

# CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW



Benny Lawrence and Jim Dingle listen to Herndon Town Councilmember candidate Naila Alam as she tells what she will do if elected to Town Council.

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

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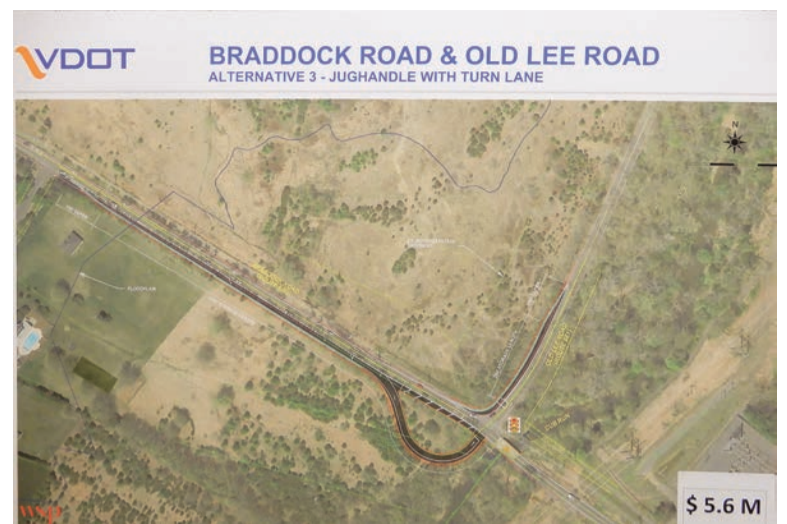
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## NEWS

Local residents say Alternative 3 will benefit Loudoun County residents more than them.



# 'We Believe We'll Have a Voice, But We Don't'

## Residents furious about Braddock, Old Lee funding decision.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**W**hen VDOT held a Feb. 13 information meeting about safety and operational changes proposed for the Braddock/Old Lee roads intersection in Centreville, five alternatives were presented. But VDOT Preliminary Engineering Manager Andy Beacher told attendees it was simply a study, with no funding expected in the foreseeable future.

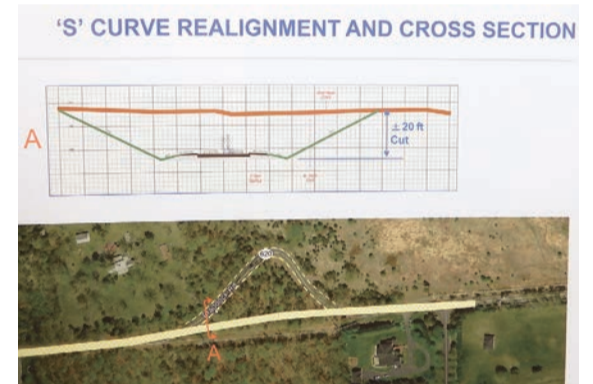
Yet on July 28 – quietly and without a public hearing beforehand – the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recommended it receive almost \$16 million in Smart Scale funding from the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) made the recommendation, advancing the alternative residents objected to most.

It means a new road will cut a swath through Kathleen Leggette's land in Sully Estates, endangering both the wildlife and environment there. She's angry about that, but even more about how this whole issue has been handled.

"As citizens, we're so naïve – we believe we'll be listened to and that we'll have a voice," she explained. "But we don't; we're just part of the required hearing process. No one told us at that February meeting that they were submitting the Smart Scale pre-application by March 1. It was deception.

"As citizens, we don't know about Smart Scale. We entrust our elected officials to represent our best interests – and Kathy Smith failed us. She never informed any of us in western Fairfax County that this had been submitted for funding and what it would mean. She just slid it in."

**IN NORMAL TIMES**, that section of Braddock carries 9,200 vehicles/day, with 8,200 on Old Lee. Eastbound Braddock has heavy traffic congestion and queuing during morning rush, and southbound Old Lee has the same thing in the afternoon – in addition to drivers trying to turn onto Braddock. And between 2010-2017, some 18 large trucks have gotten stuck in Braddock's S curve just west of Old Lee,



A diagram of VDOT's plan to realign the S curve on Braddock Road.

Fairfax County's current Comprehensive Plan calls for realigning Braddock and Old Lee to go into Rock Hill District Park and out again, with Braddock ending in a T at old Lee. But Beacher said it would cost more than \$70 million, so VDOT was seeking "interim, low-cost improvements until that could be done."

VDOT preferred Alternative 3 – adding a traffic signal, plus a 200-foot, southbound, right-turn lane and a 1,100-foot jughandle lane to accommodate the existing, eastbound left turns. The work would include realigning the S curve on Braddock by cutting 20 feet deep into the ground and removing a large section of rock.

Residents told Beacher that was the worst alternative because it would just add more traffic to Braddock from Loudoun County, making it harder for Centreville residents to access that road. But VDOT chose that plan, anyway.

After the February meeting, said Smith, VDOT coordinated with Fairfax County's Department of Transportation, and the official, Smart Scale funding submission was placed on the July 28 agenda for action. "These are state owned and maintained roads," she said. "And when VDOT studies these issues, it looks at the overall transportation network, not by jurisdiction."

Based on VDOT's safety/operational analysis, it chose that alternative, and Smith deferred to VDOT. "With any road project there can be differing viewpoints," she said. "Similar arguments were made by citizens, when Supervisor Michael Frey was in office, that the safety improvements as part of the roundabout at Braddock Road/Pleasant Valley Road were

SEE RESIDENTS, PAGE 7

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

### Braddock Road and Old Lee Road Safety and Operational Improvements Study Fairfax County

Virtual Public Information Meeting

Wednesday, September 30, 2020  
7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

[www.virginiadot.org/braddockandoldlee](http://www.virginiadot.org/braddockandoldlee)

Find out about a study assessing potential safety and operational improvements at the intersection of Braddock Road (Route 620) and Old Lee Road, and the S-curve on Braddock Road between Pleasant Valley Road and Old Lee Road. The concepts being studied include realignment of the S-curve and intersection enhancements at Braddock Road and Old Lee Road such as turn lanes and innovative intersection improvements.

The meeting will be held as a virtual/online meeting. It is the second public information meeting on the study, the first was held February 13, 2020. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting will be posted on the project website ([www.virginiadot.org/braddockandoldlee](http://www.virginiadot.org/braddockandoldlee)).

The VDOT project team will make a presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and be available to answer questions after the presentation until 8:30 p.m.

Review project information and meeting details on the VDOT project website or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2239 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

Give your comments after the presentation, submit your written comments by **October 12, 2020** via the project website, by mail to Mr. Andrew Beacher, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or email [meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov](mailto:meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov). Please reference "Braddock Road and Old Lee Road Safety and Operational Improvements Study" in the subject line.

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## Mobilizing for the Biden-Harris Ticket

Virginia's former Governor, House of Delegate Speaker and Senate Majority Leader at FXCO Government Center.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

The second and third day of early voting at Fairfax County Government Center brought enthusiastic voters exercising their rights to vote and more. Saturday, Sept. 19 was the second day of early voting at the Government Center. Shortly before noon, a group taking part in a "Trump Train" circled their vehicles in the parking beside voters waiting to cast their ballots. Footage shared on Twitter showed Trump supporters waving flags, using bull horns, and yelling at voters through vehicle windows. Later they formed a line beside the voters. According to a statement released Sept. 21 on Twitter by Jeffrey C. McKay Chairman, Board of Supervisors, "No one should ever feel intimidated when exercising their right to vote and engaging in the democratic process." Voters were moved inside and continued political activity took place a safe distance away from voters according to McKay.

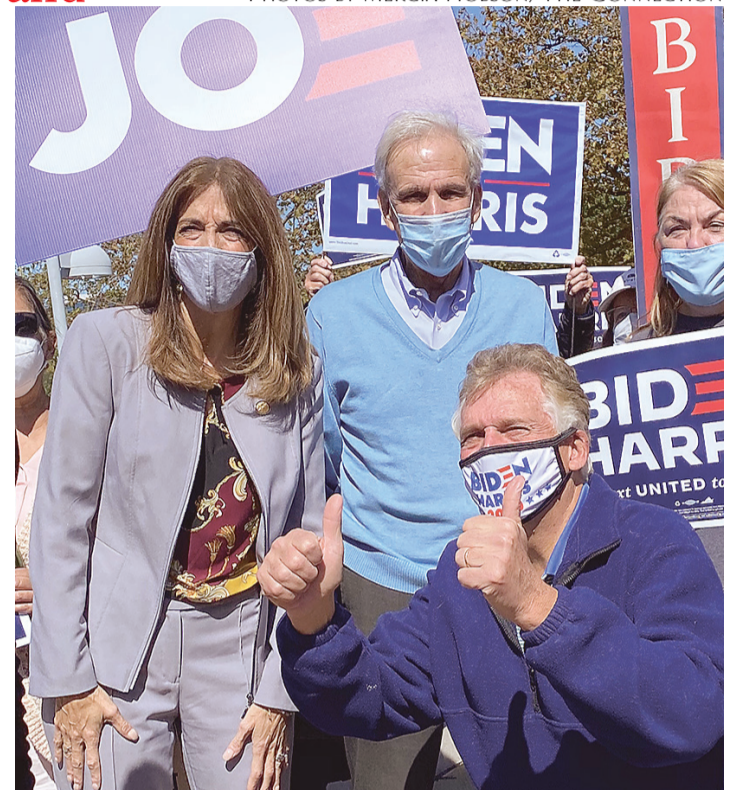
On Monday, September 21, a different scene played out in the "First Amendment" area at Fairfax County Government Center. Supporters holding Biden-Harris posters stood behind Virginia Delegate Hala Ayala (D-51). She is a Democratic candidate in the 2021 Virginia lieutenant gubernatorial election. Ayala introduced former Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D), 2014-2018, House of Delegates Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41), and Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw (D-35). The elected officials discussed the stakes in the November 3 election with supporters and why Virginians should support the Biden-Harris ticket.

Speaker Filler-Corn is the first woman handed the gavel in the House's 400-year history. She said nothing was more important than exercising the constitutional right to vote. Motioning toward the voters, she said, "You see what's going on right over there? The long line started Friday, but actually, it started a long time ago. We have been fighting to make it easier for Virginians to vote...This past session, we were able to pass HB1...no-excuse absentee voting...Candidates matter. Elections matter... We have that opportunity... You can vote early. Go to IWillVote.com. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are doing their part. We'll do ours."

Senate Majority Leader Saslaw spoke next. He talked about mailed absentee ballots and drop boxes. He said, "They are not going to be standing where anybody can mess with them." According to Saslaw there could not be a better ticket than Biden-Harris, two people who reflected the majority of what America is all about. "We've had four years of total chaos through the Trump administration. Think about this, when in anybody's lifetime did 80 former congressmen and senators from the other party endorse



Line of voters at Fairfax County Government Center on the third day of early voting



(From bottom to row) On Monday, Sept. 21, Former Democrat Governor Terry McAuliffe, House of Delegates Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41), and Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw (D-35) stop at the Fairfax County Government Center to campaign for the Biden-Harris ticket. Early voting shows record turnout and enthusiasm.



Early voter Nevien Tadross of Vienna: "I've been waiting one hour forty-five minutes. I came today because I set this day aside for voting."



Early voter Lulva Ali of Reston: "Because I believe that we should all vote, and given the current circumstances, it is important that we make a plan, and we make sure that our vote is counted."

the candidate for president for the other party...On top of that...twenty-five people who served the Trump administration are supporting Biden," he said.

Former governor McAuliffe said events like the one in Fairfax were being held all over the Commonwealth that day to encourage voting. "The early vote requests today in Virginia are 865,000. Do you know where they were in 2016? 168,000...In Fairfax, on our first day, we had four times the turnout we had in 2016."

McAuliffe looked at the people in the lines and around him, "Masked... and being saved," he said. "Tens of thousands of people are not alive today because of Donald Trump. He knew about the Coronavirus in November. He knew about it in December. He got an intelligence briefing in January and February. The president said absolutely nothing because he was afraid it would affect his reelection and didn't want to affect the stock market... Donald Trump is about Donald Trump...We've got to get Joe Biden

and Kamala Harris in office. It affects our future."

A Question and Answer Session Followed.

Q: The governor's reaction to Trump supporters at the Government Center on Saturday, "a massive rally, kind of in the same area we were shooed away from. What's your reaction?"

McAuliffe: "We want everybody to vote... This is the most important election of all time. We cannot afford because, as we saw with RBG, the court, what is going to happen, it could go to a six-three conservative court. Everything we have fought for...common sense gun restrictions... reproductive rights... That is all going to be put at risk... Stop the nonsense. Let people vote."

Q: According to a national NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll released yesterday, 11 percent of eligible voters in the United States have yet to decide if they will vote for Biden or Trump. What can you tell about voters who remain undecided with the election just over six weeks away?

McAuliffe: "My guess will be that 100 percent of them voted for Trump in the year 2016. Anybody that didn't vote for Trump sure isn't going to be switching to him now after the chaos he's creating... Eighty percent (of undecided) usually break for the challenger."

# OPINION

## Virginia Voters Can Contribute to the State's Progressive Future

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM  
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)



### COMMENTARY

The year 2020 has been filled with major ups and downs, but nowhere has the good news been clearer than in the Virginia legislature. The General Assembly session in the opening months of the year and more recently the Special Session have been transformative in making the Commonwealth a truly progressive state. The voting system has been made easier and more accessible than ever before. Discrimination in all forms has been outlawed and hate crime laws have been strengthened. ERA was ratified. Laws to end gun violence are now on the books. Minimum wage has been increased and predatory lending heavily regulated. Details on criminal justice reform are still being resolved in the Special Session, but major steps in criminal justice and public safety reform will be taken before the session adjourns.

A major step forward in making Virginia a truly progressive state is up to the voters on November 3. Two successive sessions of the General Assembly have passed a Constitutional amendment to rid the state of gerrymandering, but the amendment needs to be approved

by voters before becoming part of the Constitution. The amendment is question #1 on the ballot. I hope you will vote yes.

The subtitle of Virginia historian Brent Tarter's book *Gerrymanders: How Redistricting Has Protected Slavery, White Supremacy, and Partisan Minorities in Virginia* (University of Virginia Press, 2019) summarizes the unfortunate consequences of a state that has been a victim of extreme gerrymandering throughout its history. Little wonder that Tarter supports the Constitutional amendment as being long overdue.

The language of the amendment provides protection against racial abuses of the past, saying "Every electoral district shall be drawn in accordance with the requirements of federal and state laws that address racial and ethnic fairness, including the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, and judicial decisions interpreting such laws. Districts shall provide, where practicable, opportunities for racial and ethnic communities to elect candidates of their choice."

The director of Princeton University's Princeton Gerrymandering Project, Dr. Samuel Wang, and colleagues recently wrote that "we are proud to endorse Amendment 1 because never before has the Commonwealth seen such an open and transparent redistricting process. Such citizen involvement will help protect communities that have been split up in the past."

Political scientists and law professors from Virginia's leading universities collaborated on an article that appeared in the *Richmond Times Dispatch* earlier this year in which they wrote, "as scholars of elections and redistricting, we believe this amendment represents an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen Virginia's democracy—one that we cannot afford to miss."

David Daley, senior fellow with the elections think-tank Fair Vote and an author of books on the subject wrote in the *Washington Post* that "politicians usually do a lousy job of regulating themselves. But if this (Amendment # 1) moves forward it would be the strongest set of redistricting reforms to ever emerge from a state legislature in American history."

Amendment # 1 is a big deal for democracy in Virginia. It is controversial for those who see themselves as losing power, but it is time to put gerrymandering on the trash heap along with Jim Crow laws and granite monuments. The decision is in the public's hands. Please vote yes!

## Public Health Measure or Political Litmus Test?

BY JOHN LOVAAS  
RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST



### INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

Only in America in the age of Trump could a simple, straightforward public health precaution become a kind of political litmus test symbolizing personal freedom or, in some cases, manliness?! I'm referring, of course, to the wearing of face masks to reduce the risk of transmission of the highly contagious novel coronavirus or Covid-19.

The virus that causes Covid-19 spreads from person to person "mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks" according to the CDC. The droplets can then land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. Many people infected with the virus do not always show symptoms of the disease but still do a fine job of transmitting it via their respiratory droplets.

Masks, and to some extent face shields, are effective barriers to virus transmission, particularly to protect those around infected persons. Public health workers often wear both masks and plastic face shields to protect themselves as well as those around them. The Trump-appointed head of the CDC, Robert Redfield, recently testified to Congress that masks in fact are "the most important, power-

ful public health tool we have" to fight the pandemic.

There is abundant evidence to support that statement in the United States and in countries around the world. In the U.S. jurisdictions with mask mandates, infections and deaths from Covid-19 related causes have declined following the introduction of masks. In other jurisdictions, especially more urban ones without mandates rates of infection and death are higher in nearly all cases. The same holds true in countries around the world. Unfortunately, in some cases U.S. jurisdictions and other countries prematurely lifted mask mandates with the virus still present and, once they did, infections and deaths soared.

Locally, in Reston we have examples of extraordinary public support for the mask precaution based on common sense recommendation alone. One is the Reston Farmers Market, which is attracting an average of 1800-plus shoppers on Saturday mornings in the Lake Anne Village Center parking lot. Last Saturday (9/19), we had 1,945 shoppers for the freshest fruits, veggies, meats, baked goods, etc. At the Market, we can only "recommend" that masks be worn according to Virginia state mandate,

but not require them. It turns out that Reston area shoppers not only know where they can find the freshest foods, they are smarter in other ways, have common sense, and are caring, responsible folks who want to be part of the solution, not the problem. Last Saturday, we observed two out of the 1,945 shoppers unmasked and unwilling to take a free mask from our volunteers.

Full disclosure, I am a volunteer manager at the Reston Farmers Market.

Imagine if all Americans had this same sense of responsibility for themselves and their neighbors from the beginning of this dreadful, deadly virus. Imagine if political leadership at the top and around the country were imbued with it. How many tens of thousands of people would be alive today if they had been?!

Meanwhile, dozens of dedicated Secret Service agents who protect President Trump and Vice President Pence have been infected by Covid-19 or been quarantined after direct contact with unmasked infected people at rallies and other functions involving a President who even mocks the wearing of masks and other public health measures. Isn't there a certain irony about a president who discourages practical public health measures that might have saved a few thousand lives among his most ardent supporters? I wonder how many additional thousands he can cram into his events between now and November 3?

## CONNECTION

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PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Karen and Paul Novak, voters in the Town of Herndon, take a campaign door hanger from Council member candidate and incumbent Cesar del Aguila. Charlie, the kitty, is all ears.

# Why Vote in the Town of Herndon Elections

Candidates let voters know their message.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION



Benny Lawrence and Jim Dingle listen to Herndon Town Councilmember candidate Naila Alam as she tells what she will do if elected.

With forty-four days until the November 3 Town of Herndon elections for Mayor and Members of Town Council, councilmember candidate and incumbent Cesar A. del Aguila and candidate Naila Alam walked door-to-door, the weekend of Sept. 1. They left campaign literature on voters' doorknobs. Benny Lawrence and Jim Dingle happened to be home when Alam came to their door. "We are pleased to be Town of Herndon residents and have candidates out campaigning because they love the community too," said Lawrence. "They are interested in helping to shape the future of our town," she said.

Aguila stopped at the home of Paul and Karen Novak. According to del Aguila, it was crucial for qualified voters to cast their ballots in the Town Council elections because the Town is structured under a Council/Manager form of government. Town Council decisions affected citizens' finances and quality of life.

According to del Aguila, who is serving his first two-year term on Council (Jan. 1, 2019- Dec. 31, 2020), the Town Council is made up of a Mayor and six Council

members. They are elected simultaneously for two-year terms. He said, "The Town Council controls Town budget, capital improvements, Town property taxes, infrastructure improvements such as road paving and sidewalks, land use and development decisions, Town development and Metro Kiss and Ride, Herndon Police, services of Public Works, such as Spring and Fall Clean up, leaf and snow removal, (and) fees for water, sewer, and recycling."

Candidates for mayor are Sheila A. Olem and Roland B. Taylor. Candidates for Town Councilmember are Naila Alam, Cesar A. del Aguila, Pradip Dhakal, Signe V. Friedrichs, Clark A. Hedrick, Stevan M. Porter, Sean M. Regan and Jaszinder Singh.

"So please vote on November 3, 2020," said del Aguila. Use this link to register online: Virginia Department of Elections or visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/>.



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**AREA ROUNDUPS**

**New I-66 Exit from Route 28 South**

The two left-turn lanes and spur ramp from Route 28 South in Centreville to I-66 East are slated to close on or about this Friday morning, Sept. 25. Drivers on Route 28 South will instead access I-66 East using a new, loop ramp on the right side of Route 28 South. This change is because of the I-66 Outside the Beltway project.

proposed Boulevards at Westfield project. Developer K. Hovnanian wants to rezone 23 acres in Chantilly from industrial to high-density residential. He could then build 442 homes under a Dulles International Airport flight paths – where the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) believes it's too noisy for people to live. To comment to the Board, go to <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form>.

**Stuff the Bus on Sept. 26**

COVID-19 has increased the need for food in the local area, so Stuff the Bus is responding to the demand. On Saturday, Sept. 26, Fastran buses will be parked at these locations from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to collect food donations: Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly; and Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive in Centreville.

**Virtual Meeting about Braddock Park**

The Fairfax County Park Authority is updating its master plan for Braddock Park at 13451 Braddock Road, bordering both Centreville High and Twin Lakes Golf Course. The 61-acre district park contains six natural-turf softball diamonds; one synthetic-turf rectangular field; a batting-cage area, picnic pavilion and restroom.

**Braddock/Old Lee Roads Hearing**

VDOT will hold a virtual public hearing next Wednesday, Sept. 30, at 7 p.m. on controversial changes proposed for Braddock and Old Lee Roads in Centreville and the S-Curve on Braddock Road. To access the meeting, go to [www.virginia.gov/braddockandoldlee](http://www.virginia.gov/braddockandoldlee).

To learn what improvements are needed, the Park Authority is holding an online, public-information meeting Thursday, Oct. 1, at 7 p.m. Access it via <https://publicinput.com/F231> Public Input, or listen in by calling 855-925-2801 and entering access code 8081.

**Boulevards at Westfields Hearing**

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing next Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 4 p.m. on the

**Have Coffee with a Cop**

As part of a nationwide event, area residents are invited to enjoy Coffee with a Cop. It's set for Wednesday, Oct. 7, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., at Peet's Coffee, 14383 Newbrook Drive, Suite 103, in Chantilly. For social-distancing purposes, the event will be held outdoors. It gives neighbors and police officers a chance to join together for coffee and conversation in a relaxed atmosphere.

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.  
**-Werner Heisenberg**

**Employment**

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## Bridging Braddock and Walney Roads

Beams for the new Braddock Road/Walney Road Bridge over Route 28 in Centreville are currently being installed. The bridge is being constructed as part of the I-66 Outside the Beltway project, and the traffic in this photo is on Route 28 south, heading toward Braddock Road, on a recent weekday.

# Residents Furious About Braddock, Old Lee Funding

FROM PAGE 2

made for the benefit of Loudoun residents. Again, these are public roads, and the safety enhancements are for the entire traveling public.”

But Leggette and others say these changes will come “at the expense of the environment and the Comprehensive Plan Fairfax County created 20 years ago to protect and preserve that land. “My property is in a 100-year floodplain, the Chesapeake Watershed and a Resource Protection Area,” said Leggette. “I have foxes and turkeys living in my backyard, plus wood turtles, flora and fauna along a beautiful creek. As designed now, the road will be 12-18 inches from the base of Cub Run Stream.”

She said her yard would have to be elevated to avoid a quick drop in height along that road. “If you fix that S curve, people will speed down it and then be thrown into a jughandle, less than 2/10 of a mile away,” said Leggette. “How are drivers supposed to slow down quickly enough to get into it without having an accident?”

“Apparently, this is the next step in beefing up the two-lane parts of Braddock down to the new Route28/I-66 mixing bowl to speed up Loudoun commuters through western Fairfax,” said Virginia Run’s Jim Hart. “That seems a higher priority than floodplains, stream protection and threatened turtles.”

He said the more Loudoun traffic is shifted to Braddock, instead of to Route 50, the more the homes on Braddock with driveways, and the neighborhoods with entrances on Braddock, would be impacted. “This whole project is contrary to the Comprehensive Plan directive to protect the residential neighborhoods,” said Hart.

VDOT says environmental issues will be examined during the design phase, but Hart said that “seems backwards to me. Environmental impacts from all that disturbance in the floodplain ought to be part of the de-

cision, not an afterthought. Too bad there was no public hearing, and nobody knew of the Supervisors’ [funding] vote. Folks could have raised some of these objections and tried to persuade the Board to stick to the Comp Plan.”

**AGREEING**, Virginia Run’s Jay Johnston said Alternative 3 “fails miserably to protect the environment and endangered species. It also fails to protect our residents from the impacts of Loudoun commuter traffic and trucks. Billions were spent building and modifying Route 50 as the primary route for traffic coming west. But this takes property from Fairfax County residents unnecessarily just to appease Loudoun.”

Like Hart, Centreville’s Chris Terpak-Malm is “disappointed with this supposedly public process for Braddock Road improvements. Decisions seem to be made with absolutely no input from the community. Kathy Smith is a huge disappointment. Her argument for the jughandle is that she’s from New Jersey and they work there. I thought she represented us in Centreville.”

“The downzoned area along Braddock Road, with its environmentally sensitive floodplain – Cub Run which flows into the Occoquan, our drinking-water supply – is a horrible candidate for a jughandle,” continued Terpak-Malm. “We are not New Jersey. I’m further concerned with taking land from a private residence for this ‘road improvement’ which no one supports. There are choices far less intrusive. If this road goes through, anyone with land bordering Braddock is in jeopardy.”

*An online, VDOT public hearing will be held next Wednesday, Sept. 30, at 7 p.m., at [www.virginiadot.org/braddockandoldlee](http://www.virginiadot.org/braddockandoldlee). Afterward, send comments until Oct. 12 to Andrew Beacher, PE., 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or [meetingcomments@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:meetingcomments@vdot.virginia.gov). Put “Braddock/Old Lee Roads Safety and Operational Improvements Study” in the subject line.*

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## “Canceritis”



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

There are two generic types of cancer: the cancer that you have, and the cancer that has you. And the yin and yang is what defines ‘canceritis.’ The internal struggle between being defined by your disease verses living a life in spite of your disease. The former is easy; you’re a victim of an insidious, in some cases, incurable disease that causes myriad problems, shall we say; physically, emotionally and psychologically. The latter is hard. Sometimes, overcoming the former in order to live the latter is much easier said than done. The reason being, primarily, that cancer isn’t a killer because symptoms, treatment and side effects are always manageable and overall mental/emotional demands are easily compartmentalized. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the truth is that if the disease, treatment and side effects and/or anxiety/stress about your diagnosis doesn’t get you, the total disruption of your life and/or routine will.

Not that you lose free will, but you do lose a fair amount of control. While cancer is in the house, cancer rules the roost. Somehow, even though the disease and all is all about you, you must find a way (navigate) a path forward that enables you to set aside the physical and emotional demands of a terminator-type disease. With many patients, the cancer won’t stop until it kills. And for the hundreds of thousands of cancer patients who die every year, wishing, hoping, praying and being compliant to their doctor’s instructions, the outcome though hardly guaranteed is not particularly encouraging either. The disease takes its toll and despite all the efforts of the king’s men to put Humpty back together again, the ravages of cancer often prevent the patient from ever being whole again.

Sometimes, the damage is already done as it usually is for non-small lung cancer patients who often are asymptomatic until they’re not (as I found out, first hand). Then you’re told you have a “terminal” form of stage IV lung cancer which is described as incurable which meant for me, being told I had 13 months to two years to live. The question I asked myself back in Feb., 2009: What the hell happened to stages I, II and III? This is what cancer can do: travel at warp speed and not leave too many clues. Finding some kind of work-around/plan “B” to deal with the loss of control and helplessness might keep the patient from descending into an emotional rabbit hole from which there’s a scant chance of recovery. At this juncture, the cancer is in charge.

This is the challenge: overcoming a disease which in many instances, is beyond your doctor’s/modern medicine’s ability to control. Just imagine living with the knowledge that every day you wake up, is a day borrowed against future days when you might not wake up or if you do, might feel so poorly that the point of trying to feel better becomes more of a fool’s errand than it does a practical alternative. Cancer is not literally a four-letter word but it’s most definitely in its own category: a six-letter word which makes all four-letter words meek by comparison.

Somehow, you must restructure your understanding of your cancerous condition and philosophize: everyday you wake up and feel something isn’t a day that’s lost. It’s a day that’s found. Making the most of these emotional crumbs is not a guarantee of anything. Rather, it’s an attempt to prevent things from getting worse. And as any cancer patient will tell you: it can always be worse. And until it’s the worst, try to embrace whatever remains as the best.

*Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.*



(From left) Members of the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department: Volunteer Firefighter of the Year 2019 Jack Prudence, Chief John Morrison and Administrative Member of the Year 2019 Valentin Neacsu.

PHOTOS BY DANIEL LIEBMAN



The 2019 Fire Chief's Award: John Hootman, McLean Volunteer Fire Department with his family.

# Extraordinary Commitment Honored

## 2019 Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Awards presented.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

On Wednesday, Sept. 2, the Fairfax County Volunteer Fire Commission honored recipients of the 2019 Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Awards. The ceremony was held at Public Safety Headquarters. "Each of these individuals demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the FCFRD through hundreds of hours providing fire and emergency medical services or through other roles that support the goals of the FCFRD," stated a Sept. 5 News and Information notice from the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. The individuals came from various volunteer fire and rescue departments throughout Fairfax County.

"Each year our 750 volunteers collectively perform 200,000 hours of service in the communities in Fairfax County," said Mike Wendt, President of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Association. "The annual Volunteer Service Awards are a way for us to recognize the outstanding contributions of our current and future fire service leaders," he said.

Chief Timothy G. Fleming of the Franconia Volunteer Fire Department received the first-ever Fire Chief's Career Achievement Award. According to the award nomination letter by The Volunteer Fire Commission, Chief Fleming worked to improve the Fire and Rescue Department countywide as Chairman of the Volunteer Fire Commission. The letter said in part: "During his tenure, he worked with five divergent Fire Chiefs,



Volunteer Operational Officer of the Year 2019 Al Woolf, Centreville Volunteer Fire Department.

navigating a changing landscape and making sure the volunteer system was represented and improved."

During Fleming's term as Chairman, some of the many initiatives and accomplishments included revision and implementation of the Volunteer Utilization Plan; increased utilization of volunteers because of changes to career staffing of EMS units; a comprehensive review of the volunteer system, The Ludwig Study; the successful creation of formal agreements between the 12 Volunteer Fire Department's and the County and improved recruitment and retention efforts to grow the volunteer system.

"I am honored to have such exceptional volunteers as members of Fairfax County Fire and Rescue's combination career-volunteer system. Their hard work plays an integral role in helping support the department's goals. These individuals, and all our



(From left) Dranesville District: Volunteer Fire Commission Chair Shawn Stokes, CERT (Community Member Response Team) Member: Susy Ledgerwood, Dranesville District and Fire Chief John Butler.

volunteers, have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the department. I cannot thank them enough for their dedication

to FCFRD and the communities they serve," said Fire and Rescue Department Chief John S. Butler.

### THE 2019 VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AWARDS

Fire Chief's Award: John Hootman, McLean Volunteer Fire Department	CERT Member: Susy Ledgerwood, Dranesville District
Volunteer Firefighter: Jack Prudence, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department	Volunteer Operational Officer: Al Woolf, Centreville Volunteer Fire Department
Administrative Member: Valentin Neacsu, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department	Special Recognition Award: Dave Presson, Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department
Administrative Member: Valentin Neacsu, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department	Volunteer EMS Provider: Gus Sawatzki, McLean Volunteer Fire Department
Administrative Officer: Kelsey Lanza, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department	Volunteer ALS Provider: Barry Brown, Burke Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Volunteer BLS Provider: Kerin Hamel, Great Falls Volunteer Fire Department	Administrative Officer: Kelsey Lanza, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department