News

COURTESY PHOTO

Meet HRACRE's new president

JAN HALL OF RRMM SEEKS MORE MEMBERS, WILL PUSH STRONG LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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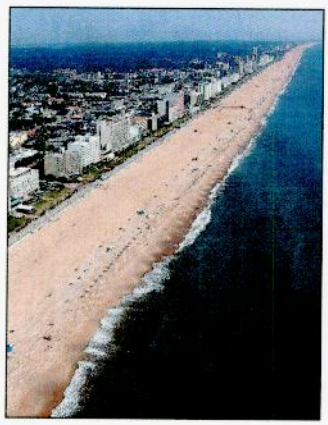

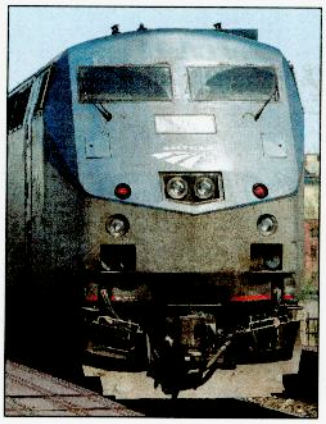

VIRGINIAN-PILOT AND ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTOS

Hall said HRACRE will focus on issues affecting commercial real estate, such as rising sea levels and transportation projects.

Jan Hall is the new president of the Hampton Roads Association for Commercial Real Estate, the second woman to assume the post in the trade group's 20-year history.

Like her predecessors, Hall, the vice president of RRMM Design-Build of RRMM Architects, has set definite goals for the organization this year.

"I want to see an increase in our membership and attendance," Hall said. "We are saturated with good events and great programs, and I don't think we need to add any more."

Outsiders may view the 650-member coalition of bankers, attorneys, developers, accountants, real estate brokers and economic development professionals as a group that attends monthly networking events and nothing more.

But Hall said the group's main thrust is its legislative agenda, which dovetails with two other commercial real estate groups in Virginia to form the statewide Virginia Association of Commercial Real Estate.

Hall said her primary goal is to monitor and take a proactive role on legislation that affects commercial real estate.

"My goal is to inform members of changes in commercial real estate over the last 20 years and our plans for the future."

The state group represents the other organizations in front of legislators via its lobbyist, Richmond-based Vectre Corp.

HRACRE listed seven legislative priorities for this year's legislators.

One is to monitor efforts to address sea-level rise and flooding on Virginia's shores and in coastal communities.

The other six priorities range from the creation of the Virginia federal Facilities and Defense Industry Caucus to a fund for intercity passenger rail.

But the organization is opposed to a constitutional amendment to strengthen Virginia's eminent domain laws.

Among other things, the amendment, if enacted, would make it more difficult for government to take property for public use and

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Hampton Roads Association for Commercial Real Estate's 2012 legislative priorities

Support the nine legislative priorities of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization approved and adopted Oct. 20 with specific emphasis on the following:

- Full funding of Highway and Maintenance Operating Fund.
- Identification of dedicated source of funds to support passenger rail operating costs between Richmond/Petersburg and Hampton Roads including Peninsula and Southside.
- Support legislation requiring the commonwealth to pursue federal funding for continuation and expansion of intercity and high-speed passenger rail service in Hampton Roads region.

Support the creation of Virginia Federal Facilities and Defense Industry Caucus.

Oppose enactment of the Eminent Domain Constitutional Amendment.

Support capitalizing the Intercity Passenger Rail Operating and Capital Fund by increasing current car rental tax from 10 percent to 14 or 15 percent.

Support full funding of Virginia Enterprise Zone Program as recommended by Governors Commission on Economic Development and Job Commission.

for use as private development. It would also compensate property owners for not only the loss of the property, but also for the potential loss of the owner's business.

"We oppose the constitutional amendment as written," Hall said. "We don't like the wording because it's loosely worded. We want the wording to be changed."

Legislators must approve the amendment this year for it to be placed on the ballot in November.

The Virginia Municipal League has voiced its opposition to the amendment, saying it would inflate the costs of rebuilding cities.

The organization is opposed to a constitutional amendment to strengthen Virginia's eminent domain laws.

Such battles don't seem to faze Hall.

She was the fourth daughter of an Army sergeant who joined the military when he was 17 and married a young woman from Norfolk.

Hall lived nearly four years in Germany before returning to Virginia where she graduated from Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach.

"I had a normal childhood and then I met the boy across the street in 1978," Hall said. "We got married in 1980, and we are still married. He was actually born in DePaul Hospital 19 days after me."

Both Hall and her husband, who raised a son and daughter, now in their 20s, were born in January 1961. Hall's birthday is Jan. 8, her husband's is Jan. 27.

Her parents shaped her life. Her father died four years ago, but her mother sill lives in Virginia Beach.

"I know it's a cliché," Hall said, "but my parents were my hero and heroine when I was growing up. They were hard-working, loving parents who gave us everything we needed and most of what we wanted.

"They instilled in their children the importance of family, morals, values and a great work ethic. I admire and love them very much. I am the person I am because of them."

Hall's work ethic helped her navigate from high school intern at an architectural and design firm to her position now with RRMM, which includes the responsibilities of director of business development and pre-construction manager.

"The whole idea of creating something out of nothing was fascinating," Hall said, referring to architecture and design.

Her employers have included Walsh Ash Associates, The Taft Group and Ballou, Justin, Upton Architects. Hall is celebrating her eighth year with RRMM.

She named the biggest and smallest projects during her career.

The biggest was the 223-acre Marquis Shopping Center in York County, consisting of 1 million square feet of retail space.

"We got all of it designed, but not all of it constructed," Hall said.

The property was sold to a Texas firm, Todd Interests, last year after the original owner, under a limited liability company, filed for bankruptcy.

Her smallest job was the build-out of a 600-square-foot pizzeria.

The Marquis property was also her worst job "because we never got to see it finished," Hall said.

"We've been fortunate to work with a lot of very good clients," Hall said about some of the best jobs in which she's been involved.

As for her business, Hall said the market is much like it was during the recession of 1992.

Then, as now, there's a huge uptick for religious facilities in all cities and all faiths, Hall said.

Otherwise, the market for new commercial real estate construction is still anemic.

"There's not a lot of Class A office going up," she said. "Speculative office and warehouse is gone."

Spec space is usually a gamble by a developer.

The market for spec space – or space built on the promise of tenants – has dropped since lenders have tightened their lending standards.

Retail has improved in the last six months, Hall said.

"I'm taking that as sign that the economy is doing better," she said.

About 95 percent of RRMM's portfolio is generated by the private sector, though the firm does design and construction management for government, such as Virginia Beach's 20,000-square-foot vehicle maintenance facility.

LEED certification is also part of the firm's offerings, so 20 of the firm's professionals are LEED-certified.

"We have designed a lot of silver and gold LEED-certified buildings for the military," Hall said.

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