

Welcome to...

OPCL

Ocean Park Civic League - Virginia Beach, VA



Important Dates

Ocean Park Civic League Meeting

March 8
Thursday
7:30 p.m.
Ocean Park
Rescue Squad

Ocean Park CRAWL OUT!!!

March 24
Saturday
6 p.m.
La Casa Rana

BAC Meeting

March 15
April 19
3:30 p.m.
Bayside
Recreation Center

SDCC Meeting

April 23
7:30 p.m.
Ocean Park
Rescue Squad

Ocean Park Echo

MARCH 2012

Dredge spoils in Ocean Park



Do you have an opinion about something like this **PERMANENTLY** loading and unloading muck, not sand, in our neighborhood for the whole city?

What do you think of 60 dump trucks a day entering and leaving Ocean Park? 7 a.m. to dusk?

***The city assumes Ocean Park approves of this.
Numbers matter, if you have an opinion, share it now.***

Please attend the meeting. This is it. If the community doesn't share it's opinion, and share it loudly, the project will move forward as planned.

After fighting so hard to preserve Pleasure House Point from development, it will share it's view with the sites, sounds, smells and traffic associated with this. You will experience this every day at the base of the Lesner Bridge, Ocean Park side.

Permanently.



The permanent dredge station will pump sludge from around Virginia Beach waterways to dump trucks in Ocean Park.

Dave Hansen, Virginia Beach deputy city manager and public works expressed that this is not a residential area and is suitable for industrial operation.

There may be 60-140 muck-loaded trucks leaving our neighborhood and using Shore Drive daily.

Calling all guard dogs!

The Crab Creek Dredge Spoils Transfer Site is Back.

A few years back, a small but determined group of OPCL residents know as the

Lynnhaven Boat Ramp Guard Dogs, came together to convince our city that the Crab Creek area behind the Lynnhaven boat ramp was not a good place to create a PERMANENT dredge management transfer site (DMTS). We thought we won that war when the city actually studied the plan and decided to purchase a sight near Virginia Beach Boulevard in Thalia to create this industrial site, but little did we know it was only the opening battle of a long and drawn-out campaign.

The public works department recently came up with a city-wide neighborhood channel

dredging plan to coordinate the private estuary dredging throughout the city. This is a great idea if you live on an estuary, a bad idea if you live near one of the five PERMANENT dredge spoils transfer sites that the public works department feels need to be created. Crab Creek has been identified as the area DMTS for the Upper Western Branch of the Lynnhaven River, which will service the waterfront home owners in Thoroughgood and Church Point. Not one home in Ocean Park will benefit from putting this PERMANENT DMTS in our neighborhood. At the time of the initial battle we identified a myriad of reasons why this was a bad idea, but it seems those reasons have been roundly ignored by our public servants.

At last week's Bayfront Advisory Committee meeting, the city's deputy city manager, Dave Hansen, and representa-

part of the construction, the contractor will use the area behind the Lynnhaven Boat Ramp as a construction laydown area. They will also construct a "temporary" 400-foot bulkhead so the contractor can bring materials to the site via barge.

The difference between a temporary bulkhead and a permanent bulkhead is essentially how long you leave it there. Our city fully intends to use the construction of the new Lesner Bridge to back-door constructing a PERMANENT dredge spoils transfer site on the property. This is not a "maybe," they gave us a presentation on how they are going to do it. If we don't speak up in force, and loudly, this is going to happen. I was told by Hansen that he and public works do not feel Crab Creek is a residential area. He did not see that is was a problem putting a PERMANENT industrial operation at Crab Creek.

Fortunately we have time to fight this. The first thing you need to do is show up at the next OPCL meeting in March. Deputy City Manager Dave Hansen will be there. We need to let him know in no uncertain terms that we do not want this PERMANENT DMTS at Crab Creek. If we don't speak up loudly and in numbers, this DMTS is going to happen. Make your voice heard.

Rick Mercadante



tives from the city's public works department, gave a presentation on the planned Lesner Bridge replacement construction, scheduled to begin in July 2013. As

Dredge Letter to Ocean Park



Dear Neighbors,
Sid and I attended Thursday's Bayfront Advisory Committee meeting. The Assistant city manager and city staff were there to present plans for the Lesner Bridge replacement AND building a permanent industrial site at Crab Creek.

There are several distinct issues that you should know about:

1. Lesner Bridge replacement is vital - the City plans to use the Crab Creek "spoils" site for construction staging for the bridge over the two or so years it will take for the project. I feel that we as homeowners should accept that. The bridge's condition currently is rated lower than the one in the Midwest that fell a few years ago. During the construction there will be up to 100 truck trips daily through the boat ramp and out to Shore Drive via Piedmont Circle and East Stratford Road. There will be a "temporary" barge docking station built for barging materials to the site. There will be noise and other usual construction site impact. Beach access via the boat ramp facility will be curtailed during the construction. Boat launching will remain open. While this is unpleasant, it seems to be a necessary, but temporary, inconvenience.

2. Currently, CLEAN sand from dredging of the Crab Creek Channel occurs once every year or two, or when weather causes sand movement that requires it to keep the channel open for boaters. Again, I feel that since we, especially homeowners with boats on the creek, benefit from this, it is a necessary nuisance. The city stockpiles this sand on the site for future use for sand replenishment along the bay or elsewhere in the city. We certainly also benefit when sand is replenished on our nearby beach.

3. **THIS IS WHAT WE NEED TO FOCUS ON:** The city has renewed its interest (that we fought in 2008) in put-

ting a permanent dredge transfer site with a barge off-loading station at Crab Creek to receive and truck out the MUCK dredged from neighborhoods such as Witchduck Point, Thoroughgood Manor, Church Point and Saw Pen Point, which want their channels dug for their boating pleasure, but do not want the inconvenience of the dredge transfer station in their own backyard.

If this is built, we will experience: barges offloading 40-50 truckloads of dredge spoils a day, and those 40-50 trucks, averaging THIRTY-FIVE TONS traveling across the cross-walk between the boat ramp bath house and the boardwalk to the beach, and out to Shore Drive via Piedmont Circle and East Stratford Road. Barges may impede boat traffic in the boat channel. The dredged muck in this process is thick and foul-smelling, not the clean sand that is dredged from the Crab Creek channel. Beaches and Waterways Commission has recommended limiting to 30 trucks per day for no more than two 90-day cycles per year. It is unclear what the time-of-day restrictions may be for dredge transfer work. City representatives said, regarding the Lesner Bridge construction, that time-of-day work would depend on the contractor proposal... If the engine noise and beeping you heard during the Crab Creek sand dredging was troublesome to you, imagine adding the 30 or 50 large trucks per day. I personally found the noise alone to detract from my enjoyment of my porch. I wonder if those along the creek will be able to use their back decks.

4. **THIS ALSO DESERVES OUR ATTENTION:** The city staff of Virginia Beach now say they will use the future Permanent Dredge Transfer Station for other uses: possible staging for other construction, docking of working barges

that currently moor in the Lynnhaven River for oyster reef work, dredges, etc.

City representatives at Thursday's meeting expressed assurances that they are sensitive to boaters and fishermen. They expressed no concern for homeowners.

I hope you all will join us in opposing a Permanent Dredge Transfer Station at Crab Creek. Please email city council, the Beaches and Waterways Commission and the Bayfront Advisory Committee members with your opposition to the proposed Dredge Transfer Station at Crab Creek.

tfrain@masacorp.com
CMOffice@vbgov.com
ctycncl@vbgov.com
David@sdcc.info
wsessoms@VBgov.com
lrjones@VBgov.com
gdavis@vbgov.com
bdesteph@VBgov.com
bdyer@VBgov.com
bhenley@VBgov.com
juhrin@VBgov.com
rwilson31@cox.net
jlwood@VBgov.com
abarnes@vbgov.com
kkasir@aol.com
viayia223@aol.com
tanklines@aol.com
jjma6@aol.com
joeb@HBAonline.com
normcarrick@cox.net
dsparks@wbeach.com

Thank you,
Wendy Vaughn

Join the Ocean Park
Civic League
and

CRAWL OUT!!!

Saturday, March 24th
6 p.m. at La Casa Rana
Baja Grill



Bring a neighbor and
come to the annual
OPCL Crawl Out of
Hibernation
Celebration!
Enjoy free food,
live entertainment and
raffle prizes

RSVP on the OPCL
Facebook page or to
laurenbennis@gmail.com

OPCL official business

OPCL Zoning Committee Update:

Case 11-3924 West Stratford Road: request a variance to a 12.25 foot front yard setback (West Stratford Road) instead of 20 feet as required (Proposed/Existing Stairs) The Board of Zoning Appeals passed a motion unanimously by a recorded vote of 7-0 to defer the application. The proposed porch was too large under

recently revised R5-R zoning rules allowing a porch no larger than 6 feet by 12 feet to encroach into setbacks.

House Bill #40 offered by Senator Bob Tata to permit bulkheading along Chesapeake Beach was passed in the House assembly and sent to the Senate for passage unbeknownst to most of the Shore Drive Commu-

nity. Before it was voted on in the Senate several Ocean Park residents express concerns over the impact this bill may have and the OPCL Executive Committee asked our representatives in the legislature to table the bill next year pending a comprehensive review. The request was granted and the bill will be tabled until next year.

OPCL Finance Committee Update:

The Robbins Legacy account holds investments valued at approximately \$201,800. The portfolio is allocated 57 percent fixed income/cash and 43 percent equity/balanced funds. In addition to appreciation

from the original \$180,000 investment, the account continues generating approximately \$6000/year in interest and dividends. The committee will meet in April for an annual review and to discuss rebalancing of the account. Motions will be presented to make annual

donations to the Ocean Volunteer Rescue Squad, Lynnhaven River Now and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation at the March 8 OPCL meeting. Ideas for funding of community projects are encouraged and welcome.

Your input requested on Ocean Park southside flooding plan alternatives



During the November and December 2009 northeasters, extreme flooding due to abnormally high storm tides and heavy rainfall oc-

curred impacting the Ocean Park neighborhood, among others. The city of Virginia Beach commissioned and received on a final study of these occurrences from Parsons Brinckerhoff. The Final Report, dated September 2010, may be viewed by clicking below.

www.vbgov.com/government/departments/public-works/storm-water/Pages/Ocean-Park-Flooding

The study cites four areas that, if modified, would provide flooding protection up to a tide elevation of approximately

five feet. Improvements include creating a drainage divide along Shore Drive just west of the Lesner Bridge to redirect flows at Crab Creek; creating a drainage divide along Shore Drive at the western end of Ocean Park Neighborhood, redirecting flows at Marlin Bay East and rerouting flows from the Powhatan pump station located on the north side of Shore Drive to the Winston Place pump station located on the south side of Shore Drive.

Virginia Beach Public Works accepted citizen comments at a public meeting regarding proposed drainage improvements south of Shore Drive held on February 23, 2012. Please take the time to review the three proposed projects and choose your preferred option. You may contact the Public Works Storm Water Department at 385-4131 or quickly fill out and return the form provided at the March 8 OPCL meeting. The city will accept citizen votes until March 9.

...more OPCL business

Volunteer coordinator position created

Dear Neighbors,

I have volunteered for the newly created position of volunteer coordinator. During my tenure as OPCL president I realized that many folks wanted to pitch in and lend a hand, but they just didn't know how to go about doing that, and the relatively small group of time-strapped people who were already picking up the lion's share of the volunteer work just didn't have time to show them what needed to be done. By creating this position we hope to end this cycle and help more folks understand what it is the civic league does, and how they can pitch in to lend a hand.

When most people think of "the civic league," or suggest that "the civic league" should do something about an issue, they don't realize they are referring to the 10 to 15 volunteers who do all the work of the civic league. We are a community of over FIFTEEN HUNDRED homes. So I know with a little effort we can get lots more folks involved and make the civic league reflect the incredibly diverse and vibrant community that is Ocean Park.

The interesting thing that I have found during the past four years that I have gotten involved with OPCL, is that prior to being involved I had always assumed that volunteering to help would end up taking an inordinate amount of my time, and what I've found is that most volunteer positions take up less than ten hours a year. We only have five meetings a year, we only publish five newsletters a year, and we put on two or three social events a year, and most volunteer needs revolve around those three things.

So what's in it for you if you volunteer to help? Well, to put it bluntly, not much, and a whole lot. There's obviously no material compensation, however, you will get to know your neighbors better, you will get a better idea of what's going on in the 'hood, you will learn how city politics work (or, in some cases, don't work), and, I think most importantly, you will be "paying it forward" in your own neighborhood. I can honestly say that in my 23 years of living in Ocean Park, the

past four years since I have been involved with OPCL have been some of my most memorable and rewarding.

So, what can you do to pitch in? I have listed some of the volunteer positions we currently have open and are in need of help, with my estimate of the ANNUAL time commitment (in parentheses). We also always have needs for folks who can pitch in for an hour or two to help at any special events we

are sponsoring, so if you can't commit to a regular gig, maybe you can pitch in on an occasional basis, if so let me know and I'll keep you on a list of folks to email when we have those kinds of needs. You'd be surprised at how just volunteering for an hour or two a year can make a difference. I am available to anyone who wants to discuss any of the positions. You may contact me by email, snail mail, phone, text or doorbell. Feel free to come by and we can sit down and talk about any of the positions over a cup of coffee. If you see anything that you think you might be interested in learning about, or have some skill that would help (i.e. graphic design or writing skills for the newsletter), don't hesitate to contact me. I know I

speak for the rest of the executive board and current volunteers when I say we would appreciate any help you can give to the civic league to help make our community a better place to live.

Rick Mercadante
OPCL volunteer coordinator
3920 Shady Oaks drive
287-0771
RickMercadante@cox.net

Volunteer Positions (Annual Hourly Needs)

- Vice President (12)
- VB Council of Civic Organizations Rep (6)
- Secretary (12)
- VBPD Community Advisory Committee Rep (6)
- At Large Executive Board Member (12)
- Newsletter distribution Coordinator (6)
- Newsletter Graphic Designer (30)
- Newsletter Content Contributor (5)
- Fireworks Committee (10)
- Newsletter Distributor (4)
- Scholarship Committee (5)
- Zoning Committee Member (5)
- Audit Committee (3)
- Safety and Traffic Committee Member (5)
- Meeting Coordinator (6)
- Social Committee Member (5)
- Door Prize Coordinator (6)
- Business Liaison (10)
- SDCC Representative (10)
- Membership Committee Member (5)

George and Louise Lyon Memorial Scholarship:

Volunteers are needed in the Spring to review applications and award the \$1000 scholarship to a deserving Virginia Beach high school senior attending a Virginia college in the Fall. Please contact Mike Wills if you are interested in participating.

What in Ocean Park is that?

Bobcat

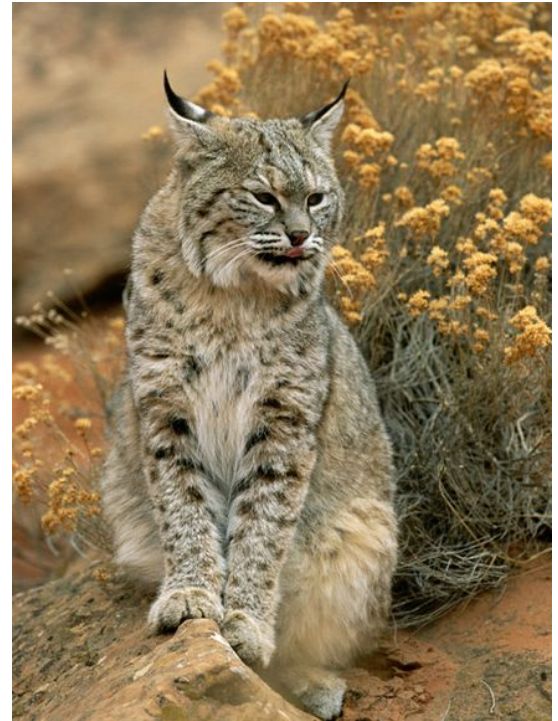
Bobcats are elusive and nocturnal, so they are rarely spotted by humans. Although they are seldom seen, they roam throughout much of North America and adapt well to such diverse habitats as forests, swamps, deserts, and even suburban areas.

Bobcats, sometimes called wildcats, are roughly twice as big as the average housecat. They have long legs, large paws, and tufted ears similar to those of their larger relative, the Canada lynx. Most bobcats are brown or brownish red with a white underbelly and short, black-tipped tail.

The cat is named for its tail, which appears to be cut or "bobbed."

Fierce hunters, bobcats can kill prey much bigger than themselves, but usually eat rabbits, birds, mice, squirrels, and other smaller game. The bobcat hunts by stealth, but delivers a deathblow with a leaping pounce that can cover 10 feet (3 meters).

Bobcats are solitary animals. Females choose a secluded den to raise a litter of one to six young kittens, which will remain with their mother for 9 to 12 months. During this time they will learn to hunt before setting out on their own.



Bobcats, named for their "bobbed" tails, have ears that resemble their feline cousin, the lynx.

Photograph by Norbert Rosing

for their soft, spotted fur. North American populations are believed to be quite large, with perhaps as many as one million cats in the United States alone.

Reprinted from www.NationalGeographic.com

In some areas, bobcats are still trapped

For a noise clip of a bobcat visit nationalgeographic.com and search "bobcat."



Bobcat range

Fast Facts

Type: Mammal

Diet: Carnivore

Average life span in the wild: 10 to 12 years

Size: Head and body, 26 to 41 in (66 to 104 cm); tail, 4 to 7 in (10 to 18 cm)

Weight: 11 to 30 lbs (5 to 14 kg)

Did you know? The bobcat is the most abundant wildcat in the U.S. and has the greatest range of all native North American cats.

Size relative to a 6-ft (2-m) man:



The Ocean Park scoop

Several neighbors have reported briefly sighting a bobcat at Pleasure House Point. True to their nature, it has eluded photographers.

George Mathews, curatorial director for the Virginia Living Museum, says that while bobcats are prevalent in The Great Dismal Swamp, it's more likely that this one came from First Landing State Park. A call to the park confirmed that rangers see bobcats in the park.

Whether this is a lone wandering male (mating season occurs right now) or an established family is difficult to say. They are extremely secretive and do not like civilization. Bobcats are elusive and prefer not to interact with humans.

They roam on foot because they don't swim well, and the males will travel in a 10-25 mile area. The current Pleasure House Point food supply is ideal for bobcat diets with marsh rabbits, rats and other rodents.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation/Ocean Park partnership

Pleasure House Point update

The city of Virginia Beach, Trust for Public Land and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) continue to work closely to ensure that Pleasure House Point will become a protected natural area. Once officially protected (ideally Summer 2012), CBF has a vision to enhance a portion of Pleasure House Point to better serve and educate current and future generations. Specifically, CBF has three goals for the site, including

- 1) **Environmental Restoration:** CBF will utilize Pleasure House Point as an active demonstration site for important and relevant restoration projects, including shoreline plantings and oyster and water-quality restoration;
- 2) **Environmental Education:** CBF will employ an educa-

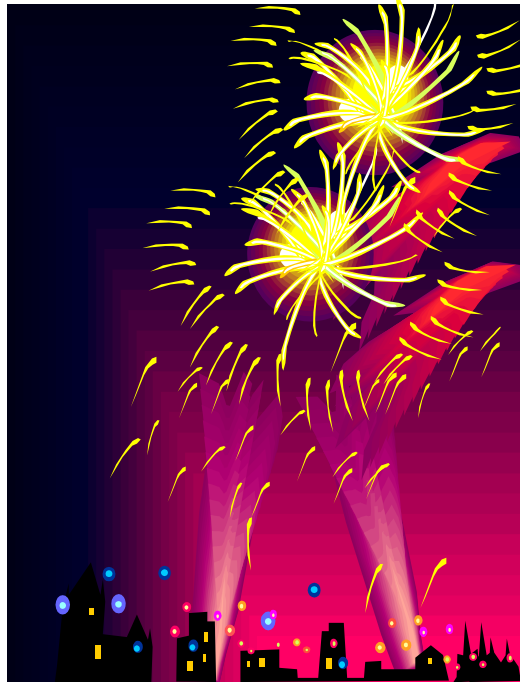
tional workboat and canoes/kayaks to provide school field trips that explore the nearby Chesapeake Bay, Lynnhaven River and Pleasure House Creek, and to increase students' environmental literacy, stewardship ethic, and engagement in standards-based learning; and an **Environmental Center:** CBF will construct a sustainable "green" building that will model and showcase state-of-the-art energy and resource-saving features. CBF is thrilled that the center will provide office space both for CBF's Hampton Roads staff and other community non-profit conservation and educational institutions.

CBF looks forward to working with OPCL and its members to enhance this Virginia Beach jewel. For more info, contact Christy Everett at CBF Hampton Roads office

Fourth of July FIREWORKS 2012

The Fourth of July Fireworks committee has no definitive plans to report at this time. The committee will work over the next week to finalize plans for an exciting and even better show than last year.

Come to the March 8 Ocean Park Civic League Meeting in the Ocean Park Rescue Squad at 7:30 p.m. to hear the latest developments.



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WEEKLY SPECIALS

Every
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OPCL Sponsors

- The UPS Store Shore Drive: 10 percent off all services except United States Postal Service postage and UPS shipping.
- Tidewater Insulators: 10 percent off any attic or crawlspace insulation package.
- The Royal Chocolate: 10 percent off product purchases. Does not apply to gift cards, shipping or delivery. One per person, per visit.
- Lend a Hand Massage Therapy Free half hour reflexology added onto your 60-minute massage. Not valid with other discounts.
- La Casa Rana: 5 percent discount for all OPCL members. Not valid with other discounts/coupons.
- Ampor Electric Corporation: Buy a one year Energy Saving Maintenance Agreement and get a year free. (\$140 value). Receive \$30 off service calls. Receive \$350 off a HVAC system replacement, home generator or tankless water heater installation.
- Tim Sidow, CPA will donate 10 percent of the professional fees from tax services to the Fireworks Fund. 615-9730 or www.facebook.com/SidowLLC.
- Salon De Bella: 25 percent to first-time customers and a 15 percent on subsequent visits. See coupon ad for more.

Consider becoming a business sponsor. Contact Terry Gearhart at tgearpsu@gmail.com. You may need to show your OPCL membership card to receive discounts.

Ocean Park Civic League Membership Form

Property owners, residents, renters and businesses are eligible to join. Membership year runs January 1 to December 31 so the earlier you pay your dues, the more time you have to enjoy your benefits.

Pay online at www.opcl.org through PayPal or mail a check to the address below.

If you use PayPal, make sure you fill out the online membership form so we can get your membership card to you.

Sign up for:

Annual Household Dues

Amount

\$15.00

Fireworks Donation
OPCL supports the Fourth of July Show but does not fund it. It is funded strictly by neighbor donations to the Fireworks Fund.

\$ _____

Total: _____

Even if you aren't a member, we want to keep you informed. Please email Terry Gearhart, membership, at tgearpsu@gmail.com to be added to the email list. We send out regular announcements from crime alerts and water quality warnings to rescheduled events. It is a much more up-to-the-minute method of communication.

If you paid your dues but still don't have a card, it may mean we don't have your address.

Name

Address

Phone

Ocean Park Civic League

P.O. Box 55385

Virginia Beach, VA 23471

Website:

oceanparkcivicleague.org

As seen on Facebook

- Kevin O'Hara has a new Facebook photo album of images around Ocean Park
- Speeding along Mystic Cove and on Surry causing concern.
- LaCasa Rana has made big efforts to reach out to the community by posting new menu items, menu changes, thanks to the neighbors, etc.
- The city will improve the southside storm water system. Link shared on FB.
- Missing pets cause concern.
- Mary Reid Barrow wrote about Pleasure House Point. See the link.
- Lesner Bridge replacement and the proposed permanent dredge station causing a big stir.
- Anyone in the market for a dog? Adoption needed. Photo on Facebook.
- Ocean Park CRAWL OUT!!!! Of Hibernation announced.
- Volunteers needed for Fifth of July Beach cleanup.
- Stolen car from southside found and returned. Others may be able to claim their stolen items found in the car.
- Low-flying black helicopters frighten OP residents. It turns out they were Dominion Virginia Power surveying.
- Please don't put hazardous waste, like fluorescent bulbs, in the beach trash cans. Dispose of properly.
- Neighbors looking for dog walkers, notary publics, information on well-digging, rental property.
- La Casa Rana owner got the city to install pedestrian crossing signs near Shore Drive businesses.

Posting to the OPCL Facebook page requires joining the site. Valuable real-time information about OP residents. These are summarizations of posts.

Acronyms: The BAC

Bayfront Advisory Committee

A city council appointed advisory board, the Bayfront Advisory Committee (BAC) serves in an advisory capacity to city council with respect to development and improvement to the Bayfront area. The committee promotes the Shore Drive Corridor and implements the recommendations of the Urban Land Institute's 1997 study of the area. The committee advises city council on all matters relating to the Shore Drive Corridor. Members will attend and speak at any civic homeowner association meetings.

BAC responsibilities:

- To familiarize itself with the [Urban Land Institute \(ULI\) Bayfront Study](#) and the various issues associated with development of the corridor.
- To develop an aesthetics and urban design plan for the corridor using the Bayfront Study as a foundation for such plan.
 - To identify a series of recommended projects and actions to implement the above-referenced aesthetics and urban design plan, and to prioritize such projects and plans.
 - To facilitate the establishment of

public-private partnerships to achieve the goals and recommendations of ULI's Bayfront Study and the BAC.

- To investigate alternative funding sources for projects within the Shore Drive corridor/Bayfront area.
- To engage in public information efforts regarding the BAC's work and efforts.
- To monitor the progress of those projects and plans which are implemented.

The BAC meets the third Thursday of every month at 3:30 p.m. at the Bay-side Recreation Center. The general public may attend.

When I jumped headfirst into the Ocean Park Civic League I quickly learned that the committees and the city representatives use many acronyms to shorten the names of locations, groups, divisions, etc. It can be very confusing to a newcomer or to those not regularly involved in meetings. To help shed light on some of this, I will include an explanation for frequently seen acronyms. In all newsletter use I will always follow Associated Press Style and identify by full name on first reference and acronym thereafter in each article.

Jill Doezji, editor

The BAC Meeting Wrap Up

Dave Hansen, deputy city manager of Virginia Beach, introduced the Lesner Bridge Replacement Project Update and the Transfer Site Opportunities.

The committee expressed concern over the proposed bicycle lanes on Shore Drive from First Landing to 83rd Street and the need for bicycle lane education, questions about marking, signage, requirements or fines for bicyclists not using the lanes, and if large groups using the lanes should require police escort.

The committee requested information about the newly-altered development plans for former Duck-In site, which propose fewer, less expensive units and a potential seawall.

The BAC committed to continuing to work with other Shore Drive committees and organizations regarding the proposed dredge spoils site at the Lynnhaven Boat Ramp.

News from the Bayfront

Pleasure House Point Property Grant Award

On January 3, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service notified Parks and Recreation of a \$1 million grant award for the acquisition of the Pleasure House Point property for open space preservation.

Pleasure House Point is the largest undeveloped property in the Lynnhaven River watershed. The \$1 million award is from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program that provides matching funds to states and cities for acquisition, establishment, management or restoration of coastal wetlands.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) is our sponsor for this grant and VDGIF staff will assist Parks and Recreation staff with managing the

wetlands on the site once it is acquired. \$500,000 in additional grant funding was awarded to Parks and Recreation for the acquisition of this property from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation.

The Trust for Public Land, our partner and mentor in this important acquisition for the past year and a half, will also provide \$500,000 toward the city purchase price

through a gift to them from Dominion Foundation.

All together, this amounts to \$2,000,000 in outside funding that has been secured for this legacy purchase. This extraordinary amount of grant funding from federal, state and private sources speaks to the importance of preserving this for future unique and irreplaceable environmental asset generations.



Comings/Goings

Judith Connors

On January 20, 2012, the city of Virginia Beach lost one of its most dedicated and tireless volunteers. Judith K. Connors moved to Virginia Beach in 1974 and immediately began serving our city. She served on the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Bayfront Advisory Committee, the Southeastern Virginia Areawide Model Program, the Francis Land House Board of Directors, the Friends of Virginia Beach Historic Houses, the Ocean Park Civic League, the Ocean Park Women's Club and the Council of Civic Organizations, to name a few. The Virginia Beach City Council honored Connors with a resolution in tribute to her life of service on January 24, 2012. Virginia Beach benefited greatly from Connors' efforts and council recognized her dedication and her untiring and faithful service to the many citizens of Virginia Beach with deepest gratitude, respect and honor.

Sushi Coast

Sushi Coast restaurant opened for business on East Stratford Road and Shore Drive. The menu features both sushi and cooked entrees like filet mignon, shrimp, lobster, tempura and stir fry. Hours of operation: 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. to

The SDCC Meeting Wrap Up

The Shore Drive Community Coalition met Monday February 27, 2012. The meeting focused on a Beaches and Waterways Advisory Commission Final Report to City Council presented in January of 2012 regarding impacts on Shore Drive communities.

For important information concerning neighborhood issues, dredge spoil projects and the Lesner Bridge replacement and Long Creek see www.SDCC.info.



The Property Shoppe

**RENTALS
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

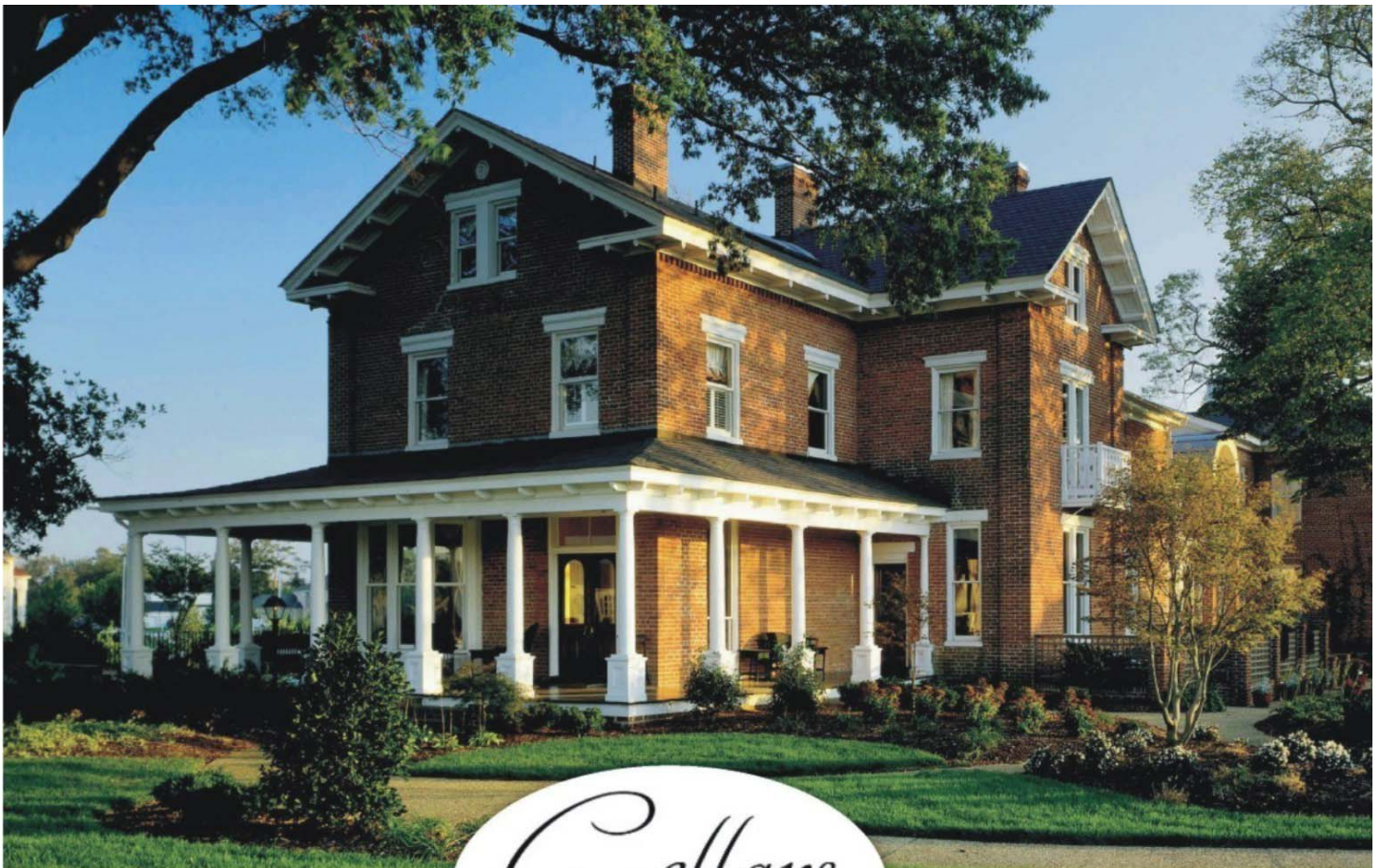
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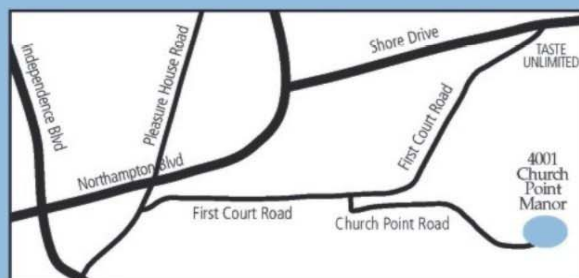
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Oyster farmers turn to branding to gain market edge

Reprinted exactly from the *Virginian-Pilot*

By [Lorraine Eaton](#)
The Virginian-Pilot

© February 25, 2012

Shells crunched under Chris Ludford's boots as he trudged into the Lynnhaven River, a 40-pound basket of bivalves bumping against one thigh. He stopped in knee-high water and plunged the basket into the brine.

Between dunks, Ludford spun it from side to side like a washing machine, spewing bits of oyster shell, marine life and mud back into the sea.

He stopped to consider an oyster, one worthy of his soon-to-be trademarked

Pleasure House brand.

"Can you imagine what's in there?" he asked.

Ludford doesn't have to imagine. Like a growing number of commercial oyster farmers in Virginia, he knows exactly what's inside his brand of bivalve - in Ludford's case, a plump mouthful of meat that starts with a bracing blast of brine and finishes with a rich oyster flavor and a speckle of sweet.

The State Corporation Commission can't say how many oyster names have officially been registered in Virginia.

Some growers forgo the process, and the \$30 fee, and instead

rely on a provision of state law that offers a measure of protection to names already in heavy use.

Either way, branding is fast becoming business as usual for the burgeoning number of Virginia's oyster farmers.

"I hear of a different one just about every day," said Jim Wesson, conservation and replenishment department head for the Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

Following a period of devastating disease, Virginia oysters are making a comeback - the 2011 harvest of 236,000 bushels was the best since 1989, accord-

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ing to VMRC records. And there's been a "major, major upsurge" in the number of oyster aquaculture licenses issued by the state, Wesson said. The number has risen from 376 in 2008, when they were first offered, to 542 in 2010, growth driven in part by the development of a meaty, fast growing oyster that reaches harvest size in one year compared with the wild oysters' three.

With record numbers of oyster growers entering an increasingly competitive marketplace, the broad geographical names of the past such as Chincoteague, Rappahannock and the legendary Lynnhaven are giving way to more precise - or catchy - monikers.

"I'd guess there's 50 branded oysters; it's

growing exponentially" in Virginia, said Travis Croxton, a fourth-generation owner of Rappa-hannock River Oysters in Tappahannock.

The Chesapeake Bay now yields Cherrystones, Shooting Points, Painters Creeks, Yorksters, Nassawaddox Salts, Choptank Sweets, Barcats, Old Plantations and more.

The Lynnhaven River is home to Church Points, Witch Ducks and Ludford's Pleasure House oysters. More are in the works.

"It's not any different than what was happening in the 1970s with California wines," said Daniel Kauffman, a Virginia Tech seafood business specialist who in January led a daylong half-shell mar-

keting workshop to a standing-room-only audience.

The names, growers say, are critical to cultivating the new breed of half-shell customers - chefs, raw-bar owners and diners with an intense interest in the origin of their oysters and who appreciate nuances in flavor the way oenophiles appreciate fine wine.

It seems to be working. New York City's venerable Grand Central Oyster Bar - which offers oysters from around the world - has twice this winter honored Virginia bivalves as the "Oyster of the Month."

In December, the menu showcased Eastern Shore Sewansecotts, one of Virginia's oldest brands, harvested from the pristine waters of Hog Island Bay. In January, Witch Ducks, grown in the Broad Bay region of the Lynnhaven River, basked in the big-city limelight.

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Named oysters have been great for business, said Chuck Macin, owner of Uncle Chuck’s Seafood at the Virginia Beach Farmers Market.

A decade ago, Macin said, customers just wanted a burlap sack of oysters, the cheaper the better. These days, “they ask for a deep-dish out of Nas-sawadox Creek,” Macin said. “It’s location, location, location. Like real estate.”

“And people are brag-gers. They want to be able to say, ‘I’ve eaten that one. La-di-da.’”

It may be status on the half-shell, but every mid-Eastern Seaboard oyster on every raw bar menu has one thing in com-mon: They are all the same species, *Crassostrea virginica*.

So how different can they taste?

Oyster connoisseurs, or ostreophiles, consider salinity the most obvious flavor characteristic - the farther from the Atlantic Ocean, the less salty. Other nuances come from the oyster’s “merroir,” the watery ground where it’s grown, which might have adjacent marshland or abundant seaweed.

There’s also a human component. For example, when oysters frequently are tumbled or shaken, the process chips off the sharp lip, resulting in a deeper, boat-shaped bottom, all the better for serving on the half-shell.

Then, there’s pedigree. When growers buy oyster seed, they now can select for shape or meatiness, VMRC’s Wes-son said. Some farmers even breed lines for their particular location and brand.

Croxton’s Rappahannock River Oys-ters holds the trademark for the Witch Duck. The company touts the oyster as having a saltiness cut with a fresh-water sweetness and markets it as part of an “heirloom trilogy” that includes Stingrays from Mobjack Bay and Olde Salts from Chincoteague Bay.

Travis Croxton and his cousin and company co-owner, Ryan Croxton,

travel the country hosting tastings and knocking on restaurant doors to intro-duce top chefs to their trademarked brands.

“That means less time on the water for us, unfortunately,” Travis Croxton said. “It’s really changed, and it costs a lot of money, but that’s the way it has



Photograph by Hyunsoo Leo Kim –The Virginian Pilot

to be done.”

Oysterman Chris Ludford, who is also a captain with the Virginia Beach Fire Department, uses the same approach, but on a much smaller scale.

Now, his sole restaurant account is A.W. Shucks in Norfolk, where on a recent afternoon his Pleasure House oysters topped the chalkboard list behind the raw bar.

Ludford is still experimenting with seed - he’ll buy from three suppliers this year. But the farming process will be the same: cold winter days on the Lynnhaven River, culling, cleaning and shaking those baskets.

With his newly named oyster comes a level of accountability in the market-place, he said. His customers will get consistency in size, shape and flavor.

Standing at the edge of his 2 acres of leased river bottom just south of the Lynnhaven Bridge, Ludford consid-ered another of his oysters. It featured a deep, boat-shaped bottom, flat top and spanned about 3.5 inches from hinge to lip.

“I’m getting a feast for someone,” he said.

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