Essex County EMS Merger

Essex County Emergency Medical Services has now entered its fourth year of providing career and volunteer EMS service to the citizens of Essex County and Town of Tappahannock. In doing so, Tappahannock Rescue Squad Inc. has merged with Essex County EMS to better serve our citizens and continue to build a strong EMS system. Our EMS agency provides 24/7 advance life support and basic life support services to its citizens. Essex County EMS provides public education and training such as CPR/AED and First Aid training, and recently held its first “Survivor Day,” a preparedness class in which participants received a backpack full of emergency tools and supplies. Outstanding and professional EMS service is being provided by career and volunteer EMS providers working together to protect and serve our citizens.

Currently, Essex County EMS is at a staffing level of eight full-time Advance Life Support providers, two full-time Basic Life Support providers, a roster of thirty-three part-time EMS providers, and seven volunteer EMS providers. Our goal for the upcoming year is to increase the number of certified/qualified volunteer EMS providers and continue to provide an EMS service our citizens deserve. Anyone interested in volunteering may contact James Brann at 443-3260.

Visit the Essex County website at www.essex-virginia.org
**Historic Circuit Courthouse Renovations**

There has been a lot of activity in the Facilities Department. Several projects were completed in the Historic Circuit Courthouse. The entire Courthouse complex was painted, and new flooring was installed throughout the building. New jury room furniture was purchased. The heating and air conditioning systems have been updated with new energy efficient components. Come by and visit to see all of the exciting changes we have made!

**VOIP Phones**

One of the major projects that was completed in May of 2014 was the installation of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) Phones. These phones provide a greatly expanded set of features for the end users, and save the county money since they share a pool of lines instead of having dedicated lines for each phone. The county has spent about $14,000 less on phone bills since the VOIP phones went in. In June of 2015, we expanded the VOIP phone implementation to include the sheriff’s office.

**Beale Sanctuary Renovation**

The Beale Sanctuary has also undergone extensive renovation with the Sanctuary and upstairs rooms being patched and painted. New HVAC equipment was installed to provide more efficient heating and cooling of the spaces. The Chesapeake Bay Governor’s School was able to relocate their offices to a larger, more functional space on the second floor of the sanctuary. The Sanctuary has been utilized by many Community Organizations for a variety of activities since the renovation. The Public Library has held their Evening With an Author there, and the Summer Youth Theater Camp is held in the Sanctuary as well.
Relocating County Government Offices to a Central Campus

Over the past several years, Essex County has been working to relocate government services to the central campus located around the circuit courthouse green. The General Registrar/Voter Registration office was relocated from the school board office to 205 S. Cross Street (Suite B) on the Courthouse Square in August of 2013.

A number of reasons precipitated the move. For years, the office had been located in a single room and needed more space to accommodate visiting voters and records. The Electoral Board had no place to hold their meetings. Also, the School Board Building is large and rambling without, at that time, suite designation or room numbers. The office was difficult to find and parking was often a problem, especially at election time.

Larnie Flannagan, the General Registrar for 15 years, recalls the elderly gentleman who came to vote one Saturday. He tapped angrily down the hall with his cane and announced; “This is not a voting place. This is a hiding place.” Mr. Peck offered the solution the voters, Electoral Board, and the General Registrar needed. Moving the office to the Courthouse Square provided solutions to storage needs, meeting space, and the added benefit of county internet and technical support. Previously, technology was through an outside support service at additional cost. Voters now have easier access to the office and designated handicapped parking just outside the office door.

The most recent move to the Courthouse square was by the Middle Peninsula Local Probation and Pretrial Services Agency. The Middle Peninsula Local Probation and Pretrial Services Agency provides pre and post trial services for the judicial system to the six counties that make up the Middle Peninsula. Those counties are Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Mathews, and Middlesex. The agency currently has an office in Gloucester as well as this new space on the grounds of the Essex County Administrative Buildings. The Pretrial office moved from Duke Street to the basement of the Essex County Circuit Courthouse.

The Director, Hope Brooks, reports “This move was tremendous for us as an agency. We needed to downsize from our previous location. We are in a great location and accessible to the public. Essex County graciously offered the space to our agency. After renovations to the basement were complete, we moved in and welcome visitors to our new space. We are leasing the space at a price less than what we were paying previously.” The funds generated from the rent will be going into the Glebe Fund, which is a fund to support renovations to the Circuit Courthouse.

By relocating these offices it is hoped to provide the citizens of Essex County with one central location to find governmental services, thereby eliminating the need to drive to multiple locations to conduct business with the County. Essex County hopes to continue this trend and relocate other offices when the ability to do so arises.

On February 26th and 27th of 2015 the Board of Supervisors held a retreat. At this retreat, they identified seven values for Essex County to champion and embrace. These values are found at the bottom of each page of this report.

Facility Dude

The Facilities and Technology departments have been using the Facilitydude “Help Desk” which allows county employees to submit work orders to have work scheduled and completed. The system has robust reporting tools that may be used to track what kinds of jobs are being done, what materials are being used, and how many hours are spent on a task. The system began to be used in May 2014, and in the past year over 1500 work orders have been submitted. The system allows whoever is assigned the job to be able to work more efficiently as inventory information, bulb sizes, serial numbers, and other important information is also stored in the system. Having one system for both Facilities and Technology also makes it easier on the employee submitting the ticket since they do not have to navigate separate portals.

Courthouse Green Project

A project is currently underway to improve the drainage and functionality of the Courthouse Green. The design work and a portion of the implementation of the plan is being paid for with a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) through the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund. Draper Aden Associates provided the original design for the courtyard which would include a paver walkway down the middle of the courtyard, a built in seating area, and a shade garden, however due to some last minute design change suggestions, a completed plan is not available at this time. The original grant was for $150,000 for the design and partial implementation of the Courthouse Green plan. Look for more information about this project to be available soon.

Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things.
-Peter Drucker

Essex Values ... Trust—assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something
Essex County Establishes Advisory Commissions

As part of an initiative to increase the transparency of government, Essex County has established several advisory Boards and Commissions comprised of citizens to provide guidance to county departments. In the past year, Advisory Boards and Commissions have been established for Parks and Recreation, Animal Control, and Agriculture and Forestry.

The Essex County Parks and Recreation Department, by resolution of the Essex County Board of Supervisors created the Essex County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission. The purpose of the ECPRAD is to promote outdoor recreation and water access for the citizens of Essex County. The ECPRAC is composed of seven members that includes representation from the Town of Tappahannock, Essex County Public Schools, Friends of the Rappahannock as well as other business and county organizations. The Essex County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission holds public meetings quarterly on the second Thursday of the month in the Beale Administrative Conference Room beginning at 8:00 P.M. Please check the on-line county calendar for meeting dates and times.

The Essex County Animal Control Advisory Commission was officially adopted in December, 2014. The commission acts in an advisory capacity and reports to the County Administrator. The Commission also works with the public, rescue organizations, and Essex County Animal Control employees to recommend ways to assist the shelter and promote local adoptions. ECACAC is working on fundraising and encourages participation by volunteers at the shelter. The Animal Control Advisory Commission holds public meetings on the third Tuesday of each month in the Beale Administrative Conference Room beginning at 4:30 P.M.

The Agricultural and Forestal Economic Development Advisory Board was established by the Board of Supervisors to serve as a liaison between the Board of Supervisors and the citizens of the agricultural and forestal communities, as well as make recommendations concerning issues of importance to the rural/agricultural community. Additional Duties of the AFEDAB will include supporting programs that enable the preservation of farm and forest land, agricultural infrastructure and the industry of agriculture in Essex County, and educating the non-farming public about the importance of agriculture in Essex County. The Agricultural and Forestal Economic Development Advisory Board will also advise and alert local, state and federal elected officials serving Essex County on issues of importance to the agricultural and forestal industry in Essex County. Since this is a newly formed Board, details about the meeting times are currently unavailable, but look for updated information on the County's webpage.

If you would like to serve on a County Board, Authority, or Commission, there is an application that may be found on the county webpage (On the Board of Supervisors’ page). Just fill out the application and follow the instructions to submit your completed form. We look forward to working with you!

County Website Undergoes Major Redesign and Relaunch

Over the 4th of July weekend of 2014 Essex County unveiled a new design for their website. The new website is intended to be user friendly and makes accessing important information easy. The home page has a Quick Links section on the left side that gives quick access to Budget Information, GIS Maps, Meeting Agendas, Job Opportunities and other information that is in high demand. Towards the bottom of the page, important news and announcements can be viewed and upcoming calendar events are listed as well. You may quickly access all news or calendar events using links found there. At the top of the page, in the menu header line, a visitor can easily access the information they are looking for through an expanding “mega-menu” that opens to show the subpages when the mouse is hovered over any of the main menu categories. The internal pages feature a navigation menu on the left side of the page, as well as “breadcrumbs” at the top to make moving through the pages easy and intuitive. Each department maintains a page with important information related to what they are doing and contact information. Essex County recently made GIS mapping available publicly through the website. Some of the information found there may be out of date, but we are working to bring the information current. The county’s web page is being updated and enhanced continuously to provide county residents with current and important information. Essex County will soon be making the leap into the age of social media once policies governing such sites use have been finalized. If you have any suggestions for the webpage, please let us know by emailing your comments to info@essex-virginia.org. The address for the county web site is www.essex-virginia.org
Use of BoardDocs Expanding

In 2014 the Essex County Board of Supervisors began using Boarddocs to provide increased transparency to their regular meetings and work sessions. The online portal allows community members to view the agendas for the meetings and access the supporting documents that previously would have only been available upon request. Not only did this new service increase transparency, it also improved the efficiency of producing the packets for the meetings. Previously, if there was a change to items on the agenda, the entire packet needed to be renumbered, and reprinted. Now changes can be made more easily which saves on time, paper, and other resources. In the past year, the use of Boarddocs has expanded to include other governmental organizations such as the Planning Commission, and the Economic Development Authority. Essex County is committed to increasing transparency and efficiency of all entities and units. Other Boards, Commissions, and authorities post their meeting minutes on the county's web page so community members may access them. You may find links to Essex County's Boarddocs page in the quick links section of the County home page, just click on the “Agendas and Minutes” button.

Other group’s agendas and minutes may be found by navigating to “County Government” on the top menu bar of the County website. Then select “Essex County” under the “Boards, Commissions, and Authorities” heading in the drop down menu that appears. You may then select the group for which you wish to see the documentation.

Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive planning is a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development. The outcome of comprehensive planning is the Comprehensive Plan which dictates public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing. Late in 2013 Essex County contracted with Middle Peninsula Planning District to update the county’s Comprehensive Plan. Since the town and county are so closely related it was a joint effort. A committee was formed from town and county staff, planning commissioners, and private citizens. For the next year the committee met weekly to critique and make changes to the plan. Along the way, agriculture, forestry, and retail business persons joined the group to add thoughts concerning the county plan. Friends of the Rappahannock as well as the Essex Countryside Alliance joined in to assist the committee with environmental concerns such as fracking. The final draft of the Comp. Plan was approved by the Planning Commission on June 16, 2015 and by the Board of Supervisors on July 14th 2015. The Comprehensive plan is available on the County Website for review.

Municode

For the past year, Essex County has been working with Municode to re-codify the county's ordinances. Recodification begins with the updating of the county's existing code with subsequent general and permanent legislation that has been added or modified. Next, Municode's legal research reviews the codes for inconsistencies, duplications, proper grammar, conflicts in the code and additional legislation. Municode also reviews and compares the county's Code with current state law, and then implements these suggestions as approved and republishes the code in print and online. The laborious work to complete these tasks is very close to being completed. Once finished, all of Essex County's ordinances and codes will be made available online in a downloadable and searchable format. The town of Tappahannock is already using Municode to make their Codes and ordinances available online.
Parks and Recreation’s New Web Portal

Essex County Parks and Recreation now has a new web portal that may be found at www.essexrec.com. This new site allows families to create an account and register family members for any of the numerous recreational programs and activities offered by Essex County Parks and Recreation. Once a family has created the account, they do not need to enter their children's information over and over again. Enter the required information once and then register for as many activities as you desire. The new website also allows users to pay online for all programs and activities. The new site also enables participants to receive updates and news for all current and future program offerings.

If you need assistance, or do not have access to a computer, a public access terminal is available for you to use in the Parks and Recreation Office. The friendly Parks and Recreation staff will be happy to help you create an account, register, and pay online for the plentiful and fun activities they offer. If you have any questions, you may contact the Parks and Recreation office at 804 443-2470.

Flag football is one of the new programs offered by Parks and Recreation

Anxiously awaiting hunting for Easter eggs
Economic Development Director

The Essex County Economic Development Authority (EDA) established an Economic Development Director (EDD) position through a cooperative funding effort with Essex County, Town of Tappahannock and Tappahannock-Essex Chamber of Commerce. Trenton Funkhouser was hired in September 2014. The Economic Development Department is responsible for assisting with business retention, start-up, expansion and location.

The Town and County have worked on a variety of planning efforts over the past ten years with varying implementation. EDD primary assignments include staff support for the EDA, development of the Tappahannock Commerce Park (redevelopment of the former Tappahannock Municipal Airport), implementation of the Agriculture and Forestry Industries Strategic Plan and pursuit of grants supporting economic and community development.

In early 2015, the Board of Supervisors met to review the County's mission and values. Several economic development strategies and initiatives were identified by the Board including: 1) Adopt an economic development strategy in consideration of the county's operational and capital budgets, 2) Support local businesses and entrepreneurs by establishing a focused business appreciation and expansion program, 3) Develop a five year infrastructure forecast and plan that will support business, commercial and residential development in the Tappahannock corridor, 4) Sponsor, in partnership with the Economic Development Authority, the Chamber of Commerce and the Agricultural Council, a countywide business appreciation day as well as a business aspiration forum wherein future county business, commercial, industrial and technology needs are discussed and identified, 5) Support efforts focused on developing value added agriculture as well as aquaculture enterprises, 6) Expand wireless technology throughout the county and 7) Advocate for and support a technical workforce training initiative in the Essex County school system.

The Economic Development Director is also responsible for assisting with the coordination of groups such as Tappahannock Main Street, the Tappahannock Farmers' Market and similar organizations, activities and events.

Essex County Departments

**Airport:**
Jim Evans - 804 443-5885
kxs.airportinfo@gmail.com

**Administrative Services:**
Pam Smith - 804 443-8155
psmith@essex-virginia.org

**Animal Control:**
Ellen Shifflett - 804 443-0726
eshifflett@essex-virginia.org

**Building and Zoning:**
Jeff Hodges - 804 443-4951
jhodges@essex-virginia.org

**County Administrator:**
A. Reese Peck - 804 443-4331
rpeck@essex-virginia.org

**District Court:**
Dee Balderson Davis - 804 443-3744
dbdavis@courts.state.va.us

**EMS/Emergency Services:**
James Brann - 804 443-3260
jbrann@essex-virginia.org

**Economic Development Authority:**
Trenton Funkhouser - 804 4433258
tfunkhouser@essex-virginia.org

**Facilities:**
Fred Mitchell - 804 443-4050
fmargin@essex-virginia.org

**Finance:**
Mary Davis - 804 443-1005
mgdavis@essex-virginia.org

**Health Department:**
Don Thomas - 804 443-3396
don.thomas@vdh.virginia.gov

**Information Technology:**
Charles Huntley - 804 443-8154
chuntley@essex-virginia.org

**Pretrial Office:**
Hope Brooks 804 445-0600
hbrooks@essex-virginia.org

**Parks and Recreation:**
Fred Birchett - 804 443-3303
fbirchett@essex-virginia.org

**Public Library:**
Bess Haile - 804 443-4945
bhaile@eplva.org

**Social Services:**
Rodney Gordon 804 443-3561
rodney.gordon@dss.virginia.gov

**Voter Registration:**
Kelly LaFollette - 804 443-4611
klafollette@essex-virginia.org

**Extension Office:**
Keith Balderson - 804 443-3551
thbalder@vt.edu

**Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.**
-William Pollard

*Essex Values ... *Stewardship—the responsible planning and management of resources*
Essex County Elected Officials:

**Board of Supervisors:**

**Greater Tappahannock District**
E. Stanley Langford Jr. - Chairman
804 443-5341
slangford@essex-virginia.org

**Central District**
Edwin (Bud) E. Smith Jr. - Vice-Chairman
804 443-4502
bsmith@essex-virginia.org

**South District**
Margaret (Prue) H. Davis
804 443-1028
pbdavis@essex-virginia.org

**North District**
Sidney N. Johnson
804 443-4479
sjohnson@essex-virginia.org

Constitutional Officers:

**Clerk of Circuit Court**
Gayle Ashworth - 804 443-3541
gashworth@courts.state.va.us

**Commissioner of the Revenue**
Thomas Blackwell - 804 443-4737
tblackwell@essex-virginia.org

**Commonwealth’s Attorney**
Vincent Donoghue - 804 443-6599
vdonoghue@essex-virginia.org

**Sheriff**
Stanley Clarke - 804-443-3346
sclarke@essex-virginia.org

**Treasurer**
Betty (Penny) Davis - 804 443-4371
padavis@essex-virginia.org

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**State of the County—E. Stanley Langford Jr. Board of Supervisors Chair**

As a result of a retreat the Board of Supervisors held at the end of February, a draft document was created to serve as the guiding principles for the Board and for Essex County moving forward. To provide the direction for our undertakings, a vision and mission statement were crafted. Four strategic initiatives, and an action agenda for implementing the initiatives were also created. The Board will be holding a series of public meetings to seek input from county residents on the components drafted at the retreat. Briefly, the strategic initiatives are to first, foster community and economic well being; second, to practice good governance; third, to strengthen community partnerships; and finally, to fund the future.

Over the course of the past year, many issues have been addressed, and the foundation for the future is being laid. Just a few of the constructive accomplishments that have been made are: The board has adopted using the SLEAC values for agricultural and forestry land use assessments. We have addressed concerns over Fracking with many informational meetings, and with the adoption of the county’s comprehensive plan. The renovations and additions to the High School were completed which included the first Community Center/Auditorium in Essex. A comprehensive evaluation of our personnel classification system was undertaken. Supervisors worked with the School Board to equalize benefits for school and county employees. Supervisor Meetings are now opened with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer. Several items are works in progress, County staff has been working with Municode to codify and publish the county’s ordinances online. The Cardinal Community Assistance Program made a study of Tappahannock and Essex County, and produced a report that will help to guide our economic development. The Virginia Fire Services Board was invited to perform a study of Essex County’s Fire and Emergency Services, the details of which will soon be made public.

We look back at all of our past accomplishments with satisfaction, and look forward to the work that must be continued with anticipation. By forging ahead, the Board, County staff, and community - working together can maneuver past any obstacle or hardship. We look forward to working with our staff and county residents to build an exemplary future for Essex County.

Thank you to all of our county staff and community members whose herculean efforts have made the successes listed in this annual report possible. Your dedication to the betterment of Essex County for all residents is truly exemplary.

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**Board of Supervisors’ Committees**

Your Board of Supervisors represent you on a variety of regional and statewide Authorities, Boards and Committees. Below is a listing of the committees on which each Board of Supervisors Member serves.

**Stanley Langford:** Middle Peninsula Chairs and Mayors Committee, VACo Transportation Committee, Community Services Board

**Bud Smith:** Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (Chairman), Rappahannock River Basin Commission (Alt), Virginia Peninsulas Public Service Authority (Alt), VACo Health and Human Resources Committee

**Prue Davis:** Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority, Rappahannock River Basin Commission, VACo Nominations Committee (Vice Chair), VACo Environment and Agriculture Committee

**Sidney Johnson:** Middle Peninsula Regional Security Center Jail Authority, Social Services Board, VACo General Government Committee