The Fluvanna Review wins seven VPA awards

VPA Virginia Press Association

Hits 100 percent award rate for news coverage

By Christina Dimeo, editor

The *Fluvanna Review* won seven Virginia Press Association (VPA) awards for its news coverage and advertising design in 2018.

For the first time since the *Fluvanna Review* began participating in the VPA competition, every news entry the newspaper submitted won an award.

Editor Christina Dimeo won first place in government writing for her pre-and post-election coverage and third place in government writing for her Board of Supervisors coverage.

Correspondent Ruthann Carr took first place in education writing for her reporting on the controversy that roiled over the LGBTQ rainbow Fluco symbol.

Correspondent Heather Michon won third place in public safety writing for her courts coverage, which included detailed breakdowns of two Fluvanna shooting sprees.

Advertising designer Lynn Stayton-Eurell won first place in lifestyles advertising, third place in member self-promotion advertising, and third place in professional/technology services advertising.

The announcement was made at the annual VPA banquet held Saturday (April 6) in Norfolk.

The Fluvanna Review has now won 88 VPA awards since 2010.

"I'm proud of my staff and of the newspaper," said publisher Carlos Santos. "I think the VPA awards show how hard we work to bring the very best newspaper we can to Fluvanna County residents every week, 52 weeks a year."

The *Fluvanna Review* competed against other non-dailies with circulations ranging between 3,500 and 6,999. The *Fluvanna Review* prints 6,300 copies each week and circulates in Fluvanna, parts of Charlottesville, Albemarle and Louisa counties.

Journalists from the Iowa Press Association judged the contest.

Christina Dimeo

AWARD: FIRST
Category: Government writing
Winner: Christina Dimeo
Entry:
- Supervisors put meals tax on November ballot: Voters will decide on 4 percent tax
- A voter's guide to the Nov. 6 ballot: What are those amendments all about?
- Fluvanna splits ticket on Election Day; wallops proposed meals tax

Judge's comments: *I appreciate the way Dimeo provides extensive and comprehensive coverage, including identifying what the reader really needs to know and explaining it. The "what's on the ballot" is the story that sent this entry over the top: succinct, readable and accurate.*

1st

Supervisors put meals tax on November ballot

Voters will decide on 4 percent tax

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO
EDITOR

Fluvanna residents will vote in November on whether to institute a meals tax.

The Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors unanimously decided Wednesday (Aug. 1) to direct county staff to prepare an ordinance that would impose a meals tax. By law, Fluvanna voters need to approve the ordinance before it takes effect.

If voters approve, the meals tax will be set at 4 percent. Virginia code caps county meals taxes at 4 percent and requires voter approval. Cities and towns may set a meals tax of up to 8 percent and do not need a referendum.

Jason Smith, community and economic development director, estimated that human consumption. A rotisserie chicken, for example, would be subject to the meals tax, Smith said. He estimated that about 21 businesses in Fluvanna would be affected by the tax.

Of the 95 Virginia counties, 47 have a meals tax. Those counties include Louisa, Orange, Albemarle, Greene, Nelson and Madison.

Madison, Culpeper, Orange, Farmville and Richmond.

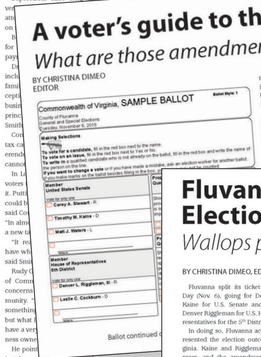
Supervisors have long discussed ...

tax, up to $100, to cover the associated costs. Supervisors considered whether ...

A voter's guide to the Nov. 6 ballot

What are those amendments all about?

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO
EDITOR


Commonwealth of Virginia, SAMPLE BALLOT
County of Fluvanna
General and Special Elections
Tuesday, November 6, 2018
Making Selections
To "Vote" for a candidate, fill in the red box next to the name.
To vote for an issue, fill in the red box next to the issue.
To write in qualified candidates who is not already on the ballot, fill in the red box and write the name of the person in the space provided.
If you want to change a vote or if you have made a mistake, ask an election worker for another ballot.
Ballot Style 1
Democrat
United States Senate
Vote for one (1)
Carey A. Stewart - R
Timothy M. Kaine - D
Matt J. Waters - L
Write in
Member
House of Representatives
5th District
Vote for one (1)
Denver L. Riggleman, III - R
Leslie C. Cockburn - D
Write in
Ballot continued

Next Tuesday's (Nov. 6) midterm election is a big deal to people of all political stripes. Information and opinions abound on how Fluvanna voters should cast their ballots in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives races.

Less discussed are the Virginia constitutional amendments that seem to pop up on the ballot every year. What are they and what exactly do they mean – in plain English?

Question one

...stitutional amendment question one ...

Local option

Delegate Rob Bell (R-Albemarle), who represents part of Fluvanna in the 58th District, pointed out that this amendment is a local option. "All it does is allow the locality to do things if they want to ... which is different than the state telling you what you can't do," he said.

Some localities near Virginia's coast, and even nearby Greene County, have experienced such flooding recently that they wanted the ability to partially exempt from real estate taxes homeowners who undertook flood abatement measures, Bell said. As the law stands right now, they can't.

If this issue doesn't resonate with a particular county, the county doesn't have to enact the exemption.

Fluvanna splits ticket on Election Day

Wallops proposed meals tax

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO, EDITOR

Fluvanna split its ticket on Election Day (Nov. 6), going for Democrat Tim Kaine for U.S. Senate and Republican Denver Riggleman for U.S. House of Representatives for the 5th District.

In doing so, Fluvanna accurately represented the election outcomes in Virginia. Kaine and Riggleman won their races, and the amendments Fluvanna approved succeeded statewide.

Kaine took 5,976 Fluvanna votes (49.8 percent) while Republican candidate Corey Stewart took 5,789 votes (48.3 percent). Libertarian Matt Waters took 217 votes (1.8 percent).

Statewide Kaine received 57.0 percent of the vote, Stewart received 41.0 percent, and Waters received 1.8 percent.

Riggleman carried the county, earning 6,168 Fluvanna votes (51.5 percent), while Democratic candidate Leslie Cockburn earned 5,785 votes (48.3 percent).

losing their home's tax-exempt status. Fluvanna approved this amendment with 9,667 votes (81.9 percent), while 2,140 voters (18.1 percent) disagreed. Statewide the amendment passed by a margin of 84.4 to 15.6 percent.

Counties, cities and towns will now be authorized to provide a partial tax exemption for real property that is subject to recurrent flooding, if flooding resiliency improvements have been made on the property. This amendment passed in Fluvanna with 7,609 votes (64.8 percent) while 4,138 votes (35.2 percent) disagreed. The amendment succeeded statewide by a margin of 70.8 percent to 29.5 percent.

Breakdown by districts

This year absentee ballots decidedly backed Democrat candidates. Absentee ballots ...

and 68.8 percent opposed.

Fork Union, Palmyra, Fluvanna and Columbia Districts were remarkably consistent on the meals tax, opposing it by about 29 to 71 percent.

Cunningham continued its tradition of being the most conservative district in Fluvanna County. It favored Stewart over Kaine by 58.4 to 39.6 percent, and Riggleman over Cockburn by 61.6 to 38.2 percent. Cunningham also voted down the meals tax more strongly than the other precincts – by a vote of 26.9 to 73.1 percent.

Palmyra arguably edged Fluvanna for most liberal district this year. Palmyra favored Kaine over Stewart by 52.9 to 44.7 percent and Cockburn over Riggleman by 51.9 to 47.9 percent. Rivanna favored Kaine over Stewart by 52.9 to 45.0 percent and Cockburn over Riggleman by 50.7 to 49.2 percent.

AWARD: THIRD PLACE
Category: Government writing
Winner: Christina Dimeo
Entry:
- Budget pressures force tax increase
- Fortune 500 company headed to Fluvanna: Supervisors approve controversial auto reclamation facility
- Supervisors battle lawsuits over rezoning disputes

Judge's comments: *The interviews enhance this article, which covers a local controversy fairly. The story is well researched and well written.*

3rd

Fortune 500 company headed to Fluvanna

Supervisors approve controversial auto reclamation facility

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO
EDITOR

A Fortune 500 company is on its way to Fluvanna County.

The Board of Supervisors Wednesday night (March 28) unanimously approved a special use permit to allow LKQ Corporation, an auto reclamation company, to open a facility off Route 250 near Zion Crossroads.

The proposal was met with hot resistance from several neighbors in the nearby Fox Glen subdivision and surrounding areas, who believe the facility doesn't belong near their homes.

Over 50 people filled the benches in the Fluvanna Circuit Courtroom – a

for further metal recycling. The yard kept clean and neat with cars in orderly rows.

Operations inside the facility, which covers a fraction of the 90-acre parcel of land, can operate 24 hours a day. The building will be lit, and pickup trucks will shuttle around the yard continuously as workers seek the parts they need. Crushing takes place regularly, and, as said Caddy – it makes a lot of noise.

Nearby residents who showed up weren't happy at the prospect of the new neighbor.

Old cars sitting around will inevita

Budget pressures force tax increase

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO
CORRESPONDENT

Budget pressures will force another tax increase, the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors learned Wednesday (Feb. 7) afternoon.

While presenting his fiscal year 2019 (FY19) budget, County Administrator Steve Nichols recommended raising the real estate tax to 93.9 cents per $100 valuation from the current 90.7 cents. This constitutes a 3.5 percent tax increase.

But Nichols' budget contains no additional money for the school system – an issue supervisors will need to address.

For at least the past two budget cycles, Nichols' proposed budgets have not included additional money for the schools.

ing to businesses. Nichols indicated that he would recommend lowering the tax again next year.

"There is no one, absolutely no one in...the Central Virginia region that pays less for business taxes than Fluvanna County businesses," Nichols said. "No one...not even close."

The county must pay a whopping $9.8 million in debt service in FY19.

"There's never an easy budget year," Nichols told supervisors, "but I thought this was going to be relatively easy because I thought our revenues would be more robust at this time. They're not. But this budget is, in relation to the last one, a way it is."

"I don't think that's really a good excuse," Weaver said.

"It's not an excuse; it's a fact," Nichols said.

The county could have a lower real estate tax rate if the Board were willing to implement other taxes, said Supervisor Tony O'Brien. "It isn't fair to compare our county to other counties and say, 'We're the highest,' when...compared as a Board you decide not to apply other tactics," he said. "We're doing that by our design."

Weaver did not respond.

The county has $6.3 million of unassigned money in its general fund. But Nichols noted that most of the money, while technically unassigned, has been earmarked for projects.

"I think that for the public...unless they pay attention...they could be misled by how [low] our fund balance really is," O'Brien said. "It's really a very tight, tight situation."

"You've got $1.7 million in unrestricted fund balance," said Nichols, referring to the money that has not been earmarked. "That's not very much."

Nichols' proposal forms the backbone of the county's budget. Over the course of budget season supervisors will make changes, especially to high profile expenses such as school funding and sheriff's office requests. But the vast majority of the thousands of line items pass from Nichols' proposed budget into reality.

Supervisors will meet weekly through mid-April to hash out specifics and plan to vote on the budget and associated tax rates April 11.

In other matters:

- Supervisors voted unanimously to hire Pearson's Appraisal to take over reassessment services for the county. The county's current firm, Blue Ridge Mass Appraisal Company, is closing. There are 19,264 parcels in Fluvanna.
- Treasurer Linda Lenherr will provide supervisors with a monthly treasurer's report. "You will be getting in your board package monthly a report that shows all the investment accounts, the balances in them, and any accrued interest that you earned off of them," said Nichols.
- Jason Smith, community and economic development director, presented an outline of a plan to promote tourism in the county. Specifics are still in the works but the plan has a defined vision: "Fluvanna County will be recognized as a viable travel and retreat destination that maintains its small town charm, unique heritage and natural beauty."

"There is no one, absolutely no one in…the Central Virginia region that pays less for business taxes than Fluvanna County businesses. No one…not even close."
– County Administrator Steve Nichols

Supervisors battle lawsuits over rezoning disputes

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO, EDITOR

The Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors is battling two lawsuits filed against it in connection with the Board's decision to rezone land upon which LKQ Corporation, a Fortune 500 company, intends to build an auto reclamation facility.

Supervisors changed the zoning of a 90-acre parcel of land off Route 250 in Troy from agricultural to industrial last December after an intense public hearing in which several Fluvanna landowners, including Katie and Walker Ward, spoke in opposition.

Now the Wards are suing supervisors for that decision.

Carroll Morris is also suing supervisors over their March 28 decision to deny him industrial rezoning of his agricultural

able.

The Wards are asking the court to void the rezoning.

Supervisors filed a demurrer Feb. 23 that disagreed with the Wards' allegations. First, they dispute that the notice was inadequate. The law requires that the Board provide a descriptive summary of the proposed action – which was the rezoning itself – not any potential actions by private third parties, according to the demurrer. The Board has no control over, and therefore cannot speak to, whether LKQ actually comes to the county.

The demurrer also states that the Wards were "informed enough about the Board's pending action to send a two-page letter to the county Planning Commission and Board, and to follow up with

Zoning Appeals (BZA).

At the May 15 BZA hearing, Scott Miller, county code compliance officer, testified that Morris' property was functioning as a contractor storage yard. He said Morris "had leased the property to two companies with the purpose of installing pipe fixtures, bringing material in and working on those materials, welding what have you, and then moving those materials out onto Route 250," according to minutes of the meeting.

Morris' attorney, Waverly Parker, argued that Morris had a right to use his property as an auto salvage yard. Stewart said whether he had that right was besides the point, as he believed the property was being used as a contractor's storage yard – a new and different use.

than was the [LKQ] tract."

Morris also filed a motion May 23 to consolidate with the Wards for trial. Supervisors opposed the motion June 4.

Waverly Parker, Morris' attorney, did not return a request for comment.

"We don't have any particular desire that Morris join our suit," said John Simpson, attorney for the Wards, in an email June 25. "He filed a petition to intervene and we simply stated to the court that we had no objection to him intervening."

Next steps

The Wards objected June 14 to scheduling a trial on their lawsuit, stating doing so would be "premature."

"We want to go to trial when the case is

Ruthann Carr

AWARD: FIRST
Category: Education writing
Winner: Ruthann Carr
Entry:
- Controversy roils over proposed LBGTQ rainbow Fluco symbol
- Rainbow Fluco leak: Will we ever know who is responsible?
- Rainbow F controversy pushed another month: School Board vote ends in a tie

Judge's comments: *So very few words for your lead quickly drew me in. I was quite intrigued as if I were reading a suspenseful whodunit story. I particularly liked the style in which you included comments from the students, which really painted a picture of how taboo this topic is for this community.*

1st

Controversy roils over proposed LGBTQ rainbow Fluco symbol

BY RUTHANN CARR AND HEATHER MICHON
CORRESPONDENTS

The community took a stand. The School Board did not.

Scores of high school students and community members packed the auditorium Wednesday (Nov. 7) for the Fluvanna School Board meeting.

During public comments it became clear why they were there: Item "B" on the action agenda: "Approval of Alliance Club request to give out stickers to teachers displaying the Fluco 'F' in rainbow colors."

If they expected the board to act, they were disappointed.

After the board listened for more than an hour to public comments, Chair Perrie Johnson (Fork Union) made a motion to approve the students' amended request.

Silence.

No one seconded.

The motion died.

Despite having the request for a month, the board chose Wednesday to do more research and discuss it further with their lawyer.

Their questions centered around whether the school or the public owned the Fluco F logo trademark.

They will take up the request again in December's meeting.

During the second round of public comments, the community chided the board.

"Your all's decision was a cop out," said Ben Fick. "You're afraid to let the kids color in your logo. It's an F logo with wings on it and you're all like 'I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do.' It's a cop out."

The Alliance Club is ...tioned group supporting l... gay, bisexual, transgend... students and their allie... Leyshon, who spoke for t...

Originally, they asked ... alter the logo and give s... rainbow F to any teacher ... be identified as a "safe sp...

Before Wednesday's me... the group amended its re... out the part about distri... to teachers. Teachers can ... litical speech in the class...

Rainbow F controversy pushed another month

School Board vote ends in a tie

BY RUTHANN CARR
CORRESPONDENT

Even after a month of study, the Fluvanna School Board still isn't any closer to an answer about allowing the Alliance Club to rainbow-color the Fluco logo.

With Andrew Pullen (Columbia) absent from ... Wednes-... the four ...ote. The ...d the Jan. ...

...d to re-... why he ...

...sion) and ...voted to ...th Ritten-...nds Pace ...

...ool-sanc-... (lesbian, ...d queer) ...

...meeting, ...kler pre-...s request ...

to create a rainbow F logo for the group to use to "encourage a safe, accepting space in our school." Originally the group wanted to offer stickers to teachers and staff to display in their room as a "safe space" for LGBTQ students.

Somehow Rob Schilling, a radio host and blogger for the conservative Bearing Drift website, got hold of a color picture of the formal request letter. On Nov. 2, five days before the request was brought before the public in an open meeting, Schilling posted a column entitled "The culture wars come to Fluvanna."

By the time the issue was addressed in the November meeting, the Alliance Club amended the request to say they would not offer stickers made with the revised logo to teachers and would not use it to make money.

Many parents and other community members spoke their mind during the November meeting public comments. Of those who spoke, about one-quarter was against the logo change.

The one uniting issue between both sides seemed to be anger at who passed

Rainbow Fluco leak

Will we ever know who is responsible?

BY RUTHANN CARR
CORRESPONDENT

Find the leak.

That seemed to be the single concern connecting those for and against the Fluvanna County High School Alliance Club's request to rainbow-ize the Fluco logo.

Everyone wanted to know how blogger and radio host Rob Schilling got hold of the Alliance Club letter that Superintendent Chuck Winkler presented to the School Board in an Oct. 10 closed session.

Bearing Drift, which bills itself as "Virginia's conservative voice" ran a Schilling blog post

the letter to the board. The name and email address of the student making the request were blurred, but not the name of a supporting teacher.

How did Schilling know about the Alliance Club request before it was even on the Nov. 7 School Board agenda?

Lots of people

Four people who were among the first to know of the club's formal request to the administration – Winkler and three School Board members, Chair Perrie Johnson (Fork Union), Charles Rittenhouse (Cunningham) and Andrew Pullen (Columbia) – have all said, "I hear a lot of people had that letter."

Lynn Stayton-Eurell

AWARD: FIRST PLACE
Category: Lifestyles advertising
Winner: Lynn Stayton-Eurell
Entry: Orme Family Fitness campaign
Judge's comments: *Fabulous ads that shout of fitness in a clean, organized and superb layout of information. Some of the best looking ads I have come across. Great job!*

Training
Tanning
Classes
Showers
Saunas
Childcare
Smoothies
Wi-Fi
Lockers
Towels

Exercise on your own time & convenience.

NEW MEMBERS

Join for $40 per month for 12 Months Minimum
$25 one time 24/7 access key fob fee

Make the commitment, meet your goals.

1st

Training
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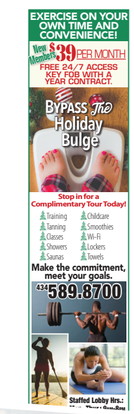

AWARD: THIRD PLACE
Category: Member self-promotion advertising
Winner: Lynn Stayton-Eurell
Entry: Fluvanna Review: Wider coverage
Judge's comments: *Great promotional ad for your paper. A lot of information, but laid out very nicely and easy to read.*

AWARD: THIRD PLACE
Category: Pro./tech. services advertising
Winner: Lynn Stayton-Eurell
Entry: Lake Chiropractic campaign

Heather Michon

AWARD: THIRD PLACE
Category: Public safety writing
Winner: Heather Michon
Entry:
- Blowe found guilty in 2016 shootout
- Roach found guilty in shooting spree
- Man sentenced in unusual DUI case

Judge's comments: *Solid court reporting; provides more than just the bare bones of the cases.*

Blowe found guilty in 2016 shootout

3rd

Roach found guilty in shooting spree

BY HEATHER MICHON
CORRESPONDENT

Joe Roach. File photo

time before finally making their way to her car and driving away.

Townsend returned to his house as the gunfire continued.

His wife, Judy Townsend, testified that she was standing inside the house when a bullet penetrated the wall and flew above her head. The shot blew the anthem off a trophy deer mounted on the living room wall.

Michael Townsend went to his gun safe and retrieved a shotgun. Standing on his deck, he fired two shots in the air, yelling: "Joe, you'd better ...

pain, numbness, and mobility issues. Both doctors said the condition was most likely permanent.

Testimony

Each of Blowe's co-conspirators testified to his role in crime.

"We were going there to steal some stuff," Jackson said. "There were supposed to be some guns there."

Jackson explained he had learned about the guns kept in a safe in the apartment above the garage from Grimes, an acquaintance of the apartment's former occupant. Jackson then told Abbitt, a longtime friend who lived in Virginia Beach.

Abbitt testified that Blowe had overhead some of his phone conversations with Jackson and decided to join him in the robbery.

The two men drove up from Virginia Beach ...

As Abbitt awaited a ride from Charlottesville, someone called in a report of a suspicious person. A deputy arrived and began questioning Abbitt, briefly putting him in handcuffs. But after confirming with the cashier Abbitt's story that he had been dropped off by a law enforcement officer, the deputy let him go.

Abbitt made his way home to Virginia Beach, where he was arrested two days later.

Evidence

Bolstering the state's case, Commonwealth's Attorney Jeff Haislip introduced forensic evidence showing Blowe's movements on the day of the crime and tying him to a weapon used in the shooting.

Cell phone tower and GPS data from devices associated with Blowe and Abbitt

Man sentenced in unusual DUI case

BY HEATHER MICHON
CORRESPONDENT