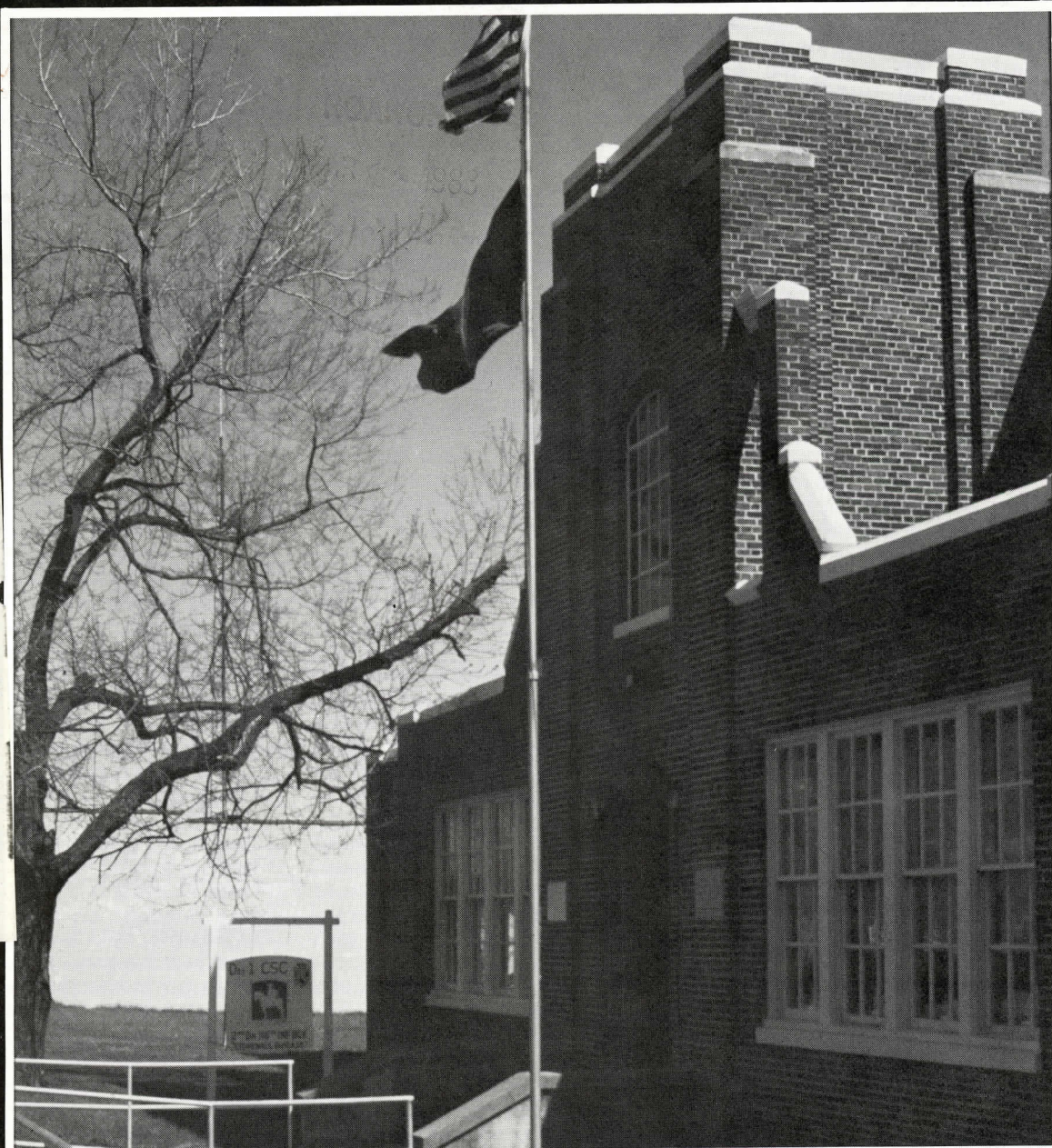


Virginia & Town & City

Volume 18
March 1983
Number 3

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Chase City Puts School To New Use

Crisis in Corrections

By Albert W. Spengler

Two knifings at the Virginia State Penitentiary on January 1, 1983 left one inmate dead and another wounded. Since 1980 four other killings have taken place at the state penitentiary. In one of the four prior incidents, one victim had been watching a movie in the mess hall when another inmate cut his throat.

Violence is not new to the Virginia correctional system. In the mid-70s, for example, a number of reforms were undertaken after a state crime commission investigation revealed that the penitentiary was nothing more than a "warehouse" where brutality was the rule rather than the exception. Nor is violence limited to the state penitentiary. On November 3, 1982, about a dozen prisoners at the Brunswick Correctional Center attacked two prison guards in a disturbance that began when a guard stopped a prisoner to check for contraband.

While prison violence is the most disturbing and most publicized problem facing prison authorities in Virginia and other states, it is only one of many serious and interrelated problems affecting state correctional systems. In recent years, correctional institutions have had to cope with a dramatic rise in inmate populations. Between 1978 and 1982 inmates in federal and state correctional institutions jumped from 294,580 to 394,380; over the same period, the number of inmates in Virginia's correctional system grew from 8,344 to 9,146.

This development has focused attention on the issue of prison overcrowding, since the growth in the number of inmates has overwhelmed the capacity of state prisons. This overcrowding also has contributed to incidents of homosexual rape, assault and robbery within the institutions' walls and led to increasing judicial scrutiny of conditions inside prisons. Thirty-two states are under court orders to

reduce overcrowding and improve conditions in their prisons. This month Virginia will go before a federal judge who will decide if the atmosphere of violence in the state penitentiary is an unconstitutional form of punishment.

Currently Virginia ranks seventeenth in the nation (*Corrections Yearbook, 1982*) in the number of incarcerations per 100,000 population. The almost 9,200 inmates that now fill Virginia's prisons constitute the largest number in the state's history. Since the number of assignable beds is 9,197, the problem of overcrowding might appear to be negligible. The statistics are misleading, however, in part because several hundred felons are locked up in local jails awaiting transfers to state facilities. On January 11, 1983 there were 6,031 inmates in Virginia's local jails, which have a rated maximum capacity of 5,664. Of the 99 local correctional facilities in the state (city and county jails and farms), nearly half, or 48 of them, were at 100 percent capacity or above (two of which were at over 200 percent capacity).

The problem of prison overcrowding in Virginia is rather modest relative to overcrowding in other states. In 1981, for instance, the population of Virginia's prisons stood at one percent over capacity, as compared to 50 percent in South Carolina and 30 percent in Maryland. Nevertheless, overcrowding is an issue that Virginia cannot ignore, although the state has sought to avoid it by building new prisons and finding alternatives to incarceration for certain offenders. Even under the present construction schedule, however, the state will be 3,000 beds short of its needs by 1990. It costs the state approximately \$55,000 per cell to build a new correctional facility; maintaining an inmate in an institution costs the state \$22,748 per year—the highest cost per inmate in the country, according to the *Corrections Yearbook*. In addition, these costs do not reflect hidden costs such as an inmate's not paying taxes or a prisoner's inability to support his family or to pay restitution. Building additional jails may solve the long-term problem of over-

crowding, but it will not take care of the immediate situation. (One step the state is taking to reduce its need for more prisons is double bunking of cells; however, this practice could be overturned in the federal courts.) Given the high cost of incarceration, are their other alternatives which will make better use of our scarce resources?

In order to reduce the prison population, the General Assembly in 1980 enacted the Community Diversion Incentive Act (CDI), which seeks to deinstitutionalize nonviolent offenders and to have them make restitution to the community. This program, which is funded by the state but locally administered has been successful in the 10 cities and 15 counties that have established a program. The CDI has resulted in a 36 percent cost savings to the state when compared to the cost of incarceration, with a 200-bed savings at an annual cost avoidance amount of \$865,200. Participants in the program have paid back the victims and communities with \$9,000 in direct restitution to victims, \$18,727 worth of services donated to local government and private nonprofit agencies and 5,500 community service hours. While diversion appears to be a useful alternative to incarceration, whether this approach along with planned prison construction will be enough to solve the long-term problem of overcrowding remains to be seen.

Indeed, the future of the correctional system is clouded by basic uncertainties about emerging trends in crime rates, judicial sentencing practices and incarceration rates. The fate of correctional policy also depends on the attitudes of legislators, law enforcement officials and the general public with regard to persistent controversies concerning the goals of sentencing and the roles of prisons.

In conclusion, two questions need to be asked: Do we follow the path of stricter sentencing and build more prisons to accommodate the increase in inmates or do we look for alternatives that aim at rehabilitating rather than punishing the criminal? Do the alternatives to

(Continued on page 17)

About the Author

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VOLUME 18

MARCH 1983

NUMBER 3

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On The Cover

It's no longer a school building but now a community center for Chase City. Read how the Town Council put the building to better use without costing citizens more tax dollars.

Statements and opinions presented in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Virginia Municipal League.

VIRGINIA TOWN & CITY (ISSN0042-6784) is the only official magazine of the Virginia Municipal League. It is published monthly at 311 Ironfronts, 1011 East Main Street, P.O. Box 753, Richmond, Virginia 23206. All contents, copyright 1983 by the Virginia Municipal League. Any reproduction or use of contents must have prior approval of the Virginia Municipal League and if granted must be accompanied by credit to VIRGINIA TOWN & CITY and the Virginia Municipal League. Second-class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia. Subscription rates: \$8 per year, \$1.50 per copy.

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People

Atkinson Named

Harold S. Atkinson, former VML president, was appointed by Governor Charles S. Robb to the Commission on Local Government. Atkinson is a former city manager of Franklin, having retired in 1981. During his tenure as city manager, he was also president of the Virginia Section, International City Management Association and was chairman of the Southeastern Virginia Planning District Commission.

Alexander Heads Fire Programs

George H. Alexander, retired director of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, is the new executive director of the Department of Fire Programs. He began his 25 year career as a volunteer for Fairfax County in 1948. He entered the paid ranks in 1950 as a firefighter at the Fort Belvoir Engineering Center but affiliated with the county in 1957 as assistant fire marshal. One of the highlights of Alex-

ander's career was the creation of the Medic program which now offers advanced life support to all of Fairfax County's 600,000 residents. He assumed his directorship of Fire Programs on February 1, 1983.

Falls Church Appoints Two

Halsey Green is the city's new finance director. He fills the vacancy left by retiring Clarence Eckert. Green joined Falls Church in 1978 as assistant finance director.

Jay Zimmer was appointed as the social services coordinator. He held previous positions as director of Children's World, Inc., a child care center, and as assistant director of community services with the United Methodist Church in Lakewood, New Jersey.

Anders Resigns

Bedford City Councilman **R. C. Anders** announced that he will resign from council due to medical problems. Elected to council in

1980, Anders has suffered from illness since taking office.

Before running for council, Anders was director of the city's Electric Department from 1965 to 1976. Utility issues were one of his specialties during his time on council.

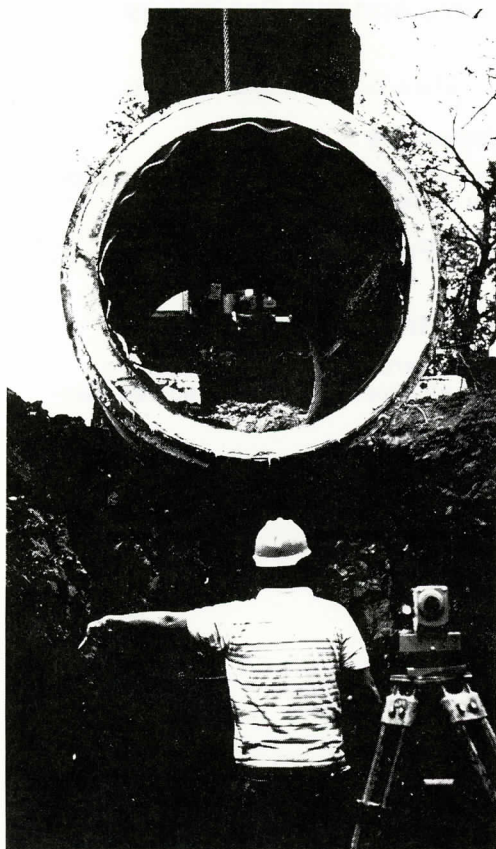
VanDevanter Appointed

Jean VanDevanter was named director of Fairfax County's Office of Public Affairs. VanDevanter was acting director at the time of her appointment. A graduate of the University of Tennessee, she was an equal employment opportunity specialist at the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (now Health and Human Services) and was the public information officer for the Arlington County Department of Public Works and the Fairfax County Park Authority.

Virginians Named By NLC

Seven Virginians have been appointed to the National League of Cities' Steering Committees. Officials are chosen on the basis of their expertise and interest in a certain area to develop NLC policy and recommendations to congressional and administration initiatives.

Dr. Willa Bazemore, vice mayor of Chesapeake, was appointed vice chairman of the Committee on Human Development. Others selected to the committees are the following: Alexandria Mayor **Charles Beatley**, Community and Economic Development; Newport News Council Member **Mary Sherwood Holt**, Transportation and Communications; Norfolk Council Member **Joseph A. Leafe**, Intergovernmental Relations; Norfolk Mayor **Vincent J. Thomas**, Community and Economic Development; Richmond Council Member **Claudette B. McDaniel**, Human Development; and Virginia Beach Council Member **Meyera E. Obendorf**, Energy, Environment and Natural Resources.



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VML Legislative Day

Since the League started holding the VML Legislative Day during the Virginia General Assembly, the largest gathering occurred this February 2 at The John Marshall Hotel. Over 200 local officials attended the afternoon session and over 100 legislators, out of a possible 140, came to the reception. Many others were represented by their legislative aides.

The date chosen for the annual event proved to be the best time for local officials to be in Richmond. Many key bills were still in committees and had to be reported out of their house of origin that week. This allowed officials the time to discuss items with their legislators or appear before committees, as several officials did.

During the afternoon work session, VML Executive Director Michael Amyx welcomed the crowd to Richmond and encouraged local officials to visit with their legislators during the evening's reception. Rick Weeks, the league's director of intergovernmental relations, gave a detailed view of the budget. This was a critical issue to attendees since, for the first time in recent history, the governor was forced to cut state aid to local government. Other league staff members outlined budget matters in their perspective areas and discussed major bills, such as conflict of interests and compensation for constitutional officers.



Above and below, local officials listen while VML staff discuss the budget and key bills.



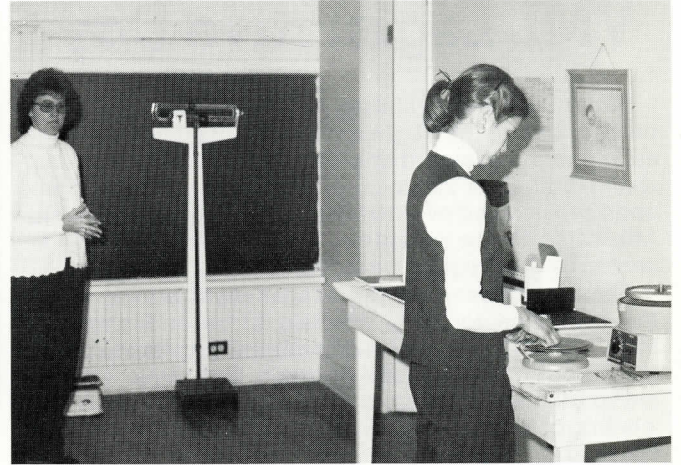
Lexington City Manager John Doane and Franklin City Manager Ted Reed.



Colonial Heights City Manager Bryon Haner talks to Roanoke City Attorney Wil Dibling.



The Virginia Beach delegation exchanges information during the coffee/coke break. From the left, Council Member Nancy Creech, City Attorney Dale Bimson, Council Member Robert Jones and Council Member Meyera Oberndorf.



Chase City's new community center has many uses. Above, a theatrical production takes place and, on the right, a health clinic nurse prepares to see patients.

Chase City Solves A Building Problem In An Unusual Way

What does a small town in rural Virginia do with a school building that is probably too costly to maintain and operate but at the same time is a landmark that nearly all its residents can identify with and want to use?

For over 50 years, the Robert E. Lee school building, located in the downtown district of Chase City, served as both elementary and high school for several generations of the town's citizens. The structure's unique and stately architecture, functional design, proximity to "Main Street" and excellent auditorium not only contributed to the education of the youth of the town and surrounding area, but gave a high degree of unity, purpose, spirit and pride to the community.

Years later when the building was no longer a school facility, Chase City found itself with a "white elephant" that could be an asset if the price was right but, if not, a building in the hub of town that is boarded up, vandalized, and surrounded by litter, trash and weeds.

It was clear that an overwhelming number of the citizens wanted to save the old school building, which represented a part of just about everybody's personal experience. Just what it could be saved for and how the town government could afford the luxury of what could be a vast "money pit" remained unsaid.

Would the school board and the County of Mecklenburg release property worth a half a million dollars to the town for little or no compensation? The county indicated that it would be amenable to the transfer if the grounds and struc-

ture could be put to good use.

Should a small town with an equally small budget accept the fiscal burden imposed by such a large building? The school included an auditorium seating 600, 12 full-sized classrooms, a cafeteria, assorted utility rooms and failing boiler. The cost of heating the building and upkeep on the extensive grounds was enough to give even the most stalwart council members nightmares. The town treasurer reported with a very long face and tight string on the town purse that maintaining the property could consume a full 10 percent of the general fund and a goodly share of the utility fund. The director of public works added to the woes of the elected leadership when he advised them that the old school had been allowed to deteriorate in anticipation of its closing and presented a lengthy list of capital improvements that had to be completed before the building could be used for any purpose.

It was obvious that if Chase City were to accept the responsibility for the property, the school would have to pay for itself, which in retrospect appeared impossible. Undaunted by the odds, council decided that the town could not afford to lose a valuable landmark near the town's center and accept what would become a blighted area.

The decision was made to accept the property but two questions remained: What purpose would the building with its grounds be used? Where would the money come from to operate the complex? Fortunately, the closing of the old red brick school house did not come as a sur-

prise, therefore, approximately two years of planning were available to decide these issues.

It was clear from citizens that a community center which could serve as a focal point for social, service and educational needs for the area was most desired. The building could also provide office space for service oriented agencies. But these two ideas do not produce money.

The breakthrough came from an unusual source. Traditionally, Chase City has been the home station of Company E of the 116th Infantry, Virginia Army National Guard. This proud unit, however, had not been reactivated in the town since its men marched off to war in 1941. Public sentiment, coupled with the availability of armory space which the Robert E. Lee building offered prompted town officials to contact the Adjutant General of the Commonwealth. The general was told of the advantages to the National Guard and the town if the Guard established a unit in Chase City. The town could provide the National Guard with not only relatively inexpensive facilities near the Guard's training areas but also a fertile, untapped recruiting area and the support of the town government and residents.

On the other hand, the Guard could offer the town the benefits of a payroll, part-time jobs for youth and could supplement the cost of the old school building and its grounds.

Terms of agreement were reached by the National Guard and Chase City which marked areas of respon-

sibility, shared costs, reconfiguration and new construction. The agreement left the town with more than adequate space to house a wide variety of meeting places, offices and the auditorium.

Having sealed the agreement with the Guard, the town was free to enter into agreements with other agencies and service organizations, several of which could contribute to the support of the school complex.

On July 4, 1981 a plaque dedicating the Robert E. Lee Community Center, in the name of the council and the people of Chase City, was unveiled by the mayor.

The uses the old building has, in fact, surprised even the most ardent supporters of the project. During the past year or so, the "new" community center has been the site of trade fairs, major theatrical productions, conventions, gospel sings and rallies. Also, the center is the regular meeting place for classes, the Jaycees and organizations for the elderly and youth. The public health service clinic even sets up shop in the center. Thus far the center has been an overwhelming success, with the only unexpected problem of trying to schedule all the events that want to be held there.

Equally surprising has been the center's ability to operate on a near pay as you go basis. The fear voiced by many that the town would assume the complex along with a vast "money pit" into which the taxpayers' money would be heaped from the treasury just never materialized.

The Robert E. Lee Community Center in Chase City is a vivid example of what a small rural town can do to protect itself from decay and at the same time improve the quality of life of its residents.

We Want News from your locality for **VIRGINIA TOWN & CITY** magazine. If you have recent appointments, a new facility or a project/program that can benefit other Virginia local governments, let us know. Contact Charlotte Kingery at 804/649-8471.

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How To Stay Out of Trouble And Still Get Things Done!

Editor's Note: This report from the Kansas Government Journal puts together some suggestions for local officials—both elected and appointed—on how to stay out of trouble, but still get things done, which seems to be an increasingly difficult thing to do. This was the theme of a general luncheon panel discussion at the 71st Annual City Conference of the League of Kansas Municipalities held October 12, 1981. The observations were edited and supplemented by Kansas League Director E. A. Mosher.

1) If you're a governing body member, allow yourself enough time to be effective. Just attending council meetings is not enough—you must study and discuss the problems, and keep yourself informed on what's going on. To do even a fair job takes a lot of time.

2) Pace yourself. Limit the number of meetings you have. Set some priorities, recognize the need to spend time with your family, and don't "burn" yourself out. Recognize that life—and local government—is dependent on a lot of things we have little control over.

3) As an individual, even if you're the mayor, don't make promises you can't deliver! Most major decisions and actions require approval of the governing body, and this takes a majority vote.

4) Treat everyone the same. Be consistent.

5) If you're a governing body member, don't spend most of your time checking on what your staff has already done. Your primary job is to provide some policies and directions. For example, instead of spending time reviewing claims, make sure you have a good purchasing practice by which claims are incurred in the first place.

6) Always deal with people as if you will have to deal with them again. Even if you don't, someone will.

7) Take your budget preparation job seriously, for it determines what your locality does or doesn't do for the coming year. It's the biggest policy development tool available to govern a municipality. And when budget cutbacks are essential, don't cut back on those activities that are vital to the critical operation of the government.

8) Be alert for the little things. They are the things which always seem to grow and come back to you.

9) Establish policy statements. Written policy statements let the public, and staff, know where they stand. They help the governing body govern, and writing them provides a process to develop consensus. "That's the way it's always been done" is not good enough to either stay out of trouble or to get things done.

10) Maintain the infrastructure! Make certain you are adequately keeping up what you now have before taking on any new projects. Deferring maintenance costs to the future simply shifts your trouble to those who follow you in the future.

11) Don't give quick answers when you're not sure of the real answer. It may be embarrassing to appear ignorant, but it can be more embarrassing to tell a person something which is wrong.

12) Don't be stampeded into action. Don't be misled by the strong demands of special interest groups who want it done now, their way. Your job is to find the long-term public interest of the community, and you may be hearing from the wrong people.

13) Don't spring surprises on your fellow governing body members of your staff, especially at formal meetings. If a matter is worth bringing up for discussion, it's worth being on the agenda. Surprises may get you some publicity, at the embarrassment of others, but tend to erode the "team" approach to governance.

14) Don't bypass the system! If you have a city manager or other chief administrative official, governing body members should stick to policy and avoid personal involvement in the day-to-day operations.

15) And don't let others bypass your system—insist that people such as bond salesmen or equipment suppliers first work with your local government staff. If direct contact with governing body members is advisable, this should be with the governing body as a whole and not on a one-on-one business.

16) Formalize your personnel rules and regulations. Make sure they're clear. For example, if you

don't pay for unused sick leave when an employee is terminated, put it in writing. Once the rules are established, governing body members should avoid the temptation to get involved in personnel matters.

17) Give notice for all your meetings. If it is not a regular meeting where everyone in town knows the time and place, publish a notice in the newspaper. If a major issue is to be considered, publish a special notice. If you know someone who is directly involved on the agenda, give them notice.

18) Distribute your council agenda to members and other concerned individuals several days before each meeting. It should be no secret what you are going to discuss, and a planned agenda permits orderly meetings.

19) Don't have closed meetings. In government, there shouldn't be any secrets. You are there to represent the public; don't hide anything from them, for your attempt to do so will certainly result in trouble. Follow the law for any executive sessions you think are necessary for the public interest.

20) Keep your constituents informed, such as a weekly editorial in the local newspaper, radio interviews or news releases. Be friendly and deal effectively with the news media. Lack of proper communications is one of the biggest problems of cities.

21) Keep your employees informed—particularly those on the front line who make decisions or are in frequent contact with the people.

22) Appoint citizen advisory committees when you need them, but be prepared to follow their advice if you use them. Appointing your opposition to a useful committee can let them work for you, instead of against you.

23) Hire the best people you can and give them as much responsibility they can and will handle. There is always the possibility that they will get you into trouble at first, but if you stand behind them, eventually they can keep you out of trouble.

24) Charge your employees with being responsible for new ideas and better ways. Listen to what they have to say.

25) Have your local government attorney attend your governing

body meetings. But don't expect the attorney to know all the answers, right on the spot. Give the attorney the chance to research the matter.

26) Don't simply ask your attorney whether or not you can do something. Sometimes, the most appropriate question is "how can we legally accomplish this objective?"

27) If yours is a typical locality, don't expect your attorney to be an expert on every matter. Local government is too complex. On occasion, you will need outside counsel and it will be a good investment of public funds.

28) Elected officials should accept their leadership responsibilities, such as selling new programs to the public. The staff should not act as if they were elected.

29) Make sure you have a good financial accounting and reporting system, and comply with the cash basis and budget laws. Some localities have gotten into financial troubles in recent years, simply because they spent more money than they had available for the whole year and nobody knew it.

30) Don't act as if local government operates in a vacuum. We must work within the intergovernmental system to be effective. Keep in contact with your federal, state, county and school officials. Use your municipal league.

31) Never trust a consultant. You are the one who will be around to yell at if things don't turn out right. The consultant should realize this. Even though we can't expect them to go against their best judgement, they should expect us to want to look over their shoulder.

32) Don't be hesitant to budget money for your officers and employees to attend meetings and seminars. These provide learning opportunities and personal contacts which can be valuable to your local government.

33) Finally, define what trouble means to you. We must realize that we work in a fish bowl environment and that most of the things we do affect people. Many times they will be affected in a manner they don't like. If trouble means having someone mad at you, you're in the wrong business! We should handle each

item in a straightforward way that we know or believe to be correct. If things don't turn out the way they should—after all, public officers and employees can make mistakes—no one can accuse you of improper motives, and you will know you did what you thought was proper.

Leesburg Named

Leesburg is one of 89 communities across the nation to receive HUD's National Recognition Award for community development partnerships. The award is for the Plaza Street Park project which was completed in April of 1982. Leesburg was innovative in the selection of the park site within the Loudoun House project area and its commitment to use town forces to provide much of the labor for park construction without grant reimbursement.

Only 10 projects were recognized within the Philadelphia region. HUD D.C. Area Office Manager Terry C. Chisholm visited Leesburg to present the award in a special ceremony.



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ICMA Survey

VA's Responses

By Kimberly S. Crannis

For the most part, the profession of city, town and county management is perceived the same in Virginia as it is nationwide. This reflection is the result of the International City Management Association survey on the "State of the Profession."

Distributed last fall through the *ICMA Newsletter* to all subscribers, the questionnaire asked members about council-manager relations, job satisfaction and finances in the local government management field.

Results of the survey, on a nationwide basis, have been published in subsequent *ICMA Newsletters*. The results of the survey were also tabulated according to state. Thirty-six Virginia members responded to the survey.

When comparing the job market to three years ago, 77 percent of the individuals surveyed nationwide and 66 percent of the Virginia respondents felt that job opportunities in the profession had either remained the same or decreased. The *ICMA Newsletter* stated that "managers are confident but concerned" about the future of the profession. This causes some degree of concern among prospective managers. With fewer job opportunities available in this field, some will be turning to other areas for career advancement. When asked how many were considering a change, at least four Virginia managers said they were "actively seeking" to leave the local government profession. Still, the opportunities are there.

The relationship a manager has with his council, board or commission is an important factor if a local government is to run smoothly. Of the 36 Virginia respondents, 78 percent indicated that their relationship had either improved or remained the same. They also rated the level of support from their councils fairly high. Eighty-six percent of the individuals rated the level of support they receive between very supportive and moderately supportive with only three percent claiming

them to be mostly unsupportive.

When judging the effectiveness of councils according to factors such as the speed and ease with which they reach consensus and how well they work together as a unit, 77 percent of the Virginia managers rated their councils high. Only six percent indicated that their councils were very ineffective.

This good working relationship also helps to increase the level of satisfaction local government managers have towards their job. Taking into consideration all the rewards, difficulties and frustrations associated with the job of manager, 83 percent of the Virginia managers rated their level of satisfaction between highly satisfying and moderately satisfying. No one rated it as highly dissatisfying.

One of the biggest challenges in the management profession is that of the budget. When asked what the prospects were for having a greater, lesser or the same budget in the current fiscal year than in the previous fiscal year, the majority of the Virginia managers answered that their budgets would be greater. Nationwide, managers reported that while their current budgets are at the same levels as last year, the budgets are a "real" reduction because of inflationary cost increases which, although reduced, are still there.

When looking at other financial factors, the number of full-time employees, except for police, have either decreased or remained the same as the previous year. Fifty-three percent of the managers will increase the number of employees in their police departments.

The only major budget decrease was in grants from state and federal sources attributable to the sharp budget cuts imposed by President Reagan. The levels of service remained relatively constant. But to continue the present level will require a high level of management know-how, employment cooperation and the development of new and more effective ways to provide municipal services.

Managing local government is a complex but rewarding field. The complexity is indicated through the many services provided by local government and the increasing struggle for finances. Indicative of the rewards of the management pro-

fession are the high ratings on job satisfaction, council/manager relations and council effectiveness given by the respondents. Overall, the managers ranked the profession very high among other professions.

VA Managers Schedule Events

The Virginia Section, International City Management Association has planned many functions for this spring.

On March 31-April 1, 1983, members will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the council-manager form of government in Staunton, Virginia, the birthplace of the manager profession. A reception will be held Thursday evening on the campus of Mary Baldwin College and a ceremony and luncheon are scheduled for Friday morning in the garden of the Woodrow Wilson birthplace. Many leaders in the profession and local government will attend.

The registration, which includes the reception and luncheon, is \$25. A registration form has been sent to members and enclosed with February 17 and March 3 LEAGUE LETTERS. If you want to attend and did not receive a registration form, please contact Sheree Carter at 804/649-8471.

Each attendee should make his/her room reservation. The VA Section has reserved a block of rooms at three motels until March 10. Please make your reservation by that date. The facilities, phone numbers and room rates are the following: Holiday Inn-Downtown, 703/886-3401, \$30 single/39 double; Holiday Inn-North, 703/248-5111, \$24 single/35 double; Ingleside-Red Carpet, 703/248-1201, \$39 single/48 double.

The VA Section's Annual Conference is May 18-20 at the Sheraton Inn-Fredericksburg. President Ronald H. Miller will preside over the three day conference. The theme is "The Profession and the Association." Leaders from the International City Management Association and the Section plan to discuss what each association should be offering members. Special sessions for assistants and retired members are planned as well as programs that look at the new technology. Members will be sent registration information and a tentative program. For more information about the conference, call Charlotte Kingery at 804/649-8471.

About the Author

Ms. Crannis was a legislative intern with the Virginia Municipal League during the 1983 General Assembly Session. She is a senior in public administration at Ferrum College.

1983 Achievement Awards Program

**Entries due by
Monday, April 25**



1983 Achievement Awards Program

Virginia Municipal League

Be a winner. Last year Hampton, James City County, and Falls Church were among the localities that carried home an award.

All member localities are eligible to enter but an entry cannot be shared by more than two localities and both localities have to be members of the VML.

Choosing an entry

Localities should select a program that has assisted its citizens or employees regardless of how simple it may seem compared with other previous award entries. Programs in employee training, transportation, recreation and solid waste, among others, are all eligible for an Achievement Award entry.

New services offered by localities are sources for award entries. Are informational brochures for senior citizens or recruitment campaigns for public safety personnel being used? Was a new format for council meetings created that made them more productive? Are department heads working together more closely because of a different approach to staff meetings? Award entries do not have to save money—they can save time and prevent headaches.

A main concern is whether the program has shown good results. If a new service is chosen for an entry, make sure enough time has evolved between the time the service goes into effect and the time of entering the program.

Preparing the entry

Each entry should be typed double spaced and should not exceed eight (8) pages. A cover page indicating the name of the project, category, locality and bearing the signature of the chief elected official is required. Black and white photographs, line art, renderings or newspaper clippings can be sent with the entry but cannot be larger than letter size. There must be three (3) copies of each entry and of all photographs, line art, etc.

The entry should summarize the program's background, activities and results: what the program is; why the program was needed; what the program was set out to do; how the program was set up; how the program operates; what it costs; who benefited from the program; what the program has achieved and what the future is of the program. Keep the entry simple and clear.

Several of the entries are enclosed in notebooks or report covers. While this is a good practice, it is not mandatory.

A screening committee as well as the panel of judges will review the entries. Appearance, grammar, and good writing style are considered.

Categories

Twelve awards are available—one for towns, and one for cities and counties in each of the six areas that parallel the VML policy committees. Localities may enter all six categories but may only have one entry in a given category.

The panel of judges has the authority to withhold an award in any category if no entry is exceptional. Below are the categories:

- Community Development (housing and urban renewal)
- Effective Government (budget, management, training programs)
- Environmental Quality (water quality, local planning and land use, energy use, solid waste management)
- Human Development (child care programs, health care, alcohol and mental health programs, recreational services, education, employment)
- Public Safety (court system, fire and rescue services, emergency preparedness, law enforcement)
- Transportation (streets and roads improvement, public transportation systems, bicycle ways, transportation of the handicapped)



Deadline

All entries must be postmarked on or before Monday, April 25, 1983. Unlike in past years, there is no application form but don't delay—start now selecting and preparing your entry.

Announcement

Winners are announced in September and awards are given at the League's Annual Conference, September 18-20 in James City County.

All entries become the property of the Virginia Municipal League.

Need more information? Call Charlotte Kingery, 804/649-8471.

Chesterfield Issues Fire Instructions In Braille

Until a couple of years ago, the visually handicapped person was almost ignored when it came to fire safety. The person who had difficulty seeing could not call the fire department unless he had memorized the telephone number. Worse, the handicapped had to depend on a sighted person to lead him out of the burning building.

All of this changed when the Chesterfield County Fire Department learned of the visually handicapped person's plight.

"The majority of visually handicapped citizens are not totally blind but are partially sighted and have the ability to distinguish between light and darkness. They would be more likely to panic in a fire situation than a totally blind person."

Kay Marano, fire safety education officer for Chesterfield, discovered the problem when she was conducting fire safety education classes for fifth graders in the county school system and for organizations and other groups. Since that time, changes have been made to help the visually handicapped.

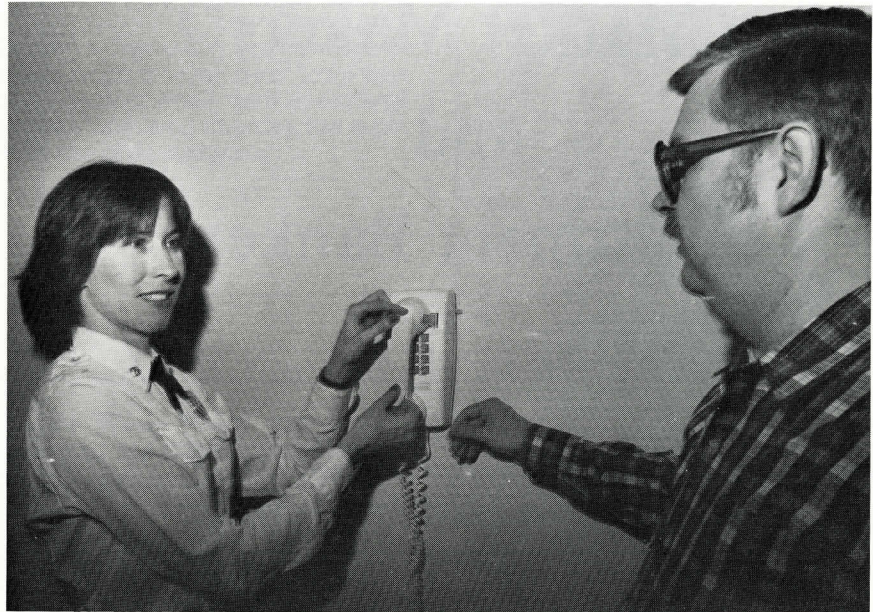
Training Materials

With the assistance of Frank Penland, former executive director of the Virginia Commission for the Visually Handicapped, the fire department developed a fire escape planning handbook, a home fire hazard survey and a general fire safety book. The commission reproduced the materials in braille and large print. Visually handicapped persons can learn how to develop their own home escape plan and conduct emergency drills. How to identify potential fire hazards in the home is also included in the books.

These braille and large print materials are primarily distributed through the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped and citizens can check them out from the Chesterfield Central Library.

Braille Labels

Fire Chief Robert L. Eanes, who didn't think these measures went



Kay Marano, fire safety education officer of Chesterfield, places a braille sticker on Frank Penland's telephone.

far enough to assist the visually handicapped, developed emergency phone number stickers in braille. The county previously provided the capability for an emergency teletype system for the hearing impaired so the braille labels were a natural followup to provide for its handicapped citizens.

Education officer Marano got the heavy duty label material suitable for typing braille and Steve Delaney, a blind operator for the county employee cafeteria, typed the labels with a braille typewriter—all in one weekend.

The stickers put the caller in touch with the fire department and rescue squads. A blind or visually handicapped person's best alternative in the event of fire is to call the department rather than try to locate the fire. The smell of smoke is very frightening for the sighted person and the fear is compounded when a person cannot see.

For those partially sighted, Chesterfield changed the color of the labels to help the individual read the label. The state Department for the Visually Handicapped suggested trying larger print on a dull yellow label instead of the bright red sticker now used by the sighted person. These large print labels are also helpful to county residents who have difficulty reading small print.

"About 12,300 legally blind individuals reside in Virginia and an estimated 858 new cases of legal blindness are added each year."

The stickers, available from the Fire Prevention Bureau and the Department for the Visually Handicapped, are distributed through the county's 12 fire stations.

Penland, legally blind for the past 14 years, received the first braille emergency telephone label. "It's like having a neighbor who is there 24 hours a day. This braille label is my entree into the fire department," he said.

The materials are so successful that the Maryland School for the Blind now uses them and at least 50 fire departments, including the Los Angeles County Fire Department, have requested copies of the information.

The response to the program has been enthusiastic and although it is relatively simple, it gives the visually handicapped a sense of security in an area that before created much anxiety in their minds.

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The Department of Development Administration of Prince William County, Northern Virginia (population 150,000). Supervise a six person plan review office for all trade disciplines. Requires any combination of education and experience equivalent to BS in Civil Engineering and/or registration as a professional engineer, and 2-3 years experience, preferably in concrete and steel design and/or analysis. Eligible for registration as a Professional Engineer in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Prefer candidate with excellent oral and written communication skills. Duties include performing structural review and analysis on plans and specifications submitted for permit, coordinating and scheduling the review of the other disciplines, and performing periodic field inspections when required. Excellent benefits package and starting salary of \$21,655 to \$25,069 (salary commensurate with experience). Apply by April 1, 1983, Personnel Director, 9300 Peabody Street, Manassas, Virginia 22110. (703) 360-9280.

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VA Cities Capture Awards

The Norfolk, Richmond and Virginia Beach city governments have won five awards in the Sixth Annual City Hall Public Information Awards Competition, a national contest that honors municipalities for excellence in communicating with their employees and the public.

Awards were announced by Raymond L. Bancroft, editor-publisher of *City Hall Digest*, the monthly municipal government newsletter that has sponsored the competition since 1977. The Virginia winning entries were:

Norfolk. A Grand Award for "Norfolk: Breaking Ground For Tomorrow" in the general publications category; an Award of Merit for "Mace" in the employee periodical category; and an Award of Merit for "Norfolk Story" in the annual report category.

Richmond. An Award of Merit for the "City of Richmond Annual Report: 1981-82" in the annual report category.

Virginia Beach. An Award of Merit for "Your Speaker File" in the general publications category.

Almost 300 entries from cities of all sizes in the U.S. and Canada were entered in the 1982 contest's eight categories which included publications, public information projects and audiovisual productions.

Judges were municipal public information officials and other public relations experts from across the nation.

The goal of the contest is to encourage the improvement of various modern communications techniques used by city government to inform their employees and residents about municipal developments.

Hiring Contractors Saves

The Division of Streets and Sewers of Jersey City, New Jersey saved an estimated \$235,000 last year by using city personnel and equipment instead of hiring private contractors for some jobs, and the division could save as much as \$500,000 this year by "in-house" work, said Mayor Gerald McCann.

McCann based his estimates on reports submitted to him by John James, director of the Department

of Public Works, and John Moersdorf, director of the streets and sewers division.

In 1983, according to McCann, the division Moersdorf heads will schedule "in-house" the resurfacing of 50,000 feet of short, dead-end side streets, the reconstruction of 200 corner catch basins and sections of the Liberty Park area, the reconstruction of the main sewer on Canal Street, the overhaul of two pump stations and the resurfacing of 800 feet of Industry Avenue.

Last year's savings by the division of streets and sewers were affected by reductions in the cost of labor and materials for the reconstruction of three streets, and other city projects.

VCU Offers Classes

Virginia Commonwealth University is offering a certificate program in public management and if enough interest is shown by local government employees, the faculty will offer classes on site at government offices.

Recently offered by the Department of Public Administration at VCU, the special feature of the certificate program is the willingness of the faculty to offer classes for 12 or more employees either at lunch time or after work to eliminate commuting to VCU. Currently, the program is offered on campus along with other classes and at the Division of Motor Vehicles, McGuire Veteran's Hospital and Richmond City Hall.

The CPM enables practitioners to gain additional knowledge and skills in public administration without studying for a master's degree. The program is designed for persons interested in taking a limited number of courses or in being exposed to new ideas and concepts. It requires a total of 18 credits at the graduate level in a sequence of management development and public service courses which are the same as those offered to fully matriculated MPA students. Students in the CPM program will take core courses along with a choice of several specialties made up of electives and a concluding three-day weekend workshop to produce a professional development plan.

For an application form or more information, write to University Enrollment Services/Graduate Admissions, VCU, 821 West Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23284 or call, 804/257-0334.

Calendar

VIRGINIA SECTION INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE, May 18-20, 1983, Sheraton Inn, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, June 1-3, 1983, Holiday Inn 39th Street, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

STATE FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, July 13-16, 1983, Holiday Inn Airport, Richmond, Virginia.

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE ANNUAL CONFERENCE, August 21-24, 1983, OMNI, Norfolk, Virginia.

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE 78TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, September 18-20, 1983, Hilton, James City County, Virginia.

VIRGINIA BUILDING OFFICIALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, December 4-7, 1983 Holiday Inn, Hampton, Virginia.

(Commentary, from page 2)

incarceration promise real rehabilitation or do they amount to a "slap on the wrist" that neither rehabilitates nor punishes? To be sure, these are questions that admit to no easy answers.

Assembly Meets

The second Virginia Assembly on Corrections will develop solutions to some of the problems facing the state correctional system. The assembly will be held at Wintergreen on June 16-18, 1983. For further information about the Virginia Assembly on Corrections, the four regional conferences that will follow it and how you can participate in them, please contact Albert W. Spengler, Institute of Government, 207 Minor Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903 (telephone 804/924-0950).



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Tax Rates Available

The Institute of Government, the Virginia Municipal League and the Virginia Association of Counties are pleased to announce the first edition of *Tax Rates in Virginia Cities, Counties and Selected Towns*. The new publication includes the information that previously was presented in three separate publications. The report, published by the Institute of Government, includes 1982 tax data for all Virginia cities and counties and 77 of the 90 towns with a population of 1,000 or more. (The 13 towns with a population over 1,000 that were excluded from the report did not respond to our request for data.)

Tax Rates is divided into two sections, an analytical section and a set of 17 appendixes that present in tabular form the actual tax rates and tax provisions for a variety of local taxes in the surveyed localities. The analytical sections presents a summary of selected 1982 legislative changes in the *Virginia Code* with respect to local taxation as well as in-depth examination of the use of four excise sales taxes by localities. The discussion of these four taxes—the meals tax, the transient occupancy tax (commonly referred to as the rooms tax), the cigarette tax and the admissions tax—is summarized below.

The current structure of the four excise taxes is a patchwork of varying rates and authority. The variation in the authority that localities have to levy these taxes is probably the most controversial issue surrounding these taxes. As a rule, cities and towns are granted the authority (indirectly) to levy these taxes under the "general taxing powers" found in their charters. Counties, on the other hand, can levy these taxes only by securing special enabling legislation from the General Assembly. In recent years the question of whether the authority to impose the rooms and meals taxes ought to be extended to all localities has been the subject of much debate in the General Assembly. As this article went to press, legislators in the 1983 General Assembly session were still discussing this question.

The reluctance of the legislature to expand local authority to levy the meals tax, now levied by 18 cities, may be due in part to the charge that the tax is regressive. The meals tax applies to both fast-food establishments and "five-star" restaurants and thereby falls upon low-in-

come and high-income consumers alike. One alternative to the method currently used by cities to impose the meals tax might make the tax more progressive. The so-called "hotdog exemption" would exempt meals under a certain dollar amount—say, meals under \$2—from the tax. Although this exemption might make the tax more difficult to administer, the revenue lost by the exemption could be offset by increasing the tax on those meals not exempted. For example, instead of levying a two percent tax on all meals, a city might impose a three percent tax on meals over \$2.

The transient occupancy tax, which is levied by 29 localities, tends to be less controversial than the meals tax, in part because the rooms tax lacks the regressive characteristics of the meals tax. From the perspective of localities levying the rooms tax, its attraction may be attributed to the fact that the tax is paid primarily by nonresidents. Although more localities impose the rooms tax than the meals tax, the rooms tax tends to be a less lucrative source of local revenue than the meals tax. On the average, the sales tax on meals provides about three percent of total local revenue as opposed to one percent of the tax on rooms.

In contrast to the rooms and meals taxes, other local excise taxes have attracted little statewide attention in recent years. The use of these other taxes, however, is not insignificant. Twenty-three localities currently impose a tax on cigarettes, while nine cities have an admissions tax. Four counties have the power to impose an admissions tax but have chosen not to do so.

While only a minority of Virginia's localities employ one or more of the local excise taxes—whether on cigarettes, admissions, rooms, or meals—the prospect is for wider adoption of these taxes. With federal and state cutbacks, localities are looking for alternative revenue sources that will allow them to continue providing public services at their current levels without resorting to increases in the property tax. For this reason, these four excise sales taxes are very appealing. They are relatively easy to administer and can generate substantial amounts of revenue.

(Copies of *Tax Rates* may be obtained from the League or the Institute.)

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