

# The WV INDEPENDENT Observer

JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

NOVEMBER 2024

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# 2024 General Election Guide



JEFFERSON COUNTY VISION



A VOTE for these candidates on Nov. 5th is a VOTE for transparency, the environment, and smart growth!



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## United States Senate

**Glenn Elliott**- A West Virginia native and former mayor of Wheeling, Glenn knows what West Virginians need. As a senator, he will fight for work force development, a fairer tax structure, and expanded access to health care



## U.S. Representative 2nd District

**Steven Wendelin**- As a veteran, Steven has traveled the world and seen what works and what doesn't. As a U.S. Representative, he pledges to bring jobs to WV, address the effects of climate change, and end corporate welfare.



## Governor

**Steve Williams**- During his tenure as Mayor, Steve revitalized Huntington using grants and corporate investments. As Governor, he wants to leverage his experience to revitalize WV, ensuring that our children can thrive here for generations.



## Attorney General

**Teresa Toriseva**- Born and educated in WV, Teresa is well versed in the concerns of West Virginians. As AG, Teresa will increase consumer protections and ensure that industrial interests enrich all West Virginians, not just the wealthy.



## West Virginia Senate

**John Doyle (16th District)**- A retired Army lieutenant, John represented Jefferson County as a Delegate for over 25 years. He has a strong track record of standing up for West Virginian workers and families as well as protecting the environment.



## WV House of Delegates

**Lucia Valentine (97th District)**- A graduate of Jefferson High School and Shepherd University, Lucia is passionate about creating opportunities for young West Virginians. She is committed to passing legislation that provides opportunities while protecting the environment.



## WV House of Delegates

**Troy N. Miller (98th District)**- Originally from Wheeling and now a candidate for a Masters Degree in Appalachian Studies, Troy knows the value of West Virginia. As a Delegate, he will focus on good paying jobs, a safe environment, and access to quality education.



## WV House of Delegates

**Osmund Anderson (99th District)**- A retired Army veteran with 22 years of service, Osmund would now like serve Jefferson County and WV. He believes that long term prosperity in WV depends upon balancing growth with environmental sustainability.



## WV House of Delegates

**Maria Russo (100th District)**- Maria has worked for the WV Environmental Council and the WV Rivers Coalition on the passage and implementation of the PFAS Protection Act. She understands that WV can grow without sacrificing the environment.



## Jefferson County Commission

**Natalie Grantham Friend (Middleway District)**- A lifelong Jefferson resident and manager of her family's farm, Natalie is committed to restoring civility, preserving the County's natural beauty, and promoting essential infrastructure improvements.



## Jefferson County Commission

**David Tabb (Charles Town District)**- A lifelong resident and farmer in Jefferson County, David is well known for speaking up at government meetings. As Commissioner, he would like to return all significant decision making to County residents, not just during elections.



## Jefferson County Commission

**James Walch (Charles Town District)**- Raised in Jefferson County and a previous small business owner, James has seen the explosive growth of the County. As Commissioner, he would focus on a balance between land use and growth, including the integration of outdoor recreational spaces.



## Jefferson County Commission

**Lanae Johnson (Harpers Ferry District)**- A retired Lt. Col. in the military, Lanae has worked with many organizations and local, state and federal governments. As commissioner, she will focus on reforming recent Commission practices that have limited community involvement.



## Jefferson County Commission

**Carrie Blessing (Shepherdstown District)**- A lifelong County resident and small business owner, Carrie has seen the challenges that face the County. As Commissioner, she will focus on communicating with all stakeholders and promoting development opportunities that align with the Comprehensive Plan.

This 2024 Voter Guide is a joint effort between JCV and EPGC, 501(c)4 organizations dedicated to preserving the quality of life in Jefferson County. The guide is the result of an endorsement process that included extensive background research based on voting records, writings, anecdotal experiences, conversations and detailed candidate questionnaire responses. Find out more about our organizations at <https://jeffersoncountyvision.com> and the Eastern Panhandle Green Coalition group on Facebook.



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131 West German Street

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Printed by FNP Printing,

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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED.



The City of Charles Town recently resurfaced the basketball court at Evitts Run Park.

**TO OUR READERS** — There are many reasons to vote in the upcoming election. There are also many candidates to choose from. The horse-race news coverage of the national races seems to be everywhere online, but closer to home we're experiencing a more personal touch from most of the campaigns. I've been to a lot of small events and candidate forums for the County Commission and State Delegate candidates. With a few exceptions, most of these candidates seem to be running on issues that are very local, like funding park facilities, local infrastructure, and preserving the character of Jefferson County.

The 4 County Commission candidates who win election will be diving in quickly to some complex issues.

The Commission has already scheduled a public hearing and a vote on updating the impact fee ordinances immediately after the election, when 3 of the 4 newly elected commissioners will be participating. Looking into January, all 4 of the new commissioners will be voting on the 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

Updates to the county zoning ordinance will also be on the agenda in 2025.

Almost a year ago, the County Commission asked the Planning Commission to recommend edits to section 8.20 of the zoning ordinance that governs industrial solar projects. To date, the Planning Commission has not taken any action on that request other than to refer it to the planning staff. On top of that high profile issue, the 2045 Comprehensive Plan calls for a review of the entire zoning ordinance, to align it with the updated land use classifications proposed in the Comprehensive Plan.

A lot to think about as you cast your ballot.



Steve Pearson  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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// PLANNING

# DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SET FOR REVIEW

## County Commision Public Hearing To Be Held On December 4

By Steve Pearson

THE JEFFERSON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION formally delivered the draft of the “2045 Comprehensive Plan” to the County Commission on October 17. This started a 90 day window for the County Commission to schedule a vote to adopt, amend, or reject the comprehensive plan and the accompanying future land use guide.

The County Commission’s first order of business after receiving the draft was to schedule a public hearing, which will take place at Jefferson High School (4141 Flowing Springs Rd, Shenandoah Junction) on Wednesday, December 4. The formal public hearing (where the commissioners listen to comments, but do not respond) will begin at 6:00 pm in the auditorium; there will be an “open house” session from 5:00 to 6:00 outside of the auditorium that will allow commissioners and planning department staff to engage in discussion with residents. The final vote is expected to be scheduled in January.

Copies of the draft plan and land use guide are posted on the county website (visit [ObserverWV.com/jefferson-comp-plan-2024](http://ObserverWV.com/jefferson-comp-plan-2024) or scan the QR code for links to the Comprehensive Plan summary page on the county website). The deadline to email comments to [Complan2045@JeffersonCountyWV.org](mailto:Complan2045@JeffersonCountyWV.org) is December 11.



### What’s Next: Questions About Zoning

Once the comprehensive plan and future land use maps are approved by the County Commission, the next step in the planning process is to update the county zoning ordinance to align it with the land use classifications in the Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 1.4, which calls for the County to “Research and review prospective additional land uses in all zoning districts” continues to be the focus of questions from the public and at least one county commissioner.

During the October 17 presentation, Mike Shepp, President of the Planning Commission and Luke Seigfried, County Planner, indicated that Objective 1.4 should be interpreted as a guide to the process, and not in and of itself a justification, for defining additional land uses in the zoning ordinance. More specifically, Objective 1.4 calls for any proposed new land use to be researched and reviewed by staff, taking into consideration best practices identified for that specific use and community input related to its local impact.

After the October 17 meeting, Dr. Christine Wimer, president of Jefferson County Foundation, provided a summary of her organization’s analysis: “Our concern with Objective 1.4 is that it may be used to undermine zoning. This objective contemplates additional land uses of all types, in all zones, and does not indicate what the criteria of the “research and review” should be for a land use to be added to one or all zones. There is also no standard for public engagement that is defined as part of this objective. If any and all uses can be added to any zoning district, why have zones? If land owners cannot rely on the zones limiting development to appropriate uses, then the whole purpose of zoning is undermined.”

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// GOVERNMENT

# COUNTY COMMISSION LOOKS AT IMPACT FEES

## Plan Calls For Updated Fees To Take Effect On January 1, 2025

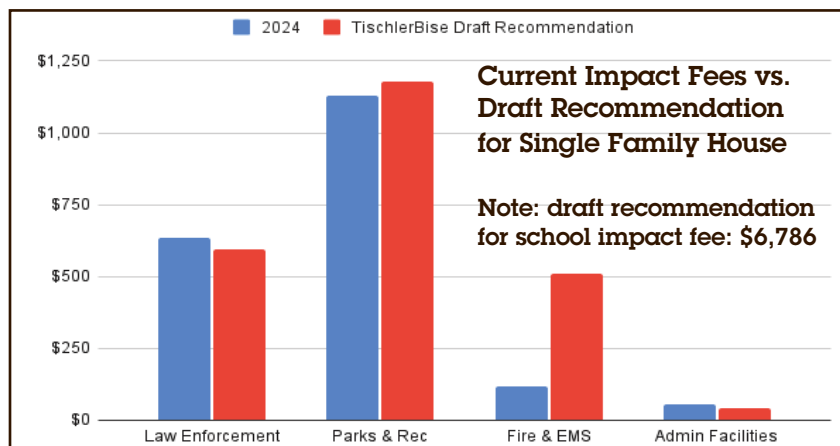
By Steve Pearson

JEFFERSON COUNTY HAS BEEN COLLECTING IMPACT FEES on new construction projects since 2004. The initial fee schedule was based on a 2003 report prepared by TischlerBise, a Maryland-based consulting firm that specializes in fiscal and economic planning for local governments. The county had TischlerBise update its recommendations again in a 2015 report. At that time, the County Commission updated the fees to only 70% of what was recommended by TischlerBise, according to notes in the annual reports produced by the County's Office of Impact Fees.

The Commission recently hired TischlerBise to produce a new report, which is due on November 13. The Commission has scheduled a public hearing on the report for Tuesday, November 19 at 6:00 pm in the Charles Town Library basement meeting room.

Impact fees are authorized by West Virginia law. The fees collected are restricted to specific uses, to cover the costs of infrastructure expansion specifically related to increased demand from growth. Buildings and equipment can be paid for with impact fees, but staffing, operations, and maintenance cannot. For building and equipment, the eligible expense is limited to the portion needed to serve new growth — just replacing old buildings or equipment is not covered by impact fees.

The expenses covered by impact fees must be proportionate to the new demand — the county can't charge commercial development for school

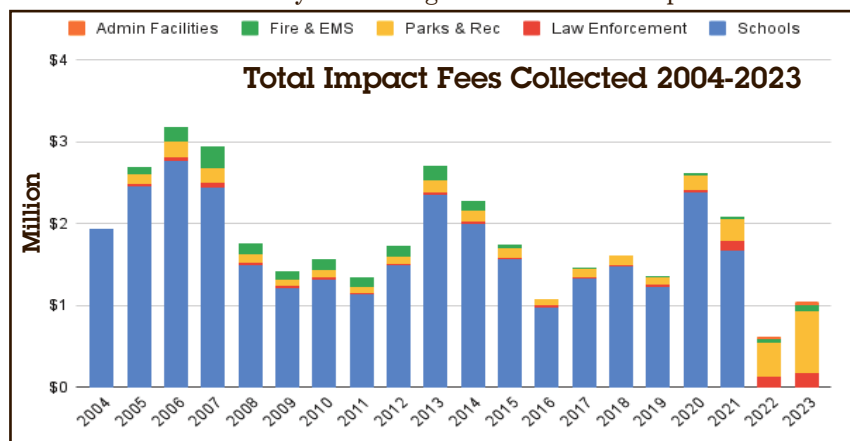


buildings for example. Likewise, if the county develops a new park that is used by the entire community, the cost has to be allocated across the entire population so that impact fees will cover only the new-growth share of the expense, not the entire amount.

In September 2021, the County Commission voted to reduce the school impact fee to \$1 for all residential categories. Prior to that vote, the school impact fee was \$6,344 for single family houses, \$7,146 for duplexes and townhouse units, and \$4,432 for apartment units. The overall reduction in impact fee collections is visible in the graph of 2004-2023 fee collections.

The impact fee ordinance includes an inflation adjustment recommendation, based on specific price indices published by the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis. The inflation factors used to calculate the 2023 impact fees were 3% for schools, 6% for parks and public safety, and 7% for administrative facilities. The inflation factors used to calculate the 2024 fees were 16% for schools, 12% for parks, 13% for public safety, and 20% for administrative facilities. Since the school impact fees were set to \$1, the inflation calculation yielded no increase for 2023 or 2024.

According to the County's impact fee annual reports, the inflation number is an after-the-fact calculation. For example, the 2024 factors, applied in April of this year, use numbers based on 2022 inflation. Since it's a lagging number, it's likely that the inflation trends will continue to suggest increases in the impact fees for the next few years. However, it will be up to the Commission to vote each year on whether to follow through on the recommended adjustments.



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Attorneys: Stephen Skinner, Andrew Skinner, & Bryan Ogilvie | Stephen Skinner is responsible for the content of this ad.



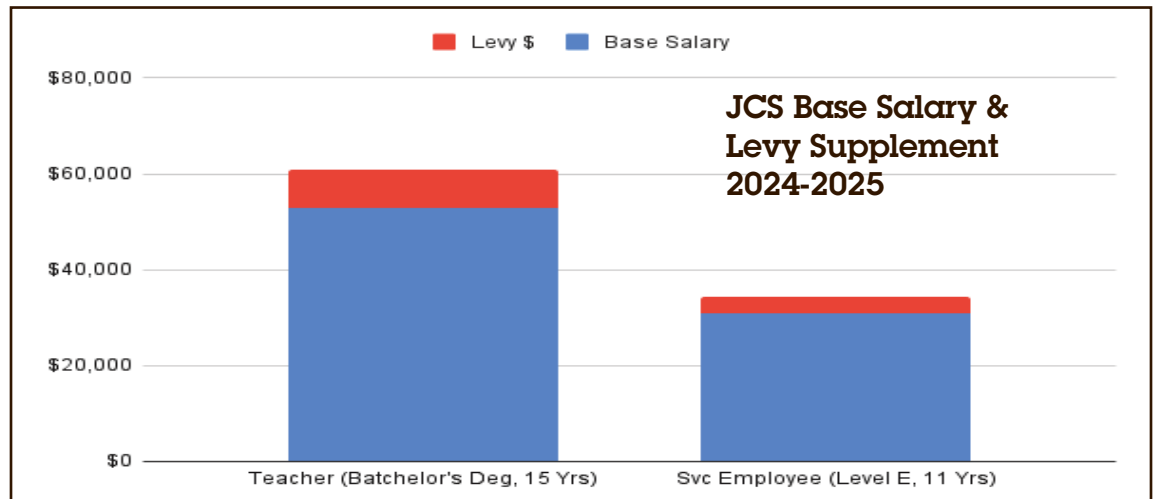
// ELECTIONS

# MANY BALLOT CHOICES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

## School Levy & County Commision Votes Will Have Local Impact

THE LEVY ON THE JEFFERSON COUNTY general election ballot this year would provide a minimum of \$25.4 million dollars each year for five years starting in July 2026 to fund specific programs and personnel positions in the Jefferson County Schools (JCS), including librarians, nurses, art teachers, music teachers, custodians, instructional assistants, coaches and extracurricular advisors. The levy also designates \$40,000 each year to help fund 4-H programs, \$90,000 to help fund the local public libraries, and a \$40,000 contribution each year to help maintain playgrounds at the schools and county parks. The specialty programs, extracurriculars, and community programs are available to all students in Jefferson County, including home-school and charter school students.

This levy offers the only option for the school system to address the significant salary gap with surrounding counties. According to JCS, the average teacher (Bachelor's degree, 15 years of experience) received over \$8,000 per year in additional compensation from the levy funding and the average service employee (Level E with 11 years of experience) receives over \$5,000 per year from the levy.



### 9 Candidates To Fill 4 Commission Seats

For the County Commission, there are 4 open seats on the ballot this year. All county voters get to select 1 candidate for each of the 4 seats. The winners of the Charles Town, Shepherdstown, and Harpers Ferry seats will take office as soon as the election is certified (about a week after election day). The winner of the Middleway seat will take office on January 1, 2025. The candidates seated in November will be voting

on the the impact fee updates (see page 5) and all of the new candidates will be in office for the anticipated January vote on the Jefferson County 2045 Comprehensive Plan (see page 4).

The Observer asked the Commission candidates to provide brief answers to some questions — their responses are presented on the following pages. Any additional responses that we were unable to fit can be found online at [ObserverWV.com/elections-2024](http://ObserverWV.com/elections-2024). 🗳️

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Voting is your opportunity to voice your opinions and influence the nation. Always remember to educate yourself on the issues and candidates on the ballot.

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// ELECTIONS

# COUNTY COMMISSION - MIDDLEWAY

Mike Mood

Natalie Grantham Friend



**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
I believe that I possess the abilities to work with others not always of the same mindset for the common good of the county and to with an open mind do what is best for the residents of the county as a whole.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

As one who has built a business from the ground up and taken another from failing when I purchased to a thriving business today I have the ability to manage budgets and hire the right people for the job and do so in a responsible manner. I have the ability to work with others in a positive manner which is best for the citizens of this county.

**What specific experience and expertise do you have that is relevant to performing the role of County Commissioner?**

As a business owner and Fire Chief I am tasked with creating policies for the operation of business as well as public safety organizations. This includes budgeting, planning, implementation as well as HR duties to make an organization successful and I have a proven successful track record of doing so and can bring this to the County Commission.

**At the end of your term, what is the one thing that you would hope people remember most about your service on the Commission?**

I want people to remember me as one who truly worked for the citizens of this county as a whole and the successes that I have helped bring to Jefferson County and its residents.

*More at ObserverWV.com/elections-2024*

**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
I am confident in my ability to make a positive impact. My motivation stems from a commitment to enhance organization and efficiency within the JCC. We must prioritize the real and significant issues facing our county.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

I am the type of person who speaks up for the little guy. I am very concerned about fairness and representation, especially when it comes to how the county commission handles resident voices.

**What specific experience and expertise do you have that is relevant to performing the role of County Commissioner?**

I am committed to listening with the goal of truly understanding others, and I have the skills to guide strong personalities toward a shared objective. My experience in managing diverse voices within the community has equipped me for this, and it's something I'm passionate about. I envision a community where collaboration leads to progress, benefiting everyone, not just a select few.

**At the end of your term, what is the one thing that you would hope people remember most about your service on the Commission?**

I listened to the residents of my community and served as a true public servant by helping improve our quality of life.

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// ELECTIONS

# COUNTY COMMISSION - HARPERS FERRY

Lanae Johnson

Pasha Majdi



**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
 I decided to run for County Commissioner after witnessing the internal struggles within the current commission. Initially, I joked about running if a vacancy arose, but when I was approached by the Jefferson County Democratic Executive Committee to seriously consider it, I knew it was time to act. I learned the appeals court had dismissed two members of the commission. With no clear candidates stepping up, I filed my candidacy. I decided to continue the process, thinking, "Why not?" I went through the interview process, and in the end, I was selected to serve. It felt like the right moment to step up and contribute.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

Jefferson County residents should trust me with governing the county because I have always been a strong and dedicated advocate for our community. I believe in working together toward a brighter future, one that reflects the values and needs of our diverse population. My track record in activism, leadership, and advocacy speaks to my commitment to represent the voices of all residents. By focusing on vision, inclusion, and collaboration, I am determined to bring about real, tangible results. Together, we can build a stronger, more dynamic economy that benefits everyone in Jefferson County. You can count on me to listen, lead, and work for positive change.

**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
 I want to keep our natural beauty and high quality-of-life in Jefferson County. My wife and I have three young children, and we want the next generation to be able to enjoy hiking, hunting, and fishing in Almost Heaven, West Virginia. Right now, unfortunately, we're not headed in the right direction. We're seeing residential development and industrial solar at a scale and speed that is just too much for our county. Instead of massive housing developments and industrial solar, we need to shift toward the tourism industry. Tourism will bring commercial development that will help us grow our tax base to pay for emergency services. We need ambulances, we need firefighters, and we need the police. But we have to pay for these critical services. I don't support raising taxes, so the only other way to fund our services is through commercial growth. Tourism provides a path forward for us to balance the budget and keep Jefferson County beautiful - without raising taxes.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

I'm not a professional politician. I have a successful, full-time career as an executive for a large non-profit dedicated to conservation. I'm volunteering to serve as Commissioner because I'm a conservationist and I want to see Jefferson County maintain its natural beauty. I have held other elected positions on a part-time, volunteer basis because I believe in public service, and I believe local government has the biggest impact on quality-of-life.

More at [ObserverWV.com/elections-2024](http://ObserverWV.com/elections-2024)

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## COUNTY COMMISSION - SHEPHERDSTOWN

Cara Keys

Carrie Blessing



**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
The past few years our county has been so consumed with fighting we have failed to solve serious problems impacting our county. Our county needs more than ever people who are willing and able to have constructive conversations on our county issues with the knowledge needed for the job. I feel I am the right person who will be able to lead critical changes in our county government to head in a better direction.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

As a newcomer to local politics, I believe I can help our county government move past the strife of the past year and begin tackling the critical issues before our community. Before beginning this campaign, I have helped Jefferson for many years as a volunteer and local civic nonprofit leader. I feel this experience, connection to our community, and the time I have spent listening to residents on all sides of the aisle has allowed me to get a clear picture of the problems we face, where things went wrong, and what can be done to get us back on track. Many of our most critical county issues have a clear consensus from the people of Jefferson County on what they want and deserve. That consensus is that the County needs to curb solar development, address severe EMS/Fire coverage issues, and bring transparency into the way the Commission does business. I have a good track record with people who have volunteered and worked with me. I would like to bring the same good will with strong ethics into our county commission.

*More at ObserverWV.com/elections-2024*



**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
We're at a pivotal moment in Jefferson County. Outside interests are pushing development that would permanently alter our rural landscape and quality of life. I'm running to ensure responsible development that respects our community and environment. I've served my community as a member of the Shepherdstown Tree Commission, advocacy work through Town Council meetings, my church, the Shepherdstown Community Club, Morgan's Grove Park, and Jefferson County Community Ministries. My education equips me to understand the complexities of smart growth and responsible development. I'm deeply invested in preserving what makes Jefferson County special. Our future should be shaped by residents, not by those who seek to exploit our resources.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

My lifelong commitment to Jefferson County is reflected in my civic service. I believe in listening to experts, engaging the community, and doing the homework required to make informed decisions. I will work to improve accountability and transparency at the county level. Governing is about collaboration, and I'm dedicated to working with others to preserve our county's values. I have no agenda other than ensuring that decisions benefit all residents, not outside developers.

*More at ObserverWV.com/elections-2024*

**John** ■■■  
**DOYLE**  
**State Senate**



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- Reproductive Freedom
- Affordable Child Care
- Your "Right to Repair"

John Doyle served for 26 years in the West Virginia House of Delegates. He sponsored the bill that created the West Virginia community college system and was the House sponsor of the bill that created the Farmland Protection Program. John led the fight to get Jefferson County a fair share of revenue from the casino, and worked with the State Board of Education to require a class in Civics for graduation from High School.

John is a graduate of Shepherd University, having majored in Political Science and minored in History. He is a US Army veteran of Vietnam, and was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor and the combat Infantry Badge.

[doyleforeasternpanhandle.org](http://doyleforeasternpanhandle.org)

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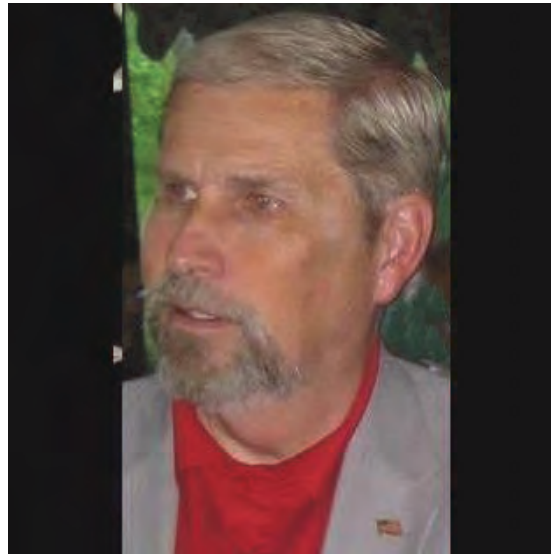
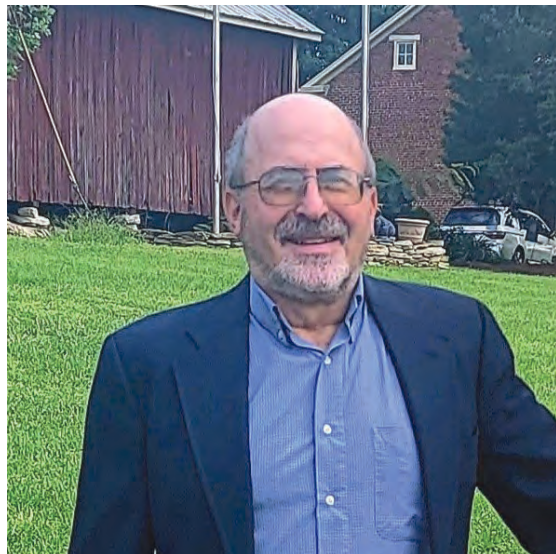
// ELECTIONS

# COUNTY COMMISSION - CHARLES TOWN

David Tabb

Jack Hefestay

James Walch



**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
 I was taught from the age of three, by my parents and elders, that everyone has the responsibility to be a steward of the land. Without the land, clean water and air you don't have anything to build upon. Over the last 20 years, this commission has not been kind to the land. I have taken action against the government, as a whole, to stop the exploitation of natural resources and the county officials have taken action against me. That's why I am running for office, so that the public can see the hidden agendas of our elected officials.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

Over the last 20 years, I have stated the facts, not opinions. Two years ago, when I ran for the same seat, I posted and said if you elected Clara Ath, the volunteer fire companies would lose the ambulances and we will have solar arrays from one end of the county to the other. With that said, does the Jefferson County residents/taxpayers trust the facts or the lies of the past and present? Past decisions determine present situations.

**What specific experience and expertise do you have that is relevant to performing the role of County Commissioner?**

I have been a steward of the land my whole life. I have numerous awards and accomplishments from 4-H, FFA, the volunteer fire companies, local charities and the Young Farmers in both Clarke and Jefferson Counties. I have served as a member of the 340-corridor project, and the Farm Bureau.

*More at [ObserverWV.com/elections-2024](http://ObserverWV.com/elections-2024)*

**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
 The Commission appeared to be contentious and deadlocked on several important issues. My management and leadership experience as well as personal history dealing with difficult situations (conflict resolution) led me to think I could be a big assist with the Commission.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

I have no special business or personal interests that would cause me any conflicts in making decisions that should be solely for the benefit of the county residents. I am well aware of issues currently facing the commission and I am prepared to work those problems toward the satisfactory resolution for a fair solution benefitting our constituents

**What specific experience and expertise do you have that is relevant to performing the role of County Commissioner?**

My professional work experience as an engineering manager in Aerospace and as a senior officer in the US Navy gives me a solid baseline to apply learned project management skills towards solving routine tasks and difficult complex situations facing our county. My volunteer service on two different county boards (approximately 14 years total) allows me some unique insight into the workings of county government.

*More at [ObserverWV.com/elections-2024](http://ObserverWV.com/elections-2024)*

**What made you decide to run for County Commission?**  
 I decided to run for County Commission because Jefferson County is facing some unique challenges and is at a critical point in its history. We are now the 2nd fastest growing county in the state. I have a deep love for Jefferson County and its residents and I want to see the county move in the right direction. We need leadership in the county that is void of self interest and that is ready and willing to get the business of the county done.

**Why should residents trust you with governing Jefferson County?**

I have spent my entire life building relationships in Jefferson County. I live here, I work here, I am raising my family here. I have a real vested interest in seeing the county move in a positive direction. I am willing to work for all my constituents and with all my constituents on the right and left, and my history in the community here reflects that.

**What specific experience and expertise do you have that is relevant to performing the role of County Commissioner?**

I have extensive experience in team building and project execution from start to finish, two fundamental attributes to effective local government. I am ready to get to work for the county and the people of Jefferson County.

*More at [ObserverWV.com/elections-2024](http://ObserverWV.com/elections-2024)*



PERSPECTIVE // NATURE

# MUSHROOM FAIRY CIRCLES

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.*

Lately many people have mushrooms popping up in their yards, after a spell of rainy weather after a dry summer. Some of them grow individually, others in circles or rings. These rings of mushrooms show up suddenly and mysteriously. Many kinds of mushrooms grow in rings. Some are complete circles, some are incomplete arcs, while others are oval shaped. These circles are called fairy rings. It's easy to imagine fairies dancing in the moonlight inside the ring or holding a secret midnight meeting perched on tiny mushroom chairs.

A species of mushroom, which goes by the common name "fairy ring," popped up in my rock garden a week or so ago. It had a distinctive caramel color to its cap, with a distinctive bump in the center called an umbo. Turning the cap over I noticed the gills were rather coarse and well-spaced apart compared to other mushrooms. The stem was thin and woody.

Why do mushrooms grow in circles? What we call the "mushroom" is the fruiting body or reproductive part of the fungus. The cap of a mushroom has gills on its underside (image above right), which produce thousands of microscopic spores. When the spores land on a suitable surface, they germinate and send out tiny white, threadlike filaments. These filaments secrete enzymes to break down the soil and nourish the growing fungus. This network of threads, called the mycelium, grows underground or in rotting wood, and over time it produces the fruit we see above ground that we call the mushroom (image below).



The mycelium that produced the fruit dies because it has used up the nutrients in the soil, but the outer edges of the mycelium network continue to spread and grow. Thereafter, the fruiting bodies appear only along the outside edges of the mycelium, and the result is the characteristic circle. Even when the mushroom caps are not visible above ground, the ring can be visible as a ring of grass that can be brighter green — or it can be a dead brown area where the grass temporarily dies back. These discolored rings in the grass add to the mystery of fairy rings.

In Europe, fairy ring mushrooms are a delicacy. Most people discard the stem, which is woody and unappetizing, and then string the caps together and dry them rather than freezing them. They can be reconstituted in soups and stews and have a pleasant nutty flavor, according to those who eat them. I have never tried eating fairy ring mushrooms, even though I can identify them easily. Several other similar little brown mushrooms (mushroom lovers call them LBMs) can be mistaken for fairy rings, and many poisonous mushrooms also grow in rings. An avid mushroom enthusiast, I still rely heavily on field guides for correct identification of every species.

Wild mushrooms vary in appearance and in condition. Some are edible and choice, others may be consumed but aren't very palatable. Eating certain species can make you sick or cause hallucinations. Some mushrooms are so poisonous that you could die within hours after consuming a tiny piece. So, if you want to eat mushrooms safely, buy them at a farm market or grocery store.

Anybody can enhance their enjoyment of the outdoors by learning about mushrooms. Children find them irresistible. They can be appreciated as a decorative bonus to a hike, or when they appear in your yard or garden. Buy a field guide, use the internet, and learn about mushrooms. Read stories about them, take pictures, sketch or paint them. But don't eat them.





**JEFFERSON COUNTY ASSESSOR**  
**NOTICE OF FILINGS DUE**  
 ASSESSMENT INFO as of JULY 1, 2024

**DATES TO FILE:**  
**JEFFERSON COUNTY DOG TAGS**  
 July 1st

—

**HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION**  
 Apply by December 1st

—

Charles Town Courthouse  
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*A Creative Adventure Awaits...*

**November 9–10, 2024**  
**10:00 - 5:00 pm**



*Sponsored by the Jefferson County Convention & Visitors Bureau*

**WWW.OVERTHEMOUNTAINSTUDIOTOUR.COM**



EXPLORE // HALLOWEEN

LOCALS ENJOY THE SPOOKY SPIRIT OF HALLOWEEN FOR FAMILY FUN



Volunteers took on the task of decorating downtown Shepherdstown.

Chris and Celina Baldwin turned a discarded bed frame into a crafty decoration for their Huntfield home (cover image). Around the corner, Devon and Amanda are ready to invite trick or treating for a spooky party (top right). Both families estimate they will give out over a thousand pieces of candy to the crowds of kids that will be roaming the Huntfield neighborhood on Halloween night. Keriann Rusiniak and her husband Ray continue to expand their display

of frights in the Heatherfield neighborhood (top right). This year the neighborhood plans to have trick or treating on October 26 from 6 to 8, to avoid competing with the trick-or-treat festivities in downtown Shepherdstown on October 31 at 6pm (see QR code on page 13).

Nick Henson and Ashley Nuckols set up Twisted Hollows (bottom right) as a non-profit organization last year. Nick has been running his haunted house for over a decade

now and they plan to join forces with Wicked Woods to put on an even bigger event next year at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. This year's Twisted Hollows will be open on October 26 and 27 from 6 to 9 pm each night. Tickets are \$5 per person (free for kids under 3) and donations are accepted — Nick uses the proceeds to purchase food and gift cards for local families in need of assistance during the holiday season. See Twisted Hollow on Facebook for details.

# Jefferson Co. Board of Ed. Levy

## VOTE YES

Provide funding to staff multiple Extension Agents in Jefferson County for a larger impact to our community.

Through 4-H Youth Development, youth learn responsibility, community service, citizenship, and leadership through clubs, camping, special interest projects, and school enrichment activities.



449 members, 21 clubs, 150 4-H volunteers,  
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EXPLORE // LOCAL ARTISTS

## ARTISTS OPEN STUDIOS FOR WEEKEND TOUR

THE ANNUAL OVER THE MOUNTAIN STUDIO TOUR takes place on November 9 & 10. The artist studios on this self-guided tour with 11 stops will be open from 10 to 5 each day for demonstrations and hands-on activities for visitors to enjoy.

At stop #1 in Harpers Ferry, painter Anne Rule-Thompson will demonstrate her Encaustic Painting process using molten wax. Rose Mendez and Mikkey Tarantino will also be exhibiting. At stop #2, Rock Fusion Studios glass artist Tatyana Zidarov will demonstrate how to cut, arrange and fuse glass, and also how she creates glass weaved baskets. Evgeny Zidarov will demonstrate wire wrapping and jewelry making techniques.

Stop #3 is in Shepherdstown, where Jeni Petterson will showcase contemporary floristry. Stop #4 in Shepherdstown features cartoonist Daniell Corsetto and potter Esther Murphy. Stop #5 in Kearneysville hosts blacksmith Eric Johnson and ceramic artist Annette Verna. Stop #6 in Kearneysville features the heirloom baskets of Anne Bowers.

Stop #7 is in Summit Point at the farm of fiber artist Bridget Brown. Metal smith Hannah Ehlman will also be working here. Stop #8 is at

Cool Spring Preserve, where hand weaver Diane Myers will demonstrate her spinning wheel and discuss how wool is spun into yarn.

Stop #9 is at the Shenandoah Planing Mill, where wood turner Neil Super will show the older wood turning machines he has restored to produce architectural and furniture component turnings. Painter Melissa Lettick will be there to demonstrate her Intuitive Painting process and invite guests to participate in a community painting project. Basket weaver Luke Bauer will also be exhibiting.

Fiber artist Isabel Wilder and weaver Denise Ray are at Stop #10 in Charles Town. Isabel will demonstrate various sewing and quilting techniques. Denise will demonstrate hand weaving on a rigid heddle loom.

Stop #11, also in Charles Town will feature paper artist Liz Goins of LizPaperArts, who will lead paper-making workshops at 11:30 and 3:00 on both dates. Assemblage artist Rod Glover will also demonstrate his botanical collage process.

You can find information about all of the artists and download a tour map at [OverTheMountainStudioTour.com](http://OverTheMountainStudioTour.com).



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EXPLORE // SHEPHERDSTOWN

## WILDER'S OUR TOWN

SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY THEATER presents Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* at the Marinoff Theater (62 West Campus Dr, Shepherdstown) on Nov 2, 3, 8, 9 & 10. Tickets are pay-what-you-will at the door (no advance reservations available). Details at [Shepherd.edu/theater](http://Shepherd.edu/theater).



## RACHELLE DART SPEAKS

SPEAK STORY SERIES concludes its twelfth season with story artist Rachelle Dart on November 12, 2024 at 7:30 at the Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, (100 West Washington Street). Dart grew up on stories. Mythology was woven into the foundation of Dart's home, folklore hung on the walls like vines, fairy tales danced through the air and histories walked the halls. Dart believes that stories can delight, remind, caution and connect us, while expanding our capacity to empathize with others. Tickets are \$20 at the door or at [SpeakStorySeries.com](http://SpeakStorySeries.com).



## MUSIC & MORE AT SHEPHERDSTOWN OPERA HOUSE



THE OPERA HOUSE will host a variety of shows in November. **Furnace Mountain** will perform on Friday, November 1 along with **Mink's Miracle Medicine**. **Jamie Bernstein** brings his NoLa sound on Saturday November 16. On Friday, November 22, nationally touring comedian Lucas Bohn will perform.

The Shepherdstown Film Society will screen *The Monk and the Gun* on Friday, November 8. On Saturday, November 10, the Opera House will present an encore performance of *VANYA*, a National Theatre Live production starring Andrew Scott playing all of the characters in a radical adaptation of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. Show info and advance ticket purchase at [OperaHouseLive.com](http://OperaHouseLive.com).

## POP-UP CELEBRATES PLANTS, ART & HEALTH

HEATHER CROSBY, AUTHOR OF THE YUMUNIVERSE cookbooks, will host "Botanica," a pop-up shop experience inspired by all things plants. The event will take place at Evolve (106 West German St, Shepherdstown) on November 9 from 10 to 7 and November 10 from 10 to 5.

For this event, Crosby is partnering with Boonsboro potter, Jocelyn Borg of Everyday Earthe for a creative exploration and celebration of plants and their healing benefits. The pop-up will take place at Evolve in Shepherdstown and will offer attendees an immersive experience that blends nature, wellness, and art.

Visitors to the event will have the opportunity to meet the makers while shopping for hand-dyed textiles, dried botanicals, ceramic and stoneware vessels, self-care and home goods, art, and paintings created with homegrown plant pigments. They'll also learn about creative, healing botanical opportunities



for wellbeing, re/connection, (and fun) like florioraphy, biophilia, horticultural therapy, and more.

Crosby's plant-inspired work has been featured in *O, Oprah* magazine, on Oprah.com, *Reader's Digest*, NPR, and HGTV. Botanica is an evolution of her appreciation of plants and the creative and therapeutic benefits they provide to positively influence well-being. More information at [HeatherCrosby.com/botanica](http://HeatherCrosby.com/botanica).

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EXPLORE // HARPERS FERRY HISTORY

THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA IN HARPERS FERRY



THE JEFFERSON COUNTY MUSEUM will host its final event of the year celebrating the recent update and expansion of its permanent John Brown Raid exhibit on Saturday, November 23. The event will take place in the Charles Town Library basement meeting room (200 East Washington St, Charles Town), beginning at 11:00 am.

Local author Lynn Pechuekonis will present her research on the era of Reconstruction in Harpers Ferry. In Harpers Ferry, Storer College was a beacon for thousands of Black youth during the Reconstruction era. But the college is not the only notable post-Civil War story in Harpers Ferry. Off the campus, Harpers Ferry became home to a thriving Black community after Emancipation — a place with low barriers to home ownership, exceptional schools, opportunities for entrepreneurship, integrated neighborhoods, and strong community structures.

For this program, Pechuekonis will

examine the early Black community, using her research on the founding of the Hill Top House and the life of Storer’s longest serving Black teacher as windows into life during Reconstruction and beyond.

Lynn Pechuekonis is an author and historian who lives in the Harpers Ferry home originally belonging to Professor William A. Saunders of Storer College. She is the author of a biography of Saunders entitled "Man of Sterling Worth." Her current work-in-progress is a biography of the Thomas Lovett family, African American founders of the famous Hill Top House.

Visit the Jefferson County Museum online at [JeffCoMuseumWV.org](http://JeffCoMuseumWV.org). The museum is located at 200 East Washington St, Charles Town (in the basement of the the Charles Town library building). The museum is open from mid-March to mid December. Jours are 10 to 4 Tuesday through Friday and 9 to 1 on Saturdays.



“ It is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bumbles his own life and the lives of others yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates in himself, and how he continually feeds it and keeps it going.”

— C.G. Jung  
(Letter to Frances G. Wickes - November 1926)



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ENGAGE //AROUND THE COUNTY

## WATER BOTTLING PLANT PLANNED IN MIDDLEWAY

THE JEFFERSON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION agenda for November 12 (7:00 pm, Charles Town Library meeting room) includes a public workshop for a proposed water bottling facility concept plan. The plan documents indicate plans for two buildings totalling 1 million square feet on 99 acres just west of Middleway village (the former 3M facility). The documents indicate the facility will obtain a limited amount of water from Berkeley County for restrooms and sanitary use. The likely water source for the bottling operation is the spring-fed Turkey Run, which runs through the property.



## LEGAL PATH CLEARED FOR MORE SOLAR PROJECTS

Two legal cases filed against the County to overturn the “solar” zoning ordinance amendment were recently resolved, Case CC-19-2022-C-141 had been denied by the Circuit Court in May 2023, but then was appealed to the WV Supreme Court of Appeals. The petitioner withdrew that appeal in October 2024. The second case, CC-19-2023-C-112, had been stayed pending the appeal of 2022-C-141. The petitioner filed to dismiss 2023-C-112 on October 8, 2024. The petitioner did not respond to *The Observer’s* request for comment on whether any settlement terms were negotiated as part of the withdrawal/dismissal. With the legal cases resolved, three previously approved industrial solar projects are expected to proceed: Rippon, Flowing Springs, and the recently approved Franklinton Farm. Updates at [ObserverWV.com/tracking-solar](http://ObserverWV.com/tracking-solar).

## MEETING FOR SHEPHERDSTOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ON NOV 18

THE SHEPHERDSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION plans to hold a public meeting on November 18 at 6:30 pm. The location has not been set yet, but the format of the meeting is expected to be a workshop run by facilitators, with the public invited to comment on both the current comprehensive plan and the review of that plan that was completed earlier in 2024. Updates at [ObserverWV.com/shepherdstown-comp-plan-2024](http://ObserverWV.com/shepherdstown-comp-plan-2024).

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The **WV Independent Observer** writes about community news, local events, and feature stories of interest to the people who live, work, and visit Jefferson County, West Virginia. For more of our stories, visit **OBSERVERWV.COM**

