

# Yes, Virginia!

Issue # 7

The Newsletter of Scenic Virginia

Summer 2002

## **2002 GENERAL ASSEMBLY = LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES**

For the second year in a row, Scenic Virginia sponsored successful legislation in the Virginia General Assembly.

During the 2002 Session, Scenic Virginia initiated scenic byways legislation to designate the Commonwealth's four Federal parkways (Blue Ridge, Skyline Drive, Colonial, and George Washington Memorial) as State Scenic Highways, Virginia's highest level of scenic byway designation.

Working with a coalition that included the Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association, Blue Ridge Parkway Association, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Luray Caverns, Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and VDOT, Scenic Virginia developed widespread support for the bill that ultimately led to unanimous passage in both the House and Senate.

That said, the bill's passage was never a foregone conclusion.

Explains Scenic Virginia President Hylah Boyd, "Other groups attempted to designate the parkways eight years ago, but the effort was derailed for political reasons. We knew that our legislation might meet a similar fate this time around, but we felt we had to try. Given the history, we are very proud of our success."

The bill, sponsored by Delegate John O'Bannon, who grew up near the Blue Ridge Parkway and who asked to be the bill's patron, was important for a couple of reasons. In addition to focusing attention on the scenic elements of these roads, the bill offered the localities situated along the parkways access to \$15 million in federal Byways funding to use for tourism projects as varied as maps, brochures, renovation

*(Continued on page 6)*

## **SCENIC VIRGINIA SCORES VICTORY ALONG THE RICHMOND RIVERFRONT**

The 2002 General Assembly had not ended before Scenic Virginia found itself called upon to help preserve several historic viewsheds of the James River in Richmond from inappropriate high-rise development.

The situation was complicated. Following last year's efforts to prevent a high-rise office building along a sensitive stretch of the riverfront west of downtown, Scenic Virginia enthusiastically supported a resolution by Richmond Councilmen Bill Pantele and Manoli Loupassi calling for Planning staff to study current riverfront zoning east of the downtown area and to respond with recommendations for new riverfront zoning.

As the vote on that resolution continued to be delayed, a separate resolution — one written by a developer's attorney and calling for new riverfront zoning — appeared before Council.

This resolution did not follow the typical Planning process that directs Planning staff to develop the zoning recommendations and the Planning Commission to approve them before coming before City Council.

Instead, this developer-driven resolution actually created the riverfront ordinance without input from Planning staff, the Planning Commission, or citizens who care about the riverfront. The resolution contained very specific references to sections of the existing code, so that the resulting ordinance allowed height of 150 feet with no restrictions on density, meaning that a developer could build a wall of 150-foot buildings along the riverfront (think the oceanfront in Virginia Beach) if he so desired.

This was a problem for many Virginians. The

*(Continued on page 7)*

“Yes, Virginia!” is published twice a year by:

**SCENIC VIRGINIA**

P.O. Box 17606  
Richmond, Virginia 23226  
phone: 804.282.5522  
fax: 804.282.5506  
email: email@scenicvirginia.org  
www.scenicvirginia.org

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*Scenic Virginia is a private, non-profit,  
501(c)3 organization dedicated to the preservation,  
protection and enhancement of Virginia’s scenic beauty.  
Membership is open to all.*

**NOTES FROM THE SCENIC VIRGINIA OFFICE**

**Richmond Planner Joins Board**

Scenic Virginia is pleased to announce that John J. Zeugner of Richmond has recently joined the Board of Trustees. John is a city planner (AICP) with experience in urban revitalization, environmental issues, and public policy. He has a consulting practice and is active in the Richmond region, advocating for smart growth, parks and conservation, and transit alternatives. In his spare time, John enjoys the cultural arts, travel, running, and his family. John worked with Scenic Virginia during the recent fight to protect the Richmond riverfront with zoning ordinances that will shape growth and allow for increased economic opportunities along the river (see story on page 1).

Please join Scenic Virginia in welcoming John to the Board of Trustees. His expertise in planning and his constant good humor are a delightful addition to our Board.

**Scenic Virginia Announces “Capital” Campaign**

Following the successful passage of beneficial riverfront ordinances for Richmond (see article on page 1), Scenic Virginia is embarking on a dedicated fundraising effort in the Commonwealth’s capital city.

“Many Richmonders have indicated that they appreciated our hard work and the tremendous effort it took to achieve this responsible zoning for the riverfront region east of Downtown,” said Executive Director Leighton Powell. “They asked how they could now help us, and the ‘Capital’ Campaign is the result.”

Anyone wanting to contribute to this effort should contact the Scenic Virginia office at 804.282.5522.

**Web Site Undergoes Name Change**

Attention, internet surfers. Scenic Virginia’s recently revamped web site can now be found at [www.scenicvirginia.org](http://www.scenicvirginia.org).

“We made the change for one simple reason: to be consistent with the other Scenic America affiliates, which currently spell out the name of the state,” says Leighton Powell. “This should make it easier for people to find us.”

Powell cautions that members should take care to enter [www.scenicvirginia.org](http://www.scenicvirginia.org) — and not [www.scenicvirginia.com](http://www.scenicvirginia.com) — when typing in the web address. The reason? The web site at [www.scenicvirginia.com](http://www.scenicvirginia.com) is owned by a representative of the billboard industry.

Says Powell, “It’s typical of how they operate. They’re a billion-dollar-a-year industry, and they spare no expense when trying to silence their opposition. Actually, it’s rather a compliment, when you think about it.”

Powell adds that Scenic Virginia also has a new email address. Members may contact the Scenic Virginia office at — conveniently enough — [email@scenicvirginia.org](mailto:email@scenicvirginia.org).

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH

Monitoring Virginia's Roadsides

Scenic Virginia is asking its members to help us monitor VDOT's tree-trimming practices along Virginia's roads. It's simple: If you see good trimming, let us know. If you see evidence of bad practices, including use of herbicides, please give us a call. At VDOT's request, we are compiling this information to hold VDOT districts accountable for their roadside management.

Scenic America Seeking Scenic Solutions

Calling all planners! Scenic America is already gearing up for next year's national conference, Scenic Summit: Action for America's Communities, Countryside, and Public Lands, to be held August 3-6, 2003 in Denver, Colorado. In preparation for that event, Scenic America is soliciting "scenic solutions" from planners across the country.

Scenic Solutions are short case studies highlighting exemplary approaches to scenic issues that other communities can use to make a positive difference in their appearance. A panel of nationally recognized scenic conservation experts will review the submissions. Scenic America and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will issue an interactive CD-ROM containing the winning submissions to all conference attendees.

Information and guidelines are available on the Scenic Summit website at www.scenicsummit.org.

Scenic Virginia Receives Third Grant from Virginia Department of Forestry

For the third year in a row, the Virginia Department of Forestry has demonstrated its support of Scenic Virginia's projects and goals with funding from its Community & Urban Forestry grant program.

Since 2000 Scenic Virginia has worked closely with the Department of Forestry, as well as Virginia utility companies and localities, on the Municipal Tree Restoration Project, also known as "Look Up, Virginia!" The program works to prevent cityscape blight caused by the mangling of trees under utility wires, and encourages citizens and planners to consider overhead wires when planting trees nearby. (For more information see article on page 7.)

In June, at the invitation of the Department of Forestry's Paul Revell, Scenic Virginia Executive Director Leighton Powell met with members of the U.S. Forestry Department team to describe Scenic Virginia's successful participation in the program and to brainstorm ideas for urban tree-planting programs across the Commonwealth.

Many thanks to the Department of Forestry for awarding this funding to Scenic Virginia. We appreciate the continued support.

SCENIC VIRGINIA'S PRESIDENT HONORED BY ORGANIZATIONS

PICTURE OF HYLAH

This past spring, Scenic Virginia President Hylah H. Boyd received recognition from two distinguished groups for her many years of volunteer service on behalf of conservation issues.

In April, The Garden Club of America awarded Hylah the Cynthia Pratt Laughlin Medal, described as "almost impossible to win" by a fellow member of The Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton, to which Hylah has belonged for 25 years. Hylah's Garden Club secretly nominated her for this honor. She is the first in her Club — and perhaps the State — to win it.

In June, at a luncheon at The Jefferson Hotel, The Junior League of Richmond presented Hylah with a 2002 Volunteer Achievement Award for her work with Scenic Virginia. Scenic Virginia Honorary Board member Betty Byrne Ware nominated Hylah for the honor, and Honorary Board member Mary Tyler McClenahan was presenter and speaker. The award includes a \$1000 grant and 20 hours of volunteer service from JLR members.

Scenic Virginia salutes both organizations for recognizing Hylah's tireless efforts. Thank you!

SCENIC VIRGINIA ANNUAL REPORT 2001

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2002 Legislative Wrap-up (continued from Page 1)

of rest stops, or the development of a marketing plan.

Says Executive Director Leighton Powell, "We saw that this money could be a boon to those communities, particularly given the current budget crisis. This was a way that we could help."

Also of note is the fact that securing State Scenic Byway designation is the required first step in the process to achieve National Scenic Byway status for the four roads. Unbelievably, Virginia has no National Scenic Byways. In fact, tourists looking at the current National Scenic Byways map might mistakenly think that the Blue Ridge Parkway originates in North Carolina and ends at the Virginia border.

Scenic Virginia is working to achieve national designation for these roads as quickly as possible. All four are deserving of the recognition, but in addition to the honor, inclusion on the National Scenic Byways map and web site represents an effective marketing tool for drawing visitors and their tourism dollars to Virginia.

Please join Scenic Virginia in thanking Delegate O'Bannon and the legislators who supported this bill. We are proud of this year's legislative effort, and we look forward to making the announcement regarding new National Scenic Byways in Virginia in the coming months.

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In addition to the State Scenic Byways legislation, Scenic Virginia had other successes in the 2002 General Assembly Session:

**SB 554:** Scenic Virginia worked with a coalition of conservation groups, health organizations, and local government representatives to oppose legislation sponsored by Senator Thomas Norment that sought to strip the State Corporation Commission's ability to consider cumulative environmental impacts when considering permit requests for power plants. When deregulation passed in 1998, the legislature had promised that the SCC would retain this oversight authority. As a result, the coalition felt a responsibility to Virginia's citizens to fight the bill.

The groups worked tirelessly to educate the public (and the legislature) about risks to public health and the environment if the bill passed. In the end, compromise language was developed that preserved the SCC's right to review as long as the efforts did not duplicate work being performed by other state agencies such as the Department of Environmental

Quality.

**SB 226:** Scenic Virginia opposed a bill initiated by the billboard industry and sponsored by Senator Bo Trumbo that sought to decrease a locality's ability to remove illegal billboards by broadening the definition of "legally erected billboards."

Scenic Virginia joined forces with representatives of local government and presented opposition to the extent that amendments were offered that effectively gutted the legislation. In fact, the bill was so decimated that neither Scenic Virginia nor the representatives of local government spoke in opposition to the final version.

**SB 379:** Scenic Virginia worked with VOLT (Virginia Outdoor Lighting Taskforce) before and during the 2002 Session regarding light pollution legislation.

Of particular importance to Scenic Virginia was Senator Mary Margaret Whipple's bill that directed the Department of General Services to require the State to procure shielded outdoor lighting fixtures. These fixtures cost the same as existing models, but full cut-off fixtures direct light downward to provide better coverage and they prevent light from escaping upward and marring the night sky. Congratulations to Senator Whipple for this good piece of legislation.

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**Governor Warner Declares May 2002 as "State Scenic Highways Month"**

Following the successful passage of Scenic Virginia's State Scenic Byways legislation during the 2002 General Assembly, Governor Mark Warner issued a Certificate of Recognition to Scenic Virginia denoting May 2002 as "State Scenic Highways Month."

At the Blue Ridge Parkway Association's Annual Meeting banquet in May, BRPA Past President Tom Vick presented a copy of the Governor's Certificate to Delegate John O'Bannon, who carried the bill in the 2002 Session, and to the four federal Parkway Superintendents, all of whom supported the effort.

In his remarks, Mr. Vick thanked Scenic Virginia and praised the organization's success in getting the byways legislation passed.

**“LOOK UP, VIRGINIA!” SETS OUT TO RESHAPE CITYSCAPES**

Unfortunately, it's become an altogether familiar sight: A large, formerly beautiful tree now disfigured by a “V” cut through the center to allow room for power lines.

Mangled trees will be a thing of the past if one group has anything to say about it. Since 2000, the Municipal Tree Restoration Project has brought together representatives from Scenic Virginia, the Virginia Department of Forestry, three Virginia utility companies (AEP, Allegheny, and Dominion Virginia Power), Virginia Tech, the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, the Society of Consulting Arborists, and numerous localities.

Also known as ‘Look Up, Virginia’ (to remind people to think about what is overhead before they plant), the program aims to restore cityscapes to their former glory by removing disfigured trees and replacing them with lower-growing species that won't interfere with utility lines.

Another goal is to educate elected officials, planners and developers about appropriate species early in the development process so that low-growing trees and shrubs are selected for projects and inappropriate species are not considered. To show how the program can work, AEP and the Town

of Abingdon removed 28 utility-inappropriate trees and replaced them with 81 utility-friendly trees last fall. Similar projects are being developed for Winchester, Waynesboro, and Luray. In addition, work is underway to compile a list of tree species for each geographic region.

The program is off to a good start. A “utility arboretum” at Virginia Tech's Hampton Roads Agriculture Research and Extension Center in Virginia Beach is being used to demonstrate selected species that do well in utility situations, and VT's Dr. Bonnie Appleton recently received a sizeable grant to continue her research with these “utilitrees.” The plan is to install utility arboretums in other locations.

Says Paul Revell, Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator for the Department of Forestry, “This is a win-win situation for all involved: Utility companies save money on long-term maintenance, municipalities get more attractive gateways, urban forestry efforts are promoted, and Virginians don't have to look at mangled and dying trees along their city streets.”

For more information on “Look Up, Virginia,” watch for updates in future newsletters. The MTRP partners will be producing a brochure very soon.

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**Richmond Riverfront (continued from Page 1)**

historic viewshed at risk was the basis for naming the capital city, as the view of the bend in the river from Libby Hill Park called to mind the view of Richmond-upon-Thames, England.

Equally upsetting, the developer-driver ordinance did not include requirements for open space nor did it guarantee citizen access to the riverfront. In effect, this ordinance gave away the scenic and historic assets of the riverfront and left the City powerless to request any amenities from a potential developer.

Scenic Virginia organized citizen groups and set to work educating City Council members and the public that development along the riverfront was desired but should contain those pedestrian amenities (e.g. open space, landscaping, and access to the river) that would also benefit the City of Richmond's ongoing tourism and economic development efforts.

In May the Richmond Planning Commission directed Planning staff to finish the riverfront zoning work they had started at the end of 2001. The result was two riverfront ordinances: RF-1, which called for lower heights along the river, and RF-2, which permitted additional height behind the RF-1 zone. In

addition, Planning staff developed an ordinance for conditional zoning, a planning tool based on the proffer system that is helpful when straight zoning is too restrictive for the developer.

By the end, supporters of RF-1/RF-2 included citizen groups and civic organizations, as well as one of the potential riverfront developers. Together, the groups persuaded City Council members that the Planning staff's riverfront zoning ordinances were the more appropriate; conditional zoning was adopted as well. Most important, the Planning process was preserved, meaning that development along the riverfront could occur in a way that benefits tourism, all citizens of the Commonwealth, economic development, and the developer.

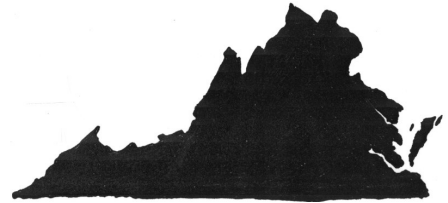
Scenic Virginia thanks the Richmond City Council, Planning Commission, Planning staff, and in particular the many citizens whose hard work and persistence made responsible riverfront zoning for Richmond possible. This was a victory for all Virginians, and the resulting zoning should ensure that the riverfront in our capital city is developed properly.

## YES, VIRGINIA!

The Newsletter of Scenic Virginia  
P.O. Box 17606  
Richmond, Virginia 23226

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CLASS  
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## Scenic Virginia



*Scenic Virginia, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, is devoted to preserving, protecting and enhancing the scenic character of Virginia's communities and countryside.*

**Note: Scenic Virginia's 2001 Annual Report is located inside.**

**You're invited!!**

**Scenic Virginia Annual Meeting  
Monday, September 30, 2002  
1:00 pm  
Location to be determined**

**Make plans now to join us as we  
elect a new slate of officers,  
review the past year's successes,  
and reveal our goals for the  
coming year.**

**See you in September!**

**Visit [www.scenicvirginia.org](http://www.scenicvirginia.org)  
for meeting details.**

## Join Scenic Virginia Today!

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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