

Media coverage June – August 2014

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-budget-20140619,0,6352496.story>

Fort Monroe: Costs outpace revenues State earmarks keep authority afloat

Robert Brauchle reports on the financial report for Fort Monroe Authority.

By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com

10:21 p.m. EDT, June 19, 2014

HAMPTON — Keeping [Fort Monroe](#)'s beaches, piers and roads open to the public will cost state taxpayers millions of dollars in the coming year.

The authority overseeing the property at Old Point Comfort will rely on a \$6.7 million General Assembly appropriation as well as a series of state and federal grants to balance its 2015 fiscal year budget, even though close to 90 percent of the homes and apartments on the property are occupied and generating revenue.

The authority will spend \$13.3 million in the coming fiscal year, a 25 percent increase from the \$10.6 million budgeted for the current fiscal year, according to budget documents the Fort Authority Board of Trustees unanimously approved Thursday afternoon.

"In the five years the Fort Monroe Authority has been in existence, there never has been a learning curb like there has been this year," Board of Trustees Chairman John Lawson said. Staff has "had more surprises than complete knows, and I don't know if everyone knows how difficult this has been."

State officials have said that costs could outpace revenue for close to a decade as the authority finds ways to generate dollars from the property decommissioned by the Army in 2011. Beyond state and federal grants, revenue from residential property leases have been the authority's main revenue source.

Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director [Glenn Oder](#) has said selling parcels of Fort Monroe will be unlikely until the authority and city of Hampton agree to zoning on the property. The General Assembly has already agreed to allow the authority to sell land in specific areas.

Real estate will be both a blessing and a burden on the authority in the fiscal year that begins July 1. While staff has had success renting residential units – nearly 90 percent are occupied – a significant amount of the fort's 1.1 million square feet of commercial and warehouse space remains vacant.

"I think it's safe to say, we'd rather focus on our residential profitability rather than our commercial losses," Oder said Thursday, "even though the commercial buildings are very important to us."

The authority expects to collect \$2.7 million from residential leases this fiscal year and just \$879,950 in commercial leases from tenants such as the Paradise Ocean Club. As board members delved into budget spreadsheets, bathing suit-clad patrons of the Paradise Ocean Club walked by the meeting room's glass windows to stake out a spot on the beach.

Costs associated with leasing residential and commercial buildings and holding events at Fort Monroe are budgeted to outpace revenues by almost \$2.8 million in the 2015 fiscal year.

"It's phenomenal and a real testimony ... that we continue to create budgets where we're not borrowing money and in fact we're finding money to do the things that we thought we'd have to borrow money for," Oder said.

State taxpayers will pay for expenses not covered by real estate revenue.

The state is expected to provide another \$5.5 million next year.

Other highlights of the authority's fiscal year 2015 spending plan include:

- \$1.8 million to pay for authority staff costs, a 19 percent increase from the current fiscal year.
- \$303,000 for attorney fees, an increase from \$270,000 this fiscal year.
- \$1.2 million for Veolia Environmental Services, the contractor hired for public works projects. That cost will remain almost flat from the 2014 fiscal year.

The Fort Monroe Authority plans to borrow \$22 million through fiscal year 2016 to pay for high-cost, long-term projects needed for the property. The Virginia Public Building Authority will borrow those funds and pass them along to Fort Monroe.

Fort Monroe Authority Deputy Executive Director John Hutcheson said authority staff will return in an August meeting with specific capital projects to approve once the General Assembly approves a budget.

The Office of Economic Adjustment will grant the Fort Monroe Authority \$734,000 more than staff had initially expected, Oder said.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-tsq-hpt-notebook-0619-20140619,0,7049049.story>

By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com

11:48 a.m. EDT, June 19, 2014

My father tends to share his opinions frequently, and without solicitation. It's a trait you'll love or hate, depending on how he feels about you.

Earlier this month, my parents stayed in downtown Hampton for the evening on their way to the [Outer Banks](#). It just so happens, the Allied Forces invaded France on that day 70 years earlier, and events remembering the sacrifices of our service members were taking place throughout the country.

That evening the weather was pleasant, the breeze kept the bugs at bay, and [Fort Monroe](#) was hosting the [United States Air Force](#) Heritage of America Band at Continental Park.

Bringing my parents to Old Point Comfort seemed like a good fit.

It served as an opportunity for them to experience entertainment at Fort Monroe, and a chance for me to get an unbiased opinion from someone who only visits the property a couple times a year.

The truth is, I rarely solicit my father's opinion about the topics I cover, save for the occasional chat about local politics or the city's historic roots.

In the case of Fort Monroe, my parents have slowly seen the property transform since I moved here in December 2012. I expected my father to have something to say about the seating options, parking and large crowds — the latter he tries to avoid at all costs.

"Whenever there's a ceremony like that at home, it's a five-minute type of thing, then it's over with," he said during a June 13 phone conversation about the D-Day concert. "It's more interesting than anything I've seen before."

He needed to park the car "a little ways away, but it's not like we had to walk through a bad neighborhood," he said.

And should the Fort Monroe Authority continue to hold military concerts in Continental Park?

"To keep that tradition going is great," he said. "You don't see stuff like that every day."

To the officials at Fort Monroe, you've made my father happy, for now.

Thanks for the interview Dad, and belated Happy [Father's Day](#).

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/local-voices/dp-nws-oped-lawson-0629-20140628,0,3290.story>

Still moving forward at Fort Monroe

By John Lawson

3:09 p.m. EDT, June 28, 2014

The [Fort Monroe](#) Authority (FMA) just completed our first year of operation as the primary property owner at Fort Monroe and we are pleased to report our successes as well as share our challenges. The success of keeping the property open to the public as well as making the buildings available for commercial and residential tenants is a testimony to the community planning that took place prior to the transfer of property. As we consider other base closures across the country, Fort Monroe is a shining example of how to keep buildings occupied and public spaces available.

Of the buildings available for occupancy, we have reached 90 percent occupancy. However, a number of buildings transferred from the Army to the FMA need substantial repairs to make these buildings available for occupancy. The recent approval of the state budget is providing the funds necessary to repair many of these buildings and we hope to have them available for lease soon.

Additionally, the FMA has leased approximately 235,000 square feet of commercial property at Fort Monroe. These leases have brought jobs back to Hampton, provided worship space for two congregations, allowed people to experience the Casemate Museum, and provided summer entertainment at the Paradise Ocean Club. Although not directly managed by the FMA, the Chamberlin is experiencing unprecedented success under new ownership and the marina is quietly becoming a destination location on the bay.

The Fort Monroe grounds are maintained by FMA contractors while the City of [Hampton](#) maintains the ball fields, provides summer lifeguards, and grooms the beaches weekly. The FMA Casemate Museum is open daily and recently received the largest transfer of artifacts from the Army to another institution in over 155 years. The National Park Service (NPS) and the FMA are collaborating on educational projects and the [Virginia General Assembly](#) Bicentennial of the [War of 1812](#) Commission just held a teachers symposium on the property that attracted more than 100 teachers from across the state.

Special events at Fort Monroe continue to entertain as well as educate people about Fort Monroe. The FMA is hosting 15 concerts this summer, including two symphonic performances, and is producing a unique and exciting Fourth of July celebration with a low trajectory fireworks launched from the Fort ramparts. Additionally 17 weddings are planned in the gazebo and our picnic shelter is booked throughout the summer weekends. We are also proud to welcome almost 200 [YMCA](#) summer day campers who fish, swim, play ball, and enjoy this historic property.

Ownership of Fort Monroe is not without challenges. Vacant buildings require constant supervision; the majority of the underground utilities are now the responsibility of the FMA, and the Army still claims ownership of almost 100 acres of property. As we approach our second year we continue to work with the Army on the transfer of the remaining property to the Commonwealth.

Entering our second year we gladly recognize the City of Hampton, the National Park Service, and the Army as our partners in the management of this property. Without their support, especially the participation by the City of Hampton in managing our beach areas, fishing pier,

and ball fields, and the logistics support for the Fourth of July, our successes would be diminished.

We also recognize the commitment by the General Assembly and Governor Terry McAuliffe to financially support Fort Monroe during this transition period. Their support is funding repairs to the infrastructure at Fort Monroe while also providing jobs in the community. For the first time in years we are repairing roads, installing sidewalk ramps, painting buildings, replacing rotten wood, restoring elevators to operational use, fixing leaking pipes, replacing old street signs, and installing new fire hydrants.

As we look forward, the vision for Fort Monroe continues to be a beacon lighting our path. Future projects include the design of a Waterfront Park with a continuous 7 mile pedestrian trail along the waterfront. The Virginia Sailing Center and the future location of the Virginia STEAM Academy will provide unique opportunities for our youth and bring statewide attention to Fort Monroe. And finally, the FMA is committed to preparing for the 2019 commemoration of the 400 year anniversary of the first arrival of Africans to the new world that occurred at this property in 1619.

This first year of property ownership demonstrates the value Fort Monroe provides to our community and these future projects demonstrate the state and national significance that is the destiny of this property.

Lawson is chairman of the Fort Monroe Authority

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<http://wavy.com/2014/06/26/archaeologists-make-stunning-discovery-in-hampton/>

Archaeologists make stunning discovery in Hampton

By Anita Blanton

Published: June 26, 2014, 8:03 pm Updated: June 27, 2014, 6:32 am

HAMPTON, Va. (WAVY) — Archaeologists in Hampton have made a stunning discovery. They've dug up trenches believed to hold information about people once enslaved, but determined to be free, right here in Hampton Roads.

We know Hampton Roads plays a significant role in America's history, but as Fort Monroe is being developed with Freedom's Fort as a focus, historians are learning more of the details of that story. Archaeologists think they've come across the place where thousands of slaves came during the Civil War after making the decision to leave the plantations that enslaved them.

"We opened up this big long trench, just to see what was there. We did find a possible well," said Joe Dietmeier from the James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc. "We do have a possible alley way. The soil is a different color, so you have a nice clear brown stripe running across. We did find a button that predates the Civil War. It looks like it's somewhere between 1812 and

1830. We found stuff right away, and pretty much everything we found was in the first week or so.”

Photos: Contraband artifacts found in Hampton

Historians, like Michael Cobb from the Hampton History Museum, say the [Grand Contraband Camp](#) began when Union Major General Benjamin Butler, then Commander of Fort Monroe, encountered three slaves and gave them asylum.

Historians say slaves escaping across Union lines would be considered “contraband of war,” and it’s estimated by the end of the Civil War 7,000 to 8,000 more slaves seeking asylum came to call the camp outside Fort Monroe home.

“They weren’t completely free, but they weren’t completely slaves. He put them to work, and soon after 10, 20, 100 contraband started showing up every day at Fort Monroe,” Cobb said. “What they wanted out of life is what we all want — they wanted freedom, education and land.”

Some historians say the camp was the first self-contained African American community in the United States. But what’s certain is that historians are eagerly waiting to see what the site near the intersection of Armistead Avenue and Lincoln Street holds.

“When this happened and we actually uncover history and the archaeologists are working, it’s like every day you go by and look it’s like opening a page of a book,” Cobb said.

Right now, archaeologists are just in phase one for the work in uncovering what is at the dig site. But on July 18, there will be an open house there so the public can see what’s been found so far. You’ll be able to see the excavation, artifacts and meet the archaeologists.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-national-monument-20140626,0,3568922.story>

Park service lays out scope, value of Fort Monroe National Monument

By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com

7:57 p.m. EDT, June 26, 2014

HAMPTON — In the nearly three years since President [Barack Obama](#) declared portions of [Fort Monroe](#) a national monument, the National Park Service has played little more than a supporting role on the former Army base.

Park service employees clad in green and gray uniforms attend events and distribute fliers, but the iconic arrowhead insignia isn’t apparently visible anywhere on the property and there is no dedicated visitors center to welcome guests.

On Thursday, the park service released a partial draft a "Fort Monroe National Monument Foundation Document" — an outline of goals and plans for the 325-acre monument based on discussions it has held privately with scholars, local residents and planners.

The document "talks about why we do things and what we're protecting," said Susan Spain, a National Park Service landscape architect.

Among the topics the document covers:

- Human servitude, slavery and emancipation.
- The physical fort structure and its role in coastal defense.
- Public access to the Chesapeake Bay.

Obama announced the national monument designation in November 2011, touching off excitement about federal park exposure and debate about why other portions of the property were not included within the monument's boundaries.

State and federal officials have said Fort Monroe will become a seamless park despite the complicated ownership issues involving the Army, the state, the National Park Service and the city of Hampton.

The National Park Service will continue working with scholars and the public to discover more detail about the property and the stories that need be told there.

Monument superintendent Kirsten Talken-Spaulding said the Fort Monroe foundation document has been more complicated to write than most other units because the property lacks "background documents" to aide research.

Project 1619 creator Calvin Pearson said National Park Service planners have worked well with his group, which aims to educate and commemorate the first shipment of African slaves to English-occupied North America. That Dutch slave ship landed at Old Point Comfort.

"We need to make sure we're working with the same information and that we're telling the same story," Pearson said.

"It's a great day and I'm glad we've reached this point," said Mark Perreault, Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park president.

Perreault said it was hard to comment just yet on the draft foundational document, although he stressed Fort Monroe's importance to public access to the Chesapeake Bay.

Talken-Spaulding said a more detailed second phase of the foundational document will be completed and published later this summer.

Brauchle can be contacted by 757-246-2827.

Fort Monroe document

To see the Phase 1 of the draft document visit: <http://tinyurl.com/fmfoundational>

<http://www.wvec.com/news/local/4th-of-July-fireworks-go-off-as-planned-at-Fort-Monroe-265868931.html>

4th of July fireworks go off as planned at Fort Monroe

by Jonathan Costen - 13News Now

WVEC.com

Posted on July 4, 2014 at 11:19 PM

Updated yesterday at 12:43 PM

HAMPTON -- Not everyone had to wait for one of the many local fireworks shows that have been rescheduled for Saturday night.

Although Hurricane Arthur forced several Hampton Roads communities to postpone their fireworks presentations, the show still went on at Fort Monroe in Hampton.

Traffic was backed up for miles as cars inched in near the fort. After patiently waiting for the show to kick off the first of the fireworks started around 9:15pm

Ashley Ragas was in her car by herself stuck in traffic. "I decided to meet a friend out and I'm probably am not going to be on time," she said.

The show lasted about 15 minutes and spectators had mixed opinions. Many people expressed their disappointment. William Blount said: "It was too far away. It really wasn't good. People came all the way out here to see good fireworks. It wasn't good fireworks tonight."

But Mike Poteet wasn't let down. "I was satisfied," he said. "It was great because everyone came to the fireworks. We were the only ones that had it."

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-fort-monroe-celebrates-fourth-of-july-with-a-bang-span-stylecolorff0000b-with-video-bspan-20140704,0,5365446.story>

Fort Monroe celebrates Fourth of July with a bang | With Video

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-ymca-20140625,0,3279163.story>

Fort Monroe YMCA branch being explored Building was renovated in '02

YMCA officials are looking at a building on Fort Monroe as a potential site for a new Y branch. The Y needs 300 new families to show interest in signing up before a new facility is opened though.

By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com

6:53 p.m. EDT, June 25, 2014

HAMPTON — Each weekday morning, the [YMCA](#)'s white buses lumber onto [Fort Monroe](#) to unload their cargo.

Close to 300 children participate in the YMCA's Fort Monroe summer camp as the group's leadership has not-so-quietly sought to build a base of families interested in joining a new branch on the property.

"We're looking for a membership base that would be interested in coming out to Fort Monroe," said Danny Carroll, [Peninsula Metropolitan YMCA](#) executive director. "We haven't quite found it yet, but we're looking in that general vicinity."

The key, Carroll said, is finding 300 new families living in the surrounding communities of Phoebus, [Buckroe](#) and Grandview interesting in joining the YMCA. The group does not want to bleed-off membership from the existing LaSalle Avenue location by opening a new branch.

"We're truly hoping by the end of summer we can have a marketing plan that we can communicate to those communities," Carroll said. "It would be wonderful to have the building cleaned up and ready to take membership soon, but we haven't firmed up exactly how we're going to do it yet."

The YMCA now uses a brick building where Ruckman Road meets the inner fort's west entrance as a pick-up and drop-off point for summer camp participants and their parents. A large YMCA sign hangs among the building's white columns.

Children are picked up from YMCAs at bus stops in [Hampton](#), [Newport News](#) and [York](#) County and taken to the decommissioned Army base where they can participate in group activities such as boating, fishing and outdoor exploration.

"Youngsters from across the Peninsula — about 200 to 300 a day — are spending time at Fort Monroe, and we're excited about that," said Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director [Glenn Oder](#) during a June 19 Board of Trustees meeting.

The YMCA has signed an agreement with the Fort Monroe Authority keeping the YMCA as the building's primary tenant for at least two years. That agreement was signed 18 months ago, Carroll said.

Fort Monroe officials have said a YMCA branch would marry well with the civilian community being developed on the property.

The Army's Training and Doctrine Command spent more than \$11 million to renovate the building in 2002. A part of that work included lead and asbestos abatement to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act.

At the time, Army officials repeatedly described the renovation as being "world class."

The building, constructed between 1902 and 1907, closed as a YMCA in 1992 because the group lacked funds and donations needed to renovate the building. At the time, it was the only YMCA in the nation operating on military property; YMCA officials said the center served 3,000 to 5,000 visitors each month.

Carroll said the renovated building could be programmed for the group's uses.

"It's a beautiful building," he said.

The first floor — or basement — includes a climbing wall, racquetball court, sauna, shower and wellness center. The second floor, accessible through the front entrance, holds a spinning room and check-in area. The third floor could be used for group exercises, Carroll said.

"There's a beautiful walk-out patio that overlooks the water," he said.

How can residents show their interest in the Fort Monroe YMCA?

Carroll said there isn't a venue for residents to directly show support for the branch. YMCA staff is working on a plan to promote the branch. YMCA staff has also solicited signatures from people at public events like the [Blackbeard Festival](#) in downtown Hampton and at the Bodacious Bazaar on Fort Monroe.

"We're really in the planning stages ... we're not that far along," Carroll said.

More information about the Fort Monroe location can be found at <http://www.fmauthority.com/ymca-your-feedback-needed>.

Brauchle can be contacted at 757-247-2827.

Where did the building come from?

Organized in 1889, the Fort Monroe YMCA was housed in one of the casemates of the old moat wall. In 1902, Helen Miller Gould, daughter of railroad and fur tycoon Jay Gould, donated \$60,000 to construct the YMCA building on Fort Monroe.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/dp-edt-fort-monroe-future-editorial-20140701-20140630,0,7387927.story>

Under our protection

Future of Fort Monroe will depend on our cooperation and sustained commitment

7:15 p.m. EDT, June 30, 2014

The future of [Fort Monroe](#) requires an ample funding stream, cooperation among the stakeholders and a firm commitment to see the monument preserved for future generations. Citizens should be pleased to see those necessities as work, though it will be years before the dream of a self-sustaining regional asset can be realized.

Robert E. Lee worked there. [Edgar Allan Poe](#) served there. [Abraham Lincoln](#) planned war there. Jefferson Davis was jailed there. And thousands of slaves flocked there when "Freedom's Fortress" offered escape from the brutality of bondage.

Fort Monroe's thick stone walls can barely contain the rich history which unfolded there. Since 1609, a defensive structure of some sort has stood sentinel over the [Hampton Roads](#). And the modern marvel that exists today, though no longer an active military facility, still has tremendous value as a cultural and historical touchstone.

When the last round of base closures designated Fort Monroe for decommissioning, it began a wide-ranging conversation over what comes next for the fortress. Preserving it was a priority, but opinions varied over how best to do so.

Ultimately, the site was designated for cooperative management, with federal, state and local officials all sharing some measure of responsibility for operations, upkeep and improvement. The Fort Monroe Authority, for example, was charged by the commonwealth to construct a blueprint for the future only for the portion of the property owned by Virginia.

The FMA faces a difficult challenge of trying to keep pace with annual expenses using funding cobbled together from several sources. Its recent \$13.3 million budget for the 2015 fiscal year includes money from the General Assembly as well as state and federal grants.

It may seem like a significant burden to put on taxpayers' shoulders, but it is an investment worth making. It was no secret that transitioning the fort from military to civilian use would include a significant expense. And we were aware public money would pay for upkeep until reliable and sufficient revenue can be generated regularly.

What's more, as maintenance is completed and needed capital projects get off the ground, residents and visitors can see the money being put to good use. Already the idea of a mixed-use property is taking shape, with residential housing filling up, a marina and beach club offering recreation options and the Casemate Museum telling the fort's story.

Those efforts are expected to accelerate in the coming years. The planned 2015 establishment of the Virginia STEAM Academy — a boarding school that will focus on teaching high school

students science, technology, engineering and applied mathematics — strikes us as a particularly important milestone.

We are also pleased to see the National Park Service living up to its obligations. It recently released a draft document outlining its goals for the national monument, including some of the historical aspects it expects to highlight for visitors.

Though ownership of the property is complicated — the [U.S. Army](#), the state, the park service and the city of Hampton all share responsibility — all agree the monument should be operated seamlessly and cooperatively. The park service document is an important part of that.

Such collaboration is vital to success, as it is in any long-term endeavor.

Across the Peninsula, we often see initiatives and projects which require sustained commitment. Many of these will expire as interest and enthusiasm wane. It is one thing to set a goal 20 or 30 years in the future, and quite another to avoid distraction and commit fully to seeing it through.

Fort Monroe will suffer without that type of determination from all involved, from the officials who manage day-to-day operations, to lawmakers who provide the funding, to area residents who should be active in their support.

This monument is a national treasure. We must never waver from treating it accordingly.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-tsq-hpt-notebook-0710-20140710,0,1544009.story>

History is unearthed daily in Hampton

By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com

9:43 a.m. EDT, July 10, 2014

Hampton history is so thick, you could sink a shovel in it.

We all know this because of our ancestors' stories and the artifacts we hold in our museums.

Hampton's history isn't completely written in stone though. Archaeologists, historians and residents find items in the ground every day. And those items continue to piece together the area's past.

On [Fort Monroe](#), contractors replacing aging and defunct fire hydrants regularly find bricks, bottles and other artifacts.

Downtown, archaeologists are unearthing remnants from the Grand Contraband Camp formed during the Civil War.

Each item placed in the hands of historians and scholars is another clue about how early residents lived on the land we still occupy today.

On Friday, July 18, archaeologists from the James River Institute for Archaeology will meet with the public to discuss what they've found at the downtown site where they are working land that most recently held the Harbor Square Apartments.

The event will take place from noon to 6 p.m. at the Hampton history Museum.

The archaeological dig coincides with the museum's exhibit "Toward Freedom: Hampton and the Contraband," which tells the story of the individuals who sought freedom from slavery by escaping to Fort Monroe and Hampton.

When they arrived, the freedmen constructed shacks and shanty homes in present-day downtown.

Items found by the archaeologists downtown during the dig include a barrel-lined well, remains of fence posts, privies, trash pits, buttons, animal bones and the remnants of an alleyway.

Brauchle can be reached by phone at 757-247-2827 or rbrauchle@dailypress.com. Follow him on Twitter, @dp_brauchle and on Facebook, [facebook.com/hamptonnews](https://www.facebook.com/hamptonnews).

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<http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/local-federal-partners-help-ft-monroe-lra-advance-its-reuse-goals/#>

Local, Federal Partners Help Ft. Monroe LRA Advance Its Reuse Goals

July 7, 2014

At the end of its first year as the primary property owner at Fort Monroe, the former post's LRA has recorded a number of achievements at the same time it is tackling multiple challenges.

The Fort Monroe Authority has leased about 235,000 square feet of commercial property at the installation located on the shore of the Chesapeake Bay, providing jobs in the city of Hampton, Va., space for two congregations and the Casemate Museum, and summer entertainment at the Paradise Ocean Club, Chairman John Lawson wrote in a recent commentary in the [Daily Press](#).

To date, the authority has achieved 90 percent occupancy for buildings that are available. Many buildings the LRA has obtained from the Army, though, need substantial repairs before they can be used by the public, Lawson wrote. State funds are expected to pay for repairs to those buildings and other outdated infrastructure at Fort Monroe.

Lawson pointed to the support of the state as well as that of Hampton, the National Park Service and the Army as playing a critical role in the successful reuse of the historic post.

He highlighted several ongoing challenges, including overseeing vacant buildings, assuming responsibility for underground utilities and the need to continue working with the Army to transfer the remaining property.

“This first year of property ownership demonstrates the value Fort Monroe provides to our community and these future projects demonstrate the state and national significance that is the destiny of this property,” Lawson stated.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/letters/dp-nws-edt-letssat-0705-20140707,0,480551.story>

July 5 Letters: Fort Monroe, Medicaid, checks and balances

10:21 a.m. EDT, July 7, 2014

Fort's last chance

Yes, [Fort Monroe](#) is a national treasure ("Under our protection" editorial, July 1). Many emphasized that a decade ago. But with Daily Press support, Virginia's leaders misframed it as merely a Hampton development plum.

Later they contrived only a sham national monument, split on the sense-of-place-defining bayfront to enlarge Fort Monroe's already huge development area.

Last month, officials finally acknowledged Fort Monroe's claim to the "greatest moment in American history." That phrase, from historian Edward Ayers, makes their planned overdevelopment sound all the more like planning Monticello subdivisions to crowd Thomas Jefferson's house.

Virginia's leaders know this. But they also know they've all but won — unless national attention intervenes.

Attention like Henry Louis Gates's May 26 essay at The Root could still force them to seek unification of the split national monument, respect sense of place, and ensure public enrichment in multiple ways from this national treasure.

Steven T. Corneliussen

Poquoson

<http://hamptonroads.com/2014/07/600-new-jobs-coming-fort-monroe-mcauliffe-says>

600 new jobs coming to Fort Monroe, McAuliffe says

By [Dianna Cahn](#)

The Virginian-Pilot

© July 17, 2014

A startup company with a unique concept for repatriating outsourced American jobs is getting \$1.5 million in public funds to bring jobs to [Fort Monroe](#).

[Liberty-Source PBC](#) intends to hire military spouses to fill the 596 jobs it is promising to create in Hampton Roads.

The company has leased 13,000 square feet in two buildings on Fenwick Road on the old Army post, most of which reverted to state ownership.

The company is barely up and running. But its concept to bring outsourced jobs back "onshore" sparked the imagination of its state partners.

"Liberty-Source PBC is a tremendous addition to Hampton Roads," Gov. Terry McAuliffe said in his announcement Wednesday. "The company's delivery model is centered on employing staff from the U.S. military community, and Fort Monroe and the city of Hampton have a long and storied military history."

McAuliffe approved a \$300,000 grant from the Governor's Opportunity Fund to bring the company to Hampton, while the state economic development group pitched in \$417,200. Hampton and Fort Monroe each contributed another \$150,000 - the city's money to go toward job training and capital investment and the authority's in the form of three years free rent.

The state also offered a \$546,000 income tax credit.

In return, the company has committed to investing \$1.6 million and to employing 596 people at an average salary of \$35,000 a year. Currently, just a handful of jobs are listed on its website.

Glenn Oder, executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority, said the company's unproven ability to perform as promised was outweighed by its vision and potential.

Liberty-Source plans to provide financial, bookkeeping, accounting, human resources and customer support services, the kinds of jobs many American companies have outsourced to developing countries.

"I prefer to look at them as an exciting startup company trying to repatriate jobs back to the United States," Oder said. "Their goal is to hire military spouses. Their business model and the fact that they are looking to locate here in Hampton mitigates much of the concerns."

Company officials hope to attract military spouses to jobs; that group is traditionally under-employed because of frequent moves.

"With over 30,000 active military from all five branches in the greater Hampton Roads area, Fort Monroe provides us access to a highly skilled and dedicated workforce," said Steve Hosley, president and CEO of Liberty-Source.

Company Chairman Deborah Kops said it will take several years to reach the goal of 596 jobs and will depend on Liberty-Source's marketing abilities.

She emphasized that there are hidden costs to overseas outsourcing. Outsourced work is subject to cultural misunderstandings and errors, with added costs of travel and oversight expenses, she said.

The company is also banking on the fact that there are organizations that would embrace the opportunity to bring outsourced jobs back to American soil.

"What we are betting on, quite frankly, is that with targeted training, technology and a good workforce, we can provide a competitive option to offshore locations," Kops said.

The Fort Monroe Authority was created in 2011, when much of the 560-acre property reverted to the state after the Army relocated its offices to Fort Eustis in Newport News.

In June 2013, the authority took formal control of 320 acres and has since leased 200,000 of the 1 million square feet of available office space, Oder said.

Dianna Cahn, 757-222-5846, dianna.cahn@pilotonline.com

<http://www.dailypress.com/business/tidewater/dp-tidewaterbiz-economic-fort-monroe-20140715,0,1553328.story>

TidewaterBiz event (with photos): Economist says Hampton Roads jobs recovery stalls

By [Tara Bozick](#), 757-247-4741TidewaterBiz

7:46 a.m. EDT, July 15, 2014

The private sector needs to step it up if [Hampton Roads](#) wants to see further economic growth, Old Dominion University economist Vinod Agarwal told more than 150 attendees of the TidewaterBiz networking event on July 8.

Currently, 42 percent of the region's economic output is tied to defense spending. But with sequestration and reduced federal government spending, Hampton Roads can't rely on this sector to grow the economy. Agarwal, the interim dean of ODU's Strome College of Business, said the days of spending increases are gone.

The effect of this can be seen from 2011 to 2012, when employee compensation -- total wages, salaries and benefits -- grew 3.5 percent in the private sector, outpacing the 1.4 percent increase from the military. Government worker compensation remained stagnant.

Hampton Roads is lagging behind the U.S. and Virginia in recovering the jobs it lost from peak employment in 2007 before the recession. Regional civilian employment is still 3 percent below what it was seven years ago. Agarwal calls this a "jobless recovery."

If the region wants to maintain its standard of living, private sector growth has to pick up, Agarwal said.

Aside from the port, that doesn't seem to be happening so far this year through May compared to the same time last year.

Yes, unemployment declined 8 percent and the number of employed increased 1.6 percent year over year, but the number of jobs is down by 1,100.

Retail sales and new vehicle registrations are flat. The region's housing recovery has slowed, in part because of a snowy winter. The number of housing permits dropped 15 percent along with a 5 percent decline in existing home sales from January to May this year compared to the same time last year.

Even so, some economic bright spots are:

- Hotel revenue has increased 4.8 percent
- General cargo tonnage at the port increased 9.7 percent

- Foreclosures and short sales are comprising less of the region's home sales, or a drop of 29.7 percent to 25.4 percent

Additionally, Mike "Yaz" Yaskowsky of Hampton Economic Development shared the city's plan for adding jobs and growing the economic base in addition to recapping the latest business announcements.

[Fort Monroe](#) Authority's Deputy Executive Director John Hutcheson told attendees that while about 90 percent of Fort Monroe's available housing has been leased, it's barely filled the more than 1.1 million square feet of commercial space. Paradise Ocean Club, which hosted the event, is one of the businesses leasing space at Fort Monroe.

Both Yaskowsky and Hutcheson said more announcements were coming soon.

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http://www.timesdispatch.com/goochlandgazette/a-week-at-old-port-comfort/article_6b7e50c0-1389-11e4-9083-0017a43b2370.html

A week at Old Port Comfort

Posted: Thursday, July 24, 2014 7:22 pm

By Jim Ridolphi / Contributing Columnist

Who doesn't love a week at the beach?

My children are spending this week at Virginia Beach with their mom, and their anticipation was inescapable with each passing day as they prepared for their trip.

For those lucky enough to enjoy one, summer vacation is a welcomed respite from the everyday grind of our lives. Whether it's a week in the mountains, or seven days at your favorite beach, there's something about vacation evenings and star-filled nights that evokes pleasant memories for most of us.

As a child, my family spent a week each summer at a place called the Chamberlin Hotel at Fort Monroe.

Located within the base and surrounded by the Chesapeake Bay, the Chamberlin was a true resort, an escape from the ordinary, at least for us. Built in the 1920s, the hotel offered a degree of service seldom seen in even that era.

Meals were served in a spacious dining room, with starched white linen services and bow-tied waiters. As visitors dined, large ships passed through the busy waterway.

The hotel is located at Fort Monroe, the largest stone fort built in the United States, and the atmosphere was almost mystic as uniformed troops drilled on the adjoining parade grounds.

And, the Chamberlin offered its share of spookiness. In the 1820s, the infamous Hygeia Hotel occupied the very same spot and was frequented by famous visitors, including Edgar Allen Poe.

The writer recited "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee" on the expansive porch of the old hotel.

It all made for a summer vacation that I've yet to equal in the many years since.

Richmonders visited the popular resort throughout the 1960s and '70s, but many bypassed the Fort Monroe exit for their trips to Virginia Beach as years passed.

The hotel fell into disrepair, only a shadow of its former splendid past.

The building closed in 2002 and, in 2003, Hurricane Isabel battered the aging building, and it remained shuttered until a massive renovation began in 2004 and ended with the opening of the Chamberlin as a retirement community in 2008.

The memories are all that's really left of the old Hotel Chamberlin, but many of us remember the excitement-filled nights in the basement of the old resort as we gathered in the game room with dozens of other vacationing youths.

And I'll never forget the crusty, leather-skinned old lifeguard who sat behind a cage and issued towels and small pins for your bathing suit each day. He worked for all the years we visited, and got darker each year.

Unlike today's action-filled vacations, you parked your car at the Chamberlin when you arrived and didn't move it until you left. Everything you could want was on-site, and — even absent televisions or air conditioning — I always looked forward to the trip.

Back to my kids, I have a feeling their week will be much different from my weeks at the Chamberlin, but no less exciting and fulfilling.

Before they departed, they asked me if I knew of any good restaurants in Virginia Beach and I thought hard to come up with an answer.

"Yeah, go to Charlie's Seafood and get the She Crab Soup. It's the best I ever had," I finally replied.

Problem is, I haven't had any in three decades and who knows if it's still there.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/letters/dp-nws-edt-letswed-0723-20140722,0,1468181.story>

July 23 Letters: Fort Monroe, Vladimir Putin

8:32 p.m. EDT, July 22, 2014

[Fort Monroe's value](#)

Your July 20 editorial "Search for stability," concludes that in this time of military downsizing, [Hampton Roads](#) must "diversify its economy, broaden its employment base and bolster its financial stability."

A means to this end is creating a stronger national-park presence at Fort Monroe. Why? Your March 4 article on Virginia's national parks gives the biggest part of the answer: "Visitors to Historic [Jamestown](#), [Yorktown Battlefield](#) and Assateague Island National Seashore helped propel Virginia to the third most-popular destination for national parks in 2012. ... Nearly 23.4 million people checked out the state's 22 national parks, spending more than \$926 million while there and supporting 13,256 jobs."

Fort Monroe, combining the natural beauty of Assateague and the historic richness of Jamestown and Yorktown — and complementing their history by extending it to the Civil War — could be an economic boon to the Peninsula, if the monument is expanded to include Wherry (the land that divides it). Also, beyond the benefits of tourism, a region with a great national park at its core

would help draw knowledge-based businesses seeking to satisfy the quality-of-life priorities of the millennials they employ.

It should be no secret to the Daily Press that the Peninsula is not well regarded nationally for its beauty or recreational opportunities. The Fort Monroe Authority, and the Daily Press, need to look again at the economic and other benefits of a unified Fort Monroe National Monument.

H. Scott Butler

Treasurer, Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/education/dp-nws-floating-classroom-20140802,0,3551747.story>

Floating classroom comes ashore at Fort Monroe in Hampton

Part of 340-mile expedition on the James River

By Ali Rockett, alrockett@dailypress.com

5:29 p.m. EDT, August 2, 2014

HAMPTON — Ten travel-weary high school students came to shore around noon Saturday at [Fort Monroe](#) nearly 80 miles from where they first started their paddle down the [James River](#) in Richmond.

After eight days on the water, the group completed the third and final leg of a 340-mile journey covering the entire river. Organized by the James River Association, the James River Expedition is a floating classroom teaching students about environmental science, ecology, biology, preservation and history.

Kyle Burnette, lead educator for the association, said the southernmost segment of the river is often the most grueling because the group is not always paddling with the tide.

"The lower James is a beast," he told the group of family and friends that amassed on the beach to welcome the students back to shore.

J.W. Brown, 16, of Mathews, said he hadn't known anyone else on the trip when he signed up, but wanted to challenge himself physically and mentally.

"You're paddling down the river with the same person all day," he said. "By the end, you're family."

The group huddled together at the end of their journey to share some of the things they had learned.

"Forty years ago, this place was a dumping ground for chemicals and trash," said 14-year-old Kirkland Shaffner, from Mechanicsville. "Now it's kind of awesome."

Shaffner, the youngest member of the expedition, said he had never been canoeing before the trip.

His mother, Dolly Shaffner, said she encouraged her son and a friend to go because of her love for the water.

"We had a boat when I was a little girl," she said. "I knew this would be something a little different for him."

The expedition, in its fourth year, is broken into three parts, each tackled by a different group of 10 students. Much of what the students learn along the way helps supplement what they are learning in classrooms during the school year.

Burnette, one of four guides, said each part of the river differed in many of the same ways that each of the three groups of students differed.

"It's place-based education," he said, "giving them first-hand experiences."

The lower tidal portion stretches from Richmond to the Chesapeake Bay. Along the way the group camped along the shores and toured riverside farms, industrial facilities, power stations and historical sites including [Jamestown](#).

"This doesn't end here," Burnette told the group as they said goodbye. "The river will always be here, hopefully. Go swim in it. Go fish in it. It's your river."

"Our goal is to create the future stewards for the James River."

Rockett can be reached by phone at 757-247-4942.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-african-landing-day-fort-monroe-20140802,0,6585788.story>

African Landing Day commemorated in Hampton Events begin Aug. 15

By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com

5:10 p.m. EDT, August 1, 2014

HAMPTON — A set of short documentaries, music and scholarly discussions taking place in August will highlight a series of events marking the anniversary of the first Africans to land in the English-occupied colonies in 1619 on a Dutch ship.

The African Landing Day commemoration is held in Hampton each year in [Phoebus](#) and at Fort Monroe.

On Friday, Aug. 15, four short documentaries at [the American Theatre](#) in Phoebus will focus on African-Americans and their experiences. The films begin at 7 p.m. A \$10 donation is requested.

On Saturday, a free morning of programs for young people will take place at the American Theatre beginning at 9:30 a.m.

A panel discussion moderated by Colita Nichols-Fairfax of Norfolk State University will follow the youth events at the theater.

The Virginia Juneteenth Jazz and Heritage Reconciliation and Healing Concert will conclude the evening. That event begins at 7 p.m. at the theater and costs \$20.

Wednesday Aug. 20 is the final day of events and will begin at noon with the World Day of Reconciliation and Healing from the Legacy of Enslavement prayer service at Continental Park on Fort Monroe.

At 6 p.m., the African Landing Day Commemoration program will include performers at the park.

For more information about the events or their organizers, visit <http://www.project1619.org> or <http://www.juneteenthjazz.com>.

<http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/customer-service-operation-to-bring-600-jobs-to-ft-monroe/#>

Customer Service Operation to Bring 600 Jobs to Ft. Monroe

July 31, 2014

Liberty-Source PBC, a business process outsourcer, will invest \$1.6 million to locate a customer service facility at the former Fort Monroe in Hampton, Va., that will create 596 jobs, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) announced last month.

The company, which will provide finance, accounting, human resources, customer care and additional support services for its clients, employs a business model that uniquely relies on military spouses, according to a [press release](#) from the governor's office.

"The company's delivery model is centered on employing staff from the U.S. military community, and Fort Monroe and the City of Hampton have a long and storied military history," McAuliffe said.

McAuliffe approved a \$300,000 grant from the Governor's Opportunity Fund to assist Hampton with the project.

Glenn Oder, executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority, similarly hailed the news. "The company's hiring of military veterans and family members of our active duty service men and women is admirable. That makes it even more meaningful that they can call Fort Monroe home," Oder said.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/hampton-matters-blog/dp-hampton-begins-to-look-at-its-role-on-fort-monroe-20140801,0,4306425.post>

Hampton begins to look at its role on Fort Monroe

12:00 p.m. EDT, August 1, 2014

Author: [Robert Brauchle](#)

With [Fort Monroe](#)'s conversion from an Army post into a civilian community continuing along, the city of [Hampton](#) is planning to step in to create/amend zoning that will govern privately owned land on the property.

Staff began briefing the Planning Commission in July just how the city plans to tackle the issue.

Here are some nuggets from the July 25 commission meeting that you might find interesting.

(Note: these are from minutes that are not yet approved.)

Also: The Planning Commission is scheduled to meet at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 7 in City Hall. A second briefing on Fort Monroe is on the agenda.

From the meeting:

In developing a Community Plan Amendment and the Zoning Ordinance Amendment, the next steps are the need to remove the military designation as Ft. Monroe is changing and help transfer it into its future use. The new zoning will be informed by those policies. Ft. Monroe becomes a different kind of an asset for the City as a park asset, a community asset and a recreational asset which all need to be reflected in the plan.

There are five topics or issues identified which are important and need to be addressed:

- Historical significance
- Governance
- Recreational and cultural opportunities
- Hampton as a 'gateway' to a National Park
- Environment resources

On how to address Fort Monroe in the city's community plan:

Staff is looking at a different format for this plan amendment forward because it does not fit the mold of a common Master Plan. Plans are for this to be a standalone plan.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/hampton-matters-blog/dp-the-colonies-on-fort-monroe-is-going-gangbusters-20140730,0,5808138.post>

The Colonies on Fort Monroe is going gangbusters

2:44 p.m. EDT, July 30, 2014

Author: [Robert Brauchle](#)

The Colonies Travel Park is going to get busy this weekend. Well, about as busy as a place can get when nearly everyone is on vacation and moving at half speed.

With the Hampton Cup Regatta coming into town, the site near the northern tip of [Fort Monroe](#) will become a hub of activity for spectators and some participants.

I stopped into the Colonies convenience store Wednesday afternoon to see how business has been going with owners Patrick and Patricia O'Connell.

They lovingly refer to themselves as Pat and Pat.

The O'Connells began managing the campsite in the summer of 2012 through a series of subleases on what is still federally owned land. It includes 19 full and partial recreational vehicle hookup sites, a bathhouse and an administrative building.

Wednesday afternoon, Patricia sat at the service counter talking with friends and retelling a story about her trip to the dentist earlier in the day.

It involved Novocaine, dental work, and a numb lip.

"Right now is the calm before the storm," she said.

This weekend, 17 visitors are expected to check in to the campsite, most of whom are affiliated with the race on Mill Creek.

Patricia said the Colonies has had visits from people across the country. They've also made it to a few recreation sites in Europe, so some international customers.

The challenge, she said, is convincing people that Fort Monroe is open to the public and armed guards aren't standing at the property's entrance.

I can assure you, they aren't.

For more information about the Colonies, visit www.thecoloniesrvandtravelpark.com or book at site through an app available through Android and Apple phones and tablets called Book Your Site.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/letters/dp-nws-edt-letssat-0809-20140808,0,4150574.story>

Aug. 9 Letters: Same-sex marriages, newspapers, green space, Fort Monroe

7:09 p.m. EDT, August 8, 2014

As a subscriber to the Daily Press, I am amazed that its stories and editorials continue to stir up fear among citizens about the region's financial prospects and the economic sustainability of [Fort Monroe](#).

An editorial on July 20 does this by saying [Hampton Roads](#) must diversity, broaden and bolster for financial stability; an earlier July editorial cites the Fort Monroe Authority's difficulty in keeping pace with expenses incurred for the operation, upkeep and improvements at Fort Monroe; while a story on July 28 reports that the City of Hampton has budgeted \$2.3 million this fiscal year to market Hampton as a destination to travelers for both business and leisure.

It is apparent that the Daily Press, the Fort Monroe Authority and the City of Hampton are not even considering a real, long-time solution.

H. Scott Butler's July 23 letter to the editor, "Fort Monroe's value" discusses the needed solution and the economic boom it would bring to the Peninsula

Mr. Butler's suggestion for creating a stronger national park presence at Fort Monroe would bring millions of people and dollars to this area. It also would save Hampton hundreds of thousands of dollars, since extensive advertising for National Parks of unique natural beauty and historic richness is handled by the Department of Interior.

As Mr. Butler points out, however, that stronger national park presence can only happen if the Fort Monroe National Park is fronted entirely by the beautiful Chesapeake Bay. The two, now disconnected, pieces of the park must be unified along the entire length of Fort Monroe's unique bay front.

It will be a national and state tragedy if something so disconnected by Wherry (the land that divides them) is not connected.

*Sandra Canepa
Hampton*

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-zoning-20140807,0,632485.story>

Hampton plans to create Fort Monroe zoning

By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com

7:00 p.m. EDT, August 7, 2014

HAMPTON — With a master plan and design standards already in place on [Fort Monroe](#), the city now plans to add a layer of bureaucracy its staff says is necessary to protect the city's interest if portions of the historic property are ever sold to private developers.

[Hampton](#) planning commissioners receive regular briefings about staff's work to create zoning districts that will regulate how Fort Monroe is used and developed. Those districts piggyback on the guidelines and policies already put in place by the state and federal governments.

Zoning will "protect the land uses you already have and steer investment to the uses you'd like to see in the future," said Keith Cannady, Hampton Planning Division manager.

City staff, the Fort Monroe Authority and the National Park Service continue to meet this summer to make sure that bureaucratic tape doesn't further complicate the property's future.

"There seems to be a fluidity in this whole process," Planning Commission member Gaynette "Gay" LaRue said. "We're looking forward ... to keeping up with this."

Fort Monroe Authority officials have said they plan to sell pieces of the property. The funds could then be used to pay for capital projects and unload the burden of maintaining the historic buildings.

The authority is legally allowed to sell land in the Historic Village and North Gate areas. The Wherry Quarter must remain in the state's hands. And the federal government cannot sell any property in the National Park Service monument.

Then Gov. Bob McDonnell signed off on Fort Monroe's master plan last December, less than two weeks before leaving office. His signature was the first step the authority needed before being allowed to sell homes and solicit bids from contractors to rehabilitate unused buildings.

The master plan combined with design standards are expected to protect the historic and cultural qualities of Fort Monroe.

City Hall's push to create zoning will come with its own set of complications.

At the moment, the state, Army and Coast Guard own land on Fort Monroe. The National Park Service will also own a portion of the property, although that transfer has not happened yet.

Each level of government adds a layer of rules and regulations, and zoning rules can both protect the property and slow private development.

Fort Monroe Authority officials have repeatedly said they are working with the city and National Park Service to create a "seamless park" where visitors and residents do not stumble on red tape created by property's already complicated ownership.

City staff has said Fort Monroe's master plan already does not fit a mold the city has created with its neighborhood master plans.

That means the city may have to create new zoning ordinances specifically for Fort Monroe.

The Planning Commission's discussion Thursday afternoon was the second briefing the group has received from city staff in as many months. A third briefing is scheduled for September.

"Defining everyone's role in the process will be key," Cannady said. "We recognize how complicated this process is."

Brauchle can be reached by phone at 757-247-2827.