

# VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA 24450-0304

Finance & Support Office  
Phone 540-464-7697  
Fax 540-464-7169

12 April 2024

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Visitors – External Relations Committee

FROM: Brigadier General (BG) Dallas Clark

SUBJECT: Local Government Relations Update

VMI continues a robust relationship throughout the Lexington/Rockbridge County community and the New Market community to include involvement in organizational boards and committees, supporting events, and maintaining effective communications on programs that impact the local jurisdictions. Below is a summary of VMI's local government relations activity from January through March 2024:

**5 January 2024** – BG Clark, COL Boobar, MAJ Grace Moyer (Jackson House Museum Site Director), and Mr. Corey Bachman (Assistant Director of Auxiliary Services) attended the Rockbridge/Lexington Chamber of Commerce “State of the Community Address.” This annual event is hosted by the Chamber and gives local political leaders the chance to meet and discuss issues with local business leaders. During the event, participants heard from the mayors of Lexington and Buena Vista as well as Virginia Delegate Ellen Campbell and Virginia Senator Christopher Head.

**10 January 2024** – The Civil & Environmental Engineering (CEE) Department provided a final report concerning an engineering project to the Miller House Museum located in Lexington. In the fall of 2023, the Miller House asked the CEE department to conduct an assessment and come up with recommendations for issues at the house and property. CEE faculty and some CEE cadets conducted the research and came up with several recommendations concerning stone masonry preservation, timber protection and water flow through the millrace canal from the Maury River. The final report will be utilized by the Miller House Museum leadership to assess future projects.

**18 January 2024** – COL Boobar participated in The Maury Express Advisory Committee meeting. VMI provides funding for this local transportation service in Rockbridge County. The Maury Express is currently operated under contract by RADAR Transportation. At the meeting, the committee reviewed the 2023 budget and approved a budget for 2024. The committee also reviewed the recent ridership numbers for the service. While the overall ridership numbers have been down over the last several months, there has been an increase in utilization by VMI cadets and W&L students in Lexington. The committee was also briefed on the ongoing process to acquire two new vehicles for the service. Mr. Spencer Suter, Rockbridge County Administrator, informed the committee that a new six-year contract will have to be awarded this year. His office will take the lead in developing the Request for Proposals documents for the committee.



**18 January 2024** – COL Boobar, COL Bogart, and VMI PD Chief Mike Marshall attended a Diamond Hill residents meeting at the Lexington Police Department (LPD) hosted by LPD Chief Angela Greene. The subject of the meeting was the issue of vehicle parking in the Diamond Hill neighborhood. Five residents from Diamond Hill and other members of the LPD also attended the meeting. During the meeting, the residents commented about cadet vehicles parking around the neighborhood for long periods of time and in some cases preventing homeowners from parking at their homes or blocking the driveways. COL Bogart provided the residents with his contact information, and VMI promised to take action to resolve the situations as they arise. VMI and the LPD agreed to work together to assist the neighborhood. The residents were very appreciative of VMI’s willingness to address the issue. Chief Greene offered to schedule a follow-up meeting in March. On **27 March 2024**, COL Boobar and Chief Marshall attended a follow up meeting at the LPD hosted by Chief Greene. Other members of the police department attended as well as approximately 10 residents of the Diamond Hill neighborhood to include Lexington Vice Mayor Marilyn Alexander. Several of the residents stated that the parking issues with cadets continue in the area. There have also been issues with large numbers of cadets partying or “hanging” out at various residences in the neighborhood. COL Boobar reiterated VMI’s desire to enforce Institute rules and regulations, and he encouraged residents to continue to provide information to either the Commandant’s Office or the police department. A couple of residents stated that they appreciated the work of the Commandant’s Office and have seen results when information has been provided. Chief Greene stated that the police department would increase patrols in the neighborhood. The residents requested Chief Greene talk with the city manager about the possibility of increasing the parking ticket fees in the city to discourage illegal parking. LPD offered to host a follow up meeting in late April or early May 2024.

**5 February 2024** – MG Wins signed a letter supporting a local feasibility study for a regional municipal airport in Rockbridge County. The feasibility study is going to be conducted by the Rockbridge Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors. The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) is also assisting with the study. The letter of support from MG Wins was sent to Mr. Greg Campbell, Director of the Virginia Department of Aviation. The City of Lexington and the towns of Buena Vista and Glasgow have also provided funding for this study.

**7 February 2024** – COL Boobar attended a meeting with Mr. Jim Halasz, City Manager for the City of Lexington concerning a new central water metering system being installed by the city. Mr. Patrick Madigan (Director of Public Works) and Mr. Thomas Wagner from the Lexington Department of Public Works also attended the meeting. This initial meeting was to discuss moving forward with switching VMI over to a new city central water meter which has been installed. The city has installed new central water meters for both VMI and Washington & Lee University (W&L). During the meeting, it was decided that a working group of subject matter experts from the city and VMI should get together to draw up a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the two parties to address the new requirements of this centralized system. COL Boobar, Mr. Todd Willey (VMI Energy Manager), and Mr. Pat O’Leary (VMI General Counsel) attended a follow up meeting with Mr. Madigan on **28 February 2024**. During this meeting, it was agreed that the City of Lexington would work up a draft MOA between the city

and VMI covering the new water meter system. Once completed, VMI would review the draft MOA.

**9 February 2024** – The VMI Color Guard provided colors for the opening ceremony of the BMX moto cross event in the Virginia Horse Center. This event was a cooperative event between USA BMX and BMX Canada, and it was the first time the event had been held at the Virginia Horse Center. Several thousand people attended the opening ceremony. Organizers anticipated over 5,000 people to participate in the event over two days. At the Lexington City Council Meeting on 15 February 2024, the Director of the Virginia Horse Center reported that this BMX event drew the largest attendance of any BMX event in the United States to date with representation from 46 states. See photo below.



**14 March 2024** – Ms. Brittney Phillips (Virginia Museum of the Civil War & New Market Battlefield Site Director) and Ms. Sarah Hebert (Assistant Site Director) attended the Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce Annual Legislative Breakfast. Virginia Senator Timmy French and Virginia Delegate Todd Gilbert were the guest speakers. Approximately 70 community members attended the event. Topics covered during the meeting included: minimum wage increases and the effects on local farmers and businesses; electric vehicles and the impact on rural communities; changes in workers' compensation policies for businesses; and pay increases for teachers and Commonwealth employees.

**19 March 2024** – COL Boobar attended the Rockbridge/Lexington Chamber of Commerce “Government Affairs Roundtable” event. Delegate Ellen Campbell was the guest at the roundtable. Approximately 20 members from the local community attended the event. Delegate Campbell provide the group with a summary of the recently ended Virginia legislative session. COL Boobar thanked Delegate Campbell and her staff for their work to sponsor VMI’s amendments in the current Virginia legislative budget. Other topics covered during the roundtable included: rural health care & mental health treatment; childcare & affordable housing in Rockbridge County; employment & internship opportunities in the area; and access to broadband services in rural Virginia.

**22 March 2024** – The Mayor of Lexington and the City Council announced the hiring of Mr. Tom Carroll as the new city manager. Mr. Carroll will replace Mr. Jim Halasz who will retire in May 2024. Mr. Carroll previously served as the city manager in Cambridge, Maryland. He has over 20 years of municipal leadership experience in Ohio and Maryland. BG Clark participated in the interviews for the three finalists during the selection process.

**26 March 2024** – BG Clark and COL Kim Parker (Government Relations Director) attended the City of Buena Vista Innovation Accelerator event. Senator Mark Warner addressed local government officials, school officials, and the public. Approximately 75 people attended the event. Topics covered by Senator Warner included: the importance of connectivity in rural communities through broadband access and rail transit; the effects of international relations with Ukraine, China, and other countries on rural communities; the dangers of social media sites like Tik Tok; and the importance of rural American values to the future of the United States.

VMI’s participation in local organizations is also ongoing. These organizations include membership in the Rockbridge County/Lexington Chamber of Commerce; membership in Main Street Lexington, a small business group; board membership on Project Horizon, a local domestic and sexual violence prevention organization; and chair of the Chessie Nature Trail Advisory Group. Through its certified EMT program, the Corps of Cadets continues to provide EMS support to local emergency services including the Lexington Fire Department and other Rockbridge County agencies. In addition, COL Boobar, in his role as local government liaison officer, continues to monitor and participate in both Lexington City Council and Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors meetings and activities as appropriate.