

Easement issues threaten grants for Kilmarnock's Main Street work

by Robb Hoff

KILMARNOCK—Easements or no easements, that appears to be the \$757,873 question facing the Kilmarnock Main Street project.

Although the town has been working for years to get a series of Main Street improvements under way, it still needs several easements; if it doesn't get them soon, it could begin losing thousands of dollars in federal grants.

Town officials met Tuesday with utility and Virginia Department of Transportation officials to define how the proposed \$2.7 million project can move forward before the federal funding expires.

"If you don't get something done in four or five years, you'll lose all of the money," said VDOT Warsaw resident engineer Joseph F. Staton.

He explained that VDOT reviews plans and bid proposals for the federally funded grants before the town can proceed with the construction. However, he said the first step toward moving the project forward is securing easements from affected property owners.

"We ran into problems with the first step — getting the right-of-ways," Staton said.

Town manager Lee Hood

Capps said four Main Street easements remain to be secured, those of Bobby Crowther, Emerson Gravatt, Peck Humphreys and Lee's Restaurant.

At least part of the easement problem has resulted from the botched roadway drainage at Waverly Avenue and Main Street, which has caused standing water in front of Lee's Restaurant for the past 17 years.

"We've been trying to get council to do something about that since 1986," said Bill Lee.

Staton said the problem has resulted from Waverly Avenue and Main Street stormwater draining into one drop inlet on Main Street, where the stormwater is piped underground away from the street. He said the installation of another drop inlet on Waverly Avenue might solve the problem.

"If we can intercept some of it, that will take care of 90 percent of the problem," said Staton, who added that VDOT compounded the slow drainage by flattening the drop inlet area in front of Lee's during previous work.

Staton said VDOT could design a remedy for the drainage problem but suggested the construction should be incorporated into the Main Street plan, which would

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National Relief Network volunteers remove barrels belonging to the Virginia Department of Transportation from a marsh in Morattico. High tides and wind swept the barrels off a nearby highway during Hurricane Isabel.

Michigan teens assist Morattico cleanup effort

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

MORATTICO—It was a new experience for 15-year-old Mallory Szczepanski, who wiped a spot of smelly, gray clay out of her blond hair.

She was hip-wader deep in marsh mud, sifting through old boards and metal.

Some of the other 40 teenagers from Grand Rapids, Mich., had been involved in prior relief effort missions. Szczepanski, a sophomore at West Catholic High School, ventured to Lancaster County's waterfront town of Morattico for her first service trip.

She was busy at work Friday, cleaning the village of debris left behind by Hurricane Isabel.

"This is fun," Szczepanski said, adding a big board to the stack of trash that was taller than she. "I'd do it again."

The volunteers with the National Relief Network (NRN) worked from Thursday through Saturday last week, collecting boards, bits of tin, dock pilings, barrels and sticks, all washed ashore by the high winds and tide that covered the point in water the night of September 18.

"They have an immense amount of energy; all you have to do is give them some direction and they go and go and go and then say, what can I do next," said NRN founder Scott Harding.

He and the volunteers arrived in Lancaster about 7:30 a.m.



Mallory Szczepanski (left) adds to a pile of debris while other volunteers comb through the marsh.

last Thursday after a 16-hour bus trip from Grand Rapids, the headquarters for the NRN. The group included students from West Catholic and Catholic Central high schools.

The NRN program, however, is open to children in public and private schools, and members of church and corporate groups.

"What's so cool about our program is when we go into a school or church to ask for volunteers, we can call it a mission or a learn-and-serve program, depending on the group I'm speaking to," said Harding. Because NRN has no real religious affiliation, it is the only organization of its kind in the country, he said.

Most of NRN's student-vol-

unteers are females, said Harding, who doesn't mind being a little politically incorrect when he says "girls have a caring heart and motherly instinct and that's why we have 70 percent girls and 30 percent guys."

So it's ironic that Harding—a man—founded the network because of his empathy.

In 1993, while watching a public broadcasting show, Harding saw a Missouri woman returning to her home after a flood. She was so devastated, Harding was moved to help.

He organized a group of co-workers for a weekend disaster relief effort, and the NRN was born.

The network now has two full-time employees, including Harding, and four part-timers, plus thousands of volunteers. Since 2001, the group annually has logged over 100,000 hours of volunteer service.

Harding took 500 student-volunteers to New York City to help with relief efforts after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

With contacts nationwide, the network is called upon to help with disaster relief after floods, hurricanes, fires and tornadoes. Basically, "we go anywhere we're needed," said Harding.

It was through a contact in Virginia Beach that the network came to be in Lancaster County. Harding plans to return to coastal Virginia in January with a group of volunteers from Grand Rapids Baptist Church.

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Irvington association faces uncertain future

by Robb Hoff

IRVINGTON—The town council last week heard a proposal from the Village Improvement Association (VIA) that would provide a salaried administrative assistant to organize and market community events.

Speaking on behalf of the association, Irvington architect Randall Kipp explained that the organizational responsibilities formerly performed by association president Alison Drake, who has resigned, are not likely to be met by another individual volunteer.

"This is almost a full-time task, almost a full-time commitment,"

Kipp said.

He proposed that the association, the town and the Irvington Business Association (IBA) share the cost of hiring an events administrator with a \$26,000 salary, provide rent and utilities at an annual cost of \$6,000, and buy equipment and furnishings at an initial cost of \$2,575.

Hatley Bright of the IBA said the organization informally supported the role of such a coordinator, who would also assist VIA event volunteers.

"It needs to have volunteers, that's very important; but it needs

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Audrey Brainard and Jim Groff prepare for final guided tour of the season at Dameron Marsh Natural Area Preserve.

Eagles are a possibility on Dameron Marsh tour

A guided walk is featured at Dameron Marsh, a 316-acre natural area preserve, on Saturday, November 22. The walk begins at 10 a.m.

Audrey Brainard, a nationally-known school science consultant; Jim Groff, education chairman of the Northern Neck Audubon Society, and Carol Hammer, an experienced Virginia naturalist, will lead the walk.

Brainard and Groff walked the property last week and reported three bald eagles, including one flying up to its nest, two northern harriers, many yellow-rumped warblers, and several dozen mute and tundra swans on the water and flying overhead.

On the Chesapeake Bay, the preserve features beach, forest, marsh and open field habitats and a wide variety of flora and fauna.

Participants may spot bald eagles, hawks, swans and ducks. A deck at the end of the trail provides a platform to view water birds and the changing face of nature entering the winter season.

Hikers may also visit the beach, home to a rare tiger beetle. Participants are urged to bring binoculars, field manuals and waterproof shoes.

From Kilmarnock, take Jessie DuPont Memorial Highway towards Burgess. Turn right on Shiloh School Road. Go two miles and turn left on Ball Neck Road. Go about a mile and turn right on Cloverdale Road. Go half-a-mile and bear left on Guarding Point Lane. Go two-tenths of a mile to a right turn onto a gravel road. Follow the gravel road to the preserve entrance. The parking area is two-tenths of a mile past the preserve entrance sign.

Disaster application deadline is extended

RICHMOND—Virginia residents who suffered losses from Hurricane Isabel have more time to apply for federal/state disaster recovery assistance.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) advised state officials the state's request to extend the registration period from November 17 to December 8 had been granted.

"To date, the total number of registrations is over 87,000 with close to 400 registrations coming in daily," said coordinating officer Michael Cline. "It was clear we needed to keep the registration period open if we were going to reach all of the people who need help."

Coordinating officer Louis Botta granted the extension request.

"We hope this extra time will ensure that everyone who suffered damage and losses from Hurricane Isabel will get the federal and state assistance they need to begin the process of rebuilding their lives," Botta said.

The registration number is 800-621-3362 or TTY 800-462-7585. The lines are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Homeowners, renters and business owners that suffered damages in 99 disaster-declared jurisdic-

tions are eligible for assistance until the December 8 deadline, including the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland.

Meanwhile, those who have applied for disaster assistance and received U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) forms also have until December 8 to return completed forms.

"If an applicant is referred to the SBA, the forms need to be completed and returned before other aid options can be considered," said Botta. "Filling out an SBA application does not guarantee that an applicant will be approved for a loan, nor does it mean that they must accept the loan if they are approved."

SBA loans are the largest source of disaster funds for making substantial repairs or rebuilding damaged structures to their pre-disaster condition. Actual loan amounts and terms are set by the SBA and are based on each applicant's financial condition. The low-interest disaster loans are available to homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes.

Those who have questions about their SBA application can call 800-659-2955 or visit www.sba.gov/.

Board OKs cell tower in Burgess

by Reid Armstrong

HEATHSVILLE—Northumberland county supervisors last week made way for a new cell tower in Burgess.

By a 5-0 vote, the board unanimously approved a special exceptions permit for a 275-foot tower off Route 200 across from Bobby's Marine.

Lisa Barton, who owns a neighboring parcel, voiced concerns that the tower would depreciate the value of her property, make her home difficult to sell, create a health risk and interfere with her reception.

She asked the board if other land could be considered for the tower.

"With the way the trees are in this area you are going to have very minimal impact and no interference," said applicant James L. Dunn.

He is in the process of signing a contract with Verizon. He plans to bring more service providers to that tower, and eventually he hopes to build more towers in the Northern Neck, he said.

The new tower will be rated to sustain 100-mph winds and 150-mph gusts. It is guaranteed to improve cell communications for customers within a three-mile radius, Dunn said.

The tower should be online by April 2004.

The board also approved a change in zoning for a half-acre parcel along Route 360 east of the Italian Garden restaurant in Burgess. The property was reclassified as B-1 business to correlate with surrounding zonings.

That motion also passed unanimously.

Santa letters due by Dec. 11

The Rappahannock Record again will publish letters to Santa, which this year will appear in the Thursday, December 18, issue.

Letters must be in the Record office by Thursday, December 11, in order to appear in the special section. If letters are written as a class project, teachers are encouraged to submit them by December 5.

Letters should be written in dark ink and include the child's name, age and hometown. Parents, teachers and others are asked to make certain the letters are legible.

The Rappahannock Record's mailing address is P.O. Box 400, Kilmarnock, VA 22482. Letters also may be faxed to 804-435-2632, or e-mailed to mail@rrecord.com, or dropped through the front door slot at 27 North Main Street in Kilmarnock.

The December 18 issue includes holiday greetings from area merchants and other businesses. The deadline for these advertising messages is also December 11.

Record has early deadline next week

Early deadlines will be in effect for next week's Rappahannock Record because of the Thanksgiving holiday. The paper will be printed on Tuesday for delivery on Wednesday, November 26.

Display and classified advertisements and articles for next week's edition should be submitted by 5 p.m. Friday.

The final download of e-mailed news items only will be at 4 p.m. Sunday, November 23.

The Record office will be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 27 and 28.

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