

The Franklin Daily

75 CENTS | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2014 | BREAKING NEWS AT FRANKLINDAILY.COM



FRANKLIN FACING POTHOLE PROBLEMS
Learn about potential cuts in highway funds
LOCAL Page 1B



FAREWELL TO A LOCAL LEGEND
A local coach's retirement
SPORTS Page 2D

APPALACHIAN POWER CO. SPENDING \$82.7 MILLION ON LOCAL PROJECTS

By BRIAN KELLEY

Electricity should begin to flow this week to the new Lake Forest substation in Botetourt County, the first of four projects in the Roanoke region that Appalachian Power Co. says are designed to bolster its ability to meet increased demand and to improve reliability.

Appalachian will spend \$82.7 million by the time the projects are completed in 2014. The company then will file a transmission rider with the state to seek to have customers pay for the work, which likely will mean a 7 cent monthly increase for the typical residential customer. That filing will be in addition to the base rate filings the company is required by law to file every two years.

For now, more than 700 people, both from the utility and hired contractors, are working or will work on the projects designed with two purposes in mind: carrying more electrical load, and building so-called "double contingency" reliability to meet updated national standards. That means if one high-voltage line goes down, a second will be available to carry its load.

"It's just unbelievable all the people who touch a project like this," said Shawn Smith, project manager for the Matt Funk and Huntington Court reliability upgrades.

The work amounts to the most substantial physical improvements to the electrical system in the Roanoke area in the past two decades, said Paul Hanson, a senior engineer in asset planning who went to work for the utility in 1996.

"These aren't projects you design overnight," he said. Each has gone through a three-year process, involving meetings with affected property owners and residents and obtaining state approval. In two projects, substations were moved from originally proposed locations based on residents' suggestions.

All are designed with the goal of keeping the lights on, the heat pumps humming and industries that employ thousands supplied with power in the face of cars hitting electrical poles, ice and wind storms, lightning and even that bushy-tailed nemesis of reliability, *Sciurus carolinensis*.

"Squirrels get on the power lines and where do they go? They follow the line back to the substation," Hanson said. To foil them, baffles are installed on the lines outside the substation's fence line.

The projects include:

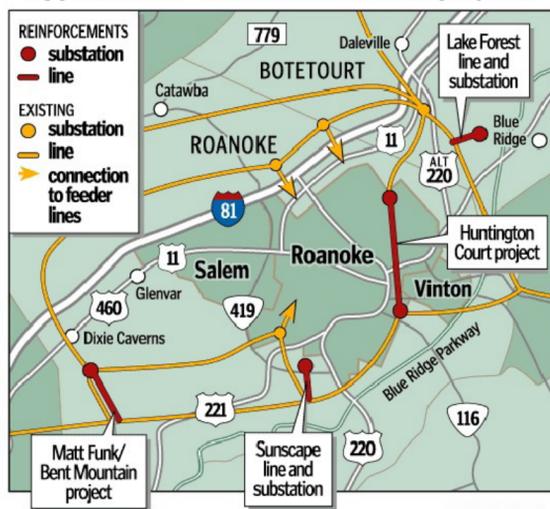
The newly completed Lake Forest substation, located off Laymantown Road north of Rainbow Forest Baptist Church in Botetourt County. This project will ease the load on an existing substation near the Bonsack Walmart and improve electric service reliability for people who live near Coyne Mountain. The \$12 million project, due to be finished Tuesday, was approved by the state in 2012. It will give the utility another source to switch customers to when an outage occurs and will respond to the area's higher risk for outages -- what spokesman Todd Burns calls the "tree-to-customer ratio." In areas that are heavily forested, there's more chance of an outage caused by fallen trees or limbs.

Sunscape, which is a 1.4-mile, double-circuit link between an existing 138,000-volt line off Starkey Road to a new substation off Ogden Road near Tanglewood Mall, behind Pebble Creek apartments. This \$14.3 million project, approved by the state in 2011, is designed to relieve an electrical system in Southwest Roanoke and Roanoke County serving 11,300 customers that has been overloaded for years. More than 350 workers from several companies are involved in the work, due to be completed in June.

See POWER, Page 1B



Appalachian Power reinforcement projects



State Legislators Adopt \$80 Billion Budget

By JULIAN WALKER

Millions in state funding that local school systems feared they would lose was preserved in the compromise state budget adopted Thursday evening.

The revised two-year spending plan features roughly \$75 million more for public education than the introduced budget.

It includes "hold harmless" funding to help school divisions potentially hurt by declining local revenue and revisions to the local composite index, a complex

formula that determines school funding based on measures of community wealth.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe's budget proposed using that money for other priorities, a move that would have cost school systems in South Hampton Roads.

Enhanced education funding was among many revisions to the blended biennial budget negotiated by House of Delegates and Senate officials, who relied on revenue growth.

The package totaling more than \$80 billion runs through June 30, 2016, and also provides money to improve state mental health services, spur road construction, promote economic development and pump money into state colleges. Legislators unanimously adopted the spending plan, a rarity in recent years when some members of both chambers have dissented.

House Minority Leader Ward Armstrong, D-Henry County, joined the majority in supporting

the budget plan, noting that, while he's opposed past budgets, the current plan does "right by schools, police, mental health and all the various things in this budget."

Del. Chris Jones, R-Suffolk, said that even though legislators ended a day behind schedule, they produced a quality spending plan as evidenced by its unanimous passage.

See BUDGET, Page 1B



Va. woman, 29, charged in beating death of boyfriend, 77

By DUNCAN ADAMS

A 29-year-old woman faces a first-degree murder charge in the beating death of her 77-year-old boyfriend in his Bedford County home. A Bedford County grand jury returned the indictment Tuesday.

Kristina Pongracz previously had been charged with aggravated malicious wounding after a deputy from the Bedford County Sheriff's Office found William Herchenrider bleeding profusely and on all fours May 4 at the large home Pongracz shared with him in Goodview.

Herchenrider survived but spent months in the hospital and an acute-care facility recovering. Then, on Aug. 25, just hours after his return home, Herchenrider died while in hospice care, said Assistant Common-

wealth's Attorney Stephanie Ayers.

In Bedford County Circuit Court last month, Ayers told the court that state medical examiners released autopsy results in December that ruled that Herchenrider's death was a homicide. Forensic evidence linked his death to complications that resulted from the beating, Ayers said. She said then that prosecutors would seek a murder indictment.

Pongracz was arrested May 5. County sheriff's Deputy Chris Brown testified in October that when he responded to the elderly man's home, he found Pongracz passed out in her underwear with "a large amount of blood smeared all over her body."

See MURDER, Page 1B

County Recommends Redistricting Plan, Public Hearing Scheduled

By ROB CHAPMAN

It's not quite a completed process, but Prince Edward is well on its way to approving a redistricting plan some three weeks ahead of schedule.

The County's three-member advisory committee presented a recommendation Tuesday evening and the Board of Supervisors agreed to advertise a public hearing on the proposal for their March 8 meeting.

There will be some changes--as there usually are with growth/shifts in population data as detailed with a census, but at a glimpse the eight electoral districts would appear roughly as they currently exist.

Advisory committee member Paul Hoffman detailed at the Tuesday evening presentation that

the committee "basically adopted the same philosophy that you instructed us to do" and outlined that they put a high emphasis on equalizing potential populations; put a lot of emphasis on contiguous boundaries (especially using boundaries that were readily identifiable, known to the community); put a strong focus on not having any retrogression of the minority popularity, especially those districts that have historically had minority majorities; had a goal of keeping polling places in their districts, and a goal of not redistricting supervisors out of their districts.

See HEARING 1B



HOW DO YOU LIKE OUR NEW LOOK?
Let us know by visiting
www.franklindaily.com

*The Daily,
Bigger & Better*

See Page 6A

WHAT'S INSIDE

Classified	6D	Obituaries	3B
Comics	2C	Sports	1D
Editorials	6A	Tech News	1C
Local News	1B	Television	4C
Movies	4C		