

**8. CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING VACANT
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION POSITION**

While the consensus last month was to leave the Extension Agent's position vacant until the economy improves and the Commonwealth lifts its hiring freeze, I wanted to bring you up to date on my latest conversation with Lonnie Johnson, Southeast District Director for Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Mr. Johnson advises that the starting salary for an entry level agent (no prior experience but with a Master's degree) is currently \$36,000 (\$45,000 including all fringe benefits). As shared last month, in FY 2009, Southampton County's share of Mr. Alexander's salary and benefits was slightly more than \$29,000. In addition, Southampton County presently includes \$1,200 annually in support funding for part-time salaries that is rarely, if ever, used by Cooperative Extension. These funds may be used in the discretion in the locality. Accordingly, the net increase of hiring an agent with 100% local dollars (until the freeze is lifted) is roughly \$15,000 annually ($\$45,000 - \$29,000 - \$1,200 = \$14,800$).

Mr. Johnson could make no promises, but advised me that the Commonwealth at least has a history of picking up its fair share of the agent's salary, once a freeze is lifted – it did so in several Virginia counties (Isle of Wight and Northampton, among them), in the early to mid-1990's.

If filling the position is something that you'd like to pursue, I will need to include the additional funding in your FY 2010 annual budget and advise Mr. Johnson to proceed with the solicitation and hiring process.

I remain open to your direction in this regard.

DIRECTION REQUIRED

I am open to your direction as we prepare the FY 2010 draft budget.