



QBs Dart, Williams shine as others flail in preseason

SPORTS, 1B

The News Leader

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2025 | NEWSLEADER.COM

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Popular YouTube show to feature Marino's diner



Marino's Lunch in Staunton will be featured on America's Best Restaurants Roadshow in February 2026.

PHOTOS BY PATRICK HITE/THE NEWS LEADER

America's Best Restaurants Roadshow to film at the iconic Staunton eatery

Patrick Hite
Staunton News Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

When Felicia Sheets purchased and reopened Marino's Lunch in Staunton, it was a dream come true. The Augusta County native had been working in restaurants since she was 15. Running her own establishment was something she had always wanted to do.

That it was Marino's made it extra special. It was her grandmother's favorite spot to eat and her dad used to accompany her for many a lunch at Marino's.

It was a year and a half ago, March 2024, that she reopened the iconic Staunton diner at 901 N. Augusta St. Now she'll be getting some national attention. America's Best Restaurants Roadshow, a YouTube show with 14,000 subscribers, is coming to Staunton in February to film at the restaurant. "They travel across the United States," Sheets said. "Each year they pick so many restaurants in each state. They select you by nominations, reviews, food, history. They reached out to

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Marino's General Manager Jennifer Johnson and owner Felicia Sheets.

Man gets 8 years for sexually assaulting teenager

Brad Zinn
Staunton News Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

A man who sexually assaulted an Augusta County teenager is headed to prison for eight years after pleading guilty in court last week to a felony charge.

Michael L. Smith, 39, of Verona, was convicted of object sexual penetration by force. He entered the plea on Aug. 11 in Augusta County Circuit Court.

Smith came under investigation last year after a teenage girl reported that he'd fondled her, according to Augusta County Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Lorna Hilliard.

The victim was under the age of 15, Hilliard said, and the sexual abuse took place last summer over the course of a couple of months.

Smith was facing three additional charges of taking indecent liberties with a minor and three charges of contributing to the delinquency of a minor, but those charges were not pursued after a plea agreement was reached.

Hilliard said that some of the other allegations involved Smith reportedly groping the teen's breasts. He pleaded guilty to the most serious charge he was facing, she said.

According to the prosecutor, after the teen said Smith gave her alcohol, he then fondled her, resulting in the charge of object sexual penetration. Smith also provided the child with a cell phone so they could communicate through Snapchat.

After Smith came under investigation, he was interviewed at the Augusta County Sheriff's Office and tearfully confessed to sexually abusing the teen, Hilliard said. Smith was arrested May 28, a day after being indicted by the Augusta County grand jury, court records show.

Smith, who had no prior convictions and was represented by Tyler Jerrell of the Staunton Public Defender's Office, was sentenced to 40 years in prison with 32 years suspended, leaving him with eight years to serve.

Smith will also be placed on 10 years of supervised probation following his release from prison.

THE AGENDA

Beekeeping, mass rezoning under the spotlight in Staunton

Lyra Bordelon
Staunton News Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Waynesboro City Council and Staunton Planning Commission are among the government boards and commissions meeting over the next week.

The Staunton Planning Commission will hold several public hearings when it meets on Aug. 21. A link to watch the hearing remotely is available on the commission's agenda.

First, the commission will hold a public hearing on a comprehensive

mass rezoning of "existing nonconforming residential uses in area zoned business and industrial in the historic districts and the south side." This item is expected to come before Staunton City Council in September.

"Historically, many properties in Staunton have been used for residential purposes despite being zoned for business or industrial uses," reads the staff briefing on the project. "This has created challenges for owners wishing to renovate, add on, or even buy and sell properties. The city has previously addressed these inconsistencies between zoning and actual use through targeted

rezoning initiatives."

An example of a similar effect is the 2024 mass rezoning of Uniontown.

The planned rezoning includes 86 properties. Rather than rezoning all the properties to one new zoning, the new mass rezoning will change properties of many different zonings to other, different zonings. The full list of properties can be found beginning on page 13 of the agenda packet or through an interactive map offered by the city.

Second, another public hearing will be held on a request to amend Staunton City Code to allow beekeeping as an accessory use to a single- or two-family

dwelling in residential and professional zoning districts. This item is also expected to come before Staunton City Council in September.

Third, the commission will take up a potential amendment to off-street parking requirements that would "enlarge the core business district parking exempt area" by "adding properties fronting on the west side of Lewis Street."

Finally, the board will consider updating its bylaws to account for changes made to the Code of Virginia centered on the Virginia Freedom of Information

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Volume 135 | No. 196
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