

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Burglaries Put Mount Vernon Business Owners on Alert

Smash and grab at three Hollin Hall places yields little for thieves.

By MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

After smashing the glass front door, the burglars that hit the Hollin Hall Shopping Center last Wednesday night decided to have a beer at the River Bend Bistro bar, and owner Caroline Ross hopes that's their last call at her restaurant.

"They drank half a beer and left it on the bar with their DNA," she said.

The Bistro was one of three businesses the burglars robbed that night in a series of "smash and grab" style of break-ins that are rare in this neighborhood shopping center. The Hollin Hall Variety Store and The Pastry Shop were the other two places they hit in this Mount Vernon shopping center. "People have tried to break in back but never out front," said the owner of the Variety Store.

The Fairfax County Police Department say these burglaries at the Hollin Hall Shopping Center are related to a series of overnight commercial burglaries throughout the county. In most cases, the front glass doors of the businesses have been broken, two to four people then enter the business taking cash and property before leaving in a vehicle,

said FCPD. Detectives have determined the burglars mostly target restaurants, grocery stores, and minority owned businesses, although that wasn't the case at Hollin Hall. While detectives continue to work these cases, crime prevention officers are reaching out to business owners to discuss safety tips and burglary prevention.

Cameras are one prevention measure that

the Hollin Hall business owners are looking at after the burglaries. At The Variety Store, there was at least one camera, and the owner noted that he intends to install more in the future. The hardware store a couple of doors down does have a few cameras outside, and the burglars bypassed the store, but the cameras were rolling nonetheless.

Ross at the Bistro saw the film after the

fact, noting the car pulling up on the video and two men getting out. She was thinking of putting more cameras in, but has such good customers, one of them beat her to it. "One of our customers brought in an extra one last night," she said.

In the police report, there were three ethnic restaurants in Annandale, two Vietnamese places in Falls Church, two middle eastern places in Springfield, and five other

SEE BURGLARIES, ON PAGE 4



Hollin Hall Shopping Center has been the scene of some "smash and grab" burglaries.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION



The once glass door at The Variety Store is temporarily covered with plywood. So is the door at River Bend Bistro.

DPC Food Drive

Donations collected for Alive!, ARHA.

Members of the Departmental Progressive Club held a food and gift card drive Feb. 20 to collect non-perishable items for local families.

"We are open today to collect non-perishable dry goods for families in the City of Alexandria," said DPC president Nelson Greene Jr. "The products we collected will be going to Alive! and ARHA and will be distributed soon for families in need." The DPC held a similar food drive Feb. 13 but due to difficult weather conditions, decided to extend the drive another weekend.

"Most of the things we have here are staples that families can use or keep until they are needed," Greene added. "That's what we try



Departmental Progressive Club president Nelson Green Jr., center back, with DPC members at the club's Feb. 20 food drive. Pictured clockwise from back left: Joseph Jennings, Nelson Greene Jr., William Chesley, Daniel Shelby, Willie Bailey and Bill Campbell.

to do in the community. Wherever we can contribute a little bit, we contribute."

-JEANNE THEISMANN

PET GAZETTE



Carlie Buddemeyer and Meaghan Bowman with Brandy at the Fish Market Feb. 20. See more pets on pages 4, 8, and 9.

JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

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Controlling Gun Violence

After stumbling on assault weapons, lawmakers limit guns at polling places and government buildings.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Fulfilling their campaign promises to take action against gun violence, Democrats in the General Assembly are sending Gov. Ralph Northam several gun-violence prevention bills. Lawmakers are taking action to exclude guns at polling places and government buildings, creating new restrictions for people convicted of domestic violence and extending the time allowed for the State Police to conduct background checks. The bills this year come after several new laws were created last year, requiring universal background checks and allowing local governments to regulate firearms.

“Virginia is a leader now,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran, who formerly represented Alexandria in the House of Delegates. “We’ve gone from dead last to first in terms of responsible gun-control legislation.”

One campaign promise Democrats have been unable to accomplish is limiting access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, deadly equipment that has been used to commit some of the worst mass shootings in American history. After Democrats seized control of the General Assembly last year, cracking down on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines was a top priority for the new majority. But Senate Democratic Leader Dick Saslaw ended up withdrawing his own bill on the issue, and Del. Mark Levine (D-45) was unable to get his bill through the Senate. This year, nobody even bothered introducing an assault-weapons bill.

“I don’t think it has enough votes to pass,” explained Levine. “It’s misunderstood because people overstate what it is because it’s really a high-capacity magazine ban more than an assault-weapons ban because we’re grandfathering in the assault weapons.”

SOME OF THE BILLS lawmakers are sending the governor are improvements to new laws that were passed last year. For example, one of the signature accomplishments of the 2020 General Assembly session was the law requiring universal background checks. This bill closed the gun-show loophole, but it also created a new problem. If the State Police did not complete a background check within three days, the sale was permitted to go through anyway. That’s why Del. Alfonso Lopez (D-49) introduced a bill to give the State Police five days to conduct a background check.

“If we keep expanding the time, you’re

taking the pressure off the police to do it in a timely fashion,” said Phillip Van Cleve, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League. “This whole system was sold to gun owners as an instant check, and the longer you stretch it the more that becomes a joke.”

Lopez pointed to statistics from the State Police showing examples of how background checks taking longer than three days can lead to problems. Last year, the State Police logged 787 transactions that were denied in three days or less. However, he said, 235 background checks that were eventually rejected took longer than three days. The way the laws work now, that would be hundreds of purchases in 2020 that should have been denied but weren’t because of a process known as “default proceed.”

“So a purchase would have been allowed to go forward — 235 examples,” said Lopez. “To keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous individuals who pose a threat to themselves, their loved ones and the community at large, I believe that making this one word change is the best course of action for the commonwealth.”

LAWMAKERS ARE ALSO haunted by the specter of the ghost guns, which are firearms created by 3D printers or assembled at home

“Virginia is a leader now. We’ve gone from dead last to first in terms of responsible gun-control legislation.”

— Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran

from kits. Because none of the new gun-violence measures passed last year would apply to these guns, some lawmakers are concerned that this is a class of firearms that would be able to evade all the laws designed to keep weapons out of the hands of people who shouldn’t have them. That’s why Del. Marcus Simon (D-53) introduced a bill to prohibit people buying kits and assembling ghost guns.

“It’s untraceable, and it really evades the entire system,” said Simon. “You build the gun yourself and it’s got no serial number. You require no background check. There was no age limit to purchase it.”

Although the original version of his bill outlawed all old guns without serial numbers, senators changed it to grandfather in all firearms that predated the new law. Advocates say they liked Simon’s original version better, but in the sausage-making facto-



Signs like these went up across the city last year after the General Assembly gave local governments authority to regulate guns.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/GAZETTE PACKET

ry of the General Assembly this is the kind of compromise that’s often needed to get bills to the governor’s desk.

Another bill that senators changed was one that allowed school boards to prohibit guns on school property, which senators amended to apply only to school administration buildings. Guns are already prohibited at schools, but the Loudoun County School Board determined they didn’t have the authority to ban firearms in the building where they meet. So they asked Del. Suhas Subramanyam (D-87) to introduce a bill granting that authority.

“I have no problem with administrative buildings, if they want to designate it as a gun-free zone just like we passed last year with city councils or county boards,” said Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34). “I do have a little bit of an issue if a school board just buys a random property as a vacant lot and then passes an ordinance saying it’s a gun-free zone.”

THE ALEXANDRIA DELEGATION is sending two gun bills to the governor, one to prohibit firearms at polling places and another to prevent people from bringing them into Capitol Square or other state government buildings.

Levine introduced the bill to prohibit guns at polling places and vote counting centers after two Virginia men were arrested after traveling to Pennsylvania to attack a vote-counting site. Gun enthusiasts dismissed the bill as creating yet another gun-free zone.

“This is to prevent intimidation?” asked firearms enthusiast Vincent Smith during a public hearing on Levine’s bill. “There are a large portion of this country who are intim-

idated by clowns, so much so that it has a name, it’s called ‘coulrophobia.’ So are you going to also outlaw clowns at polling places?”

Levine and state Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30) both introduced bills prohibiting guns in Capitol Square, although the two bills are different enough to send them into a closed-door conference committee where lawmakers will resolve their differences in secret. Levine’s bill includes a larger geographic area, including major streets surrounding the Capitol, whereas the Ebbin version bans more weapons other than guns, including knives.

“People don’t need to arm themselves in Capitol Square,” said Ebbin. “They potentially risk more harm than good.”

ASSAULT WEAPONS remain a lingering concern for advocates of gun-violence prevention because of the prominent role they have played in so many of the mass shootings over the last 20 years. Levine says he would have introduced an assault weapons ban if lawmakers had not been limited to seven bills because of the limited duration of the session this year.

Using one of those seven slots for a bill that would have not been successful would have been a mistake, he said, especially considering he’s sending two gun bills to the governor this year.

“It’s a conundrum why the House and the Senate didn’t want to take this up,” responded Lori Haas, Virginia director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. “Clearly there’s an appetite among the voters to regulate and ban semiautomatic assault-style rifles. Polling as recent as October showed overwhelming support for doing something about these people-killers.”

Two Dead Bald Eagles Found in Mount Vernon

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

February 19, 2021

Several Mount Vernon area residents happened upon two dead bald eagles in the grass near a utility pole in the 7600 block of Elba Road on Feb. 17. "I walked by right after this happened," said Pam Williams. "It was a horrendous sight."

"The eagles' talons were locked together and one of the bird's tail feathers appeared to be burned," according to Katherine Edwards, Fairfax County's Wildlife Management Specialist with the Police Department, whose animal protection officers were called to the scene. Edwards also said that a neighbor thought she heard a transformer blowing up shortly before the eagles were found. Edwards speculated that the eagles died by colliding with a power line while interlocked during what's called "a talon-grappling display."

There are several reasons bald eagles engage in talon grappling, says the American Bald Eagle Foundation's website, but human explanations of bird behavior are always risky, experts caution. It can occur between mated adults, unpaired adults, adult and immature eagles and immatures with immatures. Interlocking talons could be pair-bonding, aggression or play.

The Elba Road bald eagles were adult birds. Mature bald eagles have a white head and tail and dark brown body. Immatures, those under five years old, are mottled brown. (Mature golden eagles are dark



PHOTO BY DANIEL WEINBERG

Two bald eagles were found dead in Mount Vernon last week. "The eagles' talons were locked together and one of the bird's tail feathers appeared to be burned," according to Katherine Edwards, Wildlife Management Specialist with FCPD.

brown with slightly lighter flight feathers and a golden nape. They are rare in northern Virginia, more likely seen in the Appalachian Mountains in the winter.)

Bald eagles typically mate for life. In

A Success Story

The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was once in danger of extinction in the lower 48 states, with only 417 known nesting pairs in 1963. Scientists attributed their decline to DDT and other compounds in pesticides that moved up the food chain and made eggshells so thin that chicks failed to hatch. In 1967, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) put the bird on the endangered species list which triggered some protection measures. In 1972, Congress banned DDT and eagle population numbers began to climb. In 2007, FWS removed it from the endangered species list because FWS's website says, "their population is protected, healthy and growing."

the winter, they select a breeding territory and often return to their previous year's nest. In Northern Virginia, in February, bald eagles typically are mating and incubating eggs. In 2020, the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve had three active bald eagle nests. Fort Belvoir and Mason Neck also have had paired, nesting bald eagles for many years.

As for what this pair was doing, Edwards offers this possibility: "During the winter months, bald eagles are busy with activities associated with their breeding season, such as courtship or pair bonding with mates, establishing territories and building nests. Eagles will aggressively defend their territories from intruders. They are known to engage in talon-grappling and tumbling displays (also known as "talon-clasping" or "cartwheel dis-

plays") that are thought to be involved with either territorial defense or courtship.

"Although finding a pair of bald eagles with interlocked talons is certainly surprising and rarely observed, it is not an uncommon occurrence during eagles' breeding season. Both male and female bald eagles may engage in locking their talons together in dramatic flight displays, whirling through the air and plummeting toward the ground. Bald eagles will usually let go and separate before landfall; however, there are unfortunate instances where eagles may collide with other objects, such as trees or power lines or hit the ground before separating and may be killed in the process," Edwards offered.

Feathers Valued by Native Americans

Two federal laws, the Bald and Golden Eagle Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, generally prohibit anyone from taking, possessing or transporting a bald eagle or golden eagle or their parts, nests or eggs without prior authorization from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Recognizing the religious and cultural significance of eagles to Native Americans, the law does allow enrolled members of federally-recognized tribes to receive and possess eagle feathers and parts. FWS operates the National Eagle Repository in Commerce City, Colorado, to receive and provide Native Americans with eagle feathers for religious use.

The Fairfax County officers will send the deceased eagles to the Colorado repository. "Such a sad ending, but easier to bear knowing they have a second chance through a ceremonial function with Native Americans who respect them," Williams commented.



Some of the financial institutions in the shopping center have been victimized in the past.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

The Pastry Shop window was smashed.

Burglaries Put Mount Vernon Business Owners on Alert

FROM PAGE 1

businesses in the Mount Vernon area that ranged from a taco shop to Korean BBQ, and a sushi restaurant. There were a total of 15 businesses on the police report.

On Feb. 16, the Fairfax County Police Department hosted a virtual community meeting with Korean business owners

and discussed forging new partnerships and increasing communication to combat burglaries in the area. A Crime Prevention Officer shared tips on how to protect businesses through "CPTED," Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. Many tips were shared during the meeting such as light and security camera installation, trimming

back hedges in front of doors, and removing valuables before closing for the night. Most importantly, community members were asked to contact police if they are a victim of a burglary so officers and detectives can gather evidence that could lead to an arrest.

"People coming in from out of the area," said center customer Steve Chaconas, who

mentioned earlier bank robberies. The hairdressers at Hairvisions, were also concerned. "I'm scared now, they should have more cameras," one of the hair dressers said.

FCPD Detectives are asking anyone with information regarding these incidents to call the Mason District Station Criminal Investigation Section at 703-256-8035.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

NEWS

Upcoming Events

Mount Vernon Virtual Budget Town Meeting

When: Monday, March 1, 2021
Where: Live Virtually on Channel 16, the County's Livestream and Facebook
Time: 7 p.m.
Program: County & Schools Budget Presentation & Audience Q&A's

See related story on page 12 of this edition

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/mount-vernon-district-virtual-budget-town-meeting>

Supervisor Dan Storck 2nd Saturday Office Hours for March 13, 2021

Mount Vernon District office. 2511 Parkers Lane, Mount Vernon, VA 9am-3:00 p.m.

Supervisor Storck is available for phone and video calls, as well as in-person meetings with proper social distancing, during his regular 2nd Saturday office hours. Contact mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-780-7518 for more details and to schedule a meeting.

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

FARMERS MARKET VENDORS STILL DELIVERING

The McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon Farmers Market won't reopen until April 21, but in the meantime some of the market's vendors are taking orders online and delivering them to the Sherwood Hall Library parking lot on Wednesdays. Note that you must order in advance and that not all the vendors deliver every week. The vendors making deliveries are:

Arnest Seafood – crab cakes, scallops, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and more;

Honey Brook Farms - meats and vegetables raised with no chemicals, gluten-free baked goods;

Misty Meadow Farm Creamery - milk, ice cream, cheese, eggs and meats;

Twin Springs Orchard - fruits, vegetables, cheese and more;

Valentine's Bakery & Meats - meats and baked goods.

The Fairfax County Park Authority, which operates the Mt. Vernon Farmers Market, has no connection to the deliveries. The market, with a full array of vendors, will resume on April 21 and take place every Wednesday from 8 a.m. to noon at the Sherwood Hall Regional Library through December 22.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

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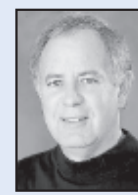
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LET'S TALK TODAY TO CONTINUE **YOUR** JOURNEY!

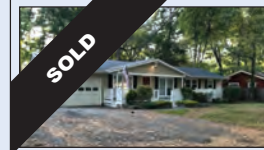
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ATTENTION

This market for sellers is the best I've seen in the 30 plus years I have been in Real Estate. Interest rates appear to have bottomed out, and coupled with low inventory we have an incredibly strong seller's market. IMHO, interest rates have only one place to go now, and that is up. Once that starts the initial response from buyers who have been sitting on the fence, will be to jump in to buy and this will create an even stronger MELT UP for sellers' prices. At some point, however, the market will crest while interest rates continue to climb and housing demand will then slow down. If you are considering selling, call me NOW and I will do a market analysis and help you maximize probably the biggest investment in your life. Let me put my 30 plus year of experience to work for you. Stay safe and healthy, Rex Reiley



Alex/Hybla Valley Farm \$614,900
7720 Schelhorn Road

Are you tired of stairs & longing for 1 level living? A beautiful partially covered front porch that you can sit out & wave to your neighbors as they walk by? How about entertaining on a large deck that overlooks a large, fenced bkyd & watching your children/grandchildren congregate & play? We have that... plus 4BRs, 2BAs, beautiful refinished hwd floors & freshly painted interior. Throw in replacement double pane windows, 6 panel interior doors, a beautifully updated kitchen w/granite counters, SS appliances, that is open to the living & dining areas. Finally, an oversized 1 car garage w/a 12'x10' storage/workshop area on the end, & extensive parking available on a large driveway, brand new roof. Ideal location, less than 1 mile to Mt. Vernon Hospital & Sherwood Hall Library, 10 mins to Ft. Belvoir(S) & Old Town (N), 20 mins to Ntl Airport & 30 mins to D.C. & the Pentagon (N). Come take a look you won't be sorry.



Alex/ Riverside Estates \$736,000
8503 Cherry Valley

Riverside Estates' largest split foyer model (Concord) w/2 car garage & lots of updates, i.e., roof 2001, HVAC 2012, baths 2010, furnace 2001, updated double pane windows 2019. Kitchen was opened to the dining & living rooms & is absolutely stunning: granite & quartz counters, large island w/seating capacity & beautiful hwd floors. Oversized MBR & MBA share a lovely gas FPL to add charm to the master suite. A large lower level offers a family rm which also has a gas FPL, a 4th BR & 3rd full bath. Plenty of storage behind the 2-car garage. Large lovely fenced bkyd, perfect for entertaining. 5-minute drive to Ft. Belvoir (S), 15 minutes to Alexandria, (N), 25 mins to National Airport (N) and 33 mins to the Pentagon (N).



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Bringing Virginia into the Light

Abolishing the death penalty, steps to end Jim-Crow era ban on felony voting and more recent ban on gay marriage.

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

The last week of the 2021 General Assembly Session has arrived and it will prove to be an exciting time with many big issues on the agenda.

In even years, the process of amending the Constitution of Virginia typically begins. Sen. Adam Ebbin and Del. Mark Sickles' legislation repealing the 2006 gay marriage ban from our constitution will have a final vote. We are also negotiating an amendment to remove Virginia's Jim Crow Era felony voting prohibition from the Constitution and replacing it with an affirmative right to vote.

We will also be taking up my legislation abolishing capital punishment on Monday.

This past week we announced our agreement on my legislation to reform Virginia's expungement and rules prohibiting the sealing of criminal convictions. Virginia is one of only nine states in America that do not allow people to seal misdemeanor convictions and one of only fourteen that do not allow the sealing of felony convictions.

My legislation creates a process for most misdemeanors and felonies, allows access to records for sensitive positions, and also reduces barriers to accessing the process by providing court-appointed counsel. It reduces procedural hurdles, and creates a process for automatic expungement after seven years of good behavior of alcohol or marijuana possession, disorderly conduct, trespassing, and petit larceny. Importantly, the bill also creates a registry for private data brokers and liability for companies who continue to publish information relating to sealed convictions.

My proposal to provide all Virginians with a right of appeal in all civil and criminal cases was finally docketed and taken up in the House of Delegates. Virginia is the only state in America that does not provide this right and providing it will require seven new judges on the Court of Appeals. I am hopeful that the details will be resolved by the end of the week.

The House of Delegates passed



Surovell

my legislation to help give Fairfax County more authority to protect River Farm. My legislation makes it clear that the County can restrict subdivision and require public access as part of any historic zoning district over River Farm. I am hopeful that Chairman Jeff McKay and Supervisor Dan Storck can convince their colleagues to utilize this authority to help ensure River Farm remains preserved and open to the public in perpetuity. The House rejected my legislation to allow class action lawsuits in Virginia. Virginia and Mississippi are the only two states in America without this remedy which helps to level the playing field between large corporations and citizens, but some members refused to consider the bill.

A House Committee also killed my bill to allow local governments to request information about a company's history of arbitrating sexual harassment, racial discrimination and consumer complaints before entering into contracts with bidders. Companies are using

these practices to hide shameful behavior from the public and companies who choose to allow their employees to litigate these matters in court are at a strategic disadvantage. I will try again next year.

The negotiations to work on marijuana legalization will start this week. Senator Adam Ebbin is carrying the legislation, Delegate Paul Krizek spent significant time vetting the legislation. The Senate has taken the position that we need more time to study the bill to get legalization done correctly while the House of Delegates would like to move forward this year. We have a large chasm to bridge.

Finally, our money committee leadership will work to resolve our competing budgets. Last week, Governor Northam announced that revenues were \$750 million higher than expected, but still \$3 billion lower when the budgets were originally built before the pandemic. Please email me at scott@surovell.org if you have any difficulty obtaining a vaccine appointment, and complete my constituent survey at www.scottsurovell.org/survey. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

“My Journey to Becoming a Law”

By: HB 2030
(AS TOLD TO
DEL. PAUL KRIZEK)

Today's the day! Today's the second to last step before I become a law. I may have said this yesterday as well, but today really is the day.

Hello, my name is House Bill 2030, and I started as a bill to regulate the outside use of neonicotinoid pesticides — chemicals that are harmful or potentially harmful to pollinating insects. It has been an incredibly exciting, albeit short, life for me. I was dreamed up a few months ago, when suburban beekeepers in Fairfax County asked my patron, Delegate Paul Krizek, for help protecting their hives. It is not uncommon for suburban beekeepers to have a hive die off when someone nearby uses a neonicotinoid pesticide outside in a nearby garden. He and his staff worked very hard, talking to experts, researching the issues, and finding allies, to make me the absolute best version of myself to prepare



“The poor bees would barely be protected at all.”

for the arduous passage through the General Assembly. Delegate Krizek met with so many people about me; from beekeepers across the state, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), to pesticide companies, wineries, farmers, lawn care professionals, the Virginia Association of Counties, the Treated Wood Council, Scott's (which stopped including neonics in 2016 for outside use), environmentalists, to people who work in the forestry service, and so many others.

After I was first introduced by the Delegate, I went straight to the House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources subcom-

mittee early one morning, where delegates, lobbyists, stakeholders and the general public came to talk about me! They discussed the benefits and drawbacks of my passage into law. Delegate Krizek and his colleagues listened to the people who presented their cases, including the beekeeper from the Mount Vernon estate and the delegate's beekeeper constituent who asked for me in the first place.

So many didn't seem to like me, and in order to move forward, there in the subcommittee, they made multiple edits to me. With those changes made, I passed the subcommittee, but even with all those changes, it was decided that I should go back to the subcommittee one more time the following week for even more discussion and even more amendments.

Indeed, I was amended once more, and started to look like a completely different bill than when I started my journey. No longer was I a ban on the pesticide, but I was a notification bill that would require beekeepers to be notified

when spraying would be taking place nearby. After that, I went to the full Agriculture committee where I was voted upon with 19 for and just 3 against. Things were looking up for me! Then, it was on to the House floor where delegates from both parties decided that I

SEE “MY JOURNEY”, PAGE 13

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A Connection Newspaper



Pawsitive Partners

Volunteers care for Arlandria feral cat colony.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Ever since Devon Cain was a young girl, she has loved cats. The retired art teacher has volunteered at shelters and several cat organizations but in 2013, she discovered another passion: caring for a feral cat colony in Arlandria.

“Ever since I can remember I have done my best to help cats in some form or another,” said Cain. “But the hardest and the most rewarding for me is my work with ferals. My heart belongs with the ferals, strays, and abandoned cats that deserve proper care from humans.”

For several years, Cain was among dozens of volunteers to feed and care for the feral colony in Arlandria. She

left the area in 2018 but still stays involved through donations of artwork to raise money to support the feral cats.

“I became involved in March of 2013 and helped a trapper TNR [trap, neuter, release] the cats,” Cain said. “Many of the cats had been previously treated but the history of the colony isn’t clear. Supposedly it was started by an employee of a local business in the area.”

Despite community support, Cain chooses not to disclose the location of the colony to protect the cats.

Currently, there are 17 volunteers caring for the Arlandria colony, which varies in number at any given time.

“The original cats were Boo, Rex, Reggie, Mosby, Matty, Le Nez, the two Radleys, and Little G,”

“My heart belongs with the ferals, strays, and abandoned cats that deserve proper care from humans.”

— Arlandria feral cat colony volunteer
Devon Cain



JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Volunteers Sara DiValentine, Lynda Rasmussen, Ginny Richards and Marta Ishmael gather Feb. 22 to feed and care for a feral cat colony in Arlandria.

Cain said.

“Sadly, we have lost all but three of the cats. One had to be euthanized due to chest cancer, we found the body of one at the site, and the rest just disappeared.”

Over the years, Cain and other

volunteers purchased food and set up cat shelters at their own expense.

“After clearing the area of debris, I began creating a home for the cats,” Cain said. “I pur-

SEE PAWSITIVE, PAGE 9

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

TUESDAY/MARCH 16

Mount Vernon Genealogical Meeting. 1-3 p.m. Via Zoom. The internet has changed the way we do genealogy. Does this make books, CDs and microfiche, obsolete? Join the MV Genealogical Society’s March meeting and let Chuck Mason, Jr., host of Channel 10’s Tracing Your Family Roots, walk you through the benefits of using all of these sources. Nonmembers are welcome to one event each year free of charge. Register by March 12 by emailing contact-us@mvgenealogy.org.

FEB. 23 TO MARCH 23

Online Study Group. 7:30-9 p.m. Via Zoom. Sponsored by Fairlington United Methodist Church of Alexandria. Free, weekly in-depth look at the mysteries of suffering and how to make better sense of them.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

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400 N Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314



In the morning, it's the Cokester and writer Mike Salmon, drinking coffee and reading the paper.



Steve the Surofish.



APD K-9 Czekaj prior to his retirement in 2019.

APD K-9 Czekaj Dies; Served from 2012-2019

Retired Alexandria Police Department K-9 Czekaj has died. He was 10.5 years old and served the APD from 2012-2019. K-9 Czekaj (pronounced Chek-eye) was partnered with Officer Robert Egan. He was certified in Patrol work and Narcotics Detection. In the course of his career, Czekaj's patrol work led to the arrests of over a dozen people suspected of committing crimes. His detection abilities led to the location and seizure of more than \$250,000 in controlled substances, currency and property related to the distribution of narcotics.

In 2018, "Czek," as he was affectionately known, and Officer Egan placed second in the region in the United States Police Canine Association Narcotics Detector trials. They also placed second in the national trials.

— JEANNE THEISMANN



People will look like their pets. Millie is a little confused by the mask Eric Miller is wearing. But it's important to be safe and it always helps to match your furry companion. Photo by Myrna Miller in Alexandria.

Suropets



Apollo, White Surocat.



Percival, Orange Surocat.



Natasha, Calico Surocat.



Giovanna Di Biccari, with Bindi and Remy, adopted from the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. She writes: "I've read that rats are smart animals so I started looking two years ago. Being a first timer rat mom, I knew I wanted babies, females, and specific colors. I could've purchased rats from the pet store but I get more satisfaction rescuing. I got Bindi and Remy from Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. I hope to train them enough to be in commercials!"



"The best things come in threes!" says Jo Echard of Alexandria.



Mosby, the Surodog, is a 10-year-old female lab mix.



Giovanna Di Biccari, with Bindi and Remy, adopted from the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. She writes: "I've read that rats are smart animals so I started looking two years ago. Being a first timer rat mom, I knew I wanted babies, females, and specific colors. I could've purchased rats from the pet store but I get more satisfaction rescuing. I got Bindi and Remy from Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. I hope to train them enough to be in commercials!"



Pliny and Humboldt perch in their cat condo in Alexandria while keeping a close eye on the Roomba making its way across the room. (No exceptions to building height limits were required for this condo.)

Pawsitive Partners

FROM PAGE 7

chased large storage bins and used either Styrofoam tubs to line them or I taped in silver insulation. A sprinkling of organic flea powder on the bottom of the bins, a mound of straw, and a 5-inch square opening to keep the raccoons out helped to complete the new homes."

The colony site has evolved over the years and now consists of several shelters, a storage unit and two feeding stations. The shelters are placed atop wood pallets to keep them above snow and smaller tubs contain extra compostable bowls, spoons, garbage bags, rubber gloves, scissors and tape. The site is cleaned several times per week and the shelters are changed out two times per year.

The colony volunteers see to it that the cats get regular care from a veterinarian.

"Every cat in the colony has had a yearly rabies shot and other vet care is given at the same time," said Cain. "To my knowledge, only one cat was trapped due to having a wound which turned out to be chest cancer."

According to Cain, it can be difficult to trap a cat after the first time as they become "trap shy."

"Before I moved, all the cats had a three-year rabies shot which helped cut down on the necessity to trap," Cain said. "However, one cat has a skin issue and must be trapped on a yearly basis."

To Cain, the trappers are her heroes. "It takes nerves of steel or a very calm nature to be a trapper," she said. "It can also take a lot of time and effort due to special traps, conditions -- no food the day before so they are hungry, decent weather if possible, special smelly food, etc. -- and availability of caretakers to help. Usually, they need to spend the night in someone's



Mosby eats a meal under a shelter provided by volunteers in Arlandria.

home before going to the vet."

Word of mouth has allowed the group to expand its support base, both with volunteers and local businesses.

"One nearby business in particular has been outstanding in its support for the colony," Cain said. "They have allowed caretakers to set up tables to sell my artwork, talk with people about the cats and to collect donations. We have a large display board with pictures of the cats and the site, and pertinent information about feral or community cats"

Cain urges everyone to support organizations that care for feral colonies, particularly those that provide TNR services.

"The plight of feral and abandoned cats is of great concern to me," Cain said. "If a stray or abandoned cat is able to join a feral cat colony and they are not neutered, their offspring will grow up feral. But if their kittens are trapped early enough -- approximately 8-12 weeks old -- they can be socialized and adopted."

Since leaving the area, volunteer Ginny Richards has become the colony's lead organizer.

"There is so much good about what we do," said Richards. "The long-term faithfulness of our volunteers means that on any given day, there are cats who don't need to worry about how they are going to eat."

Donations to the Arlandria feral cat colony may be sent to Richards via her email: ginnyrmail@aol.com.



Mosby is one of several feral cats being cared for by volunteers in Arlandria.



Ginny Richards prepares food for the feral cat colony Feb. 22 in Arlandria.



Leo, rescued from King Street Cats in Alexandria, Va. now lives with Veronica Kresse and Brian Kimm of Potomac.



"The best things come in threes!" says Jo Echard of Alexandria.

Rotary



The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon, VA

The Mount Vernon Rotary Club is initiating the "You Make a Difference Award" to support community service by organizations in the Mount Vernon area.

Specifically, the purpose of the Mount Vernon Rotary "You Make A Difference" Award is to:

- 1) Recognize individuals and organizations who support service to others
 - 2) Support community service within the Mount Vernon area
- This local support is consistent with the Rotary International Motto: "Service Above Self."

A single award and associated grant of \$1000 will be presented once a year. The goal is to recognize a single individual who sustains community service and to contribute financial support to keep that service continuing.

Nominations will be accepted until noon on March 31, 2021. To receive a nomination form or more information, email rcmvva@gmail.com

Rotary is where neighbors, friends, and problem-solvers share ideas, join leaders, and take action to create lasting change. Visit www.rotary.org for more information.

The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon meets via Zoom on Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 7:30. To request an invitation link email mikej1013@verizon.net

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NEWS

Flying Squirrels, Our Nocturnal Neighbors

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Around dusk or dawn, high up in the tree canopy, keen observers might spot a scurry. What's a scurry? A scurry is a group of flying squirrels (*Glaucomys Volans*), nocturnal, arboreal mammals, one of the many fascinating facts that captivated 89 attendees at the Feb. 17 Zoom meeting of the Friends of Dyke Marsh.

Naturalist Kim Young, from Fairfax County Park Authority's Hidden Oaks Nature Center, told the group that flying squirrels, members of the rodent family, weigh around 2.5 ounces, about the same as a cellphone, and are eight inches long, with their tail being from a third to a half of that length. With gray-brown fur, they easily camouflage against tree trunks. They have a white belly and large eyes in proportion to their bodies. They can walk upside down and "stamp their feet in a war dance" if they sense a predator nearby, Young said.

Flying squirrels prefer heavy deciduous, forested areas for both food sources and sites for tree cavity nests. Trees like oaks and hickories with few owls provide good habitat, she said. Leave your tree snags, she advised, calling them "animal hotels."

Young also urged her audience to plant native plants and trees, keep cats indoors and provide roosting boxes.

These squirrels eat nuts in the fall and winter and store nuts in nests, cracks, cavities and tree forks, caches with up to 15,000 nuts in a season. A telltale sign of flying squirrels is the acorn debris they leave behind. Flying squirrels make a round oval hole in the acorn when they probe for nutmeat and beetle larvae, unlike other rodents that completely destroy acorns. "They make a smooth cut with no jagged edges," Young said. They are omnivores and also eat berries, insects, fungi, bird eggs, slugs, snails, carrion and tree sap. Their most common predators are owls, feral cats and hawks.

Flying squirrels likely have multiple mates and have two breeding seasons, January to April and June to August. The females, called does, are highly territorial and have two-three kits per litter. The males, called bucks, are derelict dads. They don't help raise the young.

"Flying"

So, do they fly? Technically, no,



PHOTOS BY ED EDER

A flying squirrel on a tree's bark at Dyke Marsh, showing how they camouflage on trees.



A flying squirrel looking out of a nest cavity.



PHOTO BY KIM YOUNG

Flying squirrel munching on peanuts in a roosting box in a Fairfax Station backyard.

Young clarified. They are expert gliders and use the membrane, the patagium, between their ribs and ankles that in effect forms a parachute. When they want to travel, using their powerful hind feet, they launch and spread this extendable cartilage. They can cover 150 feet in a single glide and one was documented doing a 250-foot glide, almost a football field length. Their flight is not powered flight, which involves flapping,

like that of birds, insects and bats. Their leaps can reach speeds up to 20 miles per hour.

Fame

Rocky, hero of the animated "Rocky and the Bullwinkle Show" (1959 to 1964), was a plucky flying squirrel. Richmond Virginia's minor league baseball team is called the Flying Squirrels. In a fans' contest, this intriguing little rodent beat out the Rock Hoppers, Rhinos, Flatheads and Hush Puppies. They will "soar back" and open the 2021 baseball season on May 4, say promoters.

"They're the cutest little mammal I've ever seen, charismatic," Young told the Dyke Marsh group. "They remind you of what an incredible world we have."

Seeing Flying Squirrels

Hidden Oaks Nature Center maintains several boxes for flying squirrels and plans several programs in March. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/hidden-oaks>.

The meeting was sponsored by the Friends of Dyke Marsh, www.fodm.org.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

CALENDAR

NOW THRU MARCH 29 (MONDAYS)

Yoga for Gardeners I. 9:30-10:30 a.m.
At Green Spring Gardens, 4603
Green Spring Road, Alexandria.
(Adults) This class features a
gentle introduction to the Vinyasa
method, which helps participants
increase the strength, flexibility
and endurance necessary for gar-
dening. \$129 per person for 11 ses-
sions. Class held indoors. Register
online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakers (code 6E6.JNLA)
or call Green Spring Gardens at
703-642-5173.

SATURDAYS THRU MARCH

Virtual Pure Barre. 1:30-2:30 p.m.
Virtual via Zoom. Pure Barre has
again partnered with the National
Landing BID to bring free virtual
classes to the community. Visit the
website: <https://nationallanding.org/do/virtual-pure-barre-in-tro-classes>

THURSDAYS THRU MARCH 11

Happy Hour Yoga. 5:30-6:30 p.m.
Virtual via WebEx. The National
Landing BID has partnered with
Erin Sonn, owner of eat.YOGA.
drink, to bring unique yoga expe-
riences to you virtually. This free,
hour-long class will have a differ-
ent theme and playlist each week
and requires registration. Visit the
website: <https://nationallanding.org/do/happy-hour-yoga>

NOW THRU MARCH 24

Wednesday Morning Study Group.
10:30-11:30 a.m. Via zoom. Fairling-
ton UMC 3900 King St., Alexandria.
Join in a nine-week study of Laudato
Si: Caring for Our Common Home,
the groundbreaking encyclical letter
by Pope Francis on climate issues and
a Christian faith-based response. Visit
the website: www.fairlingtonumc.org.

FEB. 1-25

Hunt for Washington. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
In Alexandria. A fun and challeng-
ing game to uncover clues about
Alexandria and George Washing-
ton. The Hunt, which should take
about 60-90 minutes to complete,
will take you to places in Old Town
Alexandria associated with the Gener-
al. Start by printing the Clue Sheet
at <http://washingtonbirthday.com/events-1>, and bring it with you
as you traverse the heart of Old
Town and then use your sleuthing
skills to find answers to the clues.
Submit your findings to
GWBirthdayEvents@gmail.com before
the end of the day on February 25.
George Washington himself announce
prize winners from a drawing of
correct clue sheets during the February
26 Webinar, "The Life of George
Washington in 4 Acts" (see www.washingtonbirthday.com). Visit the
website: www.washingtonbirthday.com.

FEB. 5-27

In the "After Edward Hopper: Themes
of Solitude and Isolation" exhibit,
artists present their interpretations
of what makes Hopper's imag-
ery quintessentially American:
perseverance, fortitude, diversity,
and an egalitarian spirit in spite
of adversity, impoverishment,
and social injustice. This exhibit
expresses the anthem of a new
dawn: still we rise as one, stronger
together. Runs February 5-27, 2021
at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704
Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria
VA. Details: www.DelRayArtisans.com.

[org/exhibits](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/exhibits)

FRIDAYS IN FEBRUARY

The Life of George Washington in
Four Acts. 7-8 p.m. Virtual. Join
George Washington every Friday
in February as he discusses his life
during various periods of his life
and engages the audience. Cost
is \$20 admission per event. Visit
WashingtonBirthday.com for the
full program. Tickets are available
at <https://shop.alexandriava.gov/Events.aspx>.

FEB. 24 TO MARCH 24

Forty+ Fire Pit Party. Virtual and
In-Person. Featuring: Chore-
ographer Jane Franklin. Dates:
Wednesday, weekly, Feb 24 - March
24; from 3 - 4 p.m. and Sunday,
March 21; from 4 - 8 p.m. Forty+
Projects celebrate the collective
creativity of people past the age of
40 resulting in unique collabora-
tion. Projects explore movement
and performance technique within
a creative premise. Forty+ will
meet weekly on Zoom with occa-
sional in-person, socially distanced
outdoor rehearsals at the film
locations. The Fire Pit Party is an
on-site filmed project in the Alcova
Heights neighborhood of Arlington
County. Dances will travel through
the neighborhood, from one fire pit
to the next, and involve partici-
pants of all ages. Tuition: \$100.
Visit <https://www.janefranklin.com/adult-dance/forty-plus> or call
703-933-1111.

THURSDAY/FEB. 25

RiverRenew Listening Session. 6-8
p.m. Virtual event. Discover how
AlexRenew is building for the
future of Alexandria's waterways
at a virtual Community Listening
Session. Learn more about River-
Renew and meet the design-build
team. Register in advance: [RiverRe-
new.com/listening-sessions](http://RiverRenew.com/listening-sessions)

THURSDAY/FEB. 25

Voices of Woodlawn: A Reckoning by
4 Poets of America's Slave-Hold-
ing Past. 12-1 p.m. Virtual event.
Hosted by the Woodlawn &
Pope-Leighey House, Alexandria.
In Voices of Woodlawn, four poets
give voice to the erased lives of the
enslaved at Woodlawn, a Fairfax,
Virginia former plantation that is
now a historic site. Maryland Poets
Diane Wilbon Parks, Patrick Wash-
ington, Sylvia Dianne "Ladi Di"
Beverly and Hiram Larew confront
the sadness, anger, injustice, and
confusion of such a past and its
haunting legacy. They are joined
by poet and harmonica player, Cliff
Bernier, in a powerful program of
witness. Visit the website: [http://
www.woodlawnpopeleighey.org/
voices-of-woodlawn](http://www.woodlawnpopeleighey.org/voices-of-woodlawn)

THURSDAY/FEB. 25

Breaking Down the Wall of Slavery at
Carlyle House. 7 p.m. Via Zoom.
Join Maddy McCoy of the Slavery
Inventory Database virtually for
a discussion on how the enslaved
individuals and families at Carlyle
House were identified. Maddy
will also discuss the importance of
identifying and telling a historic
site's full story. Tickets can be pur-
chased at [https://www.eventbrite.
com/e/breaking-down-the-wall-
of-slavery-at-carlyle-house-tick-
ets-139736187699](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/breaking-down-the-wall-of-slavery-at-carlyle-house-tickets-139736187699)

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 12

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Fairfax County's FY 2022 Budget Plan

Focuses resources in targeted areas.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**
THE CONNECTION

“What a difference a year makes,” said Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill

On Feb. 23, Hill presented his FY2022 Budget Plan to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. The fiscal year will run from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

The FY2022 Advertised Budget is not a done deal; it is the county executive's recommendation. The final FY2022 Adopted Budget will happen May 4 after what Chairman Jeff McKay called “robust conversations with the community in order to prioritize funding.”

Hill's proposed plan builds on the County's success to utilize federal stimulus funds, most notably the \$200.2 million CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund.

“I THINK IT'S CLEAR that we won't be able to do everything we want to, just like our residents and businesses can't in these unprecedented times,” said Chairman McKay. “And obviously, we wish that we had better certainty about what the year ahead is going to look like, but clearly, nobody does... It's prudent for us to plan for this year to continue to be spry and to be able to pivot and respond to what's happening just as we have done through this last year in a really successful way.”

Hill's recommendation includes reducing the Real Estate Tax rate by one cent, bringing the rate from \$1.15 to \$1.14 per \$100 of assessed value. In Hill's Message

How to Provide Input on the FY 2022 Budget

ADVERTISED
BUDGET PLAN

- To learn more about participating in the budget public hearings, call the Clerk to the Board's Office at (703) 324-3151 (TTY 711) or to access the form at:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form

- The public can send written testimony or communicate with the Clerk's Office by email at: clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov.
- Residents can also provide testimony by phone or submit video testimony. In-person testimony will not be allowed if the Board meetings are held virtually.
- The entire FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan and the FY 2022-FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program are available online at:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget

How to Provide Input on the FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan.

to the Chairman and Board, he said, “I recognize that many of our homeowners may be struggling. ... Fairfax County's unemployment rate stands at 4.4 percent – far greater than the 1.9 percent we saw one year ago.”

According to Hill, with the proposed reduction in the Real Estate Tax rate, additional revenue available to the County for FY 2022 is \$42.23 million – an increase of only 1.51 percent over the current FY 2021 estimate.

Highlighting other Advertised Budget areas, it recommends a \$20 million unappropriated reserve for economic recovery.

It includes an overall increase for County and Schools of only 0.55 percent, excluding reserves.

The plan provides a \$14.13 mil-



Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill

lion increase over FY2021 for School Operating, far short of the School Board's approved request on February 18 of \$104.40 million additional.

No funding is allocated for employee pay increases in FY22.

While the Budget does not make broad investments in pre-COVID goals proposed last year, resources are recommended to focus on more targeted areas. According to Hill,

they are “modest investments” in Board and community priorities, such as expanding funding for criminal justice programs and mental health and addiction treatment. Examples are public safety staffing, Diversion First, opioid

use prevention efforts, and environmental Initiatives. Previously approved initiatives, such as body-worn cameras and health department positions funded initially with stimulus funds, are proposed to include baseline funding. An increase of 109 positions is proposed primarily for the continuation of previous initiatives and new facilities.

Concurrent with the Budget's release, Hill made available a revised draft of the Countywide Strategic Plan at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan for consideration by the Board and our residents.

Looking ahead, the Board will advertise a tax rate at its March 9 meeting. Various district meetings will occur in February and March, and the Board will hold public hearings from April 13-15.

McKay said that for FY20 - 22, the County expected revenue loss to approach \$300 million to the General Fund. He said that while

Mount Vernon Budget Town Hall

Monday, March 1, 7 p.m.

Where: Live Virtually on Channel 16, the County's Livestream and Facebook

Program: County & Schools Budget Presentation & Audience Q&A's
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mount-vernon/mount-vernon-district-virtual-budget-town-meeting

appreciative of prior stimulus money and hoped additional stimulus money was on its way to the County, “hope is not really what you base a budget on; it's reality.”

Vice Chairman Penny Gross (D-Mason District) discussed non-residential real estate. The amount of empty office space increased to 18.5 million square feet out of 119.2 million square feet.

“It does tell me that we need to go gangbusters on our repurposing of vacant buildings,” Gross said.

Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D-Braddock) said that Fairfax County is one of the thousands of jurisdictions across the country that Congress members watch, which is why he appreciated the prudent proposal Hill released. “I think if we had a budget proposal that showed us with a lot of new spending initiatives or dramatic pay increases, it would have made our job more difficult as we're making the necessary case for additional federal support for state and local governments at this point.”

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said he hoped to see a “flat tax bill,” especially given the pandemic.”

I expect things, especially in the commercial real estate world, will probably get a lot worse next year. But this Budget still represents a 3.4% tax increase on our residents ... I believe we have a lot of work to do.”

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 11

SATURDAY/FEB. 27

Great Shrubs for Home Gardens. 10-11:30 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Horticulturalist Brenda Skarphol highlights beautiful flowering shrubs that grow well in Virginia home gardens. Get to know seasonal standouts for winter and spring. Learn the culture and care of these beauties and how to best showcase them in your garden. Dress for outdoors. \$18 per person. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes (code FD2.XS7M)

or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. This program is also available virtually (code 9NQ.75W8).

MARCH 1-29

“Storytelling in the Garden.” 9-9:45 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Bring a blanket or just settle in the grass and sit back with the family to hear the park's storytellers read a tale with a different theme at each meeting. Afterward, take some time to explore the park's gardens, ponds and historic house. The storytelling program is offered every other week in March,

on March 1, 15 and 29, 2021. It's designed for family members age 2 to adult. Cost is \$5 per person for each session. Parents and children must register to track registration numbers. Call 703-642-5173.

MARCH 5-27

In the “Give Me Shelter” art exhibit, local artists explore the meaning of the word “shelter” as a noun and verb. We all have learned what it means to shelter in place. The current crisis has nearly 40 million Americans at risk of homelessness. Seeking donations during this exhibit to benefit the Carpenter's Shelter. View exhibit at Del Ray Ar-

tisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Details: www.DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

MARCH 2, 6, 28

Family Hilltop Outing. At Historic Huntley, 6918 Harrison Lane, Alexandria. Parents and kids are invited to take a family-friendly tour of Historic Huntley on a “Family Hilltop Outing” on three days in March 2021. Learn what significance this villa had to one of our Founding Fathers. Challenge yourself using historical tools, such as ice tongs. See if you can master old-time children's games. The program at Historic Huntley is de-

signed for family members age 5 to adult. It runs from 3 to 4 p.m. on March 2, from 11 a.m. to noon on March 6, and from 1 to 2 p.m. on March 28. The cost is \$8 per person. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult. Call the park at 703-768-2525.

FRIDAY/MARCH 5

Nature Photography at Dawn. 6 to 8 a.m. At Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. In the “Nature Photography at Dawn” program,

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 13

OPINION

"My Journey To Becoming A Law"

FROM PAGE 6

would make the lives of Virginians (and Virginia's pollinators) better if I was made into a law. But, that's only the first half of my tenuous journey to becoming a law.

After passing the House, I went to the Senate committee on Agriculture. I underwent a further transformation there. I was previously a bill to be incorporated into the Virginia code, but the senators believed I should be amended to become a limited effect "Section 1" bill, which would not add me to the code. I was so disappointed. The poor bees would barely be protected at all.

From there, I went to the Senate floor, where I was "passed by for the day" on multiple days. It was looking grim indeed. But today the Senate rejected my committee substitute on the floor, and decided to accept a floor substitute that turns me into a study bill to improve communication between beekeepers and applicators to further reduce the risk to pollinators from neonicotinoid pesticides. After the Senate accepted my newest substitute, they all voted to pass me and send me on my merry way.

What happens next? I will go back to the House, where delegates will vote on the newly amended me. The patron, Delegate Krizek, can either ask the House to reject the Senate substitutes or accept them. If they are rejected by the House, I will be sent to a conference committee with a few legislators from both the House and Senate to decide on my best version. If I have survived this long, I'm sure I'll be able to meet Governor Northam soon and do my best to protect our pollinators.

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 12

learn how to use a DSLR and a tripod to capture images of the natural world early in the morning. See what wildlife is waking with the sun at Huntley Meadows Park and get tips on how to capture these magical moments. The class is designed for adult photographers with beginner to intermediate skill levels. Bring your own DSLR camera and bring a tripod if you have one. The cost is \$24 per person. Call 703-768-2525.

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Obituary

Obituary

Herbert Lain Holt

March 25, 1934 – February 13, 2021



It is with great joy for the long and wonderful life he lived that we announce the passing of Herbert Lain Holt (86) on Saturday, February 13, 2021, at sundown in Carlsbad, California. Still on his feet until just 8 days prior to his passing, Herbert long battled Parkinson's Disease and never once complained. Our hero drew his last breath peacefully at home, surrounded by loved ones. We could not have asked for more for our beloved husband, father, grandfather, uncle, coach and friend.

Herbert was born in 1934 to Otis Eldridge Holt and Martha Louise Holt (nee McDaniel) in Gibson County, Tennessee. A proud son of Trenton, Herbert attended Trenton Elementary and Middle School, and played quarterback and was captain of the football team for Peabody High School. During his high school tenure, Herb won the distinction of being voted football captain of the "Big Ten" on all ten western Tennessee high school coaches' ballots. In basketball, Herb served as captain of the junior varsity and varsity basketball teams. Aside from sports, Herb exhibited leadership as the senior class president. Herb also played baseball for the Humboldt Tennessee American Legion. Because of Herb's outstanding sports performances, he was honored in 2006 to be inducted into the Gibson County Sports Hall of Fame. Known as Ol' Twinkletoes, he was honored in 2020 to be inducted into the Peabody High School Football Hall of Fame.

Herb graduated high school in 1952, and attended Murray State University in Kentucky on a football scholarship where he played quarterback for the Racers and was co-captain of the team. He was the student body vice president and president of the Methodist Student Union. At Murray, Herb met the love of his life, Celia Maurelle Kirksey of Paducah, Kentucky, and they married over the winter break of their senior year in 1955. They recently celebrated 65 years of happily ever after.

After graduating from Murray State in 1957, Herb then earned his Master's Degree in Secondary Education Administration over the summers while he worked as head football coach and head basketball coach for three years in McKenzie, Tennessee. Herb then accepted an offer to teach and coach in Alexandria, Northern Virginia. In Alexandria, Coach Holt drew out the best from students and players and touched the lives and hearts of hundreds of students and their parents for 40 years. Herb taught physical education and English at Francis C. Hammond High School in Alexandria, where he was also the assistant football coach and the junior varsity baseball coach. When T.C. Williams high school opened, he served as head football coach, and the junior varsity baseball coach. After three years, Herb was appointed athletic director, and later became assistant principal. Coach Holt was at T.C. Williams High School fostering goodness during the time of the story "Remember the Titans." Coach Holt also will be remembered for his dedication to students at George Washington Middle School. Upon retirement from T.C. Williams in 1997, he was named "MacDaddy of the Senior Class" by the seniors.

Herb and Maurelle raised their son and daughter in Springfield and West Springfield, Virginia. Herb continued to coach kids' baseball after retirement for the Springfield Babe Ruth League. He proudly served as the Membership Chairman, Vice President and President of the Northern Virginia Athletic Directors, Administrators, and Coaches Association (NVADACA).

A natural at sports, he turned his love of sports toward golf and enjoyed golf outings and trips with his son and friends. Herb never once met a stranger and was known for his get-up-and-go, tenacity and his fun-loving spirit. Genuinely interested in people, Herb never missed an opportunity to help someone or bring out the best in them, whether a family in need, or a kindred spirit hitchhiking a country lane. Herb also saved more than a few lives as a lifeguard on Kentucky Lake in his youth. He loved country music and dancing, and became a square dance caller in the 1970s. He gave his family lots of swim and beach days with bonfires and stories, trips to music festivals and county fairs, football and basketball games, amusement parks, long country drives and especially family and friends. He loved bluegrass, spaghetti Westerns, Burt Reynolds comedies, ice cream, and U.S. historical fiction novels in no particular order. He was cool, calm and collected and supported and loved us dearly, always encouraging our independence and best selves while also being available to catch us should we fall. Herb and Maurelle moved to Carlsbad, California to be with daughter and family and were able to enjoy lots of family celebrations together.

Predeceased by his parents and sister Charlotte Brown (Memphis, TN), Herbert is survived by his wife Celia Maurelle Holt, son John Lain Holt and daughter-in-law Martee Holt of Greensboro, NC, grandchildren Lauren Maurelle Holt (currently Poulsbo, WA, engaged to Darrin Cripe) and Alexander Lain Holt of Charlotte, NC, (engaged to Claire Kane); daughter Kristen Walker, son-in-law Justin D. Walker of Carlsbad, CA, and grandchildren Scarlett, Stella, Katherine and Audrey Walker; nephews Mike Brown (Carla), Pat Brown (Bethany) and Tim Brown; the late John David Kirksey (brother-in-law), sister-in-law Alice Kirksey, niece Diane De La O, nephews Samuel Kirksey (Olga), and Matthew Kirksey, extended family and countless friends. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him and we are sure that over his 40 working years as tireless coach and teacher there will be many other stories to be shared about his kindness, support and generous spirit. Herbert made a difference in many lives and heaven is a better place for calling him home.

A celebration of life will be held when people can safely gather. Please sign the guest book and leave comments at www.accucarecremation.com/obituary. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to a scholarship fund in Herb's name for young college-bound athletes at Northern Virginia Athletic Directors, Administrators, and Coaches Association (NVADACA) at www.nvadaca.org or P.O. Box 305, Burke, VA 22009.

The family wishes to thank his amazing caregiver, Sandy S.

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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

Not That I Don't Understand But ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... So this is what the process is like trying to schedule a covid-19 vaccination. If you're lucky though, you receive an email reminder - since you've pre-registered, advising you that the time to strike is now. You click on the link, and as I'm witnessing, you wait your turn. The site says there's "High Traffic," and they'll be with you momentarily. There's no calling. There's barely any responding. There's simply sitting and staring - and waiting. There's no indication of how long you'll be waiting. There's no guarantee that the site will even open. There's only instructions to refresh your computer every 30 seconds in the hopes that an interactive-type page will appear and you'll have reached the promised land: the page where you can actually schedule an appointment.

However, as I'm sitting and waiting, I'm getting frustrated. I seem to be getting nowhere, slowly. Though I'm refreshing as directed, nothing is changing on the screen I'm staring at. I've linked but nothing is really linking. So I keep repeating myself: stare, refresh, wait; stare, refresh, wait. It's a loop of nothingness. It seems an endless pursuit. It's almost like whack-a-mole, except in your attempts to get connected, the process is excruciatingly slow and there's nothing to whack. (At least it hasn't cost me anything, other than time, that is.)

I realize that the demand is way more than supply and according to experts, it won't be until June/July when "anyone who wants to get a shot will be able to get one." Nevertheless, I would have thought, given my comorbidity: cancer and age 66, that I'd be closer to the top than the bottom. Not that I'm particularly anxious about my circumstances, but my wife Dina is very concerned about them. (I'm staring steady at the site where this column began. As yet, despite my rigorous refreshing, I still haven't passed "Go.")

I understand that patience is a virtue. But today, while staring at and refreshing this site and seeing no sign of life as we know it, I am testing that virtue beyond its stress points. This process reminds of the days of buying concert tickets online. It was nearly impossible - for a popular show, to break through the internet logjam. That is not until you received a message that all the tickets had been sold. How people ever got through, I'll never know. It was always befuddling to me.

I know however, with respect to concerts, sporting events and the like, there would be a secondary/aftermarket availability. I knew an alternative existed. I also knew the cost would be black market-ish, somewhat over the original retail. Unfortunately, or fortunately, public health solutions cannot be left to the market. In its effort not to discriminate and be fair to all recipients, we're stuck with the present communication and distribution system.

Having endured these kinds of pursuits before when calling the IRS, Social Security, Medicare and The Veterans Administration, et cetera, I know a few precautions one should take before attempting to climb these mountains. First, clear your schedule. Next, go to the bathroom. Then, go to the kitchen and get some refreshments. Find someplace comfortable and cozy from which to call; you need to be prepared for the long haul. And finally, should another call come in while you're on hold, do not risk your spot in line by clicking on your call-waiting. Technology can sometimes break your spirit.

My wait is over. The site was just refreshed. It says the center is closed. Perfect timing. I just finished the column.

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

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ENTERTAINMENT

4 Black-Owned Eateries To Add to Your Feast

By HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET



Let's get one thing out of the way up front: There are many, many more Black-owned restaurants, cafes and eateries in and around Alexandria than this humble column can contain. So consider this an appetizer - or perhaps a buffet - of options to support those Black-owned businesses that feed the community (and caffeinate us, too).

Haute Dogs and Fries, 610 Montgomery St.

Don't be fooled by Haute Dogs' casual ambiance - they're serving up plenty of upscale hot dogs, sausages, burgers and more. Choose between an all-beef, veggie or chicken dog and then find that the sky's the limit: From a classic "House" dog to a banh mi-inspired concoction, a buffalo dog, a "Three-Piece Suit" and more, Haute Dogs and Fries runs the gamut. Be sure to order the signature fries, yes, but don't sleep on the onion rings, which are also top-notch.

From a classic "House" dog to a banh mi-inspired concoction, a buffalo dog, a "Three-Piece Suit" and more, Haute Dogs and Fries runs the gamut.



Magnolia's On King, 703 King St.

Maybe you were introduced to Magnolia's from its recent Restaurant Week menu, or maybe you've been a longtime fan. Or maybe you haven't heard of them at all - which would be a shame. Chef Leonard Holton's menu is a diverse feast of Southern-inspired cuisine. Deviled eggs. Po' boy shrimp sliders. Pulled pork sandwiches. And plant-based diners won't be left out, either; Holton has dedicated a slice of the menu to vegetarian fare, ranging from "sausage" and peppers to "bacon" carbonara.

Hawwi Ethiopian, 1125 Queen St.

Tucked away in an unassuming corner spot on Queen Street, Hawwi has consistently dished out fine Ethiopian fare to the community, even in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. From flaky sambusas to start the meal to a plethora of meat and vegetarian main course options, Hawwi is certainly comfort food personified. Pro tip: The com-

bo specials are the way to get the most options for your dinner table. With the likes of doro wat, beef alicha and vegetables for the carnivorous options and a vegan sampler for those plant-based customers, Hawwi's extensive menu makes it easy to make the right choice. (And when ordering takeout or delivery, don't be worried about how well the food will travel. Ethiopian fare is hardy.)

Abyssinia Market and Coffee House, 720 Jefferson St.

The little coffee shop just a half-block off of Washington Street has been a stalwart throughout the pandemic, offering up comfort in a cup (or bag of beans) to neighbors. From its vast array of Ethiopian coffee to a selection of beer and wine to daily pastries and other noshable items, Abyssinia Market has become a neighborhood staple, a constant in challenging times.

Hope Nelson is the author of "Classic Restaurants of Alexandria" and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

Join at any time. Visit the website: www.fairlingtonumc.org

FEMA FLOOD MAP UPDATE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is updating its flood maps of Alexandria and has requested that the City of Alexandria provide community outreach assistance. The City will host a virtual open house on March 1, from 7 to 8 p.m. Residents and businesses are encouraged to participate to learn more about the update to the floodplain maps. Visit alexandriava.gov/Flood-Map for information about the floodplain map update process and potential impacts to

existing and proposed redevelopment.

NARFE MEETING MARCH 3

The next NARFE Chapter 1159 meeting will be held Wednesday, March 3 at 10 a.m. via Zoom. NARFE means National Active and Retired Federal Employees. It is the association for federal employees and retirees. This chapter serves Alexandria, Annandale, Springfield, Falls Church. They will have Cherie Lejeune presenting a program on making your smartphone or tablet work for you. To attend, contact Doug Jones at: doujones500@verizon.net or 703-425-3361 to receive your Zoom invitation and passcode.

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