

THE CONNECTION

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



Day 8, Feb. 1: A couple walks across the frozen surface of Lake Anne in Reston, Sunday, Feb. 1. After a week of subfreezing temperatures, the ice on the lake thickened enough to support the two residents, not recommended for the Fairfax County community.

Casino Bill Lives

PAGE 3

Boundary Decisions Leave Much Undone

PAGE 3

Springfield Figure Skater Eyes 2030 Olympics

PAGE 11

Snowcrete!

PAGE 2

Winter Storm Fern and the Deep Freeze

Frozen sidewalks and mounds of 'snow-crete' block everyday life.

By MERCIA HOBSON
The Connection

Winter Storm Fern officially began late Saturday evening, Jan. 24, with the arrival of a few flakes of snow while residents slept. The active storm day followed on Sunday, Jan. 25, bringing heavy accumulation before the precipitation ended Monday morning, Jan. 26. While the snow and sleet stopped falling at that time, the storm transitioned into a weeklong deep freeze that continues to impact the region. As of Monday, Feb. 2. The frigid weather is bringing challenges and opportunities to Fairfax County residents that they normally do not encounter, such as blasting "ice-crete" with a pickax and walking across frozen bodies of water.

On Jan. 25, 2026, the storm dumped up to 4 inches of sleet in the Herndon-Vienna area, the

SEE WINTER STORM, PAGE 16



Day 1, Jan. 25: A Town of Herndon resident uses a snowblower to clear a sidewalk for his neighbors Sunday, Jan. 25. Sleet was just beginning to fall as the region transitioned from snow to historic ice storm.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION



Day 1, Jan. 25: Matt Springmann and his eldest son, Felix, return home after a walk in the soft snow Sunday, Jan. 25, in Fairfax County. The quiet snowfall later transitioned into a historic ice storm that paralyzed much of the region for more than a week.



Day 3, Jan. 27: Oshi, a Pomeranian, sleeps on the back of a sofa Tuesday, Jan. 27 in Fairfax County, hoping to find a patch of sunlight. With neighborhood sidewalks blocked by impenetrable "snow-crete," the dog remains indoors with her toy, avoiding the ice and record-breaking cold.



Day 3, Jan. 27: A balaclava, gloves and two pairs of boots dry on a radiator Tuesday, Jan. 27 in Fairfax County. Repeated attempts to clear the frozen "ice-crete" yield only a few feet of progress into the driveway, forcing the resident to come inside and melt snow off his gear before the next round of shoveling.



PHOTO BY JOHN LOVAAS
Day 6, Jan. 30: Snow accumulates along Lake Anne in Reston at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 30 with 7 inches on the ground and another 2 to 4 inches forecast for the day. While the region remains in a deep freeze, the edges of the lake have not yet frozen over.



PHOTO BY JOHN LOVAAS

Day 6, Jan. 30: Shovelers leave chunks of "snow-crete" piled in front of shops at Lake Anne Friday, Jan. 30 in Reston. The accumulation highlights the difficulty of clearing the dense, frozen mixture as the region enters its sixth day of the deep freeze.

Surovell's Casino Bill Clears Senate Gaming Subcommittee 5-3

State legislators ignore Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' resistance.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

State lawmakers on Jan. 23 moved to advance a Tysons-area casino bill despite the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' recent vote against the project. The Senate General Laws Gaming Subcommittee's 5-3 vote followed the recommendation to report Senate Bill SB 756 and refer it to the Finance and Appropriations Committee. This sets the stage for a high-stakes legislative battle this session.

Voting "aye" were senators Lashrecse Aird, D-Chesterfield; Todd Pillion, R-Washington; Jennifer Carroll Foy, D-Prince William; Bryce Reeves, R-Orange; and Jeremy McPike, D-Prince William. Voting "no," Adam Ebbin, D-Alexandria; Christopher Head, R-Botetourt; and Danica Roem, D-Manassas.

SB 756 would add Fairfax County to the list of localities eligible to host a casino in the commonwealth. Chaired by McPike, the subcommittee's vote begins the process toward a possible referendum even though the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted 5-4 to oppose the bill on Dec. 9, 2025.

The 5-4 vote by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors supported a proposal from Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn to oppose casino legislation until a



Sen. Jeremy McPike

majority of supervisors requests it and several other criteria.

"Fairfax County's legislative position on a casino is clear," Alcorn said in an email to The Connection on Jan. 21. "We oppose any bill to bring a casino to Tysons without the Board of

Supervisors requesting it, as explicitly stated in our adopted state legislative program. Tysons is the economic engine of Fairfax County, and a casino would undermine the ambitious and award-winning Tysons Comprehensive Plan."

Sen. Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax) framed SB 756 as a way to address Fairfax County's projected \$300 million budget gap and stop hundreds of millions in gambling dollars from flowing to Maryland's MGM National Harbor. "The county is looking at a \$300 million deficit, while Loudoun County, right next door, with 40% of the population, has a \$300 or \$250 million surplus," Surovell said. "This would not only generate about \$200 million a year for the county ... it would also generate about \$2 billion per decade for the state for school construction."

Because of specific geographical requirements in the text — within one-quarter mile of an existing Silver Line Metro station, part of a development of at least 1.5 million square feet, outside the Capital Beltway and within 2 miles of a major regional mall — the measure is widely understood to be a "Tysons casino" bill. However, Sur-



kind of development. That's what it was. That's what all those investments and

Sen. Scott Surovell, chief patron of SB 756, says there are multiple possible sites for a casino in Tysons.

ovell made clear SB 756 targets "multiple" Tysons sites. "There's two sites right now that are currently, I think, assembled, that could be possible for this," he said.

Final passage of the current bill does not automatically approve the construction of a casino. What passage of SB 756 would do is grant Fairfax County the authority to hold a local referendum. Voters in the county would have the final say.

The measure, identical to the 2025 version, would still require Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approval and a local referendum, according to Surovell.

Pro-casino Testimony

Pro-casino advocates testified



Linda Colbert, mayor of the Town of Vienna, testifies at the Jan. 23 Senate General Laws Gaming Subcommittee meeting, voicing opposition to SB 756, saying Fairfax County did not ask permission for a casino.

said Jennifer Van Dyck, representing Fairfax County.

Vienna Mayor Linda Colbert added, "Fairfax County did not ask permission to build a casino. We do not want it."

Calls for Further Study and Alternatives

Jennifer Falcone, of the Citizens for Great Falls and the No Fairfax Casino Coalition, said SB 756 should not move forward without an independent JLARC study. Reena Hicks, of Freedom, Virginia, insisted lawmakers should find fairer ways to raise revenue, noting that research shows over 70% of people in Fairfax would prefer to ask the ultra-wealthy and corporations to pay their fair share.

Speed, Red-Light Cameras Under Attack?

Two Virginia Democrats join GOP to advance limits on speed cameras.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Two Virginia Democratic senators, Jennifer Boysko of Herndon and Lashrecse Aird of Petersburg, helped advance SB 306 and SB 297 patroned by Republican Sen. Mark J. Peake on Jan. 22, bills that would stop the use of speed and red-light cameras.

The Senate Transportation Committee supported both bills on 8-7 votes, with Boysko and Aird joining



SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Sen. Jennifer Boysko

ing six Republicans to advance the bills. Boysko said in a text: "My vote to move the bill forward was intended as a statement of concern that the cameras are not being used for safety as much as revenue generators."

"Two bills currently before the Virginia Senate (SB 297 and SB 306) would eliminate speed safety cameras around schools and red-light cameras at intersections," said Fairfax Families for Safe Streets on Instagram. "These tools are proven to reduce crashes

and protect kids, yet both bills narrowly passed committee and are headed for a full Senate vote this Monday, Feb. 2.

"Sen. Boysko already voted to repeal the use of these cameras when the Transportation subcommittee voted 8 to 7 to repeal. Please contact the Senator ... and urge her to vote NO on SB 297 and SB 306. Let's keep proven safety measures in place and our schools and intersections safer for everyone."

Patroned by Sen. Mark Peake,

R-Lynchburg, SB 306 would repeal the authority of localities to use red-light cameras, and SB 297 would repeal the authority for speed cameras in school zones and highway work zones. Peake argued that automated cameras are an example of government overreach and "surveillance creep."

Additionally, Boysko said in the text she is "expecting that the patron will offer a floor amendment to clarify the revenue generation piece and to exclude school safety

SEE SPEED, RED-LIGHTS, PAGE 6

School Board Approves Results of Boundary Review

Critics say incremental change at extraordinary cost leaves core problems unsolved.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board approved its first comprehensive boundary review in nearly 40 years during its Jan. 22 regular meeting. This was the first time the board had done a district-wide reassessment since the mid-1980s. The school board had, during those 40 years, made geographically isolated changes, such as when the “West County High School,” later officially called Westfield High School, opened in 2000. The board shifted the boundaries of the schools immediately adjacent to Westfield to relieve massive overcrowding at nearby Chantilly and Centreville high schools.

The 2026 Fairfax County School Board aimed to address changing demographics in Fairfax County and facility use across Virginia’s largest school system through the comprehensive boundary review. Superintendent Michelle Reid called it a “great beginning” toward long-term progress, acknowledging the process is not perfect but essential for improvement.

The school board voted 8-3 on Jan. 22. Board members who voted in favor praised the “progressive cycle” as a hard-won victory for equity, while those who opposed it criticized the move as a costly, incremental change that does not address the district’s most pressing capacity issues. The final approved plan affects less than 1% of the district’s students.

Reid noted that several sites remain flagged for review in the next calendar year, with new recommendations expected by Jan. 2027.

The Vote Tally

Only 11 of the 12 school board members voted in the 8-3 decision, with the Braddock District seat vacant until after the March 3 special election. Supporting the plan: Karl Frisch (Providence), Kyle McDaniel (At-Large), Melanie K. Meren (Hunter Mill), Marcia St. John-Cunning (Franconia), Robyn Lady (Dranesville), Seema Dixit (Sulley), Ricardy Anderson (Mason), and Board Chair Sandy Anderson (Springfield). Opposing the measure: Ryan McElveen (At-Large), Mateo Dunne (Mount Vernon), and Ilryong Moon (At-Large). Supporters cited necessary first steps and community engagement,

while opponents criticized procedural confusion, lack of clarity, and equity concerns.

Internal Dissent and Data Criticism

Dunne said he could not support the final motion because he did not clearly know what he was voting on, citing last-minute changes that also created confusion for the public. Dunne pointed to unclear transportation logistics — specifically, who receives busing and at what cost — as key uncertainties.

Using data, Dunne argued the results are modest. The division began the process with 22 attendance islands and ended with 22; it started with 42 split feeders and ended with 35. Furthermore, the district still relies on roughly 800 temporary trailers and modular classrooms, a number reduced by only one or two. He criticized the two-year process as mentally exhausting and said it often felt like “flying by the seat of your pants.”

McElveen called the outcome an “incremental change at extraordinary cost.” He contended that targeted studies could have achieved similar results. McElveen warned that future boards would be preoccupied with ongoing boundary reviews and criticized delays in start-time changes for failing students during the mental health crisis. He called the board’s approach an “unmitigated failure.”

Moon also opposed the delay of start times but stressed the lack of a finalized transportation plan for students “grandfathered” into their old schools. Moon and McElveen argued that this creates an equity gap. Dunn said that the board was asking parents to take a leap of faith “that they could manage the logistics of the transition.”

Support for a Progressive Path Forward

Despite friction, most board members approved the vote, calling it essential groundwork. Lady, who supported the plan, described it as the result of listening to community needs and bringing students to schools with enrollment needs. She expressed pride and excitement in voting for the plan.

McDaniel linked the changes to fairness and efficiency, describing them as steps to align boundaries, balance enrollment, improve access, and run the large district effectively.

Meren, who ultimately voted in favor, still

noted procedural confusion, stating some recommendations had not been made public until just before the vote. She emphasized that complete transparency is crucial for making informed decisions.

The Board officially updated Policy 8130 in 2024 before touching any maps. Policy 8130 requires the superintendent to conduct a division-wide boundary review ev-

ery five years. The board’s commitment to a five-year review cycle ensures regular redistricting in Fairfax County. From October 2024 through November 2025, the board held multiple work sessions and community meetings to untangle so-called “attendance islands” and “split feeders,” where students from the same elementary school are sent to different high schools.

Case Study: Boundary Debt and Renovation Queues

Connecting the dots between the 2006 Westfield High School addition and the 2026 Western High School opening (the former Saudi Academy)

Before Westfield High School opened in 2000 with a design capacity of 2,500 students, the school board shifted the boundaries of adjacent schools to relieve overcrowding at nearby Chantilly and Centreville high schools. No comprehensive boundary change was conducted at the time.

By 2003, Westfield reached its limit. In November, voters approved a bond that included \$8.7 million for a permanent 24-room addition; construction began in 2004. Bricks, not boundary changes, were again used by the board to address overcrowding. Although the addition opened in time for the 2006-07 school year, overcrowding persisted.

“Opening-day enrollment was 3,230 students,” said the new principal, Tim Thomas. “Pretty soon, we’ll have our own ZIP code,” The Connection reported Sept. 20, 2006. For much of the 2010s, approximately 13 trailers were stationed around the school.

As of January 2026, Westfield has 13 trailers on site, according to January 2026 school facility reports. The new Western High School project, the former Saudi Academy which the school board purchased for \$150 million, is underway. It is scheduled to open, with limited, phased enrollment, in August 2026 for the 2026-27 school year.

The school board, through its Jan.

22, 2026, approval of the comprehensive boundary review and updated Policy 8130, is now addressing where students go to school via maps rather than bricks. By rebalancing enrollment across existing buildings, Fairfax County Public Schools aims to prevent the renovation queue from becoming a capacity queue. This shift requires the superintendent to conduct a division-wide boundary review every five years.

Where Is My School in the Renovation Queue?

FCPS staff are currently developing a new renovation queue to follow the 2008 list. The main Capital Improvement Program (CIP) page can be found at fcps.edu/capital-improvement-program. This page contains the full PDF of the FY 2027-2031 CIP (as of January 2026), which includes the specific status of every school in the queue.

For School Bond Information, see fcps.edu/about-fcps/facilities-planning-and-future-schools/school-bond-information. This link tracks which renovation projects have been approved by voters but are still awaiting funding.

The direct link to the most recent published status table is in the FY 2026 – FY 2030 Adopted CIP Summary. This document shows the line-item list for schools like Centreville High (slated for 2028), Franklin Middle, and various elementary schools, including Poplar Tree, Cub Run, and Union Mill, that are currently ahead of any new potential queue for schools like Westfield.

What's the Status of Redistricting for My FCPS Student?

Board's approved plan punts the problem down the road; Boundary Explorer tool will be 'updated by the end of January.'

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Leading up to the Fairfax County School Board’s Jan. 22 vote on the division’s comprehensive boundary plan, Superintendent Michelle Reid and her staff scram-

bled to revise school boundary plans, leaving it looking more like a patchwork quilt, amid fierce community pushback in the days just ahead of the vote. Eleventh-hour reversal adjustments, going from impacting 2,210 students to 1,697 in just two weeks (Jan. 8 to Jan. 22), ended a chaotic two-week peri-

od that left parents chasing outdated maps to determine their children’s future.

Ultimately, the board’s 8-3 vote spared several neighborhoods, 513 students, but delayed addressing overcrowding issues. It forces officials back to the table long before the five-year mark designated by board poli-

cy. They wanted a five-year cycle of stability.

According to a bulletin from School Board member Robyn Lady (Dranesville) that Fairfax County Public Schools sent Jan. 21, the public should “view the school board’s amended presentation with revised recom-

SEE WHAT'S THE STATUS, PAGE 6
www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

RA's CEO Resigns Effective Immediately

Pursues new opportunities.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Michael "Mac" Cummins resigned as CEO of the Reston Association on Jan. 22, 2026. The association announced the move in a press release the same day, stating its board of directors accepted the resignation "for good



VIA RESTON ASSOCIATION
Mac Cummins resigns as chief operating officer of Reston Association effective immediately.

reason to pursue new professional opportunities," effective immediately.

"We appreciate Mac's contributions to Reston and his leadership of the staff," Board President Travis Johnson said. "We wish him the very best in his future endeavors."

Cummins, who led the association since August 2022, is credited with modernization efforts and opposing a proposed casino in Reston.

Under his direction, the association hired lobbyists to advocate in Richmond and launched a commu-

nity awareness campaign to "preserve the quality of life" and the residential character of the community.

During his nearly three-and-a-half year tenure, Cummins oversaw the redesign of the reston.org website and led efforts to expand pool hours in 2025 so no pools closed more than one day per week. He also introduced automatic renewal options for recreation passes.

Before his departure, Cummins finalized the association's \$24 million 2026 budget, which included a 5% assessment increase

to maintain aging infrastructure. The RA board formally approved the budget on Nov. 13, 2025. The budget funded projects based on member surveys and feedback. In July 2025, the governor of Virginia appointed Cummins to the Virginia Common Interest Community Board.

The position is considered a public service appointment rather than a professional career.

Chief Operating Officer Peter Lusk will serve as acting CEO in the interim according to the RA Board.

American Legion Middle School Essay Contest Winner

A McLean resident is the winner of the American Legion Post 270 Middle School Essay Contest.

Ronan Malone, a 7th Grader at The Potomac School in McLean won 1st Place in the essay contest, sponsored by the American Legion Department of Virginia. Before becoming the American Legion Post 270 winner, Ronan had to first compete against all of the other middle school students at The Potomac School.

In Ronan's essay, he described feeling pride in the Americans' defeat of the British during the Revolutionary War, President Lincoln's freeing of the slaves, and Dr. Martin Luther King's leadership of the Civil Rights movement.

He also wrote about his love of American culture, from summer cookouts, to Halloween, Thanksgiving, religious freedom, and American football.

The 2nd Place winner was Claire Duton from The Langley School. Coming in 3rd Place was Christopher Pashaeifar from Longfellow Middle School. In 4th Place was Lila Rizvi from Cooper Middle School. Although these students did not win 1st Place for American Legion Post 270, it must be noted that each one of them came in 1st Place for their respective schools, and they should be proud of their accomplishments.

This contest was conducted throughout the Fall 2025 semester with the winners be-



Ronan Malone with his First Place certificate, beside his parents Patrick and Cynthia Malone, and Legionnaire Tony Sarver from Post 270, at The Potomac School.

ing announced in early January. This is the first year that The Potomac School and The Langley School competed in this contest, and they started with a bang!

To participate in this contest, middle school students in grades 6 – 8 volunteered to compete. All of them had to write a one-page essay following the prompt "I like living in America because ..." These essays

had to be supervised by a teacher and then certified by that teacher. After each school selected their winners, the top essay from each school was forwarded to American Legion Post 270 in McLean.

Upon receipt of the four winning essays, an awards committee of three Legionnaires read each essay and selected Ronan Malone's essay as the best, using originality,

sincerity, and the students' ability to convey thought as the criteria.

On Wednesday, Jan. 21, Tony Sarver, the Post 270 Chairman of the Children and Youth Committee presented a 1st Place Award Certificate and a check to Ronan Malone at The Potomac School in front of his parents, Patrick and Cynthia Malone, and in front of the Head of the Intermediate School Ryan Woods and the Intermediate School faculty. The faculty gave Ronan a roaring applause and cheers when he was presented his award.

For Ronan, his journey is not yet complete. Because this is a program of the American Legion Department of Virginia, Post 270 forwarded his winning essay to the American Legion 17th District in Fairfax where his essay will be judged by a committee against the winning essays of other regional American Legion posts from Northern Virginia. The 17th District will be announcing the District winner by February 20th.

If Ronan wins first place for the 17th District, his essay will be sent to Richmond to compete against all winning essays received in Virginia. The statewide winner will be announced during the Department of Virginia Spring Conference between Feb. 27 and March 1.

For more information, please visit <https://vallegation.org/programs/middle-school-essay-contest-2/>

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What's the Status of Redistricting for My FCPS Student?

FROM PAGE 4

mendations for changes to school boundaries. Changes are noted in red. The amended executive summary has also been updated to include additional sites to be reviewed by January 2027, as well as those to be reviewed during the next boundary review cycle. Find more information on Board docs.

However, according to Fairfax County Public Schools, while the district recommends using the official FCPS Boundary Review Scenario Explorer at <https://boundary.fcps.edu/boundary/>, as of Jan. 28, a caution headline fronts the boundary explorer tool: "Please note: The Boundary Explorer tool will be updated by the end of January."

Superintendent Reid confirmed on Jan. 26 that families specifically affected by the changes will receive direct mail or email notifications in the coming weeks.

Sites for Review in One Year, January 2027

- ❖ The neighborhoods within the boundaries of the Gunston, Halley, Laurel Hill, and Lorton Station elementary schools.
- ❖ The Bren Mar Park Elementary School middle and high school feeders.
- ❖ Greenway Downs, Jefferson Village, City Park Homes and King-

sley Commons neighborhoods.

- ❖ Rolling Valley Elementary School middle and high school feeders (SPA 8922).

- ❖ Glasgow Middle School changes related to the Beech Tree Elementary School and Belvedere Elementary School areas.

- ❖ Keene Mill Elementary School attendance island and the surrounding schools (e.g., Cardinal Forest Elementary School and White Oaks Elementary School).

Flagged Sites for the Next Five-Year Review Cycle

Flagged schools for the next review cycles, or areas for closer examination ahead of or during the next boundary review in five years, include but are not limited to the following:

- ❖ The Briarwood Trace and Briarwood Farms communities: To be reviewed in approximately two years. This is to ensure that data is collected on the impact of the opening of the new Western High School on enrollment at Oakton High School.

- ❖ The Tysons Green community: To integrate a priority transfer space option during the gap year timeline, starting in fall 2026, for high school students only who wish to transfer to Madison High School and provide their own transportation. The middle school

BUDGET PRIORITIES



Fairfax County Public Schools logo: Engage • Inspire • Thrive

- Recognizing the current economic environment, this needs-based budget reflects the **base requirements** of the school division which include:
 - Compensation adjustments to meet the collective bargaining agreements
 - Benefit rate changes and baseline adjustments
 - Enrollment and student needs
 - Multiyear and future-focused strategic investments

AMENDED PRESENTATION WITH REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Superintendent's Recommendation - Amended Comprehensive School Boundary Review undergoes eleventh-hour changes, as seen in red.

option for Thoreau is not possible at this time.

- ❖ The Bull Run Elementary School boundary is on hold for now and will be reviewed with the Western High School boundary study.

- ❖ Lewis High School: Review the boundary and other under-capacity schools.

- ❖ West Springfield High School: Review the boundary and other over-capacity schools (105% or

more).

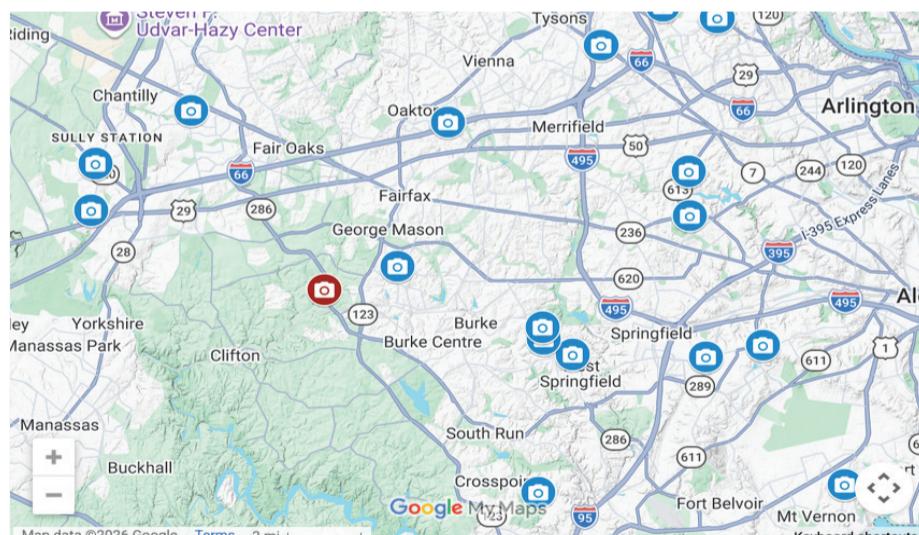
- ❖ Riverside Elementary School Full-time Advanced Academic Program Center: To be considered for relocation to Woodley Hills Elementary School before the next comprehensive boundary review, with a possible soft launch sooner.

- ❖ Non-residential areas: School boundary realignment for areas such as the Buckman Road and Richmond Highway intersection, and Greendale Golf Course and the

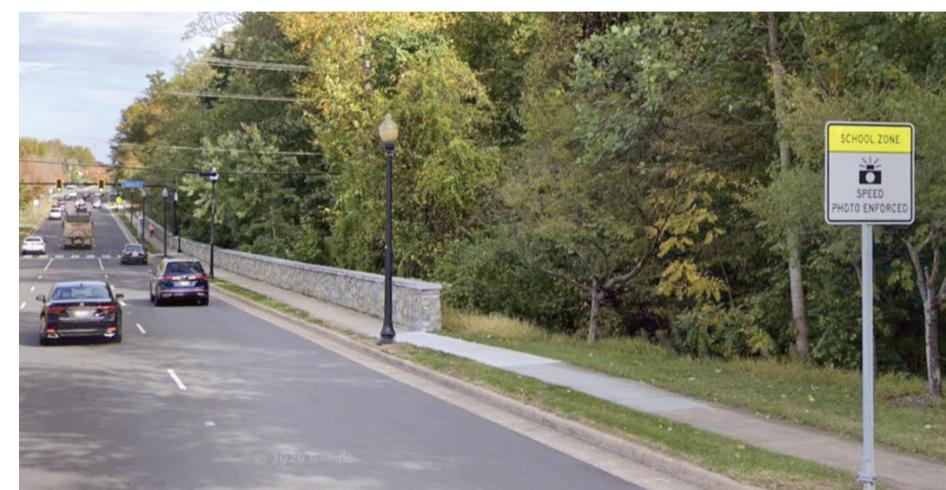
surrounding area.

- ❖ Minor adjustments: Small school boundary adjustments (e.g., 2817 Douglas St. was addressed in the current comprehensive boundary review).

If the school board moves forward with establishing Advanced Academic Program (AAP) Centers in all middle schools, board members directed Reid last fall to present an implementation plan by this March.



This map shows the number and locations of school zone cameras in Fairfax County, Va., Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026.



A sign alerts drivers to a speed camera on Fairfax Boulevard near Fairfax High School in Fairfax, Va., Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026. The image, originally captured in October 2025, reflects one of several automated enforcement zones that could be eliminated under proposed state legislation.

Speed, Red-Light Cameras Under Attack?

FROM PAGE 3

zones and work zone(s) along with high crash intersections from his bill."

Currently, camera fines go to localities after the camera vendor is paid. For cameras operated by local law enforcement, revenue stays with the city or county

after the vendor is paid its monthly fee or per-ticket fee. There is no state requirement for how localities spend camera revenue.

A Virginia State Crime Commission report from Dec. 2025 confirmed that nearly \$60 million has been collected from speed camera citations since 2022. The report noted

that currently revenue is paid directly to localities with no state restrictions or requirements to report how that revenue is spent.

Arlington County Speed Camera Guidelines reports, "Revenue collected from camera violation fines is directed into the County's general fund."

Localities have used these funds for sidewalk repairs in Virginia Beach, police personnel costs in Albemarle County and a behavior-change marketing campaign in Fairfax County. There is no strict state audit to enforce exactly how those safety-related dollars are categorized.

Scott's Run to Close for Sewer Repair for 3 Months

Beginning on Monday, Feb. 16, Scott's Run Nature Preserve will be closed for an urgent sewer project to repair the Scott's Run Siphon wastewater facility. Contractors for the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services will complete this work, which is expected to take approximately three months depending on weather conditions.

This infrastructure enables the transportation of wastewater across the Potomac River, through Carderock National Park and connects to D.C. Water's Potomac Interceptor in Maryland. This project is essential to maintaining uninterrupted service and preventing potential wastewater overflow into the Potomac River.

To ensure public safety and protect natural resources, Scott's Run Nature Preserve, including the east and west parking areas and all trails, will be closed for the

duration of the emergency work. Residents are encouraged to use the Park Authority's Park Amenity Locator and Trail Buddy to identify alternate parks and trails during this closure. The public will be notified when the park reopens.

Updates regarding project progress and any changes to the timeline will be available online at the Scott's Run Siphon Rehabilitation project webpage. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/capital-projects/scotts-run-siphon-rehabilitation>

This project is to repair 1,200 linear feet of the Scott's Run Siphon Facility. Fairfax County owns and operates three siphon pipes (14-inch, 18-inch, 24-inch) that convey the County's wastewater flows across the Potomac River, through Carderock National Park and connecting to the DC Water's Potomac Interceptor in Maryland. The trenchless rehabilitation method selected to renew this facility

is the cured in place pipe (CIPP) method. CIPP is commonly used in similar applications due to its cost-effectiveness, schedule benefits and limited impact to residents and environment.

This project will be completed in two phases, with the first phase of lining taking place in Scott's Run Nature Preserve and the second phase will occur in Carderock National Park.

Fairfax County is coordinating with Fairfax Park Authority and National Park Service to ensure safety of the public and to minimize impacts to the trails.

Questions related to the park closure may be directed to the Park Information Office at parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Scott's Run Nature Preserve is located at 7400 Georgetown Pike in McLean. For more information, visit the Scott's Run Nature Preserve website or call 703-759-9018.

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Over \$4B: FCPS Proposed Budget

Step one of nine for Fiscal Year 2027 budget before school board approval in May.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, presented the fiscal year 2027 proposed budget to the School Board during its regular meeting on Jan. 22. Calling it a “needs-based” budget, Reid said the \$4.1 billion proposal focuses on essentials to maintain excellence by reallocating existing funds and increasing efficiency rather than introducing new, unfunded programs.

The restrained approach follows a Sept. 16, 2025, meeting of the Board of Supervisors’ Budget Policy Committee, where County Executive Bryan Hill specifically requested that Reid submit a “budget of reality.”

The proposal represents a 5% increase of \$197 million over the previous year, bringing the total operating fund, including all state and federal revenue sources, from approximately \$3.9 billion for FY 2026 to \$4.1 billion for FY 2027. FCPS is requesting a \$138.4 million transfer from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, a 5.1% increase in local funding.

Reid’s FY 2027 request is more modest than the FY 2026 cycle, when she requested a record-breaking 10.4% increase (\$268.3 million) to fund the division’s first collective bargaining agreement.

Last year, the Board of Supervisors provided an increase of \$118.6 million. The resulting \$121 million shortfall forced the school system to renegotiate labor agreements and implement cuts to pay raises, textbook purchases, classroom monitors, and the central office budget. By comparison, Reid noted this year’s request for new county funding is 48% lower than last year’s.

While the FY 2027 request is smaller, the proposal aims to restore some of the special education and advanced academic positions that were cut last year to balance the budget.

The school division anticipates that the new meals tax may help close a projected \$22 million revenue gap.

Reid said today’s young people are the “architects of tomorrow,” and the division is committed to equipping them to thrive in a world yet to be imagined. She said FCPS aims to give students not only the



Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, presents the fiscal year 2027 proposed budget to the school board during its regular meeting on Jan. 22.

skills to adapt to change but also the skills to shape the world.

A primary focus of the budget is honoring FCPS’s collective bargaining agreements. The proposal includes about \$163 million in compensation adjustments under the agreement with Fairfax Education Association and \$17.7 million for recently ratified adjustments under Fairfax County Federation of Principals, Supervisors and Administrators.

Reid also noted expected savings of \$2.3 million from benefit rate changes associated with a new benefits contract, helping offset rising healthcare and retirement costs. She said these investments have helped move FCPS from seventh to second among eight regional divisions for beginning teacher salaries in the master’s lane and supported staff retention rates above 90 percent for two consecutive years, exceeding prepandemic levels, which Reid noted is unusual in the current national context.

She said there are no new wish lists, only trade-offs. Departments were told that new resource requests were not accepted this year because there are no new resources, and that any new ideas were to be funded by reallocating existing money. Reid said the division needs to stop doing some things to start doing new things. Additionally, Reid said FCPS is moving to a structurally balanced budget, stepping away from one-time carry-over funds that previously propped up the budget.

The budget addresses several multiyear commitments and staffing adjustments. The division will move hourly family liaisons to contracted positions with benefits.

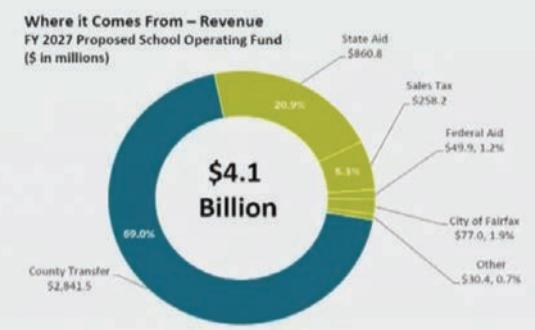
SEE OVER 4B, PAGE 9

FY27 SUMMARY	CHANGE FROM FY26 (\$ in millions)
County Transfer	\$138.4
State Revenue	\$71.1
Federal Revenue	(\$0.2)
Other Revenue	(\$12.4)
Total FY27 Projected Revenue Increase*	\$197.0

*Does not add due to rounding

FY 2027 Proposed Budget

additional state funding based



12

SCREENSHOT VIDEO FCPS

The slide shows where the revenue comes from.

BUDGET SUMMARY

- The FY27 School Operating Fund budget totals \$4.1 billion, a net increase of \$197.0 million, or 5.0%, over the FY26 Approved Budget
- The county transfer request is an increase of \$138.4 million, or 5.1%, over the FY26 transfer

The FY27 requested increase in the county transfer is \$129.8 million or 48% LESS than the requested increase last year

FY27 SUMMARY	CHANGE FROM FY26 (\$ in millions)
County Transfer	\$138.4
State Revenue	\$71.1
Federal Revenue	(\$0.2)
Other Revenue	(\$12.4)
Total FY27 Projected Revenue Increase*	\$197.0
Compensation (Collective Bargaining Agreements and Benefits)	\$178.4
Baseline Adjustments	\$11.0
Multiyear Investments	\$7.5
Total FY27 Expenditure Adjustments*	\$197.0

*Does not add due to rounding

SCREENSHOT VIDEO FCPS

The FY27 proposed budget totals \$4.1 billion, focusing on a \$178.4 million investment in staff compensation and collective bargaining while requesting a county transfer increase that is 48% less than last year’s request.

COMPENSATION ADJUSTMENTS



COMPENSATION ADJUSTMENTS	CHANGE FROM FY26 (\$ in millions)
FEU Compensation Adjustments	\$163.0
FCFSPA Compensation Adjustments	\$17.7
Benefit Rate Changes	(\$2.3)
Total Compensation Adjustments	\$178.4

The FY 2027 Proposed Budget honors FCPS’ collective bargaining agreements with the unions

SCREENSHOT VIDEO FCPS

The FY27 proposed budget invests \$178.4 million in total compensation adjustments to honor collective bargaining agreements with unions. The (\$2.3 million) figure (noted in parentheses to indicate a negative number or a decrease) means that the cost of providing benefits, such as health insurance premiums or retirement contributions, is projected to be \$2.3 million less than it was in FY 2026.

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Over \$4B: FCPS Proposed Budget

FROM PAGE 8

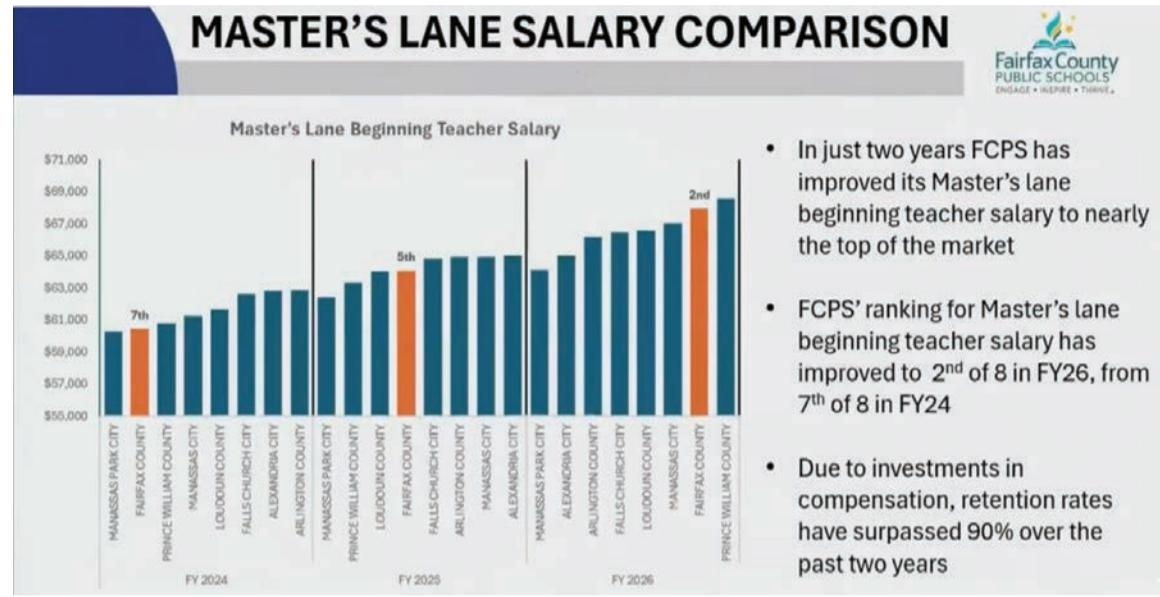
Funding will complete the build-out of athletic and fine arts stipends and continue the expansion of middle school sports. The proposal partially rolls back last year's class size increase. The budget also fully funds elementary special education department chairs and Advanced Academic Resource Teacher positions.

Targeted investments include modest funding for K-12 robotics to improve equity and support for educator math credentialing. However, Reid said that if additional state or county funds arrive beyond current assumptions, the first priority will be to fully restore the complete class size and staffing

model. Other secondary priorities for surplus funds include elementary STEM and inclusive Pre-K expansion, addressing the major maintenance backlog, professional and technical partnerships and apprenticeships, and possible expansion of world language programs.

In closing, Reid thanked the School Board "for supporting FCPS and helping us continue to not just be the heartbeat of our community, but also the economic engine Fairfax County."

The next step in the four-month process until the school board adopts the Final FY 2027 Approved Budget is a public hearing on the budget proposal. It is scheduled for Feb. 10.



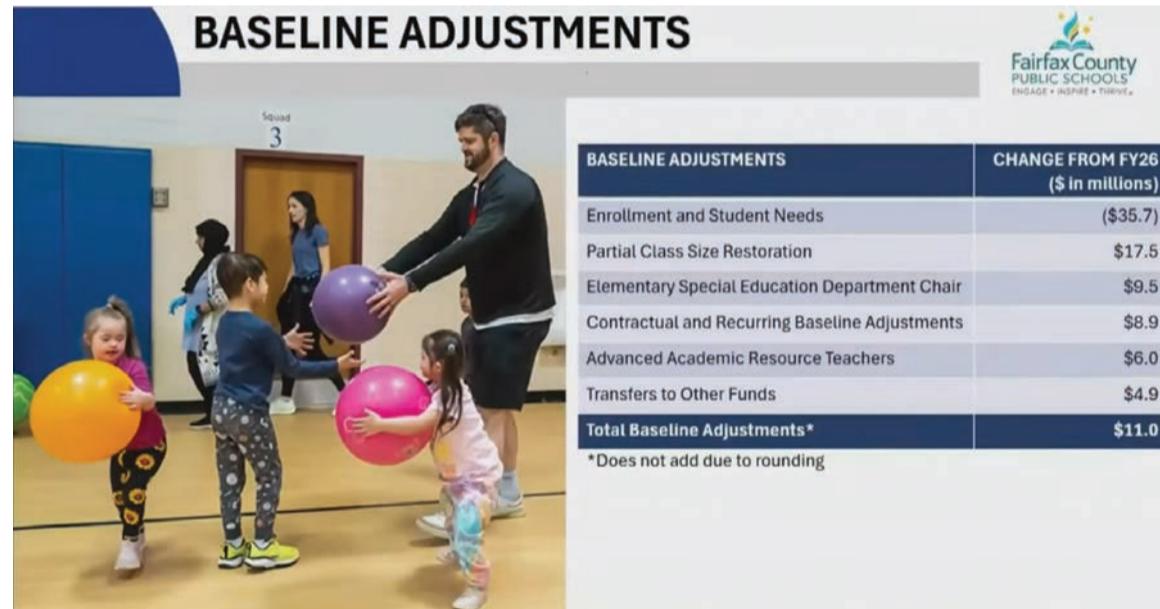
- In just two years FCPS has improved its Master's lane beginning teacher salary to nearly the top of the market
- FCPS' ranking for Master's lane beginning teacher salary has improved to 2nd of 8 in FY26, from 7th of 8 in FY24
- Due to investments in compensation, retention rates have surpassed 90% over the past two years

SCREENSHOT VIDEO FCPS

FCPS improves its Master's lane beginning teacher salary ranking to 2nd out of 8 in FY26, up from 7th out of 8 in FY24.

FCPS FY 2027 Budget Calendar

Date	Milestone
January 22, 2026	Superintendent's Proposed Budget presented to the School Board.
February 10, 2026	School Board Public Hearing on the FY 2027 Proposed Budget (6:30 p.m.).
February 17, 2026	County Executive Proposes County Budget, including the recommended dollar amount for the school transfer.
February 24, 2026	Joint Meeting between the School Board and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.
February 26, 2026	School Board Adopts Advertised Budget (Official request sent to the County).
April 14, 2026	County Board of Supervisors Public Hearing on the County Budget.
May 5, 2026	Board of Supervisors Adopts Budget, setting the final school transfer amount.
May 12, 2026	School Board Public Hearing on the FY 2027 Approved Budget (6:00 p.m.).
May 21, 2026	School Board Adopts Final FY 2027 Approved Budget.
July 1, 2026	FY 2027 Fiscal Year Begins: The new budget takes effect.



SCREENSHOT VIDEO FCPS

In the context of the FY27 proposed budget, the adjustments represent a \$197.0 million increase in total spending designed to fulfill collective bargaining agreements through staff raises, while simultaneously leveraging \$2.3 million in benefit rate savings to offset some of those costs.

Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach

Four of nine F.A.F.O. founders are Virginians, creating a local oversight from the D.C. suburbs to Hampton Roads.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Two Northern Virginia prosecutors, Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano and Parisa Dehghani-Tafti, Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, joined a national coalition Jan. 28 vowing to

oversight of federal agents who violate state laws. Called the Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach (F.A.F.O.), launched following two fatal shootings by federal immigration agents in Minnesota. At stake, among other things, is whether the federal government can take over a neighborhood and investigate its own shootings, or if local authorities have a "concurrent jurisdiction" that the federal

government must respect. The coalition aims to hold federal officials accountable when they exceed their lawful authority, particularly in jurisdictions experiencing "surges" of federal immigration and law enforcement activity. Founding members include nine prosecutors from Virginia, Texas, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Minnesota, all locally elected. They contend that their duty to state con-

stitutions overrides federal claims of "absolute immunity" when state crimes, such as assault or homicide, are committed.

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, a founding member and the coalition's primary national spokesperson, dismissed recent claims of federal immunity as "absolute nonsense" during the virtual launch.^[2] "Despite the misinformation you have heard from the

mouth of the vice president, we do have the ability to bring state criminal charges against federal officers and to prosecute those cases to conclusion," Krasner said. "This is a gathering of people who take democracy seriously and are willing to do what their oath requires to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States. SEE PROJECT FOR, PAGE 16

Love, Risk and Surprise Success

Local duo The Two Peas hits No. 1 on contemporary folk chart, sweeps three of the top four spots nationally.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Ann Granger of Arlington, formerly of Reston, never planned to stand in a recording studio, much less on the national folk song charts. She grew up avoiding the spotlight, happy to sing with friends but not in front of an audience. But as life changed, her perspective shifted.

"It has become harder to say no to a man who writes love songs for you," Granger said during a Jan. 23 interview with The Connection.

Granger and Larry Rice of Falls Church now perform as The Two Peas, an acoustic, harmony-based duo that recently achieved a triple chart win. They swept The Roots Music Report's national charts for the week of Nov. 22, 2025. On the Top 50 Folk Song Chart, they trailed only Grammy-winning artist Patty Griffin to hold the No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4 spots simultaneously. While the duo initially expected a shorter run, they maintained a Top 10 presence on the national folk chart for six weeks.

On the Roots Music Report's Top 50 Contemporary Folk Song Chart for the week of Nov. 29, 2025, The Two Peas officially held the No. 1, 2 and 3 spots with their tracks "Coppertone and Maggie Mae," an original; "You and Me on the

Rock," a Brandi Carlile cover; and "A Love Like Yours and Mine," a Dulcie Taylor cover. That run in the Top 10 "ended up being eight weeks," Rice said.

The duo expressed their surprise at the results on social media: "We can't believe it. It feels so good to have people like and listen to songs you've recorded." They noted a particular pride in "Coppertone and Maggie Mae," which they wrote.

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For Granger, the journey from private music-maker to charting artist almost didn't happen. "Larry has been trying to talk me into



SCREENSHOT INSTAGRAM

Local contemporary folk artists, Ann Granger and Larry Rice, perform at the Arlington Acoustic Cafe at Walter Reed Community Center on Dec. 17, 2024. The duo appeared as part of a monthly concert series held on the first Tuesday of each month to showcase local talent. Less than a year later, they dominate The Roots Music Report's national charts for the week of Nov. 22, 2025.

this for a couple of years, and I was very, very reluctant," Granger said. "This is all totally new to me ... it's been quite a learning experience for me, just the whole process of going into the studio and recording."

When Granger first walked into the studio, she found herself alone. "I expected to be in there with Larry and everybody else... I had no idea that I'd be in a little room all by myself ... just listening to a recording of him ... so that I could harmonize with him," she said.

The band laid down drums, bass and guitar as basic tracks, then added parts on top. They later moved to a different studio specifically to record vocals, where the two could see each other. That studio had two separate spaces with glass between them, so Ann and Larry could see each other and sing at the same time. She contrasted her "little room experience" with how it felt better there.

"There's a synergy when you're singing together ... when you're just trying to harmonize with the

recording, it's just not the same... it's kind of flat, not in terms of the pitch, but... your energy level," Granger said.

For the couple, harmony is more than a musical term. "Harmony is... a theme, musically and otherwise as well," Granger said. "We strive for harmony in relationships as well, not just music."

Granger and Rice hope to expand their reach with house concerts — aiming for listening audiences rather than bar crowds — by attending the multi-day Southeast Regional Folk Alliance conference. At the event, artists showcase their music, attend workshops and connect with venues and house-concert hosts across the region.

Their advice to anyone who secretly wants to play but is nervous about performing is simple: "Go to the Reston-Herndon Folk Club and just do it," Granger said.

"The audience is so supportive and so kind and loving ... they appreciate the effort as much as they appreciate the final product," Rice added, "Once you've done that, then ... try some open mics ... there's a lot of open mics in the area."

The Reston-Herndon Folk Club, an all-volunteer organization in existence for more than 40 years, welcomes all and meets every Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the event room at Amphora Diner, 1151 Elden St., Herndon. Musicians and listeners can purchase their dinner at the diner while attending the listening club. There is a suggested \$1 donation for regular evenings, but ticket prices for nights with the concert series vary. For more information and the event calendar, visit the Reston-Herndon Folk Club at <https://folkclubofrestonherndon.org/>.

Scenes of Chantilly in Snow, Ice and Bitter Cold

Some 6-8 inches of snow — topped by 4 inches of sleet — fell in Centreville-Chantilly, Jan. 24-25, leaving behind lots of cold, white flakes that quickly froze into cement-like ice in the bitter-cold weather that plummeted into the single digits at night.



As a plane comes in for a landing at Dulles International Airport, the sun sets on the snow and ice boulders in Chantilly's Sully Place Shopping Center.

PHOTOS BY
BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION
Thick snow cleared off Metrotech Drive in the Sully Place Shopping Center in Chantilly.



A snowy scene in the Chantilly Mews neighborhood. The vehicles on the left side of the street are trapped by the frozen, impenetrable ice beside them.



NEWS



Springfield resident Sofia Bezkorovainaya has a lot to skate for.



At 15, Sofia practices daily while attending school virtually.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED
Somewhere over the rainbow.

Local Ice Skating Marvel Honors Friend

The ice skating community and one teenage girl lost a lot from last year's helicopter-airliner collision.

By MIKE SALMON
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

The best part of performing is definitely the adrenaline," says Sofia Bezkorovainaya, 15 year old figure skater. "I love the excitement and the feeling of being on the ice in front of an audience."

When skating phenomenon Sofia Bezkorovainaya looks down at the ice, she remembers skating around the rink with her friend Everly Livingston, one of the 67 lives lost on Flight 5342 over the Potomac River last year when the airliner collided with a U.S. Army helicopter.

Sofia's friend Everly was aboard the commercial jet with her whole family, and Sofia is dedicating her routines to Everly. "In the opening and closing moments of the program, when I look up and hug myself, it feels like she's hugging me," said Sofia.

It's a lot for a 15-year-old, but



The ribbons and trophies may be on the Olympic level one day.

her flawless routine shows her level of professionalism and dedication. Her short program music is "Over the Rainbow." The emotion came through to the many who watched it on the Instagram post of Sofia skating. "I got chills, what an amazing tribute," said one. "I cry every time, it's a beautiful program for her dear friend," said another. "In some respects, this is hard to watch, but to see it, and to this song, you HAVE to, so we can remember all of the great skaters and their families whose lives were so senselessly cut short that eve-

ning. R.I.P. Everly. Your friend did a beautiful job in tribute to you," said another.

Sofia is a 15-year-old student at Virginia Virtual Academy from Springfield, born in Alexandria, Va., who recently earned a top-six finish at the U.S. Junior Figure Skating Championships, placing her among the best junior skaters in the country. She trains in Reston, and is widely considered a strong future Olympic contender, with her sights set on the 2030 Winter Games when she becomes age-eligible.



She manages traveling, home life and school.

"Absolutely, the 2030 Olympics are my long-term goal," Sofia said. Meanwhile she is excited to watch the Winter Olympics beginning Feb. 6. "These Olympics are so exciting to watch. ... I'm cheering for all of the Team USA skaters."

Training Home

"I started skating at the Mount Vernon Rec Center. After that, I trained at MedStar and Ashburn," Sofia said. "My current home rink is Reston SkateQuest."

Her virtual school schedule at the Academy allows her the flex-

ibility needed to travel, train and compete nationally while still getting an education. It's a model that has supported her growth for years, dating back to her 2022 Juvenile National Championship.

The XXV Winter Olympic Games, Milano Cortina 2026, is scheduled to take place this month, Feb. 6 - 22. Sofia won't be competing there yet, but she is hopeful for the future.

<https://www.instagram.com/sofiabezkorovainaya/>

<https://usfigureskating.org/sports/figure-skating/roster/sofia-bezkorovainaya/1244>

ENTERTAINMENT

\$25,000 BUSINESS GRANTS

APPLICATION OPENS

The City of Fairfax Business Marketing Grant is now live! The submission window is open until February 13. This program awards \$25,000 to at least five Fairfax City owned businesses, providing access to professional marketing services tailored to each business's needs. By pairing businesses with industry experts, the grant helps to boost visibility, competitiveness, and long-term growth. To view more details and how to apply, visit the link: [https://gofairfaxcity.com/business.../incentives-grants\(7\)Facebook](https://gofairfaxcity.com/business.../incentives-grants(7)Facebook)

NOW THRU FEB. 24

Bernie Boston, A Retrospective

Photography Exhibition. At Pleasant Grove Church and McLean Community Center. Presented by McLean Project for the Arts and The Friends of Pleasant Grove. Sponsored by The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove, 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Visit www.historicpleasantgrove.org.

NOW THRU FEB. 8

Winter Ice Skating. At National Building Museum 401 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C. This season, the National Building Museum is delighted to welcome back the Winter Skate Spectacular—returning for its second year in an even bigger, better, and brighter form. This one of a kind, indoor synthetic ice-skating experience transforms the Museum's Great Hall into a winter wonderland where visitors of all ages can skate beneath the soaring Corinthian columns. Events will include early hours for younger skaters, themed nights, festive snacks and drinks, and more.

Early Hours

- ❖ Thursdays – Toddler Time, 11–11:30 am (following Storytime)
- ❖ Saturdays – Museum Members-Only Skate, 10:30–11:30 am
- ❖ Sundays – Museum Members-Only Skate, 10:30–11:30 am

Daytime Hours (45-minute skate)

- ❖ Thursday through Monday, 12–5 pm, skate times are:
- ❖ Noon–12:45 pm
- ❖ 1–1:45 pm
- ❖ 2–2:45 pm
- ❖ 3–3:45 pm
- ❖ 4–4:45 pm

After-Hours (2-hour skate)

- ❖ Thursdays and Fridays, 6–8 pm

2026 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Rotary of Herndon-Reston seeks nominations for its 2026 Citizen of the Year, honoring individuals who exemplify Service Above Self. Submit Nominee and Nominator contact details with a heartfelt impact description by February 15, 2025, to HerndonRestonRotary@gmail.com

AARP FOUNDATION TAX-AIDE PROGRAM

The AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is returning for the 2026 tax season, offering free federal (and many state) tax preparation and e-filing by IRS-certified volunteers. Services begin the first week of February at multiple locations, with Mason District Government Center and Columbia Pike Library opening slightly earlier on Jan. 30. Eleven centers across North-



The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company will perform in the Year of the Red Fire House Lunar New Year Celebration on Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.

ern Virginia also prepare Virginia returns, and some sites assist with Maryland and DC filings.

Who can participate? Tax-Aide serves taxpayers of all ages, with a focus on low- and middle-income residents and seniors. Counselors handle nearly all types of income and work to ensure clients claim all deductions and credits for which they qualify.

Taxpayers should bring:

- ❖ Photo ID
- ❖ Social Security cards for themselves and dependents
- ❖ Copy of last year's tax return
- ❖ All current-year tax documents (W-2s, 1099s, 1098-T, brokerage statements, pension/IRA statements, etc.)
- ❖ Records for itemized deductions, education credits, and residential energy credits
- ❖ Bank account and routing numbers for direct deposit or debit

For more information and to find a site near you, visit: AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Information <https://www.novataxaide.org/>

FAIRFAX SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA SCHEDULE

The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra (FSO) continues its 2025 - 2026 season with an exciting slate of performances still ahead. Featuring world-renowned guest artists, cinematic favorites performed live, and orchestral masterworks, the upcoming concerts offer something for every music lover.

February 7 - The Soul of Tango with Berta Rojas: Grammy-winning classical guitarist Berta Rojas brings the passion and fire of tango to the stage, featuring music inspired by Astor Piazzolla.

March 5 - Patti LuPone 25th Anniversary Tour of Matters of the Heart: Three-time Tony Award® winner Patti LuPone returns to her acclaimed theatrical concert celebrating love, heartbreak, and the power of song.

March 7 - Mozart, Leshnoff, Mendelssohn with Demarre McGill, flute: Featuring the World Premiere of Jonathan Leshnoff's Flute Concerto No. 2, alongside Mozart's Flute Concerto No. 2 and Mendelssohn's exuberant Italian Symphony.

March 14 - How to Train Your Dragon In Concert: The beloved DreamWorks film comes alive as the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra performs John Powell's score live to film at Capital One Hall.

March 29 - Rick Steves' Europe: A Symphonic Journey: Travel icon Rick Steves joins the FSO on stage for a musical tour across Europe, blending storytelling, stunning visuals, and orchestral favorites.

May 31 - Prokofiev with Claire Huangci, piano: The season concludes with a powerful program featuring pianist Claire Huangci, Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3, and Symphony No. 5.



The Lion Dance! Honolulu Theatre for Youth will perform "The Great Race: The Story of the Chinese Zodiac" on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.

Performances take place at premier venues including the Harris Theatre and Center for the Arts at George Mason University, and Capital One Hall. More information and tickets available at FairfaxSymphony.org

BLACK HISTORY

MONTH EVENTS

Honor Black history through meaningful programs that explore African American history, culture and lived experiences across Fairfax County. Throughout February and beyond, the Fairfax County Park Authority offers engaging events, exhibits and interpretive programs for all ages that highlight the essential role Black individuals and communities have played in shaping the county's past and present. From stories of resilience and labor to traditions, skills and community life, these programs invite visitors to learn, reflect and connect with history at park and historic sites across the county.

Programs and Events

Black History Month at the Meeting House

Frying Pan Farm Park, Feb. 7 or Feb. 21, noon–2 p.m. Free

Remembrance: Enslaved Lives at Sully Historic Site, Feb. 8 or Feb. 21, 1–2 p.m. \$10

Enslaved Lives and the Legacy of Slavery

Historic Huntley, Feb. 19, 1–2:30 p.m. \$12

Grit and Grain: African American Millers

Colvin Run Mill, Feb. 28, 2–3 p.m. \$10

FIVE-PART BETTER ARGUMENTS WORKSHOP SERIES

The Better Arguments Project, developed by the Aspen Institute, is part of William & Mary's broader Democracy Initiative, which advances civil discourse, civic engagement, and the skills needed to live and lead in a pluralistic society. William & Mary is a national leader in bringing this work into classrooms, campuses, and communities. The series is free and open to the public, and participants are welcome to attend any individual session - there is no expectation to attend all five.

This free series is hosted by Radhika Murari (W&M '95), a member of the William & Mary Washington Campus Advisory Board in the spirit of William & Mary's commitment to democratic engagement. Each workshop centers on one core Better Arguments tenet:

- ❖ Workshop 1: Take Winning Off the Table; Feb 10, 2026; 6–8 pm; Reston, VA Lead with a desire to understand and learn. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/Better2026>
- ❖ Workshop 2: Prioritize Relationships and Listen Passionately; Mar 10, 2026; 6–8 pm; Reston, VA Focus on building honest connections. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/WMMarch10>
- ❖ Workshop 3: Pay Attention to Context; Apr 14, 2026; 6–8 pm; Reston, VA Acknowledge the many factors that may influence beliefs.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/WMApril14>

- ❖ Workshop 4: Embrace Vulnerability; May 12, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Consider the benefits of opening up. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/BetterMay12>
- ❖ Workshop 5: Make Room to Transform; June 9, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Be open to new and varied perspectives. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/WMJune9>

REPAIR CAFE

Fairfax County Repair Cafe is a team of volunteer "fixers" with a variety of skills. They diagnose, repair and recommend. Bring your items or questions and join them.

Examples include sewing repairs, small appliance fixes, jewelry repair, computer help, knife sharpening, community fun. Upcoming dates:

- ❖ Sunday, February 8th, 2026, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. @ Pohick Regional Library
6450 Sydenstricker Rd., Burke;
- ❖ Saturday, March 14th, 2026, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. @ Thomas Jefferson Library
7415 Arlington Boulevard, Falls Church.

THROUGH FEB. 8

"The Sunshine Boys." At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. Presented by Vienna Theatre Company. 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays: Jan. 23-24, Jan. 30-31, and Feb. 6-7. Matinee performances begin at 2 p.m. on Sundays, Feb. 1 and Feb. 8. It is the story of a theatrical agent as he tries to re-unite his elderly uncle with his long-time stage partner for a TV reunion. Tickets are \$16 each and may be purchased online at www.viennava.gov/webtrac or in person at Vienna Community Center, located at 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna, Va. Visit www.viennava.gov/theatre.

SATURDAY/FEB. 7

Ping Pong Tournament. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Wayne H. Nickum Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. All ages and levels of playing experience are welcome at this family-friendly event hosted by the Clifton Betterment Association. Call: 703-968-0740. Visit the website: <https://C25K.redpodium.com/clifton-annual-ping-pong-tournament-2026>. Registration closes at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 4.

FEB. 4-28

McLean Art Society and McLean Art Gallery "From the Heart" Exhibition. At Chesterbrook Shopping Center, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean. This February, the McLean Art Gallery is pleased to feature "From the Heart," a new exhibition from the local nonprofit McLean Art Society. Members of the public are invited to enjoy 170 new works from more than 40 local artists. Included are paintings in oil, acrylic, pastel, watercolor and mixed media; drawings; photography; sculpture; and works in wood, glass, ceramics and jewelry. "Put your heart into art" at our Opening Reception on Friday, February 6 from 5-7 p.m.

SATURDAY/FEB. 7

Mark Morris Dance Group and Music Ensemble Presents Dances to American Music. 8 p.m. At

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com



The Mark Morris Dance Group will perform Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026 at GMU Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The Mark Morris Dance Group and Music Ensemble returns to the Center for the Arts with Dances to American Music, a vibrant celebration of the rich tapestry of American music and dance. Featuring choreography by the legendary Mark Morris, "undeviating in his devotion to music" (New Yorker), this program highlights music by iconic American composers in a celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026.

SATURDAY/FEB. 7

"Astronaut vs. Aquanaut." 6 p.m. At the Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Two acclaimed scientists face off—spacesuit to wet-suit—to decide who's the ultimate explorer. Join Janet Ivey ("Janet's Planet") and Jennifer Swanson (Science Rocks) as they journey from deep oceans to outer space using cutting-edge discoveries, including images from the James Webb Space Telescope.

FEB. 7 TO MARCH 1

Reston Art Gallery Presents A Touch of Red. At 11400 Washington Plaza W # B, Reston. Reston Art Gallery is pleased to present A Touch of Red, an all-member show that incorporates red across a diverse collection of works. A Touch of Red invites viewers to explore the many meanings and moods associated with the color red. From subtle accents to bold focal points, red serves as a unifying element throughout the exhibition, often symbolizing energy, warmth, and vitality. As an all-member show, the exhibit highlights the breadth of talent within the Reston Art Gallery. Works span a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, mobiles, fabric art, and mixed media created by the gallery's member artists—Pat Macintyre, Julia Tova Malakoff, Sandra Dovberg, Rosemarie Forsythe, Marthe McGrath, Jennifer Duncan, and Cindy Griselda—as well as adjunct members Doug Fuller and Wayne Schiffelbein. An opening reception will be

held on Sunday, February 15, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., and the public is warmly invited to attend.

SUNDAY/FEB. 8

Craft Day at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. 1-4 p.m. At 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Guests of all ages can craft unique train-themed Valentine's Day cards. What to Expect:

- ❖ All Supplies Provided: We'll supply everything you need, from card-stock and decorative materials to markers and stamps. Get inspired by train motifs and designs, and let your imagination run wild as you create heartfelt cards for your loved ones and friends.
- ❖ Guided Crafting Sessions: Our friendly staff will be on hand to offer guidance and tips on creating beautiful cards. Whether you're crafting for family, friends, or that special someone, our team will help you make your cards extra special.
- ❖ Family-Friendly Fun: This event is perfect for families! Kids and adults alike can enjoy crafting together, making it an excellent opportunity to bond and create lasting memories.
- ❖ Exhibit Access: While you're here, take some time to explore our fascinating exhibits on the history of railroads and model trains. Learn more about the significance of trains in our community and their impact on transportation.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 11

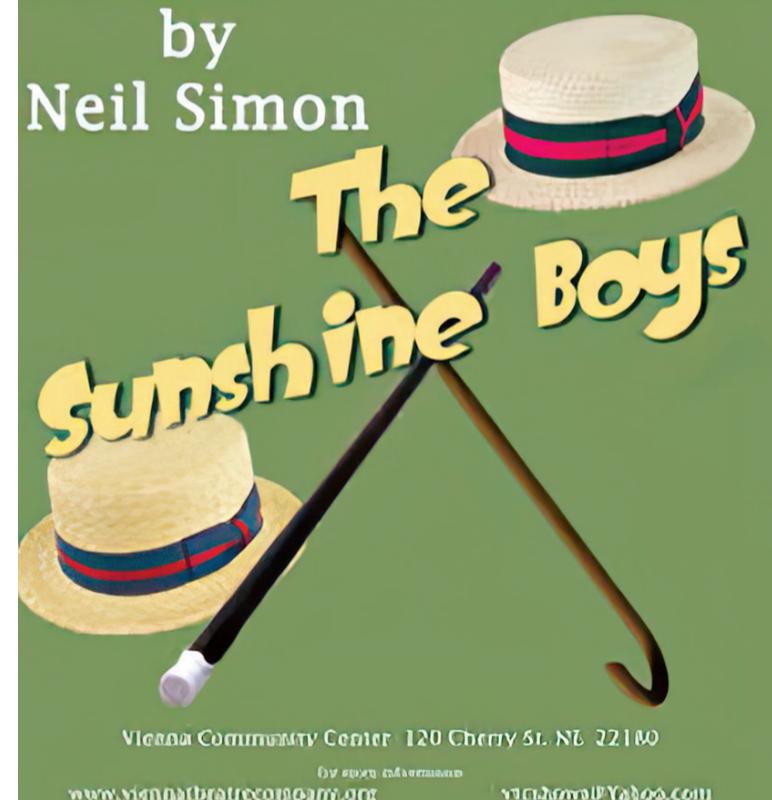
The monthly luncheon of the Springfield Christian Women's Connection will be held on Feb. 11 at the Springfield Country Club, Springfield, VA. The program includes a feature and speaker. If interested or for more information, email springwmconn@yahoo.com. Reservations required and should be made NLT February 6th.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 11

"An Evening with Friends" Fundraiser. At Red's Table, 11150 South Lakes Dr, Reston. The Friends of Reston invites the

Vienna Department of Parks and Recreation and

Vienna Theatre Company



Vienna Community Center 120 Cherry St. N. 22110
www.viennatheatreccompany.org viennatheatreccompany@yahoo.com

by Neil Simon

The Sunshine Boys

community to make Reston your Valentine at the "Evening with Friends" fundraiser, an uplifting celebration of local spirit and generosity taking place Wednesday, February 11, 2026 from 6 - 9 p.m. at Red's Table, Reston's favorite lakeside restaurant. With every dollar raised, this event supports the Reston Association's camp scholarships for underserved youth, free monthly movies for senior citizens and awards scholarships to high school seniors.

Guests will enjoy a festive evening featuring a cocktail hour with heavy appetizers, followed by dinner and seasonal Valentine's Day desserts. Two ticket options are available: \$75 for dinner including one beverage of choice or \$100 for dinner with three beverages of choice included. For tickets and information, contact friendsofreston@gmail.com or visit www.friendsofreston.org/events.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

THE CONNECTION ♦ FEBRUARY 4-17, 2026 ♦ 13

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Published by
 Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
 Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

THURSDAY/FEB. 12

"Hyenas" Film. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean. Based on Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play "The Visit"—which was also the basis of the Broadway musical, "Hyenas" follows a now-rich woman returning to her poor desert hometown to propose a deal to the populace: her fortune, in exchange for the death of the man who years earlier abandoned her and left her with his child. "Hyena's" is suitable for 18 years and older, and admission is free.

FEB. 13-16

Middleburg's 15th Annual Winter Weekend Sale. Join the town of Middleburg on February 13, 14, 15 and 16 for the 15th annual Winter Weekend Sale. During the Winter Weekend Sale, visitors will be able to hunt for wonderful gifts for themselves and others while experiencing the small-town charm of Middleburg. The sale, sponsored by the Town of Middleburg and the Middleburg Business & Professional Association, will be held Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday – Monday as posted by shops. Many of the unique shops in the village will have discounts on everything from shoes to children's clothes to fall and winter fashions, as well as specials in some of the local restaurants. Bargain hunters can arrive early to get the best deals or stay over at one of the inns in town.

FEB. 14-15

Virginia Opera: Intelligence. Saturday, February 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, Feb. 15 at 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Virginia Opera presents the state premiere of *Intelligence*, an operatic drama that tells a gripping true story of espionage, sacrifice, and the fight for freedom. Based in Richmond, Virginia, in the shadows of the Civil War, Mary Jane Bowser, an enslaved woman turned operative, joins a Union spy ring, unveiling secrets about the Confederacy and her own identity. Packed with riveting drama, powerful music, and dynamic dance, *Intelligence* will keep you on the edge of your seat. Sung in English with English subtitles.

SUNDAY/FEB. 15

Monthly Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Join the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum for the cherished Monthly Model Trains Showcase, a delightful gathering for model train enthusiasts and families alike! This month's show is February 15, 2026, from 1-4 p.m. Shows are every 3rd Sunday, from February through November, they invite hobbyists and curious visitors to explore the fascinating world of model trains, featuring either N or T scale exhibits. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$4; ages 13 and older, \$6. Military/First Responders/Teachers (with ID) \$5.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 18

"Year of the Red Fire House Lunar New Year Celebration" at 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Featuring the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. The show intertwines traditional and contemporary dance, and will also include a traditional Dragon.

THURSDAY/FEB. 19

"Spettacolo" Film. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "Spettacolo" is a portrait of the 50-year-old tradition of turning their lives into a play, where the town's piazza becomes a stage and every villager from 6 to 90 plays a part...the role of themselves. The film is rated PG, and admission is free.

FEB. 19 TO MARCH 8

"Between Riverside and Crazy." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. A play by Stephen Adly Guirgis, directed by José

Carrasquillo. When: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: Tickets: \$25-\$55 general admission, \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

FRIDAY/FEB. 20

Les Ballets Africains. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Les Ballets Africains brings Africa's rich tradition of music and dance to the Center for the Arts. Founded in 1952 to serve as cultural ambassador for the Republic of Guinea, the company has toured the world and become known for "dazzling, high-speed footwork" (LA Times) as well as "sheer physical energy and beauty" (New York Times).

SATURDAY/FEB. 21

FocusMusic presents Andrew McKnight and Beyond Borders. 7 p.m. At The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling, 22135 Davis Dr., Suite 104, Sterling. Advance tickets \$25 / day-of and door \$30 (member / congregation as-applicable \$25 at the door). Webcast tickets are \$15. Info and tickets at <https://focusmusic.org/sat-2-21-andrew-mcknight-sterling>

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

The Borisevich Duo. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean. The husband-wife pair is an Alden favorite and attracts larger crowds each year with their sweetly old-world sound and brilliant commentary! Tickets are available at mcleancenter.org.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 25

Senior Movie Night: "Anniversary." 10 a.m. Reston Association sponsors senior movies at the movie theater at Reston Town Center.

FEB. 27 TO MARCH 8

Vienna Restaurant Week. At participating restaurants in Vienna. The annual, 10-day celebration highlights Vienna's diverse culinary scene with specially priced prix fixe menus, exclusive specials, and limited-time dining experiences at local favorites across town. The initial lineup showcases a wide range of cuisines and concepts, everything from cozy cafés and bakeries to global flavors and neighborhood taverns offering something for every palate.

Participating restaurants include: Amma Vegetarian Kitchen, Bear Branch Tavern, Ben & Jerry's, Big Buns, Caboose Tavern, Cafe Renaissance, Caffe Amouri, Charlies Bowl, Chef Tan, Chick-fil-A Vienna, Cocoa Vienna, Crumbly, Cuco's Peruvian, Evelyn Rose, FRAME Coffee Roasters, Foster's Grille, Ledo Pizza Vienna, Lily's Chocolate and Coffee, Maple Ave Restaurant, Oh My Dak, Peking Express of Vienna, Plaka Grill, Pure Green Vienna, Qamaria Yemeni Coffee, Rita's Italian Ice & Frozen Custard (Rita's of Vienna), Roberto's Ristorante Italiano, Royal Nepal Bistro, Seray, Shilla Bakery, Smoothie King, Social Burger, Sunflowers Vegetarian Restaurant, Sushi Koji, Sushi Yama, Tango Pastry Café, TeaDM, The Red Bird Hot Chicken & Fries, Viet Aroma, Vienna Thai and Bar, and Vivi Bubble Tea.

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra with Vaughn Wiester Presents The Music of Stan Kenton. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Audience favorite Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra returns to celebrate the music of Grammy Award-winning jazz bandleader, composer, and pianist Stan Kenton. Known for his innovative and brassy approach to big band jazz, he developed what became known in the 1940s as "The Wall of Sound."

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Karate Kids Adventure Day. At Chantilly Family Martial Arts, Chantilly. A fun and active event to encourage physical activity, confidence, and positive social interaction in a safe, welcoming environment. Event activities: Age-appropriate obstacle courses; Team-based karate games and challenges;

Creative coloring stations

Admission is \$10 per child, with parents attending free. New families also receive the opportunity to stay for a complimentary introductory karate class. Registration link: <https://tinyurl.com/CFMAadventureday>

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Lion Dance! Honolulu Theatre for Youth will perform "The Great Race: The Story of the Chinese Zodiac" at 6 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. It is a beloved tale about the origin story of how each animal earned a place in the Chinese Zodiac. Tickets are available at mcleancenter.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Reston Association Seasonal Job Fair. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. At RA Headquarters, 12001 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston. Ideal opportunity for teens, college students home for the summer, and anyone seeking flexible. With a wide range of temporary positions available in Aquatics, Camps, Maintenance, Tennis, and Member Services, the event is an ideal place to launch a rewarding seasonal job - or even a future career - with Reston Association. RA's seasonal roles offer a great fit for:

- ❖ Teens looking for their first job
- ❖ College students returning home for the summer
- ❖ Retirees or adults seeking flexible, part-time hours
- ❖ Anyone who wants to work in a supportive, community-focused environment

SUNDAY/MARCH 1

Community Cornhole Challenge. Sponsored by The Rotary Club of Herndon-Reston and YMCA. At the Teen Center at the Reston YMCA. Benefiting local youth and literacy programs.

THURSDAY/MARCH 5

Matters of the Heart. 7:30 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The FSO presents Patti LuPone's critically acclaimed theatrical concert *Matters of the Heart*. The show is based on the CD recording of the same name which was released in 1999 and named one of the best recordings of the year by both The Times of London and Time Out/NY. For tickets, visit FairfaxSymphony.org.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7

Comicworx. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Featuring celebrity guest John Swasey who is the voice actor for *Attack on Titan* to *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *My Hero Academia*, and *One Piece*. Secure your tickets and your chance to meet the one and only John Swasey at workhousearts.org/comicworx.

SATURDAY/MARCH 14

"How to Train Your Dragon." 7 p.m. The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra will present DreamWorks' *How To Train Your Dragon* - In Concert, a thrilling live-to-film experience for all ages, at Capital One Hall in Tysons. Audiences will experience the beloved animated adventure in HD, with composer John Powell's Academy Award-nominated score performed live to the film by the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. For tickets and further information, visit FairfaxSymphony.org.

MARCH 28-29

SPRINGPEX Stamp Show. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday (March 28), and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday (March 29). At John R. Lewis High School cafeteria, 6540 Franconia Road, Springfield. Presented by Springfield Stamp Club. SPRINGPEX is the Washington D.C. area's largest club-sponsored stamp show. It features interesting philatelic exhibits, 20+ dealers, U.S. Postal Service booth, 3rd annual Postcrossing meetup, and free materials for young, beginning, and returning collectors. Free admission and parking. For details, visit springfieldstampclub.org/springpex

"Every Knock's a Boost"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

If I heard those words of fatherly encouragement once, I heard them a hundred times; words of wisdom from my late (very late now; he died in Dec. 2006) father, Barry. Not only would he be positive about the positive (that was easy), but he would also try to find a way to be positive about any kind of negative as well. Ergo the title of this column. My father had the kind of personality and attitude that invokes a very desirable description of not-every professional athlete: "Good in the locker room." Meaning, great/positive/helpful; he was good in the house, too, where my brother Richard and I not only grew up but were raised.

Born in 1918, my father was a child of The Depression. As a boy of no more than 10 years old, he was already working, selling miscellaneous stuff at Braves Field in Boston, home of the then National League Boston Braves (who eventually moved to Milwaukee and then on to Atlanta where they still play today). You might have heard of their crosstown rival: the Boston Red Sox? After the game ended and my father returned home, whatever coin (literally) he had earned, he would give over to his mother, Besse. She would greet him by spreading open her apron wide for him to donate (I use that term loosely) his days wages for the Lourie family budget. Living in the Jewish ghetto in Dorchester, Ma. with six brothers and sisters and my grandfather who rarely worked (I never received much of an explanation as to why, but my grandmother, Besse, was the breadwinner), all monies earned went to support the family.

My grandmother had a job outside the house, too. She worked for a caterer. In those days, chicken wings were not as popular as they are today, so the caterer had no interest in them. They were refuse, more trash than treat. Unclaimed and unwanted, my grandmother collected this 'refuse' and brought them home to feed her family. Otherwise, on the nights when my grandmother didn't work, the family would have gone hungry. The effect this cycle had on my father? This Depression-era staple - for him, became a lifelong must-have. For the next 70 years or so, my father loved chicken wings. And it formed him as a man and a father. Forever grateful (there's another story he would tell about wanting clean bedsheets since he always slept in the same bed as his siblings), my father never took anything for granted and as his life improved, so did his attitude. Never complaining about what he didn't have, my father was always happy to get a hot meal and sleep in a bed with clean sheets.

My father, in his work ethic, his deeds and actions, showed Richard and I the way forward. And though it may not have been a way paved with gold, it was one brimming with good intentions and confidence-boosting words of encouragement. I learned at a pretty young age, that even though we might not have had a lot, (there's a story I like to tell about the occasional breakfast my mother served/provided, and she did serve us, always: on a dinner-sized plate, she would fill it with the week's leftover breads. There would be a bagel piece, half a bulky roll, a heel of rye bread, another end of pumpernickel, some challah, et cetera, with butter and cream cheese, and American cheese), but we didn't go to school hungry or sleep in the same bed as one another. We might have been depressed but it was no Great Depression. Nor was it a big deal. It was just another day in our life.

A little perspective - and context, goes a long way. At least it did for us.

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

Winter Storm Fern and the Deep Freeze

FROM PAGE 2

highest single-storm sleet total for the D.C. region since February 1994, according to the National Weather Service, creating hazardous conditions. Unlike most storms that melt slightly during the day, as of 9 a.m. Feb. 2, Dulles International Airport had recorded more than 150 consecutive hours of subfreezing temperatures. This prevents the initial “slush” phase of the storm from draining, bonding it to the pavement as a solid sheet.

While primary roads are mostly passable, neighborhood streets, sidewalks and Fairfax County Public Schools’ 45,000 bus stops remain largely blocked by frozen mounds. The school system remained closed through Feb. 2, the sixth day of closure for the storm. For some students it is physically impossible to reach bus stops safely because sidewalks cannot be shoveled.

Winter Storm Fern is in the company of the most legendary winters in Northern Virginia history. Past record-setters include the 2010 “Snowmageddon” blizzard, which closed schools for eight days; the Blizzard of 1996, which resulted in a seven-to-eight-day closure; and the 2016 blizzard (Jonas), which kept students home for six days. As of Feb. 2, the closure for Winter Storm Fern has reached six days for students in Fairfax County Public Schools.

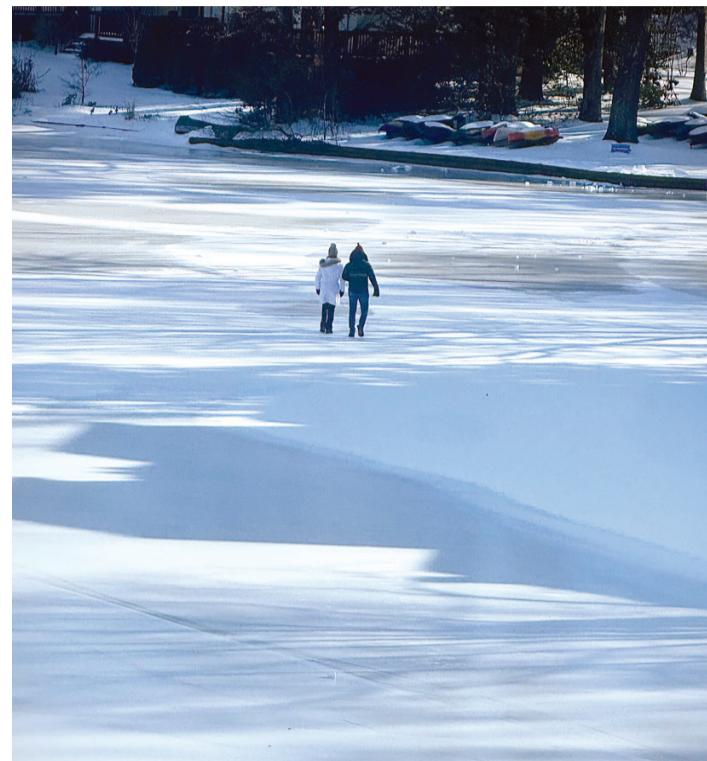


PHOTO BY JOHN LOVAAS

Day 8, Feb. 1: A couple walks across the frozen surface of Lake Anne in Reston, Sunday, Feb. 1. After a week of subfreezing temperatures, the ice on the lake thickened enough to support the two residents, a rare occurrence for the Fairfax County community.

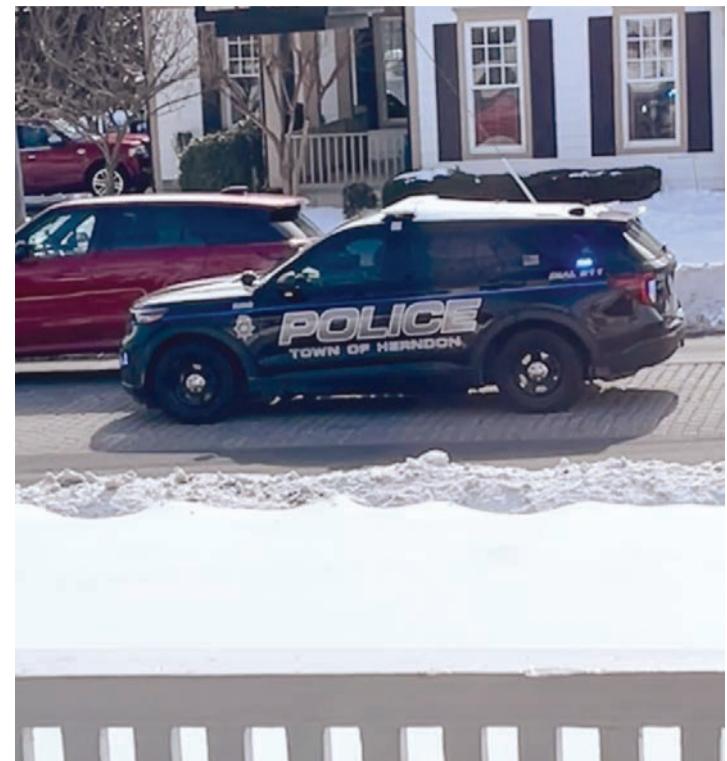


PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Day 6, Jan. 30: A Town of Herndon police cruiser waits at a red light with a layer of snow on its roof while the car ahead remains completely cleared Friday, Jan. 30. Failing to clear snow from a vehicle roof can create dangerous conditions for trailing drivers, especially with the region’s “ice-crete.”

Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach

FROM PAGE 9

and also their moral oath.”

Fairfax Commonwealth’s Attorney Steve Descano said that federal agents are not shielded from local authority.

“The chaos you’re seeing on the streets — the beatings, the abductions, the killings of everyday Americans just like you and me — these are the natural consequences of a federal government that thinks they’re above the law and the rest of us are below it,” Descano said. “If you’re not on their team, [they believe] you have no rights and your life does not matter.”

On Jan. 8, 2026, following the fatal shooting of Renee Good by an ICE agent in Minneapolis, Vance said in a White House press briefing, “The precedent here is very simple; you have a federal law enforcement official engaging in federal law enforcement action. That’s a federal issue. That guy’s protected by absolute immunity.”

Referencing the coalition’s acronym, FAFO, Descano added: “Unfortunately for those guys, we’re in the ‘find out’ business around here.”

In addition to Descano in Northern Virginia is Parisa Dehghani-Tafari, the Commonwealth’s Attorney

for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. “It doesn’t matter whether you’re local police, county sheriff, state patrol, FBI, ATF,” Dehghani-Tafari said. “You serve the public, you respect constitutional rights, and you follow the law. And when you don’t, we will hold you accountable.”

The coalition also includes two other Virginia Commonwealth’s Attorneys, Stephanie Morales of Portsmouth and Ramin Fatehi of Norfolk.

Fatehi noted that this geographic spread creates a pincer effect, ensuring that federal agents face local oversight whether they are in the D.C. suburbs or the coastal south.

“Between Steve and Parisa in the North, and Stephanie and me in the South, there is nowhere federal agents can go in this Commonwealth to escape the reach of the law,” Fatehi said. “We have effectively ensured that from the D.C. line to the Atlantic Ocean, the Constitution is not a suggestion, it is the mandate. If you are operating in the Commonwealth, you are in our backyard, and someone is watching.”

The independence of these of-

fices is anchored in the law. In Virginia, the four prosecutors are protected as constitutional officers under Article VII, Section 4 of the state constitution. This status ensures their independence.

Similar constitutional protections exist for other members of the coalition, including Texas District Attorneys Jose Garza of Travis County and John Creuzot of Dallas County, and Pima County Attorney Laura Conover of Arizona. Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarity of Minnesota, while holding a statutory office, maintains similar autonomous prosecutorial discretion under state law.

Krasner, of Philadelphia, described this combination of shared ideology, constitutional independence, and direct accountability to local voters. “We find ourselves in a moment when one of the most potent tools ... to try to preserve democracy in the United States is state prosecutors,” he said.

Participants plan to convene next in February to coordinate accountability efforts across their respective jurisdictions, according to the Official Press Release issued by the Office of the District Attorney, City of Philadelphia on Jan. 28. [9]

Legislative and Executive Backup in Virginia

Gov. Abigail Spanberger used her executive power to sign Executive Order 10 on Jan. 17, 2026, her first day in office, fulfilling a campaign promise to remove the mandate requiring state and local law enforcement to assist in federal civil immigration enforcement.

Providing legislative backup, state Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim of Fairfax is guiding three bills through the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice.

As of Jan. 29: SB 351: Prohibits civil arrests at courthouses and requires a judicial warrant for federal agents to enter. SB 352: Prohibits federal and state agents from wearing face coverings or masks during enforcement to ensure they can be identified for accountability. SB 783: Restricts which state officers can perform the functions of a federal immigration officer.

Salim said his bills are designed to keep “the chaos, lawlessness, and violence that we have seen perpetrated against Minnesotans from coming to Virginia.”

He added: “The formation of this coalition sends a clear message: Virginia is not a ‘no-man’s land’ where federal agents can ignore the law.”

Salim’s three bills (SB 351, SB 352, SB 783) are currently referred to the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice.

Salim has until Tuesday, Feb. 17, “Crossover” deadline, to get these through the full Senate.

Del. Alfonso Lopez (D-Arlington) is the chief patron of HB 1440, which would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor for federal agents to conduct “civil immigration arrests” in protected areas like schools, hospitals and courthouses. Agents could enter these areas only with a judicial warrant, a subpoena, or in exigent circumstances.

HB 1440 is moving through the House. The bill was assigned to House Public Safety Subcommittee #3 on Jan. 28. If it passes the subcommittee, it must then clear the full House Public Safety Committee before moving to the House floor. Like the Senate bills, this must pass the full House of Delegates by crossover, Tuesday, Feb. 17.