

MINING: Group expected to make a recommendation next week

FROM PAGE ONE

mining in Virginia."

That power, he pointed out, goes to the state, since the General Assembly created Buckingham, just as its members voted to create every county in the Commonwealth.

WHEN CAN THEY REGULATE?

Now yes, cities and counties can regulate mining. In Article 7, Section 15.2-2280, the Virginia Code says that any city or county can "regulate, restrict, permit, prohibit and determine" what to do in four situations. The fourth is very clearly identified as "the excavation or mining of soil or other natural resources."

But it's how this happens officials have to be careful about. While a county like Buckingham can't just outright ban the concept, they can restrict what is and isn't allowed through zoning ordinances.

Wright's comments echoed what Joe Lerch told the state gold mining workgroup back in September. Lerch, who serves as director of local government policy for the Virginia Association of Counties, explained last September that counties can decide what is and isn't allowed in zoning.

"In a zoning ordinance, you can say that this is not allowed activity," Lerch told the group. "Or you could say it is allowed in (a certain) type of district, like an industrial district, with a special use permit. If you want to say we don't even want to consider it, that could be in your ordinance too."

WHY HAVE THIS DEBATE?

So why is this debate happening in Buckingham County? It stems from a situation that started more than two years ago. In April 2019, the Canadian prospecting company Aston Bay Holdings announced they were beginning to search for gold in Buckingham.

To be clear, Aston Bay isn't a mining company. It's a prospecting company. That means they search for gold, silver or other minerals, identify and purchase a location, then sell that information (and property) to the highest bidder. They can do this because under Virginia law, prospecting doesn't require a state permit. If you're searching for anything other than uranium. In statements given in March 2019 and July 2020, company officials declared their drilling confirmed a "high-grade, at-surface gold vein system at Buckingham, as well as an adjacent wider zone of lower-grade disseminated gold mineralization." In other words, they found enough to keep going. At the beginning of 2020, the company secured the right to prospect on 4,953 acres of land in Buckingham County.

Just don't expect a gold mine to spring up anytime soon or even a request to build one. In an interview earlier this year with *The Herald*, Aston Bay CEO Thomas Ulrich said the company was "still in the early stages of exploration."

"We have conducted only preliminary exploratory drilling on the local landowners' properties at Buckingham, and none for the past two years," Ulrich said. "We have several quality potential projects, but a limited amount of funds. Over

Harold Morgan Garrett

Harold Morgan Garrett, 78 of Rice, died Friday, May 12. Born Dec. 15, 1944 in Farmville, he was the son of the late Harold Lee and Helen Morgan Garrett.

A graduate of Prince Edward Academy, which his father built, he spent a lot of time working with his father learning construction and other trades. He earned Master Cards in all trades and was very proud that he built his own house. Some of his favorite pastimes include: Amateur Radio, reading, delivering *The Farmville Herald* in his younger years, rafter, scuba diving, swimming and skiing at Crystal Lake and his beloved years in boy scouts where he was a Scoutmaster. He was



especially proud that two of his grandsons joined the same Troop from his past. He had a great love for trains and helped lay the track at the Victoria Park. He was well known and respected for his knowledge and many skills.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Nadine Grishaw Garrett; a son, Jason Garrett; a daughter, Kimberly Garrett Hailey; nine grandchildren, Caitlyn, Megan, Morgan, Jackson, Emma Grace, Matthew, Logan, Ryan and Charlotte and two great-granddaughters, Audrey and Olivia. He is also survived by one brother, Randy Garrett of Richardson, Texas and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by three brothers, Thomas A. Garrett, Charles "Nick" Garrett and David I. Garrett; a daughter, Tanya and a great granddaughter, Kylie.

A graveside service will be held on Thursday, May 18, 11:30 a.m., at Westview Cemetery in Farmville. Family will receive friends on Thursday, 10-11 a.m., at Puckett Funeral Home.

Puckett Funeral Home is serving the family. www.puckettfh.com.

OBITUARIES

Betty L. Welch

Betty L. Welch, 91 of Powhatan, passed away May 12. She was born in Athens, Alabama, daughter of the late Elmer W Davis Sr. and Florence R. Brightwell.

She leaves to cherish her memory three daughters, Gwen Welch of Sophia, North Carolina, Charlene Williams of Cumberland and Melissa Welch of Powhatan; seven grandchildren, Jai Welch, Ray Morris (Megan), David Welch, Brittany Williams (Jacob), Alysha Morris (John), Brent Williams (Julie) and Harley Lee and eight great-grandchildren, Brantley, Liam, Bryce, Luke, Ryleigh, Harper, Kayleigh and Jack. Betty married the late



William Welch in 1954. She retired from the Department of Corrections after serving as a James River Correctional Officer.

She is preceded in death by her husband, William Welch; her siblings, Elmer Davis Sr., Royce Davis, James Davis Sr., Wayne Davis, Nellie Lockaby and Bobbie Joe Davis.

Per her wishes a private family memorial will be scheduled for a later date with interment in Amelia Veteran's Cemetery, Amelia. In place of flowers, please consider donating to your local hospice center, fire department or rescue squad on her behalf. Online condolences may be made at www.bennettbardenfh.com.

DEATHS

Thomas O'Neil

Spencer, 39 of Buckingham, passed away May 13. Funeral service will be held on Sunday, May 21, at 2 p.m., at St. Joy Baptist Church, Gladstone. Interment will be in the church cemetery. Reid's Funeral Home of Dilwyn is serving the family.

the last year and a half, we have been investing in the landowners in another county. We look forward to investing in Buckingham again."

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

So, now what? Well, the planning commission has a decision to make.

"At the end of next week's regular meeting, we can decide if we need to hear other speakers," said Planning Commission Chairman John Bickford. "Our next step would be to do that and decide on a work session."

That next meeting is set for Monday, May 22, beginning at 7 p.m.

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From the family of **Brenda Elliot Johns**

Our family would like to thank all of the family and friends for the outpouring of love and kindness shown during the loss of our loved one. Thank you to our church family, Sandy Creek Baptist Church for their love and support, pastor Chris Palmer for his beautiful eulogy and Puckett Funeral Home for their gracious service. We also want to thank the Prince Edward County emergency personnel for all of their efforts, as well as, a special thanks to Prince Edward County Sheriff, Tom Egan, the Prince Edward County Sheriff's Department, Town of Farmville Chief of Police, Andy Slingline and the Town of Farmville Police Department for all of their services.

May God bless you all!
Bates, Ryan (Nicole), David and Jordan Johns

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