

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 4, 2021

River Farm Offer Falls Short of Asking Price

NOVA Parks and partners made an offer but the farm remains on the market.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

In an attempt to keep the property open to the public, the NOVA Parks, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and their partners recently made an offer to buy River Farm in Mount Vernon, but the American Horticultural Society board of directors has voted to decline their offer, looking for their original asking price of \$32,900,000 that they say they need to keep the society in operation.

"We deeply appreciate the interest of NOVA Parks in River Farm and their proposal to purchase an option on the property, which if exercised, would involve payments to AHS over several years. We deliberated carefully over the proposal and its terms and concluded that their offer as currently written simply does not meet AHS's needs. So, with thanks to them for their interest, the board declined the offer," noted AHS Board Chair Terry Hayes.

Paul Gilbert, the executive director of NOVA Parks, said their offer was "based on the appraised value," and noted that the \$32 million price is an unsupported value constructed on "completely unrealistic expectations," he said.

Officially Speaking

Locally, elected officials have supported the purchase of the farm to keep it undeveloped. Earlier this month, Senator Adam Ebbin (D-Alexandria) and Delegate Paul Krizek (D-Mount Vernon) were behind a successful effort by both the Virginia Senate Finance and Appropriations and House Appropriations Committees to come up with the money. This included \$2 million in fund-



A Board of Supervisors hearing is scheduled for later in March.

ing to preserve River Farm in its proposed budget, and another \$5 million in combined funding for the preservation of both historic Chickahominy tribal lands and River Farm.

Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck (D) is anxious to preserve the farm too. "While disappointing, AHS' decision is unsurprising," Storck said. "We all remain committed to working with AHS to find a way to preserve this beautiful place of history nestled within the Mount Vernon community. I, personally, see this as part of the process you would find with any real estate sale. I remain hopeful that the AHS Board will sup-



The riverfront location could make River Farm's property attractive to a developer to subdivide and build expensive homes.

port the criticality of preserving this historic property for the public and future generations. We know this commitment has been a long-standing mission of the AHS Board and its members," Storck said.

The AHS Board says they will continue to

review and consider offers and would prefer that the buyer of the property would maintain it for single use and not subdivide it, continuing to allow the public to access the property as much as possible. "The Board

SEE RIVER FARM, ON PAGE 10



The mansion is a highlight of the farm.



Vice President Kamala Harris visited Fibre Space, a woman-owned small business in Alexandria on Wednesday, March 3, to talk about passing the American Rescue Plan, getting the pandemic under control, getting relief to those who need it, and supporting women in the workforce. "Greetings from Alexandria, VA where the @VP is visiting Fibre Space, a beautiful woman-owned small business, to hear how they are managing to get through the pandemic," said Peter Velz, press operations director for the Vice President, in a tweet.

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Old Town | \$2,985,000

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High Time? Advocates call on the governor to legalize marijuana as soon as possible.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

The debate over legalizing marijuana is about to light up, putting Gov. Ralph Northam at the center of a budding controversy. At issue is a question of timing. Should he agree with lawmakers that legalization should wait until New Year's Day 2024, giving the commonwealth enough time to stand up the new Cannabis Control Authority? Or should he amend the bill the General Assembly put on his desk to legalize weed now to prevent communities of color from being overpoliced in the interim?

"The governor has been talking about reparative justice for the communities and individuals harmed by the war on drugs and racially biased policing," said Ashna Khanna, legislative director for the ACLU of Virginia. "A way to make that lip service reality would be to enact these changes now and stopping the harm of marijuana prohibition."

Last weekend, lawmakers emerged from a closed-door conference committee with a compromise bill that has angered many of the governor's allies. Crafted in secret, the conference report put legalization on hold until a new regulatory agency can be created and commercial licenses issued. Advocates have been calling on lawmakers to separate the date of legalized possession and the start of commercial sales, but lawmakers who were part of the conference committee disagreed.

"There's no legal marketplace. It would just be the illicit market," said state Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30). "We want to create a marketplace that has products that have been tested and not have additives and make sure that the people we're selling to have been ID'd to make sure they're 21 and older."

THE ALEXANDRIA DELEGATION is at the center of the debate. The two lawmakers leading the secret talks over the weekend were Ebbin of Alexandria and House Majority Leader Charniele Herring, who also represents Alexandria. Members of the conference committee determined that the best course of action would be for marijuana to remain illegal for now, still subject to civil fines and penalties. They



Gov. Ralph Northam during a visit to Alexandria in August 2019.

also slapped a re-enactment clause of the regulatory parts of the bill, forcing lawmakers to consider

"This is better than nothing at all. What's not progressive is to sit on our hands and do nothing."

— House Majority Leader Charniele Herring

that aspect of the legislation again when they meet next year.

"This is better than nothing at all. What's not progressive is to sit on our hands and do nothing," said Herring, who introduced the decriminalization bill last year. "At least we have a date in stone. At least we are standing up the authority and starting to promulgate regulations, and so it is a product that we can work with."

Advocates say the final few days of secret negotiations were rough, and the process was in danger of collapsing at several points. So the fact that lawmakers put something — anything — on the governor's desk this year is a victory of sorts. As governor, Northam has the power to amend the bill almost

any way he sees fit, and he has until the end of this month to take action. That means he's now being lobbied heavily by advocates for criminal justice reform to legalize marijuana as soon as possible instead of waiting for the business dynamics to materialize.

"I'm extremely disappointed that we legislated business before justice," said Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice Virginia. "The governor said that this bill was supposed to prioritize racial equity but it's clear that it only prioritized a cannabis profit industry."

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY session began with Northam calling on lawmakers to legalize marijuana, building on momentum from the

decriminalization bill he signed into law last year. During his State of the Commonwealth address, the governor framed the move as an acknowledgement that Virginia's criminal justice system treats people unfairly. He used his speech to spotlight some statistics showing Black people are three and a half times more likely to be charged with marijuana crimes and four times as likely to be convicted.

"It's time to join 16 other states and make marijuana legal, and end the current system rooted in inequality," said Northam in a speech delivered in a House chamber that was mostly empty because of pandemic precautions. "We've done the research, and we can do this right away, leading with social equity, public health and public safety."

But the legislation the governor

sent to Ebbin and Herring did not call for action right away. Instead, the governor's timeline called for legalization to wait until commercial sales begin. Advocates who worked with lawmakers during the tense negotiations said the governor's office maintained that position throughout the process, leading to an end result that delays legalization until New Year's Day 2024. That means that the governor is now hearing from people urging him to change his position on the timing of legalization.

"He certainly does have the power to make that or any other recommended amendments, however the administration is the most ardent supporter of keeping those two dates connected," said Jenn Michelle Pedini, executive director of Virginia NORML. "The date of legalization, meaning personal possession and personal cultivation, need not be tied to the date or retail sales. That's been our position throughout, and that's still our position today."

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/GAZETTE PACKET

CRIME STATISTICS show worries about disproportionate policing is not an academic concern. According to the Alexandria Police Department, 64 percent of people arrested in Alexandria for drug arrests in 2019 were African American. Almost half of those arrests were Black males. Despite comparable usage rates, Black people are 3.4 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession, according to a recent report from the American Civil Liberties Union, which also found that arrests for possession of marijuana make up about 52 percent of drug arrests.

"Even the thought of business before justice is hard to stomach," said Del. Cia Price (D-95). "Some of my constituents are in jail right now and more may be sent to jail while we are establishing a regulatory authority for the business pieces."

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.

Budget Passed

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

The 2021 session of the Virginia General Assembly came to a close on Monday, March 1st, which really concluded with a long twelve hours on the floor Saturday that included the final passage of the Budget bill, and tax conformity legislation that set a critical \$100,000 threshold for PPP expense deductibility for 2020 for all businesses in the Commonwealth.

The budget was not just one of our final bills passed, but one I played a significant role in as we wrapped up this special session. The budget allocates state funding to our legislative priorities, maintains our AAA bond rating, and promotes fiscal responsibility by adding an additional \$250 million to our Revenue Reserve Fund — to help rebuild our economy and put our Commonwealth on a path to come back from this pandemic better than before. In my position as one of the seven Subcommittee Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee, I was instrumental in the passage of many important amendments to the budget, and in

assisting my colleagues in getting their critical budgetary priorities included in our final product.

COVID

The budget employs new and existing federal dollars to address critical needs such as COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, and disease surveillance and investigation. \$89.3 million non general funds (NGF) over the biennium is allocated for mass vaccination efforts, maximizing new federal dollars. It provides \$6.1 million GF and \$40.9 million in new federal funds for state agencies to support disease surveillance and investigation, testing, and contact tracing. The new funding supports 47 epidemiologists and communicable disease nurses across the Commonwealth's 35 local health districts and 3.5 program managers in the central office.

Education

This budget has a big focus on education, adding \$466.8 million for education over the biennium, restoring over 95% of funding re-



Krizek

monies in FY 2021 to support local efforts to address COVID-19 learning loss. These funds may be used for extending the school year, summer school, tutoring, remediation and recovery, counseling and student supports, and certain facility modifications. This also permits school divisions to carryover funds from FY 2021 to 2022, with no local match required.

\$26.6 million will fund additional school counselors bringing our counselor to student ratio to 325:1. \$49.5 million provides for funding three specialized student support positions per 1,000 students, including school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, and behavioral analysts. \$62.1 million will be used to temporarily expand family eligibility for the child care subsidy program to assist families affected by the pandemic.

moved since the onset of the pandemic. These funds are critical as students and teachers begin returning to in-person learning.

Initiatives include learning loss supplemental payments, which provide \$40 million GF

Compensation

Within our final budget, we have included a much-needed 5% salary increase for state employees and state supported local employees, which includes teachers and law enforcement officers. Correctional officers will receive a \$1,000 bonus, and our state police will receive an additional 3% salary increase plus an additional \$100 per year of service to address salary compression.

Unemployment

The budget contains \$18.9 million in one-time funding for the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) to forgive no-fault overpayments of unemployment insurance benefits. Many unemployment claimants around the Commonwealth, some my own constituents, have experienced receiving invoices from the VEC to return money paid out to them due to clerical errors, so this change was critically necessary. Skilled game revenue from this year will add \$25 million to the Rebuild Virginia program, bringing total support for the small business assistance fund to \$145 million. But come July 1st,

SEE BUDGET PASSED, PAGE 5

Enormous number of measures baked into budget to address critical needs in an unprecedented year.

Marijuana Legalization Can Reduce School Inequity

BY ROB KRUPICKA

Marijuana legalization, which was just passed by the General Assembly, presents a rare opportunity for society to right decades of wrongs. When Governor Northam proposed legalization he included a bold idea to fix generations of inequity in the Commonwealth by requiring that forty percent of the tax revenues be used to fund Virginia's popular, but underfunded early childhood education system.

As a former legislator, member of the state board of education and local official, I know all too well that economically disadvantaged children are more likely to show up to kindergarten underprepared for school. New data from the University of Virginia tells us how much of a challenge this is.

In northern Virginia, as many as 49% of Alexandria kids, 31% of Arlington kids, 46% of Fairfax, 33% of Loudoun and 44% of Prince William County kids all show up to kindergarten unprepared for success.

Outside of Northern Virginia the numbers are similar, rising up to 59% of Richmond City kids

and 66% of Northampton kids not being ready. The state average is a depressing 44%. We also know that a disproportionate number of economically disadvantaged families come from black and brown communities.

These children all lack key literacy, math, and social skills to excel in school. They are at a considerable disadvantage to their peers from more well-off families. No child's potential for success should be governed by their economic status. Yet, strikingly, there are over 20,000 young children and families who need support to enter school with all the tools they need to learn.

Young children of economically disadvantaged households carry their lack of kindergarten readiness throughout their school careers perpetuating a cycle of inequity and academic set-backs that continue to plague our economy and society.

With legalization slated to start in 2024, the new market for marijuana is slated to provide the funds that can help right the wrong of systematic school readiness failures. For years voters in Virginia have told pollsters that they agree

we need high quality early childhood education. The political challenge has always been how do we pay for it. Well, once the marketplace is established, we will have a way.

Thanks to Governor Northam's leadership, legalization comes with a potent policy answer to one of the most glaring areas of injustice in our education system. Patroned by Senators Lucas and Ebbin as well as Delegates Herring and Scott, SB1406/HB2312 pro-

vides a framework for legalization. Now that the bill has been sent to the governor to amend or sign, the question is not whether we will ever legalize in Virginia, the question is whether we will do it soon enough to change the academic trajectory of babies being born right now.

Rob Krupicka is former Virginia State Delegate, Virginia Board of Education Member and Alexandria City Councilman

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Jeanne Theismann
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com
TheismannMedia

Marcia Hobson
Community Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon
Contributing Writer
msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

Helen Walutes
Display Advertising, 703-778-9410
hwalutes@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment
Advertising
703-778-9431

Publisher
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
[@MaryKimm](http://MaryKimm)

Art/Design:
Laurence Foong, John Heinly,
Ali Khaligh
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

A Connection Newspaper



Budget Passed

FROM PAGE 4

those skill game machines will be illegal and need to be removed from all public locations, mostly found in restaurants, convenience stores, and truck stops.

Elections

The budget authorizes the Department of Elections (ELECT) to use about \$1 million in remaining funds appropriated during Special Session I, 2020 General Assembly for the reimbursement of postage on absentee ballots. It also adds language to extend absentee voting-related policies, such as ballot drop boxes and my initiative for prepaid postage on the return of absentee ballots until new laws formally codifying these changes take effect on July 1, 2021. Language is also included to create uniformity in collecting petition signatures for state and local offices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$300,000 is included in FY 2022 for ELECT to educate voters on changes made to election law in the 2020 and 2021 General Assembly Sessions.

Healthcare

The budget adds \$129.9 mil-

lion in state and federal funds to increase Medicaid personal care rates. It also provides \$6.9 million in state and federal funds in FY 2022 for up to 40 hours paid sick leave for personal care attendants. \$93.4 million in state and federal funds to provide a \$15/day add-on payment for Medicaid nursing home patients, including \$4.4 million GF in FY 2022 to increase the Auxiliary Grant rate by 10 percent to support individuals in assisted living facilities. 435 Developmental Disability waiver slots will be added, bringing the total to 985 slots in FY 2022, with the goal of eliminating the waiver slot waiting list in coming years.

Locally, we were able to include \$5 million for the National Museum of the United States Army; and, provide \$200,000 to the Lorton Community Action Center; \$500,000 to United Community; \$200,000 to Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services; \$250,000 to FACETS; \$200,000 to Koinonia; and \$200,000 to BritePaths in FY 2022 from the TANF block grant to provide services to low-income families in Northern Virginia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also, our efforts resulted in \$2 million towards the purchase of River Farm, and \$1.5 million for Mason Neck Park's drinking water supply. My amendment of \$1 million will increase enforcement of unlawful direct shipment of alcoholic beverages into Virginia to curb the negative effects of unlicensed alcohol shipments on lawful Virginia businesses and allow Virginia to recoup lost tax revenue from these products. Also, included was my amendment for funding for the Department of Environmental Quality to test the effectiveness of certain plants to remove road salt from impervious surface stormwater runoff, and money for DMAS to convene a workgroup to develop strategies to finance health care services for undocumented immigrant children to ensure that all children living in the Commonwealth have access to quality healthcare. And, I was able to help secure an additional \$10 million towards NoVA localities' FY22 obligation to WMATA's capital and operating programs to ensure that public transit keeps Northern Virginia moving.

It was a busy session!



Rex Reiley
RE/MAX Allegiance
703-768-7730
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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



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Alex/Hybla Valley Farm \$614,900
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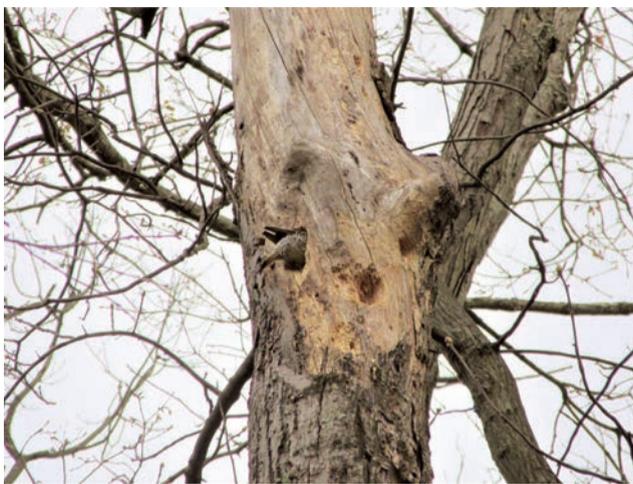
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- Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce
- Springfield Chamber of Commerce
- Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance
- Prince William Chamber of Commerce
- Northern Virginia Building Industry Association
- Apartment and Office Building Association
- Virginia Self Storage Association
- Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association
- And many more...





Fungi on dead snag and two holes drilled by a bird.



Northern flicker excavating a hole in a dead snag.



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

The Value of Dead Wood

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Tree snags are “a gourmet restaurant,” that is, from a bird’s perspective, Larry Cartwright told a group of Northern Virginia Audubon at Home ambassadors on Feb. 20 in a Zoom meeting.

He encouraged attendees to leave dead trees and limbs in place to decompose if they do not pose a danger. A snag is a standing dead or partially-dead tree. Cartwright conducts bird surveys for several organizations, including the Dyke Marsh breeding bird survey, for at least 27 years.

Some birds use dead snags during their decomposition to excavate holes, to find and store food like fungi, insects and mosses, and to nest and raise their young. Woodpeckers are expert excavators with specially built beaks to ratatat into wood and create holes. Among bird species, 85 use snags and cavities and 25 of those are in Northern Virginia. Other wildlife like flying squirrels, raccoons and big brown bats use cavities as well. Cornell University’s ornithology lab calls snags “nature’s apartment complexes.”

Cartwright told the group that the ideal snag height is eight to ten feet and the ideal circumference at least eight inches. He also advised people to let stumps remain for birds like woodpeckers and flickers.

Cartwright told the group that the ideal snag height is eight to ten feet and the ideal circumference at least eight inches. He also advised people to let stumps remain for birds like woodpeckers and flickers.

Cavity Nesters

There are two types of cavi-

ty-nesting birds, primary and secondary, Cartwright explained. The primary nesters excavate their own cavities, like the pileated, red-bellied, hairy and downy woodpeckers.

Carolina chickadees can excavate a cavity if the wood is rotted enough. White-breasted nuthatches can enlarge existing holes.

The secondary cavity-nesting birds do not excavate their own cavities but use those created by broken off limbs or drilled by woodpeckers, for example, great-crested flycatchers, bluebirds, wood ducks,

hooded mergansers, barred owls and screech owls. In wetlands like Dyke Marsh, prothonotary warblers use cavities as small as six inches.

Dead Wood Is Habitat

Dead wood, whether it’s stumps, logs, twigs or snags, is a natural occurrence, part of nature’s cycle. Fungi help break down dead wood’s organic remains. Dead wood

decomposes and eventually works its way back into the soil, enriching it and aiding plants’ growth.

Wildlife use dead tree limbs and snags for nesting, roosting, foraging, perching and territorial displays. Dead trees provide habitat for over 1,000 species of wildlife says the National Wildlife Federation.

Fallen logs provide microclimates for microscopic critters; insect eggs and larvae; birds, amphibians and more.

Small mammals like chipmunks, squirrels and moles use logs as



Fungi on a dead tree.



Snag with cavities.

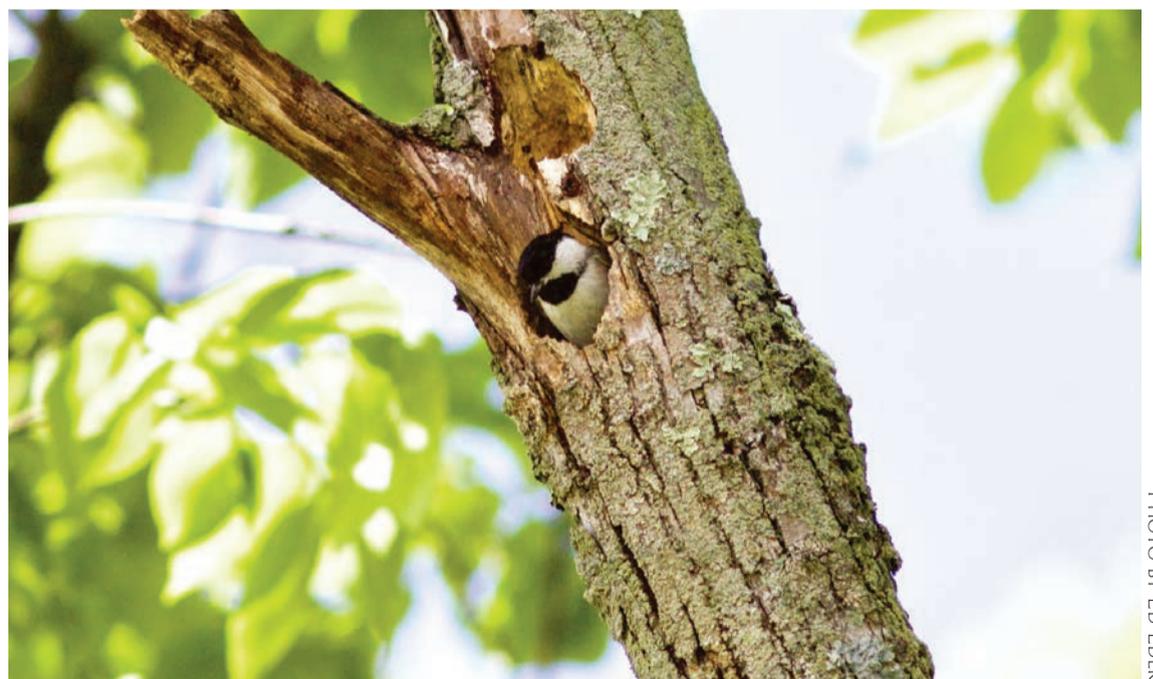


PHOTO BY ED EDER

Ed Eder took this photo of a Carolina Chickadee at the nest cavity entrance during the 2020 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey.

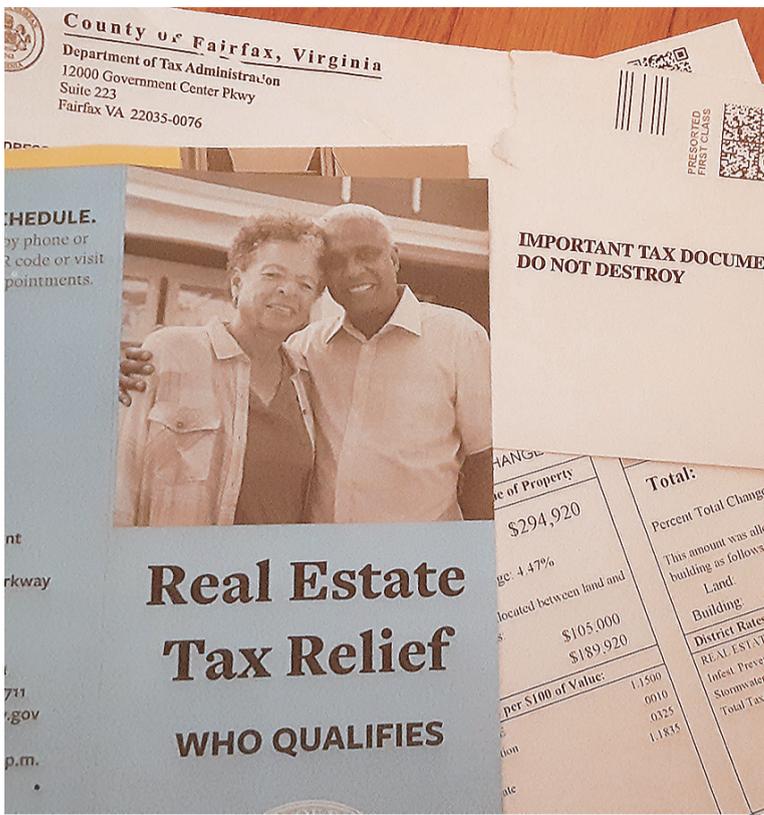
runways and lookouts. Salamanders use downed logs as cover from predators and to escape summer’s sun.

Insects overwinter in snags’ decomposing wood or gaps between loose bark.

Butterflies like the mourning cloak question mark and comma and wood-boring beetles spend the winter inside dead wood. Woodpeckers feast on termites and carpenter ants in dead wood.

Mike Roberts wrote in Virginia

Wildlife magazine, “Something as simple as an old, dead tree can teach us a valuable lesson or two about our wonderful natural environment; indeed, there is much more to recycling than paper and plastic.”



Pieces of mail all homeowners around the county have received in the past weeks.

Housing Values Increase and This Will Soon Be Felt in Tax Bills

The county juggles the tax rate, but higher tax bills are on the horizon.

By MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Despite the impact of job losses, deaths and sickness that swept over the nation over the last year, the housing values in Fairfax County have increased, and this will trickle down to the taxes paid by homeowners, including seniors that live on a fixed income.

The tax rate proposed by County Executive Bryan Hill is reduced from last year, but the average homeowner would still pay more because of increased home values. The Board of Supervisors won't advertise a tax rate until March 9.

According to the county, residential real estate assessments are up an average of 4.25 percent countywide and about 88 percent of homeowners saw an increase in their home's value. The county says these are market-driven increases or decreases to values. Only 4.4 percent saw a decrease in value, and assessments are unchanged for the remaining 7.6 percent. This year the average assessment for all homes is \$607,752, compared to \$582,976 in 2020.

The southern part of Fairfax County saw the biggest assessment increases. Houses in Lee District went up the most at 6.32 percent followed by Braddock at 6.06 percent, and Mount Vernon at 5.29 percent. In the Sully District, val-

ues raised 4.6 percent, while in the Providence District there is a 3.91 percent increase, followed by a 3.67 percent increase in Hunter Mill, 2.53 percent in Dranesville and 5.3 percent in Mason.

THE ASSESSMENTS are based on the market value, and the county assesses all properties on an annual basis, using sales records as one way to determine a property's value. If the market is hot, the housing prices go up, and eventually the taxes paid go up. According to the county, an annual real estate assessment of all real estate property ensures that they are uniformly and fairly assessing properties at their fair market value.

For example, the seniors that have paid off their mortgage will simply write a bigger check this summer when the county tax bill is due. Others who pay their county taxes as part of the escrow account will pay an increased monthly mortgage bill for 2022.

In Springfield, where the increase in housing values rose 4.89 percent, Supervisor Pat Herrity is not satisfied with the taxpayers increase at this time. The advertised county budget increase for fiscal 2022 includes a 3.4 percent increase in the tax on homeowners. "This year's advertised budget continues to raise taxes on home-

SEE HOME, PAGE 10

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Plant-Based Cottage Bakery Coming to Del Ray

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Ah, the smell of pastries – there’s really nothing like it. Soon, Del Ray residents and visitors will be able to follow their noses to a new place for flaky croissants and more: Le Petit Grump.

The cottage bakery is starting small – really small, in fact. Owner Mel Gumina’s 437-square-foot

APPETITE home in Del Ray is the place where the magic has been happening for months as Gumina perfects her pastries in anticipation of a springtime opening.

“Food has always been a passion of mine,” Gumina said. “I love how it brings people together.”

Another notable facet of the bakery? It’s all plant-based. That’s right: No dairy, eggs or other animal products will be used in the food, broadening the menu to an even wider swath of customers.

The idea for a bakery came to Gumina well after she’d transitioned to a plant-based lifestyle. Rich baked sweets were a category of food she missed when she transitioned her diet, and she wants to



bring that back to the community in a big way.

“When I walk into a bakery to maybe buy a loaf of bread, it’s the pastries -- the smell -- that gets you, takes you to a place of breakfast and cappuccino on a porch on a sunny day,” she said.

A graduate of culinary school, Gumina’s dreams of opening a bakery became closer to reality once she realized that “cottage businesses” – that is, businesses run without a public storefront – were a perfectly viable way of operation.

“Eating the food that was put out there by other plant-based cottage businesses showed me that it is more doable than I thought,” she said, noting that other vegan restaurants and eateries have been



Mel Gumina and Marcus.

incredibly generous with their time and expertise to help get Le Petit Grump up and running.

“This is not something that has been in the works for years and years,” she said. “The idea came to me one day, and I just had this really good feeling about it and I ran with it.”

And the region’s vegan and vegetarian circles are abuzz with excitement about the bakery’s prog-

ress – and opening.

“I was really fortunate for the outpouring of love I’ve received from the vegan community,” she said.

And about the bakery’s name, Le Petit Grump: It’s a reference to Marcus, Gumina’s 12-year-old pup.

“He is the most lovable little grump,” she said. “He was my inspiration to transition to vegan lifestyle in the first place.”

Gumina intends to start small, both in terms of menu items and orders. At this point, she’s eyeing a system of opening up a finite amount of orders each week, culminating in specific pickup times on the weekends.

“My plan for right now, because my kitchen is so small, is to keep it very simple,” she said. At first, she’ll be primarily offering croissants in multiple flavors – plain, chocolate and the like. But as the business grows, so will her offerings.

And in the meantime, she’s putting the finishing touches on practice run after practice run, making sure her recipes and oven are just-so prior to opening to the public.

“The response from the community is more than I ever could have imagined.

People have been so supportive and so lovely,” she said.

“Now I just hope I can feed everybody that wants to eat!”

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.

CALENDAR

NOW THRU MARCH 24

Wednesday Morning Study Group. 10:30-11:30 a.m. Via zoom. Fairlington 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.

NOW THRU MARCH 24

Forty+ Fire Pit Party. Virtual and In-Person. Featuring: Choreographer 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 collaboration. Projects explore movement and performance technique within a creative premise. Forty+ will meet weekly on Zoom with occasional 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 participants of all ages. Tuition: \$100. Visit <https://www.janefranklin.com/adult-dance/forty-plus> or call 703-933-1111.

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

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, 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.

MARCH 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 designed 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.

MONDAY/MARCH 8

Corn Grinding & Clay Pottery. 2:30-4:30 p.m. At Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Powhatan Native Americans used the plants and animals you see every day for their medicine, groceries, clothing and fun. Immerse yourself in a way of life from 400 years ago at the “Corn Grinding & Clay Pottery” program at Huntley Meadows Park. Grind

corn, make a clay pot, master corn darts and go on a guided tour to see the park from the perspective of a Native American. Bring those history lessons to life with hands-on experiences. The cost is \$12 per person. Call 703-768-2525.

MONDAY/MARCH 8

Pipeline Playwrights Launch Party. 7:15 p.m. Via Zoom for its Spring 2021 Season and Our Time, Our Stories (OTOS) production announcement. The plays in OTOS focus on women protagonists who insist on overcoming social and legal barriers. Facing injustices that prevent women from sharing in freedom and fairness, the protagonists are victorious in their personal and public domains. Pipeline will present five online productions in 2021 and 2022, beginning with A Very Present Presence by Ann Timmons in May 2021. For more information, visit www.pipeline-playwrights.org

FRIDAY/MARCH 12

Garden Talk: Designing an EcoSavvy Garden. 1:30-2:30pm. (Adults) Learn to work with nature’s resources to develop a beautiful, low-maintenance urban garden. With a little bit of knowledge, careful planning, and some effort, see how native trees/shrubs provide structure and year-round interest, along with colorful annuals and perennials that add seasonal color splashes. Extension Master Gardeners show you how to create a healthy, sustainable, and eco-savvy garden. \$12 per person. Register

online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktates (B6X .3T3H) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

SATURDAY/MARCH 13

Virtual Floral Design Demo: Swing into Spring. 1-2:30pm. (Adults) Learn how to create a modern Hogarth curve floral design—a gentle curving design that leads your eye through the floral composition. Certified floral designer Betty Ann Galway will show you how to make these graceful shapes for your spring floral project. \$22 per person. Virtual participants will receive a link to connect via Zoom and a supply list prior to the program. This workshop is also available in person. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktates (8GI.NP9M) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

MARCH 13-14

Mini Photo Sessions. 9:30-6 p.m. At The Rectory on Princess Street, 711 Princess Street, Alexandria. Private 30-minute photo sessions at The Rectory on Princess Street with four local photographers, to capture your pringtime moments with a gorgeous tulip magnolia tree. Cost is \$200. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/march-magnolia-mini-photo-sessions-at-the-rectory-on-princess-street-tickets-140086808415>

Local Republicans To Hold Candidate Information Session

Local Republican party Chairman Pete Benavage announced that the party is planning an information session on March 6 for local Republicans interested in running for office. The session will focus on the rules for filing to run, fundraising, the party's primary process, and tips for candidate messaging.

The Alexandria Republican City Committee's (ARCC's) leadership sees opportunity in the 2021 local elections. They say there is widespread di

ssatisfaction with the current Democrats in office on a variety of local issues including housing density, transportation congestion, inadequate flood control, rising taxes, overcapacity-underperforming schools, and proposals to co-locate housing on school property.

Benavage says "The local Republican party is actively encouraging local moderates and conservatives to step up to the plate. We will call on the experiences and expertise of elected Alexandria Republicans, former Vice Mayor Bill Cleveland, former City Councilman Frank Fannon, and others in shaping our information session and coaching our candidates."

Linda App, President of the Commonwealth Republican Women's Club (CRWC) in Alexandria, said "The 2020 Election brought us a lot of interest and new members who are not happy with Alexandria's all-Democrat city council or Democrat elected officials in the General Assembly. Many new Republicans are former Democrats. This is the right time for Republicans to run in Alexandria. I think some of our members will be running."

To register for the March 6 Republican Candidate Information Session, go to www.AlexGO.org.

ARCC is the local branch of the national Republican Party. CRWC is the Alexandria chapter of the National Federation of Republican Women. More information is available at www.Alexandria-CRWC.org

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Back to Abnormal



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Well, those last two weeks were kind of fun (comparatively speaking), to the dozen or so previous weeks. 'Fun', when you're a cancer patient experiencing side effects from treatment, is a moderation, absence even of said effects. My recent two-week break from taking my thyroid cancer medication was due to those side effects. Mentioned in a previous column, I was having balance and dizziness issues. In short, I couldn't walk or drive - for that matter, in a straight line. After consulting with my oncologist who deferred to the oncology pharmacist who's been monitoring/adjusting my medication dosage, it was agreed that I should cease and desist until my symptoms subsided. As of this past Thursday, my symptoms had mostly disappeared so I have resumed my treatment, albeit at a lower dose. (This will be the second reduction in my dose since we've been trying to find the sweet spot where the tumors are stable and the side effects are manageable.)

Actually, these last two weeks of being side-effect free was more than just a break in the action. It was a revelation of sorts. The infirmity/muscle weakness I was having was not due to the older age I have become. It was the medication. During this past fortnight, I began to feel like myself again. I could get in and out of chairs without pacing myself. I could roll over in bed and pull up the covers without a fuss. And of course, I could walk and drive a straight line. It was wonderful. When one is in the midst of a cancer diagnosis/existence, any indication that your bodily functions are performing "within normal parameters," to quote Lt. Comm. Data from "Star Trek: Next Generation" is somewhere between reassuring and life affirming.

Generally speaking, we all know that cancer doesn't make its diagnoses big and strong. Realistically speaking, you're happy with normal. Conversely, when 'normal' isn't how you feel, it's hard to portend that death/disability is not fast-approaching. Moreover, it's an especially slippery slope when one has been given a "terminal" diagnosis originally and more recently had that diagnosis modified to include a second type of cancer: papillary thyroid cancer stage IV, to go along with my pre-existing non small lung cancer, also stage IV. One has to fight emotionally to keep from getting lost/going down that rabbit hole. Any good news/an unexpected positive reaction with your disease, like your mind and body returning to pre-cancer normalcy is about as good as it gets. So even though I'm back on the medicine, I feel empowered, upbeat, hopeful even. To that end/continuation of life, I am not going to worry yet that the reduced dose will allow my tumors to grow. I'm just not going to go there. What would be the point? I'll find out soon enough, a few days after my next CT scan in mid-March. Until then, I am going to bask in my semi return to glory.

Speaking of 'glory,' as a cancer patient, one has to grasp and hold on to anything of emotional, physical, psychological or spiritual value. In addition, what information you receive which is not particularly positive, in that it's premature/unproven/not corroborated by science, has to be compartmentalized. As with Jerry Seinfeld, you have to put it in the vault and almost throw away the key. Allowing negative possibilities or unpalatable scenarios to take root in your brain really does a disservice to your potential survival. Ever since I was diagnosed with a "terminal" form of cancer, I've tried not to put the cart in front of the horse, if you know what I mean? The diagnosis was bad enough on its own. I didn't need to make it worse by piling on. If and when my life becomes more challenging/more cancer centric than it is now, I'll deal with it. I don't need to bring it on any sooner than is absolutely necessary. I've had 12 years I wasn't expecting since receiving an initial "13 month to two" year prognosis. Twelve years later, I don't see any reason to change my approach.

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

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NEWS

River Farm Offer Falls Short of Asking Price

FROM PAGE 1

welcomes further dialogue with NOVA Parks to the extent they are interested in submitting a different proposal," the Board said.

Gilbert said that NOVA Parks and the AHS Board are still keeping the dialogue open on the purchase. If NOVA Parks buys the farm, it will remain undeveloped and open to the public. "That's what our proposal does," Gilbert said.

Still For Sale

Local agent Sue Goodhart of Compass Real Estate Group in Alexandria has listed the farm, calling it a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to own 27 plus acres of riverfront property in the Washington, DC metropolitan area."

"Imagine owning an estate renowned for its unobstructed views of the Potomac River and impeccably maintained gardens," the listing states.

With the pandemic impacting everything for the last year, the AHS feels that they need this sales price to expand their national impact.

They will find another site for their headquarters said Bob Brackman, Interim Executive Director, "Once River Farm is sold, AHS will determine the best location for its headquarters to serve and build our national audience."

See the listing <https://www.thegoodhartgroup.com/a-once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity-at-river-farm/>

Steeped in History

River Farm, located just off the George Washington Memorial Parkway, has a long history, starting with Giles Brent Jr., and his wife, a princess of the Piscataway tribe,

who owned it in 1653 or 1654, the listing states. Then George Washington bought it and made it part of his plantation. Malcolm Matheson bought the property in 1919 and remodeled the home, and in 1973, American Horticultural Society (AHS) board member and philanthropist Enid Annenberg Haupt provided funds for the AHS to purchase the property, the listing states. The grounds now house the offices of AHS and are used for weddings, events, and gardening.

Haupt intended for the property to remain open to the public.

Historic Overlay District?

The County is currently considering the creation of an Historic Overlay District (HOD) for the River Farm property. New state legislation recently approved by the House and Senate will allow the county to protect the land by permitting inclusion of a provision in our historic preservation ordinance that would allow public access to "an historic area, landmark, building, or structure, or land pertaining thereto, or providing that no subdivision shall occur within any historic district unless approved by the review board or, on appeal, by the governing body of the locality as being compatible with the historic nature of such area, landmarks, buildings, or structures."

"I remain hopeful that the AHS Board will support the criticality of preserving this historic property for the public and future generations," Storck said in a community email. "We know this commitment has been a long standing mission of the AHS Board and its members."

www.saveriverfarm.com/
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/plan-amendments/river-farm-hod

Housing Values Increase

FROM PAGE 7

owners and is unsustainable," Herry said in a release.

He shared ideas though on budget items. "Instead of focusing on the pandemic response and providing tax relief to our residents, this budget includes staffing new programs and facilities. We need to be doing what our residents are having to do and figure out ways to work within our means."

Specifically, Herry said some reductions in the school budget could be made, and four facilities that are planned could be delayed to save the money for now.

These are the South County Police Station, the Scotts Run Fire Station, and new community centers in Lee and Sully Districts. "We can defer opening these," Herry said. None of his proposed deferrals are in his district.

The county executive's proposed budget already provides less money for schools than the school board's budget calls for.

HOMEOWNERS can also contest their ap-

praisals, possibly lowering the amount of the value of their homes, and therefore the amount of their tax bill. There are two levels of appeal, the county said. The first one is an administrative appeal to the Department of Tax Administration, and the second level is to the Board of Equalization, an independent body made up of residents of Fairfax County. In 2020, DTA received 493 administrative appeals and the BOE received 69 appeals.

Herry did note that some of the seniors in his district have moved out because of the increased taxes. "Older adults are being taxed out of Fairfax County," Herry said.

County residents can look for an opportunity to speak out on taxes over the next few weeks.

There are public hearings about the county budget from April 13-15. A mark-up of the final budget draft is turned in on April 27 and the new budget comes out May 4.

To see where your real estate taxes are spent, visit the real estate calculator at:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxcalc/>

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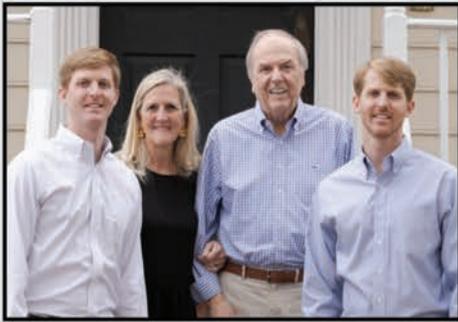


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