

# CONNECTION

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station

## Snow: It's Complicated

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### Beautiful but ...

Early on in the storm on Monday, cars slid off Newington Road in southern Fairfax County. There was no salt, no plows to be seen, and some drivers with little to no snow experience.

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PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

## Secret Garden Won't Yield Its Secrets

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## What's Coming for Braddock Road?

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## NEWS

### Fire Department Staffing

Due to an increase in the number of COVID cases among staff, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department has implemented temporary staffing adjustments to maintain the highest level of service possible to our community while balancing personnel challenges. At the time of this announcement, 66 employees were positive for COVID. An additional 12 FCFRD staff were in quarantine.

Command Staff have reviewed data sets and options to determine the appropriate adjustments to achieve the safest balance of emergency response, including:

❖ Temporary cross staffing among six units, including a Hazardous Materials Unit, a Hazardous Materials Support Unit, and four tankers located throughout the county. Cross staffing allows apparatus to remain in service and available for response.

❖ Temporarily placing four units out of service. Tower Ladder 405 (Franconia), Medic 408B (Annandale), Medic 409B (Mount Vernon), Medic 410B (Bailey's Crossroads). It is important to note that

the medic units are located at stations that have two EMS units assigned to them. One EMS unit will remain in service at each station.

❖ Requesting our volunteer partners to assist with staffing transport units.

Adjustments and staffing are evaluated daily. Units will remain in-service if staffing permits.

"The recent rise in COVID cases has affected everyone including first responders. These temporary adjustments are the result of data-informed decisions made to minimize the impact of staffing changes on our communities and ensure that the men and women of FCFRD can continue providing the highest quality fire suppression and emergency medical services to the communities we serve. We must balance the ability to carry out the mission of our department with the health, safety, wellness, and morale of our responders," said Fire Chief John Butler.

The FCFRD has 1,260 career staff. Currently, 85.4% of FCFRD personnel are vaccinated. Per county policy, all other personnel are required to be tested regularly.



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The lots are cleared for incoming students and staff, or for people to pick up food or devices to take class online.



The FCPS snow plan starts early in the morning.

## Snow and Schools

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he freak storm of Jan. 3 took many by surprise, but in the parking lot of Hayfield Secondary School in Fairfax County, snow operations were in motion just after the first flakes hit the ground. It was that way all over the county.

Typically when snow is forecasted, the wheels go in motion at the school system at 2 a.m. the night before so the school day can go on as soon as possible. There are 35 plows in the school system's fleet, and 45 vendor plows to help out. Depending on the severity of the storm, there are "approximately 50 skid steers that assist as well," said school spokesperson Jennifer Sellers. Independent contractors available on top of that, and Sellers said this storm dumped enough snow that the contractors were called out the next day.

In addition to the parking lots, there are surrounding streets that need clearing as well, which are normally under the county and state systems, so the school system works with Fairfax County Department of Transportation and Virginia Department of Transportation as well.

"We coordinate with them and assist each other," Sellers added.

The school system has three-to-four salt sources located around Fairfax County, but depending on logistics of these sites, FCPS uses other salt sources at the county DOT sites.

### Go or No Go

At one time, families would gather around the radio and television to hear the status of schools for the coming day, but it's now online. The word goes out through social media and the FCPS website. The school system hashed out the snow day plan in October this year and posted it on the website. "The first five inclement weather days will be traditional inclement weather days.



At Hayfield Secondary, the plow was operating while flakes continued to come down.

These five days may occur consecutively due to a single weather event or may take place as several individual events," it reads. With virtual learning procedures from the pandemic, there have been questions about whether snow days could be virtual days on social media, but this plan is in place for the time being.

In the past, any days the schools were closed beyond the given number of snow days were added on to the end of the year,

The communication and snow removal system continues to evolve to keep all the boxes checked.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION



The storm on Jan. 3 dumped more than was initially expected, as much as a foot of snow. Franconia had 11.8 inches; Rose Hill measured 10 inches; Fairfax Station measured 8.2 inches, according to the National Weather Service.

or taken from the spring break days, but this may also be outdated. "Once these five days have been taken, FCPS will use the flexibility provided by the General Assembly to have unscheduled virtual learning days, wherever possible, to maintain continuity of learning," the website says.

To access virtual learning, students must have taken home the computers the night before, and since this storm came on a Monday after the holiday break, it may not

have happened.

The school system has a system to allow students to pick up their devices if that is needed, and get food if needed, so a clear parking lot is vital in these cases.

"Please be aware that the goal is to provide food to students wherever possible during inclement weather days," FCPS said. Weekly meal kit distribution will be done at the regular locations from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 6.

## New Year, New Laws

On Jan. 1, the minimum wage was raised from \$9.50 per hour to \$11 per hour; and more.

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

**W**e have just welcomed the new year, giving us a fresh start and endless possibilities, though starting with a big snowstorm and loss of power for many of us may not be so auspicious. But in all seriousness, here's to a much better year for everyone in 2022!

Indeed, the moment the clock struck midnight on Jan. 1, some important laws that the General Assembly passed during last year's session became effective for the first time. As we gear up for the start of the 2022 General Assembly session in just one week, it would be remiss of me not to ensure that you are informed about the Commonwealth's new laws.

One of the most significant

changes in 2022 is the continuation of the increase in Virginia's minimum wage. On Jan. 1, the minimum wage was raised from \$9.50 per hour to \$11 per hour. Under Democratic leadership, Virginia's minimum wage has seen a 50% increase over the last two years and will have a lasting positive impact on Virginia's working families.

The minimum insurance coverage required for vehicles in Virginia increased for the first time since the 1970s. For all policies effective from Jan. 1, 2022, to January 1, 2025, the coverage requirements for liability insurance for crashes where one person is killed or injured increase from \$25,000 up to \$30,000. For cases involving two or more people, the amount rises from \$50,000 to \$60,000. Make sure to check with your insurance

provider to ensure that your policy meets this minimum.

A new five-cent tax on disposable plastic bags took effect in Fairfax County (along with Arlington County and the City of Alexandria — it is a local option) as a measure to reduce the impact of single-use plastics on our environment. This tax will be charged at grocery stores, drug stores, and convenience stores. The money raised will fund environmental cleanup, education, and reusable bags for recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC).

Starting with this year's elections, May municipal elections for towns and cities will now be held in November along with the rest of the Commonwealth. The date for primary elections will also shift from the second to the third Tuesday in June.

Another law going into effect



Krizek

bans the use of animals for cosmetic testing in Virginia, which will be followed on July 1 with a ban on the sale of any cosmetics that were developed using animal testing. This law places Virginia as a forerunner in the fight against animal cruelty. Virginia was the fourth state to pass this law, and four more have followed suit since.

The DMV can now issue "identification privilege cards" to non-drivers in the undocumented community. Undocumented children will also now be able to receive an ID. In addition, persons 70 years of age or older may exchange a valid Virginia driver privilege card for an identification privilege card at no fee.

And finally, any section of U.S. Route 1 in Virginia that is still named "Jefferson Davis Highway," after the former president of the Confederacy, will be renamed to "Emancipation Highway"

## My Elected Representative

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

**I**n the general election in 2021 through a constitutional amendment, Virginia voters decided to transfer the majority party responsibility of turning the census count of persons in the state into as much as practicable 100 House of Delegates districts, 40 Senate districts and 11 congressional districts to a nonpartisan election redistricting process. The outcome of the vote was not even close — 2.77 million in favor and 1.45 million opposed. The process to keep the outcome as independent as possible was clunky and inefficient but in the end produced a defensible result that will move Virginia into a leadership role of independent redistricting. A reform goal I had worked on for more than 40 years has become a reality.

A scan of the new maps as drawn by the Supreme Court when the commission could not come to a conclusion on a set of maps does not contain any salamander-shaped districts or any grotesque shapes designed to protect the interests of incumbents. The Washington Post described the outcome of the new redistricting procedure as "ending a contentious redistricting process that for the

first time gave no say to the state's elected officials."

There had been much criticism that the Supreme Court could not render an unbiased decision because they are political appointees proved to be misguided. As the Court Order stated, it has "fully complied with federal and state law in the following order of precedence:

- ❖ The United States Constitution, particularly Article I, Section 2, and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment;

- ❖ Applicable federal statutes, particularly the Voting Rights Act of 1965, 52 u.s.c. § 10301;

- ❖ The Constitution of Virginia, particularly Article II, Sections 6 to 6-A; and

- ❖ Applicable Virginia statutes, particularly Code §§ 30-399(E), 24.2-304.04, and any other relevant provision in Chapter 3 of Title 24.2 of the Code of Virginia.

Although it may have taken you a decade to learn the number of your delegate and senate districts, be aware that all those numbers have changed. My previously numbered 36th district is now the 7th House of Delegates district. Details of the new districts can be found at [https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/districting/2021\\_virginia\\_re](https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/districting/2021_virginia_re)

**"A defensible result that will move Virginia into a leadership role of independent redistricting"**

districting\_memo.pdf. Discussion of the impact of the new maps is available at [www.vpap.org](http://www.vpap.org).

Not everyone is happy with the new maps. Having witnessed the redistricting of the Virginia General Assembly over 40 years I can confirm that it is never a smooth and easy process because every incumbent argues for safe districts

for themselves and for their party. Every redistricting has been followed by a decade of court suits. That is not likely to occur this year. The legislature can get underway with the important tasks in front of it and spend less time on redistricting as the people indicated in their vote for the constitutional amendment.

### Let Us Know Your View

Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

## Beautiful but ...

Early on in the storm on Monday, cars slid off Newington Road in southern Fairfax County. There was no salt, no plows to be seen, and some drivers with little to no snow experience.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

## Meet the Commander

West Springfield Police Station Commander, Captain Gregory Malarkey and Deputy Commander, Lieutenant Loriann LaBarca assigned to the station November 2020 and September 2021, respectively, held a "Meet the Commander" session for the public on Dec. 13 as part of county-wide community engagement efforts.

## Meet Our Monthly Featured Artists, 2nd Saturday, Jan. 8

The Workhouse Arts Center has over 60 resident visual artists throughout its artist buildings as well as the Arches Gallery. Each month, the Arts Center features individual artists or a group of artists from each building to exhibit a current body of work. During our Second Saturday Art Walk they are onsite to speak about their work during the

exhibit opening reception.

Pay a visit to the galleries and art displays at the Workhouse Arts Center Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m., Sunday noon – 5 p.m. Don't miss the first Second Saturday Art Walk of 2022 on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022 from 6 - 9 p.m.

## Telegraph Road at Hayfield Road Fairfax County

*Virtual* Public Information Meeting

**Wednesday, January 26, 2022, 7 p.m.**

<https://www.virginiadot.org/TelegraphatHayfield>

**Find out about** potential improvements in the area of Telegraph Road (Route 611) and Hayfield Road (Route 635) that aim to reduce congestion, improve operations and enhance pedestrian mobility. The improvements include adding a second northbound Telegraph Road lane through the intersection, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) curb ramp upgrades, reconfiguring southbound Telegraph Road just beyond Hayfield Road by converting the existing on-road parking to a second through lane, and converting the eastbound Hayfield Road through lane to a shared left-turn through lane. Additional options to be discussed include the potential widening of the footprint of Telegraph Road to the west or to the east in the area of the intersection, and upgrading and/or adding pedestrian facilities.

The meeting will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at <https://www.virginiadot.org/TelegraphatHayfield>. The project team will make a short presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and answer questions for about an hour after the presentation.

**Review** project information and meeting details on the webpage above or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2907 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

In accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement created pursuant to the Code of Virginia §10.1-1188(b), VDOT has determined the potential improvements are in a list of project activities exempt from the State Environmental Review Process due to a minimal effect on the existing natural and historic resources. However, all required environmental clearances and regulatory approvals will be obtained prior to project construction.

**Give your comments** during the meeting, or by **February 7, 2022** via the comment form on the project website, by mail to Ms. Hong Ha, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or by email to [meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov](mailto:meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov). Please reference "Telegraph Road at Hayfield Road" in the subject line.

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State Project: 0611-029-467, P101, R201, C501  
UPC: 116086

*In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held Monday, February 7, 2022 at the same time.*

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Laurel Hill Park's iconic lantern was mysteriously relit in October shedding a dim light around it, but darkness still surrounds its origins, builder, and past ownership.



A taller monument, similar to the lantern, stands near the site of a historic, elaborate garden.



Three stately wide sets of steps lead into the three tiered, quartz rock-walled gardens.



Volunteers, including Lauren Struble of Alexandria, worked to clear the steps and garden tiers of invasive plants, including non-native Wisteria and English ivy during the winter 2021.



An 8-column quartz pergola and brick barbecue are just visible in one tier of the garden through extensive vine growth and fallen trees.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/ THE CONNECTION



Volunteers discovered a cement bridge with iron rails over a rectangular pool connecting two garden tiers.

# Origins of Historic Lorton Property Still Dark

Secret Garden emerges from shrouds of invasive plants with work of volunteers.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Laurel Hill Park's iconic lantern is mysteriously re-lit and glowing with a faint light visible at night, but there's been no new light shown on the mystery of the lantern's origins, who built it or owned it decades ago. The land where it sits was part of a July 2002 land transfer to the Fairfax County Park Authority. Located in Laurel Hill Park near the park's Central Green, the cement and quartz monument with iron grill work, once lit with electricity but dark until recently, presents a quirky and artful marker for the park, and a reminder of the land's historic uses.



During the volunteers' first season of work, one tier of the garden was significantly recovered from invasive plants.

The lantern generally is held by locals to be one of two identical structures that marked the entrance lane for a house of some significance. The house and its substantial garden can be seen in grainy pictures in Fairfax County's historic photograph collection in the year 1937, but they disappear by 1953 pictures. The second lantern, if not a myth, is gone now too, as is the foundation of the 1900s era house; both likely the victims of the rerouting of Lorton, Telegraph, or Workhouse roads, or some prior catastrophe.

As intriguing as the house and lantern, park volunteers have re-discovered and begun restoring the intricate "secret" 1930s era garden with permission of the Park Authority. Tucked away in an obscure section of the park, guarded by dense growths of black berry thorns and poison ivy, it has been seen by only a few. Descriptions of the monuments and garden are included in Fairfax County's application to the U.S. Department of Interior for designation in the National Register of Historic Places. The Register describes it only as "the remnants of a sunken garden once associated with a building that previously stood on the site ... established by 1937."

**THE THREE-TIERED** garden uses quartz hardscape matching the lantern to edge its garden walls, as well as to create an eight

column pergola. Along with a brick barbecue, the features create an outdoor living section of the garden; evocative of the current trend for outdoor living spaces. A decorative cement bridge connects two tiers of the garden on either side of a rectangular cement garden pool. Curved cement side-walks with inlaid decoration grace walkways to wide slate and brick steps leading into the garden tiers; features unusual in simple houses of the era. A short distance away are traces of another garden area with iron trellises and, most notably, a larger version of the lantern, also of quartz with high wooden rails and a metal cap.

Another feature, a raised, enclosed, unsurfaced tennis court is nearby, visible in historic pictures after the house had disappeared and likely used by D.C. workhouse staff.

**WHO OWNED** the house and its substantial grounds? Hours of historical research have led to more dead ends than certain answers. It's known the property was part of the area seized by the District of Columbia in 1910 to provide land for the Lorton workhouse.



Volunteer Felix Cherkasskiy removes invasive English ivy from the quartz wall in a corner of the garden.

At the time of the land condemnation and seizure (in modern terms, eminent domain), the property was owned by Luther A. Denty. He received \$3,349.24 for 212 acres, including his 84 acre parcel which included the land where the house and garden have been located. The payment amounted to approximately \$16 per acre. Denty was a merchant, whose father, Alexander Denty was a wealthy merchant with significant land holdings. Denty likely had adequate means to build a substantial house with elaborate gardens during his ownership. But did he have the opportunity? He purchased the land in 1902 from an heir of Elizabeth Violet, her son Thompson Violet. In 1909 the court realized that the deed for the 1902 sale had not been recorded and corrected the error. Because of the error, no taxes were collected for the parcel during six years of Denty's ownership, so no information is available on possible improvements made during that time. The next year the property was seized by the government. Soon after, in 1912, Denty died of tuberculosis at age 38. He is buried at the historic Pohick Episcopal Church, the home church to founding fathers George Washington and George Mason.



Plot on which the 'secret garden' sits was sold in a Commissioner's Sale on Feb 16, 1874 for payment of debts of Elizabeth Violette

Could the house and garden have been present when purchased by L.A. Denty? Thompson Violet was the prior owner. He purchased the property at a commissioner's sale of land in February 1874. That sale was decreed by the Circuit Court of Fairfax County for payment of his mother's debts at the time of her death. The sale notice for Elizabeth Violet's land described the property:



Volunteers, including Tom Krzywicki of Fairfax, uncovered the bridge creating a path between two of the garden tiers.

"is without improvements, but is of good quality and well located."

Could Thompson Violet have improved the property prior to the commission sale? The four children of Elizabeth had divided the land they inherited from their mother. In the chancery court records there is mention that Thompson intended to give some of the land to his son Milton on which to build a house. The court record indicates Milton paid for lumber to be milled for the building, but later tried to recoup the money paid to the sawmill. This suggests the lumber was not used and the house was not built while Thompson or Milton Violet was the owner.

Could the house have been built earlier as Elizabeth Violet's home? She was a widowed farmer who owned between 50 to 116 acres during her lifetime. In 1861, tax records show she owned three enslaved people, two horses, ten cattle, and five hogs. During that period in the early 19th century, farmers in southeast Fairfax County had focused on tobacco production which exhausted the soil. Much of the land was left fallow and uncultivated beginning in the 1840s until after the Civil War. Violet was exempt from taxes between 1861-1864 but speculation is that by this time her farm was not productive.

Reports of the day indicate that during the Civil War her property was used as a landmark as well as a campsite. Though no major battles took place in the immediate area, her house was the site of a skirmish on March 22, 1863. The 4th Virginia Cavalry surprised members of the 2nd Pennsylvania Cavalry who had camped on Violet's farm that evening. The skirmish left three Union soldiers wounded or dead, 20 Union soldiers captured, and two Confederates wounded. Could she have built a substantial house and garden which captured the attention of soldiers as a land-

mark? Or was her house more fitting for a poor farmer who died with debt?

**FINALLY, COULD** the house and gardens have been built by and for the use of workhouse staff?

Other historic references indicate that the prison superintendent was housed in the 18th century Laurel Hill House, from which the area gets its name. Laurel Hill House was the home of Revolutionary War patriot William Lindsey, who built the house after his purchase of 1,200 acres in 1787 and 1790. He was a carpenter and tavern-keeper and one of the first owners of large tracts of land in the area. Laurel Hill House, still standing but in disrepair, also has terraced gardens with brick hardscape built circa 1937. Since this is the known house and garden used by the superintendent, the highest ranking person at the workhouse, it seems unlikely another more elegant house and garden were built by the prison for a lower level staff person.

While the lantern is shining a new light in Lorton, this bit of history is still dark.

History detectives who can shed additional light on the story of the lantern, house, or gardens are invited to contact The Connection editors@connectionnews-papers.com

To get involved in invasive plant removal, see [www.volunteer.fairfaxcounty.gov/invasive-plants](http://www.volunteer.fairfaxcounty.gov/invasive-plants).

*The author extends thanks to Elaine McRey, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library; and Georgia Brown and staff of the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center for their hours of helpful assistance in the research of this story.*

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# Plans for Braddock Road Include 3 Intersection Redesigns

Upcoming presentation planned, public will have a chance to weigh in.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

There's a crosswalk across busy Burke Lake Road that people in Kings Park use to get to the Kings Park shopping center, and an update is in store for this small but important venue as part of the coming Braddock Road Multimodal Improvements project. The plans for the crosswalk and three major intersections along Braddock Road will be the focus of a virtual meeting on Jan. 13 at 7 p.m.

This project is a joint project for the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Fairfax County Department of Transportation to construct improvements along three miles of Braddock Road between Humphries Drive in Burke and Ravensworth Road in Annandale. The multimodal and access-management project includes the eastbound and westbound Braddock Road ramps to southbound I-495 and a half-mile of Ravensworth Road between Braddock Road and Heritage Drive.

Kevin McCarthy lives nearby in Burke and has driven through the intersection at Burke Lake Road, which is angular, has turn lanes, a traffic signal and is a feeder for commuters from Rolling Road. "It's a tricky intersection," he said.

According to VDOT traffic counts from 2019, Braddock Road averages about 71,000 vehicles a day, and Ravensworth Road, which feeds into Braddock, averages about 14,000 vehicles a day. During rush hours, it's a major commuting route for traffic coming from Burke, West Springfield, Fairfax, and Prince William County since it links to Ox Road or "123" as locals call it.

The improvements that will be considered include:

- ❖ Intersection enhancements, including at Rolling Road, Wakefield Chapel Road/Danbury Forest Drive and Burke Lake Road
- ❖ New and upgraded shared-use paths along both sides of Braddock Road
- ❖ A pedestrian overpass just west of Burke Lake Road

The project's right of way and construction will be done in two phases: Southampton Drive to Ravensworth Road (Phase 1) and Humphries Drive to Southampton Drive (Phase 2). Phase 1 is fully funded and Phase 2 is partially funded, VDOT says. The project is financed with federal, state including Smart Scale, and local funding. Estimated project costs continue to be developed as the proposed improvements and preliminary design are refined.

According to the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the SMART SCALE is Virginia's data-driven prioritization process to fund the right transportation projects that generate the greatest benefit for taxpayers. SMART SCALE stands for System for the Management and Allocation of Resources for Transportation, and the key factors used in evaluating a

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION



Looking across Burke Lake Road, this crosswalk will be part of the improvements to Braddock Road.



MAP BY FCDOT

The project map shows the areas of concentration.



Beacon lights may be put on this crosswalk to improve the crossing experience.

## MAJOR MILESTONES

- First Virtual Public Information Meeting - Jan. 13, 2022
- First Virtual Public Information Meeting Comment Deadline - Feb. 24, 2022
- Second Public Information Meeting - Fall 2022
- Design Public Hearing - Winter 2022/23
- Design Approval - Spring 2023

## VIRTUAL MEETING IS

**THURSDAY, JAN. 13 AT 7 PM.**

<https://www.virginiadot.org/BraddockMultimodal>

project's merits: improvements to Safety, Congestion reduction, Accessibility, Land use, Economic development and the Environment.

VDOT says that "the project aims to improve multimodal safety, mobility and accessibility for all users." There is a pedestrian bridge included in Phase 2. The bridge will be west of the Burke Lake Road intersection but east of the Rolling Road intersection, so that puts it about at the Kings Park Shopping Center.

In October 2018, when this idea was discussed with local residents and the Braddock Road Task Force, then-Supervisor John Cook, discussed the county proposal for an overpass across Braddock Road between Red Fox Drive (East) and the Burke Lake Road/Woodland Way intersection.

In addition, the county also offered the option of placing an overpass across Braddock Road between the Kings Park Drive intersection and the Stone Haven Drive intersection or across Braddock Road between the Southampton Drive intersection and the Wakefield Chapel Road intersection. Ultimately, the location of additional overpasses would depend on community interest.

Bulldozers will not be on hand anytime soon though. The project design is scheduled to be approved in Spring 2023, and then there are more public information meetings scheduled to present the traffic management plan which will impact residents in the area as well as commuters heading to the beltway.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Food stocks, other than prepared foods and alcohol, now subject to Virginia grocery tax.

# Grocery Tax Change Proposed

Alternative revenue source not identified.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Since the dumping of chests of tea in Boston Harbor by American colonists in 1773, American citizens have shown a distaste for taxes on food. The topic of eliminating Virginia's grocery tax was raised again during this year's gubernatorial race by then candidate, now Governor-elect, Glen Youngkin. This is not the first time elimination or reduction of the grocery tax has been proposed, by both Democratic and Republican politicians.

Today the grocery tax remains a major source of funding for education, transportation, and localities, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, a total of \$341 million in revenue that could be lost if the tax were abolished.

Gov. Ralph Northam (D) has proposed elimination of the 1.5 percent state portion of the tax; however the one percent portion going to localities would remain under his budget proposal. The budget proposed by the outgoing governor is under a two year cycle that must be reviewed and agreed upon by the General Assembly and enacted by the incoming governor.

Virginia now enjoys an unprecedented \$2.6 billion surplus following record economic growth and federal subsidy under the American Rescue plan. The Northam budget adds \$1.1 billion in the Revenue Stabilization fund, raising reserves to \$3.8 Billion.

With the new Youngkin administration's lofty goals to "restore excellence in education ... rebuilding schools, raising teacher pay, and investing in special education," Youngkin has not said what funds would

be put toward those goals if the grocery tax source is eliminated.

Originally enacted in 1966, the University of Virginia attributes adoption of the two percent state-wide retail sales and use tax and one percent local option sales tax, to a "public mood change to a desire for significant progress in public services and specifically to public education." The primary purpose of the tax was for upgrading public education. The first year's revenue of \$109.6 million had grown to \$349.8 million five years later in 1972. Interest in public education remains high as evidenced in the recent Youngkin-McAuliffe race.

The grocery tax became a campaign issue in the 1973 campaign between incumbent Governor Mills E Godwin Jr., who had enacted the tax, and Democratic challenger Henry Howell, who was then the Lieutenant Governor. Godwin narrowly won election to his second term. Democratic Gov. Douglas Wilder (1990-1994) also ran on the populist message of "no new taxes" and sought to remove taxes on prescription drugs and groceries.

Such taxes are considered "regressive" meaning they have a greater impact on low income people than the wealthy. Because the tax is applied uniformly it has the effect of taking a greater percentage of income from low income earners than from high income earners; the average tax burden decreases with income.

Although 45 states have general sales taxes, only 13, including Virginia, still tax groceries; Virginia is one of ten that impose a lower rate on groceries than their general sales tax rate, according to the Center On Budget and Policy Priorities (April 2020).

# Virginia Now More Humane for Animals

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Virginia became one of only eight states to prohibit testing of cosmetics, and cosmetic components, on animals when its humane cosmetic act when into effect on Jan. 1. The act also prohibits the sale within the Commonwealth of any cosmetic which was developed or manufactured using animal testing that was conducted on or after Jan. 1; enforcement of the sales provision begins July 1. Violations are subject to a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 and an additional \$1,000 for each day violations continue.

"Virginia is officially cruelty free. After years of advocating for this policy I am proud to say that all personal care products are made without harming animals," said Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-33), sponsor of the bill, during the 2021 Virginia General Assembly session. Boysko and Del. Kaye Kory (D-38), sponsored the bills in the Senate (SB1379) and House (HB2250). Both worked over multiple years to pass humane testing legislation. Both were recognized as legislators of the month in March for their work by Cruelty Free International, a 100+ year old British organization which works to end animal experimentation worldwide.

In 2018, Boysko, then a delegate, also successfully introduced legislation which requires a manufacturer or contract testing facility to use an alternative test method to animal testing when available.

Under Virginia code, "cosmetic" means any product intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled, or sprayed on, introduced into,

SEE MORE HUMANE, PAGE 10

## We Need Your Help Again

We are sincerely grateful and thankful to you for helping in 2021 to save one of America's oldest newspapers, the Alexandria Gazette Packet, publishing continuously since 1784



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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped to keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

Each local newspapers mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before Federal PPP funding arrived, and both made our survival possible. We now await a decision for a grant from Rebuild Virginia in early February that we hope will help us in 2022 and beyond. But we need help to survive the first quarter, always a brutal time for cash flow in weekly newspapers. Thank you.

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The ongoing pandemic continues to crush many newspapers across the country, and our newspapers continue to be at risk. The Northern Virginia area's best read and most trusted source for community news includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Con-

nection Newspapers in the metropolitan region. The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyper local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning in 2020. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. In the fall of 2021 we saw the return of some advertising for events and Grand Openings, but now omicron clouds the horizon in so many ways. Revenue still remains short of expenses despite our greatly curtailed costs.

Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless residents have grown up with these papers covering significant moments in the lives of family and children, news, community events, school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cats. Internet news and large national newspapers cannot provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers and the Alexandria Gazette Packet provide. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of local community newspapers.

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# NEWS

## Inova Opens Vehicle-Side Testing Site

In response to the increase in Omicron COVID-19 cases and high volume of emergency department and urgent care visits, Inova is opening a vehicle-side testing site for symptomatic individuals in the community.

Testing is available by appointment only for individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Asymptomatic patients or individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 will not be tested.

The testing site will open by appointment at 2990 Telestar Ct, Falls Church, Va. Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Additional testing hours on weekends may be added depending on demand.

Appointments are required for COVID-19 testing and can be scheduled by calling 571-472-6843. Inova offers PCR testing only (no rapid tests) and results will be available within 1-2 days through Inova's My-Chart Patient Portal

Inova continues to offer COVID-19 testing for our primary care patients with mild symptoms. Please contact your primary care office to schedule an appointment to receive an evaluation and testing as needed.

Individuals can also visit the Virginia Department of Health COVID-19 Testing Site for a list of other COVID-19 test sites.

## Virginia Now More Humane for Animals

FROM PAGE 9

or otherwise applied to the human body or any part thereof for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering the appearance, including, without limitation, personal hygiene products such as deodorant, shampoo, or conditioner.

Although Virginia is in the forefront of humane cosmetics legislation, there is no federal cruelty-free cosmetics law. U.S. Rep. Jim Moran, introduced the first national humane cosmetics testing legislation in 2014; becoming the first U.S. official to receive the Lord Houghton Award from Cruelty Free International. That legislation did not pass. In 2021, U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Moran's successor, U.S. Rep Donald Beyer introduced bills "to substantially restrict the use of animals testing for cosmetics." Neither bill has moved forward, leaving the U.S. behind other developed countries in instituting humane cosmetics practices. Over 40 countries worldwide have already ended the sale of new animal-tested cosmetics and rely on alternatives such as biochemical or cell based systems and computer modeling techniques instead.

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KAYLA GARCIA/COURTESY WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

Workhouse Arts Center: Cast of Workhouse Arts Center production of the musical "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"

## 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood'

Light-hearted musical mystery with vital audience participation at Workhouse Arts Center.

BY DAVID SIEGEL  
THE CONNECTION

"We wanted to provide Northern Virginia audiences with a unique evening of musical storytelling. So we selected 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood' by Rupert Holmes for our next production," said Joseph Wallen, Artistic Director, Workhouse Arts Center. "It has an unusual opportunity for the audience to vote on certain aspects of the performance including the identity of the murderer."

Holmes' based his Tony Award winning musical "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" on an unfinished novel by Charles Dickens. "Holmes asks the audience to help solve the crime," added Wallen.

"There are a handful of moments towards the conclusion of the show, where the audience is asked to vote on the 'real' identities

### Where and When

Workhouse Arts Center presents "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" at W3 Theatre, 9518 Workhouse Way, Building W3, Lorton, Va. 22079. Performances: Weekends Jan. 7 to Jan. 23, 2022. Fri & Sat at 8 p.m. Sun at 2 p.m. Tickets: Military (active duty or retired) and Seniors (62 and over): \$25. Student (with ID): \$25. General Admission \$30. Visit [www.workhousearts.org](http://www.workhousearts.org) or call 703-584-2900. Notes: Due to some suggestive humor, parental guidance is suggested. All persons attending will be required to show proof of Covid vaccination.

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of the characters and the performers are then tasked with completing the remainder of the musical using the solution provided by the audience." indicated Wallen. There are dozens of possible endings; each of which requires the cast, crew and band must be ready to implement. There are over two dozen witty musical num-

bers.

Dickens died before it was completed so his death left many questions to answer. The pop songwriter Rupert Holmes ("Escape (The Pina Colada Song)"), decided to write the musical as a playful who-done-it. The show earned Holmes the Tony Award for both book and score, as well as Drama Desk Awards for lyrics, music, the book and orchestrations, among various other honors.

"The style of performance is done in the manner of traditional British Music Hall, a relative of American vaudeville," explained Liz Colandene, Workhouse Performing Arts Coordinator. "There is an emcee (The Chairman) that introduces scenes, directly interacts with the audience- completely breaking down any idea of the 'fourth wall.' Some scenes even have the performers in the audience areas, playing with patrons during the show." There are more than two dozen musical numbers.

The Workhouse Arts Center production of "Drood" is directed by Workhouse veterans Danilo Stapula, with music direction by Paige Austin Rammlecamp and choreography by Stefan Sittig.

Inviting audiences to the light-hearted "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," Colandene added that the Workhouse looks forward to the audience participation; "the interactive nature of 'Drood' will make guests feel as if they are part of the show." After all, no Workhouse theatre patron is more than 50 feet from the performance area, adding to the in-person energy and the ever-changing possible answers to who slew the character Edwin Drood.

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## No Car and No Computer



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Due to circumstances beyond my control, for two days after the deer accident, I had no car and as it happened, no computer either. The no-car situation you regular readers know about from the previous edition's column: "Oh Deer." The no-computer element just occurred as machines, technology, almost anything I guess, eventually succumbs to old age/extended use. As a result of this dual inconvenience, I can't get anywhere, literally, and figuratively. Moreover, with these two losses, temporary though they may be, I've sort of lost my way. To invoke author Robert A. Heinlein: I'm a "stranger in a strange land."

Though I now have a courtesy rental care, I don't yet have a computer. It's being delivered later in the week by Amazon. It won't be an expense as it is being paid for my part-time employer. When the computer arrives, my brother's IT guy will come over and set it up. That means I won't have that problem to solve. As for the car, in five days or so, I was told, I'll learn whether my car can be repaired or if it will be declared a total loss. Soon thereafter I imagine, if the car is "totaled," I'll be receiving a settlement check from the insurance company. Then the fun will begin.

If in fact, I receive a settlement check, since the car I was driving was a model year 2000 Honda Accord, unfortunately the amount will be nowhere near what I'll need to purchase a new car. The net effect will be an increase in my monthly car payment from zero dollars to likely multiple hundreds. Money, I don't really have and are not eager to spend. However, the new computer can't arrive quickly enough. And given the evolution in technology since I last bought a computer, 10 years ago at least, I can well imagine the improvement/benefit in my life it will provide. As for the improvement/benefits in my life a new car will provide? Not really important to me if it costs money, which it will. I am not looking to add another car with bells and whistles since I already have a new-ish car with all the bells and whistles already. I was not looking to whistle any more bells however. What I/we need is only one car payment. Which, for the past 13 years, since my mother passed away in 2008, and I inherited her car, I've had. And I've enjoyed every minute of it. Now, I'm afraid, the party is over.

Now this is where not having a working computer at home becomes a problem. I can't research a potential solution. Consequently, I'm stuck in a kind of limbo between the car I used to own and the car I'm about to own. Right now, I'm driving a rental car, a temporary solution. What I need is a permanent solution. Sure, I receive a daily newspaper and I do have a car to drive, but I'm not going to drive randomly around and/or trust the classified ads to direct me to a proper solution. What I need is a version of Indeed.

The conclusion: I need a computer before I need the car. In fact, it's very likely that if I'm told the Honda is totaled, having a new computer will provide me with the tools and information necessary to perhaps make an intelligent and acceptable decision. Acceptable meaning a moderate impact to our finances. For me, it's not so much about creature comforts as it is about this creature's comfort.

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



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