

Because Money Matters

BY KAREN PALLANSCH
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A recent survey released by Public Opinion Strategies found that 90 percent of people polled around the Commonwealth believe that the Chesapeake Bay is “a national treasure.” There is a general consensus that the Chesapeake Bay is one of our most valuable resources, contributing to tourism, business and industry, and quality of life. As such, we must do what is financially and ethically sound to protect such a treasure.

Here at the Alexandria Sanitation Authority (ASA), we receive and clean over 12 billion gallons of dirty water every year from the City of Alexandria and parts of Fairfax County. We’re an award-winning organization with a state-of-the-art treatment facility, and we are committed to leading our region in tough new standards to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Our facility removes over 90 percent of the nitrogen and close to 100 percent of the phosphorus from the dirty water coming into the plant. Those nutrients are what fuel the growth of algae blooms in the waterways. In fact, the water leaving ASA is typically cleaner than the waterway it is entering.

This past Monday, ASA and other wastewater agencies submitted official comments to the EPA and state officials on the draft “pollution diet.” This diet seeks to further reduce harmful nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, as well as sediment from entering waterways from all sources. These sources are broken into two categories: point sources, like wastewater treatment plants, where you can “point” back to the source of nutrient discharges; and non-point sources, like agricultural and urban runoff, where it is difficult to identify and measure the exact source of pollution. In fact, roughly 80 percent of these nutrient loads in the Bay area come from non-point sources.



One of our primary objections to the draft proposal is EPA’s threatened “backstop” actions against wastewater treatment plants throughout the Commonwealth. Essentially, if Virginia as a whole does not meet those reduced nutrient levels to EPA’s satisfaction, then EPA will leverage their ability to sanction point sources by lowering wasteload allocations even further.

The EPA is considering these potential cuts based on their initial view that Virginia has not given adequate assurance that the non-point sources will be able to reduce their nutrient loads according to the plan. Given Virginia’s track record of achieving non-point reductions until now, we disagree with EPA’s initial view. Yes, it’s true that more needs to be done to protect and improve the health of our natural resources — but at what point does the cost outweigh the end benefit?

In order to comply with another set of regulations imposed by Virginia in 2005, treatment plants around the state have spent nearly \$2 billion in capital projects. Here at ASA, plans are well underway for our State-of-the-Art Nitrogen Upgrade Program (SANUP). The program costs for these upgrades are nearly \$180 million over the next 5-7 years, including land purchases, design and construction. For us to achieve an upgrade project of this magnitude, our Board has already authorized a rate revenue increase with additional increases annually for the next three years.

If the EPA overrides Virginia’s current and future plans, it could create a ripple effect costing citizens and businesses an additional \$2 billion on top of the costly upgrades already in place. This is precisely why initiatives like NACWA’s Money Matters campaign have evolved. It is imperative that we all work together for smarter investments in clean water — because money matters.

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that I have witnessed at any event — high school, college, or professional. Their director should be commended as well as the students themselves, and other community groups should take notice. They were truly remarkable.

Darryl Francois

Losing Doctor At Casey Clinic

To the Editor:

The Flora Krause Casey Health Center in Alexandria, more commonly known as the Casey Clinic, is about to undergo a major change. It is in the process of being taken over by another health center called the Arlandria Health Center. They will be bringing in some of their own doctors, which means that unless you are a patient of Dr. Truong, you will be forced to have a new doctor.

I am a patient of Dr. Robert Wolverton. If, up until now, you have also been fortunate enough to have him as your doctor, you know what an incredibly wonderful and caring person he is. He is very much beloved by the people at the Casey Clinic. And, as I said, that is for a reason — the reason being that in addition to the fact that he is just a genuinely nice person, he cares very much about his patients, giving them the time that they need with him, and the care that they receive.

I am launching a campaign to save Dr. Wolverton from having to leave the Casey Clinic and I need your help. If you also do want to see Dr. Wolverton leave the Casey Clinic, please let your voice be heard! Contact Dr. Stephen Haering and let him know how you feel — that we want Dr. Wolverton to remain at the Casey Clinic. You can leave a message for Dr. Haering with his secretary, Dean Bryant, at 703-746-4956. Or you can email Dr. Haering at stephen.haering@vdh.virginia.gov to let him know how you feel. But you must act

quickly because all of this is supposed to happen by the end of this month.

Please join with me in trying to keep Dr. Wolverton from having to leave the Casey Clinic. If you have any other ideas that you think may be helpful in achieving this, please contact me at 703-370-5311. Believe me, if he has to go, I know that he will miss his patients every bit as much as much as they will miss him.

Let’s all work together in trying to keep Dr. Wolverton at Casey.

Patty Winters
Alexandria

Rolling Back Parking Rate

To the Editor:

Few people in our city probably noticed the working meeting of the Alexandria City Council last week, but had they been there, they would have been proud. After a reasonable and civil debate, and some sincere listening on the part of Mayor Euille and the Council, our city’s leaders took the first step toward rolling back parking meter rates.

Over the summer, the city had increased meter rates to \$1.75 per hour. That rate would not be problematic for many users were it not for the fact that Alexandria is currently using old-style, coin-only parking meters. Few drivers have seven quarters handy at a given time and many of us in the merchant community have been fielding a raft of complaints from hurried customers. Digital “smart meters” are coming next year to Alexandria, offering the convenience of credit card payment — but until they are here, the \$1.75 per hour rate puts a pinch on shopping in our wonderfully-walk-able Old Town district.

A group of us merchants banded together to take this concern to City Council. We found an immediate ally in Councilmen Frank Fannon and Rob Krupicka and were joined by over 500 residents who signed a petition to the same effect. After one-on-one meetings with multiple members of the Council and discussion at the Council’s meeting, a consensus was reached to roll back the rates to \$1.25 per hour for the time being.

This decision by the Council was both prudent and shrewd — our vibrant downtown retail district is rare for a city our size and we need to take great care to avoid policies that discourage shoppers from coming, lingering, and spending money in our locally-owned businesses. Old Town’s commercial competition is suburban shopping malls where parking is as plentiful as charm is scarce.

Our location is more convenient, our character is unmatched, our collection of businesses is both comprehensive and unique. We have a retail treasure that we must protect and this wise decision to make our parking policies more customer-friendly should make every Alexandrian proud of our Mayor and Council and their willingness to listen

Appreciates School System



To the Editor:

I am thankful for Principal Seth Kennard and all the faculty, staff and personnel at Charles Barrett Elementary School (CBES) where my fourth-grade daughter thrives both academically and socially. After spending her early years in local private schools, my husband and I moved our daughter to CBES in 3rd grade.

We discovered while socially she was quick to adapt to her new surroundings, academically the course work was much more challenging at ACPS than in the private schools.

The dedication of all at CBES really made for a great transition while she played catch up. We continue to be amazed and thankful for a great public school system in Alexandria where every child is counted and nurtured.

Maureen Higgins Williams
Alexandria