

THE VINTON Messenger

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Town leaders reflect on accomplishments, Chamber selects new officers

By Debbie Adams

VINTON—The week of November 16 was a busy one for local dignitaries with the State of Roanoke County address on Nov. 17, the new Vinton Library opening on Nov. 18, and the annual State of the Town address on Nov. 19.

Each November the Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Vinton join forces to reflect on the past year and also to elect officers for the Chamber for the coming year. They sponsor an early morning breakfast meeting for local government leaders, town staff, and local business leaders.

The mayor and town manager generally open the meeting with a Powerpoint presentation on the accomplishments of the past year. This year the Mayor took the podium to the music of "Celebrate" as he said Vinton has much to be joyful about this year.

He praised the staff of the Town of Vinton and members of town council for their dedication and their hard work every day in always doing what is best for the town.

Grose said that Vinton embodies the best of the terms "partnership and cooperation" as churches and organizations, the chamber, Roanoke County, and the town all pull together for the common good.

He focused especially on the joint efforts of Vinton and Roanoke County is working together to establish 24-hour career fire protection in Vinton and East Roanoke County and the renovations to the Vinton Fire Station as a result of that collaboration.

He thanked former Board of Supervisors Chairman Mike Altizer for his vision and efforts to locate the new library in downtown Vinton and current Board Chair Jason Peters and County Administrator Tom Gates for their continued support of projects in Vinton.

Grose singled out the opening of the Third Street boat launch as part of the Blueway and Greenway system in the area for its contribution to the local economy. The replacement of water lines along Jefferson Avenue which are 100 years old significantly improved not only water service but fire suppression services in that area near downtown. Other infrastructure upgrades were made in the South Hampton and Blandford Avenue areas.

He complimented the Chamber for its "Eat in Vinton" guide and the "In Vinton" campaign in general.

He described the reasoning behind the town's purchase of the Gish's Mill property (formerly Holdren's Country Store) as a gateway into the town and as a connector between the current Greenway system and the planned trail to be extended through Vinyard Park. The town plans to involve the public in discussions about uses for the property as they have with other projects.

Grose described upcoming projects with improvements on the Farmers' Market financed by the downtown revitalization grant. The Vinton Market Stage will be renovated and doubled in size with significant improvements to "its architectural appearance." Sidewalks are to be completed in the coming months from the Walnut Avenue bridge area to the Farmers' Market. Work will begin in the near future on the Tinker and Glade Creek Greenway trails.

The Roland E. Cook Loft re-development will get underway early in the new year. Several developers have expressed an interest in the old William Byrd High School property as well.

Grose praised Finance Director/Treasurer Barry Thompson and his staff for the town's 20th annual Certificate of Achievement for its excellent CAFR report.

He didn't avoid the sore subject of the Vinton Municipal Pool which "is a drain on scarce resources needed to provide core services." The decision has been made to accept bids for a private operator to take over the pool.

This year the State of the Town address was more poignant than most, since Vinton Town Manager Chris Lawrence will be leaving at the end of the year to accept a job with the Town of Blacksburg. Mayor Grose said that the town had been "blessed" to have Lawrence for seven years.

Lawrence has contributed significantly to the improvements and achievements in Vinton which are now culminating in the opening of the library, the soon-to-be completed downtown revitalization, upgrades and replacements involving the infrastructure along Walnut and Jefferson Avenues, and the re-development of the Roland E. Cook School soon to get underway.

One slide of the presentation most indicative of the growing state of Vinton's economy was the list of businesses which have opened or expanded in Vinton in 2015, including Magnets USA, Atlantic Emergency Solutions, Support Systems, CW Security Solutions, the Roanoke Auction House, R.P.M. record shop, the new library, D.H. Griffin scrap metal and demolition, Walker Insulation, Blaze Small Engine Repair, Vinton Bowling, and the HIVE business incubator, which is home to about 24 entrepreneurs.

Lawrence told the crowd that there has been a \$2.25 million investment in construction this year in addition to the library. Over 150 new jobs have been created.



The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce elected new officers and board members at the State of the Town Address and Membership meeting on November 19. Shown left to right (front row) are Mayor Brad Grose, VACC Executive Director Angie Chewning, VACC Second Vice President Allison Finney, executive assistant Kathryn Sowers, and Dr. Sonia Bolen. Second row (left to right) are First Vice President Bruce Mayer, Jim Reynolds, Keith Liles, Justin Davison, Town Manager Chris Lawrence, Joy Payne, Dr. Richard Turner, and John Conner.

The focus of the meeting then switched to conducting the VACC business of electing new officers and board members. Angie Chewning, executive director of the VACC, assisted by executive assistant Kathryn Sowers, supervised the process, which culminated in the re-election of Todd Creasy as President, Bruce Mayer as First Vice President, and Allison Finney as Second Vice President

Returning members of the Board of Directors for 2016 will include past president Liz Lively, Tommy Wood of Wood's Service Centers, Keith Liles of Allstate Insurance, Justin Davison from Member ONE, Kynn Deadrick of K & T Entertainment, Matthew Marry of Tuck Chiropractic, John Conner of New York Life, Jim Reynolds of Reynolds Grain, Joy Payne of Vinton Roofing, WBHS principal Dr. Richard Turner, Mayor Grose, and Vinton Special Programs Director Mary Beth Layman.

Veterinarian Dr. Sonia Bolen and Sherri Fullen of BB& T are joining the board for the first time. When a new town manager is selected, he or she will also become part of the board of directors. The officers and board members were installed by Mayor Grose.

The town and the chamber thanked Teaberry's for catering the State of the Town address.