



Town Hall Held on Potomac Yard Arena Project

Listening sessions continue Feb. 1, 8.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Residents from across the region filled the bleachers at Charles Houston Recreation Center Jan. 27 as Alexandria City Council held a town hall meeting for the proposed Potomac Yard Entertainment District as part of a series of community events regarding the \$2 billion project.

Members of City Council spoke briefly about the project with the majority of the two-hour meeting spent with Council members answering questions submitted by attendees.

“We can’t look a gift horse in the mouth,” said vice Mayor Amy Jackson. “We have to understand

“City council is not interested in hearing what we really think about the project.”

— Former vice mayor Andrew Macdonald

that this will provide a phenomenal tax base. We can’t have taxes primarily on the backs of residents anymore.”

The town hall meeting was part of a listening series of events slated to engage the community and provide better understanding of the benefits of the project.

Groups in opposition to the project were on hand including the Coalition to Stop the Arena and Don’t Mute DC.

“This is just a show,” said former vice mayor Andrew Macdonald of the Coalition to Stop the Arena. “City council is not interested in hearing what we really think about the project. They are just sort of doing this to make it look like they



Members of City Council answer questions on the proposed Potomac Yard Entertainment District during a public town hall meeting Jan. 27 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



An attendee holds a sign “monumental mistake” regarding the planned Potomac Yard Entertainment District by Monumental Sports at the Jan. 27 town hall meeting at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

are engaging with the public.”

Questions from the public ranged from transportation and housing issues to impacts on the quality of life.

“The arena will be a catalyst for other development,” said Council member Aliya Gaskins when asked about the impact on affordable housing. SEE TOWN HALL HELD, PAGE 8



Former vice mayor Andrew Macdonald, right, with fellow Stop the Arena coalition supporters outside the Jan. 27 town hall meeting at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

African American Heritage Trail

Feb. 10
ceremony open
to the public.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

To many, Alexandria is known primarily as the hometown of George Washington. But there is also the city's more complicated history as home to Robert E. Lee, slavery and segregation.

Thanks to the work of city historians and dedicated volunteers, a fuller history is being told of the city that was also known as a thriving slave trading port and where thousands of African Americans sought to flee the bondage of slavery in the south during the Civil War.

As Black History Month begins, the African American Heritage Trail Committee will mark the installation of new interpretive signs detailing this history along the southern waterfront with a ribbon cutting ceremony Feb. 10 at Founders Park.

Eleven signs and two orientation panels detail the history of the African American community in Alexandria. The event will begin at 11 a.m. at the new Fishtown sign on the river side of Founders Park. A reception following the ribbon cutting will be held in the Overlook Room (#325) on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory. The public is encouraged to attend.

"We envision the African American Heritage Trail as consisting of several interconnecting routes across the City of Alexandria," according to the information website. "Together, these trails illuminate the history of the African American community over a span of several centuries. This trail highlights the contributions of Black Alexandrians, free and enslaved, to the his-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

George Henry, the enslaved captain of the schooner Llewelyn.

story of Alexandria's waterfront. We strive to forefront their experiences while recognizing that their voices are often not directly preserved in the historical record."

Stops on the new tour include a marker on the life of George Henry, the enslaved captain of the schooner Llewelyn, which was partially owned by an Alexandrian. Henry wrote an account of his life published 50 years later.

Another stop details the history of the River Queen, a sidewheel steamboat, docked at a wharf on Prince Street. Built in 1864, it had first gained fame as the site of an unsuccessful peace conference between President Abraham Lincoln and representatives of the Confederacy. By the end of the century, owners remodeled the steamer for day-long excursions that catered to African American pleasure seekers.

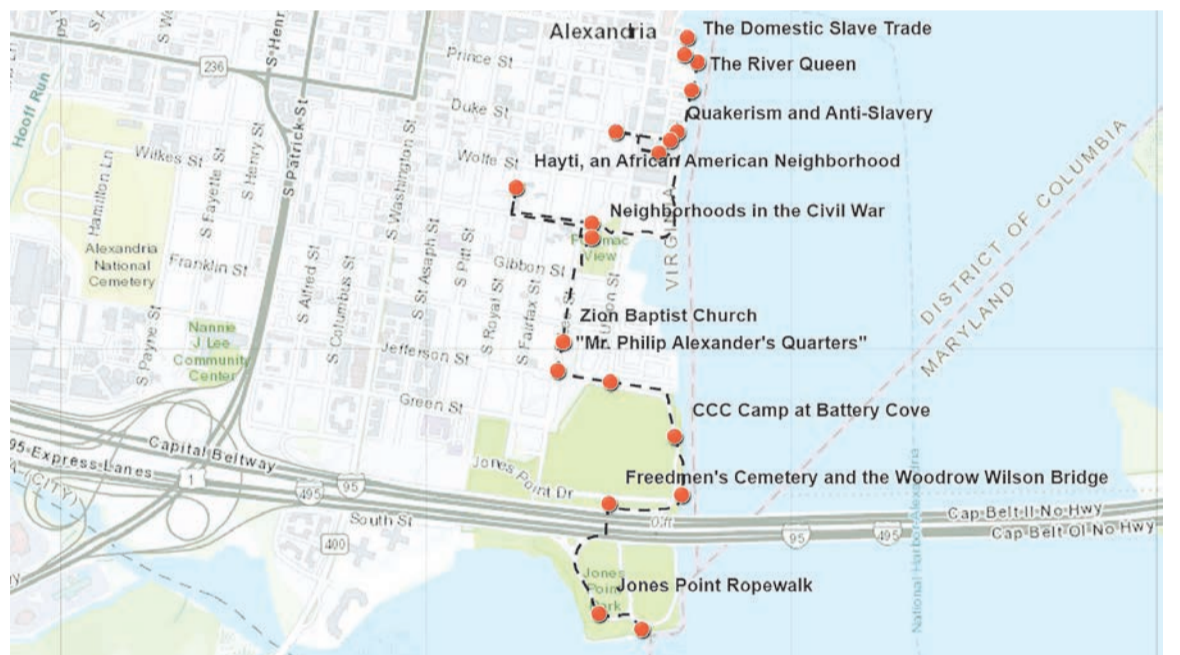
The new South Trail Route is the second in a series of trails covering the waterfront. The African American Heritage Trail Committee created the walking tours with the support of the Office of Historic Alexandria.

Members of the African American Heritage Trail Committee include: Susan Cohen, Gwen Day-Fuller, Krystyn Moon, McArthur Myers, Ted Pulliam, Eleanor Breen, Emma Richardson, Ben Skolnik, Blake Wilson and Audrey Davis.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Members of the African American Heritage Trail committee pose for a photo at one of the new historical marks along the waterfront. Shown are Emma Richardson, Eleanor Breen, Ben Skolnik, Blake Wilson, Ted Pulliam, McArthur Myers, Audrey Davis, Krystyn Moon and Susan Cohen.



IMAGE/ALEXANDRIAVA.GOV

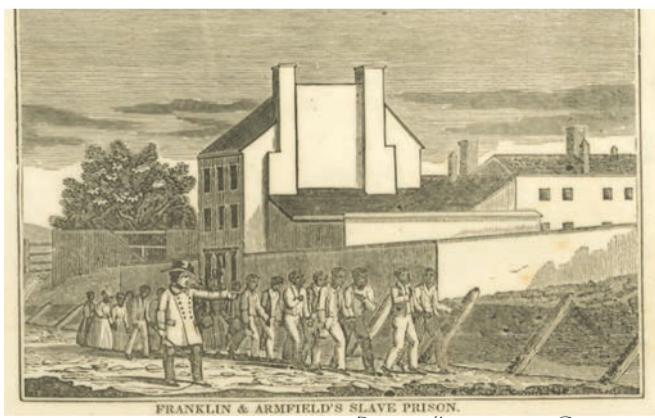
A map of the South Waterfront route of the African American Heritage Trail.

The newly unveiled Southern Trail is a relatively flat walk along the waterfront from the foot of King Street to Jones Point, a little over two miles in distance. The trail mostly follows level, paved surfaces, but there are some areas

of moderate slope, gravel paths and stairs. Included are alternate paths. The walking tour should take about an hour and a half at a leisurely pace. The walk back from the end of the trail is a little more than a mile, so plan accordingly

or arrange for transportation from Jones Point.

Information and maps on both the North and South routes can be found at www.alexandriava.gov/historic-sites/african-american-heritage-trails



PHOTO/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Franklin & Armfield's Slave Prison, from the anti-slavery broadside Slave Market of America, 1836.



PHOTO/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Patterson-Fitzgerald Warehouse, located at 101-105 South Union Street, 1933.



IMAGE/ALEXANDRIA LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The River Queen steamboat.

Police Chief To Step Down

City of Alexandria Police Chief Don Hayes has been tapped for a new assignment at the federal level and will step down from his current post, effective Feb. 9, according to the police. Hayes has spent nearly 44 years with the Alexandria Police Department, including the last two-and-a-half years leading Alexandria's police force.

"Chief Hayes has been a capable leader and committed public servant who genuinely cared about the department's people and its relationship to our community," City Manager James Parajon said. "He built upon years of experience to lead APD through some challenging times including ever-increasing demand for services. We wish him well in his next endeavor."

Hayes joined the Alexandria Police Department in March 1981, and achieved the rank of sergeant in 1996, overseeing the community-oriented policing and internal investigations sections. In 1999, Hayes was promoted to lieutenant and led the special op-



Police Chief Don Hayes

erations, information services, and public services divisions. He was promoted to captain in 2013 and served as patrol commander, in addition to heading the parking enforcement, traffic, special events, and community relations divisions. He was promoted to assistant chief in 2019 and has since used his diverse experience to oversee all parts of the Police Department. In December 2021, he was named acting Chief, and made Chief in April 2022.

"It's been an honor to dedicate my life to this community," said Don Hayes. "I truly believe there

is no greater calling than to serve on behalf of the people. Doing so alongside the men and women of this department for the past four decades has been my greatest accomplishment."

Hayes' next opportunity has yet to be announced publicly.

With Chief Hayes' departure, Assistant Chief Raul Pedroso will serve as Interim Chief effective upon Chief Hayes' departure

Threats at Schools, Swatting

False Threats on Schools as Swatting

On Jan. 24, City of Alexandria Police Department received multiple calls threatening the safety of two Alexandria City Public Schools. The investigation today revealed no threat or danger.

At approximately 12:04 p.m., APD responded to Charles Barrett Elementary School, 1115 Martha Custis Drive, after receiving a call of someone going to the school with guns. Multiple officers, K9s, and Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) responded and began searching the school. School administrators made the decision to evacuate and move students to Cora Kelly School, 3600 Commonwealth Ave., to allow APD to conduct an extensive search. APD assisted and remained with students and faculty who were relocated to Cora Kelly School. APD completed the search of Charles Barrett and determined there was no threat.

While police were on scene, additional calls were received claiming more threats, the last calls indicating the threats were directed at Cora Kelly School where police were already positioned and were able to determine there was no threat.

Police remained on the scene for general dismissal. The APD continues to investigate with the support of federal authorities who have offered their assistance.



Charles Barrett PTA and students brought goodies from MB Bakery on the Go with thank you cards designed by students to the officers who responded last week.



The students met K9 Officer Stella who was part of the response.

If you have any information regarding this incident please call 703-746-4444. Tips will remain anonymous.

These threats are believed to have been incidents of "swatting."

Swatting is a term used to describe criminal activity by an individual or group who knowingly provides false information to police suggesting that a threat exists, causing a police or emergency services response.

Swatting is a criminal offense and can be punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor up to a Class 6 felony with up to five years imprisonment.

NEWS BRIEFS

Potomac Yard Virtual Sessions Feb. 1; Pop Up Feb. 3

The City of Alexandria will hold a virtual listening session on transportation and traffic management for the proposed Potomac Yard Entertainment District on Thursday, Feb. 1, from 7 to 8 p.m.

Register online to attend. This is the third of four weekly Thursday-night listening sessions, each focused on a different facet of the project.

Recordings of the previous listening sessions are available.

The next listening session is on Thursday, Feb. 8, from 7 to 8 p.m. and will focus on small business and economic opportunities.

The City will also host a pop-up event on Saturday, Feb. 3, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., at Leonard "Chick" Armstrong Recreation Center, 25 W. Reed Ave. Stop by to ask questions.

Additional details about Potomac Yard Entertainment District and community engagement events can be found at MonumentALX.

Temporary Closure of 700 Block of N. Henry Street, Feb. 4

On Sunday, Feb. 4, 2024, from 12:01 a.m. to 9 p.m. weather permitting, W.O. Grubb Crane Rental will be closing the 700 block of N. Henry Street between Madison Street and Wythe Street. This closure is necessary to place cranes and trucks in the roadway to dismantle the tower crane located at 701 N. Henry Street, a result of ongoing construction and residential development projects. Parking will be restricted along this block during the scheduled work hours, and noise levels during early morning hours will be kept to a minimum.

All southbound traffic on N. Henry Street will be detoured to eastbound and westbound Madison Street. Eastbound Madison Street traffic will be directed to N. Washington Street, then Wythe Street, and finally back to N. Henry Street. Westbound Madison Street traffic will be directed to N. Fayette Street, then Wythe Street, and back to N. Henry Street.

A variable message board has been placed at the intersection of N. Henry Street and First Street, announcing the upcoming closure, and notices have been distributed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

UCAC Old Town North Meeting Feb. 7

The Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC) serving Old Town North will meet on Wednesday, February 7, at 9 a.m. to conduct their regular meeting at City Hall, 301 King Street, Room 2000 (on the second floor). Meeting topics include the first applicant presentation for the redevelopment of the Robinson Terminal North site. UDAC members will engage with the applicant to discuss the design approach and the applicant will answer questions from the community.

Community members electing to join the meeting virtually may do so via the following:

Zoom link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_s0iv99dW-TIacYxkxjENT-A

Meeting ID: 933 8235 4524

Passcode: 916719

Dial in: 301.715.8592

The purpose of UDAC is to review development plans for compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines of Old Town North. Applications are presented to UDAC on an as-needed basis and are discussed during public meetings.

For meeting materials and further information, visit the project website or contact Daniel Welles, Urban Planner, 703.746.3838.

Reality Check Needed Before Pursuing Sports Complex at Potomac Yard

Part from the uglification of the area in general, including the further desecration of the scenic and historic George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) and Potomac River viewshed, infeasibility of transportation access to and from the site, extensive impacts to Del Ray and neighboring communities, and enormous funding issues — environmental impacts and constraints have been completely ignored.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In virtually all media coverage of this issue, not once was protect-

ing the environment mentioned, or anything about the environment, including already dangerous flooding along the GWMP from greatly increasing impervious surface runoff; unstable soils that characterize the site (and the reason the Potomac Yard Metro Station required post-construction shoring up); the importance of the natural, historic, and aesthetic values of the GWMP; etc. Also, the site was not “always intended for significant development” — quite the opposite.

The North Pond that abuts the 12-acre site and metro station is maxed out and cannot accommodate additional runoff — and cer-

tainly not the enormous volumes expected from 12 acres of impervious surface. Where will the runoff go? It would be unconscionable to further degrade the GWMP and ancient freshwater tidal wetlands by using them as stormwater management facilities. Also, the sheer weight of the arena complex makes soil stability a huge issue, as we saw with the metro station itself but on a much smaller scale, i.e., the water table is typically only 27 feet below the surface. In addition to unstable soils, there are 12 acres of heavy fly ash and pockets of toxic soils that will have to be dealt with - an enormously

expensive undertaking. None of the above has even been remotely addressed.

Further, the City has still not disclosed the staggering cost and geotechnical reports for 2022-2023 post-construction stabilization of the sinking metro station and tracks, despite numerous FOIA requests over the past two years. Before the City, Youngkin administration, Sen. Mark Warner, and others jump from the frying pan into a volcano on this one, they need a reality check.

Rod Simmons
Arlington, Virginia

Historic District Is Essentially Finished

City hall continues to undertake (paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence) “a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, [which] evinces a design to reduce us under [the] utter despotism” of an Old Town accommodated to dense development. Three strikes against Old Town, each egregious unto itself, together “evince a design” toward subordinating Old Town’s historic protections to the pressing need for housing for the growing number of workers the region’s economy employs.

The Waterfront Plan was the first warning sign of what should now be clear is a gradually unfolding attack upon the historic districts’ underlying presumptions, but the Waterfront Plan did not prove to constitute such an attack because its most egregious development concessions proved ephemeral: 301 N. Fairfax St. spot-zoning opponents even cited the Waterfront Plan to oppose the proposed rezoning; new buildings where they face the river might have a modern look, but facing inward they are still compatible with their historic surroundings:

The Heritage development: Theoretically, tearing down the old affordable apartments and replacing them with more on the same site is not what exposes where city hall’s actions “evince a design,” but the city council’s unanimous vote overruling the board of architectural review’s unanimous decision denying the developer’s incompatible-with-the-historic-district de-

sign and city hall’s unwillingness to seriously consider removing that portion of the development from the historic district so as to not create a precedent.

City hall’s embrace of the Council of Governments report deeming historic protections incompatible with housing production: The COG complained that the city’s “historic areas ... make it difficult to build multifamily housing;” viz., our historic districts are an impediment to city hall’s desired density. By endorsing the COG’s housing construction targets and consequently passing Zoning for Housing/Housing for All, the city council implicitly embraced this formulation framing a dichotomy of either historic protections upholding the past or an adequate housing supply for the workforce of the present and future.

301 N. Fairfax St. spot zoning: The “zoning before planning” that sat so poorly with several planning commissioners and the spot zoning to suit the developer set a precedent for what city hall is likely to approve in the historic district going forward.

But it is actually the YIMBYs of NoVA statement on 301 N. Fairfax St. which lays out where the demographics voting for candidates who support these atrocities are willing and even eager for things to go: The sole speaker in support of this redevelopment, the YIMBYs primary Alexandria lead, said: “This project should be a slam dunk, but it’s gone through the ringer of reviews and delays. Speakers here today – who are already comfort-

ably housed in Old Town – have opposed the project on what are fundamentally aesthetic grounds. ... Old Town is also a living neighborhood that should be treated as more than a museum for tourists and people already lucky enough to live there.” This statement frames the issue as one of moral and practical necessity – people needing somewhere to live – versus selfish ephemerals – aesthetics for folks already lucky enough to live in Old Town. “The ringer of reviews and delays” condemns the historic districts’ – and perhaps even the zoning code’s – raison d’être.

The historic district as we have known it is essentially finished ... not all at once, maybe not in its most of its defenders’ lifetimes, but by the time most YIMBYs reach retirement, the historic district may well have been repealed or so many exceptions made that it loses most of its character or individual buildings or façades designated historic in lieu of having historic districts.

The YIMBYs’ formulation is a direct counter, both moral and practical, to the “thoughtful, appropriate development that fits in and is to scale, and will protect our neighborhoods and quality of life” because “all of us are the temporary stewards of this national treasure called Alexandria” which former mayor Allison Silberberg laid out as our standard. But “temporary stewards of this national treasure” is all the compelling moral and practical response we need to defend Old Town. Many of

us have spent more money maintaining our residences’ historical characteristics for the benefit of future generations than we would a regular residence. And what the YIMBYs dismiss as “a museum for tourists” is what keeps the historic district an economically viable net generator of city tax revenue.

We should, though, welcome the YIMBYs’ formulation because it is much more honest than then vice mayor Justin Wilson’s facile “projects that are more dense than we probably would have otherwise, have less open space than we otherwise would have, that preserve less around historic fabric than we otherwise would have” in order to make them affordable, when most such projects yield so few affordable units.

Dino Drudi
Alexandria, 22314

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VA Legislators Aim for Assault Weapon Bans

Will new seats mean new votes?

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE

Virginia came close to banning sales of assault weapons in 2020 when the House passed a bill banning them by a narrow 51-yes to 48-no vote. In the Senate Judiciary committee that year however, three Democrats: Senators Creigh Deeds, Chap Petersen, and Scott Surovell, surprised many by voting with Republican committee members to fail to move the bill forward in the Senate. Now, four years later, neither that assault bill's patron, former Del. Mark Levine, nor nay voter, Petersen, returned to the General Assembly. Deeds (D-11) is sponsoring his own assault weapon ban this session; and Surovell (D-34) now chairs the committee, titled Courts of Justice, which hears the assault weapon bills, and others related to firearms. Surovell also now leads the Democratic Caucus. The Deeds' bill, SB 2, would prohibit the purchase, possession or sale of assault weapons. The bill by Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-39), SB-99 would prohibit carrying assault weapons in public. And a bill from Sen. Saddam Salim (D-37), SB 327 would expand the definition of "assault firearm" and prohibit sales or purchase to anyone under the age of 21.

On the House side, Del. Dan Helmer (D-10), who voted for the assault weapons ban in 2020, this session is the sponsor of an assault weapon ban companion bill, HB 2. That bill reported from the Public Safety committee on Jan. 19 and was referred to the Appropriations Committee. Del. Mark Sickles' (D-17), bill HB1174, places an age restriction of 21 on purchase of assault weapons. Del. Marcus Simon (D-13), bill HB175, is the companion bill that would prohibit carrying assault weapons in public. Speakers at the bills' Public Safety Committee hearing included faith and public safety and gun control groups, including Giffords Law, Brady Center, and Chesapeake League of Voters, in favor of the bills. Several members of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, a representative of the NRA, and shooting sports group members spoke in opposition.

As the assault weapon restriction bills suc-



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME

Senator Scott Surovell, Chair, Courts of Justice Committee



PHOTO WIKIMEDIA

Assault style weapons' sale, carry, and age for possession remain the subject of debate in Virginia's General Assembly

cessfully work their way through various committees on partisan votes, Surovell at his recent Town Hall, explained what is different about assault weapon restriction chances this session from 2020.

Surovell explained that he has always favored restriction of assault weapons, but that the wording of the 2020 bill needed much more work than could be given to it that year. He and other Senators voted to continue it for study until the following year. But House GOP opponents who controlled the House the next year refused to docket the bill in 2021. Surovell asserts that the 2020 session did pass five major firearm bills that year, among an unusually high volume of work, before they simply ran out of time.

Gun rights versus gun control issues continue to roil political activism in the Commonwealth and across the country. Assault weapons are used in a large percentage of mass shootings. A federal assault weapons law, which placed restrictions on the sale and manufacture of some semiautomatic assault weapons expired in 2004. Gun safety advocates opposed allowing the law to expire and called for reinstatement of the restrictions. In December 2012, a 20-year-old gunman killed 20 children, ages six to seven years old, and six adult staff members, at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecti-

cut. Enacting gun safety measures in the wake of the massacre of small children seemed inevitable, but it didn't happen.

A new national advocacy group, Moms Demand Action, formed after Sandy Hook with chapters in every state to call for gun reform and increased gun safety measures.

In 2022, a federal bill to renew and strengthen assault weapons law passed the House of Representatives but did not pass in the Senate. Today there is no federal law restricting the weapons. Ten states (California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington), and the District of Columbia, have enacted laws that ban the sale, manufacture, and transfer of assault weapons. Virginia (Va. Code Ann. §§ 18.2-287.4, 18.2-308.2:01, 18.2-308.2:2, 18.2-308.7, 18.2-308.8) enacted laws that place some additional safety requirements and regulations on assault weapons, but fall short laws enacted in the ten listed states.

Now, about three weeks into Virginia's 2024 legislative session, a significant number of firearms-related bills, as well as the assault weapon bills, have an additional week for hearing in their originating body before the process of crossover begins for successful bills to be heard by the opposite body.

Biden, Harris Visit Northern Virginia

Second stop of Vice President Kamala Harris's Reproductive Freedom Tour.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris visited Manassas on Jan. 23, with their spouses, First Lady Jill Biden and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff. They were there to mark the

51st anniversary of the landmark abortion rights case, Roe v. Wade. The event is part of Harris's announced Reproductive Freedom Tour, a series of events across the country to "bring together people to address the freedom of every American to make decisions about their own body."

SEE BIDEN, HARRIS, PAGE 11



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris spoke in Manassas on the VP's second stop of her Reproductive Freedom Tour on Jan 23.

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THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS

ACHS to Host Mid-Atlantic Erg Sprints

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Feb. 3 event is the largest indoor rowing championship.

Alexandria City High School will host more than 1,500 rowers Feb. 3 as the host site for the 2024 East Coast US-Rowing Indoor National Championship.

This event, known as “Erg Sprints,” is the largest indoor rowing championship in America. Participants include high school and college students from across Virginia, para-athletes, amateurs, young kids, parents racing against their children, and elite athletes hoping to set a world record.

Erg Sprints is the country’s largest indoor rowing competition and a flagship competition for USRowing, given the storied history of Alexandria City’s crew program and its reputation as a training ground for top athletes and Olympians.

Competitors at Erg Sprints are eligible to medal at the national level in 2K and 500M events, in addition to earning Erg Sprints medals.

The event is from 7 a.m.-3 p.m. at Alexandria City High School, 3330 King Street, and spectators are welcome.

— JEANNE THEISMANN



The 2024 Mid-Atlantic Erg Sprints U.S. Rowing Indoor National Championships will take place Feb. 3 at Alexandria City High School.

Faith-Based Actions for Local Climate Change Solutions

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Curbing the greenhouse gas emissions that are warming the planet and disrupting many traditional weather patterns is a governmental, economic, scientific and environmental challenge. It is also a moral challenge, contends Christopher Topoleski, the new executive director of Northern Virginia’s Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS).

“It’s a moral imperative for us, where we live and where we worship,” he said in a recent interview, adding that addressing climate change transcends any one religion. “It is negatively affecting our children and future generations. Whatever you believe, we are all on the same planet and have a shared responsibility,” he offered.

Climate change is a term generally meaning changes in temperatures and climate patterns attributed largely to burning fossil fuels like carbon dioxide and methane. These fuels produce gases that trap heat and warm the planet.

The Alliance was founded in 2013 “when a small group of passionate people of faith gathered in a church basement in Oakton to reflect on a faithful response to the climate crisis,” explains Christine Connelly Montagnese, FACS Community Organizer. It is a re-



Christopher Topoleski.

gion-wide, nonprofit organization composed of many different faiths and people who do not practice any religion. Topoleski seeks to build a strong, diverse network of people and over 190 places of worship, including people from Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Unitarian Universalist, Hindu and Peace traditions.

While addressing climate change is debated in the halls of Congress, state legislatures, parliaments and the United Nations, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions is focused on local solutions, from supporting solar energy to reducing vehicular emissions.

Vulnerable Populations

Topoleski, a Reston resident, comes to the position with years of advocacy experience. As the legislative director for the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), he gained a deeper understanding of how Indigenous people view our natural resources. “They were the first people here,” he said, “stewards of the land. It all comes down to one Earth, one planet.”

He is especially focused on how energy and environmental policies impact vulnerable populations and sees heading FACS as a “perfect opportunity” to highlight solutions. “Some lower and no income people and people of color suffer the most from greenhouse gas emissions,” he maintains. For example, some low-income areas have some of the worst traffic congestion and vehicular pollution. In Fairfax County, for example, transportation emissions are 42 percent of all carbon emissions. “It’s a social justice issue,” he believes.

Working with congregations and individuals, he’s building an advocacy army to persuade elected officials to do more. He brings the tools he promoted at the NIEA, tools that are applicable at all levels of government. He’s also been a volunteer government liaison with Reston Strong and member of the Social Justice Committee

of Reston’s Unitarian Universalist Church.

“Current policy is not sustainable,” he argues and believes that advocates should not just focus on law or policy changes, but their long-term implementation which too often gets short shrift.

Scott Peterson, FACS Board Chair, lauds Topoleski’s talents, saying, “Chris’s experience will enable him to communicate with a wide range of stakeholders as we move forward. His expertise in fundraising, development of alliances, commitment to diversity and inclusion and his leadership roles will serve us well.”

FACS’s Projects

In 2022, FACS received a U.S. Department of Energy grant to help convert buildings to clean energy sources and energy efficiency measures. Climate activists see clean energy as energy that does not produce carbon dioxide and other pollution from fossil fuels. FACS is developing a pilot program and hopes to eventually scale up to help many home and building owners install solar panels and more efficient hot water heaters, for example.

The FACS Tree of Life campaign helps congregations “green” their outdoor campus by restoring natural habitats, improving soil quality and planting native plants and trees.

Why is my sanctuary so cold? That was the title of a Jan. 16 FACS program on financing heating-cooling systems and energy efficiency and renewable energy products. The organization’s solar sanctuaries program leverages the power of faith communities to strengthen energy efficiency and install solar power and battery backup systems. Not only will this reduce greenhouse gas emissions, these places of refuge can provide emergency shelter for the most vulnerable and save lives during power outages.

FACS has local subgroups called “hubs” in jurisdictions like Fairfax and Arlington that work on hyper-local projects.

As a volunteer, Topoleski manages the Reston Strong free market every Sunday at the Reston YMCA, providing free food, donated by Costco, no questions asked, to up to 150 families. “All anyone has to do is bring a bag,” he says.

The father of two adult children, Topoleski calls himself an “avid home chef” and prepares meals from his summer home garden. With vegetables out the backdoor, he’s at least not creating greenhouse gas emissions by buying produce hauled across the country. Local change can have global impacts, he believes.

Information: <https://faithforclimate.org/>



Ribbon Cutting for Soma Yoga Healing Center. From left, Joe Haggerty, CEO, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce; Tracie Brace, also known as Padma, owns Rasa Yoga in Houston, Texas; Sarah Deblock, owner Soma Yoga Healing Center, Sarah's husband Ryan Deblock. Brace is Sarah Deblock's mentor and came from Texas to celebrate.



Tony Curry-Fisher, Director of Membership for the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce; Tracie Brace; Sarah Deblock, and Joe Haggerty, CEO, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce; and.

Ribbon Cutting for Soma Yoga Healing Center

Soma Yoga is a center dedicated to helping clients improve their quality of life in a safe and nurturing environment. Their mission is to provide a space where individuals be a part of a community that promotes healing and personal growth. Soma Yoga specializes in Ayurveda Yoga, an approach that recog-

nizes the unique needs of each individual and tailors the practice accordingly. Whether you are a seasoned yogi or just starting, Soma Yoga believes that yoga is for everyone and welcomes you to join their community. 2560 Huntington Ave, Suite 404, Alexandria, Virginia 22303. <https://somyogahealing.com/>



2024 American Horticultural Society's annual Spring Garden Market at River Farm will be April 12-13. Here, a scene from a previous year.

2024 Spring Garden Market at River Farm

The American Horticultural Society's annual Spring Garden Market at River Farm will be April 12-13. This much-anticipated outdoor event, one of River Farm's largest and most popular fundraisers, brings together plant, seed and garden accessory retailers, nature-focused

artists and authors, gardening experts, food vendors, and fun for the whole family.

The 2024 Spring Garden Market will take place April 12-13, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at River Farm.

Proceeds from the Spring Garden Market directly contribute to the maintenance, beautification

and preservation of River Farm, headquarters of the AHS since 1973. Once part of George Washington's farmland, the 25-acre site overlooking the Potomac River is enhanced by a blend of formal and naturalistic gardens, including an award-winning children's

SEE 2024 SPRING, PAGE 11

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Town Hall Held on Potomac Yard Arena Project

FROM PAGE 1

housing.

Legislation to form the Sports and Entertainment Authority that would own the land and facilities as part of Monumental Sports & Entertainment's proposed campus at Potomac Yard was introduced Jan. 26 in the Virginia General Assembly. Chairman of the Appropriations Committee Del. Luke Torian of Prince William County (House Bill 1514) and Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell of Fairfax County (Senate Bill 718) will serve as bill patrons.

Monumental Sports owner Ted Leonsis penned an open letter Jan. 25 touting the benefits of the project to Alexandria and the region.

"At the heart of this decision is my belief that this project will accomplish two critical objectives," Leonsis wrote. "Provide our fans with the best experience in all of sports ... and establish a best-in-class set of facilities for our athletes and employees. This will give us the best chance to be successful on the ice, on the court, on the airwaves, and in business settings."

Leonsis detailed the progress to

date working with city and state officials as well as developers.

"Multiple traffic analyses are underway to determine infrastructure needs related to the building of the Entertainment District," Leonsis wrote. "We also believe this investment will be a catalyst for supporting and improving Metro, which benefits residents and businesses in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC."

In addition to the town hall, listening sessions continue Feb. 1 with a focus on transportation and traffic management, followed by a session Feb. 8 to focus on small business and economic opportunity. Both sessions will be virtual with registration available at www.alexandriacon.org.

A link to the Jan. 27 town hall is also available.

"Fundamentally people should be able to speak and give their opinion but that is not what Council is doing with these sessions," Macdonald added. "They are trying to control the narrative and not really have a real discourse on the pros and cons of this project. It's a farce and a sham."



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Residents from both Alexandria and the greater DMV region attend the City Council town hall meeting Jan. 27 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

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A bus sporting signs in protest of the planned Potomac Yard Entertainment District Jan. 27 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



Former vice mayor Andrew Macdonald holds a Stop the Arena sign in protest of the proposed Potomac Yard Entertainment District Jan. 27 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

ENTERTAINMENT

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

Tours Aboard Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner Maritime Heritage Center. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Alexandria's Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Guests of all ages are recruited into the Continental Navy aboard Tall Ship Providence with legendary Captain John Paul Jones. Recruits are assigned jobs on the ship, learn where they will work and live, how to load a cannon, etc... Tours conclude in the Naval History Theatre with a film about the ship. The Heritage Center is a floating museum on the Alexandria waterfront. Visit <https://tallshipprovidence.org/>

JAN. 11 TO FEB. 18

A Delicate Balance Sculpture. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Curated by Jackie Hoysted and produced by Veronica Szalus, A Delicate Balance is an all-sculpture show that explores the idea of achieving equilibrium. Perhaps more than ever, today we have a greater awareness of how everything operates in such a delicate balance - be it ecosystems, politics, relationships or personal well-being. We must navigate life without tipping too much in one direction so that we can strive for harmony, but at times something radical is required to achieve it.

FEB. 2-24

The "Visible Touch: A Look at Texture" exhibit features art that explores texture through physical form or visual illusion. Visitors will be allowed to touch some of the art (pieces are marked). Enjoy the visual and the tactile experience! View at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Opening Reception: Friday, February 2, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed February 25). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing Maestro. 3 p.m. At George Washington Masonic Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, Alexandria. When the orchestra is ready to begin their concert and suddenly discover the Maestro is nowhere to be found they begin to panic. Thankfully the world's greatest detective is available and agrees to take the case. All the musicians are suspects and thus Sherlock Holmes must investigate each of the instrument families to deduce who is behind the mystery. With Enrico Lopez-Yanez, Guest Conductor.

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Book Launch. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Hear from editor Audrey Davis and the authors of African American Emancipation in an Occupied City, which tells the story of formerly enslaved and self-emancipated people in a newly occupied city during the Civil War. They sought refuge in Alexandria, coming with only hopes and dreams for life as free people. They came seeking freedom, but many did not live long in it. Those who survived used their labor for the cause of freedom. A book signing will follow after the authors' presentations. The event is free, but online registration is encouraged.

FEB. 3-4

20th Annual Alexandria Boutique Warehouse Sale. At various boutique stores in Old Town Alexandria. The longest-running winter warehouse sale returns for its 20th year in a walkable format throughout Old Town Alexandria. With sales up to 80% off, shoppers are expected to score the best deals of the winter season with nearly 50 independent boutiques to choose from. Steals and deals from Alexandria and regional boutiques will



The 20th Annual Alexandria Boutique Warehouse Sale will be held Feb. 3-4, 2024 in Old Town Alexandria.

take place in stores, pop-up tents, select side streets, and open retail spaces for shoppers to explore and enjoy the best retailers ranging from indie brands, clothing, shoes, jewelry, to home furnishings, and more.

THURSDAY/FEB. 8

African American Film Series: "Banker." 2-4 p.m. At Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road, Suite 104, Alexandria. Free admission. In honor of Black History Month, the library will be showing a series of films throughout the month.

FRIDAY/FEB. 9

The Thirteen Presents "Path of Miracles." 7:30 p.m. At St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 8009 Ft. Hunt Road, Alexandria. In Path of Miracles, British composer Joby Talbot takes the listener on a musical journey on the mystical Camino de Santiago de Compostela. The contemplative progression of the Camino is built into the structure of the work, with the four movements of the work titled after the four main posts along the Camino. Talbot incorporates various medieval texts in many languages and musical styles as diverse as those of Taiwanese Bunun people and medieval chant. Paired with projected images of the cosmos by renowned Italian virtual designer Camilla Tassi, The Thirteen's performances of Path of Miracles promise to be replete with beauty and wonder.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

African American Waterfront Heritage Trail Signs Ribbon Cutting. 11 a.m. At the New Fishtown sign on the river side of Founders

Park, 351 N. Union Street, Alexandria. The African American Heritage Trail Committee invites the public to join in a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the installation of new interpretive signs along Alexandria's historic waterfront. The 11 signs and two orientation panels illuminate the history of the African American community in Alexandria over the span of several centuries. A reception following the ribbon cutting will be held in the Overlook Room (#325) on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union Street.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Manumission Tour Company Black History Bus Tour. 10 to 11:30 a.m. and 12 to 1:30 p.m. Tour meets at the Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe Street, Alexandria. Ride with Manumission Tour Company on a 90-minute guided bus tour to visit various African American historic sites in Alexandria. You will hear stories of both enslaved and free African Americans prior to the Civil War as well as understand the stories behind some of Alexandria's most well-known African American historic sites. Sites will include the Alexandria National Cemetery, Alfred Street Baptist Church, Shiloh Baptist Church, Church Alley, the African American Heritage Park, the Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery, Barrett Library and more. Visit manumissiontours.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

37th Annual Mount Vernon Town Meeting. At Mount Vernon High School, 8515 Old Mount Vernon Road. Times: 7:45 a.m. to 9:25 a.m. - Exhibit Hall Open; 9:30 a.m. to

noon - Program: Speakers, Audience Q&A and Virtual Tour; Noon to 1:30 p.m. - Taste of Mount Vernon.

FEB. 10-11

Alexandria Symphony Announces ASO at 80 Project

Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center; Sunday, February 11, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. at George Washington Masonic Memorial. Four original pieces, commissioned in honor of the 80th anniversary of the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra (ASO), will be presented as part of the ASO at 80 Project. Led by Music Director James Ross, the commissions will premiere throughout the 2023-2024 season as introductions to four of the five performances.

On February 10 and 11, 2024, the program entitled "Do Not Go Gentle" opens with Milad Yousufi's Aurora, drawn from his experience as an Afghan refugee and inspired by a poem dedicated to his mother. His works express both his pride in his country of birth and his longing to return. Visit www.alexsym.org.

FRIDAY/MARCH 8

Women's Leadership Forum. 7:45-10:30 a.m. At The Westin Alexandria Old Town, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria. The forum will bring together women (and men) at all stages of their careers for an interactive, "straight talk" panel discussion filled with inspiration and insight. Cost is \$80 for Members | \$105 for Prospective Members.

MARCH 12-18

Spring Book Sale - At Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria. The Friends of Beatley Central Library will hold their Spring Book Sale from Tuesday, March 12 through Monday, March 18. Members' Preview on Tuesday, March 12, 3:00 -7:30 p.m. (\$15 memberships available at the door); Wednesday, March 13, 10:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; Thursday, March 14, 10:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; Friday, March 15, 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Saturday, March 16, 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday, March 17, Half Price Day, 1:00-4:30 p.m.; Monday, March 18, \$10 Bag Sale, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. \$4 or less, unless specifically marked: hardbacks, paperbacks, children's books, and media. All genres. Visit www.beatleyfriends.org.

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

FEBRUARY

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Fri. 9: Dave Hollister \$55.00 SOLD OUT!
Wed. 14: Kevin Ross \$65.00
Thu. 15: The Amy Winehouse Celebration: back to BACK TO BLACK \$29.50
Fri. 16: NRBQ \$45.00
Sat. 17: The Dramatics featuring L.J. Reynolds \$59.50
Sun. 18: Neil Diamond Tribute starring DAVID CARLIN KING and The Gold Diamond Band \$45.00
Thu. 22: Corey Smith Band w/ Jeb Gipson - All Standing in the Flex Stage! Doors 6pm \$35.00
Fri. 23: TWEET \$45.00
Sat. 24: Tarsha Fitzgerald Presents DEVOTION: An Earth Wind & Fire Experience \$39.50
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Obituary

John Hamilton Korns, II

March 20, 1945-January 10, 2024



John Hamilton Korns, II of Alexandria, VA, was born on March 20, 1945, and passed away on January 10, 2024 at age 78. A devoted husband, father and grandfather, his family remained his constant companions until the end.

John was born in New Orleans, LA to William and Louise (Schramm) Korns. His parents divorced when he was very young, and John was raised by his mother in New Orleans. John fondly recalled a childhood filled with interesting dinner party conversations (his mother, one of the first women to graduate from Tulane law school, went on to argue several cases at the U.S. Supreme Court), various home improvement projects (John was very handy with tools), and academic success. His mother, while strict about academics, good behavior and manners, was very relaxed about where he went and what he did. During high school, John traveled with a couple of friends from New Orleans to Seattle for the 1962 World's Fair, during which they traveled by buses and hitchhiking and camped out for some portion of the trip. Following high school graduation, John and a couple of friends hopped on an ocean freight ship to cross the Atlantic, where they purchased a cheap car and spent the summer traveling all over Europe.

John excelled academically. He applied to and was accepted by Benjamin Franklin High School, which at the time was a nationally recognized public high school in New Orleans. He graduated in 1963, and then attended Harvard College on a National Merit Scholarship. John graduated with an A.B., magna cum laude, in government, in 1967. He then attended Harvard Law School, where he graduated in 1970 magna cum laude while also serving as notes editor of the Harvard Law Review. His law career was propelled by two significant clerkships, first for the Hon. John Minor Wisdom of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in 1970, and, a year later, for Chief Justice Warren Burger of the United States Supreme Court.

After finishing his clerkships, John joined the law firm Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering. After a few years there, he left to work for the Washington, D.C. District Attorney. He always said that his time at the DA's office was the most fun part of his long legal career. In the early 1980s, needing to support a growing family, John rejoined the private sector, where he worked for a handful of law firms. Much of his law practice was focused on antitrust, administrative, and securities law. He concluded his career as a partner at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney in Washington, DC.

While serving as a lawyer at Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, he met his future wife, Paulette Kay Martin of Wilbur, Washington. They were married in 1974 and settled in Alexandria, VA, where they raised their three sons. John cherished his family and adored spending time with his sons supporting their various passions. John enjoyed home improvement projects, and ended up building an addition to their home largely by himself. He loved traveling with the family, whether that was to New Orleans or Washington State to visit family, RV trips to National Parks, Mexico, sailing the Caribbean, across Europe, or sites closer to home.

John is predeceased by the love of his life, his wife of 48 years, Paulette Kay Martin Korns, and is survived by his sons Michael (Katherine Wray), Peter (Michael Hill) and Paul; and grandsons Jackson and Andrew. He is also survived by his older brother, Alexander, and nephew Robert.

John lived his final 5 years at the Silverado Memory Care residence in Alexandria where the dedication and thankless work of many caretakers and staff kept him safe, comfortable and happy.

A graveside memorial service will be held at Ivy Hill Cemetery in Alexandria in the spring.

Obituary

Obituary



Susan Bucks

February 12, 1944 - January 14, 2024

Susan Darlene Morris Bucks - beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother - passed away on January 14, 2024. She was born in Pennsylvania on February 12, 1944; the only child of Anna Y. Morris (nee Brill).

Susan leaves behind her daughter, Susan B. (John E.) Finke and her son Garth (Jodi) Bucks; her grandchildren, Christina (Dan) Gordon, Joshua Bucks, and Jacob Bucks; and her great-grandchildren, Mikayla Gordon and Ki-ersten Gordon.

A visitation will be held on Sunday, February 4, 2024 from 10 AM to 12 PM with a service beginning at 1:00 PM at Murphy Funeral Home, 4510 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA 22203. Interment will take place immediately following the service at Columbia Gardens Cemetery, 3411 Arlington Blvd, Arlington, VA 22201.

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Beyer Supports 401Kids Savings Act

U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) and U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) led a bicameral delegation with Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR), Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and Representatives Joyce Beatty (D-OH) and Suzan DelBene (D-WA) in introducing the 401Kids Savings Act. The new bill would create children's savings accounts (CSAs) for every single child in America, building lifelong wealth and economic self-sufficiency for kids from families with limited resources. Funds from the accounts could be used for post-secondary education, starting a business, buying a house, or retirement security.

"Wealth inequality is one of the most intractable challenges facing our nation; it perpetuates injustice, slows economic growth, and fosters political dysfunction.

Our bill would help reverse this worsening trend by ensuring that all children entering adulthood have the means to invest in their future," said Rep. Beyer. "The positive effects of 401Kids accounts would go far beyond the children and their families who get accounts, because we know that when young adults can pursue education, start businesses, and buy homes, it creates economy-wide benefits. I thank Senator Casey and our other colleagues and partners for their leadership on this crucial legislation."

Along with introducing the bill, Casey also released a new report called "401Kids: Building Wealth for the Next Generation," which delves into the proposal and examples of how such savings accounts are already working for kids in several states.

Based on local models around the nation, the 401Kids Savings Act would create chil-

dren's savings accounts that would be built on state 529 college savings platforms and managed by state Treasurers. Once the accounts are established for all newborns and kids under age 18, families, non-profits, employers, foundations, and others could contribute to a 401Kids Account which, starting at age 18, could be used for post-secondary education and training, a small business, a first home or retirement security. While all families could contribute up to \$2,500 per year to the accounts, only lower- and moderate-income families would receive direct federal support.

According to analysis by the Constellation Fund, for every dollar invested in 401Kids, society would receive at least \$2.61 in benefits associated with increased income, improved health, additional tax revenues, and savings to other government sectors.

The Chamber ALX's CareerCon: A Post-Grad Masterclass

The Alexandria Chamber of Commerce CareerCon, presented by Virginia Tech Innovation Campus on Friday, Feb. 16, 2024 from 1:45 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Alexandria City High School, 3330 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302. This is an ACHS early dismissal day.

The event is free for students & parents.

Agenda

- 1:45 p.m. Registration
- 2:15 p.m. Opening Remarks & Scholarship Eligibility Information*
- 2:35 p.m. 'Meet the Pros' Track Session, Featuring eight breakout rooms with professional panels in Healthcare, Finance, STEM & Cybersecurity, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality,

Criminal Justice & Government, and more

3:40 p.m. 'How To' Track Session, Featuring breakout rooms highlighting often overlooked topics, including applying for college, the job search, establishing credit, and more.

4:45PM: Closing Session & Scholarship Announcement.

Biden, Harris Visit Northern Virginia

FROM PAGE 5

Described as a campaign event for the Biden-Harris ticket, the timing of the Manassas gathering on Tuesday provided a counterpoint to the first GOP primary in New Hampshire on the same day, where former President Donald Trump led in polling among Republican voters at the time. Trump received a higher percentage of the vote than challenger Nikki Haley.

Reproductive rights and related women's health issues are expected to be major issues in the Biden/Harris re-election campaign. Harris' first tour event was on Jan. 22 in Wisconsin, with at least three additional locations planned in the next two months. The President joined Harris in Manassas to

highlight steps the administration is taking to expand access to abortion medication and contraception, to counter state abortion bans that have sprung up in many states. Biden spoke about expanded coverage for no-cost contraception through the Affordable Care Act. He indicated the Departments of the Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services are issuing new guidance to clarify standards and support expanded coverage of a broader range of FDA-approved contraceptives, at no cost, under the Affordable Care Act among other actions.

This session, Democrats in the Virginia legislature in both houses have introduced constitutional amendments to guarantee the

fundamental right to reproductive freedom in the Commonwealth. Hearings on those amendments are being deferred until 2025 to match the State's administrative rules for addressing constitutional amendments which when passed, are on the general election ballot, then must be followed by passing a second time in the General Assembly. Voters in Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Kansas, and California already have rejected abortion bans in new legislation. On June 24, 2022, The Supreme Court, Justices appointed by Trump, held that the Constitution does not confer a right to abortion, taking away the right to reproductive choice outlined in Roe versus Wade that had stood for 50 years.

2024 Spring Garden Market at River Farm

FROM PAGE 7

garden, woodlands, and many breathtaking views. Offering free access to the community six days a week, River Farm is truly a local and national horticultural and historical treasure.

With an expected attendance of over 2,000 local gardeners, plant lovers and nature enthusiasts, the Spring Garden Market is a wonderful opportunity for companies and organizations to showcase their products and brand. The AHS is currently registering vendors, sponsors and volunteers to participate in this annual event. Early bird registration for vendors is available through Feb. 18 with final registration deadline on March 15. Registration forms and details [www.ahsgardening.org/springgardenmar-](http://www.ahsgardening.org/springgardenmarket2024)

ket2024 or email plantsale@ahsgardening.org

Attendees

Entrance to the Spring Garden Market may be purchased online beginning in March at www.ahsgardening.org/springgardenmarket2024. Entry fee is \$5 per person for walk-up or \$20 per car including all passengers. There is no entry fee or parking fee for AHS members including car passengers. Children six years of age and under are free. Additional restrictions and exceptions are available on the Spring Garden Market webpage.

River Farm is located at 7931 E. Boulevard Dr., Alexandria, Va. 22308. For more information, call (703) 768-5700 ext. 114

or visit www.ahsgardening.org.

About the American Horticultural Society

The American Horticultural Society (AHS) has been fostering innovation and passion for gardening and horticultural excellence since 1922. The Society's membership includes over 22,000 individuals, including aspiring, new, and experienced gardeners, plant enthusiasts, and horticultural professionals, as well as numerous partner organizations. Through our educational programs, awards, and publications, the AHS connects people to gardening, raises awareness of earth-friendly gardening practices, introduce children to plants, and showcases the art and practice of horticulture.

Much Ado About Something



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

That 'something' being the off-hand reference (use of the "R" word/"remission") from my oncologist explaining why we need to focus on my kidney health at the expense of restarting my cancer treatment (a pill a day). It came in an email response to my question about my cancer status/treatment timetable based on recent lab work especially ordered for this reason. It's the first time I've heard that r-word in a decade. Moreover, it wasn't a word I heard a month or so ago when I had my first in-person, post-PET scan appointment with my oncologist in over two years. Seems like that would have been an appropriate time. But no. Let's be realistic: using the "R" word to a cancer patient is akin to waving a red cape in front of a bull. We may not exactly charge but you'll certainly get our attention.

If the reason not to restart my cancer treatment is the potential damage (irreparable) to my kidneys (as indicated in the kidney function/creatinine level in my recent "chem 7" lab work), I can certainly understand and appreciate that. If you're going to mention that my thyroid cancer is in remission as a reason to stop treatment and avoid further (irreparable) harm to my kidney – potentially leading to dialysis, I'm happily on board and grateful for this preemptive strike. However, you can't bury the lead: "REMISSION." Since when, and why am I hearing about now in an email no less? This is the kind of news/characterization that cancer patients dream about. And if it's at all applicable to me – or any cancer patient for that matter, given the stress and pre-occupation with our disease and life expectancy that dominates our daily lives, tell me more. If you have an ounce of above-average-sounding news, please, as I said when I was about to receive bad news (initial Team Lourie meeting in Feb.'09 when I was first diagnosed and "prognosed"), give it to me straight. I can take it. And if I can take that, I can certainly take this: "Remission." Elaborate. Don't just drop that word in the middle of a paragraph and offer no additional context or suggestion that perhaps we should talk because of this relative bombshell of amazing but unexpected – and so far, not really corroborated news of my health.

For 14 and half years, I've lived with that original "13 month to two years" prognosis hanging over my head – like the sword of Damocles, permeating my brain and affecting every decision I make. You must know that the use of this word is not going to fall on deaf ears – or blind eyes. It's the word all of us cancer patients have been straining to see on any correspondence that we receive from our oncologists. To use it in this context, without any further explanation concerning its legitimacy/relevance to my life as an excruciating no less for what we're now not doing (continuing my cancer medicine/treatment: chemotherapy/targeted therapy, pills and of course infusions galore, going on almost 15 years), deserves more than just a passing glance. Granted, I LOVE the sound/look of it but without further ado/additional information/clarification, I am no closer to a good night's sleep. It's not exactly a chicken-little situation, but for a cancer patient whose sky fell years ago, we're very susceptible and inclined to exaggerate good news. We've been waiting our whole lives (it only seems that way) since our original diagnosis for it. News or a reference of this significance/substance must be treated very carefully. Giving us/our health an inch will lead to a mile of unfounded and unrealistic, and possibly inaccurate information. And if us cancer patients need anything, it's precise and exact information so we can live what's left of our lives with clarity of purpose and dignity. Maybe even hope if there's some substance to his use of this word.

Because ambiguity is unhelpful. Considering that many cancer patients are enduring treatment with no guarantee of survival, the lines of communication – in person, and especially in print must be unequivocal with no basis for misunderstanding. And the misuse of a word, or in this case, the context in which the word "remission" is used, a word all of us cancer patients have dreamed of hearing/seeing, is unfair and dare I say insensitive.

We're all clinging to life here, emotionally certainly, and physically it varies. Make no mistake: being diagnosed with cancer or surviving cancer leaves a mark. My late mother used to quote Bette Davis: "No one gets out of this life alive." For cancer patients, life is not a given. Due to the cancer, it's more a taken.. All your decisions/considerations will be made with this underlying, overriding harsh bit of reality. And in that reality, we're all looking for morsels/cornels of positive sounding anything to give us hope. Don't presume that we can take it all in stride. In fact, I wonder if the longer I survive, the shorter distance I'll have to travel.

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

People Over Platform

A SAMPLING OF TESTIMONIALS FROM MY 2023 BUYERS & SELLERS



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“Tracy always made time for us...”

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