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County, Town Eye Marker  
*Support Historical Society,  
Israel Hill*

**By ROB CHAPMAN**

PRINCE EDWARD — Minus state funding for a highway marker commemorating the Israel Hill community, County supervisors have chipped in with the Town of Farmville and the Farmville-Prince Edward Historical Society.

“Israel Hill was a unique experiment in antebellum community life—so named because its residents were freed slaves, often referred to as modern-day Israelites living in the promised land,” noted Jo Smith, a member of the historical society’s board, who presented the request to supervisors at their November 12 meeting. “Its former location is now a part of both of the town and the county and was originally part of the property owned by the Randolph family. A family considered among the founding fathers of the state of Virginia.”

Richard Randolph, who died in 1796, granted freedom and acreage to an estimated 90 slaves. It was the subject of a book written by Melvin Patrick Ely author of *Israel on the Apomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom From the 1790s Through the Civil War*.

Supervisors endorsed the placement of the marker in 2005, but the State’s Department of Historic Resources had funding for only 10 markers and Israel Hill was not among those selected.

Board members chipped in a third of the \$1,350 cost last week (as did Town Council) and the Society plans to submit a detailed application to the Department of Historic Resources by December 1. The Department’s board is expected to take action on the request in a March meeting.

Ms. Smith cited that the proposed location for the marker is on Third Street. The initial Israel Hill 350 acres site covered an area from the underpass, to approximately the site of Booth & Company.

**Sandy River**

Supervisors held a public hearing on an amendment regulating activities near the Sandy River Reservoir that will provide for the construction and maintenance of public utilities.

“This amendment was prompted by Southside Electric Co-op who made an inquiry to possibly move a power line that crosses the reservoir at the upper end and also provides for any activities of the county or water authority regarding water withdrawal...from the Sandy River Reservoir,” explained Board Chairman William “Buckie” Fore.

One speaker, former supervisor Pattie Cooper-Jones, addressed the broader issue of a public water system (which has been discussed by the board).

“My concern, my question is, is this water supply system that we’re talking about, is it absolutely necessary? And, what kind of burden is it going to put on the taxpayers?”

She noted that it appears that it’s going to go forward.

Fore, however, cited that it doesn’t have anything to do with the ordinance (later adding that they don’t know that they’re going to build a water supply system), but Ms. Cooper-Jones offered that it’s all related.

County Administrator Wade Bartlett explained that Southside Virginia Electrical Cooperative has a need to build a new line that spans the reservoir that would allow increased capacity and better service to citizens, but they were not allowed to do so under the current ordinance.

“Once we realized the limitation of...our current ordinance, we did include anything that could possibly happen—telecommunications line, phone lines, fiber-optic cable, and also possibly any water intake and pumping stations and whatnot,” Bartlett said. “So we wrote it to allow any public utility that ability to work on county property so as to better serve our citizens.”

The change to the ordinance was approved unanimously.

Meanwhile, in related news, the board agreed to hold a public hearing on a proposed protection overlay district for the Reservoir. The County’s staff and consultants, Draper Aden Associates, have worked for months to develop the ordinance, whose purpose is to ensure water quantity and quality protection.

However, board members, following the recommendation of County Planning Director Jonathan Pickett, agreed to enter into a contract with the firm not to exceed an additional \$7,000.

“Due to overwhelming public input in the process, additional public meetings, draft revisions to incorporate steering committee changes, and compiling five mapping scenarios, the project budget has been consumed ahead of the completion of an adopted ordinance,” a memo explained.

The firm had sought \$17,000, but Pickett recommended some cost saving measures.

**Tax Evaluation**

Bartlett presented a positive evaluation of local sales and use tax for two months in the 2009 fiscal year.

"...While they are less than the corresponding months last year, they're still within our budget and are the second highest we have received," he told the board.

He added, "And, sometimes, just two months is hard to tell because some of the timing when companies pay the state it'll come back and forth and it can fluctuate, but our budget for that was \$2.8 million and, looking at that, I think we'll...still meet that but it's early in the year..."

There was some downturn in the recordation and grantors tax and deeds, reflecting a downturn in some of the real estate transactions. Overall, however, they are not significant portions of revenue.

#### **Fire Safety**

Board members also discussed correspondence from an insurance agency seeking to have the local fire departments have their public protection class ratings re-evaluated.

"I can tell you briefly that there is a...scale of one to ten and if you are a ten, you are basically unrated and so a nine would be the lowest rating," Assistant County Administrator Sarah Puckett reported. "And then if you're a one, that means you have the highest rated..."

There are three major areas on which the ratings are based.

"...We're talking about the public protection classification, which is the ISO...an insurance rating that affects your homeowners insurance," Ms. Puckett cited. "Depending upon where you live in the county, you are covered by certain rated fire departments and that helps determine your homeowners insurance. And the higher the rate at this fire department, the lower your homeowners insurance."

Three major areas are weighed: how well the fire department receives alarms and dispatches resources (10 percent); the number of engine companies and the amount of water a community needs to fight a fire (50 percent); and a community's water supply—the amount available for a company to be able to fight a fire (40 percent).

Ms. Puckett, highlighting information provided by the Prince Edward Farm Bureau, reported that departments in Darlington Heights, Meherrin, Prospect and Rice are considered at a nine on the scale; Farmville and Hampden-Sydney (which have water hydrants available) are a six on the scale and Pamplin is a seven and nine. (Part of the Town of Pamplin is serviced by a public water system.)

"I've been involved with some of these with a paid fire department. While there's three overarching, there's many different subsets of that to include equipment, manning of your equipment, the training of the people. There's a lot of areas in there. And, also, the insurance premium fall at different rates from one rating to another, which I don't know exactly the amount. We need to look at that...and do maybe a cost benefit analysis to see if the cost to maybe move from a nine to a seven would pay dividends and basically be economically feasible."

County officials are expected to research the matter (looking at it from the fire department, insurance and County perspectives) to see if there is an opportunity to save citizens on homeowners insurance costs.

#### **Materials Recovery**

County officials will weigh the merits of a materials recovery facility that would allow recyclables to be sorted out of the incoming waste stream. The benefit is that it could reduce the amount of waste coming into the landfill, save space and mean additional employment for individuals with disabilities.

"They're looking at some point...to expand sometime in the future..." Pickett said of Southside Training, Employment and Placement Services (STEPS). "They feel like they can do more with a bigger space. One of the things we're looking at is...establishing a materials recovery facility, which basically all that means is in theory is a chance for us to go through the trash before (recycling)."

Currently, the County collects recyclables at collection centers.

Rural Development has low-interest loans available for this type of facility, according to Pickett; a preliminary engineering report, however, is required. (They could also look at grant opportunities.)

"...Based on...what I've heard in the past, we have a minimal waste stream," Pickett told the board. "I don't know if it will be feasible or not to do this. However, my recommendation was to go ahead and let's get a preliminary engineering report done because I think it would give us a good idea of our waste stream."

The report, he said, would give a good idea of what the system would cost. They have plenty of space at the landfill, but Pickett added he's not convinced materials recovery system will be feasible.

Board members agreed to the preliminary engineering study. Funds will come from the refuse disposal budget and required no additional appropriation.

#### **In Other News...**

\*The board scheduled a December 9 public hearing on a proposed amendment to the county's erosion and sediment control ordinance. The change would allow a numeric scoring system to determine the frequency of inspections needed for single family home sites. Without the change, state regulations would require inspections every two weeks.

\*Supervisors agreed to appropriate \$12,500 received in grant funds for the Citizens Alert System grant. The funds will be used to assist the Town in paying for the alert system. The system provides automated emergency phone calls for such things as a tornado or severe thunderstorm warning and text notifications to registrants (and includes home phone, cell phone or pager).

Sign-ups, however, have been limited to date—Pickett estimated there have been less than 300 over two years. The grant funds were made available through the U. S. Department of Emergency Management.

\*The board voted to post County-owned property at the landfill, industrial park and County property adjoining the Piedmont Regional Jail for "no hunting."

\*Following the recommendation of the board's efficiency committee, supervisors agreed to issue a request for proposals for phone/data services. The County uses several different vendors to provide services to offices in the courthouse and it was also cited that the phone system has reached a maximum capacity and cannot be expanded—or no new phone lines and fax lines can be added.

"We have looked at this thing over the last, I guess couple of months now and studied the communications system within the courthouse and the committee does believe that we could save some money by taking another look at it because...frankly, we've outgrown it," Fore commented.

\*The board directed the county administrator to adjust the focus of the County's Economic Development Director to shift tourism duties to the marketing assistant, freeing the economic developer to research and apply for grants. The marketing assistant will report to the economic developer who will provide management oversight, and direction when required. The responsibility of the day-to-day functions of the Tourism and Visitor's Center will be headed by the marketing assistant.

"...We've talked, and so has the school, about funding a grant writer's position, but hiring another person may not be the wisest move at this time," Bartlett cited.

\*Fore noted that he has directed the staff to draft a resolution for the board to consider in December recognizing the service of the late Mr. James Lyle. Mr. Lyle, who passed away earlier this month, previously represented the Prospect District.