

WACHAPREAGUE Times

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news from the
Flounder and Lawn
Mowing Capital of
the Eastern Shore

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Making a gathering spot

The Wachapreague
General Store is all
new again

BEHIND THE PAPERED-OVER windows, behind the hints on Facebook, behind the conjecture, gossip and guessing, work has been taking place in the Wachapreague General Store - on the ground, in the ground and in the mind and sensibility of Tracey Chareas, the new operator.

Chareas has an idea, a vision for the store that takes off from what it's been since it's been open in the post-Joe era. She sees the store as a gathering place, a spot where people meet to talk and chat, to hang out. A place where you can get the butter you need for the dinner you're making, sure, and also where you can also get a perfect little treat for yourself or someone else. Chareas sees it as a store, yes, but also as a destination, an experience, different enough to entreat you to stay for an hour, or to pull off Route 13 and head to Wachapreague.

Here are some of the basics:

She's hoping to open June 3, if all goes well with the final county inspections.

The hours, for starters, will be from 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on weekdays, and until 4:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Her husband will be working at the store on weekends; she has a couple staffers, and is looking for one or two more, to make the hours possible.

The store will be open seven days a week, and year-round, though it might



close for a couple weeks in the winter.

The offerings will include fresh produce from local growers, including Chareas's farm,

Eastern Shore Coastal Roasters coffee, Brown Dog ice cream, flowers from Chareas's Saltwater Flower Farm and others flower farms in the area.

There will be coffee, as well as lattes, espressos and the like, though at the opening, the coffee will be drip; the espresso machine is on the way!. Look for baked goods; prepared foods like soups, stews, pot pies and casseroles that you can bring home to heat up; sandwiches that she makes in advance; beer and wine; small-batch cheeses; specialty gift items and what she calls "affordable luxuries."

She plans to continue the tradition of having a basket of free veggies. In the winter, she hopes to sell flowers and plants, winter vegetables and micro greens.

You'll be able to call orders in and then get them at the pick-up window on

This and That

SEAN FATE, CHIEF of the Wachapreague Volunteer Fire Department, laughed when I asked him whether the new building would be ready in time for the carnival.

"We will be able to use whatever is ready," he said. "The garage doors will not be on yet but the roof and the concrete and the electricity" will all be done in time.



The new building will house three rides: a new, smaller carousel, the pony carts that already were there, and another new ride,

a Roto-Whip, which came from Onancock, who bought it from Buckroe Beach.

The new building means that the fire department won't have to disassemble and store the three rides every year.

The cost, "when all is said and done," Fate said, "with electricity and a new walk-in refrigerator and freezer - we will have over \$200,000 invested. We've been saving, putting money away for eight to 10 years."

While Fate said that the building is the big news, the way the community comes together is the backbone of the carnival, he said.

"The amount of volunteer help that we get is tremendous. It's the only way we can operate." The fire department itself has about 35 members, he said, and it takes 85 or 90 people a night to make the carnival happen. People volunteer to help during the carnival, and also on Monday nights, at 6:30, when the carnival is closed.

"If it wasn't for the community stepping up and helping us," he said, "we wouldn't have the carnival."

The Carnival starts on Weds., June 18, at 7 p.m., and continues Weds.-Sat. through July 5. ➡➡

PAUL MORRIS, OWNER of the former commercial marina, says that he expects dredging of his marina to start this winter, to be followed by bulkhead replacement. Both projects have to be completed before the marina can reopen, he said.

It has been hooked up to the sewer line.

Morris and several council members say that they believe that the marsh dredging project is now complete. ➡➡

Continued on back

More This & That on back

General Store

Brooklyn Ave., where you'll also be able to order. She hopes that, if technology cooperates, you'll even be able pay in advance.

ALL OF THIS comes from Chareas's imagination, and also from her experience. Earlier in her life, Chareas, 49, designed jewelry and had a longstanding shop in the Beacon Hill area of Boston. The farm on Drummondtown Road where she lives with her husband Zenny, 49, and their two children, Charlie, who is 12, and Dylan, 10, is her third farm. (And the humans are not alone there. In addition to a variety of fowl, they have six rescue equines - a mini donkey, a mini mare, a Welsh pony, a mule, a Chincoteague pony and an elderly Thoroughbred).

The Chareases moved to Drummondtown Road a little over a year ago. Chareas immediately established the Saltwater Flower Farm, and began planting and selling blooms. This spring, she had beautiful daffodils and tulips for sale on a pick-your-own basis, and the summer garden is starting to come into its own.

Their first farm was in Massachusetts, where, in addition to farming, Chareas also was into real estate, mostly as a stager, a person who brings furnishings and ideas to empty homes, to help make them look their best when they hit the market. Zenny was working on the farm, and also working as a project manager for a software company.

When Covid hit, she says, everything changed. She lost her staging income. Zenny's job wobbled. New England, she says, became too crowded, and the weather was getting worse. And, she says, "We wanted an easier life for the kids."

SHE HAD LONG BEEN a fan of the Eastern Shore, though what she knew, primarily, from her family's background and her life growing up, was the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia, she says, "was affordable, and more my speed than the Eastern Shore of Maryland."

"If we'd come on vacation, we'd have moved right away," she says.

But it wasn't vacation, it was real life, and so she drove down alone, and things fell into place. She found a real estate agent around Chincoteague, and ended up buying that person's family's farm, in Assawoman.

After a few years, though, her husband lost his job, and they struggled. They ended up selling the Assawoman farm to stay afloat.

But "look what happened!" she says. They downsized, ended up on Drummondtown Road, where they could have the horses, a home for the family and all the staging furniture, room for vegetables and flowers and, Chareas says, a great feeling of community. The children enrolled in a school that they like, Zenny got a job at Wallops, and then the store came up for sale. It was not an easy decision, but, she says, "I feel it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

There's the synergy of having her farm seven minutes up the road from the store. There's the sense of community for the family, especially the children. There's a climate that's easier even than the one in Assawoman, and land that has been farmed well for a long time. And there's the challenge and joy of having a vision and making it come true.

All of which is not to say that it's been easy or smooth. Opening the store has taken more money and more focus than she thought it would. And it's taken more time.

But, she says, "The delay will seem like nothing, when we look back."

**This & That**

THE LILLISTON SEAFOOD truck seems busy, and reports are that the food is terrific. One Facebook post reads "Crabcakes - sweet nectar, no cocktail sauce required."

Kennedy Lilliston, daughter of Darryl, who owns and operates Lilliston Seafood, at 27 Atlantic Ave., says the truck has been busy every day, though business is noticeably slower on rainy days.

Jessica Lewis, who helps with the operation, says that they're getting "Everybody from everywhere. From out of state, out of town, out of mind!" Stanley Garrison, cook, agrees. He was cooking up good-looking sandwiches on a recent morning, while people waited on the porch, chatting.

The truck is open Thursday through Saturday, 10-5. The retail fish market is also open for retail shopping, every day except Sunday. 

THE ISLAND HOUSE has opened "The Boat Ramp," in the space where, well, the boat ramp used to be. A bulkhead went up, fill was brought in, and now there's a pleasant, grassy space with cornhole games and picnic tables, and of course, a beautiful view.

In related news, Blake Johnson, owner of the Island House, traveled to Scottsdale, AZ, for an intensive two-day camp in the TRC Method, to learn how to "better run our restaurants and better serve you, our customers." 

OUR TOWN is seeking two volunteers for the Planning Commission. To serve, you must be a resident of the town, and be able to meet once a quarter, from 6:30-8 p.m.

The next meeting is July 1.

So, what IS a Planning Commission? Why is it important?

The commission is made up of residents of the town. With input from all residents, this local commission primarily helps promote the orderly development of the town. Members are responsible for creating a 5-year comprehensive plan, which is essentially a road map of how the residents want the town to evolve.

If you are interested, please fill out a brief application on the Wachapreague Town website. If you prefer, you may ask Town Clerk Susan Springer to assist you. The form can then be emailed: to planning@wachapreague.org. Please join us! We value your input. 

- Contributed by Margo Digan

THERE'S A PUBLIC HEARING June 12 on the proposed 2025-2026 budget. The meeting is set for 6:30-7:00 p.m., at Seaside Hall at VIMS. There will be a town council meeting that evening, again at Seaside Hall, from 7-9 p.m. The budget is available on the town website. 

THE ARTISANS OF WACHAPREAGUE, a new group of artists and crafters who live in town, will have a second show and sale July 12, from 10-3, at the Powelton Presbyterian Church on Main Street. 