

CONNECTION

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Undefeated Champions!

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Breezeway Project Moves Ahead

PAGE 3

Bike Insight From Denmark

PAGE 4



Stand & Deliver For Education

PAGES 8-9

The Hayfield Hawks complete their season undefeated at 32-0 after a 67-47 win over Battlefield for the school's first state championship in basketball.

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NEWS

Construction for New Development Will Displace Low Income Tenants

Fairfax mayor breaks tie to approve controversial new development.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

They say everything has its price – and apparently for Fairfax City, it’s a shiny, new, mixed-use project to replace an eyesore motel, plus money for future affordable housing. But there’s also a cost – and in this case, it’s a human one since it’ll displace more than 100 people from their homes.

Last Tuesday, Fairfax City Council approved Pulte Home Co.’s plan to demolish the Breezeway Motel on Fairfax Boulevard and the Fairfax Gardens Apartments on Cedar Avenue. And it gave Pulte the go-ahead for construction of townhouses, two-over-two condos and a commercial building in their place.

But it was a hard-fought victory for Pulte, with Council members split on their vote and the mayor breaking the tie. They all acknowledged that Pulte builds quality homes. But, explained Councilmember Sang Yi, “What’s really meaningful is the impact this will have on the people who’ll have to move out. I don’t feel good about that.”



The project is bounded by Fairfax Boulevard, Cedar Avenue and Walnut and Oak streets. Coming: 40 townhouses, 40 feet high, with 80 parking spaces, and 20 condos, 51 feet high, with 40 parking spaces.

During the March 8 Council meeting, the City’s Albert Frederick, a planner, presented details of this project bounded by Fairfax



Artist’s rendition: Oak Street townhouses across from Chilcott Stadium.

Boulevard, Cedar Avenue and Walnut and Oak streets. It also entails a property rezoning to planned development/mixed use.

Planned are 60 homes with 141 parking spaces; they’re comprised of 40 townhouses, 40 feet high, with 80 parking spaces, and 20 condos, 51 feet high, with 40 parking spaces, plus 21 surface spaces, for a density of

13.1 units/acre. Also earmarked are 8,000-10,010 square feet of commercial space with 44 parking spaces.

This project has been in the making for a few years and has gone through several iterations. Just since January, two units on

SEE DEVELOPMENT, PAGE 12

‘I Don’t Want to Play Games with People’s Lives’

Council members say ousted tenants will have tough time relocating.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

During the March 8 Fairfax City Council meeting dealing with Pulte Home Co.’s proposed mixed-use project, Councilmember So Lim asked when the Breezeway Motel and Fairfax Gardens Apartments tenants would have to move out.

Brooke Hardin, Director of Community Development and Planning, said that, with the site-plan and building-permit process, it could take 12-24 months. Councilmember Jon Stehle asked if new tenants moving in now would still receive compensation, and Pulte representative Bob Brant said yes.

Councilmember Tom Ross asked how much is in the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and Hardin said \$825,000, so Pulte’s \$417, 524 contribution would bring the total to some \$1.2 million. But Councilmember Sang Yi stressed that the fund doesn’t contain millions and Fairfax has no specific plans for it.

“I’m concerned about the eradication of the most affordable housing in Fairfax City,” Yi told Brant. “The rents at Fairfax Gardens



Sang Yi — Voted No



Janice Miller — Voted No



So Lim — Voted No

“Listening to this public hearing, it’s like the human element has been thrown out. You know about the number of trees that’ll be removed, but not the number of people that’ll be displaced.”

Apartments are \$745 to about \$1,100 a month, so I’m not sure what the tenants could use your relocation money for. They’d probably have to move far away [to find something similar].”

Brant said the Layton Hall or Fairfax Village apartments are “relatively affordable.” But in reality, their rents are much higher than Fairfax Gardens. Monthly rents for one- and two-bedroom apartments at Fair-

fax Village, for example, are \$1,450 and \$1,785, respectively. That means a one-bedroom there costs nearly twice what it does at Fairfax Gardens.

“Most Americans don’t have \$500 of savings,” said Yi. “And the first and last months’ rent [the ousted tenants] would have to pay for their [new] security deposit, plus their relocation costs – possibly to another state – won’t be covered by the money they’ll receive.”

Since this agenda item was a public hearing, some City residents called in to comment. One man, who lives at Fairfax Gardens, wished to remain anonymous, but wanted his feelings known.

“I’m an honest, hardworking, tax paying citizen, and this directly affects me and my need for shelter,” he said. “I’m concerned about the insufficient monetary assistance; it’s more than it would take for a family to relocate. The average cost for a one-bedroom apartment in Fairfax County is \$1,800/month. [Pulte’s offer] isn’t enough money for six months’ rent plus storage fees.”

Furthermore, he told the Council, “Listening to this public hearing, it’s like the human element has been thrown out. You

SEE RELOCATING, PAGE 12

Mode on Main by Mara Holding Ukraine Fundraiser

Mode on Main by Mara is hosting a spring market for the whole family, while raising money for the people of Ukraine. It's set for this Sunday, March 20, from noon-2 p.m., at 10417 Main St. in Fairfax.

The fun includes a deejay, food and drinks, magic tricks and balloon art for children, a flower truck, homemade cookies, spin-the-wheel promos, chances to see Mode on Main's new spring clothing, plus Mara swag bags with purchases (while supplies last).

Event proceeds, including entry tickets, will be donated to United Help Ukraine <https://unitedhelpukraine.org/>, a nonprofit pro-

viding lifesaving medical aid and humanitarian relief to Ukraine. Children under 12 are free. Check in at Mode on Main's front door; the event will spill out into the store's backyard.

Attendees may also donate to the charity by purchasing raffle tickets to win large, gift baskets worth more than \$800. They may do so at the event or online in advance via: <https://www.mar-amodestudio.com/products/raffle-tickets-in-aid-of-ukraine?variant=42697714106581>.

In addition, during the entire month of March, 10 percent of Mode on Main's sales will go to the charity.

Ticket information and prices

for Sunday's fundraiser are available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/spring-it-on-a-small-business-market-in-aid-of-ukraine-tickets-273037702117>.

Vendors and Entertainment

Deejay: Mike Rodriguez
Blue Ribbon Floral: Flower truck
High Side: Modern craft beer
Earp's Ordinary: Music, spirits, fare

Withered Fig: Menswear shop
Milkworthy: Music-inspired artisanal cookies

Coyote Grille: Fusion of South-west cuisine

Harmony905: Hemp-derived CBD products



This Sunday's fundraiser is at 10417 Main St. in Fairfax City.

Eddie Kurland F.A.C.E.S: Family and children's entertainment
Fahrenheit99 Candle Co.: Luxury vegan candles
Earth Essentials by Erica: Holis-

tic skincare
Piper + Pearl Co.: Polymer clay earrings.

— BONNIE HOBBS

New FABB Official Provides a Look From Across the Pond

Biking experience in Denmark provides a different angle for local biking.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Springfield resident Bethany Usher recently joined the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling board of directors, and brings with her some cycling experience she gained from living in Denmark where nine out of every 10 Danes own a bike.

"They build with bike safety first, and design intersections to make them safe," Usher said, looking at the on-road trails around here that are just divided by a paint stripe on the pavement. Here there is "No protection from traffic," she added.

She knows this because she bikes from her home in South Run near Lake Mercer, to work at George Mason University where she is the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education. When Usher got the job at GMU, the first thing she did was lay out the Fairfax County Bike Map to plan a bike route to work, and found one, but it has some gaps. Sometimes at the trail end, it's not that easy to get to another bike venue or a safe route to continue.

"It's a good start but we need to create safe infrastructure to encourage people to use it," she said.

Usher loved the biking facilities in Denmark but she wasn't there to bike. She was studying medieval cemeteries, and one in particular that dated back over 600 years ago. It seemed to have been forgotten, and she was studying it in the name of preservation. Just being in a bike-dominated country like that rubbed off, though, and prompted her to become involved with FABB. "I've been a supporter of FABB for a number of years," she said.

Year of the Bike in Denmark

In January 2022, the Danish Ministry of Transportation announced that 2022 is "The Year of the Bike," said the Visit Denmark website. As part of this, they are investing \$458 million in new cycling infrastructure. The first \$64 million are to be used in 2022, mostly for the establishment of new bike lanes across the country, and Copenhagen leads the way.

In the 2022 Tour de France this summer, riders will depart from Copenhagen, which was named World's Best Bike City in 2019. Nine out of every 10 people in Denmark own a bike and "cycling in Denmark is more than a hobby and a way of transporting yourself. It's a way of life," the Tour website said.

According to Katinka Friis from VisitDenmark, they are developing "cycle superhighways," a network between their municipalities and the Copenhagen region with a focus on better conditions for commuter cyclists across municipality borders. The cycle superhighways focus on accessibility, directness, comfort and safety. Bikers with access to safe bike highways take 6 million more bike trips annually, 1 million fewer car trips annually, and have 30 percent lower mortality for adults that bike every day. This equates to 40,000 fewer days of sick leave annually in Denmark.

BRUCE WRIGHT, the FABB president here is looking at the improvements planned for the county to link bike trails in several locations. Along I-66 there is a parallel trail opening soon that will provide major trail links along that corridor.

FABB is working with the Capital Trails



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Bethany Usher on a bike excursion in Key West.

Coalition to advocate for completion of the Route 50 trail that will connect the City of Fairfax with the Merrifield area, Seven Corners, and Arlington County as well. In the southern part of the county, the Richmond Highway widening project will include some bicycle facilities, and the Braddock Road Multimodal Project will include shared use paths along Guinea Road just east of George Mason University to Ravensworth Road inside the Beltway in Annandale.

Although Usher does not have any big plans to launch in her first few months on the board, she's glad to be promoting bicycling, and the group is glad to have another enthusiastic cyclist supporting the effort.

"The FABB board looks forward to Bethany's wisdom, energy, and experiences in making bicycling better in Fairfax County," FABB said

BULLETIN BOARD

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

NOW THRU APRIL 14

ESL Classes, 7-9 p.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. In-person and online ESL classes. Classes will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7-9 p.m. Online registration started at <http://www.lordoflifeva.org/esl>. Cost is \$20.

SEEKING SOFTBALL PLAYERS

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna. For more information, visit the website www.goldengirls.org or call Marilyn at 571-261-9163.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke sponsors a monthly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, noon-1:30 p.m., for caregivers to learn and to share with others experiencing similar challenges. Before attending, contact the facilitator, Eileen Thompson at 703-451-8626 or eileen.thompson1@gmail.com.

Haven of Northern Virginia provides support, compassion, information and resources to the bereaved and seriously ill. To become a Haven volunteer, please call 703-941-7000 to request an orientation. Volunteers must complete a 30-hour training and commit to one year of service answering Haven phones (2.5 hours weekly). Next training is scheduled for fall 2017.

Second School Board Recall Case Dismissed

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME
Springfield District
School Board Member
Laurel Jane Cohen

On Feb. 23, the Fairfax County Circuit Court dismissed the filing brought by grassroots group, Open FCPS Coalition, seeking the recall of Springfield District's sitting school board member. Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge Richard E. Gardner dismissed the petition at the request of special prosecutor, Goochland County's Commonwealth's Attorney, D. Michael Caudill.

The February ruling is the second failed try for school board member recall by Open FCPS Coalition. Their August 2021 recall petition against school board member Elaine Tholen, Dranesville District, also was dismissed by the Court. Two different special prosecutors, both Republicans, declined to carry the cases forward for the same reason: "failure of the facts to show probable cause for removal".

After the dismissal of the petition against her, Springfield District school board member, Laura Jane Cohen, said, "This dismissal is long overdue. In fact, it was a case that never should have been filed in the first place. Elected officials cannot be recalled because of differences of opinion. We have elections to decide who should represent us on school boards.

"There was never any legal basis for this recall petition. It was all politics driven by massive dark money contributions and even paid signature gathering."

Cohen referred to the contribution by an out of state advocacy group of \$77,500 to the Coalition; and

the Coalition's payment of \$30,000 to Blitz Canvassing for signature collection services (Source - Virginia Public Access Project).

The Coalition faults Virginia's recall process statute for failure of their effort, saying, "Commonwealth Attorneys making a decision on a recall should not be a part of the recall statute; there is a conflict of interest from the outset. They too are elected officials."

Defending the politicalization of the issue in Fairfax County by accepting money from outside conservative group N2 America, the Coalition said, "We did not make this political, school board did. When we started this we did not even know that all the board members were one party. After being involved for a month or so we realized FCPS admin and officials are only concerned about politics."

In its December 2021 petition filing, the Coalition had charged that Cohen "voted to keep all Fairfax County Public Schools closed," during the school board's response to Covid-19 conditions, alleging negative impacts to various groups of children. The group declined to comment on whether they would continue to pursue their third stated target for recall, school board member at large, Abrar Omeish.

"I ran ... for the [school board] seat because I believed we needed strong representation who would show up for our students, families, and staff," said Cohen. "I still believe that, and I'm proud of the job we've done under unprecedented challenges to the health and safety of our students."



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Property Values Are on the Rise and I Hear You

BY DAN STORCK



I have heard from many of you since the County Executive released his proposed FY 2023 County Budget and received your annual real estate valuations. As you likely know, we live in a very desirable place and many want to move here. This desirability is driving up home prices – if you know anyone who bought or sold a home this year, you know what I mean. Greatly increasing home values are reflected in your 2022 home valuation. County real estate valuations are determined by the market, based on sales of similar homes in your area and not by the Board of Supervisors. State regulations require that properties be annually assessed by the County at 100% fair market value, leaving no flexibility to local governments to adjust valuations.

Later this year when personal property letters go out, you will see that due to an increased demand for new and used cars, those valuations are increasing as well. Generally, if you are a home, vehicle or property owner these higher values represent a growing investment and are financially a good thing. For those who are not, or for whom your pay is not increasing, these increases can make life harder.

As your representative, I am committed to working with my Board colleagues to continue offering the excellent County services you

expect, providing the funding to offer the higher wages needed to fill the many vacant teacher, police, fire, technical and custodial positions, AND lowering your property tax rates. I know we are all proud to live in Fairfax County and enjoy the many services the County and area offer, but we also need it to be affordable.

Join me virtually on Wednesday, March 23 at 6 p.m. for the Mount Vernon District Budget Town Meeting to learn more about the County Executive's proposed budget, ask questions and share your comments. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/mount-vernon-district-virtual-budget-town-meeting>

For more information on the proposed budget and how to comment, visit the County website. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/county-executives-fy-2023-proposed-budget-fully-funds-schools-request-employee-compensation>

You can also talk to a County appraiser about your home's assessment and how to appeal. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/real-estate>

I am also pleased that for the first time in over 15 years, we, the Board, are able to expand the real estate tax relief program to benefit more seniors and people with disabilities. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/board-supervisors-expands-real-estate-tax-relief-program>

It is unfortunate that in Virginia, real estate and personal property taxes are one of the few sources of revenue available to pay for our County school, police, fire, park and other services. Currently, the state returns to us only about 23% of what Fairfax County residents contribute in state taxes. (These taxes are principally contributed through the fairest and most progressive form—income taxes.) If the state returned just 1% more of the income tax rate back to us, we could reduce our real estate tax rate by \$.20! The state also funds only approximately 23% of our schools budget, with the balance coming from the County. In most counties south of us, the state funds schools at close to 50% or higher. Increased state funding for schools, public safety, mental health services, affordable housing and our many other Fairfax priorities would make a big difference in reducing the need to County-fund these services Fairfax County residents expect and need.

I look forward to hearing from you.

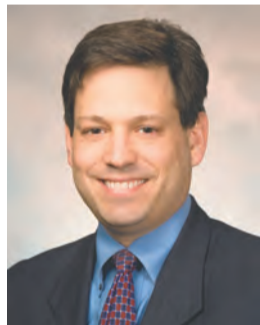
More information on the advertised budget plan: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/advertised-budget-plan>

More information about assessments and how to appeal yours: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/2022-real-estate-assessments-now-available-average-residential-increase-957>

Tax Relief Program for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/relief/tax-relief-seniors-people-with-disabilities>

Session Ends - Budget Is Pending

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL



Last week, state legislators completed the 2022 General Assembly session and 18 of the 27 bills I introduced are now on their way to the Governor. Unfortunately, we were not able to reach an agreement on a state budget, on two state Supreme Court justices or on a commissioner for the State Corporation Commission, and will have a special session.

Last week, I served on 16 conference committees charged with working out compromises on some of our most difficult bills to reconcile.

Unfortunately, the House of Delegates unexpectedly killed one of my bills to generate more bike and pedestrian solutions. We have a massive backlog of unfunded pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure projects in Northern Virginia — especially in eastern Northern Virginia, built before County land use rules required sidewalks or

bike lanes on roads. There is also no meaningful funding stream under which these projects are competitive so planners do not even develop or seek significant projects.

U.S. 1's forthcoming \$1 billion redesign, which will include a median dedicated bus rapid transit lane, dual sidewalks and multiuse paths, will be a bike and pedestrian magnet, but few of the roads connecting to U.S. 1 have the bike or pedestrian infrastructure to serve the project. The Washington Area Bicyclists Association recently predicted that we need to invest \$1 billion in cycling infrastructure in the D.C. metropolitan area over the next 20 years to meet minimum demand.

I introduced SB251 to require the Virginia Department of Transportation to work with Northern Virginia localities to prepare a 20-year bicycle and pedestrian project list. This would help us estimate future needs and develop funding solutions. The House of Delegates

defeated the bill, largely because downstate legislators feared the bill would lead to less road funding for rural areas in the state. I will try to accomplish this in other ways.

My legislation to regulate facial recognition technology in law enforcement also passed both houses on bipartisan votes. Last year, the General Assembly passed a ban on local police departments using the technology, but the ban did not

apply to state police who can still use the technology with no restrictions, when either using it on their own or in coordination with local police.

My legislation restricts usage and creates criminal offenses for misuse. It also prohibits facial recognition results from being stated in affidavits or search warrants and requires law enforcement officers

SEE SUROVELL, PAGE 7

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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Group Supports CinderBed Multi Use Trail

To the editor:

I am writing regarding the recent article titled "Group Opposes Cinder Bed Bikeway." The title of my letter is "Group Supports Cinder Bed Multi-Use Trail." The proposed trail will benefit all future users, whether they travel by bike, on foot, wheelchair, or other active transportation mode.

According to Fairfax County, the planned trail along Cinder Bed Road will "connect to an existing

trail through Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) property, and then continue through private property to tie into the trail at the end of Barry Road that leads to the Franconia/Springfield Metro Station." The proposed trail is included in the County Bicycle Master Plan and the Countywide Trails Plan and has been in the works for many years.

Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling supports this project and appreciates that Supervisor Lusk has worked with the community to address their concerns and find a viable route for this trail. The two pedestrian bridges are designed with longer spans "to minimize impacts to the Flood Plain of Long Branch."

Without this connection, the existing patchwork of poorly maintained trails and on-road routes will discourage people from biking or walking to/from Metro. The trail will help address the county's climate change goals by providing residents with an alternative to driving to Metro while at the same time allowing them to enjoy our local natural areas.

We support this proposed multi-use trail and appreciate work being done by the county to make it happen.

Bruce Wright
Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling

Surovell

FROM PAGE 6

to develop alternative corroborating evidence to link an individual to a crime. We are fully aware that many people have concerns about this new technology so the bill also requires each law enforcement agency to publish an annual report detailing the use of facial recognition technology. With this information, we will have more information on how it is being used and try to prevent its misuse.

I also served on a conference committee to reconcile a bill to reverse legislation we passed last session to subject closed criminal investigations to the Freedom of Information Act. I did not support the underlying bill, but I was put on the conference committee to try to improve it.

I represent many crime victims in my legal practice and can appreciate the sensitivity of opening up closed files to public scrutiny. However, accountability

in police shootings and police misconduct can also be achieved with sunlight as we have learned from the Bijan Ghaisar case who was killed in Mount Vernon by the U.S. Park Police. The voices of victims can be heard in record disputes without giving law enforcement complete discretion on withholding files so I refused to sign the final conference report which passed both chambers on close votes.

The budget is bogged down in a dispute over tax cuts which I do not support. Our February revenue numbers were down compared to 2021 and I am not convinced our rosy economic growth is here to stay, especially with the instability in Ukraine, rising gas prices and inflation. Cutting taxes means fewer revenues to support services people expect from their government. We have many long-ignored needs to fund and reducing revenues will likely continue that neglect. Stay tuned.

I hope you will share your views with me at scott@surovell.org



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Stand and Deliver: Protesting New Virginia Policies

Teachers, students, and parents in Fairfax and Arlington protest the new governor's campaign to control content in schools.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

Durann Thompson wonders why she keeps on coming back to teach school in Fairfax County. "I am tired of having to work nights and weekends. It's a job that in no way matches the compensation. But I left twice and came back twice. I taught summer camp. I even coached. So what's wrong with me?" she laughs. "Because I am still brought to tears when I remember my students."

Recently, Thompson got a letter from a student she had taught in the third grade. "She told me she was always in trouble. She thought I must have viewed her as the worst student I could ever have. She told me she got kicked out of two schools. But she wanted me to know that after all that, she went to nursing school, and was about to become a nurse, all because of her third grade teacher." Thompson said, "Teachers do so much more than teach our students academics. We see a future for them when they don't see it for themselves."

TEACHERS, STUDENTS and parents in Fairfax and Arlington stood in the cold on Sunday, March 13, 2022 to protest the new governor's campaign to control content in schools. The kick-off rally for "Stand and Deliver Virginia" was emceed by Pat Hynes, a classroom

"I fail to understand how it is harmful to students to talk about the past. Students will learn about our painful past, whether it is taught in schools or not."

—Sophia Lander, Arlington Career Center student

teacher and former Fairfax County School Board member, and Micaela Pond, an Arlington teacher. The event gave voice to the many Arlington and Fairfax county parents, students, and teachers who have been made deeply uncomfortable by the first executive order issued by Governor Youngkin, which prohibits the teaching of "inherently divisive concepts," including critical race theory, an academic concept which examines the ongoing effects of racism in American policies and institutions.

The executive order was fol-



Monte Bourjaily, a teacher at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, teaches his students to look at facts and make a judgment. He doesn't teach Critical Race Theory, he teaches critical thinking.

lowed by the state rescinding a wide range of policies, memos and programs established to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in schools. Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction Jillian Balow said she was rescinding equity policies in obedience to the executive order from Gov. Glenn Youngkin.

Adele McClure, Executive Director of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, and a candidate for the House of Delegates (in the new District Two) in Arlington, spoke out against the tip line, which the governor installed to allow parents and students to complain anonymously about teachers who talked about race, gender, or any issue that could be perceived as divisive. McClure was even more concerned about the removal of equity policies from public schools. "This was done without input from the schools," she said. In addition, she decried the possibility of public dollars being taken away from public schools to fund private schools.

Sophia Lander got up to speak. The Arlington high school student told the crowd, playing off the governor's pledge to return excellence to the schools, "I can assure you excellence was in full display when our gym teacher taught us from her hospital bed when she was about to give birth, that's how ded-



One sign at the protest. The event brought together almost 200 parents, students, and teachers. Teachers' consistent theme: educators care for all students; teachers are not threats but part of the support structure kids need.



Adele McClure, daughter of an early childhood educator and a Filipino immigrant who served in the U.S. Army, is running for delegate in the newly formed District Two in Arlington. She would be the first Black person and the first Asian person to represent Arlington in the Virginia General Assembly. As executive director of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, she decried the loss of equity programs in schools and the spending of public dollars on private schools.

icated she was." She zeroed in on the issue of teaching about racial and gender discrimination, "I fail to understand how it is harmful to students to talk about the past. Students will learn about our painful past, whether it is taught in schools or not. And I think we can all agree it's better to learn from teachers than from Instagram." Lander continued, "The governor has placed the blame on teachers for bringing up 'difficult or upsetting' topics. I

understand that some things can be upsetting but should I not apply for college because it frightens or upsets me?"

Kyungsup Hwang and her twin brother Theodore Hwang made reference to the "Don't Say Gay" policy in Florida and noted that efforts to quash discussion of LGBTQ issues threatened Virginia students. They had organized a successful walk-out over the Florida policy at



Del. Marcus Simon addressed the crowd, reminding them that despite Youngkin's concern about restoring excellence in Virginia's public school system it is already rated fourth in the nation. Simon also highlighted the failure of the General Assembly to pass legislation designed to fix school buildings because legislators were distracted by the anti-public school rhetoric trending after Youngkin's election.

their school, and experienced harassment and name-calling in the process of standing up for the rights of transgender and gay students. Were they upset about the slurs being hurled at them by some students? "The students weren't born knowing these words," Kyungsup Hwang said. "They learned them." The siblings stressed the importance of schools in teaching the origin of slurs that harm the LGBTQ community, the history of discrim-

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Patty Barbour, a veteran of the US Army and the Fairfax County Public Schools, was at the protest to show her support for teachers. Barbour retired recently from teaching but still works as a substitute teacher because she wants to be there for the students.



Robert Rigby has been teaching for 38 years in Fairfax County Public Schools and is president of FCPS Pride. He is about to retire.

ination, and other lessons of tolerance. "Educators need to help us face issues head on."

Luisa Boyarski of the Virginia Grassroots Coalition said as a professor at Georgetown University, she teaches the importance of public policy being formed with inputs from those affected. The new policy banning "equity" as part of the school program wasn't broached with the superintendents. That is why a letter from all VASS (Virgin-

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Sophia Lander spoke to the crowd. Her main point was that teachers help students process difficult concepts in a world that can feel overwhelming for young people. Should we leave it up to social media to educate students or applaud teachers for the job they do?



Micaela Pond introduces speakers. She and Pat Hynes are the co-founders of Stand and Deliver Virginia which was set up to take the narrative back from Richmond and stop "demonizing" teachers.

ia Association of Superintendents of Schools) and the Virginia Parent Teacher Association asked the governor for equity programs to be reinstated. "We need our opinions heard in important policy decisions," Boyarski said.

Speakers queried: "We wonder as teachers what will be legal to teach in Virginia?" "How do you define divisive? What if it's divisive for some but not for others?"



Kyungsup Hwang and her twin brother Theodore Hwang organized a school walk-out over the Florida policy of "Don't Say Gay," and view new Virginia policies as threatening to LGBTQ teachers and students.

"Inherently divisive concepts, like critical race theory and its progeny, instruct students to only view life through the lens of race and presume that some students are consciously or unconsciously racist, sexist, or oppressive, and that other students are victims."

— Glenn Youngkin, Governor of Virginia

the demographics of our representation in the U.S. Congress over the years, and decide whether the shortage of women representatives would have led to legislation that was less favorable to women. This might lead my students to conclude that women have been discriminated against in our country: what am I to do? I've just broken a rule?"

Former teacher Ethan Payne said he was talked down to as a black student in the county, and then as a teacher in the county. As a kid, when he moved to a new school which was primarily white, he was called the "N" word and the teacher did nothing.

In the seventh grade, he was in honors history. "I had a teacher who besides constantly asking me if I belonged in honors history, one day told our class that the KKK wasn't all that bad. They were actually a social group that did nice things for the community, and they even let some black people join."

To learn more about Stand and Deliver Virginia, see on Twitter, @StandDeliverVA.



Former Special Education teacher Ethan Payne left the Arlington County school where he taught because he no longer felt safe. He is now a doctoral student in Psychology.

Payne said he got tired of being treated poorly in the Arlington Public Schools system and opted out of teaching to get his doctorate in psychology. He no longer felt safe being a teacher.

NEWLY FORMED organization Stand and Deliver Virginia is three weeks into its mission of giving teachers, parents, and students a voice to take back the narrative from the anti-teacher, anti-truth, anti-public schools statements emanating out of Richmond since Youngkin's inauguration. For many parents who have monitored the changes since January, particularly the "tip" line, it was about time someone spoke up to defend teachers against policies which force them to walk a tight-rope in a job which is already one of the most demanding careers in the country.

UNDEFEATED!

Hayfield Hawks complete their season undefeated at 32-0 after a 67-47 win over Battlefield for the schools first state championship in basketball.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILL PALENSCAR

The Hayfield Hawks complete their season undefeated at 32-0 after a 67-47 win over Battlefield for the school's first state championship in basketball



Cam Lee #5 elevates to the basket as a Battlefield defender watches.



DJ Holloway #2 tries to avoid Tv Gordon #32.

BY WILL PALENSCAR
THE CONNECTION

The Hayfield Hawks made history on March 11, 2022 in the Boys Virginia Class 6 State Championships at the Siegel Center in Richmond, Va. The Hawks came in with an unblemished record of 31-0, facing a battle tested Battlefield Bobcats who just days before defeated conference rival and undefeated Patriot High School;55-54.

Battlefield would take an early 1st quarter lead 18-16 after 8 minutes of play. However, the Bobcats would be held to 11 points in the 2nd quarter while allowing 17 points. Hayfield would continue the surge forward in the 3rd quarter outscoring Battlefield 21-10, taking a 54-39 advantage going into the final quarter. Again in the 4th quarter the Hawks would outscore the Bobcats 13-8 and take home the schools first State basketball championship with a dominating 67-47 win. Both teams would convert on six three point attempts, but the difference in this game was the free throw shooting as Hayfield made 15 of 20 from the charity stripe while Battlefield made 60% but only made it to the line 5 times. Battlefield also turned the ball over 24

SEE UNDEFEATED, PAGE 15



Battlefield's Hasan Hammad #21 has his shot contested by #2 DJ Holloway of Hayfield

New Development Will Displace Low Income Tenants

FROM PAGE 3

Walnut Street were deleted from the plan, Cedar Avenue parking was relocated, and open space was increased from 20.2 percent to 23.9 percent.

“Utilities will be underground, there’ll be a playground and picnic area, plus four areas of open space – three, accessible to the public,” said Frederick. “Each unit has a sidewalk connecting to the street, and there’ll be a 10-foot-wide sidewalk/multi-use trail on Fairfax Boulevard, connection from the multifamily homes to the future commercial development, as well as crosswalks on the adjoining public streets.”

Access points to the commercial part of the site are from Fairfax Boulevard and Walnut Street. There’s also entry from Walnut Street to the condos, and access from Oak to the townhouses, plus emergency access to the townhomes from Cedar. There’ll be a Metro bus stop on Fairfax Boulevard, and Frederick said traffic impact from the project is expected to be “minimal.”

Work will be done in four phases. Phase One is demolition of the 50-room motel, 38-unit apartment building and four, single-family homes. Phase Two is the residential construction and its associated improvements, including traffic calming measures and on-street, parallel-parking spaces. The condos will have tandem parking – one vehicle in the garage and another on the driveway.

Phase Three entails interim improvements for buildout of the commercial site, such as clearing, grading and seeding of the former



Artist’s rendition: The two-over-two condo units. Approval came on split vote with the mayor breaking the tie.

motel site, plus landscaping on the parcel’s southern portion. Afterward, food trucks operated by a third party could be there as an interim use, until construction begins on the commercial building.

Phase Four would be that building, including all associated infrastructure, underground utilities and stormwater management.

“The applicant wants occupancy of all residential units [allowed] before development of the commercial building,” said Frederick. “The City ordinance says no more than 66 percent.” However, he said Pulte committed to limiting the types and intensity of the commercial uses and will make a voluntary contribution of \$417, 524 to the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund.



Site layout shows the homes, plus the commercial portion at top left.

Pulte’s tenant-relocation assistance plan is to give \$500/unit to longtime occupants of 16 units at the Breezeway Motel, for a total of \$8,000. Fairfax Gardens Apartments residents would receive \$1,500 for a one-bedroom unit and \$1,800 for two- and three-bedroom apartments, plus 180 days’ notice to relocate.

Councilmember Tom Ross asked how long the food trucks would be on site. “There’s not a time limit, while the applicant seeks a commercial buyer,” replied Brooke Hardin, Director of Community Development and Planning.

Yi asked if there’d be any gain or loss of green space, and Frederick said there’d be more. Yi wondered the same thing about impervious surface, and Frederick said it

would increase. But, he added, “There are no existing stormwater facilities for this site, so it would gain stormwater improvements.”

Yi then asked, “Is the existing multifamily housing there now the most affordable in the City of Fairfax?” Hardin answered that Fairfax Gardens Apartments has the lowest rental rates for one- and two-bedroom apartments in the City. Yi wondered how many people currently live there, and Hardin didn’t know, but said there are 18 one-bedroom units and 20 two-bedroom.

Councilmember So Lim said 26 tenants “have lived there a long time – 16 of them, for more than 12 months – and one, since 2013.”

“How many mature trees would we lose?” asked Yi. Frederick said 121 – of which, 54 are in poor or worse condition – but said Pulte proposes planting 198 new trees.”

Representing Pulte, attorney Bob Brant said, “It’s been a long journey over the past 3-1/2 years. I firmly believe [this] proposal is better because of all the input it’s received. We removed our request to vacate the right-of-way at the Walnut/Cedar intersection but will still reconfigure that intersection to make it safer. And we replaced some townhouses with green space.

“We increased the widths of some internal streets for better access by fire vehicles and increased the affordable-housing contribution to almost double the original proposal. This project will serve as a considerable catalyst to redevelopment in that corridor, and it’ll bring nearly \$300,000 in net, annual revenue to the City. It’ll be a project the City will be proud of for generations.”

Ousted Tenants Will Have Tough Time Relocating

FROM PAGE 3

know about the number of trees that’ll be removed, but not the number of people that’ll be displaced. Do you want your legacy to be displacing an entire community during a pandemic, without adequate compensation? We need a more secure and structured relocation plan.”

Also commenting was Douglas Stewart, with Fairfax City Citizens for Smarter Growth. “We see many improvements in this plan but are also concerned about the removal of the Fairfax Gardens Apartments with insufficient monetary compensation for the tenants,” he said. Stewart also decried the tree removal, home density and lack of direction for the Housing Trust Fund.

Mayor David Meyer said Council received several email comments on this project. He didn’t elaborate on their content, but said they’d be part of the public record. Then the Council members made their final remarks before voting.

“The issue that keeps me awake at night is the reduction in public housing – and not just the Fairfax Gardens Apartments,” said Councilmember Janice Miller. “Between 75-90 people at the Breezeway will have a tough time finding another place to live. Pulte provides a good product, but it’s a lot

of what we already have. Affordable housing, we don’t have.”

Density and location worried Miller, as well. “Oak Street between Main Street and Fairfax Boulevard is about 4/10 of a mile,” she said. “And when we look at all the new development there [including the 266 homes already under construction as part of Boulevard VI on the former Paul VI High site], that’s 595 new residential units.

“That’s a lot of houses, and I think the density is too high for the corner of Fairfax Boulevard and Oak Street. And on the west side of Oak, the three- and four-story homes will stand out like a sore thumb against those bungalows.”

Miller also said the Breezeway site, at just 1.14 acres, is too small a site for commercial development. She then added, “I plan to vote no and urge my colleagues to do the same.”

Lim said, when she was campaigning for City Council, “People told me about the need for affordable housing here, and this project will affect too many lives – including 29 children living at Fairfax Gardens.”

Ross agreed that adding more affordable housing is “a critical need. But I also believe we need to find a better solution for our business corridor. I’m troubled by the density and by a commercial site that’ll remain vacant for a long time. But I’m going to vote

aye because I think it’s an appropriate use for this area. We need to do better than the Breezeway.”

Yi said he was still bothered by the last-minute offer of cash Pulte made at the Council’s Jan. 11 meeting, when Brant told the Council he’d just found out, that night, that Pulte could increase its affordable-housing contribution by \$124,000 for a \$361,524 total. At that time, Yi said he didn’t appreciate doing business that way, and Miller said, “This only muddies the water.”

On March 8, Yi said Brant’s action “was like being lured [to approve the project]. It makes us forget why we’re here – and it’s why the anonymous gentleman called in. It’s about people. His comment was a real slap to the face and a wakeup call, and I appreciate it. We’re in the business of people – and this just doesn’t help the people at Fairfax Gardens, or the students living there.”

“Maybe the Breezeway isn’t the prettiest thing, but it’s still a home to some people,” continued Yi. “And our Planning Commission voted unanimously against this project because it’s flawed. I don’t want to play games with people’s lives, so I can’t support this.”

However, said Meyer, “If this community and Council are really serious about affordable housing, we’re going to have to step

up to the plate and really put some money behind it. It would require several cents on the tax rate to create a dedicated revenue stream for affordable housing. We need probably over 500 units in this city.”

Regarding Pulte’s project, he said, “The issue has always been what is the acceptable density. In three years, Boulevard VI will be finished and will drive up the value of all the units east of the Breezeway site, so future applicants would ask for [even] greater density.”

Besides, continued Meyer, “We want redevelopment of properties along Fairfax Boulevard that aren’t at their best use. And we never have been able to develop anything in the City without the removal of some buildings.

“I’m not sure Council would support a higher tax rate for affordable housing,” Meyer said. “This is a complex and nuanced issue – and a proposal with several moving parts. Its positives include being a catalyst for future development there, improving the Walnut/Cedar intersection and undergrounding utilities.”

Meyer then asked for a roll-call vote. Council members Joe Harmon, Stehle and Ross voted yes, with Yi, Miller and Lim voting no. With the Council deadlocked at 3-3, Meyer broke the tie by voting yes – and the project was approved.

CALENDAR

FRIDAY/MARCH 18

ArtScreen Movie Night. 7:30 p.m. At Stacy C. Sherwood Center 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Enter the world of a legendary art forger! "Art and Craft", 2014, not rated. FREE Admission includes popcorn, candy, and refreshments! Doors open at p.m. Part of ArtScreen Film Series. Free.

MARCH 18 TO APRIL 16

"The Art of Murder." Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, W-3 Theater, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. In a remote estate in the countryside of Connecticut, Jack Brooks, one of the most accomplished painters of his generation, awaits the imminent arrival of his art dealer. But the visit is not a standard one, for Jack feels wronged, and he is intending to kill the man. As Jack lays out his intentions for the evening, his wife, Annie, calmly paints. She is reluctant to go along with the plan, until Jack's threat of violence convinces her otherwise. Harried and annoyed, Vincent, Jack's flamboyant art dealer, arrives. Will Jack carry out his plan? Will Annie help him? Or is something else going on? Visit www.workhousearts.org.

FRIDAY/MARCH 18

Martha Spencer Duo. 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, W16 McGuire Woods Gallery, Lorton. A singer-songwriter, mountain musician and dancer, from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia shares, with her audiences, the strong musical connection between families and music in Appalachia.



SWING OUT will be presented Saturday, March 19, 2022 at GMU Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

SATURDAY/MARCH 19

Bill Heid Trip. 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, W16 McGuire Woods Gallery, Lorton. Playing all styles of blues piano including boogie woogie, be-bop, funk, and neo-soul styles which have been influenced from greats Pete Johnson, Albert Ammons, and Meade Lux Lewis.

SATURDAY/MARCH 19

SWING OUT. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Dr, Fairfax. Live music by Eyal Vilner's Big Band accompanies the dancing and choreography created by Caleb Teicher with Lindy Hop champions Evita Arce, LaTasha Barnes, and Nathan Bugh. The dancers will also participate in community events and classes during their time as Mason Artists-in-Residence in the

week surrounding the performance. Visit the website: <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>

SUNDAY/MARCH 20

Josanne Francis. 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, W16 McGuire Woods Gallery, Lorton. Born and raised in the twin-island Republic of Trinidad & Tobago, she is an internationally known steelpan performer and music educator. Her music catapults audiences in a unique and exceptional way.

SUNDAY/MARCH 20

N Gauge (NTRAK) Model Trains on Display. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Museum members and ages 4 and under free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages

13 and older, \$5, special events, \$6; seniors and military both active and retired, \$4. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

MARCH 25-26

Mason Dance Gala Concerts. 8 p.m. At the GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Tickets: \$28 General Public; \$15 students, staff, and seniors; \$10 groups of 10 or more. For up-to-date information, video, and choreographer bios, visit the website: <https://dance.gmu.edu/dance-gala-concert>.

MARCH 26-27

Springpex Stamp Show 2022. At John R. Lewis High School, 6540 Franconia Road, Springfield. Springpex is the area's largest stamp show. The show features competitive and non-competitive philatelic exhibits, and some 25 stamp and cover dealers from throughout the Eastern U.S. In addition to the exhibits, special commemorative cachet envelopes and postal cancellations will mark the 50th Anniversary of the last Lunar Landing by Apollo 17, the 100th Anniversary of the Lincoln Memorial, and the 50th Springpex show. Show hours will be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, March 26, and 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 27. Visit the website at www.springfield-stampclub.org.

SATURDAY/MARCH 26

Hearth Cooking Workshop. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Lorton. Visit the hearth kitchen at Gunston Hall

for the ultimate experience in slow food as you learn to employ 18th-century cooking techniques and recipes to create period dishes. Cost: \$125. Visit the website: <https://gunstonhall.org/events/adult-hearth-cooking-workshop-2/>

MONDAY/MARCH 28

"My Brother is Deaf." 7:30 to 9 p.m. At GMU Johnson Center Cinema, Fairfax. Visiting Filmmakers Series: Peter Hoffman Kimball, "My Brother is Deaf." A sweet 5-year-old learns that his younger brother is deaf and joins with his family in discovering how to embrace and support him. Peter Kimball is a screenwriter, filmmaker, and professor based in Washington, D.C. His films have played at festivals all over the world including Slamdance, Vancouver, D.C. Shorts, and Calgary.

MAY 21-22

Girls on the Run Spring Registration. GOTR NOVA will be offering an in-person 10-week curriculum for the Spring 2022 season. Two in-person 5Ks presented by Cigna will be held on May 21st and 22nd in Sterling and Ballston, respectively. Teams will continue to be school and community-based to further our outreach efforts in being accessible to every girl across Northern Virginia. Currently, 105 teams throughout Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, Loudoun, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William are open for Spring 2022 registration through March 1, 2022. For more information about spring registration and sites for Girls on the Run of NOVA, visit www.gotrnova.org.

New Golf Game Opens in Old Golf Venue in Kingstowne

In an area slated for houses, Rudy's golf provides options for golfers.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

There's nothing like a sleepy Sunday afternoon on the golf course, slicing and hooking shots and somehow coming with a par on the scorecard. Now Franconia residents have that option at Rudy's Golf, a driving range game featuring the "Top Tracer," system that tracks the shots like on the PGA games on television.

"It gives you the yardage and spin rates," said James McArdle, the manager who drives in from his home in Burke.

Rudy's is located in the same location of a previous golf game there called "Top Golf," which is less than a mile from Edison High School in Kingstowne. Top Golf was a similar driving range facility but closed in late 2019 to make way for a new housing complex. Those plans were for 275 residences which could have been townhouses, houses and condos or apartments, similar to the current housing stock of Kingstowne.

The application to redevelop the site into houses was deferred by Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Lee) and county officials. The site owner "expressed a desire to recommence previous uses on the site, to include golf activities and a restaurant," Lusk said.

Out in the tee box, the golfers were happy with the situation. "I'm so glad this is here instead of the houses," said Kingstowne resident Leonard Smith who was on the tee with his family playing a game next to his neighbors, the McClung family. "Van Dorn is already a mess," Smith said.

"People need an outlet, somewhere to go," said his wife, Jamie Smith.

They opened in January but aren't running full speed yet. McArdle plans a bigger opening event in April. When Top Golf was at its height of popularity, things filled up quickly and there was a wait for a golf bay to open up. For the rest of March, Rudy's will be closed on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays while the weather gets better and the inside is completed.

"By April we should be open everyday of the week," said McArdle.

There is a miniature golf course there as well and it also closed when everything else did, but the course remained intact. Plans include that as well. "We're going to renovate it," said McArdle.

Cooling Off in the Club House

Inside there is a bar, 13 tables, single seats and many big screen televisions tuned into sports, particularly golf when possible. There are alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks available and a full menu. The classic burger with fries is \$10.99 while the kids meals top out at \$6.99 with a drink. The menu has appetizers and salads as well.

On the side of the main lobby there is a conference room for area businesses to combine a meeting with food and golf.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION



In the bay, Kingstowne neighbors' the Smiths and the McClung's see what Rudy's has to offer.



Plenty of golf balls at Rudy's.



Inside there is a restaurant space, big-screen televisions and a bar.

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Obituary



David Arthur Kreager, beloved husband, father, and grandfather, died peacefully surrounded by his family on Feb 27, 2022 in Leesburg, Virginia. "Dave" as he was known to his loved ones, was 70 years old. He will be dearly missed by his family and friends. Dave was born on September 5, 1951 to his parents Arthur William Kreager and Margaret Collins Kreager in Indianapolis, Indiana. For full obituary visit www.colonialfuneralhome.com.

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Pharmacist at New World Pharmacy LLC in dba Shinsegeh Pharmacy in Annandale VA. Dispensing RX meds to patients & offering expertise in the safe use of RX meds. Doctorate Deg in Pharmacy & VA Lic Pharm. Res: newworldpharmacy@aol.com

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILL PALENSCAR

The Hayfield Hawks hold up the school's first basketball State Championship after defeating Battlefield 67-47.



Greg Jones #23 slams the ball in for Hayfield in the closing minute of the game. Jones led all scorers with 23 points.

UNDEFEATED!

FROM PAGE 6

Greg Jones led Hayfield with 23 points, 5 rebounds and 4 steals. Teammate David King added 12 points and 7 rebounds, while DJ Holloway had 11 points and Braylon Wheeler added 10.

Battlefield was led by Maddux Tennant with 12 points and 4 steals. Bryce Ham-

mersley and Hasan Hammad each had 9 points while teammate Chase Nelson added 8 points.

Hayfield Coach Carlos Poindexter credits his team over the season for having really big 3rd quarters, and this game was no different. Poindexter also added that the leadership of Braylon Wheeler helped keep his team together.

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Nothing Sensational Here



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Can I admit to a lack of sensation? It might sound a bit odd, but I don't feel like I have cancer. Furthermore, when I go to a medical facility to have one thing or another done, I never feel as if I'm on a slippery slope, health wise. Naively or not, what I most think and feel about whatever procedure or diagnostic scan I'm having or prescription drug I'm ordering, is that I'm at a certain age, over age 65, where some of the parts don't work as well as they used to, and a tune-up, so to speak, is merely the cost of doing business, if you know what I mean? The older one gets, the more difficulties there are getting from here to there – and everywhere in between; with varying hurdles at almost every step (more so if there's a bend-over involved). For some inexplicable reason, I don't see the cancer issue as the extremely serious and complicated problem that it is. I just see it as another day alive and in semi paradise (especially considering my original two-year prognosis).

And though I joke when referring to being in paradise, compared to the "terminal" diagnosis I was initially given by my oncologist, specifically: "13 months to two years," in late February 2009, it's impossible for me to consider any blip on my health radar now as anything but amazing good fortune that I'm still even blipping. As in I'm still alive being able to experience any blips/symptoms. (The presumption being that one doesn't feel symptoms when they're dead, so my thinking is, if I'm still feeling; then I'm still in the game, and it's a game I very much want to continue to play.) Honestly though, none of it really bothers me, too much.

For a while, back in early 2009 when Team Lourie was trying to assimilate the "terminal" diagnosis I received: (stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer), it was difficult to see a future. Heck, it was difficult to see a present – which by the way, had just been taken away. But my attitude then, as it remains so today, is a kind of blissful ignorance while respecting and adhering to the many medical steps I regularly take. I mean it's serious, of course, very serious. Still, I do my best to compartmentalize the bad and try to live my good life going forward; as if nothing has been taken away.

Thinking back, thirteen years ago, when I was initially diagnosed, seems like an eternity, another lifetime, one might say. Considering I'm now living in year 14 after being told I might not make it to year two, and perhaps you can appreciate how little – and even some big things, don't bother me nearly as much as one might imagine. Having dodged a bullet (a hail of bullets, actually), I don't feel as if I'm on shaky ground. Quite the contrary. I feel like I'm on hallowed ground. I've not been to the mountain top or seen a burning bush, but I have lived a life I had no expectation of living.

I may not be "The Iron Horse" (Lou Gehrig), but I feel very fortunate, nonetheless. Life has gone on. Amazing.

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

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