



# VARJ E-NEWS

Volume 2, Issue 1  
March 2009

## VA. GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADJOURNS

The following are excerpts taken from a Memorandum issued by Robyn M. Desocio, Executive Secretary, Compensation Board.

All Constitutional Officers Budget Bill proposals, unchanged in Conference:

The elimination of salary increases for Constitutional Officers and their employees originally provided in the FY09/FY10 biennial budget remains unchanged; Existing restrictions on the use of turnover and vacancy savings, and the 90-day delay in hiring of vacant positions, are maintained; Recovery of 50% of surety bond and liability insurance premiums and the proposed in-

creased recovery of 100% of the cost of the retiree health care credit premiums paid on behalf of Constitutional Officers and their employees remain unchanged.

### Sheriffs and Regional Jails

Funding of \$5.3 million was restored from reductions initially included in the Budget Bill as introduced;

Additional language included in Items 395 and 475.50 specifies that the distribution of \$23.3 million from Virginia's allocation from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program is to restore remaining reductions for Sheriffs' offices and local and regional jails operating budgets (to the extent such funds are made available as part of the federal economic stimulus legislation); this is anticipated to restore up to 99% of budget reductions ini-

tially included in the Budget Bill;

Technical language was added to clarify that the date by which a sheriff's office can be approved by an accrediting agency is March 1 to be considered by the Compensation Board for the purpose of compliance with the Sheriffs' Career Development Program and allocation of the associated salary supplement;

FY10 proposed funding associated with the completion of the Loudoun County jail expansion project, originally scheduled to be completed July 1, 2009, was reduced by \$965,874 based on a revised completion date of November 15, 2009;

Additional funding of \$291,195 to support 16 positions for the previously unfunded Blue Ridge Regional Jail expansion project was approved based on a November 1, 2009, estimated date of completion;

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### **Special points of interest:**

- Mark your Calendars! The Virginia Association of Regional Jails 11th Annual Training Conference to be held in Virginia Beach at the Cavalier Hotel on April 14-17, 2009. See page 7 for Conference Agenda.

## NEXT BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING

The Riverside Regional Jail will be hosting the next VARJ Board of Director's meeting on March 13, 2009 at 10:00AM in Hopewell, Virginia. We hope to see all Superintendents and/or their representatives at the meeting.

# FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear VARJ Members:

As we're all aware, this Association and our Jails are caught in the midst of sweeping

changes in the way we do business. The collateral damage resulting from our nation's economic crisis now affects virtually every aspect of our operations.

We can no longer consider any action without first quantifying the cost. However, as a group, we have long prided ourselves on being both efficient and effective. We've all made sincere efforts to cut energy costs, minimize staffing requirements, and maximize the use of technology while maintaining services. The new challenges presented by the current crisis make our efforts all the more important. The success of our responses will shape the perspectives and opinions of the localities we serve for years to come. It is clear that we

have a responsibility to do the best we can with what we are given.

Sincerely Yours,  
Lance Forsythe,  
President

### VARJ Officers:

**President:** Lance Forsythe—Southside Regional Jail

**1st Vice President:** Ron Mathews—Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail

**2nd Vice President:** Walter Minton—Riverside Regional Jail

**Treasurer:** Ernest Toney—Piedmont

## VA. GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADJOURNS

Language and an associated savings of \$256,000 was removed from jail per diem funding that expands the existing federal inmate cost recovery methodology to recoup the entire costs borne by the Commonwealth for federal inmates housed in local and regional jails;

Funding for per diem payments was reduced by \$2.2 million in FY09 and FY10 based on recent

inmate population data; adequate funding remains for payment of the FY09 4<sup>th</sup> quarter per diem payment.

Budget Bill proposals, unchanged in Conference:

Additional positions and funding to support the jail expansion project for the New River Valley Regional Jail remain unchanged;

Funding reductions of \$5.6 million, representing 7% of budgeted funds for FY10 per diem payments, have not been restored; No changes were made to current language that provides for exemptions from the federal inmate cost recovery for Alexandria City Jail and Central Virginia and Northern Neck Regional Jails.

## BLACKSTOCK TAKES HELM

Mr. Elton Blackstock, former Assistant Superintendent of the Blue Ridge Regional Jail was recently promoted to the position of Superintendent, replacing Superintendent Chris Webb who retired effective February 1, 2009.

Elton, who has over 27 years of experience in corrections and Law Enforcement, expects a smooth transition and looks forward to the Standard of Excellence that the Blue ridge Regional Jail Authority has established under Mr. Webb. He also looks forward to the challenges of his position and opportunity to work with his Superintendents through the Virginia Associa-



## WESTERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL JAIL

The new Western Virginia Regional Jail will be holding an Open House Dedication Ceremony on March 6, 2009 at 10:00AM.



Located in Western Roanoke County near Dixie Caverns, the Western Virginia Regional Jail is a regional partnership between the Counties of Franklin, Montgomery, Roanoke and the City of Salem. This state-of-the-art jail facility will be approximately 264,000 sq. ft. and will provide a rated capacity for 605 inmates with another 200 beds double-bunked for a total of 805 inmates upon opening.



This facility will help ease the current overcrowded and potentially unsafe conditions at the local jail facilities of the four partnering jurisdictions. The jail is scheduled to begin operations on March 9, 2009.

### MEMORABLE QUOTE

"I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.

Booker T. Washington

## VARJ FEATURED JAIL— RIVERSIDE REGIONAL JAIL

By David Hettinger, Program Manager

It is well documented that inmates who participate successfully in a Re-entry/Transition Program during confinement are less likely to re-offend than those who do not. The Riverside Regional Jail Transition Program's primary goal is to reduce recidivism by having inmates successfully complete a Re-entry/Transition Program.

The Riverside Regional Jail's Re-entry/Transition Program includes the following programs: Adult Basic Education, Literacy Training, General Equivalency Diploma (GED), Vocational Training, Basic Computer Skills, Life Skills Development and group work which covers psycho-



educational needs with an emphasis on core values. A major part of the program encompasses the Career Readiness Certification Program. This portion of the program covers the basic skills identified for success in the workplace. The skills are broken down into five

basic skills sets: (1) Employment training that introduces thinking strategies for approaching the job hunt, (2) Communication classes that teach active listening and clear communication. The communication classes also include prevention and resolution of conflict as part of the curriculum. (3) Writing classes which are augmented by community volunteers, teach processes for

writing, planning, organizing, and supplying information in the workplace. (4) Reading groups focusing on getting information, reading for purpose, following directions, and using reports and manuals. (5) Math classes, assisted by community volunteers teach the basic skills necessary for coping with budgets and spending money wisely.

The course requires eight weeks to complete and the inmates who participate in the program are housed dormitory style in a separate Pre-Release/Work Release building. Ms. Gretchen Miller, the Transition Coordinator is a certified proctor to administer the Career Readiness Certification Test under the auspices of John Tyler Community College.

A total of 83 male and 34 female inmates participated in the program in 2008.

## 50 TO LOSE JOBS AT PIEDMONT JAIL

Emergency session in Farmville

Farmville-based Piedmont Regional Jail, of which Nottoway and Lunenburg counties are among six members, have begun laying-off what could be as many as 50 of the facility's 135 employees. That's more than one-third of its workforce.

In a move that reflects the state of the national economy, Superintendent Ernest Toney—in a called emergency meeting last Wednesday, February 10th—provided the Jail Board of Directors a budget report that dramatically confirmed the urgency and realities of the economic decline being felt at all levels of the Commonwealth and local economies.

Mr. Toney pointed out that the Jail has and will continue to experience deep losses in revenue for the coming year. Those revenue decreases are a direct result of targeted reduction strategies included in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Bill (5% to 7% across the board) affecting Sheriffs' and Re-

gional Jails' operating budgets, as well as additional 5% to 7% cuts to the Jail's per diem funding for fiscal year 2010.

The shortfall is further compounded by a dramatic reduction in revenue from The Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) over the past few months.

Superintendent Toney added that "this is the most difficult decision I have ever been a part of...these are not only staff members but friends and neighbors. We have done everything possible to maintain our staff but there comes a time when as difficult as it may be, you have to address

the issue head on, and the Board has determined that we have to be realistic in our fiduciary responsibilities to our member jurisdictions and the taxpayers we serve."



Out of concern for staff, Toney has made arrangements with the Virginia Employment Commission, South Central Workforce Investment Board, the State Dislocated Worker Unit, and the Prince Edward Department of Social Services for assistance.

According to Deputy Superintendent Donald Hunter, "The Rapid response Program of the Virginia Community College System is conducting a briefing of Employment transition Services for our staff. They will cover employment assistance services, unemployment insurance benefits, and career counseling and training opportunities, all in an effort to minimize the impact on our employees."

The Jail has housed some 77,000 inmates since it began operating in the 1980s. During that time, three inmates have died—all of natural causes.

Courier Record – February 19, 2009

## REGIONAL JAIL AUTHORITY EYES LOOMING CUTS

### Loss of federal inmates, less funding from state cited as cause for fiscal '10 shortfalls

By Alex Bridges – Daily Staff Writer

WINCHESTER – The regional jail faces cuts in next year's budget due to less money from the state and a loss of federal inmates.

The Northwestern Regional Jail Authority heard from Superintendent Bruce Conover at its meeting Thursday about the potential cuts to the Northwestern Regional Adult Detention Center for fiscal 2010. "This budget is austere," Conover said.

The proposed \$17.2 million fiscal 2010 budget assumes the jail will receive approximately \$1.5 million less in revenue than it saw in the current year, including a gap of \$717,000 due to a lack of inmates from outside agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Prince William County. Another \$506,000 shortfall is due to a 7 percent reduction in state per diem and salary assistance, and another \$270,000 is from the implementation of an aid-to-locality reduction for 2010.



But the reduction in state assistance may only be about 4.3 percent, Conover said, citing information from officials with the State Compensation Board.

Inmate population has an impact on the jail in both its expenses and revenue. According to Conover, the jail population has stayed around 525 for months. "We all kind of anticipated that

when the economy had gone bad that we'd see an increase in the inmate population," Conover said. "It hadn't happened yet." The jail saw its average daily population rise to 598 in fiscal 2007 and 623 in 2008. The facility returned a number of inmates to Prince William County's jail when its facility completed an expansion.

Participating localities – the city and Frederick, Clarke and Fauquier counties – would see no increase in their share of funding for the jail, according to the proposal. "We've done the best we

could trying to reduce the impact on the jurisdictions, recognizing the difficulty that they're in," Conover said after the meeting. "But at the same time we've got [to] maintain security and safety, and I think the budget proposed does that. It's going to be difficult and challenging, but I think we can do it."

The draft budget includes an overall 9.1 percent reduction in spending and seeks to cut operating expenses by 11 percent. The assistant superintendent position remains frozen and unfilled; a nurse and two administrative positions also will not be funded through attrition. Conover said the jail anticipates a reduction of 12 positions in the next year. The draft also notes reductions in the operating reserve as well as for food, clothing and supplies.

The draft does not yet include information on the impact of any reductions in salary or personnel for Frederick County government. Since the county acts as the fiscal agent for the jail, such cuts would affect the facility's work force if implemented, according to County Administrator John Riley Jr.

The Board of Supervisors plans to meet Wednesday for a budget work session.

Contact Alex Bridges at [abridges@nvdaily.com](mailto:abridges@nvdaily.com)

## VIRGINIA INMATE LOSES FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS APPEAL

A Richmond-based federal appeals court panel ruled today against a Virginia prison inmate who claimed his First Amendment rights were violated.

In a 2004 letter, inmate Johnny Huff, 57, complained to the director of the Virginia Department of Corrections and others of "cold, callus, cruel, evil, uncaring, unmerciful, inhumane officials you have left in charge as wardens." He was fined \$12 and said he lost a deduction from his sentence

for using "insolent and inappropriate language directed toward an employee." The punishment was later rescinded, but Huff sued.

He lost in U.S. District Court when the judge ruled that an inmate does not have a First Amendment right to direct disrespectful comments to a prison official, because the prisons have legitimate interests in promoting order.

In an opinion released today, a

three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the lower-court ruling. Huff is serving a 23½-year sentence for sex offenses in Chesterfield County. –

Richmond Times Dispatch  
February 25, 2009  
By Frank Green



## Meherrin River Regional Jail project up in the air

Published: February 23, 2009

DINWIDDIE – A plan to build a \$100 million regional jail for Brunswick, Dinwiddie and Mecklenburg counties would alleviate the need for inmate space in all three localities dealing with overcrowded and inadequate local jails, local officials said.

The regional jail, which has been in the planning stages for nearly four years and was originally estimated to cost \$150.2 million, will help the counties save money and will make the jail system more efficient in all three jurisdictions.

The project had not been included in the governor's 2009-10 budget proposal, but this month legislators in both houses approved amendments to include the project in their respective budget bills, making it more likely that it will move forward in the next few years.

A state funding match, however, may not be available until 2013.

The Meherrin River Regional Jail Authority, formed in early 2008, initially wanted to build an 800-bed jail but has scaled back its plans to 408 beds.

The current plan consists of building a main facility in Brunswick County, near Alberta, that will accommodate the pretrial and sentenced prisoners from Brunswick and Dinwiddie as well as the sentenced prisoners from Mecklenburg. A smaller satellite jail near the government offices in Mecklenburg will accommodate the pretrial and work-release populations from Mecklenburg.

The authority last year took a \$10 million loan to use toward the purchase of a 126-acre site in Brunswick County, the design of the facilities and the preliminary site work. Officials have interviewed for the architectural design and have the permits needed to launch construction.

The facilities would be built with a capacity for expansion, and one superintendent would oversee both locations. Once the replacement facilities are built, the local jails will be closed, officials said.

"We will still have to pay for the operational cost, but we won't be at the mercy of other facilities," Dinwiddie County Administrator W. Kevin Massengill said. "We will be saving money, and it just works more efficiently."

Dinwiddie's local jail – built in the early 1970s – houses a maximum of 64 inmates, but the county usually has more than 100 inmates per day, Sheriff B.B. "Dusty" Rhodes said.

"We need our regional jail. We are going to grow and with that growth, we are going to have an increase in crime," he said. "As far as I know, we have gone as high as 150 [inmates] and as low as 95. We have always had more than the 64 that this jail was built for 30 years ago."

On a daily basis, the county jail will house only 55 inmates because the facility is required to keep nine empty beds for arrests made overnight and on weekends.

To cope with the overflow, the county rents beds in four regional jails: Southside Regional in Emporia, Riverside Regional in Hopewell, Piedmont Regional in Farmville and Rappahannock Regional in Stafford. When those facilities are full, inmates are taken as far away as Staunton, Rhodes said.

"That runs into a great expense for the taxpayers. If we had our own regional jail, we wouldn't have to be transporting to four different areas, which is what we are doing now. We are sending deputies at 6 a.m. in the morning to bring inmates to court," he said, adding that the trips take time from deputies' law-enforcement duties.

The cost for bed rental alone at the end of the year is more than \$1 million, Massengill said. Deputies' time and transportation costs are a separate tab, he said.

A trip from the Brunswick site where the regional facility is being planned to the Dinwiddie County courthouse would take about 25 minutes, compared with the two to three hours it takes now, Rhodes said.

In 2005, the three jurisdictions began to work together to address the situation and in early 2008 formed the Meherrin River Regional Jail Authority – named after the river that crosses all three counties.

The General Assembly granted the counties an exemption to a state moratorium on prison-building, allowing them to pursue the construction of the facility. They also met all the requirements from the Board of Corrections.

"We have done everything that is required," said Wayne Carter, Mecklenburg's county administrator. "The state historically always pays 50 percent on construction and renovation of regional jails. . . . When we started, we felt fairly confident that we would get the funding. We were very surprised when we did not make the government's budget."

Continued on page 8.

**Deadline for the submission of articles for the next issue on VARJ E-News will be May 15, 2009. Please submit your articles by the due date!**

## NEW AMHERST COUNTY JAIL TO UNDERGO CONSTRUCTION

Two years after a contentious rezoning, land for a new jail in Amherst County remains undisturbed — although that will start to change this spring.

Heavy machinery will move onto the 125-acre site on Virginia 210 near U.S. 29 in April, with the actual building construction slated to begin in late summer to early fall.

The \$50 million project will not be delayed in the state's current funding crunch, said Chris Webb, the administrator for the Blue Ridge Regional Jail Authority.

The project is currently funded without using state dollars, Webb said. That money will be paid back from the state at the end of the project — almost three years out, when officials hope that state revenues have improved.

The project already has been through the state approval process as well, and Webb doesn't foresee anything stalling the construction.

Webb met with designers Thursday to review the plans for the new building. It was just one of many meetings with the design team to incorporate ideas from as many people as

possible.

"We are pleased so far with the design," Webb said. "We've been through several exercises in value engineering, with different sets of eyes looking to see if there is a better, less expensive way."

The new jail will be built to house 325 to 400 inmates, replacing jails in Amherst County, Appomattox County and the Blue Ridge Regional Jail Authority facility in Moneta. Those three jails house about 220 inmates combined, which stay imprisoned for an average of 90 to 100 days.

Amherst's existing jail was built in 1994 with a capacity of 50 inmates. It averages between 80 and 95 prisoners and is landlocked with no room to expand.

Amherst will account for about 42 percent of the beds in the new jail; Appomattox would take up about 14 percent of the beds, and the Blue Ridge Regional Jail Authority will take up 44 percent. Each of the agencies will contribute a portion of the costs based on usage.

Starting in April, Webb said crews will begin clearing and grading the site.

That work will start a little before and independent of the actual construction of the jail, which will begin in late summer or early fall.

The project will take an estimated two years to complete.

Administrators are working with the Amherst County Public Service Authority to run sufficient water and sewer lines to the site. A portion of that cost will be included in the construction project.

"There's so much detail work that needs to be done," he said.

The Blue Ridge Regional Jail Authority will run the new jail. It also operates jails in Lynchburg and Bedford as well as the counties of Bedford, Campbell and Halifax.

The Amherst County Board of Supervisors rezoned the property for the jail in December 2006, amid protests from the property's neighbors who expressed concerns over safety and property values.

By [CARRIE J. SIDENER](#) – NEWSADVANCE.COM

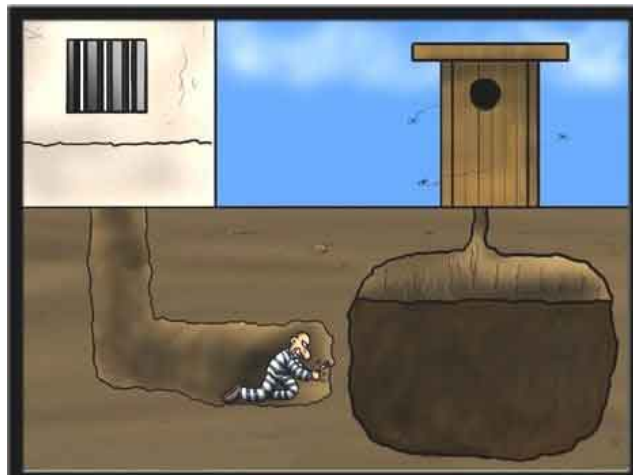
## VARJ LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The General Assembly has adjourned for another year but during the Session, as with every session, there were many bills presented that could have impacted jails if they had been passed into law.

This has been one fast paced session at the General Assembly with many ups, downs, and turn-arounds occurring. Of major focus this session has been the State's Budget, as was indicated in the December issue of VARJ E-News. However, if you recall, VARJ had three goals during this session: (1) protect current state funding levels; (2) prevent further Budget reductions and; (3) the passage of mandatory LEOS benefits for Regional Jail Officers. I must say, and I think everyone who

has been involved in the process will agree, that our goals were high and at times may have seemed unachievable. However, with the assistance of Kemper Consulting, specifically Marianne Radcliff, John Garrartt, David Hollock, and Fred Helms and many Superintendents, jail officers and select members of the General Assembly we were able to achieve our goals. We protected our funding, prevented additional cuts and also obtained mandatory LEOS benefits for all jail officers. Special thanks go out Delegate Hamilton, Senator

Stolle, and Senator Houck for everything they did to assist Regional Jails in reaching their goals during this session.



How not to break out of Jail

VARJ TRAINING CONFERENCE AGENDA APRIL 13—16, 2009—VA. BEACH CAVALIER HOTEL

Monday, April 13, 2009		Tuesday, April 14, 2009			
Golf Tournament Aeropines Golf Course Oceana Naval Air Station, Virginia Beach, VA		Pistol Tournament 08:00 NORFOLK POLICE DEPARTMENT RANGE 1501 Pritchard Street Norfolk, VA <i>(MUST REGISTER IN ADVANCE NO ONSITE REGISTRATION)</i>			
Tuesday, April 14, 2009					
Classroom	1000-1600	1300-1430	1430-1630	1730-2000	
Coral Reef A	Registration	<b>Colin Powell's Leadership Primer</b> Noland Cutler (Cheeseboro)	<b>Crisis Intervention Training</b> T. Von hemert (Woodson)	Vendor Hall Open	
Coral Reef B		<b>Bridging Generation Gap</b> Ammerman (Sears)	<b>Staff &amp; Inmate Sexual Misconduct</b> T. Hatchett / F. Thomas (Cheeseboro)		
Coral Reef C		<b>Mgmt. Substance Abuse Offenders</b> Dr. Bisconer (Broussard)	<b>Staff Attitude</b> Patricia Huffman-Chasse (Fowler)		
Coral Reef D Coral Reef E		<b>Treating the Mentally Ill Inmates</b> Keith Jones (Hickey)	<b>Gang Intelligence</b> Clare (Sears)		
Wednesday, April 15, 2009					
Classroom	SPECIAL HOURS 8:00-12:00 NIC Class only		12:00-13:00		SPECIAL HOURS 13:00-17:00 NIC Class only
Coral Reef A Coral Reef B	<b>NIC (Part 1 of 2)</b> <b>MUST TAKE BOTH PARTS FOR CREDIT</b> Inmate Behavior Mgmt (NIC) Robbye Braxton-Mintz (Jones)		Vendor Hall Open		<b>NIC (Part 2 of 2)</b> <b>MUST TAKE BOTH PARTS FOR CREDIT</b> Inmate Behavior Mgmt (NIC) Robbye Braxton-Mintz (Jones)
Classroom	8:00-9:30	1000-1400		1430-16:00	
Coral Reef C	<b>Stress Mgmt for Corrections</b> G Cornelius / T Manley (Jones)	Vendor Hall Open		<b>Reading &amp; Understanding the Jail Climate</b> G Cornelius / T Manley (Jones)	
Coral Reef D Coral Reef E	<b>Personal Responsibility</b> Patricia Huffman-Chasse (Fowler)			<b>Dealing With Problem Employees</b> Noland Cutler (Cheeseboro)	
Thursday, April 16, 2009					
Classroom	8:30-10:30	1130-1300	14:00-1500	1500-1515	1515-1615
Coral Reef A Coral Reef B	<b>Cultural Perceptions</b> (Fowler)	Presidents Luncheon	<b>Alzheimer's Disease for Jail Staff</b> Hodges (Sears)	Break	<b>Games Inmates Play</b> T. Wyche / B. Nero (Brown)
Coral Reef C	<b>Medical Screening and Recieving</b> Dr. Ofogh (Robinson)		<b>Inmate Hearings</b> W. Fowler (Fowler)		<b>Budget Update</b> Comp Board (Jones)
Coral Reef D Coral Reef E	<b>Risk Mgmt You've been sued; Now What?</b> Ann Coble / A. Fran- cuzenko / M. Parham (Jones)		<b>Cost Effective Medical</b> Dr. Ofogh (Robinson)		<b>Cost Effective Medical</b> Dr. Ofogh (Robinson)
19:00—23:00 Employee Recognition Social—Virginia Beach Cavalier					

**VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL JAILS**

Submit articles and/or suggestions to:  
 Jeffery W. Frazier, Superintendent  
 Northern Neck Regional Jail  
 P.O. Box 1090  
 3908 Richmond Road  
 Warsaw, Virginia 22572

Phone: 804-333-6000  
 Fax: 804-333-6029  
 E-mail: jfrazier@nnrj.state.va.us

*"When you have come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on!"*

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*



**Interested in becoming a Member of VARJ?**  
 Individual Membership is only \$30.00 per year. Contact Lance Forsythe @ 434-634-2254 for more information

**The Purpose of the Virginia Association of Regional Jails shall be to (a) encourage mutual cooperation and assistance among the membership and the criminal justice community; to (b) improve the level of professionalism among the membership; to (c) improve communication and understanding among the membership and the criminal justice community; to (d) increase and improve the educational and intellectual level of the membership; to (e) promote legislative, executive and judicial improvements; to (f) encourage the highest level of ethical conduct among the membership; and to (g) promote and uphold the appointed offices of Regional Jail Employees pursuant to the Code of Virginia.**

**MEHERRIN RIVER REGIONAL JAIL PROJECT UP IN THE AIR - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5**

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine presented a budget to the General Assembly that reflects the tough economic crisis and leaves out several projects, press secretary Gordon Hickey said. He said he didn't know whether the project had been presented to the governor to be included in the budget and added that the assembly would be able to add it if it chooses to.

"The governor has to make a lot of difficult decisions," he said. "The budget is now in the hands of the General Assembly. It will come back to the governor, and he will make a decision on what to leave and take out."

The House and the Senate this month approved amendments adding the Meherrin River Regional Jail project to their respective budget bills, which are now a part of the 11-member Budget Conference Committee package.

The House amendment author-

izes the construction of the project without allocating any money to it, while the Senate amendment requests that a facility of no more than 400 beds be built with construction at just one site, for which the state's share of the capital costs of construction should not exceed \$50 million. Under their plan, the reimbursement of the state's portion would not occur before July 1, 2012.

Del. Rosalyn R. Dance, D-Petersburg, who supports the project and offered an amendment to the budget bill, said she hopes funding would be allocated for the project in the coming years.

The project, she said, will ease overcrowding in the local jails, and its design will provide a safer and more secure environment for inmates and guards. She is optimistic that a budget compromise will be worked out to the counties' satisfac-

tion. Brunswick County Administrator Charlette T. Woolridge points out that the bonds for the state's share of construction would not have to be issued until 2012 and would not affect the current two-year budget. If funds are not allocated for the project in the current budget, construction will be delayed and local officials will try to get the funding next year.

In the meantime, Massengill said, paying for jail space will be a bigger challenge for the counties facing tight budgets under the current economic crisis.

He said the counties will continue to lobby for the state funds. "We, as three jurisdictions, cannot afford to pay for a jail this size without the help of the state," he said.

Contact Luz Lazo at (804) 649-6058 or [llazo@timesdispatch.com](mailto:llazo@timesdispatch.com).