Forward Thinking

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Forward Thinking is What We Need in Hampton Roads

by Joel Rubin, Managing Editor

Forward Thinking represents the future of the "Future of Hampton Roads" (FHR), a forty plus year old organization of volunteer champions of our region. With this publication, we will have a home for our, and your, thoughts on what we're doing right and wrong and how we can be, as my friend Mayor Meyera Oberndorf used to say, a "community for a lifetime."

Through the year, we will delve into issues from the "brain drain" to transportation, affordable housing to workforce development, the arts to education, the military, sports, tourism and more. The goal? To get the conversation started or moved along, thanks to cogent prodding from individuals with first-hand knowledge of their topics.

You don't have to be as extraordinary as some of the movers and shakers pictured elsewhere on this page.

But have you ever put your thoughts in front of an audience and stepped up when others cautioned you to shut up? This is your chance.

Where is racial progress occurring and what keeps us apart? Should we drop the borders and become one big city? Rather than angst over our lack of big-league teams, should we focus on where we can be better (or the best!) in literacy, customer service, heart health, energy research, the trade skills...even crabcakes.

To get the ball rolling, there is a lot from me in this initial edition, but fear not, subsequent ones will introduce more voices. All we ask is that you write from your own experience (we also do interviews), telling us things we might not know that would be good for everyone in Hampton Roads, not just your "neck of the woods."

Visit www.757future.com to learn more about FHR and be part of Forward Thinking, which likely will evolve into more than a magazine, because let's face it, we need it.

To suggest a topic and a writer, visit www.757future.com/forwardthinking

Some notable Hampton Roads Movers and Shakers, *from left to right:* Captain John Smith, Amadeo Obici, Collis Huntington, Henry Clay Hofheimer, Frank Batten, Jessie Rattley, Pete Decker, Joe Jordan, Paul Trible, William Harvey, Ann Kilgore, Blake Cullen

LOOK WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 2 - Three of a Kind | Page 3 - Seeing the Region
Page 4 - The Promise of the Expanded HRBT
Page 5 - The Brain Drain | Page 6 - Meet the Chair

Three of a Kind Brings Councilmembers Together for a Candid Conversation

By Joel Rubin, Managing Editor and Peter Shaw, Deputy Editor

We will call this recurring feature, ***Three of a Kind***. In it, you will meet a trio of public servants from as many Hampton Roads cities, all facing similar issues. Until our get-together, our first trio did not know each other.

They are Chesapeake councilman Jeff Bunn, who worked for his city for 37 years in tourism, public works and economic development and was on the school board for 14; Portsmouth's Lisa Lucas Burke, the daughter of Senator Louise Lucas and a hard charger in her own right, starting on the Economic Development Authority followed by 7 years on council; and Joash Schulman of Virginia Beach, like Bunn a first termer but long active in regional matters. Joash owns a co-working space at Town Center where we met.

There was no one-upmanship in this conversation, even though Chesapeake and Virginia Beach are arguably among the region's wealthier cities and Portsmouth is... not. "But look at how resilient we are," said Burke, Portsmouth's vice mayor. "Fifty percent of our land is off the tax rolls, but we do well meeting our obligations. That's because we are very proud of our city and stick together."

Having lived in Virginia Beach for the first 14 of her 28 years of marriage, Burke is hardly naïve to the differences. "We barely have a Burger King, but frankly seeing what the Beach had, energized me to go back to Portsmouth and fight for more shopping opportunities there." Joash (pronounced Josh) and Jeff admitted to loving Olde Towne and being thrilled to see massive monopiles on the pier at Portsmouth Marine Terminal. "The offshore wind industry can be good for all of our cities," said Joash.

Jeff acknowledged that Chesapeake has more land available for development than Portsmouth or Virginia Beach but when traveling on behalf of his municipality in search of convention and reunion business, he promoted all of our "sister cities" attractions, from Norfolk's downtown to the Virginia Beach resort strip. Joash, a Michigan native, is the lone come-here of the group. To him Town Center, "creating something from nothing," was "visionary," and since "you can get anywhere in 20 minutes here" (unlike his native Detroit), he is often sampling other communities' delights.

All three were busy writing down what they were learning. "I want to know more about your land bank program," Joash said to Jeff. "I am interested in your festivals and really enjoy taking the ferry from Norfolk to Portsmouth," said Jeff to Lisa. "We should all do that together," stated Joash, a father of three, who related how he would like more impervious driveways to relieve flooding, something

"Three of a Kind", continued on Page 7

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Exposure to Opportunity is Crucial for African American Boys to Succeed

By Jimmy Gray

It's no secret that Hampton Roads is challenged to attract and retain talent to fill in-demand jobs in such fields as health care, manufacturing, shipbuilding, and transportation. Many pay well and the training to attain credentials is readily available.

African American males are historically underrepresented in high wage positions, particularly in STEM fields, and over-represented in low wage ones. We can do better. The region must develop a talent pipeline that ensures these young men are included and prepared. It starts with accessibility and awareness, a task undertaken by two groups with whom I am involved.

Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, also known as the Boulé, is the nation's oldest Black Greek-letter graduate-level fraternity. Beta Lambda, its Hampton Roads chapter, organizes and supports a mentoring and career exploration effort for African American males. It exposes students to major industries in the local area where careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are in demand.

In planning the program, I borrowed from my experiences with LEAD 757 (Class of 2002) and Civic Leadership Institute (Class of 2008) where I expanded my own horizons by visiting workplaces and meeting leaders in government, defense, education, transportation, industry, non-profits and the arts. Boulé Scholars Program employs a similar model. We took our teens on a series of field trips to facilities like NASA Langley Research Center, Newport News Shipbuilding's Apprentice School Innovation Lab, Hampton University's Proton Therapy Insitute, Brooks Crossing Innovation and Opportunity Lab and the U.S. Department of Energy's Jefferson Laboratory. At all stops, students engaged in meaningful

As more young people, in this case Black ones, realize that there are ample well-paying opportunities in their back yard, they may consider staying or returning after graduating from high school or college.

"Exposure to Opportunity", continued on Page 8

The Expanded Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Will Be a Game Changer for Our Region

By Joel Rubin, Managing Editor

For a recent trip from Ocean View to Williamsburg that ought to be a half hour drive, Pavithra Parthasarathi, Deputy Director of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, gave herself a full hour. You know why. It's the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (HRBT), the most overworked 3.5 miles of highway in Virginia, hosting up to a hundred thousand vehicles a day during the summer and enough the other seasons to force all of us to schedule trips across our famed harbor at odd hours or not at all.

Thankfully, help is on the way. By 2027, mostly thanks to Mary, an enormous 430 foot long, 46 foot wide "boring" machine, and a host of dedicated engineers, trades people and others in hard hats, we will have nearly ten miles of widened interstate highway including bridges and tunnels. Some of the lanes will be free, others tolled to give drivers options to move west to east or east to west even more quickly.

HRTPO Deputy Director Pavithra Parthasarathi at site of expanded HRBT

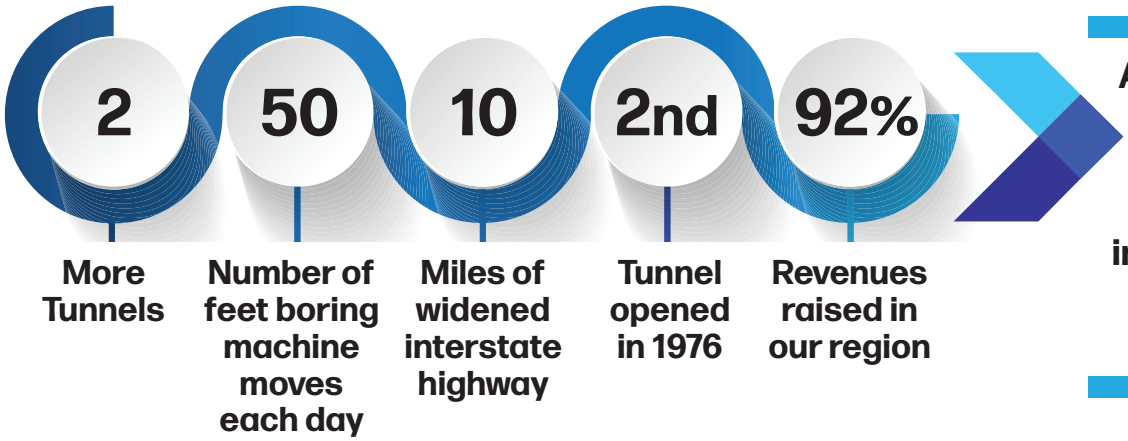
Because water is both our blessing (creating and sustaining jobs in defense, shipping and tourism) and curse, (the cost of crossing it and keeping it off the land), we must tend to our bridges and tunnels. With the HRBT, we have waited a long time to keep up with the traffic that uses it. The first tunnel opened in 1957. It wasn't until 1976, during Governor Mills Godwin's second term, that a second came on line.

Now nearly a half century later, we are able to invest nearly $4 billion on the largest infrastructure project in state history, 92% of which was raised in our region, thanks to the 2013 establishment of the Hampton Roads Transportation Fund (HRTF) and the 2014 creation of the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), which administers the HRTF. Boy, do we need it.

The fact that we add more time to trips to avoid backups, or experience them even if we don't, is a productivity killer. When we sit and wait, we are not at our computers, in class or at a job site. If they're not sleeping, kids are complaining, the car is belching out pollution, and our Hondas and Chevys, not to mention buses and semis, are wasting gas or electricity. Family gatherings, beach vacations and office meetings start late, nerves are frazzled, and in an emergency, like an approaching hurricane, we risk our very lives because let's face it, there aren't many ways out of our beloved region when we absolutely must evacuate.

To say that more capacity at the HRBT will be a huge psychic lift for our citizens and visitors is an

"Expanded HRBT", continued on Page 7



How Do We STOP the Brain Drain?

"We continue to lose people to other parts of the state and other states in the nation," ODU economist Robert McNab recently told WAVY TV, referring to a report he authored on the declining number of 20–34-year-olds in the area. "Hampton Roads has gotten slightly larger, but slightly grayer."

McNab said it's about money. "It's not because they are saying Hampton Roads is a boring place to live, but they are looking for economic opportunities and are voting with their feet. They are going to areas where they can find jobs that are higher paying."

David White of the VA Maritime Association blames lack of knowledge of opportunity here. In an op-ed in the Pilot, citing a study showing how vibrant the maritime sector is in the region, he wrote: "Hampton Roads is actually an Ocean of Opportunity for our citizens and those who come here. Check the 'want ads'." Even though we already have the U.S.'s largest maritime workforce, there are openings for skilled tradesmen and women; and educational institutions are amping up certification and degree granting programs." And those include white collar jobs too.

Forward Thinking will stay on this issue. For starters, here are a couple pieces by young people who think Hampton Roads is just swell.

Why Not Here?

By Drew Keever, Entrepreneur

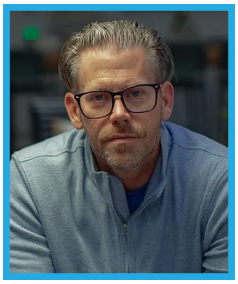
I was born in Norfolk, but at the age of 11, my family moved to Virginia Beach to satisfy my parents' insatiable appetite for the sand, sun and surf. I graduated from Norfolk Academy in 2014. After finishing college and starting my career, I felt Virginia Beach, and Hampton Roads, pulling me back.

Despite being home to nearly 1.8 million people, our region has a way of feeling like the biggest small town you'll ever experience with a tapestry of cities and counties, each with its own unique flavor, offering something for everyone. From Portsmouth to Pungo, your experience varies depending on where you plant your roots. Indeed, there's a sense of belonging here that wraps around you like a warm blanket.

Hampton Roads is also a fertile ground for entrepreneurship. Over the last year, I've been scaling a fintech startup with a Virginia-based team that is part of a vibrant community of innovators, founders and creators in Norfolk that's incredibly supportive. That includes notably Tim Ryan, Executive Director of Innovate Hampton Roads (see his piece that follows). His family decided on this region more than 20 years ago and couldn't be happier. Tim is the compass needle pointing true North for Hampton Roads' burgeoning startup community.

Here's to the future of Hampton Roads—a future we're all crafting, one story at a time.

If you want to get involved with our organization, please visit our website, www.757future.com.



Air Force and Buffalo Native Loves Hampton Roads

By Tim Ryan, Executive Director, Innovate Hampton Roads

Born and raised in the suburbs of Buffalo, I did enjoy having the Bills and Sabres as home teams. But the winters are harsh, and the summers are short.

As I grew up in the '90s, General Motors' reign over the automotive world diminished, and the job market wasn't exactly "thriving" in western New York. The US Air Force became my career path.

After spending several years overseas, my last duty station was Langley Air Force Base in Hampton. I quickly realized this was home, and I separated from the service. Here's why.

Virginia has four seasons, and although the summers can be hot and humid, that is offset by mild winters with snowfalls that melt the next day. Spring and autumn are very pleasant.

I love the water and the mountains, with their hiking trails, wineries and apple orchards, are not far away.

To experience the big city, Washington DC is but a few hours north, but after attending an A-list concert venue or a Nats/Commanders/Wizards game, you realize our traffic isn't so bad.

I often joke with people that Hampton Roads is the

"Buffalo Native Loves Hampton Roads", continued on Page 7

New FHR Chair Has a Rich Hampton Roads History

By Joel Rubin, Managing Editor

There was a time in his life when Greg Garrett would not blame anyone for calling him sketchy. "I was a bad kid, shoplifting when I was 6, driving my grandmother's car at 11, facing grand larceny charges at 15 that almost landed me in reform school."

But he was also so focused on success that he started his own tree trimming business at 16 and was elected SCA President at Hampton High. "I led an effort to convince the city to appoint a paid and voting student on the school board. It lost 4-3."

Thanks to a family fund, Greg was able to attend the University of Richmond, but he dropped out after one year. "I came home at 19 to help my mom in the family real estate agency after my dad died of cancer at 60. I bought ten homes and helped clients buy and sell 20 others in my first year. I never went back to college." He hasn't stopped hustling since.

As a young business owner, Greg realized that to spread his entrepreneurial wings, he couldn't put all his eggs in one municipal bucket. "I already knew a lot of people in Hampton, so I decided to open my own real estate company in Newport News." He became so ensconced there that Mayor Jessie Rattley made him at age 25 the leader of a commission to address the city's drug problem. "Over the years I considered running for office myself, but frankly I just got too busy with work and family to devote my time to one city. And now I have a wonderful new wife (Michelle) and a 13th grandchild."

Greg also has three lines of business. There are six divisions within Garrett Realty Partners, from traditional sales to lending, titles and property management, with offices in Newport News, Williamsburg and VA Beach. "You have to be on the southside too to be successful." He's also at Virginia Beach Town Center with one of two locations of IV Nutrition, the other in Suffolk. "I believe that good health is critical," says the 65-year-old Garrett. IV Nutrition's website describes its IV drips as a "fast and effective way to replenish your body with essential vitamins, minerals, and amino acids." Greg is eying a third center on the Peninsula.

He's also in Norfolk's Ocean View with "Sailtime Virginia," one of four services he offers pleasure boaters including training and chartering. "We encourage groups of families to share one boat, and we take care of it for them." He loves to be on the water and doesn't understand why Hampton Roads' bays and rivers aren't as busy as Annapolis'.

In fact there is a lot about our region that frustrates Greg Garrett, who is a member of both major area chambers and was recently chair of Greater Peninsula Now. Pointing to the significant new investments at Jefferson Lab, in offshore wind, bridge-tunnels and more, he thinks our best days are just ahead. "We have tremendous potential here." He acknowledges our geographic and historic divisions, but what really riles him is the lack of appreciation for what every city and citizen has to offer. "It's not good to have rich and poor communities who look up or down on each other. Virginia Beach and Chesapeake need Portsmouth and Newport News to thrive. The region is so much more important than each individual locality."

Smart business leaders see it, says Greg, which is why he loves being around them. Two decades ago, he was founding chairman of the eastern Virginia chapter of Entrepreneurs Organization. Today it has 90 members across Hampton Roads. Seeking the advice and experience of even more high achievers, he helped establish a Young Presidents' Organization chapter in

"New FHR Chair", continued on Page 7

Expanded HRBT, cont. from Page 4

understatement. "I am proud that VDOT, HRTAC, and the HRTPO have collaborated to bring this massive project to life. This is a model example of regional collaboration in Hampton Roads," says Bob Crum, Executive Director of the HRTPO/ Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. His and our satisfaction will be watching rush hour and vacation weekend traffic moving smoothly from Willoughby to Phoebus, knowing that the fruits of our labors (and the money from our taxes) will have done as intended, made motoring more pleasant because drivers were able to reach their destinations when the GPS said they would.

Yes, that day may be a few years hence but given how long we've waited, for civil engineers and everyday citizens, it will be worth every minute.

"Three of a Kind", cont. from Page 2

Norfolk "does much better than us." All three can't wait for a regional success story, an expanded Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, to open and are pleased that the cities will soon share the costs and reap the tax benefits of some future large regional projects.

They all agree that raising reading scores would be an ideal regional initiative, perhaps encouraging support for a privately funded program like local retired school psychologist Gary Anderson's All District Reads where entire school systems devour the same book at the same time at home with their families. "The more that kids can read at grade level, the better our workforce literacy will be," said Burke.

They are not pollyannish, acknowledging that there is a "long way to go" to become better "connected" and that the economy challenges all governments, but that mutual respect and more personal relationships among all councilmembers would help. "Our regional agencies should get us in the same room more often, because we're all in this together," said Ms. Burke, an NSU grad in electronic engineering. "We should encourage each other to lean into our particular strengths," said Mr. Schulman, "so we all can grow and prosper." Now that's Forward Thinking.

New FHR Chair, cont. from Page 6

Virginia with most members in Richmond and Hampton Roads. "I learn so much from these interactions." One thing he's gleaned is the value of a mega-region along I-64, the study and implementation of which is underway through RVA757 Connects. "Between our corporations and universities and populations, we have a lot to offer the world if we join forces in meaningful ways."

This eternal optimist rejects those who paint a bleak future based on past failures. "I don't buy it. We have wonderful people here and tremendous assets. Maybe we need to look at how we define success because there is plenty here to attract and retain productive residents." Greg appreciates all of them, regardless of their race, gender or religion (and he is active in his, finding the Lord at 15, a discovery he credits for his teenage turnaround). "I don't have a desk or office at any of my companies," he says. "I have a leadership team with very talented and motivated individuals who oversee our operations. It works well."

His latest venture is as chair of the Future of Hampton Roads, an evolving legacy group of local men and women who, through this publication and other activities, intends to provide an oomph to more regional interaction. "We have a generational changing of the guard occurring in our local governments," says Garrett. "We must give them the time, fair compensation and respect they deserve to do their jobs in a collaborative manner."

Thanks to his business acumen and enthusiasm, no one seems to create more opportunity than Garrett himself, who has 150 people spread among his various interests and at least that many who serve with him on boards that among other causes helps incarcerated kids and orphans and drive business development in Central America, but most importantly, push his home region forward. Get to know Greg Garrett. He'll make you a Hampton Roads believer in no time.

"Buffalo Native Loves Hampton Roads", cont. from Page 5

largest, small town you'll ever live in. You realize that when you are constantly bumping into people you know. Add in our history, amusement parks, world-class beaches, colleges and universities, the military, and so much more, our region is not a hard sell.

Lots of visitors save their hard-earned money over the course of a year to vacation here. How wonderful we can be in this area all the time.

When Councilmembers Convene Away from Work, Connections Commence

Put a couple dozen local politicos from Williamsburg to the Beach into the same room for an hour, with adult beverages and appetizers available, and you know what you get? Relationships. As much as we like to think that our councilmembers and supervisors know each other on a personal level, it isn't the case. Time and legal constraints keep them apart, but when the Hampton Roads Alliance, tasked with advancing economic development in these parts, invited not just mayors and chairs but their elected partners in local governance to a meeting and reception, they found takers. And listeners.

"Talking to other people about how they handle problems and their successes and not so successful things, you can learn a lot," said Poquoson vice mayor Carey Freeman. "Youth crime, youth violence, those are issues we're all dealing with," added Chris Taylor of Virginia Beach. Colleague Worth Remick, noting the number and intellect of reps from other communities, said, "This is about as good as you're gonna get."

The Future of Hampton Roads had a camera crew at the Museum of Contemporary Art at the end of 264 to capture the sights and bites and put them together into a video, available at www.757future.com. We should all encourage more social interaction. It's how progress begins.

"Exposure to Opportunity", cont. from Page 3

discussions with administrators, researchers, engineers, and scientists.

They also engaged in hands-on creativity exercises, used 3D printers, augmented reality training, and performed high-performance computing. Most importantly, they saw professionals that looked like them.

As more young people, in this case Black ones, realize that there are ample well-paying opportunities in their back yard, they may consider staying or returning after graduating from high school or college.

Another men's group, the 25-year-old Hampton Roads Committee of 200+ Men that I am proud to be president of, also focuses on achieving positive outcomes for African American males. We stage an annual breakfast to spotlight high school seniors who graduate with honors from public and private schools. In 2017, we launched the 200+ Scholars Academy, a multi-year mentoring program. Its mission is to prepare our young men to leave high school ready for employment, enlistment or higher education. There are monthly sessions around personal development and participation in monthly community service activities, plus field trips to such places as the Virginia General Assembly. Five students recently traveled abroad to attend an international leadership program in Paris.

200+ Men needs more awareness and volunteers if we are to meet our mission to funnel more qualified Black males into high demand jobs in our economy. Email me at jgray@hampton.gov, and let's talk about how you can help our organization or start your own. The time is now.

Besides his civic involvement described above, Jimmy Gray is Vice Mayor of the City of Hampton.