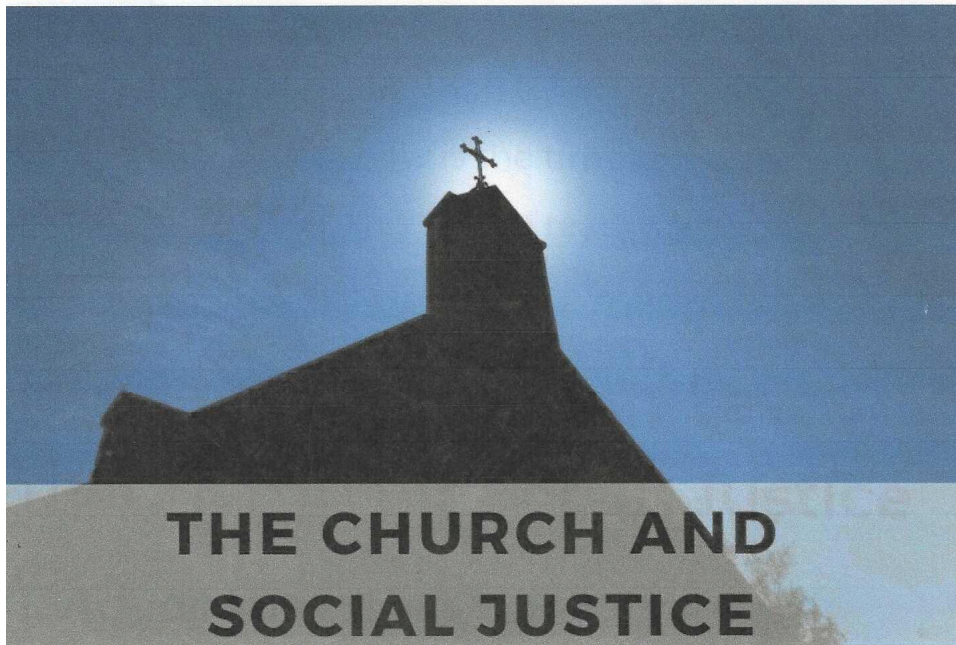


Multifaceted Role of Churches in the Community



How The Church Can Lead The Charge For Social Justice



Saturday March 21, 2026

10:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.

New Mount Olive A.M.E. Church

1953 Campostella Road

Chesapeake, Virginia 23324

The NCMP is a nonpartisan social and political corporation. Our focus is on fostering informed dialogue, building common ground, and advancing solutions that benefit all citizens of the city Chesapeake

Table of Content

Topic	Page
Multifaceted Role of Churches in the community	3
Addressing Social Needs	3
Educational and Youth Programs	3
Promoting Equity and Diversity	3
Community Engagement	3-4
Specific Ways Churches Can help Candidates	4
NCMP 2026 legislative Agenda	4
Lack of Sidewalks and the presence of Ditches in Selected Minority Neighborhoods	5
Flooding	5
Performing Arts Center	5
Swimming Pools	5-6
Convocation Center	6
Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality	6-7
Affordable Housing	7-8
Single Member Voting Districts	8-9
Advantage of Single Member Voting Districts	8-9
Problems and concerns identified by Civic Leagues	9
Community Survey Results on Issues Identified by Multiple Civic Leagues	9
Get Out the Vote: Civic League Engagement and Neighborhood Canvassing	10
Reasons Registered Voters don't Vote	10-11
Majoritarianism Rule and Public Policy	11-12
Why is voter turnout Important	12
How voting makes a Difference	12-13
Path Forward	13
City Publications to read to be informed	14
Chesapeake Customer Contact Center	14
Up Coming Forums	14

Multifaceted Role of Churches in the Community

Churches have long been integral to the fabric of local communities, serving not only as a place of worship but also as hubs for social support and community engagement. Their influence extends beyond spiritual guidance and, impacting various aspects of community life. The role is evolving, making churches vital partners in fostering strong, resilient communities. The IRS recent ruling reversing its long-standing interpretation regarding the tax-exempt status of churches, allows them to endorse political candidates without losing their status. Churches can now engage in political activities, thus enhancing their Constitutional First Amendment rights.

One of the key roles churches play is providing a sense of belonging. In a world where individual often feel disconnected, churches offer a welcoming environment where people can gather, share experiences, and build relationships. These communal ties are crucial for mental and emotional well-being, helping to reduce feelings of isolation. Churches can play a crucial role in the following:

Addressing social Needs:

Churches often step in to address social issues within the community. They organize food drives, clothing donations, and other charitable activities to support those in in needs. These initiatives not only provide immediate relief but also foster a spirit of generosity and compassion among community members.

Educational and Youth Programs:

Churches make a significant impact when it provides tutoring programs, after-school activities, and scholarships to support the educational aspirations of young people. These initiatives help bridge the educational gap and provide children with opportunities they might not otherwise have. Youth programs within churches should also focus on character development and leadership skills. By engaging young people in community service and mentorship opportunities, churches help cultivate a new generation of responsible and community-minded individuals.

Promoting Unity and Diversity:

Churches are uniquely positioned to promote unity within diverse communities. By fostering an inclusive environment that welcomes people from all walks of life, churches serve as a microcosm of harmonious society. Interfaith dialogues and multicultural events hosted by churches can encourages understanding and respect among different cultural and religious groups. Through these activities, churches help dismantle barriers and build bridges between different segments of the community, leading to a more cohesive and supportive social fabric.

Community Engagement:

Churches, through events, activities, and various volunteer programs strengthen communities bonds and create opportunities for individuals to connect, and collaborate in community development. These efforts can address physical and spiritual needs, provide emotional and social support, and empower individual and groups within the community.

Churches indeed, must demonstrate a commitment to serving and supporting their communities, contributing to the overall well-being and development of the local population.

Specific ways churches can help candidates:

Local churches can help candidates during elections by engaging in various activities that align with their mission and legal guidelines. Here are some of the ways churches can assist candidates:

- Churches can educate their congregant's during elections on the political process, local issues, and the expectations of voters. This can be done through educational activities, voter registration drives, and providing voter guides.
- Churches can build relationships with candidates and their staff to foster a positive atmosphere for candidacies. This can include hosting candidates for discussions or providing support through prayer and advocacy.
- Churches can encourage their congregants to participate in the electoral process by providing resources, information, and opportunities to vote. This can include voter registration drives, and outreach efforts to ensure that all eligible voters are registered and informed.
- Churches can advocate for policies that align with their beliefs and values, as well as policies the benefits all citizens.
- Churches can identify volunteers to participate in Political Door-to-Door canvassing. Door-to-Door canvassing is considered the **gold** standard for increasing voter participation, especially in minority neighborhoods..

NCMP 2026 Legislative Committee Agenda

“We Need You Now More than Ever Moment”

As a long-time 50 year resident of Chesapeake and a very concerned citizens, I believe we are at a “We Need You Now More Than Ever Moment”. I say that because I remember the 1980s and 1990s when churches, NAACP, and community organizations worked collaboratively to bring about meaningful change that benefitted all citizens. We have an opportunity at the 2026 council and school board elections to put in place a council and school board that will strengthen community bonds, and understand that our common problems become more than an exercise in observation, requiring crucial steps towards developing solutions.

In my view, our city is being stymied by a lack of vision and leadership by a Republican led City Council and School Board. Both seem more interested in following the Republican playbook rather than governing the city for all citizens. They seem self-serving, strongly supporting assessments and tax increases while at the same time eliminating services such as curbside recycling. Whereas the city has shown financial surpluses according to the City's ***Manager Popular Annual Financial Report***, three consecutive years, it has failed miserably in repairing or developing the infrastructure throughout the city and especially in selected minority communities.

Lack of Sidewalks, and the of Presence of Ditches in Selected Neighborhoods

The lack of sidewalks on major streets such as Campostella Road which has no sidewalks and ditches 2 feet from the road. Campostella Road is a major street with a bridge and no sidewalks for citizens. West Munden has narrow streets and no sidewalks, but a lot of ditches that harbor mosquitos. These condition put walkers in danger from passing vehicles as well as causing health problems from mosquito bites. These conditions have existed for years and the city has not responded in any meaningful way to correct these intolerable conditions.

Flooding

Flooding in South Norfolk, Pugheville, Deep Creek, and Crestwood has existed for over 50 years. ***Flooding in South Norfolk in 2024 was designated a City Council priority, but not funded.*** The Adopted March 26, 2024, **Chesapeake Industrial Waterfront Study** noted that Bainbridge Boulevard reflected what is called” Sunny Day Flooding” which can be the results of long-term sea-level rise and subsidence (sinking land) over time. It is notable that that city Council amended the Comprehensive Plan outlining potential resilience and adaptation solution, however, those solutions were not funded as part of the City’s Budget.

Performing Arts Center

A performing arts facility was placed in the City Council’s 2026 Comprehensive Plan, and has been kicked down the road since 2004. The late City Mayor, Dr. William E. Ward proposed building a performing art building in 2004. It too is a City Council priority, but not funded. A performing arts center would yield the following benefits to the city and residents: Economically, it will attract audiences, artists, and businesses that will create jobs and revenue; foster community engagement by fostering social interaction and collaboration among diverse groups, enhancing community cohesion and civic engagement; contribute to cultural development by show casing a variety of artists forms and genres, promote social and cultural diversity; provide a platform for artistic expression, experimentation, and collaboration, stimulate creativity and innovation; strengthen a community sense of identity by reflecting and celebrating local culture and heritage. These benefits highlight the transformative impact of a performing arts center on our City’s social, economic, and cultural landscape.

Swimming Pool

Chesapeake is the second largest city in Virginia, and one of the wealthiest cities, and it was the only city without a public swimming pool until the state and federal government provided major funding for its construction. The City broke ground for its construction November 14, 2025, at the Dr. Clarence V. Cuffee Community Center. The pool will offer a multitude of benefits to the city, including providing a place for our high school swimming teams to practice and to hold competitive swimming meets. It will serve as a hub where

individuals of all ages can come together to create lasting memories, build relationships, and enhance their overall well-being; offer swim lessons and water safety education, reduce the risk of drowning, particularly in children; provide low-impact forms of physical activity that is gentle on the joints, making them ideal for individuals with past injuries, arthritis, or other conditions that make traditional exercises challenging; create jobs, stimulate local spending and attract visitors from surrounding areas, increasing property values and making them an attractive feature for potential homebuyers; and provide access to swimming and aquatic programs that potentially reduce the risk of chronic diseases, improve mental health and enhance overall quality of life. These benefits highlight the importance of public swimming pools as essential resources for the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole.

Convocation Center

A convocation center is needed to facilitate a venue wherein the school system can graduate seniors in Chesapeake rather than in Norfolk. The school board and city council has shown very little interest; however, ***the city council has made it a priority, but unfunded***. The city promote Chesapeake as a great place to work, learn and play, yet there are no facilities to achieve the play part. Building a convocation center will have a range of benefits for the city and residents. An immediate benefit will be the ability to graduate high schools seniors in the City. ***As the school board and city council seem to have very little interests because it is designated a Council priority, but unfunded***. To me, this is an injustice to our students and parents, as well as a reflection on the school board's concern for our students. It is cheaper and easier to go to Norfolk, rather than fund the convocation center from the financial surpluses listed by the city manager each year. Other benefits derived from a convocation center will be economic development, that is, attracting businesses and investors to the city; create jobs in related sectors such as hotels, restaurants, and entertainment; foster community engagement and provide opportunities for cultural, recreational, and educational events; enhance the city's appeal and provide a platform for local businesses and organizations; and can lead to innovations and growth, making the city more competitive in the marketplace. Investing in a convocation center is a strategic move for Chesapeake that will enhance the quality of life for its citizens and the economic vitality of the city.

Diversity, Inclusion and Equality

The importance of diversity, inclusion, and equality in government employment is very important in a diverse city as Chesapeake, Demographically, Chesapeake population consist of 56.16% White; 29.02% Black or African Americans; 3.73% Asians; 7.1% Hispanic; 0.9% Native American/other; and 5.6% Multiracial. The median age of Chesapeake residents is 37 with only 14.1% over the age of 65. The median household income is 92,361, and 73% of citizens own their homes. Suffice to say, Chesapeake has a young population and fair better financially than most residents throughout the state. However, the city offers little in the way of entertainment for young people.

City government, as it is constituted now, does not reflect the multiracial population, but reflect a significant composition of Whites. Analyzing 35 major departments in the City reflected that only three (3) (8.6%) were held by Blacks or African Americans: Economic Development, Deputy City Manager, and Director of Human Services.

Why is it important to have diversity, inclusion and equality? It enhances public trust because it fosters inclusive practices that create welcoming environments, and improve engagement with government services. Diverse teams bring broader perspectives leading to more effective and inclusive policies that address the needs of all communities. DIE helps in ensuring that public services reflect the diverse needs of the population and leads to more equitable outcomes. Also, DIE improves job retention helps the city to comply with evolving legal and ethical standards. Clearly, the current governing body and city manager’s office has very little or no concerns in addressing this situation. To us, it is an egregious situation as well as a wealth grab.

Affordable Housing Matters:

Affordable housing is housing, whether single family or multifamily, where households spend less than 30% of their income on housing. The Chesapeake Alliance focused on households making less than 80% of area median income up (up to \$74K/yr.). Based on that factor, 12,357 rent burden households existed in 2022, which meant the following:

Critical workers that cannot afford to live in Chesapeake

	Wage / Salary	Affordable Monthly Rent (30%)	Available for rent
Sumitomo Machine Material Handlers	\$18.50/Hr.	\$962	3
New Police Officers	\$54,000	\$1,350	27
Home Health Workers	\$15.00/Hr.	\$780	1
New School Teachers	\$55,000	\$1,279	31
89% AMI Households of 4	\$74,000	\$1,854	200

According to Zillow listings October 3, 2024, there were only 369 total units listed for rent in Chesapeake. Virginia Beach had 1,185 and Norfolk had 995 total units for rent.

Chesapeake housing supply is overwhelmingly dominated by single-family detached houses. Out of the 94,035 total housing units, 145 multifamily permits (20%) were issued, whereas 29% across Hampton Roads. This shortage of affordable housing makes it difficult for young people to live in Chesapeake. The Alliance survey reflected that 44% of worker live and work in Chesapeake, 56% of them commute while in Virginia Beach, only 27% commute.

The Weldon Cooper Center projects a total Chesapeake population of 272,670 in by 2030, it was projected that Chesapeake will need 15,000 new housing units. The Center further indicated that 35% of the housing units should be affordable (5,250).

Chesapeake needs more housing of all kind, and the Chesapeake Alliance outlined how to make it happen.

1. Align economic development, education and housing policies
2. Increase multifamily zoning in urban and suburban overlay districts
3. Provide density/affordable bonuses
4. Support LIHTC projects
5. Dedicate funding for affordability
6. Track progress toward the housing plan with a community dashboard.

We are nearly at a crisis point in the availability of affordable housing, teachers, police officers and other worker, the backbone of our communities, need affordable housing. For example, a household needs to make \$74,000 a year to afford Chesapeake's median monthly rent of \$1,861. Chesapeake was cited as having the most expensive rent in Hampton Roads with a one bedroom apartment priced at \$1,590, a 2.6% increase from a year earlier, according to Zumper.com, an online listing that tracks rents.

Chesapeake has high school graduates and college graduates who can't come back to Chesapeake because they can't afford housing cost or they can't move out of mom and dad's house. They also have older parents who have the same problem, and don't want to live in a 4,000 square foot house and can't manage it, but can't find any smaller unit in the city.

Like many cities in the region, more than 80% of developed land is reserved for single-family housing in Chesapeake, according to a tool developed by advocacy group Housing Forward Virginia. Just 4% of the city's land currently allows development of four or more units of housing without the need for city council approval. The report notes Chesapeake approved zero building permits for new apartments or condos in 2022. In the same year, 81% of new housing units built in Virginia Beach were multifamily developments. Those kind of numbers don't say "Chesapeake is open for business." We can't recruit businesses into the city if we can't house their workforce.

Single Member Voting Districts:

The single member district system establishes a direct relationship between voters and their elected representative. Constituents in a specific district know who their representative are, fostering a direct line of communication and accountability. This direct link is considered a strength, as it can encourage representatives to focus on the specific needs and issues of their constituents.

Advantages of Single-Member Districts:

Supporters cite several advantages, namely that single-member districts

- provide voters with strong constituency representation because each voter has a single, easily identifiable, district representative;
- encourage constituency service by providing voters with an easily identifiable 'ombudsman';
- maximize accountability because a single representative can be held responsible and can be re-elected or defeated in the next election;
- ensure geographic representation.

The strengths of single-member districts rest in the close ties between representatives and constituents, the accountability of representatives to the voters, and constituency service. Because single-member districts are used in conjunction with plurality or majority voting rules, they are also said to foster strong and stable government.

Problems and concerns identified by Civic Leagues Visited:

The Legislative Committee met 17 times with civic leagues and two times with two of them to present the NCMP Agenda, stressed the necessity for voting, and shared the issues that were negatively affecting their lives and communities. With each visit, neighborhood attendees were given surveys to list their problems, concerns and challenges. Compilation and analyses resulted in a compendium of concerns which are outlined below.

Community Issue Survey

Issues	# of Checkmarks
Speeding on neighborhood streets	35
Ditches that breed mosquitos	34
Flooding	30
Lack of performing arts center	28
Lack of a convocation center	26
Lack of sidewalks	21
Trash dumping	18
Crime	17
Toxic waste contamination	17
Quality of schools	16
Lack of access to recreational facilities	15
Lack of street lights	15
Lack of nearby grocery stores	12

Lack of access to public transportation	5
Business in private residences	5

Other concerns not identified in the survey included positioning of Virginia Natural Gas pumping station near Crestwood’s communities; absence of a community center in Crestwood; curbside recycling; air quality; parked broken down cars; yard care, and trailers parked on front yards.

The NCMP has presented these issues to the deputy city manager and has spoken to city council advocating that the above issues be addressed.

Get Out the Vote: Civic Leagues Engagement and Neighborhood Canvassing

In its efforts to increase minority voting, elect more Democrats to Chesapeake’s City Council and School Board, and change the at-large voting to single member district voting, the NCMP Legislative Committee met with lawyers from the Advancement Project, a Washington DC based organization that work to eliminate barriers to voting, ensure that every vote counts, and ensure that people voting rights are restored and protected. Following that meeting, we reviewed voter participation in the 2020 and 2023 election to develop strategies for moving forward to increase voter participation. We also looked at research from the US Vote Foundation LoCelections initiative on fixing the problem of Low voter Turnout in US Local Election: A Data-Driven Solution. The impact of low voter turnout failed to be representative of the socio/economic/demographic makeup of the various electoral district in cities and town. The research revealed that five factors constituted the main reasons for low turnout:

- Local electoral processes
- City size and demographics
- The potential for contested outcomes in a race
- Voter information gap
- Lack of trust in local government

Detail explanations were provided for each of these factors that is worth exploring in the research, but I will only address the voter information gap which is significant to candidate seeking offices. According to recent studies by the Knight Foundation, Millennials are now the largest single population cohort in the US, having surpassed the boomer generation in 2015. Data showed that that a lack of information was the dominant factor in the lack of participation by millennials in local elections-surpassing issues like geographic mobility and a lack of home ownership by a significant Margin. The chart below details the millennials Information gap

Reasons people don’t Vote:

Barriers	%
I don’t have enough information about the candidates	75%
I don’t know enough about the local issues	62%

There's not enough news coverage of local elections	40%
I don't know when local elections are held	20%
I don't have enough time to vote in local election	17%
It's not worth it. My vote doesn't matter	17%
I don't feel a connection	12%
Local elections are less important than the national ones	10%
I don't know where my polling place is	7%
I haven't lived in the city long enough to know who to vote for.	5%

Source: US VOTE Foundation

Danny Hayes and Jennifer Lawless, 2015 publication, *As Local News Goes, So Goes Citizen Engagement* noted that the declining circulation and availability of local newspapers are a major contributor to engagement in local elections, and Lee Shaker of Portland State University cites the closure of local newspapers as a factor in the overall reduction in political engagement. According to the Kennedy School of Government research on trust in governments, only 35% of Millennials trust local Government while 68% believe in community service as an honorable undertaking, what seems clear from these and other data is that the seeds of greater participation, however dormant today, have been scattered widely in the political system. The question is, how we cause things to change. The answer, in a nutshell, is **information**.

This may foster greater political interest on local elections, which in turn could benefit civic society as a whole. We need to use information from prior elections and use complicated technologies and interface it with voter outreach, registration and the media organizations. The key is to keep voters updated on local elections and issues, and allow them to stay up to date on candidates, issues, ballot eligibility and other local voting information in all neighborhoods in the city.

The New Chesapeake Men for Progress board of directors empowered its Legislative Agenda Committee to initiate strategies to: (1). Educated voters on the local issues, and candidates, And (2) canvass 10,000 voters to get out the vote. In 2024, the committee targeted 5 predominantly minority neighborhoods with the goal of increasing the percentage of voter turnout 10% from the previous election. For the 2026, local election, the NCMP is targeted 12 neighborhoods to canvas to improve voter participation.

Majoritarianism and Public Policy:

When a majoritarian rule shapes public policy, it tends to favor initiatives that benefit the largest number of people, and often at the expense of minority interests. This dynamic has profound implications for how governments allocate resources, design social programs and address social change. From an economic perspective, majoritarian rule normally leads to inefficient resource allocation. Majority coalitions often support policies that provide concentrated benefits to their members while distributing costs across the entire population.

Consider agricultural subsidies to Midwest farmers. Farmers represent a significant voting bloc, and they might successfully lobby for subsidies that benefit their community directly. However, these subsidies are funded through general taxation, meaning urban consumers and non-agricultural workers bear the cost. The majority, including farmers and their supporters, benefit from this arrangement, while the minority, those who bear the cost without receiving direct benefits, has little recourse.

To get a better understanding of how preferences of the majority dominate political decisions, potentially leading to the marginalization of minority issues, concerns, and problems, one needs to read Alexis de Tocqueville's **Democracy in America**, and John Stewart Mill's book **On Liberty**. The tyranny of the majority can manifest itself in various ways, including: laws specifically targeting or disadvantage minority groups, undermining their rights and interests; gerrymandering to dilute minority representation, ensuring that the majority maintain power; imposition of the values and norms, thus leading to the marginalization of minority culture beliefs; and electoral manipulations of voting precincts and poles. James Madison in 1887 warned us about majority (Factions in Federalist Paper NO. 10) dominating government. **He indicated that there were two ways of curing the mischiefs of factions: the one, by removing its cause; the other, by controlling its effects. At this point, we have not been able to control its effect; therefore, we must remove them.**

To mitigate the risks associated with tyranny of the majority, citizens can implement countermeasures such as policies protecting minority rights, checks and balances within the government structure, and other mechanisms to ensure that all voices are heard in the political process. Locally, the major way to combat tyranny of the majority is to vote. Voting is a fundamental right and the cornerstone of democracy, empowering citizens to influence governance, hold leaders accountable, and shape public policy. However, among the biggest challenges in local elections is getting people to the polls. The reasons for voter apathy can vary, but their sentiments can be summed up in just a few comments from eligible voters who increasingly prefer to stay home on Election Day.

"I can't stand either candidate"

"I'm too busy just trying to survive"

"My vote doesn't matter, so why bother"

"The election is rigged"

There are many reasons for voter inaction, but the situation turns around when we honestly answer the question: Why is it important to vote in elections?

Why is Voter Turnout Important?

In a democracy, every vote counts, and every voice matters. It's not simply a matter of answering the question of "Why is it important to vote?" The answer lies in the profound impact that voting has on our communities, government, and our future. Whether in a presidential election, city council, or school board race, voting is a fundamental right that allows citizens to shape the future of their city, state, and national government. Sometimes, an election is determined by just a handful of votes.

How Voting Makes A difference.

Voting is not just a civic duty; it's a powerful tool for change. When you cast your ballot, you are choosing your representatives and influencing the policies that will govern your life. From healthcare, education, public safety, taxes, infrastructure improvements, etc. The decisions made by elected officials affect every aspect of your daily lives, even when that impact is not immediately apparent.

By voting, you help decide who will hold power and make those critical decisions. Moreover, voting is a way to hold elected official accountable. If they fail to represent your interest, you can vote them out of office. This mechanism ensures that government remains responsive to all of its citizens.

Yes voting is a fundamental right but we must exercise this right as citizens. Key points to recognize are as follow:

- Voting allows you to express your preferences and choose representatives who align with your values and interests. This process ensures that elected officials are accountable to the people they serve, fostering a government that reflects the will of the populace. When citizens participate in elections, they have a direct say in who makes decisions that affect their lives, from local policies to national legislation.
- Elections serve as a mechanism for holding leaders accountable for their actions and decisions. Regular and competitive elections compel politicians to be responsive to the needs and concerns of their constituents. This accountability is crucial for maintaining a healthy democracy, as it encourages elected official to prioritize the interest of the public over their own.
- Voting is a powerful tool for driving social change. Through the electoral process, citizens can advocate for issues that matter to them, such as education, healthcare, and social justice. The policies enacted by elected officials have direct impact on your daily lives, influencing everything from funding public services to civil right protections.
- Elections reinforce the legitimacy of the political system by providing a platform for public participation. When citizens engage in the voting process, it strengthens the social contract between the government and the governed, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility. This participation is essential for the stability of democratic institutions.
- Voting is not only a right but also a civic duty that contributes to personal fulfillment. It allows individual to feel connected to their community and to have a voice in shaping the future. Engaging in the electoral process can enhance self-esteem and a sense of belonging, as citizens recognize their role in the democratic system.

In summary, voting is crucial in a democracy as it empowers citizens, ensures accountability, drives social change, legitimizes governance, and fulfill civic responsibilities. Every vote matters, and participation in elections is essential for a vibrant and responsive democracy.

For Chesapeake to be an “exceptional place to live, learn, work, farm, and play”, there is much work to be done. The current Republican majority City Council and school board have not shown the courage to realize these end.

The Path Forward

The path forward will require cooperation and a collaboration among the New Chesapeake, Men for Progress, Inc., Chesapeake Democratic Committee, churches, NAACP, civic leagues, fraternities, sororities, and community organizations. It is going to take a unified efforts to unseat Republicans on City Council and the School Board. Progress on quality of life issues, economic growth, improving the city’s infrastructure, quality healthcare, diversity, inclusion, and equality, and mental health services have been stymied by the majority Republican City Council and School Board. The upcoming 2026 election is presenting Democrats a golden opportunity to change the directions this city will go into the future. We must not blow this opportunity. Yes, ***we are at a “We Need You Now More than Ever Moment***

Publications to read to be informed:

1. Chesapeake Industrial Waterfront Study. Identified flood areas such as Crestwood, Bainbridge Boulevard, Freeman Avenue, and areas of Deep Creek.
2. City Council Priority Projects
3. Greenbrier Area Plan
4. City Manager’s 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 “Popular Annual Financial Report”.
5. Chesapeake 2035 Comprehensive Plan
6. Chesapeake Alliance Housing Committee Presentation, April 28, 2024.

Chesapeake Customer Contact Center:

Phone: 757-382-2489: The place to call to request services or to report a concern.

Up Coming Forums:

One purpose of the forums is to help in strengthen community ties by bringing together leaders and individuals with shared interest and concerns. Also, the forums will foster collaboration among community members, organizations, and government representatives, promoting collective actions on local issues.

1. Saturday March 21, 2026: Church and Community Organization Cooperation, Collaboration, and Engagement Forum.
2. Saturday April 11, 2026 Civic League and Community Organization Cooperation, Collaboration, and Engagement Forum.
3. September 26, 2026: Candidate Forum

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