

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

FEBRUARY 22, 2024

## Mount Vernon Estate Celebrates Washington's Birthday

By SUSAN LAUME  
THE GAZETTE

**W**hat better place to celebrate Presidents Day, Feb. 19, than at the restored home of President George Washington? Thousands took advantage of free admission to the estate on Feb. 19 for Presidents Day and Feb. 22 for Washington's birthday as part of the celebration.

The observance included a military demonstration by the 3rd U.S. Army Infantry, known as the Old Guard. The regiment is the oldest active-duty infantry unit in the Army, serving our nation since 1784. The Old Guard is the Army's official ceremonial unit and escort to the president, and also provides security for Washington, D.C. in time of national emergency or civil disturbance. The regiment wears the uniform of the Continental Army approved by General Washington in 1782. It consisted of a blue coat faced with a red collar, cuffs and lapels, white buttons and lining, long-fitting overalls, and a black cocked hat with cockade.

Also appearing, the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corp, the only unit of its kind in the armed forces.

The musicians of this unit recall the days of the American Revolution as they perform in uniforms patterned after those worn by the musicians of General George Washington's Continental Army. Military musicians of the period wore the reverse colors of the regiments to which they were assigned.

The uniforms worn by the members of the Corps are dated circa 1784, and consist of black tricorne hats, white wigs, waistcoats, colonial coveralls, and distinct red regimental coats.



In Revolutionary Army formation to defend against cavalry attacks, the battalions discharge muskets.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE

Close friends Avner Frederick and Charlie Hanger, both 8 years old, of Washington D.C., wore their own uniforms to celebrate the birthday of President George Washington, a favor of theirs even though they claim lineage to President Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin, respectively.



The U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment demonstrates colonial army maneuvers on the Bowling Green at Mount Vernon to celebrate the President George Washington's designated birthday.



At 3 years old, Levi Foster is too young to join the Old Guard but clearly enjoys being part of President George Washington's 297th birthday.



Platoons of the Old Guard reenact battle formation with bayonets ready at the Mount Vernon estate.



Soldiers in the Old Guard come from all over the United States, including 4 1/2 year Guard veteran, Michael Flaniken from California (foreground), and Ian Godwin, with one year experience, from Alabama.



The U.S. Army 3rd Regiment marches past the Mount Vernon estate on its Bowling Green on President's Day, Feb. 19 before a large crowd.



Members of the Old Guard's Fife & Drum Corp play traditional period marches as part of the President's Day celebration.



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# NEWS

## Mary Washington's Grave Location a Mystery

A President's Day investigation involves ground penetrating radar technology.



A meter shows where there are possible grave locations.

By MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

**M**ount Vernon is seemingly the center of George Washington's legacy but it began with his mother Mary Ball Washington who was buried in Fredericksburg under a monument that resembles D.C.'s Washington Monument on a lesser scale. The monument acts as her grave site but the exact location of the actual tomb remains unknown so investigators arrived on President's Day with a grave detecting gadget.

The team was led by historians from Washington Heritage Museums, and a professor from Mary Washington University who manned the GSSI Ground Penetrating Radar apparatus to investigate this colonial mystery. The radar system looks like a cross between a walker for a person with disabilities and a football field measuring system.

"We won't see individual bones," said Dr. Katherine Parker, a professor with the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of

Mary Washington. Parker was out at the site with a few students testing their new tool. "This is our first project with this, it's faster and we don't have to dig," she said. The plan was to map out a few areas where ground signals were strong, map it out and discuss before any ground would be broken. There is a small, family cemetery nearby too."

### Monumental Momentum

The Mary Washington monument was dedicated on May 10, 1894 near Mary Ball Street and Kenmore Avenue in the old town portion of Fredericksburg. Since there was no headstone placed when Mary Ball Washington was actually buried in 1789, "it is reported to be near the sandstone outcropping now known as Meditation Rock," said a historical Washington Heritage Museums pamphlet. Construction of the monument began in the 1830s but was only partially finished which angered a group of local women who formed the Mary Washington Monument Association. They raised enough money to buy the site and finish the monument.



Dr. Katherine Parker, a professor with the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington.

When it was finished in 1894, thousands gathered at the dedication including one of the speakers, President Grover Cleveland. Other presidents who have visited this site include Andrew Jackson, who was president from 1829 to 1837, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, who laid a wreath at the monument in 1954.

MWU student Blake Bauer was

on site, operating the GSSI along with Professor Parker. He is majoring in historic preservation and looked at this experience as "a once in a lifetime opportunity," he said. "It's very science-ee" he added.

GSSI stands for Geophysical Survey Systems, with headquarters in Nashua, New Hampshire. They have

customers all over the world, and their mission is to "help customers solve their subsurface visualization challenges with ground penetrating radar equipment." The GSSI technology is used on everything from checking the structural health of roads, bridges, and skyscrapers to studying the thickness of glaciers, their information stated.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON

The GSSI Ground Penetrating Radar in action.

## County Executive Presents FY 2025 Advertised Budget

Tax increase proposed; jobs cut; state underfunds schools; supervisors will make changes.

MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**B**ryan Hill, Fairfax County's executive, presented his proposed FY 2025 Advertised Budget and the FY 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Program Feb 20. Hill's Advertised Budget is the first step in a community-driven budget process. The board will approve the FY 2025 budget after changes on May 7.

According to Jeff C. McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in a Feb. 20 release, the advertised budget pro-

vides "limited, targeted investments," such as the 42 new positions to address various county needs, including the effects of inflation and support for board priorities such as affordable housing and environmental initiatives. Hill's advertised budget leaves balances totaling \$3.83 million for the board to consider, a small amount of the more than \$3.5 billion total.

The budget is based on a \$1.135 Real Estate Tax rate, which partially funds both the schools request and the employee compensation package. Hill's budget calls for

SEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE, PAGE 11

## TJ Admissions Upheld

Statement from Fairfax County Public Schools:

**T**he U.S. Supreme Court today let stand an appeals court decision upholding the admissions policy for the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST), ending a three-year legal challenge by a group that claimed the policy was unfair.

"We have long believed that the new admissions process is both constitutional and in the best interest of all of our students. It guarantees that all qualified students from all neighborhoods in Fairfax County have a fair shot at attending

this exceptional high school," said Karl Frisch, Fairfax County School Board chair and Providence District representative.

The Fairfax County School Board adopted the plan in late 2020 to address the shortcomings in an admissions system that persistently drew students from just a handful of the County's middle schools and resulted in classes that lacked the socioeconomic and geographic diversity seen in the other schools. The plan raised the minimum GPA and class size, guaranteed every middle school a certain number of seats, and eliminated the standardized tests and application fee that had long been part of the admission process.

"We're very proud that the last three

SEE TJ ADMISSIONS, PAGE 11



# Report of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Public Safety

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

**O**n Budget Sunday this week, as Chairman of the Transportation and Public Safety subcommittee, I gave the report of the subcommittee. Here's what I said:

"Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the Transportation and Public Safety Subcommittee, I am pleased to present to you our budget recommendations.

In the area of Transportation, the subcommittee has continued the practice of limiting budget actions to a narrow group of high-priority items. The 2024-26 biennial budget includes more than \$22.5 billion for the Transportation Secretariat. Nearly all of these funds are distributed using funding formulas established by the Code of Virginia and then allocated to specific projects based on data-driven processes. This practice has, and will continue to serve, the Commonwealth well.

However, as in the recent past, the Subcommittee recognizes that there are some projects or issues that are so large and have such a significant impact on the Commonwealth as a whole, that direct budget action is warranted. For this reason, the Subcommittee is happy to include in its recommendations \$70 million in general funds to expedite the widening of I-81 in the Salem area. This \$70 million will enable



Krizek

**Approximately 45 percent of the Commonwealth's tax revenues are derived from the Northern Virginia region. A healthy and successful WMATA system benefits Virginia as a whole.**

the widening of the southbound lanes concurrently with the northbound lanes and therefore save \$70 million over the life of the project.

Additionally, the Subcommittee is pleased to recommend \$149.5 million from the general fund over two years in increased support for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. This funding is necessary to address a financial shortfall for WMATA driven largely by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting increase in teleworking. This funding will allow us to cover the financial shortfall in the short term while we work with our partners to ensure the system's financial viability in the long run. As you well know Mr. Chairman, a healthy and vibrant public transit system is vital to the success and continued economic growth of the Washington metropolitan area as a whole and Northern Virginia specifically. Furthermore, I would like to take the opportunity to remind the Committee that approximately 45 percent of the Commonwealth's tax revenues are derived from the Northern Virginia region. A

healthy and successful WMATA system benefits Virginia as a whole.

In the area of Public Safety, to support our correctional officers, the Subcommittee report provides \$9.5 million each year to establish a career progression program. This item will provide us with another tool to retain our most qualified officers by allowing them to receive merit-based compensation increases and promotions.

The Subcommittee report also supports the Commonwealth's efforts to join the growing list of states that have established well-regulated adult-use retail cannabis markets. To this end, the report includes \$20 million over the biennium to the Cannabis Control Authority so that they have the resources needed to ensure adults have access to safe, legal products outside the influence of the black market.

With that, Mr. Chairman, the report of the Subcommittee is now before you and the members of the Committee. I hope it will be the Committee's pleasure to adopt the subcommittee's report."

## Thank You Mount Vernon and Lorton!

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK  
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT



Storck

**T**he 37th Annual Town Meeting at Mount Vernon High School (MVHS) was another wonderful celebration of community! Residents were excited to visit our crowded Exhibit Hall, meet the KidBiz Young Entrepreneurs, get their flu vaccines, listen and ask questions of local leaders and watch the virtual "helicopter" tour of all that is happening in the Mount Vernon District from Lorton to Huntington.

For those who have not attended the Town Meeting, this annual event provides an opportunity for residents to hear from our local elected representatives, see what is new and planned for the area, learn about our accomplishments of the past year and initiatives for the coming year and ask your questions. The highlight of the

morning is always the virtual "flying tour" of the District with newer technology, including GIS - Geographic Information Systems - interactive mapping and, this year, green screen video to make me a helicopter pilot! The County's GIS data and mapping technology is open to all, with learning tools, and can be found here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maps/>.

This year we were thrilled to bring back the Taste of Mount Vernon, following the Town Meeting, where many of you stayed to sample foods from our local restaurants, visit with your neighbors and make new friends. A huge thank you to the restaurants who donated their delicious food, time and talents to make this event possible. We even had Grandma from new a new hot spot - Grandma's Famous Café join us! Other new restaurants included HoneyGrow



Team Grandma from Grandma's Famous Cafe

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Your name and town will be published with your letter, other personal information will not be shared. If you are a student, your school name, age and grade will also be published.

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A Connection Newspaper





## OPINION

# Metro Funding: Va. Should Contribute \$180 Million

BY STEWART SCHWARTZ  
COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Last week we shared the joint statement of 18 non-profits thanking Virginia legislators for proposing \$65 million (+\$65 million from NoVA) but making the case that Virginia, DC, and Maryland should do more to Close the Gap. Failure to fully close the gap will mean service cuts, fare hikes, and delays to important capital projects.

As a follow-up, please see our Coalition for Smarter Growth case for Virginia providing a combined \$180 million as its fair share to fully close the gap. With our partners we will be pressing DC and Maryland to increase their commitments as well (\$209

million for Md, \$275 million for DC).

Virginia is currently offering \$65 million for FY25 and \$84.5 million for FY26, to be matched 50/50 by Northern Virginia localities, for a total of \$130 million in FY25 and \$169 million in FY26. We thank officials for this commitment.

However, this will not fully close the WMATA operating gap, meaning some service cuts, fare increases, and delays to capital projects as capital funds are used to pay for preventative maintenance.

\$180 million would be Virginia's share to fully close the WMATA operating gap, with another \$209 million from Maryland, and \$275 million from DC.

The state is proposing \$1.3B or more in  
SEE VA. CONTRIBUTION, PAGE 8

# Over The Halfway Mark

BY ADAM EBBIN

The 2024 Regular Session of the General Assembly is now past the halfway mark, also known as Crossover — the deadline for the Senate and House to complete consideration of bills introduced in their respective chambers.

Out of 737 pieces of legislation introduced in our chamber, the Virginia Senate passed 452 bills which are now being considered in the House.

From my own legislative package, 19 bills have now passed the Senate and are being considered in the other chamber. In the coming weeks, they will receive a hearing and a vote and hopefully make their way to Governor Youngkin's desk for his signature.

As a rule, if a bill reaches the governor's desk prior to the final week of a legislative session, the governor is required to act upon that bill within seven days. For bills that reach his desk after that window of time, the governor has thirty days within which to review and act. Because the vast majority of bills do not pass until the final week of session, the "seven day bill" rule usually applies to a very small number of bills.



Ebbin

Thanks to broad support from both legislative chambers, several of my bills could reach Governor Youngkin's desk prior to the end of session — and could become seven day bills that he would be required to sign, amend, or veto prior to the final day of session on March 9. That could include bills to protect Virginians from gun violence, reform our criminal justice system, and to ensure the right to marry for two consenting Virginia adults.

SB101 — which would codify the right to marry in Virginia for two consenting adults — should be one of my first bills to reach Governor Youngkin's desk this year. I find it encouraging that the bill, and its House cognate HB174 carried by Delegate Rozia Henson, passed the General Assembly with bipartisan support in both legislative chambers. I sincerely hope that Governor Youngkin will sign this important bill that would create state-level protections for all Virginians regardless of who they love.

Another bill I expect to pass the General Assembly soon is SB362. This bill would provide more options for first-time nonviolent

SEE OVER THE HALF, PAGE 8

## LETTER TO EDITOR

# Fixing Something That Isn't Broken

I am writing to express concern over the proposal to consolidate the animal services under the Department of Animal Sheltering (DAS). Key stakeholders have been left out of the process, and critical information on how this proposal will work in practice has not been provided. This proposal has not been adequately explained. What we have at the moment works well. Why we are fixing something which isn't broken — and which was, in fact, thoroughly reviewed in 2016 — has not been adequately justified. The injuries recently caused to law enforcement officers in DC when removing 10 neglect-

ed dogs from their firearm wielding owner speaks to the need for police training and equipment, yet this proposal seeks to save money by replacing the Animal Protection Police Officers (APPOs) with civilian officers and reducing their training. This increases liability risk to the County, and one civil case could wipe these savings out.

The changes being proposed will significantly affect structure, operations and the ability to provide services to the public, their pets and to wildlife. It completely fails to address the necessary work the APPOs do for

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 11

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## Rotary

### The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon, VA

The Mount Vernon Rotary Club, in 2021, initiated the "You Make a Difference Award" to support community service by organizations in the Mount Vernon area.

Specifically, the purpose of the Mount Vernon Rotary "You Make A Difference" Award is to:

- 1) Recognize individuals and organizations who supportservice to others
- 2) Support community service within the Mount Vernon areaThis local support is consistent with the Rotary International Motto: "Service Above Self."

A single award and associated grant of \$1000 will be presented once a year. The goal is to recognize a single individual who sustains community service and to contribute financial support to keep that service continuing.

Nominations will be accepted until noon on Friday, March 29, 2024. To receive a nomination form or more information, email [MVRotaryVA@gmail.com](mailto:MVRotaryVA@gmail.com)

Rotary is where neighbors, friends, and problem-solvers share ideas, join leaders, and take action to create lasting change. Visit [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) for more information.

**The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon meets via Zoom on Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 7:30. To request an invitation link email [mikej1013@verizon.net](mailto:mikej1013@verizon.net)**

**Let us know about an upcoming event**  
[www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar)



# DOJ Releases Uvalde Report

How should officials here evaluate recommendations?

By Mercia Hobson  
The Connection

The deadliest K-12 school shooting in the U.S. since Sandy Hook occurred in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24, 2022. A former student equipped with a high-powered AR-15 rifle entered Robb Elementary School at 11:33 a.m. Over the course of the 77-minute gap from when officers first arrived on the scene and when they confronted and killed the subject, the shooter murdered 19 students and two teachers.

The U.S. Justice Department deemed the response “cascading failures of leadership” in its Critical Incident Review of the Response Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School released on Jan. 18, 2024. The nation’s chief law enforcement officer, Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General of the U.S. said, “We hope to honor the victims and the survivors by working together to try to prevent anything like this from ever happening again, here or anywhere.”

The DOJ provides a litany of blistering observations by topic, followed by recommendations in its 600-page review. The content translates to school divisions, law enforcement, and legislatures across the U.S.

According to Garland, the victims and survivors of the mass shooting at Robb Elementary deserved better. “The law enforcement response at Robb Elementary on May 24, 2022, and the response by officials in the hours and days after, was a failure. As a consequence of failed leadership, training, and policies, 33 students and three of their teachers, many of whom had been shot, were trapped in a room with an active shooter for over an hour as law enforcement officials remained outside,” states the DOJ in the review.

On Jan. 18, the same day the DOJ released its Uvalde review, President Joe Biden said in a statement that there were multiple points of failure that hold lessons for the future. He said that his team would “work with the Justice Department and Department of Education to implement policy changes necessary to help communities respond more effectively in the future.”

“No community should ever have to go through what the Uvalde community suffered,” Biden said.

Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers said in a statement on Jan. 18, that no community is immune from school shootings and urged implementation of the DOJ’s recommendations.

The DOJ’s critical incident review is life-saving knowledge intended for law enforcement agencies, school divisions, and state departments of education. It lists observations and recommendations on Tactics and Equipment; Leadership, Incident Command, and Coordination; Post-Incident Response and Investigation; Public Communications During and Following the Crisis; Trauma and Support Services; and School Safety and Security.

Yet so far, leadership in Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia have yet to call publicly for studying or implementing the recommendations in DOJ’s Uvalde report. No officials have called for reviewing or revising current policies here. Discussion here on active shooter strategies, physical building hardening, campus policing and how to react in certain attack scenarios has yet to be informed by recommendations in the detailed report. The report contains recommendations about how to respond to a possible attack by insiders with authorized access to schools, by snipers operating from a distance and frontal assaults where an armed intruder forcibly enters.

The Connection began reaching out to officials in early February for reaction, and several key officials responded.

Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools (response via mail response, Feb. 6, 2023): “Reading, studying and learning from the Uvalde report is important and necessary work. It is also re-traumatizing for children, families and educators across our country, all of whom were impacted by the horrific loss of life in Uvalde. The report reinforces my belief in the importance of partnerships in communities to help keep schools safe. In Fairfax County, we are so grateful for our partnerships with

PHOTOS BY FCPS



Dr. Michelle Reid, division chief, Fairfax County Public Schools.



Karl Frisch, Chairman, Fairfax County School Board.



Melanie K. Meren, School Board vice chair, Hunter Mill District.



Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO).

law enforcement and community agencies that help us maintain a focus on student and staff mental health and physical safety.

“I want to make clear that we have a multi-disciplinary approach to school safety in which training, planning, and partnerships are critical to our district protocols. Schools are a reflection of our communities, and unfortunately, across the nation, our communities have become increasingly violent. As we all think about the impact of events such as the Uvalde tragedy, it serves as a reminder of the need to convince ourselves to prioritize the health and safety needs of our communities.

“The impact on our students and staff of traumatic events like this makes it hard to do our best teaching and learning in schools across the nation. Our country and our elected officials would do well to recognize that in order to learn, students and staff must first feel safe, and resources must be committed to this effort. We need everyone’s help in making our schools and our communities a safe place to thrive.”

Karl Frisch, Chairman, Fairfax County School Board and Providence district representative said in an email response, Feb. 12, 2024: “Fairfax County Public Schools has a thorough and multi-faceted strategy for ensuring the safety and security of our schools, incorporating physical, technical, and operational safeguards. Our dedicated team within the Office of Safety and Security is committed to regularly updating and refining our safety protocols to ensure the wellbeing of our students and employees remains our top priority.”

Melanie Meren, vice chair of the Fairfax County School Board, Hunter Mill district representative said in an email response Feb. 16: “I’m not able to provide specific comments on the DOJ’s report... Speak with the Fairfax County Po-

lice Department, though, as they are the law enforcement experts. You may know that our school resource officers, who are assigned to middle and high schools, are budgeted for and employed by the police department.

Katherine Hayek, spokesperson for Fairfax County Police Department, has not responded to requests for comment.

The first school shooting of 2024 happened in Virginia on Jan. 3, when an 18 year-old was shot and injured in the parking lot at Midlothian High School, in Midlothian, Va.

Following the Midlothian High School shooting in Virginia, the second U.S. school shooting of 2024 occurred on Jan. 4 at Perry High School near Des Moines. The shooter opened fire, killing a sixth grader and shooting seven others; four students and three staff members, including the school principal, Dan Marburger, who put himself in harm’s way. Marburger died of his injuries ten days later, on Jan. 14.

The deadliest mass school shooting ever happened in Virginia at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. The Virginia Tech shooter was a Fairfax County Public School graduate of Westfield High School (2003). Five of the 32 people the gunman shot and killed in the massacre were Fairfax County Public School graduates: Maxine Turner, James Madison High School, 2003; Leslie Sherman, West Springfield High School, 2005; Erin Peterson, Westfield High School, 2006; Reema Samaha, Westfield High School, 2006; and Mary Read, Annandale High School, 2006. The shooter died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers, former police officer and SRO during the time that the Columbine massacre happened. Canady was very clear in an interview on Feb. 16 about “good

## Critical Incident Review Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School

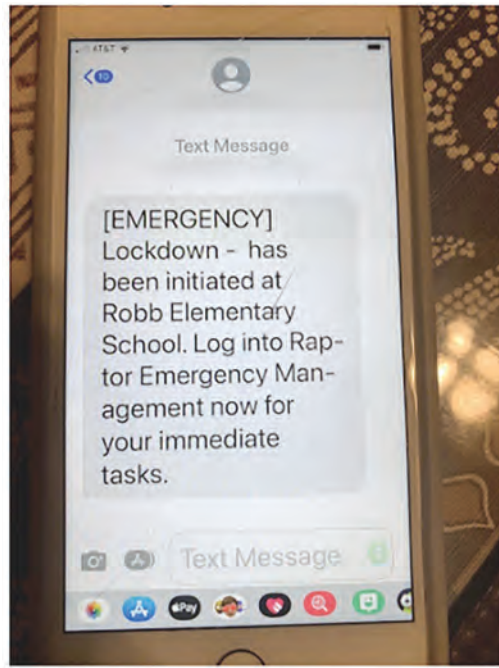


SCREENSHOT COPS U.S. DOJ

Cover of Critical Incident Review of the Response Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School by the U.S. Department of Justice.

protocol around lockdowns,” especially for students who are outside during an active shooter situation. Run; Hide; Fight. Whether it’s recess at the primary level or PE at the high school level, “If the assailant is inside the building, firing rounds ... we don’t want to bring students back into a building where the violence is occurring. That’s akin to running back into a burning building. That’s for firefighters to do,” Canady said. “Running into a building where gun firing is happening, that’s for law enforcement. We don’t want anyone [else] running into that danger.”

Figure 7-5. Raptor alert received by UCISD employees on May 24, 2022

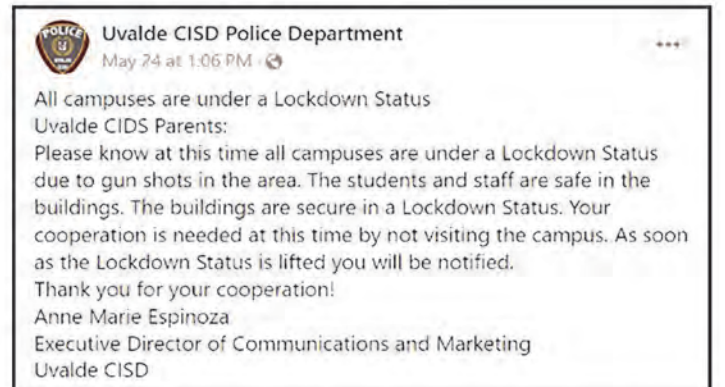


Source: CIR Document and Data Review.

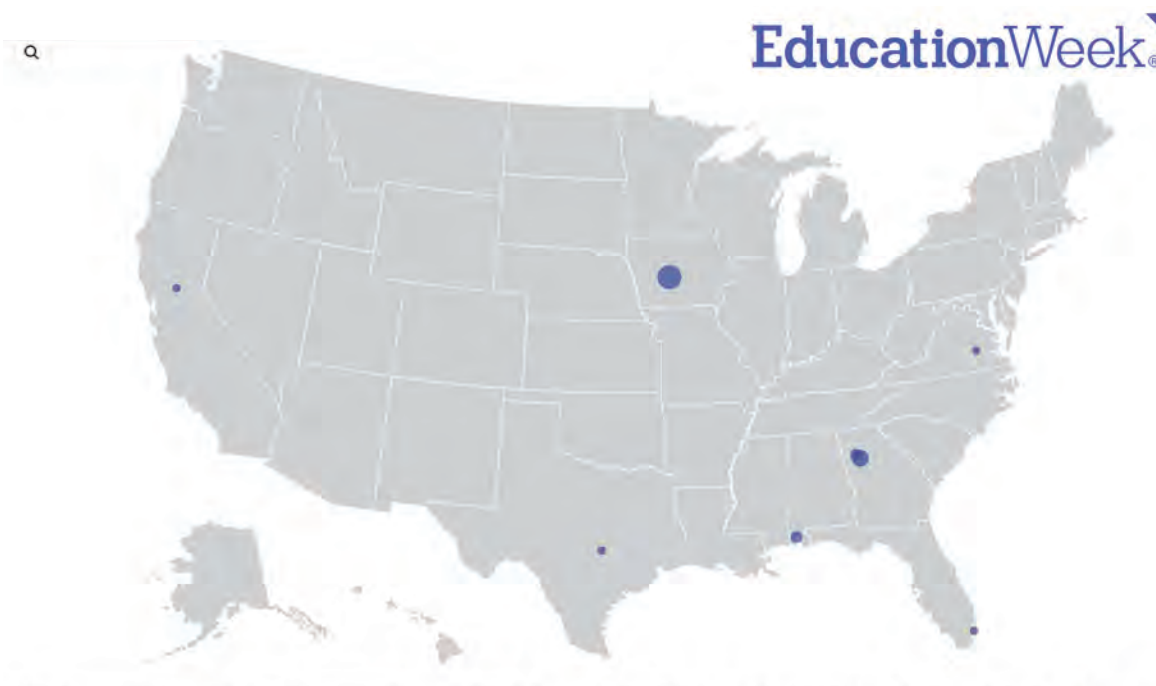
SCREENSHOT

The message no parent or loved one wants to read.

Figure 8-3. Initial UCISD post on May 24, 2022



The TXDPS, Border Patrol, and the UCSO were often involved in the high-speed pursuits and crashes, but the UCISD Communications Director never contacted those agencies before distributing a news release.<sup>1241</sup>



SOURCES: Education Week reporting, local news outlets, school and district websites, news alerts via online search engines, the Gun Violence Archive, David Riedman’s K-12 School Shooting Database, and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security’s Naval Postgraduate School’s K-12 School Shooting database. SCREENSHOT [SOURCE: SCHOOL SHOOTINGS THIS YEAR: HOW MANY AND WHERE (2024, JANUARY 4). EDUCATION WEEK. RETRIEVED MONTH DAY, YEAR FROM <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where/2024/01>]

**School Shootings 2024: How Many and Where.**

# February’s Big Buzz About Bees



Of Virginia’s 477 bee species, perhaps the best recognized is the Bumblebee (Bomfusus), often spotted visiting area flowers.



Bumblebees (Bomfusus) attracted by colorful flowers collect and spread pollen.

Could the Honeybee become a Virginia mascot?

By Susan Laume  
The Connection

In case you didn’t know, since 2020, February has been designated Winter Honey month in Virginia, a fact perhaps not well advertised outside of the beekeeper community. In this session of the Virginia General Assembly, Delegate Patrick Hope (D-1) introduced HB 517 to designate the European Honey bee (Apis mellifera) the official state pollinator.

One might wonder, what is all this buzz about bees and honey this month? As the calendar swings around to February, most think of chocolate as the timely sweet, not winter honey. If one thinks ‘honey’ at all, it’s likely as an endearment for that special someone to whom one might gift chocolate in recognition of February’s Valentine’s Day. While in ancient times, Egyptians and the Chinese used caramelized honey with fruits and nuts to make candies, in modern day, chocolate is the king cupid of candies.

What is ‘winter honey’? Honey produced from the nectar of summer flowers, such as lavender, sunflowers, and clover, takes on slight hues from the flower and tends to a light color. Fall honey produced from the nectar of fall flowers, such as aster and goldenrod, is darker. The darkest color comes from borage, sumac and buckwheat nectars, the later bloomers. Winter honey is the darkest in color although all raw honey darkens a bit with age. There are more than 300 unique types of honey available in the United States, each originating from a different floral source.

There are about 4,000 bee species native to the United States, ranging in size from a tiny two millimeters Sweat bee, to the B-52 bombers of bees, the Carpenter bees, about the size of a grape. Only the honey bee makes honey that humans eat, but in that sense they can be considered livestock, and compete with native bees.

Most bees are solitary, nesting alone in the ground or dried plant stalks, rather than in social hives like the honeybee. All bees gather nectar and pollen. It’s their job as important pollinators of plants in our ecosystem for which they are best known and prized.

The European honey bees were sent to Jamestown in 1622, when requested by colonists to help improve crop growth. George Washington raised bees at Mount Vernon and is said to have enjoyed honey and hoecakes almost daily for breakfast. Over the years, honey production has drawn both commercial enterprise and hobbyists. In 2022, Virginia produced 240,000 pounds of honey for sale, of the 125 million pounds sold in the United States. That’s only a small niche of the market, compared to the number one producing state, North Dakota, which produced over 28 million pounds.

Most commenters on the General Assembly’s pub-



European honeybee (Apis mellifera), the only hive bee and only human consumed honey producing pollinator.

lic comment site largely poo-poo’ed the idea of a non-native European as the Virginia pollinator mascot. Instead commenters lauded the host of the Commonwealth’s native bees, including numerous species of Bumble (Bomfusus app), Digger (Apidae spp) Mason (Osmia app), Miner (Andreno app), Nomad (Nomad app) Plaster (Colletidae app), and tiny Sweat (Halite app) bees, totaling 477 Virginia native species.

Delegate Hope counters that Virginia already has several named Commonwealth mascots which are non-natives, including: the State beverage, milk, from cows introduced in 1609; the State dog, the Foxhound, introduced in 1615; and the recently added Chincoteague pony, from Spain.

A House committee member, who farms, and beekeepers ‘droned’ on in testimony about the Honey bee’s great contribution to State agriculture. Senator Danica Roem ‘waxed’ on over adding the Bumblebee, a native bee, as well. Hope countered, alluding to the ‘honeycomb’ of intricacy related to determining which native bees might be added. In the end, the Honey Bee prevailed in the committees of both houses.

Perhaps it is the honey bee’s unmatched celebrity, including on a cereal box, an oft used endearment, and a reputation as a hard worker, which gave it an edge over the shy, solitary native bees. Whatever the reason, the bee buzz soon will be moving to the Governor’s desk.

For a list of Virginia’s 477 bee species see, <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/va-invertist-bees.pdf>



## Va. Contribution to WMATA Budget Gap

FROM PAGE 5

bonds and \$200 million or more in capital transportation spending for the proposed Wizards/Capitals arena in Alexandria.

The state is proposing huge sums for additional expansion of I-81.

Northern Virginia is still the strongest share of Virginia's economy and tax base, and Metro is critical to the economy and tax base, generating about \$1 billion in annual personal income and sales tax revenue to the state. The half mile around Metrorail stations comprised just 3% of the land but

contains 30% of the property value, 40% of jobs, 50% of new apartments, and 65% of new office development.

A large share of the workforce continues to depend on Metrorail and Metrobus to reach their jobs, and Metro supports the Washington DC region's large tourism industry. They will be impacted by fare hikes and service cuts.

For these reasons, Virginia should combine with Northern Virginia for \$180 million as its formula share to fully close the WMATA budget gap.

## Storck

FROM PAGE 4

Alexandria, El Fresco Tex-Mex Grill and Taco Rock.

An exciting new addition to the Taste this year was MVHS Culinary Arts - Chef Rockymore Murray's Restaurant. The Culinary Arts program at MVHS is part of the Career and Technology Education (CTE) Program, offering students the opportunity to learn the technical applications of many occupations while preparing for higher education or entry-level employment. The program even offers catering services and holiday meals. Contact Culinary Instructor Nabil Ibrahim at nsibrahim@fcps.edu for more information.

Other participants included some of our newer restaurants and old favorites: 2 Jefes Tex-Mex, America's Best Wings, Chalkboard Wings & BBQ, Della J's Delectables, Dishes of India, Dominos, Moe's Southwest Grill, Pollo Campero and Ruby's Jamaican Kitchen. I hope you will consider visiting these restaurants and letting them know you appreciate their support

of our community. And, a special thank you to our amazing super volunteer, Lady Fairfax 2023 Shirley Short, for all she does and especially for organizing the Taste of Mount Vernon!

We continue to look for ways to improve this annual event and want to hear from you. Please send feedback, ideas and suggestions to mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov. A huge thank you to our many exhibitors, our presenters, the Police Explorers for their service, the Mount Vernon High School Chamber String Quartet for providing musical entertainment, Mount Vernon High School Marine Corps JROTC Color Guard, the Fairfax County Health Department for providing flu vaccines and the KidBiz Young Entrepreneurs Expo!

Did you miss the Town Meeting this year, but still want to watch or pick up a goodie bag? Watch the Town Meeting or just the virtual tour here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/district-videos>. Pick up a "Goodie Bag" at our office (2511 Parkers Lane) which has lots of District information or find the information on our website.

## Over The Halfway Mark

FROM PAGE 5

drug offenders so that individuals are treated with a rehabilitative model for a first offense. SB362 was unanimously supported in the Senate. I hope to see its full passage in the coming days in the House and ultimately its signing into law by Governor Youngkin.

I also expect Governor Youngkin will soon receive two of my

gun violence prevention bills that would prohibit ghost guns in the Commonwealth (SB100), and ban the open-carry of semi-automatic assault weapons in public places (SB99). Even though these bills were advanced on party-line votes, I hope that the governor will listen to the voices of Virginians on this important public safety issue and

SEE OVER THE HALF, PAGE 10

### LETTER TO EDITOR

## Largest Government Subsidy Of a Sports Arena Ever

To the editor:

Please publish this letter sent to the City Council on 2/20/24 regarding the proposed arena.

Council Members:

Mayor Wilson provided me with a link to a video discussion with the city's Finance Director and bond consultants. The video described financing of the proposed Arena and the results of HR&A's study. You need a second opinion.

You are on the verge of granting the largest government subsidy of a sports Arena in history — ever. If you bet wrong, you could leave Alexandria in crippling debt with radically higher taxes, reduced services and a huge white elephant draining its budget. You literally have the future of Alexandria in your hands. You need to get this right. That starts with reaching out for help from non-traditional sources. You are about to make what may be the most impactful

decision of your lives. You deserve — and should demand — the best possible guides to take you through billion-dollar decisions fraught with uncertainty and far-reaching impacts.

Preparing yourselves to make good decisions will take time. Take it. Please, please don't let other stakeholders rush you into decisions for the sake of a sports schedule. And don't let them bully you into using input that is more of a sales pitch than a decision matrix. You are being asked to ante \$106 million and guarantee \$700 million more. You are putting more money on the table than Mr. Leonis; and you are risking more in terms of neighborhood integrity than Governor Youngkin. Not only should you be at the table. You should be at the head of the table.

Michael Diffley  
Alexandria 22314,  
City resident since 1987

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# ENTERTAINMENT

## NOW THRU FEB. 29

**Love Is In the Air Exhibit.** At Van Landingham Gallery, Torpedo Factory, Gallery 311, 105 North Union Street, Alexandria. The Torpedo Factory Artists' Association presents a group exhibition including jewelry, paintings, photography, mixed media work, hand pulled prints, and more during the month of February. Visit <https://www.torpedofactoryartists.com/> to learn more about the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association.

## NOW THRU APRIL 15

**Exhibit: "Searching for Truth in the Garden" at Freedom House Museum.** At Freedom House Museum, 1315 Duke Street, Alexandria. Gonzaga High School's groundbreaking research on slavery, "Searching for Truth in the Garden," found new life at the Freedom House Museum. The traveling exhibition, on view through April 15, 2024, delves into the life of Gabriel, a teenager enslaved at Washington Seminary (now Gonzaga) in 1829. Gabriel's story offers a poignant lens through which to examine the complexities of slavery and its lasting impact.

## 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/>

## NOW THRU MARCH 2

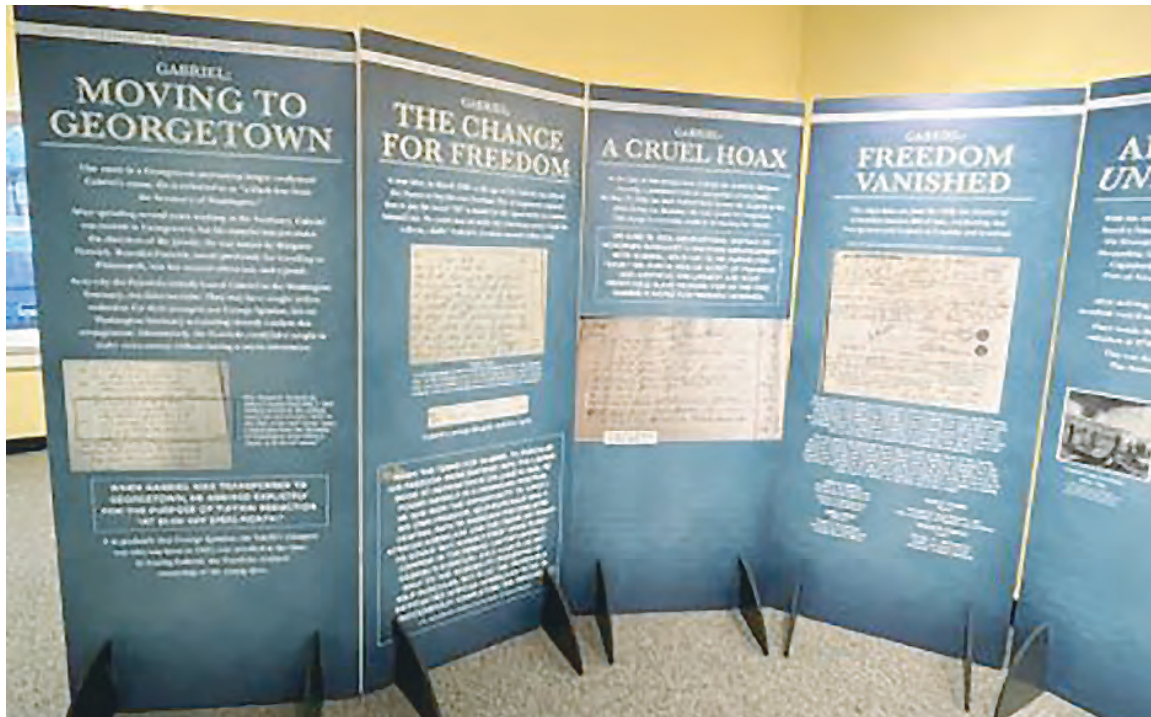
**Native American Culture & Experience Exhibit.** At Nepenthe Gallery, Hollin Hall Shopping Center, Alexandria. This special exhibit includes works by renowned photographer, Cara Romero, and historical painters, Bryant and Pamela White, among others. The exhibit will be up until March 2nd at Nepenthe's flagship gallery at the Hollin Hall Shopping Center in Alexandria.

## NOW THRU FEB. 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). DelRay-Artisans.org/exhibits

## THURSDAY/FEB. 22

**Black Dance: Housing the Past and the Present.** 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Virtual via Zoom. Join a virtual presentation exploring how colonialism brought an end to authentic African dance with Associate Professor of Dance at George



The Exhibit: "Searching for Truth in the Garden" will be on view now through April 15, 2024 at Freedom House Museum.

Mason University Lawrence M. Jackson, who in 2011 co-authored and edited a special edition on Black dance in the Journal of Pan African Studies. In this presentation, he explains how Black dance keeps those African cultural traditions alive and is an affirmation of identity and independence. Visit [alexandrialibraryva.org](http://alexandrialibraryva.org)

## SUNDAY/FEB. 25

**Finding the Family of Joseph McCoy.** 2 p.m. At Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe Street, Alexandria. Genealogist Char McCargo Bah will lecture on "Finding the Family of Alexandria's Lynching Victim Joseph McCoy." Join the Black History Museum staff in learning how Ms. Bah, the official genealogist for the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, discovered the family of the first of Alexandria's lynching victims, Joseph McCoy, who was lynched in Alexandria on April 23, 1897. Learn the secrets to investigating a family tree that does not have many leads. The lecture is suited for beginners or established genealogists. The lecture is free, but space is limited, so register to attend. Registration at Finding the Family of Joseph McCoy - shop.alexandriava.gov.

## TUESDAY/FEB. 27

**Bright Star Theatre: George Washington Carver and Friends.** 6 to 7 p.m. At Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria. Meet Black entrepreneurs and groundbreakers like George Washington Carver, Madame CJ Walker, Thurgood Marshall and more in this interactive theater performance. The event is for children grades K to 5. Visit [alexandrialibraryva.org](http://alexandrialibraryva.org)

## WEDNESDAY/FEB. 28

**Burke Book Club: "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison.** 3:30 to 5 p.m. Virtual via Zoom. In honor of Black History Month, join a virtual Zoom discussion put on by Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library on the 1952 classic novel, "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison. This program will take place by Zoom and registration is required. After

registering, you will be emailed the link to join this Zoom meeting. If you have questions about the program or need help with set up, please contact Caroline at [cpak@alexlibraryva.org](mailto:cpak@alexlibraryva.org). Visit [alexandrialibraryva.org](http://alexandrialibraryva.org)

## THURSDAY/FEB. 29

**African American Film Series: "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."** 2-4 p.m. At Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road, Suite 104, Alexandria. In honor of Black History Month, the library will be showing a series of films throughout the month. Visit [alexandrialibraryva.org](http://alexandrialibraryva.org).

## MARCH 1-31

**Woodlawn Needlework Show.** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Woodlawn Plantation. Tuesday, February 27th at 10:00am - 1:00pm - Lotus Leaf Mat Workshop with Youngmin Lee (Fee \$165, includes materials)

Learn traditional Korean needlework techniques at this in-person workshop conducted by renowned textile artist, Youngmin Lee. This workshop will teach you how to construct a lotus leaf shape Sangbo (covering bojagi) that you can use in daily life. Gamchimjil and Kkojipgi techniques and the Yeonbong (Lotus Bud Knot) technique will finish this simple and organically-shaped bojagi with raised line composition.

Every Wednesday and Friday at 2:30pm in March - Special Tours of 61st Anniversary Woodlawn Needlework Show (Fee: \$18, includes Needlework Show Admission) Join our special tour for a brief history of Woodlawn while discovering the unique stories behind many pieces of the Needlework Show as a Woodlawn guide and Nelly's Needlers expert lead visitors through the house.

Saturday March 16th, Monday March 25th, and Wednesday March 27th at 3:30pm - Beginners Needlework Techniques (Fee: \$25 per class or \$65 for all three, includes Needlework Show Admission and supplies)

Join members of Nelly's Needlers to learn the basics of three fundamental needlework techniques;

counted cross-stitch, canvaswork (needlepoint), and surface embroidery.

March 16- canvaswork coasters

March 25 - cross-stitch towel

March 27 - embroidered hat

Virtual Programs

(All virtual programs are free, with a suggested donation to support Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House)

Saturday, March 23rd at 4:00pm ET -What Linens Know with Ruth Tabancay

Enjoy a fascinating virtual presentation by multi-disciplinary artist Ruth Tabancay as she discusses "What Linens Know" on exhibit at the Woodlawn Needlework Show. Ruth's exhibit is an unique spin on this year's theme, "Needlework in Everyday Life" as she examines the uses of vintage linens in everyday living and embroiders a lasting memory of the remains.

## MARCH 1-30

**"The Power of Two" Exhibit.** At Del Ray Artisans gallery, 2704 Mount Vernonn Ave., Alexandria. Features art that showcases two related items in one piece of art; for example, two-of-a-kind, complementary items, double-exposures, duos, twins, or multiple generations. "Double your pleasure, double your fun." Opening Reception: Friday, March 1, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed Sunday, March 31). Details: [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

## MARCH 5 THRU APRIL 28

**Mosaics by Nina Tisara and Photographs by Steven Halperson.** At Green Spring Gardens, 4601 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. The Opening Reception is Sunday, March 10, 1-3 p.m. The mother-son team had worked together at Tisara Photography in Old Town for three decades. Steven now manages the Alexandria portrait studio as well as creating painterly photographic images and unique etched copper art. Nina creates intricate mosaics of unglazed porcelain tile which are widely exhibited and collected. Their work may also be seen by appointment

at Serenity Place Gallery, Nina's in-home gallery,

## 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, 1-4:30 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](http://www.beatleyfriends.org)

## THURSDAY, MARCH 21

**Alexandria Chamber 2024 General Assembly Breakfast, 8 a.m.-10 a.m.** The Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 \$50 for Members | \$60 for Non-Members Register here To submit a question in advance please send it to Maria Ciarrocchi [mciarrocchi@thechamberalx.com](mailto:mciarrocchi@thechamberalx.com)

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

**Historic Garden Week Old Town.** Take a behind-the-scenes peek into the spectacular homes and gardens of six historic Old Town Alexandria properties kicking off the Garden Club of Virginia's historic annual statewide tour. Offering a glimpse into the town's storied past, the tour features homes dating from 1785. Expertly updated, tastefully furnished, and filled with spectacular floral arrangements designed by blue ribbon garden club members, each property features lovely, curated gardens filled with bountiful Spring flowers timed to bloom in concert with the tour. Tickets include admission to five private homes and gardens, Lee-Fendall House, a one-time private home with a rich history that now houses a museum and garden, as well as six nearby public properties, including: Mount Vernon, River Farm, Carlyle House, Gunston Hall and Green Spring Gardens. Advance tickets are \$55 online at [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org) and may be purchased tour day at the Alexandria Visitor's Center located at 221 King Street.

The Garden Club of Virginia's (GCV) eight-day statewide tour from April 20 to 27 includes 170 private properties throughout Virginia. The Old Town Alexandria tour is hosted by the GCV's two local garden clubs, Hunting Creek Garden Club and Garden Club of Alexandria. For more information, visit [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org)



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**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER POST EXCHANGE SITE, FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA**

The U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir hereby gives the Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Residential Communities Initiative redevelopment of the former Post Exchange (PX) site located within the Community Support Area on the North Post of Fort Belvoir. The action involves construction of approximately 200 new family housing units and related amenities at the PX site and renovation of approximately 13 existing homes in the Woodlawn Village neighborhood to make the homes accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The action also includes renovation of the existing swimming pool adjacent to the PX site to serve as a community pool and amenity area for residents of the newly constructed residential neighborhood at the PX site.

The Final EA was prepared in accordance with the regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Army's NEPA implementing regulations (32 CFR Part 651). The EA is available to be viewed/downloaded electronically from the Fort Belvoir Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division website: <https://home.army.mil/belvoir/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-public-works/environmental-division#qt0:1>. To access the EA, click the "Programs & Documents" tab and scroll down to "NEPA Program" on the list. Once that is clicked, a drop down will appear with all of the NEPA documents available to the public. The PX Site Final EA will be under the documents listed as "Final NEPA Documents."

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**OPINION**

**Over The  
 Halfway  
 Mark**

FROM PAGE 8

sign these bills into law.

I am also looking forward to the following bills progressing into law in the coming weeks:

**Banning Unfair Service Agreements (SB576):** This bill would prohibit real estate service agreements that take advantage of unwitting property owners by binding them to a particular real estate company or realtor for an extended period of time.

**Prohibit Junk Rental Fees (SB422):** This legislation would protect renters from having to pay the most commonly-charged junk fees by making lease provisions unlawful that charge extra fees for maintenance requests.

**Metro Study (SJ28):** This bill would establish a Joint Subcommittee to study and make recommendations to achieve long-term, sustainable, and dedicated funding, and cost-containment controls and strategies, to ensure the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Virginia Railway Express (VRE), and Northern Virginia regional bus systems can meet the future needs of the region and the Commonwealth.

**Election Officials Security (SB364):** This legislation would make it a Class 5 felony, punishable by 1-10 years imprisonment or a \$2,500 fine, for any person to attempt to bribe, intimidate, threaten, coerce, or otherwise willfully and intentionally hinder or prevent, or attempt to hinder or prevent, an election official from carrying out their duty to administer an election.

**VEC Reform Bills (SB381 & SB382):** These bills would make needed reforms to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). SB381 would create protections for claimants when their former employer is not responsive to the VEC for information about the claimant's case. SB382 would establish a statute of limitations on collection of non-fraudulent overpayments, and require that the VEC cease collection efforts on overpayments upon death or bankruptcy.

I look forward to updating you further on these and other bills from my 2024 legislative package as we move closer to the end of the legislative session.

It is my continued honor to serve the residents of the 39th Senate District.



## Pedestrian Crash Leaves One Man Dead

An adult man is dead following a pedestrian crash near the intersection of Richmond Highway and Belfield Road in Belle Haven last Thursday, Feb. 15.

Preliminarily, detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit determined on Thursday, Feb. 15, an adult man was attempting to cross Richmond Highway outside of a crosswalk just after 4 a.m. The driver of a 2006 Toyota Camry was traveling north on Richmond Highway before Belfield Road and struck the man. The pedestrian was declared deceased at the scene. The driver and passenger of the vehicle remained at the scene of the crash.

Detectives continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the crash. Pending next of kin notification, the identity of the man will be withheld.

Anyone with information about this crash is asked to contact our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

## Driver Arrested in Fatal Hit & Run of Pedestrian in Woodlawn

A 51-year-old man was pronounced dead following a hit and run pedestrian crash in Woodlawn Sunday evening.

Around 10:40 p.m., officers responded to the intersection of Richmond Highway and Brevard Court for a pedestrian who was struck by a vehicle that fled the scene. The driver of the vehicle, Kel-echi Uzodinma, 61, of Woodbridge was found by officers less than 2 miles away from the scene.

Preliminarily, detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit determined Heliodoro Luna-Perez, of Alexandria was attempting to cross Richmond Highway near Brevard Court outside of a crosswalk. Uzodinma was driving a 2015 Lexus GS 350 traveling south on Richmond Highway near Brevard Court and struck Luna-Perez in the southbound lane. Luna-Perez was taken to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Uzodinma was charged with Felony Hit and Run and was held at the Adult Detention Center on a \$2500 bond.

Detectives continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the crash. Alcohol was deemed to not be a factor for Uzodinma in this crash and speed is still under investigation.

## Same Old Story. Thank God!



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not to be overly self-indulgent but, a 15-year anniversary of when I was originally diagnosed with non-small cell lung cancer stage IV (on Feb. 20, 2009), is worth mentioning, if I do say so myself. And I do. Moreover, that diagnosis came with a “13 month to two-year” prognosis. In effect a “terminal” diagnosis. I was age 54 and a half – and was just told I might not make it to age 56. Stunned doesn’t begin to describe my reaction. A non-smoker my whole life with no cancer in my immediate family, the diagnosis seemed peculiar. Not that I ever woe is me but receiving this kind of prognosis led me to wonder what I did to deserve this devastating news. My oncologist couldn’t offer an explanation as to why. Sometimes, there’s no rhyme or reason – or no straight line from “normal” health to the slippery slope that I was now on. Cancer is not arithmetic. It didn’t matter why. It only mattered that it was. My oncologist was more interested in treating my forward than he was in examining my past.

And so, it has been for almost 15 years, as I write this column on Sun. Feb. 18. I certainly remember the beginning, middle and end of the diagnostic process: eight weeks from start to finish. And when Team Lourie met – for the first time, the doctor/oncologist who would become the center of my apparently shrinking universe, we entered totally foreign territory. I had never spent a night in a hospital or even broken a bone. Yet here I was sitting across from an oncologist.

We sat in the waiting room until my name was called. We were led to the doctor’s office. He was sitting down waiting for us. He stood up from behind his desk and introduced himself. After the usual pleasantries, we all sat back down, across from one another. The oncologist began by reading the reports/summaries from all the doctors I had visited while trying to determine the cause for my original discomfort in my left-side rib cage. Discomfort that forced me to go to the emergency room on Jan. 1, 2009. First came the report from the emergency room doctor, followed by the pulmonologist, thoracic surgeon, general surgeon (who performed the biopsy), the pathologist (who evaluated the tissue sample), and the oncologist who summarized it all and thus had the grim task of telling me/Team Lourie what all the doctor’s reports had indicated/confirmed: non-small cell lung cancer stage IV. Five opinions. I didn’t think I needed a sixth.

As a result, a week later I had my first chemotherapy infusion. This would go on every three weeks for years. Each appointment lasted anywhere from two hours to six hours, depending on the chemotherapy infused. In addition, I was getting quarterly CT scans to monitor the tumors in my lungs characterized as “Too many. They’re like weeds,” by my oncologist. And what happened? I didn’t die. I thrived even. My oncologist was perplexed. Non-small cell lung cancer stage IV is a killer. Yet here I was, years later, alive, and reasonably well. He called me his “third miracle.”

As time passed – and I kept showing up for appointments, if you know what I mean, my oncologist occasionally reassessed my condition. But he didn’t find enough convincing evidence to alter my treatment, re-stage my disease or even investigate too much further. It wasn’t until I presented with a lump in my throat above my Adams apple that I was referred to an endocrinologist. I made the appointment and again Team Lourie showed up. It took the endocrinologist two seconds (I’m exaggerating. Maybe it was five seconds) to ask me about the lump in my throat. It took her another 10 seconds, after I explained that I’d had this lump for nine months or so – and it had never been biopsied (to her shock) to tell us that she was going to biopsy that lump then and there. (It was a needle biopsy, so it was quite manageable right in her office.) After the procedure, the endocrinologist told me she’d have the results of the biopsy in a few days. The next day I received a call from her. Apparently, in her opinion, I never had stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer. I had, according to her, – and since this was year 9/10, was very slow-moving papillary thyroid cancer. I wasn’t anybody’s miracle. Instead, I might have been somebody’s error.

Now we got that sixth opinion: from the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University. We sent over my medical records and then set an in-person appointment to follow up with a thyroid cancer doctor. Again, we sat in an office across from the doctor who said quite simply and happily: “If you had lung cancer, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.” Meaning, if I had lung cancer, I wouldn’t be alive. She confirmed the diagnosis and agreed with the medication I was taking and so we went home, as pleased as possible after receiving a cancer diagnosis. However, considering what our previous cancer diagnosis was compared to what the doctor thinks it is now, we felt, for the first time since the original diagnosis, hope.

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

## County Executive Presents FY 2025 Advertised Budget

FROM PAGE 3

a 4-cent increase in the current real estate tax rate. The proposed rate would result in an average property tax bill increase of just over \$524.

The advertised budget only partially funds the county schools’ proposed budget. The superintendent’s budget requested an increase of \$254.03 million, or 10.5 percent, making it historically the largest school operating request by percentage since FY 2007. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), a key component of the legislative oversight function in Virginia, reported that “Virginia schools receive 14 percent less funding per pupil than the average across the entire country,” according to Hill’s advertised budget.

The advertised budget also proposes fully funding the first year of public safety collective bargaining agreements.

While there is a proposed \$33.82 million expenditure reduction in the advertised budget, \$36 million in net savings is identified. That includes a reduction of 84 positions, \$33.82 million in expenditure reductions and \$2.28 million in increased projected

revenue.

Increases for six priorities itemized total \$40.58 million.

1) Inflationary/Contract Rate Adjustments: \$16.02 million.

2) Housing and Human Services, \$7.75 million, with the preservation of 72 early childhood slots and five positions to support affordable housing.

3) Parks and Environment, \$6.83 million with \$3.18 million and four positions to support the Park Authority for parks operations and maintenance, forestry operations, bamboo mitigation, zero waste initiatives and mobile nature centers; consolidation of RecPac and summer SACC in the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services; Athletic Services Fees are recommended to increase in support of the athletic sports program, including redirection of non-resident fees from the General Fund to the athletic sports program; and \$3.45 million in capital support for the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.

4) Information Technology, \$5.94 million.

5) County Operations, \$2.77 million, with two positions and operational support for

average (GPA) was 3.9, which is consistent with historical averages,” Frisch added.

In the last group of admission offers for the freshman class that entered in the fall of 2023, economically-disadvantaged students comprised 11.64% of the class. The gender breakdown was 43.4% female and 57.6%

times it is more cruel to keep them alive. This is when we need the APPO the most, on the spot, providing humane euthanasia. Transporting an injured animal to the Shelter, per the proposal, only prolongs their agony. This difficult mission of the APPO conflicts with the Shelter’s current mission and “No Kill” policy. How will this inherent conflict be managed?

We need both the animal welfare and animal protection missions, separately. How will we know that one mission is not being sacrificed to achieve the other? How will we know how many animals are not removed from conditions of abuse or neglect because the shelter is full, or of the injured wildlife left to suffer because of ‘no kill’ goals? What

the Office of Elections.

6) Safety and Security, \$1.27 million, with four probation counselor positions to provide administrative and operational support at the Lorton Police Station.

According to the budget timeline, the Board of Supervisors and School Board will hold a joint meeting on Monday, Feb. 27 to discuss the FY 2025 budget and tax rates. On March 5, the Board of Supervisors will authorize the advertisement of the tax rate for fiscal year 2025. On March 19, the Board of Supervisors will authorize the advertisement of the FY 2024 Third Quarter Review. On April 16, the Fairfax County School Board will present the county’s public school budget to the Board of Supervisors.

The budget process includes three days of public hearings, April 16-18. Individuals who are unable to attend in person may submit budget testimony live via phone or video. The annual budget process includes a series of budget town hall meetings hosted by district supervisors and attended by county budget staff.

See [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget) for more.

male. Asian-American students represented 61.6 % of the offers, with white students receiving 19% and Black and Hispanic students receiving 6.7 % and 6.0%, respectively.

All students admitted to TJHSST are qualified and have earned their place in this prestigious school.

we do know is that the data provided when presenting the proposal on Jan. 30 (Safety Committee) was incorrect, cherry-picked and mis-contextualized. It provides an incomplete accounting of the work of the APPOs, particularly with regard to wildlife. This can easily be demonstrated by looking at the publicly available, validated data on the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website.

Do we really want to implement a proposal like this?

Clare Thorp, Ph.D.  
Class IIA DWR Licensed  
Wildlife Rehabilitator  
Fairfax Station, VA

## TJ Admissions

FROM PAGE 3

years of TJHSST admissions decisions included students from every Fairfax County middle school and the average grade-point

### LETTER TO EDITOR

FROM PAGE 5

wildlife and natural resources in this county. It also takes away the livelihood and careers of the APPOs whose work and training are dedicated to animal welfare and control. Without APPOs, we risk losing our current ability to adequately control rabies, wildlife-human conflicts, or disease spread, all of which occur at the intersection between pets, people, livestock and wildlife. In addition to their work with the Department of Wildlife Resources, the Department of Health, and the Park Authority, the APPOs also work directly with wildlife rehabilitators to save as many wildlife as possible, including wildlife injured by traffic. Yet some-





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*If you're tired of the mundane and want a truly custom one of a kind property, this is the one! Premier location on quiet cul-de-sac in one of the area's most prestigious communities combined with incredible renovation provides the most exciting luxury home opportunity on the market currently. No expense was spared in this recent renovation by owners who planned for this to be their ultimate forever home. Unexpected change of plans has made this one of a kind masterpiece available! The rare combination of a stately Colonial exterior with a truly breathtaking open and stylish interior has been perfectly executed in this home. The bright and airy interior is enhanced by high ceilings, expansive windows, glass doors, and extensive custom lighting. Other main level features include 2 story entry foyer, office with built ins, expanded chef's kitchen with every upgrade imaginable, dining room with cathedral ceiling and gas fireplace, and living/family rooms with tons of natural light. Five bedrooms including a stunning primary suite complete with luxury bath, custom walk-in closets, and statement wall of windows. Convenient bedroom level laundry as well as a bath for each additional upper level bedroom and every closet is furnished with custom build outs. The finished walk out lower level includes a large rec room, workout area, bedroom with full bath, and tons of storage/closet space. In addition to the residence, the gorgeous grounds have also been recently renovated featuring extensive custom hardscaping, large level lawn, and privacy fencing.*



9499 Lynnhall Pl | \$1,295,000



3104 Battersea Ln | \$775,000



8832 Fort Hunt Rd | \$1,195,000



8909 Dogue Dr | \$683,800



1904 Mallinson Way | \$1,800,000



9308 Allwood Dr | \$815,000



4008 Old Mill Rd | \$780,000



8524 Wagon Wheel | \$850,000



9334 Mount Vernon Cir | \$989,000

*78 homes sold in 2023!*

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