

# THE WAAR GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

MAY 2017

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**“Politics is the art of choosing between the disastrous and the unpalatable.”**

*– John Kenneth Galbraith, Canadian-born economist, public official and diplomat*

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**In this report, we summarize the local, state and national political issues affecting our REALTOR® members in the Williamsburg Area, beginning with...**

## **Local Issues**

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### **CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG**

- Marvin Collins, City Manager, and Michele DeWitt, Economic Development Director, briefed the Public Policy Committee (PPC) in March on the Culinary and Arts District (CAD) for the Bypass Road/Capitol Landing Corridor. The City hopes to redevelop that part of the City and provide opportunities for new businesses in the food and arts economic sectors, sparking investment and activity in that part of the City and increasing the City's overall quality of life. <http://wydaily.com/2016/10/15/city-rezones-northeast-triangle-into-culinary-arts-and-tourism-district/> This new development will be presented by Mr. Collins and Ms. DeWitt at the June 7 Annual Membership meeting.
- Part of the plan includes making improvements to the roads and streets that could be funded partially from VDOT. The City has asked WAAR to support the effort, and in particular, to communicate with VDOT and our state delegation on the importance of providing the funds for this effort.
- The City Manager and Councilman Doug Pons briefed the Public Policy Committee in April on the proposed tourism development fund (TDF) designed to capture additional revenue from visitors to the City. Included in the presentation was information regarding numerous capital projects throughout the City that would be completed if the fund is approved. The PPC has not taken action on the proposal, and is waiting to assess the actions of other area business organizations, including the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance.
- The City Manager, the Assistant City Manager, the CEO and the Legislative Consultant remain in contact regarding the interest of the City in working with WAAR to underwrite a housing market analysis and a housing needs study. The anticipated timeframe during which WAAR will apply to NAR for Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) grant funds is this summer. Stay tuned for more details.
- PPC Members took a field trip to The Stryker Center in the early Spring. What an incredible space! Did you know that private events and meetings can be held there? Did you know that there is a lovely art exhibit that changes every 90 days? The PPC was so impressed that it held its April Committee meeting at The Stryker! Take a minute to visit your local City government

venues! <http://www.williamsburgva.gov/government/about-williamsburg/history/stryker-center-project>

### **JAMES CITY COUNTY**

- The CEO and the Legislative Consultant remain in contact with Dr. Sarah Stafford regarding her work on the James City County HOP grant-funded housing needs study and market analysis. It is likely that we will ask Dr. Stafford to provide an update on the data, given that we are coming up on the two-year mark of the report's completion.
- Also in regard to the JCC housing study, Dr. Stafford and Vaughn Poller, Director of the James City County Office of Housing and Community Development, presented jointly to a standing-room only crowd the details of the housing study in March. Dr. Stafford gave an overview of her analyses while Mr. Poller discussed how the County is using the report in conjunction with the County's Housing Conditions Study that was completed last year with Virginia Tech.
- The WAAR market analysis and housing need study, along with the County's Housing Conditions Report, will form the basis of a comprehensive review of the County's housing policies. It is anticipated that a stakeholders group will be established this summer to begin that process. WAAR has been invited to be a member of that advisory group, and your Legislative Consultant and Mr. Poller confer regularly on the timing, on suggested participants and on anticipated goals and outcomes of the effort.

### **NEW KENT COUNTY**

- The CEO and the Legislative Consultant met with Rodney Hathaway, County Administrator, to discuss housing, zoning, economic development and the role that WAAR can play to promote housing opportunity. Mr. Hathaway noted the benefit of receiving the monthly housing stats from WAAR and the MLS.
- He also invited WAAR to be a stakeholder in the upcoming review of the County's Comprehensive Plan, which will begin later this year. We also discussed the opportunity to develop a REALTOR® education program with the County that will allow New Kent to provide details to the REALTOR® community on the various departments and programs within the County. Lots going on in that dynamic community!

## **Regional Issues**

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- WAAR recently provided data to the Williamsburg Health Foundation and to Housing Virginia to be used in a year-long research study focusing on healthy communities and the role of housing in creating a high quality of life in the Williamsburg region. The "deep dive" into that data will begin soon, and there will be more details to come as the information is compiled. Your Legislative Consultant and Kyra Cook, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Program Officer, remain in contact about the study and the involvement of WAAR. This is another great example of the value that the community gains from WAAR and our REALTOR® advocacy efforts!
- WAAR continues to provide monthly housing data and housing sales reports to the various local governments. Decision makers and professional staffs comment regularly on the benefit of receiving those details that play a role in future economic development planning, infrastructure and resource decisions, budget decisions and planning decisions.
- The Ft. Eustis Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) has begun and is focusing initial steps on gaining community input via a survey and the development of a website. <https://www.forteustisjlus.com/> Information has been posted to the WAAR Facebook page so that members can provide their initial thoughts.
- WAAR's Legislative Consultant is working with the new Public Information Officer at Ft. Eustis, Col. Bo Clayton, to organize a tour of the Post for WAAR members. Ft. Eustis is an economic

driver in our region, and we are working with the Post to educate the public on the economic value of the installation.

## State Issues

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- Position statements for the 2018 VR Legislative Package, to be considered during the 2018 General Assembly Session, are due to VR by June 15th. This year, in efforts to include the entire membership and to improve efficiency, VR is asking members to submit a simple 250-word Wufoo form, "SUGGEST A LAW," to allow members the opportunity to offer changes to the Code of Virginia that impact the industry.  
<https://www.virginiarealtors.org/advocacy/get-involved/suggest-a-law/>
- The WAAR PPC asks that prior to submission to VR, WAAR members advise the Legislative Consultant, Susan Gaston at [susan@gastongroup.com](mailto:susan@gastongroup.com), of any suggestions so that the PPC can review and sponsor the issue. The form can be found here:  
<https://www.virginiarealtors.org/advocacy/get-involved/suggest-a-law/>

## Election Issues

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- 2017 is a BIG year in the election universe! From statewide elections for Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General, to the Virginia House of Delegates and to James City County Board of Supervisors, it is an active time in the Commonwealth's election cycle.
- Remember to VOTE in the June 13<sup>th</sup> primaries for the statewide candidates! Both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party are holding elections to narrow their pick for statewide candidates in each of the offices: Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General. Check out the candidate lists for that election here:  
[http://www.elections.virginia.gov/Files/CastYourBallot/CandidateList/2017JunePrimary-List\\_of\\_Statewide\\_Candidates-dem.pdf](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/Files/CastYourBallot/CandidateList/2017JunePrimary-List_of_Statewide_Candidates-dem.pdf)  
[http://www.elections.virginia.gov/Files/CastYourBallot/CandidateList/2017JunePrimary-List\\_of\\_Statewide\\_Candidates-rep.pdf](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/Files/CastYourBallot/CandidateList/2017JunePrimary-List_of_Statewide_Candidates-rep.pdf)

### REMEMBER TO VOTE IN THE JUNE 13<sup>TH</sup> PRIMARY!

- On June 21<sup>st</sup>, the Virginia REALTORS® will host a statewide candidate forum in Richmond at The Westin Hotel. This event is open to ANY REALTOR® member, but you must register for the program in advance. Non-registered members will NOT be allowed into the forum. Registration is quick and easy: <https://www.virginiarealtors.org/calendar/2017-governor-candidates-townhall/>.
- The RPAC of Virginia Trustees, including WAAR Past President and Trustee Mary Beth Pauley, met in April to outline the budget and campaign efforts for the upcoming elections. Your WAAR PPC members will be active in a number of campaign events, fundraisers and outreach efforts to our REALTOR® Champions in the House and Senate.
- The WAAR PPC will conduct candidate interviews in September for the James City County Board of Supervisors elections that will be held in November. Two seats are up for re-election: the Jamestown District seat, currently held by Board Chairman Kevin Onizuk, and the Powhatan District, currently held by Past Chairman Michael Hipple. This promises to be an active local campaign season!

## Federal Issues

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- NAR 2016 Vice President Sherri Meadows testified recently before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity at a hearing entitled, "A Review of VA's Loan Guaranty and Specially Adaptive Housing Grant Programs (SAH).  
<http://narfocus.com/billdatabase/clientfiles/172/25/2559.html?sf21145631=1>
- Since its establishment in 1944, the VA home loan guarantee program has helped millions of veterans purchase and maintain homes. NAR believes this program is a vital homeownership tool that provides veterans with a centralized, affordable, and accessible method of purchasing homes as a benefit for their service to our nation.
- NAR sent a letter to the full U.S. House of Representatives urging support for H.R. 916, the "Risk Management and Homeowner Stability Act." The legislation would amend the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 to prohibit the use of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's guarantee fees (g-fees) to pay for government spending. Moreover, the bipartisan bill recognizes that diverting revenue from these risk-based fees both places an additional burden on the backs of homeowners and is bad public policy.
- The purpose of the G-fee is to prospectively guard against credit losses at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. G-fees should only be used to protect taxpayers from mortgage. Each time G-fees are extended, increased and diverted for unrelated spending, homeowners are charged more for their mortgages and taxpayers are exposed to additional risk for the long-term.



*Our Power.  
Our Protection.*

Questions? Need more details? Want a speaker for a sales meeting? Contact your Legislative Consultant, Susan Gaston, at 871-1445 or by email at [susan@gastongroup.com](mailto:susan@gastongroup.com)!