SPEAKER PROFILES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

The Honorable Sherman Lea/Mayor/City of Roanoke

Sherman P. Lea was elected Mayor of the City of Roanoke on May 3, 2016. Mayor Lea began his political career as a member of Roanoke City Council and has served 12 consecutive years, also holding the position of Vice Mayor. During his tenure, Mayor Lea has served as Chairperson of the Personnel Committee, and member of the Audit and Legislative Committees. As a member of City Council, Mayor Lea formed the Domestic Violence Task Force in 2005 and began the annual Lea Youth Outdoor Basketball League in 2015 and the Lea’s High School Winter Classic Basketball Challenge in 2015.

As a professional, Mayor Lea spent 36 years with the Virginia Department of Corrections assisting people with criminal convictions as they re-entered the community upon release from incarceration. He worked as the Institutional Parole Officer with the Virginia Correctional Center for Women in Goochland and later served as the Adult Probation and Parole Officer, working in Danville and Pittsylvania County.

In 1984, he was named Chief Probation and Parole Officer becoming the first African American to hold that position in Virginia. Mayor Lea was promoted in 1992 to the Western Regional Director. In 2014, he was appointed to the Virginia Parole Board by Governor Terry McAuliffe. Additionally, Mayor Lea is the founder and president of S.P. Lea & Associates, facilitating training sessions on topics including leadership, management theories and practices, and maintaining the skills needed to remain successful in our ever-changing work environment. He has facilitated workshops for various groups and at various institutions of higher learning to include the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice and Virginia University of Lynchburg. He has also conducted classroom lectures for educators studying to become superintendents.

On September 20, 2019, Mayor Lea was inducted into the Virginia Union University Athletic Hall of Fame. He was awarded the 2010 William L. Hastie Award by the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ) and named the 2014 Citizen of the Year by the Gamma Alpha Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in sociology from Virginia Union University and an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters for Humanitarian Work in the Community from Bethlehem Bible College.

The Honorable Brian Ball/Secretary of Commerce and Trade/Commonwealth of Virginia

Brian Ball was appointed Secretary of Commerce and Trade in April of 2018. He previously served in the Northam Administration as Special Advisor for Economic Development and Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade.

Prior to joining the Northam Administration, Brian was an attorney at Williams Mullen where he concentrated his practice in mergers and acquisitions, securities laws and corporate governance matters. Brian served as a trusted advisor to senior management, boards of directors and audit and special board committees handling such matters as internal investigations and activist shareholders. He also regularly represented clients before state and federal administrative agencies and the Virginia General Assembly. Brian served on the firm’s board of directors and as its General Counsel.

Brian graduated with high distinction from the University of Virginia where he was an Echols Scholar and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia. He is admitted to practice in Virginia, the District of Columbia and California. He served as an assistant U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California from 1981 to 1982.
Cassidy Rasnick/Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade/Commonwealth of Virginia

Cassidy Rasnick serves as Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade for Rural Economic Development. Prior to her appointment, Rasnick managed the state’s economic development efforts for two of the Commonwealth’s largest industries – agriculture and forestry – while serving as manager of the office of business development at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and previously, as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry for Governor McAuliffe. Before joining the McAuliffe administration, she worked for the Virginia Manufacturers Association and the Virginia Craft Brewers Guild. Rasnick also spent more than five years working for United State Senator Mark Warner.

A native of Botetourt County, Rasnick is a graduate of James Madison University and the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership.

Pete Eshelman/Director of Outdoor Branding/Roanoke Regional Partnership

Pete Eshelman currently serves as the director of outdoor branding for the Roanoke Regional Partnership and director of the Roanoke Outside Foundation where he focuses on asset-based economic development.

Pete uses his 25 years in the outdoor industry to help the Roanoke Region leverage its natural assets to attract talent and investment.

Pete has developed roanokeoutside.com, founded the Blue Ridge Marathon – America’s Toughest Road Marathon, GO Cross, and the GO Outside Festival to help build brand recognition for outdoor recreation and increase recognition of the region as a place to live, work, and invest. The past several years Roanoke was voted Best Outdoor Town, The GO Outside Festival was voted Best Festival, and the Blue Ridge Marathon was voted Best Running Event by readers of Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine.

Pete’s efforts also focus on improving access to the outdoors. Under his leadership the community crowdfunded a kayak launch on the Roanoke River, a dock at Carvins Cove, contributed funds to access projects on the Jackson and James Rivers and Smith Mountain Lake, and built the first phase of a bike park.

More recently he started an Outdoor Explorers Mentor Program in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters with a goal of inspiring the next generation of outdoor users with a focus on social equity.

His work has changed the region’s community narrative to one that places a high value on the outdoors and helped attract Backcountry.com, Traditional Medicinals, Deschutes Brewery, Ballast Point Brewing, and Humm Kombucha, all of which wanted to locate in a community with a strong outdoor culture. He serves as the director of the Roanoke Outside Foundation, is a board member with Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Greenway Commission, Star City Cycling, the chairman of the Roanoke Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, is a member of the Regional Bicycle Advisory Committee, and one of 30 Creative Connectors as part of Roanoke’s Creative Communities Leadership Program. Pete frequently consults with other communities on asset and community development.

Pete was awarded the Gold Star Award for outstanding efforts and contributions to the growth and development of Roanoke’s tourism industry and the FLITE award for the Blue Ridge Marathon. He was also voted 2016 Most Inspiring Outdoor Person by readers of Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine.

Pete grew up in West Virginia, graduated from DePauw University, and was a professional ski bum in the Tetons before settling in Virginia with his wife and two teens.

Doug Blount/Director, Parks, Recreation, and Tourism/Roanoke County

Doug Blount has been the Director of Parks, Recreation and Tourism for Roanoke County since August of 2011. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau- Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge.

Since moving to Roanoke County, Doug has focused on park development and growing local partnerships with citizens and stakeholders in the Roanoke Valley. Doug has more than 20 years of experience in the field of parks and recreation. Before coming to Roanoke County, he was the Recreation Operations Director for the Prince William County Parks and Recreation Department.

Doug has a Bachelors of Business Administration from East Tennessee State University. He has been married to Melissa for 24 years and has two children, Grace (18) and Jimmy (14).
James W. Noel, Jr./Director of Economic Development/York County/VEDA 2020 President

Jim Noel has served as the Economic Development Director for York County since 1993. Prior to that Jim worked for the City of Portsmouth for 14 years in multiple capacities including the Department of Economic Development. During his tenure with the City of Portsmouth Jim earned a Master’s degree in Public Administration from Old Dominion University. His undergraduate degree is in Urban Studies from Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania.

Jim has played a key role in expanding York County’s tax base over the past two decades and was instrumental in attracting several large retailers as well as Great Wolf Lodge that ultimately became a $100 million investment. He is very proud of being part of the team that developed Riverwalk Landing, a shopping and dining destination on the Yorktown waterfront. Jim established York County’s first formal business retention and expansion program and has continued to make existing York County businesses his first priority.

Jim has served on multiple boards including the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance and the Small Business Development Center of Hampton Roads. He currently serves as the Treasurer of the Virginia Economic Developers Association. Jim is a member of Grace Episcopal Church, International Economic Development Council, International Council of Shopping Centers and the Industrial Asset Management Council.

Clark Lewis/Principal/Troutman Sanders Strategies/VEDA Legislative Liaison

Clark Lewis is a Principal of Troutman Sanders Strategies and a Partner of Troutman Sanders LLP. Clark routinely works with companies, business groups, and associations on legislative and governmental issues related to all aspects of project development and finance. His practice also focuses on public-private partnerships and infrastructure projects, state and local government relations, project development, privatization initiatives and related legislative matters.

Clark has spearheaded many major procurement-related initiatives, appropriations, statewide economic development projects and business-related projects. These projects include procurement reform, mega-site development, transportation initiatives, project development, and the restoration of monies for local governments. Clark also has extensive experience as an attorney in the areas of commercial and products liability litigation.

His representative experience includes work on the following matters: complex transportation projects; procurement reform; economic development grants, incentives, and tax credits; Virginia’s film industry; and the Science Museum of Virginia Foundation.

Clark received a J.D. degree from the University of Virginia School of Law and graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. degree from Washington & Lee University.

He is a board member for the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and a former board member for Virginia FREE. He serves as the legislative liaison for the Virginia Economic Developers Association.

Stephen Moret/President & CEO/Virginia Economic Development Partnership

Stephen Moret is President and CEO of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. Before joining VEDP in January 2017, Moret served as chief executive of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and Louisiana Dept. of Economic Development, as well as the LSU Foundation and its real-estate development arm.

At VEDP, he has collaborated with state, regional, and local partners to craft an ambitious vision focused on transformational goals, including accelerating employment growth; enabling every region to grow; and moving back to the top of national business climate rankings. He led Virginia’s successful state-and-local team bid for Amazon’s HQ2 and is launching a world-class, custom workforce program along with the Virginia Community College System.

For seven years, Moret served as secretary of LED, transforming it into one of America’s top state economic development agencies. While there, he led business development efforts and built higher ed partnerships that helped secure a variety of projects in urban and rural areas, including software/IT centers (e.g., CGI, CSC, GE, IBM), food/agricultural processing facilities, and a few of the largest FDI projects in U.S. history. Collectively these projects totaled more than $62 billion in capital investment. He also established LED FastStart, which The Economist called “probably the most notable statewide workforce-
development initiative [in America].” During his tenure, Louisiana rose to its highest-ever position in every national business climate ranking.

Prior to LED, Moret was CEO of BRAC, which he and his team transformed into a nationally competitive, regional EDO. He also served as a consultant with McKinsey & Company; a public policy fellow with the Public Affairs Research Council of La.; and a consultant to Harvard Business School.

Moret received a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering from Louisiana State University; a MBA from Harvard Business School, and an Ed.D. degree in Higher Education Management from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Mike Ownbey/President and Chief Operating Officer/Morgan Olson**

Mike Ownbey, President and Chief Operating Officer of Morgan Olson in Sturgis, Michigan, since December of 2007. Prior to becoming CEO, Mike managed other companies within JBPCO, including the Specialty Vehicle Group and Federal Coach Company. Prior to joining Morgan Olson, Mr. Ownbey held executive positions with Honda Motor Company’s largest subsidiary, Yachiyo Industries. He was responsible for North America production of seven plants specializing in automotive stamping, including large structural components, welding and assembly, sunroofs, repair parts, injection molding and plastic parts, blow molding and plastic fuel tanks as well as automotive accessories.

His management experience extends to all areas of vehicle manufacturing, including the production of metal stampings and frame assemblies.

He is a retired U.S. Army Officer having commanded various units at company and battalion levels.

**David Halladay/Vice President of Operations/Morgan Olson**

David Halladay, Vice President of Operations at Morgan Olsen. Dave is a senior executive with experience in all core business functions providing strategic and tactical operations leadership. Through his operational leadership Dave has worked to achieve continuous improvement through a deliberate focus on current state value streams to generate cloud bursts representing opportunity for which lean practices can be applied to deliver consistent and predictable financial results utilizing a metrics driven business operation system. He is also experienced in leading critical company turnarounds with a focus on operational restructuring, cultural change, developing leaders, managers and work teams and effectively led company divisions with multi-plant operations in both union and non-union environments. Was in charge of site selection for the Loudon TN plant in 2015-2016

**Pandy Brazeau/Business Manager/Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

Pandy Brazeau has worked at the VEDP since 1997, currently serving as a Senior Business Manager on the Business Investment Products Team.

Pandy has worked in the VEDP’s International Trade and Investment Group where she worked on international projects including Korona Candles, Pruefrex and Tag Chemicals.

Since joining the Business Investment group in 2016, her focus has been primarily on the automotive and advanced materials industries working with companies including Morgan Olson, Volvo Trucks, Tessy Plastics, BGF Industries, and Koinonia Foams.

**Matthew D. Rowe/Director of Economic Development/Pittsylvania County**

Matthew “Matt” Rowe has enthusiastically served the citizens of several counties throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Currently, he is the Director of Economic Development for Pittsylvania County where he has the responsibility of developing and implementing a successful business attraction, retention, and expansion program. Prior to his employment with Pittsylvania County, he served as the Director of Planning & Economic Development for Charles City County, Virginia, where he led all of the County’s Planning, Economic Development, and Environmental functions. He has also gained valuable land-use planning and development experience through his work experiences in Amherst County, Virginia as their Planner, Assistant Zoning Administrator, and Erosion and Sediment Control Program Administrator; and in Mathews County, Virginia, as their Planner, GIS Coordinator, and Wetlands Administrator. He began his career in Smyth County, Virginia, where he was the Assistant to the Director of Community & Economic Development.
Mr. Rowe was recently selected by the Danville Pittsylvania Chamber of Commerce as a Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) Award recipient, due to his significant impact on the Dan River region in his role as economic development director.

Mr. Rowe is a native of Northumberland County, which is located on Virginia’s Northern Neck, where he grew up working on the Chesapeake Bay for his father as a commercial waterman and charter boat mate for over 11 years.

Mr. Rowe is a Certified Zoning Administrator with the Virginia Association of Zoning Officials, and is certified as a Combined Erosion and Sediment Control Administrator and Combined Stormwater Program Administrator. He is a member of the Rural Virginia Planning Caucus, the Virginia Economic Developers Association, and has obtained the Georgia Tech Basic Economic Development Course certificate. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy from the College of William & Mary, and a Master of Public Administration from Virginia Tech. He is currently Vice-Chairman of and serves on the executive board of the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance.

Since assuming his role with Pittsylvania County in December 2015, Mr. Rowe has been directly involved in the announcement of 1,626 direct jobs with an associated investment around $485,000,000. He is also credited with facilitating the creation of the Staunton River Regional Industrial Facility Authority, which is an industrial development collaboration between Pittsylvania County, City of Danville, and Town of Hurt.

**Telly Tucker/Director/Arlington Economic Development**

Telly Tucker serves as a Director of Arlington Economic Development in Arlington County, Virginia. Telly leads a team of economic development professionals responsible for business investment, attraction, retention & expansion, real estate development, cultural affairs, and convention & visitors services.

Prior to Arlington, Telly served as Director of Economic Development for the City of Danville and as staff to the Danville Industrial Development Authority and the Danville Pittsylvania County Regional Facility Authority.

Prior to his post in Danville, Telly served as the Assistant Director of Economic Development in James City County, Virginia. He also served for three years as an Economic Development Specialist for the City of Lynchburg. During his time in Lynchburg, he co-directed the City of Lynchburg’s One™ programs which have been awarded the Virginia Economic Development Association’s and the Southern Economic Development Council’s Community Economic Development Award, as well as the Virginia Municipal League 2008 Achievement Award.

He is a Lynchburg native and obtained his Bachelors of Business Administration in international business and Spanish from James Madison University in 2004. In 2014, Telly received the prestigious Certified Economic Development (CEcD) designation granted by the International Economic Development Council in Washington, D.C.

**Nicholas C. Conte (Nick)/Senior Vice President and General Counsel/Carilion Clinic**

Before joining Carilion in March 2016, Mr. Conte served as chairman of Woods Rogers PLC, Western Virginia’s largest law firm headquartered in Roanoke with regional offices in Richmond, Charlottesville, and Danville.

In addition to his practice of corporate law, Mr. Conte has extensive experience advising boards of directors and executive teams on a broad range of matters and has served as outside general counsel and corporate secretary for several companies. His expertise ranges from managing complex transactions including mergers and acquisitions to risk management and contracting best practices.

Mr. Conte has served on the boards for both the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and the Carilion Clinic Foundation. He is active in many community organizations, including the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, United Way of Roanoke Valley and the Taubman Museum of Art.

Mr. Conte earned B.S. and J.D. degrees from William and Mary.

**John Martin/President & CEO/Southeastern Institute for Research**

Search Google for “intellectually curious” and you're bound to find John W. Martin. He is one curious guy. It's no surprise that he's well-informed, thoughtful, insightful, and a natural leader. In the early 2000s,
John left corporate marketing — after almost 20 years in the advertising agency business — to take over SIR from its founders.

In the years since, John has built SIR into the most well-respected research and consulting firm in the region. Clients frequently tell us they would hire no one else, now that they have benefited from engaging SIR on a project. Most of that is due to John's ability to identify the core issue and direct his band of inquisitive minds to dig hard for solutions. Clients say he's smart. His co-workers know he's kind.

John is also a gifted keynote presenter (visit the Institute of Tomorrow to see) and a remarkable leader of SIR. He is on several nonprofit and community boards and, when he's not in front of a whiteboard mapping something out, he spends time making both RVA and Norfolk better places for everyone.

Get John's real-time insights by following along on Twitter (@SIR4Tomorrow) or connecting with him on LinkedIn.