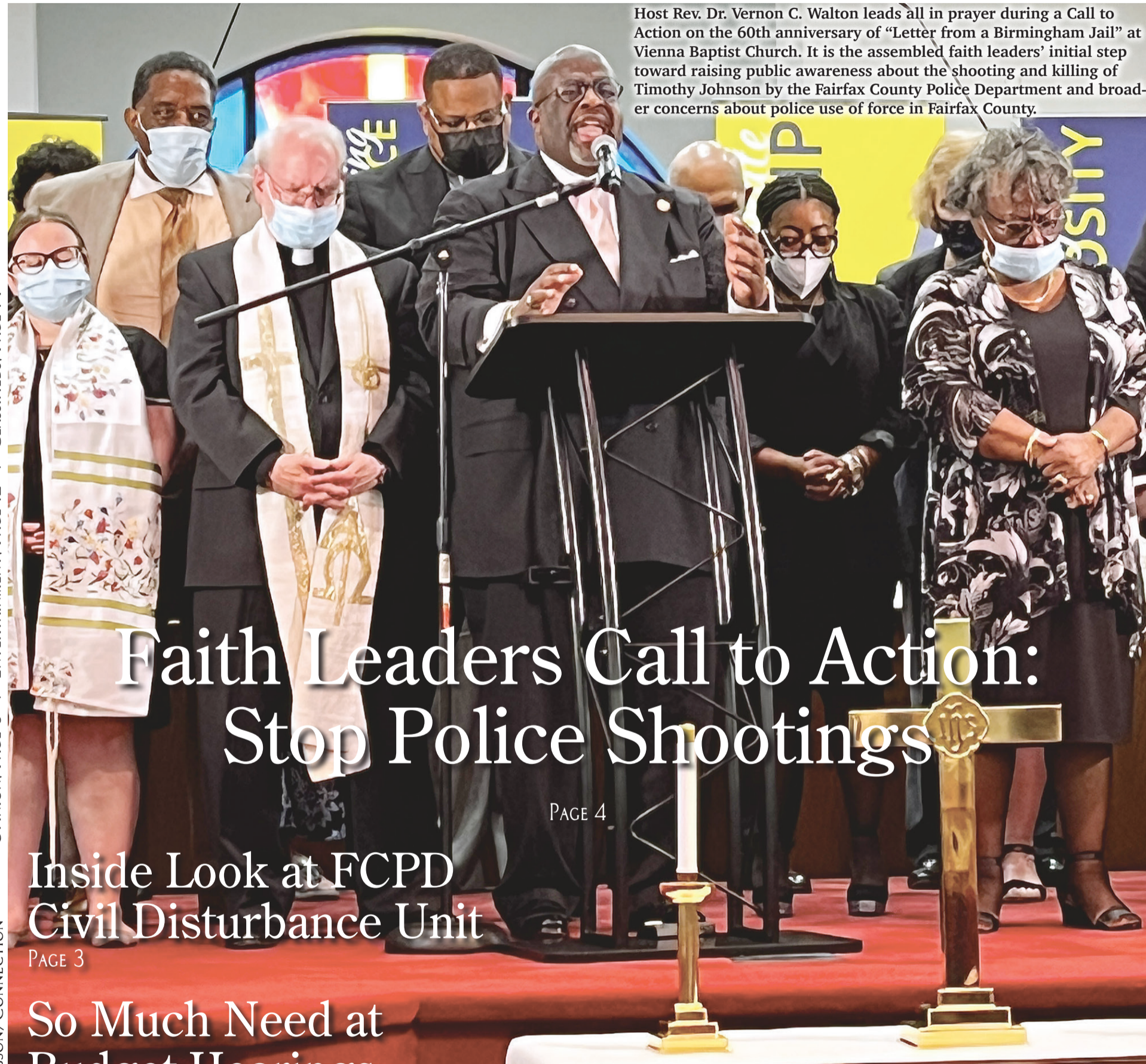


THE CONNECTION

CENTREVIEW ❖ Chantilly ❖ Great Falls ❖ Herndon ❖ McLean ❖ Oak Hill ❖ Oakton ❖ Reston ❖ Vienna

Host Rev. Dr. Vernon C. Walton leads all in prayer during a Call to Action on the 60th anniversary of "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" at Vienna Baptist Church. It is the assembled faith leaders' initial step toward raising public awareness about the shooting and killing of Timothy Johnson by the Fairfax County Police Department and broader concerns about police use of force in Fairfax County.



Faith Leaders Call to Action: Stop Police Shootings

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Inside Look at FCPD Civil Disturbance Unit

PAGE 3

So Much Need at Budget Hearings

PAGE 8

No Indictment

PAGE 10

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OPINION, PAGE 6 ❖ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ❖ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 14

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NEWS

Inside Look at FCPD Civil Disturbance Unit

Purpose is to ‘protect peaceful, First Amendment protests and quell violent uprisings;’ unit responded to the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Not everyone knows the Fairfax County Police Department has a Civil Disturbance Unit, but it performs vital functions here and throughout the region. And one of its members, PFC Kevin Gehr, recently spoke about it at a meeting of the Sully District Police Station’s Citizens Advisory Committee.

“We’ve been here five years now, and we respond to First Amendment events,” he said. “With 131 members, we’re the largest, non-standing unit within the county – meaning we all have other police jobs as our main job. Our purpose is to protect peaceful, First Amendment protests and quell violent uprisings. We responded to the Capitol on Jan. 6.”

Gehr said the members have a “high level of training” and are “trained more than street officers are to deal with these types of situations. Our training levels are Basic, Grenadier, Medic and Level 1. Grenadiers will use chemical munitions and pepper balls. Level 1 officers are in full riot gear; we use armadillo shields that won’t break if an ax is thrown at them. When you have 10,000 people and only 50 of you, officers need to be trained to deal with them.

“A couple medics – usually from our Helicopter Division – are embedded with us. They help us out because, in a [Civil Disturbance Unit] deployment, we’re often far from a hospital and they can offer prolonged treatment and provide advanced life support. They can also do ultrasounds and concussion screening, and they can administer DuoDote – a prescription medicine used to treat chemical attacks. In addition, we’re now the first police department in the country carrying whole blood in the cruiser. It comes from Inova, and we can administer it to victims on the street.”

He said some 38 Civil Disturbance Unit officers are Level 1 and the rest are Basic level. The CDU conducts several rounds of training per year. And, said Gehr, “Every new member coming out of the Police Academy will be CDU-trained, at least at Basic level. It’s not an option, anymore.”

The CDU also instructs surrounding jurisdictions – including Stafford and Spotsylvania counties, Fairfax and Alexandria cities, and the U.S. Capital and CIA police – in both basic and advanced tactics. “It’s a National Capital Area requirement for a 40-hour class,” said Gehr. “And all the other jurisdictions come and take our class in Fairfax County.”

Since May 2022, Fairfax County’s Civil Disturbance Unit has been deployed more than 80 times. “Crowd sizes for these protests have ranged from 5-100 people,” said Gehr. “They all ended peacefully and without incident. We don’t want to make



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

PFC Kevin Gehr

FCPD CIVIL DISTURBANCE UNIT

At a Glance

- ❖ 131 Officers
- ❖ High level of training
- ❖ Responded to the Capitol on Jan. 6
- ❖ Deployed more than 80 times since May 2022
- ❖ Last fall, 90 percent of the deployments were for protests outside homes of the three Supreme Court justices who live in Fairfax County.

arrests; we want to encourage people to protest peacefully.”

He noted that, last fall, 90 percent of the deployments were for protests outside the homes of the three Supreme Court justices who live in this county. “We went there every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, after the Roe vs. Wade decision came out,” he explained.

However, the violent Jan. 6 insurrection was another matter, entirely. “Our folks were in gas masks for five hours that day, as well as helmets, masks, body armor and shields,” said Gehr. “The Fairfax County CDU pushed people back after the curfew, but the Capitol Police and Metro Police Dept. did most of the heavy lifting. Then came the state and local police, including FCPD.”

Normally, he said, 30-50 CDU members are deployed at a time for a large-scale event in, for example, Washington, D.C., or Baltimore, Md. But to a Supreme Court justice’s house, just 10-12 officers are needed. The Civil Disturbance Unit’s many deployments have also included responding to protests outside the NRA building, as well as to the District for presidential inaugurations and State of the Union addresses.

After hearing Gehr’s presentation, residents attending were able to ask questions. One wanted to know how the CDU learns about an incident in advance. “We have full-time detectives and analysts working



PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPD

Civil Disturbance Unit officers doing live training to subdue a “violent protester.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPD

FCPD’s Civil Disturbance Unit officers (in face shields) inside the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

on intelligence, and this information is relayed to the CDU commander,” replied Capt. Rachel Levy, commander of the Sully District Station.

Another man asked, if a civil disturbance broke out in Centreville, who’d respond and who’d be in charge of quelling it. “Should

there be an unlawful assembly in the county, we’d be called to go there with our gear,” said Gehr.

“The local police officers would respond, as would the CDU,” added Levy. “When the CDU experts came in, we’d still be there, but they’d be the ones leading the charge.”



Host Rev. Dr. Vernon C. Walton leads all in prayer during a Call to Action on the 60th anniversary of “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” at Vienna Baptist Church. It is the assembled faith leaders’ initial step toward raising public awareness about the shooting and killing of Timothy Johnson by the Fairfax County Police Department and broader concerns about police use of force in Fairfax County.



Willie King shakes hands with Del. Holly Seibold (D-35). Willie King (not related) helped transcribe Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” written on newspaper edges, paper napkins, toilet paper, and whatever scraps Dr. King could find in jail, and carried out by his lawyer.

Calling Leaders to Action in Wake of Police Shooting

Ecumenical Service links 60th anniversary of MLK’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail” with call to action about police use of force.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Influenced by the Feb. 22 shooting and killing of shoplifting suspect Timothy Johnson, 37, at Tysons Corner Center by Fairfax County Police officers and the increase in police use of force cases in the county, Faith Leaders United of Northern Virginia held “Call to Action: An Ecumenical and Interfaith Service” on April 16. It coincided with the 60th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

Multi-racial, multi-faith clergy teams invited legislators and candidates from all levels, community activists, and others to the First Baptist Church of Vienna program at 450 Orchard Street NW. Rev. Dr. Vernon C. Walton was the host pastor. The 17 speakers tied the anniversary commemoration of King’s letter to their current ongoing fight for justice for Johnson and others shot and killed by Fairfax County Police.

Rev. Stephen Smith Cobbs, Trinity Presbyterian Church pastor in Herndon, and other faith leaders urged action. Cobbs said everyone should follow Reverend Dr. King’s example and act. “Write our own letters to public officials (to) encourage them to take action to restore trust and accountability,” he said.

The program suggested mailing a letter to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Commonwealth’s Attorney, and local business owners and leaders. Reference <http://www.nvhcreston.org/664393-2/>.

Pastor Paul Sheppard of the First Baptist Church of Merrifield said waiting for justice through the legal system or the goodwill of white moderates would “only perpetuate the



Karen Campblin, third vice president and immediate past president of Fairfax County NAACP

vicious cycle of oppression and inequality. ... [King’s] letter is still relevant,” Sheppard said.

As a teen, Rev. Scott Ramsey, pastor at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church in McLean, had read King’s letter. He learned that “the Negroes great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is ... the white moderate ... (who) is more devoted to order than to justice.”

Ramsey said the timetable for another man’s freedom cannot be set “until a more convenient season.” Ramsey said King wrote that waiting for change is no longer an option. “We do not want our community to elevate consumer goods over human lives. So, we are here together to think together as a community about loss preven-



Rev. Aaron Fulp-Eickstaedt, pastor, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, McLean



Pastor Paul Sheppard, First Baptist Church of Merrifield



Rev. Scott Ramsey, pastor Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, McLean



Rev. Dr. Vernon C. Walton, host pastor of First Baptist Church of Vienna

tion policies in our businesses. We are here to call for proper accountability and training for our police officers. We’re here to call for equipping our police officers, whom we value and honor, to be ready to de-escalate situations. We are here to think together

about improving public safety so that lives serve the common good of all of us. Those of us who aren’t white, we need to be involved in this now.”

SEE POLICE SHOOTING, PAGE 10
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



The solar panels on this Centreville house burned.

Centreville House Fire Does \$90,000 Damage

A house fire last week in Centreville caused an estimated \$90,000 damage. Fire investigators determined it was accidental in nature and started on the roof because of “an electrical event involving solar panels.”

The incident occurred last Tuesday, April 11, in the 15400 block of Martins Hundred Drive in Virginia Run. Units from both the Fairfax County and Prince William County fire and rescue departments were dispatched there at 11:46 a.m. for a reported house fire.

First-arriving units discovered fire visi-

ble on the roof of a two-story, single-family home. Crews worked quickly to extinguish the blaze, preventing the bulk of the fire from entering the home’s interior.

Two occupants were home when the fire began, but a neighbor saw flames coming from the roof and alerted them. They both evacuated and called 9-1-1. Working smoke alarms were in the home but did not sound, due to the fire’s location. This incident did not displace the occupants.

— BONNIE HOBBS

House Fire in Chantilly Causes Estimated \$110,000 in Damage

On Saturday, April 15, at 1:52 p.m., units from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue and the Prince William County Fire and Rescue were dispatched for a house fire in the 15400 block of Eagle Tavern Lane in Chantilly. The fire was caused by improperly discarded fire pit ashes.

While enroute to the scene, one unit reported a column of smoke was visible in the distance. The first arriving units reported heavy fire showing from the garage. A second alarm was requested which brought additional firefighters from FCFRD, PWCFRD and Loudoun County Fire and Rescue. Crews worked aggressively to bring the fire under control and eventually extinguish it. There were no reported civilian or firefighter injuries.

No occupants were home at the time of the fire. The fire was discovered by a neighbor who saw smoke and fire on the side of the house. Neighbors attempted to extinguish the fire but were unsuccessful. Smoke alarms sounded after smoke from the fire migrated into the home.

Fire Investigators determined the fire was accidental in nature and started outside of the home inside a plastic trash can. The fire was caused by improperly discarded fire pit ashes.



Fairfax County Fire and Rescue and Prince William County Fire and Rescue responded to a house fire in the 15400 block of Eagle Tavern Lane in Chantilly.

Three occupants were displaced because of the fire. Red Cross services were offered and declined. Damages as a result of the fire were approximately \$110,000

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Much Remains To Be Done

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN"
PLUM



In my farewell speech to the House of Delegates last week I reflected on the changes that had occurred in Virginia during the 44 years I was honored to be a member. In addition I thought it important to share my thoughts about much that remains to be achieved. Following are excerpts from my speech stating my priorities as to what still needs to be done.

When we as Democrats reformed Virginia's voting laws, making them some of the best in the country, Republicans under those new laws won the governorship and a majority in the House of Delegates. Why now do you seek to turn back the clock and make it harder to vote? Do you fear that you need to limit the electorate when you cannot win on the merits of your positions?

You railed for decades against Roe v Wade that was settled law on the difficult issue of abortion. You appear to be like the dog that chased cars until he caught one and then did not know what to do with it. Ducking, bobbing,

and moving past the issue will not save you. Women's reproductive rights need to be fully restored. Let me remind you that Virginia elected the first Black governor in the country not simply because he was the most capable of the candidates but because he was prochoice and the man he defeated was not.

How much longer can you as Republicans stay with the pro-gun advocates when the death toll from gun violence continues to escalate? More children die from gun violence than any other reason. I must tell you that it is a little pathetic to witness when well-researched commonsense bills to end gun violence are presented and there is no discussion but rather kowtowing to what the NRA and the Virginia Citizens Defense League lobbyists have to say. What do you say to your children and grandchildren to explain your vote against common sense gun safety laws? Do not try to put it off on the Second Amendment as if the Founding Fathers intended to protect this kind of gun violence in the Constitution.

These are especially challenging times in our schools. The number of children who need

mental health assistance and the need to reduce anxiety among our youth is only getting worse. At the same time we are talking about taking more than a billion dollars in available revenue and dividing it up among the people who need it least. I think that kind of action is unconscionable!

We have ministers, rabbis, and religious leaders come in to give a prayer each day at the start of the session. Uniformly without reference to any particular religious doctrine they offer us direction on caring for the most vulnerable and needy in our society. Do we act any differently because of what they have to say? We have separation of church and state, but we should never separate legislating from morality and ethics.

The good old days were never as good as we sometimes make them out to have been. I am honored to have been part of making the days in Virginia ever better for all. I know that you as members of the oldest legislative body in the Western Hemisphere will work to overcome prejudices, conspiracy theories, misinformation and lies to make Virginia a leader among the states.

To listen to my entire speech, go to <https://www.facebook.com/kenneth.plum/videos/670005431487255>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Speaking Out Against zMod's Data Centers By Right

To the Editor:

The Virginia Supreme Court ruled on March 23 that the new Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance (zMOD) was illegal. But rather than allow the public time to digest and comment on the 691-page document, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on it, May 3 at 7:30 p.m., and the Board of Supervisors, May 9 at 4:30 p.m. This rush for reapproval leaves residents little time to prepare their responses and objections, or even to realize that zMOD will allow construction of data centers, by right, close to residential neighborhoods.

Of the nearly 400 emails received during the pandemic regarding zMOD, many complained of the dizzying number of changes to consider, the minimal time for discussions and that it was being rushed through during a pandemic. But the do-over is being rushed, too.

Questionable zMOD issues include: Allowing 12 square feet of signage in residential front yards advertising Home-Based Businesses (HBBs – effectively changing a residential district to a commercial district); eliminating the public hearing process that allows neighbors to weigh in on the building of Accessory Living Units, Accessory Structures, HBBs; and more.

However, the most problematic is zMOD's by-right construction of data centers, which the public has never been separately made aware of. Prior to zMOD, data centers were only allowed in the "planned" (P) districts, which are large tracts of land developed for a specialized purpose. It is a gross misinterpretation by the Supervisors to state that data centers were allowed anywhere a telecommunication facility was referenced.

zMOD permits data centers in the C-3, C-4, I-2 through I-6, PRC, PDC, and PTC Districts (more than Loudoun). Check how close these districts are to your home via <https://fairfaxcountygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e64b68aa834d46b0ad0e6cd4d831f843>.

I-3 and I-5 districts are adjacent to, or within several hundred yards of parkland and residential neighborhoods. For example, an enormous 100-foot tall, 402,000-square-foot data center (ref: RZ 2022-SU-00019, SE 2022-SU-00038) is being considered adjacent to the Cub Run Stream Valley Park and neighboring Pleasant Valley community.

In zMOD, the I-3 district's purpose is "to provide areas for scientific research, development and training, offices, manufacture and

assembly of products, and related supply activities. This district is designed to accommodate a broad spectrum of clean industries operating under high performance standards." A clean industry uses eco-friendly practices to minimize negative environmental impacts while conserving energy and natural resources.

Data centers have an enormous energy usage: the DEQ even considered a variance to allow data-center generators to exceed EPA air-pollution levels in Loudoun County because they cannot get enough supply from the electrical

grid. Data centers also consume an enormous amount of water. Excessive water and electrical usage and the ability to pollute the air, do not constitute a "clean industry" and therefore should not be permitted by-right in I-3.

zMOD states uses allowed in the I-5 district "must minimize noise, smoke, glare, and other environmental pollutants on the uses within the district and on neighboring areas." Data centers are noisy, contradicting I-5's purpose "to minimize the impact of noise."

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 7

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 6

The 24/7 hum from roof-top HVACs is having detrimental effects on many communities. Residents near an 8-story CyrusOne data center in Chicago sued because of the incessant noise; Northern Virginia residents have been protesting the effects of data-center noise; and a Business Insider article states, "Physiological effects of industrial noise pollution are well-documented to include hearing loss, elevated stress hormones like cortisol, hypertension, and insomnia."

Article 4, section 6A for data centers states "In all districts except I-4, I-5, and I-6, all equipment necessary for cooling, ventilating, or otherwise operating the facility must be contained within an enclosed building where the use is located. This includes emergency power generators and other emergency power supply equipment," implying that data centers can have outdoor generators for I-5 districts – again contradicting "to minimize the impact of noise."

Data centers are largely self-regulating: no federal agency governs the siting and operation of these facilities. It's up to us to understand the issues and know where NOT to allow data centers that will be detrimental to the surrounding communities.

The Virginia Supreme Court has given us an opportunity to get ZMOD right. We know more about data centers than we did three years ago, so it's important to remove the by-right construction of data centers from zMOD and handle data centers as a separate issue.

Show the county that you care.

Email your concerns to the Planning Commission Plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov by May 1, subject "zMOD - No to by-right data centers," and to clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov requesting it be submitted to all the supervisors by May 7. Sign up to speak, or attend one of the hearings at the Fairfax County Government Center auditorium, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax.

Cynthia Shang
Chantilly

NEWS BRIEFS

Document-Shredding Event in Centreville

Sully Station Shopping Center is sponsoring a document-shredding event this Saturday, April 22, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., in its parking lot at 5079 Westfields Blvd. in Centreville. To protect their identity, people may bring their old documents, bank statements, etc., and have them securely shredded onsite. Limit of three "banker boxes" per vehicle. Papers only; no binders. Participants must remain in their vehicles. And if there's low demand, the event may close early.

Free Prom Dresses at Centreville High

Need a prom dress but can't afford one? No problem. Centreville High marketing students and the Fair Oaks Classroom on the Mall program have opened a Prom Dress Shop at the school. Any area student—not just those from Fairfax County Public Schools—who don't have the money to buy a prom dress may choose from hundreds of new dresses donated by Macy's.

Students must show a valid student ID or other form of school ID to select a free dress during the following days and times: Friday, May 5, from 4-7 p.m.; Saturday, May 6, from 2-5 p.m.; and Sunday, May 7, from 1-4 p.m.

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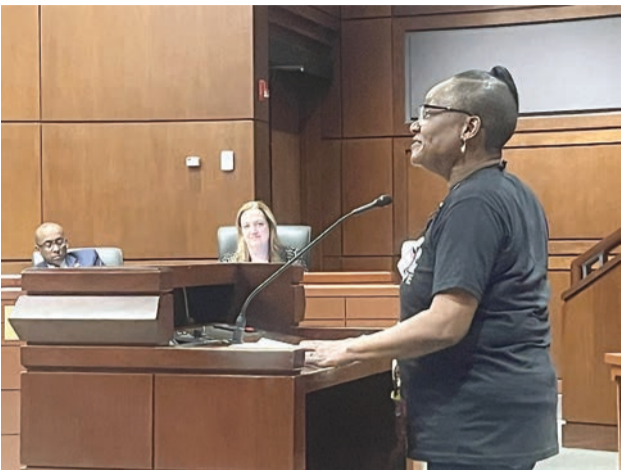


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Alicia Archer



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Cyndi Jones testifies before the Board of Supervisors.

Three-Days of Budget Public Hearings

Out in force, crying out for help from Fairfax County.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The economic impact of the pandemic is not over. The level of need, following cuts in federal rent relief and food assistance, continues to be as high or higher now than during the pandemic, according to testimony by Leah Tenoria, director of Hispanic Ministry and Community Outreach at Good Shepherd Catholic Church

“I have recorded a higher number of calls for assistance each month — double the number from last year at this time — and our funds are out by the 2nd or 3rd day of the month,” Tenoria testified. She oversees the Emergency Assistance Program at Good Shepherd Catholic Church.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors public hearings were held April 11, 12, and 13 to get public input on the County Executive’s Proposed FY 2024 Advertised Budget Plan, the Advertised Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2024-2028 with Future Fiscal Years to 2033, and the Current Appropriation Level in the FY 2023 Revised Budget Plan.

“These individuals have already called the county help hotline at CSP (Community Services Program) and are told that



County School Board Chair Rachna Sizemore Heizer



Rose Risely, member Long Term Care Coordinating Council

they are out of funds or that they no longer have COVID funds to help them,” Tenoria said. “We should continue to provide funding to support Emergency Assistance Programs and other support systems that will lift up families and ensure basic needs are met.”



Lydia Lawrence, chair of the Fairfax Parks Coalition



Mary Paden, chair of the South County Task Force

One hundred forty-seven people testified during the public hearings. From County School Board Chair Rachna Sizemore Heizer, the first speaker on April 11, to Tenoria on April 12, to Rose James, the final speaker on April 13, they expressed a need and asked for funding or changes to the pro-



Arthur Purves, president of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance



Therese Chaplin

posed budget. Sizemore Heizer said that the School Board appreciated the advertised budget funding for all of Schools’ recurring costs that the district requested. She said the division faced a teacher shortage and needed to



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

About 80 residents of mobile home parks along Route 1 turned out to the budget hearings.

Budget Public Hearings

FROM PAGE 8

provide “market competitive compensation.”

Lydia Lawrence, chair of the Fairfax Parks Coalition, requested “targeted equity programs” as parks do not look the same, access is not the same, and the “quality of them differs” in different parts of the county. Lawrence requested funds for mobile nature center buses to go into neighborhoods that do not have access to parks, and funding of \$229,279 would be for those staff positions. Lawrence said that FCPA desperately needs to hire staff members who have the bilingual capacity and requested \$50,000 in translation and interpretation services. She told of an advocate at Burke Lake Park who noticed that most signs were in English. “The sign that was in English and Spanish was a sign for trash. What does that say to our residents?” Lawrence asked.

Arthur Purves, president of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance, said that since FY 2000, the supervisors raised residential real estate taxes three times faster than household income. “If the real estate taxes had increased at the same rate as household income,” the rate would be 57 cents instead of \$1.11,” Purves said.

Rose Risely, a member of the Long Term Care Coordinating Council, asked the board to support funding to staff the Springfield Senior Care Center Without Walls program and that the new positions support the inclusion of adults with disabilities into the program. She asked the board to support the proposed funding increase for the Fastran contract and that human services contracts reflect the consumer price index of 7.3 percent, “which is referenced in county contracts as the basis for contract rate adjustments at a significantly higher than the advertised budget.”

Mary Paden, chair of the South County Task Force, which advocates for people with low income on the Route 1 Richmond Highway Corridor, testified that the task force organized a block of speakers on behalf of the Fairfax NAACP Housing Committee. Paden described how the county is losing housing “out the back door as rents are increased, and older garden apartments are scheduled for redevelopment.”

Mobile home park communities along Route 1 with

many tenants, are not all covered by the new no-net-loss policy, and are being bought by out-of-state equity firms, Paden said. “One park located in a future BRT area is ripe for sale to a developer.”

“These [mobile home] parks are long standing communities of color ... In its budget guidance, the Board promised \$60 million in the FY24 budget for both building and preserving affordable housing, but only about \$30M is included in this FY24 budget. We repeat our ask for \$60M in the FY24 housing trust fund: \$30M for new housing and \$30M for preservation. ... It is imperative to increase funding now because, after a lull, development pressures are picking up, and we need to be nimble in grabbing opportunities for preservation — or they will be lost forever,” Paden said. Paden also repeated a request for a new position in the Department of Housing and Community Development focused on mobile home communities. About 80 residents of mobile home parks along Route 1 turned out to the budget hearings. They asked the county to join with nonprofits in purchasing mobile home parks to save them from being developed.

Other Mount Vernon area issues include funds for home repairs, more rent relief and food assistance for residents still coping with health effects or job hour cuts from the pandemic; a right to counsel in eviction court; and repairs to the Kennedy shelter or alternate housing for people experiencing homelessness until a new shelter is completed in four years.

Therese Chaplin spoke as an individual but is also a member of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church and the NAACP Housing Committee. Chaplin said housing was a life-essential building block, and people of color are disproportionately affected.

She urged the board to mandate a right to counsel in eviction court and fund legal aid attorney positions to meet the need; add funds for rent and food relief; enable lower-income minority residents to own a home so that they can build intergenerational wealth.

April 28 is the Board of Supervisors Budget Committee meeting for pre-markup. On May 2, the Board of Supervisors adopts the FY 2024 Budget, and on May 25, the School Board adopts the FY 2024 Approved Budget.



Members of the Climate Conservation Club at Great Falls Elementary School help set up for the Bluebell Walk at Riverbend Park.

Seven Ways to Celebrate Earth Day

BY HALIA OCHIENG

This region offers so many ways to celebrate Earth Day, which falls on April 22. For example, with the help of Fairfax County Master Gardeners, you could plant a habitat garden using native plants. Soil testing kits are available at all Fairfax County libraries, and the Great Falls Garden Club has resources on local native plants and a youth grant for gardens that support local ecosystems.

Another option is to volunteer. Fairfax County offers many volunteering opportunities at local parks. Through the county’s volunteering website, my friends and I signed up to help build a native plant garden at the Great Falls Grange and prepare for the Bluebell Walk at Riverbend Park.

In case getting your hands dirty is not your cup of tea, you could research the voting records of your Congressional representatives, which are easily available online from organizations like the National Environmental Scoreboard. You could write a letter to your Senator or Representative to thank them for protecting the environment or to ask them to support future environmental bills.

The weeks leading up to Earth Day have many events open to students and the gen-

eral public where you can learn more about the environment and ways to get involved. Environmental clubs can register to participate in the School Environmental Activity Showcase on April 18. This fair allows local students to present their activities and learn from each other.

You could also host or attend a fundraiser to support an environmental organization. For example, Climate Conservation Club is selling Earth Day crafts using recycled material at the annual Children’s Business Fair on April 22 on Utterback Store Road. The money raised will go to an organization in Kenya that protects injured and sick sea turtles.

You could check out books about climate change from your local library and share what you learn with your friends and family. Try writing about what you learn in school publications or even local newspapers!

And last but not least, you could also start an environmental club. By teaming up with friends at school or in your community, your group can get new ideas, have more fun, and make a bigger impact. I saw this to be true when a friend and I interviewed our principal about energy usage. By working together, we thought of better questions and had a great time.

However you choose to celebrate, have a happy Earth Day!

Grand Jury Fails to Indict for Johnson's Death

Former FCPD Sgt. Wesley Shifflett won't face criminal charges, at least now.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A grand jury decided on Monday, April 17, not to indict a former Fairfax County Police Department officer. He fatally shot Timothy McCree Johnson, a 37-year-old unarmed Black man from Washington D.C., during an alleged shoplifting incident at Nordstrom Tysons Corner Center in McLean on the evening of Feb. 22. The merchandise: two pairs of sunglasses.

In a released statement Monday afternoon, April 17, Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano said, "Earlier this morning, I sat with Timothy Johnson's family and told them I expected an indictment to come today in the killing of their son, so I can only imagine their pain and shock when they received the news that the officer — who shot and killed their unarmed son — was not indicted." Descano did not proceed with his previously announced 12 p.m. press conference to provide an update on the in-

vestigation into Johnson's death, during which he would read a statement and take questions. It was delayed until shortly before 2 p.m., then cancelled.

According to VA Courts.gov, the grand jury's function is to determine whether there is probable cause to require the accused to stand trial. It is not to determine guilt or innocence. Proceedings are kept in strict confidence.

"Since, by law, no prosecutors were permitted to be present in the room when the investigating officers made their presentations to the grand jury, I can't say for sure what information was conveyed to the grand jurors. In light of this outcome, I am evaluating all options on the path forward and continue to grieve Timothy's loss," Descano said.

During a press conference on March 23, FCPD Police Chief Kevin Davis said no firearm or other weapon was recovered from the scene. Davis said the officer had been served notice that day, "administratively separating" him from the Fairfax County Po-



SCREENSHOT VIA INSTAGRAM

Fairfax County and City of Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano

lice Department. Davis clarified that is the equivalent of firing, and he did so because of the officer's "failure to live up to the expectations of our agency, in particular use of force policies." The fired officer was later identified as Sgt. Wesley Shifflett.

Shifflett, a white officer in the FCPD Tysons Urban Team, fatally shot Johnson during a nighttime foot pursuit in a wooded area near the mall, according to Shifflett's body-worn camera video released by FCPD. The chase ends with Shifflett saying, "Stop

reaching. Stop Reaching. Don't move." It is followed by three pops heard "consistent with gunfire."

Johnson was shot in the chest. Johnson says: "I'm not reaching for nothing. I have nothing. ... I'm shot, man. Hurry." Johnson was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced deceased.

THE ATTORNEY for the Johnson Family spoke harshly about the failure to indict.

"It is unprecedented that when a Commonwealth's Attorney requests an indictment and the Grand Jury doesn't return a True Bill. Two detectives from the Fairfax County Police Department gave testimony for the Commonwealth to return these indictments," said Carl Crews, the Johnson Family attorney. "They tanked the case and turned the Grand Jury away from returning an indictment. This is nothing more than a 'Blue Wall of Silence.' The Blue protecting the blue. No one should be above the law, even former police officers."

Chief Davis did not immediately respond to a request for comment before the Connection's deadline. Neither did Jeffrey McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; nor Caleb Kerscher, attorney for Wesley Shifflett.

Calling Leaders to Action in Wake of Police Shooting

FROM PAGE 4

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION

Karen Campblin, third vice president and immediate past president of the Fairfax County NAACP, attended for Michelle Lee, president. Campblin said she realized the community would still feel King's sentiment and awareness even if his letter were dated today. Disparities persist despite gains. Campblin said they want more than words from the Board of Supervisors, Commonwealth's Attorney, and police chief, "actionable solutions and definitive reassurances that this will never happen again."

"Moving forward," Campblin said, they are asking for an end to "excessive use of force policies that will hold our police officers accountable,

instituting comprehensive policies and procedures... establishing a foot pursuit policy ... and of course, community-based alternatives that aid in mental health and substance abuse crisis responses."

According to Campblin, these changes would fail if Black lives were undervalued. Leaders should enforce these new rules. They must also change the culture, enforce fairness and equality, and admonish efforts to demonize Black, brown, indigenous, and low-income communities. "The urgency now," Campblin said.

Rev. Aaron Fulp-Eickstaedt, a pastor at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in McLean, said he received a call that no pastor ever wants to hear. One of his church members, a young trans man name Aaron Lynch "had



Speakers' row

been killed by Fairfax County Police." The killing took place after three officers went to his home for the second time that evening, a mental health call. According to Fulp-Eickstaedt, Lynch "was experiencing a psychotic break, and came towards officers brandishing a tribal mask and a wine bottle, and Aaron, who may be weighed 140 pounds soaking wet, was first tased twice and then shot three times."

"Spending time with his grieving mom and dad and then conducting his memorial service was heart-wrenching. With Aaron's death, even more, painful for all of us at Emanuel Presbyterian Church was that it didn't have to happen. None of these shootings have to happen," Fulp-Eickstaedt said.



Community members and others.

Fulp-Eickstaedt told of a different incident wherein they sent a letter to the Fairfax County chief of police about a successful crisis intervention by a rookie officer who helped during a mental health call during their hypothermia shelter week. "She helped de-escalate a charged situation like an expert, and she was only a rookie," he said. "We learned that it was in large part because she had received Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)."

According to Fulp-Eickstaedt, part of that letter to the county's chief of police "advo-

cated for him to deploy additional funding and the FCPD budget to make sure that every officer on the force was trained in CIT so that they felt better equipped in such situations... But the letter our board received back from the chief was that there were 1000 officers on the force who had received crisis intervention training, and they didn't need any more of them to be trained," Fulp-Eickstaedt said. "One untrained officer is one too many."

SEE CALLING TO ACTION, PAGE 11
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Right, Karen Keys-Gamarra (at-large member, Fairfax County School Board) and Democratic candidate for House District 7, and Ramona Carroll.



Harold Sims (D), candidate for Fairfax County School Board in the Mount Vernon District, and Erika Yalowitz (D) candidate for Virginia State Senate, 37th District



Left, Shyamali Hauth (D) candidate for the Virginia House District 7, with Willie King.

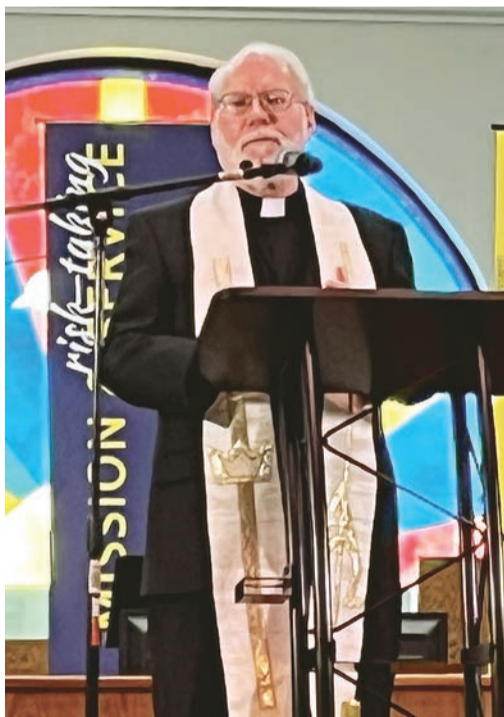
Calling Leaders to Action

FROM PAGE 10

Rev. Dr. Vernon C. Walton, the pastor of First Baptist Church of Vienna, closed the program asking for Fairfax County's elected officials to stand. "I want to acknowledge Karen Keys-Gamarra (at-large member of the Fairfax County School Board) I did see as we were coming into the sanctuary," Walton said. She was the only elected official who attended.

"I thought it important for you to see who is present because seeing and acknowledging those that are present, you're also able to see those that are not present," Walton said.

According to Walton, every Fairfax County Supervisor received an invitation. Officials who people



Rev. Stephen Smith Cobbs, pastor, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Herndon

elect hold positions to represent their constituents. "You cannot represent us if you don't hear from us," Walton said. "This is not the end; this is just the beginning."

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Here's What's Happening at MCC!

APR 29

APR 19

Presented by The Alden
Macdonald Scholarship Finals
Wednesday, April 19, 8 p.m.
Free admission

Presented by The Alden

Performing Arts Movies
Thursday, April 20, 1 p.m.
Free admission

APR 20

McLean Earth Day Celebration

McLean Earth Day-Act Locally
Saturday, April 22, 9 a.m.-noon
For MCC district residents.
Free admission; registration required.

APR 22



Presented by The Alden

Windmill Theatre Company of Australia:
"Hiccup!"
Sunday, April 23, 4 p.m.
\$15/\$12 seniors and students
\$10 MCC district residents

APR 23

APR 26

MCC Governing Board
Regular Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, April 26, 6:30 p.m.
All meetings are open to the public.

Old Firehouse Center Family Events

Sensory Day
Saturday, April 29, noon-4 p.m.
Free Admission;
preregistration is recommended.

APR 29

Presented by The Alden

Spring 2023 Youth Production
"When Pantheons Collide!"
Saturday, April 29 and
Sunday, April 30, 2 p.m.
Free admission.

APR 29

APR 30



The McLean
Community Center
www.mcleancenter.org

Home of The Alden Theatre
www.aldentheatre.org

1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean, VA 22101
703-790-0123

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CALENDAR

BLUEBELLS AND SPRING WILDFLOWERS

Lace up your hiking shoes, grab your camera and enjoy the ephemeral wildflowers that bloom in our parks. Ephemeral flowers are those that bloom temporarily. Their short-lived beauty allows them to grow and reproduce quickly before the canopy of the forest comes alive. Take advantage of the opportunity to get out, during this limited time, to see many of our native ephemeral blooms including bluebells, toad lilies, spring beauties, may apples and more!

Spring Wildflowers Programs
April 30 (9:30 to 11:30 a.m.):

Managing for Native Wildflowers, Riverbend Park, \$10

May 6 (Noon to 1 p.m.): Wildflowers Walk and Craft, Burke Lake Park, \$8

May 7 (3 to 4 p.m.): Wonderful Wildflowers, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, \$7

NOW THRU APRIL 30

Score: Mixed Media Art. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Score explores 20 years of the work of Virginia-based mixed media artist, Joan Dreyer. While developing her MFA thesis at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, PA, Joan began taking tools, techniques and imagery that have been historically considered "women's work" and transforming them into innovative, contemporary art that is responsive to the tone and tensions of our times. Created by combining fiber techniques with unexpected materials like X-rays, her work is a subtle art that asks questions about life, loss, symbolism, and the impact of war instead of providing one size fits all answers. The artist's work provides a space for the contemplation of life stages that we all encounter. The result is a body of work that allows for meaningful but also multiple interpretations by the viewer. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/score-mixed-media>

NOW THRU MAY 31

Candytopia Opens. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Candytopia, in partnership with Tysons Corner Center announces the arrival of its sweet interactive concept to the center. It will feature 16,000 square feet with 14 different interactive environments, Instagram-worthy photo opportunities, and delectable tastes of your favorite sweet treats. There is a candy art gallery, a state-of-the-art candy confetti room, complete with confetti-farting pigs, a marshmallow pit filled with a quarter-million marshmallows, as well as DMV-inspired elements throughout the experience. The journey includes candy samples throughout the experience. Visit www.candytopia.com.

APRIL 4 TO JULY 27

Senior Slow-Pitch Softball Seasons. 9 a.m. to noon. At Braddock, Wakefield, and Nottaway Softball Fields. Join NoVa Senior Softball, men 50+, women 40+, average age 66. Skill-level assessment. 24 teams, three levels of play. Tuesday/Thursday morning double-headers. Begin Spring Training now. 703-663-7881. Visit the website: www.nvss.org



Windmill Theatre Company of Australia presents "Hiccup!" on Sunday, April 23, 2023 at the McLean Community Center.

NOW THRU JUNE 3

"Urinetown." 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. In a Gotham-like city, a terrible water shortage, caused by a 20-year drought, has led to a government-enforced ban on private toilets. The citizens must use public amenities, regulated by a single malevolent company that profits by charging admission for one of humanity's most basic needs. Amid the people, a hero decides that he's had enough and plans a revolution to lead them all to freedom! Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/urinetown>

NOW THRU APRIL 21

Approaching Event Horizons. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Buchanan Hall Atrium Gallery, 4379 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. In Approaching Event Horizons: Projects on Climate Change, artists address the growing consumerist culture and raise awareness about the consequences of the environmental crisis through sculpture, photography, and performative actions. Visit the website: <https://www.masonexhibitions.org/exhibitions/approaching-event-horizons-atlantika-pk3bx>

APRIL 20 TO MAY 7

Mojada by Luis Alfaro. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. Mojada, written by Luis Alfaro who takes the chilling ancient Greek tale of Medea and re-imagines it in a Los Angeles Mexican-American immigrant community. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$50 general admission, \$47 seniors (65+), \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or 703-854-1856.

THURSDAY/APRIL 20

JP Muller Art Exhibit Opening. 6-8 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, Upper Level in Bloomingdale's Wing, McLean. Featuring guest speakers ArtsFairfax CEO Linda Sullivan, Tysons Corner Director of Property Management Jesse Benites, and the Artist JP Muller. The latest exhibit is a dynamic installation titled Static Dynamism by local metal artist, sculptor and engineer JP Muller. Swiss-trained as a tool-maker, Muller's life's work is in the making of things and the intricate process of bringing intangible ideas to reality.

THURSDAY/APRIL 20

Green Expo. 7-9 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. Plant guidance, live animals and expert tips on

sustainable practices are among the attractions at this year's Green Expo. Dozens of local exhibitors will be on hand with information on sustainable practices including energy efficiency, green landscaping and zero waste. Visit www.viennava.gov/GreenExpo.

APRIL 21 TO MAY 7

"Unnecessary Farce." At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. 8 p.m.: Fridays and Saturdays -April 21, 22, 28, 29; May 5, 6; and 2 p.m.: Sundays: April 30, May 7, 2023. "Unnecessary Farce," an award-winning comedy by Paul Slade Smith, combines all the elements of classic farce with a contemporary plot. Two cops. Three crooks. Eight doors. Go! Set in an economy motel, an embezzling small-town mayor is to meet with his female accountant. In the room next door, two inept undercover cops aim to catch the mayor on camera doing the guilty deeds. When the camera catches a bit of unrehearsed hanky-panky and a kilt-wearing, bagpipe-wielding, hit-man stumbles into the fray, comic pandemonium ensues! Visit www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

DEA Prescription Drug Take Back Initiative. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At 215 Center Street, South, Vienna. In conjunction with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and state and local law enforcement agencies, the Vienna Police Department will again participate in a one-day initiative to remove potentially dangerous controlled substances from area homes. The Vienna Police Department will have a collection site for old, expired, unused, or unwanted medications. Prescription medications, controlled or non-controlled substances, and over-the-counter drugs may be turned in anonymously at the collection point inside the Vienna Police Department temporary facility.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Concert for the Earth. 5:30 p.m. At Rock Spring United Church of Christ.

Join Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS) on Earth Day for an evening of music and climate activism! Enjoy a concert with acts performed by Melting Virgo, Musical Scalpel, and Josh Long. Come celebrate the Earth with fellow activists and feel ignited to work towards climate solutions this spring. Please support FACS and the musicians with a recommended donation of \$20.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Farmers Markets Opening Around the County

The Fairfax County Park Authority hosts 10 markets at locations throughout Fairfax County, where residents can find a variety of fresh and locally grown produce, delicious baked goods, prepared foods and family-friendly market activities, including live musical performances.

The 2023 season begins April 19 with the McCutcheon/Mount Vernon market. Check out our full market schedule for the latest times and locations.

WEDNESDAYS

McCutcheon/Mount Vernon

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/mccutcheon-mount-vernion>
April 19 to Dec. 20, from 8 a.m. to noon
Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane

Oak Marr

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/oak-marr>
May 3 to Nov. 8, from 8 a.m. to noon
Oak Marr Recreation Center, 3200 Jermantown Road

Wakefield

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/wakefield>
May 3 to Oct. 25, from 2 to 6 p.m.
Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road

THURSDAYS

Annandale

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/annandale>
May 4 to Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to noon
Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike

Herndon

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/herndon>
May 4 to Nov. 9, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Old Town Herndon, 700 Block of Lynn St., by the Red Caboose

FRIDAYS

McLean

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/mclean>
May 5 to Nov. 17, from 8 a.m. to noon
Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road

Kingstowne

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/kingstowne>
May 5 to Oct. 27, from 3 to 7 p.m.
In the Giant parking lot, 5870 Kingstowne Towne Center

SATURDAYS

Burke

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/burke>
April 22 to Dec. 16, from 8 a.m. to noon
VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway

Reston

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/reston>
April 30 to Dec. 3, from 8 a.m. to noon
Lake Anne Village Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza

SUNDAYS

Lorton

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/lorton>
May 7 to Nov. 19, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
VRE parking lot, 8990 Lorton Station Blvd.

For a complete list of market times and locations, visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets>. For questions, contact the Community Horticulture Office at 702-642-0128.



“Unnecessary Farce” can be seen April 21 to May 7, 2023 at the Vienna Community Center.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Micah “Bam-Bamm” White. 7 and 9:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Micah “Bam-Bamm” White has spent over 20 years in the entertainment industry as a stand-up comedian, host, and philanthropist. He has performed in four countries, and in over 80 U.S. cities in 30 states. The go-to guy for corporate comedy and hosting, White’s talents have led him to perform for 40 corporations, 30 non-profit organizations, and 20 colleges doing everything from stand-up to hosting and delivering the commencement address. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/micah-white>

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Get Inspired Fundraiser. 7 - 10 p.m. At PJ Skidoos, 9908 Fairfax Blvd., Annandale. This is the perfect date night with appetizers, drinks, a DJ, an auction, and more! Gather your friends and family, wear your dancing shoes, and prepare to be inspired. Cost is \$75. Visit the website: www.kidsgiveback.org/events

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Fairfax HisTree Day. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Historic Blenheim, 3610 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Experience local history and crafts presented by costumed reenactors and meet Fairfax City staff members who protect our natural resources. Hay maze, petting zoo, historic house tours, and food trucks. Visit the website: fairfaxva.gov/histreeday

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Documentary Screening and Discussion. Historic Pleasant Grove is screening the hour-long document-

tary “Finding Fellowship,” about the 1968 integration of three churches: one Black, two White. The film will be followed by a panel discussion led by the filmmaker. Free community event 3-5 p.m. at 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Visit www.HistoricPleasantGrove.org.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Earth Day Celebration. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. This year’s celebration, hosted by the Fairfax County Park Authority, will be a fantastic, fun family-friendly event packed with entertainment, activities, food vendors, Touch-A-Truck, prizes and more. Applications are now being accepted from vendors, exhibitors and food vendors who are looking for opportunities to reach thousands of county residents in a single day with a booth at Earth Day Fairfax.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

McLean Earth Day Celebration. 9 a.m. to noon. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Drive, McLean. For McLean residents who reside in Small Tax District-1A Dranesville only. This drive-through, outdoor, environmental action event provides a convenient way for McLean residents to better the planet. Several local community businesses and organizations will provide four key facets of environmental health in the spirit of shredding, reusing, recycling and planting.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The Center for the Arts is proud to



A Pastel Painting Demo by Bryan Jernigan will be held Friday, April 28, 2023 at the McLean Community Center.

co-present a soaring classical music program by the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, featuring George Li performing Rachmaninoff’s immortal Piano Concerto No. 2. Praised by The Washington Post for combining “staggering technical prowess, a sense of command, and depth of expression,” Li possesses brilliant virtuosity and effortless grace far beyond his years. He won the Silver Medal at the 2015 International Tchaikovsky Competition when he was 19 and was named the recipient of the 2016 Avery Fisher Career Grant. Li’s performances of Rachmaninoff are acclaimed for their “sheer precision” and “sense

of discovery, as if the music was quite new” (Bachtrack). Music Director Christopher Zimmerman and the FSO bookend the evening with a pair of Sir Edward Elgar’s rousing masterpieces, graduation staple Pomp and Circumstance, March No. 1 and the passion-filled Symphony No. 1

SUNDAY/APRIL 23

The Passing Zone Saves the World. 4 p.m. at GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The Passing Zone has been wowing audiences for decades with hilarious, award-winning performances. In their latest

show The Passing Zone Saves the World!, The Passing Zone delivers a pulse-pounding and riotously funny performance, combining juggling, comedy, and daredevil stunts. The dynamic duo of Owen Morse and Jon Wee met in 1986 at a juggling convention, and have been tossing bowling pins, sharp knives, lit torches, and even roaring chainsaws ever since. The Passing Zone holds five Guinness World Records and has received 18 gold medals from the International Jugglers’ Association. They have performed at the Just for Laughs Comedy Festival, been two-time finalists on America’s Got Talent, and they have even taken their act to the White House! Their hilariously interactive performance will have the whole family in fits of laughter and gasping for breath as they showcase their zany blend of hair-raising juggling, dangerous stunts, and a healthy dose of their signature brand of comedy. The Passing Zone saves the world from boredom and the mundane by putting themselves at risk for your amusement!

APRIL 22-23

Meadowlark Botanical Gardens Spring Show. More than 30 fascinating bonsai trees, each a work of art, will be on display at the Northern Virginia Bonsai Society’s (NVBS) Spring Show at the Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, on Saturday, April 22, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sunday, April 23, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. NVBS members will be on hand to share their knowledge and demonstrate bonsai techniques. This free show takes place in the Visitor Center. In addition, there is a Bonsai Pavilion at Meadowlark where trees of members of NVBS are shown and docents address the questions of Visitors.

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Troop 1995 Eagle Scout Jake Winkler properly burning a flag.

Honors U.S. Flags

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

American Legion Post 1995 in Centreville recently conducted its annual U.S. Flag Retirement Ceremony at Fire Station 38 in Centreville. Many of the flags were collected at Fairfax County government centers; each has a collection box near their entrances. Other collection points include some fire stations, plus American Legion and VFW posts.

According to United States Code, "When a U.S. flag is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning."

More than 1,200 unserviceable flags were properly disposed at this ceremony as a tribute to the U.S. flag and its symbolism. Each folded flag was burned individually while American Legion members, Boy Scouts, the Fairfax County Police Honor Guard, and firefighters saluted.

Participants in this year's retirement ceremony included six members of Post 1995, led by Commander Jim Robison and Sergeant-at-Arms Mark Miller; five members of the Police Honor Guard, led by Lt. Deanna Weand; nine members of Fire Station 38, led by Capt. Marc Staubinger and Deputy Fire Chief John Walser; and nine members of Boy Scout Troop 1995, led by Mark and Dawn Winkler.

"This year's event was significant for two reasons," said Post 1995 Adjutant Steven Hunter. "One, our post collected the largest number of flags in its history; and two, Boy

SEE HONORS U.S. FLAGS,
PAGE 15

CEREMONY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVEN HUNTER



From left are Troop 1995 members Dawn Winkler (Committee Chair), Evan Hanosh, Ishan Hanosh, James Winkler, Pete Loyola, Jake Winkler (Eagle Scout and Assistant Scoutmaster), and Mark Winkler (Scoutmaster).



From left are Post 1995 members Mark Miller, Randy Young, Steve Hunter, Scout: James Winkler, Jim Robison and Al Schenck.

American Legion Post 1995 Honors U.S. Flags

FROM PAGE 14

Scout Troop 1995, which the post sponsors, provided two new burn barrels specifically constructed for this purpose.”

The standard, 55-gallon, steel burn barrels the post had been using for many years were at the end of their useful life. So a post member contacted the Boy Scout troop to see if a Scout would build two, new barrels for this year’s ceremony, as an Eagle Service Project. And they had to be specially designed to reduce smoke.

The flags burned at this ceremony were made mostly of cotton. Since 95 percent of flags manufactured today are made of polyester or nylon, which may emit toxic smoke and fumes when burned, most of the flags collected were to be disposed of at the Co-

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vanta Waste to Energy plant in Lorton at a future date.

“An interesting find while folding the donated flags was a 4x6-foot, 45-star flag in fair condition, considering its age,” said Hunter. “It’s between 115 and 126 years old, as Utah was admitted to the Union in 1896 and Oklahoma, in 1907 – the latter being the 46th state. The post is exploring whether a local museum may be interested in this flag for its American history collection.”

The Fairfax County Fire Department recorded the Centreville ceremony on the ground and in the air. For more photos, visit <https://teelphotographyllc.smugmug.com/Flag-burning-ceremony-FS438>. To see the drone photography and video, go to Flag Burning Ceremony @ Fire Station 438 - YouTube.

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

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

Please, help save these historical papers. All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

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

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

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The Dog's Honest Truth



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Since we'll be out of town for a few days – and can't take our new puppy Burton with us, arrangements for his away-from-home accommodations have been made. For the first time in over five months, dog and owner will be separated. I am not looking forward to it. Burton will be spending the next two days and one night staying with fellow dog owners, Jen and Murph. Rather than subject Burton to the stress of being caged at his veterinarian's kennel, he'll be overnighing instead in Huntington, Maryland in a big single-family house. He'll have run of that house and when he needs to go outside, he'll have a large fenced-in yard to explore and even better, he'll have another dog, Cooper, to occupy him. Besides, he's not quite old enough, and/or vaccinated completely yet to risk exposing him to a kennel environment where a miscellaneous disease or a virus might exist. I know Burton will be in excellent, loving hands, but that's not my problem. My problem is me and the logistics of the drop-off. Because of schedules and availability, we'll still be at home without Burton for nearly a day before we leave.

As I write this in real time, I'm still at home – without Burton, and I miss him terribly. A dog is such a full-time responsibility that not having him around is extremely noticeable. I feel like I'm not doing something I should be doing with him: walking, playing, petting, wrestling, ball-throwing, stick-fetching, feeding, treating, et cetera. Moreover, until we leave later today, for the time that I'm being dogless, I am lonely and bored, even though there are still four cats and one wife in the house. In addition, not having any dog-centric responsibilities for the next few days is triggering some other feelings that subconsciously I've buried (having been so preoccupied with Burton): my brother, Richard's surprising (but not shocking) death on Dec. 3rd.

On Dec. 3rd, Burton was four months old and not yet housebroken. As such, me and my wife, Dina have been taking him out constantly, especially since he's a puppy, throughout the day and overnight as well, trying to reinforce certain dos and don'ts. Also, it seemed like every week, one of us was taking him to the vet for one puppy shot or another: distemper, DHPP, rabies, para influenza. It's not overwhelming or anything as we're familiar with the drill (requirements). Nonetheless, it's easy to get preoccupied. Then (not suddenly), we have no dog anything for two-plus days, one day of which was half at home, now.

Left to my own devices, with no distractions (not that Burton is a distraction, but you know what I mean, right?), I began to feel my brother's death more substantially again. Not that I hadn't learned to live with it, but I had found a place for it, I thought. It wasn't top of mind. It was middle of mind. And it seemed to be in a good place. After I dropped Burton off and came home – with no dog responsibilities, Richard's death became top-of-mind, sort of unexpectedly. Here I thought I was coping and assimilating his loss into a new routine. The only routine I was assimilating was life with a puppy. With Burton away for the weekend, I've had no distraction. And it has become painfully obvious that my brother's death is still weighing on me. Once again, the loss felt palpable. Almost as if I was experiencing it for a second time. I hadn't assimilated anything after all. I was too busy with the dog to realize it. Now, I realize it. My brother is dead. And I'm extremely sad.

At least my brother got to meet Burton once (his nephew as he called him) on his birthday in late October. Richard was doing so well. I never imagined (anticipated is probably a better description) that that would be the last birthday and the second to last time I would see my brother alive. And the fact that Burton was involved with Richard, even for a little bit, gives me some comfort. It created a connection of sorts between them that helps me to smile about an otherwise horrible situation. I can recall how happy Richard was that night when we brought Burton, kennel, and all, into the house. We positioned Burton's kennel on the floor in the dining room right next to Richard so they could be physically close. Dogs have a wonderful capacity to spread joy wherever they go. And this evening was no exception. As minimal as their interaction was, nonetheless, it was a happy memory I have and will continue to have of my brother. And I need as many of them as possible. And thanks to Burton, I have an extra-special one. One for which I am forever grateful.

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



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