

Hurricane Erin floods Hatteras

Worst conditions expected to last into today; ocean swimming banned in Virginia Beach

By Kari Pugh
Correspondent
and Stacy Parker
Staff writer

Hurricane Erin was still hundreds of miles away Wednesday evening, but flooding already had closed the main road on Hatteras Island and ocean swimming was banned in Virginia Beach.

Conditions worsened throughout the day on the barrier islands, and the worst was expected through the night and into Thursday. The state transportation department closed N.C. 12, the island's only thoroughfare, at 6:30 p.m.

By 5 p.m., the Category 2 storm was roughly 300 miles southeast of Cape Hatteras, according to

the National Hurricane Center. It was moving due north, and would sideswipe much of the mid-Atlantic coast before turning out to sea. It had sustained winds of 110 mph and was expected to slightly strengthen as it passes the Outer Banks and Hampton Roads starting Wednesday night into early Friday, the National Weather Service Wakefield forecast office said in a morning briefing.

The hurricane center predicted as much as 4 feet of inundation in the southern Outer Banks, and as

much as 3 feet in some flood-prone parts of Hampton Roads.

The Outer Banks remained under tropical storm and storm surge warnings Wednesday and all of North Carolina is under a state of emergency ahead of Erin's impacts. Meanwhile, the National Weather Service upgraded Hampton Roads to a tropical storm warning with potential for wind gusts up to 57 mph early Thursday. A coastal flood watch and high surf advisory are in effect through Friday.

In Virginia Beach, coastal flooding is the main concern. Low-lying neighborhoods along the Chesapeake Bay and the ocean that have been inundated with water in the past will likely be affected.

"If you experience flooding during a high tide event, a king tide event, that's probably the folks that are going to see a lot of flooding," said L.J. Hansen, Virginia Beach public works director, who, along with several Virginia Beach public

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Board member Jane Batten speaks during the state of the university address at Virginia Wesleyan University on Wednesday. As of July 1, the university will be renamed Batten University. KENDALL WARNER/STAFF PHOTOS

Virginia Wesleyan to change name

Institution will be Batten University as of July 1

By Eliza Noe
Staff writer

VIRGINIA BEACH — Virginia Wesleyan University will officially be renamed Batten University next year.

Named for local philanthropist and VWU board member Jane Batten — widow of media mogul and former publisher of The Virginian-Pilot Frank Batten Sr. — the new moniker will go into effect officially on July 1, 2026. The name change was approved by the school's board of trustees and announced at a news conference Wednesday at the school.

"You need to know one really important thing: this was not my idea," Batten said during the announcement held at the university's student center, which already bears her name. "However, after discussions, I have sincerely come to believe that the change to Batten University will be a very positive move for the institution, its students and this region ... What about Virginia Wesleyan? I promise that our over 60-year history and heritage is not being abandoned. We're building on our Methodist ethic of service and education. This university will just become a better version of itself."



A patron grabs a complimentary Batten University mug following the address at Virginia Wesleyan University.

The university, which first opened its doors to students in 1966, was founded by the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. VWU now has about 2,100 students in undergraduate and graduate programs.

The Battens are no strangers to Virginia Wesleyan. One of their daughters enrolled

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Rudee Park project OK'd

Council gives final redesign approval

By Stacy Parker
Staff writer

VIRGINIA BEACH — The City Council agreed Tuesday to finally move forward with the design plan for Rudee Park and start a capital fundraising campaign for the multimillion-dollar project set to transform the south end of the resort area.

It was the final approval needed to bring the project to fruition.

The council has already set aside \$50 million to build the park, with the money coming from a tourism tax fund. But council members hope to offset that cost by obtaining at least \$20 million in sponsorships, which could include naming rights on elements of the park or programs and events held there.

"We are getting national sponsors who are very interested in this," said Vice Mayor Rosemary Wilson, who represents the district. "The exposure is going to be phenomenal."

Rudee Park will be built on 8 waterfront acres at the southernmost end of the Oceanfront's resort area where city-owned parking lots currently exist. It will feature a walking path on top of the 1st Street jetty, a water plaza and splash pad, a fishing ledge, elevated walkways with an ocean overlook and a grassy sunset lawn cascading toward Rudee Inlet.

It's expected to attract more than 3 million people a year, according to the city. The next step — completing construction drawings — will take about a year and a half and cost \$4 million, said Michael

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Va. lawmakers discuss affordable housing crisis

By Kate Seltzer
Staff writer

RICHMOND — The General Assembly allocated \$87.5 million in the current budget for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, a financial resource that helps preserve and develop affordable housing units. That's the largest investment from the state in the fund's history.

More funding has equaled more affordable housing: In fiscal 2024, \$60 million went toward the creation or preservation of more than 3,000 affordable units, compared to \$5.4 million generating about 300 units in fiscal 2014.

But in 2021, the last time a comprehensive statewide housing needs assessment was conducted, the Joint Legisla-

tive Audit and Review Commission found the state would need to allocate closer to \$1.6 billion annually to develop 20,000 units per year to meet the state's need for affordable housing in 10 years.

"We still have a long way to go," said Isabel McLain, director of policy and advocacy at the Virginia Housing Alliance, during a presentation to a Virginia Housing Commission workgroup at the General Assembly Building Tuesday.

The VHTF helps get existing projects with other funding sources over the finish line. The bulk — 80% — of the funds are administered to the Affordable and Special Needs Housing loan pool. Those loans then go to projects with units affordable to people earning 80% or less than



The Lawson Companies partnered with Samaritan House to redevelop a 1960s-era apartment complex into Seaside Harbor affordable housing in the ViBe Creative District at 18th Street at the Oceanfront. TODD SPENCER/STAFF

the area median income. Affordable is defined as costing no more than 30% of one's income.

The other 20% of the VHTF funds go toward homeless reduction grants, which can pay for projects like a new shelter or

rental assistance.

State Sen. Emily Jordan, R-Smithfield, proposed a bill this past session that would change that formula to a 65-35 split.

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INSIDE

Food lockers installed at Sentara

Sentara CarePlex has 15 food lockers outside its emergency department to provide food for patients and those in need. **Page 2**

Target to see change in leadership

A company veteran will be Target's new CEO in February. **Business, Page 10**

WINDY; A SHOWER OR TWO IN AM
High: 83 Low: 66



Details on the back of news

