

Regional Update

A Monthly Report of Activities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

September 2005

Regional Housing Authority To Administer Homeless Intervention Program

The Accomack-Northampton Regional Housing Authority (A-NRHA) will administer the Department of Housing and Community Development's Homeless Intervention Program (HIP) for the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The Homeless Prevention Task Force's November 2004 survey showed that 169 people were homeless on the Eastern Shore. HIP seeks to prevent homelessness by providing temporary financial assistance that results in housing and financial stability as well as self-sufficiency.

Services offered by HIP include up to 9 months of rental or mortgage assistance, security and/or utility deposits, and housing counseling to establish and implement a self-sufficiency plan. Persons eligible for HIP are those who have not previously received assistance from HIP either through A-NRHA or any other agency; are in imminent danger of losing their home or apartment through foreclosure or eviction; are experiencing a temporary financial crisis due to unavoidable circumstances, such as accident, illness, job layoff, loss of transportation, etc.; have exhausted all other resources; meet income requirements; and can demonstrate evidence of prior self-sufficiency and the potential for future self-sufficiency.

Enrollment in HIP is a two step process, with potential clients responsible for completing a screening application to allow for an evaluation to assess the immediate need of and eligibility for assistance. A qualifying applicant will be given an application and an appointment for an interview with a housing counselor. Upon verification of documentation and a committee review of the application, the applicant will be notified of the enrollment decision.

Continued eligibility for the program will be determined on a monthly basis by the HIP Counselor and based on the

participants' strong commitment to achieving the goals outlined in their Housing and Self-Sufficiency Plan. Persons facing foreclosure on a primary residence mortgage property may access HIP funds available in the form of no-interest loans. The A-NRHA does not issue grants for mortgage assistance through the HIP program. A Promissory Note will need to be executed for all mortgage assistance loans, as well as a Deed of Trust for loan amounts in excess of \$2500.

For more information, contact us at (757) 787-2800.



23 Years After its Creation, Economic Development Commission to End

Northampton County eliminated funding for the Eastern Shore Economic Development Commission (EDC) from its budget, so the Commission will cease operations on September 30th. Accomack and Northampton Counties jointly created the EDC in 1982 to promote economic development of the region.

At its August 3rd meeting, the EDC unanimously voted to return \$12,500 recently committed by the Accomack Board of Supervisors to the County. The Commission appreciates Accomack's support but will not require those funds. The Commission's

financial reserves are projected to be enough to cover final expenses.

The EDC also requested that Accomack County use \$5,000 of the returned \$12,500 to support the Eastern Shore office of the Small Business Development Center for the next year. The Small Business Development Center provides important assistance to the local entrepreneurs who are building the Shore's economy, and the small amount of local funds required is a bargain for the services offered. The EDC made a commitment to support the Small Business Development Center prior to the decision to end the Commission.

Broadband Initiative

Broadband Internet access is an important tool for businesses and students, but it's not available across most of Accomack County. Universal broadband access could help our existing businesses stay competitive and enable dozens of new business start-ups.

Worcester County, Maryland has the same problem as Accomack – broadband Internet access isn't available in most of the County. They are tackling the problem by supporting the Lower Shore Broadband Cooperative. The Cooperative is going to have a WiMax wireless broadband system operational in Worcester County on October 1. The system will cover the entire county and will be cost-competitive with DSL. WiMax is a new wireless standard that can cover up to 5 miles from the broadcast tower and has a connection speed of 1.5 Mbps.

Accomack County has an opportunity to encourage the development of broadband Internet throughout the entire County, just as Worcester has. To proceed with a broadband Internet project, there will have to be: a request for proposals (RFP) from Internet providers, a business plan, a system design, and a financing strategy.

At its August meeting, the Accomack Board of Supervisors approved an application to Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for money to complete the project plan. The planning grant will fund the Request for Proposals process and the preparation of a detailed plan for a broadband Internet system covering the County. The plan will then be used in another application to the Community Development Block Grant program for construction funding.

Elaine Nachtrieb Meil, New PDC Director of Planning

Elaine Nachtrieb Meil has been promoted to PDC Director of Planning and began her new duties on August 1, 2005. Ms. Meil came from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and joined the PDC staff in January of 2004 previously holding the Regional Planner position.

While Regional Planner, she completed the Eastern Shore Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, Northampton Emergency Operation Plan, and has been working to complete the Hazard Mitigation Plan. She has also worked on updating the transportation element of the comprehensive plans for Accomack County and Northampton County.

Ms. Meil has a technical background with a Bachelor's Degree from Virginia Tech in Geophysics and a Master's Degree from VCU in Urban

and Regional Planning.

"Her technical skills are a giant plus to the PDC and every department has found her responsiveness and abilities very helpful" said Executive Director Paul Berge. "She will continue our tradition of providing the highest level of planning services to the region."



USGS Crater Drilling Event in Eyreville

The United State Geologic Survey is drilling into the crater caused by the bolide that struck near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay hundreds of thousands of years ago. This event is still affecting the Eastern Shore today. The USGS is having an drilling event in Eyreville on September 20th at 1 PM.

Scientists will explain how the Eastern Shore's groundwater is impacted by the bolide event. Participants will be able to look at tailings, brought up by the drill, under microscopes and scientists will explain what the importance of what these minerals mean.

Preliminary PSA Nassawadox Survey Results

To assure grant funding agencies that a sufficient number of users will be on board to support the Northern Northampton Wastewater Project a user survey is in process to help gauge levels of support. Flyers and a mass mailing have been distributed in the Town of Nassawadox and near vicinity. An informational Town meeting was held with about thirty interested townspeople in attendance. Additional Town Meetings will be held. So far, the overall response rate to the mass mailing is 30% which is good for a first response. Of those responding, 40% have indicated interest in participating in the project, 54% are not interested, and 6% are undecided.



How to Contact the A-NPDC

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