

CULPEPER STAR EXPONENT

SAFE Mardi Gras Luxury Bingo is back this weekend. Fun for a great cause

COMMUNITY, A3



3 low-fuss, one-pan dinners perfect for busy weeknights

LIVELY, INSIDE

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

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Dominion plans \$1B super-high voltage line

DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

A joint venture of Dominion Energy and three other energy giants is planning the state's biggest-capacity power line, a \$1 billion project, to bring more electricity to power-hungry central and Northern Virginia.

The 115-mile, 765-kilovolt line would move electricity from the Ohio River valley, where utilities can produce more than customers need, to Virginia, said Adam Maguire, electric transmission strategic

project advisor for Dominion.

Only American Electric Power, the parent of Appalachian Power, Hydro-Quebec and an upstate New York connection to the Quebec grid have lines that handle that much power. Dominion's backbone high-voltage transmission system uses 500-kilovolt lines.

But one end of an American Electric Power 765-kilovolt line ends in Campbell County, just east of Lynchburg.

The joint venture wants to build

a line from there north to Culpeper County, where a new substation will step the voltage down to feed into existing 500- and 230-kilovolt lines feeding central and Northern Virginia.

Dominion, which is handling the permitting and routing work, has narrowed the likely routes to three, running through Campbell, Appomattox, Buckingham, Fluvanna, Louisa, Orange and Culpeper counties, and possibly Goochland and Spotsylvania counties.

American Electric, with six decades of experience with 765-kilovolt lines, will handle engineering and construction; its safety and operating procedures will serve as a base for Dominion to build upon, Maguire said.

The wires would be carried on towers 135 to 160 feet tall, on a 200-foot right of way, somewhat wider than Dominion's usual rights of way for its transmission lines.

Please see DOMINION, Page A4

SECURITY CONCERN

Replacing antique doors at courthouse will be costly

Bid three times, project comes in at \$389K for 13 doors

ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION
Culpeper Star-Exponent

Grappling with anticipated astronomical costs of cumulative space and security needs at the 1870s historic courthouse, the board of supervisors appears to be advancing the replacement of its antique outside doors.

The considerable project involves 13 doors of different shapes and sizes around the courthouse — seven with transom windows. The county has bid on the project three times in the past three years, with one bid in 2024 being nearly \$1 million.

The county awarded a \$250,000 contract for the work last year, but the contractor pulled out due to supply issues, Environmental Services Director Paul Howard told the Building & Grounds Committee at its meeting earlier this week.

The committee discussed the latest single bid of \$389,000 from Janus Construction of Beltway, Maryland, to replace the exterior wood doors with a combination of bulletproof doors and steel security doors. Finished carpentry and painting, which will be done under a separate contract.

Working on a historic structure with multiple-size door openings, bullet-proof door demand and availability, restricting the work to weekends when the court is not in session, and providing security have been cited as bid deterrents and cost factors, according to the county.

The door replacements are based on a U.S. Marshal's security analysis of the courthouse conducted last year at the court's request. The judge has ordered the county to take steps to address security issues at both the jail and courthouse, due to overcrowding and high caseloads. A study done last year found a new courthouse will cost \$115 million.

Meanwhile, there's \$268,555 in the budget for the exterior door project, leaving a \$119,960 shortfall coming from the general fund, including a 5% contingency.

Howard told the board committee they called all the local contractors and previous bidders to see if they would do the project: "We got one. No one is interested in custom doors," he said, noting the work was "a pressing project" for court security.

East Fairfax District Supervisor David Lee said his concern was the time.

Please see DOORS, Page A4



CARVER FOOD ENTERPRISE CENTER

Carver Food Enterprise Center Executive Director Gretchen Ledmor (right) makes a batch of bone broth with Anchor Mere Farms of Brandy Station during a recent processing session in the commercial kitchen.

Commercial kitchen receives \$1.2M USDA grant to expand co-packing

ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION
Culpeper Star-Exponent

Focused work rooted in making the community healthier just got a super-sized boost. The Carver Food Enterprise Center is preparing to triple in size, greatly expanding its reach as a processing and co-packing facility for local farms — thanks to support from the state and the feds.

Governor Abigail Spanberger last week announced nearly \$5 million in support for 12 "Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure" programs across Virginia. The USDA funding through the Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services includes \$1.2 million for the buildout of the Carver community kitchen.

The expansion will increase the facility's

production capacity from its current 30 gallons to more than 600 gallons of healthy food at a time, according to kitchen organizers, while greatly expanding freezer space. The project is slated for completion by spring of 2027 in the facility located at the back of the historic Black high school in Rapidan. Culpeper County owns the multi-use building.

The nonprofit kitchen, a keystone project of George Washington Carver Agriculture Research Center, has been operating for over two years in a portion of the refurbished school that educated students from four counties from 1948 to 1968, during segregation.

Please see AGRICULTURE, Page A4

Jaslene Garcia and Macie Hoffman are this week's Academic Spotlight

PAGE A3

Weather
Clouds and sun
High 63 • Low 46
Forecast • A6

Inside

360	INSIDE	LIVELY	INSIDE	SPORTS	B1
CLASSIFIEDS	B4	OBITUARIES	A3	WEATHER	A6
COMMUNITY	A3	OPINION	A5		

