

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/editorials/dp-edt-fort-monroe-plan-editorial-20141221-20141220-story.html>

For future generations

December 20, 2014

- **Designating all of Fort Monroe as a national monument could threaten the historical site**
- **Gov. McAuliffe wants Fort Monroe off the books, but that could threaten the historical site's future**

When the U.S. Army decommissioned Fort Monroe and began the transfer of ownership to the commonwealth, a great debate emerged over how best to protect the property for future generations.

No public body was eager to accept the financial obligations associated with maintaining and operating the 180-year-old structure, so a compromise was forged. A new organization, the Fort Monroe Authority (FMA), took responsibility for drafting a master plan to ensure the preservation of this national treasure.

Now, barely a year after former Gov. Bob McDonnell formally accepted that blueprint to guide Fort Monroe's future, his successor — Gov. Terry McAuliffe — wants to chart a different course. Like former Gov. Mark Warner before him, he is pushing for the federal government to make it a continuous national monument.

The governor's heart may be in the right place, but the future of Fort Monroe should be dictated by logic, not emotions. The FMA master plan offers the most promising path toward economic self-sufficiency and remains the best hope of protecting Fort Monroe for decades to come.

Fort Monroe at Old Point Comfort is a site of immense historical importance, especially for its notable role in the Civil War. Held by Union forces throughout the conflict, the fort became a destination for those escaping slavery, since they enjoyed protection in the shadow of its walls. It won the nickname "Freedom's Fortress" and a prominent place in the annals of American lore.

Obviously, Virginia — indeed, the nation — has a vested interest in preserving so important a landmark. It is our responsibility to keep it a place where schoolchildren can explore the casemates where Union troops held Confederate President Jefferson Davis. And the picturesque beach areas should be accessible to residents and visitors alike.

However, seeing that through requires revenue. Once the Army deactivated the fort in 2011, the state assumed ownership of a facility that needed millions of dollars in clean-up, improvements and upkeep.

The commonwealth was not eager to accept the financial obligation. The city of Hampton could not afford it. And the federal government was reluctant to heap an additional burden on the already over-stretched budget of the National Park Service.

In November 2011, President Barack Obama declared 325 acres — a little more than half — of the property as a national monument, putting it under the direction of the National Park Service. The designated land is in two parts — the actual fort, with its casemates and distinctive moat, and the North Beach area.

Between the two is a strip of land known as the Wherry Quarter. And the president's decision rekindled a heated debate over what to do with that area.

The state transferred control of the property it controlled to the Fort Monroe Authority, which would operate as a subdivision of state government. That group, led by a 12-member board of directors, developed a master plan in 2013 by working with officials, businesses and members of the community in an effort to achieve financial solvency.

The blueprint they produced included a plan to allow limited development of the Wherry Quarter, a decision that outraged activists who decry any intrusion on what they consider hallowed ground. But constructing residential and mixed-use units would generate the revenue needed for economic independence and preservation of the entire property.

That debate, once settled, was reopened by Gov. McAuliffe's announcement.

He wants to clear Fort Monroe from the state's ledger by foisting it onto Washington. But the National Park Service's billion-dollar backlog virtually ensures the property will not receive the attention required to preserve it.

We appreciate the passion of the activists who reject the idea of development at Fort Monroe. But their insistence on turning the Wherry Quarter into park land ignores economic reality.

We also understand the governor's determination to get Virginia taxpayers off the hook. But we cannot ignore the likelihood that the federal government is ill-equipped to take responsibility for a property it never wanted in the first place.

The FMA leadership worked with members of the community to create a workable, promising plan to protect this historical site. The only way to keep Fort Monroe open and available for future generations is to draw revenue from that property.

That is best accomplished through thoughtful, limited development on available land that lacks the same historical value that fort itself boasts. Gov. McAuliffe must not let fiscal expediency or unrealistic dreams scuttle a promising blueprint for success.

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Fort Monroe buildings to become apartments and offices

The Fort Monroe Authority *12:45 p.m. EST December 19, 2014*



(Photo: 13News Now)

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HAMPTON -- Two buildings at historic Fort Monroe will be rehabilitated and leased to the public as commercial and residential properties, another step in the execution of a master plan, which calls for the shuttered Army installation to be repurposed into a mixed-use community.

The Fort Monroe Authority Board of Trustees voted to approve the \$1.1 million project at its meeting on Thursday, December 18. It is funded by a state allocation to the Fort Monroe capital improvement budget.

Building 83 will receive \$550,000 in renovations and become the new office space for the Fort Monroe Authority staff which is now in Old Quarters 1 inside the fortress.

"These buildings have played a significant role at Fort Monroe and have been used for many different purposes," said Glenn Order, executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority. "We are happy to have the opportunity to extend the lives of these buildings and repurpose them once more for our community." The buildings were each constructed in the late 19th century during a post-Civil War development era.

Building 80 was built in 1897 as a Visiting Officers' Quarters. The building's eight units were reconfigured into apartments in the 1920s. In 1927, a two-story wing was added, which housed kitchens and bathrooms. It was known as the Old Bachelors' Quarters until around 1933; and it was converted to VIP quarters in 1972. Building 83 was a post office for the military installation.

Construction on the buildings is expected to begin in January 2015 and be completed by the spring.

Hampton eyes tourism tax breaks

By Robert Brauchle

rbrauchle@dailypress.com

DECEMBER 22, 2014, 8:15 PM

Hampton may soon ask the General Assembly's permission to create a series of tax breaks for private developers who build entertainment and tourism based projects.

The breaks are given as part of the state's tourism zone program, which Newport News used in 2012 to revitalize construction in City Center's entertainment district.

While localities can customize the benefits to their liking, the largest carrot they can dangle in front of developers is a tax deal that pays as much as 20 percent of the total construction cost. The so-called "gap financing" is recouped by new sales tax generated by the project that would traditionally go to the state and city.

"The payback comes from that new revenue the project is creating ... so it helps developers who may have a gap in financing, and it creates new revenue for the city," said Newport News Economic Development Director Florence Kingston.

James City County also has received state permission to create tourism zones. Hampton is angling to get in the game in 2015.

The Virginia Tourism Development Financing Program was created in 2011 to include gap financing as an incentive for developers. A previous version of the tourism zones allowed localities to reduce or waive local fees for services such as water and sewer hookups and permit reviews.

"There are several economic advantages," said Susan Boreland, Hampton's senior business development manager. "One thing is that localities get to really tailor the zone to the specific project. (The localities) can establish what incentives they provide, what regulatory flexibility they would like to provide and where the zones are located."

Local economic development authorities can run tourism zone programs, although final approval for any project and incentives must come from the City Council, Boreland told the Hampton Economic Development board during a Dec. 16 presentation.

"The most important thing to keep in mind is it must be a tourism based project," she said.

"We're optimistic this is one piece of the equation to help develop new assets in the city for tourism and other important development," Hampton Economic Development Director Leonard Sledge said.

The Hampton City Council could act on an ordinance creating the zones by the end of March, he said.

In 2012, Newport News agreed to provide \$4.3 million to City Center's developer as the gap funding needed to revive the estimated \$25 million project involving Toby Keith's I Love This Bar and Grill, Tucanos Brazilian Grill, Paragon Theater and Travinia Italian Kitchen.

When complete, the project was expected to produce \$2.2 million in annual sales tax, according to documents provided to the City Council at the time the project was being considered in May 2012.

The Paragon Theater opened in May, so it is unclear if the project is performing up to those 2012 expectations.

The gap financing was obtained through a private lender, so the city is not on the hook if the debt service is not paid, Kingston said.

"It's a big project, and it wasn't simple," she said. "It was quite complicated. But this isn't something that isn't going to always work on some smaller projects."

Newport News has four tourism zones including Upper Warwick Boulevard/Denbigh, Southeast Community, Patrick Henry (including City Center) and Greater Hilton.

James City County created a countywide tourism zone in January 2012, although no projects have met the criteria set by the county.

The county requires projects to be valued at a minimum of \$350,000 to be eligible. In return, the county offers expedited permit reviews, reduced permit fees and reduced business license and personal property taxes, according to the county's ordinance creating the zone

Beyond the Peninsula, the city of Fredericksburg's three tourism zones have helped 13 businesses create \$41.3 million in capital investments since the zones were created in 2012.

That includes the Hyatt Place-Fredericksburg, the first project in the state approved for the Virginia Tourism Development Financing Program.

Bill Freehling, Fredericksburg's assistant director for economic development, said city staff reviews developers' proposals, scores each project and recommends tailored incentive packages for the City Council to consider.

Developers locating within each zone must then meet benchmarks for job creation and sales tax generation before they are eligible for incentives.

"The city's philosophy is that it's very risk adverse," Freehling said. "We don't make upfront payments. They're performance-based, so they have to hit thresholds before we provide the incentive, not the other way around."

Those incentives could include gap financing; reduced or waived business licenses taxes; rebates on meals, lodging, admission, local sales and machinery and tools taxes; and a reduced or waived permits fees for sewer and water connections.

Kingston said the tourism zone incentives create a pool of new revenue for Newport News that wouldn't otherwise exist. The city will receive a portion of that new revenue as long as the debt service is being paid off. When the debt is gone, the city and state will again collect their regular share of sales tax.

"Everyone around that project benefits from those incentives, even if we're only getting a portion of the new revenue," she said. "This isn't something that's added on that will show up on receipts. This comes from that tax that's already collected."

Hampton has not yet established tourism zone boundaries, but it would likely include Coliseum Central, downtown, Phoebus and Fort Monroe, according to the Dec. 16 presentation. The city also must create a tourism development plan that must be approved by the Virginia Tourism Corp.

Hampton City Manager Mary Bunting said the ultimate goal of the tourism zones is to attract more businesses and customers to the city, which will raise more tax revenue.

"If you do them right and invest in the right projects, then you'll have more tourists in the area, then you'll have a better return on the city budget and take pressure off existing city businesses and homeowners," said Bunting during an Oct. 22 presentation to the City Council.

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

Tourism zone gap financing

The math:

The state now collects 6 percent sales tax from businesses, of which 1 percent is returned to municipalities.

The following is used to pay back the debt:

- 1 percent of the sales tax collected by the state.
- An amount matching the state's 1 percent coming from the developer.
- 1 percent from the city's share of sales tax collection.
- Once the debt is paid off, sales tax reverts to its standard format.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-renovations-20141222-story.html>

Fort Monroe plans new apartments in old building

By [Robert Brauchle](#), rbrauchle@dailypress.com

December 22, 2014

The Fort Monroe Authority will pay \$1.1 million to renovate the interiors of two historic buildings along Ingalls Road into space that can be leased as apartments and into office space that will serve as the authority's headquarters.

The authority's board of trustees signed off on the projects even though the budget for that work is significantly more than initially expected.

State officials running Fort Monroe are expected to spend millions of dollars over the next decade to renovate the interior space of historic buildings to get those structures into usable form. The authority is using a combination of state and federal grants and earmarks and rental revenue to fund that work.

Building 80 is a two-story brick structure with Colonial Revival features, that will be converted into a 10-unit apartment complex. The budget to renovate the former visiting officers' quarters increased to \$600,000 from \$350,000 because of design changes to the units that now include laundry equipment and "market rate" kitchens and by changing proposed office space into additional apartments, according to description of the project reviewed by trustees.

"The bids came in higher than we thought," said Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director Glenn Oder. "But we still consider them to be very viable projects."

The authority will spend \$550,000 to renovate Building 83 — a former post office — into office space that will be used as the authority's headquarters. The project was estimated to cost \$300,000 when the board of trustees approved the budget in late June. The added cost comes from replacing the building's outdated heating and air conditioning system.

"These buildings have played a significant role at Fort Monroe and have been used for many different purposes," Oder said. "We are happy to have the opportunity to extend the lives of these buildings and repurpose them once more for our community."

Work on both buildings is expected to be complete in mid-2015.

"When this work is completed, we expect these units will be in high demand on the rental market," Oder said in a news release announcing the projects. "We base that on the amount of interest that exists already from people who want to live or work at Fort Monroe. We are excited about that, as it indicates we are making strides toward turning this into a self-sustaining community that everyone can visit, live in and enjoy."

The Fort Monroe residential rental market has proven popular in the past year. Every available residential unit — of which there are more than 160 — was rented in December. Those residential leases generated \$324,739 in net income since July, according to a finance report reviewed by the authority's board of trustees last week.

The fort's commercial buildings are proving to be a financial burden.

The authority's commercial leasing operated at an \$884,533 deficit in the first five months of this fiscal year because of utility and maintenance costs, according to the finance report.

Oder said about a quarter of the property's commercial building space — 292,000 square feet — is actually ready except for "minor market standard improvements." The authority has rented close to 250,000 square feet of the space that meets that description. The remaining commercial building space will need capital improvements to either become usable for businesses or to be converted into residential space.

"We're doing really well for the period of time we've owned the property on the leasable space at Fort Monroe," Oder told trustees.

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

Fort Monroe's 2015 renovations

Building 80



The two-story administration building was constructed in 1897 and served as a visiting officers' quarters. It comprises two, five-bay buildings sharing a common roof and wall, and it includes some Colonial Revival features.



A two-story wing was added to house kitchens and bathrooms in 1927. The space was converted to VIP quarters in 1972.

Building 83

This building sits at Ingalls and Fenwick roads and served as the property's post office from 1898 until the 1990s. It is the only example of Romanesque Revival architecture at Fort Monroe.

The building stands out because of the octagonal clock tower on the northern side of the structure with clocks set in recessed round arches and concrete and brick belt courses.

Source: National Register of Historic Places

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Sunday, January 04, 2015

A national gathering place for our pain

Fort Monroe should be designated as the place where Americans can be guided in discussions promoting education and healing from racial strife, without shame or blame.

SHERI BAILEY

AS AMERICA grapples with issues related to race, there is an immediate need for Fort Monroe to serve as a venue where conversations connected to the tragedy of slavery can be held.

In the wake of grand jury decisions in Ferguson, Mo., and Brooklyn, N.Y., President Barack Obama convened a task force and asked for solutions within 90 days. The designation of Fort Monroe as the place where Americans can be guided in discussions promoting education and healing, without shame or blame, needs to be offered as one of those solutions.

In March 1832, a few months after the Nat Turner Insurrection, the General Assembly, by one vote, decided against gradually ending slavery. Instead, lawmakers agreed to impose more draconian measures to ensure its continuation.

Imagine how advanced our nation would be regarding racial strife, income inequality, voter suppression and other problems we are dealing with almost 200 years later if Virginia's leaders had shown the courage and vision that is now being advocated by Gov. Terry McAuliffe for the future of Fort Monroe.

Last month, McAuliffe reiterated that he's pushing to expand the Fort Monroe national monument to connect the two federally protected parcels. The historical value of the place — and the chance to lure more visitors to the natural area on the Chesapeake Bay — should be protected, he said.

Africans first joined the Jamestown Colony in 1619 as indentured servants. More than 240 years later, and about a month after the Civil War officially began at Fort Sumter, three enslaved men — James Townsend, Frank Baker and Shepard Mallory — dared to escape from their owner in Norfolk and sought sanctuary at Fort Monroe. That act made Fort Monroe the site of "the greatest moment in American history," according to Edward Ayers, noted Civil War historian and president of the University of Richmond.

In December 1865, the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery, made its way through Congress and was voted into law on Dec. 18.

In 2007, as Virginia prepared to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, the General Assembly apologized for slavery and issued a Juneteenth Freedom Day proclamation. That prompted several other states, from Maryland to Georgia, to offer apologies, too. Such symbolic gestures are welcome, but too often, as it was in this instance, the symbolic gesture is the sum total of all that gets done.

Now is a moment our descendants will look upon, trying to decipher what we were thinking. Just as we today attempt to reconcile Thomas Jefferson the statesman with Jefferson the slaveholder, let us be cognizant of the same realities, for what we do today will be judged tomorrow.

Offering Fort Monroe as a place for healing and reconciliation is about appreciating that we have been given amazing gifts collectively known as the American Dream. Pursuing that dream involves the journey of rediscovery. Starting in August 1619, and particularly in May 1861, Fort Monroe is where that journey started — and where it should continue.

Few Americans living today know that history, but they should, and in the years to come they will. The efforts to save Fort Monroe will shine a light on the birthplace of America and the place where the values of freedom for all were first fully realized by three black men who probably could not swim but crossed a river.

Certainly, they did not know what awaited them at the Union camp, but knew they wanted to be free. Soon thousands of other black men, women and children began arriving at Freedom Fortress Monroe. Now, 150 years later, it is time to recommission this national treasure for the good of the nation.

We are angry, frustrated and bewildered. We need a gathering place for our pain, and there is no better place than on the shores of the great Chesapeake Bay where sits Fort Monroe.



Sheri Bailey is a playwright and author of “Summers in Suffolk.” She lives in Portsmouth.

http://www.virginiabusiness.com/news/article/327233?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily

Two Fort Monroe buildings to be rehabilitated and leased to the public

December 19, 2014

Two buildings at Fort Monroe will be rehabilitated and leased to the public as commercial and residential properties.

The Fort Monroe Authority Board of Trustees voted to approve the \$1.1 million project at its meeting on Thursday.

It is funded by a state allocation to the Fort Monroe capital improvement budget.

The authority described the move as another step in the execution of a master plan, which calls for the shuttered Army installation to be repurposed into a mixed-use community.

The buildings were each constructed in the late 19th century. Construction on the buildings is expected to begin in January and be completed by the spring.

The fort's Building 83 will receive \$550,000 in renovations and become the new office space for the Fort Monroe Authority staff, which is now in Old Quarters 1 inside the fortress. Building 83 was a post office for the military installation.

Another building, Building 80, was built in 1897 as a Visiting Officers' Quarters. The building's eight units were reconfigured into apartments in the 1920s. In 1927, a two-story wing was added, which housed kitchens and bathrooms. It was known as the Old Bachelors' Quarters until around 1933, and it was converted to VIP quarters in 1972.

<http://m.insurancenewsnet.com/oarticle/2015/01/13/hampton-gets-its-turn-to-see-new-fema-flood-maps-a-584587.html>

Hampton gets its turn to see new FEMA flood maps

Jan. 14--Water's impact can be felt throughout Hampton Roads: tides are lapping higher on shorelines, flood waters are reaching farther inland and property owners' pocketbooks are noticeably lighter from higher insurance rates.

FEMA -- the Federal Emergency Management Agency -- is updating its flood maps for localities throughout the region, including the city of Hampton, to provide a better gauge of flood risks for residents and insurers.

The combination of sea level rise, land subsidence and poorly planned development is leaving more property owners in areas deemed at risk of flooding, which means more people will pay for flood insurance they may not have needed just a few years ago.

Residents can individually appeal the changes, but localities must accept the updated flood maps to continue participating in the National Flood Insurance Program.

"One of three things is going to happen -- you'll be in (the flood zone), you'll be out, or you won't change at all," FEMA outreach coordinator Dave Bollinger said during an informational meeting held Tuesday at the Hampton Roads Convention Center.

Hampton senior civil engineer Gayle Hicks said the Army Corps of Engineers studied the Newmarket Creek flood plain and determined a greater number of properties are now affected by the waterway when it spills its banks. Residents near Newmarket Creek have complained about flooding from severe storms for close to two decades.

On Fort Monroe, flood maps show nearly the entire property is within the 100-year flood plain and many of the base flood elevations -- how deep the water would be -- are seven feet or more. Those heights would affect private property owners' insurance premiums. To date, the state and federal government have not sold any property on the former Army post to private owners.

Land surrounding Newmarket Creek is almost all in the AE zone and has base elevations of eight feet or higher. Large swaths of Riverdale, areas long the Hampton River, Grandview and Langley Air Force Base are also included in the AE zone.

The AE zone includes land FEMA deems to have a 1 percent chance of being "inundated" by flood water annually, making it a high-risk area.

Hicks said base flood elevations were updated throughout the city. As a result some areas of Buckroe and Fox Hill were removed from the high-risk areas.

"Even people who are in the (flood plain) and know they'll probably remain in there should still look at the maps, because their base flood elevation could have changed," said Hicks, who mailed more than 13,000 postcards to property owners affected by the map changes.

As subsiding land and rising sea level take a tangible toll on Hampton Roads, property owners in coastal communities must decide: pay higher insurance rates and pray insurance covers the next big storm, raise their home elevations, or move to higher ground.

Hampton's maps were last updated in 2010 when the status of 7,000 households changed. About 1,740 were added to new flood zones. Prior to the 2010 change, Hampton's maps had not been updated since 1995.

Hampton's new maps are projected to become effective in May 2016.

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

Hampton flood maps

City of Hampton flooding information: <http://hampton.gov/floodmaps>

To view FEMA flood map website, visit: <http://maps.riskmap3.com/VA/HamptonCity>

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<http://hamptonroads.com/2015/01/books-jefferson-davis-confederate-president>

Books | Jefferson Davis as the Confederate president

By Timothy J. Lockhart
Virginian-Pilot correspondent
© January 25, 2015

JEFFERSON DAVIS did not want to be president of the Confederacy.

His wife recalled that he told her the news of his election - a telegram came while they were taking rose cuttings at their Mississippi plantation - "as a man might speak of a sentence of death." But Davis' sense of public duty led him to serve. His reward included being blamed for the Confederacy's military setbacks, its growing shortage of food and other necessities, and its eventual defeat. In addition, Davis was virtually the only Confederate imprisoned after the war, in his case at Fort Monroe, for taking part in the rebellion.

However, James M. McPherson argues convincingly in "Embattled Rebel" that much of the criticism of Davis as Confederate commander in chief was undeserved. Davis' military options were constrained by the Confederacy's lack of men and materiel, the clamor of certain Southern governors that their states be protected even at risk of losses elsewhere, and the Union's overwhelming superiority in manpower and manufacturing. Unfortunately for him, his

strong ego; aloof, even cold, personality; and reluctance to explain his actions (partly to deny valuable intelligence to the Union) kept many of his critics from rendering balanced judgments.

As his unanimous election by the Confederate convention at Montgomery underscored, Davis was a logical choice to lead a new nation that expected to fight for survival. He was a West Point graduate who had served seven years in the Army, commanded a volunteer regiment in the Mexican-American War, and chaired the Senate Committee on Military Affairs. In addition, he had served as secretary of war in the Pierce administration, a role for which his portrait hangs in the Pentagon.

His experience helped the Confederacy enlist, organize, supply and field armies quickly for what he correctly predicted would be a long war. The Battle of First Manassas suggested as much, and the Battle of Shiloh, where Davis' good friend Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston died, confirmed it.

Union strategy was the "Anaconda Plan," designed to divide the Confederacy along the Mississippi River and then constrict the eastern part by invasion and blockade. Confederate strategy was to avoid defeat by using a perimeter defense and concentrating forces at points of Union attack in an "offensive-defensive" role. Several factors dictated Confederate strategy: the need to protect its territory (which also meant protecting slave, recruiting and supply territory), the availability of interior lines to shift forces quickly (which worked only sometimes), and the confederate nature of its government, in which the demands of the "sovereign" states influenced the dispersion of forces.

As McPherson shows, Davis understood that excessive dispersion was a mistake, and he resisted it as much as he could. He also understood that a withdrawal, or "Fabian," strategy of retreating while keeping Confederate armies intact and ready to strike Union detachments deep in Southern territory would have surrendered Richmond, the Confederate capital, much earlier and resulted in the loss of other crucial territory. McPherson notes that such a strategy, despite its efficacy in certain other wars, probably "would have had fatal consequences for the Confederacy."

Thus, Davis supported military efforts to bring the slave states of Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri into the Confederacy. He also supported the invasions that Gen. Robert E. Lee, his most successful partner in carrying out the offensive-defensive strategy, launched into Union territory in 1862 and 1863. Recognizing the importance of Lee's valuable if costly victories, Davis refused to replace him after the tide turned at Gettysburg. (Lee knew that a key to working with Davis was to keep him well informed about military plans and operations.)

But Davis, loyal to a fault, was too slow in replacing Braxton Bragg, the erratic Western general whose army petitioned to have him relieved, and was slow in replacing other military and civilian officials he had appointed. And his contentious relationship with Gen. Joseph E. Johnston - whom he blamed for both the irretrievable loss of Vicksburg and the crippling loss of

Atlanta but turned to repeatedly when he believed he had no better option - deserves a book of its own.

"Embattled Rebel" is an excellent account of how Davis fulfilled his role as Confederate commander in chief and is a refreshingly balanced evaluation - neither Blue nor Gray - of the ways in which he failed or, quite often, succeeded in that role. McPherson, an emeritus professor of history at Princeton University, is well qualified to write this focused but deep study, which is well illustrated and relies mostly on primary sources. "Battle Cry of Freedom," his magisterial history of the Civil War, won the Pulitzer Prize, and his Civil War books "Tried by War" and "For Cause and Comrades" won the Lincoln Prize.

As McPherson notes in his first line, history "has not been kind to Jefferson Davis." Undoubtedly some of that feeling stems from Davis' unwavering defense of slavery. But some of it is simply misplaced. Davis was a brave and dedicated American - however misguided - who had much in common with the Founders he revered as heroes, and he did more to promote Confederate victory than he did to cause Confederate defeat. One is likely to finish this compelling book by agreeing with McPherson that "the salient truth about the American Civil War is not that the Confederacy lost but that the Union won."

Timothy J. Lockhart is a Norfolk lawyer and retired Navy Reserve captain. His great-great-grandfather Andrew J. Lockhart served in the 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment assigned to the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-hampton-budget-update-20150115-story.html>

Hampton expecting less aid from state budget

January 15, 2015

By [Robert Brauchle](#)

rbrauchle@dailypress.com

Officials here feel the once symbiotic relationship the city had with the General Assembly is turning parasitic.

City Council members and staff spent about 30 minutes Tuesday afternoon lamenting recent state aid reductions. For the upcoming fiscal year, that means cutting a \$678,208 check to help balance the state's budget.

Virginia's localities are cobbling together information for their budgets for fiscal year 2016, which starts July 1, and Hampton is starting that public discussion with the state's aid to localities.

Tuesday afternoon, Hampton officials took aim at the General Assembly as a large contributor to the city's financial struggle in recent years. The state provides funding to localities to pay for mandatory services such as police forces and commonwealth attorneys although that aid is oftentimes too meager to pay the full freight, City Manager Mary Bunting said.

"Most localities around the state are calling it aid to the state because that's what it's become," she said. "We're providing aid to the state for them to meet their obligations, and at the same time they're not relieving any pressure on us."

A September budget deal reached by Gov. Terry McAuliffe and General Assembly Republicans cut about \$60 million in aid to localities over the next two years, meaning Hampton was forced to pay back \$678,208 during the current fiscal year. The deal also eliminated more than 500 state jobs and forced cuts on state agencies and the state's higher education system.

Mayor George Wallace said state spending cuts are too often passed down to localities, which are then forced to raise taxes to provide essential services.

"I want to state that we involuntarily have to help the state with that dilemma," Wallace said.

Councilwoman Chris Snead learned at a Virginia First Cities conference in early January that localities large and small are raising taxes because of reduced state funding.

"Everyone's in the same boat," she said. "It was confirmation, this is something that needs to be done in order to deal with the losses they were experiencing (from the state) and the economy tanking."

While Hampton officials didn't reveal any plans to change the existing tax rates, the city has raised taxes in recent years along with cutting costs and services to make up for slumping revenue collections and reduced state aid.

City officials said there are some positive changes in the state's proposed budget. The money the state gives to the city to provide services on Fort Monroe will increase \$350,000 to about \$1.3 million from \$983,960. The city and state have clashed in recent years over the cost of providing basic services, such as police, fire and trash collection, on Fort Monroe. State officials have been wary of sending money to the city because of the state's multimillion-dollar budget gaps, and city officials contend residents should not subsidize services on Fort Monroe.

The decommissioned Army post has not undergone a formal property assessment, meaning neither the state nor the city knows how much residents would pay if the state was charged the city's property tax rate of \$1.24 per \$100 of assessed value.

City officials believe the state should be paying about \$60,000 more than the General Assembly has agreed to for those services.

"The governor has put us a step forward to where we really need to be," Hampton special projects manager Brian DeProfio said.

Bunting believes the local General Assembly delegation has been "very supportive," although she said more pressure needs to be put on committees that make spending decisions.

"We have to advocate for the local city budget," the city manager said. "Our highest priority – and we've said this over and over this year – is salaries, and when we have to write a check to

the state for close to \$700,000, that's less that we have in the coffers that we can use to take care of our dedicated workforce."

Brauchle can be contacted by phone at 757-846-4361.

Budget discussions

The Hampton City Council has scheduled the following financial updates:

Jan. 28: Change of property assessments

Feb. 11: Revenue forecast

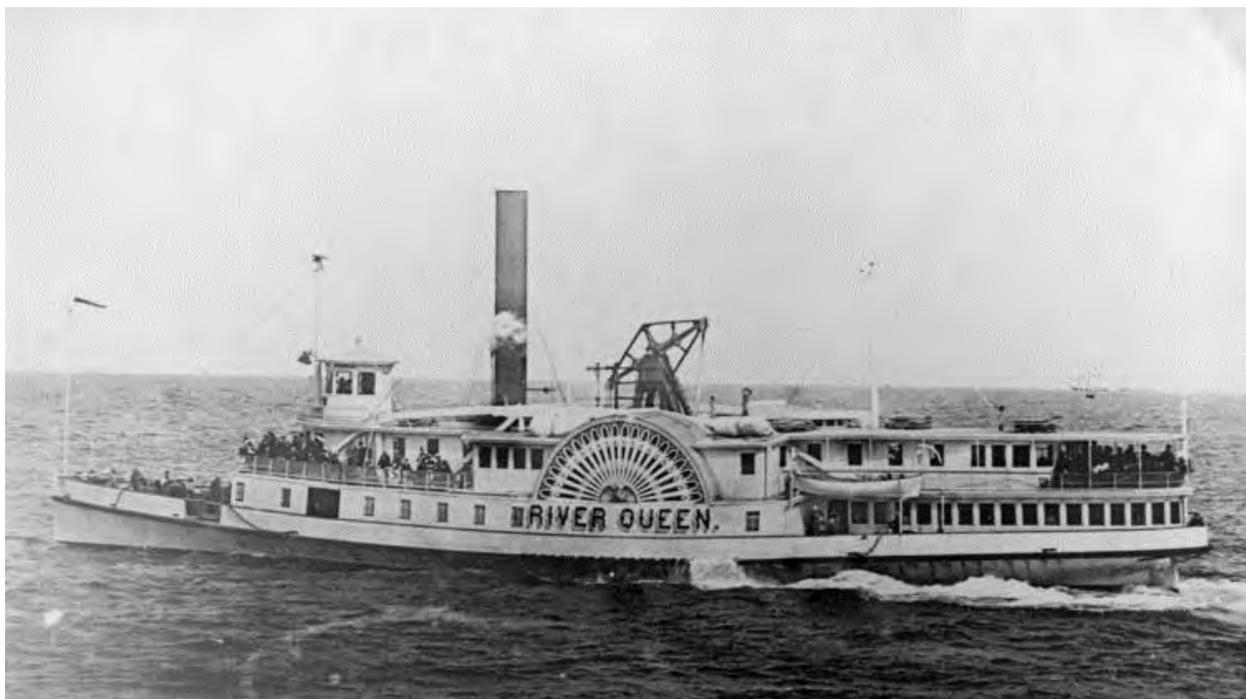
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<http://www.dailypress.com/features/history/dp-nws-civil-war-peace-conference-20150129-story.html#page=1>

Hampton Roads Peace Conference enabled Lincoln as a firm leader

By [Mark St. John Erickson](#)
merickson@dailypress.com

January 29, 2015



Sometime after 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 31, 1865, an eerie silence fell over the blasted landscape that divided the Union and Confederate armies at Petersburg.

Thousands of soldiers on both sides stood up and watched as a flag of truce emerged from the front-line fortification the men in gray called "Fort Damnation." Then a small delegation of civilians appeared behind it, soberly starting their trek across the unearthly expanse of no-man's land toward the opposing bastion that Federal troops dubbed "Fort Hell."

Almost immediately, the silence turned into cheers and chants of "Peace! Peace!" as the combatants realized that nearly two weeks of news reports and rumors regarding potential talks were finally playing out before their eyes.

But the short crossing to Union lines represented only the first tentative public step toward a Hampton Roads meeting that almost didn't happen.

Two more days and a flurry of telegrams would pass before the political posturing between North and South ended, enabling Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to run to the City Point docks with an order sending the envoys to Old Point Comfort, where Union Secretary of State William Seward was waiting for President Abraham Lincoln aboard the steamboat River Queen.

Though the Southerners would return disappointed, the Feb. 3, 1865, meeting a half-mile off Fort Monroe still had milestone importance, enabling the leader who had all but won the Civil War to show himself as both a firm defender of the Union and emancipation, and a conciliatory, even open-handed peacemaker.

"The Hampton Roads Peace Conference was not really important in terms of tangible results. But it does show you how badly Lincoln wanted to end the bloodshed — and how generous he was willing to be in giving the South a way to come back into the Union," says Christopher Newport University history professor Phillip Hamilton, who will take part in a 150th anniversary event at 1 p.m. Saturday at Fort Monroe.

"It also shows the Confederates' lack of perception about the true nature of their dire situation. They can't see the surrender at Appomattox coming."

Secret diplomacy

Emboldened by his re-election — then buoyed still more by the Dec. 15 destruction of the Confederate Army of Tennessee and the Dec. 20 capture of Savannah — Lincoln was operating from a position of exceptional strength when he began orchestrating a behind-the-scenes overture to Richmond in late 1864.

Though both he and Seward would later deny any collusion, the president met with longtime political operative Francis Preston Blair Sr. at the White House on Dec. 28, when the 73-year-old Marylander received a pass to cross Union lines and retrieve some personal papers captured the previous July and held in the Confederate capital.

Just more than 31/2 years earlier, the well-connected Blair — whose house still stands across Lafayette Park from the Executive Mansion — had been Lincoln's emissary when he offered command of the Union armies to Robert E. Lee.

So it came as no surprise when the canny veteran of President Andrew Jackson's famed "Kitchen Cabinet" was invited to visit Richmond by Confederate President Jefferson Davis — his friend of 43 years — then stepped aboard a Union warship provided by Navy Sec. Gideon Welles for all but the final miles of his trip up the James River.

"Blair was a very well-plugged-in senior statesman. One of his sons was in Lincoln's cabinet. Another was a Union general. He had many long-time friends in both the North and South," Hamilton says.

"And he became the go-between that allowed Lincoln to communicate with Davis — but without acknowledging that the Confederacy existed."

Blair brought his own ideas to the table, too, suggesting that the North and South might reconcile after declaring an armistice and joining forces to resist France's occupation of Mexico, says CNU assistant history professor Jonathan W. White, who also will take part in Saturday's program.

But both Lincoln and Davis brushed the notion aside as — through two letters carefully addressed to Blair, then sent back and forth with him between Richmond and Washington — they sparred over the Confederacy's status as an independent nation.

"(I) am willing now, as heretofore, to enter into negotiations for the restoration of peace; and am ready to send a commission ... with a view to secure peace to the two countries," Davis explained in a note that Blair delivered on Jan. 18.

"You may say to him that I have constantly been, am now, and shall continue, ready to receive any agent whom he, or any other influential person now resisting the national authority, may informally send to me with a view to securing peace to the people of our one common country," Lincoln replied in a letter Blair gave Davis three days later.

Diplomatic dance

Despite that crucial disagreement, Davis pressed ahead, selecting Vice President Alexander H. Stephens, Assistant Secretary of War John Campbell and Sen. Robert M.T. Hunter as his envoys on Jan. 28.

But when they tried to cross the lines the following morning, they were denied permission by the White House, which dispatched an aide to determine whether the peace commissioners had accepted the condition of reunion.

Such a rapprochement was the last thing Davis would submit to after nearly four years of fighting, Hamilton says. But the Confederate president may have been trying to use the widely hoped-for talks and their near-inevitable failure as a way to bolster lagging support for the war.

"He wanted to show how hard and intransigent the North was being in its demands," Hamilton says.

"And for him, any agreement that didn't recognize the Confederacy as a separate and independent country was an unconditional surrender."

That's where the process had stalled when Grant returned on Jan. 31 and let the envoys cross.

But pumped up by the news reports and rumors surrounding the possibility of peace talks, the soldiers watching from both sides of no-man's-land didn't know how far apart the two factions were from sitting down to decide their future.

"It had to be an amazing thing to see," says Old Dominion University assistant history professor and program panelist Timothy J. Orr, describing the united cheers and chants of "Peace!" voiced by the veterans of both armies.

"But the bloodshed was far from over."

That seemed certain after Lincoln's aide arrived Feb. 1 and determined the commissioners had not accepted his conditions.

But just hours after Maj. Thomas T. Eckert dispatched his terse report — prompting the president to consider recalling Seward from Old Point Comfort — Grant sent a telegram saying "their intentions are good and their desire sincere to restore peace and union."

"Say to the gentlemen I will meet them personally at Fortress Monroe as soon as I can get there," Lincoln replied.

Fruitless talks

150th anniversary of the Hampton Roads Conference

Bolstered by the Union's Jan. 15 victory at Fort Fisher in North Carolina and the Jan. 31 passage of the 13th Amendment ending slavery, Lincoln woke up on Feb. 3 in an even stronger position than when the peace process began.

But instead of greeting the Confederates as an all-but-declared victor, he opened the talks in a manner the Southerners later described as unusually courteous and cordial.

After the reminiscences and inquiries about family and friends had ended, however, Lincoln countered Stephens' opening question — "Is there no way of putting an end to the present trouble?" — by bluntly suggesting the South disband its armies and cease its resistance.

He turned aside a second inquiry regarding an armistice and alliance against the French by repeating his insistence on "the restoration of the Union."

Emancipation posed just as thorny an issue, with Lincoln standing firm on the status of more than 200,000 blacks already freed by the war.

"Whatever the views of your people before the war, they must be convinced now, that slavery is doomed," Stephens recalled the president saying.

"It cannot last long"

Almost immediately afterward, however, Lincoln raised the issue of compensation for slaveholders, citing a figure of \$400,000,000 provided the states rejoin the Union and abolish bondage.

"Lincoln was a lawyer — and he recognized more than anything else that the war was about slaves as property. They were the economic driver of the South," says historian Robert Kelly of Casemate Museum, which organized the anniversary event.

"He knew it was a puzzle that had to be solved if reconstruction was to be successful."

Lincoln underscored his previous offers of amnesty, too, for the soldiers and officials who had taken up arms against the Union.

But as four hours of talks came to end, Hunter declared that nothing he'd heard offered the South an escape from "unconditional submission."

Not long afterward — as the vessel transporting the Confederates pulled away from the River Queen — Seward sent a basket of champagne across the widening gap in a boat piloted by a black crewman.

"Keep the champagne!" he yelled to the waving envoys through a boatswain's trumpet.

"Return the Negro!"

Aftermath

In the North, all but the most Radical Republicans embraced Lincoln's calculated mix of firmness and reconciliation.

"They hated the South. They hated Lincoln, too — and they were angry that he'd agreed to peace talks," White says.

"But after the dust settled, they thought he'd done the right thing."

The South's response was more predictable — especially given Davis' conviction that anything short of independence was "unconditional surrender."

So instead of talk he ordered his army to return to the business of war.

"He was willing to sacrifice thousands more men in a desperate effort to win an increasingly unwinnable war for independence," White says.

"And thousands more did die before the South finally gave up."

Erickson can be reached by phone at 757-247-4783.

150th Anniversary of the Hampton Roads Peace Conference

What: A panel discussion and screening of the Oscar-winning 2012 film "Lincoln."

Where: Fort Monroe Theater, 41 Tidball Road, Hampton

When: 1 p.m. Saturday

Cost: Free

Information and reservations: 757-690-8073 and <http://www.fmauthority.com>

Photos: Go to dailypress.com/history to see a photo gallery of archival images.

<http://www.virginiabusiness.com/news/article/reshaping-a-400-year-old-city>

Reshaping a 400-year-old city

Hampton makes strategic moves in redevelopment

January 29, 2015

by Elizabeth Cooper

- **Reveille at Fort Monroe**

The 400-year-old city has an abundance of older housing, including more than 170 units at Fort Monroe, the national historic site that was decommissioned as a military installation in 2011. Fort Monroe is boasting 100 percent occupancy of its available residential properties, adding credence to officials' contention that the 565-acre stone fort has steadily come into its own as a housing, business and tourist destination. "Our housing is leading the charge and shows there is interest in Fort Monroe," says Glenn Oder, executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority, which manages the site.

"Compared to what we have seen in BRAC [Base Realignment and Closure process] closings around the country, we are a shining star," he adds "Fort Monroe is an almost perfect mixed-use community."

- However, businesses have been slower to take advantage of Fort Monroe's 1.1 million square feet of commercial space. At issue, says Oder, are the major renovations needed on the nearly 200-year-old fort's commercial buildings, many of which were built before the Americans with Disabilities Act necessitated elevators and other accommodations. "We have a wide spectrum of office buildings in various conditions and from various construction periods," says Joe DosReis, the authority's real estate director. "Most of the improvements are needed because of aged electrical systems and plumbing. As you get deeper in the buildings, it becomes a little more challenging."
- While the authority has been handling renovations, DosReis says it does not want to become a developer for the fort. "By improving buildings, we actually add value to them, but the more expensive renovations are better done by private entrepreneurs because they can get state historic tax credits."
- Several buildings are ready for tenants, and renovations are starting on the fort's former post office, which will house the authority's staff. In addition, Liberty Source opened its headquarters in Fort Monroe in 2014, investing about \$1.56 million to renovate two buildings. The company, which performs office functions for large corporations that had previously outsourced those practices overseas, plans to employ almost 600 workers in Hampton during the next few years.
- There are also plans to use up to 19 buildings for a statewide residential science and engineering school called STEAM Academy. Lease negotiations are underway, DosReis says. "It's still in process. Those plans are moving ahead."
- Set on an island in the Chesapeake Bay, Fort Monroe offers a unique business setting, DosReis notes. "People enjoy walking out the front door of their office onto the bay. Very few offices offer that kind of amenity." On the financial side, Fort Monroe's debt-

free status enables it to offer competitive lease rates and tenant improvement packages. Average rents run about \$1,250 per month for the more modern buildings.

- “Our process was very clear from the beginning,” DosReis adds. “We intended to get people back to Fort Monroe. If we could get people to visit Fort Monroe, we could get them to live here, and if [they] live here, work here. We led with special events, fixed up houses, and now we’re working on commercial properties.”

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-hpt-notebook-0128-20150127-story.html>

150th anniversary of the Hampton Roads Conference

January 27, 2015

By [Robert Brauchle](#)

rbrauchle@dailypress.com

On Feb. 3, 1865, a steamboat floating in the waters of Hampton Roads was the setting of a meeting between Union and Confederate officials to discuss a peaceful end to the Civil War.

An accord was not reached, although the meeting became a signal from both sides that the war was stretching on longer than anticipated.

Fort Monroe will commemorate the 150th anniversary of that historic meeting on Jan. 31 with a movie and scholarly discussion about the events surrounding the assembly.

Steven Spielberg's 2012 film "Lincoln" will be shown at 1 p.m. in the Fort Monroe Theatre, at 41 Tidball Road. The film will be followed by a discussion featuring professors Robert Watson of Hampton University, Jon White and Phil Hamilton of Christopher Newport University and Tim Orr of Old Dominion University.

The event is free to attend, although registered participants will have priority with seating.

The Virginia Civil War 150 HistoryMobile will also be open for free tours from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the day of the discussion.

More information on the Civil War 150 HistoryMobile and the initiatives of the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission can be found at <http://www.VirginiaCivilWar.org>.

Brauchle can be reached by phone at 757-846-4361 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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A landmark place for black history

Mark St. John Erickson

4:25 pm, January 30, 2015

When it comes to landmarks in African-American history, few places can match the depth and breadth of the milestones that have played out over the past 400 years in America's oldest continuous English-speaking settlement.

Here's a preview of an upcoming Sunday story recalling some of the nationally important events that took place in Hampton:

First Africans. The first documented Africans in Virginia moored off Old Point Comfort in 1619 — some 12 years after the first English settlers sailed into Hampton Roads on their way to founding Jamestown. “About the latter end of August, a Dutch man of Warr of the burden of a 160 tunnes arrived at Point-Comfort, the Commandors name Capt. Jope,” colonist John Rolfe reported. “He brought not anything but 20. And odd Negroes, w(hich) the Governo(r) and Cape Merchant bought for victuals.”

That vessel was the *White Lion*, which in the late 1990s was discovered by historian Engel Sluiter to have seized them from a Portuguese slave-trader en route from Africa to Mexico. Three or four days later the privateer was followed by its consort — the *Treasurer* — which carried as many as 29 more Africans taken from the same ship, and some of them were sold before it departed.

In 1998, Fort Monroe-born historian John K. Thornton published new evidence demonstrating that most, if not all the early Africans transported to Virginia were likely to have been Ndongo people from the Congo, who were captured by African mercenaries fighting alongside the Portuguese and then sold as slaves from Angola between late-June 1619 and mid-1620.

First African-American child. Little is known about the African couple who became the Adam and Eve of black America. According to historian Martha McCartney's authoritative 2007 book “Virginia Immigrants and Adventurers, 1607-1635: A Biographical Dictionary,” Anthony and Isabell show up first in the Virginia census of Feb. 16, 1624, when their master — Elizabeth City County planter Capt. William Tucker — identified them as part of his household. They crop up again in the muster of 1625, when Tucker recorded the names and races of “Antoney Negro, Isabell Negro.” Then he added the name of “William, there child, baptised.”

The first documented African-American child in the English colonies was probably born at his master and namesake's plantation on the west side of the Hampton River, where Tucker had constructed three dwellings and a wooden palisade for his family and 18 servants, Hampton History Museum Curator J. Michael Cobb says. He was most likely baptized in the settlement of Kecoughtan's second church, which was constructed on the east bank of the Hampton River near present-day Hampton University after the bloody Indian uprising of 1622.

Pioneering black school. Free black Mary Peake was flouting the law when — not long after moving from Norfolk to Hampton in the early 1850s — she began teaching slaves and free blacks to read and write. But the town's whites broke ranks with the rest of the South, Cobb says, and their tolerance combined with her quiet but fearless efforts to give Hampton's large African-American population a conspicuously high level of education.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861, Peake redoubled her efforts, teaching classes day and night for the tidal wave of refugee slaves streaming into Union-occupied Hampton. So prominent did she become in just a few months that — when Rev. Lewis C. Lockwood of the American Missionary Association arrived on Sept. 3 — he hired her as the first teacher in a crucial alliance of blacks, Northern missionaries and Union army supporters who built and operated schools for thousands.

Five months later, Peake died of consumption at age 39 after teaching from her sick bed — as Lockwood recalled in his 1862 biography — until her last days. But her influence lasted far beyond her final class.

“There was a distinct difference in the blacks at Hampton. They were much more cosmopolitan, much more sophisticated than those found in such places as the Sea Islands in South Carolina,” writes the late Robert F. Engs in his pioneering 1979 study “Freedom’s First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia 1861-1890.”

“And the fact that they could read persuaded many Northern whites that they deserved freedom.”

-- Mark St. John Erickson

<http://touch.dailypress.com/#section/-1/article/p2p-82737179/>

Fort Monroe STEAM academy bill moves, without public money

9:22 pm, February 5, 2015

Public funding for a private school focused on science and math at Fort Monroe has been stripped from legislation before the General Assembly, leaving little but the school's basic governing structure intact.

Senate Bill 1369, from Senate Majority Leader Thomas K. "Tommy" Norment, R-James City, would create an appointed board for The Virginia STEAM Academy.

His bill is moving toward the Senate floor, though some questioned the need for it at all now that the public funding school organizers had asked for has been removed.

"I understand your question," Norment told one senator Wednesday. "I just think that this will move it along."

The board would be made up of 15 to 21 members, including two members of the General Assembly and several state education officials, including the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Other members, several of whom would have connections to local school systems and state universities, would be selected from across the state.

"It does not include any public dollars whatsoever," Norment said Wednesday. "It's more of a conduit and a catalyst."

Norment said he hopes the bill will help private fundraising efforts for the planned boarding school, which would create a new campus in existing buildings at Fort Monroe. The school would take students from around the state and focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, And Math - hence the "STEAM" moniker.

Organizers initially wanted state and federal education dollars to follow students who attend the school, on a per-pupil basis. That idea was shot down earlier this session in the House of Delegates. A number of public school officials had complained, and legislators said they didn't like the precedent of transferring public dollars to a private school.

Organizers of the non-profit behind the school, which has already been running summer programs and has some corporate partnerships in place, have said they'll forge ahead, working to raise enough private money to expand the school.

Fain can be reached by phone at 757-525-1759.

<http://touch.dailypress.com/#section/-1/article/p2p-82822831/>

Feedback Feb. 15: Academy name, Dean Smith, U.Va. and more

8:15 pm, February 14, 2015

What's in a name

Ed: I'm calling in reference to an article of today's newspaper. It has to do with the STEAM Academy located at Fort Monroe. For some reason this feels like déjà vu all over again. I thought we agreed that when you use an acronym in an article, the first time that you use the acronym you define the meaning of the acronym. It talks about the STEAM Academy, but I don't know what is the STEAM Academy. You said a week or so ago that you were going to try to correct that situation, and it appears we're still having difficulty getting that lesson across.

•**Gary:** On Page 4 of today's "Local News" you leave the reader wondering what is the meaning of the acronym STEAM. From my experience as a government contractor, I learned at the first reference in a document the meaning was given followed by its acronym enclosed in parentheses. As an example for STEAM, the following would be: "The Virginia Science Technology Engineering and Applied Mathematics (STEAM) Academy. ..." Further into the document, STEAM stands alone in its usage, but the reader now knows its meaning.

•**Colin:** Please! When it's so easy to check, you should get the acronym STEAM correct.

•**Teresa:** I continue to see articles related to the STEAM academy that is projected at Fort Monroe. In one article the DP said it stood for science, technology, engineering and arts academy. Then in another article the reporter said it stood for science, technology, engineering and math. From what I understand, it stands for science, technology, engineering and applied math. I just thought you would want to have the correct meaning for this acronym.

•**Gloria, Newport News:** I've got to correct the editor's response to the acronym STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Applied Mathematics. That's what the "A" stands for. Thank you.

Editor: Sometimes the editor needs an editor. The correct name is the Virginia Science Technology Engineering and Applied Mathematics (STEAM) Academy

<http://touch.dailypress.com/#section/-1/article/p2p-82785030/>

Hampton budget trends

Robert Brauchle

1:56 pm, February 11, 2015

It's budget season at Hampton City Hall, so the City Council is receiving regular updates on the city's revenues and spending.

Here are some notes from the Feb. 11, 2015 budget updated provided during an afternoon work session.

The state provides about 13 percent of revenue, 87 percent created locally.

Nearly 80 percent of all city revenue comes from real estate taxes, personal property taxes, meals and sales taxes and business license taxes.

Real estate taxes are the largest single source of revenue for the city. Real estate values have dropped in the five of the past six years.

Hampton has one of the highest real estate tax rates but one of lowest average household tax bills because home values are below Hampton Roads median.

Personal property tax is second largest revenue source for city.

Sales and meals taxes have continued to increase through the recession recovery.

Business taxes have remained relatively flat through recession recovery.

Mayor George Wallace said proposed General Assembly legislation that impacts local government should be submitted on first day of session so local government has time to respond.

There is a lot of proposed legislation going through the General Assembly including:

\$150,000 partnership with Virginia Air and Space Center and other museums will remain in upcoming year.

Both House and Senate have reduced governor's recommended increase for Fort Monroe payment to city for services. City will receive \$983,960, which is the same as Fiscal Year 2014.

Looking forward: Public input sessions will continue through March.