

<http://www.dailypress.com/features/history/dp-fea-hampton-streetcar-project-1218-20161217-story.html>

Group works to bring Peninsula streetcar back to region

A group of Peninsula residents are attempting to bring back and restore the last remaining Hampton Streetcar. (Images courtesy of Hampton History Museum and Q-Design.)

By Jonathan Black joblack@dailypress.com

December 17, 2016

The streetcars were a link on the Peninsula. Traveling from Buckroe Beach to Victoria Boulevard, into downtown Newport News and up toward Hilton Village, thousands loaded into the vehicles every day in the 20th century.

It was essential transportation, the importance of which is not lost on Hampton resident Greg Siegel.

"The streetcar enabled Hampton and Newport News to expand," Siegel said. "It's a story-telling vehicle."

Forty-two streetcars ran their course over 40 miles of track through the two communities. Only one remains, the 390, which is stored at the Baltimore Streetcar Museum. Siegel is part of a project to bring back the last remaining streetcar.

Building the project

Streetcar 390 traveled between Newport News and Hampton from 1918 to 1945. After decommissioning, it was purchased by a family in York County who made it into a home for 30 years. The vehicle then was purchased in 1977 by the Baltimore Streetcar Museum, after a member of the institution saw it while traveling.

It would stay in Baltimore's storage. After years of not being able to refurbish the the streetcar, Hampton History Museum was contacted about taking on the project. The museum also was unable to restore it as well but opened the idea up to the public via an open meeting, according to Luci Talbot Cochran, executive director of the museum.

"At the time it was not within our means to do it alone, but we did want to share this interesting opportunity with the community," Cochran said. "A number of individuals and volunteers came and said they were willing to take this on."

Always a history buff, Siegel was a volunteer at the museum and attended that open session. A few months passed and after not hearing any updates, Siegel toyed with the idea of taking on the project.

He approached Cochran and asked to run a feasibility study to see if a streetcar could be an attraction, what the costs would be and if it could attract people to downtown Hampton and the museum.

"I put together a small group of friends who are into history and know people in Hampton," Siegel said. "I said, 'I think we can get it done.' "

Cochran gave the go-ahead and the Hampton Streetcar 390 Project was formed, with Siegel acting as chairman.

The project works as a partnership with Hampton History Museum, which has 501(c)(3) status to make the organization exempt from federal income tax and apply for grants.

"We're not leading this ourselves. In many ways, that's a strength. This is being generated and led by community people," Cochran said. "These kinds of projects are never easy and take a little time and momentum. They're doing a wonderful job at it."

It was time to fundraise.

Repair and housing

The 390 Project estimates the total cost will be about \$750,000. This encompasses costs for the streetcar's transportation and restoration and for the structure in which to house it in Hampton.

Funds have been met to transport the streetcar, with hopes of moving it at the beginning of the new year. Siegel said the project should take up to five years.

Fort Monroe will be a temporary, but visible, home for the streetcar while it's under repair. The project will pay for a restorer to repair Streetcar 390 off Patch Road. Siegel envisions work done in an open environment that allows people passing by to see the progress and restoration.

"The most difficult thing is to share the vision when you don't have the streetcar here," Siegel said. "When people hear my vision they see the excitement, but you don't have it here to say come out to Fort Monroe. That's the hardest part."

The project considered having volunteers work on the streetcar's repair but chose having a professional recommended by the Baltimore Streetcar Museum.

"We don't want it to be a 20-year project. We want to get it in, get it done. I want to fast-track it as much as I could," Siegel said. "I want people to start enjoying it."

Once repaired, the project tentatively has planned to display the streetcar on Hampton Museum Way, situated between the public parking garage and The Heritage at Settlers Landing Apartments. The design is based on a train depot and will tie into that with its steel frames. A track would extend toward the Hampton History Museum, symbolically connecting the two attractions together.

Ron Quinn, architect and co-owner of Q-Design, is designing the glass edifice.

"We got the idea of putting it up on the grassy median in front of the Hampton History Museum as sort of a front door," he said. "At night, it'll be lit up. There's a lot of traffic on Settlers Landing so this will get people's attention."

Yellow-brick pavement will surround the streetcar, a tie to same-colored brick that sits beneath asphalt in some of Hampton's older neighborhoods.

Purpose of 390

Once repairs and construction are completed, the streetcar can fulfill its multipurpose function as an educational and entertainment space.

"The streetcar reminds us not only of our past as an important cultural element, but it really talks to how those infrastructure aspects like streetcar lines and railroads, which we don't pay as much attention to now, shape who we are," Cochran said. "A lot of times we don't remember those elements that were critical to our growth."

The goal is to take "riders" through a multimedia experience detailing the importance of public transportation and the experience of riding a streetcar. Siegel and the 390 Project have begun collecting testimonials about what it was like to ride the streetcar in the 20th century.

"We want to take folks on a ride to Buckroe, to Fort Monroe, along Chesapeake Avenue, out to Washington Street with the old stores that are no longer there," Siegel said. "Wrap it all up into a nice package and tell it into a story of growth: how Hampton and Newport News became what they are today, because of the streetcar."

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Hampton Streetcar 390 Project

To get involved or donate, contact 757-407-3202, email info@hamptonstreetcar390.com or visit hamptonstreetcar390.com.

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Letter to the Editor—Daily Press 12/1716

<http://www.dailypress.com/va-vg-edit-meyer-1217-20161217-story.html>

Dominion needs to walk away from towers

December 17, 2016

It is indeed a sad affair when a large company such as Dominion becomes so tone deaf that it tenaciously persists in a quixotic effort of irreparably despoiling the most precious icon in our American history—the unobstructed panorama of the James River and the Jamestown

settlement. Personally speaking, that peaceful panorama and its history cinched my family's decision to move to Williamsburg.

Once again, Dominion's arguments for placing these visually hideous transmission towers were brought up in the Virginia Gazette in its Dec. 10 news article. Once again, the flimsy apparition of frequent power outages on the peninsula and the EPA mandate for a 2017 shutdown of the peninsula's backup plants materializes. Once again, the company dangles the ante of increased but fungible "environmental mitigation" blood money.

Most striking is the "hurry-up" nature of the comment and deliberation period to conclude before Christmas 2016, to exploit EPA dictates that will soon disappear. Did we not just have a national election with the appointment of Scott Pruitt as EPA director taking office just one month later who has pledged to place the agency's capricious and draconian "war on coal" under intense scrutiny? The new director will assuredly place a stay (a hold) on the EPA's order to close these coal burning plants in early 2017 for further review after he takes his oath of office in January.

It is transparent that Dominion must walk away from the transmission tower scheme. Dominion would be ill-advised to drill irreparable holes in the coal plant boilers making them utterly useless as they will need to rely on those boilers for a while longer. If the line is truly necessary, Dominion will simply up the ante they are willing to pay for a transmission line built under the James River. As a public utility, Dominion will have to make the argument to the State Utility Review Board to assure a just and reasonable rate structure if the connection is justified.

For those in the environmental camp, the preservation of the ancient panorama of the river is a definite win while the country continues to seek clean power solutions. Once this environment is lost, it is lost forever.

It was a priority to conserve the Yorktown battlefield, Colonial Williamsburg, Fort Monroe, Civil War redoubts, and many other historical sites and venues sites from destruction. It is a priority to preserve the unspoiled vista of the country's Founding English Colony — this is the irreplaceable jewel we have economically and historically going for us in the Williamsburg-

Jamestown-Yorktown triangle. The under-the-riverbed cable argument has overwhelming precedent. It is historically and environmentally nonnegotiable.

Matthew Meyer

Williamsburg

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<http://www.dailypress.com/entertainment/books/dp-fea-no-mans-land-baldacci-review-20161226-story.html>

Local setting as great a character in Baldacci's 'No Man's Land' | #HRBooks review

By Andi Petrini apetrini@dailypress.com

December 27, 2016

It's been a while since I read a thriller. In high school, I couldn't get enough of John Grisham's latest, with the occasional Mary Higgins Clark or James Patterson thrown in. Now, I tend to balance between frothy fiction and historical non-fiction and biographies. There's no doubt my reading tendencies cycle through several genres.

But I was drawn to David Baldacci's "No Man's Land" because it is set at Fort Monroe. The decommissioned Army base is my favorite spot in the Peninsula area, and while not my typical reading fare, I was game to give it a try.

I'm not familiar with Baldacci's John Puller series, though "No Man's Land" is the third installment.

I didn't need the familiarity to dive right into the novel. Baldacci provides enough background and character introduction where the book stands fine on its own. It also piques interest in Puller's family background and likely will entice you to pick up the previous two parts of the series.

Puller works for the Army's criminal investigation division. He and his brother grew up at Fort Monroe when their father served as a three-star general there. Puller's mother disappeared

from the fort while the boys were still children. "No Man's Land" picks up 30 years later, as circumstances lead to Puller trying to piece together the night his mother disappeared and solve what happened to her.

The novel bounces between Puller and Paul Rogers, who is just getting out of prison after serving time for manslaughter. Rogers has a connection to Fort Monroe as well, though its circumstances are cloudy as the novel opens and clear up the more you read.

Early on, you know it's a matter of time before the characters collide — and of course, the collision is likely going to be at Fort Monroe.

The rotating narration between Puller and Rogers is a nice touch. I like when you go inside a character's head, so when it is multiplied in a novel, it helps deepen the story and characters' motives.

The descriptions of local places makes it clear Baldacci spent some time exploring Fort Monroe while writing — he confirmed as much in a recent interview — and it's so easy to picture so much of the action in the book.

"No Man's Land" is fun, escapist fare. It ties in Hampton Roads and the Outer Banks so well to the action, which is plentiful, and the writing is brisk and keeps you turning the pages. I devoured the book in a weekend and was disappointed to have to stop reading.

Petrini is the sports and features editor at the Daily Press, and an avid reader. She can be reached by phone at 757-247-4643.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/politics/dp-nws-session-preview-20170107-story.html>

**Session starts Wednesday: Here's a rundown, Hampton Roads
Local legislators give a brief rundown of their priorities for the 2017 General Assembly.**

By Travis Fain tfain@dailypress.com

JANUARY 7, 2017

Legislative sessions are like the proverbial box of chocolates: You never know what you're going to get.

What you won't get is easier to predict as legislators prepare for Wednesday's start to the 2017 General Assembly.

Medicaid expansion, which would provide health insurance to hundreds of thousands of poor Virginians courtesy of the U.S. taxpayers, remains a non-starter for the legislature's Republican majority. The same goes for tax increases, though spending cuts and other tweaks, including a debate over how quickly retailers must send in collected sales taxes, are coming to balance the state budget amid under-performing revenues.

Tax reform in general remains on the back burner, as usual, but could become a major issue in the 2017 gubernatorial race. That election will loom over the legislative session, as it does every four years.

Locally, last year's unexpected death of state Sen. John Miller led to Monty Mason's move from the House to the Senate. Del. Mike Mullin, D-Newport News, takes over Mason's seat in the House.

New U.S. Rep. Donald McEachin's ascendency to Congress opened a new leadership role for state Sen. Mamie Locke, D-Hampton, who will have a higher profile role as her party's new caucus chair.

Locke said she doesn't see much changing, but she hinted toward a harder push on some issues, including efforts to block "the dawning of the Trump agenda" as the president elect's politics trickle from D.C. to Richmond.

What do lobbyists see for the Virginia general assembly?

Locke, D-Hampton, and the Peninsula's other black legislators are keyed in on police issues this session. One bill would push law enforcement agencies to release more information to other

agencies when former officers seek new jobs, particularly if the officer committed a criminal offense or generated civil lawsuits.

Another bill sets up new protocols to investigate officer-involved shootings and would require commonwealth's attorneys to release information about shootings even if they're not prosecuted. A third would specifically prohibit officers from seizing recording devices from people who aren't interfering with the officers' duties.

Del. Marcia "Cia" Price, D-Newport News, said there have been a few examples of that happening, though only a few. Locke said the bills are proactive and not meant to cast a negative light on police.

"If we can prevent a problem, let's prevent a problem," she said.

Del. Jeion Ward, D-Hampton, is hoping to teach Virginia school students what to do when they're stopped by police. She envisions best practices being laid out during driver education courses, in online public service videos and potentially being part of the state's drivers license test.

"We need to let our young children know: This is the protocol, this is what you should do," Ward said. "We want to keep the driver calm and keep law enforcement calm."

AI in HRVA?

Del. David Yancey, R-Newport News, has a big idea this session: He wants Hampton Roads to embrace artificial intelligence as a cornerstone of the future economy.

Yancey said that, in talking to people around the country, he believes virtual reality and thinking computers will become a big part of manufacturing. With research facilities such as Jefferson Labs and NASA Langley in Hampton Roads, and a [Virginia Tech](#) drone program based here along with all of the region's colleges and universities and the area's manufacturing base, "we've got a unique situation," Yancey said.

Yancey's proposal is not fully formed, but could involve tax credits, deductions and state grants drawn from a number of existing programs, including GO Virginia, a regional jobs creation program the legislature created last year.

"I think part of growing our economy is going to be predicated on big ideas," he said. "If nothing else it kick starts the conversation."

Yancey is also eyeing more incremental changes, saying he hopes to tweak existing tax credits to give businesses more incentives to bring in young people for internships and apprenticeships. The state is rewriting high school graduation requirements and making other moves to emphasize job readiness and the trades, and these changes would dovetail with that effort, Yancey said.

Judge to name

The General Assembly elects judges, and Newport News will have a Circuit Court opening in February with Judge David F. Pugh hitting the state's mandatory retirement age.

Local legislators have been meeting with candidates, but have not reached a consensus. The local bar associations have not all weighed in with their recommendations, either.

Newport News General District Court Judge Christopher R. Papile is among the candidates, which could open up his district court seat. Legislators may also rework an arrangement reached last year to have Hampton and Newport news share a district court judge, though budget concerns may mean the split stays in place.

Social issues

Bills have been filed on abortion, gay marriage, transgender bathroom usage, religious freedom and other hot-button issues, but the status quo that has kept Virginia from moving on these matters still holds.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe, a Democrat, has one more year in office and has promised to veto any bill restricting abortion rights, as well as anything he sees as discriminatory. Republican leadership,

which controls nearly a two-thirds majority in the House but not enough of the Senate to overturn vetoes, has not prioritized these issues.

They did pass a bill last year granting protections to people and businesses that don't want to recognize gay marriages pass, and that bill may pass again, and be vetoed again. McAuliffe announced an executive order Thursday that forbids the state from contracting with companies that discriminate against people who are gay or transgender, and conservatives have complained that it punishes religious beliefs.

Executive orders can be struck down by a future governor, and social issues will be part of the debate in the 2017 governor's race.

There is also a resolution this year to name January 22, the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark Roe v. Wade decision on Abortion, "The Day of Tears" in Virginia. Flags would be lowered to half staff to "mourn the innocents who have lost their lives to abortion."

Del. Bob Marshall, R-Manassas, has filed legislation dealing with bathroom usage, and requiring schools to inform parents if a student asks to be referred to by a new pronoun. Given the certain veto, the controversial nature of the bill and the pending U.S. Supreme Court case on transgender people's bathroom rights, GOP leadership is widely expected to kill the measure.

Money

The city of Hampton wants \$9 million from the state budget for its National Institute for Seafood and Aquaculture plans downtown.

Local legislators said they'll ask, but they do not expect to receive. Budget writers are looking for cuts to balance the budget, and McAuliffe did not include the project in his spending proposal.

"I think they want to put it out there," Locke said of the city. "At least to put it on the radar."

The city is also seeking more state funding for services it provides at Fort Monroe, an annual effort that has not been successful.

Locke is carrying legislation that would empower counties more like cities on meals taxes, allowing them to pass a tax without a referendum. The bill would also double, from 4 percent to 8 percent, the restaurant meals tax counties can charge.

Locally, York County asked for the bill. Getting a potential tax increase through the legislature will not be easy.

"We just want options," York County Administrator Neil Morgan said.

Local legislators said their budget efforts will probably be more about protecting existing funding than asking for new money.

"Playing defense," Mason told a town hall meeting of about 50 people Thursday at McIntosh Elementary School.

New spending is expected, though, for mental health reforms. House Appropriations Chairman S. Chris Jones, R-Suffolk, has also promised to increase state police wages and to try to include an across-the-board raise in the budget for state employees.

Morris

Del. Rick Morris, who has a felony abuse charge pending, is expected to attend the 2017 session.

Morris, R-Carrollton, will keep his committee assignments and other privileges, Speaker of the House William Howell has said, though Howell and other Republican leaders have called on him to resign.

Morris refused, and has said repeatedly that he is innocent. He once faced seven felony and seven misdemeanor charges in a child and domestic abuse case, but all but one felony was dropped or dismissed during a hearing that Domestic Relations Court Judge Robert S. Brewbaker Jr. closed to the press.

Morris did not respond to a Daily Press interview request. The General Assembly's online database of bills didn't show any filed in his name as of Friday evening, but that doesn't mean he won't carry legislation.

The economy

House Republicans promise "laser focus" on economic issues, much as they have in past sessions.

This year's big push: red tape reduction. Bills are coming to create a new state position to review state regulations and to reduce them by 35 percent, GOP leaders said in a conference call Thursday.

They have a website, cutredtapevirginia.com, collecting people's email addresses and their ideas for regulatory reform.

Republican leaders also promised to take a hard look at state licensing requirements, saying during Thursday's call that it takes four times as long to become a massage therapist in Virginia as it does to become an EMT. The state also requires upholsterers to be licensed.

House Republicans plan to push bills McAuliffe vetoed last year, including one to block the state from implementing carbon regulations tied to the federal Clean Power Plan. There's also legislation to re-implement coal industry tax credits the governor allowed to expire last year.

General Assembly leaders and the governor both want to reform the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, which gives businesses grants in exchange for promises to create jobs, but they differ on details. McAuliffe wants more power at VEDP for the executive branch and Jones, the appropriations chairman, said Thursday that's not likely.

Both sides agree the VEDP boards needs more people with business experience on it. Yancey, R-Newport News, said he wants the Port of Virginia to be represented on the board.

Criminal justice / school discipline

A number of criminal justice reforms are queued up this year, though their prospects are uncertain.

McAuliffe wants to increase the amount someone must shoplift in order to be charged with a felony, taking it from \$200 to \$500. The state Senate has backed this in the past, Republicans in the House have not.

He also wants to end the practice of suspending people's drivers licenses over unpaid court fines, and there may be common ground to find there. Del. Matt Fariss, R-Rustburg, filed legislation allowing people to keep their licenses if their employer attests they need to drive to work, and if they agree to have their wages garnished.

Senate Majority Leader Thomas K. "Tommy" Norment, R-James City, has backed a constitutional amendment to strip the governor of his power to restore felon voting rights. The General Assembly would set criteria for automatic restorations instead, resolving a fight the two sides had last year when McAuliffe tried to restore voting rights for more than 200,000 people through a single executive order.

Norment also nodded in recent months toward supporting the decriminalization of marijuana, but that's not expected in the short term. The legislature voted last year to authorize the in-state production of THC oil, which does not produce marijuana's characteristic high and is allowed here only for the treatment of epilepsy. That legislation must be voted on again this year to take effect.

State Sen. Bill Stanley, R-Moneta, has a trio of bills aimed at reducing school suspensions and expulsions. One would cut maximum long-term suspensions from 364 days to 45 school days. Another would prohibit suspensions and expulsions for disruptive behavior unless that behavior causes or threatens injury. The third would prohibit pre-school and elementary school suspensions, except for drug and firearm offenses, and some criminal acts.

A 2016 report by the Legal Aid Justice Center found that Virginia public schools issued 126,000 suspensions over the 2014-15 school year and that 20 percent of them were for elementary school students. Roughly 16,000 of those suspensions affected children from pre-K through third grade, the report found.

Fain can be reached by phone at 757-525-1759.

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http://pilotonline.com/inside-business/news/maritime-and-transportation/hampton-considering-shuttle-bus-water-taxi-transportation-options/article_9e698146-3b29-53e2-9860-959047b8cd09.html

Hampton considering shuttle bus, water taxi transportation options

Inside Business staff and web reports

Jan 19, 2017



Nancy Vessell Lighthouse at Fort Monroe

A shuttle bus service linking Hampton University students with the Coliseum Central area and a water taxi service that would possibly have connections to Fort Monroe, Phoebus and Fort Wool are new transportation proposals introduced by the city of Hampton.

The goal of the shuttle bus service is to help HU students reach the city's major shopping district. Freshmen and sophomore HU students are not allowed to have cars on campus. Under the city's request for water taxi proposals, the public pier would be the main terminal.

[DailyPress.com reports](#) that Hampton is seeking proposals from businesses interested in providing either service.

<http://wavy.com/2017/01/18/land-transfer-allows-fort-monroe-to-move-forward-with-plans/>

Land transfer allows Fort Monroe to move forward with plans

By Kara Dixon Published: January 18, 2017, 9:51 pm

HAMPTON, Va. (WAVY) — The Fort Monroe Authority is moving forward with its plans to establish the area as a livable community and tourist attraction.

Last week, Governor Terry McAuliffe announced the finalization of a deal that would transfer more than 70 acres of land from the Army to the Commonwealth.

Glen Oder, the Executive Director for the Fort Monroe Authority, says they're excited about the deal.

Oder says the fort was built in the 1800s, following the War of 1812. He says the original deal made between the Army and the Commonwealth would transfer the land back to the the state once the fort closed in 2011.

Oder says much of the land was transferred over then, but because property was added over time, a new deal had to be made for the Commonwealth to buy the land.

"This building right here, which is the Fort Monroe Theater, seats about 600 people. The property line actually runs through the middle of the theater. I'm standing on Commonwealth property. If you go in past the foyer, you're past Army property," Oder said.

Oder says they worked with the Army to deal with things like utilities and leasing homes on the property. He says the transfer of land will make it easier for plans to get into motion.

Oder says more than 160 families live in Fort Monroe and a few businesses are established on the property as well.

The transfer of the acres, which include the marina and the area surrounding the theater, will allow them to make it better for residents and tourists they're hoping to attract.

Oder says some of the projects they're hoping to complete by the end of the year is setting up a visitor's center and renting out buildings, like the theater, for public use.

The Fort Monroe Authority says a seven mile hiking trail will also be created in the upcoming years with help from the National Park Service, which also owns land near the fort.

"We want to work with the National Park Service to create a beautified vision for Fort Monroe that will tell the great history of Fort Monroe, that will help us manage the property and make it open so that all people who can come here and learn this incredible history about the country here at Fort Monroe," Oder said.

The Commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation says the state spent roughly \$23 million for the land. He says the money will go towards funding road projects outside of Army bases.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/politics/dp-nws-peninsula-bills-20170117-story.html>

James City junk car, Fort Monroe Authority membership bills move forward

By Travis Fain tfain@dailypress.com

JANUARY 17, 2017

A trio of bills on Peninsula issues sailed toward passage Tuesday, albeit with some hazing for freshman state Sen. Monty Mason.

Mason's Senate Bill 1134 adds two members to the Williamsburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority, which is currently made up of just the Williamsburg City Council. The bill adds two residents of public housing to the board to satisfy a federal requirement that the board include at least one resident, Mason said.

Mason's Senate Bill 1135 deals with James City County's ability to order the removal of junk vehicles from people's property. Senate Bill 1001, sponsored by state Sen. Mamie Locke changes the membership of the Fort Monroe Authority.

All three passed easily Tuesday through the Senate Committee on Local Government. The only opposition came from senators messing with Mason, D-Williamsburg, who moved from the House of Delegates to the state Senate in November to replace late state Sen. John Miller.

In a bit of hazing common for new senators, committee members initially voted against Mason's Williamsburg bill, only to change those votes to "ayes." Mason noted that Williamsburg Assistant City Manager Andrew Trivette was on hand and, possibly, nervous about the bill's fate.

"I kept hearing him say primary, primary," committee chairman Bill Stanley said.

Locke's Fort Monroe bill came at the authority's request. It removes the lieutenant governor from the authority's board of trustees and changes two of the governor's cabinet secretaries from voting board members to non-voting ones. It adds three regular citizens appointed by the governor to the board.

"The secretaries rarely show (to the meetings)," said Locke, D-Hampton. "They always sent designees."

Mason's James City bill adds the county to a list of 20 localities empowered to pass ordinances that prohibit people from keeping inoperable vehicles visible from the road on property zoned for residential, commercial or agricultural use.

The county requested the bill, Mason said.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/politics/dp-nws-mcauliffe-state-of-commonwealth-20170111-story.html>

Fort Monroe deal inked; McAuliffe drops local news in annual State of the Commonwealth address

By Travis Fain tfain@dailypress.com

JANUARY 11, 2017

Gov. Terry McAuliffe's State of the Commonwealth address included a brief mention of significant news for Fort Monroe and Hampton: The state and the Army have finalized a long-pending land exchange.

The deal will cede control of the fort's marina and the North Gate parcel, a key step before the areas can be developed under Fort Monroe's master plan. Authority Executive Director Glenn Oder called the step "huge for the future of the property."

The state will pay \$23.1 million for the 70-plus acre tracts, and that money will be used to address traffic concerns outside Army posts in Virginia, according to John Harvey, McAuliffe's secretary of veterans affairs and homeland security. A memorandum of agreement was signed Tuesday, Harvey said.

The announcement — a single sentence in the governor's annual speech on the first day of a new General Assembly session — was a rare morsel of new news in McAuliffe's nearly hour-long address. The governor had already rolled out legislative priorities in a series of press conferences over the last few weeks.

Wednesday night, the governor harkened back to his inauguration, three years to the day, then ticked through administration accomplishments. Speaker of the House William Howell said, as other Republicans have in the past, that he recognized a lot of the ideas McAuliffe highlighted.

"An awful lot of what he talked about tonight are Republican ideas," Howell said. "And he takes credit for them, and that's OK. ... A lot of the stuff that he was talking about today ... it was bipartisan in the sense that he signed the bill."

McAuliffe promised a focus this session on mental health reforms, which he's included nearly \$32 million in new spending for in his latest budget. He also highlighted the state's opioid crisis. More than 800 Virginians died of overdoses in 2015, the governor said, and the figure is expected to top 1,000 when finalized for 2016.

McAuliffe asks Congress to go slow on Obamacare repeal

The governor has called for a new limit on opioid prescriptions written in emergency rooms and a new requirement that all narcotic prescriptions be made electronically to aid in tracking.

The governor reiterated promises Wednesday to veto abortion and other controversial social bills, should the legislature's Republican majority send them to his desk. McAuliffe was in California earlier this week, and he told reporters Tuesday that the big question from executives there was whether Virginia plans to pass a bathroom bill, ala North Carolina's legislation last year on transgender restroom usage.

Such a bill has been filed in Virginia this session, but it is expected to die as quiet a death as the majority leadership here can arrange during an election year. The governor specifically promised a veto if needed. He also pitched a number of measures Republicans are just as likely to deny him.

He called, as he has before, for repeal of the state's voter ID law, for universal background checks on all gun sales and for repeal of the state's pre-abortion ultrasound requirement.

"Over the last 15, 20 minutes, the guy who doesn't want to talk about social issues, talked about social issues," House Majority Leader Kirk Cox, R-Colonial Heights, said after the speech. "You can't have it both ways."

McAuliffe may also see tough sledding on some of his other priorities, including a push to raise the threshold for felony larceny charges from \$200 in stolen goods to \$500.

"My thoughts haven't changed on it," said Del. Rob Bell, who chairs a House subcommittee that has killed this measure before. "I don't see any reason to give a cost of living allowance to people who steal."

The governor's proposal to end Virginia's practice of suspending drivers licenses when people don't pay court fines may have a better chance. Bell, R-Charlottesville, said Republican legislators have been discussing this issue for some time, though a consensus measure has not yet emerged.

"It's certainly a topic we're looking at," he said.

The governor also continued Wednesday his call for Medicaid expansion, a priority he's been unable to persuade GOP lawmakers on three years running. This year, McAuliffe has asked for authority to expand the taxpayer-funded health insurance program on his own if it survives into October of President-elect Donald Trump's administration.

Republican leaders have said they won't grant this.

As for Fort Monroe, the land deal grew from lengthy negotiations that once included a potential swap of land the Virginia Department of Transportation owns near Arlington Cemetery. Oder, the Fort Monroe Authority director, said the new deal will allow the authority to look at a potential Marina expansion and to develop a parcel between Mill Creek and the fort's north gate.

"A potential development site with lots of restrictions," Oder said.

"This solves a lot of problems, I think," said Harvey, McAuliffe's secretary of veterans affairs. "I was kind of proud of this one. We got it moving. It had been stuck for a long time."

Fain can be reached by phone at 757-525-1759.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/military/hrmilitary-blog/dp-adam-smith-brac-post.html>

Not just the Senate: BRAC surfaces in the House

Associated Press

January 26, 2017

Sen. John McCain revived the debate over military base-closings this week, saying it was almost "an act of cowardice" for Congress to avoid the issue.

Now comes Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee. Piggybacking on McCain's comments, he announced plans to reintroduce legislation that would authorize another Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission.

Under his bill, the Defense Department would recommend a list to BRAC, which would review it and make a recommendation to the president. That list would then go to Congress.

The last BRAC round in 2005 sent a few shivers through military-dependent Hampton Roads, but the sky didn't fall.

Fort Monroe in Hampton closed, but that installation is reinventing itself with residential and commercial development. Fort Eustis in Newport News lost some functions but gained some, and Virginia Beach officials mobilized to save Naval Air Station Oceana.

Smith's bill includes measures to differentiate the next BRAC from the 2005 effort, which left some lawmakers disappointed with its lack of savings.

Officials in Hampton Roads and Virginia aren't panicking at the thought of another BRAC. They feel they've learned lessons from the 2005 process and are now better prepared.

Hampton city officials, for instance, say they've done just about everything possible to make Langley Air Force Base BRAC-resistant, and think they could attract additional functions there.

Stay tuned. McCain's attention to this issue means it will like show up on an agenda at some point.

As for the Trump administration? The president never mentioned BRAC on the campaign trail, at least as far as we know. He wants to spend money for a larger military, but he's also criticized big-dollar programs, like the F-35, and demanded cost savings. That's what BRAC is supposed to be about.

We'll keep watching our Twitter feed, and you do the same.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/science/dp-nws-whale-fort-monroe-20170123-story.html>

Humpback whale visits Fort Monroe on its way south to tropics



Spend the day in Virginia Beach at the Fort Henry Lighthouses and spotting various wildlife on a whale watching tour with Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center.
(Aileen Devlin/Daily Press)

By Tamara Dietrich tdietrich@dailypress.com

January 23, 2017

Humpback whale visits Hampton on its way from north polar region to the tropics

Folks at the Fort Monroe fishing pier in Hampton became whale-watchers last week when a small whale breached the calm surface of the water, flicked its tail in the air and eased back into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

The sighting was captured in a short video posted to the [Hampton Police](#) Department's Facebook page Thursday evening, and by Monday had logged 163,000 views.

Marine experts who watched the video suspect it was a juvenile humpback, judging by its dorsal fin and the fact that the species is no stranger to the mouth of the bay this time of year as it migrates south.

"It's not common, but it's also not rare, to see whales in the bay," said Dave Malmquist, spokesman at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in Gloucester Point. VIMS is affiliated with the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg.

At the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center in Virginia Beach, Alexander Costidis said humpbacks can come quite close to shore — even just a few hundred yards off our Atlantic coast.

"A number of whales are also spotted each year inside the bay and in close proximity to river mouths," Costidis said. The aquarium is working with various partners to better understand humpback numbers and seasonal distribution in our area.

Humpbacks spend summers in the far north and polar regions, then typically move south toward the tropics during the winter, said Malmquist. Along the way, some linger off the Virginia capes and the bay. In a typical winter, that could mean anywhere from five to 20 humpbacks in the mouth of the bay.

The last time a whale captured major public attention in Hampton Roads was August 2014 when a sickly young sei whale began swimming erratically for days in the bay's rivers and creeks before she finally died.

A necropsy later found she had ingested a sharp, rigid shard from a plastic DVD case that sliced her stomach and prevented her from feeding. Costidis is coordinator of the aquarium's Stranding Response Program that investigated that incident.

But based on the recent video, he said, the humpback whale appeared to be swimming normally off Fort Monroe and his team won't be mounting a response.

"It is very important to us to avoid disturbing or harassing them unnecessarily," Costidis said. "We, therefore, typically only respond if there is a reason to believe they are injured or distressed."

Whales and other marine mammals are federally protected from human disturbance in order to protect both humans and whales. Close approaches by vessels as small as jet skis and as large as ships can disturb their feeding, cause them to navigate into inhospitable or shallow waters and inflict injuries from propellers or hulls.

"The best advice we can offer is to give the whales space and enjoy them from a distance," Costidis said.

Malmquist agreed. "People should enjoy the wonder of seeing a fairly unusual sight," he said. "But not to approach it."

Anyone who discovers a sick, injured or distressed sea turtle, seal, whale or dolphin is encouraged to take a photo, if possible, and immediately call the stranding response hotline at 757-385-7575.

Dietrich can be reached by phone at 757-247-7892.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/features/family/religion/dp-fea-religion-column-sokol-0205-20170204-story.html>

Religion column: Remembering those displaced, in history and today

February 4, 2017

We are all stewards of the past. History may not always merit our affection or be comforting, but it must command our attention in how we observe the world as advocates of maturity, intelligence and compassion. Without us, memory could be desecrated, and intolerance may triumph. Callousness should not be treated with a shrug of indifference.

Monuments and memorials are more than tourist attractions. They are vivid reminders of the fragile and dramatic terrain we still inhabit. Even today, despite all our advances, sadly our societies are still insecure with increasing diversity. Some believe in the melting pot, others the cauldron.

Here in Virginia, we are fortunate to be surrounded by some of the greatest landmarks in the annals of American history. When you set foot on the soil of Fort Monroe and her environs, nature is teeming with beauty, the birds are photogenic, and waves often hug the picturesque shoreline. The impressive historic stone fort, reportedly "the largest ever built in the United States," was designed by a French engineer, Simon Bernard, who served Napoléon Bonaparte.

The American Army conferred the ranking of Brigadier General on Bernard. Even though Barron Bernard was dedicated to the well being of our Armed Forces, he never became an American citizen and later returned to France.

Construction on the stone fort started in 1819. This history is expertly laid out in the Casemate Museum. The military base was decommissioned in 2011. When you survey the impressive landscape, you see its grandeur and how time and the elements have weathered almost every brick, stone and wooden plank. There is pride, but also frailty.

According to the National Park Service, the trees at Fort Monroe have served as living witnesses to "both the beginning of slavery ... and the end of slavery in the United States." The powerful story of African-American history is an undeniable force here. The "first documented Africans to

England's American Colonies" arrived here in 1619. African-Americans built Fort Monroe and later sought freedom there. Fort Monroe is a vital place to experience and understand history. There is no way of understanding the freedom symbolized by this place without raising uncomfortable questions about the past.

More than 6,500 kilometers across the Atlantic are the ruins of a military base that never symbolized freedom, but instead represents some of the only traces in France that remain of the internment of 600,000 men, women, children and the elderly. There were an estimated 200 internment camps. The French government had utilized Rivesaltes, near the border with Spain, for military purposes, dating back to 1924. But the decision to build an internment camp for refugees occurred in 1938. Construction on the camp was completed in 1941. Nearly 17,000 Jews, Spaniards and Sinti and Roma (Gypsies) were interned in the Rivesaltes camp between January 1941 and November 1942. At least 2,400 Jews were deported from the camp between August and November 1942 — and few returned alive.

By September 1942, Rivesaltes had become the main transit center for deportation to Drancy and on to the concentration camps, primarily Auschwitz. For this reason, some scholars call Rivesaltes an antechamber to Auschwitz. In the 1960s, the camp again was utilized to house thousands of Algerians in the aftermath of a civil war. The camp later fell into disuse but was abandoned rather than completely demolished.

Considered by many France's most decorated and accomplished World War II scholar, Denis Peschanski has strikingly asked about these tragic events: "How can we explain that these men, women, and even children, wound up behind barbed wire? These refugees expected a different welcome from the France of Human Rights, the France of the French Revolution."

Since 1998, Professor Peschanski of the Sorbonne has worked tirelessly to establish the Musée Mémorial du camp de Rivesaltes and to make it, in his words, "one of the great places for reflection on the past and present, in France and throughout the world." He has overcome many political and administrative obstacles. The foundation, which has support from the highest levels in the current French government, helps organize visits, exhibitions and welcomes students from France and abroad. Such efforts require great public will and support domestically and internationally to move forward with important scientific and pedagogical

work. Professor Peschanski also has worked closely with the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City and the Mémorial de Caen.

This history informs every fiber of his being, for his own parents joined the Résistance in the fight against the Nazi occupation of France. They were arrested. They somehow survived, but this traumatic history marked them and their children forever. For Peschanski, "the emotional burden of Rivesaltes does not need be evoked: it comes from the very spectacle of those dilapidated buildings." To underscore the base's importance, one of France's greatest architects designed a memorial to all who suffered at Rivesaltes.

On Jan. 27, we marked the observance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The liberation of Auschwitz occurred Jan. 27, 1945. We use this occasion to promote tolerance, inclusion, democracy and human rights.

On Jan. 28, my father passed away. He and his mother had escaped the Nazis by fleeing to Oran, Algeria. Algeria was his haven and sanctuary. My grandfather, who narrowly escaped arrest and deportation in France, remained behind. My father bore the scars of World War II. I grew up in a household where my Judaism was shaped by the accents of refugees, Sephardic Jews, who spoke Spanish, Arabic and Hebrew. French is my mother tongue. English is the fifth language I learned and embraced as my own.

There are those who wish to say that the Holocaust never happened or attempt to dilute and diminish its specificity. This is a source of continuing sadness.

I am mourning, as this Monday I buried my father. My remembrance of him is indebted to his loving heart. Remembrance is an inescapable obligation within Judaism. It is our response to those who sought to permanently silence us at such places as Auschwitz.

Today's refugee crisis proves that we cannot put such discussions behind us. We are again living through another moral catastrophe, and it is our obligation to overturn the kind of thinking that leads us away from caring about humanity.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-demo-20170130-story.html>

Army prepares to demolish building at Fort Monroe

Building 168 at Fort Monroe is slated for demolition this week. The one-story brick building, built in 1992 as a warehouse, is still property of the Army.

(Joe Fudge / Daily Press file)

By Jane Hammond ejhammond@dailypress.com

January 30, 2017

The Army is preparing to demolish an old warehouse at @FtMonroeatOPC

Building 168 at Fort Monroe is slated for demolition this week.

The one-story brick building, built in 1992 as a warehouse, is still property of the Army, Fort Monroe Authority spokeswoman Phyllis Terrell said.

It's not an historic building, Terrell said, so it is not part of the fort's historic landmark district. A sign on the building says "Directorate of Logistics, Directors Officer, Property Book Office, Bldg 168." It stands near the corner of Murray Street and Patch Road, across the moat from the north west corner of the fort.

The building is one of several that may eventually be demolished as the Army prepares to transfer property to FMA.

"I think there maybe future environmental work to be done, but I don't know the extent of that work either," she said. "Perhaps some of that would be uncovered when they take the building down. I don't know the extent of that environmental work."

