



CHANNEL MARKERS

A Quarterly Publication of the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission

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Dragon Run Watershed Tour

As part of the Coastal PDC quarterly meeting, a tour of the Dragon Run Watershed was conducted. The tour was guided by members of a local preservation group, Friends of the Dragon. The tour group consisted of representatives from Gloucester County, Town of Tappahannock, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department, MPPDC, and the Dragon Run Steering Committee.

The group, using canoes and kayak that were on loan from Rappahannock Community College and the Friends of the Dragon, put in at Big Island and paddled for 3 and a half hours through the thick green canopy of the Dragon. A member of the Friends of the Dragon served as guided interpreter for the group.

As an added bonus the group was treated to a spectacular view of a Bald Eagle, that was perched on a limb, watching the group slowly paddling its way down to the Rt. 602 Mascot Bridge.



The group puts in at Big Island.

MPPDC Monthly Meeting

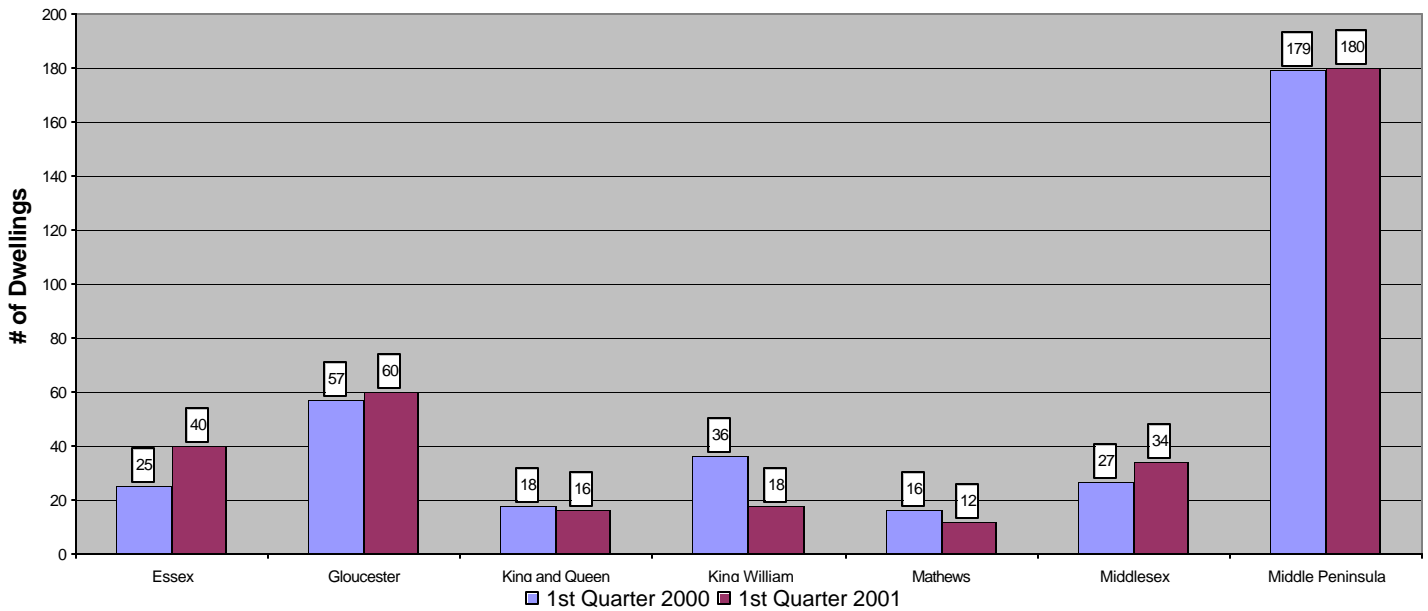
The spring quarterly dinner meeting of the MPPDC was held at Goodfellas Restaurant, White Marsh, Virginia on March 28, 2001. The meeting highlight was a presentation on the Middle Peninsula Re-assessment Study by Dan Kavanagh, Executive Director of the MPPDC. Mr. Kavanagh explained that a Reassessment Study Group was organized because of an interest from the localities. He explained the data collection process the study group used and the five Regional Real Estate Re-assessment Options. He then explained the Net Revenue Enhancement Scenario. To conclude his presentation Mr. Kavanagh requested that the audience review the advantages and disadvantages of the options.

For more on the Middle Peninsula Re-assessment Study see page 5.

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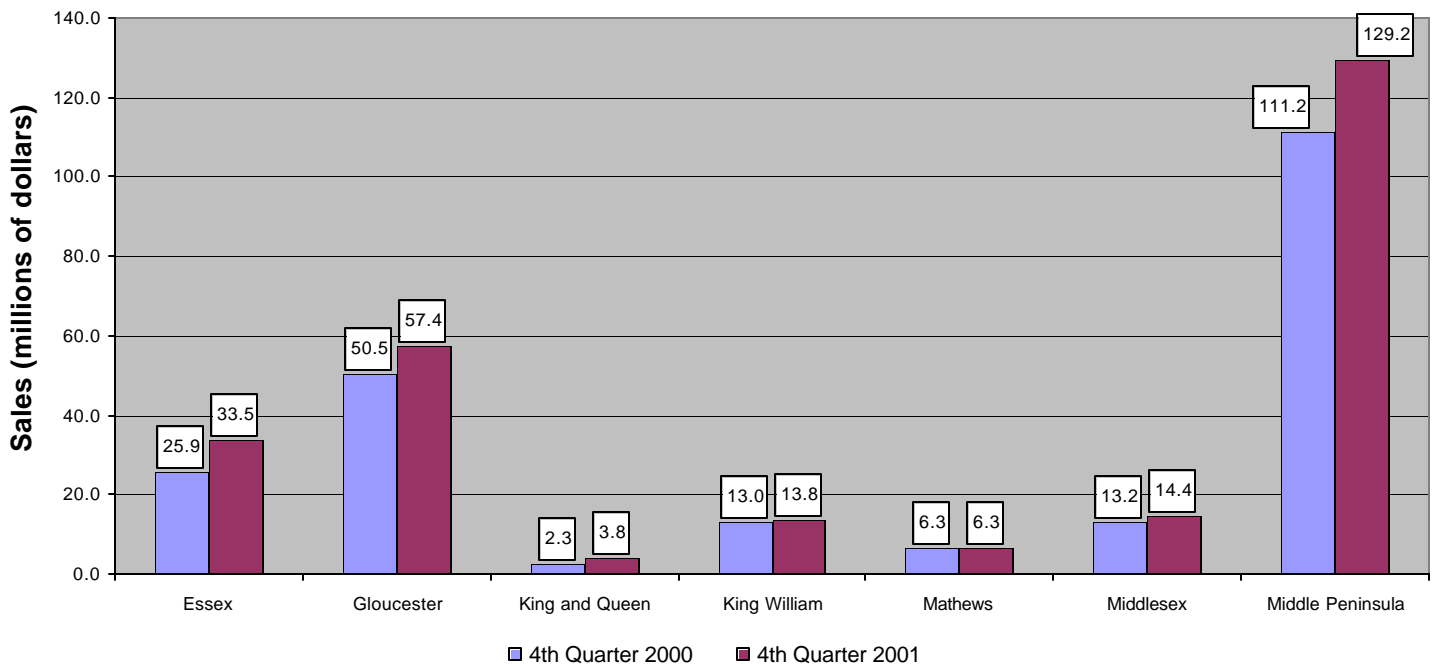
Economic Data

Residential Building Permits Issued



When comparing the first quarter of 2000 and 2001, Essex, Gloucester and Middlesex counties experienced increases in the number of new housing permits. The region as a whole remained relatively steady with only an increased from 179 permits issued in the first quarter of 2000 to 180 permits issued in the first quarter of 2001. (Each county reports this information)

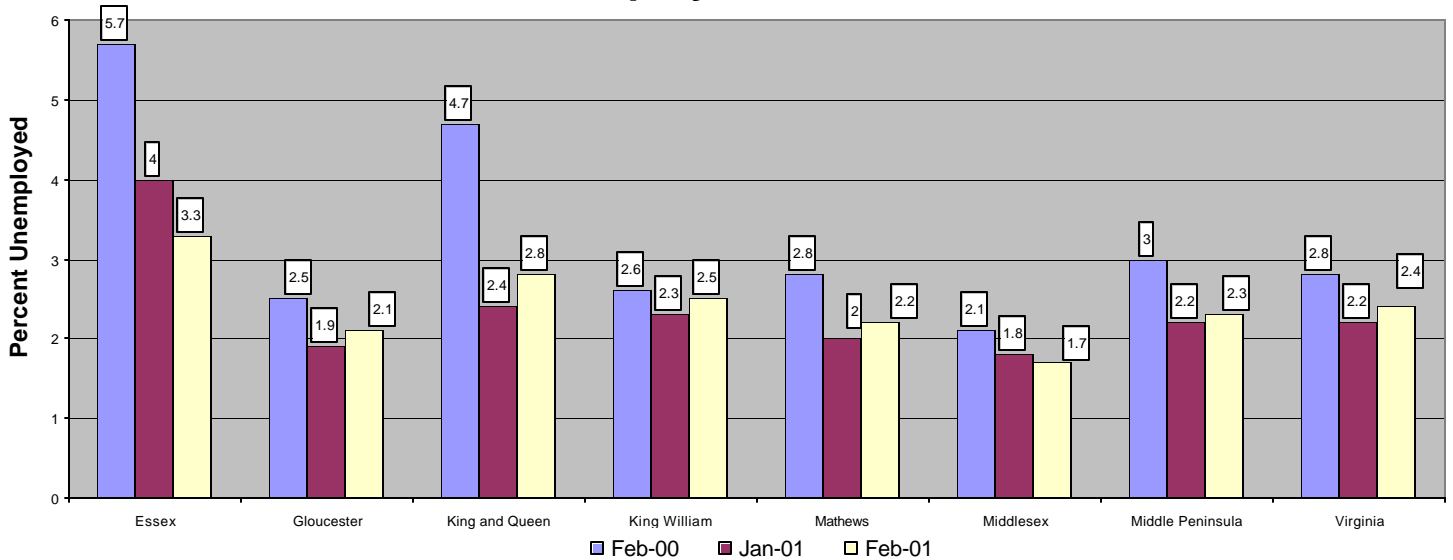
Taxable Sales



Comparison of taxable sales in the fourth quarter of 2000 and 2001 shows a \$18,000,000 increase for the Middle Peninsula region, for an approximate total of \$129,200,000 in taxable sales. Five of the six counties experienced increases during this time period, including Gloucester, Essex, Middlesex, King and Queen and King William, while Mathews remained level. (Source: Weldon Cooper Center)

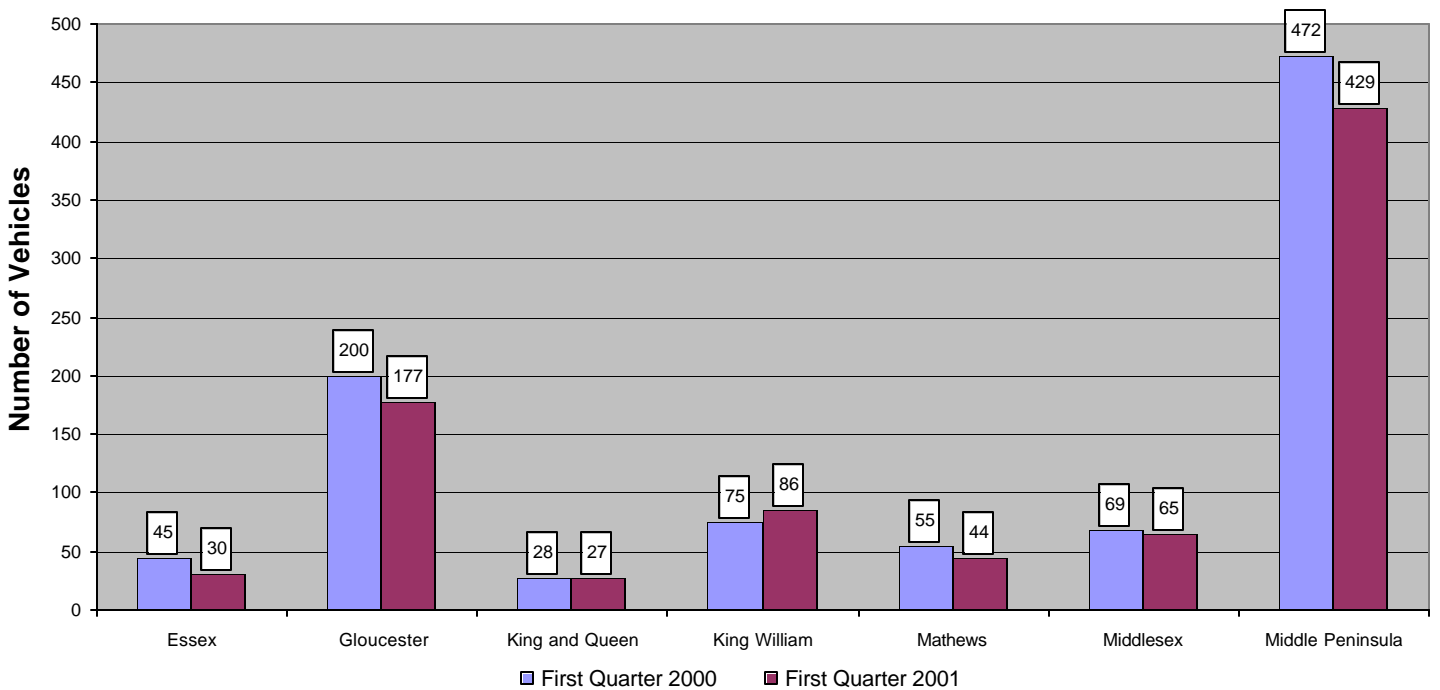
Economic Data

Unemployment Rates



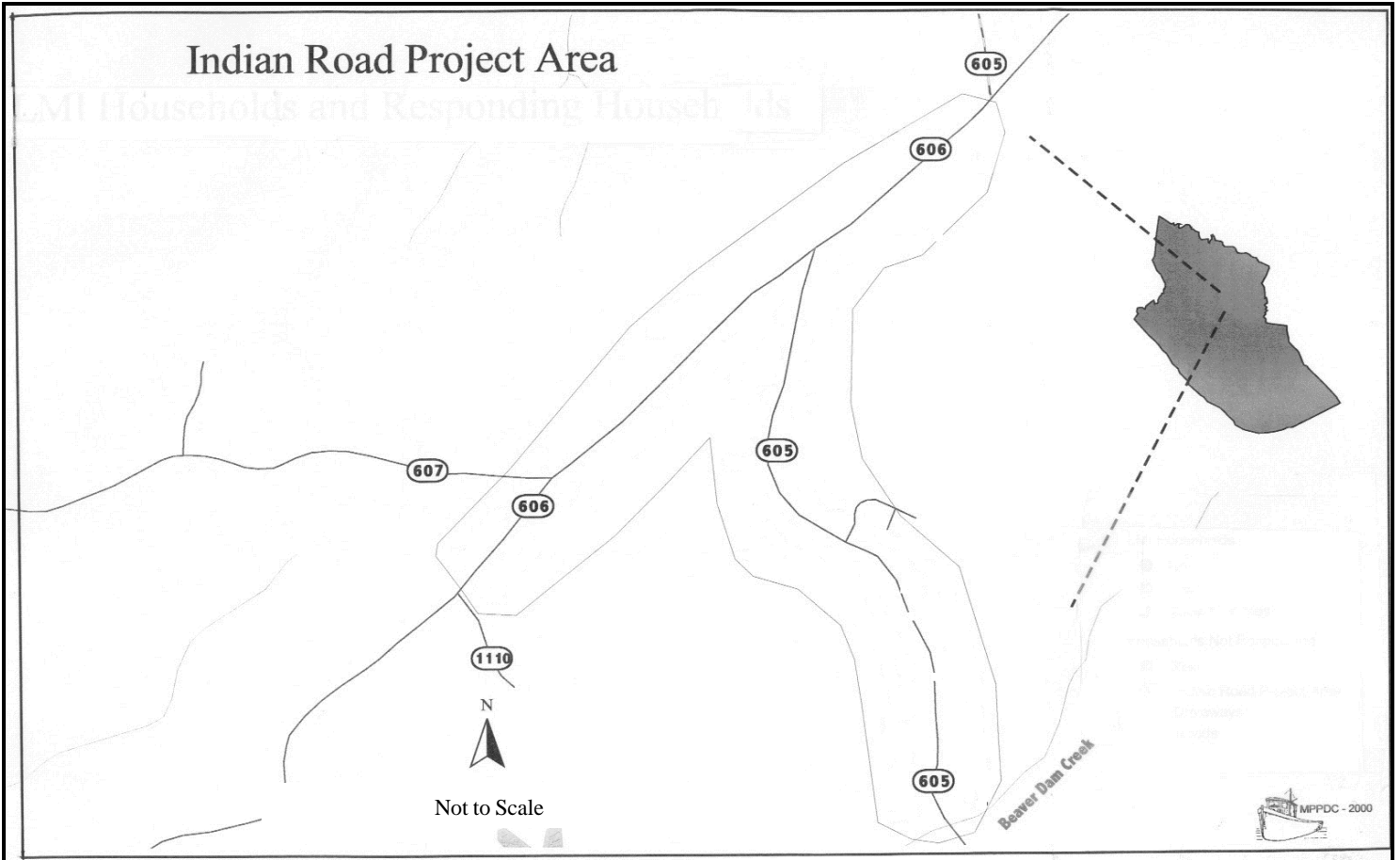
The Middle Peninsula’s unemployment rate for February of 2001 (2.3%) was lower than Virginia’s (2.4%) for the month. Essex (3.3%), King William (2.5%), and King and Queen (2.8%) had rates higher than the state average for February of 2001, while the other counties were below the state level. Overall for the region, the unemployment rate dropped from an average of 3.0% in February of 2000 to 2.3% in February of 2001. (Source: Virginia Employment Commission)

New Domestic Vehicle Registrations



Middle Peninsula new domestic car registrations decreased 9%, from 472 in the first quarter of 2000 to 429 in the first quarter of 2001. All of the six Middle Peninsula counties but King William, saw some level of decrease in the number of registrations. (Source: DMV)

MPPDC Project Updates



The above map shows the boundary for the Indian Road Housing Rehabilitation Project. The project is located in the Ware District of Gloucester County, north of the Courthouse. It is located along Route 606 between Route 1110 and Route 605, and Route 605, between Route 606 and Beaverdam Swamp.

Indian Road Housing Rehabilitation Project

The Gloucester County Indian Road Housing Rehabilitation Project has received funding to rehabilitate 21 homes in the Gloucester County Pinero area. The fund will benefit 60 residents of the area. Interim assistance such as home maintenance, financial and credit counseling workshops will be conducted and benefit all 142 residents of the target area.

The Indian Road Project area was chosen from three areas studied in a 1999 planning study. The area ranked the highest in terms of Community Development Block Grant eligible needs.

Gloucester County has hired the MPPDC to be the project manager. The Chesapeake Bay Agency on Aging will be the Housing Rehabilitation Specialist and do the loan servicing.

Rev. Leon Abbott of the Zion Hill Baptist Church which is located in the community will assist with

community outreach during the program. The church will also allow meetings to be held in their facility. This will provide a familiar meeting place since the church is attended by a large majority of the residents in the area

In association with this project the Gloucester Housing Partnership will be conducting a job training program for persons interested in learning home building skills. The program will consist of two 13 week training sessions of classroom and on-the-job training.

For more information concerning this project please contact Todd Rigler at 804-758-2311 or e-mail

mppdc@inna.net.

**For information about the
Middle Peninsula Disability Services Board
visit
www.MPDSB.org**

MPPDC Project Updates

Middle Peninsula Regional Assessment Study

Regional Assessment has been a topic of discussion for some time in the Middle Peninsula Region. In 1983 it was nearly implemented, but due to a legal issue the concept was unable to move forward. 10 years later, in 1993, the idea came to light once again but this time the timing was not acceptable by all of the Counties involved. In 1999, due to interest from the localities, a study group was organized to once again look at the issue.

The study group consisted of Commissioners of Revenue, County Administrators and representatives of the Virginia Department of Taxation. The group met from June 1999 until December 2000. During this time the study group hired Knight, Dorin & Roundtreay to complete a study to determine the feasibility of creating a regional service agency for reappraisal services of locally taxable and tax exempt real estate of the counties of the region.

The scope of the study consisted of four phases. These phases included the following: A questionnaire was prepared, local Commissioners of Revenue and County Administrators, mass appraisal companies, representatives of the State Department of Taxation and Commissioners of Revenue and Real Estate Assessors in other selected localities outside of the region were interviewed, technological issues were considered, a comparative analysis was completed and options were developed and evaluated.

The study looked at the quality, consistency, timeliness of the current reassessment operations and practices. With the present system the counties must hire independent contractors for each general reassessment cycle. From the study five options were developed.

Option 1 – Maintain Current Reassessment Policy

This option would involve no change in how the individual counties currently conduct their reassessment cycles. For comparison purposes, it is assumed that future reassessment contracts with mass appraisal companies would be at prevailing market rates. Responsibilities and duties currently fulfilled by the respective Commissioners of Revenue would continue as before. This option involves no budgetary impact.

Option 2 – Consolidated Reassessment Contracting

This option would involve a universal contract with one mass appraisal company to conduct reassessments of each of the five counties on a rotational basis. The contract would be negotiated by a representative entity of the participating localities, such as a committee or an appointed individual, who would oversee the process on an on-going basis. This is being successfully utilized in the Mount Rogers Planning District. Such an arrangement would likely result in a lower unit cost for the reassessment.

Option 3 – Hire a Regional Reassessment Director/Coordinator and Provide Clerical Support to that Position

This option would involve hiring an individual to oversee the reassessment process. Clerical support staff, which at this level would likely consist of only one person, is assumed to be provided by one of the participating counties or possibly the MPPDC at cost. The Reassessment Director/Coordinator would be responsible for establishing and maintaining a regional sales database, tracking building permits and assessing new improvements accordingly, analyzing data for property specific value trends, monitoring the mass appraisal companies during the reassessment cycles for quality control, assisting the Commissioners of Revenue and public during the real estate assessment appeal process, and coordinating the contracting of the mass appraisals under the direction of an authorized representative entity of the participating localities. This entity could be a committee consisting of the Commissioners of Revenue, County Administrators, and appointed member(s) of the Boards of Supervisors from each of the participating counties.

This option would have a budgetary impact consisting of salaries and benefits for the Reassessment Director/Coordinator and the clerical assistant that would be provided by one of the counties, furniture, fixtures, and equipment including technological support. Office space would be leased at a central location in the Middle Peninsula.

Option 4 – Rotational Reassessment Staff

(See Regional Reassessment on page 6)

MPPDC Project Updates

(Regional Reassessment Continued from page 5)

This option would involve increasing the two person staff in Option 3 to an eight-person staff including four additional appraisers and two additional clerical assistants. The appraisers would rotate from year-to-year among the five counties conducting reassessments on a regularly scheduled basis. The Reassessment Director/Coordinator and at least one of the clerical assistants would be in centrally located leased office space in the Middle Peninsula. The appraisers and possibly one or two clerical assistants would be situated in rent-free office space provided by the counties during their respective reassessments. As with Option 3, the Director/Coordinator would have the authority to create job descriptions and make all personnel decisions regarding the employment of his/her staff with the approval of the representative entity.

This option would have a budgetary impact consisting of salaries and benefits for eight employees, furniture, fixtures and equipment including technological support. Office space would be leased at a central location in the Middle Peninsula. It is assumed that the appraisers would use their own automobiles for travel and be reimbursed for their mileage.

Option 5 – Fully Staffed Regional Reassessment Office

This option involves the hiring of a full staff including a Real Estate Assessor, a full complement of appraisers sufficient to conduct annual reassessments and clerical assistants with benefits comparable to other real estate assessment offices in Virginia. Included would be automobiles, furniture, fixtures, and equipment and the rental of office space that could adequately accommodate these employees. Additionally, the office would be fully equipped with a networked computer system utilizing a CAMA software program that would be integrated with the computer systems in each of the participating localities. This option would be the most expensive of the five options.

Potential Revenue Enhancement

In consideration of alternatives to improve reassessments on a regional basis, the potential changes in revenue are very important to each locality. None of the options discussed in the report would reduce revenues; however, several changes could increase revenues.

Real estate assessments in the Middle Peninsula average somewhat below true market value. In general terms, more accurate appraisals that are closer to true market value will increase the tax base and corresponding revenues to each jurisdiction. The alternative models presented aim to provide high quality reassessments and thus have potential to increase revenue. This is a general concept and cannot be quantified based on available data.

More important in terms of revenue generation is the frequency of reassessments. Since real property values generally increase over time, the longer the period between reassessments the greater the margin between the assessment and the true market value. This gap represents lost potential tax revenues. In terms of dollars, the numbers are very significant.

Jurisdictional Allocation of Cost

When considering the allocation of cost the following factors will include the number of parcels, the effort and the frequency. More time and a greater pro-rata share of the annual operating expenses will be incurred by those counties that have a greater number of larger size parcels, higher ratio of commercial/industrial properties, higher ratio of waterfront properties, and greater number of improved parcels.

Cost Benefit Analysis

The analysis of potential revenue enhancements provides a basis for consideration of costs versus benefits. Most of the potential benefits of a regional approach to improving reassessments are not financially quantifiable. Among these are consistency, equalization, fairness, taxpayer relations, improved record keeping, and improved information availability for the public and for government planners and administrators.

The clear quantifiable financial benefits come from increasing the frequency of reassessments. The shorter reassessment cycle is an option available to all the jurisdictions regardless of whether or not the reassessment process is regionalized. Certainly the revenue enhancements from shorter cycles can be a part of the implementation and financing of a regional approach to reassessment; however, such enhancement is not dependent upon such conversion.

A copy of the study conducted by Knight, Dorin & Roundtreay is available at www.mppdc.com/reassess.pdf or contact Dan Kavanagh at (804) 758-2311.

MPPDC Project Updates

Disability Services Board

The Middle Peninsula Disability Services Board is a partnership of consumer, local government, and business working to increase access and develop consumer oriented, community-based services for persons with physical and sensory disabilities.

The Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund (RSIF) for the 2002 fiscal year were recently approved. The RSIF is to be used to meet programmatic and individual recipient needs not otherwise met through existing federal, state, or local programs, and to develop community programs to meet the needs of persons with physical and sensory disabilities.

FY 2002 Funding Recipients are the Middle Peninsula Self Help for the Hard of Hearing and the Essex County Public Library.

The Middle Peninsula Self Help for the Hard of Hearing will receive funds to obtain computer assisted note taking/ captioning equipment comprised of a laptop computer and related accessories.

The Essex County Public Library will receive funds to provide and expand handicapped access to the Public Library by refitting the entrance and lobby doors as automatic doors, to go beyond the minimum ADA requirements, which were original meet during time of construction.

Applications for the competitive round of funding, a second round, for the 2002 year will be available in May. Applications can be requested by contacting Todd Rigler at (804) 758-2311 or mppdc@inna.net.

Middle Peninsula On-Site Waste- Water Treatment and Disposal Revolving Loan and Grant Program

The MPPDC Revolving Loan and Grant Program provides financial assistance to individuals with malfunctioning, failing on-site wastewater treatment systems. The program is available to homeowners of property located in the Middle Peninsula Planning District of Virginia. Applications are sought through referrals from local Health Departments and referrals from local government.

The MPPDC Revolving Loan and Grant Program has entered its third year of providing financial assistance to individuals. The MPPDC is in the process of procuring the services of local contractors for nine loan applicants. Contact Lewis Lawrence, Director of Regional Planning, at (804) 758-2311 or mppdc@inna.net for more information.

Business Training Classes to held in Gloucester

MP-BDP will hold its third business training series in Gloucester starting on May 29, 2001. The classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at Page Middle School. Topics to be covered include Business Law, Business Insurance, Personal Credit, Record Keeping, Bookkeeping, Taxes, Advertising, Developing a Business Plan, Financial Forecasting, and Business Feasibility. Classes are open and free to the public.

The MP-BDP will be holding its fourth business training series in King and Queen County starting in July 2001. Call now! Classes fill quickly.

For more information contact the Business Development Partnership's Director William Smith @ (804)-758-4917 or E-mail MPBDP@inna.net.

Census 2000

Census information is available via the web. Visit www.census.gov or link from www.mppdc.com

Events Calendar

May 2001

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1	2	3	4
7 Middle Peninsula Travel Council 7:00PM	8	9 Local Planners 9:30 AM	10	11 VA Coastal PDC Meeting 9:00 AM
14 Middle Peninsula Land Trust 7:00 PM	15	16 PSAP 10:30 AM Middlesex Co Comm. 7:00PM Dragon Run Steering Comm. 7:30PM	17 Middlesex County Museum 7:30PM	18
21 PDC Staff Meeting 9:00 AM	22	23 MPPDC Monthly Meeting 7:00 PM	24	25
28 Memorial Day Observed	29	30 Memorial Day	31	

June 2001

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1 Virginia Peninsula's Service Authority 9:00
4	5	6	7 Master Gardeners 9:30 AM	8 Local Government Administrators Meeting 9:00AM
11 Middle Peninsula Land Trust 7:00 PM	12	13 Local Planners 9:30AM MPBDP 7:00PM	14	15
18 Middle Peninsula Travel Council 9:00AM	19	20	21 1st Day of Summer Middlesex County Museum 7:30PM	22
25 PDC Staff Meeting 9:00 AM	26 Middlesex Co Comm. 7:00PM	27 MPPDC Dinner Meeting 6:00 PM Location TBA	28	29

July 2001

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
2 Middle Peninsula Travel Council 9:00AM	3	4 Independence Day Office Closed	5 Master Gardeners 9:30 AM	6
9 Middle Peninsula Land Trust 7:00 PM	10	11 Local Planners 9:30 MPBDP 7:00PM	12	13 Local Government Administrators Meeting 9:00AM
16	17	18 PSAP 10:30 AM	19 Middlesex County Museum 7:30PM	20
23 PDC Staff Meeting 9:00 AM	24 Middlesex County Communications Meeting 7:00PM	25 MPPDC Monthly Meeting 7:00 PM	26	27
30	31			

Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are held at the MPPDC Offices in Saluda. The site of the Quarterly PDC Dinner Meeting will be announced in a mailing prior to that meeting. All times and dates are subject to change. Call the MPPDC at (804) 758-2311 for more information.

Employment

REGIONAL PROJECTS PLANNER

Excellent opportunity to live and work in a rural area on the Chesapeake Bay. Responsibilities include professional and technical work in transportation, land use and environmental planning, information management, and grant seeking. Requirements include a degree in planning or other appropriate field, computer literacy including GIS, and excellent written and oral communications skills. Hiring range \$23-28K with an exceptional benefits package.

Letter and application with resume to:

Dan Kavanagh, Executive Director
Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission
PO 286
Saluda, VA 23149.

Position open until filled. The MPPDC is an equal opportunity employer.

PLANNING ASSISTANT/GIS COORDINATOR COUNTY OF MATHEWS

Mathews County is accepting applications for a Planning Assistant/GIS Coordinator position. Position requires Bachelor's Degree in Planning, Public Administration, Geography or related field, proficiency in the GIS field working with GIS software and application programming and development with ArcInfo and ArcView; or any equivalent combination of experience and training which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities. Candidates should have excellent oral and written communication skills, and an ability to work with the public as well as elected, appointed and employed officials. GIS abilities required to manage and maintain operation of the County's GIS to include developing and updating data; plotting maps; documenting and maintaining the GIS data archive; updating the Enhanced-911 maps; performing system hardware and software set-up, upgrades, back-ups and other maintenance; and develops and presents technical papers, reports, and demonstrations of agency GIS activities. Salary: mid \$20s, DOQ.

Send letter of application and resume including salary history to
Department of Planning and Zoning,
Post Office Box 839,
Mathews, Virginia 23109.

A job description can be obtained at the Planning Department or by calling (804) 725-4034.

Deadline for applications is 4:30 p.m., Friday, May 18, 2001. Applicants with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations during the selection process. EOE.

For information on all of the MPPDC current Projects go to
www.MPPDC.com
or e-mail
MPPDC@inna.net

MPPDC News



Dan Kavanagh and Lewis Lawrence recently attended the 14th Annual Geographic Information Sciences Conference— The Internet and GIS: Evolution or Revolution? TUGIS 2001 held at Towson University.



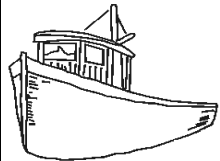
William Smith attended the Association for Enterprise Opportunity Annual Conference in Oakland, California.



Look for the Fall issue of Channel Markers to be in your box in August 2001

Staff

Executive Director	Director of Planning	Business Development Partnership
Dan Kavanagh	Lewis Lawrence	William Smith
Regional Projects Planner	Administrative Assistant	Secretary
Todd Rigler	Barbara Zimmerman	Rose Lewis



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Created in 1972, pursuant to the Regional Cooperation Act, the Commission is a Confederation of nine local governments established to plan for the orderly and efficient physical, social and economic development of Virginia's Middle Peninsula region. Activities and policies of the Commission are set by Commissioners, who are appointed by the local governing bodies. The Commission provides its member local governments with planning, coordination, technical assistance, policy analysis, and management services in a wide array of program areas including information management, water quality, community development, demographic and economic analysis, transportation, and housing services.
 Channel Markers is published quarterly by the MPPDC, PO Box 286, Saluda, Virginia 23149. The Executive Director is Dan Kavanagh and the editor of Channel Markers is Todd Rigler. Comments should be addressed to the Editor.