

EASTSIDE EXPRESS

Sept/Oct 2025

Volume 32 No. 7 & 8

Distribution: 615



Cue the applause: Our speaker at the next membership meeting will be the Virginia Stage Company’s managing director

The River Forrest Shores/Wayside Manor/Easton Place Civic League will be resuming its meetings (after a July and August hiatus) with a compelling presentation from Jeff Ryder, managing director of the Virginia Stage Company (VSC). So put Sept. 8 at 7 p.m. at Aldersgate United Methodist Church on your calendar because you won’t want to miss this.

Jeff will give a preview of the 2025-2026 season of Hampton Roads’ premier professional theatre company. VSC was founded in 1978 by members of the Hampton Roads community who had a deep desire to make live theater a part of the area’s cultural life. For its home, VSC chose the Wells Theatre in downtown Norfolk, which was fully restored in 1986 and is now a National Historic Landmark. Now more than 35,000 annually enjoy the benefits of professional theater.

Also, if you are one of those individuals who is inspired by live theater, know that the Virginia Stage Company does have a thriving volunteer program. Information on those opportunities will be shared at the meeting. Jeff Ryder has been VSC’s managing director since March 2022. (Continued on page 2)

Alicia “Lisa” Gragg, our corresponding secretary: A life well lived

This summer the civic league board —and this entire community — experienced a profound loss. On June 5, Lisa Gragg, our corresponding secretary, passed away unexpectedly. Those who knew Lisa will attest it is no exaggeration to describe her as “the kindest, most positive person you could ever meet.”



For the civic league board she was a mainstay. In her role she organized the delivery of our newsletter, the *Eastside Express*. When a newsletter carrier wasn’t able to do his or her route, then it was up to Lisa to figure out how to fill the gap. And she always did and NEVER complained about any inconvenience. She consistently put encouraging notes and/or candy in her newsletter carriers’ delivery bag as a thoughtful thank you. Those of us who served as newsletter carriers felt appreciated because she made it a point to let us know she valued our service.

Lisa also kept an eye on who in the neighborhood had experienced a loss, was ill or had experienced another momentous event. (Continued on page 2)

Recycle Dates

Sept 15th & 29th
October 13th & 27th
Street Sweeping:
Sept 26th & Oct 24th

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September Meeting

Will be held in the social hall at Aldersgate United Methodist Church on September 8th, at 7:00 p.m.

Important Numbers
Norfolk Cares
Assistance Center
Hours: Mon—Fri, 9AM-5PM
(757) 664-6510
For Emergency Call 911
Our Community Officer:
Officer Charles Dreer
Cell-757-353-1268

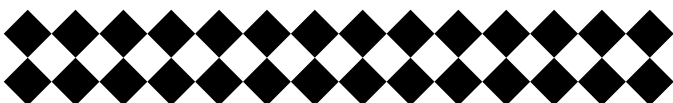
(Continued from page 1 VA Stage Company)

Prior to coming to VSC, he served in several roles at Cleveland Play House from 2013 to 2022. Jeff holds a Master of Public Administration Degree from the Levin College at Cleveland State University and a Bachelor’s Degree from Tufts University. At Levin, Jeff was inducted into an international honor society for the study of non-profit management and philanthropy. Jeff also holds a certificate in Diversity and Inclusion for HR Professionals from Cornell University. He serves on the board of Hampton Roads Pride and is the community service director for the Rotary Club of Norfolk.

Prior to coming to Norfolk, he previously served on the boards of the Cleveland Kids’ Book Bank, Theatre Forward, the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Cleveland, and the Cleveland Professional 20/30 Club. In Cleveland, Jeff served as a stage manager at several theaters including Talespinner Children’s Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and Berkshire Theatre Festival.

**Don’t forget you have the option to attend via Zoom
 If you can’t physically attend the upcoming meeting, you do have the option of attending via Zoom.**

**Visit this page on our website to make it happen:
<https://eastsidecivicleague.org/zoom-meetings/>**



(Continued from page 1 Lisa Gragg)

She was renowned for sending meaningful notes and cards at just the right time.

In fact, Debby Forehand, who had made a donation to the civic league, received a sweet thank you note from Lisa the day after she left this world.

When Lisa wasn’t helping the civic league, chances are she was volunteering for her church, Christ Gospel Church in Virginia Beach where she taught Sunday School. Lisa had a wonderful way with children. She often babysat for her little pal Ryker and her cheerful posts on Facebook were frequently centered on Ryker’s adventures with her. Ryker called her “Sassy” which seemed like a fun, apt nickname because Lisa had a wonderful sense of humor, an infectious laugh and a spunky zest for life. She loved her family dearly. She leaves behind her husband of 52 years, George; her daughter Christa Farmer, her grandson Jonathan Farmer, six siblings and two aunts.

There is no doubt about it Lisa made this community a better place in which to live. We are deeply grateful to Curtis Troy of Appleton Drive. Curtis worked with Lisa to handle the sorting and delivery of the *Eastside Express* to the newsletter carriers. Thankfully, he has agreed to continue helping. In addition, Sunita Malik of Ivor Avenue has stepped forward to work with Curtis in the future. Many thanks to both Curtis and Sunita for carrying on Lisa’s good work!

The assistance of Ward 4 Councilman JP Paige has proved highly beneficial in expediting needed city services

Liz Albert, 2nd Vice President

In the month of July, the missing 12-foot section of sidewalk on the south side of Sellger Drive at the creek was replaced. The secret weapon used to accomplish this feat was none other than our attentive Ward 4 councilman, JP Paige. After I was alerted to the problem by neighbors, I did a little research and discovered that HRSD had removed the sidewalk to do some repairs 4 years ago, and that multiple requests to the city for replacement of the sections had been submitted to Norfolk Cares, but nothing had ever been done to fix the problem. I made another MyNorfolk request, but this time I emailed Councilman Paige the request number along with a brief description and history of the problem.

(Continued on page 7)



Hello Neighbor

I'M THE TOP AGENT TO REACH OUT TO IN

Our Neighborhood

Whether you need to sell your home, need some real estate advice, or simply want to unwind and have good conversation, I've got you covered. Let's meet up and uncover the true value of our amazing community. Cheers to your lively and vibrant neighborhood!

-Karen Davis

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Shell yeah! Civic league's Facebook page helps a family reunite with a beloved pet

When Rikki Lippert posted on the civic league's Facebook page about the escape of her Sulcata tortoise from her backyard on Kidd Boulevard, she admits she had fears her little friend Scubie might be lost to her and her family forever.

A Sulcata tortoise is the third largest species of tortoise in the world, behind only the Galapagos tortoise and Albrada giant tortoise. According to Rikki, the Sulcata can grow to over 200 pounds and have a lifespan as long as 100 years. At 2.5 years old Scubie was just getting started in his life journey, but he was already growing rapidly. Rikki and her family had erected an enclosure for him in their backyard so he could enjoy the outdoors. He came in at night to rest in his in-home enclosure. However, Scubie proved more resourceful than the Lipperts anticipated. From his outdoor home he piled up dirt from a flower bed, packed it into a mound and literally went over the wall. The day he escaped, the Lipperts posted their plea on Facebook for neighbors to keep an eye out for him. They searched for him for six hours that day with their basset hound BoBo trying to sniff him out. They posted on other lost pet sites and checked out local shelters. Despite their efforts the intrepid tortoise remained missing in action for almost four weeks.



Then one day Alexis Smith Bailey of Faulk Road was out in the backyard with her three granddaughters, when their mother arrived with the fourth daughter in tow. Alexis said her daughter immediately told her there was a big turtle in the driveway, The family surrounded the turtle and Alexis' husband noticed right away that Scubie was not the kind of turtle that usually hangs around the Elizabeth River. He seemed to think Scubie might be "some kind of desert tortoise." Then Alexis suddenly remembered Rikki's post on the civic league Facebook page. She went inside the house, found the post and called Rikki via the messenger app. Rikki, who was at work at the time, identified Scubie as her pet and sent her son and daughter to the Bailey home to fetch the wandering tortoise. Meanwhile, Alexis and family got Scubie into a large box and gave him some water and vegetation to chew on. This is a classic story of neighbor helping neighbor! By the way, Scubie gained a pound during his big adventure.

(Continued on page 9)

General Meeting River Forrest Shores/Wayside Manor/Easton Place Civic League

May 13, 2025

President Edith Lizalde called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. She then led the group in prayer. Second Vice President Liz Albert followed and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Guest Speaker: Councilman Carlos Clanton – First 100 days in office Councilman Clanton gave a wide-ranging and detailed presentation.

Key topics included: **City Budget and Priorities (FY26)**: The FY26 budget was set for vote the following day, with core focus areas of public safety, affordable housing, education, youth programs, infrastructure investment, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization. He emphasized transparency through his biweekly e-newsletter and ongoing feedback channels. Those interested can find his newsletters here at this address: <https://www.carlosclanton4norfolk.com/blog/categories/newsletter>.

Capital Improvement & Equity for the Eastside: Councilman Clanton acknowledged that many residents feel downtown and the Westside have received disproportionate investment. He is committed to fostering an equitable Capital Improvement Plan, funding and accountability. One item highlighted was \$350,000 in FY25 for an Eastside amenity study outreach and \$1 million added to the FY26 budget for feasibility and design of a new recreation center and library complex.

Military Circle Redevelopment Update: The city is looking at a \$1B+ redevelopment plan that includes mixed-use housing (condos, apartments, row and single-family homes), a new recreation center with an Olympic-size pool, library, senior amenities, and splash pad, new street infrastructure and structured parking, and integrated family-friendly features (e.g., shops, dining, ice arena potential). The timeline has the consultant report due Fall 2025; initial construction may begin in 2027–28. The new recreation facility will mirror the \$64M wellness complex under construction on Newport Avenue.

Schools and Educational Facilities Update: It was noted that the city's school buildings are aging (Granby Elementary: 1948; Jaycox Elementary: 1949; and Norview Elementary: 1962). There is a consolidation proposed to address under-enrollment and redirect savings (\$88M+) to improve facilities and programs. Councilman Clanton has pushed for new policies: creating a School Maintenance and Construction Fund using sale proceeds from old school sites. He also clarified that 9.55% of casino revenues are committed to school debt service—not construction.

Housing Commission: This involves Norfolk's first housing policy effort in 40+ years and co-chairs for the new Housing Commission are Councilman Clanton and Councilman Jeremy McGee. Some of the goals are assessing inventory and affordability, addressing short-term rentals, protecting seniors, promoting homeownership, and reducing concentrated poverty. Policy recommendations are expected within eight months.

Economic Development & Tourism: Cruise and casino investments are seen as ways to relieve the local tax burden. The casino will include a hotel, nine restaurants, and retail space; expected to lower real estate tax rates as has happened in Portsmouth. Upcoming small business initiatives and housing symposiums were announced, including an event at Norfolk State University on June 21 for renters, buyers, and seniors.

Airport Expansion (Transform ORF): Major upgrades underway include new terminals, baggage system, international customs, and a Courtyard Marriott with rooftop restaurant. Expanded parking and realigned entrance from Azalea Garden Road. Expansion will be fully funded through airport revenue, not local tax dollars. Rapid transit links and transit-oriented planning in discussion.

Community Q&A: Residents raised concerns about street paving (e.g., Poplar Hall and Military Hwy), flooding and clogged drains, lack of green space and parks, overgrown baseball fields and lack of lighting, and absence of sidewalks in older neighborhoods. Residents were encouraged to report issues to Norfolk Cares and forward claim numbers to him and Councilman Page. He noted residents could contact him directly (via cell/email) with specific concerns.

In Other Action: A motion was made by First Vice President Kathy O'Hara and seconded by Trustee Dustin Wallace to accept the March and April 2025 meeting minutes as presented. This motion was then approved by all present. Treasurer's Report: Treasurer KK German noted the membership drive was being extended for a brief period. She shared that the civic league had budgeted \$1,800 for special events which include the Christmas party and community picnic.

Newsletter Distribution: It was pointed out that the civic league needs volunteers for delivery route. The desire is to be able to restructure routes to make delivery more manageable. Please volunteer to help make this happen!

(Continued on page 8)

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RFS/WM/EP Civic League met its budgetary goal for membership this year!

Many thanks to all who stepped forward to support a strong civic league

KK German, Treasurer

The civic league is pleased to announce that we met our budget goal for membership dues this year. All total, \$1342 in dues collected which is \$12 over our \$1330 goal. This is an encouraging achievement especially since we did not meet the goal last year. However, the \$1330 was actually only a mid-sized target. In recent history there were a couple years when dues received amounted to almost \$1600.

We want to heartily thank all the volunteers who trudged our streets to knock on doors and ask for residents' support. While financial support is very necessary to meet our goals (primarily community picnic and Christmas dinner, with a modicum of administrative/meeting/operational expenses), we realize our true life blood is our people. And when you live in a neighborhood filled with people wanting to make it a nice place to live, how can you refuse to pay the cost of one coffee to support such a wonderful organization?

One big boon to facilitation of the drive this year has been a new and improved way for people to pay via Paypal. In fact, \$706 of the dues received came via Paypal. Mrs. Edith Lizalde, our new president, has added so much value in terms of tech know how and has helped with all sorts of improved communication, sharing, recording, and promotion of our mission. It's never late to renew or to sign up. So if you haven't joined yet, do so now by visiting

<https://eastsidecivicleague.org/membership/>.

One final important note: Recognizing that in recent years donations have become a way to close the budget gap, our Membership Chairman, Mrs. Liz Albert, rebranded the drive to "Membership Fund Drive" to remind residents we do also accept donations. This year an anonymous donor stepped forward to gift us \$1000 and expressed the belief that this civic league is headed for great things. We also received donations from Mrs. Anita Boyd of Newark Ave, Mike and Mary Barrett of Oetjen Blvd, Lisa and Carter Pettrey of McGinnis Ct, and Ms. Debby Forehand, our former president, who we are proud to announce is now an Honorary Life Member of the civic league.



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AldersgateNorfolkUMC.org

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<u>Size</u>	<u>Five issues</u>	<u>Single Issue</u>
1/8th page	\$55	\$20
1/4 page	\$80	\$25
1/2 page	\$155	\$50
Full page	\$295	\$95

To place an ad, simply email or call KK German at kkgerman@gmail.com or 757-714-2335!

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**President's Corner:
Reflecting on Summer,
Preparing for Fall**

Edith Lizalde, President

As we step into fall, I want to take a moment to reflect on the work and progress that took place over the summer months. While our general meetings paused, your civic league board stayed hard at work—meeting regularly, advancing our strategic plan, and preparing for one of our favorite community traditions: the annual picnic.

We were truly encouraged by the feedback received through our neighborhood listening survey. Thank you to everyone who took the time to share your thoughts and priorities. The data collected is already being reviewed and will play a key role in shaping our strategic plan. We're grateful to be working alongside our Neighborhood Specialist, Lauren Richardson, as we use this valuable input to guide our next steps.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the newsletter carriers and volunteers who stepped forward following our recent call for help. Your willingness to serve has made a real difference in keeping our community connected and informed. Lastly, it's important to acknowledge that this summer also brought profound loss with the passing of Lisa Gragg—a dear friend, mentor, and beautiful soul. While her absence is deeply felt, I remain grateful for the enthusiastic individuals who have stepped up during this difficult time to continue the work she loved.

I hope to see many of you at the upcoming picnic, where we can gather in celebration of the strong, resilient, and caring community we're building—together.

(Continued from page 2)

He was able to put his muscle behind the service request I made, and the job was completed in a matter of days!

Do you have any service requests that have failed to get any attention from the city?

If so, email me at albertfamilyva@aol.com with the request number and a brief description of the request. I will do some research and elevate it to Councilman Paige who has an impressive track record for ensuring troublesome issues are resolved. We as citizens need to be the eyes and ears of the city to keep Norfolk beautiful and maintained. If you see something that needs to be done, please take the time to make a MyNorfolk app request or call Norfolk Cares at 757-664-6510. If you do not get satisfaction, email me and I will call on the influence of our effective councilman, JP Paige.

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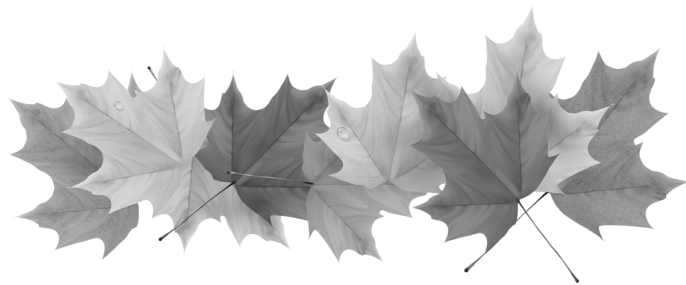
**Affordable Rates
224 S. Military Hwy
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Phone: 466-9392**

(Continued from page 4)

Polling Location: There was a reminder that Aldersgate United Methodist Church is now the official polling location and that the first election would take place there on June 17, 2025.

The Neighborhood Listening Survey: It was noted this survey would be launched that week to collect community feedback and that it would be live through the second week of June. The survey would be accessible via Facebook, email, and printed flyers. The feedback will be used by the civic league board for development of a strategic plan.

The raffle was won by First Vice Trustee Nick Masella. A motion was made by Recording Secretary Suzanne Duncan to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Trustee Dustin Wallace and unanimously approved at 8:30.



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Sunday School: 9:45am

Worship Service: 11:00am

<https://www.rbcnorfolk.org>



Getting up early to pick up trash might not seem like an ideal way to spend a Saturday morning, but neither the start time nor the task at hand bothered the seven volunteers who recently showed up to help in an August neighborhood clean-up. This crew tidied up around the Military Gardens jug handle, the Military Highway feeder road, Sellger Drive and Curlew Drive (up to the intersection at Kidd Blvd.)

Many thanks to: Bill Bunch, Millie Coward, Walter Escobar, Kathy O'Hara, Jason, Lucas Plumley and Jeri Zurbuchen for their hard work.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



Christy Siepert

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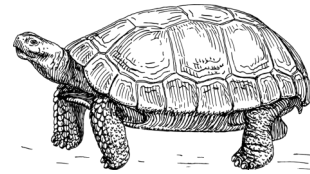
(Continued from page 3)

Fast forward to today and the Lippert family has strengthened Scubie's enclosure because they still want him to enjoy the outdoors. They are grateful to Alexis and her family and to the civic league for providing such a connecting force as the neighborhood Facebook page. Rikki noted, "Thank you for having that page because without it I don't think we would have ever gotten him back."

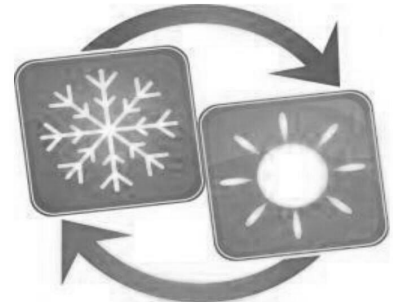
If you haven't joined our Facebook page yet, hopefully this story will move you in that direction!

You can find it at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/RFCivicLeague>. Just send a request to join with your address as the page is a great resource for residents.

We do have rules of engagement that help keep the conversation lively but civil. They are pinned to the top of the page.



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General Meeting River Forrest Shores/Wayside Manor/Easton Place Civic League

June 9, 2025

President Edith Lizalde called the meeting to order at 7:014 p.m. and noted it was being recorded for record-keeping purposes. Before the invocation, President Lizalde announced the passing of Corresponding Secretary Lisa Gragg, who served the civic league for six years with dedication, grace, and leadership. A card for the family was made available at the back of the room. A moment of reflection was led by President Lizalde, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Community Safety Update – Officer Charles Dreer May 12 – June 9: 0 reported incidents. Concerns raised by residents included homeless encampments behind Amarillo and near the 264 overpass and reports of threatening behavior and public exposure. Officer Dreer clarified that areas is under the Virginia Department of Transportation’s/state’s jurisdiction and thus requires coordination with state representatives or VDOT. VDOT has responded in similar past instances. Officer Deer indicated an increased police presence typically follows reported incidents. He confirmed that resource reallocation may explain the reduced incident reports. Inquiries about a previously open manhole cover and whether 911 should be used were addressed: 911 can be used, but reports may be routed to Norfolk Cares.

Guest Presentation – Paula Miller, Director of Communications and Community Engagement HRBT Expansion Project. Project Scope: 10-mile corridor from Mallory St. (Hampton) to Patrol Rd. (Norfolk), part of a 45- mile express lanes network. Project Value: \$4 billion; 92% funded by regional taxes, 8% state/federal.

Construction Innovations: First use of bored tunnels in Virginia (replacing immersed tube method). Tunnel boring machine “Mary,” 46 ft. in diameter, named after NASA engineer Mary Jackson. Slurry treatment plant named after Katherine Johnson; built on the South Island.

Progress: First tunnel bored and completed in April 2024. “Mary” is 65% through boring the second tunnel as of June. 1,194 tunnel rings will be constructed; 785 completed. Trestles and Bridges: New “mega trestle” being phased in on Norfolk side (8 lanes, 6–20 feet higher than existing trestles). All existing trestles will be removed; concrete will be re-used for artificial reefs in partnership with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Environmental Efforts: 24 environmental permits secured. Displacement of nesting birds accomplished using border collies and alternative habitats on barges and at Fort Wool. Historic Finds: Civil War cannonballs, 1823 shipwreck timber, and mastodon bones (12,000–50,000 years old). Items are on display at the HRBT Welcome Center on 4th View Street, open twice monthly. Completion Date: Spring 2027 (on track).

Public Engagement: Website: hrbtexpansion.org , monthly newsletter, podcast (“HRBT Tunnel Talk”), and social media for updates, Civic League members encouraged to visit the Welcome Center and LOVE sign.

In Other Action: Neighborhood Listening Survey open until June 14. Available via Facebook or by request to riverforrestcivicleague@gmail.com Results will inform the civic league’s upcoming strategic plan and be shared in the fall.

Winning ticket: Dustin Wallace. Members were invited to remain after the meeting for an ice cream social. Motion to adjourn was made by Recording Secretary Suzanne Duncan; seconded by Trustee Dustin Wallace; and approved by all present. Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.



Bill Bunch leads the neighborhood clean-ups and KK German (not pictured here) handles the administrative duties of reporting efforts to the City Of Norfolk and alerting a list of volunteers to scheduled clean ups. KK also works with Clara Allen to clean up along Newtown Road in Easton Place. Jeri Zurbuchen (pictured here) often cleans up Military Gardens on her own time when she sees the trash piling up at that entrance to our area. If you want to be put on the volunteer notification list, contact KK at 757-714-2335.



Sheriff Joe Baron



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240 E. McGinnis
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337 W. McGinnis
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335 E. McGinnis
Sold: \$305,000



321 E. McGinnis
Sold: \$320,000



236 E. McGinnis
Listed: \$460,000

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