

# VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

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## 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 October through December 2024:

**8 October 2024** – COL Boobar attended the Lexington City Council Work Session. During the session, the council discussed a new stormwater fee proposal for residents and businesses in the city. The funds from this fee would be used to create a dedicated revenue stream to deal with underground stormwater infrastructure. Once fully implemented, the fees will raise approximately \$440,000.00 annually. VMI's annual stormwater fee would be approximately \$63,300.00 annually. If approved by the City Council, the city manager will schedule a meeting with VMI leadership to discuss the new fee and to discuss VMI's stormwater best management practices already implemented.

**31 October 2024** – BG Clark, COL Parker, and COL Boobar attended the Spirit of Virginia Award ceremony at the Virginia Horse Center. Governor Glenn Youngkin and Mrs. Suzanne Youngkin presented the Spirit of Virginia award to the Virginia Horse Center Foundation. This award is given out six times per year to a group or entity in Virginia for their positive impact on Virginia and its local communities. **See below photograph.**





**25 November 2024** – BG Clark and COL Boobar met with Lexington City Manager Tom Carroll in Smith Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the ongoing water master meter memorandum of understanding (MOU) which is being negotiated between VMI and the City of Lexington. During the meeting, BG Clark and Mr. Carroll discussed several issues contained in the draft MOU to include: the city’s willingness to provide in-kind services and support to VMI for utility breaks and repairs for a specific time frame and cost after the MOU is signed; the use of a two-tiered rate for water usage; and the city’s requirement to conduct a water rate study before 1 July 2028. At the conclusion of the discussion, Mr. Carroll agreed to draft new language for the MOU and provide it to VMI. In addition, BG Clark and Mr. Carroll discussed the ongoing issue within the city of the Cabell House and the Neikirk Hall demolition as part of the new Moody Hall capital project.

**5 December 2024** – VMI Facilities Management hosted a meeting with the City of Lexington leadership to discuss the city’s new stormwater fee proposal and how it would affect VMI. VMI was represented by COL Boobar; LTC Daren Payne, Director of Construction; Mr. Eric Schwartz, Director of the Physical Plant; Mr. Jeff Lawhorne, Director of Finance & Budget; and Mr. Todd Willey, Energy Manager. The city was represented by City Manager Tom Carroll, Director of Public Works Patrick Madigan, and Deputy Director of Public Works Thomas Wagner. The city provided a summary of the stormwater fee proposal which will be voted on by the city council in December or January and provided an estimated fee for VMI. If passed by the city council, the new stormwater fees will begin for Lexington residents in July 2025. In addition, the city described how VMI can apply for credits to the stormwater fee based on VMI best practices used to control its own stormwater runoff.

**6 December 2024** – The VMI Corps of Cadets participated in the 2024 City of Lexington Christmas parade in downtown Lexington. Regimental leadership, select cadre, Band Company, and the Rat Mass marched as the lead element in the parade. **See below photograph.**



**16 December 2024** – COL Boobar; COL Keith Gibson, Preservation Officer; and Mr. Keith Jarvis, Director of Facilities Management attended a meeting with City of Lexington officials, members of the Historic Lexington Foundation (HLF), and members of the Lexington Architectural Review Board (ARB) at the Lexington Police Department. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the ongoing Moody Hall capital project and concerns/issues raised by both the HLF and the ARB. During the meeting, both the HLF and ARB members reiterated their concerns which had previously been spelled out in letters sent to the VMI administration concerning the demolition of the Cabell House and Neikirk Hall, two historic buildings on the VMI Post. In summary, their concerns included the need to preserve both structures for historic value; the demolition of the two buildings would destroy the historic and beautiful approach to VMI currently known as the “hyphen;” VMI did not do enough to consider areas on Post or other properties where the buildings could be relocated; the demolition of these two buildings will be the beginning of the demolition of other historic buildings in the “hyphen;” and the

demolition will affect VMI's reputation as an institution of higher education who has been dedicated to preserving history. In addition, City Manager Carroll stated that while he understands VMI's needs for modernization the city council agrees with many of the concerns expressed by the HLF and the ARB, and the city council may be taking a formal position of opposition to the demolition. The city council may also be sending a letter to the VMI administration. COL Boobar, Mr. Jarvis, and COL Gibson addressed the concerns brought up at the meeting by providing a summary of the project timeline to date to include all joint studies and coordination with the appropriate state agencies to address all options when it came to the future of both the Cabell House and Neikirk Hall. COL Gibson provided information concerning a meeting that was held which included members of the HLF back in 2021 where the project and the potential demolition of these two buildings was discussed. At the conclusion of the studies all the appropriate state agencies along with VMI agreed that in this case the most feasible plan of action was the demolition of these two structures, and the state provided the appropriate demolition permits to VMI. COL Gibson went on to describe many of the past and future projects which have been or will be conducted on numerous historic buildings on Post to include buildings currently in the "hyphen"; in downtown Lexington, the Jackson House; and at the New Market battlefield. He also assured the HLF and ARB members that there are no plans to demolish any buildings along Letcher Avenue and that VMI has invested multi-millions of dollars in renovating most of those structures. Mr. Jarvis reiterated that VMI had gone thru a thorough process with our partner state agencies to address the future of the Cabell House and Neikirk Hall, and VMI will be moving forward with planning and construction which will start with demolition sometime in the fall of 2025. The meeting ended with HLF and ARB members understanding that VMI has a plan in place and a specific budget for this project. However, both the HLF and ARB requested VMI take time to look at any locations on Post that the buildings could be relocated and to inquire with any adjoining property owners such as Washington & Lee University to see if they would be interested in relocating the buildings to their property.

**18 December 2024** – COL Boobar attended a Maury Express Advisory Committee meeting. During the meeting, RADAR Transportation, the contracted transportation company who runs the system, reviewed the FY 2023/2024 budget and discussed the proposed FY2025/2026 budget. They also provided a summary of the ridership for the current fiscal year (FY2025). In FY2026 funding from Virginia is expected to decrease. The breakdown of funding for that year will be Federal funding 50%; State funding 23.81%, and Local funding 26.19%. Those percentages will leave the amount of payment for VMI at approximately \$14,000.00 for FY2026.

**19 December 2024** – COL Boobar attended the Lexington City Council meeting. During the meeting, the council unanimously passed the new city-wide stormwater fee proposal. The fee will take effect in July 2025 with the first payment contained in city customers' August 2025 water bill. The city will have six months (JAN – JUN 2025) to enact the new fee and provide customers time to apply for stormwater fee credits. In FY 2026 the stormwater fee will be collected at the 50% level (30cents per 250 square feet of impervious surfaces), and in FY 2027 the fee will be converted to the full rate (60cents per 250 square feet). In addition, the council members were advised that the City Planning Commission approved a conditional use permit (CUP) for the VMI Alumni Agencies to use office space in the Bank of the James building during the renovation of new office space. The city council will vote on this CUP at their 2 January 2025 meeting.

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. 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.