



Layer by layer, field technician Aileen Kelley finds shards of bottles and coins as she evacuates. GAYA GUPTA/STAFF

WILLIAMSBURG-JCC

School Board asked to not make students wear masks

By Em Holter
Staff Writer

WILLIAMSBURG — Despite the state Health Commissioner's latest emergency order, which will require students to wear masks inside all K-12 schools, dozens lined up at the podium this week to demand the Williamsburg-James City School Board go against those orders.

The board heard from about 20 parents and students predominantly against mask-wearing and, despite Chairman Jim Kelly's threat that anyone not wearing a mask would be removed from the boardroom, several refused to wear a mask citing religious and medical exemptions.

At least a dozen speakers referred to wearing masks as child abuse, non-effective tools against liberty, mold carriers and causation for teen suicides.

One woman addressed the board carrying a stack of constitution pamphlets citing masks as the cause of her teenage son having acne, headaches and preventing him from paying attention in class.

A man suggested the only he is "the only one who can tell (his kids) what to do."

Several speakers said they would not send their students to school next year if the mask mandates remained in place.

Every major health organization including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends people wear masks indoors in localities with high case transmission rates. The state's emergency order to mask all children in K-12 schools is backed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

According to the Virginia Department of Health, Williamsburg and James City County are considered areas of high transmission rates.

Those who spoke in favor of wearing masks were ridiculed by those in the crowd.

On numerous occasions, Kelly threatened to end the public comment period as

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Coronavirus

As of 9 a.m. Friday, these are the number of cases of the new coronavirus in the state and Historic Triangle:

- 734,079 people in Virginia have tested positive for coronavirus
- 5,225 cases in James City County
- 863 cases in Williamsburg
- 4,218 in York
- 32,670 people across the state have been hospitalized
- 11,647 deaths in the state

Number of residents fully vaccinated

- James City County: 43,654
- Williamsburg: 6,704
- York: 34,179
- Virginia: 4,741,951

Source: Virginia Department of Health

Going layer by layer

Archaeology team unearths new discoveries of Powder Magazine's structure, history

By Gaya Gupta
Staff Writer

It may not look like much, but this clay shingle will dramatically change the structure of Colonial Williamsburg's Powder Magazine.

The roof tile, no more than 4 or 5 inches wide, is one of the first major discoveries that Jack Gary, director of archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg, and his team have found excavating around the Powder Magazine.

One of the 89 original buildings standing at Colonial Williamsburg, the Powder Magazine was initially interpreted as having wooden shingles. But the clay tile indicates that the original colonists knew to fireproof the building, which held gunpowder and arms.

Gary's team of four field technicians, who have been excavating the magazine for the past four weeks, have found several of these tiles, and are hopeful that the next three months of digging will turn up more illuminating artifacts.

"In the first four weeks, we've already discovered a major reinterpretation of the building," said Gary. "What are we going to have at the end of the project?"

The octagonal building was constructed in 1715 under the direction of Gov. Alexander Spotswood, who Gary believes to be



Jack Gary, director of archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg, shows a clay shingle, indicating that the Powder Magazine's roof was not made of wooden tiles, but instead the clay shingles his team has found. GAYA GUPTA/STAFF

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Unearths

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instrumental in designing Williamsburg as a town. Unlike most around the country, Williamsburg's Powder Magazine stands in the center of town. After the Revolutionary War, the building served as a stable and as the Williamsburg Baptist Church before it was restored in 1930. The restoration, Gary said, is outdated, and the clay shingles they've found prove that.

"They didn't have the same amount of evidence that we now have," said Gary. "So now we're going back and forth — what aspects of (the building) need to be changed? The archaeology can help with that."

In addition to the building's structure, Gary also wants to find out more about its use. Historians know that the building held ammunition in times of war, but Gary and his team are also curious about the building's function during peaceful times as well, specifically in between the space of the building and the brick wall placed around the magazine in the 1750s, likely for defense. What else was going on, they wonder. Did people live or camp out in this space? Did they use the space to clean their guns, or prepare equipment? And if the surrounding wall was used to protect the magazine, where did the soldiers stand to defend themselves?

These are a few of the many questions Gary's team has yet to answer. But layer by layer, they're closer to finding answers.

No day is the same as a field technician, and their schedule is subject to what they find in between the layers of the ground.

"You just have to go by the soil and the artifacts," said Aileen Kelley, one of the field technicians on the Powder Magazine dig. "They really dictate how you're going to do things and where you need to stop and start and go next."

The technicians dig in 5 centimeter increments, and in those 5 centimeters, Kelly remarked, things can change drastically. As soon



The archaeology team at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has been excavating around the Powder Magazine in hopes to illuminate further uses of the area, as well as what life might have been like for those who worked there. **GAYA GUPTA/STAFF**

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Aileen Kelley, one of the field technicians on the Powder Magazine dig

as one of the technicians feels like they've found a new feature, an area where something might have once stood in the ground, or hit a new layer, they'll stop and record everything they've found before it.

Each layer can usually be defined by its color, texture or the objects found within it. Something different must have happened in that layer than from the layers above and below it, Gary

explained. Artifacts found in the same layer or feature also can help contextualize and date each other, sometimes more than any chemical dating can. Much like the evolving models of our cellphones, Gary said, the materials of glassware and ceramic in the 18th century changed so rapidly that they can often be used to date surrounding artifacts. Recently, when Kelley

found a tobacco pipe stem, a shard of a glass bottle, and a coin dated to 1773 in a feature last week, the team concluded the artifacts were from sometime between 1773 and 1789, based on the coin's date and other artifacts in the surrounding area.

"Archaeology is kind of like a very physical mystery, where you have to connect all the pieces," said Kelley. Once the features are all

mapped out, the team can analyze patterns in the landscaping to start determining possible structures that could have stood in those locations. Using documentary evidence and studying surrounding Powder Magazines in the area for context, they can slowly start to build a narrative of how the building was used.

Gary's end goal is to recreate the space with the most accurate depictions and stories so that guests can better understand what happened centuries ago. Their discoveries will lead to a reinterpreted building — which they now know will have a clay-tiled roof — constructed sometime

before 2026, the 250th anniversary of 1776.

Despite having studied Colonial Williamsburg for almost 100 years, archaeologists have still only looked at 20% of the town, Gary said. His work ahead is far from finished.

"I love the fact that this building has been standing here for as long as it has, and yet we've never we never really fully understood it. And this," he said, gesturing to the magazine excavation around him, "is the first real step in understanding it."

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