue projections in County budgeting.

**November 12, 2013.** The Commissioners:

- Received a quarterly **Financial Status Update** from Budget & Finance Director Seeman, which included a report that FY 2014 expenditures are now projected as below budget: \$112.8M projected versus \$114.3M budgeted, and a comparison showing that QAC received only \$8M in grants in FY 2014 versus \$25M in FY 2007.

- Issued, on presentation by Aging & Community Service Director Willis, a proclamation saluting family caregivers "as the backbone of our Nation's long term care system" and heard an update on QAC community services.

- Adopted an ordinance setting County Commissioner salaries for the next term of office at \$25,000 annually.

- Introduced, and forwarded to the Planning Commission for review, Ordinance No. 13-24 requiring **consolidation of Southern Kent Island lots** not conforming to existing zoning, with the intended result of reducing, from about 1400 to 650, the number of vacant lots that could be developed if public sewer service were to become available.

- Heard a presentation from Baltimore officials on the transportation funding implications of the fact that, after the 2010 Census, a portion of QAC centered on the 50/301 corridor, with a population about 12,000, is now part of the Baltimore urbanized area and subject to the jurisdiction of the Baltimore

Regional Transportation Board (BRTB).

- Issued, four Commissioners voting, a proclamation saluting Commissioner President Arentz upon his appointment as District 36 Delegate.

- Heard one person speak at Press and Public Comment on the Adopt-a-Bear Christmas gift program for over 1000 disadvantaged children in QAC.

**November 14, 2013.** The Commissioners:

- Met with Senator Hershey and Delegates Jacobs and Smiegel to discuss 2014 State legislative initiatives, including changes to the Bay Restoration Fund to allow **funding for SKI sewer**.

**November 18, 2013.** The Commissioners:

- Held a work session with members of the Board of Education to discuss budget issues and the impact of recent cuts; the challenges and benefits arising from implementation of the Common Core State standards; and the numerous QAC school initiatives in the area of digital learning.

**November 26, 2013.** The Commissioners:

- Appointed Commissioner Dumenil as President and Commissioner Dunmyer as Vice President of the Board of County Commissioners.

- Made **25 appointments to County boards and commissions**, including the appointment of Sharon Dobson to the Planning Commission, Kenneth Scott to the Board of (Zoning) Appeals, and Dale Anderson and Mary Roby (alternate) to the Ethics Commission.

- Approved preservation of a 5-acre parcel in Stevensville, potentially the north landing site for a pedestrian bridge over 50/301, donated to the County by Bob Eisinger, with the easement being held by the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.

- Recognized, upon presentation by Jackie Carter and Wayne Humphries of Character Counts!, (1) the achievements of Darryl Calloway and the Sudlersville Middle School Ecology Corps, and (2) the thirteen years in QAC of Character Counts!, during which more than 85,000 character-building experiences were delivered to children by over 900 volunteer character coaches and mentors.

- Heard from Mary Margaret Revell Goodwin about QAC participation, through the Slippery Hill Quilts of Valor project, in the national Quilts of Valor program for veterans.

- Approved a letter of support, on presentation by School Superintendent Williamson, for the **BOE's 2015 capital improvement request** for the State's share (50%) of funding for two projects: Stevensville Middle School renovation and roof replacement for Centreville Middle School.



Winter Moon

— Chronicle Photo

## The Queen Anne's Chronicle

**The Queen Anne's Chronicle is published by Queen Anne's Conservation Association.**

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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](http://www.qaca.org)

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# THE SEASON OF THE WILD GOOSE

I am always thrilled by the annual return of the geese. At the first faint discordant call, I rush out to look for the long wavering V high overhead and heading south.

These long skeins of returning birds are actually made up of many family groups, and many of the year's young will form pairs over the winter, although they won't actually breed until they return to northern Canada in March. Because geese are monogamous, these new couples will be together for the rest of their lives.

If they are lucky that may be as long as twenty-five years, although like most wild creatures, geese live a dangerous life. The eggs are eaten by a number of animals from raccoons to snapping turtles, the goslings often fall prey to hungry owls and eagles, while the adult birds are preyed upon by animals such as foxes and coyotes. That is not counting the numbers that are shot by hunters.



*Normal migration altitude for Canada geese is 3,000 feet, but they have been observed flying as high as 29,000 feet.*  
*Photo Credit – David Godfrey*

Watching as they circle a cornfield, back-pedal their wings and set their flat black feet down in the stubble, I try to differentiate the gander's slow, low "ahonk" from the goose's quicker, higher "hink" – with limited success. They speak to each other so rapidly that both calls blend into that cracked sound we all recognize.

Canada Goose populations have fluctuated widely over the years. When I was young in Talbot County, a flock of geese was a pretty rare sight, and they again suffered a steep decline in the late 80's and 90's. At that time, the drop in numbers was considered so serious that the hunting season along the entire Atlantic flyway was closed from 1996 to 2000, dealing a painful economic blow to the Eastern Shore.

The good news is that the moratorium worked; the absence of hunting pressure, plus improved nesting conditions in northern Quebec and Labrador, led to a substantial increase in migratory goose populations.

## Goose Life

Except when they are nesting, geese are highly social. When you see a flock in a field, look for the sentries or guard geese. These birds stand on the perimeter, keeping a sharp lookout for any danger or disturbance. Occasionally you will see another bird take his turn in the lookout position, allowing the first one to feed. If you come too close, these sentry birds will be the first to give the

alarm, causing the entire flock to rise in a cacophony of sound.

Like most birds, a goose's eyes are on the side of its head. While this means they have only monocular vision, it also allows them to keep watch on an area of close to 270 degrees. Their hearing is also extremely good, and their bills have saw-tooth edges called lamellae that easily cut through grass and stems.

Geese love corn and soybeans as well as grasses of all kinds, including lawn grass and those succulent shoots of winter wheat. It is no wonder that the largest numbers on the entire eastern flyway are found here on Delmarva. Our abundant farm fields plus nearby estuarine marshes provide their ideal wintering habitat.

Insulated as they are with the same down that we love in our winter parkas, geese are beautifully equipped to endure the most brutal weather. In winter, they fluff their feathers against the cold to increase the insulating air layer. (In summer, they do the opposite; flattening their feathers against their body to reduce the air space.)

Actually, there are eleven geographical "races" of Canada Geese that taxonomists have now split into a confusing variety of subspecies. Suffice to say that they vary in length from 22 inches to 45 inches and range all the way from the Yukon and California to the Atlantic Coast. Ours are somewhere in the middle in size and belong to the so-called "Atlantic race." The smallest ones, known as cackling geese, are not much bigger than a mallard and are found in the far west and Alaska. The biggest birds are native to the northern prairie and do not migrate.

## Resident Geese

Which brings me to the question of the so-called "resident geese" that are here all year, roaming over golf courses and parks throughout the east. We don't have many on Delmarva as yet, but they are a common sight on the Western Shore and in northern Delaware. Contrary to popular belief, these are not birds that abandoned the idea of migrating in favor of the good life, so to speak, after finding plenty to eat and ample nesting sites right here.

They are, in fact, descendants of those large non-migratory mid-western birds that game managers brought here to improve the hunting when our native birds were scarce. The first flocks in Maryland were apparently released in the late 30's and early 40's, and because geese, like many birds, return to the place where they were born, the survivors simply settled down and multiplied to the point that they now number in the millions and are making a nuisance of themselves.

So the enterprising game managers that brought them here in the first place now have the problem of bringing them under control! While special hunting seasons can help in rural areas, the fact is that these geese are particularly fond of suburban lawns and public gardens -- places where hunting is impractical to say the least. So some managers have resorted to such tedious hands-on tactics as oiling the eggs to keep them from hatching.

It is a sad commentary that such noble birds are now considered pests, the unintended consequence of one more misguided idea that misfired. Will we ever learn to stop meddling?

*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).*



*Photo credit - Tom Pendleton*

## COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS, *continued from Page 4*

- Approved, Commissioner Olds opposed, upon presentation by Chesapeake YMCA CEO Robbie Gill and after hearing testimony from 13 persons, an **agreement between the County and YMCA** of the Chesapeake for \$8 million in County funding for construction, in the County Complex across from QACHS, of a facility to be operated by YMCA, with \$4 million of the funding to be raised by YMCA and reimbursed to the County within seven years.
- Heard one person speak at Press and Public Comment on need to address shortcomings in the SKI lot consolidation ordinance (No. 13-24) introduced on November 12.

### **December 10, 2013.** The Commissioners:

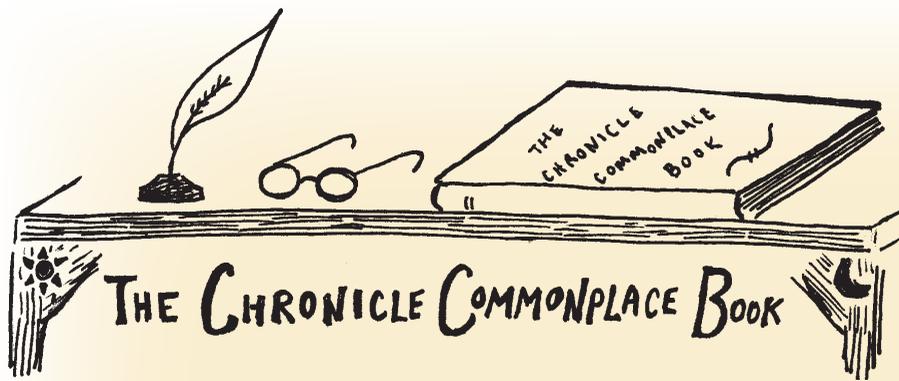
- Heard (beginning at 15:17) a favorable report from the Public Works Department on their West Coast tour of STEP systems of the type that would be used for the **SKI sewer project** to serve 1518 existing homes and some 650 (consolidated) vacant lots, estimated at roughly \$40 million and

requiring 3-5 years to complete.

- Received and discussed (beginning at 34:00) an informative update from IT Manager Megan DelGaudio on the progress and prospects of **broadband in QAC**.

### **December 17, 2013.** The Commissioners:

- Heard County Administrator Todd announce the Governor's appointment of James Moran to fill out Steve Arentz's term as County Commissioner and to be sworn in the following day.
- Held a hearing on an ordinance (No. 13-26) authorizing up to **\$24 million in borrowing by the County** including \$5 million for the new County office building, \$3.2 million for radios for the emergency system upgrade, and \$6 million toward the County's share (\$12.4M) of the Stevensville MS renovation; heard one person (Steve Wilson) testify against the "extraordinary explosion of debt" proposed for the three-year period 2014-16; and approved, Commissioner Olds opposed, the proposed borrowing.



✂ **What's a "commonplace" book?** Since early times, people have often copied and clipped into books information of all kinds that they found interesting and wanted to be able to find again. By the 17th century, commonplacing – which is essentially just creating a kind of scrapbook – was actually being taught as a study technique at the university level.

Among many distinguished practitioners of the commonplacing art was Thomas Jefferson, who kept several commonplace books and is quoted as saying: "I was in the habit of abridging and commonplacing what I read meriting it, and of sometimes mixing my own reflections on the subject." Emerson and Thoreau, Coleridge and Mark Twain, all kept commonplace books. The *Chronicle* thought we would too, on a small scale, as space permits.

✂ **Drive Safely Everybody!** QAC native Bud Roe, a keen observer of North County happenings, has often cautioned about the special hazards of driving on our narrow county roads. Backing him up, a recent study found that the traffic fatality rate on Maryland's rural roads is nearly two-and-a-half times higher than on all other roads in the State. [http://www.tripnet.org/docs/MD\\_TRIP\\_News\\_Release\\_Annapolis\\_02-28-13.pdf](http://www.tripnet.org/docs/MD_TRIP_News_Release_Annapolis_02-28-13.pdf)

And that general finding definitely applies to Queen Anne's County. In 2012, our traffic fatality rate was 2.4 times greater than that of the State as a whole – ranking us #3 in the State, below only Garrett and Worcester, in our rate of traffic fatalities (i.e., figured on a per population basis). [http://www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd30/ncsa/STSI/24\\_MD/2012/24\\_MD\\_2012.htm](http://www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd30/ncsa/STSI/24_MD/2012/24_MD_2012.htm)

✂ **In the Bay: Up – and Down.** Striped bass spawning in Maryland have rebounded sharply from 2012's record low, but blue crab harvests are way down and prices have hit record highs. Only two years ago, the annual winter dredge survey found the most crabs in the Bay in 19 years, and the most juvenile crabs ever. The abundance of juveniles was expected to result in increased catches as they reached legal harvest size last fall and this year. Instead, harvests dropped last year, and have fallen more this year. The dearth of crabs is a great, unsolved puzzle: the scientists are perplexed and competing theories abound. [www.bayjournal.com](http://www.bayjournal.com) (November 2013 issue)

✂ **We Have It Here.** "Silence has become a luxury in New York that only a scant few can truly afford". Constant noise afflicts NY city dwellers from huge rooftop HVAC units, delivery truck traffic, home theater systems, helicopters, planes, all-night construction projects. "Soundproofers say demand for their services is reaching new heights. And they are not cheap — soundproofing a wall starts at \$5,000; a single window can start at \$1,000, with giant windows costing \$9,000." And if you can't afford a fix, you're at risk: chronic exposure to noise can cause cardiovascular disease, learning impairment, sleep disturbance, stress, immune system impacts. — *New York Times*, July 12, 2013

✂ **What's an "Externality"?** It's an economist's favorite 50-cent word for the effects of an economic activity, like running a business, that "spill over" on third parties who are not involved in the activity as owners, suppliers, or customers. An externality can be either negative or positive — i.e. the effect may either impose a cost on the third parties, or it may confer a benefit on them.

Example of a negative externality: An air-polluting fossil fuel power plant imposes health costs on the general population – but those health costs are not taken into account when the power plant sets its charges to its customers for electricity.

Example of a positive externality: A superior public school system increases local property values and community productivity – but taxpayers and elected officials don't have to take those benefits into account when setting the schools budget.

In both these examples, because the costs or benefits are "external" to the economic activity, normal market mechanisms fail to produce the best allocation of society's resources: we use too much dirty power (because it's too cheap if all its costs are taken into account) and we discourage too many good school teachers (because they are underpaid for what they contribute to the community). — For more, see Wikipedia, "Externality" and "Market Failure".

✂ **Rising Waters.** Want a little excitement on a dull winter day? The website of the UMD Phillip Merrill College of Journalism Investigative Project *Sea Level Rise in Maryland* has a vivid, easy-to-use "In-depth Interactive Map" showing which areas could be underwater at different levels of sea level rise and storm surge.

The storm surge layers in the map evidently depict surge coverage at various heights above *existing* sea level, not above the possible future levels that the sea level rise layers show. Accordingly, if you want a look at an alarming and quite possible future, where we've had a sea level rise of 3.3 feet and then get a storm surge of 9.8 feet, the way to see that is to leave the sea level rise button alone and simply click on the 13.1 foot (3.3 + 9.8) storm surge button.

Look at Kent Island, and Grasonville, and Bennett Point, and around the mouth of the Corsica. . . It's not a pretty picture. Here's the address of the Map: [http://cnsmaryland.org/sealevelrise/?page\\_id=22](http://cnsmaryland.org/sealevelrise/?page_id=22)

✂ **Farming in Colonial Times.** "Nature, as with farmers everywhere, ruled the American farmer's life, but it was a nature that differed from the one known in England. . . The farmer had to deal with new predators – wolves, wildcats, and black bears – all native to America.

"Wolves presented the greatest danger. They preyed especially on cattle that roamed abroad, for they were easier to kill than fleet deer. Every county offered bounties for them.

"The intrepid raccoon, another native, was endowed with a delicate palate; it waited until a week or so before the corn ripened, then swooped in at night to feast until contented.

"Passenger pigeons, which migrated about the time corn ripened, were a worse threat. They were known as 'maize thieves' and when they alit in a field could flatten the whole crop in an instant." — David Freeman Hawke, *Everyday Life in Early America* (Harper, 1989)



✂ **Traffic Noise.** Traffic noise, as we all know from experience, is increased by higher speeds, heavier volumes, and more trucks:

- Traffic at 65 mph sounds twice as loud as traffic at 30 mph.
- 2000 vehicles per hour sounds twice as loud as 200 vehicles per hour.
- At 55 mph, one truck at 55 mph sounds as loud as 28 cars.

These noise facts are from the famous JMT Report on SKI Sewer. [www.qac.org/Docs/PublicWorks/SKI/Final%20Document%20Aug%202011.pdf](http://www.qac.org/Docs/PublicWorks/SKI/Final%20Document%20Aug%202011.pdf) JMT also says that "dense vegetation must be greater than 100 feet in depth and high enough to completely block the line of sight to provide any noise reduction". Other authorities agree that "for a noise barrier to work, it must be high enough and long enough to block the view of a road", but they say instead that "it takes about 200 feet of dense vegetation to audibly reduce traffic noise". (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/environment/air/trafficnoise.htm>)

✂ **How Many Farms in QAC?** Depending on how you define a farm, you can get a wide variety of answers – 521 in the 2007 Census of Agriculture, 1206 in USDA/FSA Participation Data. If a family farms a tract that it owns and farms another tract down the road that it leases, does the family have one farm, or does it have two? You can make a case for either answer.

So let's ask the question a little differently: how many "farm operations" are there in QAC – whether they are individuals, or families, or LLC's, whether they are farming on their own land or also on leased land or in sharing agreements? The *Chronicle* believes the best answer, obtained locally from USDA sources with on-the-ground information, is that there are about 230 farm operations in Queen Anne's County.

# POLICING BEGINS IN CENTREVILLE

By MARY MARGARET REVELL GOODWIN

We in Centreville have had a police force from the very beginning of the town, but it was not called “the police” and it was not called a “police force”. We began law enforcement with a “bailiff”.

The bailiff was part and parcel of town life from the very beginning. He had a number of jobs, some not at all pleasant to name or recall.

First, he was to keep slaves in order and

under control. It was his duty to be sure they were not walking around town after sundown. This was especially important when smallpox became a problem and African Americans were the ones thought to be the carriers: they had to be out of town by sundown if working in any home.

The second responsibility was to keep dogs and critters under control. We very, very early on (1805) instituted dog control here. Any dog found wandering without its owner could be and was shot. We had dog tag registration very early on in town, and I in fact have one of the old dog tags from a registration.

Also, chickens, hogs, sheep and geese often

got in the way in the streets and just wandered around, and bad news for them too if they were caught. They could be taken by the bailiff, and he could either use them or give them out to his favorite townspeople. He could also do the same with the grass cut on the Court House green.

Finally, the other problem that had to be policed—imagine it!—was speed control for horses or horse and buggies. This was a problem throughout the entire 1800’s. The people of this county, and of this town, were inveterate racing enthusiasts. Any opportunity to issue a challenge, or to take one up, to race any distance was never rebuffed!

The laws against racing on the roads and streets were constantly refined and never solved the problem. Even slaves were not immune, except that if they were caught, they were lashed and their owners were fined.

*Centreville Historian Mary Margaret Revell Goodwin has led the War of 1812 commemoration on the Eastern Shore. She is completing work on signage for the Centreville Heritage Trail, a book on the War of 1812 on the Eastern Shore scheduled for December of this year, and a major new book, enriching and updating Emory’s late 19th century account, on the history of Centreville and Queen Anne’s County.*

## Law and Order, continued from Page 2

useful for patrol of the 137 square miles of County waters that the Sheriff is responsible for besides the 373 square miles of County land area. (In contrast to these expanses, the Centreville Police have only 2.7 square miles to cover; guided by Chief Rhodes, they do that quite intensively.)

The Sheriff also been supplied by the federal Department of Justice with some cutting-edge technology, in the form of a Gyrocopter, which is said to be useful in such endeavors as looking for stolen cars or missing persons. The *Chronicle* probably won’t be able to resist printing a picture of the Gyrocopter in action, though we suspect that even if this gift horse had not found its way to the Sheriff’s doorstep, the County would be almost as safe as it is.

### Being There for the Citizens

“Presence” is also, and perhaps most significantly, a matter of officers being in person, on foot, in direct contact with citizens, at places and events where people have gathered and where any breach of the peace would be dismaying: at government buildings (such as the Circuit Court, by itself requiring a staff of 4-5 Sheriff’s deputies), public hearings and meetings, schools, sports events, fairs, parades, celebrations. These are the places and times where law enforcement officers and citizens interact in non-crisis modes. Properly trained and experienced officers use these opportunities to learn about the community and to strengthen the “mutually beneficial ties” with citizens that are

the foundation of effective community policing.

Reference to “trained and experienced officers” reminds us again that effective law enforcement is mostly about people. The Sheriff says that 80% of his budget is payroll -- taxpayer money paid to professionals for whom the community has high expectations. When a deputy, who has been well trained and gained the community-specific experience that makes community policing work, leaves for a higher paying job elsewhere, the taxpayers’ investment in that deputy is lost and public safety suffers. Doing what needs to be done to retain experienced personnel is as much a key requirement in law enforcement as it is in the public school system.

“Mutually beneficial ties” are also created in the many situations where Sheriff’s deputies or Centreville police officers deal with offenses or disruptions or problems that are not among the “major” crimes. These are the traffic citations, the shop-lifting incidents, the eviction disputes, the noise complaints. And there are the constant drug offenses (addressed by the multi-agency Queen Anne’s County Drug Task Force) which, though very serious, again are not included in the major crime category.

The volume of all these incidents and problems — and the resultant number of police-citizen contracts — is very large. Consider this from the annual report of the Police Department of safe, quiet Centreville:

“During the calendar year 2012, the Department responded

to 3,772 miscellaneous incidents. The total of all service calls for the year was 4,201.”

### Keeping It Real

This last perspective on what the police deal with reminds us that our safety in Queen Anne’s County is not the same thing as true tranquility. We are safe here, law and order do prevail here — but we are still a simmering pot of disorder and injury and loss that require constant police attention.

Nevertheless, in our fallen world, QAC is a great place to live — just go back to the beginning of this article and look again at our major crime statistics. They are very hard to beat, and as a community we should be proud of that.



Gyrocopter in Flight

Photo Courtesy QAC Sheriff’s Office

## Planning Commission, continued from Page 3

transfers of development rights and changes to the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance.

### • December Meeting

In the morning, with Chairman Waterman recusing himself, the Planning Commission gave exhaustive consideration to Ordinance No. 13-24 mandating lot consolidations to reduce to 650 (from perhaps 1600) the number of vacant lots that will become buildable in Southern Kent Island communities if sewer service is provided to those communities. The **County Commissioners’ SKI sewer service plan** contemplates funding the sewer project with financial assistance from the State, which evidently will not be forthcoming unless the number of sewer-enabled new homes on SKI is reduced well below what would occur if there were no mandatory lot consolidation (see QACTV at 185:30).

The Planning Commission ended by unanimously giving a favorable recommendation on the ordinance, with the further recommendation that the lot consolidation not become final unless and until the State funding assistance was assured. The many points of interest in the three-hour deliberations included:

- Legal advice that the lot consolidation ordinance is clearly constitutional and not a “taking”—indeed, it is “very conservative” because mandatory lot consolidations typically occur in the context of a significant downzoning (43:15);
- Increasing County staff pressure for installation of holding tanks at SKI locations with failing septics (119:00);
- A funding plan built around \$37 million in County borrowing and the goal of keeping the total monthly cost to existing homeowners at \$100 (128:00); and
- Disclosure of the multiple meetings between County staff and MDE to arrive at the proposed sewer plan (e.g. at 141:30).

After a short lunch, the Commission reconvened to consider and grant various approvals to seven development projects, including: — **The Vineyards of Queen Anne’s** in Stevensville just south of 50/301, consisting of a 54-room hotel with a 20-room future expansion, accompanied by a banquet facility, restaurant and bar, with a service area and an outdoor covered porch. — **The Village at Slippery Hill** on Nesbit Road in Grasonville across from the Emergency Room, consisting of 20,000 square feet of commercial/office space and 108 affordable rental apartment units with community center.

# BEECH TREES: GETTING OUR ATTENTION

Now is the time of year when the beech trees stand out in our woods. Unlike so many deciduous forest trees, the beeches (*fagus grandifolia*) hold on to their leaves – often until spring. As winter comes on, their leaves turn from the bronze of fall to a papery yellow-tan that responds to the winter sun, seeming to decorate the trees and attracting the attention of those who pass by.



Young beech trees in woods near Centreville

– Chronicle photo

Most people identify beeches by their gray bark – their thin, smooth “skin” that does not wrinkle with age the way other trees’ bark does. Occasionally someone will take advantage of beech bark’s poor healing ability and the trees’ long life span to leave behind a personal mark carved into the trunk. This kind of arboreal graffiti should be discouraged: the carvings often serve as an entrance for wood-damaging insects and fungi.

## Beeches Like It Here, Not in Cities

Beech trees are remarkably well suited to Queen Anne’s County and similar areas. They like moist, well-drained soil and bottom lands. They tolerate sun or shade and clay, loam, sand or acid soil. In spite of this versatility, beeches don’t do well in cities. Pollution seems to affect them, and anyway they have wide and shallow root systems that break up sidewalks and driveways.

Those shallow roots and the trees’ dense shade, when combined with their slow-to-decay leaf litter, prevent most anything from surviving under them. Just about the only thing that can

grow beneath a beech tree is the parasitic beechdrop (*Epifagus americana*) that grows from the trees’ roots: it’s a small plant with no chlorophyll, no leaves, but with tiny pink flowers that occur between August and October.

## Big Beech Trees

Another reason beech trees aren’t good urban trees is that they can become extremely large. Living to 300 and 400 years old, they can grow as tall as 115 feet with a 100+ foot spread. There is a beech tree, estimated to be about 100 years old, on private property in Queenstown that is 103’ tall with a 182” circumference and a 103’ spread. The U.S. (and Maryland) Champion beech tree is in Anne Arundel County. It is 112’ tall with a 290” (!) circumference and a 103’ spread.

The large roots of very old beech trees often emerge from the trunk above ground and run and twist about before submerging in the soil, intriguing artists and small children.

## Beech Nuts and Beech Wood

A tree that lives so long can take a long time to mature. The beech tree takes 40 years to produce its seeds – or mast – and it doesn’t produce large crops of mast until it is about 60 years old. Seeds aren’t the only way beeches reproduce, however. Sometimes young trees sprout from the shallow roots of a distant parent tree.

The mast of a beech tree is a bristled, four-lobed capsule containing one to three seeds or nuts. Beech nuts have been roasted and used as a coffee substitute, and American Indians used various parts of the tree for medicinal purposes. In earlier days, livestock were let loose to wander in the woods, feeding on beech nuts. A fully mature beech tree will produce a plentiful mast every two or three years, and many forms of wildlife, among them wild turkeys, possums, squirrels, foxes, deer, and pheasants, relish the nuts.

The hard white wood of beech trees makes the tree quite valuable. It is used for flooring, furniture, tool handles, toys, barrels, and sounding boards. It burns slowly and is used for smoking some foods. Decay resistant, beech wood was used to make water wheels for mills in Colonial times.

Before the advent of power tools, and because these native trees have such hard wood, many beeches were left unfelled and allowed to grow, so that in some places large stands of quite old beeches exist. The trees’ shade tolerance allows them to grow readily in existing woods, both in “pure” stands and in association with pines and other conifers as well as with hardwoods such as ash, oak, wild cherry, and maple.

Now’s the time of year to admire our native beech trees as they make themselves known in the winter woods.



– Arthur Rackham, 1906

## \* A Calendar \* Of Verses

### JANUARY: WINTER WALK

Bleak season it was, turbulent and wild,  
When hitherward we journeyed, side by side . . .  
The frosty wind, as if to make amends  
For its keen breath, was aiding to our steps,  
And drove us onward as two ships at sea;  
Or like two birds, companions in mid-air,  
Parted and reunited by the blast.  
Stern was the face of Nature; we rejoiced  
In that stern countenance; for our souls thence drew  
A feeling of their strength. . . .

– William Wordsworth

### FEBRUARY: WINTER BIRD SONG

. . . [A] voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead . . .  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.  
So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

– Thomas Hardy