Fiscal Year 15-16, July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, has proven to be a turbulent time for Essex County. The tornado that struck our community on February 24th, 2016 caused widespread destruction across a swath of the County, displacing numerous families and leveling St. John's Church, a revered County landmark on Desha road. The cooperation and giving that has resulted from this event has been awe inspiring.

The immediate days and weeks that followed the event witnessed an outpouring of support from neighbors, community members, surrounding counties, and state entities. Even though Essex County and its citizens will be striving to overcome the effects of this storm for long into the future, the unity, and fellowship with which our community has responded is commendable.

The response to the February tornado shows the volunteer spirit in Essex County is very strong. Many of our County departments would simply not be able to function at the current service level without their volunteers. We would like to dedicate this fiscal year's annual report to all of the volunteers that allow our County to function and provide services to residents and visitors alike.

Fiscal Year 2015-2016 was not all doom and gloom. The County offices continue to see revitalization, with painting, new carpet, and new furniture. The Health Department building underwent extensive improvements with a new roof, windows, drop ceilings, and other improvements. The County pool, on Marsh Street, underwent a total refurbishing and opened for the Memorial Day weekend. Everything looks great at the Marsh Street Park.

Despite the numerous challenges that Essex County and its citizens faced, we have prevailed and are moving forward together.
EF 3 Tornado Strikes Essex County February 24th, 2016

An EF 3 tornado impacted the central Essex County area of Benton Point, Scotts Mill, Desha Road and Kino Road the evening of Wednesday, 2/24/16, causing damage to 89 homes and completely destroying 27 homes. During the event twenty five people were injured, there were no deaths, and no first responder injuries. Within the first three hours of the event, all citizens impacted by the storm were accounted for and had received medical treatment. Essex County received mutual aid from all surrounding counties. There was an estimated 250 first responders on scene wanting to help. The response to the storm event was structured by implementing the Incident Command System and the Peninsula’s Emergency Medical Services (PEMS) Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) protocol.

Roads in affected areas were impassable or down to one travel lane. Virginia Department of Transportation assisted in clearing the roads and providing access. Most roads were reopened by 7:00 A.M. on 2/26/16. Three roadblocks were established by the Virginia State Police to limit access to affected areas.

A shelter was opened at Essex Intermediate School for displaced residents. There were four occupants and two canines. The shelter closed the afternoon of 2/25/16. Essex County Department of Social Services (DSS) assisted the families in need of long term housing in the immediate aftermath of the storm. The task of providing assistance to families impacted by the storm has transitioned to a Long Term Recovery Group which is overseeing the distribution of funds raised to assist tornado victims.

The affected areas were served by Rappahannock Electric Cooperative and Dominion VA Power. Rappahannock Electric provided a representative at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) immediately following the incident. At the peak, there were 600 outages. Power was restored by the evening of Thursday, 2/25/16.

A Volunteer Coordination Center was established at Essex Volunteer Fire Station 1 where volunteer groups such as Team Rubicon, Christ in Action, God’s Pit Crew, The Virginia Baptist Disaster Relief Group, The Virginia Methodist Disaster Relief Group, and several hundred unaffiliated volunteers joined together to help with the debris removal and clean up. Local churches assisted with coordinating donations and opened a donations collection site located at the old Southern States Building.

For those impacted by the storm, dealing with the loss of their home and personal belongings is something from which they may never recover. The community support, however, was overwhelming during this event. Whether it came from a neighbor down the street or from someone you never met before, hundreds of volunteers came to help those in need.

The map on the facing page shows the path of the tornado through Essex County and the concentrated areas of damage. The map was created by Essex County’s GIS department.
ESSEX COUNTY - CONCENTRATED TORNADO DAMAGE AREAS

33 Homes Destroyed
85 Homes Damaged
0 Deaths
25 Injuries
44 Groups Providing Aid
  Fire & EMS—17
  State Agencies—10
  Law Enforcement—9
  Volunteer Groups—8

$162,832.71
  Total Monetary
  Donations to Help Victims

$363,760.28
  Total Estimated Cost to
  Essex County
Essex County Volunteers

The tornado event of February 2016 brought volunteers from all over the state and nation; however, Essex County has numerous volunteers that lend their talents and expertise everyday. The Tappahannock-Essex Volunteer Fire Department (TEVFD) is an entirely volunteer operated agency, serving Essex County and the town of Tappahannock. The TEVFD routinely provides fire suppression, fire prevention programs, vehicle extrication, hazardous materials response, Emergency Medical Services assist, and disaster response 365 days a year. Essex County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) relies on volunteers as well as paid staff to provide emergency medical care to the citizens and visitors of Essex County.

During the course of a year in Parks and Rec volunteers play a vital role in every program the department offers. Without the volunteers the department would incur costs of over $15,000.00 in salaries. The department has volunteer coaches, instructors for first aid and CPR certifications, as well as volunteers for the Christmas parade, Easter egg hunt, swimming lessons, after school camp, and summer camp. Volunteers completed the first walking trail at the Rotary Poor House Farm Park. Volunteers are the backbone of Essex Parks and Recreation.

Other departments that benefit from volunteers are the Public Library and Animal Shelter. Volunteer, Kevin Kean, teaches basic computer literacy for free at the Essex Public Library. The Tappahannock/Essex Animal Shelter also benefits from numerous hard-working volunteers. Many dedicated Essex County staff members work outside of their normal business hours and beyond 40 hours a week, keeping staff rosters low while providing high levels of service.

Essex County would like to thank all of the dedicated volunteers whose altruistic actions serve the citizens and guests of Essex County. Your generous assistance is greatly appreciated.

Volunteer Spotlight - Fred Woodard

Fred Woodard is one of Essex County’s tireless volunteers. Mr. Woodard volunteers to teach First Aid and CPR certification courses to Emergency First Responders, Parks and Recreation Staff, County Staff, Public School Staff, and this past year every senior at Essex County High School. He has also volunteered his time to draft the Essex County Emergency Operations Plan which has been highly praised by the state officials who reviewed the document. Essex County is a safer place thanks to the volunteer efforts of Fred Woodard.

Animal Shelter Improvements

The Tappahannock/Essex County Animal Shelter (TECAS) staff has been working on a big project this year. We have been fundraising to raise money for a new exercise yard for the dogs. The current yard does not meet state code, and we need a new one. The new yard will provide us with the ability to safely exercise the dogs in our care, allow potential adopters to view multiple animals and spend time getting to know them outside the confinement of their pens.

TECAS reached out to businesses and community members to ask for their help. We received donations and support from several groups, including Indian Rivers Humane Society and the Animal Welfare League. With all these generous donations, we reached our fundraising goal of $20,000.

In December, Tommy Turner, who works for Talley & Armstrong Inc. donated his time and his company’s equipment to start the groundbreaking of the new yard. Keith Cooke from Essex Concrete, Inc. has donated the concrete for the new yard.

The project has faced many delays with weather related events, but is now back on track to have the yard completed very soon.

The Essex County Facilities Team has been helping keep the Route 17/360 median in town mowed and looking great!
Essex County Launches an In-house GIS Department

Over the past year, Essex County has been working to implement a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program, as it is recognized to be a necessary and cost saving tool which will help in all aspects of local government. Essex County reached out to the University of Mary Washington for assistance in implementing the program. County staff met several times with Dr. Brian Rizzo, GIS Program Director, and graduate students in the Masters of Science in Geospatial Analysis Program to discuss the needs of the County and determine a strategic plan to move forward with the County’s GIS program. The team from Mary Washington produced a development plan for geospatial capabilities and presented it to Essex County. This plan was used to create a job description and launch the new department and services.

Susanne Joy is the new Geospatial Program Coordinator for Essex County. She is originally from Maryland, but moved to Tappahannock in 2013 after falling in love with the area. She had been supporting the military through GIS for nearly ten years before being hired on by the County.

What is GIS? Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a powerful tool that allows people to analyze locations and relationships of objects in the world, which can then be presented on maps. In its simplest form, you may see a point on a map to represent a place; but in a real world, that point has meaning. If the point represents a house, information such as assessed value, address, and homeowner will be stored in the GIS. We now know from this point, not only the location, but also what the point means – this is geographic information. Where this data is stored is the system. GIS professionals use geographic information to analyze location information and present to decision makers, enabling them to make smarter decisions.

What can GIS do? GIS is a support mechanism that will bring great benefit to the County. Working in cooperation with all the departments, GIS can help make smarter decisions. Over the next year, the GIS department plans to meet with all departments to find efficiencies through mapping and data management. There has already been great progress in implementing the program. The GIS department is currently working on updating the EMS map book, which will allow for more efficient responses to emergency calls. A Green Infrastructure project, which works to find opportunities for environmentally friendly recreation areas, is also underway. The GIS department has also been working closely with the Commissioner of the Revenue to improve accuracy of property tax information. Parks and Recreation has been using GIS to map trails for the Poor House Tract. Citizens may also request map products of their properties to determine if they are in a flood zone.

The tornado on February 24, 2016 that injured 25 people and destroyed many homes was the first test that the GIS department went through. GIS was used to create search grids, which allowed emergency personnel and volunteers to efficiently search for victims. Also, a map was created to reflect the initial impact area of the tornado, which allowed emergency responders to determine where to focus their rescue efforts. In the aftermath of the tornado, the GIS department worked closely with various departments to create maps to aid in cleanup, as well as to visualize the damaged areas.
New Voting Equipment

Essex County voters cast their votes in the November 2015 election using new voting equipment. The new system allows voters to complete a paper ballot, review their choices and then cast their votes on an optical scan device. The choice to return to a paper based ballot may seem a step backward, but the conversion is mandated by the Code of Virginia.

The paper ballot does have several advantages over the Direct Recording Equipment (DRE) previously used in Essex County.

1. Voters are now able to take their time with a ballot, fully reviewing candidates and questions in the privacy of a voting booth.

2. There is a paper trail, something increasingly important in close state elections. If the process is re-counted, all ballots will be rescanned for accuracy. If there are any questions about a ballot, it will be hand counted – a method unavailable with the DRE machines.

3. Each precinct has a minimum of four voting booths with the ability to expand to 12 booths, which allows multiple voters to complete their ballots at the same time. This change will mitigate the lines voters faced at the DRE machines.

4. The voting equipment will read the ballot in any direction in only 3 seconds.

“That was quick & easy,” was heard more than once on November 3. A few individuals missed the review screen offered by the DRE, but were accepting of the fact their review screen is now the actual ballot. Voters may review the ballot in the voting booth until they are comfortable with their choices even “spoiling” a ballot if an error is found.

The Essex County Electoral Board and General Registrar have been pleased with the positive public response and are ready for the November 2016 Presidential Election.

Adoptions and Rescue Report

2015 was a good year for the animals at the animal shelter. The Tappahannock/Essex County Animal Shelter (TECAS) had 219 dogs and 78 cats come into the shelter last year. Of those, 132 dogs and 48 cats were stray. There were 34 dogs and 2 cats that were reclaimed by their owners. The shelter had 45 dogs and 42 cats adopted. TECAS transferred 122 dogs and 21 cats to rescue groups. There were only 2 animals that were euthanized for aggression issues. That is less than 1%.

The shelter received sponsorship for our adoptions by Indian Rivers Humane Society and the Animal Welfare League. Their incentive for adoptions increased our adoption rates to 67%. We hope to continue to receive support from rescue groups in the state of Virginia as well as other states.

TECAS is working hard to promote our volunteer program, and hopes to start attending more adoption events and community functions.

Marsh Street Pool Renovation

The renovations to the Marsh Street Pool have been completed and allowed the pool and park to open on May 28th at 11:00 A.M. The renovations include the complete removal of the paint, coping stones, and aging lifeguard stands. With the pool open for the season, guests now see a beautiful facility with new coping stones, tile, and white coat. Guests now also see new lifeguard stands as well as new lounge chairs to relax in.
Essex County TRIAD

TRIAD is a cooperative effort of the Essex County Sheriff’s Office, Tappahannock Police Department, Essex County EMS, Essex County Parks and Recreation, Essex County Churches Together, and concerned individuals. Each month, guest speakers present focused topics which are intended to increase awareness of scams and frauds targeting seniors, strengthen communication between the law enforcement and senior communities, and educate seniors on local and state resources that are available in their community. TRIAD meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 10 A.M. in the Essex County Beale Administration Building. TRIAD meetings are open to all who would like to attend.

Rotary Poor House Farm Park

Essex County Parks and Recreation has partnered with the Tappahannock Essex County Rotary, Forestry Department, Boy Scouts, Dunnbrooke Hunt Club, Lowes, and several individuals to begin the development of trails at the Rotary Poor House Farm Park. The first marked 1 ½ mile trail will open to the public in late spring. Trail development has been slowed as the recent devastating tornado directly impacted the park.

County Debt Service

As part of the County’s ongoing capital funding program, Essex County has utilized debt financing to fund capital improvement projects. As of June 30, 2016, the County’s outstanding tax supported debt totaled $32,202,425\(^1\). The County’s outstanding tax supported debt obligations carry fixed interest rates ranging from 2.42% to 5.125% and will be fully repaid by July 15, 2031.

Annual net debt service requirements\(^2\) on the tax supported debt for Fiscal Year 2017 total $2,992,789; annual net debt service will increase in Fiscal Year 2018 to a projected $3,566,376 and will decline each year until they are fully repaid in Fiscal Year 2032. Funding for net debt service is included in the County’s annual budgeting process.

As part of the County’s debt management program, the County has adopted a series of tax supported debt policies, including a maximum debt to real property assessed value ratio of 3.5%, a maximum debt service to annual general fund expenditures (inclusive of net School Board expenditures) ratio of 12% and a minimum 10-year principal payout ratio of 55%. The County periodically monitors the adopted debt policies and considers the impact of proposed financings within the parameters of these policies. As of June 30, 2016 the County was in compliance with tax supported debt policies as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Policy Limit</th>
<th>FY 2016 Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debt to Real Property Assessed Value</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt Service to Expenditures</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>9.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Year Principal Payout</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>72.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

\(^1\) The County’s outstanding tax supported debt excludes the County’s obligations related to the Tappahannock-Essex County Airport and Tappahannock Water & Sewer operations.

\(^2\) Within the total net debt service requirements, the 2011 VPSA QSCB debt service reflects sinking fund requirements, gross of earnings, gross interest expense, and then net of the calculated federal subsidy. At 12/15/2011, the published QTCB (subsidy) rates were above/in-line with the stated coupon rate of 4.25%. Therefore, at issue, interest expense should be fully subsidized by the Federal Government. However, due to sequestration, a reduction in subsidy was implemented. Currently, the sequester reduction is 6.8%.
Economic Development News

The past year has seen welcome news in many parts of our local economies. Business start-ups, expansions and locations are showing positive trends and community development activities continue to help set the stage for future improvements.

Grand openings of new businesses included NN Burger, choosing a Queen Street location for its 2nd store (big thanks to building owner, Greg Packett for an incredible renovation); Echoe's Café opened with local owners and operators in the White Oak Village Shopping Center; and the Handi-Store, a regional institution opened a new location on Queen Street in the former 7-11. Willow Stitch embroidery opened on Prince Street and Shelley Pierson can show you how to give up that out of town or internet habit for your decorative, promotional, or uniform needs. James River Equipment is completing a major expansion, Blue Ridge Lumber relocated a yard from King & Queen County, and P. Bradley and Sons, a Shenandoah Valley institution opened a sales, parts, and service center on Tappahannock Boulevard.

Thank you to all of our businesses for starting, staying, or expanding their role in our economy. Please remember to shop local, when you can, to keep our dollars at work as close to home as we can.

An easy way to support some of our local and regional businesses is to stop by the Tappahannock Farmers’ Market on Prince Street the 3rd Saturday of each month from April through November. Please mark your calendars and support your local and regional food producers (go to www.tappahannockmarket.com for more information).

Rural Development Grant Awarded to Essex/Tappahannock

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Virginia Rural Development Office announced it will invest $580,000 for police, fire and emergency medical vehicles, and equipment in Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock.

“These investments are critical in ensuring health and safety in Essex and Tappahannock,” said Basil Gooden, Ph.D., Virginia State Director, USDA Rural Development. “It's important to our agency to support such essential community needs across rural Virginia because they have direct impacts on residents' lives, the economy and the overall quality of life in our Commonwealth.”

The investments are provided through USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program. This program provides affordable funding to purchase, construct or improve essential community facilities in rural areas through low-interest loans, grants or a combination of the two. Funds can also be used to purchase equipment and pay related project expenses.

Details about funding announced April 07, 2016 are below.

Tappahannock-Essex Volunteer Fire Department: Loan - $400,000; Grant - $50,000
Funds will be used to purchase a fire truck.

Essex County: Loan - $45,500; Grant - $24,500
Funds will be used to purchase police vehicles.

Essex County: Loan - $35,000; Grant - $25,000
Funds will be used to purchase an ambulance and equipment for emergency medical services.

Essex County By the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION: 11,151</th>
<th>Total Area: 286 sq. Miles</th>
<th>Public School Enrollment: 1450</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Voters: 7487</td>
<td>Land Area: 257 sq. Miles</td>
<td>Total Housing Units: 5798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting Precincts: 4</td>
<td>Water Area: 29 sq. Miles</td>
<td>FY 16-17 County Budget: $34,020,286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Development

Community development efforts include a few significant ongoing planning projects and awards of cash or technical assistance.

**Former Tappahannock Municipal Airport** - Obtained $10,000 in 50/50 funding from VA Brownfields Assistance Fund to complete a Boundary and Improvements Survey, Environmental Site Assessment and title work for the former airport. The Town of Tappahannock is paying match for this work to assist Council's Industrial Development Committee in revisions to the existing conceptual plan for redevelopment of the site.

**Cardinal Report** – Offered as a free service through the VA Economic Developer's Association (VEDA), this effort was a review of initial and planned department activities by two out of area “consultants” (professional practitioners). Confirmed “we” are on the right track and provided objective recommendations for future activities. Our efforts will [continue to] promote Recreation, Retail & Retirement based on strong Agricultural and Forestry Industries base. The report was presented at first joint meeting of EDA, BOS and Town Council.

**Facade/Site Improvement Grant Program** – The Economic Development Authority and Board of Supervisors have created an initial fund to offer 50/50 matching grants to businesses in Town and adjacent commercial and industrial areas of the County. The goal is to provide an incentive for projects such as repainting buildings, sealing parking lots, replacing signs, windows and doors and other exterior or property improvements that can really make a difference in appearance of our non-residential areas.

**Green Infrastructure Plan** – Receiving technical assistance from the Green Infrastructure Center in cooperation with the VA Department of Forestry to develop a plan to help the Town and County be both a natural resources destination and a destination for natural resources industries. This plan can link our environmental assets such as wildlife, rivers and creeks and farming, forestry and open space lands with our conservation, recreation and economic goals. More than just a plan for active and passive recreation, this will be a guide to help protect and promote our agricultural and timber industries and build more economic activity and value through conservation, prudent connections and wise use of all of our natural assets.

**VDOT/HB2** – $1 Million in improvements to: Route 17/360 Corridor (Shoulder paving/drainage improvements), Route 17/360 Safety Improvement (VDOT priority) at Winston Drive Crossover, Route 17/360 (Queen Street) Improved Turn Radius for Northbound 17 traffic. Final funding approvals expected from the Commonwealth Transportation Board in late June. “HB2” is a new funding process for the future of transportation funding in VA. Continued participation in the competitive process within our transportation district and statewide will help ensure that we get our fair share of funding and technical assistance to improve roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and other transportation related facilities.

**Prince Street Park** – An application was prepared at the Town’s request and direction to the VA Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program. The project total is $360,000. The majority of the 20% minimum grant match is planned for Phase II and III lighting by the Town on Prince Street and is supported by County funds of $10,000. The project includes reconstructed sidewalks and additional decorative streetlights to enhance the Prince Street commercial corridor and an observation deck at the river. Final funding approvals are expected from the Commonwealth Transportation Board in late June.

These activities and accomplishments are all the positive results of having an Economic Development Department supported by “volunteers” from all parts of the community. Activities ranging from the entrepreneurs that start, expand, or otherwise keep their businesses rolling to the members of the Economic Development Authority and other boards and commissions of the Town and County that spend their time on a wide range of topics with any eye towards community improvement. We could not accomplish what we as “staff” do without these direct volunteers and all the members of the community that participate in civic, church, and social groups working together thereby making this area a great place to live, work, and play.
Essex County Elected Officials

**Board of Supervisors:**

**Greater Tappahannock District**
E. Stanley Langford Jr.—Chairman
804 445-5341
slangford@essex-virginia.org

**South District**
Margaret (Prue) H. Davis—Vice-chairman
804 443-1028
pdavis@essex-virginia.org

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

**Central District**
John C. Magruder
804 445-5774
jmagruder@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

Essex County Departments

**Airport:**
Jim Evans—804 443-5885
kxsa.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:**
Trenton Funkhouser—804 443-4951
tfunkhouser@essex-virginia.org

**Emergency Services:**
James W. Brann—804 443-4059
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**County Administrator:**
Pam Smith—804-443-4331
psmith@essex-virginia.org

**District Court:**
Dee Balderson Davis—804 443-3744
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**Economic Development:**
Trenton Funkhouser—804 443-3258
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**Extension Office:**
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**Facilities:**
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**Finance:**
Mary Davis—804 443-1005
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**GIS/Mapping:**
Susanne Joy—804 443-3490
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**Health Department:**
Don Thomas—804 443-3396
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**Information Technology:**
Charles Huntley—804 443-8154
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**Pretrial Office:**
Hope Brooks—804 445-0600
hbrooms@essex-virginia.org

**Parks and Recreation:**
Fred Birchett—804 443-0303
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