

VIRGINIA BAPTIST HOSPITAL: Centra set to hold public planning events. **A2**

REGION: Staunton River, LCA land players on all-state basketball teams. **B1**

The News & Advance

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WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

Attacks rise on energy facilities

US eases sanctions on Venezuelan oil to raise supply and cool prices

JON GAMBRELL, SAMY MAGDY AND JAMEY KEATEN
The Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Israel killed another top Iranian official — the intelligence minister — in its campaign against the

Islamic Republic's leadership, and reportedly attacked an Iranian offshore natural gas field Wednesday amid the war's escalating pressure on the region's economic lifeblood: energy.

Iran took aim at its Persian Gulf neighbors' energy facilities since the war started on Feb. 28, and made the Strait of Hormuz shipping channel — through which one-fifth of the world's oil travels — nearly impassable.

On Wednesday, Iran struck a province of Saudi Arabia where many oil fields are located, and it threatened to ratchet up strikes against oil and gas infrastructure in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, too.

The price of oil surged another 5% to over \$108 a barrel on international markets, increasing the price of gasoline and other goods, and squeezing the global economy. The price of Brent crude,

the international benchmark for oil, is now up close to 50% since the start of the war.

As the Trump administration looks for ways to boost oil supplies and lower prices, the Treasury Department eased sanctions Wednesday on Venezuela, saying U.S. companies will be allowed to do business with the country's state-owned oil and gas company.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said Iranian Intelligence

Minister Esmail Khatib was killed in an overnight strike and promised "significant surprises" to come. Iran retaliated by unleashing attacks against its Persian Gulf neighbors and Israel, where two

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■ **MORE INSIDE:** US intel official says Iran's regime still intact but refuses to discuss talks with Trump about war. **Page A5**



JUSTIN FAULCONER, THE NEWS & ADVANCE FILE

Victoria Hanson, executive director of the Amherst County Economic Development Authority, looks out a window at the former Seminole Elementary School in Madison Heights on March 3, 2020. A year later, it opened its doors as the brand-new Westie apartments.

'An asset to Amherst County'

After 12 years at helm, EDA executive director Victoria Hanson retires

JUSTIN FAULCONER
The News & Advance

After 12 years leading the charge for Amherst County's interests and future, Victoria Hanson has retired as executive director of the county's economic development authority.

Hanson said the decision to retire was filled with mixed emotions because she cares deeply



Hanson

about the work the Economic Development Authority (EDA) has done for the county in her tenure. "When you truly believe in your work and invest yourself in it for many years, it becomes personal — almost like your 'work child,'" Hanson said. "The EDA has exciting opportunities ahead, which makes stepping away especially difficult, but after

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much thought and reflection, I decided it was time to retire and begin the next chapter of my life."

Hanson's last day on the job was Feb. 17. Lori Saunders, the EDA's assistant director who

has nine years of experience with the authority, has taken over as executive director. Serving as the EDA's director has been one of the great privileges of Hanson's career, she said.

The EDA and Amherst County have made meaningful progress in attracting investment, creating jobs, strengthening partnerships and building a strong foundation for future growth, according to Hanson.

"I am deeply proud of how far our economic development

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LRCC | COUNCIL RACE

Firehouse primary to be held to pick noms

GOP also aims to use ranked-choice voting to select 3 candidates

MARK HAND
The News & Advance

The Lynchburg Republican City Committee voted Monday to hold a firehouse primary in late May where local Republicans will get to pick who they want to represent the party in this fall's elections for the three at-large seats on city council.

The local party said it chose a firehouse primary rather than a state-run primary to prevent Democrats from skewing the GOP nominees. In state-run primaries, a voter does not have to be registered with a party to participate in its primary.

Two years ago, in the ward elections, Ward IV Councilman Chris Faraldi faced a Republican primary challenge from local business owner Peter Alexander. Faraldi narrowly won the state-run Republican primary and went on to defeat Alexander, who ran a write-in campaign, and Democrat April Watson in the general election.

Mayor Larry Taylor and At-large City Councilwoman Stephanie Reed already have announced their plans to run for

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THE NEWS & ADVANCE FILE

Bob Klima stands near the doorway where citizens continue to pile in for a Nelson County Board of Supervisors meeting addressing the Second Amendment sanctuary resolution on Dec. 10, 2019, at the Nelson County General District Court, the board's meeting room.

NELSON COUNTY | SECOND AMENDMENT

Board reaffirms sanctuary status

Passes resolution that takes aim at Va. Dems' pursuit of stricter laws

JUSTIN FAULCONER
The News & Advance

In an expression of a "deep commitment to the rights of all citizens to keep and bear arms," the Nelson County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 to approve a resolution reaffirming the county's Second Amendment sanctuary status.

The resolution, which Supervisor Ernie Reed opposed during the March 10 vote, states the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed on and it takes aim at stricter gun laws advancing in the Democratic-controlled state legislature.

"Certain legislation publicly proposed for the 2026 session of the Virginia General Assembly could have the effect of infringing on the rights of law-abiding citizens to keep and bear arms, as guaranteed by the Second

Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article 1, Section 13 of the Constitution of Virginia," the resolution reads. "The Nelson County Board of Supervisors is concerned about the passage of any bill containing language which could be interpreted as infringing on the rights of the citizens of Nelson County to keep and bear arms or could begin a slippery slope of restrictions on the Constitutional rights of the citizens of Nelson

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