Time for Sheriff Hunt to go, voluntarily or otherwise

A couple of years ago, theキャンペーン of the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office was called the “Dukes of Hazzard” kind of a thing. Back then, according to a grand jury report, it was a cornpone cop shop. Sheriff Dewey Hunt’s tuna-fish-scented technician daughter, a part-time clerk on the sheriff’s payroll, was named “Hurricane Ashley.” Browned all over, full-time deputies and played dress-up cop.

She yelled at her dad in front of his staff, turned in highly questionable timesheets and directly curbed on an eye-rolling relationship with an older retired officer.

Now, events have turned tragic. Alger’s ex-wife, Jennifer Pope, is dead, allegedly slain by the estranged deputy Monday afternoon at a Roanoke convenience store — in front of one of their daughters. Then, Alger allegedly shot a state trooper during his getaway.

Nepotism and indecent exposure by Sheriff Hunt preceded these crimes. That’s why he should resign his office now.

It’s rare when police get psychic advance warning of a killing about to happen. It’s even rarer when the potential killer is a trained gymnast, armed with a semiautomatic rifle, driving a marked police cruiser, miles away from his intended target, and when the s— comes from another law enforcement agency.

That is what happened roughly 25 minutes before Jennifer Pope’s dying.

What did Hunt do under these circumstances? He lied on an order to wear Roanoke County and Salem police uniforms for the lookout for Alger.

Hunt said he would take care of it himself. So he called Salem police and left a message shortly after Alger appeared north from Roanoke Mill.

By the time Salem police returned the call, Jennifer Pope was dead.

We will never know if she would be alive today had that lookup been traced. Many other things still are unclear about the case. But it’s hard to conceive that her chances would have been better the other way.

Another lookup, however, pointed to a direct connection to the sheriff, who won election by less than 200 votes in 2007. It would likely have led to some uncomfortable questions in an election year in which Hunt already was facing a stiff challenge from a candidate he barely edged four years ago — before he turned the sheriff’s office into a lakhimpooch.

Who was this loose-cannon deputy? Who was such an untouchable man on the force? The answers would have led back to Jonathan Alger and his controversial relationship with Ashley Hunt, the sheriff’s daughter and more-than-questionable.

Why wasn’t Alger canned when it was clear he was cavorting on and off at home, with a teenager.

Wasn’t it time, then, the teenager should have been checked?

As an anonymous person posting under the nickname “Retired Officer” commented on my blog Wednesday: “Sheriff Hunt found himself in a position of either protecting life or protecting his department... There was only one idea to be made and the sheriff chose not to make it.”

I would put it a bit differently: It looks like Hunt was protecting his own skin for November’s election. And perhaps because of that, a woman is dead, her two daughters have been orphaned, a state trooper has been shot.

Sheriff Hunt now has another decision to make whether or not to step down. It is well past time for him to turn the department over to someone capable.

If Hunt declines to do the right thing, voters can take steps to force this issue. Under Virginia law, a candidate may remove a constitutional officer by neglect of duty, upon petition. In Hunt’s case, that would require the signatures of at least 5,500 registered voters — 10 percent of the total number of people who cast ballots in the 2007 election’s sheriff’s race.

Precisely 6,299 people voted for somebody other than Hunt in that four-way contest. Under the circumstances, it shouldn’t be that hard to round up 6,500 signatures calling on a judge to give the sheriff the boot.

JUNE 2, 2011
THE ROANOKE TIMES
CROWD IS FAIR'S BEST SHOW

Tripp Godsey said a transportation law supported by Del. Dave Nutter and Sen. John Edwards intrudes personal property rights.

By Mason Adams
mason@roanoke.com, 689-2353

Virginia Sen. John Edwards and Del. Dave Nutter both saw a 2007 omnibus transportation bill as a way to fund roads without a wholesale tax increase. But now, Tripp Godsey, who is running against Nutter for the Republican nomination and right to face Edwards this fall in a race for the 28th Senate District seat, is criticizing both men for those votes, saying the bill has created more problems than it solved.

Godsey's criticism stems from a section of the lengthy bill that requires localities of a certain size and growth rate to establish “urban development districts.” Last month, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted down a proposal last week, which Godsey said is a statement commending the board and promising to fight for repeal of the mandate.

The issue is a big one for the Roa- noke Tea Party, which has called for its members to speak out before the board’s vote. Godsey was recruited by the tea party to run against Edwards, and his campaign manager, Greg Aldridge, is a prominent leader within the Roanoke Tea Party.

“Not all laws, brought up either by the Fair Tax or, by the way, any of the Tea Party, are perfect laws,” Godsey said. “If I can get elected, I’ll work to improve them.”

See SENATE, 8

SAVE THE DATE

Shake, Bake & Sprout

A children’s event series featuring hands-on learning about container gardening, a hands-on cooking activity and a fun exercise and movement program. Lead by the Roanoke Children’s Theatre, will present the original musical, “Cookie’s.”

When: Victoria Hammon Market, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. July 24
Contact: 343-6263

Tax jump likely in school projects

Montgomery school officials must find a way to fund $96 million of the building costs.

By Katelyn Polantz
k Polantz@roanoke.com, 689-2307

The projects to build Blackburg and Auburn high schools and upgrade Auburn Middle School will cost Montgomery County about the same amounts, $42.5 million, that officials had previously said, and could cause a jump in the property tax rate by 10 cents or more.

According to a proposed contract released by the school board after 10 p.m. Friday, the cost for a private company to build the schools may not exceed $110 million, or $51 million for Auburn High, $58.8 million for Auburn Middle and $31 million for Blackburg High.

But that amount doesn’t include all expenses, such as construction and equipment purchases, Greg Meadmore, the county administrator, said Saturday. Those neces- sities should add about $20 million to the projects’ total in about $5 million.

“I think the school board thought they could negotiate with [construction company] Branch 12 Associates and have done a tremendous job getting high-quality, reasonable rates,” Meadmore said. “That’s the challenge — to put the num- bers together so we can keep it low as possible for the taxpayers.”

The school district released the contract price tag Friday along with the draft contract with a group of companies. The release didn’t include information about the proj- ects’ total costs. School dis- The projects to build Blackburg and Auburn high schools and upgrade Auburn Middle School will cost Montgomery County about the same amounts, $42.5 million, that officials had previously said, and could cause a jump in the property tax rate by 10 cents or more.

According to a proposed contract released by the school board after 10 p.m. Friday, the cost for a private company to build the schools may not exceed $110 million, or $51 million for Auburn High, $58.8 million for Auburn Middle and $31 million for Blackburg High.

But that amount doesn’t include all expenses, such as construction and equipment purchases, Greg Meadmore, the county administrator, said Saturday. Those necess- sities should add about $20 million to the projects’ total in about $5 million.

“I think the school board thought they could negotiate with [construction company] Branch 12 Associates and have done a tremendous job getting high-quality, reasonable rates,” Meadmore said. “That’s the challenge — to put the num- bers together so we can keep it low as possible for the taxpayers.”

The school district released the contract price tag Friday along with the draft contract with a group of companies. The release didn’t include information about the proj- ects’ total costs. School dis-
John West, 5 of Floyd looks at the mechanical bull at Floyd Fandango in Pulaski County. The fair's organizers encourage designated driving and emphasize their event is family-friendly.

**WINE: Designed drivers give free soft drinks**

**CASEY: Midway games, shows dying traditions**

*The Roanoke Times*

---

**Ad Number:**

**Advertiser:**

**Size:**

**Section/Zone:**

**Description:**

**Color:**

---

**TAX:**

Board will vote on plan from 1

**FROM 1**

The Roanoke Timesceaseable election.

**FROM 1**

The Salem Fair draws in additional taxes to replace Blacksburg.

**FROM 1**

The latter,经济增长，and

**FROM 1**

uniformed officers, or a 1,400-

**FROM 1**

TAX, TAGS, TITLE, AND

---

The Roanoke Timesceaseable election.

**FROM 1**

The Salem Fair draws in additional taxes to replace Blacksburg.

**FROM 1**

The latter,经济增长，and

**FROM 1**

uniformed officers, or a 1,400-

**FROM 1**

TAX, TAGS, TITLE, AND
Disabled veterans deserve a place to park

By Byanne Rucker
jrucker@roanoke.com

ROCKY MOUNT — In 30 months, the town police department has faced challenges and advantages.

Soon after David Cundiff was hired as the temporary police chief in June, there was a large break-in at an area grocery store.

Then there was the accident that killed two town firefighters, followed by two armed robbers and on-off terrorism threats.

“It’s been a challenge,” he said. Cundiff was hired after Virgil Mollin stepped down from the position.

Cundiff had spent 30 years with the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office, retiring as a lieutenant. Mollin managed the five-man police force in the Rocky Mount department when Cundiff arrived, but Mollin left earlier this year to work for a private security company.

Cundiff wrote 62 weeks a hour and makes $50,000, with no benefits, said Town Manager James Evans.

Updating the department’s equipment and training has been Cundiff’s focus. Last week, he introduced two new القرى members of the department — the town’s first in 30 years.

“We had them (the dogs) for the county and saw what valuable assets they were to the community,” Cundiff said.

The dogs are trained in tracking and narcotic searches. Officers were on board with the idea, and the council went to purchase the dogs themselves.

Officers have received intelligence training, and the Blue Ridge Thunder — now known as the Northern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force started by Bedford County — Cundiff said.

He was able to get the county to donate an old rescue squad vehicle for the town, a new mobile command unit, equipped with computers and communication devices. The department also received a tax credit when the town included him for new video recording devices and updated laptops and software for police work.

Two of the town’s in-car video recording devices still record to a VA regional office.

Deitch suffered two heart attacks so good that he decided to take the time to pace for the last 10 years, but he sprained his ankle while doing so before falling.

Matthew Cundiff, the police chief on the scene before he was taken to Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

Deitch told a police officer who moved him with a defibrillator that his daughter, who lives in Vinton.

His daughter, who lives in Vinton.

He said he planned to return in next year’s Virginia Valley.

ROANOKE VALLEY

Sites collecting old meds for safe disposal

Unusual or expired medications in your home can be disposed of safely as part of the Virginia National Guard’s Project Drug Take-Down Day on April 21.

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at four locations.

 Virginia Tech Police Department
 Virginia Tech Police Department

The event is sponsored by Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Prevention, the Virginia Tech Police Department, Roanoke Police Department, Salem Police Department and the Botetourt County Sheriff’s Office.

Rocky Mountain Police Chief David Cundiff (left) listens as Sharon Moore (left), state manager for the Virginia National Guard’s Drug Take-Down Day, speaks on April 21.

Rocky Mountain Police Chief David Cundiff (left) listens as Sharon Moore (left), state manager for the Virginia National Guard’s Drug Take-Down Day, speaks on April 21.

Rocky Mountain Police Chief David Cundiff (left) listens as Sharon Moore (left), state manager for the Virginia National Guard’s Drug Take-Down Day, speaks on April 21.

Rocky Mountain Police Chief David Cundiff (left) listens as Sharon Moore (left), state manager for the Virginia National Guard’s Drug Take-Down Day, speaks on April 21.

ROANOKE VALLEY

Police updates force

Disabled veterans deserve a place to park

Bob Hibbard of Roanoke got blown up by a land mine in Vietnam while he was serving in the military.

He was weak from radiation and chemotherapy and he had to be in the hospital for the first result of another surgery.

He decided to use crutches for each of those visi- tions, to the moment that he had his VA records. But there was a problem. There were no records for veterans at the Vet Fed- eral Building in downtown Roanoke.

Although the Vet’s parking spaces are reserved for fed- eral employees. Sometimes the pay lot across Franklin Road was full.

So Hibbard put his car down on Luck Avenue near Oakley’s Parking Service, and he would walk blocks away. On his way, he’d run into a few more disabled veterans.

Eventually he’d make it to the Poff Building, where he’d wrangle with the revolving doors. Then he’d be there to fire up and癌症

“In the beginning,” he said, “I couldn’t.” Hibbard told me Tuesday. “Sometimes, I didn’t think I was going to make it.”

This year, Hibbard — still seems like a young man — runs the Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Kevin Thompson, a former co-worker in the Rocky Mountain police force, said he told town offi- cers, “I’m just trying to help them out, and we’ll see what happens after that,” he said at the time.

When he took the role, Cundiff said told town officials it would take at least a year to bring the department up to par.

Eventually he’d make it to the Poff Building, where he’d

“Everything’s falling into place,” Cundiff said. “I think they’re doing a good job. Everyone has listened. Everyone believes in Cundiff.”

Donnie maximal.muncy@roanoke.com

ROANOKE VALLEY

Police updates force

Disabled veterans deserve a place to park

Bob Hibbard of Roanoke got blown up by a land mine in Vietnam while he was serving in the military.

He was weak from radiation and chemotherapy and he had to be in the hospital for the first result of another surgery.

He decided to use crutches for each of those visi- tions, to the moment that he had his VA records. But there was a problem. There were no records for veterans at the Vet Fed- eral Building in downtown Roanoke.

Although the Vet’s parking spaces are reserved for fed- eral employees. Sometimes the pay lot across Franklin Road was full.

So Hibbard put his car down on Luck Avenue near Oakley’s Parking Service, and he would walk blocks away. On his way, he’d run into a few more disabled veterans.

Eventually he’d make it to the Poff Building, where he’d wrangle with the revolving doors. Then he’d be there to fire up and cancer.

“In the beginning,” he said, “I couldn’t.” Hibbard told me Tuesday. “Sometimes, I didn’t think I was going to make it.”

This year, Hibbard — still seems like a young man — runs the Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Kevin Thompson, a former co-worker in the Rocky Mountain police force, said he told town offi- cers, “I’m just trying to help them out, and we’ll see what happens after that,” he said at the time.

When he took the role, Cundiff said told town officials it would take at least a year to bring the department up to par.

Eventually he’d make it to the Poff Building, where he’d

“Everything’s falling into place,” Cundiff said. “I think they’re doing a good job. Everyone has listened. Everyone believes in Cundiff.”

Donnie maximal.muncy@roanoke.com

ROANOKE VALLEY

Police updates force
The coal industry has been harshly criticized in recent years for the mining process known as “mountaintop removal.” A 2010 study by the West Virginia University shows that mountaintop removal has caused irreversible ecological damage and led to significant health issues for the local population. The process involves blasting away the tops of mountains to access coal seams, which creates huge, sprawling plains of Flatter land. While creating more flat land for agriculture, mountaintop removal also results in the destruction of valuable forests and wildlife habitats. The effects of mountaintop removal are far-reaching and long-lasting, making it a contentious issue in many coal-producing regions. Despite the negative impact, the industry continues to push forward with the practice, driven by the demand for coal and the profit margins it offers. The debate continues as communities and environmental groups seek to protect their lands and ecosystems from further destruction.
A compromise on the Ten Commandments?

A Giles County parent wants schools to display a collection of founding documents that includes the controversial biblical list that has caused a stir.

A Giles County father felt the virility in this year’s back-to-school when the Ten Commandments were removed from the county’s public schools.

So Bobby Lilly found a possible compromise.

The attorney with a second-grade daughter at Lee Elementary School wants to hang a “scriptorium” of sermons in its halls — a display of nine American government documents, historical texts and symbols, including New Testament bible verses of the Ten Commandments.

“The whole point of doing this was to make this not inflammatory,” he said last week. “I did it because I’m a parent. Because I love a citizen and had family and friends and neighbors caught up in this polarizing debate.”

Display of the commandments have gone up and down in Giles County Public Schools since December, when a secular group first pressured the district to remove them, to the outrage of hundreds of citizens.

Facing a red tri-fold poster board, Lilly gave the controversy new life at the last school board meeting.

He proposed a display of framed 8 by 10-inch copies of the Menorah Compact, Virginia Declaration of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, Magna Carta, short music of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and a regime of Lady Justice with blindfold and scales.

But the school district and others are most concerned with the Ten Commandments, which would hang near the bottom left of the cluster, next to the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. The pairing of these two texts, Lilly says, would promote tolerance and show students they have the right to believe what they choose.

Lilly, 44, serves as assistant commune’s attorney in Paladino County, and weighed his legal training with his Methodist faith and involvement in the education of his daughter, Merrilith.

“The lawyer side of me aside, the common sense side of me certainly can’t talk about church and state without talking about one of it,” he said.

ACLU of Virginia attorney Rebecca Gallenberg questioned Monday how Lilly’s proposal compromises the commandments.

“I see a bunch of documents related to the history and one religious document,” she said.

The ACLU of Virginia and Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation threatened the lawsuit if they keep the commandments off school walls since February.

“Gallenberg said the ACLU will evaluate any document the board makes on Lilly’s proposal and will discuss it with them in Giles County.”

“One of the questions of a constitutional standpoint is what is the intent to retain religious or secular? Gallenberg said.”

But Liberty Counsel founder Mathew Staver said Lilly’s display would be constitutional, because of a federal court of appeals decision in 2010. That decision, called ACLU of Kentucky v. Grayson County, allows the Ten Commandments to hang among other symbols in a courthouse.

The Liberty Counsel has advised the Giles County school system since the debate flared last year.

School board Chairman Bill Buckland said the ACLU would evaluate the specifics about Lilly’s proposed last week.

“We’re not considering the Ten Commandments — this is historical documents,” he said, clarifying the difference he sees between the perspective and this.

Buckland said the district didn’t finish reviewing the proposal, and a vote isn’t on an agenda for the board’s meeting this afternoon.

The Giles County School Board meets at the school administration office in Pearisburg at 4 p.m.

Visit the story at newsroomwv.com for ongoing coverage and to share your thoughts on the Ten Commandments controversy.

By Katelyn Palazola
katelyn.palazola@roanoke.com
385-1662

A truck trailer with a Ten Commandments message stand parked in a private field on the edge of the town of Pearisburg in Giles County earlier this month.

Attorney Bobby Lilly prepares to display the Ten Commandments in company with several other historical documents. Lilly made the most of his proposal in a letter to local TV station.

Virginia is for lovers of weird?

A truck trailer with a Ten Commandments message stand parked in a private field on the edge of the town of Pearisburg in Giles County earlier this month.