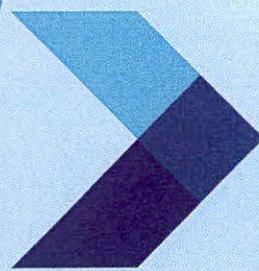


Forward Thinking



A Publication of Future of Hampton Roads

Summer/Fall 2024



We Have Our Eye on Our Airport

by Joel Rubin, Managing Editor

On a recent night at Harbor Park in Norfolk, when 10,000 people of all ages, races, genders, and walks of life and hailing from every locality in the 757,

crowded the grandstands and concourses to enjoy baseball and beer, I marveled at the scene.

Harbor Park is not new (built in 1993) and its capacity only AAA size (about 12,000 seats), but it's a superb asset for Hampton Roads. The public, especially when light rail to travel there is free, loves it. And it's not the only edifice that continues to serve us well. Scope and Hampton Coliseum, both in their 50's, amphitheaters in VA Beach and Portsmouth, plus concert halls, museums, convention centers, a casino and other attractions dot the landscape. And we collectively frequent them, Atlantic Park probably the next venue to tempt our time and disposable income.

Which leads me to our airport, that is called Norfolk International (NI) but bestrides both that city and Virginia Beach and is actually owned, not by Norfolk but a separate authority. At a recent authority meeting, I learned that ORF, which could use another runway and is hemmed in by water and highways, is still "killing it" financially. A record 5-million passengers will arrive or depart from ORF this year, up 10% over 2023. Breeze Airways now takes us to the west coast, Frontier to San Juan, Spirit to Boston, and more

carriers are looking at our airfield beside the Botanical Gardens.

Other airports covet the seasonal mix ours boasts, basically half business in the cooler months, half pleasure in the summer ones. To what do we owe this success? It's the vast scope of our region, from Virginia Beach (the home or destination of most air travelers) to Chesapeake, the Outer Banks (yes, ORF is NE NC's airport), as well as Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk et al. Once the expanded HRBT opens and traffic flows more smoothly, expect even more Peninsula residents to come east for Delta, American, and Southwest flights.



And NI is undergoing a renaissance, with nearly a billion dollars of improvements on the books. Half will go toward an enhanced departure terminal, a fifth to a central rental car facility, the balance to the airport's first on-property hotel, runway, gate and parking upgrades, a new people mover, fuel farm and more. In June, airport and civic leaders broke ground on two facilities, expansion of

**"We Have Our Eye on Our Airport",
continued on Page 7**

HR Trivia

Route 60 crosses Virginia from east to west (and beyond), meandering 303 miles from Virginia Beach to the West Virginia line. In Hampton Roads, it has many street and highway names. Identify as many as you can from Newport News to the oceanfront. Answer on page 7.

To suggest a topic and a writer, visit www.757future.com/forwardthinking

LOOK WHAT'S INSIDE

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Real Regional Economic Development is Alive and Kicking in Hampton Roads

by Jim Noel, Director EVRIFA, Hampton Roads Alliance



EVRIFA. It hardly rolls off the tongue, but the Eastern Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority (EVRIFA) has the potential to reshape how we collectively grow and share in the benefits of economic development.

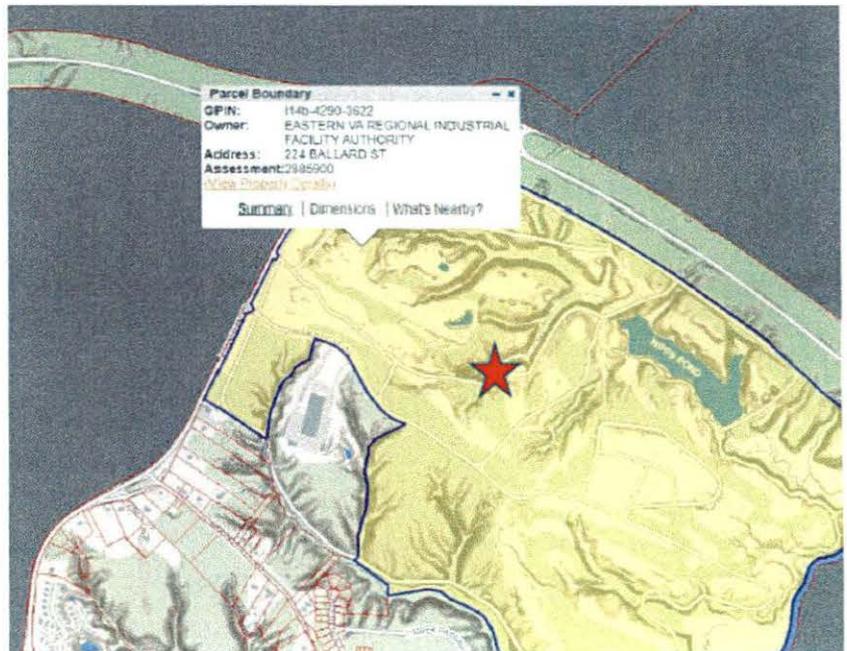
As the former economic development director of York County for almost 29 years, I have had a front row seat for this evolution. There has long been a 432-acre site, owned by the federal then the state government, that has sat empty. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with that, but the parcel, off I-64 near Cheatham Annex and Water Country USA, could generate jobs and tax revenue, and in this case, also renewable energy.

But securing enough money to acquire the property, study the options and pay for municipal infrastructure was too much for York to do alone. It required more investors. Enter EVRIFA, a state enabled entity of localities willing to put up some dollars in exchange for a share of the taxes and revenues generated when the land sells. For the York site, we did explore a golf course and a drone testing facility before receiving solid interest from CI Renewables for a 250-acre, 20-megawatt solar farm, with roughly 70 developable acres left over for other commercial interests. Would our Hampton Roads neighbors see value for themselves by joining in the funding and the eventual payoff? (By the way, the up-front cost for those last 70 acres after leasing the 250 to CI would be roughly \$70,000, quite a deal when you consider the sale price for it could be nearly \$3.5 million).

Eleven localities, including Isle of Wight, Hampton, Newport News, James City, Chesapeake, Franklin, Gloucester, York, Williamsburg, Poquoson, and most recently, Virginia Beach, have joined EVRIFA, with an elected and appointed representative from each on the board. We only needed two members to go in on the York County site, and guess what, a half dozen did.

Five are from the Peninsula, Isle of Wight being the lone "south of the James" member on this one. With a \$150,000 Go Virginia grant to help form the EVRIFA and seed the property initiative, those six bought into the development at a jointly negotiated rate. They will reap a proportionate share of all taxes generated from the property along with any transactional revenue.

Having retired from government service (after nearly 43 years), I am no longer administering this for York County, but the Hampton Roads Alliance has me on their payroll on a part time basis to manage EVRIFA. It's exciting because this structure scales up so easily and can support a variety of regional initiatives. A



lightly populated locality, for instance, could have a huge shovel ready site needing a friend with less land available but an interest in ROI. Norfolk, meet New Kent, or something like that.

I hope all our Hampton Roads counties and cities will join the EVRIFA, the first one in the eastern part of our state. I encourage them to bring land and ideas to the table, and let's figure out how the unique powers of this organization can further unite us as business partners. Because so many of us work elsewhere from where we live, why not view economic development as a regional activity too? Right now, we are on the ground floor of this wonderful model, but the sky's the limit. Just say it, EVRIFA.

These Beach Kids Had a Marvelous Monday in Portsmouth

By Joel Rubin



balance of their day spent outside at real life industry internships. “They will get full time jobs as soon as they graduate. That’s how well prepared they will be.”

And there’s the demand for their talents, including from offshore wind companies. “There is welding happening right here at PMT and more out at sea once these pieces are in place and producing energy,” said Sigi Huerta who runs the terminal for the VA Port Authority. And it’s not just welders they want. “I was very impressed with the number of other trades they need,” said skill seeker Aiden Eastwood.

After touring PMT, the seniors visited TCC’s Skilled Trades Academy, also in Portsmouth, and then the school’s student center to hobnob with profs, all part of Wind Energy Rocks, a signature creation of

You might say many of the “smart” students today are the ones in vocational technical education, the trades, where opportunities are abundant, jobs are secure, pay is healthy and college, at least four years of it, is optional.

The 40 high school seniors on this luxury bus are learning welding in Virginia Beach and about manufacturing across the region, which is why they were touring Portsmouth Marine Terminal on a recent

Monday morning and ogling at the long monopiles and the tall transition pieces that will comprise part of the Costal Virginia Offshore Wind project.

“My kids are the best,” said nine-year instructor Joe Santos, a veteran welder whose program is so popular that the city is adding a second welding lab. Many of these fourth years are only in class a couple hours, the



WINDSdays in partnership with the Hampton Roads Workforce Council and the Commonwealth through a grant. Dominion Energy and Taste shared the cost of lunch.

“These Beach Kids”, continued on Page 7

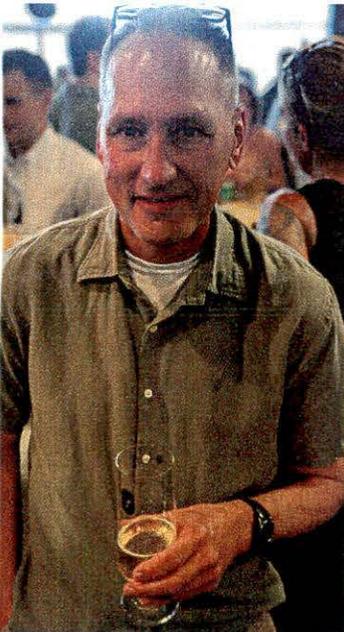
Why Not Here?

By Joel Rubin

At realtor/marketing savant Jake Maines' monthly Networking Happy Hour, held at various watering holes in Virginia Beach, you can learn a lot about why young people are in Hampton Roads and for how long...just by asking.



Tatiana Usynina is a transplant from the Ural region of Russia, brought here by an "agency" at age 24. Now 40, she has been married for 15 years, her husband an employee at the Navy Exchange. They have three children, a 12-year-old and 7-year-old twins. "I am a life and health insurance agent and enjoy it, because I'm helping people." Now a US citizen, this was her first networking event and hopefully she picked up some new clients. "I really like it here, it's manageable, affordable."



Software developer **Zack Lauck**, who settled here after 30 years in the Navy as a helicopter pilot, is not so enthralled. "I think this area is not particularly interesting," pointing to its lack of hills and walkable neighborhoods, Virginia Beach not being Ghent or Old Towne. "You have to drive everywhere here. I've stayed because my wife has a successful event planning business. My two kids have said they would never come back here," says Zack, who despite his lack of enthusiasm was meeting people at Jake's event at

Voodoo Brewing near Town Center.



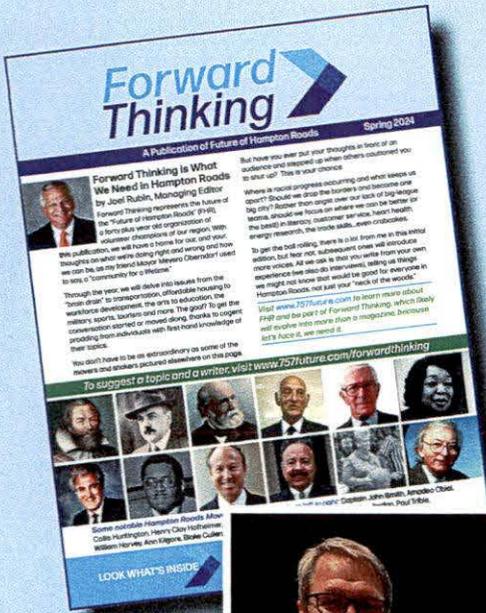
So was **Travis Tisdale**, Granby High Class of 1995, who earned an associate's degree in Indiana before returning home to finish college at ODU. "I was then at Trader Publishing for 18 years" before taking his upbeat personality, sales

skills (and love of music) to Sinclair Communications, owner of five radio stations from the Coast and BobFM to WNIS and 96X. "I cannot imagine not being here," says Travis, who skis, fishes and goes to Tides' games. "What can't you do here?"

At Voodoo, he was chatting with **Paul Telkamp** who runs a pair of businesses, one providing Microsoft services, the other vacation rentals. What brought him to Hampton Roads? "I grew up in Bampa, Texas, near Amarillo and was working there when the economy cratered in 2008 and I lost my job," says Paul. "I went on Linked-in and said I would go anywhere for a decent one." The Navy Reserve here reached out, and Paul took it. He's also been with Ferguson and Stihl but now he's his own boss, with three kids. "I really appreciate the diversity here and the climate."

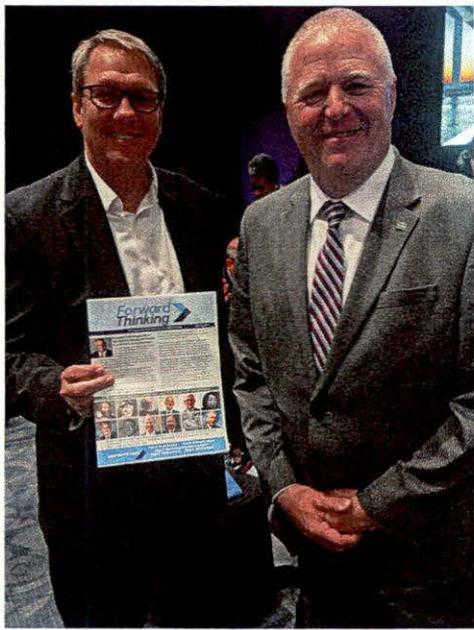
Trevor Knight is a native, a 2014 graduate of Kempsville High and Mount Olive University in North Carolina. "That place either smelled like pickles or a slaughterhouse," Trevor recalls but he did earn a degree in music production and pedagogy. Today he is a New York Life agent and contemplating his next move. "I don't think I'll be here forever although I enjoy being close to family." Maybe that or Jake Maines will keep Trevor in Tidewater.





Many thanks to the head guys at the Hampton Roads and Peninsula Chambers, Bryan Stephens and Bob McKenna, for greenlighting distribution of our first Forward Thinking at six State of the City events this spring. Each was well attended, more than 4,000 guests total to hear what's happening in the area.

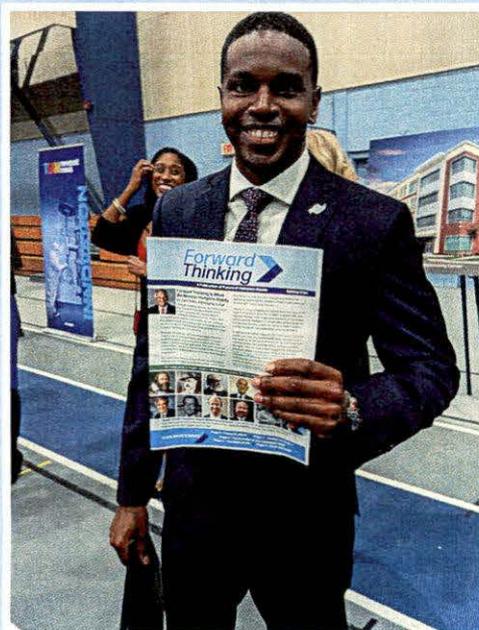
Mayors, councilmembers, regional execs and business leaders all praised this new effort to talk up regional projects and opportunities. *Interested in being on our email list for all future quarterly issues...or perhaps writing something "thoughtful" and provocative yourself? Go to www.757future.com and complete a brief form.*



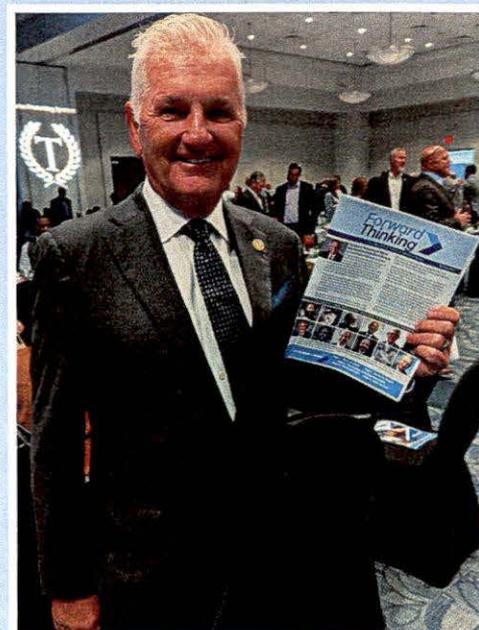
Hampton Roads Alliance President Doug Smith and Hampton Roads Planning District Commission Executive Director Bob Crum



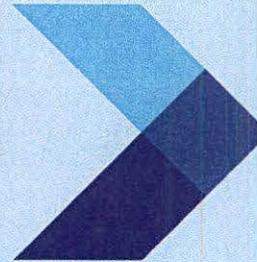
Va Beach Councilwoman Amelia Ross-Hammond



Newport News Mayor Phillip Jones

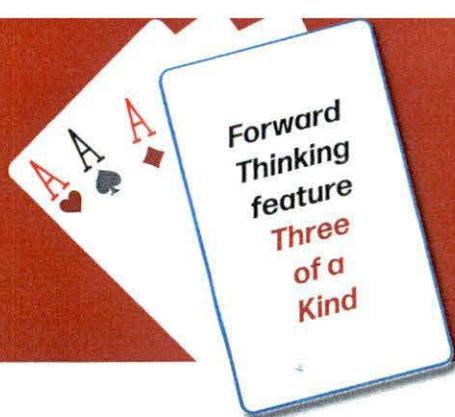


Chesapeake Mayor Rick West



Three of a Kind: Trio of Peninsula Electeds Reflect on 50 Years of Service

By Joel Rubin, Managing Editor



Looking at **Billy Hobbs** and **Tina Vick**, you would never know they each grew up, says Hobbs, "in the numbered streets" in Newport News. He was 24th and Marshall, she 12th and Ivy, in the disadvantaged southeast section of the city. And though Tina (yes, she's the aunt of QB and now FOX football commentator Michael) was a good student, active at Ferguson High, role model to her friends, few thought she or Hobbs, 11 years older and from Newport News High, would become long-standing community leaders as adults.

Boy were they wrong.

These Peninsula products, both one of six kids in their families, found their calling, she working with the underserved (poor pregnant women through the Resource Mothers program), he as a mechanic ("it got me off the streets"). Hobbs took his love of cars up the ladder to become Vice President and GM of Hampton Chevrolet. He also spearheaded the growth of Hampton's Coliseum Central Business Improvement District, was on the city's zoning board for a dozen years and for the last twelve, on City Council.

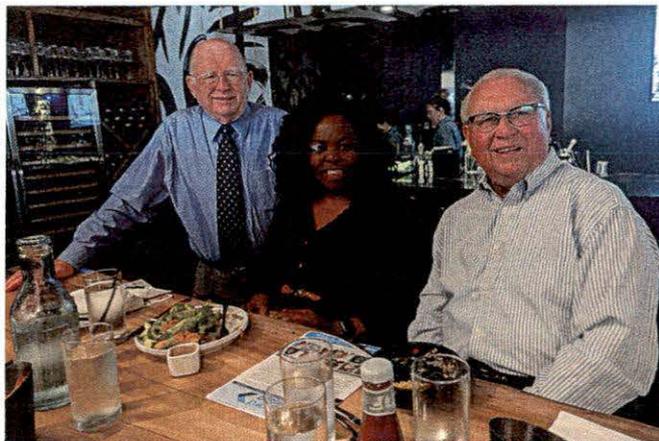
Before winning her first Newport News Council election in 2008, Tina Vick was already known for her writing skills, starting as the "humanitarian reporter" for the school newspaper before earning a communications degree from VCU, funded in part by the first scholarship ever awarded to a public housing resident. And around her ample community work, she wrote a book, "Growing up Vick: The Strength and Resilience of the Vick Family," which chronicles how they all dealt with a host of issues, including Michael's 2007 dog-fighting dilemma.

Tom Shepperd, the third of our Three of A Kind selectees who gathered for lunch at Sate Restaurant, a new hot spot in Newport News' City Center, was

raised with few resources in what he calls "a red neck farm area" of Jacksonville, FL. But he yearned to serve in the military to protect his country and did so in the Air Force, piloting mostly A-10's over numerous airfields around the world. Before retiring at Langley AFB in Hampton as a Colonel, he made it to the Pentagon and a spot on the Joint Staff under General Colin Powell. The military taught him leadership and the ability to function in complex systems, perfect training for government service. Shepperd followed political mentors Jo Ann Davis and Melanie Rapp onto the York Board of Super-

visors, but rather than seek higher office, he stayed there, winning reelection six times (all unopposed) and intends to run again in 2027.

His motivation? "Helping residents solve problems," says Tom. "I find that most people have very little understanding of how government works and become very frustrated, so I made it my mission to help them work through the processes to get things done."



Tom Shepperd, Tina Vick, Billy Hobbs, Jr.

Hobbs, who says he "eats a lot of cold dinners because I'm out so late on city business" looks forward, at age 72, to another term. "I've always been in it for the kids." And Hampton during his tenure has made strides in that direction (its academy system is highly regarded) and in boosting youth sports through the Boo Williams complex while also spiffing up War Memorial Stadium for the hometown Pilots.

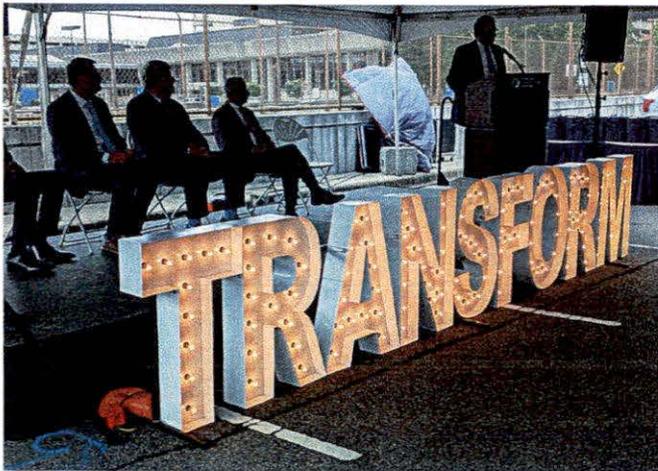
Vick is proud of her "life of service," before and since her time on council, where she's pushed for infrastructure improvements, code enforcement and retail options, including a new grocery store, back in the city's east end, as well as more workforce training programs. A broker, she owns Tina Vick Real Estate Agency and Development Company.

"Three of a Kind", continued on Page 7

“We Have Our Eye on Our Airport”, cont. from Page 1

Concourse A and Federal Facilities Service, critical step in luring real international flights. It's no wonder that the estimable Mark Perryman, a highly respected industry consultant, came here two years ago to run the airport and is considered a superstar by his regional exec peers.

Every area has at least one principal airport. We are fortunate that ours is so convenient and operated so masterfully with major upgrades and more flight options on the way. Forward Thinking and Future of Hampton Roads, as well as the Hampton Roads Alliance and other visionary organizations, are focused on air transportation and how to utilize and market available resources, most particularly Norfolk International, to optimize their value. Stay tuned.



HR Trivia Answer

Route 60 (generally) follows these roads in our region.
Newport News: I-64, Warwick Boulevard, 25th Street, Huntington Avenue (one block)
Hampton: Kecoughtan Road and I-64
Norfolk: Ocean View Avenue, I-264
Virginia Beach: Shore Drive, Atlantic Avenue, Pacific Avenue

“Three of a Kind”, cont. from Page 6

Of the trio, Tom has been most active on the regional level. “I have chaired the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, the HR Transportation Planning Organization and the HR Military and Federal Facilities Alliance” and is a member of the HR Transportation Accountability Commission. “It has been wonderful watching all the localities, on both sides of the water, jointly prioritize highway projects,” he says. “I was happy for instance to see Chesapeake get a new High-Rise Bridge, the improvements of the I-64/I-264 Interchange in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, and the widening of I-64 on the Peninsula along with the HRBT expansion. Fourteen governments working together to solve transportation challenges is awesome.”

For Tom, Tina and Billy, public education is a high priority, but they know that there is so much more to do to help children navigate through their teen years without becoming perpetrators or victims of crime. It starts at the local level, and these three individuals, with a combined half century of elected office under their belts and now renewed appreciation for each other, are in no rush to stop serving.

“These Beach Kids Had a Marvelous Monday in Portsmouth”, cont. from page 3

“Thank you so much,” said Jenny Ailstock, who connects students with jobs and apprenticeships. “We are always looking for opportunities to expose our students to possible careers in Hampton Roads, whether it's in our city or another,” says Beach superintendent Don Robertson. “This day and for these kids, Portsmouth was the right place to be.”





Meet Dr. Antipas Harris, Newest Member of the FHR Board

“I See Myself as a Bridge, Helping Overcome Divides”

By Dr. Antipas Harris

Future Hampton Roads draws upon my deepest passion - bridging divides and strengthening unity toward a shared success. We can go further when we lock arms as one region.

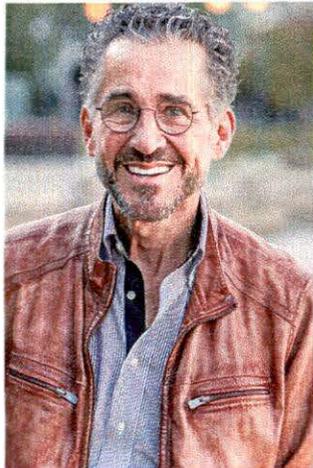
I have been a student for much of my life. I earned a BA in Religion and Creative Music Technology from LaGrange College, a Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology at Emory University, an STM from Yale University, a Doctor of Ministry from Boston University, and a PhD from St. Thomas University. I am a published author with numerous articles, newspaper

columns, chapters, edited volumes, and monographs to my credit.

I see myself as a bridge, helping overcome divides between church traditions, interfaith and interracial communities, faith and education, and faith and public life. I co-chaired Hands United Building Bridges (HUBB), served as Vice Chair for Interfaith Relations on the executive board for the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, hosted forums on issues of race and led the annual Evening of Hope in partnership with Virginia Symphony Orchestra. I am also the founding president and CEO of the Urban Renewal Center.

Over the past 18 years, I have taught at various universities and theological schools, including Sacred Heart University, New York Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, Portland Theological Seminary, Vanguard University, Virginia Christian College, and Regent University. I have also held administrative roles and served as a tenured associate professor at Regent University and am currently an adjunct in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at ODU. And by the way, I also like to travel, fish, and hang out at bars with friends.

Because of my experience in religious education, civic entrepreneurship, and community engagement, I look forward to helping Future Hampton Roads build ideological and relational bridges to strengthen the region. I have seen the power of togetherness and want to show the world that Hampton Roads is better together!



Portsmouth & Hampton Lead the Way on Fair Compensation for Council and Mayor

By Greg Garrett, Chair, Future of Hampton Roads

Every local City Council should do what Portsmouth's and Hampton's did recently.

Thanks to a new state law that amends the maximum amount cities can pay their local elected officials, these two cities nearly doubled the salary of their councilmembers from \$23,000 to \$43,000 and the mayors to \$47,000 from \$25,000. Now some citizens might object to such high raises at one time, but the fact is, the compensation, which hasn't risen in a quarter century, has been too paltry for too long. The mayors alone should be earning over \$52,000 if their remuneration for services rendered had just kept up with cost-of-living.

And speaking of remuneration, we forget that these men and women are “on” 24/7. As Portsmouth's Vernon Tillage, who holds down a full-time job while also overseeing the city's business, told the Pilot, “I can't take the title of councilman off when I go to Wal-Mart. I can't even take it off when I go to a restaurant with my family.”

It certainly took some political courage for both councils to take this action (Richmond's raised theirs too), but there was scant opposition from the public, although it will be interesting to see if it becomes an election issue this fall. Let's hope it doesn't, which might lead other councils to increase salaries too. And for those skeptics who think this will lead to a regular ramp up of pay, the General Assembly stipulated that once this goes into effect (7/25), councils can only boost wages “by an inflation factor not to exceed five percent.”

Based on the constant public scrutiny of their performances, and the fact that factors beyond their control often dictate outcomes, I would not expect to see a regular rush to pad compensation. These adjustments were just way overdue.