

The WV INDEPENDENT Observer

JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 2022

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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED. 



TO OUR READERS — The holiday festivities seem particularly energetic this year. Perhaps it was the unseasonably warm weather for the parades — or that our pandemic-related anxieties of the past several years have cooled. The Shepherd University band certainly lifted a lot of spirits as they marched past McMurrin Hall (cover image) during the Shepherdstown Christmas parade. The University’s football team was also full of energy later that day, romping up and down the field on the way to a 48-13 victory over Indiana University of Pennsylvania (coverage at WeAreTheObserver.com).

Part of the fans’ excitement for the team is linked to the local roots of some of the star players (as profiled in August’s *Observer*). The connection of a shared community makes the players’ dedication and effort seem closer and more relatable. It’s the same spirit that local service organizations rely on for their support. John Cloyd, Assistant Director at Jefferson County Community Ministries, shared what his organization sees: “We’re serving roughly 2,500 different individuals over the course of a year. Our food is in pretty good supply, but we always need money to purchase specific items, especially meats and other proteins.” Shepherdstown Shares, which provides services in the northern part of Jefferson County, notes a similar need for money to fill in what they don’t receive in food donations. The need is year-round and there are dozens more worthy local causes — including those profiled in this month’s issue — with which we can share our time and resources.

From all of us at *The Observer*, we hope you are able to enjoy the rest of December’s festivities and ring in the new year with some good cheer!

 **Steve Pearson**
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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// COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE LIFELINE FOR NEGLECTED KIDS



Circuit Court Judge R. Steven Redding swears in Sharon Price, Kirsten Owens, Jean Hamilton & Sarah Piper as advocates for CASA of the Eastern Panhandle (CASA-EP).

“YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE” was the phrase Circuit Judge R. Steven Redding used to welcome the four volunteers standing in his courtroom on November 16 ready to be sworn in as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). West Virginia’s Department of Health & Human Resources oversees the Child Welfare Services functions that provide the basic investigation, administration, and oversight of children in need of foster care and other services related to abuse and neglect. The CASA volunteers act

in conjunction with the state’s caseworkers to help the judges make decisions and to help the children receive appropriate services. As Michelle Sudduth, Executive Director for CASA of the Eastern Panhandle (CASA-EP) puts it, CASA volunteers are “the voice of the child in the courtroom.”

Judge Redding pointed out the yeoman’s service provided by the two state caseworkers currently assigned to Berkeley County, but noted that there should be a dozen or more

to handle the number of children in need of services. “They are working an unfathomable amount of hours — two cannot do the work of ten. The CASA volunteers are how I can sleep at night, knowing that someone is watching out for these kids.”

Michelle Sudduth shared some numbers that highlight the need for volunteer advocates: 800 children are currently in youth/foster care in Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan counties, 453 new cases of abuse/neglect were filed in 2021, and 351 new cases filed in 2022 (the current year number is lower not because of a decrease in need, but because of a backlog in DHHR’s investigations). CASA is currently able to provide advocates for 350 of those children — so there’s a great need and a great opportunity for volunteers to have an outsized impact on a child’s life. 📌

Visit WeAreTheObserver.com to read what current CASA volunteers have to say about how the experience has changed their own lives, learn about new programs that CASA-EP has launched this year, and see how recent fundraising is helping to support these services. You can also visit MyCASAEP.org to learn how you can get involved or make a donation.



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Original drawing by Mark Danzey of Shepherdstown



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// COMMUNITY

CHRIST REFORMED CONGREGATION CELEBRATES 275 YEARS

By Steve Pearson

THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE GERMAN REFORMED, Lutheran, and Presbyterian churches in the settlement of Mecklenburg (later Shepherdstown) date their origins to 1747, when they were meeting in local houses and long-forgotten buildings around town. By 1782, the three congregations were sharing a small log building perched at the eastern edge of the settlement known as Mecklenburg (later Shepherdstown). Located on land donated to the Reformed church by Henry Cookus, the church would have been prominently visible to all travelers coming south along the wagon road running from Philadelphia into the Shenandoah Valley as they climbed up the hill after crossing the Potomac River at the nearby ford.

By 1795, the Lutherans and Presbyterians had left to occupy their own church buildings in town. The stone bell tower that still stands today was built by the Reformed congregation around 1798 in front of their log church. When the present brick structure was built in 1839, the encroaching graveyard in the rear left no option but to build the new church in what was the front yard of the original building — hence the unusual configuration of the bell tower at the rear of the church.

Life is Sweeter When We Journey Together

The Reformed congregation's records list 29 ministers since 1796. The current pastor, Gayle Bach-Watson, says, "I came to it as a second career" when describing her path to the ministry. After graduating from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC, Bach-Watson was ordained in 2000 and served at several UCC congregations in Maryland



(Left) Many of the headstones in the nearby Reformed graveyard are inscribed in German, and the Reformed congregation would worship in that language into the 19th century. The church's four bells, still rung by hand-pulled ropes, are a mis-matched set purchased used by church member Michael Yeasley and installed in 1800. Church history recalls that the smallest bell was used as a communal wine bowl for the congregation during the installation celebration. (Middle) The church organ has evolved over the years, with the present Allen instrument combining elements of earlier Kimball and Möller organs. (Right) Stained glass windows line both sides of the church.



before coming to the Christ Reformed church in Shepherdstown in 2015.

The members of the local congregation quickly determined Bach-Watson was a good fit and formally called her to be the permanent pastor in 2016. They also moved forward with a decision to update the church's mission statement, defining themselves as an "open and affirming congregation." Bach-Watson recalls the vote as unanimous, and described it in the context of the UCC tradition: "everyone can come to the table and we welcome anyone who seeks a deeper relationship with God, regardless of where they are on life's journey or how they define God."

Bach-Watson recently announced she will be retiring in January and noted that

what she enjoyed most about the job is walking around and meeting people in the community. "It's so important to be able to help bring the community together. We're not meant to be alone — we are healthier in a community."

Christ Reformed United Church of Christ (304 E German St) holds a weekly worship service at 11 every Sunday. The church also welcomes community members to a regular schedule of activities throughout the month — a speaker series on the 1st Tuesday, a book club that meets on the 2nd Tuesday, a game night for kids, families and singles on the 3rd Friday, and movie night on the 4th Friday. Web: ChristReformedShepherdstown.org, FB: CRUCC Shepherdstown.

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// HOLIDAY

STEEPLES WITH HISTORY

Historic Building Tours on December 26



IT'S EASY TO FIND yourself walking by a church in historic Shepherdstown — not quite a church or cemetery on every block, but close to it. If you visit town on December 26 (Monday) between 4 and 7 pm, you'll be able to wander inside too, as many of the churches open their doors to the public during the Historic Houses of Worship Tour. The tour is open to all, self-guided, no charge, and no obligation — just an opportunity to explore the community and meet a few neighbors that have been here for a while.

The churches on the 2022 tour are Christ Reformed United Church of Christ, New Street United Methodist, Shepherdstown Presbyterian, St. Agnes Catholic (main church, plus the chapel), St. Peter's Lutheran, and Trinity Episcopal. The tour will have greeters and docents at each church to welcome visitors with information about the history of the congregations, the buildings, and the interior furnishings. Three other historic buildings will be open as well: the Historic Shepherdstown Museum in the Entler Hotel (129 East German St), the renovated Shepherdstown Opera House (131 West German St), and the War Memorial Building (102 East German St). There will also be refreshments and hospitality for tour visitors at the War Memorial Building.

The tour is sponsored by a partnership of the churches, the Historic Shepherdstown Commission, the Shepherdstown Community Club, the Jefferson County Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Corporation of Shepherdstown. All of the churches are within easy walking distance of each other and will be marked by luminaries. Maps will be available at each location and also online at the Christmas in Shepherdstown Facebook page. 📍



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HOLIDAY LIGHTS >>> PAGE 13

PERSPECTIVE // NATURE



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>>> PAGE 16 <<<



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HOWLING AROUND TOWN WITH COYOTES

By Doug Pifer

Doug Pifer is an artist, naturalist, and writer. He has a Master's Degree in Journalism from Penn State and has been an editor and art educator. His illustrations have appeared in various books and magazines and he has been a contributor to The Observer for several years. He lives with his wife and assorted animals on 5.7 acres in a historic farmhouse near Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

I STEPPED OUTSIDE with one of our dogs at about 8:00 pm earlier this fall and almost immediately heard a piercing wail followed by a wild series of yaps, chatters and yelps. It seemed to come from the field beyond our neighbor's house. The dog never lifted his head from whatever he was sniffing. He's heard coyotes many times before.

Later in the evening when I took the dogs out before bedtime, I heard the chorus again. It was coming from a distance, beyond the woods behind our house. I wondered whether these were the same or different animals.

The dynamics of animal sounds are more fascinating the more we learn about them. For example, scientists have recently learned that some animals we thought were silent, such as turtles and fish, communicate with their own unique sounds. Even the well-studied sounds of birds and coyotes have many secrets to reveal and mysteries to solve. For example, how can two or three coyotes howling at night sound like a dozen or more?

This phenomenon of one animal sounding like many is called the Beau Geste effect, after the novel authored by Percival Christopher Wren. In his story, Wren describes a ghoulish, but pragmatic scene of French Legionnaires propping up their fallen comrades to make the enemy think their army was bigger than it was. The term was first applied to male birds that sing several different songs at different places. Supposedly this gives the impression that the place is occupied by many individuals, thus keeping away competitors.

Here's how coyotes produce the Beau Geste effect. Mated pairs tend to stay together with their young of the previous year. One coyote, generally the male, gives an opening howl, followed by his mate and then their young chime in. Each individual varies the pitch and intensity of their calls. Waves of sound in various pitches and frequencies bounce off rocks and trees and even nearby buildings, and then echo through hollows and valleys. Such reverberations from the howls of a very few animals can lead many folks to claim the country is "overrun" with them.



Illustration courtesy PA Game Commission

Over the past 20 years, coyotes have successfully repopulated in the eastern half of the United States. Their numbers appear to be growing not only in the wooded and agricultural regions but also in cities and suburbs. The howl of the coyote, once iconic to the Old West (or our cinematic perception of that geography), is now heard in New York City, Washington DC, and Atlanta. Coyotes will probably always be controversial. Many people hate them for attacking pets and livestock. Coyotes are very flexible in their diet and even crops of melons and other fruit are subject to their depredations. And while many stories of their harms are exaggerated, coyotes do real damage to livestock, particularly to sheep during lambing season. Combined with their ability to live almost anywhere, this places them in direct competition with us. Their adaptability to a variety of habitats and their tolerance of humans have made coyotes subject to such outdated methods as bounty hunting and poisoning campaigns. Many states allow people to hunt coyotes anytime and anywhere, yet coyotes survive.

My wife and I have no doubt lost some of our poultry to coyotes, and we have watched an adult coyote chase a fawn, stalk wild turkeys, and kill a groundhog in the hayfield behind our place. Coyotes learned to tolerate our presence and go about their business in the open, in plain view of us. I admire them for their success in bringing a touch of the wild back into our lives.

THANKS AND CONGRATULATIONS

John Doyle and Dale Manuel

John Doyle, of Shepherdstown, is finishing his 26th year in the West Virginia House of Delegates, and was West Virginia Deputy Secretary of Revenue from 2014 to 2017. Dale Manuel, of Charles Town, served 16 years in the House of Delegates and 12 years on the Jefferson County Commission. They were the Democratic Party nominees for seats on the County Commission in the recent general election.

WE PROFOUNDLY THANK everybody who voted in Jefferson County on Tuesday, November 8. We include those who voted for either or both of us, and those who voted otherwise. We're sorry we lost, but we accept and respect the outcome.

And we congratulate our victorious opponents, Clare Anne Ath and Jennifer Krouse, who will be serving on the Jefferson County Commission. The voters chose them, and not either of us (or David Tabb, the Mountain Party candidate who was also on the ballot) to address Jefferson County's myriad problems over the next several years. We wish Ms. Ath and Ms. Krouse godspeed in these efforts. The voters, by their choices, have assigned Ms. Ath and Ms. Krouse (along with the other three county commissioners — Tricia Jackson, Steve Stolipher and Jane Tabb) the responsibility of deciding the many questions that will be before the County Commission in the next few years.

We are not going away. Both of us will participate as private citizens in a positive manner as well as we can. One of us (Dale) will need a few weeks to recover from a serious health problem that necessitated a hospital visit a few days before the election. But we'll both be active as citizens whenever we can be.

We particularly urge all citizens to join us at the public hearings on the rewriting of the county's comprehensive plan over the next two years. We think it is of the utmost importance for citizens to join us in attendance and give their two cents worth.

We also wish to thank all the many poll workers who offered their time and effort to make our election function well here in Jefferson County. They are the worker bees of democracy, as responsible as any for our republic being a beacon of freedom for the last 246 years.

Tim Ryan, the defeated Democratic nominee for US Senate in Ohio, began his post-election speech with the words "It is my privilege to concede this election." It is our privilege to concede this election to Ms. Ath and Ms. Krouse. They have been elected to govern our county, and we wish them well in doing so.



The County Commission's plan to take over 100 percent of the responsibility for owning, operating and funding the ambulance services in Jefferson County will require a lot of attention and decisions from the Commissioners in the next few months. See page 16 for an update on the transition planning.

Neighbors Meeting and Tour

MARK YOUR CALENDAR - DEC. 13 At 6:00 PM

ROCKWOOL invites you to participate in a neighbors meeting, including a tour of our facility, Tuesday, December 13 from 6-8:30 pm. We look forward to having our neighbors visit our factory, get an update on operations, and have a dialogue with our local team.

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PERSPECTIVE // LAW

GOOD TREATMENT IN THE COURT

Recovery Is Focus of Treatment Court Program

By Harriet Pearson

IT WAS A FALL DAY in 2020 when Tim [name changed for privacy] was charged with multiple counts of drug possession and distribution. It was not his first encounter with the criminal justice system. The 38-year old Jefferson County resident was 15 when he first started using drugs to treat chronic pain and 18 when he started getting arrested in West Virginia and Maryland.

Facing years in prison, Tim was ready to try a different path. “I was motivated,” he said, when he learned that he could avoid prison by completing a court-supervised treatment program. He applied even though he was unsure whether he met all of the criteria. Fortunately, he was accepted and became one of 11 participants who entered Jefferson County’s Treatment Court program in 2021.

High Cost of Prison for Drug Crimes

West Virginia reports that drug offenders are approximately 25 percent of all new prison admissions in the state (up from 10 percent in 2000). Between 2005 and 2015, the state’s annual cost to house drug offenders increased from \$7.1 to \$22.4 million. Yet studies consistently show that incarceration alone is ineffective to reduce substance abuse and distribution. Imprisonment brings risks of continued access to illegal drugs and other negative influences, compounding the challenges faced by individuals — and their families and loved ones — who are already struggling with substance abuse.

A Different Path to Recovery

In West Virginia, there is an alternative. Treatment Courts are authorized by state law and offered by circuit courts to adults as an alternative to incarceration in situations involving substance abuse (there is a similar program for juveniles). Treatment Court participants agree to an intensive, court-supervised program for at least one year while remaining drug free. Violation of the program’s conditions can result in return to the traditional judicial process (including imprisonment).

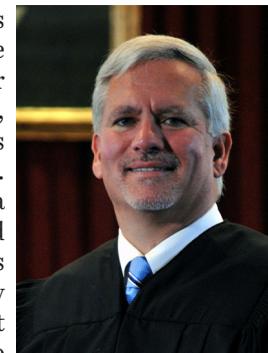
The program has four phases and the initial phase is particularly intense: daily group or individual therapy and coaching sessions, drug testing, and weekly meetings with the supervising judge. As the individual moves through the program, the frequency of testing decreases and more time is spent on career counseling, taking classes, and developing a plan for normal life.

The Treatment Court program was established in the Eastern Panhandle in 2015, covering Jefferson, Berkeley and Morgan counties. In Jefferson County, Judge David Hammer and other court officials volunteer their time to oversee the program and meet weekly with the participants. Probation Officer Crystal Gumbel-Shade manages the caseload, touching base with each participant regularly. Treatment and counseling professionals are part of the effort as well. In 2021, 7 participants graduated from the Eastern Panhandle program and 26 individuals were accepted into the program.

Volunteers Make It Happen

While the Eastern Panhandle Treatment Court

program receives funding from the state court system and other government sources, the program relies heavily on volunteers. This October, a community-based group of volunteers organized a comedy show and silent auction specifically to support the program in Jefferson County. According to Melissa Knott, volunteer treasurer of the community group (and regional manager of City National Bank), a local advisory board will guide how the \$17,000 raised will be used to pay for services that government funding is not able to support.



Judge David Hammer

A Better Future

Tim is just a few months away from graduating from the program. During the program he took various classes at Blue Ridge Technical College and discovered a love of welding. Instead of continuing to receive federal benefits, he is now working for a regional construction company in a union job. He credits the Treatment Court program, and the personal involvement of Judge Hammer, with helping him “turn his life around.”

For information on how to support the Treatment Court program, contact volunteer Melissa Knott (melissa.knott@bankatcity.com). To get help with substance abuse, visit Help4WV.com or call/text 844-435-7498. Additional information about Treatment Court and addiction/substance abuse recovery resources at WeAreTheObserver.com/treatment-court.



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—C.G. Jung
(“Mysterium Coniunctionis” in Collected Works, vol. 14, par. 47)



Cathryn Polonchak, LCSW
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PERSPECTIVE // SCHOOLS

NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Confusion on Sewer Connection Path & Costs

By Steve Pearson

SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE JEFFERSON COUNTY Board of Education were visibly unsatisfied with the lack of detail they were receiving about the water and sewer connections for the new Shepherdstown elementary school site, prompting them to invite Stephanie Reel, General Manager of Jefferson Utilities, and Jacquelyn Milliron, former member of the Charles Town Utility Board, to speak from the audience in what amounted to an impromptu public workshop at the November 28 meeting. That ad hoc discussion raised more questions than it answered and at the end of an occasionally pointed exchange between board members and Joyce White, the Deputy Superintendent of Operations, the Board deferred action to its next meeting (Dec 12, 6 pm, Washington HS auditorium), requesting that White return with additional specific information on the water and sewer project.

Backing Up To The Beginning

Jefferson County Schools submitted a grant application to the West Virginia School Building Authority (SBA) in February 2021. That document projected a construction budget of \$18 million for the Shepherdstown elementary school project plus an additional \$2 million to cover architect fees, engineering fees, surveys, and other expenses. That application also indicates connections to public water and sewer as part of the plan. At the November 14 school board meeting, Superintendent Bondi Shay Gibson-Learn, along with White and project architect Randy Jones, asked the Board to make a choice — the public utility option versus an

on-site well and septic/treatment facility for the project. “Some things have come to light” was how Gibson-Learn introduced the question, suggesting that circumstances had changed regarding the utility connection options.

An Uncertain Path

Gibson-Learn indicated the school system had not anticipated it would need to manage the construction of the water and sewer lines, which also includes the need to obtain easements from private property owners along a one mile stretch of Shepherdstown Pike to connect the new pipes into the existing utility network. Jones, the architect, said that typical practice was that utilities would perform this work for the school and Gibson-Learn emphasized that the school system was surprised when the Corporation of Shepherdstown informed the schools that they would be responsible for constructing the “mainline extension” to serve the school property.

Construction Costs Expected To Increase

At the November 28 school board meeting, White backed away from the argument that the schools had been misled by Shepherdstown and characterized the on-site utility option as a potential cost-saving choice, to offset expected cost increases in the building construction. White did not provide the Board with a timetable for when she expected to receive bids for the building construction, but she did share in response to another question that the construction costs on school projects elsewhere in the state have been running 25 percent higher than the initial planning budgets due to inflation and cost increases. That would amount



The site of the new Shepherdstown Elementary School is approximately 1 mile south of downtown Shepherdstown along Shepherdstown Pike (Route 230). The school property is outlined in red in the image of an early site plan (the building concept has been updated significantly since this 2019 drawing). The Covenant Church borders the property to the north (upper right) and the “5 way” intersection of Shepherdstown Pike, Flowing Springs Road, Trough Road and Gardners Lane is just to the south.

potentially to an additional \$4.5 million for the Shepherdstown project.

According to public records, the SBA has been making supplemental grants for other WV school projects facing cost increases, but also requiring those projects to be scaled back to the SBA’s minimum specifications. To date, Jefferson County Schools does not appear to have shared any information with the SBA or the LSIC (community members involved with reviewing the project) to indicate that they might be considering modifications to the building design due to budget concerns.

Follow this story at [WeAreTheObserver.com/school-construction](https://www.wvobserver.com/school-construction).



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CHAMBER MUSIC RETURNS FOR WINTER SERIES



2022 summer concert at the Barns of Rose Hill (Berryville VA); photo credit Brian Christopher.

THE APPALACHIAN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL (ACMF) will present a series of three concerts to ring in the new year on December 29, 30, and 31. After two successful summer festivals in and around Jefferson County, ACMF is eager to warm up audiences with some holiday cheer. ACMF brings a youthful energy and an inventive spirit to classical music, inviting patrons to join them in non-traditional venues for energetic and accessible programs. A typical ACMF concert will feature orchestral string instruments performing in different configurations (solos, duos, trios, quartets) and a wide variety of genres.

DEC 29 (THU), 7 PM — FESTIVE CHEER

This performance will feature a selection of jolly and uplifting music to celebrate the yuletide

season. There's something for everyone in this one-hour, family-friendly concert. Selections include original arrangements of some holiday classics by ACMF artist Sinead Frost, Corelli's Christmas Concerto, and "Winter" from Vivaldi's Four Seasons. The concert will take place in the Zion Episcopal Church (301 East Congress St, Charles Town).

DEC 30 (FRI), 7 PM — WORKS TO WARM US

Enjoy a concert that will warm the body and soul with some foot-tapping favorites and poignant moments of reflection. Enjoy beloved works such as "Winter" from Vivaldi's Four Seasons paired with Piazzolla's tango-inspired "Winter" from the Southern Hemisphere. Come on a journey from darkness into light with Golijov's "Tenebrae" (an audience favorite from the

festival's 2021 summer season). The concert will also feature music by Danish String Quartet, from their "Wood Works" and "Last Leaf" collections. Expect a few nostalgic holiday tunes thrown in, too. The concert will be held at Camp Hill-Wesley United Methodist Church (601 Washington St, Harpers Ferry).

DEC 31 (SAT) 2 PM — FIRE AND ICE

The theme of this concert is inspired by Janos Starker, a legendary cellist of the 20th century who was born in Hungary, narrowly avoided being sent to a concentration camp during WWII, and ultimately established himself in America. Katie Tertell, artistic director of the music festival, counts herself fortunate to have studied under his direction during her time at Indiana University. With the tremendous amount of turmoil in the world at this moment in time, Tertell felt drawn to visit works reflecting the history of eastern Europe in the face of another refugee crisis and displacement of Ukrainians from their homes due to war. The program for "Fire and Ice" is inspired by Slavic and Eastern European music that would have been in the air for Starker and his contemporaries. The featured music is very characterful, representing cold barren textures of winter in Peteris Vasks' "The Book," contrasted with fiery folk-slavic rhythms in works like the Smetana and Martinu. In keeping with the theme, the venue for this concert will be the War Memorial Building (102 East German St, Shepherdstown).

For tickets, visit AppalachianChamber.org

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EXPLORE // HOLIDAY LIGHTS

CHARLES TOWN & RANSON CHRISTMAS LIGHT TOUR



The Charles Town & Ranson Lights Tour will run through Dec 29. This year's tour is organized in 5 routes, with residents competing for prizes for "people's choice," "best Griswold (lots of lights)," "best theme (lights and music)" and other categories. Hours, maps and downloadable app on Facebook (Charles Town & Ranson Lights).

HARPERS FERRY & BOLIVAR HOLIDAY LIGHT TOUR

The light tour in Harpers Ferry and Bolivar is a self-guided route through the streets of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, with participating houses decorated in Victorian-era decor. The official tour and voting for people's favorite will take place on the same weekends as Olde Tyme Christmas (Dec 3 & 4, 10 & 11) between 6 and 8 pm. Info and map at ExperienceHarpersFerry.com.



CITY PARK LIGHT SHOW – HAGERSTOWN, MD

City Park in Hagerstown will be lit through Jan 1. Visitors can drive through the park and listen to a music show broadcast on 90.3 FM between 5 and 11 pm nightly. Info: HagerstownMD.org/CPL.

COLOR ON THE CREEK – FREDERICK, MD



Carroll Creek Park hosts 30 boats decorated by local businesses and individuals in a competition fundraiser for charity – visitors are encouraged to vote for their favorite via a donation (see website). Self-guided walking tour, through Feb 2023. Info: ColorOnTheCreek.com.

BULL RUN FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS – CENTREVILLE, VA

A 2.5 mile driving tour through Bull Run Regional Park with thousands of lights and displays. Through Jan 8. Mon-Thu 5:30-9:30 pm, Fri-Sat-Sun & Holidays (Dec 24, 25, 31) 5:30-10 pm. Bull Run Regional Park, 7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville, VA. Tickets (timed entry) are \$30 (per passenger vehicle) + processing fee (online); \$40 (on site). Info: BullRunFestivalOfLights.com.



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December 10 & 11, 2022

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Bolivar Community Center (60 Panama St.)
The Barns (W. Washington St.)

MORE EVENTS
>>> PAGES 14 & 15 <<<



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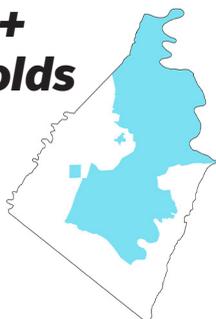
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EXPLORE // EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

DEC 9 (FRI) – JD BROWN – Country & rock music + ugly Christmas sweater contest at the Barn of Harpers Ferry · 8 - 10 pm · 1026 West Washington St, Harpers Ferry · \$10/person · FB: Barn of Harpers Ferry

DEC 10 (SAT) – BREAKFAST WITH SANTA – Organized by Shepherdstown Centennial Lions Club · 8 - 11 am · Blue Moon Cafe, 200 East High St, Shepherdstown · FB: Shepherdstown Centennial Lions Club

DEC 10 (SAT) – TUBA CHRISTMAS – Your favorite carols, performed by an all-tuba and euphonium orchestra · Performance at 1 pm · McMurrin Lawn, downtown Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: Christmas in Shepherdstown



DEC 10 (SAT) – HOLIDAY TEA – Organized by Shepherdstown Community Club · Noon - 3 pm · War Memorial Building, 102 East German St, Shepherdstown · \$15 · FB: Shepherdstown Community Club

DEC 10 & 11 (SAT & SUN) – OLD TYME CHRISTMAS – In Bolivar & Harpers Ferry, a celebration of traditions old & new · See website for schedule & locations · Web: ExperienceHarpersFerry.com

DEC 10 (SAT) – HISTORIC HOMES & INNS TOUR – Visit five historic homes and inns in Harpers Ferry all decked out for the holidays · 10 am - 4 pm · Parking & ticket purchase at First Zion Baptist Church, 1030 West Ridge Street, Harpers Ferry · \$20 · Web: HistoricHarpersFerry.org

DEC 10 (SAT) – HARPERS FERRY - BOLIVAR CHRISTMAS PARADE – Organized by Friendship Fire Company · 4 pm · Washington St (street closures) · FREE

DEC 10 (SAT) – BOLIVAR COMMUNITY TREE LIGHTING – 6 pm · Bolivar Children's Park, 1387 West Washington St, Bolivar · FREE

DEC 10 (SAT) – CEMETERY LANTERN WALK – Guided tour with historical narration of Cedar Hill and Pine Grove cemeteries in Harpers Ferry · 6 - 7:30 pm · Parking at 230 Old Furnace Rd, Harpers Ferry · \$15 (advance purchase only at website) · Web: HistoricHarpersFerry.org

DEC 10 & 11 (SAT & SUN) – CLAYMONT MANSION OPEN HOUSE – Tours of one of the grand Washington family homes · Noon - 3 pm · 577 Claymont Mansion Rd, Charles Town · \$5 suggested donation/adult to help with restoration projects · Email: ClaymontOffice@Claymont.org

DEC 10 & 11 (SAT & SUN) – HISTORIC SHEPHERDSTOWN MUSEUM – New exhibits & Victorian Christmas decorations · 1 - 3 pm (also Dec 17 & 18) · 129 East German St, Shepherdstown · Donation suggested · More info at Web: HistoricShepherdstown.org



DEC 11 (SUN) – HOLIDAY BINGO BASH – Eastern Panhandle Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority fundraiser for scholarship and local service projects · 2 pm (doors open at noon) · Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Company, 8052 Martinsburg Pike, Shepherdstown · \$20 (advance), \$25 (at door) · Questions/tickets: email EPACDSTinfo@gmail.com



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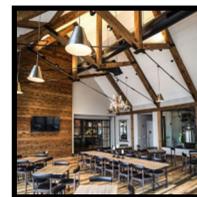


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EXPLORE // EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

DEC 13 (TUE) – STORYTELLER STINA FAGERTON – Hosted by Speak Storytelling · 7:30 pm · ONLINE · \$15 · Stina Fagertun, of Tromsø, Norway, has collected ancient, unique fairy tales from the three cultures that are part of her heritage: Sámi, Kven, and Arctic Norwegian. Fagertun is the winner of the 2003 Northern Norway Cultural Award and won best storyteller at the 2011 International Storyteller Festival in Oslo · Web: SpeakStorySeries.com

Stina Fagerton



DEC 16 (FRI) – GAME & MUSIC NIGHT – Hosted by Christ Reformed UCC · Board games, card games and classic games for kids, families & singles · 7 - 8:30 pm · Shepherdstown 304 East German St, Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: CRUCCShepherdstown

DEC 16 (FRI) – WAYNE SNOW – Music + ugly Christmas sweater contest at White Horse Tavern · 6 - 9 pm · 4328 William Wilson Fwy, Harpers Ferry · FB: White Horse Tavern

DEC 23 (FRI) – BOB KEEL & ERIC AVEY – Holiday Performance · 8 pm · Mecklenburg Inn, 128 East German St, Shepherdstown · Check FB page for cover charge · FB: Mecklenburg Inn

DEC 26 (MON) – HISTORIC HOUSES OF WORSHIP TOUR – The churches of Shepherdstown open their doors for tours & hospitality to all · 4 - 7 pm · Shepherdstown · FB: Christmas in Shepherdstown >> See article page 7

DEC 31 (SAT) – BLUEGRASS NEW YEAR – At the Barn of Harpers Ferry · 9 pm - 1:30 am (doors open at 7 pm) · 1026 West Washington St, Harpers Ferry · \$40/person · FB: Barn of Harpers Ferry

HOLIDAY MARKETS



HARPERS FERRY HOLIDAY HANDMADE MARKET – DEC 10 & 11 (SAT & SUN) · 90 vendors at 3 locations (shuttle transportation available) · Sat 9-5, Sun 9-4 · Clarion Inn Hotel, Bolivar Community Center, Barn of Harpers Ferry · FREE · FB: Harpers Ferry Holiday Handmade Market >> See ad page 13

HO HO HO-LIDAY HANDMADE MARKET – DEC 10 & 11; DEC 16, 17 & 18 · See FB page for hours · War Memorial Building, 102 East German St, Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: Shepherdstown Community Club

SHEPHERDSTOWN HOLIDAY MARKETPLACE – Weekends between Thanksgiving & Christmas · see FB page for hours · Historic Shepherdstown Museum, 129 East German St, Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: Shepherdstown Holiday Marketplace



Winston Woodcrafts, Jim Winston

SHEPHERDSTOWN FARMERS MARKET – Every Sunday Morning (until Dec 18), 9 am - 1 pm · Winter schedule is 11 am - 1 pm on Jan 8 & 22, Feb 5 & 19, Mar 5 & 19 · Behind the Market House, 101 East German St, Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: Shepherdstown Farmers Market

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ENGAGE // AMBULANCE UPDATE

AMBULANCE CHANGES PUSH AHEAD

First Steps Complete, Tougher Tasks Remain

THE JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION voted to hire Fitch & Associates in May of 2021 to analyze the County's EMS (emergency medical services) system. When the consultant's report was finally presented in public at a February 2022 meeting, the reaction outside of the Commission ranged from dismay to anger, particularly among the many volunteers who expressed concern that they had not been invited to share their local experience and expertise. After several months of meetings and discussions, the Commission shifted gears and asked the staff at the county's Emergency Services Agency (ESA) to present alternatives. Those proposals, presented in July of 2022, backed away from the consultant's framework and recommended an increase in the full-time paid-staffing for EMS.

A July 2022 vote by the County Commission authorized the purchase of 10 ambulances and related equipment, funded by \$2.5 million allocated from federal money received by the County as part of the pandemic-related American Rescue Recovery Act (ARPA). The Commission also voted to reorganize the ESA as a county-run department to manage all ambulance staffing and EMS operations (shifting from the current hybrid of county-paid staff operating volunteer-owned ambulances). The County completed the purchases from the volunteer companies by August 2022w, acquiring 9 previously-owned vehicles and 1 new vehicle already scheduled for delivery. The target date for the County department to begin operating the ambulances is March 2023. Until the transition is completed, the County is leasing the ambulances back to the respective volunteer companies and the county-wide EMS services are being provided under the existing paid/volunteer structure.

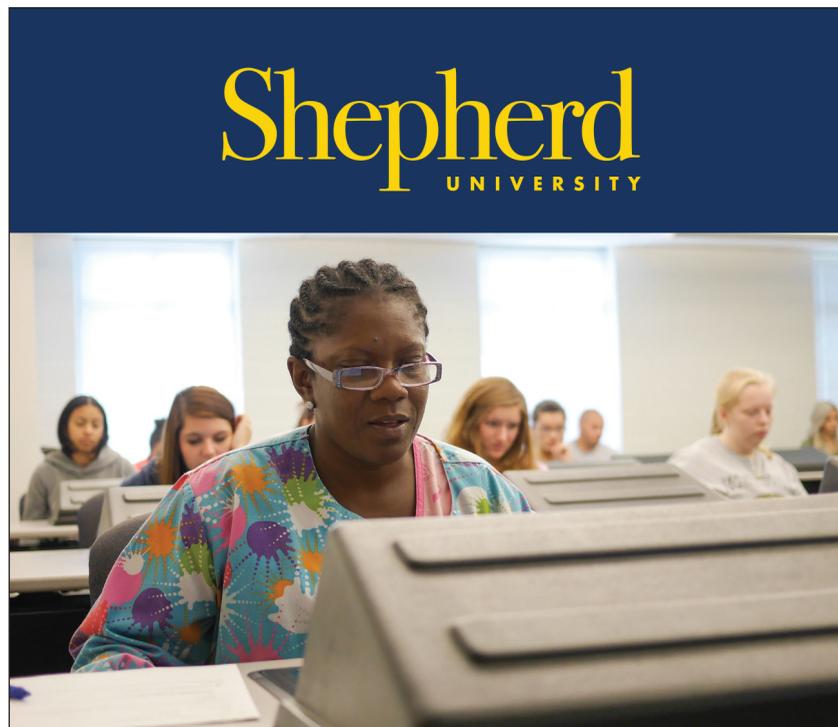
Bob Burner, Director of the ESA, provided an update to the Commissioners at their recent December 3 meeting, noting that several tasks of the transition had been completed, most notably the state licensing required for the county department to transport patients. Burner noted that establishing billing arrangements with multiple state and federal reimbursement programs, along with insurance company agreements, is complicated and will be a much more time-consuming process for his staff.

Technology and equipment investments were the big-ticket items discussed at the meeting. The Commission approved \$209,000 for the county's IT department to upgrade its systems that support the ambulance services and \$35,800 for an inventory management system to track drugs and medical supplies — described as a necessity not only to ensure the paramedics have the material they need to treat patients, but a requirement of federal law to maintain control over the narcotics and other drugs stocked in each ambulance.

Burner also reported on other key issues he highlighted as concerns, particularly the expense of equipment maintenance and the difficulty in recruiting paramedics. The Commission will receive another update in January. Additional coverage at WeAreTheObserver.com/ems-transition.

LT11	ONDT	1.3Y	
A1	ONDT	21.1H	1
A12	ONDT	6.8d	1
A2	ONDT	1.5H	2
A21	ONDT	49.5m	2
A3	ONDT	2.1H	3
A31	ONDT	3.3H	3
A4	ONDT	46.1m	4
A41	OOSRV	1.1d	4
A42	ONDT	6.6H	4

The ambulance dispatch system is being updated to a more industry-standard (and simpler) model as part of the transition.



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