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On the cover

2010-2011 CAWV President John H. Strickland, Maynard C. Smith Construction Company, Inc., used his ability to focus on the end goal to lead the industry through a busy and productive year. With his wife, Pat, by his side, He kept the association’s focus on improving project outcomes, being proactive in policy and legislation development, and keeping the subcommittees and task forces of the association’s committees moving toward their goals. For more information on the outgoing president, see page 6. Photo by Pat McDonald.

The Contractors Association of West Virginia is a nonprofit trade organization representing the building, highway, heavy and utility contracting industries in West Virginia. Its services include establishment of a close working liaison with state and federal agencies; worthwhile educational and informational programs; the regular dissemination of pertinent information to its members; strong legislative and media relations; as well as all other activities deemed necessary and proper to promote the general welfare of the construction industry. The CAWV is a certified chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America and the American Road and Transportation Builders Association.

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He rode into town in 1990 with guns blazing and a reputation for being the bad guy. He was the one a company hired to get a project done when no one else could. He was used to fighting, quarreling and locking owners out of their projects. But all that changed when he and his wife, Pat, came to West Virginia.

Twenty-one years ago, 2010-2011 CAWV President John Strickland, Maynard C. Smith Construction Company, Charleston, was welcomed into West Virginia’s construction industry, an event which changed the course of his career.

“My first CAWV meeting at The Greenbrier was on my 40th birthday. Then-president Sam Bowling, aided by Lisa Fischer Casto, got wind of it and I was presented with black balloons. It was incredibly refreshing to not have to fight all the time.”

Despite having a B.S. in Building Construction from the University of Florida, most of Strickland’s training came through the school of hard knocks.

“One of my most profound role models was a superintendent I worked with who, at the time, I was convinced hated me,” he said. “He was a great bad example of how to supervise, but I recognize now that he was pushing me to succeed. Back then, you had to keep everyone in line to get a project done. An attitude like that in today’s world wouldn’t get anything accomplished. The industry is much more collaborative today than ever before.”

Kenhill was a fixture in West Virginia’s building construction industry. Started by Ken Sylvester and John Hill, and purchased by Winfield Strock, Kenhill built many of Charleston’s iconic buildings such as the BB&T building, CAMC Memorial and Thomas hospitals, Laidley Tower, the original Charleston Civic Center, numerous other renovations, schools and medical facilities. When the company was purchased by Danis Industries, John and Pat moved to Charleston to learn the ropes from Win Strock.

Strickland and Maynard C. Smith met while working on the CAMC surgery replacement project for Kenhill. The two had instant chemistry.

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Strickland’s entrance into West Virginia is often misunderstood, according to Pat, who serves as the company’s secretary and treasurer.

“One misconception is that John bought Kenhill Construction but the company was moved out of state and then closed,” she explained. “John’s employer at the time, Danis Industries, bought Kenhill and moved us to Charleston so he could replace Win Strock, who was retiring.”

Strickland and Maynard C. Smith met while working on the CAMC surgery replacement project for Kenhill. The two had instant chemistry.

“Maynard was an amazing field superintendent,” he said. “He built
CONSTRUCTION NEWS 7

Maynard C. Smith Construction Company, Inc., Charleston, renovated the 25,000-square-foot West Virginia State Museum. The $3.5 million project, which presented a unique set of challenges, showcases the history of the Mountain State with 26 discovery rooms, each representing a different era.

Charleston Area Medical Center’s $55 million Robert C. Byrd Clinical Teaching Center was completed in January 2009. The 280,000-square-foot project combines teaching facilities, cath lab, patient rooms and a Vascular Center for Excellence. Maynard C. Smith Construction Company served as Construction Manager and completed the core and shell, basement and floors 1 and 6-9.

Mingo Central High School is being constructed by The Neighborgall Construction Company, Huntington, with Maynard C. Smith Construction Company serving as the Construction Manager. The project began with a public-private partnership with a coal company and has presented challenges with site utilities, access roads, wild animals and everything in between.

It was Smith’s experience and expertise in the field and Strickland’s management and leadership skills in the office that made them an excellent team. In 1994, as Kenhill’s projects were completed, the company was moved out of state. Both stayed in Charleston and opened Maynard C. Smith Construction Company.

“They started small but the company soon grew,” Pat Strickland said. “The sudden death of Maynard, his friend and business partner, in 2004 was devastating,” she recalled.

Smith made his mark all over Charleston, and together, Pat and John have kept his legacy for excellent construction alive. Currently, the company is completing the new Mingo Central Comprehensive High School, Hospice at Thomas Hospital and the Mingo Central High School Athletic Facility.

“We have the luxury of choosing projects that present unique challenges, but fill a need in the community and have meaning,” John Strickland said, recounting his most memorable project, albeit far from the largest, as the 1997 renovation of the Capitol Market in Charleston. “That project is still relevant, still packed with people and has become a cultural hub within the Charleston community,” he said.

Today it is that sense of accomplishment and contribution to the community and the industry that keeps Strickland going. During his presidency and vice presidency, he worked to oversee renovation of the CAWV’s historic headquarters. Between renovating the CAWV office, leading the Congressional Fly-In to Washington D.C., monitoring the association’s investments and keeping tabs on the political scene in West...
Virginia, leading the CAWV kept him very busy.

“It was an honor to be selected to lead the CAWV,” he said. “I look around at all the construction and leadership talent and think, “Why me?” But I know that my forté, which is to get things done quickly, has benefited the CAWV and its members.”

Strickland’s term was marked by intense activity within the Joint Architect’s Committee, which has four active task forces and subcommittees working toward specific goals. A National Guard Task Force is working to improve bidding and construction phase outcomes, a goal shared with the State Bidding Procedures Task Force and the AIA Documents Task Force.

“The CAWV has an amazing ability to bring designers, owners and contractors together to find solutions to problems and improve processes. Keeping the focus on a specific goal is an essential part of that process,” he said. “Throughout my career, my focus has shifted from my needs and what specifically I am doing, to the company and its needs. Now the focus is on the industry and community and how they can be improved. Working with the National Guard, State Purchasing Department and AIA has allowed me to have a positive impact on the industry’s future.”

Strickland’s driven personality is balanced by his eloquent and compassionate wife, Pat, who helped him lead the association throughout his 2010-2011 term.

“I had a lot of help,” he said. “Some days I rant, some days she rants and some days we rant together,” he said with a smile. “She is completely devoted and takes all of my Type-A personality quirks in stride.”

Dinner conversation aside, the Strickland’s have built a fulfilling personal life while building West Virginia during the last two decades. They volunteer on numerous boards and committees including the Collectors Club, the Clay Center, the West Virginia Symphony and Edgewood Summit - all with the goal of protecting the legacy of the arts within the community.

In addition to their philanthropic activities, the Strickland’s enjoy traveling throughout the world and spending time with their 7-year-old granddaughter, Katharine.

“John’s biggest joy in life is Katharine,” Pat said. “To see them together, they are two-peas in a pod.”

In addition to Katharine, John and Pat were joined by their daughter and son-in-law, Amy and Bart Scruggs, and family matriarch (Pat’s mother) Helen Mlcuch for John’s last meeting as CAWV President.

“I turned 40 at my first CAWV Annual Meeting at The Greenbrier and this year my daughter turned 40 at The Greenbrier,” John said. “It really brought the whole experience full circle for me. Construction is still fun. The sense of contribution to a community and completion is priceless. And, to be paid for that is a great feeling.”

Strickland will be glad to spend less time keeping up with politics, as he does not enjoy the diplomacy required or the inefficiencies of the process.

“The CAWV’s strength is in its ability to address issues on a level playing field regardless of how vehemently contractors compete on bid day,” he said. “The outcome always leads to a stronger construction industry.”

Throughout his presidency Strickland kept the focus on taking a proactive approach to advocating for the industry.

“The CAWV is unique in that it represents the building, utility and highway industries in West Virginia,” he said. “We will always have to be reactive, but when we are able to be proactive the results are much better for everyone involved. I am glad to be passing the torch to Gene Thompson. He is a great leader.”

Strickland met Thompson in the 1980s while both worked for Danis Industries.
Although they worked in different arenas, the two men quickly recognized a similar solution-oriented nature within each other.

“Gene has such a passion for the industry and ensuring its success in the future,” Strickland said. “He will be perfect as president. And he is much more tolerant of politics than I am,” he said jokingly.

Thompson noted that although Strickland’s strength may not be in the political area, he went above and beyond his required duties.

“John did a lot of good things, but he really spent a tremendous amount of time remodeling the CAW,” Thompson said. “He also put in a lot of effort to have financial statements prepared that Board members could understand. John is a really great guy who gave a lot of himself to the association while serving as president.”

Strickland may have entered West Virginia ready for a fight, but returning to southern hospitality and good-old fashioned community values convinced him to stay. Throughout the past 21 years, the skills he and Pat have learned by being the bad guys have allowed them to tackle the tough jobs and build a better West Virginia … one project at a time.

By Lindsay Stephens
INTRODUCING OUR NEW PRESIDENT

GENE E. THOMPSON
Vice President
Ahern, a Division of Kokosing
The development of Marcellus shale could be a game-changer for West Virginia, and if the state is able to land a cracking plant, this would be just the operation to push us over the top," according to Doug Malcolm, the 2003 president of the Independent Oil & Gas Association (IOGA) of West Virginia and current chairman of the association’s Government Affairs Committee.

Speaking at the General Business Session at this year’s CAWV Annual Meeting, held July 7-10 at The Greenbrier, Malcolm introduced members to a new alliance formed by IOGA called “Just Beneath the Surface.”

The group’s goal is to provide information on the state’s natural gas industry and inform the public and legislators about the opportunities associated with Marcellus shale exploration.

Malcolm, vice president of D.C. Malcolm, Inc., a family-run oil and gas company based in Charleston, also discussed how CAWV members can participate in construction projects associated with drilling.

“West Virginia has the third largest number of producing gas wells in the country – behind Texas and Pennsylvania – and last year our industry paid over $71 million in severance taxes and over $105 million in property taxes,” Malcolm said. “We invested $771 million in developing our petroleum resources.”

IOGA estimates that continuing development of Marcellus shale will create an additional 7,000 new jobs in West Virginia. This includes both direct jobs, such as drillers, and indirect jobs created by economic development in the state.

Malcolm discussed the horizontal drilling techniques used to maximize gas production and hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking” which has garnered much criticism from environmentalists and some land owners. Hydraulic fracturing is the
process of pumping water, sand and chemicals into a target formation in order to create cracks that allow the gas to flow more freely.

“Fracking has been around since 1948 and been used in over two million treatments in the United States,” Malcolm asserted. “Approximately 90 percent of all the wells ever drilled in our country have been fractured. Hydraulic fracturing is a safe process and there has never been a documented instance of water contamination caused by this operation.”

IOGA notes that fracturing fluid consists of 99.5 percent pure water with the remainder being sand and a small amount of a chemical used to reduce friction and inhibit bacteria growth.

Malcolm discussed how CAWV members can provide construction services in the oil and gas industry.

“In Northern West Virginia, where Marcellus drilling is ongoing, companies need engineering design and construction services for well sites and large impoundments, pipeline construction, large-scale compressor design and installation, and road and bridge improvements and repairs,” he said.

“In the not too distance future, hopefully, comes the big bonanza for West Virginia,” Malcolm proffered. “In certain areas, gas from Marcellus shale contains large quantities of ethane which must be removed to make the gas suitable for pipeline transportation. Ethane can then be “cracked” or converted into ethylene, one of the most important components of plastics.”

West Virginia is currently in the running as a site for one or more cracking plants.

“One of these plants may cost as much as $2 billion to construct,” he said. “It would employ thousands of workers during the construction phase and hundreds during its ongoing operation. These would be world-class chemical plants and the benefits to contractors would be enormous.”

Estimates put the Marcellus reserves at over 2,000 trillion cubic feet, or “enough to meet current U.S. gas consumption for another 100 years,” he stated. Reserves in West Virginia alone have been estimated 100 trillion cubic feet.

Malcolm said IOGA will be working with legislators to develop regulations for Marcellus shale operations in a special session of the West Virginia Legislature. Discussions on regulations broke down during the regular legislative session when industry, the WV Department of Environmental Protection, land owners and environmentalists could not reach agreement.

Bill Maloney, Republican gubernatorial candidate also spoke at the General Business Session. A former CAWV member, Maloney said he was glad to speak to people who are “Hard at work building West Virginia.” The co-founder of Morgantown-based Shaft Drillers International, Maloney grew his company from a two-person business to a world leader in large diameter shaft drilling for mining and other industries.

“I’m tired of West Virginia’s poor business ratings. West Virginia is a great place to live and grow a family. I want it to be a great place to grow a business,” he said.

Maloney said that accountability in government, cutting wasteful spending and regulatory reform will be the hallmarks of his term, if elected.

When asked about funding sources for the state’s highway program, he said he would “look outside of the box” at such issues as public/private partnerships (PPPs) and other non-traditional funding mechanisms.

Acting Governor Earl Ray Tomblin had a scheduling conflict and sent his apologies for not being able to attend the CAWV meeting.

Members attending the Building Division meeting re-elected Doug Meeks, president of Brewer and Company of West Virginia, Charleston,
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Julie Ramey, Monty Boyd and Eric Ramey enjoy the Welcome Night Reception.

Jim and Christy Goff enjoy the resort with their children Abby, Isaac and Bella.

One of the hallmarks of the meeting is the opportunity to meet new people, as Carl Belt and Jim Goff found out.

John Casto and Derick Foster catch up during the reception.

Kala Cox and Bryce Burgett pose for a photo during the reception.

Virginia and Art King enjoy the reception held on the first night of the Annual Meeting.

Bob Orders and Willie Crane talk about changes in the transportation industry.

Jarred Clonch and Lacy McDaniel participate in the Welcome Night Reception.

Melinda Taylor joins Phil and Maggie Laird.

Josh and Brooke Booth enjoy the Annual Meeting.

John Boyle and Brittany Warnick join Rochelle and Jason Workman at the reception.

Elyse, Cathy and Matt Campbell enjoy the Welcome Night Reception.
The CAWV's General Business Session was developed to broaden members' horizons. Topics were chosen to enhance business opportunities, expand economic knowledge and provide increased understanding of the industry.

chairman of the CAWV Building Division.

On the agenda at this year’s division meeting were updates on activities of the Joint Architects Committee including the Bid Procedures and West Virginia National Guard task forces, the possible development of Supplementary Conditions to the Construction Manager (Advisor) contract for use on state of West Virginia projects, future CM projects at West Virginia higher education facilities, updates on a proposal to withhold three percent from contractors working on governmental contracts, and an update on the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) employer participation in a multi-employer pension plan.

“Committees within the Building Division have been very active this year,” said Building Division Director C.R. Neighborgall, The Neighborgall Construction Company, Huntington. “All of the subcommittees and task forces have worked on issues that are important to our members and the entire building construction industry in West Virginia. Committee members are to be commended for their involvement with the CAWV and commitment to the industry,” he said.

Utility Division Chairman Mike Gianni, president of James White Construction Company, Weirton, reported that a small group of Joint Utility Committee members had met with officials from the West Virginia
Department of Tax and Revenue to discuss sales tax exemption issues that some contractors are having on municipal utility projects. The committee members informed the tax officials that most Public Service Districts (PSDs) do not have direct pay permits that allow a contractor to buy supplies for a project without having to pay sales tax, as outlined in the state code. Officials from the tax department are currently working on updating documents to allow contractors to make purchases using a PSD’s tax exempt number.

Chairman Gianni reported that Joint Utility Committee members had met recently with officials from the West Virginia Division of Highways to discuss ongoing issues with the use of temporary traffic control devices on projects that involve WVDOH right of ways. WVDOH officials are working to provide consistent instructions for the use of temporary devices.

Annual meeting attendees reviewed 2011 project report updates from the Water Development Authority (WDA). The report noted that the WDA now has over $639 million in water and sewer projects under construction with another $340 million in projects that are fully funded but have not started the construction phase.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Bill Maloney addressed CAWV members during the General Business Session. Maloney talked about his experiences running a business in West Virginia and his goals if elected to serve West Virginia. Maloney, pictured with John Farley, Triton Construction, Inc., Nitro, is running against Senate President and acting Governor Earl Ray Tomblin to complete the term left by the election of Joe Manchin to the U.S. Senate.

Utility Division members discussed recent increases in PVC pricing and how that is affecting projects. Vince McComas, The C.I. Thornburg Company, Inc., Huntington, reported that availability has increased for PVC.
and products and pricing seems to have leveled off.

“Manufacturers are now quoting prices and locking in that price for 30 to 45 days,” McComas said. “Although prices have stabilized, I don’t expect to see any drop in pricing in the near future because of the high demand for exports of the raw material that manufacturers use to make PVC pipe.”

The Utility Division re-elected Gianni as the Chairman for 2011-2012.

State and federal highway funding was a major item of discussion at the July 9 meeting of the CAWV Highway Division.

Division Director Dan Cooperrider, WV Paving, Inc., Dunbar, updated members on the status of federal transportation fund reauthorization efforts, suggesting that a two year, $109 billion federal highway bill, as proposed by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), would be best for West Virginia. Cooperrider pointed out that the current House proposal introduced by Congressman John Mica (R-Fla.), calls for about $35 billion a year over six years, representing a cut in annual appropriations by approximately 35 percent, or $141 million annually in West Virginia.

The State Road Fund ended the fiscal year $37 million over projections. The excess funds will be reallocated to support paving, bridge and other state-funded projects. Other potential road fund revenue enhancements that could come in the future, such as work generated by Marcellus shale drilling, severance taxes or a transfer of surplus funds from the General Fund were discussed.

The CAWV / WVDOH / FHWA Joint Cooperative Committee and its network of subcommittees and task forces updated Highway Division members on the issues currently being addressed.

Joint Cooperative Committee Chairman Bill Medcalf, vice president of
Derick and Katie Foster join David and Morgan Griffith during the reception.

Rob, Anna, Elizabeth, Allison, Dede and Robert Hunter at the President’s Reception.

Meredith and Doug Canterbury enjoy The Greenbrier resort.

Dan Compston and Ed Robinson network during the event.

Steve Cvechko talks with Dan Flesher during the President’s Reception.

Roger and Lisa Thomas pose for a photo during the meeting.

Mark and Angie Urso join Melinda and Doug Taylor.

Kim and Mike Davis join John and Sheila Coe.

Will and Carrie Samuels talk with Todd and Traci Dunmire.

John and Amanda Lynch participate in the meeting.

R.M. Brewer catches up with David Thomas during the President’s Reception.

Photos by Pat McDonald.

Chris and Jim Tressell join Matt and Danielle Marin and Jennifer and Aaron DeRosa at The Greenbrier.
Twanya Hayes and Jim Smith meet Doris and Dan Flesher at the meeting.

Incoming President Gene Thompson presents outgoing President John Strickland with a gift.

Fishing Tournament winners: Brent Edwards and Lorrie Hazera.

John and Ashley Gabhart listen to the band during the President’s Banquet.

Robert Hall and MaryBeth Johnson enjoy The Greenbrier.

Shelley and Steve Humphreys enjoy the Annual Meeting.

Ellen Cyrus and Sonny Johnstone during the Annual Meeting.

Bob Brookover, CAWV Golf Outing Chairman reports on the fundraising success for the Scholarship Foundation.

Bobbi Phares receives the Grand Door Prize, “Relic” by Phil Philbeck, from Dave Thomas.

Shelley and Steve Humphreys enjoy the Annual Meeting.

Fishing Tournament winners: Brent Edwards and Lorrie Hazera.

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Bobbi Phares receives the Grand Door Prize, “Relic” by Phil Philbeck, from Dave Thomas.
Vecellio & Grogan, Inc., Beckley, updated members on bidding of excavation and erosion and sediment control, warranties, dispute resolution provisions and pending changes to escalation specifications. Chris Apperson, Joint Concrete Committee chairman, reported on mass concrete and new rapid set modified PCC provisions in the Supplemental. Asphalt Subcommittee Chairman Willie Crane, WV Paving, Inc., is currently in discussions on joint density, compaction/gauges, tack, warm mix, smoothness measurement, RAP, RAS, mix design and other issues.

The Publications Subcommittee is updating many Design Directives and Standard Details. Specification Subcommittee Co-Chair Nate Orders, president of Orders Construction Company, St. Albans, highlighted many specification changes, special provisions and activities addressed in their monthly meetings. He explained changes to Temporary Barrier, noting that “pin and eye” barrier would be obsolete by January 1, 2016. Changes to sections 601 and 108, warranty specifications, asphalt joint density, mass concrete and ASAP bridges were discussed. Orders invited members to participate in the meetings, held the first Monday of each month, by attending in person or online.

West Virginians for Better Transportation (WVBT) will be launching a new strategic campaign in 2012, according to an announcement by Bob Orders, WVBT vice chairman. Orders, CEO of Orders Construction Company, provided an overview of the group’s 2011 to 2013 Strategic Plan and encouraged members to financially support the campaign's efforts to highlight the needs facing the state’s roads, bridges and highways.

Nate Orders was elected as the new Highway Division chairman, replacing Roger Thomas, Kelly Paving, who moved up to Division Director. Former director, Dan Cooper-erider, is now the CAWV secretary.

Over 350 members, guests and children attended this year’s meeting, which began with a reception at Howards Creek Lodge on Thursday. The CAWV Board of Directors met on Friday and discussed a number of industry issues.

A Welcome Night Reception, sponsored by select members of the Associate Division, was held Friday evening. Following Saturday’s General Business Session, the Building, Highway and Utility divisions met and elected officers. Golf, trap and fishing tournaments followed the meetings, and a number of children’s programs were offered.

At the President’s Banquet, Bob Brookover, president of WV Paving, Inc., and chairman of the CAWV Scholarship Golf Outing, presented a check to the CAWV Scholarship Foundation.

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“I am very proud to announce that this was our best year ever in raising funds,” stated Chairman Brookover. “We had a great day for our outing. The perfect weather, the fellowship, the food and refreshments helped us raise $10,480 for construction industry scholarships,” he said while presenting this year’s contribution.

“I want to thank members who participated in the association’s committees and task forces this year,” said President John Strickland at the banquet. “I came to my first CAWV Annual Meeting 21 years ago. Sam Bowling with Dougherty Company suggested I come. He told me there was strength in membership. After 20 years, I can tell you tonight that what the CAWV accomplishes is a testament to the organization, its committees, but most of all, its members,” said the outgoing president.

“I am most pleased to look out over this room and see three generations of family-owned businesses. I appreciate the opportunity to have served as your president,” he told members. He also thanked his family who attended, including his daughter, Amy, who was celebrating her 40th birthday.

2011-2012 CAWV President Gene Thompson, vice president of Ahern, a division of Kokosing Construction Company, South Charleston, thanked President Strickland for his service to members.

“John has worked tirelessly to develop fair and equitable bid procedures for public construction projects while leading the efforts to renovate the CAWV’s headquarters into a first-class conference facility,” said the new president. “John also developed new programs to incorporate better involvement of members, including the Spring Meeting, the car show, a new membership data base and website, and video conferencing capabilities at locations around the state.”

The South Charleston highway contractor said he wants to continue with the successful membership recruitment efforts and to increase membership and involvement in committees and task forces.

Outgoing CAWV President John Strickland thanked CAWV members and guests attending the President’s Banquet for all their hard work throughout the past year with the association’s committees. The CAWV’s committees were very active throughout his term working on issues in the building, utility and highway industries.

He, too, thanked his family for being at the meeting, including his wife Donna, mother Margaret, sister Tina, and daughter Stacy.

“In this business, we should all tell our spouses how much we appreciate their support,” he said. “We work nights putting together bids and on the weekends driving to look at jobs to bid. I would like to thank my wife, Donna, for everything she does.”

He noted that his first construction job was working for Donna’s father’s company carrying concrete in buckets.

The 2012 Annual Meeting will be held July 12-15 at The Greenbrier.
Midnight Movers provided music during the President’s Banquet.

Shehara Hapaurachy and Brian Russell take a break from the dance floor.

Beth and Bruce Meeker enjoy the music.

Martha and Bill Medcalf dance the night away.

CAWV members participate in a golf tournament at The Greenbrier’s Meadows Course each year.

Jeff and Elizabeth Perkins during the President’s Banquet.

Debbie McComas and Rebecca Bennett enjoy the Annual Meeting.

R.M. Brewer, Dick Smailes and Jim Ahern catch up during the meeting.

Jackie Lively and Lee Smailes look lovely during the banquet.

Cam Dunmore, Todd Dunmore, Matt Marin and Jim Goff prepare to tee-off.

Willie Crane, Norm Daniels, Lee Cooperrider and Matt Campbell compete in the tournament.
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WORKING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT: NOT A ONCE A YEAR CHORE

By Timothy A. George, CPA, MST CCIFP
Brown, Edwards & Company, LLP

How many times does someone get in the car and drive off without looking at the fuel gauge? Hardly ever, right? Likewise, how can anyone expect to drive a construction business without knowing how much working capital is in the company’s tank?

As an owner or a member of management, one has to be continually aware of the working capital and the amount needed to achieve both tactical and strategic goals. Constant evaluation should be made of each major decision’s affect on working capital; not just when the auditors “bring it up” or the surety “fusses” about it. For a contractor who wants to survive and grow the business, working capital is probably the most important number to know. Fortunately, it’s a number that can be easily obtained from a company’s financial system. But all too often it is ignored until an issue arises.

WHAT IS WORKING CAPITAL?

Loosely defined, working capital is the net assets available to fund operations over the next year. In “formula speak”, it is CURRENT ASSETS (those expected to be received or available for operations over the next year) minus CURRENT OBLIGATIONS (those expected to be paid over the next year).

WHY IS WORKING CAPITAL IMPORTANT?

For the same reason fuel is important in a car, working capital is important to a contractor. Working capital is the driving force that enables a contractor to operate and is a determining factor in the amount of volume a contractor can achieve. A car will operate on a ratio of miles per gallon of fuel, a company’s volume levels will operate on a ratio of sales per dollar of working capital. Most contractors can expect revenues of $15 to $20 per dollar of working capital held in reserves. A company exceeding these levels can find itself in financial hardship and begin running out of gas.

Bonding companies and governmental institutions use working capital to determine bonding capacity and construction prequalification limits. Bonding companies use the ratio of volume to working capital when determining how much volume a contractor can safely handle to establish a contractor’s bonding capacity limits. The multiplier depends on the overall market, credit conditions or concerns that the surety may have, but usually starts at a multiple of 15 to 20. However, some credit may be given based on a company’s history and owners’ personal indemnities.

Governmental agencies use working capital as a factor in the prequalification process and setting limits to the amount of work in progress a contractor can have at any one time. Similar to bonding companies, these institutions use working capital and a multiplier in establishing the limits.

HOW CAN WORKING CAPITAL BE USED AS A PLANNING TOOL?

Owners can use the working capital ratio in the planning and budgeting process as well. We have discussed how revenues can be budgeted by multiplying working capital by a multiple of 15 to 20. By taking the inverse of the ratio, management has a planning tool as well. The inverse of the ratio will allow management to determine the working capital necessary to meet various levels of revenue. Typically, for each dollar of revenue, a company should have working capital of 5 to 10 cents to cover it.

WHAT CAN MANAGEMENT DO TO IMPROVE WORKING CAPITAL?

Simply put, to improve working capital, management must take into account the effects material decisions have on working capital. Management has to ask, will a transaction increase working capital and put the company in a better operating position and enable growth or will it erode working capital and potentially place the company in a bind and hinder the ability to gain work in the future?

Often managing working capital goes hand in hand with proper cash management functions, as the best cash management decision is often the best decision for managing working capital. For example, management has determined that an equipment purchase is required. Management must decide how the purchase should be made and the affect it will have on working capital. Should current operating assets or cash reserves be used, or should an installment agreement be used to make the purchase? For cash management, an installment agreement is usually preferred over using cash to make the purchase. The use of cash is an immediate drain on operating assets and decreases working capital as those resources are no longer available to fund operations. However, using an installment agreement reduces the
initial impact on working capital by spreading out payments over the term of the agreement while, theoretically, the equipment is producing income that will offset the cash required to make the payments.

That was just one transaction to consider, some other transactions that may negatively impact working capital include extinguishment of debt, bonuses, dividends, loans to officers or employees, redemptions of stock, etc. However, some transactions such as refinancing short-term debt into long-term debt or having owners make capital contributions to the company can improve working capital. The question should be asked, do we have the capacity to make such transactions without detrimentally affecting the company’s working capital position and putting a burden on the company in the future?

Consider ways to simplify tracking working capital on a regular basis and it will help management be more conscious of it. For some it could be as simple as comparing accounts receivable to accounts payable. Though the ratio is not an exact working capital figure, in many cases it will let management know whether they are on safe grounds or not. For others it is a little more complicated, but a plan should be established so that working capital can be effectively monitored on a regular basis.

In these competitive times, companies need to be able to plan ahead and be ready when opportunities arise. Recent surveys from the Construction Financial Management Association suggest that backlog numbers are decreasing and sources of future work remain the number one concern for contractors. Therefore, companies can’t let themselves be in a position where they are scrambling around desperately seeking working capital to rev the company’s engines and increase bonding capacity and work load. Proper working capital management is one way to ensure that the “tank” is always full and the company is ready for when those opportunities arise.

Tim George is a director in the Charleston office of Brown Edwards. He has extensive experience dealing with the financial and business issues of privately held companies and employee benefit plans. He has worked closely with various sizes of businesses, particularly in the construction and design industries.
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CAWV GOLF OUTING A HUGE SUCCESS; MEMBERS SHATTER FUNDRAISING RECORD

Over 200 CAWV members tee’d off at Sandy Brae Golf Club on Friday, June 3, 2011, to benefit the Scholarship Foundation. The golf outing, which was a sell-out, raised over $10,000 for the annual CAWV scholarship award which helps college sophomores and juniors studying civil engineering or pursuing a construction-related degree. Members were divided into a morning flight and afternoon flight. Prizes were given for longest drive, closest to the pin and the first place team in each flight.

"The weather was perfect and everyone had a great time," said Golf Chairman Bob Brookover, WV Paving, Inc. "We could not have done this without the volunteers which generously donated their time to make this a success. I would like to extend a special thank you to the volunteers, sponsors and members who contribute to the scholarship program."

All proceeds from the Golf Outing benefit the CAWV Scholarship Foundation.

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Transportation Secretary Paul Mattox, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, U.S. Representative Nick Rahall and Federal Highway Administration Division Administrator Tom Smith joined local and state officials to break ground for the New River Parkway. Triton Construction, Inc., Nitro, is scheduled to begin excavation work on a 1.3-mile section of the two-lane scenic highway before fall, and complete the $11.32 million project by May 2013. The first segment of the parkway will stretch from W.Va. 20, just across the New River from downtown Hinton, and extend northward along the river, following the path of River Road.

After 27 years on the drawing board, officials broke ground on the New River Parkway in August. Triton Construction, Inc., Nitro, is scheduled to begin excavation work on a 1.3-mile section of the two-lane scenic highway before fall, and complete the $11.32 million project by May 2013. The first segment of the parkway will stretch from W.Va. 20, just across the New River from downtown Hinton, and extend northward along the river, following the path of River Road.

The National Park Service is planning development in the southern end of the Gorge, including a new campground with recreational vehicle accommodations at Meadow Creek, rehabilitation of the former Camp Brookside near Hinton into a Youth Conservation Corps camp, and the rehabilitation and interpretation of three former subsistence farms near the path of the Parkway between Hinton and Sandstone. Plans call for a 35-mile-per-hour speed limit on the Parkway, which would be built with wide shoulders and a number of pullouts and viewpoints ...

Senator Jay Rockefeller helped secure $12.2 million in federal funding for some of West Virginia National Guard’s training facilities in the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill approved by the Senate in July. The bill passed in the House in June.

The bill includes $10 million for the construction of a new Buckhannon Readiness Center and $2.2 million to replace the hydrant fuel system at Camp Dawson in Kingwood. The $10 million will help build a new 57,000-square-foot training center in Buckhannon on a 44-acre tract near the Upshur County Regional Airport. The current 23,700-square-foot facility is located in a floodplain and is inadequate to support new missions under the Army Modularity Transformation unit.

The $2.2 million will enable the guard to improve its fuel facilities for the helicopters, small aircraft, and military trucks and vehicles that support training at Camp Dawson. The expansion and upgrades will include a new office building, fencing, and new electrical and lighting systems that will allow for day and night operations. It will also include paving the surrounding areas of the fuel facility and a new parking lot area ...

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development division has received a $2.3 million funding boost from the federal government. U.S. Senators Jay Rockefeller and Joe Manchin and Congressman Nick Rahall announced the funding in August. Most of the money is allocated to the Logan...
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County Public Service District, allowing them to extend service to serve 192 additional households. The remainder is allocated to development of a meat processing plant in Raleigh County, the East Fork Volunteer Fire Department in Mingo County, a library in Pocahontas County and the Wyoming County Economic Development Authority ...

- The WV Division of Highways in July announced plans to improve parts of a two-lane section of U.S. 35 in Mason County. Transportation Secretary Paul Mattox recently sent a letter to Mason County commissioners saying the work includes resurfacing, widening, paving shoulders and replacing a bridge. The state had planned to expand a 14.6-mile stretch of U.S. 35 in Mason and Putnam counties to four lanes and install tolls to pay off construction bonds. In March, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin took tolls off the table as a funding option ...

- Cabela’s, the outdoor sporting goods chain, is building a store at Southridge Center, in Kanawha County. The Nebraska-based company announced in July it expects to open the 80,000-square-foot store, its second in West Virginia, in the summer of 2012. Construction is expected to start early next year. The store interior will feature the company’s latest layout, which includes conservation themed wildlife displays, a built in aquarium and trophy animal mounts. It will also feature a gun library, fudge shop and bargain cave, the news release said. Outside, the building will use the traditional Cabela’s design stonework, logs, wood siding and metal roof. Cabela’s opened a 175,000-square-foot store in Wheeling, more than twice the size of the Charleston store, in 2004. At the time, it was the company’s second location in the eastern United States ...

- Renovations to the Nitro-St. Albans Bridge are expected to be complete by the fall of 2013, according to Department of Transportation officials at a public informational workshop held in August. Known as the Richard J. “Dick” Henderson Bridge, work will involve reinforcing and "arming" the existing piers, while completely replacing the
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structure that carries traffic over the
piers. A new three-lane steel plate
girder bridge with 6-foot-wide
shoulders and 5-foot-wide sidewalks
will replace the original bridge, built in
1934. The new bridge will feature three
12-foot-wide travel lanes and an early
turning lane to allow better traffic
control. Talk of reconstruction has been
in the works since 2007 because of the
bridge’s evident old age. School buses
and other large vehicles have avoided
the bridge out of fear for safety. The
estimated cost of the new bridge is
between $25 million and $28 million. A
bid date has not yet been set ...

- Canaan Valley Lodge in Tucker
  County is getting a $24 million
  makeover. Crews are currently
demolishing the existing modular units.
The project is being bid in phases.
Wiseman Construction Company,
Charleston, received the $2.4 million
foundations and structural steel
contract. Workers already have torn
down 100 rooms at Canaan and
poured a foundation that will support
two new four-story guest room wings.
When complete, the resort will feature a
160 room hotel with interior corridors,
a departure from the motel style of the
old facility.

  The new accommodations will
  include standard double-occupancy
rooms and higher-end suites similar
to those found at Chief Logan State
Park. Many rooms will have balconies,
allowing guests to take in Canaan
Valley’s spectacular views. Last year,
the West Virginia Economic
Development Authority authorized a
$160 million bond issue to pay for
projects at state parks, universities
and at the Capitol Complex. Lottery
revenues will be used to repay the
bond. The new rooms are expected
to open before the 2013 ski season ...

- The West Virginia Regional
  Technology Park (former Dow Tech
  Park) will receive a $5.25 million
grant from the U.S. Economic Development
Administration. The grant is the largest
the agency has awarded to date this
year. The funds will enable the
Technology Park to renovate a major
lab building on the South Charleston
campus. Senators Jay Rockefeller and
Joe Manchin, along with

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36 July / August 2011
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Representatives Shelley Moore Capito and Nick Rahall, worked on behalf of the Tech Park to get the grant. The award comes through the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission ...

- **Work on the new Marsh Fork Elementary School has begun**, as crews with Bear Contracting, LLC, Bridgeport, finish up their $1 million site development contract. Site clearing, grading, utilities, access roads and parking areas are now complete. Work on the school will now transition into the building phase as crews construct the nearly $5 million school. The new Marsh Fork Elementary School was made possible by public and private donations and replaces an existing school located in close proximity to a coal processing plant ...

- American Municipal Power broke ground recently on a new $276 million hydroelectric power plant at the Willow Island Locks and Dam in St. Marys. The plant is expected to create 400 construction jobs. When it's completed, it will have nine full-time employees. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lt. Col. Andy Ford said the plant is expected to begin operations in 2015.

Bear Contracting, LLC, Bridgeport, is completing the site work for the new $5 million Marsh Fork Elementary School in Raleigh County.

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