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The Catalyst

A Message from the President

Hi friends,

I'm writing from a beautiful high-desert city in New Mexico, where my wife and I are currently vacationing. I've spent the better part of the last two weeks traveling for both work and leisure.

Recently, the Chamber led a delegation of Hampton Roads innovators to the [Kendall Square](#) area of Massachusetts, near Boston, to engage with leaders from the renowned innovation hub surrounding [MIT](#). More details about this visit are available below. We also enjoyed some sightseeing in Boston, a truly remarkable city!

This week, my wife and I have been exploring Santa Fe and Sedona, Arizona, both incredibly scenic destinations. Tomorrow, our vacation concludes, and we'll be heading back to the Peninsula. After a 27-year career of global travel, we are happy to call the Peninsula home.

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are fortunate to have exceptional resources, including all of you, the businesses that are members of the Chamber. The Chamber staff and I are dedicated to working with our community partners to foster an environment that supports economic growth, and we are committed to serving you, our members.

Please let us know how we can better serve you.



Bob McKenna
President/CEO,
[Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#)



VIRGINIA
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Innovation Ecosystem News
- Economic Development News
- Legislative Update
- Business Tips
- Volunteer Opportunities
- LEAD Peninsula Recap
- LEAD Peninsula Alumni News
- LEAD Higher Recap
- Upcoming Events
- New Member Spotlight

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM *news*



Peninsula Leaders Visit "Most Innovative Square Mile" to Spark Regional Growth

By Bob McKenna, [Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#)

The Virginia Peninsula Chamber recently led a group of 26 regional leaders to [Kendall Square](#) in **Cambridge, Massachusetts**—widely recognized as “the most innovative square mile on the planet.” **The goal:** to explore how Hampton Roads can build its own thriving innovation ecosystem by learning from the world-class innovation hub that surrounds MIT.

Kendall Square is home to cutting-edge startups, global biotech firms, and elite academic institutions. The two-day visit included tours of the [Cambridge Innovation Center](#) (CIC), [The Engine](#) (MIT’s deep tech incubator), and [LabCentral](#), as well as high-level panel discussions on scaling innovation, venture capital, defense technology, and university-industry collaboration.

Attendees represented a wide cross-section of Hampton Roads leadership, including representatives from higher education, economic development, private industry, entrepreneurship networks, and public service organizations such as [NASA Langley](#) and the [Hampton Roads Sanitation District](#).

“Our region has world-class assets in research, industry, and workforce,” said Bob McKenna, [Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#) President & CEO. “Now we need to

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The group will reconvene in May to develop messaging, strategies, and action steps to help position Hampton Roads as a national leader in BlueTech, autonomous systems, and defense innovation. The visit was a key step toward accelerating innovation-led economic growth and turning shared regional strengths into lasting opportunity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT *news*



Governor Youngkin and Mayor Gray tour new Hampton Logistics Center

By Bob McKenna, [Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#)

Governor Glenn Youngkin joined [City of Hampton](#) Mayor Jimmy Gray and local leaders for a tour of the future [Hampton Logistics Center](#), a \$70 million industrial development featuring over 500,000 square feet of Class A space. The center, set to open this fall, is poised to boost job creation and economic growth in the region.



HLC

HAMPTON LOGISTICS CENTER

Governor Youngkin highlighted the site as a symbol of Virginia's rising status as a top state for business, noting, "This is the future. This is why companies and

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Located at 1012 N. Campus Parkway near I-64 and the [Port of Virginia](#), the two-building site offers prime access to both domestic and global markets. One building is 230,874 square feet, and the other is 275,685 square feet. Mayor Gray emphasized its strategic location, in close proximity to the Port of Virginia and I-64, saying, “This project helps put Hampton at the front of the line for business expansion.”

Developers [Manekin LLC](#) and [Turnbridge Equities](#), in partnership with the [City of Hampton](#), are currently seeking tenants to bring jobs and momentum to this major logistics hub.

LEGISLATIVE *update*



Public Policy Update

By Chris Davidson, Government Relations Consultant

As we continue advocating for the interests of our business community, the Virginia Peninsula Chamber is proud to announce a robust lineup of events designed to foster meaningful dialogue between local businesses, elected officials,

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Candidate Debate Series focused on key races in the region.

[READ MORE](#)

BUSINESS *tips*

Part 1: Avoid These Small Business Launch Mistakes

By [SCORE Williamsburg](#).

The biggest mistake when launching a small business? Running before walking. Too many entrepreneurs jump in without a plan or proper research to confirm demand. Consider these common launch traps:

Failing to validate your business model – Use tools like the Business Model Canvas (BMC) to test assumptions before investing time and money.

Ignoring customer feedback – Your idea is only great if customers want it. Validate your solution with real buyers.

Lacking an elevator pitch – Clearly articulate your business in a concise, compelling way that grabs attention.

Stay tuned for more key mistakes in Part 2!

In the interim for updates and free expert guidance on navigating these and other small business challenges, visit SCORE at <https://www.score.org/williamsburg>.



LEAD PENINSULA *recap*



Government Day

By Jaime Parrish, [Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#)

On Thursday, April 10th, the [LEAD Peninsula Class of 2025](#) participated in a Mock City Council meeting at [Hampton City Hall](#). During this simulation, facilitated by Hampton City Manager, Mary Bunting, the group voted to approve this land use case 6-1. Following the Land Development Exercise, City Attorney, Courtney Sydnor, and Deputy Director of Community Development, Kimberly Mikel, joined the group for a presentation on local government. A special thank you to the Government Day Supporting Sponsor: [City of Hampton, Virginia](#).

The [Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#) is pleased to announce we are **accepting applications** for the **LEAD Peninsula Class of 2026!** [LEAD Peninsula](#) is already a respected and outstanding program. Please consider helping us to expand its influence and impact and to drive continual improvement by nominating and enrolling one of your recognized or emerging leaders. [Application packets](#) will be accepted through **Friday, May 23, 2025**. For more information on the LEAD Peninsula program, or for questions on the application process, please contact Jaime Parrish at jaime@vpcc.org.

LEAD PENINSULA ALUMNI *news*

The [LEAD Peninsula Alumni Network \(LPAN\)](#) is seeking self-nominations for the following open committee positions:

- Recruitment Committee Lead
- Recruitment Committee Deputy Lead
- Recruitment Committee Members
- Projects Committee Deputy Lead
- Projects Committee Members
- Community Engagement Committee Members

Self-nominations will be collected through April 30, 2025 via <https://forms.gle/DgPUiE5EPNokNnsH7>. Learn more about these open positions by visiting <https://www.virginiapeninsulachamber.com/lead-peninsula-alumni-network/>. Still have questions? Email Jaime Parrish at jaime@vpcc.org.



SAVE THE DATE: Join the [LEAD Peninsula Alumni Network](#) at the [Lionsbridge FC](#) game on Wednesday, June 11, 2025. Bring your family and friends to cheer on the team. LPAN members can sign up to volunteer at the drink tent, advertise the 50/50 raffle, and promote the [LEAD Peninsula](#) program. LPAN is pleased to announce that we will cover the ticket cost for

member? Join now at <https://bit.ly/LPAN25-26>. More details coming soon - make sure to click the "bell" icon to receive post notifications from the [LPAN LinkedIn group](#). We don't want you to miss this!

SURVEY REQUEST: The [LEAD Peninsula Alumni Network](#) is developing a series of resources to support businesses that (1) do not currently have an internship program, and are interested in establishing one; (2) already have an internship program, but would like to make improvements. Please take a couple of minutes to complete the brief survey ([Google Form](#)). Your responses will be used to develop resources for local businesses. Your information will not be shared with third parties. Thank you in advance for your response!

LEAD HIGHER *recap*



Fundamentals of Systems & Building Your Team Session

By Jaime Parrish, [Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#)

On April 1st the [LEAD Higher Class of 2025](#) gathered once again at the Chamber office, for a session focused on the Fundamentals of Systems. This session was facilitated by William M. Donaldson, PhD, Associate Professor; Director of CNU Small Business Institute; Director, Biotechnology and Management Program, Joseph W. Luter III School of Business, [Christopher Newport University](#) and Mary B. Bunting, City Manager, [City of Hampton, Virginia](#). The two introduced the group to systems and systems thinking – highlighting the

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VOLUNTEER *opportunities*



[Lackey Clinic](#) celebrates 30 years of bringing hope and healing to many who come seeking our help this year. Our volunteers are the heartbeat of what we do, and currently we are recruiting for medical and dental providers along with Spanish interpreters to join the Lackey Team, click [here](#) for more

information about volunteering, [Become A Volunteer - Lackey Clinic](#).

[Lackey Clinic](#) is a faith-based, free and charitable healthcare center, providing comprehensive medical and dental care, and it has been operating in Yorktown, Virginia since 1995. The Clinic seeks to build a bridge of healing and compassion to serve the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of uninsured adults in Virginia. The Clinic's patients are the working class usually earning between \$12-\$25 an hour who earn too much to qualify for Virginia Medicaid but not enough to afford quality health insurance. The Clinic's services include medical, dental, eye care, virtual urgent care, free and low-cost prescriptions, behavioral health services, diabetic education, and spiritual care.



Lackey Clinic

A Free and Charitable Healthcare Center

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UPCOMING *events*

[Wednesday, May 7th](#)

Start, Grow, Thrive

[Thursday, May 8th](#)

Pink Bag Lunch

[Tuesday, May 13th](#)

Coffee Connection

[Tuesday, May 20th](#)

Military/Business Career Fair

[Tuesday, May 20th](#)

Strategies, Purpose, Progress

[Wednesday, May 21st](#)

Small Business Task Force

RSVP NOW



NEW MEMBER *spotlight*

[Newport News Behavioral Health Center](#)

offers programs to address the mental health needs of adolescents, ages 11 to 18.

Our residents may have mental health issues, sexually aggressive behaviors or substance use with an underlying complex trauma. Our well-trained staff of caring professionals creates an environment in which growth can occur.

The clinical team consists of therapists who are either licensed or under supervision for a license. The clinical team also includes licensed professional counselors, certified substance abuse counselors and certified sex offender



Newport News
Behavioral Health Center

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Please join us in welcoming the following new members - our future CHAMPIONS - to the Virginia Peninsula Chamber!

- [CJC Services LLC](#)
- [Urgent Vet Newport News](#)
- [Integrate CCLD](#)
- [THRIVE Consulting Solutions](#)
- [Illusionz Travel, LLC](#)
- [Mane Tame Professionals, LLC](#)
- Providence Realty, Inc.
- [Newport News Behavioral Health](#)
- [Novatech](#)

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