

Each year, the City of Winchester and several community agencies organize Charles B. Rouss Day to celebrate his affection for and generosity toward Winchester more than a century ago. This year, one of the celebrations will be held on his Feb. 11 birthday, which is Monday. From 8 a.m. until noon, free birthday cupcakes will be given out (while supplies last) at Rouss City Hall, 15 N. Cameron St. From noon until 5:15 p.m., guided tours of City Hall will be offered.



JEFF TAYLOR/The Winchester Star

Employees of Patton's Masonry in Edinburg work Wednesday on the foundation of the new self-sanitizing public restroom facilities, which are part of the Infrastructure Improvement Project on the Loudoun Street Mall. Construction on the \$7.1 million project began Jan. 2 and is scheduled for substantial completion by April 30. The city will maintain the restroom at no additional cost to downtown merchants. There will be a charge to use the facilities, but the cost has yet to be determined. A decision will be made before the end of the project. See a chart showing the progress on the Loudoun Street Mall, Page B3

Outdoor dining rules floated for downtown

By VIC BRADSHAW
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Proposed guidelines for outdoor dining areas downtown have been forwarded to the Winchester Planning Commission from the Old Town Development Board (OTDB).

City Planner Will Moore told board members at Thursday's meeting that the commission is to discuss the possible changes this month. The new rules would be incorporated into broader zoning ordinance amendments regarding the use of public space by restaurateurs and retailers and forwarded to City Council for action.

The rules were developed by the OTDB's Design Committee and approved by that panel on Jan. 17. Their target is regulation of the use of public space in the primary and secondary taxing district — the area bound by Piccadilly, Cameron, Cork and Braddock streets.

Guidelines for furniture and fixtures, planters and barriers are the key components of the regulations.

Tables, chairs and planters are to be stone or metal. Tables and chairs "may not be fluorescent or of a strikingly bright or vivid color," the guidelines state, and planters "must complement the design of barrier fencing and the overall aesthetic of Old Town."

Umbrella dimensions, design and materials are addressed, as is the maximum height for planters. Plants must be live and cannot be taller than 9 feet.

Fencing must be metal and black in color. It must be free-standing and not attached to a building or the sidewalk. Height and accessibility rules also are established.

Restaurateurs meeting the guidelines can have their plans approved quickly by city staff. Those who prefer to have fea-

Retreat addresses revitalization plan for the city's core

By VIC BRADSHAW
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Stakeholders spent more than four hours Thursday establishing plans to continue the revitalization of the city's downtown core.

Members of the Old Town Development Board (OTDB) and its subcommittees held a retreat at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley to develop priorities for each panel and begin creating plans to achieve their goals.

"A lot of people now have picture and sound on how much work needs to be done," Lauri Bridgeforth, the board's chairwoman, said following the planning session. "I think we have a very good skeleton. We're now attaching some muscle to that skeleton."

The day's primary focus was establishing lists of issues facing downtown that the OTDB can help address and beginning planning to implement the improvements. Much of the work was done in committee groups.

Among the tasks committee members designated for action were:

- Creating livable, workable and cultural space. Providing Wi-Fi was one of the recommended actions.
- Evaluating the Loudoun Street Mall's redesign after the ongoing construction project is finished.
- Consolidating a calendar of events and cross-promoting those events.
- Establishing a place where visitors can get informa-

See **Retreat**, Page B3

tures that don't meet the guidelines will have to go through one or more city boards to gain approval, and their plans can be rejected.

Potential celebrations for the completion of the ongoing construction project on the Loudoun Street Mall also were shared at the meeting. An ice cream social with entertainment and an event themed after the BBC television show "Downton Abbey" were men-

tioned.

Also discussed were the creation of two or three task forces to deal with specific projects.

Both the OTDB and City Council have made branding downtown a priority, and one task force would focus on that effort.

"We need to give an excellent immediate first impression of Winchester," board member

See **OTDB**, Page B3

Clarke group reveals its ideas for school safety

By REBECCA LAYNE
The Winchester Star

BERRYVILLE — Clarke County Public Schools could be beefing up its security if a local group's recommendations are approved.

The School Board Safety and Security Committee met Thursday for the third time to come up with ways to make the division's schools safer. The group of eight to 10 people included parents, school officials, Clarke County Sheriff Tony Roper and Berryville Police Chief Neal White.

The committee was formed in the wake of the Dec. 14 shootings in Newtown, Conn., that killed 26 people, including 20 elementary school students.

Community member Neil Raper, speaking on behalf of himself and others on the committee, suggested that the division adopt a "low-key" approach to exterior security enhancements, so "we don't

look like Fort Knox when somebody comes to visit."

Committee recommendations included installing cameras outside the schools, putting sensors on exterior doors that would immediately alert the school office and other unspecified entities of an intrusion, putting in locked and controlled entries in all schools, using cameras or intercoms to identify visitors, and placing a panic button and interior locks in all classrooms.

Wherever there's a sensor on a building, there should also be an assessment device, such as a camera, Raper said. Video surveillance for all playground areas was recommended as well.

The group also determined that each school campus should have a security officer present at all times.

Putting material on exterior windows making it impossible for

See **Clarke**, Page B3



SCOTT MASON/The Winchester Star

Firefighters work to open the top of a sawdust collector Thursday morning at Cochran's Lumber and Millwork on Jack Enders Boulevard in Berryville in an effort to extinguish a fire.

Cochran's Lumber fire labeled minor

By MELISSA BOUGHTON
The Winchester Star

BERRYVILLE — No one was injured Thursday and only minor damage was reported after a small fire at a local business.

Employees at Cochran's Lumber and Millwork Inc. — located at 523 Jack Enders Blvd. in Berryville — noticed smoke in the business just before 11 a.m. and contacted fire and rescue crews.

"It was just a very small fire in our dust collection box," said Rhonda Lamberson, who works in

office administration.

According to the company's website, they provide "high quality flooring and millwork for custom residential, commercial and historical preservation projects."

Lamberson said the blaze — caused by a small spark — was put out quickly and did minor damage to some internal parts of the company's dust collection system.

She added that the parts would need less than \$5,000 worth of repairs and the system is expected to be fully up and running again by

See **Fire**, Page B3

Animal case delayed again

By MELISSA BOUGHTON
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — A case involving a local man charged with animal cruelty was delayed Thursday.

Russell L. Ebersole — who owns Aberdeen Acres Pet Care Center in Stephenson — faces 13 misdemeanor counts of animal cruelty. He has denied the allega-

tions.

Ebersole appeared in Frederick County Circuit Court with local attorney Roger Inger.

His case — which has now been continued four times since he was indicted in November — was postponed until 9 a.m. March 7.

The pet care center owner has been under investigation for ani-

See **Cruelty**, Page B6

New Internet option available in Frederick

By MATT ARMSTRONG
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Frederick County residents who are dissatisfied with their Internet service can test drive a fledgling Virginia provider's service in the county's Information Technology office.

Christopher Hild, director of operations for Manassas-based NOVEC Energy Solutions Inc. and its Internet-providing subsidiary NOVECnet, demonstrated his company's satellite Internet capabilities during a gathering in the IT office on Thursday.

While streaming a YouTube

video on an iPad, Hild used another tablet device to stream a program on Netflix. Both devices used NOVECnet's Internet, much like multiple devices in the same home using the same connection, and a speed test performed on one device by downloading a document while the other device continued to stream a video showed little impact on the speed, Hild said.

NOVECnet started enrolling customers in June 2012, and currently has about 200 customers — primarily in the rural western parts of Loudoun County. But Frederick County residents can also enroll

See **Internet**, Page B6



GINGER PERRY/The Winchester Star

Walter Banks, director of Information Technology for Frederick County, demonstrates the Internet speed of the service provided by NOVECnet and powered Exede, a satellite broadband available in Frederick County, using an iPad that has been set up in the county's offices. The county's IT office has set up the iPad so that residents can come test the service.

Man accused of using business to embezzle money

By MELISSA BOUGHTON
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — A local businessman who was arrested in November for smuggling cigarettes was indicted Thursday for using his restaurant to embezzle money from the state.

Xue Wen Guan, 53, of Winchester, was indicted in Frederick County Circuit

See **Indicted**, Page B6



Xue Wen Guan

Site manager picked for Cedar Creek



Photo courtesy of National Park Service

Amy Bracewell, a six-year National Park Service veteran who has been named site manager for Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, said Thursday that she expects to be at her office in Middletown by early to mid-March.

By **MATT ARMSTRONG**
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Days after announcing a new superintendent for two parks in the area, the National Park Service (NPS) has named a site manager for Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park.

Amy Bracewell, a six-year NPS veteran originally from Atlanta and currently working as a historian at the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, said in a phone interview Thursday that she expects to be at her office in Middletown by early to mid-March.

"I'm really excited to be a part of this community," she said. "There is a lot of great history and community engagement in the Shenandoah Valley, and I'm looking forward to working with all the community partners and organizations to help share our collective message and stories with our community and visitors."

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove

National Historical Park, located just south of Middletown, was established just over a decade ago. Diann Jacox — the park's first superintendent, who retired on Jan. 3 — worked to establish a general management plan during her time at the park, and Bracewell said she's eager to implement that plan.

"I'm really looking forward to making the [plan] a reality, helping the partner groups and the [park's] team start some projects from the plan, getting community involvement and building on the great partnership [the park staff and community] have created," she said.

While she'd never lived in the area, Bracewell has visited the Shenandoah Valley for vacations and has friend in Winchester.

"It's such a beautiful area with so much to offer in terms of recreation, cultural festivals and history," she said.

The NPS announced last week that Jim Northup, a 32-year park

service veteran, will assume the role of superintendent for both Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park and Shenandoah National Park. He will replace both Jacox and Martha Bogle, who retired as Shenandoah's superintendent in January.

Bracewell will report to Northup.

"Amy's background, which blends expertise in historic preservation and relevant public programming through partnerships, is an ideal fit for Cedar Creek and Belle Grove," NPS Northeast Regional Director Dennis Reidenbach stated in a news release. "Her energy and professionalism will immediately be put to work under the direction of Superintendent Jim Northup to implement the vision set forth in the general management plan and by the park's significant partners."

— Contact Matt Armstrong at marmstrong@winchesterstar.com

Internet

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for service.

Since the company provides Internet via a satellite dish — about as big as those used for television service — Hild said NOVECnet can be a better option for rural customers than other service providers.

"That's usually the reason people talk to us — they can't get Comcast and they can't get [Verizon] FiOS," Hild said. "If you can get FiOS, then we're not a product that you'd be interested in, and if you're happy with Comcast, then there's no reason [to change]. . . But if you have dial-up [Internet], we are what you want, or if you're not happy with Verizon or Comcast."

While satellite Internet providers have developed bad reputations in the past due to inclement weather negatively affecting service, Hild said that NOVECnet customers have not report-

ed rain, storms or clouds noticeably affecting their Internet service.

He added that NOVECnet could be used by either small or home-based businesses, but that the service would not be ideal for larger businesses.

Walter Banks, Frederick County's IT director, said following the presentation that NOVECnet's iPad will be available in the IT office for about 45 days if local residents want to test the provider's speed and compare it to their current home service.

The IT office is located on the first floor of the Frederick County Administration Building at 107 N. Kent St. The public can test out Internet service providers during the office's normal hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

While NOVECnet is the first Internet provider to set up a demonstration in the IT office, Banks hopes others in the area will do the same

to show residents the range of options available if they're not satisfied with or currently don't have Internet service.

According to Banks, four primary areas in the county — Gore, Shawneeland, Star Tannery and Mountain Falls — are underserved by Internet providers.

"A lot of residents had expressed to me through emails, through phone calls, through conversations on the street that basically they heard about this provider," Banks said. "When we sat down and met with some of the small providers in the area, we said 'Hey, we certainly understand your need to get the word out [about your service]. . . We'll offer a space if you offer the equipment and the installation.'"

— Contact Matt Armstrong at marmstrong@winchesterstar.com

Indicted

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Court for seven counts of embezzlement of \$200 or more — by virtue of his operation of Guan's Garden, a Chinese restaurant located north of the city at Rutherford Crossing — and two counts of conducting unlawful financial transactions.

The indictments stem from cigarette smuggling and money laundering, according to Frederick County Sheriff's Office Capt. Allen Sibert.

He said that investigators still are getting figures together to determine exactly how much money Guan allegedly embezzled from the state.

However, a search warrant was executed at the business in January in which bank records, sales receipts and a ledger belonging to the restaurant were recovered.

During an examination of

records and after consulting a Virginia Department of Taxation criminal investigator, it appears that Guan's Garden recorded gross sales of around \$24,000 in October.

"[The tax investigator] reports that it appears that Guan's Garden underreported gross sales for the month of October 2012 by \$9,000-\$10,000," the warrant reads. "Additional examination of the ledger has found that it appears that there is a history of underreporting gross sales to the Virginia Department of Taxation over the past year."

Investigators also recovered more than 300 cartons of cigarettes and large sums of cash in \$20 denominations, according to the war-

rant.

The investigation into Guan's restaurant began last November after he and two other local men were charged with one count each of possession of contraband cigarettes with intent to distribute.

They were caught after allegedly buying large quantities of cigarettes from a local Sheetz convenience store.

The case remains under investigation.

Guan is expected to appear at 9 a.m. Feb. 22 in Frederick County Circuit Court on the indictment charges.

— Contact Melissa Boughton at mboughton@winchesterstar.com

Cruelty

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mal cruelty since August 2011, when two former employees filed a complaint about the use of abusive training practices.

He is accused of choking, beating, kicking and torturing several dogs in his care.

According to its website, Aberdeen Acres is a grooming, training and boarding facility that specializes in basic obedience, agility, protection and service dog training.

It is unclear if the alleged abuse took place at the pet center.

— Contact Melissa Boughton at mboughton@winchesterstar.com

Smithsonian hosts series on black history

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Smithsonian is celebrating Black History Month with a series of programs in February.

Throughout the month, the National Museum of American History will present performances by historical characters in "Join the Student Sit-Ins." Visitors will meet a civil rights ac-

tivist from 1960 and take part in a training session based on an actual civil rights manual to prepare for a sit-in.

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Friday, February 8: Buffet, 5-8 p.m.
Band: "Fast Lane" 8 p.m. - Midnight
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Friday, February 15: Buffet, 5-8 p.m.
Band: "Virginians" 8 p.m.-Midnight
Saturday, February 16:
WOTM Valentine's Day Dance
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Queen of Hearts Every Thursday 7 p.m.
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