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NEWS, PAGE 8

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uses prescribed
burn to enhance
natural resources
at Laurel Hill Park.

CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

'Fairfax Rotary Club Helps Community Thrive'

NEWS, PAGE 9

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NEWS, PAGE 6

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Concerned Citizens Testify on Fairfax County's Budget

County tax rate and County employee pay freeze drive comments.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors held three days of public testimony, April 13 through April 15, on the County Executive's proposed FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan, the Advertised Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2022 to 2026, with future years to 2031 and the current appropriation in the FY 2021 Revised Budget Plan. The Board also accepted testimony on the FY 2022 effective tax rate. The hearings are available online to view on demand.

Following the School Board Presentation by Fairfax County School Board Chair Dr. Ricardy Anderson, County employees, union and organization representatives, individuals, and others pleaded with the Board of Supervisors to recognize the value of their work and consider the proposed budget's impact on their requests.

SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR Dr. Anderson requested that the Supervisors fully fund Fairfax County Public Schools FY 2022 Advertised Budget. She said FCPS school-based and operation staff had worked endless hours since March 13, 2020, to provide engaging instruction. They developed and implemented academic and emotional supports for students and families. She acknowledged there remained "a tremendous amount of work to be done and resources to be secured" for FCPS staff to mitigate the damage caused by COVID-related disruptions and learning virtually and concurrently.

Anderson reminded the Board of Supervisors that on Feb. 18, 2021, the School Board unanimously adopted FCPS FY 2022 Advertised Budget. It represented, she said, an increase of \$75.5M, or 2.4 percent from the FY21 Approved Budget.

"This thoughtful and caring budget acknowledges the school division's most pressing needs. It is student-centered, staff-focused, and fiscally responsible," she said. Aware of the \$90.2 million shortfall between FCPS's budget request and the County's proposed FY 2022 Budget, Anderson said FCPS was at a pivotal moment.

"Fully funding this budget will help us to maximize the opportunity before us by investing in every FCPS student and providing the resources each of them needs to reach their full potential," she said.

Kimberly Adams is President of the Fairfax Education Association, a union representing thousands of school employees in Fairfax County. "We understand the constraints on revenues, but in our area, we have once again been inside the bubble where property values have risen. This means our revenue is set to increase, even if property taxes remain



Fairfax County School Board Chair
Dr. Ricardy Anderson



5. Kimberly Adams
President, Fairfax Education Association
Kimberly Adams, President of
Fairfax Education Association

FY 2022 Proposed Taxes and Fees			
Type	Unit	FY 2021 Actual Rate	FY 2022 Proposed Rate
GENERAL FUND TAX RATES			
Real Estate	\$100/Assessed Value	\$1.15	\$1.14
Personal Property	\$100/Assessed Value	\$4.57	\$4.57

FY 2022 Proposed Taxes and Fees

flat," Adams said.

According to Adams, the County must compensate those who continue to drive it forward, especially when those in Richmond prioritize workers who need that compensation. "After years of underfunding, school employees are slated for a 5 percent salary increase (through the state), but only with a local match," she said.

Adams noted a cost of living raise would be a morale booster to school employees. "We simply ask you to recognize that you can and must keep the tax rate where it is and push forward a portion of those dollars to your schools. Continue to invest in Fairfax, and do your job this budget season, so that we can continue to do ours," Adams said.

Norm Hall is an employee with Fairfax County. In a video released by the Fairfax County Government Employee Union, SEIU Virginia 512, Hall urged the Supervisors to pass a strong collective bargaining ordinance. "People on the ground who know each other and have the respect and trust of each other can come up with solutions that will work for the citizens that we serve, as well as the employees. (Collective bargaining) is what you're going to do to retain employees who might have other options because they'll understand that taking care of employees is mission-critical."

Charles McAndrew of Oak Hill opposed the FY 2022 effective tax rate increase. He said that the Board planned to implement a real estate tax rate of \$1.15 which could cost the homeowner an average of \$300. According to McAndrew, this continued a two-decade trend where the County Board of Supervisors increases real estate taxes three times faster than the homeowner income, which barely kept up with inflation.

"I should also add, the last 20 years that the real estate tax usually goes up, in most

- April 23, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting
- April 27, 2021 Board of Supervisors marks-up FY 2022 Budget, adopts FY 2022-FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program, and FY 2021 Third Quarter Review
- May 4, 2021 Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2022 Adopted Budget
- May 11-12, 2021 School Board holds public hearings on FY 2022 budget
- May 20, 2021 School Board adopts FY 2022 Approved Budget
- July 1, 2021 FY 2022 Budget Year Begins

Next Steps toward Board adoption of the FY 2022 Adopted Budget and School Board adoption of the FY 2022 Approved Budget.

cases, two to three times the rate of inflation. This increase exceeds the consumer price index for 2020, which is approximately 1.3," Andrew said.

Sherry Noad of Burke supported maintaining the current real estate tax rate of \$1.15 per \$100 of assessed value rather than reducing the rate to \$1.14. "I don't think we can afford the reduction at the time and still continue to maintain the excellent schools, public services, and recreational facilities that make Fairfax County a great place to live and raise our families," she said.

Arthur Purves of Vienna addressed the Board as President of the Fairfax County Taxpayers' Alliance. He requested that the Supervisors provide greater clarity when speaking of lowering the real estate tax rate or keeping it the same as last year. He said the Board should tell how much residential assessments increased. "Instead of saying the advertised tax rate of \$1.15 is the same as last year and as homeowner assessments are increasing, add the average assessment increases 4 percent. That way, homeowners will know how much their real estate tax will increase, even if the rate is unchanged," said Purves.

Gina Lynch of Fairfax is Chair of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter Advisory Services Commission. She reported that despite the many challenges of the pandemic, staff and volunteers continued to carry out critical programs at the Michael Frey Animal Shelter on West Ox Road. She called the Board's attention to establishing a new shelter in the south end of the County. "Naturally, the as-

Documents Available Online

The Fairfax County FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan can be found online. Other documents as listed below can also be found on the Fairfax County website.

County Executive's Presentation of the FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan to the Board of Supervisors (February 23, 2021)

Citizen's Guide to the FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan

English

Spanish / Español

Overview

County Executive's Message

Advertised Budget Summary

General Fund Statement

Multi-Year Budget: FY 2022 - FY 2023

"Where It Comes From" Pie Chart - General Fund Receipts

"Where It Goes" Pie Chart - General Fund Disbursements

Volume 1: General Fund

Volume 2: Capital Construction and Other Operating Funds

Performance Measurement Data

FY 2022 - FY 2026 Advertised Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Ways to Give Input on the Advertised Budget Plan

sociated personnel and infrastructure funding for this new facility must be included in your budget planning discussions," she said.

According to Lynch, alongside the shelter staff, the animal protection police officers ensure that all animals in the County are treated in a legal, human, and compassionate manner. She noted that they had not received their longevity step increases for many years, affecting their retirement incomes. Lynch asked the Board of Supervisors to ensure they appropriately receive receipt of their increases.

LYDIA LAWRENCE, the chair of the Fairfax NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, urged the Board of Supervisors to fund improvements for trees and green spaces, especially along the Route One corridor in Annandale, where there are inequities. The heat index map highlights those areas as heat islands because of higher impervious surfaces and fewer trees and green spaces.

Lawrence asked the Board to designate funds to change the name to evaluate and execute the removal of Confederate names on a prioritized basis, focused initially on Lee District, Lee Highway at Lee Jackson Memorial Highway. "These names have no place in our County, especially in its commitment to equity. We all need to feel like we live in a safe place, a place that values each and every one of us as humans," she said.

'We Want to Make Sure This Is the Best Project'

American Legion Post 177's redevelopment plans hit a snag.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

American Legion Post 177 has big plans for a major redevelopment of its facility at 3939 Oak St. in Fairfax City. Besides renovating its own building, it wants to construct both workforce and market-rate homes and provide much-needed amenities to nearby Chilcott Field.

But during a recent Fairfax City Council work session the applicants learned of several problems the City has with its proposal. They include concerns about parking, traffic, tree preservation and the location of affordable housing.

The project is a collaboration between the American Legion, Toll Brothers and Post 177 Apartments LLC (Good Works) – which will develop the affordable/workforce housing. The American Legion's building is decades old and too outdated to be sustainable for the future. For example, there's no handicap access between the floors, making it difficult for disabled veterans to easily move around the facility.

So the proposal calls for completely renovating and enlarging the existing 12,000-square-foot building to 17,140 square feet and adding three floors of brick-exterior, affordable apartments above and to the back of the current structure. Also planned are market-rate, two-over-two townhouses, a park and 34.5 percent open space.

AND CHILCOT FIELD – where both the Fairfax Little League and Challenger Baseball teams play – would receive a \$1 million overhaul and modernization. It currently has no amenities; but under the proposals, it would get a new stadium, bleachers with an elevator, concession stands, restrooms and a press box.

During the work session, City Planner Supriya Chewle explained the plans to the Council. She said there'd be 76 affordable apartments (ADUs) and 66 stacked townhouses, and that the developer wants a zon-



Artist's rendition of an aerial view of the entire project from the northwest.

ing change from Residential High to Planned Development Mixed Use.

"Chilcott's baseball field would have a new, two-story, press box behind home plate, covered bleachers on the second level and a covered dugout on the first-base line, parallel to Oak Street," said Chewle. "A portion of the [proposed] tot lot is in the flood plain, so it would need a special permit."

She said a 5-foot-wide sidewalk network would go within the project and along Oak Street. The density would be 18.3 dwelling units/acre, which is less than they could have there. "ADUs require 1.5 spaces/unit, and the applicant requests a modification for 1 space/unit," said Chewle. "So the applicant is short 63 multifamily parking spaces. [City] staff is concerned that the parking supply for the ADUs may be insufficient. And the Planning Commission recommended a parking location for the two-over-twos, as well."

Furthermore, she said, "The applicant proposes having all the ADUs in the multifamily building [to be part of the American Legion building]. But the ADUs shouldn't all be concentrated in one building, so the applicant would need a modification."

And although the developer plans to remove 16 trees, the Planning Commission called tree preservation there "crucial." It also wants the tot lot to remain part of the proposal, requested a Transportation Demand Management Plan and told the applicant to discuss its plans with nearby residents and civic associations.

Chewle also noted that "A lack of internal, traffic circulation within the site could put more traffic onto Oak Street. The development is projected to yield 35 students, and



Artist's rendition of the two-over-two, stacked townhouses on Oak Street.

staff estimates the project would have a negative, fiscal impact on the City.

Councilmember Sang Yi said, "Regarding the ADUs, we don't want segregated housing. They should be interspersed throughout the project. This flies in the face of the ADU policy we created."

"All the ADUs are rental units," replied Chewle. "So if there were four ADUs in the two-over-twos, they could be for-sale units."

Yi also stressed that, "Buried in the applicant's project summary it says that, ultimately, the American Legion would take ownership of the ADUs and have them as an income source. Does that mean these ADUs could someday be turned into market-rate units?"

Brooke Hardin, the City's director of Community Development and Planning, explained that, "To be accepted into the City's program, ADUs would have a 30-year rental program."

And Fairfax Mayor David Meyer said, "A lot of information hasn't yet been provided to staff, so there's a lot of unanswered questions." Post 177's Hank Waters then reminded everyone that the American Legion is "a major institution in the City and only wants to help the City."

Attorney Ken Wire, representing the applicants, called it "one, cohesive, master-development plan. We'll save as many Oak Street trees as possible, and we'll comply with the 30-year ADU agreement, after which those units would revert to the American Legion."

He said the 76 ADUs would be available in a range from 30-80 percent AMI (Area Median Income). "The overall average is at or less than 60 percent," said Wire. "It goes to 80 percent so if, for example, a firefighter gets

a raise, he won't get kicked out of his home. ADU rents will range from \$582 to \$2,300/month, and we'll administer these units."

AS FOR THE TOT LOT, he said, "If things in the RPA [Resource Protection Area] are a problem, we'll change and reconfigure that area. And we can move the tot lot elsewhere. We're actually moving the existing batting cage out of the RPA."

Furthermore, stressed Wire, "We don't want the minutiae to get in the way of the overall good. This total project will be less than 17 percent of the traffic on Oak Street, and most ballfield usage will be after hours and on the weekends. I've never seen an ADU project with underground parking like this one has, and we'll see if we can do better on our ADU parking."

He also told the Council that "the financial impact isn't just dollars and cents." He then listed the project's benefits to the community, including: Preserving and modernizing the building housing the American Legion – which helps various Scout groups, nonprofits and baseball teams; adding affordable housing and increasing the City's housing diversity; and improving Chilcott Field.

Meyer then advised him to "Address the Planning Commission's concerns and work with staff to provide them the information they need so we can work through these issues. We value and greatly respect the American Legion's presence in our City, and we want to work collaboratively with the Legion so it can continue to do all it does, in the future. We want to make sure this is the best project for the optimal number of people in the City."

Springfield Man Charged with Sexually Assaulting Women from Dating App

A 58-year-old man is facing charges for sexually assaulting two women last summer. Detectives were contacted in July 2020 by a woman who reported she was assaulted at a home in the 8300 block of Cushing Court in Springfield by a man she met online. Approximately a month later, as detectives continued their investigation, a second victim reported being sexually assaulted at the same location under similar circumstances.

According to FCPD Public Affairs Bureau -- detectives identified Drew John Steiner, of Springfield, as the offender in both cases. Monday morning, April 19, evidence was presented to a grand jury who indicted Steiner on one count of rape, one count of forcible sodomy, one count of unlawful filming, two counts of abduction with intent to defile and two counts of object sexual penetration.

Steiner has been held without bond at the adult detention cen-

ter since being charged with the assault and abduction of a family member that occurred on Sept. 27, 2020.

Victim specialists from our Major Crimes Bureau's Victim Services Division have been assigned to ensure that the victims are receiving appropriate resources and assistance.

Detectives are asking anyone with information about this case or who may have met Steiner through a dating app to call Major Crimes

Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 3. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477), by text – Type "FCCS" plus tip to 847411, and by web – Click [HERE](#). Download our Mobile tip411 App "Fairfax Co Crime Solvers". Anonymous tipsters are eligible for cash rewards of \$100 to \$1,000 dollars if their information leads to an arrest. If you wish for a detective to follow up with you, please leave your contact information.



FCPD PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUREAU
Drew John Steiner

Springfield Romance Writer Releases New Book

Contemporary fiction inspired by her life as a military spouse.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Springfield resident and USA Today Bestselling author Tif Marcelo discussed her recent novel release, "In a Book Club Far Away" (indiebound | amazon | kobo | barnes&noble | book of the month). A veteran army nurse and a military spouse for years, Marcelo said her book shines a light on home front military families, often left behind when their spouses or significant others deploy. Marcelo's work pays homage to them and the book clubs she joined, where she gained lasting friendships.

"My target audience is readers between the ages of 20 and whatever, adult readers who love book clubs and who also love our men and women in uniform and their families," said Marcelo. "I wanted to show that within this huge population of military families, there's a small part of us who love books and how we bonded around those books."

Marcelo's novel holds three critical and fundamental pieces of a successful and entertaining read: an intriguing premise, developed characters, and a compelling story.

According to Marcelo, she had it in her head from the

very beginning that she wanted to write a story about a set of military spouses but wasn't sure how to make it compelling. She also realized book clubs created opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds and opinions to build and deepen relationships. But those elements would not be enough for a successful novel. "That's where I decided something had to happen in the past that leads to the conflict in the present," she said.

Marcelo chose to bring two timelines with an integral backstory together. The structure and weave of twin timelines would make the novel more exciting than a chronological account, lending itself to "a little more mystery" and a deeper plot.

In Marcelo's story, three Army wives who bonded during their book club years and became inseparable face an unimaginable betrayal within the group. Later, and estranged, the two are shocked when they receive a call for help from the third who lives in Alexandria, Virginia. As the women reunite, they must come to terms with their hurt.

Marcelo's other works include Once Upon A Sunset (March 2020), The Key to Happily Ever After, and the Journey to the Heart series. Her next book, The Holiday Switch, is out on Oct. 5, 2021.



PHOTO BY
FRANCESCA COLE
Springfield author Tif Marcelo



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Running for Second in Command

Thirteen candidates are running for lieutenant governor in Virginia.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

The job of lieutenant governor is often overlooked, but it plays an important role in Virginia politics. Although many people view it as a stepping stone to running for governor, the lieutenant governor has a critical role in the day-to-day proceedings of the General Assembly.

He or she presides over the Senate, which often means making procedural rulings about whether motions can proceed or not. Perhaps more importantly, though, the lieutenant governor gets to break tie votes in a chamber where Democrats hold a two-vote majority. Because the chamber is home to some conservative-leaning Democrats, the lieutenant governor has many opportunities to step in and break a tie vote.

Earlier this month, Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax broke a tie vote on legalizing marijuana after two Senate Democrats voted with Republicans. The next election for senators isn't until 2023, so the next lieutenant governor will walk into a Senate chamber where he or she could end up being a tie-breaking vote on almost any issue.

Democratic Candidates for Lieutenant Governor

Democrats will choose their nominee for lieutenant governor in a June 8 statewide primary. (Absentee voting begins April 23.) Seven candidates will be on the ballot. The seat will be open because incumbent Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax is running for governor.

Del. Sam Rasoul (D-11) was first elected to the House of Delegates in 2013 to fill the seat vacated by Onzlee Ware. He's raised more money than any of the other Democrats in the race, and his campaign contributors include dona-



Sam Rasoul

tions from the health-care sector, physicians, pharmacists and dentists. On the campaign trail, he talks about how his experience as a Muslim has informed his view of politics.

"Look, we've all had some vulnerable moments over the past several years," said Rasoul in a candidate forum. "And a big vulnerable moment for me was in December of 2015 when a then-candidate for president said people who worship like me are not

welcome in this country."

Del. Hala Ayala (D-51) was first elected to the House of Delegates in 2017, defeating incumbent Republican Rich Anderson. Campaign-finance records show she's received \$25,000 from the environmental group



Hala Ayala

Clean Virginia, and she also was able to transfer \$60,000 from her House campaign. On the campaign trail, she talks about how being an Afro-Latina-Lebanese-Irish has informed her view of politics.

"For a long time, I did not feel like politicians looked like me or had a lived experience like mine," said Ayala in a candidate forum. "My family struggled growing up, and I lost my father to gun violence.

Norfolk City Councilwoman Andria McClellan

was first elected in 2016, and as an at-large member of the council represents more people than anybody else in the race. Her biggest contributor is the Norfolk-based PAC Access for Virginia. On the campaign trail, she talks about how her experience in local government would inform her performance as lieutenant governor.



Andria McClellan

"We need a statewide database of affordable housing, where people can search and find opportunities," said McClellan in a candidate forum. "It needs to be searchable and available for all throughout the commonwealth."

Sean Perryman is the former president of the Fairfax NAACP, a role that's put him at the center of the debate on ending qualified immunity and defelonizing drugs. A significant portion of his campaign contributions come from lawyers and lobbyists, and he's taken \$25,000 from Clean Virginia. On the campaign trail, he's called for allowing incarcerated people to vote, abolishing qualified immunity for police and limiting campaign contributions.

"I don't think corporate donations are a problem. I think the problem is contribution limits," said Perryman in a candidate forum. "Whether you're getting \$100,000 from an LLC or from Joe Smith down the block, they are still having influence over you. And so we absolutely need to have limits on our contributions."

Del. Mark Levine (D-45) was first elected in 2015, filling a seat vacated by Democrat Rob Krupicka. Campaign-finance records show his largest donation is \$40,000 from

his House of Delegates campaign, and he also received \$25,000 from Clean Virginia. On the campaign trail, he advocates for banning assault weapons, joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact and abolishing mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent crimes.

"I support no prison sentences for people who are addicted to drugs, period," said Levine in a candidate forum. "Because if you're an addict, you need help. You need health care. You don't need to go to prison."

Del. Elizabeth Guzman (D-31)

was first elected in 2017, defeating Republican incumbent Scott Lingamfelter. Campaign-finance records show she's taken large campaign contributions from several unions, and she's also taken \$25,000 from Clean Virginia. On the campaign trail, she's styled herself as the Bernie Sanders candidate in the race who will abolish Virginia's so-called right-to-work law.

"I'm ready to go to the Senate and to be the voice to educate the senators on how it's important to repeal the right to work," said Guzman in a candidate forum. "Repealing the right to work is providing workers a voice at the table, to fight for better equipment, to better their salary and for training purposes as well."

Xavier Warren is an NFL player agent and lobbyist for nonprofits. Campaign-finance records show he's taken money from people who work in sports management, and he received a \$10,000 in-kind contribution from communications firm Capture Create Media. On the campaign trail, he advocates for ending the cash-bail system and investing in solar farms.

"Virginia is in a covid crisis, a climate crisis and an economic crisis," said Warren in a candidate forum.

"I want to be the leader in technology, healthcare innovation and also clean energy and helping families to build generational wealth."

Republican Candidates for Lieutenant Governor

Republicans will choose their nominee in an unassembled convention on May 8, which

will be at 37 locations throughout Virginia. To vote in the convention, voters must register as delegates to the convention. Voters will be asked to rank the candidates from first to sixth, and if no one wins a majority on the first round the last-place candidate will be dropped.

Former Del. Tim Hugo (R-40)

was first elected in a 2002 special election to fill the seat vacated by Jay O'Brien when he was elected to the state Senate. As a longtime member of the House, he served as chairman of the House Republican Caucus and was able to raise large amounts of money to help candidates across Virginia. On the campaign trail, his pitch to Republican delegates is that he's a Republican who has a history of winning in Northern Virginia, where he was reelected eight times before being unseated by Dan Helmer in 2019.

"You never thought a decade ago or 15 years ago that you would have Democrats talking casually about infanticide," said Hugo in a candidate forum. "You never thought you'd have Beto O'Rourke going door to door against us to talk about taking our guns, and you never thought you'd be talking about defunding the police. But that's what Democrats are doing now."

Del. Glenn Davis (R-84)

is a former member of the Virginia Beach City Council who was first elected to the House of Delegates in 2013. Campaign-finance records show he was able to transfer about \$350,000 from his House campaign account, giving him an early edge over other other candidates. As a member of the House, he has a voting record that's a bit more moderate on issues involving gay rights and labor issues. On the campaign trail, he's positioning himself as a moderate alternative to the other candidates who are more closely aligned with former President Donald Trump.

"I want to go to the middle because the middle is where you win elections," said Davis in a candidate forum. "The middle is where a lot of Republicans have gotten way too uncomfortable being, and what's why we lose."

Former Del. Winsome Sears (R-90)

served one term in the House of Delegates 20 years ago. Since that time, she waged an unsuccessful campaign in 2004 against Con-



Mark Levine



Elizabeth Guzman



Xavier Warren



Tim Hugo



Glenn Davis



Winsome Sears

Candidates

FROM PAGE 6

gressman Bobby Scott and an unsuccessful write-in candidacy in 2018 as an alternative to Corey Stewart, whom she called a “charlatan.” Sears has the endorsement of state Sen. Amanda Chase (R-11), and on the campaign trail she accuses Democrats of race baiting.

“They’re pitting the races against each other,” said Sears in a candidate forum. “You’re heard the constant Black, white, now it’s Asian. They’re speaking against Thomas Jefferson kids and their successes, and they want quotas.”



Lance Allen

Lance Allen is a first-time candidate who is trying to use his lack of political experience as an asset, framing his campaign as an attempt to do something about his frustration with politics. He doesn’t have any big name endorsements, and he hasn’t raised much money. But on the campaign trail, he’s trying to connect with voters by tapping into their frustration with Republican leadership in the General Assembly.

“We caved on issue after issue, and I’m tired of compromising my values just so we can have a little bit of power,” said Allen in a candidate forum. “It’s time to stand up and say the things we know as Republicans that we need to say.”

Puneet Ahluwalia is an activist who has been involved in Northern Virginia politics for years trying to build an immigrant base for the Republican Party. As a first-generation immigrant, he’s hoping his personal story might resonate with voters who want to expand the range of the party. On the campaign trail, he talks about how critical race theory is a threat to Virginia schools.

“All it does is teach children to divide, to hate, to see themselves as victims of oppressors,” said Ahluwalia in a video posted to YouTube. “It leads to lower achievement and more quotas. America can’t lead when we don’t even believe in our own values.”



Puneet Ahluwalia

Maeve Rigler is a lawyer who wanted to run as a Republican candidate against U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-8) but she was unsuccessful in securing the nomination in the convention. She’s now positioning herself as the candidate who will fight for election security, arguing that she’ll fight against voter fraud.

“We need a candidate who will stand up against voter fraud,” said Rigler in a YouTube video.

“The Democrats stole the election from the Republicans. I’ve been expecting Virginia Republicans to stand up and speak out while the Democrats keep spewing their socialist agenda, I’ve heard nothing but silence from Republicans.”



Maeve Rigler

FRESHFARM Markets Open

Local FRESHFARM Markets are opened. Residents are encouraged to pre-order as much as possible, but grab-and-go and prepackaged options will be available for purchase at all of the markets listed below.

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Sunday Market

Mosaic, 9 a.m - 2 p.m. -- 2910 District Ave., Fairfax

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A certified “Fire Boss”, Owen Williams, covers safety protocols and the fire/smoke management operation plan with fire team members who are wearing protective gear: helmets, flame resistant fabric “brush shirts/pants,” masks, gloves, and boots.



Natural Resources Ecologists Darko Veljkov and Owen Williams prepared the area well in advance of the burn using mechanized equipment and hand tools

Safety First at Park Controlled Burn

A meadow restoration project will improve a wildlife habitat area at Laurel Hill Park in Lorton.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

The Connection had a view, from a safe distance on April 7, of Fairfax County Park Authority’s prescribed burn operation. The work, conducted as part of a meadow restoration project, will improve a wildlife habitat area at Laurel Hill Park in Lorton. Signs on nearby roads and at the work area entrance advised the public that smoke could be present. No roads or trails were closed for the day long operation conducted by the County’s Natural Resources Branch.

Preparation began long before

the day of the burn over a period of many months. Native plant species, identified by project manager Darko Veljkov, were tagged for protection. In September 2020, Veljkov and lead Ecologist Owen Williams, used a Bobcat to clear the area of heavy brush and non-native trees; some targeted herbicide was also used. (See www.connectionarchieves.com, Sept 24-30, pg 9) Clearing work was done around the perimeter to create a “firebreak,” a gap in vegetation and combustible material, to act as a barrier and stop the progress of fire.

The day of the burn was chosen carefully for conditions of temperature, humidity, and wind ve-

locity, for optimal control of fire and smoke. Trained and certified members of the Natural Resources Branch, and volunteers and contractors experienced in fire management and emergency medical technicians made up a crew of eleven at work on the fire crew. Designated lead, certified Fire Boss, Owen Thomas led a team review of the mapped fire/smoke management plan, radio and call check, equipment and assignments.

Before the fire was set, the fire break was given a renewed clearing by blowing and raking combustible materials out of the break. A “wet line” was laid along the firebreak, and was reapplied periodically. Drip torches were used to begin combustion in the lower portion of the field working back toward the entrance, in a manner that worked with the light wind and forced the fire in on itself. This

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Natural Resources’ Nelson Debarros, a botanist, lays a “wet line” on the fire break for increased safety.



Ecologist Darko Veljkov uses a drip torch to lay fire in prescribed areas to burn away debris.

allowed the smoke to rise straight above the field and minimized smoke reaching trails and outlying areas.

Special fire control tools were used to move the fire, suppressing it as it neared the firebreak.

Fire crew members, some with

prior wildfire fighting experience with the National Forest Service, maintained a constant vigil.

The fire was at a relatively low intensity with higher flares as larger piles of dry black berry canes and brush materials were consumed. Williams indicated, “fire intensity can be high at a site that hasn’t been burned before.”

A final sweep assures all hot spots are cooled. By the next day, the meadow presents a cool, empty, ashy palette waiting for nature’s renewal of color and life.

Additional burns may be needed on the same site until hearty invasive plants weaken and don’t regrow in following seasons. Williams predicts any future burns there, if needed, will have lower intensity and less smoke, but with all the same safety protocols in place to assure the continuing success of this important tool for natural resource management.



Fire intensity was kept below what could affect live standing trees.



Fire crew member with fire rake monitors fire intensity on dead brush pile.

'Fairfax Rotary Club Helps Community Thrive'

Group honored by Gerry Connolly and City schools.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTIE MAJORS

(From left) Rotary Club of Fairfax New Generations Director, Verne Tuininga, and Fairfax City Schools Superintendent Phyllis Pajardo look on while Kate Malesky of a Place to Stand receives a financial donation from Rotary Club of Fairfax President Barry Gordon.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11), recently honored The Rotary Club of Fairfax for its support of City of Fairfax schools. He read a proclamation to his colleagues in the House of Representatives, recognizing the club for helping these schools via its literacy programs, scholarships, plus contributions to nonprofit A Place to Stand's "Place to Eat" program, which has helped feed local students in need during the pandemic.

In fact, this week, the Rotary Club of Fairfax celebrates its 90th anniversary. It was chartered on April 21, 1931, making it one of the oldest clubs in the Washington, D.C. area. It's also one of the largest, with 91 active and honorary members. And, said Connolly, "These members share a desire to unite and take action to create positive, lasting change in their communities."

THE ROTARY CLUB also received special recognition, twice in late 2020, from the Fairfax City School Board for its significant contributions to City of Fairfax schools. For example, the club donated dictionaries and U.S. Constitution booklets, gave more than \$20,000 in scholarships to seniors at Fairfax High, participated in the Read Across America program and sponsored speech and essay contests.

Rotary International's motto is "Service Above Self," and the Rotary Club of Fairfax has truly taken this spirit of volunteerism to heart. For example, last year, when Fairfax City schools partnered with A Place to Stand via its "Place to Eat" program to distribute food packages to school children who were most vulnerable, the Rotary Club of Fairfax raised almost \$9,000 to support the cause. Rotarian Bogram Setty initiated the donations from other Rotarians and ended up being the largest donor – and more than 250 Fairfax City families didn't go hungry.

Earlier this year, the Rotary Club of Fairfax distributed Webster Dictionaries to all third-graders in the City, as well as Constitution booklets to the eighth-graders at the former Sidney Lanier Middle School, renamed Katherine Johnson Middle School. And the Rotarians'

Constitution distribution and March virtual meeting with the Johnson Middle students were highlighted on the Fairfax County Public Schools Website. Hosted by civics teacher Ryan Sterzinger, it resulted in a discussion among the students, faculty, Rotarians and Del. David Bulova (D-37).

In addition, the club continues to support City schools by sponsoring a speech contest at Fairfax High and an essay competition for middle-school students. The most recent speech-contest topic was this year's Rotary International theme, "Rotary Opens Opportunities." Senior Sala "Lena" Asha-Camp won the Fairfax High competition and then went on to win the Rotary District 7610, Area 9, speech contest in April.

The Rotary Club of Fairfax also supports a school and literacy project in Guatemala, local charities, an exchange-student program, Teacher of the Year awards in the City of Fairfax, and many other projects to help those in need and to build positive relationships around the world.

"As someone who comes from local government, I understand firsthand how important community organizations are, and the important role they play, in strengthening communities by providing vital opportunities and services," said Connolly. "The Fairfax Rotary Club is a part of helping our communities thrive."

THE CLUB meets Mondays, at 12:15 p.m., currently on Zoom. For more information, go to www.fairfaxrotary.org.

— CHRISTIE MAJORS CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 9. This year we will continue to publish submissions through the May 5th and 6th editions. Photo submissions are due by Sunday, May 2, 2021.

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Mother's Day Photo Submission

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CALENDAR

NOW THRU JUNE 26

Ken Britz, Artist of the Year. At VAS Gallery in the Village Green, 513 Maple Ave. W, Vienna. The Vienna Arts Society is thrilled to present a collection of "Favored Subjects", artworks by Artist of the Year Ken Britz. The exhibition is open April 12 through June 26, Mon. - Sat., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Discover more about Ken on the website: www.ViennaArtsSociety.org

NOW THRU APRIL 23

Joanne Bast Exhibit. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At The McLean Textile Gallery, 6819 Elm Street, McLean. Visit the newly opened McLean Textile Gallery to view the work of Joanne Bast, an artist who works in thread, felted wool and beads. Small groups welcome. Visit the website: www.themcleantextilegallery.com

to 1:30 p.m. At Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Put a little pizzazz into your next nature walk with a tricked-out hiking stick. Fairfax County parks have more than 300 miles of trails, and a hiking stick can be a good companion on your explorations. Pick a stick, decorate it, and then take it with you on your next nature

SATURDAY/APRIL 24

Decorate a Hiking Stick. 11:30 a.m.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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Legals

PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR TOWN OF CLIFTON APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL USE PERMIT

PUBLIC HEARING OF TOWN OF CLIFTON PLANNING COMMISSION
APRIL 27, 2021
Notice is hereby given that the Town of Clifton Planning Commission will hold an electronic Public Hearing on Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 7:30 P.M. via Zoom as permitted by law to consider the application for a Special Use Permit for Môtier, LLC located at 12644 Chapel Road, to include restaurant use. The application for the proposed Special Use Permit is available for review and downloading on the Town's website at www.cliftonva.gov and a hard copy may be examined at the Clifton Post Office, 12644 Chapel Road, Clifton VA, 20124. All interested parties are invited to attend and express their views with respect to the application. To obtain access to the electronic Public Hearing, contact the Town Clerk at clerk@cliftonva.gov no later than Noon on April 27, 2021.

PUBLIC HEARING OF TOWN OF CLIFTON TOWN COUNCIL

MAY 4, 2021
Notice is hereby given that the Town of Clifton Town Council will hold an electronic Public Hearing on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 7:30 P.M. via Zoom as permitted by law to consider the application for a Special Use Permit for Môtier, LLC located at 12644 Chapel Road, to include restaurant use. The application for the proposed Special Use Permit is available for review and downloading on the Town's website at www.cliftonva.gov and a hard copy may be examined at the Clifton Post Office, 12644 Chapel Road, Clifton VA, 20124. All interested parties are invited to attend and express their views with respect to the application. To obtain access to the electronic Public Hearing, contact the Town Clerk at clerk@cliftonva.gov no later than Noon on May 4, 2021.

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THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Amazon Grocery Store Joining the Mix in Kingstowne

Newcomer to the grocery mix features jobs, benefits and no check-out lines.



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

So far, the exterior remains nondescript, and Amazon probably likes it that way.

The Kingstowne-Manchester Lakes community is getting a new face in the grocery store equation with the plans for Amazon to step in with a different approach to buying groceries that's more reliant on web applications and less on the conveyor belt at the checkout line.

Amazon is looking at the space vacated by the Shoppers Food Warehouse at Beulah Street and Manchester Boulevard, about a mile from the Springfield Town Center and the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station.

Amazon recently acquired Whole Foods, and then has a grocery store they call "Amazon Fresh," but it is unclear what type of store is opening at the Manchester Lakes shopping center. Amazon spokesperson Alyse Bernal would not directly comment on the store specifics, but did note the hiring push for the stores in Franconia and Washington, D.C. "All roles offer industry-leading pay of at least \$15 per hour, double the federal minimum wage, and a variety of benefits packages starting on the employee's first day on the job. Amazon also provides employees the opportunity to learn new skills and grow with the company, along with access to its innovative Career Choice program, which provides education and training for in-demand jobs," Bernal wrote in an email.

In the vicinity of the Festival at Manchester Lakes shopping center, there is a Safeway

and Giant in Kingstowne about a mile away, the Wegman's at Hilltop about two miles away to the south, and another Giant in central Springfield. Amazon has a familiar name to it, and the word has gotten around.

"I think it's going to be a boost to the community," said Kingstowne resident Karla Monzon, who was having ice cream at a shop a few doors down. She cited real estate values, the hourly rate they were paying and the opportunity that Amazon gives employees. "To me, it's good," Monzon said.

The staff at the Baja Fresh next door had heard about their new neighbor, as did the staff at Craftsman Auto Care around the corner.

The check out procedure at Amazon grocery stores is different, as the internet giant comes with a few quirks that the normal shopper isn't used to. First, the shopper downloads the "Amazon Go," app on the cell phone, grabs what is needed off the shelf, and just walks out of the store and everything is rung up and charged to the card or account. No more banter with the check-out clerk though. In the Amazon world, this is known as the "Just Walk Out Shopping experience."

Although the building is upgraded on the exterior, the doors are shut and there appears to be no people working on the interior, so the opening date is still undetermined.

"I think it's going to be a boost to the community."

— Kingstowne resident
Karla Monzon

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 9

hike. All craft materials will be provided. This program is designed for explorers age 6 to adult. The cost is \$15 per person. Call 703-471-5414.

SATURDAY/APRIL 24

Discovery Sampler. 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. You'll also get an idea about the nature center's spring and summer programs. Program scheduling will limit group sizes and allow for social distancing. There will be a maximum of 20 participants in each time slot, and the attendees will be divided into smaller groups of about six to eight people. Station rotations will include Pond Netting, Nature Crafts, and Meeting the Exhibit Animals. Call 703-451-9588.

SUNDAY/APRIL 25

Open Air Spring Market. Noon to 5 p.m. At the
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Windover Building, 243 Church Street, NW, Vienna. The Vienna Arts Society presents a curated selection of the best independent designers, artists and emerging brands. You'll meet vendors selling hundreds of hand crafted items. Artists will help kids paint a small gift for their moms in time for Mothers' Day. Plein air painters will be working in the neighboring gardens. Rain date, Sunday, May 2. Visit the website: www.ViennaArtsSociety.org

SUNDAY/APRIL 25

Collision of Rhythm. 3 p.m. At Mason Pond Lawn at GMU, across from the Center for the Arts Concert Hall in Fairfax. Collision of Rhythm is the ultimate dynamic duo made up of a tap-dancing percussion virtuoso and a beat-boxing, juggling multi-instrumentalist. Bring the entire family for this fun outdoor performance on Mason Pond Lawn. \$15 adult, \$10 youth through grade 12.

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Wanna Take A Chance?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I'm sort of invoking Southwest Airlines here, but not exactly. What I am invoking are the incredible number of television and radio commercials for legal gambling sites and for car insurance. Both offer rewards while requiring payment upfront. In anecdotal fact, if it wasn't for these two entities advertising on television especially, and on radio to a lesser degree, the airwaves would be a lot less redundant. I'm so used to seeing Flo from Progressive, LiMu Emu and Doug from Liberty Mutual and all sorts of familiar characters from Geico that I am actually contemplating making an insurance inquiry. Together, these insurance companies in particular have combined to nearly beat me into insurance-quote submission. The last time I changed car insurance companies was after seeing a plane at the beach flying a banner for all of us who could see encouraging us to make a call. It was - for me, the last straw. I called the company the following week and was indeed rewarded for that call: hundreds in premium savings.

Likewise, DraftKings, Fanduel and BetMGM have combined to nearly entice me into entering their world of online, sportsbook betting. Unfortunately, I have a much better grasp of the jargon and issues addressed by car insurance advertisers (having been a Certified Financial Planner in my previous profession). With respect to the sportsbooks, even though I'm a long time "sports guy," and as such understand the nature and risks of anticipating a desired outcome, I've rarely ventured outside the lines. Those lines being an NFL most-winners pool held weekly in season at my wife Dina's former employer, a season-ending Super Bowl point-totals-at-end-of-each-quarter thing, and a yearly participation in the annual NCAA's "bracketology," (which I've actually won once).

But the modern sportsbook and even the individuals hired by the radio and television networks to discuss/albeit recommend the various "plays;" the over-under, the parlays and all the extra-special, apparent can't-miss,

opportunities for new/first-time bettors/gamblers hyped as if there really is nothing to lose by playing and only money to win, is all too much for me to process and understand. After listening to all the noise, I really feel a need to take a class to protect myself from simply losing/throwing money away because I think I understand, but likely understand very little of the actual risk/reward dynamic. Certainly, I can appreciate the excitement of winning money at the expense of others, but as most would attest, at the very least; expecting outcomes will satisfy your financial needs is a slippery slope at best and a rabbit hole at worst (why else the "If you become afflicted to gambling" advisories on all the advertisements).

The car insurance companies are certain we all want to save money on such necessary got-to-haves like car insurance. And the sportsbooks are betting (pun intended) that we all want to find free money and are not opposed to taking a chance to get it. A chance which if successful, might actually provide the extra money needed to pay their car insurance premiums. I fear however, that once dipping my wallet into the gambling waters, and win a little, but likely lose more, it might be difficult to extract myself from their figurative clutches. The car insurance companies are sort of the same. They entice us by advertising lower prices then hope to retain customers by offering various other incentives such as "accident forgiveness," "vanishing deductibles" and the like. In effect, they're both trying to bait us and hope we don't switch. Their motivation is quite similar: they want our money and they want us beholden to them. It's not ideal, but it sure is prevalent. In each instance, you're "betting" money on an outcome which is totally out of your control: predicting scores and predicting whether you'll have a car accident or not. Whose to know? Not me. In addition, I've grown weary - and skeptical of the never-ending pursuit of my dollars. Besides, I got out of the predicting business as soon as I received my "terminal" cancer diagnosis in late Feb., 2009.

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



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