

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

WORKING IN ABINGDON:
Contractors work to repair downed lines after storm

PAGE A2



BRINGING HOME THE GOLD:
Gibson's fourth title fuels win for Rural Retreat

PAGE B1



Tuesday, February 24, 2026

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WASHINGTON COUNTY

INSIDE OUTDOOR FUN

Mini-golf course, golf simulator business opening in Damascus

Mendota Trail to downtown connector could cost \$16.6 million

DAVID MCGEE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — The Bristol Virginia City Council will hear an update about the proposed Mendota Trail to downtown connector route during its Feb. 24 meeting.

Last year the city contracted Alta Planning and Design to conduct a feasibility study of developing a roughly three-mile connector route between the Mendota Trailhead and Cumberland Square Park.

The 12.5-mile hiking and biking trail follows a former railroad bed from the city limits at a site off Island Road and extends through Washington County to the town of Mendota.

The draft report shows the consultants are expected to recommend a four-phase, \$16.6 million extension that includes:

- \$3.48 million for 0.6-mile from the park to Piedmont Avenue to the intersection with Euclid Avenue, with a sidepath with 600 feet of bike lanes and sidewalks.

- \$3.58 million for 0.5 miles along the Euclid Avenue median from Virginia Middle School across Commonwealth Avenue.

- \$4.17 million for 1.4 miles from s from Euclid Aven., through the future redevelopment site, crossing Bob Morrison Boulevard along Division Street and Susong Branch, to Crescent Drive and then along Little Creek, ending at Keys Street.

- \$5.42 million for one mile from Keys Street, moving into some terrain that will require switchbacks and then back down to G&G Country Store, where it connects into an inactive rail line along Little Creek to the trailhead.

The proposed trail extension is aimed at providing recreational opportunities and economic development. The study was funded by grants from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Mendota Trail Conservancy.

The draft copy of the report identifies opportunities and challenges for the project.

“The northern terminus at the Bristol Trailhead presents challenges at the Pittstown intersection, with potential options including use of highway right-of-way or nearby road corridors,” according to the report.

Please see **TRAIL**, Page A6



CAROLYN WILSON PHOTOS

Susan Hopson and her husband Tom Hopson give their 10-year-old granddaughter Harlow Pensinger a few tips on putting on their new mini golf course. The couple, along with business partner Teresa Parker, are opening Trail Town Adventure Golf in Damascus in the coming weeks.

CAROLYN R. WILSON
Special to the Bristol Herald Courier

DAMASCUS, Va. — — A new outdoor-themed indoor mini-golf course and golf simulator business is taking shape in downtown Damascus.

With an indoor waterfall and photo murals of the region adorning the walls, Trail Town Adventure Golf is designed to reflect the many outdoor activities which define the town's trail culture.

Bringing the outdoors indoors is the theme for the new business, located in the former General Dollar Store building on West Laurel Avenue.

The 18-hole indoor course celebrates the hiking, biking, fishing and other outdoor activities which attract thousands of visitors to the region each year.

Owners Tom and Susan Hopson recently moved to Southwest Virginia from Atlanta after “falling in love” with the town after hiking the Appalachian Trail.

“We have a strong need to do something for the town. There are so many businesses that are gone after the hurricane,” Susan Hopson said.

Her husband comes from a golfing family, but she knew little

Please see **MINI GOLF**, Page A6



Tom Hopson, co-owner of Trail Town Adventure Golf, tries out the new simulation golf course where participants can choose from at least 50 golf courses from around the world to play an entire 18-hole round.

Virginia Senate passes on its budget proposal **PAGE A7**

Inside

GENERAL ASSEMBLY	A7
HEALTH	A8
OPINION	A9
REGION	A2

Weather

Clearing Skies
High 40
Low 34
Forecast • A10





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