

Improving a Community Gem?

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What is the McLean Central Park Development Plan? Attend the Wednesday, March 2 virtual meeting, phone or listen to the recording. <https://www.publicinput.com/McLeanCentralPark>

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Survivors Remember Iwo Jima

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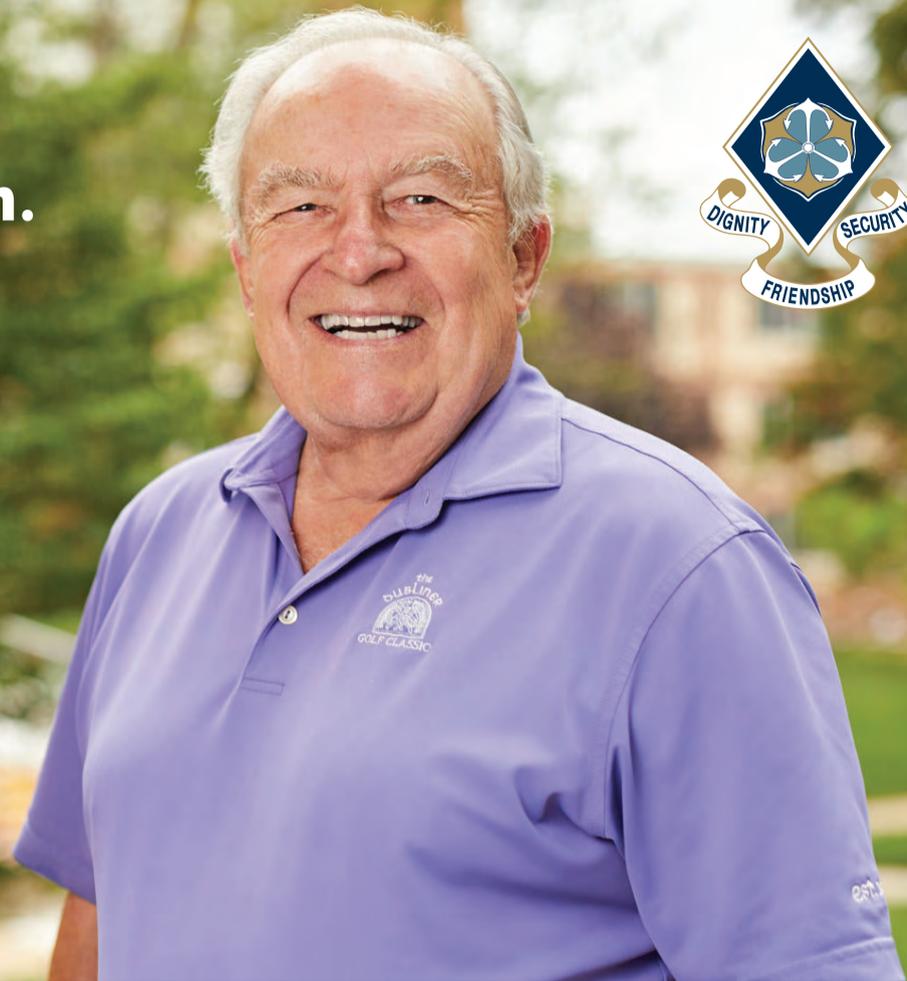
Will Your Property Tax Go Up?

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NEWS

McLean Central Park Development Plan Meeting This Wednesday

Making a great park even better, funds available.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Wednesday, March 2 the public is welcome to attend the virtual information meeting at 7 p.m. about the McLean Central Park Development Concept. It can be viewed online at www.publicinput.com/McLeanCentralPark or accessed by phone at 855-925-2801 and entering the access code 2881. Preregistration is optional.

Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville), who represents McLean on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, said before the meeting that he loves McLean Central Park and is excited that there is now funding to implement the plan. According to Foust, the park is a beautiful 28-acre gem, “with significant natural spaces and nice active recreation areas.”

“In 2013, after extensive public outreach, the Park Authority adopted a revised Master Plan that will make our great park even better,” he said.

McLean Central Park is located at 1468 Dolley Madison Boulevard, next to the McLean Community Center and the Dolley Madison Library. In addition to its natural setting, the popular park has tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, and paths available to the community.

“I am especially pleased that there is still support for building an amphitheater,” Foust said. He added that he believes the amphitheater will serve as a much-needed community gathering place for McLean and a magnet that will attract many fun and exciting activities to the park.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

What is the McLean Central Park Development Plan? Attend the Wednesday, March 2 virtual meeting, phone or listen to the recording.

As background to the McLean Central Park Development Project, a virtual meeting was held on May 24, 2021, to share an early development proposal. Through July 30, 2021, the public provided feedback on the concept. It was utilized to develop a newly revised concept. Its design is responsive to the proposals put forth by individuals and stakeholders interested in the project.

According to Foust, “Because of some good suggestions received during the recent public outreach effort, the Park Authority made changes to the proposed amphitheater that will make it even better.”



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

McLean Central Park offers much, but a revised plan is underway to make it even better. Tune in to learn more about the park you love now and what is proposed. <https://www.publicinput.com/McLeanCentralPark>

There will be a question and answer session during the Wednesday evening, March 2 meeting. The meeting will be recorded, and the presentation slides will be posted on the project website.

Comments regarding the revised concept

plan will be accepted until April 1, 2022, and can be sent to McLeanCentralPark@publicinput.com. For more information, please visit the project webpage; or contact the Public Information Office at 703-324-8662 or via Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Wolf Trap Area House Fire Caused by Improperly Discarded Fire Pit Ashes

On Saturday, Feb. 26, at approximately 8:45 p.m., units were dispatched for a house fire in the 1500 block of Snughill Court in the Wolf Trap area of Fairfax County.

Units arrived on the scene of a two-story, split-level, single-family home with fire evident from the rear of the house. Crews worked quickly to bring the fire under control. There were no civilian or firefighter injuries reported.

Five occupants were home at the time of the fire. One of the occupants discovered the fire when he looked out a window and saw the back of the house on fire. He alerted the other occupants,

and all self-evacuated before fire department arrival. Working smoke alarms were present and alerted after the fire was discovered.

Fire Investigators determined that the fire was accidental in nature and started on the rear deck of the house. The cause of the fire was improperly discarded ashes from an outdoor fire pit.

Five occupants were displaced because of the fire. Red Cross assistance was offered and declined. Damages as a result of the fire were approximately \$187,500.

SEE WOLF TRAP AREA HOUSE FIRE, PAGE 8



Fire investigators determined that improperly discarded ashes from an outdoor fire pit caused this house fire in the Wolf Trap neighborhood.

Environmental Issues Take Back Seat

DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM



Even with increasing evidence of climate change, there is a sparsity of bills in the current session of the General Assembly dealing with environmental and climate changes. Of greater concern is the fact that among the bills that could be classified as relating to the environment, most would turn back the clock on current laws, programs, and regulations in place to protect the environment. Virginia did not get its top ranking as a business-friendly state because of its tough environmental regulations, but its already minimal laws and programs are under attack by those who oppose government action on keeping our environment clean and on stopping climate change.

Evidence of the shift in environmental policy came earlier this year when the newly-elected Governor Glenn Youngkin announced his opposition to Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), an effort among 11 states to cap and reduce CO2 emissions from the power sector. CO2 is the major culprit in the warming of the earth that is leading to climate change and the bizarre shifts in weather and air quality. Most surprising about this shift in policy is the fact that RGGI is a cooperative, market-based approach supported by many in the industrial sector to cap and reduce

“Two bills have been making their way through the General Assembly that would strip citizen boards of their power and responsibilities in protecting air and water quality.”

CO2 emissions across the northeast region of the country without the need for government regulations.

Another concerning piece of evidence of a shifting of policy came with the new governor appointing a former Trump administration official known for his opposition to environmental protection regulations as his Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources. A review of the credentials of the appointee raised such alarm among legislators that the Senate refused to confirm the appointment, only the second such refusal in the decades of history of the cabinet system in Virginia.

Most recently two bills have been making their way through the General Assembly that would strip citizen boards of their power and responsibilities in protecting air and water quality. The impetus for the bills came from businesses and industries that felt it takes too long and is too complex to get needed air or water permits to situate their industries in Virginia. Most recently there has been a great

deal of controversy and court action about pipelines that proposed coming through Virginia. These affected industries placed the blame for the complexities of the regulation process on the need for scientific evidence and the public participation that raised questions about their plans on the State Water Control Board and the State Air Board. The bills making their way through the legislature and no doubt to be signed by the governor would strip the boards of their power.

I have taken a strong stand against the changes in the Air and Water Boards. My speech against the bills on the floor of the House of Delegates can be heard at https://youtu.be/UaAytHE-o_s, and an article I wrote with Del. Kathy Tran and an expert on the subject is available in the Washington Post at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/02/23/efforts-silence-virginias-citizens-boards-commissions-are-wrong/>. The current policies that are being implemented in Virginia can do immeasurable harm to the already fragile environment of the Commonwealth.

Looking Ahead to Critical Budget Process

The grassroots “Invest in Fairfax” coalition of community members, local families, and essential workers call on the Board to engage the public in the budget process and to invest in vital county services. Fully two years into the pandemic, it's critical that our budget reflects the values, priorities and urgent needs of our diverse community.

“We are now marking the second year of a pandemic we have not seen in 100 years. Local public services are more important than ever,” said David Edelman, Chair of the Invest in Fairfax coalition. “We need to invest in our schools to address interrupted learning. We need to invest in public health and mental health services to help residents deal with this health crisis; to name only a few priorities. Our investments and budget should reflect these needs.”

“The Fairfax League of Women Voters understands that the emergence from the Covid pandemic and the economic changes that have resulted place multiple pressures on the county as the budget planning process goes forward.

The Highest priority is the adjustment of compensation to those county employees who have borne the brunt of our service needs during the pandemic including our schools, our public health department and other public servants,” said Anu Sahai, Co-President of the Fairfax League of Women Voters. “As an organization committed to free and fair elections, we note that election reforms and increased public demands have placed a significant increase on the needs of the Board of Elections for staffing, maintenance, and capital management. The price of fair elections has gone up and we need to budget accordingly.”

“Fairfax County deserves a budget which invests in good, safe jobs for all workers, and quality public services for all working families,” said Tammie Wondong, SEIU Virginia 512 Fairfax President and a 30+ year county employee. “Frontline workers throughout our community need affordable health care, need to keep up with the cost of living, and need safe working conditions. That's why county employees are coming together in

SEIU to work with county leadership on this year's budget and at the bargaining table for future budgets. Together we will ensure that every working family can thrive.”

“The Fairfax Education Association stands with the Invest in Fairfax coalition in asking this board to ensure safety and prudence remain at the forefront of every action,” said Kimberly Adams, President of

the Fairfax Education Association. “This budget should continue to reflect our employees' hard work to keep everyone healthy as we maintain the world class services our community depends on, especially for our youngest as well as our most vulnerable residents. We expect this budget to carry the message that we are emerging

SEE INVEST IN FAIRFAX, PAGE 10

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PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

Secretary of Finance Stephen Cummings presents a bleak economic picture to the Senate Finance Committee this week.

Ditch Warfare

House Republicans push for tax cuts; Senate Democrats push back.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

On the campaign trail, Glenn Youngkin said Virginia's economy was "in the ditch." Now that he's governor, he's calling for a host of tax cuts he says will jumpstart what he calls a "rip roaring" economy. He wants to eliminate the grocery tax, double the standard deduction and postpone an increase in the gas tax.

But Senate Democrats are skeptical. "Companies are lining up — let me repeat that — lining up to come to Northern Virginia. Would they be doing that if we were taxing them out of existence? I mean give me a break," said Majority Leader Dick Saslaw this week. "How do you explain that and the fact that virtually none of us here ever get emails saying 'Oh geez you need to cut taxes?'"

During a tense meeting of the Senate Finance Committee this week, newly installed Secretary of Finance Stephen Cummings said the cost of government is outstripping economic prosperity. He pointed to data showing sluggish job growth, warning senators that revenues are strong because taxes are too high. The governor is hoping the job-growth numbers will be a persuasive argument for Senate Democrats who are skeptical of moving forward with his package of tax cuts.

"We have to be able to explain why we are not growing then because I understand that people are not complaining right now that 'you're taxing me too much,' but why is it we're lagging all these other states?" said Cummings. "Why are we lagging the national economy? There's got to be an explanation."

THE EXPLANATION for Virginia's languid recovery from the pandemic downturn might be explained by related data on unemployment. Because Virginia's unemployment rate was so much lower than other states, many experts say, the commonwealth has less ground to reclaim. States that have seen supercharged job growth are also states that suffered a much higher unemployment rate when the economy shut down.

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"A state like Florida that is more tourism and travel dependent was hit much harder at the beginning of the pandemic," said Chris Wodicka, senior policy analyst with the Commonwealth Institute. "If you measure 'recovery' in the way the administration seems to be measuring it, Virginia will look worse just based on that alone."

House Republicans tried to get Virginia to leave the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a multi-state compact created to cap and reduce emissions across 11 states. But Senate Democrats rejected that idea, which means Virginia will remain part of the group despite opposition from conservatives who say it's a drag on the economy. Critics of the environmental policy Democrats put in place when they were in charge say mandating green energy is a recipe for disaster.

"RGGI is a real and growing tax on power and companies cannot evade it by taking a third party provider," said Stephen Haner, a senior fellow at the Thomas Jefferson Institute. "And until the election there was a strong reason to worry this year could bring repeal of the Right to Work law."

IN THE COMING weeks, Senate Democrats and House Republicans will need to hammer out their differences on tax cuts. The House wants to eliminate the grocery tax while the Senate wants to let local governments keep the option to have a 1 percent sales tax on groceries. The House wants to double the standard deduction while the Senate wants to study the idea and come back to it later. And the House wants to delay an increase in the gas tax while the Senate rejects that approach.

The bottom line is that the Senate budget has about \$3 billion more in revenues than the House budget. That could end up meaning less spending on everything from environmental preservation projects to economic development programs.

The Senate budget has \$278 million more for public education, for example. Cummings says that kind of austerity is needed to make Virginia more competitive with other states, a perspective Saslaw rejected in trademark fashion.

"Listening to you, you'd think we're in the poorest, most bankrupt state in America and everything has gone to hell in a handbasket," said Saslaw.

"Saslaw can't be paying much attention to his constituents if he thinks cost of living and inflation isn't a major problem for Virginia families," said Macaulay Porter, spokeswoman for the governor.

CALENDAR

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Uncommon Valor



Survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima gather for a photo following a wreath laying at the Marine Corps War Memorial Feb. 18 in Arlington. Pictured left to right are: Roy Earle, John DeGennaro, Louis Bourgault and Ivan Hammond.

Survivors mark Iwo Jima 77th anniversary.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
THE CONNECTION

Roy Earle was just 18 years old when he enlisted in the Marines shortly after graduating from high school in 1942. For the next three years he would mark his birthday in the midst of some of the worst battles fought in the Pacific Theater of World War II, including his 21st birthday as the Battle of Iwo Jima raged around him.

“For several years, I never celebrated a birthday,” said Earle, who will turn 98 on March 5. “The best I can say is that I marked the occasion lucky to be alive.”

Earle was one of four survivors to gather in Arlington over President’s Day weekend to mark the 77th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima, one of the bloodiest in U.S. history.

“Two years ago we had more than 50 Iwo Jima survivors gather for the 75th reunion,” said David Fields, a board member of the Iwo Jima Association of America that sponsored the gathering. “This year only four veterans were able to return.”

Fields, a Vienna resident who served six years as a Marine infantry officer, is the son of the late Col. Thomas Fields, a veteran of Iwo Jima who went on to serve in Korea and Vietnam.

“Dad felt he was an old man at age 26 when he served in WWII,” Fields said. “He did not talk much about his experience on Iwo Jima, but he always said that the credit goes to the 18-year-olds, who fought with immeasurable courage. In his Company D battalion of the 5th Marine Division, 250 men in his company walked in and only 19 walked out.”

The Battle of Iwo Jima began Feb. 19, 1945. It was the first day of an intense, 36-day battle that

“For several years, I never celebrated a birthday,” “The best I can say is that I marked the occasion lucky to be alive.”

— Roy Earle, who will turn 98 on March 5

became one of the major turning points in WWII. Situated 791 miles from Japan’s capital city of Tokyo, two airfields on the small volcanic island were seen as vital in order to achieve victory in the Pacific.

The raising of the American flag by five Marines and one Navy Corpsman on Feb. 23, 1945, was immortalized in a Pulitzer-Prize winning photograph by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal.

“I was in the fourth wave to land on Iwo Jima,” Earle recalled. “Iwo was a very soft ash – when you

stepped on it you went down to your ankles. Mount Suribachi was an active volcano and the Japanese had fortified the island with 15 miles of tunnels so you never knew where or when you would be attacked.”

Recalled Fields, “Dad would say that the Japanese were not on the island, they were in the island.”

Approximately one-third of all Marines killed in action during World War II were killed on Iwo Jima. More than 100,000 Americans fought there and 6,821 died as a result — 5,931 of them Marines. An additional 19,000 troops were wounded in the battle that claimed more than 21,000 Japanese lives. Of the 23,000 Japanese troops defending Iwo, only 1,083 were taken prisoner.

In addition to Earle, Iwo Jima veterans attending the reunion at the Hilton Crystal City included Ivan

Hammond, John DeGennaro and Louis Bourgault.

Virginia Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears, a Marine Corps veteran, was the keynote speaker and the recipient of the first Iwo Jima Association of America’s Woody Williams Award. The award is named in honor of Herschel Woodrow “Woody” Williams, a Marine survivor of Iwo Jima and the last living Medal of Honor recipient from WWII. Williams virtually presented the award to Sears.

“What an incredible honor to



Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears, center, receives the Iwo Jima Association of America’s Spirit Award Feb. 19 in Crystal City. With her are IJAA President Lt. Gen. Norman Smith, USMC, Ret., and Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Schultz.



John DeGennaro.

“In [Col. Thomas Fields] Company D battalion of the 5th Marine Division, 250 men in his company walked in and only 19 walked out.”

— David Fields, speaking of his father



Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears greets Iwo Jima veteran Roy Earle Feb. 19 at the Hilton Crystal City.

sit in a room full of veterans and their families, including those who fought at Iwo Jima,” Sears said. “I heard stories and thoughts from veterans and Gold Star families, reminding us that freedom isn’t free.”

The four-day series of events included a veterans panel, a visit to the National Museum of the Marine Corps at Quantico and wreath-laying ceremonies at the WWII Memorial and the Marine Corps War Memorial.

Earle, who lives in Maine with his wife Linda, was in constant combat against the Japanese in

the Marshall Islands, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. For his service he received the two Presidential Unit Citations awarded the 4th Marine Division, the Navy Unit Citation awarded JASCO, the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with four bronze battle stars, and the World War Two Victory Medal.

“I walked off of every battlefield, I was that fortunate,” Earle said. “I was proud to be a Marine. More specifically I was proud to be a 4th Marine Division Marine. We fought four battles and won them all.”

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Survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima gather for a photo following a wreath laying at the Marine Corps War Memorial Feb. 18 in Arlington. Pictured left to right are: Roy Earle, John DeGennaro, Louis Bourgault and Ivan Hammond.



Ivan Hammond.



Louis Bourgault.



Roy Earle.

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CLIFTON FUNDRAISER

Clifton Community Woman's Club
Virtual C.A.R.E.S. Fundraiser.
C.A.R.E.S. is an acronym for Creative, Arts, Recording, Education, and Service. Participants will enter a photo or three-minute video of their project with an entrance fee of \$25. The five categories include:
CREATIVE - Crafts, Fiber, Paper, Wood
ARTS - Painting, Sculpture, Poetry, Creative Writing, Photography
RECORDING - Video of Music, Dance, Stories, Dramatic Reading, Acting
EDUCATION - Video or PDF of any type of Class, teaching, or instructional volunteer
SERVICE - Photos of person with materials being created and/or donated as a
Each year the Club gives four \$2,000 scholarships, included in an annual \$20,000 to food banks, veterans, women and children in need. The pandemic canceled the homes tour, but not its giving, thanks to loyal sponsor support. Due to their commitment to service and technology, these women are sponsoring a virtual fundraiser. The winners in each category will be recognized on ZOOM on April 23.

NOW THRU MARCH 13

"The Phlebotomist." Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road in Tysons. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.



Lynette Rathnam and Josh Adams star in "The Phlebotomist," at 1st Stage in Tysons Corner, thru March 6, 2022.

NOW THRU MARCH 13

"Every Brilliant Thing." At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. Guided by an unnamed

narrator, the audience is drawn into the story of a young boy who tries to cure his mother's depression by creating a list of all

the most wonderful things in the world. At times humorous and at others gut-wrenching, this extraordinary, interactive play brings the actor and audience along together on a unique journey of shared discovery and catharsis. Visit www.NextStopTheatre.org.

NOW THRU MARCH 30

Fiber Optics. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At McLean Textile Gallery, 6819 Elm Street, McLean. Philadelphia printmaker Fay Stanford will show her fabulist banners. Stanford creates wry fairy tales about suburban family life – especially death, disease and aging. Visit the website: mcleantextilegallery.org.

NOW THRU MARCH 5

Grand Opening. 9:30 a.m. to 7:30

p.m. At Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming, 5750 Union Mill Road, Clifton. Booked grooms will receive free teeth cleaning and half-price nail trims are available. Store hours are 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sundays. Email: cliftonva@woofgangbakery.com. Visit the website: www.woofgangbakery.com

MARCH 2-5

Tysons Library Booksale. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. At 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less on Saturday, March 5, from 2 - 5 p.m. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Visit the website: <https://booksalefinder.com/VA.html#X2291>

MARCH 5-6

The DC Big Flea Antiques Market. At Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Hours: Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cost is \$10 for both days. Don Hakenson and Chuck Mauro will be selling all of their books on the Civil War in Northern Virginia. The table location will be somewhere around the middle of aisle B. Visit www.hmshistory.com.

SUNDAY/MARCH 6

Comedian Jeanne Robertson. 5 p.m. At Capital One Arena, Tysons Corner. At 76 years young, Jeanne Robertson continues to charm audiences with her humorous observations about life around her. This former Miss North Carolina, standing tall at six-foot-two, has a vivacious personality, heart and sense of humor. Visit the website: capitalonehall.com.

SUNDAY/MARCH 6

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. At the Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring KA/PO: Karen Ashbrook and Paul Oorts: hammered dulcimer, harp guitar, mandolin, musette accordion, to name a few.

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Wolf Trap Area House Fire Caused by Improperly Discarded Fire Pit Ashes

FROM PAGE 3

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department would like to remind all residents to be cautious and keep safety in mind when handling ashes from fireplace, wood stoves or fire pits.

Safety tips:.

- ❖ Do not discard your ashes into any combustible container such as a paper or plastic bag, a cardboard box, or a plastic trash can.

- ❖ Do not place ash containers on decks, porches, or in garages.

- ❖ Put ashes into a non-combus-

tible metal container with a lid.

- ❖ Pour water into the container to make sure the ashes are cool.

- ❖ Keep your can OUTSIDE the home, away from your fireplace or stove and anything combustible.

- ❖ Keep the can a safe distance from the home and ideally on a non-combustible surface.

- ❖ Teach all family members to be safe with ashes from your fireplace, fire pit or wood stove.

- ❖ Ashes can stay hot for several days. Follow these steps even when you wait several days to remove the ashes from the fireplace.



Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill



Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D-At Lage)



Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw (D-Braddock)



Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield)



Tammie Wondong, President SEIU Virginia 512 Fairfax

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU

County Executive Presents FY 2023 Advertised Budget

Increase in assessed values for real estate and vehicles drive higher tax payments.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill is proposing a \$4.85 billion spending plan while maintaining the current real estate tax rate of \$1.14 per \$100 of assessed value according to his presentation on the FY 2023 Advertised Budget plan at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Feb. 22, 2022, at Fairfax County Government Center.

Because of increased home assessments, the typical homeowner's tax payment would rise by \$666, a 9.5 percent increase, according to Hill. "I did have to go back and recalculate that number, but I want you to know that is a true number," Hill said. "I expect mitigating this impact will be a priority."

In addition, used car prices are soaring. Updated information from JD Power for January 2022 suggests an increase of over 33 percent. Hence, with no changes to the Personal Property Tax rate, the average vehicle tax levy for the taxpayer will increase by about \$181. Revenues will increase by \$83 million beyond what is included in the Advertised Budget.

CHAIRMAN Jeffrey C. McKay (D) warned the Board and audience before the County Executive's presentation that Hill's proposal was not the final budget. It was the first stage in a protracted process and schedule that sought public input before board approval.

During the discussion, Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw (D-Braddock) said, "This one is going to shock the heck out of a lot of people. We're going to have to figure out how we can make an adjustment here."

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said in a statement after the meeting, "The real estate tax increase is on top of the 45 percent increase in real estate taxes over the last decade and comes while residents are facing record inflation, rising gas prices, and continuing to recover from the pandemic. Instead of increasing the burden on our struggling residents, the Board needs to prioritize the critical service issues that are going unaddressed and work to reduce the cost of government."

The proposed budget prioritized compensation for county and Fairfax County Public



Fairfax County Board of Supervisors listen to the County Executive Bryan Hill's presentation of the FY 2023 Advertised Budget. It is a proposal and not the final adopted budget.

Schools employees. "The budget proposal includes a 4.01 percent market rate adjustment for all County employees and performance, merit, and longevity increases," Hill said.

In addition, the County's living wage increases to \$15.90 an hour; Performance, Merit, and Longevity increases, including a new 25-year step proposed for uniformed pay plans, an average increase of 2.15 percent for non-uniformed; 3.85 percent for uniformed.

County compensation includes a 5 percent health insurance premium increase in Jan. 2023, and no changes in retirement employer contribution rates.

Because of increased home assessments, the typical homeowner's tax payment would rise by \$666, a 9.5 percent increase

Tammie Wondong is the President of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Virginia 512 Fairfax and a 30-year county employee. "For two years, my co-workers and I have been working on the front lines of the pandemic, with just a 1 percent raise. The rising cost of living and our healthcare increases mean that our paychecks have actually gone down. That's why SEIU members called for fair pay, affordable care, and safe working conditions. Today's proposed budget is one step in that direction, but only collective bargaining can ensure the good jobs and quality public services our community needs."

A SUMMARY of the proposed FY 2023 Budget reports net county resources, revenues,

and transfers increase by \$330.17 million and of the increase: \$127.84 million are for county priorities, \$117.90 million for schools, \$5.17 million for reserve requirements, and a \$79.26 million balance for Board consideration.

The proposed budget also fully funds Fairfax County Public Schools' request of \$2.285 billion. Schools are 52.4 percent of General Fund Distribution in FY 2023.

Highlighting investments in board priorities are affordable housing (\$1.52 million/7 positions), Diversion First Initiative (\$1.05 million/7 positions), Opioid Task Force \$0.40 million/3 positions), baseline support for Health Department staff, one public health nurse in all Fairfax County Public Schools, and additional resources for Public Health Readiness (\$12.92 million), Language Access Program, and One Fairfax Support (\$1.54 million/5 positions).

The proposed budget supports residents facing vulnerability, providing \$10.66 million and nine positions; including baseline funds for the Co-Responder Program, Behavioral Health, Equitable School Readiness and Emergency Rental Assistance Program support; and baseline funds for Public Assistance Eligibility Workers, Child Protective Services, and Family First In-Home Services added at Carryover.

"Lastly, we have begun to implement recommendations from the Joint County and Schools Capital Improvement Program Committee," Hill said. A net of 109 positions increases county positions.

Real estate taxes will be the primary source of funding for the County in the fiscal year 2023. Real estate taxes provide about 68 percent of general fund revenue, which is forecasted to increase by 8.1 percent over FY 2022. Taxes on personal property are likely to climb by 10.8 percent.

The proposed budget fully funds the

FY 2023 BUDGET TIMELINE

- Feb. 22, 2022 County Executive presents FY 2023 Advertised Budget Plan
- Feb. 24, 2022 School Board adopts FY 2023 Advertised Budget
- March 1, 2022 Joint Board of Supervisors/School Board Budget Committee Meeting
- March 8, 2022 Board of Supervisors authorizes advertisement of FY 2023 tax rates
- March 22, 2022 Board of Supervisors authorizes advertisement of FY 2022 Third Quarter Review
- April 12-14, 2022 Public Hearings at Board of Supervisors on FY 2023 Budget, FY 2023-FY 2027 Capital Improvement Program, and FY 2022 Third Quarter Review
- April 26, 2022 Board of Supervisors marks-up FY 2023 Budget, adopts FY 2023- FY 2027 Capital Improvement Program and FY 2022 Third Quarter Review
- May 1, 2022 Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2023 Adopted budget
- May 5, 2022 Public Hearings at School Board on FY 2023 budget
- May 26, 2022 School Board adopts FY 2023 Approved Budget
- July 1, 2022 FY 2023 Budget Year Begins

Schools Operating request as included in Superintendent's Proposed Budget, a 5.1 percent increase. Schools budget includes:

- ❖ \$88 million in increased sales tax and state aid
- ❖ 4 percent Market Scale Adjustment for all employees and Step Increases for eligible employees
- ❖ Reduction of over \$88 million based on lower projected enrollment
- ❖ Baseline funding for initiatives previously funded with federal stimulus dollars
- ❖ \$10 million placeholder for General Assembly actions

The FY 2023 Advertised Budget Plan and the FY 2023-FY 2027 Capital Improvement Program are available online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget.

To provide input, the public can send written testimony or communicate with the Clerk's Office by email at clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov. The Board of Supervisors will hold public hearings on the budget April 12-14.

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OPINION

Invest in Fairfax

FROM PAGE 4

with renewed strength and forged resilience for the anticipated path ahead.”

“The Fairfax County Federation of Teachers is united with the Invest in Fairfax coalition in its request of the board to continue to keep safety and best practices as a priority,” said Tina Williams, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers President. “We believe the FY23 budget should continue to support all county employees’ unprecedented efforts to keep our community safe and healthy. We require a budget that allows us to provide the world class services which makes our county a great place to live, work and raise a family. We urge the Board of Supervisors to fully fund the FCPS budget request. The FCPS FY23 proposed budget includes a focus on compensation to attract and retain a premier workforce as well as funding to address critical staffing needs in special education and ESOL. The FCFT strongly encourages this partnership between the Board of Supervisors and the School Board to fully-fund our school system so that we can provide the world-class education our students deserve and families expect.”

Invest in Fairfax Coalition members will continue to mobilize to speak out during the budget process at Supervisors’ town halls, at public budget hearings, and during Board meetings.

The county executive’s budget proposal is the first of many steps in finalizing the county budget. Click here to see the full budget timeline <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/budget/budget-proc-timeline>

Though the County Executive writes the first draft of the budget, the Board of Supervisors is responsible for changing and finalizing the county budget. On March 8, the Board of Supervisors will authorize the proposed real estate tax rate for FY 2023. Throughout March, the Board will hold budget committee meetings and town halls. The Board will hold public budget hearings April 12-14. On April 26, the budget committee will “mark up” or make changes to the proposed budget. The Board of Supervisors will adopt the budget on May 10, and the School Board will adopt their budget on May 26. The FY 2023 budget begins July 1, 2022.

WELLBEING

Managing Anxiety Triggered by News from Ukraine

Music and meditation among the ways to cope.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Sitting on yoga mats with their eyes closed as meditation music fills the air, Stephanie Dowd's yoga and meditation students seek a sense of calm. For the past two weeks, the Arlington instructor offered a special class for those who are seeking solace in the midst of an abundance of disturbing news about the crisis in Ukraine.

"My students have come to class talking about the sadness and stress they're feeling," she said. "They're looking for ways to decompress from the upsetting headlines."

The onslaught of disturbing images and news headlines about the crisis in Ukraine can take a toll on one's mental health. While feelings of stress over negative events is normal, there is a point in which these feelings can become unmanageable.

"It's normal to feel some level of anxiety over negative national and international events," said Bethesda psychologist Michele Windsor. "The key is having enough self awareness to recognize those when feelings are interfering with your ability to carry out

daily tasks."

"Deep breathing, meditation or just spending five minutes sitting quietly and without access to news, smartphones and social media can help cultivate that self awareness," Windsor said.

When members of her prayer group began to express feelings of profound sadness over the crisis, Yves Jaffe said they discussed some of the ways in which they can find comfort in their faith. "I play the flute and I've started playing at the beginning and end of our gatherings. The sounds are peaceful and give us a sense of calm. There's another

woman in our group who's a pianist and she plays, "Let there be Peace on Earth" while we sing it.

In fact, spending time with friends and setting limits on news consumption can reduce anxiety, says Windsor. "Because we're all attached to our smartphones, get news

alerts and spend time on social media, we can lose track of the amount of negative news we're getting," she said. "Make a conscious effort to unplug. Set aside a certain amount of time each day to stay off the internet and social media. There are very few reasons why most of us can't choose to stay away from these things for at least three hours each day. It can do wonders for our mental health."

"The key is having enough self awareness to recognize when those feelings are interfering with your ability to carry out daily tasks."

— Michele Windsor

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

Tickets must be purchased in advance through the link at www.oldbrogue.com: \$21 general admission. Season ticket: \$110. Visit <https://karenashbrook.com/ka-po-karen-ashbrook-paul-oorts>

TUESDAY/MARCH 8

Author Joyana Peters. 7-8:30 p.m. At Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave., E, Vienna. The Girl in the Triangle is a fictional story of a recently immigrated woman working at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in 1909. Books available for sale and signing. Visit the website: <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/8689020>

MARCH 11-13

"Fiddler on the Roof." Fridays at 8 p.m.; Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7750 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons. Director Bartlett Sher brings his fresh take on a beloved masterpiece to life as "Fiddler on the Roof" begins a North American tour direct from Broadway. A wonderful cast and a lavish orchestra tell this heartwarming story of fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, and the timeless traditions that define faith and

family. Visit the website: capitalonehall.com.

SATURDAY/MARCH 12

Model Train Open House. 1-5 p.m. At Vienna Train Station, 231 Dominion Road, NE, Vienna. Stop by the Historic Vienna Train Station where you can see and hear HO scale model trolleys and trains including Thomas and some of his friends on display and in operation. Great family fun and activity for the young and young-at-heart. Hosted by the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders. See www.nvmr.org.

SUNDAY/MARCH 13

Family Orchestra Concert. 4-5:30 p.m. At Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, 2310 Colt's Neck Road, Reston. The spring program during which the RCO traditionally spotlights talented youth from our area, is loosely modeled after a popular radio game show. The soloist, 18-year-old violinist George Pekarsky, and the orchestra will perform the music without divulging titles, so you can say, "Wait! Don't Tell Me!" Cost: \$25 adults, \$18 seniors (60+), Free, youth, military, first responders. Visit the website: www.restoncommunityorchestra.org.

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More Than a Virtue



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I sit and write this column on Sat., February 26, 2022, it is 13 years, almost to the day (it was a Thursday actually, Feb. 27, 2009) when Team Lourie (me, my wife, Dina and my brother, Richard) first met an oncologist who would become the center of my universe. This initial meeting WAS to review your recent diagnostic medical history and discuss treatment. Moreover, once this meeting occurs and a cancer diagnosis is confirmed, your oncologist is placed on speed-dial and his/her email is auto-selected every time you type the first few letters of their name. This oncologist becomes your lifeline, phone a friend and/or the person you ask about all things cancer related. And there's plenty to ask, especially if you're clueless to begin with, as was Team Lourie.

I wouldn't say I've learned my lessons well, but after so many years, one does accrue a working knowledge/familiarity with certain practices and procedures. And though I never mastered the pronunciation of some of the early-on/heavy-duty chemotherapy I infused, I always knew where to be and when. As a result, I was described as a "compliant" patient. Meaning I did what I was told and never missed any appointments. (You mean not all patients are compliant," I remember asking. The answer I received: "You'd be surprised." After a diagnosis of cancer, how does a diagnosee not show up for treatment, et cetera? Apparently, it happens, more than I can understand.)

But I never had to be told twice. And though text and emails were sent with regularity by my provider, I was always aware in advance and even though I was contacted multiple times on multiple devices, I never needed to be reminded. I was ready, willing, and able. As was the case with "Deets," (Danny Glover's character in "Lonesome Dove"). When he died, Capt. Woodrow Call (Tommy Lee Jones) carved the following sentiment on his headstone: "Never shirked a task. Cheerful in all weathers." He was dependable and reliable, as have I been during this cancer adventure.

Now whether my compliance and cheerful attitude has had any bearing on my survival, or whether a possible misdiagnosis – which led to my diagnosis being changed in 2020 to papillary thyroid cancer from the original non-small cell lung cancer after multiple biopsies confirmed the rediagnosis, Team Lourie can't know for sure – and of course, no one is admitting it. I've been told that papillary thyroid cancer, generally speaking, is a slow-moving (perhaps that's why I've survived so long), curable type of cancer. Quite a bit different than the "terminal" diagnosis/"13 month to two years" prognosis I initially received back in 2009.

Maybe that's why I am alive and reasonably well. When you're told that you have two years to live, maximum, it's hard to be mad if you're still alive 13 YEARS LATER. Over these many years, I have learned to roll with the punches and go with the flow because if being diagnosed with cancer has taught me anything, it has taught me how to be patient – and how to be one as well.

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



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